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### John 1:9 in the Light of Historical Interpretation

John Francis Niermann

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, johnniermann@att.net

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BACHELOR OF DIVINITY

THESES

1961

v.2

Exegetical Theology

10236

Concordia Seminary

St. Louis, Mo.

1961

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JOHN 1:9 IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORICAL  
INTERPRETATION

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

John Francis Niemann

June 1961

Approved by:

Paul W. Beutcher  
Advisor

Donald L. DePue  
Reader

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this investigation is to give the solutions of various commentators to the interpretive problems of John 1:9 and to propose an interpretation based on an exegetical study of this passage.

The grammatical and exegetical problems of John 1:9 to which commentators speak are these: (1) What is the subject of ἦν?; (2) Is ἦν a copula, the meaning being: "He (the Logos) was the true light"?; (3) Or is ἦν the predicate, the meaning being: "The true light was, that is, existed or appeared"?; (4) Or does ἦν constitute with ἐρχόμενον a periphrastic verb, the meaning being: "The true light was (or, will be) coming"?; (5) Or, if ἦν is predicate (see 3 above), is ἐρχόμενον to be connected with ὡς, φωτισει, or ἀναφωταν?; (6) What is the activity of ὡς designated by φωτισει?; (7) Is it universal?; (8) What does ἀληθινόν mean?; (9) What does κόσμον mean? Chapter Two will deal with questions one, two, three, and four; Chapter Three with question five; Chapter Four with questions six and seven; Chapter Five with question eight; Chapter Six with question nine. In addition to the answers given by commentators to these questions, the significance of their answers will also be presented if given by them.

In answering these questions the following commentators were consulted: (1) John Chrysostom and Theophylactus (the Patristic period); (2) John Calvin and Martin Luther (the Reformation period); (3) C. K. Barrett, J. H. Bernard, R. Bultmann, E. C. Colwell, C. H. Dodd, F. Godet, W. Hendriksen, E. C. Hoskyns, W. F. Howard, P. E. Kretzmann, R. C. H. Lenski, R. H. Lightfoot, H. A. W. Meyer, H. Olshausen, A. Plummer, D. A. Schlatter, A. Tholuck, B. F. Westcott, and T. Zahn (the Modern period). Not all of these men speak to every question that John 1:9 poses, but where they do comment, their views are presented in this study.

The same problems referred to above will be considered in Chapter Seven in which an interpretation is proposed. However, they will be treated in a somewhat different order. This order, the methods employed, and the purpose of the exegetical study in the last chapter will be given at the beginning of that chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION OF ἦν AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

In noting the solutions of various commentators to the grammatical difficulty and meaning of John 1:9 the first word of the passage will be considered first. The position of this verb immediately raises four questions: (1) What is its subject?; (2) Is ἦν a copula, the meaning being: "He (the Logos) was the true light"?; (3) Or is ἦν the predicate, the meaning being: "The true light was, that is, existed or appeared"?; (4) Or does ἦν constitute with ἐρχόμενον a periphrastic verb, the meaning being: "The true light was (or, will be) coming"?

Commentators are divided as to what the subject of the word should be. Some say that it should necessarily be τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν. R. C. H. Lenski in his commentary on the Gospel according to St. John feels compelled to regard τὸ φῶς as the subject of ἦν and not as the predicate noun. He says, "To supply the strong demonstrative 'that' as the subject (A. V.) is quite unjustifiable."<sup>1</sup> T. Zahn also takes the position that τὸ φῶς should be the subject. He argues that it is impossible to regard τὸ φῶς as the predicate noun after the analogy of verse 8a (there τὸ φῶς is the predicate

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<sup>1</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), p. 51.



noun). To do so would be against the context. All of the other occurrences of  $\tilde{\eta}\nu$  in the preceding verses have a definite subject. He contends that  $\tau\omicron\ \phi\omega\varsigma$  can be the predicate noun only if the subject of  $\tilde{\eta}\nu$  were expressed. He suggests  $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$  as subject. The difficulty here, he points out, is that such a subject could only refer to John the Baptist who in verses six and seven was the only subject, and of him Zahn says it cannot be said that he is the true light.<sup>2</sup> H. A. W. Meyer also believes that  $\tau\omicron\ \phi\omega\varsigma$  should be the subject and also argues from the context as does Zahn. Meyer writes,

$\tau\omicron\ \phi\omega\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\ \alpha\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota$  cannot be the predicate but must be the subject, because in verse eight another was the subject; consequently without a  $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ , or some such word, there are no grounds for supposing a subject not expressed.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to Zahn, Lenski and Meyer all the commentators who construe  $\tilde{\eta}\nu$  with  $\epsilon\pi\chi\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu$  as a periphrastic conceive of  $\tau\omicron\ \phi\omega\varsigma$  as the subject.

On the other hand, the predicate position of  $\tau\omicron\ \phi\omega\varsigma$  with the subject of  $\tilde{\eta}\nu$  understood is advanced by some commentators. It is supported by Burney, R. Sultmann, and A.

<sup>2</sup>Theodor Zahn, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in the Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (First and second edition; Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1908), IV, 65.

<sup>3</sup>H. A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John, in the Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, edited by Frederick Crombie, translated from the German by William Urwick (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1883), I, 77.

Plummer. The first two men see a dependence of the Greek of John on a conjectured Aramaic original. In  $\text{Hv}$  Burney sees a mistranslation of  $\text{X'75T}$  (Hebrew for "he").  $\text{X'75T}$  was misread as  $\text{X'75T}$  (to be) and rendered  $\text{Hv}$ . This would mean that the subject was originally an expressed pronoun and the beginning of verse nine should be rendered as Burney suggests: "It was the true light" (according to Burney the verb "to be" was understood in the original). Burney's difficulty here, as Torrey points out, is that his conjectured  $\text{X'75T}$  would naturally refer to John the Baptist.<sup>4</sup>

Bultmann also takes  $\text{Iò } \phi\omega\varsigma$  as the predicate and like Burney finds the Aramaic original instructive. However, he does not believe that there was a misunderstanding in rendering  $\text{X'75T}$  with  $\text{Hv}$ . The evangelist was forced by verses six to eight not to begin verse nine with  $\text{e\delta\tau\omicron\varsigma } \text{Hv}$ . Bultmann believes that the subject is "he" and should definitely refer to the Logos. He argues that the subject of this verb is the same as the subject for  $\text{Hv}$  in verse ten and for  $\text{H\delta\theta\epsilon\upsilon}$  in verse eleven. This, he says, is as the  $\text{a\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon}$  of verse eleven shows, the Logos.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>E. C. Colwell, The Greek of the Fourth Gospel (Chicago: The University Press, 1931), p. 107.

<sup>5</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in the Kritisch--exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, Begr. von H. A. W. Meyer (Twelfth edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1956), II, 31-2.

Plummer also takes τὸ φῶς as the predicate with "that" as the subject. He does not argue in support of this but his view becomes clear in his translation.<sup>6</sup>

In answer to the second question raised at the beginning of this chapter (is ἦν a copula?) Burney, R. Bultmann, and A. Plummer reply in the affirmative. Because they regard τὸ φῶς as a predicate noun they view ἦν as a copula, the meaning being: "He (the Logos) was the true light."

The third question (is ἦν the predicate?) is answered affirmatively by Theophylactus, B. Westcott, H. A. W. Meyer, D. A. Schlatter, and E. C. Hoskyns. Theophylactus believes that ἦν establishes the preincarnate existence of the Logos. He says that the evangelist leads the mind to the existence beyond all beginning and says, "ἦν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ σαρκου θῆναι τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν." The evangelist does this, says Theophylactus, so that no one will think that Jesus was not, before He became incarnate. Theophylactus' interest in such an exegesis was to counteract the heresy of Photinus and Paul of Samosata who denied the preincarnate existence of Christ and who said that He first came into being when He was born of Mary.<sup>7</sup> Westcott, too, takes ἦν as a separate verb

<sup>6</sup>A. Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John (Cambridge: the University Press, 1906), p. 65.

<sup>7</sup>Theophylactus, "Enarratio in Evangelium Joannis," Patrologias: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n. p., 1864), CXXIII, col. 1149.

expressive of permanent being.<sup>8</sup>

Other commentators who regard  $\text{?Hv}$  as expressive of existence, see in it only a reference to the fact that Christ was already there when John the Baptist bore witness of Him. It is in this way that H. A. W. Meyer takes it.<sup>9</sup> D. A. Schlatter and E. C. Hoskyns go one step further and spell out the implications of the fact that Christ was already there when John the Baptist bore witness to Him.  $\text{?Hv}$  means for Hoskyns that the Christ to whom John bore witness was neither "an abstraction, nor . . . a hope or promise to be realized in the future. The Light was, was in the world."<sup>10</sup> Schlatter, too, says much the same thing. He remarks that  $\text{?Hv}$  is "nicht nur eine Kopula, sondern die inhaltvolle Aussage des Satzes . . . ." This means for him that the Light was present "nicht nur als Verheissung und Hoffnung, sondern als Wirklichkeit."<sup>11</sup>

T. Zahn objects to taking  $\text{?Hv}$  as a predicate with the meaning: "The true light was." He feels that if it is taken as a predicate with  $\text{Te } \rho\omega\varsigma$  as the subject, then a statement

<sup>8</sup>Brooke Foss Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans's Publishing Company, 1954), p. 13.

<sup>9</sup>Meyer, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>10</sup>E. C. Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 145.

<sup>11</sup>D. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Johannes: wie er spricht, denkt, und glaubt (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1930), p. 14.

of place is required, for example, "the true light was in the world." He cites other instances in the Gospel of John where forms of εἶναι are used with a statement of place:

"v. 4 ἐν αὐτῷ, v. 10 ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, 2,2 (u. 6); 4,6: 5,5: 6,22. 24 ἐκεῖ, 6,9; 11,21.32 ἔθε."<sup>12</sup>

In order to complete the discussion of this chapter it is now necessary to list the commentators who answer in the affirmative to the fourth question (does ἦν constitute with ἐρχόμενον a periphrastic verb?) and to state the reasons for their stand. C. K. Barrett favors this construction. He recognizes that there are two possibilities: (1) To take ἐρχόμενον as a neuter nominative agreeing with φῶς which would give a periphrastic construction; (2) To take it as a masculine accusative agreeing with ἄνθρωπον. He notes that in favor of (2) is the fact that כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּא־עוֹלָם, "all who come into the world," is a common rabbinic expression for "every man."<sup>13</sup> However, in spite of this he favors the first possibility for the following reasons:

(i) in the next verse the light is in the world; it is therefore natural to suppose that it should previously be described as coming; (ii) in other passages (6.14; 9.39; 11.27; 16.28) Jesus "comes into the world," and at 12.46 he declares, ἐγὼ φῶς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐλάλησα;

<sup>12</sup>Zahn, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>13</sup>C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 134.

(111) the periphrastic imperfect is in accordance with John's style (1.28; 2.6; 3.23; 10.40; 11.1; 13.23; 18.18,25). These arguments seem to outweigh the parallel which stands on the other side.<sup>14</sup>

Zahn also advocates the periphrastic formulation because he feels it corresponds to John's style. The periphrastic to him is expressive of a progressive coming of Christ that began just prior to the Baptist's witness to Christ. When the Baptist witnessed to Christ (verses six to eight), Christ was already involved in coming. It was a coming into the fullness of Christ's ministry rather than the incarnation that is meant here according to Zahn. He says that *ἦν . . . ἐρχόμενον* . . . . refers to the self disclosure of Jesus when he began to step out of the hiding of his earlier life to rise resplendent as a light. This step by step self revelation, yet incomplete going forth (incomplete as long as the Baptist exercises his witness office) is best expressed, he feels, by the periphrastic construction rather than by a simple imperfect.<sup>15</sup>

F. Godet also favors the periphrastic construction. He says that the verse so understood leaves the phrase, "coming into the world," in the usual and almost technical sense which it has in the Gospel according to St. John. He notes the following passages as parallels: John 3:19, 6:14, 9:39, 18:37.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Zahn, op. cit., p. 68.

His rendering of  $\text{ἦν}$  with  $\text{ἐρχόμενον}$  is also like that of Zahn's. He translates it: "was coming" and comments, "This analytic form involves an idea of duration. At the time when John was testifying of the light, it was on the way; it was just coming . . . ."16

J. H. Bernard, too, argues for the periphrastic construction. He writes that  $\text{ἦν}$  with  $\text{ἐρχόμενον}$  means "was in the act of coming." This construction of  $\text{ἦν}$  with the present participle used for the imperfect is one, he says, which appears frequently in John's Gospel. Furthermore, he writes that John several times uses the clause, "coming into the world," of the advent of Christ (he notes: John 6:14, 11:27, 16:28, 16:37) and that elsewhere in the Gospel (John 3:19, 12:46) Christ is spoken of as a "light coming into the world." This latter fact would not mean that  $\text{ἐρχόμενον}$  would have to be taken with  $\text{ἦν}$  to form a periphrastic but it does preclude the possibility of taking  $\text{ἐρχόμενον}$  with  $\text{πάντα ἄνθρωπων}$ .<sup>17</sup>

Although R. C. H. Lenski admits that John has no other examples in his Gospel where a relative clause intervenes

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16F. Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, translated by M. D. Cusin (Third edition; Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1934), I, 346.

17J. H. Bernard, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, in the ICG series, edited by A. H. Mc Neile (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), I, 10.

between the two words of a circumscribed imperfect, he feels that it is quite evident that ἔρχόμενος completes the idea of ἦν. "For John is not merely once more saying (v.4) that the light was in existence in the indefinite past but that this light was in the act of coming into the world."<sup>18</sup> This coming into the world he equates with the appearance of Christ in His office as Savior and Redeemer.

As far as Christ is concerned, he was already born when the evangelist writes that he "was coming into the world." This "coming" is the standard term of Christ's mission in the world, for his appearance in his office as our Savior and Redeemer. The term ἔρχομαι is almost technical in this sense. Israel constantly expected the coming one; and in v.11 John writes, "He came into his own," he appeared as the promised Messiah, manifesting himself as such by his word and his work, by his suffering, death, and resurrection. In v.9 when the Baptist testified of him, he was on the point of thus coming and making himself manifest.<sup>19</sup>

P. E. Kretzmann also takes ἦν with ἔρχόμενος as a periphrastic imperfect. He offers no argument for his position except that it is "in keeping with the stately presentation of the Prolog . . ." He further states that this construction emphasizes one of the titles of the Messiah, "the Coming One," and notes the following passages as parallels: Matt. 3:11; 11:3; John 1:15,27,30; 3:31; 6:14; 11:27. According to him the periphrastic here has a durative quality and refers to Christ's entering upon His public ministry. He

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<sup>18</sup>Ienski, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 53.



writes, "The Light was in the process of coming, He was soon to be revealed, He was soon to enter upon His public ministry, in which His manifestation was to be made."<sup>20</sup>

A. Tholuck, too, takes ἐρχόμενον in a close relation to ἦν to form a periphrastic. However, he differs from the foregoing commentators concerning the tense that the periphrastic here should have. The preceding men take ἦν . . . ἐρχόμενον as having a tense of present value while Tholuck assigns to it a tense which he admits is present but which he contends has future value. He writes,

We connect ἐρχόμενον with ἦν, (that was the true light about to come into the world etc.); the present used of something future, denotes its speedy occurrence, Winer, 3d Ed. p. 218, hence "the true light will shortly come." So in Heb. 10:5, εὐσεβόμενος means on the point of entering the world. So also in Heb. 10:37, the Redeemer that was soon to enter into the regnum gloriae is called εὐσεβόμενος.<sup>21</sup>

To this periphrastic construction objections have been made. D. A. Schlatter feels that although forms of the verb εἶναι with the participle are frequent in the Gospel, the periphrastic is not to be construed here. In the first place he says that this formulation describes the coming as a con-

<sup>20</sup> P. E. Kretzmann, The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple (Unpublished exposition of the Gospel of St. John; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, n. d.), p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> A. Tholuck, A Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, translated from the German by A. Kaufman (Fourth edition; Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1836), p. 69.

tinual and repeated coming, that is, Christ was always a "wieder Kommender. mit Kommen beschäftigt" and this thought he says is not a Johannine concept. He concludes that the coming does not stretch itself through a long period of time but happened at His birth. Furthermore, he argues, the constructions in John 8:54 (ἔστιν ὁ δεσπόζων) and John 11:27 (ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον) show how easy it would have been for John to express himself so that there would be no misunderstanding.<sup>22</sup> What Schlatter evidently means is that if John wanted ἐρχόμενοι to go with ἦν he would have made it clear that the two belong together.

R. Bultmann also objects to the connection of ἦν with ἐρχόμενοι. No parallels in the Gospel of John can be given for the construction of the periphrastic as it appears in this verse. He discounts 2:6 and 18:18 which he says are no analogies since they do not have a relative clause intervening between the main verb and its auxiliary. He also feels that the periphrastic here gives no tolerable sense as the dilemma of the commentators shows.<sup>23</sup>

H. A. W. Meyer categorically states that ἐρχόμενοι can only be connected with πάντα ἀνθρώπων and not with ἦν. His objections to the periphrastic construction are the follow-

<sup>22</sup>Schlatter, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>23</sup>Bultmann, op. cit., p. 32.

ing:

(1) when John was bearing witness the Logos was already in the world (v.26), not simply then came into the world, or was about to come, or had to come. We should thus be obliged arbitrarily to restrict ἐκ τῆς ἰστορίας to His entrance upon His public ministry. . . .; (2) "the order of the words does not suggest the connecting of ἦν with ἐρχόμενον. . . ."<sup>24</sup>

C. H. Dodd, too, rejects the connection of ἦν with ἐρχόμενον but gives no lengthy objection. He merely says that the attempt to connect ἐρχόμενον with ἦν produces a type of sentence which is alien to John's style.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Meyer, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>25</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), p. 204.

### CHAPTER III

## ἔρχόμενον, ITS GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The previous chapter necessitated a partial discussion of the grammatical construction of ἔρχόμενον since it had a vital connection with ἦν in a periphrastic formulation according to some commentators. In the present chapter the study of ἔρχόμενον will be completed as we note its possible connection with either ὡς, ὡτισει, or ἐκθρονον as a modifying participle.

B. F. Westcott takes ἔρχόμενον as a participle modifying ὡς. This to him expresses a constant, continuous coming of the Light to men. The same idea of a continuous coming of the Word to men is found, he says, in John 6:33,50 where ὁ καταβαίνων stands in contrast to ὁ καταβάς (John 6:51,58).<sup>1</sup> This coming of the Logos to men did not begin when John began to witness to Christ or at the incarnation, but

all along up to this time "the Light" of which he came to witness continued to shine; being revealed in many parts and in many ways . . . . Taken in relation to the context, the words [ἔρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον] declare that men were not left alone to interpret the manifestations of the Light in the Life around them and in them. The Light from whom that Life flows made Himself known more directly. From the first He was (so to speak) on

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<sup>1</sup>Elooke Foss Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company, 1954), p. 13.

His way to the world, advancing toward the incarnation by preparatory revelations. He came in type and prophecy and judgment.<sup>2</sup>

F. Godet finds fault with Westcott's treatment and points out that to take "coming into the world" to refer to the long coming of the Logos through the ages (by means of His revelations during the whole course of the Old Testament) would lead to a tautology with the first proposition of the following verse (ten) where John states that "He (Jesus) was in the world." This phrase means for Godet that "that light which cometh into the world was already there." Hence, there could be no progressive coming of Christ through the ages.<sup>3</sup>

Another possible understanding of ἐρχόμενον arises when it is connected with φωτισει to form a temporal modifying participle. The passage would then be translated something like this; "This is the true light which lights every man when it comes into the world." This possibility was suggested by T. Zahn, but he gives no name of a commentator who originated or who holds this view. Zahn himself does not. He merely mentions it and then goes on to show why such an interpretation is untenable. The burden of his argument is that it conflicts with his own view. He says that it is not

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>F. Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, translated by W. D. Gussin (Third edition; Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1934), I, 347.

when Jesus comes into the world, it is not at Christ's birth when the Light beams out, but it is when Jesus goes out among the people and bears witness to Himself through word and deed, that the Light sends out its rays.<sup>4</sup>

ἔρχόμενον is also taken with φωτίζει in a somewhat similar sense but instead of the participle expressing time, it expresses means by which. W. F. Howard takes it in this sense. His translation of verse nine reads as follows: "This is the true light which lighteth every man by its coming into the world."<sup>5</sup>

F. Godet criticizes this construction because of insufficient examples to support this translation.<sup>6</sup> E. F. Westcott, too, criticizes the "by means" rendering. In speaking to this very construction of means, he says, "the context does not call for any statement as to the mode of the action of the Light; and the Light illuminates by 'being' as well as by 'coming.'"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Theodor Zahn, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in the Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (First and second edition; Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1908), IV, 66-7.

<sup>5</sup>W. F. Howard, The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation (Fourth revised edition; London: The Epworth Press, 1955), p. 198.

<sup>6</sup>Godet, op. cit., p. 347.

<sup>7</sup>Westcott, op. cit., p. 13.

The last possibility is that of taking ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἀνθρώπων as a modifying adjectival participle. This construction appeals to a number of commentators. Theophylactus takes πάντα ἀνθρώπων as the phrase which is to be modified by ἐρχόμενον and discusses no other possibility.<sup>8</sup> John Chrysostom, too, refers ἐρχόμενον to πάντα ἀνθρώπων. He offers no proof; he merely assumes that they belong together.<sup>9</sup> Calvin<sup>10</sup> and Luther<sup>11</sup> agree with Theophylactus and Chrysostom. H. A. W. Meyer also argues for this construction and finds himself in full agreement with the early church. He feels that the word order links ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἀνθρώπων grammatically and therefore concludes, "the connection by the early church of ἐρχόμενον with π. ἀνθρ. is by no means to be regarded . . . as obsolete, but is to be retained. . . ." He also states that here there is no redundancy as opponents

<sup>8</sup>Theophylactus, "Enarration in Evangelium Joannis," Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n. p., 1864), CXXIII, col. 1149.

<sup>9</sup>John Chrysostom, "Eighth Homily on the Gospel of St. John," Library of the Fathers, translated by G. T. Stupart (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1848), pp. 68-73.

<sup>10</sup>John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, translated from the Latin by William Pringle (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company, 1949), I, 38.

<sup>11</sup>Martin Luther, Das Johannes-Evangelium mit Ausnahme der Passionsterte, in D. Martin Luthers Evangelien-Auslegung, edited by Erwin Mühlaupt (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1954), IV, 33.

to this construction say, but "that we have here, an epic fulness of words."<sup>12</sup>

A. Plummer, too, takes ἐρχόμενον as a modifier of πάντα ἄνθρωπων. He offers no argument for his position but does comment that ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον is a Jewish phrase for being born and that it is frequent in St. John's Gospel. He cites the following passages as parallels: John 9:39, 11:27, 16:28.<sup>13</sup> E. C. Hoskyns feels that ἐρχόμενον should modify man although he does not feel as strongly about it as does H. A. W. Meyer. Hoskyns realizes that the periphrastic construction is in full accord with John's style and that the thought conveyed by the periphrastic was in the author's mind, but he feels that in view of the Rabbinic parallels and because the connecting of ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἄνθρωπων places much emphasis on the universalism of Jesus, the placing of ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἄνθρωπων is to be preferred.<sup>14</sup>

D. A. Schlatter argues also on the basis of Rabbinic parallels for the construing of ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἄνθρωπων.

<sup>12</sup>H. A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John, in the Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, edited by Frederick Crombie, translated from the German by William Urwick (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1883), I, 77.

<sup>13</sup>A. Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John (Cambridge: the University Press, 1906), p. 65.

<sup>14</sup>E. C. Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 145.



He cites one particularly striking one:

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In Greek it reads: "ὅτι φωτισίσεις τοὺς ἄνω καὶ τοὺς κάτω καὶ πάντα ἐρχόμενος εἰς κόσμον" (R. Lev. 31:6). In addition to this one he notes five others and remarks that the close connection between verse nine and Palestinian parallels makes it inadvisable to separate ἐρχόμενον from πάντα ἀνθρώπων.<sup>15</sup> C. H. Dodd also cites the passage which Schlatter cited above and comes to the same conclusion.<sup>16</sup>

However, there are difficulties in taking ἐρχόμενον to modify πάντα ἀνθρώπων and other commentators are quick to point these out. F. Godet admits the possibility of taking ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἀνθρώπων and even discounts the argument against it that the clause is a needless appendix to man. However, he finds that it forces a construction with respect to φῶς that is very unnatural. He says that if ἐρχόμενον is taken with πάντα ἀνθρώπων, then there are two ways to construe φῶς, either as the subject of ἦν or as the attribute of ἦν. If it is the subject, it would be translated in the sense of the Light being present, but if taken as an attribute, the subject would be a φῶς understood to be taken from the

<sup>15</sup>D. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Johannes: wie er spricht, denkt, und glaubt (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1930), p. 14.

<sup>16</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: university Press, 1953), p. 204.

preceding verse. The Light to which John bore testimony would be understood as the subject. These two constructions, he concludes, "are not very natural."<sup>17</sup>

H. Olshausen objects to allowing ἐρχόμενον to modify "every man." He says that ἐρχόμενον is not to be connected with πάντα ἄνθρωπον for this would cause a pleonasm, since all men must come into the world, that is, must be born.<sup>18</sup>

William Hendriksen refuses to let the phrase, "coming into the world" modify "every man." He asserts that the Gospel of John does not contain any undisputed passage in which the expression, "coming into the world," refers to the birth of an ordinary human being.<sup>19</sup>

R. C. H. Lenski, too, objects to the connecting of ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἄνθρωπον. Although he admits the fact that Hebrew originals have been cited for regarding "coming into the world" in the sense of "being born" he contends that the New Testament never uses the expression in this sense. He further points out that as far as men are concerned, they

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<sup>17</sup>Godet, op. cit., p. 347.

<sup>18</sup>Herman Olshausen, Biblical Commentary on the New Testament, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library (First American edition; New York: Sheldon, Blakeman and Co., 1857), II, 316.

<sup>19</sup>William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel According to John, in the New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1953), I, 79.

were never outside the world and thus cannot come into the world by means of birth.<sup>20</sup>

A. Tholuck recognizes that Luther favors the connecting of ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἄνθρωπον and that Rabbinic parallels have been adduced in which men are called directly "קָרְבָּנֵי עוֹלָם" (all who come into the world). However, he feels that if this construction had been intended, the demonstrative οὗτος could not have been dispensed with before ἦν. Tholuck feels that in the absence of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ must be connected with ἐρχόμενον and this construction leaves out the possibility of taking ἐρχόμενον as a modifying phrase to πάντα ἄνθρωπον.<sup>21</sup>

J. H. Bernard also offers an argument against allowing ἐρχόμενον to modify πάντα ἄνθρωπον. In the first place, he says that if ἐρχόμενον were to be taken with πάντα ἄνθρωπον πάντα τὸν ἐρχόμενον instead of πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον should be expected. Secondly, he argues that ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον is wholly redundant because it adds nothing to "every man." Finally, he asserts that the expression, "coming into the world" is not used elsewhere by John of a man

<sup>20</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), p. 53.

<sup>21</sup>A. Tholuck, A Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, translated from the German by A. Kaufman (Fourth edition; Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1836), p. 69.

being born and John 16:21 is no exception.<sup>22</sup>

T. Zahn does not agree either with those who would take ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἄνθρωπον. He adduces several reasons for his refusal to acknowledge that ἐρχόμενον modifies πάντα ἄνθρωπον. First, he points out that the Jewish expression "קָרַבְתָּ אֵלַי" in the sense of being born is strange to the New Testament. He also states that קָרַבְתָּ אֵלַי is not a pleonastic attribute to "man" as would be the case in John 1:9 if ἐρχόμενον were taken with πάντα ἄνθρωπον. He says that it is a substitution for "man." This means that where the expression, "coming into the world," appears, the word "man" would not appear since the former is a substitution for, not an attribute of, "man." Zahn furthermore says that to connect ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἄνθρωπον is to say that every man at the moment of his birth and from there on continually is enlightened. That John is saying that every man is enlightened at the moment of his birth is possible only if one claims that John speaks of an enlightening activity of the preincarnate Logos. This, Zahn claims, John does not do. Zahn further argues that in verse six to eight the reader is held fast to the time of the public ministry of the Baptist

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<sup>22</sup>J. H. Bernard, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, in the ICC series, edited by A. H. Mc Neile (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), I, 10.

and that the Ἡ of verse nine refers to this past. This means, Zahn asserts, that the relative clause in verse nine cannot treat of an effective working of the Logos since creation, on all men and in all times and places. It can only treat of an enlightening which was taking place during the public ministry of Christ. Hence, to connect ἐρχόμενον with τὸ πάντα ἔκτισεν is not permissible since it would vitiate the limited enlightening activity that Christ is carrying on.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Zahn, op. cit., p. 66.

#### CHAPTER IV

φωτίζει. WHAT KIND OF A PROCESS IS IT AND IS IT UNIVERSAL?

In this chapter the problem posed by the relative clause ὃ φωτίζει πάντα τὰ ὄντων will be discussed. This problem can be expressed by a twofold question: What kind of a process is φωτίζει and is it universal? It is necessary to take these two questions together since the nature of the process expressed by φωτίζει often influences a commentator's feeling with regard to the Light's scope. Some will give φωτίζει a limited scope and others will see in πάντα τὰ ὄντων the universal sway of the Light. Often their opinion is determined by what kind of a process they feel φωτίζει is.

D. A. Schlatter does not comment on whether or not the enlightening is universal but he does comment on the nature of the enlightening process. He says that the word is never only the power but always also light and gives to man, while it gives to him life, at the same time the eyes which not only see the world, but also perceive through whom and for whom the world exists. The enlightening process to Schlatter, then, appears to impart a certain understanding of the world to man.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Johannes: wie er spricht, denkt, und glaubt (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1930), p. 16.

R. Bultmann sees the enlightening process as having a twofold effect. Man, according to Bultmann, is engaged in a search after self understanding. In this search it is easy for man to lose himself and to hold a "false light for the true." But in Jesus alone the continually sought after and missed, true self understanding is given. This is the one result of the enlightening activity. The second effect of the enlightening is blindness. He states that the φωτισειν of the revealer also reigns over the unbelievers but effects in them a blindness. "Wie es das Sehen," he says, "nur im Lichte gibt, so auch die Blindheit; diese Paradoxie hat der Evgl. 9:39-41 ausdrücklich hervorgehoben." Because Bultmann conceives of the enlightening process as having a two-pronged result, he has no difficulty in seeing the enlightening activity as universal.<sup>2</sup>

R. C. H. Lenski does not directly define the activity of φωτισειν. It can with certainty be assumed, however, that he conceives of φωτισειν as expressing the enlightenment of saving grace. This assumed definition of φωτισειν involves him in a difficulty which he acknowledges and from which he attempts to extricate himself. The difficulty is this: If

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<sup>2</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in the Kritisch--exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, Begr. von H. A. W. Meyer (Twelfth edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1956), II, 32-3.

the enlightening process is one of grace and if it does extend to all men as the text states, then why is it that all men are not enlightened? Why do some still continue in darkness? Lenski solves the dilemma by denying that John meant that every single human being is enlightened by the Logos. John, he says, before and after this statement speaks of men rejecting this Light and remaining in darkness. Because Lenski denies that John means every man by the expression "every man," he is forced to spell out what John actually does mean. He says, "Luther has caught John's meaning, 'There is only one light that lighteth all men, and no man comes into the world who can possibly be illumined by any other light.'"<sup>3</sup> He also refers to Rom. 5:18.

"As through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation, even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men into justification of life." Although all men are not justified through Christ, he is, nevertheless, the only man through whom justification comes. Augustine uses the illustration of one teacher in a city, who, then, is said to instruct all the city, meaning not that everyone actually goes to him to be instructed but that none are taught except by him.<sup>4</sup>

H. A. W. Meyer also assumes that φωτισει expresses an activity of God's saving grace. He also finds himself in the same difficulty as does Lenski. But Meyer does not resolve

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<sup>3</sup>R. G. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), p. 52-3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 52-3.



it by denying that the enlightening is universal. He asserts that one characteristic of the true light is that it does illumine everyone and this remains true even though the illumination is not received by many so that every one does not become what he could become, a child of light. However, he says that as a matter of experience the situation is this: "Whoever is illuminated is illuminated by this light."<sup>5</sup> This means that his resolution of the difficulty actually differs little from that which Lenski offers.

H. C. Hoskyns sees in φωτισει an activity by which the light of the creative word of God imparts physical life. This interpretation does not present any difficulty with the phrase πᾶντα ἐν ἑαυτῷ and it can be taken quite literally according to Hoskyns to mean every human being. He expresses his view in the following statement: "The coming of Jesus was fraught with all embracing universalism, for in Him was manifested the light of the creative Word of God on whom all men depend for their very existence."<sup>6</sup>

For R. K. Lightfoot φωτισει means to make clear to every

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<sup>5</sup>H. A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John, in the Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, edited by Frederick Crombie, translated from the German by William Urwick (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1883), I, 79.

<sup>6</sup>H. C. Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 145.

individual the meaning and purpose of his life. This activity is universal. This is apparent when he says, "He is the light of every human being born into the world . . . ." I believe, however, that Lightfoot would not say that everyone understands the meaning and purpose of his life. Although he does not set up this problem, that is, if the Logos makes clear the meaning and purpose, why does not every life have meaning and purpose?, he nevertheless solves it in a statement he makes concerning the explanation of φωτισει. He says, "He (and, it is implied, He only) can make clear to every individual the meaning and purpose of his life."<sup>7</sup> Hence, it would appear according to Lightfoot that the Logos enlightens everyone in the sense that He is the only one who is able to enlighten everyone although all men do not take advantage of His enlightening activity.

E. F. Westcott does not explain what the enlightening process is. He does, however, insist that παντα ἀπορωτων should be taken simply as it stands. He says, "No man is wholly destitute of the illumination of 'the Light.' In nature, and life, and conscience it makes itself felt in various degrees to all." Westcott comments further on the significance of the singular, παντα ἀπορωτων. He believes that

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<sup>7</sup>R. H. Lightfoot, St. John's Gospel, edited by G. F. Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 82.

this idea is distinct from that of πάντες (v.7). "The relation is not collective, corporate, as it is here presented, but personal, and universal while personal."<sup>8</sup>

F. Godet sees in φωτισει an illumination of the good, beautiful, and the true which he also infers is universal since he takes φωτισει to denote universal illumination if it would apply to the gospel revelation. He writes,

it is more natural to find the same notion expressed here as in ver. 4: the Logos, as the inner light, enlightening every man, illuminating him with sublime intuitions of the good, the beautiful and the true. . . . The phrase: which lighteth every man, if it were applied to the gospel revelation, would denote the universal character of the gospel. . . .<sup>9</sup>

C. K. Barrett's view concerning the nature of φωτισει is somewhat different. He feels that it is well to understand φωτισει in the sense that the light shines upon every man for judgment, to reveal what he is (whether he sees this light or not). He cites as parallel usages I Cor. 4:5

(φωτισει τα κρυφα του σκοτους) and II Tim. 1:10 (φωτισαντας εις ζωην και αβραμιαν). He further argues that in the rest

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<sup>8</sup>Brooke Foss Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans's Publishing Company, 1954), p. 14.

<sup>9</sup>F. Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, translated by M. D. Cusin (Third edition; Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1934), I, 348.

of the Gospel the function of the light is judgment and that when it shines, some come to it while others do not. Barrett cannot accept the position that the present verse is a reference to a general illumination of all men by the divine Reason which was subsequently deepened by the more complete manifestation of the Logos in the incarnation. He feels that it is open to doubt that John's words bear this meaning because:

(i) In the next verse he emphasizes that ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω -- there was no natural and universal knowledge of the light. (ii) It was those who received Christ who received authority to become children of God.<sup>10</sup>

Barrett's interpretation of φωτίζει as the light shining upon every man for judgment aligns with one of the two basic meanings he gives for this verb. He states that it may mean:

(1) "to shed light upon," "to bring to light," "to make visible"; (2) "to illuminate inwardly," "to instruct," "to give knowledge." His interpretation aligns with meaning number one.<sup>11</sup>

Theophylactus sees the illumination of φωτίζει as consisting in rationality, the knowledge of good and evil, and the ability to distinguish the creature from the Creator. He believes this illumination to be universal and argues for

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<sup>10</sup>C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), pp. 134-35.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

its universality by asking if all men are not rational, if they all by nature do not know how to distinguish between the good and evil, and if they do not all have the ability to distinguish the creature from the Creator. The fact that the activity of φωτισει is universal has polemical significance for Theophylactus. According to him it does away with the evil demiurge of the Manicheans. He invites the Manicheans who say that men are creatures of the evil demiurge, to hear that John says that the true Light enlightens every man. Theophylactus further argues that if the evil demiurge is darkness, then it is not able to enlighten anyone and we, he says, are "Τῶ φῶτι τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ . . . κτιστά."<sup>12</sup>

John Calvin identifies the activity of φωτισει with an impartation of reason, intelligence, and moral discrimination which is universal. He writes,

For we know that men have this peculiar excellence which raises them above other animals, that they are endued with reason and intelligence, and that they carry the distinction between right and wrong engraven on their conscience. There is no man, therefore, whom some perception of the eternal light does not reach.<sup>13</sup>

Calvin very pointedly rejects that φωτισει constitutes a

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<sup>12</sup>Theophylactus, "Enarratio in Evangelium Joannis," Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n. p., 1864), CXXIII, col. 1149.

<sup>13</sup>John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, translated from the Latin by William Pringle (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company, 1949), I, 38.

a divine illumination of grace. He urges,

But as there are fanatics who rashly strain and torture the passage, so as to infer from it that the grace of illumination is equally offered to all, let us remember that the only subject here treated is the common light of nature, which is far inferior to faith, for never will any man, by all the acuteness and sagacity of his own mind, penetrate into the kingdom of God. It is the spirit of God alone who opens the gate of heaven to the elect.<sup>14</sup>

His concern to preserve his doctrine of election which denies the universality of God's saving will, leads Calvin to veer away from any interpretation of φωτισει which would include a divine illumination of saving grace.

A. Plummer does not specify what the process of enlightenment is, but he does maintain that it is universal. He sees in πᾶντα ἑκάστω ἰσως an individual approach which is typical of God's working. He notes that John uses the singular, "every man," not the plural, "all men."<sup>15</sup> He comments further:

the Light illumines each one singly, not all collectively. God deals with men separately as individuals, not in masses. But though every man is illumined, not every man is the better for it: that depends upon himself.<sup>16</sup>

Martin Luther conceives of the action of φωτισει as one that imparts the light of faith. He feels that one is driven

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>A. Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John (Cambridge: the University Press, 1906), p. 65.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

to this interpretation because of the clause, ἔρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, which he says modifies πάντα ἄνθρωπον. John is saying that the Light enlightens only those who come into the world. If the evangelist was speaking of the light of reason, Luther maintains, he could not have restricted the action of φωτίζει to this world, for the devils, the damned, and the dead, those who are outside of this world, also have reason. φωτίζει then must mean an illumination of faith since John only mentions men who come into this world and only in this world does the light of faith enlighten and save. After this life it ceases its operation.<sup>17</sup>

Since Luther believes that φωτίζει means an illumination of faith and since he connects ἔρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον with πάντα ἄνθρωπον, he involves himself in the difficulty which confronted Lenski and Meyer. If the illumination is universal in this world, why aren't all enlightened? He gives two solutions to this problem. For the first solution he cites Augustine's answer to this problem and a parallel from the epistle of Paul to the Romans. Augustine gives the illustration of a teacher who is the only teacher in the city. Of this teacher it is said that he teaches everyone. This is

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<sup>17</sup>Martin Luther, Das Johannes-Evangelium mit Ausnahme der Passionsterte, in D. Martin Luthers Evangelien-Auslegung, edited by Erwin Hilhaupt (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1954), IV, 33.

not to be understood in the sense that he actually teaches everyone, but that everyone who is taught in the city is taught by this teacher. Luther further points out that Paul speaks this way in his letter to the Romans. In Rom. 5:8 Paul says that through the righteousness of one man righteousness comes on all men, not in the sense that all are righteous, but in the sense that all who are righteous are righteous because of Christ. Paul wishes to designate Christ as the only one through whom righteousness comes. Therefore, Luther concludes: "Also auch hier; wenn auch nicht alle Menschen erleuchtet werden, so ist doch dies das Licht, von welchem allein alle Erleuchtung kommt." Luther also points out that the above interpretation does not do injustice to the text for John himself did not believe that the Light enlightened everyone in the sense that all were enlightened. John says that the darkness did not comprehend it (Jn. 1:5), the world did not know it (Jn. 1:10), and his own did not receive it (Jn. 1:11).<sup>16</sup>

Luther gives the following solution as the second possible way to reconcile the text's statement that the Light enlightens all men with the fact that all men are not enlightened. He says that *ἡ φωτὶς ἡ ἀληθία ἀνθρώπων* can refer to the universal proclamation of the Gospel. John is thinking of

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.



the Light going up over all men of the world as the sun goes up over all men. Luther cites several passages of Scripture in support of this view: Col. 1:23, Mk. 16:15, Ps. 19:6.

Col. 1:23 and Mk. 16:15 speak of the universal proclamation of the Gospel. The first of these last two passages speaks of it as an accomplished fact and the second as a command. Ps. 19:6 affords the picture of the mode of operation of

φωτισει. In this passage the Psalmist says of the sun, "Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and there is nothing hid from its heat." If one takes φωτισει to designate the proclamation of the Gospel, there is then no conflict with the fact that all are not enlightened. The Light shines as the sun over all men. Men can refuse to remain in the Light but this does not vitiate the universal sway of the Light.<sup>19</sup>

W. Hendriksen conceives of the illumination of φωτισει as an enlightening that imparts a degree of spiritual understanding to all who hear the Gospel. This spiritual understanding concerns spiritual matters but does not necessarily result in salvation. The enlightening takes place when the Gospel is preached and heard. The majority do not respond favorably. Many who have the light prefer the darkness but some receive the word with the proper attitude and obtain

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 34-5.

everlasting life. Hendriksen limits ἵνα πάντες ἀποκτήσωσιν to those who hear the Gospel. When John says that the Light lightens every man, what he is really saying is that the Light "illuminates every man who hears the Gospel."<sup>20</sup> Hendriksen gives the following reasons for adopting this view:

First, this explanation is in harmony with the succeeding context. Note that also verses 10, 11, and 12 refer to a wider and a more restricted circle in which the Gospel operates. In each case it is the same glorious Gospel of salvation, but though "many are called, few are chosen." Thus, in verse 10 we see Christ standing in the midst of mankind which, however, did not acknowledge him, and in verse 11 he is represented as having come to his own home, but his own people did not welcome him. There are, however, exceptions, as verse 12 indicates; some accept him.

Secondly, this explanation is also in harmony with the preceding context; see verses 4b and 5: "and that life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness did not appropriate it."

Thirdly, this interpretation accords well with similar passages in the same Gospel. An author should be allowed to explain his own phraseology. We have such an explanation in 3:19 and in 12:46: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, but men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil" (3:19), and "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believes on me may not abide in the darkness" (12:46; cf. 12:35a,36).

Fourthly, this view is entirely in harmony with Heb. 6:4-8 where the same verb illumine (ἠωτίσω) is used as here in 1:9. In the Fourth Gospel this verb occurs nowhere else. In the rest of the New Testament it is used both intransitively (to shine, give light, as in Rev. 22:5) and transitively. The latter means either: to bring to light (I Cor. 4:5; II Tim. 1:10) or to illumine.

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<sup>20</sup>William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel According to John, in the New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1953), I, 77.

enlighten. In Eph. 1:18 this illumination concerns the eyes of the heart and is given to believers. But in Heb. 6:4 it is said to have been given to those who subsequently "fell away" and could not be renewed to repentance. Accordingly, Heb. 6:4 clearly teaches that there is an illumination which does not necessarily lead to salvation.<sup>21</sup>

P. E. Kretzmann holds that the illumination of the Light is one of saving grace and that it is universal. He solves the apparent difficulty of some not being enlightened by translating qwtiSei "shines upon." He says,

The implication is not that Christ, as the eternal Light, actually imparts the blessings of salvation to every man, for it was just stated in v.5 that the darkness did not accept Him. But just as the physical, created sun shines upon the evil and upon the good, so Christ, the true Light, the Sun or Righteousness, sends the rays of His love and mercy to all men with the object of reaching all men. And every person who is saved, who accepts the blessings of the redemption of Christ, does so because the light and the power come from Christ and His work of redemption. As for the others, who are lost, it should be kept in mind that the light shone also upon them, that salvation was also earned and intended for them, but that they preferred their darkness to His light.<sup>22</sup>

J. H. Bernard does not explicitly spell out the nature of the illumination of qwtiSei. However, he does stress the fact that it is a universal illumination. He says,

That the Servant of Yahweh would be a "light to the Gentiles" as well as to the Jews was the forecast of Deutero-Isaiah (42:6, 49:6): but this passage suggests a larger hope, for the Coming Light was to enlighten every man.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>22</sup>P. E. Kretzmann, The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple (Unpublished exposition of the Gospel of St. John; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, n. d.), p. 19.

It was this great conception upon which the early Quakers fixed, urging that to every man sufficient light was offered; and some of them called this passage "the Quaker's Text."<sup>23</sup>

Although Bernard stresses the universal illumination, he limits τὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων to those who lived after the advent of Christ. He writes, "it speaks only of the universal enlightenment which was shed upon Mankind after the Advent of Christ."<sup>24</sup>

John Chrysostom holds that the enlightening of φωτισεῖ is an operation which imparts the blessings of salvation and that it is universal. In order to meet the objection that all are not enlightened, Chrysostom says that Jesus enlightens every man

as far as in him lies. But if some, wilfully closing the eyes of their mind, would not receive the rays of that light, their darkness arises not from the nature of the light, but from their own wickedness, who wilfully deprive themselves of the gift. For the grace is shed forth upon all, turning itself back neither from Jew, nor Greek, nor Barbarian, nor Scythian, nor free, nor bond, nor male, nor female, nor old, nor young, but admitting all alike, and inviting with an equal regard. And those who are not willing to enjoy this gift, ought in justice to impute their blindness to themselves; for if when the gate is opened to all, and there is none to hinder, any being wilfully evil remain without, they perish through none other, but only through their own wickedness.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>J. H. Bernard, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, in the ICC series, edited by A. H. Mc Neile (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), I, 12.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>John Chrysostom, "Eighth Homily on the Gospel of St. John," Library of the Fathers, translated by G. T. Stupart (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1848), pp. 68-9.

It is evident that Chrysostom sees in the clause, ὁ φωτίσει  
πάντα ἄνθρωπον, a universalism which is non-restrictive as  
to race, station, sex, or age. But it is a universalism  
which is more in the intent or will of Christ than in its  
objective reality. All men are not enlightened, but this is  
not because the enlightening process is not universal. Some  
men close the eyes of their mind and will not receive the  
rays of the Light, but Christ is still there with His univer-  
sal intent, enlightening every man as far as in Him lies.

T. Zahn does not specify what the enlightening process  
is, but from his entire discussion of the passage (John 1:9)  
one can safely assume that it is an illumination that imparts  
the blessings of salvation. Zahn takes the words as they  
read and maintains that the sway of the Light is universal,  
that it does enlighten every man. However, he limits this  
universality by saying that the Light enlightens every man  
beginning with the public ministry of Christ, not before.  
Hence, although Zahn does not make the following deduction,  
it appears fair to say that, according to him, those who lived  
before are not included in the phrase πάντα ἄνθρωπον. But  
those who live after the public ministry of Christ has closed  
are included in the phrase πάντα ἄνθρωπον. Zahn says that  
the enlightening is in force from Christ's first appearance

until His visible return.<sup>26</sup>

Zahn very simply relieves the difficulty of the universal lighting of which the text speaks and the fact that all are not enlightened. He looks to the tense of the verb, φωτίζει, to solve the difficulty. The present tense does not say that the enlightenment had been carried out. It is still in progress. When John wrote the Gospel, the Light had not reached all. Therefore, there is no contradiction when it is observed that there are some who are not enlightened. If John would have used the imperfect or aorist tense, then there would be a real difficulty. Zahn expresses it in this way:

So lange er auf Erden weilte, erreichte das von ihm ausstrahlende Licht bei weitem nicht jeden Menschen und hatte auch zur Zeit des Ev nicht alle erreicht. Darum heisst es auch weder ἐφώτισεν noch ἐφώτισεν, sondern φωτίζει, entsprechend dem Praes. φωτίζει.<sup>27</sup>

C. H. Dodd holds that φωτίζει should be taken as an operation of illumination which imparts "that essential humanity . . . which is . . . the offspring of the Father . . . ." He argues backwards from this urging that because there dwells in every man this essential humanity, the illumination must be universal as John says it is. He says,

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<sup>26</sup>Theodor Zahn, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in the Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (First and second edition; Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1908), IV, 66-7.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

It [the Light] enlightens every man (since in every man there dwells that essential humanity (οὐσιώδην ἀνθρωπίνον, ἐκδηλοῦσθαι ἀνθρωπίνον) which is (as Ptolemy has it) the offspring of "the Father of all who is life and light").<sup>28</sup>

However, Dodd does not say that because the Light enlightens all men, all are enlightened. In explaining the distinction he says,

The majority of mankind . . . are not aware of the presence of the light (they do not rise from contemplation of phenomena to recognition of their archetypes), but those who "receive" the light, the "enlightened" minority, have that knowledge of God which makes them sons of God and sharers in His life.<sup>29</sup>

In brief, Dodd says that the illumination is universal in that all men possess the essential humanity which the Light imparts, but all men are not therefore enlightened. Enlightenment comes when one receives the light which gives them the knowledge of God which makes them sons of God.

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<sup>28</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), p. 204.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MEANING OF Τὸ φῶς Τὸ ἀληθινόν

There is no universal agreement concerning the meaning of ἀληθινόν among the commentators consulted. Some take ἀληθινόν to express the divinity of the Logos. One takes ἀληθινόν to distinguish τὸ φῶς from the natural light. Others take ἀληθινόν as an adjective which means that the noun it modifies actually does that which is said of it. Thus in John 1:9 ἀληθινόν means that the light actually does enlighten every man. Still others take ἀληθινόν in the sense of genuine as opposed to that which is not necessarily false but imperfect. Finally, some take ἀληθινόν to mean that which is true as opposed to that which is false.

For John Chrysostom ἀληθινόν designates Christ as the true God. He writes, "where now are those who deny that He is true God? for here He is called the true Light . . . ." <sup>1</sup> Theophylactus also takes ἀληθινόν as an adjective used by John to show that Christ is God. To Arius he addresses the following: "Ἄκουε καὶ σὺ, ὁ Ἄρειανός, ὃ μὴ λέγων ἀληθινόν θεὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, τί φησιν ὃ εὐαγγελιστὴς κτὸ φῶς τὸ

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<sup>1</sup>John Chrysostom, "Eighth Homily on the Gospel of St. John," Library of the Fathers, translated by G. T. Stupart (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1848), p. 68.



ἄλυθινόν<sup>2</sup>

Martin Luther is the one commentator who sees in ἄλυθινόν a purposeful intent on John the Apostle's part to distinguish τὸ φῶς from nature's light. He writes,

Das is aber wunderbarlich, dasz er sagt, es erleuchte alle Menschen, die da kommen in diese Welt. Soll es gesagt sein von dem natürlichen Licht, so streitet dawider, dasz er spricht, es sei das wahre Licht.<sup>3</sup>

Other commentators feel that because the light is said to enlighten all men, it is called ἄλυθινόν. T. Zahn argues that Christ would not be the true Light, the Light in the full sense of the word, the Light without equal, if He would not be for all men and finally reach all men with His operation. "Weil dies der Fall ist, ist er τὸ φῶς τὸ ἄλυθινόν,"<sup>4</sup> he concludes. R. C. H. Lenski also adopts this same view. He asserts,

The relative clause, "which lighteth every man," conveys more than an activity native to "the light"; it furnishes the evidence for this being "the genuine light." . . .

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<sup>2</sup>Theophylactus, "Enarratio in Evangelium Joannis," Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n. p., 1864), CXXIII, col. 1149.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Luther, Das Johannes-Evangelium mit Ausnahme der Passionsterte, in D. Martin Luthers Evangelien-Auslegung, edited by Erwin Mülhaupt (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1954), IV, 32.

<sup>4</sup>Theodor Zahn, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in the Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (First and second edition; Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1908), IV, 67.

This light is genuine because it is universal; every man, all men, are wholly dependent on this one divine light.<sup>5</sup>

Lenski expresses in another way the fact that the light is genuine because it does enlighten every man, when he states, "The adjective ἀληθινόν means real, genuine, the reality corresponding to the idea, verus, and is thus distinguished from ἀληθής, true, mind and word, word and deed agreeing with each other, verax."<sup>6</sup> A. Tholuck also feels that ἀληθινόν denotes that which corresponds to its idea. When John uses ἀληθινόν he is saying, according to Tholuck, that "in relation to the human soul, Christ is, in the strictest sense, that which light is to man; therefore illumining, brightening, enlivening."<sup>7</sup> H. A. W. Meyer, too, sees in ἀληθινόν the same meaning that Tholuck does. He states in his commentary on John's Gospel that ἀληθινόν means that the Light is "the true, genuine, archetypal Light which corresponds to the idea -- the idea of the light realized."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), p. 52.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>A. Tholuck, A Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, translated from the German by A. Kaufman (Fourth edition; Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1836), p. 70

<sup>8</sup>H. A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John, in the Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, edited by Frederick Crombie, translated from the German by William Urwick (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1883), I, 79.

Other commentators see in ἄλυθινόν primarily an emphasis on an exclusiveness of Christ which does not mean that He is the only Light with the implication that all other lights are false, but that He is the true Light while others are lights only in an imperfect or derived sense. John Calvin falls into this group of commentators. He places special emphasis on the fact that Christ is not a derived Light, but that He shines of and by Himself. He says,

The evangelist did not intend to contrast the true light with the false, but to distinguish Christ from all others, that none might imagine that what is called light belongs to him in common with angels and men. The distinction is, that whatever is luminous in heaven and in earth borrows its splendour from some other object; but Christ is the light shining from itself and by itself, and enlightening the whole world by its radiance; so that no other source or cause of splendour is anywhere to be found. He gave the name of the true light, therefore, to that which has by nature the power of giving light.<sup>9</sup>

F. E. Kretzmann also places much emphasis on the independent radiance of the φῶς that ἄλυθινόν characterizes. He does not think of ἄλυθινόν as separating Christ from those teachers who may be outside the pale of Christianity but from those who witness concerning Christ. He writes,

John the Baptist was not the Light, and he rejected the suggestion that he was the Christ. Vv. 19.20. It is true that Jesus himself calls John a burning and a shin-

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<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, translated from the Latin by William Pringle (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans's Publishing Company, 1949), I, 37.

ing light, chap. 5, 35, but he was not the true light, the Source and Giver of light. (Note: luchnos, not phos.) That honor belongs to Christ alone, for He only is the true light, He only is an independent, self-sufficient light-giving body, while all those who witness concerning Him whether hearers or preachers, derive their light from Christ.<sup>10</sup>

H. Olshausen expresses the same view as Kretzmann's. His view is contained in the following excerpt from his commentary:

The epithet ἀληθινός, true, contrasts the Logos, as the original light, with the other derived lights (James 1.17). John frequently uses the term (iv.23, vi.32, xv.1) to express the sentiment that the earthly was only the imitation of the former. Hence it stands in antithesis not to the false, for the Baptist was no false light but only to the relative, the derived.<sup>11</sup>

Although C. H. Dodd believes that ἀληθινόν characterizes the independent brilliance of τὸ φῶς, he feels that it separates Christ not from His witnesses but from all empirical lights. He contends that ἀληθινόν in John 1:9 is equivalent to Philo's φῶς ἀρχέτυπον. He writes, "both are speaking of the eternal idea of light, of which all empirical lights are transient copies."<sup>12</sup>

The idea of ἀληθινόν as designating the light as the

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<sup>10</sup>p. E. Kretzmann, The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple (Unpublished exposition of the Gospel of St. John; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, n. d.), p. 19.

<sup>11</sup>Herman Olshausen, Biblical Commentary on the New Testament, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library (First American edition; New York: Sheldon, Blakeman and Co., 1857), II, 316.

<sup>12</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), p. 203.

perfect Light with the implication that others are imperfect copies, is also very clearly expressed by J. H. Bernard. He writes that τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν is not to be interpreted as the true Light as though implying that other lights are misleading.<sup>13</sup> He goes on,

ἀληθινός is distinguished from ἀληθής as the genuine from the true. The opposite of ἀληθινός is not necessarily false, but it is imperfect, shadowy, or unsubstantial. "The ἀληθής fulfills the promise of his lips, but the ἀληθινός the wider promise of his name. Whatever that name imparts, taken in its highest, deepest, widest sense, whatever according to that he ought to be, that he is to the full" (Trench, Synonyms of N. T.). Thus ἀληθινός here is significant. Christ is not "the true and only light," but rather "the perfect Light," in whose radiance all other lights seem dim, the Sun among the stars which catch their light from Him.<sup>14</sup>

F. Godet, too, takes ἀληθινόν to designate the perfect in opposition to "all light of an inferior order." His comment is the following:

The word ἀληθινός, true, appears here for the first time. It is one of the characteristic terms of John's style. Of twenty-eight passages in which it occurs in the New Testament, twenty-three belong to John; nine in his Gospel, four in his First Epistle, ten in the Apocalypse (Milligan). It is also used in the classics. It denotes the fact as the adequate realization of the idea. It therefore contrasts, not the true with the false, but the normal appearance with the imperfect realization. Consequently the light of which John speaks is thereby

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<sup>13</sup>J. H. Bernard, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, in the ICG series, edited by A. H. Mc Neile (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), I, 11.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

characterized as essential light, in opposition to all light of an inferior order.<sup>15</sup>

A. Plummer also sees ἀληθινός as a word which does not imply the opposite of falsehood but the opposite of non-genuineness, of imperfection. He uses the old English "very" to express what he feels the meaning of ἀληθινόν should be. He writes,

The word for "true" (alethinos) is remarkable: it means true as opposed to "spurious" not true as opposed to "lying." It is in fact the old English "very," eg. "very God of very God." Christ then is the true, the genuine, the perfect Light, just as He is "the perfect Bread" (vi. 32) and "the perfect Vine" (xv. 1): not that He is the only Light, and Bread, and Vine, but that He is in reality what all others are in figure and imperfectly.<sup>16</sup>

W. Hendriksen and C. K. Barrett are other commentators who note this peculiar meaning of ἀληθινόν as genuine rather than true as opposed to false. Hendriksen comments,

Christ is here called the true light . . . . The word which has been translated true is ἀληθινός, which means real, ideal, genuine. The word is the perfect light in whose radiance all other lights seem dim.<sup>17</sup>

Barrett comments,

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15F. Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, translated by M. D. Cusin (third edition; Edinburgh: T and F Clark, 1934), I, 347-48.

16A. Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John (Cambridge: the University Press, 1906), p. 65.

17William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel According to John, in the New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1953), I, 77.

The Baptist might be supposed to be a light (indeed, in a sense he was a light, 5.35), but he was not τὸ ἀληθινόν φῶς, the Word. That is, ἀληθινός means "real," "genuine," "authentic"; . . . .<sup>18</sup>

Another position that commentators take with regard to the meaning and significance of ἀληθινόν is shown by the views of R. Bultmann and D. A. Schlatter. For them ἀληθινόν means true as opposed to false. Bultmann states that ἀληθινόν stands opposite pretended revelation (vermeintlicher Offenbarung) and pretending revealers (vorgeblichen Offenbarern). This seems to imply that the pretended revelation is false together with the pretending revealers. In the context where he discusses this word Bultmann calls Christ the only Revealer. This makes τὸ φῶς very exclusive and would further seem to show that Bultmann believes that ἀληθινόν designates Christ as the only Light with the implication that all other lights are false.<sup>19</sup>

Schlatter, too, believes that ἀληθινόν has the meaning of "true" in opposition to that which is false rather than to that which is non-genuine or imperfect. He says, "ἀληθινόν nennt auch J. das, was wirklich and echt ist im Gegensatz

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<sup>18</sup>C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 134.

<sup>19</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in the Kritisch--exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, Begr. von E. A. W. Meyer (Twelfth edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1956), II, 32.

zum trügenden Schein und vorgetäuschten Titel. . . .<sup>20</sup>

The false lights that Schlatter primarily has in mind which are opposed to τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἀληθινόν are the Jewish and Greek teachers who wish to attain to the knowledge of God with the Law. He says,

Wenn Joh. von dem in Jesus gegenwärtigen Licht sagt, es sei echt and wirksam erleuchtend, hat er vermutlich nicht nur an den Täufer gedacht, dessen Wort Dunkel geliebt wäre, hätte ihm nicht Jesus die Erfüllung gebracht. Es gab noch zahlreiche andere Meister, die sich als Führer zu Gott anboten. Dagegen enthält das ἀληθινόν schwerlich eine Absage an das Gesetz; denn dieses nannte Joh. Gottes Gabe, nicht ein nur scheinbares, unechtes Licht. Aber alle Meister der Schule, ob sie jüdisch oder griechisch, pharisäisch oder gnostisch dachten, die sich mit dem Gesetz die Erkenntnis Gottes bereiten wollten, sind mit diesem Satz abgelehnt.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>D. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Johannes: wie er spricht, denkt, und glaubt (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1930), p. 14.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER VI

### Τὸν Κόσμον: ITS MEANING

Τὸν Κόσμον is not dealt with at length by many of the commentators consulted. The ones who do discuss the meaning of the term vary in their interpretation. For Martin Luther it means the sphere of the living in contrast to the sphere of the dead, the damned and the devils. When he discusses the meaning of φωτίζει (what kind of an operation φωτίζει is), he has this meaning of Τὸν Κόσμον in mind. As noted in Chapter Four his argument for taking the operation of φωτίζει as an enlightening of grace rather than reason is that the Light enlightens every man coming into the world. If the enlightenment would be one of reason, then John would not have been able to restrict the lighting of the φως to this world because the devils, the damned, and the dead also have reason, even to a greater degree than people on earth. But John says, Luther remarks, that the Light enlightens every man coming into the world thereby showing that it is an enlightening of grace which can operate only in this life.<sup>1</sup> In his use of "world" in the process of his argumentation it is evident that Luther thinks of it as the sphere of the living in contrast to the sphere of the dead, the damned, and the devils.

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 34.

For A. Plummer τὸν κόσμον means the "earth." He offers no proofs nor does he cite any parallel passages in support of his view.<sup>2</sup>

Two other commentators, P. E. Kretzmann and W. F. Howard, feel that τὸν κόσμον here signifies lost mankind. Kretzmann's emphasis is on the lostness while Howard stresses the defiant arrogance of lost mankind. Kretzmann takes ἦν ἐρχόμενος as a periphrastic imperfect and by it would understand the entering of Christ on His public ministry. Because of this he believes that τὸν κόσμον has a special connotation meaning not merely the mundane world but the world of sinful, lost, and condemned mankind.<sup>3</sup> He further substantiates the fact that τὸν κόσμον has this significance by showing the relative clause to be the purpose for which Christ came, to shine upon every man. He says,

That He was coming to or into the world seems, therefore, to refer not merely to His appearing in the physical, inanimate world, the "mundane sphere," but includes also His coming to sinful and lost mankind. This thought is definitely presented in the relative clause, which states the object of Messiah's coming: which shines upon every man.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>A. Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John (Cambridge: the University Press, 1906), p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>P. E. Kretzmann, The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple (Unpublished exposition of the Gospel of St. John; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, n. d.), p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Howard does not explicitly say what τὸν κόσμον means in John 1:9, but he sees in the word as it is generally used by John an attitude of man's defiance toward God. Therefore we can assume that Howard feels that τὸν κόσμον has this significance in John 1:9 also. He writes,

To St. John . . . the world is the mass of mankind mobilized in defiance of the divine purpose. Its characteristic is creatureliness, yet it raises its head arrogantly against the Creator. The world was made through the Logos, yet the world knew him not. "For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." (I John iii.1) It is blinded by hatred to Christ and his followers. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." (John 15:18) "Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you." (I John 3:13) Yet to those who reject this witness Jesus can say: "The world cannot hate you: but me it hateth because I testify of it, that its works are evil." (John 7:7) Jesus recognizes a deep cleavage between himself and this hostile society. "Ye are of this world, I am not of this world." (John 8:23)<sup>5</sup>

Other commentators who discuss this term, τὸν κόσμον, list the various meanings that it has but do not venture to say which meaning should be assigned to it in John 1:9. Among those who follow this procedure are: Bernard,<sup>6</sup> Hendriksen,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup>W. F. Howard, Christianity According to St. John (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), pp. 83-4.

<sup>6</sup>J. H. Bernard, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, in the ICG series, edited by A. H. Mc Neile (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), I, 12-13.

<sup>7</sup>William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel According to John, in the New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1953), I, 79.

and Olshausen.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Herman Olshausen, Biblical Commentary on the New Testament, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library (First American edition; New York: Sheldon, Blakeman and Co., 1857), II, 316.

## CHAPTER VII

### A PROPOSED INTERPRETATION

#### The Procedure to be Followed in Arriving at this Interpretation

In proposing an interpretation for this passage a positive approach will be followed. The study will not be an attempt to evaluate critically all of the commentators consulted and pick out the position of the commentator who has the most plausible view, but on the basis of an exegetical study of the passage itself we shall try to arrive at our own conclusions. Not all of the commentators presented in the previous chapters will be cited. Commentators will be cited principally if they have a serious objection which must be met as we establish our view. Since our approach is exegetical, we shall try to arrive at our conclusions after a consideration of the grammatical construction of the passage using a grammar and consulting parallel passages, after a study of the contextual setting of the passage, and after a lexical and concordance study of the concepts.

Our study shall be limited to the grammatical construction of ἐκόμενον (does it modify τὸ πῶς or πάντα ἄνθρωπων and if it modifies τὸ πῶς, is it to be taken as a participle or with ἢ as a periphrastic?), to φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπων (what kind of activity is meant by φωτίζει and is it universal?), and to ἀλυθινόν and κόσμον. The question of the subject of ἢ

and the question of whether or not it should be taken separately as a copula or predicate which were treated as separate problems in Chapter Two will not be treated independently in this chapter since they depend largely on the position taken regarding ἔρχόμενον.

### The Grammatical Construction of ἔρχόμενον

The first step in our procedure will be to collect the passages in the Gospel according to St. John that are pertinent to John 1:9 and from them endeavor to see the grammatical construction of ἔρχόμενον that John possibly had in mind. John 3:19; 6:14; 11:27; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37 are the important passages at this point. In 3:19 the clause that is of interest to us is ὅτι τὸ φῶς ἐλάληθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον. Here we notice that τὸ φῶς is the subject of a clause which is almost identical to the one in John 1:9, ἔρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον. This would seem to indicate that ἔρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον in 1:9 should be connected with τὸ φῶς. Not only is 3:19 a good parallel because of the close resemblance of this passage with 1:9, but also because their contexts are parallels. In the same verse (3:19) and in the verses following 1:9 (1:10,11) John speaks of the rejection of the One who came into the world by the world and His own (1:10,11) and by men (3:19). Thus 3:19, a reduplication of the thought content of 1:9, is doubly worth noting as a parallel.

In 6:14 occurs the clause, ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν ἀληθὺς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον. Here again the connection between Christ who is here called "the Prophet" and the clause, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, is seen. He is the One who is coming into the world. Also in 11:27 where Martha confesses, ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος, it is Christ who is spoken of as coming into the world. These two passages point to the conclusion that ἐρχόμενον of 1:9 should be connected with τὸ φῶς and that there, too, Christ be spoken of as coming into the world.

In 12:46 there appears the statement of Christ, ἐγὼ φῶς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐλύθη. It almost seems as if John had these words of Christ in mind as he was writing the Prologue. Jesus cries out to the crowd in 12:46, "I have come a light into the world . . . ." John remembers these words, and as he is writing the Prologue he reports that the true Light, who once said to a crowd that He came as a light into the world, was coming into the world as the Baptist was bearing witness to Him.

In addition to 12:46 there are two other utterances of Christ that are excellent parallels to John 1:9. They are identical to one another (ἐλύθη εἰς τὸν κόσμον in 16:28 and 16:37). Although these are not so strikingly similar to 1:9 as 12:46, they nevertheless indicate when taken with

12:46 that Christ liked to speak of Himself as the One who came into the world. This fact would show even more strongly that ἔρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον of 1:9 should go with τὸ φῶς since it can be safely assumed that John, who was writing a Gospel concerning Jesus Christ, would like to make his account as sharp a portrait as possible and so would speak of his Master in the same way in which the Master spoke of Himself.

These parallels are proof in a positive way that ἔρχόμενον should be taken with τὸ φῶς. Not one of these passages parallels the possibility of taking ἔρχόμενον with φωτισεῖ in a "by means" rendering. This together with the fact that there are insufficient examples to support a "by means" translation make this proposal of C. F. Howard very unlikely.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the above parallel passages make it improbable that ἔρχόμενον should be construed with πάντα ἀνθρώπων, but it would not preclude altogether the possibility of such a construction. However, according to a concordance study which I made using Alfred Scholler's Handkonkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament there is no instance in the Gospel of John where ἔρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον is used in the sense of "being born," which meaning it would have if it were connected with ἀνθρώπων. In fact there is no instance in all

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 17.



Johannine literature where ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον modifies ἄνθρωπον. There is one passage (John 16:21) where a man is spoken of as being born into the world (ἐγεννήθη ἄνθρωπος εἰς τὸν κόσμον), but the verb is not a form of ἐρχομαι. It is a form of γεννάω. It is further worth noting that the three appearances of κόσμος in verse ten are linked with Christ. Should it not then be linked with Him in verse nine by making ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον modify τὸ φῶς instead of linking κόσμον with ἄνθρωπον by making ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον modify ἄνθρωπον? Therefore, it definitely appears that according to John's usage the connection of ἐρχόμενον with ἄνθρωπον is precluded.

But in spite of the testimony of the parallels cited above and even though there is no instance of ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον modifying man in John's writings, some commentators feel justified in taking ἐρχόμενον with ἄνθρωπον. Some do this as we saw on the basis of Jewish parallels in which the expression "all coming into the world" appears.<sup>2</sup> D. A. Schlatter cites six of these parallels, but it is notable that not in one of them does the exact phrase corresponding to John 1:9 occur. While some form of πᾶς, the participle of ἐρχομαι, and εἰς τὸν κόσμον are present, not one of the parallels includes ἄνθρωπον. For example, in Lev. 31:6

<sup>2</sup>Supra, pp. 19-20.

πάντας ἐρχομένους εἰς κόσμον is the clause. ἄνθρωπος, as in all the other parallels, is missing.<sup>3</sup> Where πάντας ἐρχομένους εἰς κόσμον appears there is no need for ἄνθρωπον because both convey the same meaning. Hence, in John 1:9 where ἄνθρωπον appears there is no need for John to add the additional redundant clause, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον to fill out this idea. ἐρχόμενον should not then be taken with ἄνθρωπον on the strength of these Rabbinic parallels.

Because of the parallel passages cited above in which Christ is spoken of as coming into the world and because of lack of adequate support for taking ἐρχόμενον with φωτίζει or ἄνθρωπον, I believe that ἐρχόμενον should be taken with τὸ φῶς.

But if ἐρχόμενον is to be taken with τὸ φῶς how should it be construed? There are three possibilities. It can be taken with τὸ φῶς as an attributive participle, it can be taken with τὸ φῶς as an attributive participle used substantively, or it can be taken with ἦν to form a periphrastic with τὸ φῶς as the subject. In the first case John 1:9 would be translated, "The true Light that enlightens every man, the One which comes into the world, was present." In the second case the translation would be, "The true Light which enlight-

<sup>3</sup>D. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Johannes: wie er spricht, denkt, und glaubt (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1930), p. 15.

ens every man was One coming into the world." In the third case the passage would be translated, "The true Light that enlightens every man was coming into the world."

It is doubtful whether ἔρχόμενον can be taken as an attributive participle. It would then have to have the characteristics of an attributive participle modifying a noun with an article. The first characteristic concerns its position. There are six possible arrangements for a clause having an attributive participle listed by Ernest De Witt Burton. The position of ἔρχόμενον in John 1:9 corresponds to the sixth arrangement that Burton lists, namely, article, noun, article, participle, modifier of the participle.<sup>4</sup> This arrangement has its counterparts respectively in John 1:9: τὸ φῶς, (no article in 1:9), ἔρχόμενον, εἰς τὸν κόσμον. The first characteristic (position) is met, but we notice already here that the second characteristic of an attributive participle modifying a noun with an article is missing. There is no article preceding the participle. In John 6:11, and 11:27 where there appears the clause, ἔρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον, modifying nouns with articles, John is careful to use the article before the participle. Therefore, I would rule out the possibility of ἔρχόμενον modifying τὸ φῶς as an attributive participle.

<sup>4</sup>Ernest De Witt Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek (Third edition; Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1955), pp. 166-67.

The second possibility, that of conceiving of ἔρχόμενον as an attributive participle used substantively, can be a likely way of seeing the connection between τὸ φῶς and ἔρχόμενον. According to Burton John 18:30 is a passage in which an attributive participle used substantively appears.<sup>5</sup> The important part of that passage is εἰ μὴ ἂν ὄντας κακῶν πταιῶν. The participle as in 1:9 does not have an article. It is possible on the basis of this parallel to take ἔρχόμενον of 1:9 as an attributive participle used substantively. The translation as we noted above would be, "The true Light which enlightens every man was One coming into the world." This translation would answer the natural question raised at the end of verse eight: If John is not the Light, who is? Verse nine, if the above translation is accepted, would answer it: The true Light was One coming into the world. The difficulty here is that "one coming into the world" is not distinctive enough without the article to distinguish Jesus from John because John also came into the world.

The last possibility is to take ἔρχόμενον with τὸ φῶς and ἦν as a periphrastic. The use of the periphrastic is not foreign to John. There are at least eight good examples of periphrastic imperfects in the Gospel of John (1:28; 2:6; 3:23; 10:40; 11:1; 13:23; 18:18,25). Although these parallels

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

give warrant for taking ἦν with ἐρχόμενον as a periphrastic, the objection has been raised that none of these are really parallels since in none of them is there a relative clause intervening between the main verb and its auxiliary. However, in John 2:6 a phrase modifying the subject of the periphrastic intervenes between the main verb and its auxiliary. Although it is not a relative clause, it makes just as big a break in thought as a relative clause would. The phrase in question is κατὰ τὸ καθαρικὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων. Furthermore, the relative clause coming directly after the noun it modifies is a normal Greek construction (John 6:63; 15:20). Thus, John, in placing ὁ φωτισεῖ behind τὸ πῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, would have only one logical place to insert ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, that is, after the relative clause where it stands in John 1:9 (ἐρχόμενον could have been placed at the beginning of the sentence immediately after ἦν, but this would mean that the modifier of ἐρχόμενον would have to intervene between between ἦν and the subject of the periphrastic and there is no example of this in the periphrastics occurring in John's Gospel). Therefore, the way John has constructed John 1:9 in letting the relative clause widely separate ἦν and ἐρχόμενον is a construction that could be expected of him.

The periphrastic imperfect construction also fits in well with the context. In verse ten the Light is in the world. It is natural to suppose that it should previously

be described as coming.

Therefore, in view of the evidence for the use of periphrastics in the Gospel of John and because the argument against the periphrastic occurring in John 1:9 (no parallels in John's Gospel where a relative clause intervenes between the main verb and its auxiliary) is not sufficiently valid, and because the periphrastic gives the passage a sense which makes it fit well into the context, I believe that the best way to construe ἐρχόμενον with τὸ φῶς is to take it with ἦν as a periphrastic of which τὸ φῶς is the subject.

φωτίζει πάντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον

As we consider the above phrase, we will attempt to give an answer to the twofold problem to which the commentators spoke in Chapter Four: What kind of an activity is meant by φωτίζει and is it universal?

In order to find out what kind of a process φωτίζει designates, whether it is an enlightenment resulting in salvation or whether it is an enlightenment of reason or whether it could refer to some other kind of activity that was proposed by commentators in Chapter Four, we will first of all begin with a study of φῶς. If the nature of φῶς can be determined, it should give some indication of the kind of activity it carries on which in this verse is expressed by φωτίζει.

One of the significant functions of φως in the Gospel according to St. John is to reveal the works of men for what they are. In John 3:20 the one who does evil does not come to the light lest the light expose his evil deeds. In the following verse the one who does what is true comes to the light that it might be seen that his deeds were done in God. It is possible that John had this meaning of light in mind when he wrote John 1:9 and was saying, when he said that the Light enlightens every man, that the Light does this in the sense that it reveals the deeds of every man for what they are.

A significant factor which argues for this interpretation is that John 3:19 is the closest of any passage in the Gospel of John to John 1:9 as a parallel. The subject is the same, the verb is the same (different tense) and the place into which the light is going is the same. In John 1:9 the activity of the Light is spelled out by φωτισει in the relative clause. In 3:19 the light's activity is explained in the succeeding verses. The function of φως is not spoken of in a general way but it is specifically spelled out in terms of exposing evil deeds and showing that the deeds of him who does what is true are done in God. John 3:19 could be a fuller explanation of what John only vaguely hinted at in 1:9.

Also, if φωτισει is taken in the sense of showing the deeds of men for what they are, πάντα φερωται can be taken in its

most literal sense. The illumination can be universal without qualification or objection. The light illuminates the deeds of all men whether they realize it or not.

But if φωτίζει of John 1:9 is taken in the sense of revealing the deeds of men for what they are, it would have to also be taken, not in the sense of an inward enlightenment of knowledge, of grace or reason, but in the sense of an outward illumination, a shining upon. This latter meaning of φωτίζει seems to be the consistent meaning that φωτίζει has as used by the Apostle John in Revelation. In Revelation 18:1 the earth is spoken of as being illumined by the glory of an angel coming down from heaven (ἡ γῆ ἐφωτίσθη ἐκ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ). In Rev. 21:23 John says that the city has no need of sun nor of the moon because the glory of God illuminates it (ἡ γὰρ δόξα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐφωτίσκει αὐτήν). This same thought is expressed again in Rev. 22:5. There John says that they have no need for the light of a lamp or of the sun "ὅτι Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς φωτίζει ἐπ' αὐτούς . . ." In all of these passages (these together with John 1:9 are the only occurrences of φωτίζω in the New Testament writings of John) φωτίζω is used by John to give the sense of an outward illumination or a shining upon.

There appears to be another characterization given φῶς in the Fourth Gospel which could help us to understand what John means by the action of φῶς expressed by φωτίζει in John



1:9. In John 8:12 John characterizes the light as the light of life. I take this to be a Genitive of Definition.<sup>6</sup> Life defines light. The light is a "life-light," that is, a life giving light. "Life" here I take to mean the supernatural life belonging to God and Christ which the believers enjoy here and now. Now if  $\phi\omega\varsigma$  is taken in the sense of this kind of life in John 1:9, then the action of  $\phi\omega\tau\iota\varsigma\epsilon\iota$ , we would surmise, would refer to an enlightenment resulting in supernatural life. However, the difficulty in this interpretation is that  $\phi\omega\tau\iota\varsigma\epsilon\iota$  is never used by John in the sense of an inward enlightenment. Also this interpretation would conflict with the context. Verses ten and eleven say that the world did not know Christ and that His own did not receive Him. If every man was enlightened with the supernatural life, the world would know Christ and His own would receive Him.

The function of the Light that John seems to want to designate by  $\phi\omega\tau\iota\varsigma\epsilon\iota$  in John 1:9 is the Light illuminating in the sense of revealing men's deeds for what they are. If  $\phi\omega\tau\iota\varsigma\epsilon\iota$  is taken in this way, it agrees with the activity of  $\phi\omega\varsigma$  as presented by John in 1:9's closest parallel (3:19), it aligns in meaning with all the other occurrences of  $\phi\omega\tau\iota\varsigma\epsilon\iota$  in New Testament Johannine literature, and it makes for the

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<sup>6</sup>H. P. V. Munn, A Short Syntax of New Testament Greek (Fifth edition; Cambridge: University Press, 1951), p. 43

simplest interpretation by making it possible to take πάντα  
ἀληθῆ in its most literal sense.

### ἀληθινός

In attempting to discover the particular shade of meaning that ἀληθινός has in John 1:9 the word will be examined as it is used in the Johannine literature and especially as it appears in its setting in 1:9.

According to William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich ἀληθινός can have a total of three different basic meanings. They are: (1) "true," "dependable"; (2) "true," "in accordance with the truth"; (3) "genuine," "real." <sup>7</sup> In the Gospel of John, the Johannine epistles, and Revelation ἀληθινός is used four times with meaning number one (Rev. 3:7,14; 6:10; 19:11), nine times with meaning number two (John 4:37; 8:16; 19:35; Rev. 15:3; 16:7; 19:2,9; 21:5; 22:6), and nine times with meaning number three (John 4:23; 6:32; 7:28; 15:1; 17:3; I John 2:8; 5:20). It occurs three times in I John 5:20.

On the basis of this compilation of the passages in which ἀληθινός occurs, it can be seen that John is not consistent in using preponderantly only one meaning for ἀληθινός. However, in his Gospel it can be seen that John uses ἀληθινός

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<sup>7</sup>William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 36.

most in the sense of "genuine," "real" (five times). It is used only three times with meaning number two. This fact means nothing in itself but most often when John in his Gospel wishes to express the meaning "true," "in accordance with the truth," he uses ἀληθής (John 4:18; 5:31,32; 8:13,14,17; 10:41; 19:35; 21:24). Only twice does he use ᾠληθής in the sense of "real," "genuine" (6:55). Thus, it appears that John did distinguish between ᾠληθής and ἀληθής, assigning in most of the instances meaning number three to ᾠληθής and meaning number two to ἀληθής. This distinction is also apparent in his epistles. There John was even more careful in his use of ᾠληθής and ἀληθής. ᾠληθής does not appear for any other meaning except meaning number three and ἀληθής does not appear for any other meaning except for meaning number two.

However, in Revelation John uses ᾠληθής almost exclusively in the sense of "true," "in accordance with the truth." ᾠληθής does not appear. As an overall picture (taking into account all of the Johannine literature), then, John does not sharply distinguish between ᾠληθής and ἀληθής, but he does make a distinction in his Gospel and epistles. Thus, there is a strong possibility that in John 1:9 the meaning of ᾠληθής will be "genuine." Arndt-Gingrich cites John 1:9 as an example of ᾠληθής used in the sense of "real," "genuine," and it appears from the context to have this meaning. It

would make little sense to take ἀληθινός in the sense of "true," as opposed to false, that is, meaning number two. This would imply that the Baptist who is mentioned in the preceding verse and who is apparently being contrasted with Christ was a false light. This is not what John said of the Baptist elsewhere. In John 5:35 he calls the Baptist a "burning and a shining light" (λύχνος). Furthermore, the Baptist could not be a false light since he came to bear witness concerning Christ (verse eight). Neither would the context warrant taking ἀληθινός in the sense of "dependable," another meaning which ἀληθινός has according to Arndt-Gingrich.<sup>8</sup> This implies that the Baptist is undependable, a thing which the Gospel of John does not bear out.

The only acceptable meaning is "real," "genuine," the meaning that ἀληθινός bears in many other instances in John's Gospel. The Baptist is not then a false light but an imperfect one, a derived light.

### κόσμος

κόσμος occurs seventy-six times in the Fourth Gospel and, according to Arndt-Gingrich, bears four different basic meanings in John's Gospel. They are: (1) "The world as the sum total of everything here and now . . . ."; (2) "The world

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

as the earth, the planet upon which we live . . . ."; (3) "The world as mankind . . . ."; (4) "The world, and everything that belongs to it, . . . as that which is at enmity w. God, i.e. lost in sin, wholly at odds w. anything divine, ruined and depraved . . . ." Arndt-Gingrich subdivides meaning number two into several subdivisions and groups passages in John's Gospel under: (1) "a. gener."; (2) "b. the world as the habitation of mankind . . . ."; (3) "c. earth, world in contrast to heaven . . . ." The lexicon also subdivides meaning number three into the following divisions under which appear passages from John's Gospel: (1) "a. gener."; (2) "b. of all mankind, but especially of believers, as the object of God's love . . . ."9

Arndt-Gingrich mentions almost all of the occurrences of κόσμος in John's Gospel. The occurrences which he did not cite could easily be fitted under one of the basic meanings he gives. He omits fifteen which this writer examined and found in his judgment to be incapable of giving any different basic meaning in addition to the meanings that Arndt-Gingrich gives this word. Thus, there are only four possible meanings that κόσμος could have in John 1:9.

The word is used most often with meaning number four. It is almost technical in this sense in John's Gospel. Of

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9Ibid., pp. 446-48.

the seventy-six occurrences of κόσμος over half bear meaning number four (thirty-nine). It occurs three times with meaning one, two times with two a, two times with two b, nineteen times with two c, twelve times with three a, five times with three b (a single appearance of κόσμος may have two different meanings and this will account for a total greater than seventy-six if the separate figures above are added).<sup>10</sup>

Even though κόσμος is predominantly used in the sense of meaning number four, the meaning of the word in 1:9 will have to be determined in the final analysis on the basis of context and by comparing pertinent parallel passages.

κόσμος as used in John 1:9 is the place into which Jesus came. As such it stands opposite the place from where He came. Hence, κόσμον here is used in the sense of "earth" in contrast to heaven. This is the meaning that Arndt-Gingrich assigns κόσμον in John 1:9. The parallels this lexicon cites for this passage which speak of Jesus as the Light coming into the world are John 12:46 and 3:19.<sup>11</sup> It is significant that in the context of each of these passages including John 1:9 the world into which the Light comes is a hostile one (compare John 1:10; 12:37 ff.; 3:19). Therefore,

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 447.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

I would not quarrel with anyone who might say that κόσμον in John 1:9, although primarily meaning "earth," also carries with it the meaning that John predominantly gives it in his Gospel, that is, the world as that which is at enmity with God (a single occurrence of κόσμος is capable of bearing two meanings. Arndt-Gingrich lists John 13:1 under four and two c).<sup>12</sup>

#### Summary

As a result of the study undertaken in this chapter the following conclusions, which are here set forth in summary fashion as a proposed interpretation to John 1:9, have been reached: (1) ἐρχόμενον is to be construed as a periphrastic with ἦν; (2) φωτισεῖ means "illuminate outwardly" with the purpose of revealing men for what they really are; (3) πάντα ἀληθινόν is to be taken literally; (4) ἀληθινόν means "true," "genuine"; (5) κόσμον means "earth" in contrast to heaven. The translation of John 1:9 reads accordingly: "The genuine Light which illuminates every man was coming into the world."

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

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