

Pseudepigrapha, meaning “false title,” refers to Jewish books that falsely claimed to have been written by Moses, Enoch, Abraham or some other ancient hero of the faith. Most pseudepigrapha, or books by fake authors, were written between 250 BCE and 200 CE. A few examples are as follows:

- *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*: A series of documents claiming to be the “testaments” of the patriarchs of the tribes of Israel, in which they by turn give exhortations to their descendants. This work was probably written in the second century B.C., but its present form seems to reflect revision by a Christian. Depending upon interpretation, it may present a doctrine of two messiahs: a priestly messiah (from Levi) and a royal messiah (from Judah). In a manner typical of intertestamental Judaism, this work describes the Mosaic Law as the wisdom of God but reflects also the influence of Stoicism, a Hellenistic school of philosophy.
- *Testament of Solomon*: An outlandish tale, in which Solomon receives a magical ring from the archangel Michael and uses it to control demons, the book may have been written during the first or second century A.D.
- *Testament of Moses*: A text in which Moses purportedly predicts the history of Israel from the conquest under Joshua to the postexilic period, the book’s principal concern is the apostasy of Hellenistic Jews. The date of its composition is disputed; some suggest that it was composed during the first century A.D.
- *Psalms of Solomon*: This is a first-century B.C. collection of psalms written in reaction to the Roman occupation of Palestine. These psalms anticipated the coming of a “Lord Messiah” who would lead pious Jews to overthrow the Roman forces occupying the land. They are important for illustrating the Messianic fervor and religious turmoil that prevailed among the Jews in the days prior to Jesus’ birth.
- *Jubilees*: Claiming Mosaic authorship, this work, essentially a retelling of Genesis and Exodus written between the second century B.C. and the first century A.D., has some curious emphases. For example, it devotes a great deal of attention to Rebekah and considers the slaughter of Shechem (Ge 34) to have been a praiseworthy event. The

book is also intensely concerned with priestly matters.

- *First Enoch*: Early mystics of both Jewish and Christian background were fascinated by Enoch, the man who, after having walked with God, “was no more” (Ge 5:24). *First Enoch* is the first of many “accounts” detailing Enoch’s ascent into heaven, but even this work is a composite of texts written from approximately the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. The narrative is highly fantastic in nature. For example, 1 Enoch 6-11 describes the rebellion of the “watchers,” the angels who, according to Genesis 6:1-4 (cf. Jude 6) took the daughters of men to be their wives. In 1 Enoch 72-82, a section referred to as the Astronomical Book of Enoch, Enoch is given a tour of the heavens by the angel Uriel and sees the gates out of which the sun and moon rise and set. This section is also highly concerned with calendar issues.

The New Testament writers avoided this material, although Jude is often claimed to have made use of it in two places. In verse 9 he alluded to a story concerning Michael and the devil that is found in a version of The Assumption of Moses (as noted by Clement and Origen; the actual text is lost). Also, in verse 14 Jude quoted from 1 Enoch 1:9: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones.” It is possible that through God’s providence some pseudepigrapha have preserved some genuine traditions and that Jude was able to discern the true from the false. Given the nature of these books, however, it would be perilous to treat them as reliable sources. It is also helpful to keep in mind that citation of a given work by a Biblical writer does not in and of itself imply endorsement. Paul cited pagan poets (Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12), and Jude’s references to 1 Enoch do not imply that he thought the book had canonical authority.

Source: New International Version Archaeological Study Bible