

of Peter (late second century). Origen (early third century) and Jerome (late fourth century) referred to it by name; both noted that some disputed its authenticity although they themselves apparently had no doubts. II Peter was declared canonical by the Council of Carthage (AD 397). Its canonical status was undisputed until the time of the Reformation when Erasmus rejected it, but Luther accepted it while Calvin wondered about it.

Several arguments against Petrine authority have been used since the early 19th century; its language and style, the seeming reluctance of the church to give it canonical status, its doctrinal content, and some historical questions.

Differences between the language and style of I and II Peter were noticed by the early church--one reason for its slow acceptance. Jerome explained this by saying that I Peter was written with the help of Silvanus (I Peter 5:12) whereas II Peter may have been written by Peter himself or by another amanuensis. This argument is still used today. The contents of the two letters differ; differences of content and purpose usually call for different vocabulary. It is also important to note that a not inconsiderable number of words and phrases are found only in I and II Peter (a few are also found in Peter's speeches in Acts).

While it is true that the church officially approved II Peter as part of the canon at a rather late date, it was nonetheless approved. At the same council which approved II Peter, two works which had enjoyed considerable approval and use in and by the church were specifically rejected (Barnabas and Clement of Rome). Many "Petrine" writings were also being rejected by the church at this time (Apocalypse of Peter, Gospel of Peter, etc.).

The doctrinal argument has two main aspects: differences between I and II Peter and the nature of the false teachers attacked in II Peter 2. Many of the most important doctrines found in I Peter are not mentioned in II Peter; the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, baptism, and prayer. Peter emphasizes instead the transfiguration, the second coming and the judgment. There is no need, however, for an author to mention everything that he knows in every letter.

It is claimed that the heresy attacked in II Peter 2 was Gnosticism which came to fruition in the second century. It is now known that "incipient Gnosticism" was present from the beginning of the Christian era, although it did not develop a full-blown theology for another century or so.

The references to Pauline documents (3:15) is one historical argument advanced against Petrine authorship. Critics argue that this refers to a collection of Paul's writings---therefore II Peter must have been written only after such a collection began to circulate in the church. This must have been after Peter's death since he died shortly after Paul. The critics also say that Paul's writings would not have been accorded equal authority with the Old Testament ("the other Scriptures") until early in the second