Hebrew is not held to such sequential narration exclusively. Flashbacks as well as reaching forward to later events, and logical relationships between events, are all made possible by a variety of syntactic forms.

The principle of sequential narration is a useful adjunct to methods of redaction criticism, although it by no means is an absolute criterion. It is also helpful in interpreting the text, whether for reconstructing dramatic sequence or for selecting the precise meaning of a term.

M. DE JONGE

AN ANALYSIS OF I JOHN 1. 1-4

M. de Jonge is Professor of New Testament in the University of Leiden (Netherlands) and a member of United Bible Societies' European Regional Translation Committee (ERTC). This article gives (with some alterations) the text of a lecture given at Uppsala, 28 April 1977, at a joint meeting of the ERTC with Bibelkommissionen, the Swedish committee responsible for a new translation of the Bible. The material presented here was earlier used for a Dutch contribution to the Festschrift for W. K. Grossouw, *Van Taal tot Taal* (published in September 1977).

Introduction

In their meeting at Klosterneuburg in April 1976 the members of ERTC had an interesting discussion on the relation between scholarly exegesis of the Bible and the teaching of exegetical method in universities, on the one hand, and the approach to biblical texts, practised and continually developed by the translators and translation consultants of the Bible Societies, on the other. A good exegete need not be a good translator; but we may rightly ask whether an exegete who neglects important linguistic insights like those gained in Bible Society circles does not curtail his exegetical possibilities, and give an incomplete interpretation of the text before him. I should like to continue this discussion in this paper.

It is obvious that a translator of the Bible needs exegetical skills as well as linguistic training. When an exegete serves on a translation committee (as I did for a number of years, helping to prepare various parts of a translation into everyday Dutch) he discovers that he has a lot to learn. If he tries to broaden his perspective theoretically and practically, he also discovers that his actual exegetical work benefits from this new outlook. Consequently I tried to apply what I had learned in my lectures on the New Testament at the University of Leiden during the academic years 1975–1976 and 1976–1977.

I discovered that the response of the students was very positive. For these two years I concentrated on discourse analysis along the lines of E. A. Nida and C. R. Taber in their *The Theory and Practice of Translation*[1] and E. A. Nida in his *Exploring Semantic Structures*.[2] I also benefited from a number

[1] Leiden: E. J. Brill ²1974.
[2] Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 1975.

of practical insights given by J. Beekman and J. Callow in their *Translating the Word of God*.[3]

Discourse analysis carried out in this fashion proved to be a very useful method for giving an overall view of the text. Many exegetical methods only deal with certain constituents of the text or with certain aspects of it. If one applies discourse analysis one has to keep a general view of the wood while examining the trees, and that is a good thing—in theory and in practice! Those who have read Birger Olsson's *Structure and meaning in the Fourth Gospel*[4] will have had the same experience.

The choice of the texts to be interpreted in the lectures was influenced by practical considerations. First, I dealt with the Johannine Epistles. Having written a commentary on them in Dutch,[5] and having afterwards worked on a *Translator's handbook* with C. Haas and J. L. Swellengrebel,[6] I could concentrate on the new approach, presupposing and re-examining the exegetical results laid down in the books mentioned. Next, I worked on I Thessalonians, a text with which I was not so familiar, using as an extra tool the *Translator's handbook on Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians* by P. Ellingworth and E. A. Nida.[7]

My subject in the present paper is the analysis of I John 1.1–4, an exegetically difficult passage, and one not easy to translate. From the point of view of discourse analysis it is a relatively easy one. An analysis of this small pericope will illustrate, I hope, how we can reach a better understanding of a text by combining traditional exegetical methods with the analytical methods used by Nida and his colleagues. This better understanding will, in the end, lead also to a better translation.

E. A. Nida and discourse analysis

It will be good to sum up, at the beginning, the main elements in Nida's approach. As a non-linguist, I can only try to repeat in my own words what I understand Nida to mean, and to underline what seem to be the most important elements in his method. I do not feel that I see all the implications—linguistic, philosophical or theological—of Nida's method, nor can I compare it with other approaches. Nida's books show that his own thoughts are still in a state of flux, and at the same time that he is eminently practical. Theories are put forward in order to explain things and to help people to analyse and handle them. This makes his books very useful for an exegete who is trying to find new ways, but it means also that Nida's terminology is not always entirely consistent, and that theoretical presuppositions are often less explicit than their practical application.

If discourse analysis is to be defined as "the study of linguistic patterns, structures or systems beyond the sentence", the two most important questions

[3] Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House 1974.
[4] Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup 1974.
[5] *Die Brieven van Johannes*. Nijkerk: Callenback 1968, ²1973.
[6] *A Translator's Handbook on the Letters of John*. London: U.B.S. 1972.
[7] Stuttgart: U.B.S. 1975.

will be (1) the inter-relation between the sentences (and between clauses within a sentence), and (2) the relationship between the sentences/clauses as parts, and the text as a whole consisting of these parts.

For Nida "meaning" is relatively independent of the surface structure of the text. Grammatical possibilities and semantic domains of lexical units differ from language to language, and also within any one language there is much flexibility. Before we translate from one language to another we should restructure the text, and in doing so we try to define more precisely the meaning of the sentences and clauses before us. Restructuring means going "below the surface". I am not quite sure how far Nida wants us to go in theory; I understand that in this, too, he is practical and expects us to go no further than necessary. The surface structure is the expression of a very complicated network of so-called primary semantic units. These primary units are marked by "primary semantic relations" between lexical units belonging to four basic semantic classes: objects,[8] events, abstracts, relations.

These primary semantic relations can be classified rather easily. In chapter 4 of his *Exploring Semantic Structures*[9] Nida discusses six types of "primary semantic configurations": action, description, association, classification, identification, axis. Of great practical importance is his advice to describe the primary configurations found in or under the text with the help of "kernels". In these "kernels", basic clauses, we should try to render objects by nouns, events by verbs, abstracts by adjectives or adverbs, relations by prepositions or conjunctions.

Having thus clarified the primary semantic units, we proceed to define the relationship between them. Of course we have to start with grammar in the usual sense of the word, and study the forms and syntax of the surface text. Exegetes and translators cannot dispense with a thorough knowledge of the language in which their text is written. But one cannot stop there. The semantic structure of the texts before us is not identical to the grammatical structure. In chapter 5 of his *Exploring Semantic Structures*, Nida deals with "grammatical meaning of secondary semantic configurations". Here he uses "grammatical" in connection with "meaning" to denote the various possible semantic relations between primary configurations. He distinguishes two main categories under the headings "co-ordinate" and "subordinate", and uses many subdivisions. "Co-ordinate" is subdivided into "additive" (equivalent, or different) and "dyadic" (alternative, contrastive or comparative); "subordinate" is subdivided into "qualificational" (with many possibilities), and "logical" (with, again, at least seven possibilities).

I am not going into the details of Nida's distinctions. They are, certainly, to some extent subjective; one may doubt whether it will ever be possible to find an objective grid to apply to the living utterances of living people. Yet Nida's distinctions help the exegete to ask good questions of his text, particularly because he emphasizes that the relation between primary semantic con-

[8] In his *Componential Analysis of Meaning* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton 1975) and his *Exploring Semantic Structures* (see e.g. chapter 4, note 4 on p. 187), Nida introduces the term "entities".

[9] *Exploring Semantic Structures*, 37–47.

figurations may be complicated, and will sometimes have to be classified under more than one heading. The exegete should also realize that he has always been forced to go beyond the grammatical analysis of the surface text and to ask questions about the author's train of thought, that is, he real intention, however imperfectly it may be expressed in language.

Two further remarks are important in this connection. Before applying his own "grid" to an article, "Fish bites dog", in *Time Magazine* of 23 August 1968,[10] Nida remarks that a restructuring of all parts of a text to "kernels" requires a lot of work, and is not always necessary. His advice is to concentrate on the relations between clauses or clause-like constituents on the surface level, and only to restructure these clauses if their meaning is equivocal or not immediately evident. This saves time, but involves certain dangers, because one may easily confuse levels of analysis in shifting back and forth from surface to subsurface level, and one may be tempted to be influenced too much by the surface structure.

In practice I found this advice of Nida's most useful; any method should be used only as long as it clarifies the issues rather than complicating matters unnecessarily.

A second remark concerns the relations between larger units in the text. According to Nida, "the relations between those larger sections of a discourse exhibit the same types of semantic relations as those which are found between primary configurations".[11] He advises us to treat the larger sections as "thematic units" and to delineate them by defining the major element or elements of the units from the point of view of content. In his *Exploring Semantic Structures* Nida is not very explicit at this point. We have to supplement his remarks there with the treatment of discourse structure in *The Theory and Practice of Translation.*[12]

There Nida and Taber mention eight "universals of discourse". "A well-constructed discourse in any language will respect a variety of constraints designed to give the discourse structure".[13]

Two of them are relative to the discourse as a whole:

1. The marking of the beginning and the end.
2. The marking of the transitions between the major internal divisions.

Three have to do mainly or largely with events:

3. The marking of temporal relations between events.
4. The marking of spatial relations between events and objects.
5. The marking of logical relations between events.

Two others have to do mainly with objects:

6. The identification of participants.
7. Various devices for the highlighting and backgrounding of various elements, objects as well as events.

[10] *Ibid.*, 54–56.
[11] *Ibid.*, 54.
[12] *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 131–132, 152–157.
[13] *Ibid.*, 131.

Finally there is an **eighth** aspect:

8. Indication of the involvement of the author (extremely important, by the way, in the analysis of a real letter like I Thessalonians!).

For the analysis of the relations between the larger units of a text, the help of these discourse markers, applied separately at first, and in various combinations later, proves very helpful. Again I may refer to Olsson's book on the Fourth Gospel; I myself applied them also in my analysis of I Thessalonians, with satisfactory results. Here, by the way, the *Translator's Handbook* proved to be less explicit and consistent than in its delineation of the primary and secondary configurations and the treatment of the meaning of individual lexical units. Perhaps a special section, either at the beginning or at the end of each Handbook, should be devoted to the treatment of the relations between the larger units of the text. Perhaps this area of theory and practice may have to be developed a little further before this can be done in a satisfactory way.

I John 1.1–4 as an example

v. 1 a That which was from the beginning
b which we have heard
c which we have seen with our eyes,
d which we have looked upon
e and touched with our hands,
f concerning the word of life—
v. 2 a the life was made manifest
b and we saw it,
c and testify to it,
d and proclaim to you
e the eternal life which was with the Father
f and was made manifest to us—
v. 3 a that which we have seen
b and heard
c we proclaim also to you,
d so that you may have fellowship with us;
e and our fellowship is with the Father
f and with his Son
g Jesus Christ.
v. 4 a And we are writing this
b that our joy may be complete.

The text given above is that of the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), printed in such a way as to show the semantic structure of the pericope under discussion. RSV was chosen for no other reason than that it gives a formal-equivalent translation. What the reader has before him is, of course, the result and not the starting-point of discourse analysis, and some explanation is required.

First a remark on the beginning and the end of this pericope. The beginning, although not marked by any formula, presents no problem. It is, obviously,

the beginning of the text as a whole, whether it should be called a letter or not. As to the end, there is a clear transition between vv. 4 and 5. V. 5 states the core of the message which forms the basis of the rest of the next section, which ends at 2.2. The "this" (καὶ ἔστιν αὕτη) points forward to the clause beginning with ὅτι, indicating the content of the message which "we have heard from him and proclaim to you". This clause, of course, also underlines what is important in the preceding pericope. The author speaks about the proclamation by the "we" to "you" of the things heard by the "we" from "him". V. 5a obviously marks the transition between two sections in the discourse.

Secondly: this pericope evidently consists of small sentences and clauses. The connection between them is problematical, but the sentences themselves are nearly all clear, and analysis into kernels is not necessary, except in the case of 1f, "concerning the world of life". In the *Commentary* and in the *Handbook* mentioned above, this is interpreted as meaning "the Word that is life (or: gives life)" and the translation, "the Word that speaks of life", is rejected. The exegesis we prefer presupposes that the word *logos* used in the Greek must be seen against the background of the Prologue of the Gospel, and, consequently, refers to Jesus Christ. This implies a decision about the place of 1f in the context. We do not connect it with the immediately preceding clauses (as in RSV), but regard it as the beginning of a new sentence which remains unfinished. 'V.1^{c} [= 1f in our structure] serves to specify to what the relative clauses are referring. It is added as though by afterthought, and gives the impression of being an unfinished clause that lacks a verb form meaning "we speak" or "we write".'[14]

My **third** remark is concerned with the persons mentioned in these verses. Evidently a group which indicates itself as "we" distinguishes itself from another group addressed as "you". "We" is used exclusively and not inclusively; this may apply also to the "our" in 4b, unless this serves to underline the union after the proclamation leading to fellowship, mentioned in 3cd,[15] taken up again in 4a. What is essential is that the "we"-group testifies to, proclaims, and/or writes what it has seen and heard. This seeing and hearing became possible because the life was made manifest to the "we" (this is stated twice; see 2a and 2f).

Before this manifestation the (eternal) life was with the Father, as we read in 2e. Clearly 2ef explain and develop what is said very briefly in 2a. From v. 2 we understand why 1b-e could follow immediately after 1a, what is meant by the unusual neuter "that which was from the beginning" and with the (in itself equivocal) "beginning".

If we may connect 1a, 1f, 2a and 2e in this way, there is a third person on the scene, who is called "the Son" in 3f, and (finally) identified as Jesus Christ in 3g. This person entered into a relation with the "we"-group and made it possible (and even necessary) for this group to address the others indicated as "you". This third person was "with the Father", 2e tells us; "the Father" comes back in 3e, and therefore 3f can call the third person "the Son". Thus the Father, God himself, is very much in the picture. The Son is the inter-

[14] *A Translator's Handbook on the Letters of John*, 21.

[15] We should note the repeated καὶ ὑμεῖς in 3d after the καὶ ὑμῖν of 3c.

mediary in the constitution of the fellowship between the "we"-group and the Father; the grammatically co-ordinate expressions "with the Father" and "with his Son" in 3ef are semantically subordinate. V.3f indicates the means by which the "fellowship" mentioned in 3e is realized. In this we presuppose that the fellowship did not end at the moment the Son was made manifest to "us".

This may be further clarified by an analysis of the temporal features. Therefore a **fourth** remark. From what we have just said we must come to the conclusion that "the beginning" mentioned in v.1 is "the beginning" meant in Gen 1.1 and Jn 1.1. Jesus Christ was with the Father "from the beginning"; he was made manifest to "us" and is still the one with whom the "we" have fellowship (and through him with the Father). The "we" enter upon the scene at a point in time which lies also in the past, but it is obvious that "the beginning" lies much further back than the "was manifested". Next: after the *imperfects* in 1a and 2e, emphasizing duration, 2a and 2f use *aorists*, indicating a specific point in the past. For "hearing", "seeing", "touching", both *aorists* and *perfects* are used. The relation between "we" and "you" is indicated by verbs in the *presents* "we are writing" in 4a clearly indicates a special aspect of the testimony or proclamation mentioned before in 2cd and 3c. The connection (fellowship) between the "we" and "you" has its origin in the fellowship between "we" and the Son, inaugurated at the moment of their positive response to the manifestation and continued also after the moment of the writing of this letter. The "writing" is one aspect of the continued proclamation and its purpose is to make the "you"-group enter into the existing fellowship. It is this analysis of temporal relations, rather than logical ones, that has determined the indentation-pattern of the text printed above.

We should, of course, deal in detail also with the meaning of the words used in the individual clauses, if only to distinguish between the (near)-synonyms used. Is there a difference between ἑωράκαμεν in 1c and ἐθεασάμεθα in 1d, or between "heard and seen" in 1bc and "seen and heard" in 3ab? Perhaps the distinction between "testify" in 2c and "proclaim" in 2d (and 3c) can be shown by pointing out that "testify" is the connecting link between "we saw" in 2b and "proclaim" in 2d. For further details I refer you to the *Handbook*. I wish to close this section with an analysis of the four verses concerned.

1a indicates what preceded in time to an (implicit) "was manifested", presupposed in 1b-e. Explicated in 2ab, ef.
1b equivalent of 3b.
1c addition (different) to 1b, equivalent of 2b and 3a.
1d equivalent of 1c.
1e addition (different) to 1b and 1cd.
1f addition (different) to 1a.

2a means with 2b as result; also content of 2b.
2b result of 2a; equivalent of 1c and 3a.
also: means with 2c as result, and content of 2c, together with 2a.

2c result, and partly equivalent, of 2b.
2d addition (different) to 2c, and specification; equivalent of 3c.
2e addition (different) to (and explication of) 1a and f.
2f equivalent of 2ab.
3a equivalent of 1c and 2b } content of 3c.
3b equivalent of 1b }
3c equivalent of 2d; means with 3d as purpose.
3d purpose of 3c.
3e background of and reason for 3cd; also addition to 3d and result of 3f.
3f addition (different) to 3e and also means with 3f as result.
3g identification of "his Son" in 3f.
4a specification of 2cd and 3c; means with 4b as purpose.
4b purpose of 4a; addition to 3d.

Some concluding remarks

1. Discourse analysis after the manner of Nida presupposes sound exegetical work on the basis of the Greek text. One has to take certain exegetical decisions with the help of other exegetical methods before the place of sentences and clauses within the text as a whole can be determined. It is a matter of interaction between the two. In this process, discourse analysis helps to focus on the text as a whole, and on the consistent approach of the individual phenomena as parts within that whole.

This means that discourse analysis as a central feature in the process of interpretation helps the exegete to avoid two very common mistakes. The first is that he tries to explain a text diachronically, by an analysis of its history. A very common literary-critical approach is to show that the author used written sources or traditional material and redacted it in a somewhat awkward way; or to suppose interpolations in an already existing and consistent whole. In doing so one pays special attention to the differences in the text, and interprets them historically, without explaining them as nuances or tensions within one text. Discourse analysis does not exclude literary criticism or form- and redaction-criticism, but it asks consistently what got across in the process of communication between the author(s) and readers of this present text.

The second mistake the exegete learns to avoid is that of investigating the meaning of words and expressions *in abstracto*, without a detailed study of the contexts in which they function. The same applies to the study of parallels. Every word is an integral part of a particular context, and should be interpreted as part of that context. Parallels are useful and interesting, because every individual language-user cannot but use the language of many others, but again, the really important question is how words, expressions, sayings, proverbs, function in individual contexts.

2. The text is one very essential aspect of a process of communication—see chaper 2 in *The Theory and Practice of Translation* and particularly Nida's earlier book *Message and Mission*.[16]

[16] New York: Harper 1960. The sub-title is: "The communication of the Christian faith".

This means that we cannot detach the text from that communication process, and neglect historical questions; certainly not in the case of the writings of the New Testament, which try to reach a particular audience, and which in many instances presupposes a personal and intensive relation between the author(s) and the people addressed. This is the case of I John, whether we call it a letter or a treatise. Many of the questions dealt with in introductions to the New Testament are of direct importance for the interpretation of the meaning of the text. Yet one should give priority to questions of internal criticism above the collecting of external data. In the case of I Thessalonians it is advisable, for instance, to study the relations of Paul and his helpers with the Thessalonians, first from the letter itself, before looking to the Acts of the Apostles for confirmation and further information.

3. A third remark deals with the relation between surface structure and the underlying level(s). Our pericope repeats certain things several times, with minor changes. The purpose of this repetition is to underline some really important things. We have also noticed how the authors begin with the vague "that which was from the beginning" and end with the name of Jesus Christ in verse 3g, which constitutes a climax. In this way, what is central in the thinking of the authors becomes central in the text. If we go back from the surface structure to the underlying level, we find that the number of primary units could have been smaller, and that a less complicated surface structure could have served to communicate what the author wanted to say just as well. But the authors said what they said the way they said it, and it is precisely the comparison between the surface level and the one below it which shows clearly the abundance and complexity of their way of expression. This text does not yet try to get information across, but it makes an appeal to its readers. Here Nida's distinction between "cognitive meaning" and "emotive meaning" is apposite. So also is his statement, "emotive meanings are not relatable primarily to language as a structure, but rather to the manner in which this structure manifests itself, especially in actual discourse."[17] In short: in our exegesis we should not only analyse what somebody says, but also how he says it.

This has its consequences for our translation too. Discourse analysis helps us to see clearly what we should translate—but the *how* is obviously a component of the *what*. This does not mean that we should imitate the ways of expression of the source language. But in the case of I John 1:1–4 we have to ask how we express the abundance, the emphasis, the gradual disclosure ending in a climax, with the help of the stylistic means of the receptor language, so that we really achieve "dynamic equivalence".

[17] *Exploring Semantic Structures*, 18.