

The Second Epistle of John

...And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. (2 John 1:6)

2 John Introduction

Someone read 2John 1:1-7

Someone read vv 8-13

Canonicity

Due to the brevity and casual nature of 2&3 John, it is not surprising that they were among the last to be accepted as canonical (define "canon"). Eusebius in his Church History (ca 290ad) lists them as "disputed, although well known and accepted by many." Irenaeus quotes twice from 2John in his famous *Against Heresies* (ca 195ad), attributing both to S. John.

He attributed the second quote to 1John, making it even more convincing that these had the same author.

References exist in no less than half a dozen other ECFs, including the Muratorian Canon, which was known in Rome about 200ad.

The commentator Plummer remarks: "It is apparent that precisely those witnesses who are nearest to S. John in time are favorable to the Apostolic authorship, and they seem to know no other view."

The contents of 2John reflect that it is the product of the same author as 1John. More than half of 2John is a virtual repetition of 1John.

D. Edmond Hiebert writes: "For the common reader, the most natural explanation is the view that all 3 writings are the work of the same author. This view goes back to the early church and was held almost unanimously until the rise of modern critical scholarship."

Authorship

Following the traditional format of a letter written in Biblical times, the author refers to himself at the very beginning. But he does not use his name, instead he refers to himself as what?

The Elder (Greek=*ho presbuteros*), from which we get the name of what mainline denomination?

This has occasioned much speculation on the author's identity. How exactly does he identify himself?

The Elder. What does this fact imply?

1. He was known to his readers
2. They would recognize his authority
3. His authority would be such that it could settle disputes among the brothers

This sounds like John the Apostle, doesn't it? So, how did the view that there was another John the Elder arise?

There is an obscure passage in *the History of the Church*, attributed to Papias, that reads:

5. It is worth while observing here that the name John is twice enumerated by him. The first one he mentions in connection with Peter and James and Matthew and the rest of the apostles, clearly meaning the evangelist; but the other John he mentions after an interval, and places him among others outside of the number of the apostles, putting Aristion before him, and he distinctly calls him a presbyter.

6. This shows that the statement of those is true, who say that there were two persons in Asia that bore the same name, and that there were two tombs in Ephesus, each of which, even to the present day, is called John's. It is important to notice this. For it is probable that it was the second, if one is not willing to admit that it was the first that saw the Revelation, which is ascribed by name to John.

The suggestion is a very clever one, and yet it is only a guess, and does not pretend to be more. He concludes that the Apocalypse must have been written by some person named John, because it testifies to that fact itself; but the style, and other internal indications, lead him to think that it cannot have been written by the author of the fourth Gospel, whom he assumes to be John the apostle.

However, the "presbyter John" has again played an important part among some critics as the possible author of certain of the Johannine writings, though the authenticity of the Apocalypse has (until very recently) been so commonly accepted even by the most negative critics that the "presbyter John" has not figured at all as the author of it; nor indeed is he likely to in the future. – Notes by Phillip Schaff

So, if the author was the beloved Disciple – as I believe it is – the why do you think he doesn't give his name?

Similar to GJohn, 1John, and 3John.

Out of humility – remember, he is one of the Sons of Thunder reborn to the Disciple of Love.

But, see Rev 1:1. Why do you think John identifies himself by name here?

See Isa 1:1, Jer 1:1, Eze 1:3, Dan 7:1, etc.

Consciously writing a prophetic vision, like the OT prophets

So, to sum up, the author, in my view, is the Apostle John. He was probably writing from Ephesus (although there is no direct evidence of this), and was writing either in the first half of the 80's or perhaps 10-15 years later. Marshall thinks the chronological relationship to 1John is that 1John was either written after 2John (because the heretics were still able to pass themselves off as true believers), or was written to a Christian lady (or community) in an area where the heretics had not

yet visited, but John knew they were planning to visit in the near future.

The Form

It is short enough to fit on one piece of papyrus, and contains a more or less standard greeting and conclusion.

The Audience

This brings us to the matter of the “Elect Lady.” Is it a literal lady, or a metaphor for a local church.

1. It is a literal lady and her children
 - a. First rule of Biblical Hermeneutics (Interpretation): When the literal sense makes sense then seek no other sense.
 - b. It is the most natural understanding
 - c. There are no examples of “lady” being used of a local church in the Bible, unless this is the lone exception
2. It is a metaphor for a local church
 - a. John’s language is not appropriate for an individual, either in his statement of love (1,2) or his exhortation to love (5). He could hardly call his personal love for a real lady a “commandment...which we had from the beginning.”
 - b. The warning about showing hospitality to false teachers is more appropriate for all members of a local church than to a single household.
 - c. John changes from the second person singular in vv4-5, to plural in vv6, 8, 10, and 12, and back again to singular in verse 13). See the KJV which uses “Thy” for singular, and “you” for plural.
 - i. But, who is John writing to (1)?
 - d. The sister mentioned in v13 is most likely a sister church, perhaps the church from which John was writing
 - i. See 1Peter 5:13
3. It is a metaphor of the Church universal
 - a. All of the arguments under local church may be applied here as well
 - b. The *Didache* (the Teaching of the Apostles, ca 100ad) contains similar warnings to refraining from showing hospitality to false teachers, and this was intended to a group of churches in Asia Minor, and by extension to the Church as a whole:
 - i. Whoever, therefore, who comes and teaches you all these things mentioned, receive him. But if the one teaching changes what has been taught to another teaching in order to destroy these things, do not listen to him

I don’t regard option 3 as viable. I lean towards the first view, but am not dogmatic – it could very easily be the second.

Purpose

John was aware of certain false teachers who posing as true Christians, and were seeking converts to their heresy. They planned to infiltrate the church and to lead as many astray as they could. At the time, inns were filthy, flea-infested hovels, and private homes be opened to travelers. John was concerned that these heretics would abuse the hospitality of his friends and fellow Christians. He writes this letter as a warning to them, and says he plans of visiting them in the future.