

Speaking of the Apocalypse (from the previous post giving that odd video): Someone recently asked me if the same author could have written both the book of Revelation and the Gospel of John. Interesting question! Traditionally, both books have been identified as coming from the same person, John the son of Zebedee, the fisherman who was one of Jesus' closest disciples. In answering the question I would like to stress two points: first, they almost certainly were not written by the same person (note: they do not claim to be); and second, whoever these two authors were, neither one of them was John the son of Zebedee.

Before making these two points, I need to explain the traditional view: same author for both, John the son of Zebedee. With the book of Revelation, the reason for the identification was simple: the author explicitly says that he was named John. Already in v. 1 he indicates that the Revelation was given to himself, John, and in v. 9 he is even more explicit: "I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (translation of the NRSV).

The author does not make any big deal of the fact that he is someone named John - that is, he is not claiming to be someone famous. If he were, we might suspect that he maybe was making a claim in order to provide greater authority for his book - i.e., that the book was a forgery. But the striking thing about the claim, in this instance, is that he simply names himself without saying which John he was. He's just someone named John, who apparently was known to the people to whom he was writing (since he doesn't need to identify himself any further.)

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