

Opening:

1. Earlier Findings

Previous papers on the topic of Repetition in 1 John (2023, 2024) serve as a foundation for this research. A brief review of their conclusions will provide clarity of the pathway to this point. My initial research (Harstine, 2023) focusing on the helical nature of the text concluded, “This circular nature indicates that employing concentric parallelism as a construct might (eventually) unravel the communication method this writing employs.”¹ This initial research regarding Testimony (μαρτυρία) demonstrated the pervasive nature of this theme throughout the writing.² My 2024 paper proposed an outline with three central elements: 1:4–2:14, 2:15–3:24, and 4:1–5:12 incorporating chiasmic structures and hinge verses.³ My research focused on the structural role of 1 John 4, and did not address the relationship of 5:13–21 to the letter. The relationship of this passage within the larger letter serves as the chief concern for this inquiry.

2. Structural Issues

Earlier investigations by myself and others document the wide variety of modern proposals for an outline of 1 John, which reinforce the oft-stated conclusion that there is no apparent structure to the letter. For further purposes related to the ending specifically, I examined two early codices: Codex Sinaiticus (GA 01 or Aleph) and Codex Vaticanus (GA 03 or B). Structural elements in Sinaiticus are more easily identifiable. Indeed, “The most frequent text divisions in GA01 is the combination of the *ekthesis* with a space and the raised point.”⁴ On occasions these outdents appear redundant since GA01 identifies each appearance of (γραφώ) in 2:12–14 as an *ekthesis*.⁵

Vaticanus preserves a far more complex history including two numbering

systems and a lack of ekthesis in 1 John.⁷ The older numbering system in GA03 shares structural clues with Sinaiticus at 2:1, 7, 18, and 3:2, while the younger system in Vaticanus indicates clues at 2:15 and 5:16 when compared to GA01.

When it comes to identifying an overarching structure for this letter modern scholarship shares much in common with the ancient scribes.

3. Ethical and Christological Outlines

After my previous research indicated structural analysis approaches did not resolve the quandary regarding an outline for 1John, my current focus seeks to identify how the ethical and Christological approaches address the issue. These ethical approaches often focus on Brotherly love as a key topic, thus the title of this investigation on repetition in 1John.

Published in 1892, Theodor Häring explored the line of thought and basic concepts of 1John.⁸ As an ethicist he brought new perspective to this text and outlined 1John in five (5) parts: 1:1–4, 1:5–2:27, 2:28–4:6, 4:7–5:12, and 5:13–21. Häring described a variety of ethical themes, including “Gottesgemeinschaft hat Nichtsündigen, Lichtwandel, Gerechtigkeit, Liebe zum Kennzeichen, denn Gott ist Licht und Liebe.”¹¹ Central to his ethical theses is Brotherly love with the connection of the ethical and Christological closely related at 3:9–16.¹⁵ Furthermore he states, “Lichtwandel, Nichtsündigen, Bruderliebe ist das eine untrügliche Zeichen der Gottesgemeinschaft 2:5 und oft.”¹⁶ He notes that love and faith of this type are the obvious characteristics of correct knowledge.¹⁷

Charles Talbert proposed four central sections in contrast to Häring’s three (1:6–2:28, 3:2–4:6, 4:7–16a, and 4:16–5:12).¹⁸ Focusing on rhetorical elements over topical

themes, Talbert found a trio of triads in the first segment: three pairs of statements, three boasts, and a three part chiasmic arrangement of final “words.”¹⁹ Brotherly love appears in the third boast. A pair of statements follows the thesis, both in the positive and negative. The point of this “second subunit of ethical expositions is that a covenant understanding of ‘knowing God/abiding in God/being in the light’ implies certain behavior toward others as a corollary.”²⁰

In Talbert’s second segment the ethical dimension of brotherly love represents “the evidence, not the basis for spiritual life.”²¹ In the third segment, 4:7–16a, one ethical section is found in 7-12, while a second section opens his fourth segment of 4:16b-5:4. These two “God is love” statements are significant to the ethics. Talbert notes that “ All God’s activity in relation to us is loving. God is the origin of love.”²² Further, the love described by the author of 1John finds its framework in “showing covenant fidelity toward” others.²³ Subsequently, God’s love is defined in 4:10 as the sending of God’s Son and the atoning action associated with his death. “That is, God’s love is one that takes initiative in seeking a relation with us even at great cost to himself.”²⁴

{A. E. Brooke’s 1909 ICC commentary}

4. Findings from Brotherly Love in Harstine Structural Proposals

A. The incidents of Brotherly Love/hate passages

Brotherly love is specifically mentioned at 2:10, 3:10–14, and 4:20–21.

1. 2:10

The discussion found in 2:7–11 on the writing of a new commandment begins by comparing light and darkness (2:8) before addressing hate and love as ethical aspects of those metaphors. The author employs the impersonal participial construction (ὁ λέγων) at this point as a stylistic variation from the language of 1:6–10, (Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν) to present a hypothetical position, or perhaps to use the language of those outside the

community being addressed.³² Thus, loving one's brother becomes the validation for keeping the old/new commandment.

This third instance of Ὁ λέγων, provides a conclusion to the topic introduced in 2:3, namely, how one knows that one knows him, i.e. Jesus Christ the Righteous One. One keeps the commandments (2:3) by walking in the light which emphasizes that claiming to love one's brother while hating one's brother demonstrates one is walking in the darkness, i.e. not keeping the commandments.

Structurally, I found 2:7–11 to be a parallel construct with 1:5 in the opening segment I propose.

2. 3:10–14

The second occasion appears in the section 3:7–18. This section opens with a discussion of being righteous by practicing righteousness (ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην). The negative proposition at 3:10 is stated in practical terms as not loving one's brother (ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ). The opposite of practicing righteousness is then identified as practicing sin (ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν), a characteristic of the devil. At the center of this paragraph lies the statement distinguishing the offspring of God from sin (Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ) at 3:9.

The positive statement at 3:14, loving one's brother, falls within a discussion of the relationship of “the world” to the “brothers” being addressed by this writing. The metaphorical concepts of death and life illuminate this practical test of loving one's brother. The theme of death is carried forward through the language of hate and murder at 3:15 (ἀνθρωποκτόνος), . Indeed, since the author describes such a one as not possessing eternal life, the concept antithetical to death is actually life of the ages (ζωὴν αἰώνιον).

The concept of love is described more fully in 3:16 as giving one's life, first in the example of Jesus Christ the Righteous One, and then among the brothers (ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θείναι). This idea of loving is actually seen in the act of imitating the exemplar.³³ Yet, the practical test is yet to be described. Love for one's brother includes a physical element described as sharing the physical resources of this world (τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου) in 3:17. Any “brother” who does not share his own resources with another brother in need does not possess the love being discussed in this epistle. Only in this manner is the *imitatio Dei* fully completed.³⁴

Structurally, I found 3:10–14 as parts of two chiastic units. First John 3:10 concludes 3:1–10 and is a parallel construct with 3:1–2. The second unit, 3:11–16, finds 3:14a as parallel to 3:13.

3. 4:20–21

The third incident of the Brotherly Love discussion appears within 4:11–21. Following the second statement that God is Love (4:7, 16) the discussion turns to remaining in God by remaining in this love (ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ). The topic moves to having confidence (παρρησία) on the day of judgment and the corresponding lack of fear found from a perfected or completed love (ἡ τελεία ἀγάπη) at 4:18. Recalling God’s catalyst demonstration named love, the author again states the impossibility of loving God while hating one’s brother within a conditional clause.³⁵

The positive declaration of loving one’s brother rests within the language of commandment introduced earlier at 2:7. Brotherly Love is a requisite for claiming to love God. The author’s clarity is enhanced after having already discussed this topic on two other occasions.³⁶

Structurally, I found the unit 4:12–16 forms one chiastic unit while 4:19–21 forms a second and introduces a section which recapitulates prior ideas from the letter.

{Hating One’s Brother}

B. {The incidents of Love One Another}

C. The structural Locations of these incidents

The structural location for these passages on loving a brother/other play a significant role in defining the context for these ethical concepts. My basic outline for the letter contains an opening with three main sections: 1:4–2:14, 2:15–3:24 and 4:1–5:12. The Brotherly Love passages found at 2:10, 3:10–14 and 4:20–21 appear throughout the three sections .

More specifically, the chiastic structure of these sections provides further insight into their context. My outline of 1:4–2:14 results in a 15-point chiastic structure such that 1:5 and 2:7–11 are parallel passages.⁴⁷ The first appearance, and the least complex language, at 2:10 expands on the statement that God is Light, “the person loving his brother/sister in the faith community dwells in the light.” The concept of loving one’s brother becomes central to “being in the light” (2:9).

The second location for Brotherly Love language is found in two different subsections: 3:2–10 centers around Abiding in the Son and Not Practicing Sin, while 3:11–16 centers around love versus hatred, life versus death. First John 3:10 takes the negative perspective to wrap up and identify those who are children of God. The focus of 1 John 3:14 rests in distinguishing this love for one’s brother as a sign of life. The main theme clarified in the second section identifies Eternal Life as Abiding in the Father and the Son. The signifier of this life is love.

The third appearance is found in a section which recapitulates prior ideas. It follows the poetic section found in 4:7–11 and the two-fold “God is Love” statements in 4:7 and 16b. Loving one’s brother is stated twice, the first in the negative and the second in the positive. Both are related to the stated concept of loving God. Thus, in the section which describes God AS love, one cannot NOT love one’s brother/sister in the faith community and be in the faith community.

D. Implications for 5:13–17

Each main section of the letter, 1:4–2:14, 2:15–3:24, and 4:1–5:12 contains an appeal to act in love. The sections build on one another, as repetition in Greek rhetoric often does, expanding and clarifying the concept of loving one’s brother. The crucial question for this research is whether the mention of “brother” in 5:14–17 might also be part of this pattern? If it is part of the pattern, then does this passage form part of a “conclusion” or the main body. Two lines of consideration need addressing. First, how does 5:13 fit into the structure? and second, how do the following verses, 14–17, fit?

When it comes to how 5:13 fits in the letter little agreement can be found. Du Rand’s structural analysis locates 5:6–13 as the penultimate section.⁵² Talbert sets 5:13 aside as an independent part of the structure.⁵³ Others view 5:13–21 as the conclusion⁵⁴ while Parsenius views the final section as encompassing 5:1–21.⁵⁵ This question alone exemplifies the diverse range of opinions on the structure of 1John.

A new perspective could ask how 5:13 might be understood structurally and rhetorically through the lens of repetition. What repetition occurs here and what elements of 1John are being repeated? First, the combination of the demonstrative pronoun + the verb write (γράφω) + the 2nd person plural personal pronoun (Ταῦτα γράφω/ἔγραψα ὑμῖν) occurs on only three occasions in the letter: 2:1, 2:26, and 5:13. This pattern is followed by a conjunction at 2:1 and 5:13 (ἔνα) and by a preposition at

2:26 (περὶ). The author utilizes the ταῦτα γράφω phrase with a subjunctive clause on only one other occasion, at 1:4, and then with a 1st person plural subject and no direct object. Although 5:13 carries some affiliation with 1:4 the stronger comparison can be found with 2:1.

The specific clause under consideration is 2:1a (Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ ἀμάρτητε), which my research identifies as the center of the chiasmic structure for 1:4–2:14. The key theme for this clause is that the audience might not sin (ἵνα μὴ ἀμάρτητε). The key theme for the clause at 5:13 is that they might know they hold life of the ages (ἵνα εἰδῆτε ὅτι ζωὴν ἔχετε αἰώνιον). Eternal Life is described as being possessed by the ones believing in the name of God's son, i.e. identifying fully with the Messiah discussed earlier. The phrase (ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ) only appears at one other place, 3:23, while ὄνομα + αὐτοῦ appears at 2:12. At 2:12 the key theme is having their sins forgiven, while 3:23 is described earlier in this paper as repeating the message that we are to believe in the Son and love one another. The language of 5:13 includes inferences toward abandoning sin through its association with two major themes regarding sin and the Son.

More pertinent to a rhetorical relationship is the similarity of 5:13 with 5:12, which uses Son in the Accusative case instead of Name (ὄνομα). This passage rephrases the relationship between the Son and holding this Life of the ages by stating it in both the positive and negative. Thus, 5:13 functions more fully as a hinge verse and cannot be isolated from the 5:5–12 passage.

The second line of consideration, how vv. 14–17 fit into the letter has been the ultimate focus for this research. Three commonalities illuminate this connection: Brotherly Love, Confidence, and Making Requests.

The word brother (ἀδελφός) appears fourteen (14) times in the letter including 5:16. It relates in nine (9) incidents to either loving or hating.⁵⁶ On two occasions it relates to Cain's murderous action, 3:12. The word is used once in the vocative case, 3:13. The remaining two appearances, 3:16–17, provide a practical action originating in love, giving one's life for one's brother in terms of the substance of this world (τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου). Thus, with the exception by the use of the vocative form of address, brother is associated in this letter with the idea of love or hate and their associated actions.

This brief passage recalls the confidence one should have in prayer and a specific action of prayer for one's brother dealing with sin. This first theme in 5:14 is confidence (παρρησία), which appears previously at 2:28, 3:21, and 4:17.⁵⁷ In the first passage, we have confidence when we abide in him. In the second instance we have confidence when our hearts do not condemn us and may ask of God since we keep his commandments - a direct connection to loving one's brother. The third instance relates confidence to a "perfected" love, (τετελείωται). Each passage employs the verb having/holding (ἔχω).⁵⁸

The implication of such confidence for 5:14–17 is that he hears us when we are asking (αἰτέω) according to his will and we will receive those items requested from him (5:15). The combination of these two themes, confidence and asking, links 5:14–15 with 3:21–22: verses found in the final chiasmic structure (3:19–24) of the second major section of the letter (2:15–3:24). **Consequently**, the return at this point in the letter to the themes of confidence in prayer and action for one's brother indicate structural parallelism. The probability is high that both passages introduce a concluding segment within their respective larger sections.

Finally, in the first main section of the letter, 1:4–2:14, the central element of the proposed chiasmic structure, 2:1a, asserts that this letter is written to address sin.⁵⁹ Sin appears throughout the letter as both a noun and verb (ἁμαρτία and ἁμαρτάνω). The thematic return to concern for one's brother avoiding sin at 5:16–17 functions to unite 5:13–17 around this critical theme for the entire letter.

I propose that 5:13–17 should not be considered as an opening for the concluding section in this letter. The repeated appearance of "confidence" suggests a concluding segment attached to 5:1–12. Moreover, the instructions on prayer for one's brother forms a further ethical clarification regarding love, begun at 2:10 with a generalized statement regarding walking in the light, rephrased as providing for one's brother with material necessities at 3:16–18, and emphasized at 4:19–21 through defining our love for God in terms of imitating God's actions toward us. These instructions on ethical behavior indicate the author's ultimate challenge for this community—those whom the author deems to be children of God—to work through love to avoid sin in their midst.

End Notes

¹ Stan Harstine, “The Rhetorical Role of 1 John 5:9–12 When Viewed Through Johannine Repetition” (paper presented at the International Meeting of the SBL, Pretoria, South Africa, 7 July 2023), 9.

² Harstine, 2023, 10

³ Stan Harstine, “Repetition and Rhetoric in 1John” (paper presented at the International Meeting of the SBL, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 29 July 2024), 1.

⁴ Gregory King, Correspondence 14 February 2025

⁵ “I write to you children (τεκνία)” (2:12); “I write to you fathers (πατέρες)” and “I write to you young men (νεανίσκοι)” (2:13) and “I wrote to you . . .” children (παιδία), fathers (πατέρες) from the young men (νεανίσκοι) in 2:14.

⁶ Breaks are found at 1:1; 2:1, 4, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14a, 14b, 15a, 15b, 18, 19, 29; 3:2, 4, 7, 17, 18, 21; 4:11; 5:3, 16, 16bf

⁷ Gregory King, Correspondence, 14 February 2025. Based on the older system, the structural breaks in Codex Vaticanus are found at the following locations: 1:1; 2:1, 7, 18, 24; 3:2, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:1, 13. The younger numbering system places structural signs at 1:1, 2:15, and 5:16.

⁸ Theodor Häring. “Gedankengang und Grundgedanke des ersten Johannesbriefs.” In Adolf von Harnack, et al., eds. *Theologische Abhandlungen: Carl von Weizsäcker zu seinem siebenzigsten Geburtstag 11. Dezember 1892 gewidmet.* (Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1892), 171–200.

⁹ Häring, 184–87.

¹⁰ Häring, 184–87.

¹¹ Häring, 190. “Fellowship with God consists of avoiding sinfulness, walking in the light, righteous living, love as a distinguishing quality since God is both light and love.”

¹² Häring, 188

¹³ Häring, 191. “Das vielbesprochene ‘Zusammenschauen’ des ‘Vaters’ und des ‘Sohnes’, oder welchen Ausdruck man immer für diese unbestreitbare Sache bevorzugen mag, ist besonders unleugbar und seinem Sinne nach deutlich, wenn man solche Stellen unterscheidet, in denen über die grammatische Beziehung von Aussagen auf Gott oder Christus kein Zweifel sein kann, die an andern Stellen umgekehrt von Christus oder Gott vorkommen; und andererseits solche Stellen, in denen schon an und für sich disputabel ist, ob dieses unbestimmt-bestimmte ‘Er’ auf den Vater oder Sohn zur beziehen sei.”

“The oft mentioned unitedness of Father and Son, or whichever expression one might always prefer for these indisputable things, is especially undeniable and his Sense beyond clear, when one such positions distinguishes, in which over the grammatical connection of the expression of God or Christ no distinction can be made, and the other position comes in reverse from Christ or

Gott; and still further such position, which is already disputable to and for him, whether this uncertain/certain “He” refers to the father or the son.”

¹⁴ Häring, 193. “Aber allerdings ist das Zusammenschauen von Vater und Sohn im Verlauf des Briefs ein noch weitergehendes, als im Verlauf des Evangeliums verglichen mit dem Prolog, und damit hängen wohl in der That (sic) die schwebenden Ausdrücke des Briefeingangs, das immer bemerkte ‘was von Anfang war ’zusammen.”

¹⁵ Häring, 195. “Und was für ein Zusammenhang zwischen der ethischen und christologischen Theses stattfindet, ergibt sich im Grunde auch schon aus allem Bisherigen. ROTHE hat mit Recht gesagt, die Art der Bruderliebe, die gefordert wird, setze den Glauben an die Liebesoffenbarung in Christus voraus.”

¹⁶ Häring, 197. “Walking in the Light, Not sinning, and Brotherly Love is the one unmistakable sign of fellowship with God.”

¹⁷ 199. “Es kann nicht anders sein, denn Gott ist Liebe, aber diese Liebe ist nur Wirklichkeit, weil sie erschienen ist in der Sendung des Sohnes. Die Brüderliebe wird eine andere ohne diesen Glauben an die offenbare Gottesliebe, und dieser Glaube ist nicht solcher Glaube ohne diese Brüderliebe.”

¹⁸ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*. Revised Edition. Reading the New Testament. (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 7.

¹⁹ Talbert, 19–25

²⁰ Talbert, 25.

²¹ Talbert, 33.

²² Talbert, 40.

²³ Talbert, 40.

²⁴ Talbert, 41.

²⁵ A.E. Brooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, ICC 1909. §4 Notes, 1 John 2:10.

²⁶ “The doing of righteousness might be too vague and general a test. The writer therefore narrows it down to one special form of righteousness which is in fact the basis of the whole, and in the exercise of which the false teachers had apparently shown themselves particularly lacking.” Brooke, Notes, 1 John 3:10

²⁷ Brooke, Notes, 1 John 3:23,24

²⁸ “He who loves shows thereby that he has experienced the new birth from God which is the beginning of Christian life, and that its effects are permanent and abiding. He also shows that he has entered upon that life which consists in the gradual acquiring of the knowledge of God.” Brooke, 1 John 4:7

²⁹ “Our love is not self-originated. It has a divine origin. It is called out in response to what God has given. Thus interpreted, the words offer a far more powerful incentive to the exercise of love than a mere exhortation, and they have their natural place in the writer’s thoughts.” Brooke, 1 John 4:19

³⁰ Brooke, 1 John 5:1

³¹ Brooke, 1 John 5:2

³² Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, WBC 51 (Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 59

³³ Smalley, WBC 51, 195

³⁴ Smalley, WBC 51, 197–198.

³⁵ Smalley, WBC 51, 263.

³⁶ Smalley, WBC 51, 264

³⁷ Smalley, WBC 51, 181

³⁸ “ This connection is established, however, not only with the conjunction, but also by the way the author picks up the notion of the person ‘who does not love his brother ’(3:10) when he urges his readers not to be like Cain, who ‘murdered his brother ’(3:12), and informs them that ‘anyone who hates his brother is a murderer ’(3:15).” Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, Pillar NTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 132.

³⁹ Smalley, WBC 51, 178

⁴⁰ Smalley, WBC 51, 209, note that these two form “a close parallel” but differ due to the inclusion of the element of faith.

⁴¹ J A du Rand, “A Discourse Analysis of 1 John,” *Neot* 13 (1979) incorporates verse 11 into his AB structure.

⁴² Smalley, WBC 51, 236–237.

⁴³ Talbert, *Reading John*, rev. 39–41.

⁴⁴ Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, and 3 John*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 193

⁴⁵ Smalley, WBC 51, 247. See Jobes, 194 for her discussion of the language switch from God to one another in the statement.

⁴⁶ Jobes, ZEC, 195

⁴⁷ Coincidentally, Culpepper’s *Pivot of John’s Gospel* also contains 15 levels. R. Alan Culpepper, “The Pivot of John’s Prologue,” *NTS* 27 (1980): 1-31.

⁴⁸ Jobes, ZEC, 40.

⁴⁹ Specifically, John 13:34, 15:12, 17. Such instruction is not limited to the Gospel of John as it is also found in Leviticus 19:18. See Jobes, ZEC, 154.

⁵⁰ Bultmann 1973, du Rand 1979, Peter Rhea Jones 1970, Thomas 1998, Talbert 2005, Parsenios 2014, Myers 2019

⁵¹ Jobes, 186, places 7–10, 11–14, and 15–16 as subsections. Kruse, PillarNTC, 157, identifies greater detail with 7–8, 9–11, 12–13, 13–15, and 16 as smaller thought progressions. Smalley, 235, follows Westcott in identifying 7–10 and 11–16 as part of the structure in 4:7–5:4.

⁵² Du Rand, 1979. Bultmann views 5:5–13 in the same way.

⁵³ Talbert, 2005.

⁵⁴ Peter Rhea Jones, “A Structural Analysis of 1 John,” *RevExp* 67 (1970): 433–44 and John Christopher Thomas, “The Literary Structure of 1 John,” *NovT* 40 (1998): 369–81.

⁵⁵ George Parsenios, *First, Second, and Third John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014). Alicia D. Myers, *Reading John and 1, 2, 3 John*, Reading the New Testament (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys 2019) identifies this section extending from 5:5–21.

⁵⁶ 1 John 2:9, 10, 11; 3:10, 14, 15; 4:20 (2x), and 21.

⁵⁷ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983; rep., 2001), 123.

⁵⁸ This verb is used with regard to life of the ages at 5:13 as well.

⁵⁹ Harstine, 2024, 9