

Unravelling the structure of First John: Exegetical analysis, Part 1

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Surveying commentaries and introductions to the Johannine epistles reveals a multiplicity of methodology with regard to the structure of the epistles. Proposals have generally emphasised characteristics of content (doctrine and paraenesis), style (antithesis and repetition) or outline divisions. If the intent of the author is connected to the structure of the text, commentaries and introductions may not adequately discern the authorial intent. The lack of agreement amongst commentators as to the division of the First Epistle of John has resulted in numerous interpretative conclusions. As a consequence of difficulty in ascertaining the structure of the text, interpretations are frequently formulated upon theological persuasions and historical reconstruction. The purpose of the article is to overcome such persuasions and reconstructions.

Exegetical analysis explained

The most characteristic distinctive of exegetical analysis is to consider the biblical text beyond sentence boundaries (Hock 2009:2). Petöfi (1979) argued as follows:

The definition of the textual unit (or unities), [*in other words*] that unit which extends beyond the boundaries of the sentence and is larger than the sentence, is one of the most attractive problems of text-linguistics. (p. 283)

Exegetical analysis presupposes the text as the fundamental aspect of language because communication is inherent in the text as opposed to the sentence. Whilst it may be challenging for expositors not to begin their research with an emphasis upon the individual words of the text and the phraseology containing its usage and then progress to emphasis upon the clause to the larger units and ultimately to the Johannine text itself, the recognition that the text is the fundamental linguistic unit necessitates first identifying the unit boundaries within the Johannine discourse (Guthrie 1994:49–55). However, a cursory examination with regard to commentaries on the Johannine epistles will quickly demonstrate that structural analyses are often in variance with one another. The lack of agreement amongst commentators as to the division of the First Epistle of John has resulted in numerous interpretative conclusions. For instance, Brooke (1912) remarked:

While some agreement is found with regard to the possible division of the First Epistle into paragraphs, no analysis of the Epistle has been generally accepted. The aphoristic character of the writer's meditations is the real cause of this diversity of arrangement, and perhaps the attempt to analyse the Epistle should be abandoned as useless. (p. 32)

Moreover, as demonstrated by Anderson (1992:10) in his exegetical summary, even the first word of the text of the First Epistle of John demonstrates the need for a new methodology in hermeneutics:¹

Most commentators think that instead of δ 'what' referring to any specific noun, it has a more complex reference. It does not refer to Jesus directly, but to that which the writer declares about Jesus [Brd]. It refers to the person, words, and acts of Jesus [AB, Brd, ICC], to both the gospel message and the person of Jesus [Herm, NIC, NTC], to both the gospel message about Jesus [Ws, WBC], to the account of η $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\acute{\iota}\alpha$ 'the message' (1:5) which is identical with the person of Jesus [Herm], to Jesus and all that he is and does for us [Ln], to Jesus as the Word and the life he manifested [EGT], the content of the Christian doctrine [HNTC]. Another thinks that it refers specifically to the Word, but the neuter form suggests that the Word cannot be adequately described in human language [TH]. (Anderson 1992:10)

As one continues to examine the discourse units of the First Epistle of John, it is evident that a more exhaustive analysis is necessary, which is not only apparent in the summary by Anderson but also becomes apparent as one peruses various commentaries. Anderson's (1992:9) exegetical summaries of the discourse units prove the necessity 'for hermeneutical methodologies that can be integrated into the exegetical analysis for the purpose of achieving a more consistent and valid structure of the text' (Bigalke 2013:39). Longacre (1996:198–201) demonstrated how important it is to discern 'the relationship between the thematic structure of the text and the exegetical units' because it would certainly be counterproductive to 'interpret a biblical text in a partitive manner

1. Semantic-structural analysis is not superior to other hermeneutical methodologies, especially historical-grammatical interpretation; rather, it is necessary to demonstrate fundamental language functions and text structures.

without regard for the holistic structure' (Bigalke 2013:39). Porter observed the extent to which the macrostructures of a text 'convey the large thematic ideas which help to govern the interpretation of the microstructures':

Macro-structures serve two vital functions. On the one hand, they are the highest level of interpretation of a given text. On the other hand, they are the points at which larger extra-textual issues such as time, place, audience, authorship and purpose (more traditional questions of biblical backgrounds) must be considered. (Porter 1999:300)

If one is 'to adopt an holistic approach to the text of Scripture', the macrostructure must be identified, as argued previously:

Macrostructures help to identify exegetical units, whereas traditional hermeneutical methods tend to emphasize a clause or sentence of a biblical book. By identifying the macrostructure, one more discern the relationship between each section and subsection to the complete text. Therefore, the endeavor to identify the microstructure assists in answering specific noun or verbal usage within a clause or sentence. (Bigalke 2013:40)

Porter (1999:300) noted the following: 'The micro-structures are the smaller units (such as words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and even pericopes and paragraphs) which make-up macro-structures.' As semantic-structural analysis is applied to the First Epistle of John, one may readily discern the author's specific reason for employing the precise grammar of the text.

Exegetical analysis methodology

The tendency to structure the First Epistle of John partitively (microstructurally) as opposed to holistically (macrostructurally) certainly contributes to interpretative confusion, as argued previously:

Since macrostructural analysis seeks to approach the text holistically, it will seek to identify unit boundaries as opposed to focusing merely upon the sentence. The attempt to identify a relationship between each section constituent and subsection constituent that contributes to the intent of the entire text necessitates a concentrated effort to explain word grammar and sentence grammar at the microstructural level. In other words, discerning why a certain verb tense was used is more relative to the author's theme for writing, as opposed to being merely syntactical, especially considering that other options in verb usage were possible (yet only one would communicate the particular message that the author wished to convey). (Bigalke 2013:25)

Commentators have provided numerous proposals with regard to the structure of First John. However, the only agreement is regarding the prologue (1:1–4) and the conclusion (5:13–21), 'which can be frustrating for the majority of believers who seek to understand the First Epistle of John macrostructurally' (Köstenberger 2009:171). Consequently, some commentators conclude that such challenges deem it 'impossible to identify an evident structure in First John' (Bigalke 2013:25). Strecker (1996) is an example of such pessimism:

But for the most part 1 John is seen as a relatively loose series of various trains of thought hung together on the basis of association. Many exegetes therefore regard their suggested outlines more as

aids to the reader's understanding than as genuine attempts to discover a clear-cut form within the letter.² (p. 43)

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that such cynicism is 'unnecessary since there does appear to be a definite structure, which semantic-structural analysis can discern and will demonstrate' (Bigalke 2013:26).³ Discerning the development of the thought process – by means of the textual structure – is fundamental for understanding the meaning of First John. Bruce (1970) summarised the difficulty that has endured as one strives to identify both the purpose and structure of First John:

Attempts to trace a consecutive argument throughout I John have never succeeded. For the convenience of a commentator and his readers, it is possible to present such an analysis of the epistle ..., but this does not imply that the author himself worked to an organized plan. At best we can distinguish three main courses of thought: the first (I. 5 – 2. 27), which has two main themes, ethical (walking in light) and Christological (confessing Jesus as the Christ); the second (2. 28 – 4. 6), which repeats the ethical and Christological themes with variations; the third (4. 7 – 5. 12), where the same two essential themes are presented as love and faith and shown to be inseparable and indispensable products of life in Christ. (p. 29)

Identifying the structure of First John is a challenge that has not only impacted earlier scholarship but is also experienced by contemporary scholars. Bruce made his summary statement of the problem in 1970, and indeed, there have been improvements since that time. Dressler (1978:55–79) noted that one reason for such development is the priority given to the text as the foundational linguistic unit. Du Rand (1991) also argued as follows:

The historical information on the possible socio-cultural setting of the Johannine community (although hypothetical) should be linked up with the text-immanent analyses. To bind the text together, its cohesion and coherence on the surface level should be analysed to respond methodologically to the syntactic dimension. The logical and temporal relations underlying the text from the conceptual patterns of the semantic organisation of the text, and the pragmatic dimension, then, makes the use of the syntactic and semantic analysis and describes the meaning to be materialised in the relation between narrator and audience. (p. 96)

The analysis of such cohesion and coherence for the entirety of the First Epistle of John and the syntactic and semantic components will be the emphasis for the remainder of this article. The reason for examining the First Epistle of John by means of exegetical analysis is to discern those elements that traditional hermeneutical methods do not typically provide.

Exegetical analysis of First John 1:1–2:27

The prologue of First John uses several relative clauses, which is not only a precise usage of grammar by the apostle, but most commentators also note that such usage is uncommon. The

2. Kruse (2002:32) wrote similarly: 'The analysis of 1 John ... does not seek to trace any developing argument throughout the letter because there isn't one.'

3. The preceding comments are not intended to imply that commentators are either uninterested or unwilling to resolve structural issues because scholars have indeed and continue to propose numerous suggestions. See, for instance, Brown (1995:116–129), Marshall (1978:22–27) and Van Staden (1991:47, 487–502).

consistency of 1:1–4 is evident in the repetition of four terms: ἀκηκόαμεν [we have heard] (2x), ἐώρακαμεν [we have seen] (3x), ἐφανερώθη [was manifested] (2x) and ἀπαγγέλλομεν [we proclaim] (2x). The unit is also designated by prominence as evident in the repetition of ὁ [what] (5x). Furthermore, there is the plurality of witnesses (12x).⁴ The semantic relationship is evident in 1:1–4, yet there are also chiasmic elements that indicate the cohesion of this unit. The repetition and variation in word usage demonstrates a consistent exegetical unit.

First John 1:2 is parenthetical with the emphasis upon τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς [the Word of life], which or who⁵ was mentioned at the end of verse one. Longacre (1996:13) referred to this type of phenomenon as ‘tail-head linkage (in which the last sentence of one paragraph cross-references to the first sentence of the following paragraph)’. The parenthetical clause restates the assertion with regard to what the apostle saw with his own eyes, in addition to the testimony of others (ὁ ἐώρακαμεν [what we have seen]). Verse one and verse three are chiasmic, which is evident in the reverse order of the two perfects, ἀκηκόαμεν [we have heard] and ἐώρακαμεν [we have seen], which are then followed immediately by two aorists, ἐθεασάμεθα [we have looked] and ἐνηλάφησαν [touched]. The usage of the two perfects emphasises consistency of thought and informs the readers of the epistle that the same topic is the basis for the continued revelation.

The primary verb in 1:1–4 is ἀπαγγέλλομεν [we proclaim] even though it was consigned to verse two and then again to verse three. The verb ἀπαγγέλλομεν emphasises the entity of examination, that is, τῆς ζωῆς [of life]. Whereas the construction is unique stylistically, it nevertheless conveys local prominence syntactically because the customary structure was altered. In other words, the syntax effectively emphasises that the subject of the epistle is the reason for ‘the message’. Moreover, μαρτυροῦμεν [testify] is connected with the proclamation of ἡ ἀγγελία [the message] as a consequence of its appositional placement in the clause and as evident in the denotation of the adverbial καί [and]. The normal conjunction emphasises the subsequent pronoun. Even though the unity of 1:1–4 is not generally disputed, the analysis of this section conveys the notion that semantic-structural analysis is helpful to determine interpretation. Furthermore, the identification of the coherence of 1:1–4 may indicate how the next exegetical unit is related to the previous section.

Generally, most commentators agree that 1:5 begins a new unit. Subsequent to 1:1–4, unfortunately, there is much disagreement regarding structure. Lexically common characteristics indeed indicate a relationship between 1:5 and 1:1–4. For instance, (to use the terminology of Longacre [1992:231]) the ‘tail-head

4. Lenski (1961:370–373) identified the ‘we’ as the apostles whereas Brown (1995:160) understood the plurality to indicate ‘a School of tradition-bearers rather than to eyewitnesses’.

5. Marshall (1978:103) noted: ‘Jesus Himself may be meant as the Word who is the source and substance of eternal life. Probably the phraseology is again deliberately ambiguous, although the writer is perhaps thinking more of the Christian message.’ Schnackenburg (1992:61) and Westcott (1892:6–7) indicated the complexities involved in determining the meaning of the phrase.

linkage’ is evident in how ταῦτα γράφομεν [these things we write] in 1:4 corresponds with ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ ἀγγελία [this is the message] in 1:5. Moreover, prominence is evident in the transition from the apostle’s authority in 1:1–4 to the content and implications of ἡ ἀγγελία [the message], beginning with 1:5 and continuing to the end of the epistle. Furthermore, there is a change in verb usage from either the aorist or perfect tense to the present tense, and the literary genre changes from proclamation to hortatory, which is evident in the repetitive use of the phrase ἐὰν εἰπῶμεν [if we say] that commences in 1:6. To apply these principles to other exegetical units will assist in the elimination of conflicting analyses with regard to the holistic structure of the epistle.

The methodology of traditional hermeneutical approaches to texts of Scripture is not normally focused upon the exegetical unit. Consequently, semantic-structural analysis indicates that conjunctions are not only important to discern within clauses and sentences but also within the exegetical unit itself. Determining the function of conjunctions is helpful for delineating ‘boundary markers’ (Erickson 2005:66; Larsen 1991b:51), which is then beneficial for identifying the primary emphasis of a text. Moreover, exegetical units or new paragraphs are often introduced by conjunctions (Larsen 1991a:48–54).

Larsen (1991b:43) noted that the primary conjunction in the Greek New Testament is καί [and], which would be somewhat equivalent to the *waw* consecutive in the Hebrew Old Testament. Titrud (1991:1–28) noted that the importance of καί is often minimised (‘overlooked’); yet ‘it is used in practically every verse of the New Testament’ (Titrud 1993:240). ‘When καί is used, it implies that what follows is closely related to what precedes; this is not so when other particles such as δέ [yet], ἀλλά [but], and τότε [then] are used’ (Titrud 1993:250). Titrud (1993:240–241) noted that even primary Greek lexicons ‘seek to describe the meaning of καί by relating it to the meaning of various English or German constructions.’ However, the usage of καί should be based upon its usage in the Greek New Testament as opposed to either an English or German perspective. Disagreeing with the assertion that καί is used commonly ‘as a connective where more discriminating usage would call for other particles’ (Bauer 2001:392), Titrud (1993:242; see also Allen 2010:136–137) asserted ‘that καί was not just written arbitrarily;’ rather, ‘it has a particular function in the discourse structure of New Testament Greek’. By delineating what is prominent, καί functions as a conjunction ‘both on the intraclausal and interclausal level’ and indicates when one proposition is logically subordinate to another. ‘When καί does coordinate what is semantically a subordinate clause, it is encoding more prominence upon the subordinate clause than’ if introduced by other particles (Titrud 1993:255). ‘The conjunctive καί is a coordinating conjunction; it coordinates grammatical units of equal rank’ (Titrud 1991:9).

The function of καί [and] is not always that of a coordinative even though there may be instances in which one proposition is logically subordinate to another. Nevertheless, when such

contrast occurs between an exegetical and a logical construction, the intent of the author is 'deliberate and significant'. The syntactic emphasis upon what is 'logically subordinate' means that the author is indicating 'more prominence' upon the clause than if it were 'introduced by a subordinating conjunction' (Titrud 1991:16; Titrud 1993:250; cf. Levinsohn 2000:99–102; Runge 2010:23–26, 48–49). The relevance of Titrud's helpful research for better understanding the usage of *καί* in exegetical contexts is apparent in the beginning of the First Epistle of John. For instance, in 1:5 and 2:3, *καί* is located in the 'clause-initial position', which would normally indicate new information and simultaneously indicate a new exegetical unit (Butler 2003:86). Moreover, 'when *καί* does introduce a new paragraph, the paragraphs are more closely linked semantically' (Titrud 1993:251). The thematic continuity and development of thought that is reflected by the *καί* in the clause-initial position indicates that the subsequent clause is 'closely linked semantically' to the preceding one (*ibid*). Since there is not an alternative textual reading in 1:5 and 2:3, there must be a deliberate and significant reason for the use of *καί*.

Titrud (1993:242–244) noted that, when *καί* [and] is followed by a pronoun, the function is adverbial and thus provides emphasis,⁶ which may be a possible classification of *καί* in 1:5 and 2:3. According to *Nestle-Aland* (Aland *et al.* 1979), *καί* introduces a paragraph only in the following:

- 1 Corinthians 2:1; 3:1; 12:31
- 2 Corinthians 1:15; 7:5
- Ephesians 2:1; 6:4
- Colossians 1:21
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- Hebrews 7:20; 9:15; 10:11; 11:32
- 1 Peter 3:13
- 1 John 1:5; 2:3; 3:13, 19; 3:23.

Alternative textual readings can be identified in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 John 3:13, 19. The conjunction *γάρ* [for] is a 'postposition particle' in 2 Corinthians 2:5, and the particle occurs subsequent to *καί* [and], which functions adverbially in that verse. In the other uses of *καί* (e.g. 1 Cor 2:1, 3:1; Eph 2:1; Col 1:21; Heb 11:32; 1 Pt 3:13; 1 Jn 1:5), there is a demonstrative, personal or relative pronoun that is immediately subsequent to *καί*, which would be adverbial and would thereby likely denote emphasis upon the pronoun. With regard to determining the structure of the epistles, Titrud (1993; see also Larsen 1991b:35–47) argued as follows:

a new paragraph should not be made where a conjunctive *καί* begins a sentence in the Greek text. A paragraph-initial *καί* followed by a pronoun or a post-positive particle (e.g. *γάρ*) should be classified as an adverb. (pp. 251–252)

Therefore, in both 1:5 and 2:3, a pronoun is subsequent to the clause-initial conjunction *καί* [and], which indicates prominence (a 'highlighting device' [Anderson & Anderson

⁶Titrud (1993:244) provided the example of 1 Peter 2:21 wherein the adverbial *καί* [and] is understood to modify the immediately subsequent constituent, as opposed to necessarily modifying the entire clause: 'The focus is on the fact that *even Christ Himself suffered*, so they also should endure suffering.' Prominence is upon Christ Himself as opposed to the subordinate constituent *ὑμῶν*, which is important to not give the notion that someone else ('also') suffered for the believers.

1993:43]), and is therefore helpful for determining the structure of the beginning chapters since *καί* not only delineates thematic continuity but also a new section of the epistle.

The use of the vocative

Longacre (1992:272–276) is most notable for his emphasis upon identifying structural paragraphs based upon the distribution of vocatives. Of course, the vocative is not the only exegetical feature that delineates the structural units. In addition to the vocative, Longacre (1992:272–83) noted the distribution of the verb *γράφω* [I am writing], the counting and weighing of the various kinds of verbs (i.e. either expository type or hortatory type), peaks of the book that are especially vital to the message and the macrostructure as a limitation upon the content.

Based upon the distribution of vocatives, Longacre (1992:276) asserted that one 'can posit a string of *natural* paragraphs', and most 'boundaries' are delineated 'with a vocative, either in the initial sentence or in a sentence or two into the body of the paragraph'. However, it is not entirely certain that one can indeed identify the structural paragraphs on the basis of whether a vocative is located at the beginning of a sentence or even within the paragraph unit. Longacre's analysis of First John indicated that there are no vocatives in the beginning of two units that he delineated: 1:5–10 and 5:1–12. The vocatives in his structural paragraphs of 3:1–6 and 3:19–24 are not 'paragraph-initial' (which, of course, Longacre admitted could occur). The vocative in 3:1–6 is found in verse 2, and, within 3:19–24, it is located in the middle of the unit (v. 21). Consequently, it seems arbitrary to begin the structural paragraphs in chapter 3, with verse 1 and verse 19, when the vocative is found later in the section. Furthermore, he stated that the thesis of First John is located in the paragraph unit of 3:19–24, and one of the doctrinal 'peaks' is located in the paragraph unit of 4:1–6. The vocative in 4:1–6 is paragraph-initial, yet there is another to be found in verse 4, which again seems arbitrary in not beginning a new structural paragraph where the second vocative is located. Therefore, one may conclude that Longacre's assertion that the vocatives constitute new units is not as resolute as initially thought.

Rogers's (1984) article addressing vocatives and boundaries demonstrated that the former is not as decisive as other factors in determining the latter. She noted:

In many places where vocatives seem to signal boundaries, other forms or factors are decisive. In itself, the vocative form cannot be said to signal change of theme. Although some writers may use vocatives only at boundaries, it should not be assumed that all do.⁷ (p. 26)

Larsen (1991a:51) asserted that a vocative is 'a rhetorical device, not a structural device, and it functions to establish a closer relationship with the hearers'. Callow (1999:401) noted that, within 1:6–2:2, 'the use of the vocative *τεκνία μου* [my little children], and the performative *γράφω ὑμῖν* [I am writing to you], focuses attention on the purpose

⁷Rogers's conclusions were based upon association with the Pauline usage of vocatives.

statement, and so serves to give it added performance'. As opposed to understanding the vocative and the performative as indicating a new paragraph division, it could have a prominence function as opposed to an initiating role (particularly within the context of 1:6–2:2) (Callow 1999:401). Therefore, it would be best to understand the use of the vocative as able to introduce a new subject, whether primary or subordinate. The use of the vocative could also introduce a conclusion, which seems evident in 2:28, 3:21 and 5:21.

The vocative 'children' or 'sons' was a customary rabbinical practice, which is evident throughout all varieties of Jewish literature. Griffith (2002:63–65) noted the significance of 'this particularly Jewish filial authority device', which appears to have been rejected by the gentile church. The use of the vocative functioned to emphasise both authority and equality. Van der Watt (1999:491) concluded that the ethical thought of First John was developed 'by using a coherent network of metaphors related to first-century family life'.⁸ He further argued as follows:

The vocative plural is found 20 times in 1 John, distributed among six nouns, and this frequency helps to generate a sense of urgent pastoral concern. *agapetoi* ('beloved': 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11) always occur at the head of a sentence and in contexts where love (whether for one another, or of God's love for us, or both) is stressed. *paidia* ('children': 2:14, 18) can convey affection, and occurs in parallel to *teknia* (2:12), but its association with slavery and service may account for John's preference for *teknia*. However, it is perhaps significant that *paidia* is the preferred vocative when the serious topics of the antichrist and the schism are introduced (2:18). *adelphoi* ('brothers': 3:13) is used once in the context of a reference to Cain's murder of his brother (3:12). (Van der Watt 1999:65)⁹

Callow (1999:401) noted that a better understanding of *τεκνία μου* [my little children] in 2:1, with the immediately subsequent *γράφω ὑμῖν* [I am writing to you], was to give additional prominence to the purpose statement, *ἵνα μὴ ἀμάρτητε* [that you may not sin]. Assuming that Callow is correct, the vocative in 2:1 would provide reassurance immediately subsequent to the resolute denunciation in 1:10. Consequently, it would be awkward and unnatural to regard the vocative as indicating a new paragraph. The usages of the vocatives throughout the First Epistle of John serve to provide encouragement to the believers (cf. 2:12–13; 4:4).

The majority of the vocatives within First John introduces a conclusion or has a tail-head linkage where a motif or word from the 'tail' of the last clause or sentence of one paragraph is located in the first clause or sentence of the subsequent paragraph. For example, the vocatives in 2:1, 7; 3:18, 21; 4:4 and 5:1 all seem to provide a conclusion to the aforementioned propositions. The vocatives in 2:18, 28 and 3:2 seem to have a tail-head linkage. The vocatives in 4:1, 11 are difficult to identify as either conclusions or as of the

8. See also, Van der Merwe (2006:537–539).

9. Griffith (2002) noted that 2:12–14 contains six vocatives, and 'is a special case with its thrice repeated *γράφω ὑμῖν* [I am writing to you] ... followed by the vocatives *τεκνία* [children], *πατέρες* [fathers] ... and *νεανίσκοι* [young men] respectively (2:12–13), and its thrice repeated *ἔγραψα ὑμῖν* [I have written to you] ... followed by the vocatives *παιδιά* [children], *πατέρες* [fathers] and *νεανίσκοι* [youths] respectively (2:14)'.
.....

tail-head variety. First John 2:12–14 is unique with its usage of six vocatives; it would seem best to regard that section as providing encouragement. Of course, verses that are typically regarded as beginning new sections, such as 1:1 and 5:1, do not contain any vocatives. Consequently, the vocatives do not always indicate new structural paragraphs (i.e. this is not their primary purpose, even though they can be used for this reason) and were often used to give prominence (when used in this manner, the vocatives may correspond to other structural paragraphs to delineate exegetical units).

The use of coherence

Coherence has previously been defined as indicating the relationship between parts of one unit and another (i.e. 'the constituents of a unit will be semantically compatible with one another') (Beekman 1981:21). Semantic and structural cohesion in First John 1:5–2:2 will prove the assertion that the vocative in 2:1 does not initiate a new structural paragraph. The contention here is that *τεκνία μου* [my little children] in 2:1 was used to initiate a concluding exhortation to the constituents of a unit that began in 1:5. Moreover, the occurrence of *καὶ ἐάν* [and if] in 2:1 'introduces the last of a series of six conditional clauses, supporting the idea of a unit' (Sherman & Tuggy 1994:29). 'Although *καὶ* [and] is a conjoining and not a contrastive particle', it should be translated as 'but' in 2:1 because 'two conjoined clauses or sentences have contrastive content' (cf. 1:6) (Titrud 1991:24; Larsen 1991b:43). Akin (2001) asserted that *καὶ* in 2:1 should be translated as 'and':

John never uses *καὶ* to connect opposing thoughts in 1 John. He uses either *δέ* or *ἀλλά*. See *δέ* as 'but' in 1:7; 2:5, 11, 17; 3:17; 4:18 (the *δέ* in 5:5 and 5:20 are probably just 'and'). See *ἀλλά* as 'but' in 2:2, 7, 16, 19 (twice), 21, 27; 3:18; 4:1, 10, 18; 5:6, 18. Cf. the literal translation of the NASB on these verses. (The NASB does inexplicably translate *καὶ* in 2:20 as 'but'; it also translates *ἐὶ μὴ*, 'except,' as 'but' in 2:22 and 5:5.) (p. 77, fn. 142)

However, as Larsen and Titrud noted, there are contrasting notions in 2:1. Therefore, the use of *καὶ* [and], as opposed to other conjunctions such as *δέ* [yet] or *ἀλλά* [but], can be explained by the semantic compatibility of 2:1 with 1:10, which does not occur when other conjunctions are used (Titrud 1991:17). Certainly, the syntactical argument by Akin is persuasive. However, the semantic analysis of First John reveals a contrastive content that is best represented by translating *καὶ* as 'but'.

Callow (1999:396–397) demonstrated that there is a definite threefold arrangement in the Greek text of 1:5–2:2, which is reproduced ensuing tables (see Table 1 and Table 2a–c).¹⁰ The threefold arrangement is labelled as units 1, 2 and 3. Each of the three subunits (1:6–7; 1:8–9; 1:10–2:2) were structured with two protases, in addition to an apodosis construction. There are a total of six protases (1:6a; 1:7a; 1:8a; 1:9a; 1:10a; 2:1c), each introduced by *ἐάν* [if]. Each apodosis has a dual structure with the second half of each case introduced by *καὶ* (1:6e; 1:7d; 1:8d; 1:9d; 1:10d; 2:2a).

10. Hansford (1992:126–174) also noted this significantly structured writing, and regarded it as a form of poetry.

TABLE 1: 1 John 1:5.

Ref.	Greek text	Structure
1.5a	καὶ ἔστιν αὐτὴ ἡ ἀγγελία	Orienter
1.5b	ἢν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ	
1.5c	καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι	
1.5d	ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἔστιν	Setting
1.5e	καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία.	

Source: Callow, J., 1999, 'Where does 1 John 1 end?', in S.E. Porter & J.T. Reed (eds.), *Discourse analysis and the New Testament*, pp. 392–402, Sheffield Academic Press, New York

TABLE 2a: The structural outline of 1 John 1:5–2:2 (Unit 1).

Ref.	Greek text	Structure
1.6a	ἐὰν εἰπῶμεν ὅτι	Protasis
1.6b	κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ	
1.6c	καὶ ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατοῦμεν,	Apodosis (x) Apodosis (y)
1.6d	ψευδόμεθα	
1.6e	καὶ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν.	Protasis
1.7a	ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατοῦμεν	
1.7b	ὡς αὐτὸς ἔστιν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ,	Apodosis (x) Apodosis (y)
1.7c	κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων	
1.7d	καὶ τὸ αἷμα ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας.	

Source: Callow, J., 1999, 'Where does 1 John 1 end?', in S.E. Porter & J.T. Reed (eds.), *Discourse analysis and the New Testament*, pp. 392–402, Sheffield Academic Press, New York

TABLE 2b: The structural outline of 1 John 1:5–2:2 (Unit 2).

Ref.	Greek text	Structure
1.8a	ἐὰν εἰπῶμεν ὅτι	Protasis
1.8b	ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν,	
1.8c	ἐαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν	Apodosis (x) Apodosis (y)
1.8d	καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.	
1.9a	ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν,	Protasis
1.9b	πιστὸς ἔστιν καὶ δίκαιος	Apodosis (x)
1.9c	ἵνα ἀφῆ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας	
1.9d	καὶ καθάρσῃ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας.	Apodosis (y)

Source: Callow, J., 1999, 'Where does 1 John 1 end?', in S.E. Porter & J.T. Reed (eds.), *Discourse analysis and the New Testament*, pp. 392–402, Sheffield Academic Press, New York

TABLE 2c: The structural outline of 1 John 1:5–2:2 (Unit 3).

Ref.	Greek text	Structure
1.10a	ἐὰν εἰπῶμεν ὅτι	Protasis
1.10b	οὐχ ἡμαρτήκομεν,	
1.10c	ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτὸν	Apodosis (x) Apodosis (y)
1.10d	καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.	
2.1a	τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν	Orienter
2.1b	ἵνα μὴ ἁμαρτήτε.	
2.1c	καὶ ἐὰν τις ἁμάρτη,	Protasis
2.1d	παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, ἰησοῦν χριστὸν δίκαιον.	Apodosis (x)
2.2a	καὶ αὐτὸς ἴλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν,	Apodosis (y)
2.2b	οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον	
2.2c	ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου.	

Source: Callow, J., 1999, 'Where does 1 John 1 end?', in S.E. Porter & J.T. Reed (eds.), *Discourse analysis and the New Testament*, pp. 392–402, Sheffield Academic Press, New York

Brown (1995:237) also noted the use of protases and apodoses. His structural analysis is somewhat different than that of Callow, as seen in the ensuing representation:

(a) PROSTASES

7ab: But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in light

9a: But if we confess our sins

2:1b: But if anyone does sin

(b) COMPOUND APODOSES

7c: we are joined in communion with one another

7de: and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin

9bc: He who is reliable and just will forgive us our sins

9d: and cleanse us from all wrongdoing

2:1cd: we have a Paraclete in the Father's presence, Jesus Christ, the one who is just,

2:2abc: and he himself is an atonement for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world.

Brown (1995:237–238) noted the contrasting structure of the three protases. The first protasis exhorts the believer to 'walk in the light', whereas the other two protases assume that some walking in the darkness will occur and inform the believer how to respond. The apodoses are theological and are structured in a compound manner. Each conditional sentence (ἐὰν [if]) of disapproval corresponds to a conditional sentence of approval.

First John 1:5 contains the first orienter, and therefore, this verse can be understood as the introduction for the three subunits. The orienter in '2:1a and 1b break[s] the pattern, which, if strictly regular, would have started at 1c' (Callow 1999:396).¹¹ The clause-initial καὶ [and] was used in both 1:5 and 2:1 and was followed by a pronoun, thereby indicating an adverbial function and prominence (Titrud 1993:242–244). For this reason, Brown (1995:248) noted that the clause initial καὶ in 2:3 'is not a simple connective, as THLJ rightly observes.' Haas, De Johne and Swellengrebel (1972:38) noted that καὶ 'does not have connective or transitional force here but serves to emphasize the subsequent ἐν τούτῳ [in this]'. A similar clause initial καὶ, in addition to a slightly different form of the demonstrative (αὕτη [this]), was located in 1:5 (τούτῳ in 2:3) wherein John stated ἀναγγέλλομεν [we announce], and subsequent to 'three pairs of conditional sentences', that he would 'now' inform his readers with regard to knowing 'the God who is light' (Brown 1995:248).

First John 1:5 certainly corresponds to Callow's unit 1 (1999:398), which then corresponds to unit 2, and finally, unit 2 corresponds to unit 3. Therefore, 1:5–2:2 is characterised by semantic cohesion, resulting in 'a recognisable unit of thought'. The semantic structure of 1:5–2:2 emphasises the apodosis as more important than the protasis to which it corresponds. The apodosis is the primary clauses whereas the protasis is subordinate. Consequently, Callow (1999) argued that in 1:6–2:2:

... the only concept that meets the ... criteria for a topic is the concept 'sin', formally introduced in 7d with the noun ἁμαρτία (in the phrase ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας). This noun is repeated in 8b, 9a, 9c and 2a; the corresponding verb is used in 10b, 1b and 1c; and the synonym ἀδικία is used in 9d. And although in 2.2 the noun is used only once, the περὶ phrases that are used in 2b and 2c clearly presuppose the ἁμαρτιῶν of 2a. (p. 400)

God's provision for overcoming sin is stated in 2:2, which is the most important revelation for concluding the discussion with regard to sin (Callow 1999:401; Sherman & Tuggy 1994:29).

One can demonstrate that φῶς [light] and κοινωνία [fellowship] are intimately related in thought by comparing the protases in 6b (κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ [we have fellowship with Him]) and 7a (ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατοῦμεν [but if we walk in the Light]) with the apodoses in 6c (καὶ ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατοῦμεν [and in the darkness we walk]) and 7c (κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων [we have fellowship with one another]). Therefore, the development of thought continues from 1:5 to the end of the unit, which is 2:2. Moreover, the φῶς [light] and σκοτία [darkness] motif, which began in 1:5, is evidently

11. Haas et al. (1972:22, 33) also noted the interruption.

cohesive to the end of 2:2. The emphasis of 1:5–2:2 is upon sin. Therefore, verse 5 states, ‘God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.’ The thought progression is then evident in verse 6, which reveals that *κοινωνία* with God is evident when one does not ‘walk’ ἐν τῷ σκότει [in the darkness]. To have *κοινωνία* with God is also evident in that ‘the blood of Jesus ... cleanses us from all sin’ (2:7), which is contrasted to those who say that they have no sin (2:8–10). First John 2:1–2 continues to address the notion of sin by revealing that the believer has ‘an Advocate with the Father’ who is the ἰλασμός [propitiation] for sin.

As already stated, the only concept that could be regarded as a topic from 1:5–2:2 is the issue of sin, which was introduced formally in 1:7. The noun ἁμαρτία [sin] is repeated throughout 1:8–9. The issue of sin is continued from 1:10 and then stated again in 2:2, with three parallel prepositional phrases (περὶ [for]) indicating that ἁμαρτία is the primary issue in the cohesive unit of 1:5–2:2. Moreover, the apostle indicated that his reason for writing is that believers would not sin (2:1). Callow (1999:397–401) concluded that this reason ‘refers to the purpose of this unit, not to the epistle as a whole’, which is evident when one contrasts the purpose statements in 1:3 (ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ’ ἡμῶν [we proclaim to you also, in order that you too may have fellowship with us]) and 1:4 (καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη [and these things we write to you, in order that our joy may be made complete]) that are located in the introduction of John’s Epistle, and therefore, indicate the purpose for the entire letter and not just a portion of it. The vocative τέκνιά μου [my little children] would then give prominence to the purpose statement.

First John 2:3–11 is the second subunit of 1:5–2:11, which is evident from the resumption of the φῶς [light] and σκοτία [darkness] motif in 2:8–11. The motif began in 1:5; therefore, this verse provides the theological proposition which is preliminary for the entire unit. With the repetition of the φῶς and σκοτία motif in 2:8–11, the primary unit of 1:5–2:11 may be then understood as an *inclusio*.¹² The nature of summarising expressions is to unify the information to which they allude or state, thereby implying that the preceding facts are to be understood as a crucial component for what is subsequent. With regard to non-narrative texts, summarising expressions thus indicate structural paragraphs, that is, a conclusion will often repeat information from an introduction in some manner (Larsen 1991b:51). To understand 1:5–2:11 as a primary unit, with 2:12 commencing the next unit, is based upon the linguistic data.¹³

The vocative ἀγαπητοί [beloved] appears in 2:7, which Longacre (1992:273) understood to introduce a new structural paragraph. The reference to ‘a new commandment’ and γράφω ὑμῖν [I am writing to you] in the same verse is the

12. For the significance of *inclusio* structures, see Guthrie (1994:14).

13. Callow noted the differences of structural analyses of the First Epistle of John and discerned ‘a distinct move towards treating 1.5–2.2 as a unit in the structure of the epistle’ (Callow 1999:394). Commentators who divided 1:5–2:11 into two subunits (as Callow did) include the following: Malatesta (1973:8–13), Schnackenburg (1992:11–15), Grayston (1984:4) understood 1:5–2:11 as one primary unit, with no subunits, which is primarily concerned to address moral consequences.

reason why many commentators have made a structural division subsequent to 2:6. However, as noted throughout the examination of 1:5–2:2, the vocative indicates prominence with regard to the subsequent propositions. First John 2:6 progresses from emphasis on general statements with regard to all commandments, such as walking in the light and having fellowship, to the more specific commandment that those in the φῶς [light] and in *κοινωνία* [fellowship] are to love one another (Callow 1999:403, fn. 431).

The concepts of φῶς [light] and σκοτία [darkness] occur at least once in 2:8–11. The use of σκοτία is the most frequent, with one occurrence in verses 8 and 9 and three occurrences in verse 11. Verses 8–11 employ φῶς for a total of three times: once in each of the verses, with the exception of verse 11. Subsequent to 2:8–11, the concepts of φῶς and σκοτία are not referenced any longer, which means that these verses form an *inclusio* with 1:5–7. Furthermore, 2:12 is the first verse of a quite distinctive section as evident in the repeated phrases γράφω ὑμῖν [I am writing to you] with ὅτι [that] (once in 2:12 and twice in 2:13) and ἔγραψα ὑμῖν [I have written to you] with ὅτι (thrice in verse 14). The division between 2:11 and 2:12 is evident by the senary phraseology and the fact that only 1:5–2:11 contain the φῶς and σκοτία motif.

Other apparent lexical and structural parallels between 1:5–2:2 and 2:3–11 demonstrate that First John 1:5–2:2 is a cohesive unit and 2:3–11 is the second subunit of 1:5–2:11. For example, the usage of ἐὰν εἴπωμεν in 1:8 and 1:10, in addition to ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν in 1:9, corresponds to the threefold usage of ὁ λόγος in 2:4, 2:6 and 2:9. The assertions in 1:6 (ψευδόμεθα) and 2:4 (ψεύστης ἐστίν) are quite similar in addition to those in 1:8 (καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν) and 2:4 (καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν). The subjunctive use of περιπατέω occurs repeatedly in both 1:5–2:2 and 2:3–11, yet the verb does not occur again throughout First John. The vocatives, τέκνιά μου (2:1) and ἀγαπητοί (2:7), were used medially for prominence. The repetition of ὁ λόγος in 1:10 and then again in 2:5 and 2:7 is also a notable correspondence. In addition to these parallels, there is the *inclusio* of 1:5–2:11 that has already been mentioned, which indicates that 1:5–2:11 is a primary semantic unit, consisting of two subunits: 1:5–2:2 and 2:3–11 (with 1:5 providing the theological proposition, which is preliminary for the entire unit; thus the first subunit could be regarded as 1:6–2:2) (Callow 1999:402–404).

Longacre (1992:273, 277–279) included 2:12–14 with 2:15–17 based upon the γράφω [I am writing] and ἔγραψα [I have written] formulae in verses 12 and 13, which can be regarded as a ‘somewhat elaborate introduction to the paragraph’. Moreover, the imperatives in 2:15–17 indicate overt, negative commands as opposed to commands that are being mitigated.¹⁴ Longacre’s unit is noteworthy because 2:12–14 contain six of the nineteen vocatives (cf. 2:1, 7, 18, 28; 3:2, 7, 13, 18, 21; 4:1, 4, 7, 11) and six of the twelve orienters (2:1, 7, 8, 26; 3:19; 5:13) that are located throughout the epistle. The first imperative in First John is located in 2:15, with the

14. See also Hoopert (2007:3, 4–5).

majority of the ten imperatives occurring in the middle of the epistle and only one located in chapter 5 (Fantin 2010:195). For this reason, Longacre (1983:9, 11) regarded 2:12–17 as indicating ‘a peak of the discourse which embeds within the Introduction to the book’ (1:1–2:29). Callow (1999:404) regarded 2:12–14 as possibly constituting a transitory unit, thereby providing a relationship between 1:5–2:11 and the subsequent revelation. Grayston (1984:4) also understood 2:12–14 as ‘a transition from the statement to the writer’s development of it’.¹⁵ Indeed, it would be best to understand 2:12–14 as a transitory unit as opposed to a component of Longacre’s structural division from 2:12 to 2:17.

Most commentators note the unique characteristics of 2:12–14 as a consequence of the senary vocatives and senary orienters. The primary reason why Longacre (1983:13) structured 2:12–17 as one unit (as opposed to two) was the fact that another vocative appeared only in 2:18.¹⁶ The repetitive usage of the vocatives ‘is a way of reinforcing the message by repeating the verb “write” six times’ (Miehle 1981:270–271).¹⁷ Another unique characteristic of 2:12–14 is the variation of tense from the present (γράφω [I am writing]) in 2:13 to the aorist (ἔγραψα [I have written]) in 2:14, and this change continues throughout the epistle and to the very conclusion of First John (cf. 2:21, 26; 5:13). Longacre (1992:266–277; 1983:11–14) identified the subsequent units as 2:18–27 and 2:28–29, which he understood to be the concluding sections of the introduction, thus ‘the body of the work’ does not begin until 3:1 and continues to 5:12. The evidence of this assertion is that the verb γράφω occurs only in the introduction (1:1–2:29) and the conclusion (5:13–21).

John already explained what it means to have fellowship with God and thus to walk in the Light. The message is somewhat similar to that of the epistle of James wherein one reads that ‘faith, if it has no works, is dead’ (2:17). John’s ‘work’ involves not walking in the darkness. Regardless of one’s profession to abide in God, if someone does not ‘walk in the Light,’ such an individual remains in the darkness and has been blinded (1:5–2:11):

The author now turns directly to his readers, having refuted the errors of his opponents. He seeks to assure his readers of their salvation (vv. 12–14), and he urges them to reject all evil love of the world (vv. 15–17). (Schnackenburg 1992:115)

First John 2:12–14 is addressed to those who do walk in the Light and further explains what such fellowship entails.

The next unit (2:15–17) contains the overt command to ‘not love the world’ for it ‘is passing away’. Consequently, the lack

15. Watson (1989:97–100) regarded the change from the present tense of γράφω [writing] to the aorist as amplificatory: ‘The passage as a whole is a *digressio* used after argumentation and refutation, serving to praise the audience, elicit their goodwill, enhance style, and amplify topics.’

16. ‘Since no further vocatives occur in 2:15–17, I take the latter three verses to be a continuation of the same paragraph – indeed, as the nucleus of that paragraph’ (Longacre 1983:13). ‘First John 2:18–27 is marked as a separate paragraph by the clause which begins with *παιδία* [children]’ (Longacre 1992:273).

17. Miehle (1981:270–271) asserted: ‘These two features [the vocatives and the orienters] set this paragraph off as a unit orienting 2:15–17.’ The lack of vocatives in 2:15–17 is explained on the basis that the audience was already mentioned, therefore, ‘since this has been taken care of in the orienter paragraph 2:12–14,’ there is no need for any ‘specific mention’ of the addressees.

of coherence in 2:15–17 indicates that it should be regarded as a new unit. The unit is demarcated ‘by its lack of explicit vocatives and by the negative commands’, *μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ* [do not love the world nor the things in the world]. Moreover, ‘two other prevalent themes’ that unify 2:15–17 include the references to *κόσμος* [world] and *θεός* [God] (Miehle 1981:272). The overt prohibition of 2:15 contains obvious prominence. The prohibition is the first overt command in First John; nevertheless, the entire epistle is characteristically hortative. Longacre (1983:13) explained that the commands are initially mitigated, yet become more overt as the epistle reaches its conclusion. Therefore, as Longacre (*ibid*) indicates:

... in 15b, we have the by now familiar use of a conditional clause to express a covert command; here ‘if any man love the world’ equal ‘don’t love the world’ and echoes in mitigated form the overt imperative of the preceding clause. (p. 13)

Smith (1991:65) noted the lack of ‘a more explicit connection’ between 2:12–14 and 2:15–17, yet affirmed that an ‘intrinsic relationship is real enough’. His argument is based upon the assertion that ‘the warnings against the world’ must be elaborated, thus the ‘elaborate words of address lead to a strong warning against worldliness’ (*ibid*). According to Smith (1991:65), if one were to divide 2:12–17 into two units, this would result in the ‘elaborate words of address’ (2:12–14), lacking the warning of 2:15–17. Brown (1995:294–302) noted a threefold problem for determining the intent of 2:12–14. The first issue is the ‘alteration of tenses’ between γράφω [I am writing] and ἔγραψα [I have written] (Brown 1995:294). The second issue is the ‘different groups of people’ who are addressed as *τεκνία* [little children], *πατέρες* [fathers], *νεανίσκοι* [youths] and *παιδία* [children] (Brown 1995:297). The third issue is with regard to the interpretation of *ὅτι* [that] (Brown 1995:300). The alteration of tenses could be either stylistic or epistolary. If the latter, John was referring to the truths that they already knew (including ‘past writings or John’s letters in general’) (Miehle 1981:271), and it could also be the apostle’s means for preparing his readers for the overt prohibition of 2:15 (i.e. the relationship of trust between John and his readers was reinforced by his assertion that he already trusted them) (Sherman & Tuggy 1994:42). John addressed three groups of readers – children, fathers and young men – who may have been divided chronologically by age, or the division may denote spiritual maturity. ‘Fathers’ is not sequential, however, which would indicate that the chronological or maturity interpretation is inconsistent. Furthermore, the epistle addresses all readers as ‘children’ (2:1, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), which would indicate that all the addressees could be regarded as ‘children’, ‘fathers’ and ‘young men’.¹⁸

18. The inspired authors of Scripture often used figurative speech to denote age contrasts between the elderly, middle aged and young. For example, the quotation of Joel 2:28–32 in Acts 2:17 refers to young men seeing visions and old men dreaming dreams, which is a poetic expression to indicate that visions and dreams will be experienced by all ages. Therefore, the statements with regard to each of the three different groups of individuals in 1 John 2:12–14 were intended to be true with regard to believers of all ages. All believers are like ‘children’ because all have experienced forgiveness of sins and have come to ‘know the Father.’ As ‘fathers’, all believers have come to ‘know Him who has been from the beginning’, which means they have truly experienced and known what it is to have fellowship with God. As ‘young men’, all believers ‘have overcome the evil one’ and have become ‘strong’ because the Word of God abides within them.

The best interpretation of ὅτι seems to be declaratively as 'that' (rather than 'because' or 'since'). The reason is that the context indicates that John was referring to truths that they already knew (2:21), that is, he referred to their current experience and declared his message to them on that basis. Brown (1995:349–350) noted that the causative 'because, since' is affirmed by many scholars, yet recent commentators affirm the particle as declarative. Schnackenburg (1992:115–116, 118), for example, rejected the notion that John's readers needed reassurance with regard to those truths that they already knew; rather, the Christians who are addressed already enjoy 'the salvation they desire'.

The senary vocatives in 2:12–14 are not insignificant, yet neither is it conclusive that 2:15–17 should be regarded as a structural paragraph. First John 2:12–14 is certainly unique, which seems to indicate that it should be distinguished from 2:15–17. However, 2:12–14 is also not unrelated to 2:15–17 and could even be distinguished as a 'peak' (according to Longacre's usage). For instance, Malatesta (1978:167) noted: 'Although no connecting particles relate 12–14 to what precedes (9–11) or to what follows (15–17), the passage is related to both.' First John 2:12–14 is 'prepared by 7–11' and 'is directed principally to what follows, since believers (12–14) will be contrasted with the world (15–17) and antichrists (18–28)'. First John 2:12–14 could be regarded as a parenthesis, which contrasts the selfless love that characterises one who is in the Light (2:7–11) with the selfish love that characterises the unbelieving world (2:15–17); therefore, 2:12–14 is indeed related to both units (Sherman & Tuggy 1994:43).

Disagreement as to whether 2:18 begins a new structural paragraph generally relates to the statement regarding the world 'passing away', that is, whether verse 18 continues the theme or begins a new section. Marshall (1978:147–148) noted the 'slight' relationship with the preceding section. John 'told his readers that the world is passing away; he now bids them note that it is in fact approaching the end. It is the last hour, as various signs make clear' (Marshall 1978:147). The thought progression with regard to 'the last hour' is somewhat related to the statement 'that the world is passing away' (Marshall 1978:147–148). The primary concern is an increasing number of individuals who are opposed to the truth. Schnackenburg (1992:129) regarded the transition as 'didactic and parenetic', with a new emphasis upon the 'last hour', as a consequence of 'heretical teachers who deny the central point of the Christological message, the saving significance of Jesus Christ'.

As in 2:12, the readers of the epistle are addressed as *παιδία* [children], which would seem to indicate that 2:18 begins a new structural paragraph. The distinct features of this section, with the preceding and subsequent paragraphs, is the emphasis upon the *ἔσχάτη ὥρα* [last hour] (2:18) and the *ἀντίχριστος* [antichrist] (2:18, 22). The unit also emphasises the following motifs: *μείνη* [abide] (2:24), *ἐπαγγελία* [promise] (2:25) and *ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον* [eternal life] (2:25). Another

distinguishing characteristic of this section that emphasises coherence is the contrast between 'the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ' (2:23) and those who 'abide in the Son and in the Father' (2:24). Prominence in 2:18–27 is evident by the adjoined phrases in 2:20–23 and 2:24–25. The anaphoric *ταῦτα* [these] in 2:26 is, of course, a reference to previous constituents, which could be the entirety of First John to this point, or, as Painter (2002:208) asserted, it could refer to 2:18–25. Painter's suggestion considered the first specific mention of the antichrists, and therefore, *ταῦτα* [these] is best understood as a conclusion to the section. The phrase *ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν* [one confesses the Son] is asserted in the imperative because there is emphasis upon positively acknowledging Jesus as the Christ and the negative statement that the one who denies this truth 'is the antichrist'. The second adjoined phrase is stated as a command: *μηνέτω* [let abide]. First John 2:18–19 provides additional justification for acknowledging the Son and for abiding in the truth. Moreover, the fact that it is the *ἔσχάτη ὥρα* [last hour] makes the commands all the more important to heed (Miehle 1981:273–274).

First John 2:18–27 emphasises the distinction between the *χρῖσμα* [anointing] received 'from the Holy One' who¹⁹ allows believers to know all things and those who cannot discern between lies and truth. First John 2:22 inquires, '[w]ho is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?' The antichrist 'denies the Father and the Son,' therefore, 'whoever denies the Son does not have the Father' (1 Jn 2:22–23). Confessing the Son indicates that one 'has the Father also' (1 Jn 2:23) and abides in that which was 'heard from the beginning' (1 Jn 2:24). Abiding in the Son and in the Father culminates in 'the promise', that is, 'eternal life' (1 Jn 2:25). For this reason, John's readers received warning regarding the antichrists and were reminded that if they abide in the *χρῖσμα* [anointing], who was received 'from Him' and who abides in them (1 Jn 2:27), they will 'have no need for anyone to teach' them because the *χρῖσμα* will teach them the truth (1 Jn 2:27). Consequently, they are to 'abide in Him' (1 Jn 2:27).

The intent of 2:18–27 is both expository and hortatory (Longacre 1983:14). John's readers are to abide in the truth, which they have 'heard from the beginning' (1 Jn 2:24). The subunits of 2:18–27 are identified by the threefold usage of the emphatic pronoun *ὕμεῖς* [you] in verses 20, 24 and 27. The first subunit (2:18–23) is expository, as evident from the predominance of *ἐστίν* [it is] and *ἔχω* [have]. The second subunit (2:24–27) is hortatory, as evident from the predominance of *μηνέτω* [let abide] and *μένετε* [will abide]. First John 2:18–27 provides much emphasis upon the concept of abiding with the verb *μένω* [abide, live, remain] occurring seven times (2:19, 24, 27, 28). The believer has an anointing from God and should abide in it. First John 2:26–27, therefore, concludes the section with an overt command to abide in God 'as His anointing teaches you' (1 Jn 2:27).

19. The majority of commentators conclude that *χρῖσμα* [anointing] is 'a metonymy for the Holy Spirit, since the Holy Spirit is associated with Old and New Testament ceremony of anointing' (Sherman & Tuggy 1994:48).

Conclusions for interpretation

The exegetical analysis of First John 1:1–2:27 indicates the important aspects of the epistle. The authentic and authoritative proclamation of the gospel message is the emphasis in the prologue (1:1–4). John hoped that his readers would appropriate this revelation for the purpose of fellowship (1:3) and experience the completeness of their joy (1:4). The foundation for comprehending the first structural unit of First John is identifiable in the summary statement of 1:5 ('God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all'). The perspective herein was previously summarised as follows:

Subsequent to the foundational statement of 1:5, the claims and false propositions between John and his opponents comprise the first primary structural unit (1:5–2:2). The negative apodotes were introduced by a protasis with the *ἐάν* εἰπωμεν clause (1:6, 8, 10), whereas the positive apodotes were introduced with protases containing only *ἐάν* (1:7, 9; 2:1). The somberness of the assertion in 1:10 (*ἐάν* εἰπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν) necessitates the assurance provided to the believer in 2:1–2. The sins of believers are forgiven based upon the advocacy and propitiation of Jesus Christ. ... The notion of *κοινωνία* [*fellowship*] in 1:1–4 and 1:5–2:2 does not appear in 2:3–11; rather, the emphasis is upon knowing God and loving God, in addition to the new commandment (2:3–5, 10). The next unit (2:12–14) is transitory, and is addressed to those who do not walk in the Light and further explains what characterizes such fellowship. The next unit (2:15–17) contains the overt command to 'not love the world' for it 'is passing away.' First John 2:12–14 parenthetically contrasts the selfless love that characterizes one who is in the Light (2:7–11) with the selfish love that characterizes the unbelieving world (2:15–17). The intent of 2:18–27 is both expository and hortatory, with much emphasis upon abiding, and concluding with the overt command to abide in God. John's injunctions exhort his readers to abide and mature in the Father and the Son. (Bigalke 2013:40–41)

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