

Apostolic Alignments

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The New Testament canon was still fluid in the 4c, as witness the presence of Barnabas and Hermas in Codex Sinaiticus. But already in the late 1c we see an interest in the authority claims of texts. Papias, defending Mark in the early 2c, is a later voice in that discussion. Additions made to many texts identify those texts with an Apostle. The names at the top of the list of acceptable Apostles were Paul and Peter.

Paul

Paul's letters (plus the editorial Colossians) were the first Christian canon. Then:

- **2 Timothy** (probably by Timothy), by including an invented farewell address by Paul, sought to increase the prominence of Timothy in the Paul movement by making him, and not Onesimus or another, **Paul's** designated heir.
- **Acts II** (from 15:36 onward) shifts its narrative emphasis entirely to **Paul**, and in its "we" passages, claims companion status for Luke, the author of Acts.
- **Hebrews** (by Apollos; see 1 Cor 1:12), at first without indication of author, was converted to a **Pauline** Epistle by adding the Heb 13:22-25 personalia.

Peter

No writing can be credibly attributed to Peter, but his importance was great.

- **Matthew** downplays Peter in favor of more equal treatment of all the Twelve, but the later Mt 16:18-19 identifies **Peter** as the Rock of the future Church.
- **John** makes the "Beloved Disciple" (John Zebedee) constantly upstage Peter (Jn 13:21f, 18:15f, 19:26f, 20:3f). The added Jn 21¹ instead assigns the future care of the flock to **Peter** (Jn 21:14, 16, 17).
- **1 Peter**, originally an anonymous baptismal homily (1 Pet 1:3-4:11), received additions which encouraged those suffering exclusion from the synagogues, and added **Peter** as the writer of that text, now transformed into an Epistle.
- **2 Peter**, referring to 1 Peter (2 Pet 3:1) but in a very different style, swallows Judas (which had aligned itself with Jacob the Brother of Jesus, then thought to be the author of the Epistle of Jacob) and converts it into a **Petrine** text. It counters 2 Timothy by seeming to contain *Peter's* last testament (2 Pet 1:13-15, compare the prediction of Peter's death in Jn 21:18-19).
- Papias (early 2c) defended Mark as deriving from the preaching of **Peter**.

Paul and Peter were becoming the two poles of the Alpha/Beta theological argument.

¹Perhaps based on an early version of the Gospel of Peter. I regard it as John E, Jn 16-17 as John D, Jn 15 (with 16-17, also queried by Wellhausen) as John C, and the rest as John A/B.

Ecumenical

There is also a tendency to reconcile Peter and Paul, in both directions:

- **Gal 2:7-8**, an editorial interpolation, calls **Peter**, but not Paul, an apostle.²
- **Acts I** (to 15:35) symmetrizes the two: **Peter** is the first to convert a Gentile.
- **1 Peter 5:12** uses **Paul's** associate "Silvanus" as an amanuensis.
- **2 Peter 3:15-16** refers to "our beloved brother **Paul**," while acknowledging some difficulties with the Pauline writings.

Other Shifting Affiliations

A Gospel connection was desirable for at least one previously unaffiliated text:

- **Didache**, a circular liturgical advisory text, in its final layer absorbs material from Matthew (and some from Luke), and adds an End Days section based on Matthew, which in another place is called "the Gospel of our Lord" (Did 8:2).³

Some texts affiliated with Jacob the Lord's Brother later shifted to a member of the recognized Twelve. For Judas, see above. Another shift from Jacob the Brother is:

- **The Gospel of Thomas**, whose probable core (gTh 1-12, note gTh 12) had aligned itself with Jacob the Lord's Brother, later (Introduction and gTh 13) claimed an association instead with Thomas, who was neither Peter nor Paul, but was at least an officially recognized member of the Jesus Twelve.⁴

The Judas > 2 Peter rewrite abandons Judas' reference to Enoch (Judas 14, compare Heb 11:5), a contemporary Jewish text. Enoch may have been experiencing disesteem among the Rabbinic authorities, who at that time (post-70) were presumably in charge of defining the Hebrew Scriptures, on which the Christians and their texts also relied.

All this implies a late 1c shakeout in the list of accepted authority figures, and a scramble of texts to be associated with the top names. Behind the scramble, in the Pastorals (after 70) and the rulings of Jamnia (also after 70), as the Post-Apostolic Age got itself gradually underway, we seem to sense the presence of new decision makers, scrutinizing authority claims and making authority choices.

Works Cited

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²See Walker **Question**, and for further detail on the editorial process, Brooks **Editors**.

³There follows the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9-13). See also Did 15:3 (compare Mt 18:15-18) and Did 15:4 (Mt 6:1-4, 5-15), and for further detail, Brooks **Didache**.

⁴He was also the *twin*, not merely the *brother*, of Jesus, a more convincing kind of intimacy. For Jacob and Thomas as later Gnostic authority figures, see further Brooks **Thomas A**.