

THE FUNCTION OF THE PARACLETE IN JOHN 16:7-11

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JOHN 16:7-11 constitutes one of the most baffling passages in the fourth gospel. Augustine acknowledged their difficulty;¹ and almost every commentator who has addressed the problem since Augustine has prefaced his interpretation with apposite notice that these verses are not easy to sort out. None of the interpretations offered so far is entirely free from difficulty; and the one about to be presented does not quite escape this curse either. Nevertheless, it does offer several distinct advantages and, as far as I know, has not been suggested before.

The argument of this essay proceeds in three steps. First, the principal exegetical and theological uncertainties are set forth in cursory form. Second, the most important interpretations are briefly presented and criticized, without any attempt to provide exhaustive catalogues of proponents. Finally, a new proposal is offered and defended, with some diffidence.

I

The text may be helpfully set forth as follows:

16:7a ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω ὑμῖν,
b συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα ἐγὼ ἀπέλθω.
c ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ ἀπέλθω,
d ὁ παράκλητος οὐκ ἐλεύσεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς·
e ἐὰν δὲ πορευθῶ,
f πέμψω αὐτὸν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

16:8a καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον περὶ ἁμαρτίας
b καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης
c καὶ περὶ κρίσεως·

16:9a περὶ ἁμαρτίας μὲν,
b ὅτι οὐ πιστεύουσιν εἰς ἐμέ.

16:10a περὶ δικαιοσύνης δέ,
b ὅτι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ὑπάγω καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ με·

16:11a περὶ δὲ κρίσεως,
b ὅτι ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου κέκριται.

¹Augustine comments: *Valde latebrosum est, nec isto sermone coarctandem, ne fiat obscurius brevitate (In Joan., Tr. 94,6).*

Clearly, 16:9 stands in apposition to 16:8*a*, 16:10 stands in apposition to 16:8*b*, and 16:11 stands in apposition to 16:8*c*. As a result of this elementary observation, we may reduce the primary exegetical problems to the question of the meaning of three pairs of lines:

- A₁ καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον περὶ ἁμαρτίας
 A₂ ὅτι οὐ πιστεύουσιν εἰς ἐμέ.
 B₁ καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον περὶ δικαιοσύνης
 B₂ ὅτι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ὑπάγω καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ με.
 C₁ καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον περὶ κρίσεως
 C₂ ὅτι ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου κέκριται.

Exegetically, the chief (although not the only) problems can be reduced to a handful of questions: (1) What is the meaning of ἐλέγχειν, or of ἐλέγχειν περὶ, in this context? Does the Paraclete convict the world, convince the world, prove to the world that it is wrong, or prove to the believers that the world is wrong? Or does ἐλέγχειν περὶ here take on the meaning “to expose in regard to”? (2) How are the ὅτι clauses A₂ B₂ C₂ to be taken? Is this a use of ὅτι explicative, introducing a noun clause explaining the nature of ἁμαρτία, δικαιοσύνη and κρίσις respectively? Or is this use causal, introducing adverbial clauses which modify the verb? (3) What explains the *second* person plural θεωρεῖτε in B₂ (“and you see me no longer”), displacing an expected αὐτὸς θεωρεῖ (“and it [the world] sees me no longer”) or even a third person plural θεωροῦσιν (“and they [the people who constitute the world] see me no longer”? (4) What do the three nouns ἁμαρτία, δικαιοσύνη and κρίσις mean in this context? Does ἁμαρτία mean “sin” in a broad sense, or can it be reduced to “unbelief”? Can it mean simply “guilt”? Does δικαιοσύνη refer to imputed righteousness, right conduct, or simply “innocence”? And does κρίσις mean “judgment” taken neutrally, or taken negatively in the sense of “condemnation”? (5) The most difficult question is this: How do the pieces fit together with consistency? It is easy enough to find a believable interpretation of each case, one that is consistent with johannine thought, if we forfeit the attempt to insure that such an interpretation will blend harmoniously with the interpretation of each of the other clauses. We might, for example, find it easy to believe that the Paraclete convicts the world of its sin. Yet we must hesitate before submitting this interpretation because exactly the same structure in the next pair of lines yields the interpretation that the Paraclete convicts the world of its righteousness; and that does not on the face of it appear too coherent. Perhaps these lines mean rather that the Paraclete will convict the world in the realm of the righteousness of Christ. But in that case, we introduce discontinuity: we speak of the *world's* sin, but of *Christ's* righteousness. We do this despite the fact that there is no formal mention of “world's” or “Christ's,” while there is formal identity of structure.

Most of the more believable interpretations offered to date manifest a significant built-in discontinuity of this type. Some, for instance, take two of the ὅτι clauses causally and the other as an explicative. Others want ἐλέγχειν to mean “convict” in A₁, but “prove wrong about” or “convince” in B₁ and C₁.

All such interpretations are extremely difficult to disqualify in their elements; but they remain unconvincing as total packages because they resort to an atomization which ignores the integrity of the structure.²

II

The most important interpretations of John 16:7-11 may be placed into several general classifications.

(1) One popular view takes *ἐλέγχειν περὶ* to mean "to prove (the world) wrong about," and *ὅτι* as an explicative. The Paraclete will prove the world wrong about sin; that is, he will convict the world of wrong ideas about sin, in that they do not believe; of wrong ideas about righteousness, in that Jesus is glorified and has gone to the Father; and about judgment, in that the prince of this world is judged.³ The *ὅτι* explicative clause in the last two cases (B₂ and C₂) provides the content of what constitutes right thinking over against the false thinking of the world. The world misconstrues righteousness, because it does not recognize that Jesus and his cross-work have been vindicated by his glorification; and it misconstrues the nature of the judgment which took place at the cross, because, contrary to the world's opinion, the prince of this world was then condemned, not Jesus. In a sense, then, the Paraclete is re-enacting the trial of Jesus.

By analogy with B₂ and C₂, A₂ must give the content of what constitutes right thinking in the area of sin, over against the world's wrong thinking. Indeed A₂ can be taken that way: "in that they do not believe in me" provides what is right thinking about sin. To preserve the symmetry of the construction, one must not, in this schema, interpret A₂ simply to provide the content of the world's sin, or its apex, or the reason why the Paraclete must do his convicting work; but specifically what one must think about sin if one is to think aright.

²A. H. Stanton ("Convince or Convict [John xvi. 8]," ExpT 33 [1921-22] 278-79) experimented with a meaning which shifted from phrase to phrase; but this is surely a recourse of desperation. Popular works are prone to unconscious shifts: e.g., J. M. Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary* (5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975-79) 4. 288-94.

³Cf. W. Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933) 149: "Die drei *ὅτι*-Sätze 9-11 gehen an, inwiefern der Geist bezüglich der genannten Dinge die Welt zu ihrer Beschämung überführt (*ὅτι* = insofern als, in Rücksicht darauf, dass . . .)." Cf. *NEB's* paraphrastic rendering of 16:8: "he will show the world where wrong and right and judgment lie." Other scholars who adopt this interpretation, or some minor modification of it, include A. Loisy, *Le Quatrième Evangile* (Paris: Emile Noutty, 1921) 430-32; H. Alford, *The Greek Testament* (4 vols.; London: Rivingtons, 1864) 813-15; B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, repr. 1954) 228; H. Strathmann, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955) 223-24; J. Blank, *Krisis: Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie* (Freiburg: Lambertus, 1964) 335-39; R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 561-66. H. B. Swete (*The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* [London: Macmillan, 1910] 156-61) develops a similar interpretation, although his language is quite different. What is to be learned from the individuality of his language is brought out below.

Not all who have adopted the general lines of this schema have sensed the cogency of this argument from the symmetry of the passage; but one who has is Rudolf Schnackenburg, whose translation throws this interpretation into bright relief—into brighter relief, indeed, than the Greek requires:

8 Und wenn er kommt, wird er die Welt überführen (und aufdecken), was Sünde, Gerechtigkeit und Gericht ist. 9 Sünde (ist), dass sie nicht an mich glauben, 10 Gerechtigkeit aber, dass ich zum Vater gehe und ihr mich nicht mehr seht, 11 Gericht, dass der Herrscher dieser Welt gerichtet ist.⁴

This is clever, for it avoids the weakness of those interpretations which embrace a logical discontinuity insensitive to the structure. I believe that, apart from the interpretation I want to suggest, this is the most viable option. It can be tilted in several directions by various subtleties, such as holding that the Paraclete's work is internal, or conversely that he operates solely through the agency of Christ's disciples; but such optional extras do not seriously affect the structure of the interpretation.

Nevertheless, there are two factors, one major and one minor, which prompt one to look for another approach to this passage. The minor one concerns the change to the second person *θεωρεῖτε* (B_2). Various efforts are made to explain this word; but they do not relate well to the immediate context. Many point out that the words may help the disciples recognize that Jesus' departure means not grief for them but the presence of the Paraclete to help in the struggle against the world.⁵ However much this makes sense in other johannine passages, it seems out of place under the present interpretive structure, which focuses attention not on the disciples but on the world.

The more serious objection concerns the meaning of *ἐλέγχειν περί*. Is this verbal form most plausibly rendered "to prove (the world) wrong about" *certain ideas*, i.e. "to convict (the world) of *wrong ideas* about"? Does not this interpretation ascribe to the Paraclete a function rather too coldly cerebral to be credible? To put the matter another way, we may ask ourselves if A_1 and A_2 would likely receive this interpretation were it not for the presence of B_1 , B_2 , C_1 and C_2 . By themselves, A_1 and A_2 are structurally akin to John's only other use of *ἐλέγχειν περί*, viz. 8:46, where Jesus asks, *τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέγξει με περὶ ἁμαρτίας*; would anyone seriously interpret this to mean, "Which of you convicts me of wrong ideas about sin?" The natural translation is, "Which of you convicts me of sin?" And similarly, the natural translation of A_1 and A_2 , were it not for B_1 , B_2 , C_1 and C_2 , is, "And when he has come, he will convict the world of sin, because (or "in that") they do not believe in me." In other words, this first interpretation remains in the running because it deals sensitively with the structure of the passage; but that very sensitivity has produced a highly implausible rendering of the first element.

⁴R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium, III. Teil* (Freiburg: Herder, 1976) 143. See his discussion, 143–51.

⁵Compare, for instance, the approach of R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 3, 150, and of O. Betz, *Der Paraklet* (Leiden: Brill, 1963) 201.

(2) The second interpretation to be considered is a modification of the one just discussed. First presented (as far as I know) by M.-F. Berrouard⁶ in 1949, it was slightly modified by R. E. Brown,⁷ and then massively argued, again with slight modification, by I. de la Potterie.⁸ This view holds that *ἐλέγχειν περί* means, as in the first interpretation, “to prove (the world) wrong about”; but it has two distinctions. Most important, it says that “to prove (the world) wrong about” does not mean “to convict (the world) of wrong ideas about.” Rather, the proof that the world is wrong is proof provided *for the disciples*. This passage, it is argued, says nothing about what the Paraclete does to or for the world. On the contrary, it testifies to the work of the Paraclete in keeping and strengthening the disciples, a work achieved by proving *to them* that the world is wrong. The second distinctive note of this interpretation is that the proof is an entirely inward work within the disciples and has nothing to do with apostolic signs and wonders or the like.

Within this framework, Berrouard and de la Potterie take the *ὅτι* clauses to be causal; Brown takes them to be explicative. I shall deal primarily with the former argument, and in particular with the most cogent arguments of de la Potterie, whose work is the most compelling of the three.

De la Potterie begins by competently staking out the semantic range of *ἐλέγχειν*. Having done so, he points out that the only meaning in any way suitable to the context of John 16:7-11 is “démontrer l’erreur ou les torts de quelqu’un.”⁹ But two subpoints gathered from his word study are of particular importance to him. First of all, the verb does not in itself require that the guilty party be persuaded of his guilt, but only that the fact of the guilt be established. On this I shall say more later. More important, de la Potterie insists that the guilty party does not need to be present while *ἐλεγξίς* is going on; and therefore the proof of the guilt need not be offered to the guilty in the sense of convincing or convicting him. The proof may be offered to a third party, in order to convince, not the guilty, but that third party. De la Potterie is certainly correct: the verb can have the meaning he wants it to have. But perhaps it is worth observing that, when the verb falls within the narrower semantic range required by the johannine passage, de la Potterie can adduce only four examples: one in Plato, two in pre-Christian papyri, and one in the Fathers. There are no examples from the LXX or from the New Testament. In short, the evidence is scarcely overwhelming, but it renders possible (no more) the interpretation of John 16:7-11 that de la Potterie seeks to establish.

De la Potterie appeals next to the context. In 16:6, Jesus says, “Because I have told you these things (*ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν*), grief has filled your hearts.” What, asks de la Potterie, are “these things” (*ταῦτα*)? Surely they are

⁶M.-F. Berrouard, “Le Paraclet, Défenseur du Christ devant la conscience du croyant (Jo. XVI. 8-11),” *RSPT* 33 (1949) 361-69.

⁷R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966) 704-14.

⁸I. de la Potterie, *La Vérité dans Saint Jean* (2 vols.; Rome: PBI, 1977) 399-421.

⁹*Ibid.* 404.

the warnings that the world will persecute the disciples, as presented in 16:1–4. In other words, because grief swamps the disciples who must face the world alone, Jesus tells them that the Paraclete will come and convince them of the world’s error, and thus sustain them. It is in this sense that Jesus says, “It is for your good that I am going away” (16:7).

This interpretation is not convincing. The word *ταῦτα* of verse 6 does not refer primarily to the threat of suffering in vv 1–4, but to the oft-repeated notice of Jesus’ departure which occurs again in v 5. Jesus’ departure, however, entails the coming of the Paraclete; and therefore the disciples will not be abandoned in the enterprise Jesus has committed to them. He has just finished pointing out that they will have to bear witness to the world, the world that will persecute them (15:26–16:4); but even then, Jesus pointed out that the Spirit would bear witness also. Now Jesus further underscores the fact that the disciples will not be alone in their witness: the Paraclete will come and do his convicting work. Such an interpretation (which I shall develop farther on) offers more encouragement to the disciples and better fits the flow of the argument than that of de la Potterie.

De la Potterie appeals to empty similarities when he draws attention to the following parallels:

15:18–27	16:7–11
1) ὁ παράκλητος (v 26)	ὁ παράκλητος (v 7b)
2) ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν (v 26)	πέμψω αὐτὸν πρὸς ὑμᾶς (v 7b)
3) ὅταν ἔλθῃ (v 26)	ἐὰν μὴ ἀπέλθω . . . οὐκ ἐλεύσεται (v 7b) καὶ ἔλθῶν (v 8)
4) μαρτυρήσει (v 26)	ἐλέγξει (v 8)
5) ὁ κόσμος (6 times in vv 18–19)	τὸν (τοῦ) κόσμον (-ου) (twice, in vv 8, 11)
6) περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας (v 22)	περὶ ἁμαρτίας (vv 8, 9)

Because of these parallels between the third and fourth Paraclete passages, de la Potterie concludes afresh that the *ἐλεγξίς* of 16:7–11 is inward, within the disciples, as is the “witness” of the Paraclete in 15:18–27. Close scrutiny, however, reveals that the argument has little weight. The first three parallels are formally close; but similar parallels can be drawn between 16:7–11 and each of the four other Paraclete passages in the farewell discourse. The fourth deals with different verbs: why must they reasonably be understood to link the same actors in the same way? Indeed, de la Potterie has found a “parallel” in the fifth and sixth instances only because he has extended the Paraclete passage in 15:26–7 backward to include 15:18–25—which is not a Paraclete passage at all. The use of *κόσμος* in the fourth gospel is so common as to provide little weight in discovering parallels; and its use in these two sections, I shall argue, better suits another interpretation anyway. After all, *κόσμος* is expressly used in conjunction with *ἐλέγχειν* and is not used in conjunction with *μαρτυρεῖν*. De la Potterie’s parallels look better than they are, until one recognizes he has had to reach backward, out of the context of the Paraclete saying in 15:26–7, to establish his last two. The final parallel, between *περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας* and *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, is closer than he recognizes. In 15:22, Jesus is

the one whose presence renders the world guilty and robs it of all excuse; and in 16:8, 9, as I shall argue, the Paraclete is the one whose presence similarly brings home to the world its guilt, robbing it of all excuse. In other words, both Jesus in the days of his flesh, and the Paraclete, exercise this ministry *to the world*, not to the disciples—*pace* de la Potterie.

De la Potterie claims that he takes the three $\delta\tau\iota$ clauses as causal. The Paraclete proves (to the disciples) that the world is wrong in the area of sin *because* they do not believe in Jesus. He proves (to the disciples) that the world is wrong in the area of “justice” (here taken to mean Christ’s “triumph”) *because* Jesus is going to the Father and the disciples will see him no longer. And he proves (to the disciples) that the world is wrong in the matter of “judgment” (here taken to mean “condemnation”) *because* the prince of this world has been judged. However, quite apart from the question of whether $\delta\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\upsilon\nu\eta$ will bear the weight put on it, close inspection of these three clauses and of de la Potterie’s explanations reveals a misunderstanding of the syntax. All three $\delta\tau\iota$ clauses, in his reconstruction, answer the question *why the world is wrong* in the areas of sin and triumph and judgment, not *why the Paraclete proves the world is wrong*. In other words, the $\delta\tau\iota$ clauses do not really modify the verb, despite de la Potterie’s sustained rendering of $\delta\tau\iota$ by “parce que,” but in fact constitute noun clauses which show in what the world’s wrong ideas consist. This misunderstanding may, of course, be overcome by taking the three $\delta\tau\iota$ clauses as noun clauses: so R. E. Brown.¹⁰ We may then conclude that this interpretation succeeds in preserving the symmetry of the construction. But because the first interpretation also did, as do one or two others in this list, the symmetry by itself does not provide a very strong argument in favor of de la Potterie’s approach. Maintenance of the symmetry is a necessary condition for a reasonable interpretation; but it is not a sufficient condition.

The one weighty argument de la Potterie advances is his explanation of the second person plural $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\tau\epsilon$. If Jesus is here concerning himself exclusively with his disciples, then the second person is quite natural. There is, however, an alternative explanation with as much plausibility as this one; so perhaps judgment may be suspended until the alternative is aired.

One other factor tells against this interpretation by Berrouard, Brown and de la Potterie. In their view, the Paraclete as presented in the Farewell Discourse performs no function to or for the world. It is true, of course, that from John 13 on, special attention is focused on the disciples; yet one must not forget that the farewell discourse is climaxed by the high priestly prayer of John 17, which certainly encourages the disciples to think of the potential disciples still lost at that time in the world, but who would come and join their ranks in the future. In the farewell discourse itself, the disciples, empowered by the Spirit, are to *bear witness* to Jesus; and clearly, such witness must be borne *before the world*. Moreover, Jesus himself exercised a ministry to the

¹⁰Cf. R. E. Brown, *John*, 704–14.

world. For a start, all of his disciples were chosen out from the world in which they once had a part. Would it not be surprising if the Paraclete, this ἄλλος¹¹ Paraclete, himself enjoyed no ministry to the world? One must surely conclude that this second interpretation is implausible within the framework of johannine theology and must be accepted only if there is none better.

(3) Some take ἐλέγχειν περί to mean “to convict of,” and ὅτι as an explicative at least for the first element. The Paraclete will convict the world of its sin, which consists in unbelief. Bernard is the ablest defender of this view.¹² Unfortunately, however, he is forced to break the symmetry of the structure when he treats the second element, δικαιοσύνη. Now the world is being convicted of the righteousness of Christ. So we have moved from the world’s sin to Christ’s righteousness.¹³ This wrench clearly effects a subtle semantic shift in ἐλέγχειν as well: “to convict of sin” is scarcely parallel with “to convict of righteousness,” even if the latter means “to convict of the righteousness you don’t have”; for quite obviously the preceding element means “to convict of the sin you do have.” Moreover, Bernard interprets the second ὅτι clause causally, introducing a second major wrench. In short, this interpretation has little to commend it.

(4) Still others take ἐλέγχειν περί to mean “to convict of,” while holding that the ὅτι clauses are causal.¹⁴ The Paraclete will convict the world of sin because they do not believe—i.e. because sin reached its apex in not believing in Christ. To maintain three causal ὅτι clauses removes one of the jarring shifts which marred the last interpretation (although Morris, who begins by adopting a causal ὅτι, finds a ὅτι explicative in v 11 and consequently loses even that advantage),¹⁵ but the other uncomfortable shift remains. We must still run from the sin of the world to the righteousness of Christ. Avoiding such a discontinuity is much to be desired.

(5) Another interpretive framework has been developed. Beginning (as in the last instance) with ἐλέγχειν meaning “to convict of” and with causal ὅτι, W. H. P. Hatch suggested that δικαιοσύνη (16:10) here means “legal acquittal.”¹⁶ Hatch himself had in view the advocacy of Christ in heaven; but when Mastin picked up the idea he rejected that nuance. According to Mastin,

¹¹The standard interpretation of ἄλλος is to be accepted. Cf. also 1 John 2:1. The alternative, a pleonastic use of ἄλλος, is an extremely rare construction: cf. BDF §106.

¹²J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928) 2. 506–8.

¹³The fact that syrsm specifies “concerning its sins, and concerning its (or his: i.e., either Christ or the world could be understood) righteousness, and concerning judgment,” does not in any likelihood attest to an early Greek textual tradition with clarifying genitives but to the early date at which the exegetical problems of this passage were noted and resolutions sought.

¹⁴Cf. T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Leipzig: Georg Böhme, 1908) 580–81; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 488–89; Sir E. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber, 1947) 484–85; R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel according to John* (London: Tyndale, 1960) 179–80.

¹⁵L. Morris, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 697–99.

¹⁶“The Meaning of John XVI, 8–11,” *HTR* 14 (1921) 103–5.

ἐλέγχειν in v 10 means “to convince of,” and the verse itself “refers to those who come to belief in Jesus, who are acquitted *because* of the new conditions which follow his departure from the earth. The *judgment* is then the condemnation which is the alternative to acquittal and is based on the fact that *the ruler of this world* is judged already. . . .”¹⁷ But it seems extremely difficult to grasp what Mastin means. What does it mean to say in one breath that the Paraclete convicts or convinces the world of sin and that he convicts or convinces the world of acquittal? Surely ἐλέγχειν is undergoing too great a semantic shift to be tolerated.

(6) Sensing a good thing but recognizing the difficulties, Lindars modified and improved the foregoing approach.¹⁸ He weakens ἐλέγχειν περί to mean “to expose in regard to.” He then translates: “to expose (the world) for a verdict of guilty (ἀμαρτία), a verdict of innocent (δικαιοσύνη), a verdict one way or the other (κρίσις).”

The first objection to be raised against this interpretation is the rendering it offers for ἐλέγχειν περί. It presupposes that the use of ἐλέγχειν entails no conclusion about the guilt of the world. It is true that, outside of the canon, very occasionally ἐλέγχειν does not quite demand that guilt be present (e.g., Sir 19:13–17); but, at least, within the NT and that part of the LXX which is a translation of the Hebrew canon, it seems better to argue, with Mowinckel, that although ἐλέγχειν does not necessarily imply the conversion or convincing of the party “rebuked,” the one certainty is the guilt of that party.¹⁹

The one barely possible exception in the OT is Isa 11:4 LXX, but even this case depends on a particular interpretation.²⁰ In the NT, the verb ἐλέγχειν is found eighteen times (nineteen, if John 18:9 be included; the other references are: Matt 18:15; Luke 3:19; John 3:20; 8:46; 16:8; 1 Cor 14:24; Eph 5:11, 13; 1

¹⁷J. N. Sanders and B. A. Mastin, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: A. and C. Black, 1968) 350–52.

¹⁸Cf. B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Oliphants, 1972) 500–504; and especially his article, “Δικαιοσύνη in Jn 16.8 & 10,” *Mélanges Bibliques en hommage au R. P. Bédard Rigaux* (ed. A. Descamp and André de Halleux; Gembloux: Duculot, 1970) 275–85.

¹⁹S. Mowinckel, “Die Vorstellungen des Spätjudentums vom heiligen Geist als Fürsprecher und der johanneische Paraklet,” *ZNW* 32 (1933) 97–130, esp. 104–6. Similarly, cf. F. Büchsel, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 474.

²⁰Isa 11:3–4a reads:

- (a) οὐ κατὰ τὴν δόξαν κρινεῖ
- (b) οὐδὲ κατὰ τὴν λαλιὰν ἐλέγξει
- (c) ἀλλὰ κρινεῖ ταπεινῶ κρίσιν
- (d) καὶ ἐλέγξει τοὺς ταπεινοὺς τῆς γῆς

The first three lines are a fair representation of the MT; but if (d) is understood to translate the MT in any fashion approaching accuracy, then either it must be rendered: “and he shall decide for the lowly of the earth” (in which case ἐλέγχειν is not in this instance a verb which focuses on a guilty party); or else it must be rendered elliptically: “and he shall rebuke the oppressors of the poor of the earth” (in which case even this verse fits the normal semantic range of the verb). The latter is not so implausible considering the rest of 11:4LXX: καὶ πατάξει γῆν τὴν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν πνεύματι διὰ χειλέων ἀνελεῖ ἀσεβῆ.

Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9, 13; 2:15; Heb 12:5; James 2:9; Jude 15, 22; Rev 3:19). Perhaps Eph 5:13 might seem a likely candidate for a neutral meaning for ἐλέγχειν; but the fact that the same verb appears two verses earlier in the sense of “rebuke” or “condemn” governs the entire passage. The only other NT instance where one may plausibly argue that ἐλέγχειν takes on a neutral sense “to expose” is John 3:20. Here, Schnackenburg insists that ἐλέγχθῆ (3:20) is formally parallel to φανερωθῆ (3:21), and that both verbs must therefore have similar meaning: viz. “to make clear,” “to expose.”²¹ However, Schnackenburg neglects to set out the full parallelism of the two verses. When this is done, the argument from structure turns against him:

3:20a πᾶς γὰρ ὁ φαῦλα πράσσων μισεῖ τὸ φῶς καὶ οὐκ ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς
 b ἵνα μὴ ἐλεγχθῆ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ
 3:21a ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς
 b ἵνα φανερωθῆ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ἐν θεῷ ἐστὶν εἰργασμένα

Clearly 3:20a and 3:21b are parallel to each other; but this is an instance of antithetic parallelism. On the other hand, 3:20b and 3:21b stand in synonymous parallelism to each other, each giving the purpose of the conduct described in the preceding line. However, when the obviously common elements have been removed (ἵνα in both lines; τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ in 3:20b and αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα in 3:21b), then the remaining equivalence is not ἐλεγχθῆ = φανερωθῆ but, *pace* Schnackenburg, μὴ ἐλεγχθῆ = φανερωθῆ. . . ὅτι ἐν θεῷ ἐστὶν εἰργασμένα. From this, it is immediately obvious that the verb ἐλέγχειν even here—indeed, especially here—presupposes the guilt of ὁ φαῦλα πράσσων. In any case, it is hard to see how merely neutral “exposure” would keep ὁ φαῦλα πράσσων away, unless that exposure shamed him, rebuked him, or convicted him. What the light exposes, both here and in Eph 5, is evil under the guise of darkness.

As for the prepositional expression ἐλέγχειν περί, in addition to its occurrence in John 16, it is found three times in the NT. Of these, it is twice followed by some evil (John 8:46; Jude 15), and once by a person who occasioned the evil (Luke 3:19).²²

Lindars, as we have seen, wants ἐλέγχειν περί to mean, “to expose (the world) for a verdict of.” What kind of verdict? The world, he says, earns a verdict of guilt, of innocence, a verdict one way or the other. But does the “world” in John ever earn a verdict of innocent? Some have indeed tried to argue that κόσμος for John can have positive, neutral, or negative

²¹R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), 1. 406–7 n. 160.

²²In the LXX, the expression occurs but once. In 1 Chr 16:21, we read that God “reproved kings for their sakes,” i.e., ἠλεγξε περί αὐτῶν βασιλεῖς. In this instance, ἐλέγχειν περί is not followed by a sin, nor by a sinner, but by the people for whom the ἐλεγξίς was performed. The expression is sufficiently strange that A understandably displaces περί with ὑπέρ. It is nevertheless worth observing that the guilt of the “kings” is presupposed, just (I would argue) as is the guilt of the “world” in John 16.

connotations.²³ But close scrutiny forbids such a conclusion. There are in John a few neutral instances. In 12:19, the word is hyperbolic for “a large number of people”; in 16:21, it is the sphere into which man is born; in 11:9; 17:5, 25, it is the created “world”; and in 21:26, it is a large place which could hold a lot of books, but not enough to describe the glories of the Lord Jesus. The only other usage in an apparently neutral sense paves the way for mention of the heinous crime of unbelief: in 1:10 we are told, “He (the Word) was in the *world* (= created sphere), and though the *world* was made through him (still a neutral reference), *the world did not recognize him.*” However, there are no positive references whatsoever; and the proffered examples fail to convince. Thus, if the Word is the true light which comes into the *κόσμος* (1:9), it is because the *κόσμος* is characterized by darkness. If God sent his Son so that the *κόσμος* might be saved by him (3:17) it is because the *κόσμος* is lost without him. If Jesus is the Saviour of the *κόσμος* (4:42; cf. 1 John 4:14), it is because the *κόσμος* needs saving. God, according to the most famous verse in the Bible, so loved the *κόσμος* that he gave his Son; but he loved it despite what it was, not because of what it was.²⁴ Indeed, the true measure of divine love, according to 3:16, is not the largeness of the world, but its blackness. Despite its blackness, God loved the *κόσμος*; and that love is the ground of his commission to the Son.²⁵ To cite one more instance, 1:29 says a great deal for the Lamb of God, but not much for the *κόσμος*.²⁶

In the light of this evidence, it is not very likely that John could speak of “exposing the world for a verdict of innocent.” The “world” is irremediably guilty. Moreover, from a theological perspective, neither the world nor any part of it is ever accorded a verdict of “innocent” on its own account. It is the universal guilt of the world which requires the cross-work of Christ. Moreover, in the johannine perspective, the disciples themselves find life because Jesus has chosen them out of the “world” (15:19), not because they are in the world but innocent.

Lindars himself is aware of the grammatical awkwardness of his interpretation and concedes that in his understanding the “phrase *ἐλέγχειν περὶ δικαιοσύνης* is scarcely good Greek.”²⁷ Ironically, Brown points to the *μέν . . . δέ . . . δέ . . .* construction and comments, “John shows an almost

²³To offer but two examples, cf. N. H. Cassem, “A Grammatical and Contextual Inventory of the Use of *κόσμος* in the Johannine Corpus with Some Implications for a Johannine Cosmic Theology,” *NTS* 19 (1972-73) 81-91; L. J. Lutkemeyer, “The Role of the Paraclete (Jn. 16:7-15),” *CBQ* 8 (1946) 220-29, esp. 223-24.

²⁴Cf. B. B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., repr. 1952) 505-22; R. Bultmann, *John*, 153 n. 3.

²⁵Cf. N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965) 143.

²⁶For additional notes, cf. C. R. North, *IDB*, 4. 873-78; H. Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel* (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, repr. 1968) 115-29; G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 225-27; and esp. H. Sasse, *TDNT* 3 (1965) 867-98.

²⁷“*Δικαιοσύνη*,” 284-85.

classical elegance of style.”²⁸ In any case, the most obvious interpretation of this passage can scarcely be one which marshals forced Greek.

(7) There are other interpretations of this passage, but these are the prime options in the modern spectrum of interpretation. It remains to offer one more.

III

I begin by offering a number of exegetical, contextual and theological observations and suggestions and conclude with my translation.

(1) In the first place, ἐλέγχειν περί must be taken to mean “to convict of” or “to convince of.” The reason for this “or” is because “to convict of” is ambiguous and “to convince of” is inadequate. The expression “to convict of” is ambiguous because in this context it might mean either: (a) to convict the world as in a Great Assize.²⁹ If this were the meaning, then the establishment of the objective guilt of the world is the important thing, not convincing the world that it is guilty. The latter is the second possible meaning, viz.: (b) to convict the world itself that it is guilty, i.e., to convince it of its guilt. Both meanings (a) and (b) are linguistically possible, but the latter obtains in the rest of the NT occurrences and is the meaning adopted here. “To convince of” by itself is not quite adequate, however, because it sounds too restrictively intellectual. To bring the world to the place where it is convinced of its sin, for instance, is to bring it to self-conscious “conviction” of sin, to self-conscious recognition of guilt.³⁰ It is in that sense that ἐλέγχειν περί must be taken in this context.

(2) What the Paraclete convicts the world of is the *world's* sin (ἁμαρτία), the *world's* righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), and the *world's* judgment (κρίσις). The first element presents no problem: the Paraclete convicts the world of its sin. It should perhaps be noted again that this interpretation accords remarkably well with the only other place in the fourth gospel where ἐλέγχειν περί is used, viz. 8:46, where Jesus asks the question, “Which of you convicts me of sin?”

The second element needs to be handled more carefully for this is the point at which at first glance a reader may well balk. Can δικαιοσύνη easily and naturally be understood in an ironic sense to mean, not genuine righteousness, but the righteousness one might expect from the κόσμος?

²⁸R. E. Brown, *John*, 705.

²⁹So, for example, G. Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (SNTSMS 12; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970) 35–36.

³⁰Cf. A. A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (SNTSMS 31; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977) 118–20, who prefers “convinces” to “convicts,” but clearly means by “convinces,” in the forensic setting he adopts, precisely what I mean by “convicts.” It is this linguistic ambiguity which makes Swete’s interpretation at first glance seem independent, when in fact it is not: cf. n. 3, above. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *John* 486–87, for additional evidence that ἐλέγχειν means “to convict” in the sense adopted here.

At least the following points are in favor of such an interpretation:

(a) John is much given to the use of irony, a point frequently noted in recent literature.³¹ To provide exhaustive lists would take us beyond the legitimate boundaries of this paper, but suffice it to say that johannine irony extends even to the theme of discipleship.³² John's most sacred of verbs, *πιστεύω*, can refer to people who do not truly believe (cf. 2:23-25); indeed, failure to recognize this fact has fostered speculation about diverse sources in John 8:30-59. There is, in John, belief and belief, good belief and bad belief: why not also good righteousness and bad righteousness?

(b) There are at least two places in the OT where *δικαιοσύνη* clearly takes on such a negative meaning. In Isa 64:5 LXX, we read: *καὶ ἐγενήθημεν ὡς ἀκάθαρτοι πάντες ἡμεῖς, ὡς ῥάκος ἀποκαθημένης πᾶσα ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἡμῶν*. All the *δικαιοσύνη*³³ of the people is as a menstruous cloth. This passage not only says that the righteousness of the people is foul in God's perspective; but it also implies that, if the professed *righteousness* of the people be so abominable, their open *sins* are far worse. It is worth remembering that many students of the fourth gospel see numerous literary and thematic ties between that gospel and Isa 40-66;³⁴ and here is another one.

There is one other place in the OT which deserves mention. In Dan 9:18 (Theodotion), we read: *ὅτι οὐκ ἐπὶ ταῖς δικαιοσύναις ἡμῶν ἡμεῖς ῥιπτοῦμεν τὸν οἰκτιρμὸν ἡμῶν ἐνώπιόν σου ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τοὺς οἰκτιρμούς σου τοὺς πολλοὺς κύριε*. A pedantic translation which preserves the pun in Greek might be: "Not on the basis of our *righteousness* do we bring our pitiful case to you, but on the basis of your many pityings, O Lord." This passage itself does not assign evil value to *δικαιοσύνη*, but in this context that is assumed at least to the extent that the *δικαιοσύνη* of the people is recognized to provide no adequate basis for appealing to God.

(c) This interpretation is thematically appropriate to the fourth gospel. Quite a few of the pericopae in John offer overt or implicit rejection of the "righteousness" of the Jews (even though the word is not used). For example, the temple, the focus of Jewish worship, must be cleansed; and it is in any case surpassed and displaced by Jesus' body (2:13-22). Nicodemus, a man of the Pharisees, the³⁵ teacher of Israel (3:10), does not understand something as

³¹Cf. esp. D. W. Wead, *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel* (Basel: F. Reinhardt, 1970) 47-68.

³²*Ibid.*, 66-68.

³³It is unfortunate that in the magisterial work by J. A. Ziesler (*The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* [SNTSMS 20; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1972]) Ziesler never discusses this particular Septuagintal use of *δικαιοσύνη*.

³⁴For example, cf. F. W. Young, "A Study of the Relation of Isaiah to the Fourth Gospel," *ZNW* 46 (1955) 215-55; A. A. Trites, *Witness*, 78-127.

³⁵The article in the Greek text is scarcely accidental: cf. E. F. F. Bishop, "The Authorized Teacher of the Israel of God' John 3:10," *BT* 7 (1956) 81-83.

elementary as the new birth. The sabbath regulations of the Pharisees are carefully observed, while Jesus is condemned for healing a paralytic of thirty-eight years (5:16). There is diligent study of the Scriptures, but no true understanding (5:39–40). The crowds enjoy the multiplied bread and reject the bread from heaven (John 6). The leaders possess the law of Moses yet attempt to kill Jesus (7:19). Examples could be multiplied at length, but one passage in particular deserves quotation in full:

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God (12:42–3).

Does it not seem thematically appropriate that the Paraclete *convicts* the world of its *righteousness*?

(d) This is the only place where *δικαιοσύνη* occurs in John's gospel, and so we cannot make appeal to his use of the term elsewhere in this book as an argument either for or against the interpretation offered here.³⁶ However, it is worth pointing out that at least three times in the pauline corpus, the word *δικαιοσύνη* is used of man's "righteousness," a clearly inadequate "righteousness." Each offers stunning thematic parallels to my interpretation of John 16:10. The first is Rom 10:3: "Since they (the Jews) disregarded the righteousness which comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." Would not both Paul and John say that such people need to be convicted of their "righteousness" and repent of their "righteousness"? The second passage is Phil 3:6–9. Here Paul says that *κατὰ δικαιοσύνην* he was, in his pre-Christian days, blameless; yet he came to consider even this, among the "all things" of which he could boast, merely rubbish, in order that he might gain Christ and be found in him, *not having a righteousness of his own that comes from the law* (*μη ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνη τὴν ἐκ νόμου*) but having righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. Similarly in Tit 3:5, we learn that we are saved *οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων τῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ἀ ἐποιήσαμεν ἡμεῖς* but according to God's mercy.

(e) One place in the synoptic gospels calls for attention. In Matt 5:20, Jesus tells his disciples that unless their *δικαιοσύνη* surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, they will not enter the kingdom of heaven. At very best this means that the *δικαιοσύνη* of the scribes and Pharisees is quantitatively inadequate, but most interpreters recognize that the criticism by Jesus runs in deeper channels. Their *δικαιοσύνη* is qualitatively inadequate and therefore must be repented of. The parallel to John 16:10 is obvious.

(f) This interpretation forges a convincing symmetry. The Paraclete convicts the world of *its* sin, of *its* righteousness, of *its* judgment. It is unnecessary to jump awkwardly from man's sin to Christ's righteousness, or the like.

³⁶In 1 John 2:29; 3:7, 10, *δικαιοσύνη* appears, falling nicely within its normal semantic range but offering no parallel to John 16.

The third element in the series can make do with briefer comment: the Paraclete will convict the world of its judgment. By this, John does not mean to castigate only that judgment of the world which rejected Jesus, judgment which led to the cross, but all false judgment, of which the condemnation of Jesus was the supreme example. Elsewhere in the fourth gospel, after a Sabbath controversy, Jesus says, "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment" (7:24). By contrast with the world's false κρίσις, Jesus' κρίσις is righteous (δικαία, 5:30) and true (8:16). The world is wrong in its assessment of all things spiritual, i.e., all things surrounding Jesus and his teaching and work. In these realms, mistaken judgment stems not from mere cognitive ignorance but from moral perversity, and so the Paraclete convicts the world in this area as well.

(3) The three *ὅτι* clauses deserve close attention. If the interpretation offered so far is correct, then the *ὅτι* in the second clause (B₂) cannot be an instance of *ὅτι* explicative. The *world's* righteousness certainly does not consist in, nor is it explained by, Jesus' departure to his father!

The other option, causal *ὅτι*, makes good sense in all three *ὅτι* clauses. Yet a caution must be sounded. We have already taken note of one or two writers who translate *ὅτι* by "because" (or *weil* or *parce que*) yet who in one or more of the *ὅτι* clauses use the expression in an explicative sense and fail to see they are jumping categories. Strictly speaking, if the *ὅτι* clauses are causal, they must be syntactically related to the verb ἐλέγξει³⁷ and answer the question as to *why* the Paraclete convicts the world of its sin, its righteousness, and its judgment.

(a) The Paraclete convicts the world of its sin because the people who make up the world do not believe in Jesus. If they did believe in Jesus, they would believe his repeated statements about their sin and guilt and turn to him to be saved from it. In other words, according to the fourth gospel, failure to believe in Jesus not only entails condemnation (3:18, 36) but brings with it sustained ignorance of personal need. The world not only fails to receive life because of its unbelief; it also fails to see its present death, its need to receive life, because of its unbelief. The Paraclete will press home conviction of sin to men and women in the world *despite* their unbelief. In other words, *he will convict* the world of its sin *because* the world does not believe in Jesus. This is the reason *why* the Paraclete is concerned to convict the world. To frame it in this way gently implies that the purpose of the Paraclete's convicting work is gracious; that is, that the Paraclete exercises this convicting ministry to bring the world to recognize its need, and so to turn to Jesus, given that the world's unbelief prevents it (apart from the work of the Paraclete) both from ever facing its own need and from turning to Jesus.

(b) The Paraclete convicts the world of its righteousness because Jesus is going to the Father. Accepting the *ὅτι* as causal, we must understand this to

³⁷Cf. A. Plummer, *The Gospel according to St. John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1889) 292-93.

mean that the reason *why* the Paraclete convicts the world of its righteousness is that Jesus is going to the Father. During the days of his earthly ministry, one of Jesus' functions was, as we have seen, to expose the so-called righteousness of the world. This was accomplished not only by Jesus' more dramatic works, like the cleansing of the temple, but by the purity of his life (cf. 8:46) and the witness of his signs. So focal has been this aspect of his ministry that Jesus can say, just a few verses before the passage under study, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. . . . If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father" (15:22, 24). By his words and deeds, Jesus has set the world's self-vaunted righteousness against the backdrop of his own matchless righteousness and thereby brought home to the world the inadequacy of its own righteousness. Jesus has convicted the world of its righteousness. Now, however, he is departing to his Father's presence: who will continue this particular ministry? Our passage provides the answer: the coming Paraclete will convict the world of its righteousness because Jesus is going away to the Father.

(c) The Paraclete convicts the world of its judgment because the prince of this world is judged. In this verse we must be particularly careful not to render what has been designated *ὄτι* causal by a surreptitious *ὄτι* explicative. We must not, in other words, take the verse to mean that the Paraclete condemns the world of its false judgment in condemning Jesus to the cross, a judgment declared to be false *in that* not Jesus but the prince of this world was judged at the cross. Rather, to preserve the symmetry achieved so far, we must understand the verse to mean that the reason *why* the Paraclete convicts the world of its judgment is *because* the prince of this world is judged.

Jesus, of course, is speaking proleptically of the victory over the prince of this world achieved at the cross. Earlier, and equally proleptically, Jesus announced, "Now is the time for judgment *on this world*; now the *prince of this world* will be driven out" (12:31). In other words, Jesus' death/exaltation is seen in the fourth gospel not only as the place where the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world (1:29), and not only as death in behalf of the Jewish people and the scattered children of God (11:51–2), but also as the pivotal declaration of judgment against the "world" and its prince. The realized aspects of johannine eschatology pertain almost symmetrically to both life and condemnation: believers already enjoy eternal life now, and unbelievers already stand in horrible condemnation now (3:18, 36), the age of the "now" being understood to begin climactically with the cross. The cross achieves the condemnation of the prince of this world and, implicitly, of the world of this prince. Whoever does not believe stands condemned already (3:18); God's wrath remains on him (3:36). Therefore from the johannine perspective the matter of changing one's judgment from the false judgment of the world to a correct assessment of Jesus and belief in him is desperately urgent. The "hour" has arrived; we wait no more for the crucial battle to take place, for it has

already taken place at the cross. The urgency of appeal is based on this eschatological dimension. The Paraclete will convict the world of its judgment because of this eschatological urgency or, otherwise put, because the prince of this world has been judged and now stands judged (*κέκριται*). Both this prince and his domain, the world, stand condemned; and because of this eschatological condemnation, the Paraclete urgently convicts the world and its people of their false judgment.

(4) In discussing B₂ above, the last clause, *καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ με*, was not mentioned. Why this change from the third person to the second?

The answer to this question is properly related to a larger question. In the last two verses of the preceding chapter, Jesus says, “When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me; but you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning” (15:26–7). Some wrongly restrict the Paraclete’s ministry in this passage to what he achieves exclusively through the church.³⁸ The Paraclete’s witness is the church’s witness, we are told; and the passage therefore functions in large measure as encouragement to the church that its witness is, conversely, in reality the witness of the Paraclete who abides in the believers. Such an interpretation is right in what it affirms and wrong in what it denies. No doubt the Paraclete functions through the church, but there is nothing in the passage which suggests that he functions *only* through the church. Indeed, the flow of the argument from 15:26*d* to 15:27*a* suggests, at least, that the Paraclete’s witness to the world is the primary thing but is a witness in which the church will play some part: *ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ· καὶ ὑμεῖς δὲ μαρτυρεῖτε*. We may also appeal to the analogy which Jesus himself draws and ask, if the Paraclete is in some sense the replacement of Jesus, would it not be surprising if he were to exercise no direct ministry toward the world, in light of the fact that Jesus did exercise such a ministry?

Of course, Jesus came for his own, for the sheep the Father had given him; and in the farewell discourse it is Jesus’ sheep, not the people of the world, who receive prime attention. Yet even here, we are told that Jesus’ disciples were chosen by him out of the world (15:16, 19). The world/disciples dualism is never absolute. It is not surprising, then, that the farewell discourse climaxes with the high priestly prayer, in which Jesus foresees that more people from the world will become his disciples.

Once these contextual observations are absorbed, the passage 16:7–11 is seen to fit neatly into the pattern. The Paraclete will come *to the disciples* (*πρὸς ὑμᾶς* [*bis*], 16:7). It is for *their* good he is coming and therefore for *their* good that Jesus is going. In what ways will the coming of the Paraclete be good for the disciples? Two points are offered. The second, found in 16:12–15, is that the Paraclete will lead the befuddled and confused disciples into all truth. He will unpack for them the full significance of the revelation of the Son

³⁸E.g., C. K. Barrett *John*, 487.

of God.³⁹ The first point is formulated in the passage which is the focus of this paper: the Paraclete will convict the world of its sin and its righteousness and its judgment. How is this of help *to the believers*? The strength of de la Potterie's interpretation, as we have seen, is its ability to handle this question believably.

But another answer, equally believable, is available. Jesus has just finished telling his disciples that: (a) they must witness to the world; (b) they will be persecuted; and (c) Jesus is leaving them (15:26–16:5). Small wonder the disciples are filled with grief (16:6). But when the Paraclete comes *to them* (16:7), he will in effect replace Jesus: he will operate in this sphere where they are, not in the sphere of the soon-to-be-exalted Jesus. He will not only be with them and live in them, a point forcefully made in an earlier Paraclete passage (14:16–19), but will assist them in the responsibility just laid on them. He, too, will confront the world. They must witness and bear persecution; but they may be encouraged by this promise that the Paraclete will actually convict the world of its sin, its righteousness, and its judgment. The believers are left behind neither as orphans (14:18) nor as isolated and abandoned workers (16:7–11). The prime worker among them so far has been Jesus; the prime worker among them in the future will be the Paraclete.

To put these observations another way, the passage 16:7–11 concerns the world but is addressed to the disciples. It simultaneously informs the disciples what the Paraclete will do to the world and encourages the disciples to understand that they are not abandoned in their witness. In this light, the element B₂ is entirely coherent, including the change from third person to second. The Paraclete will convict the world of its righteousness because Jesus is going to his Father and the disciples will see him no more. Earlier on, Jesus twice warned the men of this world that they would soon lose the opportunity of seeing him (7:33–34; 8:21). No longer will they be convicted of their sin and of their false righteousness by hearing Jesus' words and observing his signs; now the Paraclete will take over that function. This much is made clear *apart from* the last clause of B₂. What that last clause, *καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ με*, introduces is not some refinement of the main reason for the Paraclete's *ἐλεγγίς* advanced by the first part of the *ὅτι* clause but something more subtle. Once Jesus has departed, the disciples have no model, no "master," no one to follow in the same sense that they followed Jesus in the days of his flesh. How, then, will they contribute to convicting the world of its false righteousness? The Paraclete takes over this role from Jesus, as we have seen; but he does not convict the world *only* on his own but *also* through the disciples. The disciples by their conduct, lived in the light of the exalted Master's authority and empowered by the Paraclete, share in the responsibility to bring conviction to the world concerning its "righteousness." Already the promised Paraclete has been linked with the obedience of the disciples (14:16–27); and within the

³⁹Cf. E. Bammel, "Jesus und der Paraklet in Johannes 16," *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (ed. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1973) 199–217.

context of such themes comes the astounding promise that *the disciples themselves will do what Jesus has been doing* (14:12)—indeed, even greater things than Jesus has been doing, *because Jesus is going to the Father* (= *because the blessed Paraclete will be sent*). Jesus is no longer seen by the world, but the Paraclete brings conviction to the world anyway. Jesus is no longer seen by his disciples, but the Paraclete enables them to exercise significant witness in convicting the world anyway. The Paraclete convicts the world of its pseudo-righteousness, but he accomplishes at least part of this convicting work by so operating within the believers that they themselves establish before the world true and convicting standards of righteousness. Jesus is gone, and they see him no more, but the Paraclete so works in them that they are enabled to exercise the same convicting righteousness exhibited by Jesus in the days of his flesh. Thus, within short compass, B₂ not only provides the reason why the Paraclete will convict the world of its “righteousness,” but frames that reason in such a way as to provide encouragement for the disciples in their witness.

(5) One broadly based theological motif may be advanced as a final note to the interpretation advanced in this paper. Elsewhere I have dealt at length with the relation between divine sovereignty and human responsibility in the fourth gospel.⁴⁰ Among the observations which stemmed from that study, one is relevant here. The repeated language of election functions as a source of assurance both (a) that God’s sovereignty was never put in abeyance in the tragedy and triumph of the cross and (b) that it is never put in abeyance when a man comes to faith. The interpretation of 16:7–11 advanced here is in perfect conformity with both of these election functions. (a) It is a *good* thing for the disciples that Jesus “goes away” by his death/exaltation, for without his departure the Paraclete would not come. Even in this respect, the cross is not seen as defeat, but as victory. (b) And when the Paraclete comes, he continues the initiative which Jesus began in the world. He, too, exercises a ministry of convicting the world of its sin, its righteousness, and its judgment; for without such sovereign intervention the mission of the disciples must be futile.

Here, then, is the translation of 16:8–11:

When he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, its righteousness, and its judgment: its sin, because they do not believe in me; its righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; and its judgment, because the prince of this world stands judged.

Or, if a loose but extended paraphrase be preferred:

When the Paraclete comes, he will convict the world of its sin (that is, so convince it of its sin as to drive home self-conscious conviction of sin), its righteousness (that is, what the world takes to be righteousness but which is woefully inadequate or tainted), and its judgment (that is, all of its false assessment of spiritual reality, culminating especially in its false assessment of Jesus):

⁴⁰D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Some Aspects of Johannine Theology Against Jewish Background* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, forthcoming).

its sin, because the (the people of the world) do not believe in me and are by this unbelief self-excluded (apart from the work of the Paraclete) from the one source that would reveal their need to them;

its righteousness, because I am going to the Father and will no longer be present in the same way to convict them of their sin. The Paraclete will therefore take over this ministry from me. Moreover, you believers will no longer see me either; but the Paraclete will enable you to discharge faithfully your responsibilities as witnesses.

its judgment, because, with the condemnation of the prince of this world, the age of salvation and of condemnation has already dawned, and it has become terribly urgent that the people of the world change their false and sinful assessment of spiritual reality before it is too late.