

The Rhetorical Role of 1 John 5:9–12 When Viewed Through Johannine Repetition

One reality permeates biblical scholarship: “the more time passes the more things remain the same.” Over one hundred years ago, A.E. Brooke described his task.

A more modest, but equally difficult task has been attempted, that of determining, in the light of our knowledge of Christian life and thought at the end of the First and beginning of the Second Century, what the writer seems to have intended his readers to understand by the words which he addressed to them. (Brooke, ICC, Preface)

His task sounds remarkably similar—apart from authorial intent—to what rhetorical and narrative scholars employ today as they research how an early, authorial audience might interpret the rhetoric employed as well as the stories related by the writer.

In this paper, I treat the document as a written artifact from the ancient world while recognizing that the author speaks in the 1st person, both singular and plural, and addresses an audience in the 2nd person plural a total of 34 times.¹

Rhetoric in this Writing

Attempts have been made to identify a guiding rhetorical framework for 1 John in order to identify its structural elements more precisely. Two of these are “deliberative rhetoric” which seeks to influence decision and action² and “epideictic rhetoric” which seeks to inform and establish group cohesion and employs amplification.³

Differences between oral and written cultures may also play a significant role in determining the author’s perceived audience and context. Pheme Perkins proposes that

¹ ὑμεῖς occurs 6 times in the nominative, 22 times in the dative, and 6 times in the accusative.

² Hans-Josef Klauck in Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, SP, 87.

³ Duane Watson in Painter, SP, 87. See also George L. Parsenius, *First, Second, and Third John*, Paideia, 14.

sensitivity to oral persuasion, which is itself “infused with rhetoric at every level,” might find that this extreme sounding language was “not indicative of the nature of the problem.”⁴ Thus, what the modern reader hears as apparently strong, even polemical, language may merely reflect the author’s assessment of a “grave crisis” which demands addressing in an equally grave manner.⁵

The orality model presents a third rhetorical style, *sententia*, which is the use of maxims to express broad truths in an either/or style of persuasion.⁶ According to George Parsenios, “*Sententia* have a social function, drawing boundaries and establishing a social connection between author and audience.”⁷ The importance for a modern reader to recognize the rhetorical underpinnings of 1 John lies not in a mere exercise of structural analysis—as helpful as that might be for 1 John in particular—but in understanding the depth of importance the author places on this mode of communication.

The Structure of this Writing

One key aspect for understanding the rhetorical role of 1 John 5:9–12 is to identify how it fits into the larger structure. This task is harder than it appears. J.A. du Rand noted in 1979,

Initially a structural analysis of 1 John does not seem such an impossible undertaking at all. This is the first impression. It is after all written in the so-called ‘easier’ Greek of the New Testament. However, when one begins to make syntactical combinations from the given surface structure to result in

⁴ PHEME PERKINS in PARSENIOS, 15.

⁵ PARSENIOS, 16

⁶ PARSENIOS, 16–17

⁷ PARSENIOS, 18

a definition of its semantic function, it must be admitted that such an undertaking is not easy at all.⁸

Outlines of 1 John abound in their distinctiveness, so much so that Robert Longacre remarked “it almost amounts to a denial of structure to the book.”⁹ Many researchers address the material in a chronological order.¹⁰ Others pattern it on the Fourth Gospel, especially along the lines of the Book of Signs and Book of Glory distinction. This approach may result in a prologue and epilogue with two¹¹ or three middle sections.¹² Several researchers utilize discourse analysis in their attempt to clarify the structure.¹³ A fourth pattern focuses on concentric parallelism within the writing.¹⁴

Four proposals highlighting 1 John’s concentric parallelism find different emphases. In Charles Talbert’s outline, the purpose statement in 5:13 follows the fourth in a series of Ethical and Christological exposition pairings and precedes what he

⁸ For older examples see J A du Rand, “A Discourse Analysis of 1 John,” *Neot* 13 (1979): 1–42. Rudolf Bultmann even noted at the time of writing his commentary on the three letters later translated for the Hermeneia series, “The question of a unified train of thought and the question of structure have often been discussed, but none of the attempts to demonstrate unity and a sequence of thought is satisfactory.” *The Johannine Epistles*, trans. R. Philip O’Hara, Lane C. McGaughey, and Robert W. Funk (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1973), 2. See also Raymond E. Brown, *the Epistles of John: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 30 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 116-30

⁹ Robert E. Longacre, “Towards an Exegesis of 1 John Based on the Discourse Analysis of the Greek Text,” in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, edited by David Alan Black. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992. See for example I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT, (1978): 22–26, who provides seven examples in addition to his own. “This does not mean that John is illogical, but rather that his Epistle is not meant to be divided into large sections on a logical basis.” 26

¹⁰ Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PillarNTC, 49; Hermann von Soden, cited in Brooke, ICC, §4 Analysis

¹¹ Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, WBC, 51.34; Daniel Akin, “John, Letters from,” HoIBD

¹² Culpepper, *Gospel and Letters*, 254; Brown and Moloney, *Interpreting*, 322; and of course Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, AB, 124.

¹³ Jan A du Rand, 1979; Robert E. Longacre, 1992

¹⁴ Talbert, *Reading John*, 7, Myers, *Reading John and 1, 2, 3 John*, 229

identifies as the postscript in 5:14-21.¹⁵ Alicia Myers' outline incorporates two parts: a Sermonic Prologue and a Body. The Body contains five levels with the central level, 2:18–4:6, consisting of a three level chiasm emphasizing 2:28–3:24, "Revealing Identities."¹⁶ Myers includes 5:9–12 in her final level. John Christopher Thomas and Ron J. Bigalke both identify an eleven level structure with the center level found at 3:11–18, which Thomas calls "Love One Another" and Bigalke refers to as "Love proves abiding."¹⁷ They only differ in their outlines at whether the section beginning at 4:7 concludes at 5:5 (Thomas) or 4:21 (Bigalke). Thomas and Bigalke each include 5:9–12 in their penultimate layer.

My own structure identifies an opening (1:1–4) preceding a chiastic section built on the Message proclaimed and Relationships the audience may hold (1:5–2:14). (Harstine, 2023) The remaining part of the book reflects several internal chiastic patterns.

The Two-fold Organization of this Writing

My own analysis of this writing continually returns to the opening section, the oft-named prologue, 1 John 1:1–4. A single theme dominates the content for this writer's message: **Life**. First, the Word of Life is described as the substance from the beginning for this writer's ears, eyes and hands (1:1). This Life is made known and proclaimed as Life of the Ages with the Father (1:2). The seen and heard Life is proclaimed to the writer's

¹⁵ Talbert, 7, modifies Theodor Häring ("Gedankengang und Grundgedanke des ersten Johannesbriefs," Theol. Abhandlungen, Carl von Weizsäcker gewidmet, Freiburg i. B., 1892, Mohr) as cited in Brooke, §4 Analysis

¹⁶ Myers, 229

¹⁷ J.C. Thomas, "The Literary Structure of 1 John," *NovT* 40 (1998): 373 and Ron J. Bigalke, "First John structure resolve: Exegetical Analysis, Part 2" *HvTst* 69 (2013): 6.

audience with the stated purpose of sharing *koinonia* with the writer's community (1:3).

In the words of Dirk van der Merwe,

The effect of 'hearing', 'seeing' and 'touching' Jesus is a declaration (ἀπαγγέλλομεν) and testimony (μαρτυροῦμεν) *about* him (1:2–3), and an invitation to have fellowship *in* him (Smalley 1989:11–12) and *with* him.¹⁸

In essence, this Life and *koinonia* become the content for all of the written material which follows (1:4).¹⁹ The fulcrum passage for this paper in 5:9–12 likewise focuses on these two themes at 5:11 and 5:12.

The other diverse topics covered throughout the writing can be subsumed under these two themes. Light, Love, Overcome, Truth, Righteous, Born, Hope, and Believe are positive attributes of this Eternal Life while Sin, Darkness, Hate, Deceive, Lying, Lawless, and World reflect the lack of this revealed life from God. Similarly, Forgiveness, Keeping Commandments, Abiding, Knowing, Confessing, Seeing, and Testifying are the positive sides for *koinonia*. Indeed, these various individual topics might be better understood as interlocking timbers forming the walls of a building rather than as separate, individual pillars supporting the roof.²⁰

Repetition in this Writing

Similarities between 1 John and the Gospel of John have been long established by other studies. Repeated themes from the Gospel's prologue appear frequently in 1 John. The repetition of these terms: *BELIEVE* (9x with 3 in 5:10), *WORD* (6x), *WORLD*

¹⁸ Dirk G. van der Merwe, "The author of 1 John uses the multiple references to his 'writing' as a mechanism to establish different affects and effects," *HvTSt* 74 (2018): 4

¹⁹ Parsenios, 119. "And yet, even as 1 John deploys an ever-greater constellation of images and ways of talking about God and those who believe rightly in God, it almost never strays from saying the same two things repeatedly. The two things ever in mind are expressed in 1:3 (1) 'that you also may have fellowship with us,' and (2) 'our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.'"

²⁰ Harstine, *Reading John Through Johannine Lenses*, 107.

(23x), *WITNESS* (12x with all but 1 appearances in this section of the structure and that one in 1:2), *RECEIVE* (3x), *LIFE* (13x with 5 in 5:11–13) and *TRUTH* (9x) demonstrates a similar concern for these topics in both writings. The preponderance of *TESTIMONY* at 5:9–12 and the absence of the term from 1:5–4:13 prompted this paper to shine the spotlight on this small section and its rhetorical role.

One struggle a researcher encounters when identifying structure lies in the copious repetition found within this writing. J.A. du Rand noted the spiral affect of topics leads from one idea to the next. “This results in a recapitulation of certain themes. These repetitions are not merely presented as atomistic extractions, but show associative progression or development.”²¹

Parsenios identifies rhetorical variation as a common characteristic of the Gospel and letters of John while not being unique to them. As he states, “any good author [I might even add speaker], whether from today or in antiquity, would seek to vary vocabulary in order to avoid lulling the reader to sleep.”²² Key terms reflecting the content presented by a witness include *Message* (ἀγγελία), *Announce* (ἀπαγγέλλω), *Proclaim* (ἀναγγέλλω), *Promise* (ἐπαγγελία), *Write* (γράφω) and *Word* (λογός).

Testimony as a Focal Element

Reading through 1 John with an eye (and ear) to the testimony cluster in chapter 5 can provide unique insight. The writing provides increasing clarity for its readers as the related key terms appear. The reader is clued into the term’s significance immediately in the prologue section when testimony (μαρτυρέω) is paired with announce (ἀπαγγέλλω) in

²¹ du Rand, 2.

²² Parsenios, 127.

1:2. The object of this verbal action for the visual witness is “life of the ages” (τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον) Verse 3 follows with a reminder that the announcement (ἀπαγγέλλω) consists of what was seen as well as what was heard and results in *koinonia* with the writer’s group as well as with the Father and his Son—Jesus the Messiah.

Immediately, the content of this message (ἀγγέλλια) heard and proclaimed (ἀναγγέλλω) is stated: God is Light and no Darkness can be found in him at all, 1:5. The writing clues the informed reader into the fact that this communication from author to reader will be cryptic and revealed slowly. Following this initial barrage of attestation, testimony (μαρτυρέω) goes silent until our passage in 1 John 5, while announce and proclaim shift to terms better reflected in the written form of communication. I will highlight 3 sub-topics, testimony to life, testimony as confession and truthful testimony.

Testimony to Life

Following the author’s guidance at 1:4 the reader’s focus shifts to the written rather than the auditory evidence. Multiple descriptions of this primary message, life of the ages (τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον) begin to appear.²³ At 2:1 the possible result of this message is described as “not sinning” (μὴ ἀμάρτητε) while 2:7 uses the term commandment (ἐντολήν) which was “from the beginning” (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς), a direct reference to 1:1 and the substance of this testimony. The commandment described remains cryptic as it portrays “the darkness passing away and the true light shining already” (ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει)

At 2:25 the promise (ἡ ἐπαγγελία) is identified as life of the ages. At 3:11 the message is expressed as “what they heard from the beginning” (ἣν ἠκούσατε ἀπ’

²³ See van der Merwe, 10.

ἀρχίς.) and consists of loving one another (ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους)—a reference to 1:1 as well as 2:7 and the commandment there. At 3:23 the phrase “this is” (αὕτη ἐστίν) [as at 1:5, 2:25 and 3:11 as well as 5:4 and 5:11 to follow] accentuates the commandment while relating it to believing in the name of his Son Jesus the Messiah.

At 4:21 we see a change when the author indicates that we already have the commandment and restates its content as whoever loves God should love his brother (ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ), bringing it into alignment with a frequently discussed topic in the writing. (2:10, 3:10, 3:14, 3:23, 4:7, 4:11, and 4:19 as well as 5:2) At 5:3 the author informs the reader that God’s love (or love for God, ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ) is found in keeping his commandment, thus wrapping up these references for testimony to life.

Testimony as Confession

Another crucial term for the rhetorical web of Testimony is confession (ὁμολογέω), the verbal act of declaring one’s testimony. Appearing on four occasions, the objects of confession are: one’s sins (1:9), the Son (2:23), Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh (4:2), and Jesus as God’s Son (4:15). Confession also appears in negative situations, as in not confessing Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh (4:2), in denying (ἀρνέομαι) Jesus is the Messiah, which is denial of the Father and the Son (2:22), and in denying the Son (2:23). According to Dirk van der Merwe, “The author uses the negative testimony of the deceivers to create a positive lived experience that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”²⁴

²⁴ van der Merwe, 3.

Truthful Testimony

Truth appears as a significant topic on its own in this writing (with 16 appearances of ἀλήθεια and her cognates), however, truth's antonym plays the central role regarding testimony. At 2:21 the author emphasizes that this writing concerns the distinction between the truth and every lie. (τὴν ἀλήθειαν and πᾶν ψεῦδος) and at 2:26 notes this writing concerns the deceivers (περὶ τῶν πλανῶντων). The idea of being a "liar" forms an inclusion at 1:10 and 5:10. Early in the writing the failure to say (i.e. confess) we have sinned makes God a liar and demonstrates that his word is not part of our existence (1:10). Later, the author elevates God's own testimony concerning his Son when he states, Anyone who believes in the Son already has this testimony. Yet those who do not believe in the Son have made God a liar simply by not believing God's testimony.²⁵ On three occasions in-between, Liar (ψεύστης) is used to describe those who claim to know God but don't keep his commandments (2:2), those who deny Jesus is the Messiah (2:22), and the one who claims to love God yet hates his brother (4:20).

Inferences for the Rhetorical Role of 1 John 5:9–12

Implementing repetition as a lens for reading/hearing 1 John proves a valid and insightful approach. Instead of examining this writing as a linear document, repetition illustrates the circuitous nature of the text. This circular nature indicates that employing concentric parallelism as a construct might (eventually) unravel the communication method this writing employs. While several researchers provide a chiasmic outline for the entirety of this Johannine writing, a consensus model has not, as yet, appeared. Yet, the internal structure definitely employs *chiasmus* throughout smaller segments.

²⁵ My rendering emphasizing the important elements in 5:10.

Focusing on repetition in this paper identifies the broad use of concentric parallelism centering on the term Testimony at the beginning and ending as well as the main topic of said testimony, Eternal Life. Again quoting van der Merwe,

He refers to life three times in the prologue and relates it to Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. In chapter 1, it is personified and refers to the identity of Jesus. At the end of 1 John, eternal life (5:11–13) is also attached to Jesus. In this context, the author uses ‘eternal life’ as a word event. Therefore, for the author to have faith in Jesus would lead to the experience of Jesus.²⁶

Furthermore, the focus on the broader semantic field highlights the significance of testimony and its stated content throughout the writing. These additional terms serve to continually focus the reader’s attention on the complexity of Eternal Life and Fellowship with God the Father.

This investigation of various terms analogous to Testimony (μαρτυρία) demonstrates the pervasive nature of this theme throughout the writing. The word appears as a noun only at 5:9–11, while the verb is used here as well as at 1:2 and 4:14—both in conjunction with words of visible sight (ὁράω and θεάομαι). The other terms in this cluster—{announce (ἀπαγγέλλω), message (ἄγγελια), proclaim (ἀναγγέλλω), commandment (ἐντολήν), promise (ἐπαγγελία), what they heard from the beginning (ἦν ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς,)}—thread their way throughout the intervening paragraphs as they shift from the action of testifying (verb) to the content (noun) of the testimony given.²⁷

²⁶ van der Merwe, 10

²⁷ These terms appear in noun/verb form a total of 47 times. This is more than any other individual noun. Only εἰμί occurs more frequently among nouns and verbs.

The transition from verb to noun parallels the aspect of God's own testimony presented here, whereby he gives testimony to the substance of his testimony.

A further detail arising from this research can be described as the writer's emphasis on truth, perhaps more specifically on truth's antonym, falsehood (ψεῦδομαί and its cognates). Tied to the proclamation at 1:5, God is Light and no Darkness can be found in him at all, the emphasis on aspects of Light-living reappear at significant places within the text of 1 John in contrast with those who do not live in this Light. (2:15–27 and 4:1–14). Truth is doubly linked to testimony in 5:7–10. First the Spirit is specifically identified as providing testimony because the Spirit is Truth.²⁸ The second time references God's testimony concerning His Son whereby those who do not believe what God states effectively declare God to be a lying witness. Any person who reaches this negative conclusion does not enjoy the Light-living God alone provides and sends in His Son.

Finally, in this paper I have sought to illustrate how attention to repetition on the part of the researcher introduces an expanding field of study rather than a narrowed one. Once one recognizes repetition within a single phrase, one becomes more alert and sensitive to related terms which expand the exegetical effect. Since the early 1800s the focus for a majority of biblical scholarship has rested on compartmentalization and atomization of ideas within the text. Even today, a strong tendency exists among researchers, especially younger ones, to narrow their focus to the smallest detail possible in order to achieve their research goal, including writing doctoral dissertations. This pattern is a necessary beginning point. Whenever possible, it behooves the scholar

²⁸ van der Merwe, 8

and the guild for us to widen our research iris and take in broader ideas rather than more narrow ones.

My own research on this topic has actually moved from the broad to the narrow in a manner reverse to my expectations. I began by reading and noting repetition based on the assumption that the structure might reveal itself. Instead, I recognized fifteen significant terms the writer employs to varying degrees. This conclusion led me to seek a different approach. Rather than identify the letter's purpose, meaning, message, teaching, context—or a host of other options—based on the seemingly incoherent use of repetition, I employed the technical strategy of “zooming out” in order to find a narrower concept which incorporated the myriad of terms found in 1 John. The idea of Eternal Life and *koinonia* as presented in 1:2–3 and 5:9–12 provided the clarion call for organizing the content. First John 5:9–12 thus serves rhetorically to return the audience to this central idea once it has heard all the other noise, most probably representing the communities external and internal conflict. The writer reminds them that only 1 thing matters, Eternal Life, and that life is only experienced in Fellowship with the Godhead and the children of God.

Chronological Outlines

A. Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PillarNTC, 49

- 1:1–4 A preface concerning the Word of life
- 1:5–2:2 Claims to know God tested by attitudes to sin
- 2:3–11 Claims to know God tested by obedience
- 2:12–14 Encouragement for believers of different levels of maturity
- 2:15–17 Warnings against loving the ‘world’
- 2:18–27 Warnings against being deceived by the secessionists
- 2:28–3:10 Distinguishing the children of God from the children of the devil
- 3:11–24 The gospel demand to love one another and confidence in prayer
- 4:1–6 Testing the ‘spirits’
- 4:7–5:4a Claims to love God tested by love for fellow believers
- 5:4–12 Accepting God’s testimony and eternal life
- 5:13–21 Concluding reassurance for the readers and an exhortation to pray

B. Hermann von Soden, *Die Schriften des NT, i.1, 459* as cited by A.E. Brooks, *Johannine Epistles*, ICC 1909, §4 Analysis

Κεφαλαία Ιωαννου επιστολης πρωτης

- α. (1.1) επαγγελικη θεολογια περι Χριστου, εν ω.
 - (1.6) περι εξομολογησεως και προσοχης εις το μη αμαρτανειν.
 - (2.3) οτι η τηρησις εντολων θεου την γνωσιν βεβαιου.
- β. (2.7) περι αγαπης ης ανευ ασεβεια, εν ω.
 - (2.12) παραινεσις περι χαριτος εκαστου καθ ηλικιαν και περι αποτροπης της προς τον κοσμον αγαπης.
- γ. (2.18) περι ψευδαφελφων αρνησιθεων και οτι η εις Χριστον ευσεβεια πατρος ομολογια, η γαρ του πατρος δοξολογια του υιου εστι θεολογια, εν ω.
 - (2.26) περι θειου και πνευματικου χαρισματος εν αγιασμω επ ελπιδι εις γνωσιν θεου.
 - (3.2) οτι πας ο εν Χριστω εκτος αμαρτιας. ο γαρ αμαρτανων εστιν εκ του διαβολου.
- δ. (3:9 or 10b) περι αγαπης της εις τον πλησιον και διαθεσεως μεταδοτικης, εν ω.
 - (3.19) περι συνειδησεως αγαθης της εν πιστει Ιησου Χριστου.
 - (4.1) περι διακρισεως πνευματων εφ ομολογια της του Χριστου ενανθρωπησεως.
- ε. (4.7) περι φιλαδελφιας εις θεοσεβειαν.
- ς. (4.15 or 5.1) περι θεολογιας υιου εν δοξη πατρος και περι νικης της κατα του πονηρου δια πιστεωσ Ιησου Χριστου εις ζωην.

- ζ. (5.16) περι αντιληψεως του αμαρτανοντος αδελφου διαπροσευχης και περι του μη αμαρτανειν, εν ω.
(5.18) περι αποχης δαιμονικου σεβασματος.
- A. 1:1–5
1:6–2:2
2:3–6
- B. 2:7–11
2:12–17
- C. 2:18–25
2:26–3:1
3:2–8
- D. 3:9–18
3:19–24
4:1–6
- E. 4:7–14
- F. 4:15–5:15
- G. 5:16–17
5:18

Patterned after Fourth Gospel

C. Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, WBC 51, 34

- I. Preface (1:1–4) The Word of Life
- II. Live in the Light (1:5–2:29)
- a. God Is Light (1:5–7)
 - b. First Condition for Living in the Light: Renounce Sin (1:8–2:2)
 - c. Second Condition: Be Obedient (2:3–11)
 - d. Third Condition: Reject Worldliness (2:12–17)
 - e. Fourth Condition: Keep the Faith (2:18–29)
- III. Live As Children of God (3:1–5:13)
- a. God Is Father (3:1–3)
 - b. First Condition for Living As God’s Children: Renounce Sin (3:4–9)
 - c. Second Condition: Be Obedient (3:10–24)
 - d. Third Condition: Reject Worldliness (4:1–6)
 - e. Fourth Condition: Be Loving (4:7–5:4)
 - f. Fifth Condition: Keep the Faith (5:5–13)
- IV. Conclusion (5:14–21) Christian Confidence

D. Daniel Akin, “John, Letters from,” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*

- Prologue: The Word of Life (1Jo 1:1–4)
1. God Is Light (1Jo 1:5–3:10)

- Walk in the Light (1Jo 1:5-2:2)
 - God is Light (1Jo 1:5-7)
 - Resist sin (1Jo 1:8-2:2)
- Obeys the command to love (1Jo 2:3-11)
 - Know God and keep His commands (1Jo 2:3-6)
 - Learn the new command and love others (1Jo 2:7-11)
- Know your spiritual status (1Jo 2:12-14)
- Be warned of enemies of the faith (1Jo 2:15-27)
 - Beware of the world (1Jo 2:15-17)
 - Beware of the antichrists (1Jo 2:18-27)
- Live like children of God (1Jo 2:28-3:10)
 - Be confident and ready for His coming (1Jo 2:28-3:3)
 - Be righteous and do not sin (1Jo 3:4-10)
- 2. God Is Love (1Jo 3:11-5:12)
 - Love one another: part one (1Jo 3:11-24)
 - Love in action (1Jo 3:11-18)
 - Live in confidence (1Jo 3:19-24)
 - Test the spirits (1Jo 4:1-6)
 - Love one another: part two (1Jo 4:7-21)
 - Love others because God loves you (1Jo 4:7-10)
 - Love others because God lives in you (1Jo 4:11-21)
 - Obeys God and experience the victory of faith (1Jo 5:1-5)
 - Believe in the Son and enjoy eternal life (1Jo 5:6-12)
- Conclusion: Confidence and Characteristics of the Child of God (1Jo 5:13-21)
 - Know you have eternal life (1Jo 5:13)
 - Be confident in prayer (1Jo 5:14-17)
 - Do not continue in sin (1Jo 5:18-20)
 - Keep yourself from idols (1Jo 5:21)

E. R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 1998, 254

- Prologue: The Word of Life (1:1–4)
- I. A Community Faithful to the Confession that God is Light (1:5–2:27)
 - A. The Dangers of Denying Sin (1:5–2:2)
 - B. Love as the Command of the New Covenant (2:3–11)
 - C. The Danger of the World's Temptations (2:12–27)
- II. A Community Faithful to the Confession that God is Righteous (2:28–4:6)
 - A. Doing Right and Avoiding Sin as the Mark of God's Children (2:28–3:10)
 - B. Love as the Command of the New Covenant (3:11–24)
 - C. The Danger of the Spirit of Deceit (4:1–6)

III. A Community Faithful to the Confession that God is Love (4:7–5:12)

A. Love Comes from God and Is Rooted in Faith (4:7–21)

B. Faith in the Son of God Is the Root of Love (5:1–12)

Epilogue: Assurance to the Faithful Community (5:13–21)

F. Sherri Brown and Francis Moloney, *Interpreting the Gospel of John*, 2017, 322

1:1–4 Prologue: The Word of Life for the Community

1:5–2:27 Opening Appeal to the New Community: God is Light

1:5–2:2 The Experience of the Light: The Word of God in Jesus

2:3–11 The Message of the Light: Knowledge of God is Fellowship in God

2:12–27 The Crisis of the Light: The Dangers of the World

2:28–4:6 Central Appeal to the New Community: God Is Just

2:28–3:10 The Mark of the True Children of God

3:11–24 The New Covenant Commandment

4:1–6 The Call for Discernment and the Testing of Spirits

4:7–5:12 Closing Appeal to the New Community: God is Love

4:7–21 The Presence of God in Relationship: Love for God and One Another

5:1–12 The Foundation of Love: Faith That Conquers the World

5:13–21 Epilogue: Prayer for the Faithful Community

G. Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, AB 30, 124

I. The Prologue (1:1–4)

II. Part One (1:5–3:10): The Gospel that God is Light, and we must walk in the light as Jesus walked.

III. Part Two (3:11–5:12): The Gospel that we must love one another as God has loved us in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion (5:13–21): A statement of the author's purpose.

Discourse Analysis

H. J. A. du Rand, “A Discourse Analysis of 1 John,” *Neotestamentica* 13 (1979): 30–34

Theme: We know that we possess eternal life. We must show this in our way of life. The source for this certainty lies in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The forms of certainty are fellowship, filiation and love (30)

Introduction 1:1–4 Division 1

Fellowship 1:5–2:17 Division 2

2.1 Foundation of fellowship

2.2 Criterion for fellowship

- 2.3 Test for fellowship
- Filiation 2.18–4:6 Division 3
 - 3.1. Identification test concerning filiation;
 - 3.2 Foundation of filiation;
 - 3.3 Criterion (sin) for filiation;
 - 3.4 Criterion (brotherly love) for filiation;
 - 3.5 Foundation of certainty (filiation);
 - 3.6 Identification for relationship (filiation)
- Love 4:7–5:5 Division 4
 - 4.1 Foundation of Love
 - 4.2 Criteria for the fulfillment of love
 - 4.3 Visible test for love
- Conclusion 5:6–21 Division 5
 - 5.1 Witness about Jesus Christ
 - 5.2 Resumé

I. Peter Rhea Jones, “A Structural Analysis of 1 John,” *Review and Expositor* 67 (1970): 433-44. Reprint in *idem*. 117 (2017): 531-41.

Prologue. 1:1–4

I. God is Light. 1:5–2:27

Tests

A. Communion with God and Confession of Sin. 1:5–2:2

1. Walking in the Light. 1:5–7

2. Confessing-Sin. 1:8–2:2

B. Communion with God and Obedience. 2:3–11

1. Obedience to God’s Commandments. 2:3–8

2. Loving the Brother. 2:9–11

C. Attitude toward the World. 2:12–17

1. Pastoral Encouragement. 2:12–14

2. Attitude toward the World. 2:15–17

D. Warning against the Antichrists. 2:18–27

1. Staying with the Church. 2:18–20

2. Confession of Jesus as the Christ. 2:21–25

3. The Presence of the Spirit. 2:26–27

II. God is Righteousness. 2:28–4:6

A. The Righteous Children of God. 2:28–3:10

1. Doing Righteousness. 2:28–29

2. Possessed by Hope. 3:1–3

3. Doing Lawlessness. 3:4–6

- 4. Doing bin. 3:7–10
- B. The Righteous Love of the Children of God. 3:11–18
 - 1. Loving a Brother. 3:11–15
 - 2. Compassion for a needy Brother. 3:16–18
- C. Confidence before God. 3:19–24
 - 1. Testimony of the Heart. 3:19–21
 - 2. Keeping the two Commandments. 23:22–24
- D. Warning against the Spirit of Antichrist. 4:1–6
 - 1. Belief in the real Humanity of Christ. 4:1–3
 - 2. Response to apostolic Authority. 4:4–6
- III. God is Love. 4:7–5:12
 - A. The Nature of true A gape. 4:7–21
 - 1. Ability to Love. 4:7–12
 - 2. Possession of the Spirit. 4:13
 - 3. Confession of Jesus as Son of God. 4:14–15
 - 4. Love without Fear. 4:16–19
 - 5. Loving the visible Brother. 4:20–21
 - B. Cruciality of Faith in Jesus. 5:1–12
 - 1. Belief that Jesus is the Christ. 5:1
 - 2. Obedience to God's Commands. 5:2–5
 - 3. Having the Witness through Belief in the Son. 5:6–10
 - 4. Having the Life through Belief in the Son. 5:11–12
- Epilogue: 13–21

Concentric Parallelism

J. Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John, 2005, 7*

The Proclamation (1:1–5)

The Exposition (1:6–5:13)

A. Ethical exposition (1:6–2:17)

B. Christological exposition (2:18–28)

A'. Ethical exposition (3:2–3:24a)

B'. Christological exposition (3:24–4:6)

A". Ethical exposition (4:7–12)

B". Christological exposition (4:13–16a)

A"". Ethical exposition (4:16–5:4a)

B"". Christological exposition (5:4–12)

The Statement of Purpose (5:13)

The Postscript (5:14–21)

K. Alicia Myers, *Reading John and 1, 2, 3 John, 2019, 229*

A Sermonic Prologue (1:1–4)

Body of the Letter: Exhortation to Remain in Fellowship (1:5–5:21)

A. 1:5–2:2, Sin's Solution Is Jesus Christ, Righteous One

B. 2:13–17, The Commandments: Love One Another, Not the World

C. 2:18–4:6, Behavior Reveals Identity

i. Antichrists: Going Out vs. Remaining In (2:18–27)

ii. Revealing Identities (2:28–3:24)

l'. Antichrist Identified: Testing Spirits (4:1–6)

B'. 4:7–5:4, Let Us Love because God Is Love

A'. 5:5–21, Jesus Christ, Son, True God, Eternal Life

L. J.C.Thomas, "The Literary Structure of 1 John" *Novum Testamentum*, 40 (1998): 373.

A – 1:1-4 – Prologue-Eternal Life

B – 1:5-2:2 – Making Him a Liar (Walking)

C – 2:3-17 – New Commandment

D – 2:18-27 – Antichrists

E – 2:28-3:10 – Confidence-Do not Sin

F – 3:11-18 – Love One Another

E' – 3:19-24 – Confidence- Keep the Commands

D' – 4:1-6 – Antichrists

C' – 4:7-5:5 – God's Love and Ours**

B' – 5:6-12 – Making Him a Liar (Testimony)

A' – 5:13-21 – Conclusion-Eternal Life

M. Ron J. Bigalke, "First John structure resolved: Exegetical analysis, Part 2," *HTS Theological Studies*, 69 (2013): 6.

A Prologue: Eternal Life (1:1–4)

B Three Witnesses (1:5–2:2) (to deny sin is to make God a liar) (walk)

C The love of God and the believer (2:3–17)

D False Christ (2:18–27)

E Believer's confidence (2:28–3:10) (do not sin)

F Love proves abiding (3:11–18)

E' Believer's confidence (3:19–24) (do keep God's commands)

D' False prophets (4:1–6)

C' The love of God and the believer (4:7–21) **

B' Three Witnesses (5:1–12) (to deny Jesus is to make God a liar) (testimony)

A' Epilogue: Eternal Life (5:13–21)

Other Outlines

N. George Parsenius, *First, Second, and Third John*, Paideia, 2014, 32

Introductory prologue 1:1–4

The light and the darkness 1:5–2:11

three boasts 1:5-2:2

three boasts 2:3-11

Who are the children of God? 2:12–3:10

Love for God, Love for one another 3:11–4:21

Testimony and witnesses 5:1–21

O. Stan Harstine, 2023 ISBL Paper

Opening 1:1–4

The Written Message 1:5–2:14

A. These Things we Write (1:4 as hinge)

B. The Message 1:5

C. Fellowship 1:6

D. Truth Purifies 1:7

E. Deception Rejects Truth 1:8

F. Confession brings Forgiveness 1:9

G. Liars Reject truth about sin actions 1:10

G'. Message prevents sin actions 2:1–2

F'. Fellowship in keeping commandments 2:3

E'. Words and actions imply Truth 2:4

D'. True living results in love 2:5

C'. Abiding means true living 2:6

B'. The message is not a new commandment 2:7–11

A'. Summary 2:12–14

On Eternal Life (Abiding in the Father and the Son) 2:15–3:24

A. Do Not Love the World 2:15–29

B. On the Children of God 3:1–10

C. On Loving as God's Children 3:11–24

On Fellowship (Testing the Spirits) 4:1–5:20

Conclusion 5:21