

Living in the Light

Notes for 19 Apr

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Read: [1 John 1](#)

Starters

This study, if you are part of the regular VV group that meets on a Saturday morning, follows on from 55 weeks of working our way through the Books of Samuel.

So, on Tuesday this week I opened up my Bible app and read 1 John 1. The first thing that struck me was *this is different!*. We've moved from the blood and guts and murder and mayhem, and more blood and guts (did I mention the murdering?), to something *completely different*.

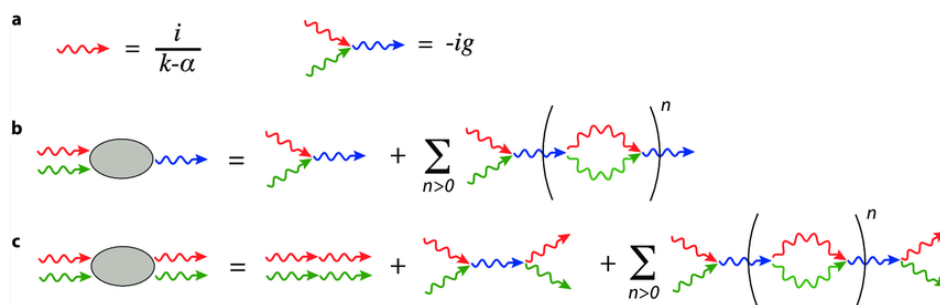
- Pause to take consider this. What's your immediate reaction to reading 1 John 1 after reading Samuel?
- Consider yourself to be a visiting alien with no knowledge whatsoever of the Christian God. With *no reference to any other Biblical writings...*
 - describe the God of Samuel,
 - describe the God of 1 John.

Main Course

One of the delights of living where I do is that the University of St Andrews is but a short drive away. And the good folks of UoStA keep an excellent library, where, for 20 quid a year, anyone can join and take out books. As you might expect of UoStA the theology section of the library is comprehensive. I took myself to the library on Tuesday and took off the shelves about a dozen books with titles akin to 'The Letters of John'. Some were slim volumes of 60 pages, other ran to epic tomes of 500+ pages.

A quick scan of the index pages and the contents and introduction of each volume led me to my first conclusion. There's a lot of *theology* in the letters of John. A *lot*.

One of the epic tomes had an introductory chapter full of diagrams, which reminded me of [Richard Feynman's pictorial representations](#) of the mathematical expressions describing the behaviour and interaction of subatomic particles.



The theology of 1 John, or maybe it's a Feynman diagram...

Read 1 John 1 again.

- Make a list of the important theological points made in the text, both theoretical and practical.

The Text: Introduction

We start with no preamble, no "Hello, my name is John". No "Greetings to my friends in Ephesus". Nothing. Just straight into the big story. John is in a hurry and needs to get on with it.

- **v1a: "We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning..."**
The 'one' is nameless. The important attribute is that this 'one' has been around for ever.
- **v1b: "...whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands."**
We have heard and seen this 'one'. *We* were there. It is real - *I* have seen it with my own eyes.
- **v1c: "He is the Word of life."**
A hint of an explanation - the 'Word' is capitalised (at least in the English translation!). Who can he mean?
- **v2: "This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us."**
Again, *we* have *seen* him. This one *is* eternal life. What does that mean? He was "revealed" to us, after being with the Father.
- **v3: "We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."**
More emphasis on the personal: "*we ourselves*", "*our fellowship*".
More emphasis on the senses: "*seen and heard*".
And, finally, the identification of the One...
- **v4: "We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy"**
Why is he telling us this? Because he wants you to share the *joy*!

This is quite an introduction. Buckets of sheer joy in what he has to tell us. Strong emphasis on the personal. This isn't academic theology. This is a thing that *happened to me*.

Discussion

- Why do you think John starts off like this? Why doesn't he start with some history, or some attempt to justify the stories told about Jesus?
- Does the emphasis on the "personal" distance us, the modern reader, from the text? We, in 2025, don't have the option to go and meet Jesus in the flesh. Is John recounting a magnificent experience that was uniquely his?

- If the experience that John claims is possible (he wants us to share the experience, to "share our joy") then how do we do that? How do we, in 2025, replicate his "joy"?
- Join Catherine and [put on your mystic hat](#): is it important to replicate this feeling? Or would we be better served having a discussion on, say, the [State of the Dead](#), or things [we are not allowed to do on Sabbath](#)? Why/why not!?

Living in the Light

Verses 5-7 declare God to be "light". Not that God provides light, but that God actually *is* light. It is interesting how John describes the differences:

spiritual darkness = not practicing the truth
living in the light = we have fellowship with each other

Why do you think John chose those words? Particularly the second comparison?

Almost as an afterthought, John then adds "and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin".

- Why is this more complex theological argument added at the end of this section?

A warning?

Verse 8 is very blunt. If you claim you have no sin then you are a liar. Given the bluntness of this statement how can we explain the (sadly) common Adventist position that we need to live a perfect life, as Christ lived, before Christ will return - the so-called [Last Generation Theology](#) argument?

Verse 10 more or less repeats the warning of verse 8. But expresses it in an even worse way - if you claim you have no sin then God is a liar! Ouch!

Thankfully verse 9 is squeezed in between these two warnings. Yes, you have sin, but if we acknowledge that fact then "he is faithful and just to forgive us".

- What do you make of the word "just" in verse 9?

Phew! We're off to an excellent start. John, in a few short words, expresses much. I look forward to the rest of these letters...