

1:1 *The Elder to the Elect Lady and Her Children*

To the Elect Church.

Clement of Alexandria: John's second letter, which is written to virgins, is extremely straightforward. It was written to a certain Babylonian woman called Electa, whose name stands for the election of the holy church. Adumbrations.¹

To the Elect Lady.

Hilary of Arles: The elect lady is clearly a church to which the letter is written. It is elect in faith and mistress of all virtues. Introductory Commentary on 2 John.²

The Elder.

Jerome: Originally "presbyters" and "bishops" were the same. When later on one was chosen to preside over the rest, this was done to avoid schism. For apart from ordination, what function is there which belongs to a bishop which does not also belong to a presbyter? Letters 146.³

To a Particular Lady.

Andreas: John is either writing to a church, or else to a particular woman who has ordered her household spiritually, according to the commandments of God. He writes this letter to one of the women who has accepted the proclamation and exhorts her to do two things. The first of these is to walk in love, and the second is to avoid welcoming false teachers. John also tells us that the overall purpose of his letter is to keep her informed until he is able to come to her in person. Catena.⁴

John the Elder.

Oecumenius: There are some people who think that this and the following letter are not by John the beloved disciple but by someone else of the same name. The reasons they give for this are that in both letters he describes himself as the elder and addresses a single correspondent (either the elect lady as here, or Gaius), which is not the case in the Catholic Epistle (1 John). Moreover, he starts with a personal introduction in both these letters, which is missing from 1 John. In answer to these points we would say that he did not put an introduction in his first letter because he was writing neither to a particular church nor to a specific individual. The fact that he calls himself an elder rather than an apostle may be due to the fact that he was not the first missionary to preach the gospel in Asia Minor. There he followed Paul, but unlike his predecessor, who merely passed through, John remained in the province and ministered

directly to the local people. Nor did he refer to himself as a slave of Christ 6 because as the beloved disciple he had the confidence that he had gone beyond the fear of slavery. Commentary on 2 John.7

The Author.

Theophylact: The most convincing argument in favor of the belief that John wrote this and the following letter is that the themes found in the first letter recur whenever the opportunity presents itself. Commentary on 2 John.8

1:2 Truth Is with Us Forever

The Truth Abides in Us.

Hilary of Arles: By “truth” John is referring to the Holy Spirit, because love is always the work of the Spirit. Introductory Commentary on 2 John.9

Perseverance.

Oecumenius: Here John states that our faith is firm and sure, and he alludes to the divine gift of perseverance. He had to do this because the people to whom he was writing were not properly established and confirmed in their faith. Commentary on 2 John.10

1:3 Grace, Mercy and Peace

In Truth and Love.

Oecumenius: Here John is saying that good things arise out of perfect love. His choice of words here gives solidity to what he is saying and provide real evidence of his charity, or love, toward those to whom he is writing. Commentary on 2 John.12

1:4 Rejoicing in the Truth

The Results of Truth.

Hilary of Arles: The saints are always overjoyed to see the results of truth at work. Introductory Commentary on 2 John.1

Following the Truth.

Oecumenius: It is always a cause for the greatest joy when we find someone making progress in the faith of Christ without any drawbacks. The Father's command to which John refers is what Christ said in the Gospel: "Whoever loves me will keep my commandments." ² Here John calls Christ a father, because he really is the father of all the children who have been given to him by the Father's dispensation, as it is said: "Behold, I and the children whom God has given me." ³ Commentary on 2 John.⁴

1:5 *Love One Another*

Not a New Commandment.

Oecumenius: Note that this verse closely resembles what is said in 1 John 2:7 and elsewhere in that letter. John's purpose is to show that what he is saying is something which people already know in principle and have even had some past experience of. It is not something strange and unusual which they will find hard to grasp. Commentary on 2 John.⁶

1:6 *This Is Love*

Follow Love.

Augustine: Meanwhile let us continue in the way we have come along so far, until God reveals it to us if we are otherwise minded. Letters 175.⁷

As You Heard.

Oecumenius: John specifies that the commandment which he is talking about is that we should love one another. This was given from the beginning in order to prevent a situation in which we might be honoring God in purely spiritual things but at the same time rebelling against him and denying him in more practical matters. Commentary on 2 John.⁸

1:7 Such Is the Deceiver

Many Deceivers.

Polycarp of Smyrna: Let us be zealous for that which is good, refraining from occasions of scandal and from false brothers and those who hypocritically bear the name of our Lord, deceiving empty-headed people. Letter to the Philippians 6.1

Jesus Christ in the Flesh.

Oecumenius: One ought to add “whoever does not believe this” before the final clause, in order to make the transition from the plural to the singular easier to understand. Here John is speaking in the first instance about the second coming of Christ, not about the first one, though it is clear that whoever denies his second coming has denied his first coming also. Someone who thinks that he really did come in the flesh will certainly believe the promise that he made while he was in the flesh, to the effect that he is coming again. Commentary on 2 John.3

1:8 Claim Your Full Reward

Do Not Fall Away.

Hilary of Arles: Here John is warning people not to fall away into heresy or to revert back to the Old Testament law once they have received the New. Introductory Commentary on 2 John.4

Win a Full Reward.

Oecumenius: What if someone were to say: “So what if I do not believe that Christ is coming in the flesh. I have lived a life of good works, so why can I not be rewarded for these insofar as they are in accordance with what is godly and religious?” To this the apostle replies that no one should think that if he rejects the coming of Christ in the flesh he can receive the perfect reward which is given to the saints, or be regarded as a worshiper of God, because someone who does not remain in his teaching does not have God to begin with. Commentary on 2 John.5

1:9 Abide in the Doctrine of Christ

The Doctrine of Christ.

Oecumenius: How can a person who rejects the divine self-revelation be regarded as a worshiper of God? He is not a worshiper at all but an atheist. However it is important to note that this is his own fault. It is because he has withdrawn himself from the knowledge of God which is common to all creatures that he has fallen into this state. The apostles on the other hand had the right teaching and preached it, so that anyone who accepts them receives it as well and thus possesses both the Father and the Son. Commentary on 2 John.⁷

1:10 Do Not Receive a False Teacher

Avoid Such People.

Ambrose of Milan: Since it is written that we should avoid such people, how can we not assume that someone who associates with Arians is also an exponent of their heresy? Synod Letters 40.⁹

Table Fellowship Refused.

Hilary of Arles: Here you see an example of excommunication in the New Testament, both from table fellowship at home and from table fellowship in church. Introductory Commentary on 2 John.¹⁰

1:11 Take No Part in Evil

Sharing in Wicked Work.

Irenaeus: By wishing that we do not even give them a welcome, John, the Lord's disciple, made their condemnation even stronger. Against Heresies 1.16.3.¹¹

Do Not Waste Time in Dispute.

Clement of Alexandria: John forbids us to greet such people or to offer them hospitality, which in the circumstances is not at all unkind. But he also warns us not to argue or dispute with people who are unable to handle the things of God, lest we should be taken away from the true doctrine by clever arguments which have the appearance of truth. Furthermore, I think that it is wrong to pray with such people, because during times of prayer there is a moment for greeting and sharing the peace. Adumbrations.¹²

Those Who Speak Falsely.

Basil the Great: It is obvious that those who make friends of people who speak falsely about God and who even eat with them do not love the Lord who made them and who feeds them. Instead of being content with that food they are led away into blasphemy against the one who feeds them. Catena.¹³

Separation Required.

Didymus the Blind: Anyone who dwells in the doctrine of the gospel and who acts according to its teaching will separate himself from those who think and act differently. Commentary on 2 John.¹⁴

1:12 That Our Joy May Be Complete

Paper and Ink.

Origen: Because of the incapacity of his hearers, John did not think it right to entrust the solutions of secrets of this kind to paper and ink. Sermons on Exodus 4.2.¹

I Hope to Come to See You.

Oecumenius: John explains that the reason this and the following letter are so short is that he hopes to visit them personally before too long. When he comes, he will be able to talk about things which are difficult to write in a letter and to clear up any remaining doubts which his correspondents may have. Commentary on 2 John.²

1:13 The Children of Your Elect Sister Greet You

United in Baptism.

Hilary of Arles: John unites the leaders of the churches in peace because they are sisters in the faith of the church and daughters of God by baptism. Introductory commentary on 2 John.³

Addressed to a Church.

Oecumenius: This ending proves that John was not writing to a single individual but to a church. Commentary on 2 John.⁵