

## Pew Summer Research Proposal

*Union University*

*2004–2005*

Name(s) of Applicant(s): Mark Dubis

Date: 9/16/04

Title of Proposed Project: A Semantic and Structural Analysis of 1 Peter 1:1–2:10

Primary Discipline: Biblical Studies

Secondary Discipline(s): Theology

Has this proposal been submitted to another agency, publication, or program? No  
If so, which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

Location of proposed research: Jackson, Tennessee and Dallas, Texas

Desired start date: June 1, 2005

Sponsoring Scholars (and discipline, please):

External: John Banker, General Editor, Semantic and Structural Analysis Series,  
SIL International

Union: George Guthrie, Chair and Benjamin W. Perry Professor of Biblical  
Studies, Department of Christian Studies

### **Checklist:**

- Request for Letters of Recommendation
- Project description with major goals
- Brief examination of scholarly literature
- Plan for completion and dissemination
- Budget
- Essay on integration
- Current vitae
- Six copies of proposal

## **A Semantic and Structural Analysis of 1 Peter 1:1-2:10**

Pew Summer Research Grant Proposal  
Mark Dubis  
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### **1. Description of the project and its major goals**

This project aims to develop a detailed structural analysis of 1 Peter 1:1–2:10 with a view to placing this section within the overall structure of 1 Peter. Although I will critically interact with secondary literature that adopts various analytical methodologies such as epistolary analysis, literary analysis, and rhetorical analysis, the particular methodology that will provide the vantage point for my study will be a “semantic and structural analysis.” This method will analyze the Greek text of 1 Peter syntactically and semantically in order to identify the relationship between constituent units, beginning with phrases and propositions and moving toward increasing larger constituent units. The goal of this analysis is to identify the message and function of 1 Peter 1:1-2:10 within the book as a whole and to determine the way in which the constituent units of this passage relate to one another, with the ultimate aim of facilitating a better understanding of the message of 1 Peter.

### **2. Relevant scholarly literature**

During the first half of the twentieth century and beyond, it was common to argue against the unity of 1 Peter, bifurcating the book on the grounds that 1:3–4:11 views suffering as a mere possibility, while 4:12–5:11 views suffering as a present reality. Scholars often coupled this view of the composite nature of 1 Peter with an understanding that 1:3–4:11 was either a baptismal homily or a baptismal liturgy which was then set within an epistolary framework (see Perdelwitz 1911 and numerous others after him such as Cross 1954 and Moule 1956), thus raising questions about 1 Peter’s literary genre. Along these lines, Brooks (1974) argued that 3:21 and its reference to baptism was the

key to the literary structure of the entire book. More recent scholarship has rightly rejected these theories of baptismal and composite origins (so e.g. Achtemeier 1996: 58-62), but other questions related to 1 Peter's structure still remain.

Scholars have approached the analysis of 1 Peter's structure in a number of ways. Most scholars, having rejected the notion that 1 Peter was fundamentally a baptismal document, now agree that 1 Peter is a letter. As such, scholars have examined 1 Peter according to the standard divisions of ancient Greco-Roman letters. In an important monograph, Martin (1992) and similarly Prasad (2000: 75-117) divide 1 Peter into a prescript (1:1-2), blessing section (1:3-12), letter-body subdivided into body-opening (1:13) and body-middle (1:14-5:11) and body-closing (5:12), greeting section (5:13-14a), and farewell (5:14b). Disagreement exists here, however, since Achtemeier (1996: 73-74) identifies the verses corresponding to the letter-body much differently (body-opening in 1:13-2:10, body-middle in 2:11-4:11 and body closing in 4:12-5:11). Even if one is able to identify correctly the various letter components, understanding the form of ancient letters, while helpful, only goes so far in analyzing the book's structure (as Martin himself indicates).

Martin thus attempts to press further in understanding the organization of 1 Peter by paying attention to literary characteristics of the letter, especially the use of metaphors. On this basis he divides the body-middle into three sections: 1:14-2:10 united by the "household of God" metaphor, 2:11-3:12 united by the "aliens" metaphor, and 3:13-5:11 united by the "sufferers of the exile" metaphor, all submetaphors of the 'controlling metaphor' of the Jewish diaspora. Along different lines, some have analyzed 1 Peter simply in terms of an oscillation between exhortation and doctrine (Chevallier 1971; Ellul 1990; Tuñi 1987).

Other have approached 1 Peter via rhetorical criticism, including Thurén in two separate monographs (1995; 1990). Campbell (1998) criticized Thurén as being too dependent on modern rhetorical theory, opting rather to use what he calls "classical-

rhetorical criticism,” drawing upon ancient rhetorical handbooks for his analytical categories. He consequently divides 1 Peter into an *exordium* (1:3-12), three *argumentationes* (1:13-2:10, 2:11-3:12, 3:13-4:11), and a *peroratio* (4:12-5:14). Thompson (1994) suggests a different arrangement as follows: *exordium* (1:3-9), *narratio* (1:10-12), *probatio* (1:13-5:5), *peroratio* (5:6-11). Furthermore, while Thurén understands the species of rhetoric to be epideictic, Campbell and Thompson treat it as deliberative.

Yet others apply a linguistically oriented method sometimes called “semantic and structural analysis” or, more broadly, “discourse analysis.” This method seeks to identify the relationship between constituent units (e.g. exhortation-grounds, concession-contraexpectation) and pays attention to such things as boundaries, coherence, prominence, and the function of discourse units. For over forty years, SIL International, the linguistically oriented field organization of Wycliffe Bible Translators, has developed this methodology and published related studies, including the seminal work by Beekman, Callow and Kopesec (1981) and the ongoing multivolume series, *Semantic and Structural Analysis*. Using such an approach, some studies focus on narrow units (see Du Toit 1974 on 1:3-13, Botha 1988 on 1:13-25, Beckman 2002 on 1:17-21), while other scholars give attention to the book as a whole (see especially Combrink 1975 but also Wendland 2000). Van Rensburg (1992; 1990) gives particular attention to the use of intersentence particles and asyndeton. Although not on 1 Peter, I note here that George Guthrie has published an important monograph, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), which applies discourse analysis to the book of Hebrews, and thus Dr. Guthrie is especially appropriate to provide an internal recommendation for this proposal.

Despite these studies and the application of these various methods, no consensus on 1 Peter’s structure has been achieved. Apart from the differences mentioned above, an additional indication of the lack of consensus on 1 Peter’s structure is the divergent identifications of major units. Some scholars divide 1 Peter into two sections (Antoniotti

1985 and Talbert 1986 into 1:3-2:10 and 2:11-5:11; Kendall 1986 into 1:3-12 and 1:13-5:11), others divide it into three major sections (Balch 1981: 123-31 and Michaels 1988: xxxiv into 1:3-2:10, 2:11-4:11, 4:12-5:11; Dalton 1989: 72-86 into 1:3-2:10, 2:11-3:12, 3:13-5:11), while yet others find four major sections (Combrink 1975 into 1:3-2:10; 2:11-3:12; 3:13-4:19; 5:1-11; Elliott 1990: 234-36 and Schreiner 2003 into 1:3-2:10, 2:11-4:11, 4:12-19, 5:1-11). Debate also exists as to the nature of the opening section in 1:3-12. Over against others, Kendall (1986) regards 1:3-12 as a heavily programmatic introduction to the rest of the letter (cf. Tite 1996; 1997 who views 1:1-2 alone in a similar light).

The number and variety of these major divisions alone indicate the lack of clarity that exists with regard to the structure of 1 Peter. And yet it is the structure of 1 Peter which is foundational to its proper interpretation. Consequently, the field of Petrine studies is ripe for a fresh analysis of the question of 1 Peter's structure so as to better understand its message. Issues of interest in 1 Peter 1:1-2:10 include the question of the introductory character of 1:3-12, the extensive citation and allusion to Old Testament texts and their rhetorical function, grammatical ambiguities related to Greek participles and imperatives, and the use of metaphors in this section. While seeking to incorporate the best insights of other methods, my primary method would be that of semantic and structural analysis, especially the particular variety of this method represented in the research and publications of SIL International.

### **3. Plan for completion and dissemination**

As mentioned above, SIL International, the field organization of Wycliffe Bible Translators has been a leader in the development and ongoing publication of works related to semantic and structural analysis (as well as linguistics in general, with the ninth edition of the SIL bibliography of its members running to over 600 pages and 12,000 titles). SIL publishes a multivolume series dedicated to the structural analysis of

individual biblical books entitled *Semantic and Structural Analysis*. John Banker, the editor of this series, recently invited me to contribute the volume on 1 Peter to the series (and, consequently, I have asked John Banker to provide the external recommendation for this proposal). Given that the *Semantic and Structural Analysis* series is widely used by Bible translators, this opportunity is especially exciting since my contribution to the series has the potential of supporting the translation of 1 Peter into many of the world's languages that still do not have a Bible (or even a New Testament) available.

If this proposal is funded, this spring I would integrate this project with my Intermediate Greek class. Then especially during the summer months I would develop the analysis of 1 Peter 1:1–2:10 with corresponding commentary, which would be the first phase of this larger book project. Early in the research phase, I would plan to travel to the International Linguistics Center, the international headquarters of Wycliffe Bible Translators and SIL International, for a week or so of consultation and research with the series editor. That fall I would plan to give a conference presentation arising from my work. By the following spring I would plan to submit the manuscript draft of this work to the series editor.

I note that, given the rich insights that a structural analysis will provide into the interpretation of 1 Peter, this project will lay an important foundation for additional future publications arising from my ongoing program of research on 1 Peter.

## Proposed Schedule

Spring 2005	Begin preliminary work by integrating research project with teaching by translating and analyzing 1 Peter in the spring semester of Intermediate Greek
Early Summer 2005	Spend week at the International Linguistics Center in Dallas in research and consultation with John Banker, editor of the <i>Semantic and Structural Analysis</i> series
Summer 2005	Research and write analysis of 1 Peter 1:1–2:10
October 2005	Submit research summary to Selection Committee
November 2005	Give presentation at the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society and/or the international Bible Translation 2005 conference sponsored by SIL
December 2005	Submit manuscript draft of 1 Peter 1:1–2:10 analysis and commentary to <i>Semantic and Structural Analysis</i> series editor, John Banker
April 2006	Give presentation at Union University Scholarship Symposium

## 4. Budget

Travel to Dallas for consultation with series editor	\$250
Salary Supplement	\$4,250

## 5. Integration of Faith and Research

1 Peter is a rich source of theological and pastoral insight. This book offers important guidance regarding how Christians should respond in a culture from which they find themselves increasingly alienated. It offers hope for ways in which Christians may exercise a transforming influence on their society. It speaks powerfully to how Christians should interpret the suffering and persecution they face. It addresses relationships within families and relationships to governments. It presses the need for a vital evangelistic witness and upholds a pattern of pastoral integrity. Its use of the Old

Testament provides insight into the way in which early Christianity appropriated the first half of the canon and offers models for the contemporary church in this respect. It offers significant contributions under the theological foci of soteriology, Christology, ethics, ecclesiology and eschatology. In order that all these facets of 1 Peter be interpreted accurately and meaningfully, however, a proper understanding of the ways in which the constituent parts of the book fit together is required. Such analysis would hopefully contribute towards illuminating the message of 1 Peter so that it may continue to speak to our own day.

What especially motivates me with regard to this proposal is the great need for Bible translations around the world. Stuningly, of the world's approximately 6,500 languages, less than six percent have a complete Bible and only twenty percent have a complete New Testament. This staggering reality transforms my potential contribution from a mere academic pursuit into a project that intersects in a profound way with my deepest Christian commitments.

## **6. Curriculum vitae**

See attached.

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