STATUS DEGRADATION IN FIRST JOHN: SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC AND LITERARY PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: *A socio-rhetorical approach to analyzing portions of the text of First John brings out new answers to questions about the text, related to genre, structure and interpretation that have puzzled biblical commentators over the years. This article looks at the text from two perspectives. From a socio-rhetorical perspective it looks at the text through lens of a social-scientific model termed by Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey a "Status Degradation Ritual"[2] (adapted from sociologist Harold Garfinkel[3]), which enriches the understanding of the purposes, genre and structure of First John. From a literary perspective this article looks at the way language is used to facilitate the Status Degradation Ritual and finds the intentional use of chiasm, a common oral-literary device in ancient Hebrew[4] and Greco-Roman literature. Insights from the chiastic parallelisms of the structure of the proposed Status Degradation Ritual offer new explanations for exegetical issues such as the seeming contradiction between 1 John 1:8, 10 and 3:6, 9 regarding the sin and sinlessness of the believer.*

1. Introduction

The situation the author of the First Epistle of John (First John) is addressing, deviance from group norms and what to do about that deviance, can be better understood when examined with the aid of two separate socio-rhetorical models: a group ritual model and an oral-literary model. This article follows the approach of investigating First John through the lenses of these two models, one cultural and one historical, for the purpose of uncovering new questions and new explanations regarding the nature of the text, the purposes of the author, and the group dynamics that occasioned the writing of the text.

Looking first through the cultural lens of the ritual model provides evidence that the author of First John has presented the reader with two separate rituals that have been antithetically intermingled to create the text as we have it now. Understanding the genre of First John as a unique combination of rituals side-steps the usual debate over whether or not it is valid to consider the book to be within the epistolary genre.[5] Ritual is used here in the sense of a written documentation of a public performance, designed to change the perception of a group about a given topic, person or group. Two rituals potentially applicable to First John are described in Malina and

Neyrey's edited volume, *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation,* namely a "Status Degradation Ritual," and a "Status Transformation Ritual." Malina and Neyrey state that "status degradation rituals publicly categorize, recast, and assign a moral character to deviant actors,"[6] while in a separate chapter Mark McVann explains that status transformation rituals involve passage from one status to another, including christening, baptism, marriage, or ordination.[7] In First John the believers are having their status transformed (or re-confirmed) as children of God (3:1) while the opponents, or "secessionists" as Raymond Brown calls them,[8] are having their status downgraded to children of the devil (3:10).

Each of these rituals, preserved in First John as a written text, was most likely meant to be read or recited aloud in the oral-literary environment of 1st Century Mediterranean culture.[9] Investigation of these rituals through the second, historical, lens of this investigation, an oral-literary model, reveals that the author has used a common memory aid of that time, known as chiasm,[10] as a means of organizing the content of the two rituals for his readers or listeners. The literary combination of these rituals produced a memorable explanation that could be read or recited to Johannine communities in various locations to help them understand the new (outcast) status of the opponents as well as their own status in relation to God. It will be necessary to look more closely at which sets of verses describe each of the opposing groups in order to examine the rituals in their separate literary formats.

A majority of the verses in the text are addressed to or speak about one of these groups, the believing community (the "beloved," *teknia*, "little children"),[11] and can potentially be viewed as a "Status Transformation Ritual." As mentioned above, this type of ritual was intended to transform or re-confirm the self-image of the members of the Johannine Community. The author offered them a ritual interpretation of reality that would restore confidence in their status as children of God (3:1) who possess eternal life (5:13).[12] The diagram provided at the end of this article shows that these transitional techniques can also serve as structural clues for the full text of First John in which the two rituals are synthesized.

This article will focus on the second ritual within the synthesized text, the portions of First John that refer to the "secessionists," the opponents of the author's community. These verses will be seen to fit the model of a Status Degradation Ritual, as described above by Malina and Neyrey. [13] These portions will be examined as a self-contained literary unit arranged in chi-

astic format. One of the values of the chiastic literary model is its focus on the climax, the chiastic centre, which in this ritual labels the deviants who went out from the original group as "children of the devil" (3:10). When originally "performed," this ritual decreed a final divorce between the two groups, the children of God and the children of the devil. The means of demonstrating the value and good fit of these models to the text of First John will be described next in a discussion of the methodological approach.

2. Methodological Approach

The dual hypotheses of this article are that particular portions of First John can be considered as a separate text that functions as a specific type of ritual and that this text is structured in chiastic format. In a socio-rhetorical analysis of First John to test these hypotheses, this article will investigate and apply the social-science model of the Status Degradation Ritual and the oral-literary chiasmus model to the text in three stages: (1) explanation and examples in the text of social-scientific models, (2) explanation and examples in the text of the chiastic model, and (3) joint application of both models to the text for interpretive purposes.

2.1. The use of social-scientific models within the socio-rhetorical method

The first stage of investigation consists of establishing the social-scientific models that will be used to analyze the portions of the text that apply to the opponents of the Johannine community. Within this section of the article it will first be necessary to demonstrate the legitimacy of using current social-scientific theory and models to better understand 1st century Mediterranean texts and the groups they describe. After establishing the value of using social-scientific models, Mary Douglas' Grid and Group model of four types of groups will be briefly explained, including boundary maintenance and concern with deviant behaviour typical of Low Grid, High Group societies. This model will then be applied to the Johannine community to show the perceived necessity of casting out those who deviated from the group norms. The text of First John clearly indicates both the Johannine group's norms and how the secessionists violated or deviated from those norms, leading to their expulsion from the group. The means of formalizing that expulsion can be better understood through the lens of Malina's and Neyrey's Status Degradation Ritual, which will be summarized in the last part of this section.

2.2. The use of the historical-literary model of chiasm within the socio-rhetorical method

After investigating specific social-scientific models of groups and rituals, the second stage of the socio-rhetorical analysis will be to address the historical question of the oral-literary model of chiasm. How likely would it have been for the author of First John to know and use chiastic structure, and why might he do so? What does that chiasm look like and what value does it add for interpreting the text? Three diagrams will be provided of different levels of chiastic structure within the text. The closest parallelisms will be seen when the portions of First John dealing with the opponents are considered as a separate unit. The parallelisms that result from this chiastic structure and some insights gained from these parallelisms will be highlighted, including the value of chiasm for understanding the group dynamics of the Johannine community. The selected text in its chiastic structure will be the basis for investigating the validity of the hypothesis that portions of First John follow the model of the Status Degradation Ritual described earlier in the first stage of the socio-rhetorical investigation.

2.3. Application of the ritual model to the chiastic text

The third stage in this socio-rhetorical analysis will be to apply the ritual model to the chiastic text established in the second section, calling attention to the exegetical questions the model raises and those aspects of the text that can be better explained by means of this model.

2.4. Summary of insights into the purpose and message of the First Epistle of John resulting from the application of the socio-rhetorical models of ritual and chiasm to the text.

Finally, a question and answer approach will be used to summarize insights into the purpose and message of First John that result from the application of the socio-rhetorical models of ritual and chiasm to the selected portions of the text.

3. The use of social-scientific models within the socio-rhetorical method
3.1. The legitimacy of using current social-scientific theory and models to better understand 1st century Mediterranean texts.

The starting point in this article, following a socio-rhetorical approach, is

that appropriate interpretation of New Testament texts requires interacting with the social-cultural values, beliefs, and customs of the people who wrote and received the written documents we are studying.[14] Culture permeates everything a person or group says, writes, and does. Without knowing the presuppositions and common knowledge of a people, including their historical and cultural frame of reference, modern interpreters cannot really grasp the meanings behind the words they use, even if those words sound familiar. "Not only must modern observers and interpreters clarify their own viewpoint and articulate their own values, they must strive as well to imagine and learn the viewpoint and values of those of another culture whom they would study."[15]

But how are contemporary interpreters to know what the biblical culture was like? As Raymond Hobbs points out, most contemporary interpreters of the Bible live in a westernized global culture that is alien to the culture of the ancient Mediterranean world.[16] Malina suggests that trying to understand a biblical text (in this case, First John), is like trying to learn a foreign language and culture.[17] Elsewhere he states, "what is needed is a cross-cultural approach to grasping the meanings imparted by a foreign language."[18] Social-scientific models can serve as that cross-cultural approach. As a way to get started into the social world of the text of First John, the authors of this article will be accepting two presuppositions from respected proponents of using social-scientific theory in New Testament interpretation:

1. Malina states, "A fundamental presupposition in social-scientific criticism of the Bible, duly outfitted with historical and cross-cultural lenses, runs: if something actually exists, then it could possibly exist."[19] Applied to the study of First John, this means that since contemporary social scientists have observed group formation and dissolution under a variety of cross-cultural conditions, the principles they have formulated can be used to analyze the ancient groups referred to in the text of First John.

2. A basis is needed for categorizing the nature of groups in the 1st century Mediterranean world. Based on a comparison of descriptions of societies in ancient Middle Eastern texts and anthropologists' descriptions of contemporary rural societies in that part of the world, J. Duncan Derrett proposes, "there is no reason to surmise that Mediterranean societies have undergone fundamental changes … within the relatively short interval of two millennia."[20] In other words, it is legitimate to apply cultural insights into the nature of present-day group dynamics in the rural Mediterranean world
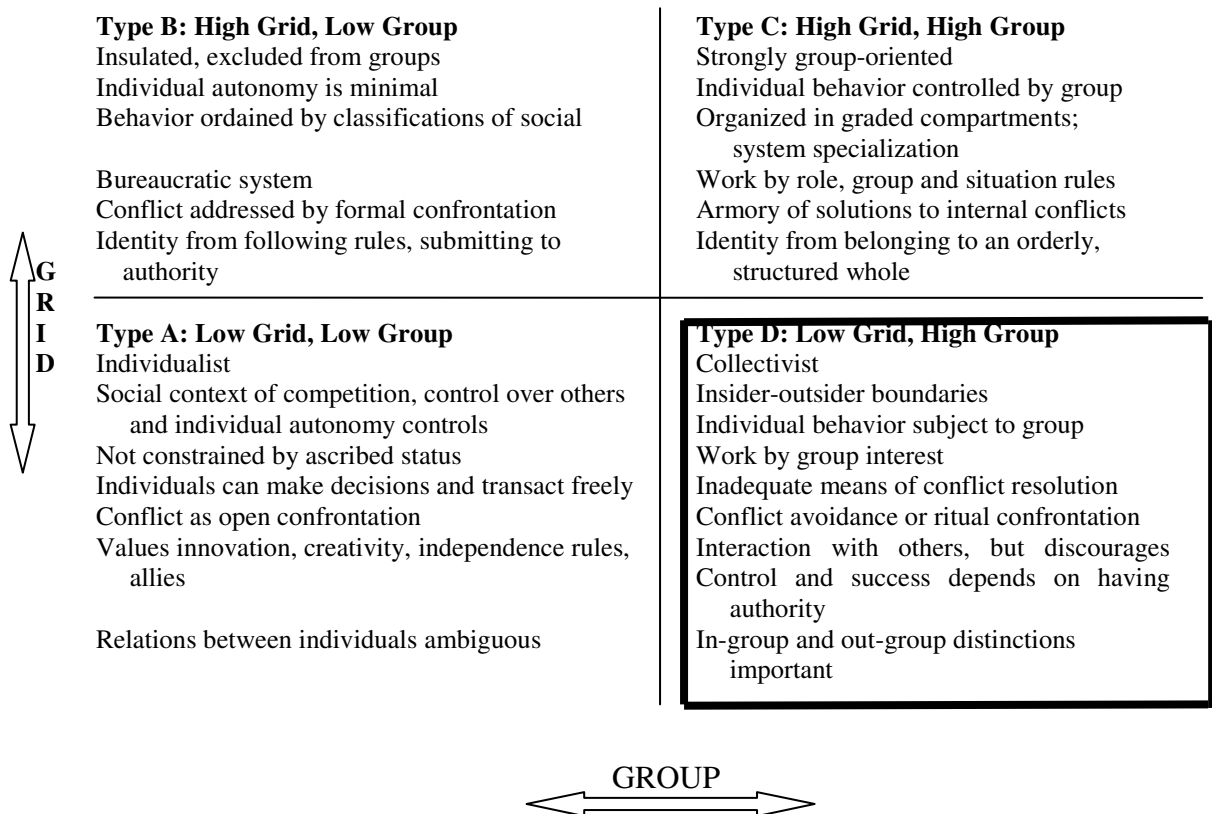
to ancient group dynamics in the same area.

By accepting these presuppositions the possibility is opened for using current social-scientific models to better explain phenomena being reported or implied in an ancient text. Philip Esler points out, "the explicit use of models brings the interpreter's values and perspectives out into the open," which helps the interpreter avoid hidden anachronism and ethnocentrism. [21] At the same time, the use of anthropological models, that describe and predict behavior in a variety of contemporary societies and cultures, gives the interpreter points of comparison and brings up new questions leading to new insights into the original intentions and meaning of the biblical author. "As an exercise, the use of models is designed to stimulate the sociological imagination, to free the object of our gaze from … the patina of the obvious." [22]

3.2. Douglas' Grid and Group model

Without the aid of an anthropological model, it would not be obvious that First John meets the criteria of ritual conflict confrontation, the typical means of addressing conflict in Low Grid, High Group societies.[23] As background for understanding the value of the Status Degradation Ritual as a model for studying First John, Douglas' Grid and Group model[24] will be used to examine the nature of the Johannine group. This model focuses on two major features of societies: "Grid" refers to a society's rules, structure and leadership (or the lack of them), while "Group" refers to the extent to which members of the society do or do not consider themselves to be part of a group that defines their values and practices. In the Grid and Group cultural theory, anthropologists analyze different societies to classify relative levels of "Grid" and "Group" in the way people relate to one another. The combinations of these categories can be graphed in four quadrants, with Grid as the vertical axis and Group as the horizontal axis as shown in the following chart.

Comparisons of Grid and Group Descriptions of Societies
Adapted from Mary Douglas, Sherwood Lingenfelter and Sheryl Silzer

Type B: High Grid, Low Group	**Type C: High Grid, High Group**
Insulated, excluded from groups	Strongly group-oriented
Individual autonomy is minimal	Individual behavior controlled by group
Behavior ordained by classifications of social	Organized in graded compartments; system specialization
Bureaucratic system	Work by role, group and situation rules
Conflict addressed by formal confrontation	Armory of solutions to internal conflicts
Identity from following rules, submitting to authority	Identity from belonging to an orderly, structured whole
Type A: Low Grid, Low Group	**Type D: Low Grid, High Group**
Individualist	Collectivist
Social context of competition, control over others and individual autonomy controls	Insider-outsider boundaries
Not constrained by ascribed status	Individual behavior subject to group
Individuals can make decisions and transact freely	Work by group interest
Conflict as open confrontation	Inadequate means of conflict resolution
Values innovation, creativity, independence rules, allies	Conflict avoidance or ritual confrontation
	Interaction with others, but discourages
	Control and success depends on having authority
Relations between individuals ambiguous	In-group and out-group distinctions important

GRID (vertical axis)

GROUP (horizontal axis)

This article focuses on descriptions of the Low Grid, High Group society, as these are most characteristic of the general 1st century Mediterranean world, according to Bruce Malina,[25] who is known for applying insights from ancient Mediterranean culture to the interpretation of biblical texts. Once one has recognized that some New Testament texts reflect the characteristics of highly group-oriented societies with few strong leadership roles among them (a relatively egalitarian society), it becomes helpful to study the texts more closely using the Low Grid, High Group model developed from observations of many contemporary cultures. Malina's description of groups in this lower right quadrant explains some of the group dynamics that were likely experienced by the Johannine community.

"Strong group/low grid … generates societies of fixed rites … a focus on group boundaries rather than on stable caste classification. … The existence of this quadrant will normally be recognizably a proliferation of competing groups, each attempting to be self-contained, to win out over its competitors, defend its gains… There is a strong concern in the respective groups about maintaining social boundaries … but these boundaries seem under attack; … there are informers, spies, or deviants present." Groups are

characterized by "an abiding concern to ferret out persons who do not belong within the boundaries, with fitting rituals for expelling them beyond group lines, like expulsion, shunning, or excommunication."[26]

This description fits very well with the competing groups described in First John, and as a model it explains the likelihood and necessity of a public ritual to deal authoritatively once and for all with the deviant group. Without the ritual, the conflict and competition for the allegiance of group members could continue indefinitely, due to the fact that leaving a group voluntarily is unlikely in a strong group society, since the group forms the identity of the individual. "In the Mediterranean once one joins, it is rather difficult to leave since the unit is the collective self not the individualistic self, and groups cannot see themselves dissolve without dishonor."[27] The author of First John makes it clear that one of the two competing groups in the Johannine community were dishonorably deviant from group norms and labels them as "children of the Devil."

3.3. Group norms and deviations in First John

What are those values, or group norms (and their opposites), of the followers of the author of First John? These are clearly seen in antithetical statements throughout the Epistle. For every statement characterizing the believers there is, in close proximity, an opposite statement about the opponents. These labels are contrasted in parallel columns in the following chart:

Johannine Community	Opponents
ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν (1:7)	ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατῶμεν (1:6)
τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν (2:3b)	τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν (2:4b)
ἐντολὴν καινὴν …	ψεύστης ἐστίν (2:4c)
ὅ ἐστιν ἀληθὲς … ἐν ὑμῖν (2:8a)	ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν (2:4d)
ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτου (2:10a)	ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι
καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν (2:9a)	
ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει (2:10a)	ἐν τῇ σκοτιᾷ ἐστὶν (2:9b)
[ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτου ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει (2:10)]	ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν (2:11a)
ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεου (2:17b)	ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ (2:15b)
	πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ … (2:16a) οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς (2:16c)
μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. (2:17b)	ὁ κόσμος παράγεται (2:17a)

ὑμεῖς χρῖσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου (2:20)

νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ Γεγόνασιν (2:18c)
ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν (2:19a)
οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν (2:19d)

τὴν ἀλήθειαν, … οἴδατε αὐτὴν (2:21a)

πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν (2:21b)

ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν (2:23c)
καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει (2:23d)

πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν (2:23a)
οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει (2:23b)

ἁμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ [ἐκεῖνος] οὐκ ἔστιν (3:5b)

Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν
καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ (3:4a)

πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων
οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει (3:6a)

πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων
οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν (3:6b)

ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνη δίκαιός ἐστιν
καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστιν (3:7)

ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν
ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν (3:8a)

Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ
ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιει (3:9a)
ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει (3:9b)

πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην
οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεου
καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ (3:10b)

οὐ καθὼς Κάϊν … (3:12a)

Κάϊν … ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν
καὶ ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ (3:12a)

τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ [ἔργα] δίκαια (3:12d)

τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν (3:12c)

ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν
ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν
ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς (3:14a)

ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν
μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ (3:14b)

ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν
τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι (3:16b)

πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ
ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἐστίν (3:15a)
πᾶς ἀνθρωποκτόνς
οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν αὐτῷ μένουσαν (3:15b)

[μεταβεβήκαμεν … εἰς τὴν ζωήν (3:14a)]

ἀγαπῶμεν … ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ (3:18)

ὃς δ' ἂν ἔχῃ τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου
καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρείαν
ἔχοντα, καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα
αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ,
πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐν αὐτῷ; (3:17)

γνωσόμεθα ὅτι ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐσμεν (3:19)

πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον (4:1b)

πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ
Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα
ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν (4:2b)

πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ
τὸν Ἰησοῦν
ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν (4:3a)
τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου (4:3b)

ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστε (4:4a)
ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν (4:6a)

ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου εἰσίν (4:5a)

πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται
   καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεόν (4:7b)

ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν
   οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν (4:8)

ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν θεὸν
   ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτου
   (4:21b)

ἐάν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι Ἀγαπῶ τὸν θεόν
   καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῇ,
   ψεύστης ἐστίν (4:20)

ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ
   ἔχει τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ
   (5:10a)

ὁ μὴ πιστεύων τῷ θεῷ
   ψεύστην πεποίηκεν αὐτον,
   ὅτι οὐ πεπίστευκεν
   εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν μεμαρτύρηκεν
     ὁ θεὸς (5:10b)

ὁ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν
   ἔχει τὴν ζωήν (5:12a)

ὁ μὴ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ
   τὴν ζωὴν οὐκ ἔχει (5:12b)

οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν (5:19a)
   ἐσμὲν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ,
   ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ (5:20)

ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται
   (5:19)

This comparison of closely paired antithetical characteristics indicates that the author of First John intended to make clear who was "of the truth" and who was not. This pattern, seen consistently throughout the book, demonstrates that one of the two competing groups in the Johannine community was deviant from group norms. It was because of their deviant behavior and beliefs that the opponents had to be officially excommunicated from the original community, hence the need for the Status Degradation Ritual that will be discussed next.

3.4. Summary of the key points of Malina's and Neyrey's description of the Status Degradation Ritual

Survival of the original group and its values demanded that the members of the deviant group be excommunicated or "un-fellowshipped." How could this be done in such as way that all concerned recognized the change in status and relationships? In the context of discussing Mediterranean group culture, Malina mentions, as quoted above, that those who do not belong within the boundaries of the type of group that represents the Johannine community (low grid, strong group) are expelled "with fitting rituals." [28] In a chapter he co-authored with Jerome Neyrey, Malina describes in detail the nature of such a "fitting ritual," which the authors adapted from sociologist Harold Garfinkel who developed "a model of how denouncers arrange for the successful denunciation of their target victims."[29] Malina and Neyrey call this model a "Status Degradation Ritual." Such rituals "publicly categorize, recast, and assign a moral character to deviant actors. This results in a total change of their identity to that of 'a deviant'; they are engulfed in the master status of a deviant."[30]

Malina and Neyrey conclude their chapter with the hope that others will find the description and application of this model to be useful in other New Testament studies. This served as the initial impetus to attempt application of this model to First John, looking to see if the model would be a good fit for the data of the text.

A brief summary here of Garfinkel's model, as described and supplemented by Malina and Neyrey, will serve as the model to analyze the text of First John in the third stage of this investigation, after the chiastic structure of the Epistle has been analyzed and established in the second stage.

Garfinkel's model for a successful degradation ritual consists of four variables:

1. The denouncer.
2. The deviant whose status will be degraded.
3. An explanation for the need to downgrade the status of the deviant person or group.
4. Witnesses who will agree with the denouncer on the new identity of the deviant.[31]

Malina and Neyrey include additional information that explains and supplements this model. They use the term "labeling" to describe the activity of Garfinkel's first variable, the "denouncer." Labels can be either positive or negative evaluations of the character of a person or group. Negative labels are accusations of deviance. Who are these labelers of deviant behavior, or "denouncers" as Garfinkel terms them? Malina and Neyrey point out that these are the people whose interests as public figures or as spokespersons for the group are threatened by the behavior of the deviants. When the members of a group perceive a threat to their shared social system, the creators or enforcers of the rules of the group become the "denouncers" to separate out those causing the threat.[32]

The second variable, the deviant, is a person or group that "… threatens the moral universe of the labelers," according to Malina and Neyrey.[33] In the Status Degradation Ritual, this person or group will experience a change in social status in relation to the wider group, becoming an outsider to be shunned.

"Banning" is a term Malina and Neyrey use to refer to the explanations given by the denouncers to define behavior as being outside the boundaries

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of acceptable group norms[34] (Garfinkel's third variable). The ritual is a public event intended to change the attitudes of the witnesses (the fourth variable) so they will see it is in the group's best interest to label and cast out the deviant. This can be done by demonstrating that the core values and beliefs of the group are the opposite of those of the deviant, making it more likely the witnesses will be persuaded to agree with the denouncer's judgment. Higher authorities are appealed to in support of the need to ban the individual or group (such as God's will or the good of the people).[35] In the process of the ritual the denouncer shows why the behavior of the deviant is evil and permanently unacceptable to the society.

If the ritual is successful, witnesses (the fourth variable in Garfinkel's model) will be convinced of the truth of the negative assessment and of the need for the new, lower, status of the deviant.[36] The deviant will be "condemned by all concerned … public attention is focused on the shame of the deviant."[37] Looking back at the deviant's past, witnesses will agree that the person (or group) always did have something wrong with them. The new master status becomes a lens to interpret everything known about them.

This brief summary completes the first stage of this article's investigation, having described two social-scientific models to compare with specific portions of the text of First John, and having applied the first of these models (Grid/Group) to the text. In the third stage of this investigation the ritual model will be compared with the text to test the validity of the hypothesis that part of the text was originally a Status Degradation Ritual intended to create a permanent divorce between the opponents and the original Johannine community. Before the model can be applied, it will be necessary in the second stage of investigation to establish the portions of the text of First John that speak about the deviants. Because this article has proposed a second lens with which to examine the text, the historical oral-literary model of chiasm, the validity of applying the chiastic model to the structure of First John will need to be examined. In this second stage of socio-rhetorical analysis, the historical and exegetical questions are addressed of how likely it would have been for the author of First John to know and use chiastic structure, why he might do so, and what that structure might look like.

4.   The use of the historical-literary model of chiasm within the socio-rhetorical method

4.1. Demonstration of the probability that an author familiar with ancient Hebrew and Greco-Roman texts would be likely to know and

use chiastic structure for the purposes of memorability and emphasis of a central point.

How likely is it that the author of First John would have used chiastic structure for a public ritual, and why might he have been motivated to do so? As a Jewish follower of Jesus within the Johannine community, the author of First John would have known the ancient Hebrew and Greco-Roman texts, and this would have included familiarity with the chiastic structures that were used extensively in the Old Testament.[38] This structure may even have been as common in biblical times as the modern academic structure of essays, taught to children beginning in grade school: "Introduction, Body and Conclusion." Lund, in his ground-breaking survey of the use of chiasmus in the Old and New Testaments states, "I have reached the conclusion that much of these symmetries was altogether subconscious, … the writers had learned their forms so thoroughly that they had forgotten them as forms."[39] Neyrey adds the insight that this common form "was anticipated by audiences to aid in following the argument or narrative."[40] In a partially oral culture, chiastic structure would have helped make a text memorable, with emphasis on the central point.

Given the presence in First John of obvious Hebrew (and Greco-Roman) parallelisms at the verse level, including the inverted parallelism of chiasm,[41] it seems reasonable to look for the possibility of chiasm at the level of the whole book. This possibility is strengthened by the obvious balanced parallels at the beginning and ending of the book (the theme of witnesses to the life in 1:1, 2 and 5:20) and the references to the antichrist at about equal distances on either side of the center of the book (2:18 and 4:3b).

Since one of the values of a chiasmus is its emphasis on the central part of the structure, Ronald Man advises that biblical interpreters "attach special importance to the center of a chiastic structure."[42] In the case of First John the central emphasis, the literal center in terms of the number of verses in the Epistle, falls on the labeling of the Children of God and the Children of the Devil (3:7-10). In a Status Degradation Ritual, such labeling distinguishing the deviants from the witnesses would be of central importance. Here is a clue related to the structural center of the book that lends support to the validity of applying both the chiastic and ritual models to First John.

The clues to the validity of the chiastic model (the central point surrounded by two sets of major parallel themes) led to the supposition that broad

_____

themes might be in chiastic arrangement for the entire book. One possibility of a loose chiastic structure for the full text is shown below. But James Bailey's warning needs to be taken seriously that "it is often one's assessment of content that determines whether or not one finds a chiastic pattern."[43] John Christopher Thomas has also proposed a chiastic structure for First John,[44] but with a different center and different themes from that independently discovered and shown here, an illustration of the subjectivity involved in looking for chiastic structure in broad terms.

Major Blocks in a Proposed Chiastic Structure of First John and the Pericopes within the Blocks:

```
A       1:1-5       Intro: Life; eyewitness testimony
        1:5 – 2:2   Light; do away with sin

   B       2:3-11            Love Command
           2:12-14           Victory Theme

      C        2:15-17            Love of World vs. love of Father

        D      2:17-27            Antichrists and truth

          E      2:28 – 3:3         Confidence;
                                    We will be like Him

            F      3:4-10:              Sin taken away; works of devil nullified;
                                        (making it possible to) practice what is right/love
                                        Know who are the children of God and of devil

          E'     3:11-18:           Avoid Cain's evil example; follow Jesus' ex. of  love
                 3:19-24            Confidence

        D'       4:1-6              Antichrists; spirit of deception

      C'       4:7-12             Love of God and of one another

   B'    4:13-21           Love Command
         5:1-5             Victory Theme

A'     5:6-12     Witness Concerning the Son
       5:13-18    Life, belief, not sinning
       5:19-21    Conclusion: know you have life
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4.2 The chiastic structure that results when the portions of First John dealing with the opponents are considered as a separate document from the full epistle.

While the general themes in the chart above show many chiastic parallels, the verses within the sections do not readily match in inverted order and those that do are of irregular length. Ian Thomson comments, "As a general rule, the greater the number of objective balances of vocabulary and syntax in potentially corresponding elements, the more likely there is to be an authentic chiasmus present."[45] Although the full text of First John has only a loose chiastic structure, subjectively discerned, in an experiment combining in a separate document those verses that speak negatively of the oppo-

nents, the resulting text has obvious and very close chiastic parallelisms, as will be demonstrated below.

Even though close chiastic parallelisms are not obvious in the full text of First John, nor are they obvious in the separate portion of the text that speaks of the believers, there is still a connection between the positive labels applied to the believers, with the negative labels that apply to the opponents. (See section 3.3 above.) Through inductive study, a case for a close chiastic parallelism in the list of combined positive and negative labels can be made. (See the second chart at the end of this article.) Evidently the lack of chiastic balance in the full text, and in the portion of the text that discusses realities of the believers, is due to intervening explanatory material that is not directly connected to the contrasting labels that display the chiastic relationships.

Returning to the original intention for this section to isolate the portion of the text that refers only to the opponents and to investigate the possibility of chiastic structure in that text, the chart below incorporates only those verses that relate to the opponents (1:5b, 6, 8, 10; 2:4, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17a, 18, 19, 21b, 22, 23a, 26; 3:4, 6b, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17; 4:1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 20; 5:10b, 12b, 16c, 17, 19, 21). This is the text that will be examined later for its closeness of fit with the model of the Status Degradation Ritual. It is helpful to envision the verses from the list above being listed vertically, then folding the list in half at the centre. The result of this mental matching exercise is illustrated in the chiastic chart below, with the central hinge verses highlighted (3:4-15). The chart is arranged in a "U" shape, for convenience in seeing the parallelisms side by side. As in a typical chiastic chart, letters are assigned to each main section. In addition a number of parallel phrases have been indicated. Parallelisms, both synonymous and antithetical, between comparable sections (and particularly those in the central section) shed light on the meanings of terms and the author's theology. A few of the resulting insights will be examined later in this article.

Portions of First John that Speak of the Opponents, in Chiastic Structure

A True God 1:5b	**A' Idols 5:21**
[ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστιν]	Τεκνία, φυλάξατε
καὶ <u>σκοτία</u> ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία	ἑαυτὰ ἀπὸ τῶν <u>εἰδώλων</u>.
B Darkness, Truth is not in one, Liar	**B' Unrighteousness, Sin unto death, Liar,**
Sin, Keep the commandments	**Believe the witness**
1:6 Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν	
καὶ ἐν τῷ <u>σκότει</u> περιπατῶμεν	5:17 πᾶσα <u>ἀδικία</u> ἁμαρτία ἐστιν
ψευδόμεθα	

καὶ <u>οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν</u>
1:8 [compare 1:6b]
ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν
ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν
καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν
1:10 [compare 1:6 b and 1:8]
ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν,
ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτὸν
καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν

2:4 ὁ λέγων ὅτι Ἔγνωκα αὐτόν
καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν
ψεύστης ἐστίν
καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν

C Light, Hate, Darkness
2:9 ὁ λέγων ἐν *τῷ φωτὶ* εἶναι
καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ *μισῶν*
ἐν τῇ <u>σκοτιᾷ</u> ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι.

2:11 ὁ δὲ *μισῶν* τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ
ἐν τῇ <u>σκοτίᾳ</u> ἐστὶν

D World vs. Father
2:15 Μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν <u>κόσμον</u>,
  μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ <u>κόσμῳ</u>.
  ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν <u>κόσμον</u>,
  οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ

2:16 ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ <u>κόσμῳ</u>,
  ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς
  καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν
  καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου,
οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς

ἀλλὰ ἐκ τοῦ <u>κόσμου</u> ἐστίν.

  τὸν Ἰησοῦν *ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν*

E Antichrists
2:18 Παιδία, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν,
καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι <u>ἀντίχριστος</u>
ἔρχεται, *νῦν* <u>ἀντίχριστοι</u> πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν

2:19 ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν
ἐξ ἡμῶν· εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν,
μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν
2:21b οἴδατε … ὅτι πᾶν <u>ψεῦδος</u>
 ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν.
2:22 Τίς ἐστιν ὁ <u>ψεύστης</u>
εἰ *μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος* ὅτι Ἰησου
 οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ χριστός; οὗτός ἐστι
ὁ <u>ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος</u>
τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν.
2:23 ἔχοντα πᾶς *ὁ ἀρνούμενος* τὸν υἱὸν
οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει

5:16c ἔστιν <u>ἁμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον</u>

5:19 ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται

5:10b
ὁ μὴ πιστεύων τῷ θεῷ
ψεύστην πεποίηκεν αὐτον
ὅτι οὐ πεπίστευκεν
εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν μεμαρτύρηκεν ὁ θεὸς
περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ
5:12b
ὁ μὴ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ
τὴν ζωὴν οὐκ ἔχει

C' Love, Hate, Does not know God
4:20 ἐάν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι Ἀγαπῶ τὸν θεόν
καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ *μισῇ*,
ψεύστης ἐστίν

4:8 ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν
οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν

D' World vs. God
4:5 αὐτοὶ ἐκ τοῦ <u>κόσμου</u> εἰσίν,
διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ <u>κόσμου</u> λαλοῦσιν
καὶ ὁ <u>κόσμος</u> αὐτῶν ἀκούει.
4:6b ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ

[ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ]

ὃς *οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ* οὐκ ἀκούει ἡμῶν.
ἐκ τούτου γινώσκομεν …
… τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς <u>πλάνης</u> (4:6b)
4:3a καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ

E' Antichrist and false prophets

4:3b τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ τοῦ <u>ἀντιχρίστου</u>,
ὃ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ *νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ
ἐστιν ἤδη*

4:1 Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ Πνεύματι
πιστεύετε, … εἰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν
ὅτι πολλοὶ <u>ψευδοπροφῆται</u>
ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

 3:17 [example of denying the Father and Son]

ὃς δ' ἂν ἔχῃ τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου
  καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρείαν
  καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ,

2:26 Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν περὶ
τῶν πλανώντων ὑμᾶς.

πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐν αὐτῷ;

F Sin as lawlessness, practice of sin, of the devil, works of the devil,

3:4 Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν
καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ,
ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία
3:6b πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν
αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν

3:8 ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν
ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν,
ὅτι ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς
ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει.

3:8b
εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ,
ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα **τοῦ διαβόλου**.

F' Murder, practice of unrighteousness, of the evil one, children of the devil

3:15 πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ
ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἐστίν,
οἴδατε ὅτι πᾶς ἀνθρωποκτόνς

οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν αὐτῷ μένουσαν.

3:12 οὐ καθὼς Κάϊν
ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν

καὶ ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ [See John 8:4]
καὶ χάριν τίνος ἔσφαξεν αὐτον;
ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν,
   τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια.

3:10b πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην
οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ,
καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ

3:10a
ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστιν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ
= καὶ τὰ τέκνα **τοῦ διαβόλου**

Just as the phrases in more common Hebraic parallelisms are expected to shed light on the meanings of terms, chiastic parallelisms can function in the same way. In traditional parallelisms, which often aid interpreters through synonymous or antithetical meanings, the parallel elements are arranged in close proximity in patterns such as ABAB or ABCABC. Chiastic parallelism, or inverted parallelism, assumes the form ABCCBA or ABCBA. When this chiasm is spread out over a large portion of text, the parallelisms are not immediately obvious. Ian Thomson points out that the balance of ideas resulting from a chiasm "is by far the most complex and potentially rewarding relationship in terms of exegesis."[46] Kenneth Bailey includes in a list of other exegetical values of chiasmus that the structure may "provide a crucial key to understanding by enabling the reader to see what words, phrases, or sentences are matched with what other words, phrases, or sentences in the structure."[47] Another key to exegesis found in chiastic passages, mentioned earlier, is the center around which the passage turns. Thomson comments, "the center often contains the focus of the author's thought. … This is a particularly powerful feature with obvious implications for exegesis."[48]

Of the many possible insights that arise from the chiastic arrangement of the selected portions of First John, this section will focus on two. The first of these insights is visible at the end of the chart: the center of the chiasm hinges on verses 3:8b and 3:10a: the intention of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil and to distinguish between the children of God and the children of the devil. As referred to above, this serves as a confirmation of the validity of examining this portion of First John as a Status Degradation Ritual. Two groups of people are having their status transformed; how to tell them apart is the major emphasis of the Epistle. To put it in simplest terms: one of these groups is characterized by "sin" and the other is characterized by "righteousness" (3:10b).

But do the children of God, who are characterized by righteousness, ever sin or do they not? The second insight from the chiastic structure to be discussed in this section addresses this question. The chiastic parallelisms assist in finding a new explanation for the apparent contradiction of 1:8, 10 and 3:6, 9, a perpetual puzzle to commentators: "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves," (1:8) vs. "Anyone who remains in him does not sin … is not able to sin" (3:6, 9). A new approach to this seeming contradiction is to look at the first and last portions of the chiasmus where sin is defined as <u>unrighteousness</u>. In the chiastic structure (see the chart above), "walking in darkness" (1:6) is equated with "all unrighteousness is sin" (5:17). (Also see 1:9 "he will cleanse us from all unrighteousness.") Unrighteousness is the type of sin the author of First John is referring to in the context of 1:8, 10 when he says a person who claims they have no sin is a liar and is calling God a liar. Evidently the author realistically expects that all people lapse into doing what is "wrong" instead of what is "right" upon occasion.

But this is not the only type of sin discussed by the author of First John. In the chiastic center (that includes 3:6, 9 if the positive labeling is included along with the negative statements about the opponents), the context shows the author has re-defined sin as "lawlessness" (3:4), a more serious form of sin (see an allusion to this second type of sin in 5:16, 17—the sin that leads to death). Parallelisms in the chart above (verses 3:4 and 3:15) equate lawlessness with hate, murder and death (the opposite of eternal life). Keeping these separate definitions in mind enables the reader to understand that in 1:10, speaking of sin as "unrighteousness," the author can truthfully say we make God out to be a liar if we claim we have not sinned. God's children have done and will do "unrighteous" things, for which forgiveness is readily available (1:9). But God's children will not be characterized by sin if sin is defined as lawlessness, which in the chiastic parallelism (3:4

and 3:15) is equated with hatred and unbelief in the Son of God, leading to death. The parallelism of 1:6b and 5:17b equates "the truth is not in us" with "a sin unto death." This is the type of sin that the slogans of 3:6, 9 could legitimately claim God's children cannot commit.[49] The "sin unto death" is one the author does not ask believers to pray for (5:16). The chiastic parallelisms give an alternative way of reading verses 3:6, 9, as slogans of the original Johannine community that had been misused out of context by the secessionists to deceive the believers into thinking that if they ever sinned they were not truly children of God.

If the secessionists were undermining the faith of the believing community in this way, it is not hard to understand why a leader within a "Low Grid/Strong Group" society would feel the need to protect the group by drawing boundaries around acceptable behavior and beliefs and casting out the deviants who did not meet the criteria. This is the purpose of a Status Degradation Ritual. As the third stage of the analysis in this article, the next section will apply specific aspects of the ritual model summarized in section 3.4 to the chiastic text outlined in above.

5.   Application of the ritual model to the chiastic text

Many additional insights can be gleaned from the chiastic structure, some of which will be highlighted in this section as illustrations of the way the text accomplishes each of the variables of the ritual model. For the purposes of this article, the most important insight gleaned from the study of the chiastic structure of the sections devoted to denouncing the opponents is that the central climax, the hinge of the chiasmus, constitutes a clear labeling of two sets of people: the children of God and of the devil, and the function of the Son of God in this regard.

This prepares the way for the third stage of this socio-rhetorical analysis of First John—application of the Status Degradation Ritual to the portions of First John that deal with the Children of the Devil. As described in section 3.4 above, Garfinkel's model for a successful degradation ritual consists of four variables: a. the denouncer; b. the deviant; c. an explanation d. witnesses.

These features are all present in the chiastic text defined in section 4.2 above. Each of these will now be examined to see what insights can be gained into the purposes and meaning of the text.

5.1. The denouncer

"The denouncer must be so identified with the witnesses … that the denouncer is perceived as a publicly known person, not a private individual. The denouncer must be invested with the right to speak in the name of [the group's] core values."[50] Mark McVann points out that "the movement from one status to another is presided over by persons qualified to supervise the transition and certify its legitimacy. We call such persons "professionals" or "ritual elders.""[51]

Many Johannine scholars consider the author of First John to be identical with the "Elder" who wrote 2 and 3 John.[52] Certainly throughout the full Epistle of First John the author identifies with his audience in a role appropriate to an elder, calling them his dear little children and showing concern for their well-being. This public pastoral role fits well with the ritual model, which calls for someone qualified to denounce the heretics among the Johannine community. Robert Kysar also sees the author as someone accepted by the community "as one who spoke from the vantage point of some authority or privilege."[53] While an egalitarian society, such as the Johannine community, does not have strong authoritative leaders, Kysar's term, "privilege" can describe the status of a person around whom an egalitarian group might rally to reach consensus about dealing with deviant behavior. The first five verses (the Prologue) of First John serve the function of giving the credentials of the author/denouncer for performing the ritual:

1:1
That which was from the beginning
   which we have heard
   which we have seen with our eyes
   which we have beheld
   which we have handled with our hands
concerning the word of life

1:2
And this life appeared
   and we saw
   and bear witness
   and announce to you
the eternal life which was with the father and appeared to us

1:3
What we have seen heard we announce to you
so you may have fellowship with us
and our fellowship is with the father
   and with his son Jesus Christ

1:4
We write this to you so that our joy may be full.

1:5a
This is the message we have heard from him and announce to you:

The author was an eyewitness of the original events of the community's tradition, perhaps associated with the apostle Thomas ("our hands have handled"), who is qualified to testify to the eternal life that was made physically manifest through the Son. His claim to have fellowship with the Father and Son and his intention to include his hearers in that fellowship (1:3), along with his stated desire to find joy as a result of writing his text (1:4), indicate the author's respected professional status, perhaps that of a pastor, and his right to be the denouncer in this ritual. His dual purpose was to strengthen his followers and to accuse his opponents.

5.2. The deviant whose status will be degraded

The next element in the ritual model is the group of people whose status is being downgraded. In First John it is clear that the "deviants" are the opponents or secessionists, labeled as "antichrists" who "went out from us" (2:18, 19). The chiastic structure of the verses under consideration has helped to demonstrate clearly the seriousness of the case against the opponents and their deviation from group norms. For every value held by the believing community, an opposite characteristic is attributed to the opponents, and these are repeated in the chiastic parallels for added emphasis. The climax of the chiastic structure is the labeling of these deviants as "children of the devil" whose works the Son of God came "to destroy." There was no possibility of fellowship with those who were to the believing community as darkness is to light (see 1:5, 6).[54]

These people were a threat to "the moral universe of the labelers"[55] and their influence had to be nullified. As mentioned earlier in section 4.2, it is likely they had been deceiving the believing community with the misuse of Johannine slogans (see footnote 48) as well as demonstrating unloving

behavior, lies and unbelief. The chiastic text above and the lengthy list of antithetical qualities of the children of God vs. the children of the devil (see section 3.3) demonstrate clearly both the nature of the "moral universe" of the Johannine community and the threat posed by those who were characterized by the opposite of those values. This is exactly the nature of a deviant: someone who is "out of place," a rule breaker, a threat to the order and values of the group's life.[56] The ritual model helps the interpreter better understand the emergency the author of First John was dealing with and why he described the two groups of people in such extremely opposite terms.

5.3. An explanation for the need to downgrade the status of the deviant person or group

The third feature of the Status Degradation Ritual is the "explanation" for banning the deviants that is intended to convince the rest of the group (the witnesses) to adopt the denouncer's interpretation of the situation. Malina and Neyrey state that "rule creators define a state of affairs by drawing or redrawing boundaries around something or someone of social significance, thus situating them as 'out of bounds' or as a threat or danger."[57] Mc Vann speaks of "assembling a case record."[58] The portions of First John that speak of the opponents assemble a detailed explanation by building up accusations, climaxing in 3:8b, 10a with the strong denunciation of them as children of the devil, whose works the Son of God came to destroy. The implication may even be that the opponents themselves constituted a "work of the devil" that needed to be destroyed. In a situation in which it is the denouncer's task to convince others of his point of view, this strong denunciation is understandable. The author's goal was to convince his children to denounce with him those whose values and beliefs were contrary to theirs. No doubt the "case record" consists of stereotypes, but stereotyping serves well the purpose of defining and condemning what lies outside the boundary of acceptability, thus allowing the witnesses and denouncer to feel justified in rejecting the deviant.

As part of the "explanation" section of the ritual, "the condemnation and the deviant label will be justified by appeal to some higher order norm: God's will, the good of the people, the honor of the nation."[59] From the Johannine community's perspective this can be envisioned in widening concentric circles: God's will is in the centre, a wider circle represents the community in right relationship with God, and a still wider circle repre-sents the equivalent of the "honor of the nation," which in this context

would be the greater community that included the opponents of the Elder. The Elder had told his "children" to "walk as Christ walked" but some were not doing so (2:6). In the "explanation" portion of the ritual he appeals to God's will to demonstrate that the deviants need to be cast out for the good of the people, the Elder's followers. As the Elder stated in giving his credentials in the prologue, his goal is fellowship with the believers. The opponents had caused a schism, which was not good for the community, and potentially threatened its survival. The honour of the community is at stake here, an important point the model helps emphasize.

In examining the goodness of fit of the ritual model for the "explanation" segment of the ritual, the appeal to the higher norm of God's will is now discussed. This aspect of the model is seen in the Prologue in which the author appeals to his special relationship with God ("fellowship") and his special knowledge of that which has been known "from the beginning." Throughout the text, reference to God and the Son of God are made repeatedly. Examples are paired here from the chiastic structure, a further illustration of the validity of this model for clarifying the meanings of the text. God and the Son of God are appealed to in assembling the elder's case in these ways:

• The deviants are accused making God a liar, not having God's Word in them and not believing God's witness (compare 1:10; 5:10 in the chiastic structure)
• Those who do not keep God's commandments also do not know God; they do not have the Son of God, nor do they have life (compare the chiastic parallelisms in 2:4; 5:12)
• Denying the Father is equivalent to denying love to those in need (see 2:22, 23; 3:17)
• The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil (3:8)
• Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God (3:10)

The appeal to higher authority as a characteristic of a Status Degradation Ritual helps explain the necessity for repeated references in the text to God, the Father and Son (and the spirit of truth).

5.4. Witnesses who will agree with the denouncer on the new identity of the deviant

The fourth element of the Status Degradation Model is that of the witnesses to the ritual. As mentioned earlier, if the ritual is successful, witnesses will

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be convinced of the truth of the denouncer's explanation. [60] "When a person is successfully declared a deviant, people who knew the person begin to see connections between the deviant's condemnation and all that they know about that deviant's past life." [61] It is in this sense that the author of First John can say retrospectively that the deviants were never really "of us" (οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν, 2:18, 19). Applying the ritual model to the text gives a good explanation for the purpose of the strong denunciations against the opponents. As a ritual, the text will only be successful if it convinces the believing community to agree to the new outcast status of the deviant opponents. The chiastic parallelisms shed additional light on the serious charges being brought, that the witnesses are expected to agree with:

• The opposite of having fellowship with God is walking in darkness and being part of the world that lies in the evil one (1:6 // 5:19).
• Those who do not have the truth residing in them are participating in the "sin unto death," which the author does not encourage the community to pray for (1:6b, 8b // 5:16c, 17,).
• The claims of the opponents indicate that they do not believe God, they make God out to be a liar, they are liars themselves, and they do not have life (1:10, 2:4 // 5:10, 12).
• Those who hate their brothers do not love God; they are walking around in the darkness not knowing where they are going, and they do not know God (2:9, 11 // 4:8, 20).
• The qualities admired by the world are not from God (2:15-17 // 4:3a, 5, 6).
• The opponents are equated with the eschatological "antichrist" and "false prophets" (2:18, 19, 21b, 22, 23a, 26 // 4:1, 3).
• Denying the Father and Son is equated with closing one's affections and refusing to help a brother in need (2:23a // 3:17).
• The sin of lawlessness and being "of the devil … who has been sinning from the beginning" is equated with the sin of Cain (hatred and murder), who was of the evil one (who was also a murderer from the beginning, an allusion to John 8:44) (3:4, 8a // 3:12, 15).
• Two manifestations are listed side by side at the very center of the chiasmus: The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil and it is made manifest who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil. In the process of the manifestation of these opposite sets of people, the devil's work is being undone (λύσῃ). Jesus was manifested to "un-bind" the devil's work in peoples' lives (3:8). It is undone in the lives of the believers when they start to follow Christ. Then the devil no longer has a grip on them to influence them toward wrongdoing and hatred.

Instead, the qualities opposite to those of the devil become characteristic of believers' lives: righteousness and love. The devil cannot bind them because they are children of God, they are in God, they are born of God and they live as Jesus did.

The "Elder" concludes his ritual with a somewhat abrupt warning to his witnesses, in the hope that they will agree with him in his denunciation of the opponents: "little children, keep yourselves from idols." By now it should be obvious from the chiastically paired accusations against the opponents that the author is warning his beloved children in this last verse of the book to stay away from the deviants, the children of the devil, those who represent a false way to God. In the chiastic structure the full meaning of this ending is brought out by balancing antithetical phrase in 1:5b: "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all." In other words, stay away from those who represent the opposite of who God is—the false teachers who will lead you into walking in darkness and the sin of idolatry if you don't agree with the author's diagnosis and denunciation.

These comparisons indicate a good fit between the Status Degradation Ritual model as applied to selected portions of the text of First John. The model calls for four categories: the denouncer, one or more deviants, an explanation that includes appeals to higher authority, and witnesses. The selections of the text we have examined clearly meet all these criteria. The author of First John demonstrates his qualifications to be the public denouncer of the deviants—the group that "went out from us." Through a lengthy list of antithetical comparisons he explains the manner in which the opponents have flagrantly violated group norms and therefore must be divorced from the original community. The witnesses called for by the model correspond to the "little children" of the author's community to whom he addressed his text, hoping to maintain fellowship with them if they would agree with his assessment of the situation (1:3; 5:21). If the hypothesis is correct, that the text portions were originally a ritual to be recited or read to members of the Johannine community, it is not surprising that there is no indication as to whether the witnesses agreed with the denouncer or not. That was the hoped-for result of the ritual which was packaged in chiastic format to help the witnesses keep in mind reasons for the desperate measure being taken—labeling the former members of the group as "children of the devil," never to be associated with again.

Was the ritual successful? Perhaps not. One of the values of examining First John in light of the ritual model is that it raises this very question. If

the denouncer was not successful in rallying enough of his witnesses to agree with him, this could explain why, as Brown states, "after the Epistles there is no further trace of a distinct Johannine Community. … [It is] likely that most of the author's adherents were swallowed up by the 'Great Church.'" [62] As more and more members of the believing community were deceived by the secessionists, the remaining believers may have eventually decided to seek out other less troubled, less dysfunctional fellowships with which to meet.

6. A summary of insights into the purpose and message of the First Epistle of John resulting from the application of the socio-rhetorical models of ritual and chiasm to the text.

McVann poses a key question: "What have we learned by using ritual analysis that we might otherwise not have known?" [63] Applying the Status Degradation Ritual model, in conjunction with the oral-literary model of chiastic structure, to portions of First John, has provided new answers to some questions often asked of the text. In question and answer format, some of the key insights gained from this socio-rhetorical analysis will be briefly summarized here.

Question: Why was First John written?
Answer: The sections of the text that speak about the opponents may have been written (perhaps originally spoken) as a formal denunciation, a Status Degradation Ritual, against those rule-breakers who threatened the stability of the Johannine community. Perhaps this portion of the text was intended to be read/recited to various geographical locations of the Johannine community. The intended result of the Status Degradation Ritual was a final divorce between the two groups.

Question: What is the genre of First John?
Answer: First John can be viewed as a combination of two rituals, antithetically intermingled, each of which labels the status of one of the two sets of people referred to in the book. Robert Kysar's observation, mentioned earlier, lends support to this view: "The disparate portions of the document were drawn from different homilies delivered at different times." [64] The resulting combination of rituals produced a memorable explanation for the Johannine community of who they are as God's children and the reason for their divorce from the opponents, now labeled as children of the devil.

Question: Why does the text appear to be disjointed?
Answer: The ritual model suggests that First John may be the combination of two separate rituals, mingled in an editorial process to produce a memorable document that could be read or recited to members of the Johannine community. Without postulating any particular order in their origin, the pieces of the book that may have originally been separate entities include a Status Transformation Ritual, that could have originated as a baptismal or confirmation homily, a list of antithetical characteristics of the children of God and children of the devil, and a Status Degradation Ritual.

Question: Why is there so much repetition in First John?
Answer: Part of the text is in a chiastic structure which served as a common organizing device in ancient Hebrew and Greco-Roman literature. That structure intrinsically involves repetition. The use of repetition through chiasm would have increased the memorability of what was read by or to the community. In addition, an aspect of the Status Degradation Model calls for appeals to higher authority, designed to convince witnesses to agree with the denouncer. Repeated references to God, the Father and the Son serve this purpose in First John.

Question: Why does the author portray the two groups so stereotypically and in such stark contrasts as "good" and "evil"?
Answer: This is a typical way to maintain boundaries in high group, low grid societies. This cultural convention would help facilitate group members (the "witnesses" of the ritual model) reaching a consensus as to who is "in" and who is "out" of the group.

Question: Who are the opponents of First John?
Answer: They are deviants from the group norms of the Johannine community. This is their master status that engulfs all others. They are typified as the children of the devil who have nothing in common with the members of the Johannine community, who are typified as the children of God. (This article briefly refers to the pre-gnostic tendencies of the opponents in footnote 48.)

Question: What is sin? Do the children of God sin or do they not?
Answer: The chiastic structure of the text indicates that one definition of sin is walking in darkness and "unrighteousness" (1:6; 5:17). From the full text of First John we learn that believers can pray for each other to be forgiven from this type of sin (5:16) and that God is ready to forgive

unrighteousness (1:9; 2:1, 2). Unrighteousness is in a context predominantly about the believers, the followers of the Elder. Because they have Jesus as their Paraclete, their sins can be forgiven (2:1).

The other definition of sin is "lawlessness" (3:4), the sin of the opponents, used in the center of the chiastic ritual describing the children of the devil. In the chiastic parallel, this type of sin is equated with hatred, murder and death (3:15). The children of the devil do not have Jesus as their Paraclete, and this sin cannot be forgiven (5:16, the sin that leads to death). Keeping this definition in mind when reading 3:6, 9 reveals that since God's children do not hate and murder others nor do they have death reigning in their lives, therefore it can be said that in that sense they do not sin.

Question: What is the significance of the similarities and differences between the Prologue of First John and that of the Gospel of John?
Answer: The function of the Prologue of First John is to present the credentials of the denouncer who is carrying out a Status Degradation Ritual, while the Prologue of the Gospel serves to demonstrate the credentials of the eternal "Word." It was the denouncer's eyewitness status "from the beginning" and knowledge of the Word of Life that qualified him to know and declare to others who was "in" and who was "out" of the Johannine Community.

Question: Is there any real structure in First John since commentators over the years have not been able to agree on divisions and an outline of the book?
Answer: Western thinkers have been thinking ethnocentrically and anachronistically in terms of modern western literary concepts. First John was written by an ancient Judeo-Christian author at a time when the Greco-Roman culture was influential. The text may be profitably seen as a synthesis or intermingling of two separate rituals, each with its own structure, one of which, the Status Degradation Ritual, follows the common Hebrew and Greco-Roman chiastic pattern. The accusations against the opponents in this ritual are closely matched with positive statements about the believing community, also fitting the chiastic structure. Those same positive statements can be seen as belonging to a separate Status Transformation Ritual that is structured with amplification and transitional[65] techniques described in Greco-Roman handbooks of rhetoric.[66] Discussion of these techniques and the presence of a second ritual in the remaining portions of the text of First John are beyond the scope of this article.

In summary, the models of ritual and chiasmus provide us with new lenses to look at the text of First John, giving insights into the purpose and meaning of the author in writing this book. Further research into the Status Transformation Ritual (confirming the believers as children of God) and further study of the structure of that section of the book is still needed. In addition there remain further insights to be gleaned from the chiastic structure of the Status Degradation Ritual, particularly when the antithetical positive statements about the believing community are included as part of that chiasm.

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NOTES

[1] Beth Snodderly is a doctoral candidate in the department of New Testament and Early Christian Studies at UNISA.

[2] Bruce J. Malina, and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Conflict in Luke-Acts: Labeling and Deviance Theory." in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation (*ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 98.

[3] Harold Garfinkel, "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies," *AJS* 61 (1956): 420-24.

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4   Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 15.

5   Robert Kysar's observation lends support to the hypothesis that the genre of First John could be a combination of separate rituals: "The disparate portions of the document were drawn from different homilies delivered at different times." See "John, Epistles of" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. David N. Freedman; Garden City: Doubleday, 1992), 902.

6   Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 106.

7   Mark McVann, "Rituals of Status Transformation in Luke-Acts: The Case of Jesus the Prophet" in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 333-60.

8   Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*. Vol. 30 of *The Anchor Bible Commentary* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1982), 71.

9   Thomas E. Boomershine, "Jesus of Nazareth and the Watershed of Ancient Orality and Literacy," *Semeia* 65 (1994): 7-36.

10   Ronald Man defines chiasm (or chiasmus) as "a stylistic literary figure which consists of a series of two or more elements followed by a presentation of corresponding elements in reverse order." The pattern may be in the form of ABBA, or ABCBA, denoting words, lines, concepts, or themes. See Ronald E. Man, "The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation," *BibSac* 141 (1984): 146.

11   Verses in First John that speak about the believing community: 1:1-5, 7, 9, 2:1-3, 5-8, 10, 12-14, 17b, 20, 21, 23b, 24-29, 3:1-3, 5, 6a, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18-24; 4:2, 4, 6a, 7, 9-19, 21; 5:1-10a, 11, 12a, 13-16, 18, 19a, 20, 21.

12   A future article will describe this Status Transformation Ritual as a separate literary unit that is structured with elaborate transitional techniques, found in ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric handbooks. See Bruce W. Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2005), 5ff.

13   The following verses of First John relate to the opponents and will form the basis for the discussion of the proposed Status Degradation Ritual: 1:1-5, 6, 8, 10; 2:4, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17a, 18, 19, 21b, 22, 23a, 26; 3:4, 6b, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17; 4:1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 20; 5:10b, 12b, 16c, 17, 19, 21.

14   Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1.

15   John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, eds., *Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning: A Handbook* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998), xxxvii.

16 Raymond Hobbs, "The Language of Warfare in the New Testament" in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; London: Routledge, 1995), 266.

17 Bruce J. Malina, "Reading Theory Perspective: Reading Luke-Acts" in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 4.

18 Bruce J. Malina, *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), 12.

19 Bruce J. Malina, "Early Christian Groups: Using Small Group Formation Theory to Explain Christian Organizations" in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; London: Routledge, 1995), 96.

20 J. Duncan M. Derrett, "The Evil Eye in the New Testament" in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; London: Routledge, 1995), 65.

21 Philip F. Esler, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994), 12.

22 Esler, *First Christians*, 13.

23 Beth Snodderly, "Applying the Grid and Group Cultural Theory to an Understanding of Two Conflict Situations within the Frontier Mission Fellowship" (Research Paper, William Carey International University, 2004), 31. Also see the chart below adapted from this paper.

24 Mary Douglas, "Cultural Bias" in *In the Active Voice* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 183-266.

25 Malina, *Origins*, 37.

26 Malina, *Origins*, 37.

27 Malina, in Modeling Early Christianity, 109.

28 Malina, *Origins*, 37.

29 Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 104.

30 Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 106.

31 Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 104.

32 Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 102.

33 Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 98.

34 Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 102.

35 Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 105.

36 Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 103.

37 Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 105.

38 Lund, *Chiasmus,* 25.

39 Lund, *Chiasmus,* ix.

40   Jerome Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 38.

41   An example of chiasm in 1 John 3:9:

Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ	a	Everyone born of God
ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ,	b	does not sin
ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει,	c	because God's seed abides in him
καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν,	b'	and he is not able to sin
ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται.	a'	because he has been born of God

In the Greek, not only the meaning of the phrases, but even the exact word order demonstrates a chiastic relationship:

γεγεννημένος
    ἐκ τοῦ θεου
        ἁμαρτίαν
            οὐ ποιεῖ
                σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει,
            οὐ δύναται
        ἁμαρτάνειν
    ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ
γεγέννηται

42   Man, "Chiasm," 148.

43   James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 179.

44   John Christopher Thomas, "The Literary Structure of 1 John," *NovT* 40 (1998): 372.

45   Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 33.

46   Thomson, *Chiasmus,* 42.

47   Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 74.

48   Thomson, *Chiasmus,* 27.

49   It is also possible to read 1 John 3:6 as a mocking quotation by the opponents to disparage the believers:

        πᾶς ὅ ἐν αὐτω μένων οὐ ἁμαρτάνει·
        πᾶς ὅ ἁμαρτάνων
        οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτού
        οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτού.

Each pair of lines begins and ends with the same or similar word or phrase (πᾶς ὅ, ἁμαρτάνει/ἁμαρτάνων) and (οὐχ/οὐδε, αὐτού). Harry Swadling points out that this way of arranging the lines shows the semi-poetic nature of the verse and lends support to the theory that this verse was a slogan well known to the community. (See Harry C. Swadling, "Sin and Sinlessness in 1 John," *SJT* 35 [1982]: 205-11). "It is quite acceptable practice and sound polemic technique to quote one's opponent scornfully and then refute him

in the following sentence." (Swadling, "Sin," 9) And that is exactly what the author of First John does in verse 7: "Dear children, do not let anyone deceive you …." This reading makes it possible to see that the opponents may have been mocking the Johannine Christians: "Children of God do not sin [regardless of how they act] because they have God's seed in them (3:9). They are not able to sin. If anyone sins it means they are ignorant and have never seen or known God." This attribution of a pre-gnostic viewpoint to the secessionists is similar to a report by Irenaeus who describes the Gnostics as despising those who guard against sinning even in thought or word as "utterly contemptible and ignorant persons, while they highly exalt themselves, and claim to be perfect, and the elect seed." (*Adv. Haer*. 1.6.4)

[50] Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 104.

[51] McVann, in *Social World*, 336.

[52] Dirk G. Van der Merwe, "Understanding 'Sin' in the Johannine Epistles," *Verbum et Ekklesia* 26 (2005): 543.

[53] Kysar, "John," in *ABD,* 902.

[54] According to the Johannine epistles, sinful acts stem from three fundamental sources, namely: (1) the *Devil* referred to as ὁ διάβολος (3:8, 10) and ὁ πονηρός (2:13, 14; 3:12), (2) the *world,* represented by those 'from the world' who can be depicted as τῶν πλανώντων (2:26; 2 Jn 7), ἀντίχριστοι (2:18, 22; 4:3), ψευδοπροφῆται (4:1), τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης (4:6), ὁ ψεύστης (2:22), and (3) the *self*, which allows us 'to deceive ourselves' (ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν,1:8), 'love for the world or the things in the world' (Μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ) ... 'the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches' (ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου, 2:15-17).

[55] Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 98.

[56] Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 100.

[57] Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 102

[58] McVann, in *Social World*, 336.

[59] Malina and Neyrey, in *Social World*, 106.

[60] Malina and Neyrey, in Social World, 103.

[61] Malina and Neyrey, in Social World, 105.

[62] Brown, Epistles, 103.

[63] McVann, in *Social World*, 359.

[64] Kysar, "John" in *ABD*, 902.

[65] Duane F.Watson, "Amplification Techniques in 1 John: The Interaction of Rhetorical Style and Invention," *JSNT* 51 (1993): 100.

[66] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 1.