

Academic Summary Sample

This text is excerpted from an early portion of my undergraduate research thesis in Religious Studies. The full project was entitled “Approaches to Conquest: Understanding νικᾶν in the Book of Revelation.” This excerpt does not display much original analysis; rather, I intend to show my ability to summarize and present information. Citations are in Chicago style.

On the Authorship and Date of Revelation

Authorship

The authorship of Revelation can be determined most substantially from the text itself. The opening verse states that the visions within the text were given to a man named John, who calls himself a δοῦλος (*doulos*)—a servant or slave—of God.¹ Beyond this, John’s social identity is limited within the text; the only other major piece of information presented about John is that he is currently on the island of Patmos “on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”² Outside of these explicit confirmations of name and location, little else is stated directly. It is apparent that he is familiar with the churches of Asia Minor, given that he is able to write letters specific to the various communities therein, and that he associates with them by calling himself a “brother of [them] all.”³ He seems to assert a Jewish identity for himself, as he puts himself in tension with Jews that do not follow Jesus, and his ability to allude to the Hebrew Bible suggests

1. Rev. 1:1. [*Editorial note: translations are my own unless marked*]

2. Rev. 1:9.—“διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ” (NTG).

3. Ibid.—“ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν” (NTG).

familiarity with Jewish scripture.⁴ Thus, from the text alone, the authorship of Revelation can be attributed to a man named John on the island of Patmos who is familiar with the churches of Asia and likely considers himself Jewish.

Beyond this, the identity of John has long been the subject of tradition and speculation. In particular, he is often associated with John the Evangelist and further with the author of the Johannine epistles. In her work *Crisis and Catharsis*, Adela Yarbro Collins identifies this tradition as early as Irenaeus in 180 CE and verifies that belief in the tradition remains strong even today.⁵ With greater detail, however, she convincingly argues that there is no textual reason to support this tradition beyond the use of the common name “John.” She points out, among other things, major divergence in theology within the “Johannine” works, John’s self-distancing from the apostles (therefore including, by tradition, John the Evangelist) in 21:14, and the simple fact that the text nowhere implies that it has a common authorship with the Gospel or the epistles.⁶ Simply, the author seems to have been a Jewish man named John, living on the island of Patmos, who was familiar with the Christians of Asia.

4. In Rev. 2:9 he calls Jews that do not believe in Christ a “synagogue of Satan,” implying that he, as a Jew, has correct belief while others do not; so too does he allude to prophetic works throughout, like the four beasts of Ezekiel in Rev. 4.

5. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 25-26.

6. Ibid., 32ff.

Date of Writing

The text offers no explicit compositional date; however, identifying when the text was written is potentially vital to understanding its social goals and rhetorical function. Leonard Thompson, in *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, offers a concise summary of the major scholarly efforts to date the text. Ultimately, he says that “we may conclude with most scholars that Revelation was written sometime in the latter years of Domitian’s reign,” giving a potential range from 92 to 96 CE.⁷ This conclusion draws heavily on Collins’ work in *Crisis and Catharsis*—therein she presented significant internal evidence for such a date, particularly by utilizing the seven kings in Revelation 17 to extrapolate Domitian as the emperor contemporary with the author.⁸ Both Collins and Thompson also gesture towards external evidence—most importantly the date given by Irenaeus—who suggested Revelation was written under Domitian; Collins offers an extended defense of Irenaeus’ credibility on this issue.⁹ It can thus be reasonably concluded that the text was written during the reign of Domitian and around the year 95 CE.

7. Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 13-15.

8. A. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 58ff. It ought to be noted that she *does* leave some room for an earlier date under the reign of Nero and before the destruction of the Temple—verses 11:3-13 that describe the Temple, she suggests, come from a Neronic-era source but ultimately were “edited by the author of Revelation,” thereby unifying the date of the text (68).

9. Ibid., 54-56; Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 15.