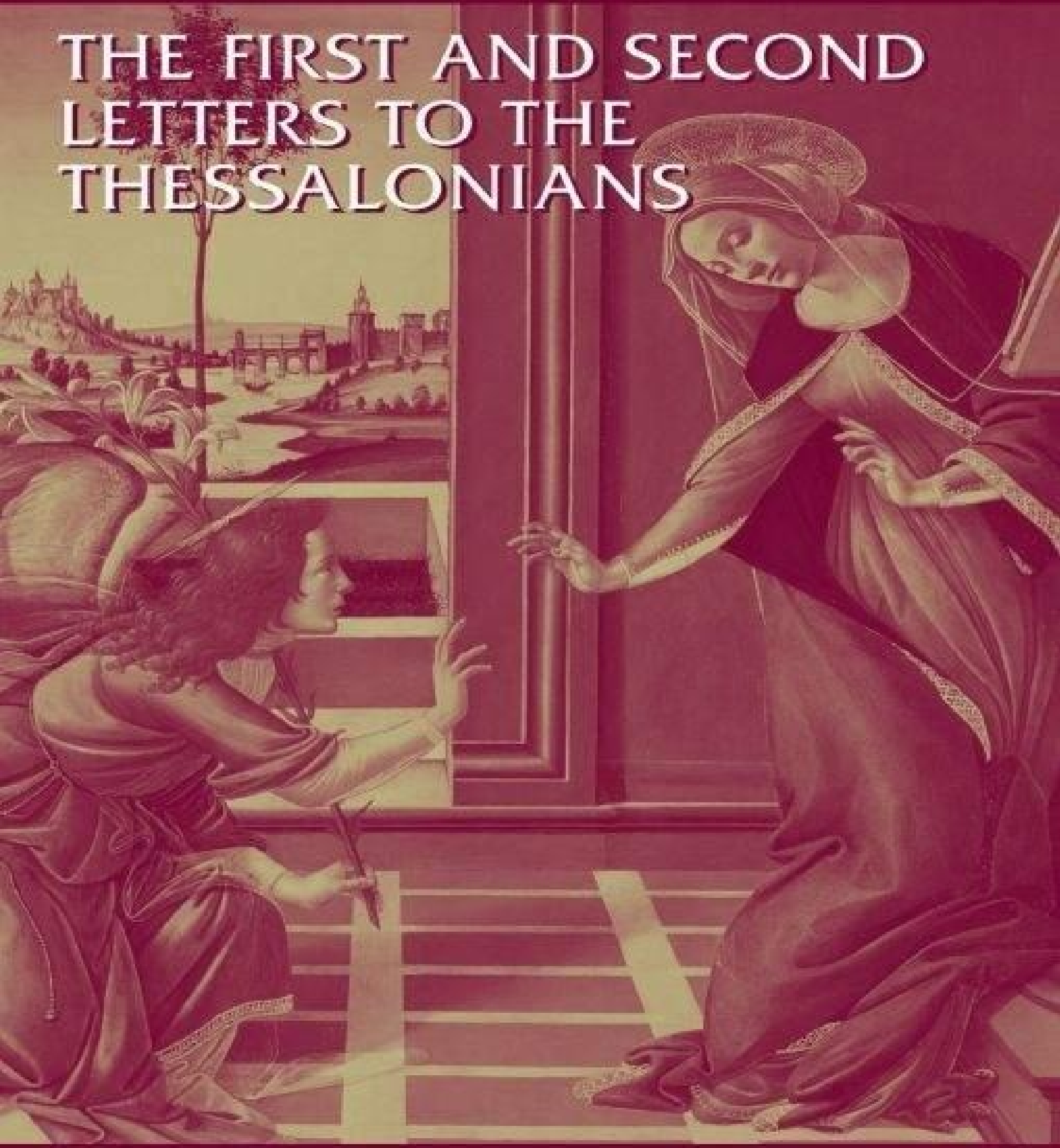
The New International Commentary on the New Testament

THE FIRST AND SECOND LETTERS TO THE THESSALONIANS



GORDON D. FEE

Table of Contents

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT
Title Page
Copyright Page
PREFACE
ABBREVIATIONS
BIBLIOGRAPHY
Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

- I. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE
- II. THE CITY AND ITS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
- III. THE OCCASION AND PLACE OF WRITING

Text, Exposition, and Notes

- I. THANKSGIVING, NARRATIVE, AND PRAYER (1:1-3:13)
- II. SUPPLYING WHAT IS LACKING (4:1-5:11)
- III. CONCLUDING MATTERS (5:12-28)

The Second Letter to the THESSALONIANS - Introduction to 2 Thessalonians

- I. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE
- II. OCCASION FOR WRITING

Text, Exposition, and Notes

- I. THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER (1:1-12)
- II. THE SECOND ISSUE: THE “WHEN” OF THE DAY OF THE LORD (2:1-17)
- III. THE THIRD ISSUE: ABOUT THE DISRUPTIVE-IDLE (3:1-15)
- IV. CONCLUDING MATTERS (3:16-18)

INDEX OF MODERN AUTHORS
INDEX OF SUBJECTS
INDEX OF BIBLICAL AND OTHER ANCIENT REFERENCES

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

General Editors

NED B. STONEHOUSE (1946-1962)

F. F. BRUCE (1962-1990)

GORDON D. FEE (1990-)

The First and Second Letters to the THESSALONIANS

GORDON D. FEE

WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN / CAMBRIDGE, U.K.

© 2009 Gordon D. Fee All rights reserved

Published 2009 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2140 Oak Industrial Drive N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505 / P.O. Box 163, Cambridge CB3 9PU U.K. www.eerdmans.com

Printed in the United States of America

14 13 12 11 10 09 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Fee, Gordon D. The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians / Gordon D. Fee. p. cm. — (The New international commentary on the New Testament)
Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
ISBN 978-0-8028-6362-1 (cloth: alk. paper)
1. Bible. N.T. Thessalonians — Commentaries. I. Title.

BS2725.53.F44 2009 227'.81077 — dc22 2009010683

Scriptures taken from the HOLY BIBLE: TODAY'S NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. TNIV®. Copyright © 2001, 2005 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of IBS-STL U.S. All rights reserved worldwide. Also used by permission of The Zondervan Corporation.

PREFACE

When I assumed the editorship of this series of commentaries in the late 1980s, one of my first tasks was to contact some of the authors of the original series as to their readiness to bring out a second, updated edition of their commentary — especially since the series was already by then in its fifth decade and some of the volumes had not yet appeared at all. One of those I was able to contact personally was Leon Morris, of Melbourne, Australia, when I was on a teaching/preaching visit to that city in the Spring of 1987. During that most cordial visit I discovered that Professor Morris had already determined to offer a second edition of his commentary on Thessalonians, and that he had done so at the request of my predecessor, F. F. Bruce. Although he was then ninety years old, he was still able and keen of mind. But by then he was also basically housebound, since he did not drive; thus the "revision" turned out to be more of a "tweaking" of a few passages and an updating of some of the footnotes. As it turned out, his "revision" was also the final item edited by Professor Bruce in the series.

Since I have taught these letters for over three decades in at least three different settings (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Regent College, and Fuller Theological Seminary), I have toyed for several years with replacing Professor Morris's commentary. Now in my fifth year of retirement from Regent College, with several "backlog" items finished, and with the encouragement of the publishers, I decided to carry through with this desire. In the meantime the secondary literature has proliferated nearly out of reach for anyone who would attempt this task. Indeed, my guess is that the amount of secondary literature on these letters has doubled in the last fifteen years — so much so that one can no longer have a sense of "mastering" it. Indeed, the amount of material that I discovered just in the final editing alone is enough to cause one to apologize in advance to all who have written on these letters and who do not appear in the present bibliography! It is quite clear that what were once dubbed "the Cinderellas" in the Pauline corpus have finally come to the ball.

But for all that, apart from scholars within the Dispensationalist tradition, the second of these letters still remains something of a "Cinderella," the evidence for which is to be found in the general paucity of secondary literature on this letter in comparison to the first one. While some of that can be attributed to its being just over half the size of the first letter (45 percent fewer words), most of it seems to be related to the general dislike of the eschatological materials in 2:1-

12, which many scholars would like to think unworthy of the Paul they know and like from Galatians and Romans. But as I. H. Marshall put it some years ago, several very weak arguments (against authenticity) do not add up to one strong one; and prejudice against the content of the letter (although no one would dare admit it to be such) is simply not adequate grounds for denying Pauline authorship. This apparently idiosyncratic moment, when compared to the rest of the corpus, is no greater than the content of Romans 9-11.

The present work has thus been mostly a labor of love — for the apostle whom I got to know well over many years of teaching and writing on his letters. I say "mostly" because, as has been my lifelong habit, I write the commentary first and then consult the secondary literature, making any necessary adjustments and adding the proper footnotes. While most of it has been helpful, I admit to some frustration with what appear to be purely idiosyncratic moments, foisted on us by the present "publish or perish" culture of the academy.

I grant with others that these two letters are not the "highlights" of the Pauline corpus; but they are full of historical and theological grist that make them well worth the effort. It is true that the great passion of Paul's life — Jew and Gentile as one people of God through Christ and the Spirit — does not emerge front and center; but it is always his underlying agenda, and thus his concern that these (mostly Gentile) believers get it right in terms of how one lives in light of the work of Christ and the Spirit.

GORDON D. FEE

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers
ASV	American Standard Version
Athanasius	
Ad Serap.	*Ad Serapionem*
ATR	*Anglican Theological Review*
2 Bar.	*2 Baruch*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BCE	Before the Common Era
BDAG	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
Bib	*Biblica*
BibLeb	*Bibel und Leben*
BK	*Bibel und Kirche*
BL	*Bibel und Liturgie*
BR	*Biblical Research*
BT	*The Bible Translator*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZNW	Beihefte zur *ZNW*
c.	century
ca.	*circa*, about
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CE	Common Era

cf.	*confer,* compare
ch.	chapter
Cicero	
Att.	*Epistulae ad Atticum*
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
d.	died
Dio Chrysostom	
Orat.	*Orations*
Ébib	*Études bibliques*
ed.	editor, edited by
EDNT	*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*
e.g.	*exempli gratia,* for example
EQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
2 Esdr	2 Esdras
esp.	especially
ESV	English Standard Version
ET	English translation
et al.	*et alia,* and others
ETL	*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
ExpTim	*The Expository Times*
FFNT	Foundations and Facets: New Testament
FilolNT	*Filología neotestamentaria*
GEP	G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*
Gk.	Greek
GNB	Good News Bible (= Today's English Version)
GTJ	*Grace Theological Journal*
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
i.e.	id est (that is)
Int	*Interpretation*
IVPNTC	IVP New Testament Commentary
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
John Chrysostom	
Hom. in 1 Thess.	*Homiliae in epistulam i ad Thessalonicenses*
Jos. Asen.	*Joseph and Asenath*
Josephus	
Ant.	*Jewish Antiquities*
War	*Jewish War*

JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
Jub.	*Jubilees*
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KJV	King James Version (= AV)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University)
LEC	Library of Early Christianity (ed. W. A. Meeks)
lit.	literally
LS	*Louvain Studies*
LTP	*Laval théologique et philosophique*
LXX	Septuagint
1 Macc	1 Maccabees
MajT	Majority Text (= Byzantine text-type)
MM	J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
n. (nn.)	note(s)
NA^{27}	E. Nestle, K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed.)
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NASU	New American Standard Update
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NET	The Net Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTT	*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	The New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum, Supplements
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

NT	New Testament
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
OL	Old Latin
OT	Old Testament
PEGLMBS	*Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies*
P. Flor.	*Florentine Papyri*
P. Giess.	*Giessen Papyri*
Plato	
Rep.	*Republic*
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
P. Oxy.	*Oxyrhyncus Papyri*
q.v.	*quod vide* (which see)
RB	*Revue biblique*
REB	Revised English Bible
repr.	reprint
rev.	revised
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SEÅ	*Svensk exegetisk årsbok*
Sir	Sirach
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
SR	*Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses*
ST	*Studia theologica*
STK	*Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift*
SwJT	*Southwestern Journal of Theology*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
Tertullian	
Adv. Marc.	*Adversus Marcionem*
T. Job	*Testament of Job*
T. Levi	*Testament of Levi*
TNIV	Today's New International Version
TR	Textus Receptus
TrinJ	*Trinity Journal*
trans.	translated by
TS	*Theological Studies*

TSK	*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*
TU	*Texte und Untersuchungen*
TynB	*Tyndale Bulletin*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
UBS^4	United Bible Societies Greek New Testament (4th ed.)
v. (vv.)	verse(s)
VD	*Verbum domini*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZST	*Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. COMMENTARIES

Beale, G. K. *1-2 Thessalonians.* IVPNTC; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Best, Ernest. *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians.* New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

Bruce, F. F. *1 and 2 Thessalonians.* WBC 45; Waco: Word, 1982.

Calvin, J. *1, 2 Thessalonians.* Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1999.

Dibelius, M. *An die Thessalonicher I, II.* HNT; Tübingen: Mohr, 1937.

Dobschütz, Ernst von. *Die Thessalonicherbriefe.* KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909.

Eadie, John. *Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians.* New York: Macmillan, 1877.

Ellicott, Charles John. *Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957 (repr. of 2nd ed., 1861).

Findlay, G. G. *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982 (repr. of 1904 ed.).

Frame, James E. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.* ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912.

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts. *First and Second Thessalonians.* Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1998.

Green, Gene L. *The Letters to the Thessalonians.* PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of I and II Thessalonians.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955.

Hiebert, David E. *The Thessalonian Epistles: A Call to Readiness.* Chicago: Moody, 1971.

Holmes, Michael W. *1 and 2 Thessalonians.* NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

Holtzmann, Heinrich J. “Die Briefe an die Thessalonicher.” HNT; Freiburg, Mohr, 1889, 1-46.

Juel, Donald H. “1 Thessalonians,” in *Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 Thessalonians* (by E. Krentz, J. Koenig, and D. H. Juel). Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985, 213-55.

Lightfoot, J. B. *Notes on Epistles of St Paul from Unpublished Commentaries.* London: Macmillan, 1904.
Lünemann, Gottlieb. *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.* Trans. P. J. Gloag. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1880.
Malherbe, Abraham J. *The Letters to the Thessalonians.* AB 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000.
Marshall, I. Howard. *1 and 2 Thessalonians.* NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.
Masson, Charles. *Les deux Épîtres de Saint Paul aux Thessaloniciens.* CNT 11; Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1957.
Milligan, George. *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes.* London: Macmillan, 1908.
Moffatt, James. "The First and the Second Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Greek NT* (vol 4; London/New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897).
Moore, A. L. *1 and 2 Thessalonians.* London; Camden, N.J.: Nelson, 1969.
Morris, Leon. *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians.* NICNT; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
Plummer, A. *A Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians.* London: Robert Scott, 1918.
Richard, Earl J. *First and Second Thessalonians.* SP 11; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995.
Rigaux, Béda. *Saint Paul: Les Épîtres aux Thessaloniciens.* ÉBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1956.
Thomas, R. L. "1 and 2 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* vol. 11. (ed. F. E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).
Wanamaker, Charles A. *The Epistle to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text.* NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
Whiteley, Denys E. H. *Thessalonians in the Revised Standard Version, With Introduction and Commentary.* New York/London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
Witherington, Ben III. *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

II. OTHER WORKS

Amphoux, C. B. “1 Th 2,14-16: Quel Juifs sont-ils mis en cause par Paul?” *FilolNT* 16 (2003), 85-101.

Argyle, A. W. “Parallels between the Pauline Epistles and Q,” *ExpTim* 60 (1948/49), 318-20.

Ascough, R. S. “A Question of Death: Paul’s Community-Building Language in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18,” *JBL* 123 (2004), 509-30.

Aune, D. *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.

Aune, D. C. “Trouble in Thessalonica: An Exegetical Study of I Thess 4:9-12, 5:12-14 and II Thess 3:6-15 in Light of First-Century Social Conditions,” unpubl. Th.M. thesis (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College, 1989).

Aus, R. D. “The Liturgical Background of the Necessity and Propriety of Giving Thanks according to 2 Thes 1:3,” *JBL* 92 (1973), 432-38.

— . “The Relevance of Isaiah 66:7 to Revelation 12 and 2 Thessalonians 2,” *ZNW* 67 (1976), 252-68.

Bahr, G. J. “Paul and Letter Writing in the First Century,” *CBQ* 28 (1966), 465-77.

Bailey, J. A. “Who Wrote II Thessalonians?” *NTS* 25 (1979), 131-45.

Baltensweiler, H. “Erwägungen zu 1 Thess 4.3-8,” *TZ* 19 (1963), 1-13.

Bammel, E. “Judenverfolgung und Naherwartung: Zur Eschatologie des Ersten Thessalonicherbriefs,” *ZTK* 56 (1959), 294-315.

— . “Preparation for the Perils of the Last Days: 1 Thessalonians 3:3,” in *Suffering and Martrydom in the New Testament: Studies Presented to G. M. Styler by the Cambridge New Testament Seminar* (ed. W. Horbury and B. McNeil; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 91-100.

Barclay, J. M. G. “Conflict in Thessalonica,” *CBQ* 55 (1993), 512-30.

Bassler, J. M. “The Enigmatic Sign: 2 Thessalonians 1:5,” *CBQ* 46 (1984), 496-510.

— . “Σκευος: A Modest Proposal for Illuminating Paul’s Use of Metaphor in 1 Thessalonians 4:4,” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (ed. L. M. White and O. L. Yarbrough; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 53-66.

Bauckham, Richard. *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
— . “The Sonship of the Historical Jesus in Christology,” *SJT* 31 (1978), 245-60.
Baumert, N. “ ‘Ομειρόμενοι in 1 Thess 2,8,” *Bib* 68 (1987), 552-63.
— . “‘Wir lassen uns nicht beirren’: Semantische Fragen in 1 Thess 3,2f,” *FilolNT* 5 (1992), 45-60.
Beauvery, R. “Πλεονεκτεῖν in 1 Thess 4.6a,” *VD* 33 (1955), 78-85.
Beck, N. A. “Anti-Jewish Polemic in the Epistles of Paul,” in *Mature Christianity: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic in the New Testament* (London: Associated University Press, 1981), 39-50.
Benson, G. P. “Note on 1 Thessalonians 1.6,” *ExpTim* 107 (1996), 143-44.
Black, D. A. “The Weak in Thessalonica: A Study in Pauline Lexicography,” *JETS* 25 (1982), 307-21.
Blumenthal, C. “Was sagt 1 Thess 1.9b-10 über die Adressaten des 1 Thess? Literarische und historische Erwägungen,” *NTS* 51 (2005), 96-105.
Bockmuehl, M. N. A. “ ‘The Trumpet Shall Sound’: *Shofar* Symbolism and Its Reception in Early Christianity,” in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel* (ed. W. Horbury; JSNTSS 48; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 199-225.
Boers, H. “The Form-Critical Study of Paul’s Letters: 1 Thessalonians as a Case Study,” *NTS* 22 (1976), 140-58.
Brown, C. “The Parousia and Eschatology in the NT,” *NIDNTT* 2:901-35.
Burke, T. J. “Pauline Paternity in 1 Thessalonians,” *TynB* 51 (2000), 59-80.
Byrskog, S. “Co-senders, Co-authors and Paul’s Use of the First Person Plural,” *ZNW* 87 (1996), 230-50.
Capes, D. B. *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul’s Christology.* WUNT 2/47; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992.
Caragounis, C. C. “Parainesis on ἁγιασμός (1 Th 4:3-8),” *FilolNT* 15 (2002), 133-51.
Carras, G. P. “Jewish Ethics and Gentile Converts: Remarks on 1 Thes 4.3-8,” in Collins, *Thessalonians Correspondence,* 306-15.
Cerfaux, Lucien. “‘*Kyrios’* dans les citations pauliniennes de l’Ancien Testament,” *ETL* 20 (1943), 5-17.
Chadwick, H. “1 Thess. 3:3: σαίνεσθαι,” *JTS* 1 (1950), 156-58.
Collins, R. F. *Studies in the First Letter to the Thessalonians.* BETL 66; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984.
— . ed. *The Thessalonians Correspondence.* BETL 87; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990.
— . “This Is the Will of God: Your Sanctification (1 Thess 4:3),” *LTP* 39 (1983),

27-53.
Coppens, J. “Une diatribe antijuive dans I Thess. II, 13-16,” *ETL* 51 (1975), 90-95.
Cortozzi, S. “1 Thes 2:7 — A Review,” *FilolNT* 12 (1999), 155-60.
Cosby, M. R. “Hellenistic Formal Receptions and Paul’s Use of ΑΠΑΝΤΗΣΙΣ in 1 Thessalonians 4:17,” *BBR* 4 (1994), 15-34.
Crawford, C. “The ‘Tiny’ Problem of 1 Thessalonians 2,7: The Case of the Curious Vocative,” *Bib* 54 (1973), 69-72.
Delobel, J. “One Letter Too Many in Paul’s First Letter? A Study of (ν)ήπιοι in 1 Thess 2:7,” *LS* 20 (1995), 126-33.
Donfried, K. P. “The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence,” *NTS* 31 (1985), 342-52.
— . “The Imperial Cults and Political Conflict in 1 Thessalonians,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Eschatology* (ed. R. A Horsley; Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997), 158-66.
— . “The Kingdom of God in Paul,” in *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation* (ed. W. L. Willis; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1987), 175-90.
— . “Paul and Judaism: I Thessalonians 2:13-16 as a Test Case,” *Int* 38 (1984), 242-53.
— . *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
— . “Was Timothy in Athens? Some Exegetical Reflections on 1 Thess. 3.1- 3,” in *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 209-19.
Dunham, D. A. “2 Thessalonians 1:3-10: A Study in Sentence Structure,” *JETS* 24 (1981), 39-46.
Dunn, James D. G. *Baptism in the Holy Spirit.* SBT 2/15; London: SCM, 1970.
— . *Jesus and the Spirit.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975.
— . *The Theology of Paul the Apostle.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. Duplacy, J. “Histoire des manuscrits et histoire du texte du N.T.: Quelques réflexions méthodologiques,” *NTS* 12 (1965/66), 124-39.
Dupont, J. “ ‘Avec le Seigneur’ a la Parousie,” in *ΣΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: L’union avec le Christ suivant Saint Paul* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952), 39-79.
Edgar, T. R. “The Meaning of ‘Sleep’ in 1 Thessalonians 5:10,” *JETS* 22 (1979), 345-49.
Elgvin, T. “ ‘To Master His Own Vessel’: 1 Thess 4:4 in Light of New Qumran Evidence,” *NTS* 43 (1997), 604-19.
Ellingworth, P. “Which Way Are We Going? A Verb of Movement, Especially in 1 Thess 4:14b,” *BT* 25 (1974), 426-31.
Ellis, E. E. “Paul and His Co-Workers,” *NTS* 17 (1971), 437-52.

Evans, C. A. “Ascending and Descending with a Shout: Psalm 47.6 and 1 Thessalonians 4.16,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders; JSNTSup 83; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 238-53.
Exler, F. X. J. *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter of the Epistolary Papyri (3rd c. B.C.-3rd c. A.D.).* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923.
Faw, C. E. “On the Writing of First Thessalonians,” *JBL* 71 (1952), 217-32.
Fee, G. D. *Galatians: [A] Pentecostal Commentary.* Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2007.
— . “*Laos* and Leadership under the New Covenant: Some Exegetical and Hermeneutical Observations on Church Order,” in *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, Mass.; Hendrickson, 1991), 120-43.
— . *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors.* 3rd ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
— . “On Text and Commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians,” in *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers* (ed. E. H. Lovering Jr.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 165-83.
— . *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study.* Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007.
— . *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians.* NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
— , and M. L. Strauss. *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.
Ferguson, E. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity.* 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
Förster, G. “1 Thessalonicher 5,1-10,” *ZNW* 17 (1916), 169-77.
Foucant, C. “Les Fils du Jour (1 Thess 5,5),” in *The Thessalonians Correspondence* (ed. R. F. Collins), 348-55.
Fowl, S. “A Metaphor in Distress: A Reading of ΝΗΠΙΟΙ in 1 Thessalonians 2.7,” *NTS* 36 (1990), 469-73.
Fredrickson, E. “Passionless Sex in 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5,” *Word & World* 23 (2003), 23-30.
Fudge, E. “The Final End of the Wicked,” *JETS* 27 (1984), 325-34.
Funk, R. W. “The Apostolic Presence: Paul,” in *Parables and Presence: Forms of the New Testament Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 81-102.
Gaventa, B. “Apostles as Babes and Nurses in 1 Thessalonians 2:7,” in *Faith and History: Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer* (ed. J. T. Carroll, C. H. Cosgrove, and E. E. Johnson; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 193-207.
Geiger, G. “1 Thess 2,13-16: Der Initiationstext des christlichen Antisemitismus?” *BL* 59 (1986), 154-60.
Giblin, C. H. *In Hope of God’s Glory: Pauline Theological Perspectives.* New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

— . *The Threat to Faith: An Exegetical-Theological Re-examination of 2 Thessalonians 2.* AnBib 31; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967.
Gilliard, F. D. “Paul and the Killing of the Prophets in 1 Thess. 2:15,” *NovT* 36 (1994), 259-70.
— . “The Problem of the Antisemitic Comma between 1 Thessalonians 2.14 and 15,” *NTS* 35 (1989), 481-502.
Gillman, J. “Paul’s Εἴσοδος: The Proclaimed and the Proclaimer (1 Thess 2,8),” in R. F. Collins, *Thessalonians Correspondence,* 62-70.
Goulder, M. D. “Silas in Thessalonica,” *JSNT* 48 (1992), 87-106.
Gribomont, J. “Facti sumus parvuli: La charge apostolique (1 Th 2,1-12),” in *Paul de Tarse: Apôtre de notre temps* (ed. A.-L. Descamps et al.; Série monographique de ‘Benedictina’; Section Paulinienne 1; Rome: Abbaye de S. Paolo [1979]), 311-38.
Gundry, R. “A Brief Note on ‘Hellenistic Formal Receptions and Paul’s Use of ΑΠΑΝΤΗΣΙΣ in 1 Thessalonians 4:17,’ ” *BBR* 6 (1996), 39-41.
— . “The Hellenization of Dominical Tradition and Christianization of Jewish Tradition in the Eschatology of 1-2 Thessalonians,” *NTS* 33 (1987), 161-78.
Gunkel, H. *The Influence of the Holy Spirit.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979 (Ger. original, 1888), 30-42.
Haacker, K. “Elemente des heidnischen Antijudaismus im Neuen Testament,” *ExpTim* 48 (1988), 404-18.
Harris, J. R. “A Study in Letter-Writing,” *Expositor* 5/8 (1898), 161-80.
Harrison, J. R. “Paul and the Imperial Cult at Thessaloniki,” *JSNT* 25 (2002), 71-96.
Heikel, J. A. “1. Thess. 3,2,” *TSK* 106 (1935), 316.
Heil, J. H. “Those Now ‘Asleep’ (Not Dead) Must Be ‘Awakened’ for the Day of the Lord in 1 Thess 5.9-10,” *NTS* 46 (2000), 464-71.
Hengel, M. *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.
Hewett, J. A. “1 Thessalonians 3.13,” *ExpTim* 87 (1975-76), 54-55.
Hock, R. F. “Paul’s Tentmaking and the Problem of His Social Class,” *JBL* 97 (1978), 555-64.
— . *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980.
Holtz, T. “The Judgement on the Jews and the Salvation of All Israel: 1 Thes 2,15-16 and Rom 11,25-26,” in *The Thessalonians Correspondence* (ed. R. F. Collins, 1990), 284-94.
Hoppe, R. “Der *Topos* der Prophetenverfolgung,” *NTS* 50 (2004), 535-49.
Horbury, W. “1 Thessalonians ii.3 as Rebutting the Charge of False Prophecy,” *JTS* 33 (1982), 492-508.

Howard, T. L. “The Meaning of ‘Sleep’ in 1 Thessalonians 5:10 — A Reappraisal,” *GTJ* 6 (1985), 337-48.
Hughes, F. W. *Early Christian Rhetoric and 2 Thessalonians.* JSNTSS 30; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989.
Hunt, A. S., and C. C. Edgar, eds. *Select Papyri I.* LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932.
Hunter, A. M. *Paul and His Predecessors.* 2d ed.; London: SCM, 1961.
Hurd, J. C. “Paul ahead of His Time: 1 Thess. 2:13-16,” in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity,* vol. 1: *Paul and the Gospels* (ed. P. Richardson and D. Granskou; Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 21-36.
Hurtado, L. W. *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
Hyldahl, N. “Jesus og joderne ifolge 1 Tess 2, 14-16,” *SEÅ* 37/38 (1972/73), 238- 54.
Jensen, J. “Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication? A Critique of Bruce Malina,” *NovT* 20 (1978), 161-84.
Jeremias, J. *Unknown Sayings of Jesus.* London: SPCK, 1958.
Jewett, R. *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings.* Leiden: Brill, 1971.
— . *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.
— . “The Form and Function of the Homiletic Benediction,” *ATR* 51 (1969), 18-34.
— . “Tenement Churches and Communal Meals in the Early Church: The Implications of a Form-Critical Analysis of 2 Thessalonians 3:10,” *BR* 38 (1993), 23-43.
de Jonge, H. J. “The Original Setting of the Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπέρ Formula,” in Collins, *Thessalonians Correspondence,* 229-35.
Judge, E. A. “The Decrees of Caesar at Thessalonica,” *RTR* 30 (1971), 1-7.
Juel, D. *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.
Keck, L. E. “Images of Paul in the New Testament,” *Int* 43 (1989), 341-51.
Kemmler, D. W. *Faith and Human Reason: A Study of Paul’s Method of Preaching as Illustrated by 1-2 Thessalonians and Acts 17,2-4.* NovTSup 40; Leiden: Brill, 1975.
Kern, P. H. *Rhetoric and Galatians: Assessing an Approach to Paul’s Epistle.* SNTSMS 101; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
Kim, S. “Paul’s Entry (εἴσοδος) and the Thessalonians’ Faith (1 Thessalonians 1-3),” *NTS* 51 (2005), 37-47.

Klassen, W. “The Sacred Kiss in the New Testament: An Example of Social Boundary Lines,” *NTS* 39 (1993), 122-35.
Kloppenborg, J. “ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΙΑ, ΘΕΟΔΙΔΑΚΤΟΣ and the Dioscuri: Rhetorical Engagement in 1 Thessalonians 4.9-12,” *NTS* 39 (1993), 265-89.
Knox, A. D. “Τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίΨεσιν ταύταις (1 Thess. iii.3),” *JTS* 25 (1924), 290-91.
Koenig J. *Jews and Christians in Dialogue: New Testament Foundations.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979.
Koester, H. “The Text of First Thessalonians,” in *The Living Text: Essays in Honor of Ernest W. Saunders* (ed. D. E. Groh and R. Jewett; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985), 219-27.
Konradt, M. “Εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτου̃ σκευος κτᾶσθαι . . . : Zu Paulus’ sexualethischer Weisung in 1 Thess 4,4f.,” *ZNW* 92 (2001), 128-35.
Kreitzer, L. *Jesus and God in Paul’s Eschatology.* JSNTSS 19; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1987.
Kuhn, H.-W. “Die Bedeutung der Qumrantexte für Verstandnis des Ersten Thessalonicherbriefes: Vorstellung des Münchener Projekts: Qumran und das Neue Testament,” in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. T. Baretta and L. V. Montauer; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 1:339-53.
Küng, H. *On Being a Christian.* Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976.
Kurichialnil, J. “If Any One Will Not Work, Let Him Not Eat,” *Biblehashyam* 21 (1995), 184-203.
Lake, K. *The Early Epistles of St. Paul.* London: Rivingtons, 1911.
Lambrecht, J. “Loving God and Steadfastly Awaiting Christ (2 Thessalonians 3,5),” *ETL* 76 (2000), 435-41.
Lamp, J. S. “Is Paul Anti-Jewish? *Testament of Levi* 6 in the Interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16,” *CBQ* 65 (2003), 408-27.
Langevin, P-É. “L’intervention de Dieu, selon 1 Thess 5,23-24: Déja le salut par grâce,” in *The Thessalonians Correspondence* (ed. R. F. Collins), 236-56.
Laurent, J. C. M. “Der *Pluralis maiestaticus* in den Thessalonicherbriefen,” *STK* 41 (1868), 159-66.
Lautenschlager, M. “Εἴτε γρηγορω̃μεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν: Zum Verhältnis von Heiligung und Heil in 1 Thess 5,10,” *ZNW* 81 (1990), 39-59.
Légasse, S. “Paul et les Juifs d’après 1 Thessaloniciens 2,13-16,” *RB* 104 (1997), 527-91.
— . “Vas suum possidere (1 Th 4,4),” *FilolNT* 10 (1997), 105-15.
Lofthouse, W. F. “ ‘I’ and ‘We’ in the Pauline Letters,” *BT* 6 (1955), 72-80.
Lucchesi, E. “Précédents non bibliques à l’expression néo-testamentaire: ‘Les

temps et les moments,’ ” *JTS* 28 (1977), 537-40.
Lyons, G. *Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding.* SBLDS 73; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985.
Maarten, M. J. J. “Paradise Regained or Still Lost? Eschatology and Disorderly Behaviour in 2 Thessalonians,” *NTS* 38 (1992), 271-89.
Malherbe, A. J. “‘Gentle as a Nurse’: The Cynic Background to 1 Thess. ii,” *NovT* 12 (1970), 203-17.
— . “ ‘Pastoral Care’ in the Thessalonian Church,” *NTS* 36 (1990), 375-91.
— . *Paul and the Popular Philosophers.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.
Malina, B. “Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication?” *NovT* 14 (1972), 10-17.
Martin, W. “‘Example’ and ‘Imitation’ in the Thessalonian Correspondence,” *SwJT* 42 (1999), 39-49.
McCaig, A. “Thoughts on the Tripartite Theory of Human Nature,” *EQ* 3 (1931), 121-38.
McGehee, M. “A Rejoinder to Two Recent Studies dealing with 1 Thess 4:4,” *CBQ* 51 (1989), 82-89.
Mearns, C. L. “Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of I and II Thessalonians,” *NTS* 27 (1980/81), 137-57.
Meeks, W. A. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
Metzger, B. M. *The Text of the New Testament.* Rev. ed. with B. Ehrman; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
— . *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament.* 2nd ed.; London/ New York: United Bible Societies, 1994.
Meyer, B. F. “Did Paul’s View of the Resurrection of the Dead Undergo Development?” *TS* 47 (1986), 363-87.
Michaels, J. R. “Everything That Rises Must Converge: Paul’s Word from the Lord,” in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry* (ed. T. F. Schmidt and M. Silva; JSNTSS 100; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 182-95.
Michel, O. “Fragen zu 1 Thessalonicher 2,14-16: Antijüdische Polemik bei Paulus,” in *Antijüdäismus im Neuen Testament? Exegetische und systematische Beitrage* (ed. W. P. Eckert, N. P. Levison, and Martin Stöhr; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1967), 50-59.
Mitchell, M. M. “New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Convention: The Example of Timothy and Titus,” *JBL* 111 (1992), 641-62.
Moore, A. L. *The Parousia in the New Testament.* NovTSup 13; Leiden: Brill, 1966.

Morris, L. “ΚΑΙ ΑΠΑ, ,ΚΑΙ ΔΙΣ,” *NovT* 1 (1956), 205-8.
Moule, C. F. D. *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek.* 2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963.
— . *The Origin of Christology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
Müller, P.-G. “The Human Paul of the New Testament: Anti-Judaism in I Thess 2:14-16,” *BK* 44 (1989), 58-65.
Munck, J. “I Thess. 1:9-10 and the Missionary Preaching of Paul: Textual Exegesis and Hermeneutical Reflections,” *NTS* 9 (1963), 95-110.
Murrell, N. S. “The Human Paul of the New Testament: Anti-Judaism in I Thess 2:14-16,” *PEGLMBS* 14 (1994), 169-86.
Nepper-Christensen, P. “Das verborgene Herrnwort: Eine Untersuchung über 1. Thess 4,13-18,” *ST* 19 (1965), 136-54.
Nestle, E. “I Thess. iii.3,” *ExpTim* 18 (1907), 361-62.
Neusner, J. *The Mishnah: A New Translation.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
O’Brien, P. T. *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul.* NovTSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977.
Ollrog, W.-H. *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter.* Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1979.
Parry, St. John R. “σαίνεσθαι, I Thess. iii 3,” *JTS* 25 (1923/24), 405.
Pearson, B. A. “1 Thessalonians 2:13-16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation,” *HTR* 64 (1971), 79-94.
Perdelwitz, R. “Zu σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλῖΨεσιν ταύταις, 1 Thess. 3,3,” *TSK* 86 (1913), 613-15.
Petersen, E. “Die Einholung des Kyrios,” *ZST* 7 (1930), 682-702.
Pfitzner, V. C. *Paul and the Agon Motif.* NovTSup 16; Leiden: Brill, 1962.
Plevnik, J. “The Destination of the Apostle and of the Faithful: Second Corinthians 4:13b-14 and First Thessalonians 4:14,” *CBQ* 62 (2000), 83-95.
Porter, S. E. “Hermeneutics, Biblical Interpretation, and Theology: Hunch, Holy Spirit, or Hard Work?” in I. H. Marshall, *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 97-128.
Quarles, C. L. “The ΑΠΟ of 2 Thessalonians 1:9 and the Nature of Eternal Punishment,” *WTJ* 59 (1997), 201-11.
Reinhartz, Adele. “On the Meaning of the Pauline Exhortation: ‘*mimētai mou ginesthe* — become imitators of me,’ ” *SR* 16 (1987), 393-403.
Rensberg, F. J. J. van. “An Argument for Reading νήπιοι in 1 Thessalonians 2:7,” in *A South African Perspective on the New Testament: Essays by South Aftrica New Testament Scholars Presented to Bruce M. Metzger* (ed. J. H. Petzer and P. T. Hartin: Leiden: Brill, 1986), 252-59.
Richardson, P. *Israel in the Apostolic Church.* London: Cambridge University

Press, 1969.
Roberts, J. H. “The Eschatological Transitions to the Pauline Letter Body,” *NovT* 20 (1986), 29-35.
Rosner, B. “Seven Questions for Paul’s Ethics: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 as a Case Study,” in *Understanding Paul’s Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 351-60.
Russell, R. “The Idle in 2 Thess 3.6-12: An Eschatological or a Social Problem?” *NTS* 34 (1988), 105-19.
Sailors, T. B. “Wedding Textual and Rhetorical Criticism to Understand the Text of 1 Thessalonians 2.7,” *JSNT* 80 (2000), 81-98.
Schmidt, D. D. “1 Thess 2:13-16: Linguistic Evidence for an Interpolation,” *JBL* 102 (1983), 269-79.
Schnider, F., and W. Stenger. *Studien zum neutestamentlichen Briefformular.* NTTS 11; Leiden: Brill, 1987.
Schubert, P. *Form and Function in the Pauline Thanksgivings.* BZNW 20; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939.
Simpson, J. W. Jr., “The Problems Posed by 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16 and a Solution,” *HBT* 12 (1990), 42-72.
Smith, C. “’Αδιαλείπτως Προσεύχεσθε: Is Paul Serious?” *Presbyterion* 22 (1996), 113-20.
Smith, J. E. “Another Look at 4Q416 2 ii.21: A Critical Parallel to First Thessalonians 4:4,” *CBQ* 63 (2001), 499-504.
— . “1 Thess 4:4 — Breaking the Impasse,” *BBR* 11 (2001), 65-105. Spicq, D. “Les Thessaloniciens ‘inquiets’ éteient-ils des paresseux?” *ST* 10 (1956), 1-13.
Stambaugh J. E., and D. L. Balch. *The New Testament in Its Social Environment.* LEC; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.
Steele, E. S. “Jewish Scripture in 1 Thessalonians,” *BTB* 14 (1984), 15.
Stein, R. H. “Did Paul’s Theology Develop? (1 Thess. 4:13-18),” in *Difficult Passages in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 82-88.
Stephenson, A. M. G. “On the Meaning of ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα του. κυριου. in 2 Thessalonians 2.2,” *TU* 102 (1968), 442-51.
Still, T. D. *Conflict at Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and Its Neighbors.* JSNTSS 183; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
Stowers, S. K. *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity.* LEC 5; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.
Taylor, N. H. “Who Persecuted the Thessalonian Christians?” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 58 (2002), 784-801.
Tuckett, C. M. “Synoptic Tradition in 1 Thessalonians?” in R. F. Collins, ed., *The Thessalonians Correspondence,* 160-82.

Turner, N. *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1965.
van Unnik, W. C. " 'Den Geist löschet nicht aus' (1 Thessalonicher v 19)," *NovT* 10 (1968), 255-69.
Verhoef, E. "Die Bedeutung des Artikels τω.ν in 1 Thess 2.15," *Biblische Notizen* 80 (1995), 41-46.
Wainwright, A. "Where Did Silas Go? (And What Was His Connection with *Galatians?*)," *JSNT* 8 (1980), 66-70.
Ware, J. "The Thessalonians as a Missionary Congregation: 1 Thessalonians 1,5-8," *ZNW* 83 (1992), 126-31.
Waterman, G. H. "The Sources of Paul's Teaching on the 2nd Coming of Christ in 1 and 2 Thessalonians," *JETS* 18 (1975), 105-13.
Watts, R. "The Meaning of *Alaw Yiqpesu Melakim Pihem* in Isaiah LII 15," *VT* 40 (1990), 327-35.
Weima, J. A. D. "An Apology for the Apologetic Function of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12," *JSNT* 68 (1997), 73-99.
— . "But We Became Infants among You," *NTS* 46 (2000), 547-64.
— . "'How You Must Walk to Please God': Holiness and Discipleship in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. R. N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 98-119.
— . *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings.* Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1994.
Weiss, J. *Earliest Christianity.* 2 vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959.
Weiss, W. "Glaube — Liebe — Hoffnung: Zu der Trias bei Paulus," *ZNW* 84 (1993), 196-217.
White, J. L. *Light from Ancient Letters.* FFNT; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.
Whitton, J. "A Neglected Meaning for σκευ.ος in 1 Thessalonians 4:4," *NTS* 28 (1982), 142-43.
Wiles, G. P. *Paul's Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of Paul.* SNTSMS 24; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
Winter, B. W. *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
Witmer, S. E. "εδίδακτι in 1 Thessalonians 4:9: A Pauline Theologism," *NTS* 52 (2006), 239-50.
Wortham, R. A. "The Problem of Anti-Judaism in 1 Thess 2:14-16 and Related Pauline Texts," *BTB* 25 (1995), 37-44.
Wright, N. T. *The Resurrection of the Son of God.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003.
Yarbrough, O. L. "The Precepts of Marriage and Sexual Morality in 1 Thess 4:3-

8," in *Not like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (SBLDS 80; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 65-87.
Yarbrough, R. W. "Sexual Gratification in 1 Thess 4:1-8," *TrinJ* 20 (1999), 215-32.

Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

Writing a commentary on Paul's two letters to the believers in Thessalonica would in some ways seem to require three introductions: one regarding the city and its Christian community, matters that will be of concern to both letters; and a second and third one on the two letters themselves, since even though they have some obvious relationships with each other, each in fact is unique to itself; and especially because the authorship of the second letter is disputed by many, it requires a much larger section on this matter in that case. But I will here stay with the tradition and offer only two introductions. Where I will tend to part from the tradition is by offering separate introductions at the beginning of each commentary, rather than to offer them both at the beginning of the book as a whole. This is simply my own attempt to give 2 Thessalonians its proper due, rather than to have it "tag along" with a commentary on the first letter.[1] In the present case I begin with the more "settled" matters (authorship and date) and then move on to the more substantive questions regarding the city of Thessalonica and the nature of the nascent Christian community in this bustling metropolis, and thus the occasion of the present letter.

I. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

Although Pauline *authorship* of this letter has been denied from time to time, dating back to the extreme historical scepticism of F. D. Baur in the midnineteenth
century, such denial faces enormous historical difficulties — so much so that one wonders, "Why bother?" Baur's reasons were ultimately based not on historical grounds as such, but on his own buying into Hegelian philosophy. Thus since the turn of the twentieth century, the Pauline authorship of this letter has been rather universally accepted as historical fact.

But the more significant question in this regard is that of single or plural authorship, since the two letters to this church are the only two in the corpus with two unique features. First, the "author(s)" in this case are identified without further qualification ("apostles," "servants," etc.), which becomes the standard feature in all subsequent letters beginning with our 1 Corinthians. [2] Second the first person plural is basically maintained throughout the letter, so that by all normal historical standards the letter should be identified as Paul's, Silas's, and Timothy's letter to church of the Thessalonians. Indeed, given that all three are named in the address, one must take seriously that Paul intended the letters to have come from all three of them.

Nonetheless, the letter was basically dictated by only one of them, the apostle himself, as the occasional "lapses" into the first person singular (2:18; 3:5; 5:27) make certain. But even so, given the uniqueness of the plural "we" in these two letters, plus the fact that the letter begins by naming the three of them, we should probably take the plurality of authorship more seriously than most of us are wont to do. This becomes the more certain, it would seem, because of the fact that in this first letter (as well as the next) Paul makes absolutely no point of his authority to speak into their situation. This phenomenon begins — for good reason, it turns out — with his first preserved letter to the believers in Corinth. This further adds to the evidence that, however else this letter might be described by ancient standards, it is first of all a letter of friendship. Paul is designated neither as "an apostle of Christ Jesus" nor as "a servant of Christ." The three of them are simply named as co-authors, jointly speaking into the situation in

Thessalonica, even though the letter itself is dictated by Paul.

The *date* of the letter is based primarily on the combined data from Acts 17:1-9 and the singular mention by Paul of his (and presumably Silas's) being left alone in Athens by his (their) having sent Timothy to the Thessalonians from there (3:1-2). The very way this is stated implies that Paul was no longer in Athens, but had gone on to Corinth.[3] From the Acts reference, where one is told that Paul and his companions came to Thessalonica by way of Philippi, from whence they had been asked to leave by the town authorities, we may legitimately assume a date *circa* 49 or 50 CE for the writing of this letter.

What is unknown specifically is Paul's actual *location* at the time of writing, since the mention in 3:6 of Timothy's return has no geographical referent regarding the place of return. Therefore, on the basis of the Acts account the majority of scholars have assumed the return of Timothy and the sending of this letter to have taken place in the early months of Paul's visit to Corinth narrated in Acts 18:1-18a. This can be neither proved nor disproved; it is simply based on — and fits well with — the few historical data at our disposal.

II. THE CITY AND ITS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Thessalonica (sometimes Saloniki) is one of the several Mediterranean cities that has had a continuous history from the Greco-Roman period to the present, mostly because of its strategic location at the northernmost point of the Thermaic Gulf (Gulf of Salonica), while sitting astraddle the Egnatian Way, the main thoroughfare between Byzantium (now Istanbul) in the east and the Adriatic ports in the west. According to the Greek historian Strabo (d. 23 CE), the present city was founded by Cassander in the fourth century BCE and was named after his wife Thessalonice (= "victory of Thessaly"), who was a daughter of Philip and half-sister of Alexander the Great. In 167 BCE, when Macedonia was annexed by Rome and divided into four parts, Thessalonica became capital of the second district. When the province was reorganized in 148 BCE, it became the capital of the province of Macedonia. In the give-and-take of history, the city was fortunate enough to side with Octavian (later Augustus) in the Roman civil war (42 BCE) and thus in victory was awarded the status of a "free city." At the same time, of course, as with Philippi, this assured loyalty to the emperor — and the imperial benefits that went with such loyalty.

According to Luke's account in Acts 17:6, the local government was administered by "politarchs," a word found on inscriptions, but only in Luke in known literature. Apparently there were five "politarchs" at the time of Paul. Because of its strategic geographical location, it almost certainly had a population mix similar to that of Corinth, making it an especially cosmopolitan city, in comparison, for example, with an interior town like Philippi. The majority would have been Greeks, but cities like Thessalonica and Corinth experienced a considerable influx of immigrants from everywhere, including especially Diaspora Jews. It was also a city where, unlike more truly Roman cities, women held places of honor and authority. These various realities also meant that it had a considerable mix of trade guilds and religions.

The founding of the church itself, recorded in Acts 17:1-9 and referred to in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10, probably took place ca. 49-50 CE. As was Paul's habit, the missionary trio (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) began their proclamation not in the Agora, but in the Jewish synagogue, which according to the account in Acts

lasted only three sabbaths. What happened next in terms of time and length of stay is shrouded in mystery, since the next event recorded by Luke, hard on the heels of the preceding narrative, is their being hustled out of Thessalonica in the dead of night by "the believers" there. But the evidence of the two Thessalonian letters, both Paul's own references to his teaching them[4] and the degree of Christian maturity the letters reveal, suggests that the believing community had been more sufficiently grounded than one would normally expect to have happened in two weeks. And since Luke's time reference had to do with the length of Paul's ministry in the Jewish synagogue, not with his stay in Thessalonica as such, one should probably posit a stay of several weeks or months.

Indeed, everything else in 1 Thessalonians, plus a passing note in Philippians 4:16, indicates a stay of longer than three weeks. In 1:8 Paul reminds them that news about their own "faith" had preceded him to his next stops (Berea/Athens/Corinth), something that would seem to require time to have developed. In 2:9-12, 17 and 19-20 Paul reminds them of the high degree of mutual affection that existed between him (and Silas and Timothy) and these believers, which again would take more time than two weeks would have normally allowed. Likewise in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10, Paul further reminds them that he had worked "with his own hands" so as not to be a burden to them and thus also to offer them an example to follow. These kinds of behavioral models would be difficult to establish in two weeks. But the ultimate proof of a longer stay comes from a passing reference in Philippians 4:16, where Paul reminds that congregation that "once and again" they had ministered to his needs while he was in Thessalonica. The "once and again" by itself pushes the time frame far beyond two weeks. But having said all that, we still remain in the dark as to the actual length of stay — probably some six or more months, but who is to know?

According to the Acts account (17:4), the overall result of Paul's stay in Thessalonica was the conversion of "some of the Jews, . . . a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women." This picture fits our two letters quite well. Although the evidence from these letters for Jewish presence is nearly nonexistent, that is most likely the result of the heavy predominance of Gentile converts. Moreover, even though the believing community began, as usual, among "God-fearers," the picture that emerges in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 is one of more purely pagans turning to Christ (1:9); and the issue with the unruly-idle in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-11, which is taken up in greater detail in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, is most likely related to Gentile sociology, probably reflecting a degree of tension between tradespeople and more wealthy

householders. The implication in all of these cases is that Paul and his companions had been with the nascent believing community for a stay of several months, not just two weeks.

Finally, we should note that as elsewhere the nascent Christian faith tended to cut across all of these various sociological and commercial boundaries, which was very likely one of the reasons it was suspect and thus destined for its share of persecution, as the (very brief) narrative in Acts 17 indicates. But this is also one of the reasons for some of the tensions that emerge in both of the Thessalonian letters, especially the issue of the “unruly-idle,” whose apparent misunderstanding of one’s place in Christ led to their attempt to live off the largesse of others.

III. THE OCCASION AND PLACE OF WRITING

In comparison with all the later Pauline letters, 1 Thessalonians has two remarkable features not found in any of the others. First, whereas most of the other letters begin with an opening thanksgiving and prayer report, in this letter that material extends through chapter 3, and thus covers nearly 60 percent of the entire letter — although the majority of this material does not technically belong to these two matters. Put another way, the thanksgiving, which begins in the "normal way" at 1:3, shows no clear evidence of coming to a full stop along the way, as thanksgiving for past relationships (apparently) spins off into a long narrative regarding the history of that relationship, before it concludes with a prayer report in 3:11-13. In later letters, when a prayer report occurs, it does so immediately after the thanksgiving report.

Second, the greater part of this letter — all but 4:13-18 — reflects a return to issues that Paul had previously spoken to when he was present among them. Thus the letter is full of information that is either reminding them of what they had already been taught or reinforcing what they already know. Indeed, there are no fewer than eleven "you already know" kinds of reminders in this letter (1:5; 2:1 [2x], 5, 9, 10, 11; 3:3-4; 4:2, 9; 5:1), and in two of these instances (4:9 and 5:1) he insists that he has "no need to write." Yet he writes anyway! So the "why" question simply must be dealt with, especially since Timothy has returned with what appears to have been an essentially good report about them.

Trying to answer the "why" question is what leads one to a proposed occasion for the letter. A careful reading of 1 Thessalonians causes several matters to emerge. First, the majority part of the "recall" language is to remind them of his earlier time among them, where two matters stand out: *their* conversion and *his* manner of life while among them. Second, his and his companions' hasty departure from the city had led to some obvious anxiety about the Thessalonians in the meantime. The reasons for his anxiety are three: (*a*) From Paul's point of view, he had left Thessalonica before his work there had been brought to its proper conclusion, especially his concern to see them fully established in Christ. The hint of this emerges in 2:17 ("we were torn away from you for a short time"). (*b*) Meanwhile, evidence from 2:14-16 indicates that they had become a

suffering community, which 1:6 implies was there from the beginning. The cause of the "suffering" in this case is related to some form of persecution. (*c*) These two matters become for Paul matters of some anxiety, based almost certainly on his sudden departure from them ("we were orphaned"! [2:17]), his subsequent inability to return, and their own persecution. Indeed, this latter item joins the first two, not only to fuel the arguments from the opposition but also to increase his own level of anxiety about them.

The letter itself was thus written on the return of Timothy from Thessalonica and his essentially good report about them as a community of believers. At the same time three matters need to be spoken to, which ultimately accounts for the letter: a question related to the sanctity of the marriage bed; the refusal to work by some who were able to, but chose rather to live off the largesse of others; and questions about the nature and timing of the Lord's return. These issues, besides being addressed directly, seem also to be summarized at the end by the "staccato" imperatives of 5:14.

The place of writing the letter was certainly Corinth. The evidence for this comes from the mention of Athens in 3:1-2, where the implication of the reference is that Paul had waited in Athens but was no longer there; and since, according to the account in Acts, Corinth was not only the next city he visited, but it was also the first one where he stayed for a considerable length of time (18 months, according to Acts 18:11), this seems the most likely place for him to have written back to the Thessalonians.

Text, Exposition, and Notes

I. THANKSGIVING, NARRATIVE, AND PRAYER (1:1-3:13)

Almost all letters from the Greco-Roman period[5] begin with a threefold salutation: The Writer, to the Addressee, Greetings.[6] Very often the next item in the letter would be a wish (sometimes a prayer) for the health or well-being of the addressee. Paul's letters, which generally follow this standard form, usually include a thanksgiving[7] — also directed toward God. In some cases he also includes a prayer report, telling them not only *that* he remembers them in prayer, but also spelling out in some detail the *what* of such prayer.[8] These features are already identifiable in this first extant letter.[9] But they are so in some contrast to those that will come later — including 2 Thessalonians — where each of the elements becomes more easily identifiable, even when elaborated somewhat. Such is not the case for 1 Thessalonians, with the result that chapters 1-3 have come under all kinds of scrutiny and differing analyses.[10]

It is not that the elements themselves cannot be identified. After all, 1:2-3 have all the markings of Paul's thanksgiving reports, while the (very typical) prayer report finally appears in 3:11-13. But the distance between these two items is part of the problem — along with two other matters that make analysis difficult. First, the thanksgiving report in this case does not come to a neat conclusion. Even though 1:4 is grammatically dependent on "we always thank God" in verse 2, what follows, beginning with verse 5, seems to move away from explicit reasons for thanksgiving, and evolves instead into a long, extended narrative of the apostles' (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) recent past relationships with the Thessalonians. The same thing happens again in 2:13, where the thanksgiving report is resumed (or repeated) from 1:4 — only to be lost again in the continuation of the narrative, now explaining his own anxiety about them in the meantime. This finally eventuated (as they themselves now know) in the sending of Timothy to them (2:17- 3:5). The narrative then concludes with an obvious sigh of relief at Timothy's return, whose report about them (3:6-10) became the immediate cause of the present letter. Thus our first difficulty has to with the *nature* of this thanksgiving that turns into narrative, with the prayer

report appended at the end — halfway through the letter![11]

Second, what are we to make of the *nature* of the long, twofold narrative (1:5-2:12; 2:14-3:10) that dominates this section between the thanksgiving (1:2-4) and the prayer (3:11-13)? The two main concerns in the first narrative section are introduced in verse 5: *(a)* The fact and nature of their conversion and *(b)* the nature of the apostles' ministry among them. These are picked up in turn in 1:6-10 and 2:1-12. In the first instance he begins with their suffering (v. 6), followed by the renown of their conversion (vv. 7-8), and concludes with what conversion in their case consisted of (vv. 9-10). In 2:1-12 Paul reminds them of the nature of his ministry among them, that it was totally unlike that of other itinerants (vv. 2-6) in that his and his companions' was one of parental care and concern (vv. 7-12).

Following the second thanksgiving, whose emphasis is on their having received the apostolic message for what it is indeed — God's own message — the narrative resumes by reminding the Thessalonians of their suffering, that it was quite in keeping with that of others who have followed Christ (2:14-16). But the main focus now is on the apostles' concern for the believers between the time that the three of them had left Thessalonica and the return of Timothy to Corinth with his report as to how the Thessalonian believers were faring. Only then does Paul add the prayer report (3:11-13), of a kind that also became standard in his later letters. Thus the two parts of the narrative together are simply a (chronological) reminder of what things were like at the beginning of their faith in Christ and of the apostolic concern for them from the time the three of them had left the city until the writing of this letter. What Paul has done, then, unique to this first of his letters, is to intersperse a long narrative of past and present relationships between the thanksgiving and prayer report. The emphases in the narrative are best understood as reflecting the historical setting. Although full precision is not possible here, two items recur in chapters 1-3 that allow an educated guess as to the nature of that setting. First, Paul more than once refers to their suffering in the face of opposition (1:6-7; 2:14-16; 3:2-4); second, he also offers a considerable defense both of his ministry while among them (2:1-12) and of his actions since leaving (2:17-3:5). These are best understood as related themes; that is, the persecution the Thessalonian believers are experiencing from their former pagan associations (2:15) is in some way related to their becoming the converts of an itinerant Jewish propagator of a new (non-Greek) religion,[12] in which part of the charge originally laid against him and Silas had to do with the legitimacy of such religion and the honor of Caesar (Acts 17:7).[13] Paul's own concern is over whether they are standing firm in their

newly found faith, despite his and Silas's hurried leave-taking[14] — and probably before the Thessalonians were as firmly planted in the faith as he would have desired.[17]

A. SALUTATION (1:1)

1 Paul, Silas[15] and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God the[18] Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace and peace to you.[1619]

Although the Thessalonians themselves would not have been privy to our broader knowledge of Paul as a letter-writer, the most convenient way for us to enter into the significance of this salutation is by comparison with the other letters in the corpus. In such a comparison, two matters stand out: its comparative brevity and the unusual designation of the church as "*in* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." We will look at each element in turn.

1 *(A) The Writer(s).* Even though the practice is extremely rare among the extant Greco-Roman letters, Paul frequently includes his present companions with himself in his salutations.[20] But this is the only place where he includes two such companions, and along with 2 Thessalonians it is the only place where there is no further identifying designation beyond the names.[21]

The Latin name *Silvanus*, which belongs to the man who is mentioned second, is undoubtedly the Silas who first appears in the narrative of Acts as one of the two men entrusted with the letter from the Jerusalem Council to the Gentile churches in Antioch and beyond (Acts 15:22-32), and who subsequently became Paul's companion on his second missionary tour (Acts 15:40-18:5).[22] He and Paul together had been hustled out of Thessalonica during the fateful night recounted in Acts 17:5-10. According to the Acts account, Silas then stayed on in Berea with Timothy when Paul headed south to Athens, and eventually to Corinth, the city where the three of them were reunited (Acts 18:5), at which point he is not further mentioned by name in Luke's account.[23]

At issue in Silas's case is his role (or non-role) in helping to author these two letters. On the one hand, Paul's shift in 2:18 to the first person singular as personal identification indicates that the letter is ultimately from him (Paul), or at least that he was the one doing the actual dictation. On the other hand, Paul's

here naming Silas as one of the writers, and his basically consistent use of "we," unique to the two Thessalonian letters, should probably be interpreted as Silas's having more of a role in the letter than merely sitting by listening to Paul dictate.[24] Indeed, it seems altogether likely that he actually penned the letter at Paul's dictation.

The story of *Timothy*'s joining Paul and Silas at the beginning of this missionary tour is told in Acts 16:1-5. He is not mentioned again by name until 17:14; but Paul's letters to the two Macedonian towns (Philippi and Thessalonica) make it clear that Timothy was with them in both places (as is probably to be implied from Luke's narrative as well). But what is not certain, because of the specific mention of only Paul and Silas both in the Philippian prison account (Acts 16:16-37) and in the nocturnal getaway from Thessalonica (Acts 17:10), is Timothy's relationship to these two events. Almost certainly he was not included in the Philippian imprisonment; it is at least possible that he stayed on in Thessalonica for a brief while after Paul and Silas left the city, but that cannot be known.

These various data together thus account both for the lack of designation following their names and for the unusual nature of the plurals ("we, us, our") throughout. The three of them had been involved in the "ministry" together when in Thessalonica, even though Paul clearly took the lead; and their sending Timothy to find out how things were with the Thessalonians (and probably again as the bearer of this letter) means that the letter truly was from the three of them.[25]

(B) The Recipients. Although the designation of the addressees in this letter is quite abbreviated when contrasted with later letters, what is said here is full of Pauline theological grist. The fact that they are designated as "the *church* of the Thessalonians"[26] indicates that this usage of the Greek word *ekklēsia* was by now (ca. CE 48) an already established practice among the early followers of Christ. Its origins in the Greek city-state as a designation for the assembly of citizens gathered to deal with city affairs, as well as a term for "societies" of people who shared common beliefs,[27] made it the happy choice of the Greek translators of the Old Testament, where it was regularly used to render the Hebrew *qahal,* referring to the "whole congregation" of Israel.[28] The choice of this word for the community of believers in any given locale was thus a natural one. And by the time of this letter, it had already begun to designate all the believers in a given community,[29] whether gathered or not — although in Paul it still most often carries its original sense.

Gentile converts to Christianity were no longer members only of Greco-

Roman culture. They had entered the "society"[30] of a people whose roots were in Judaism and whose story had its origins in the Old Testament, a story which the Thessalonians would have known well in its Greek form — the Septuagint (LXX).[31] And the primary term used to refer to this new "society" was that used in the earlier form of the story when referring to Israel as "the gathered people of God." The new expression of that "gathered people" had now taken deep root in Macedonia.

Only in these two letters is the church described as "*of* the Thessalonians."[32] The genitive in this instance means simply "composed of people who live in Thessalonica." It is of some interest that in Paul's next letter (our 1 Corinthians), he no longer speaks of the church in this way — perhaps because it could so easily carry connotations of possession. Thus in 1 Corinthians they are "the church *of God* in Corinth," very likely because some in that church had begun to think in terms of "ownership."

But the real surprise in our letter comes next. They are "*in* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Indeed, this is the only place in the entire corpus where believers are thought of as having their existence "in God."[33] This is most easily accounted for as Paul's way of collapsing into one phrase what he elsewhere tends to keep apart. That is, the church's present position is "in God" the Father, precisely because it is also "in the Lord Jesus Christ." Thus both the source (the work of Christ) and goal (God the Father) of their existence as God's people are expressed together in this compact phrase.

The more significant thing about this phrase, however, is its assumed "high" Christology,[34] a Christology that is thoroughgoing in these two letters, and which will be pointed out regularly throughout the commentary. This is the first of many instances where one preposition controls the twofold object of God and Christ, where the two "divine persons" (to use the language of a later time) are seen to be in the closest union regarding divine activities. If this were the only instance, nothing much could be made of it. But in these two letters much can be made of it, since in 1 Thessalonians 3:11 God and Christ are the plural subject of a singular verb as the object of prayer, while in 2 Thessalonians 2:16 the same phenomenon occurs but with Christ in the first position. Furthermore, in 2 Thessalonians 3:5 and 16 "the Lord" (meaning "Christ Jesus") is the single divine person to whom prayer is addressed.

It is of some importance, then, to note also in this first mention of the deity in the Pauline corpus that God is designated simply as "Father" while Christ is designated as "Lord." In this regard the lack of the (later) typical "*our* Father" is perhaps significant, since for Paul God has come to be known as "Father"

precisely because he is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” who then becomes “our Father” because we are related to him through the Son.[35] Hence in this instance the lack of the possessive “our” probably points toward verse 10, where Paul refers to their “awaiting the [Father’s] Son from heaven.”

This designation also suggests that from a very early time Paul (and other believers) had already come to recognize both the Father and the Son in the Greek text of the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4.[36] After all, Paul’s clear expression of this in his next letter (1 Cor 8:6) is not argued *for,* but argued *from.* Thus the “one God” of the *Shema* is the Father, while the “one LORD” of the same *Shema* is Jesus Christ (the “Son” being assumed under the reality of God as Father). It is therefore altogether likely that this first mention of God in the Pauline corpus comes to us with this understanding of the *Shema* already well in hand.[37] And here it indicates the secure position of the Thessalonian believers. They are “in” both the Father and the Son simultaneously. In this letter it will be their existence in “the Lord” that Paul will press on most occasions.

(C) The Greeting. The greeting found here became the standard in all of Paul’s subsequent letters. As pointed out in the commentaries on both 1 Corinthians and Philippians in this series, here is a marvelous example of Paul’s “turning into gospel” everything he sets his hand to.[38] The traditional greeting in the Hellenistic world was *chairein* — the infinitive of the verb “to rejoice,” but in salutations meaning simply “Greetings!” (see Acts 15:23; Jas 1:1). In Paul’s hands this now becomes *charis* (“grace”), to which he adds the traditional Jewish greeting *shalom* (“peace,”[39] in the sense of “wholeness” or “well-being”).[40] Thus instead of the familiar “greetings,” Paul salutes his brothers and sisters in Christ with “grace to you — and peace.”[41]

It is worth noting that this is the invariable order of Paul’s words, not “grace and peace to you” as in most translations. Very likely there is significance to this order: the grace of God and Christ is what is given to God’s people; peace is what results from such a gift. Hence, “grace to you — and peace.” In a profound sense this greeting therefore nicely represents Paul’s larger theological perspective. The sum total of God’s activity toward his human creatures is found in the word “grace”; God has given himself to his people bountifully and mercifully in Christ.[42] Nothing is deserved, nothing can be achieved. The sum total of those benefits as they are experienced by the recipients of God’s grace is “peace,”[43] God’s eschatological *shalom,* both now and to come.[44] The latter (peace) flows out of the former (grace), and both together come from “God our Father” and are made effective in our human history through our “Lord Jesus

Christ," so that in all its subsequent appearances, beginning with 2 Thessalonians, Paul adds the source already assumed here, but not expressed: "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

B. THANKSGIVING (1:2-3)

> *2 We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. 3 We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul here begins a practice that carries through most of his later letters, where the greeting is immediately followed by a thanksgiving report. In so doing he is simply radically Christianizing a commonplace phenomenon in certain kinds of letters from the Greco-Roman world.[45] In this first instance, however, we are confronted by twin difficulties: (1) it is not clear when the actual content of the thanksgiving ceases and something else that looks very much like a narrative of past relationships takes over;[46] and (2) our verses 2-10 are comprised of two very long and complex sentences (vv. 2-5 and 6-10). So any breaking up of this material is generally arbitrary on the part of the interpreter — although reasons can be given for whatever one does.

This commentary will follow the paragraph structure of the TNIV, since, under any view, verse 4 serves as a janus between the thanksgiving and the subsequent narrative recall of the Thessalonians' conversion and their relationship with Paul. On the one hand, it is linked to verses 2-3 both grammatically and in content, and thus is still part of the thanksgiving proper. On the other hand, when Paul begins to remind them specifically of the *nature* of their election mentioned in verse 4, in terms of their own experience of it (v. 5), the thanksgiving gives way to an extensive recollection for the Thessalonians' sakes of the events of their conversion (vv. 6-10), including especially a long "defense" of the apostles' conduct while among them (2:1- 3:10).

In any event, one should be aware of how the whole sentence (vv. 2-5) "works" in the way it falls out. The structure of the sentence is easy enough to see:

> We always thank God for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering your faith, love, and hope, knowing your election.

Thus Paul says that in prayer he and his apostolic companions give thanks for them by doing two things: always mentioning them in prayer as they constantly remember their faith, love, and hope; and all of this because they also know that these latter are the evidence of the Thessalonians' election. But right at that point Paul goes on to spell out the evidential aspects of their election/conversion, and with that what began as a thanksgiving report begins to tail off into a sustained narrative, where he reminds them first of their conversion and its being well known elsewhere in Greece (1:5-10). So for all practical purposes the actual content of the thanksgiving report itself is found in these two verses.[47]

2 What is said in this first part of the thanksgiving report will become typical of all of Paul's later thanksgivings. The thanksgiving takes place in the context of prayer, which in the ordinary "logic" of things should be the first thing up. That is, while we pray for you, we continually give thanks for you. But this is a "thanksgiving report," not a "prayer report," hence the first participle ("making mention") simply gives the context for the apostles' repeated thanksgivings for the Thessalonians believers — in all instances as the three of them pray for them. It is for "all of you," as they are constantly mentioned in prayer. The plural "we," which is found here and in 2 Thessalonians 1:3, occurs elsewhere only in Colossians 1:3, even where others are included in the salutation (as, e.g., in 1 Corinthians). But in contrast to all of Paul's other letters, with the partial exception of 2 Corinthians, it here continues throughout the letter — except for 2:18; 3:5; and 5:27. This is probably significant in this case, in that even though Paul was undoubtedly the "point person" for the attack against the apostles that lies behind 2:1-12, he will regularly remind the Thessalonians that all three of them were in that original ministry together.

The focus of the thanksgiving is "for all of you," where Paul (typically) expresses thanksgiving for people, not for "things" or "experiences." The "all" in this case is probably not so much a matter of emphasis as such, but a way of putting upfront that all of the members of the believing community, including some who will need to be mildly corrected in this letter, are part of the newly formed *ekklēsia* of believers in Thessalonica. At least there is nothing in the letter itself to suggest that Paul's giving thanks "for *all* of you" hints at some kind of internal unrest in the community, as it very likely does in some other letters (e.g., Romans, Philippians). At the time of this writing the believing community in Thessalonica would not have been very large, and Paul's and his companions' memory of them is still fresh, and thus inclusive — even of the "disruptive idle" noted in 5:14, who had been anticipated in 4:9-12.

The more difficult, but not especially significant, decision regarding the clause

that makes up our verse 2 is the placement of the adverb "contin-ually," which comes at the end of the verse in the Greek text. The Nestle-Aland Greek text punctuated the sentence so as to make the adverb go with the participle that begins verse 3, and in this they have been followed by many others, including a goodly number of English translations. Thus, "we continually remember before our God and Father your work, etc."[48] But here is a case where Pauline usage elsewhere, plus the structure of the first two clauses, seems to favor the TNIV and others. Although Paul uses this word only four times in his letters,[49] in each case it is in connection with prayer and thanksgiving, never with "remembering." Moreover, taking it in this case as the conclusion of the first clause, rather than as the beginning of the next one, makes for a clause that is finely balanced with verse 3, which begins with "remembering" and concludes with "before our God and Father." In this latter case most English versions rightly bring the final modifier upfront for the sake of good English. So too with this clause, which makes most sense as one finds it above, "and *continually* mention you in our prayers."

We should note further that the logic of Paul's sentence implies that he and Silas and Timothy give thanks for the Thessalonians — always — while at the same time they are interceding for them in prayer — continually. Thus in this earliest letter Paul puts intercession and thanksgiving together, which we learn from other letters was his constant habit.

3 With a second participial clause Paul returns to the thanksgiving with which this long sentence began. The content of the clause itself is basically manageable in terms of understanding what he is trying to communicate to the Thessalonians in their present adversity. Nonetheless, some of the details require discussion, which can best be presented by offering a more "literal" rendition of Paul's clause (in his word order, and picking up from the main verb): "we always thank God for all of you . . . , remembering your work of faith and labor of love and endurance of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father."

We begin at the end, by noting that in this third mention of God in the letter, and thus in the Pauline corpus, God is once again designated as "Father," but in this case with the possessive "our." Thus for Paul the risen and exalted Christ Jesus is our heavenly "Lord," while the eternal God, because of the coming of the Son, is now regularly referred to as *our* Father.[50] How this came about, including the role of the Spirit in the process, is spelled out in some detail in Galatians 4:4-7. The ease with which this is said here indicates that such talk about God has long been in place and has likewise been part of Paul's instruction

of these early Gentile believers.

Otherwise, three matters are at issue in the sentence: *(a)* how the final phrase, "in the presence of our God and Father," is intended to function: as a modifier of the phrase "of our Lord Jesus Christ" or of the opening participle, "remembering"; *(b)* whether the genitive, "of our Lord Jesus Christ," modifies only the final phrase ("endurance of hope"), or is intended to do triple duty in the same way as the single "your" with which the clause begins; *(c)* the nature and meaning of the phrases that make up the crucial triad: faith, love, and hope.

The first two items are essentially structural and thus affect only one's overall understanding of the clause. Regarding the final phrase ("in the presence of our God and Father"), it is remotely possible — especially in light of verse 10 below — that Paul is thinking of "the Lord Jesus Christ" as now in the Father's presence; but it is difficult to see how that is a cause for present thanksgiving with regard to the Thessalonians themselves. More likely, therefore, as suggested above on verse 2 and in keeping with the word order there, Paul intended this as an inclusio with the participle, "remembering," as the TNIV has it.[51] Thus, Paul envisions himself and Silas and Timothy as being "in the presence of *our* God and Father," as they offer joyful thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonian believers.

In light of this more certain expression of "inclusio" in Paul's clause, it is possible that he also intended both "our" and "of the Lord Jesus Christ" to do triple duty. That is, just as the TNIV and other translations recognize that the "your" goes with each of the three nouns in the Christian triad, so also the final phrase may go with each of the three. If so, then not only is their "hope in our Lord, Jesus Christ," but so also is their "work" a product of their "faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ," and their labor is prompted by their "love for Christ." While one cannot be certain here, it does fit the pattern of such inclusios that recur in these two letters.[52]

One may note further that in such a reading of Paul's clause, the whole takes the form of a kind of triple inclusio. The focus is clearly on the inner set of three, which are enclosed by the possessive "your" and "the Lord Jesus Christ," where the Thessalonians are the subject of the verbal ideas in the triad of faith, love, and hope and the Lord Jesus Christ is the object in at least the first and third instance. That is, their faith and hope are in or toward Christ, while their "love" is most likely toward others. All of this in turn is enclosed by the outer set having to do with Paul's "remembering [these virtues] before our God and Father."

What is crucial in the clause are the reasons for the thanksgiving, which seem

intended primarily as encouragement to the Thessalonians. Indeed, one should read these words first of all in light of chapters 2 and 3, knowing that they are expressed in response to Timothy's return with an essentially good report about the Thessalonian believers, even though they are now in the throes of considerable persecution (see 2:14; 3:2-5). Paul's gratitude to God for them finds expression in terms of the especially Christian triad — faith, love, hope — which appears here for the first time in Christian literature. It appears again in 5:8, and thereafter in Paul's letters on a recurring basis.[53] At the same time, however, especially in light of the rest of the letter, one needs to take equally seriously the first words in each of the phrases (work, labor, endurance).[54]

It has been common to read the first two of these ("work of faith, labor of love") as Christian platitudes, having to do with various forms of service and duty directly related to the gospel itself. The reason for this is easy to see; for even though Paul in later letters uses both nouns and their corresponding verbs to speak both of "the work of the Lord" and of "working with one's own hands,"[55] in the context of the divine triad one's instincts are to think exclusively of the former (doing "the Lord's work"). However, since Paul's later thanksgivings regularly anticipate issues that will be addressed in the letter, sometimes where correction is needed in the community,[56] that seems most likely to be the case here as well. Thus Paul, by way of thanksgiving, is commending the whole community, a net thrown wide enough here to embrace those who also need to get on board in these matters.

Unfortunately a "literal" rendering of these three phrases has also led to further misunderstanding on the part of many readers. Thus "labor of love," for example, is quite understandable at one level since it has made its way into common English parlance, as having to do with certain activities as motivated by love for those involved. But whether that is its meaning here is highly questionable. Furthermore, "work of faith" and "patience of hope" are especially ambiguous in English, unless they are turned into possessives: "faith's work" and "hope's patience." Thus the T/NIV — and a few others[57] — have turned all three of them into meaningful phrases that capture the "result /reason" sense of the three genitives.[58]

The first phrase, "your work of faith," has been an especially troubling idea for many Protestants, especially in light of the emphatic contrasts in Galatians and Romans between "faith in Christ Jesus" vis-à-vis "*works* of law." But that is an unfortunate misunderstanding of the concern of these latter two letters, not to mention a misreading of Paul, who in both letters is referring specifically to Gentiles' being required to "do" certain aspects of the Jewish law (circumcision,

sabbath, food laws). At the same time Paul is quite insistent that true faith can best be seen in the "good works" that it produces, as Galatians 5-6 make especially clear.[59] His language here reflects much the same idea. True faith in Christ — as with true faith in the Old Testament — expresses itself in "work."[60] And, in any case, in this earliest letter "faith" is a much broader term than the more narrowly defined use in (most of) Galatians and Romans.[61] Moreover, "work" itself takes many forms in Paul's letters. Sometimes it expresses the activities of "ministry" (e.g., 1 Cor 3:13; 15:58); sometimes in doing good toward others (Gal 6:9-10; Col 1:10; Eph 2:10); and sometimes it has to do with what Paul himself has accomplished for God (1 Cor 9:1). In the present case, the term probably has no specific referent, except that it would most likely include the first two items just noted.

The more difficult phrase is the second one, "your labor of love." First of all, the word "labor" in this phrase puts a bit more emphasis on the idea of toil and hardship, although it is also used in a more generic way for "work" of all kinds, including "laboring for the gospel" (e.g., 1 Cor 3:8; 15:58). Indeed, for the majority of interpreters this is the only meaning of the phrase.[62] But such a reading seems to be a much too generic, rather than a case-specific, understanding of the phrase. After all, early on in the narrative that follows (2:9), Paul reminds the Thessalonians that the missionaries themselves did both kinds of "work." Thus in the same sentence he reminds them that he and Silas "worked *(ergazomenoi)* night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone" and did so "while we preached the gospel of God to you."[63]

In light of 4:9-12 in this letter, therefore, where Paul urges these believers to "mind your own business and work with your hands," a matter to which he returns in full measure in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, he most likely is here anticipating that corrective word with this laudatory note. In thanking them all for their "work produced by faith" (probably Christian service) and "labor prompted by love" (probably manual labor), Paul is thus offering genuine thanks for those among them who are doing this very thing, even though for others it will be a matter needing correction. Thus rather than thanking God for them with Christian platitudes, Paul is in fact giving thanks for things that are both at work among them and at the same time need some correcting or bolstering. This also means that the word "love" in this case refers to "love for others," rather than out of love for Christ.

The final phrase, "endurance inspired by hope," is the least ambiguous of the three. Whatever else was true of these early believers, they were eagerly awaiting the final glory that would be theirs (and ours) at the coming of Christ.

Indeed, the possibility is that they have been overly eager. In any case, such expectation is part of being a follower of Christ. Not only does one labor because of faith in Christ and labor with one's own hands out of love for others (so as not to burden them), but all of this is done with the firm expectation that what Christ began at his resurrection will be brought to ultimate consummation at his coming. One's hope rests secure in the risen Lord, the once crucified Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. "Hope," therefore, in Paul is a "content" word, meaning a word that has to do with his absolute certainty about the future based on Christ's resurrection, not a word of wishfulness about a less than sure tomorrow.

Thus the primary thrust of the thanksgiving to this point is altogether on the outworking of the Thessalonian believers' coming to faith in Christ in terms of their living for Christ by caring for others. But that is not all, important as it is, so Paul will go on next to remind them of the dynamic nature of their conversion in its own right, which he spells out in our verse 5.

Much can be learned from listening carefully to Paul's thanksgiving reports, especially since it is easy to limit thanksgiving to "things" or to "blessings" that people receive. But in this first recorded letter two things stand out: (1) that he actually tells the people for whom he is praying what he is thankful for in terms of their ongoing relationship with Christ; and (2) that he thanks God for the very things that will also need some correctives. And this is not "buttering them up," as it were, so as to let the "have it" later on. Rather, it is gratitude to God for what God has been, and is, doing in and among them. It should perhaps further be noted that Paul thinks of thanksgiving as a part of prayer, and he is especially quite ready to thank God for his friends, even when he well knows that they will need some of the correctives that follow.

C. NARRATIVE PART 1: THE THESSALONIANS' CONVERSION AND FOLLOWING (1:4-10)

Without breaking stride, and still in the context of offering thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonian believers, Paul puts forth a third participle ("knowing") [64] that modifies the main verb, "we give thanks." But what begins as reassurance based on their divine election evolves immediately into a reminder of Paul's preaching and of their coming to faith, both of which were accompanied by the Spirit's power. So if the previous participle offered the *immediate* cause of thanksgiving — their service and love for Christ and others — this one offers the *ultimate* cause: their being grounded in God's calling them to himself for his own divine purposes. And all of this has apparently been brought about by Timothy's report as to their remaining faithful in the context of their present suffering.

The result is that Paul's affirmation as to the divine source of their calling and election (v. 4) is followed immediately by a reminder, first, of the realization of that election through his effective ministry among them (v. 5), then of their own role in furthering the gospel in Thessalonica (v. 6), and finally of the widespread knowledge of their conversion[65] and its radical nature (vv. 7-10). In the process the thankgiving disappears,[66] as it segues into a long narrative about his and their past and most recent relationship. Since in 2:1 the narrative begins with a considerable recall of Paul's (and his companions') conduct while in Thessalonica, the present section, which reminds them of their own conversion, may be properly viewed as its introduction.

The two main concerns in the first part of the narrative that follows (1:7-2:12) are thus introduced in verse 5. (1) The fact and nature of their conversion are reiterated as a reminder that their true origins as followers of Christ were a combination of the gospel message accompanied by a powerful work of the Holy Spirit in their lives; this is then elaborated in verses 6-10. (2) The final clause in verse 5 ("just as you yourselves know how we lived among you for your sake") elaborates the opening phrase, "our gospel came to you," and thus anticipates the long elaboration in 2:1-12.

1. Paul Reminds the Thessalonians of Their Experience of Conversion (1:4-7)

> *4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our[67] gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with[68] the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among6 you for your sake. [69] You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by[70] the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model[71] to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.*

With verse 4, and still in the mode of thanksgiving, Paul offers divine love and election as the foundation of the Thessalonians' faith that prompts his thanksgiving. This is probably also intended to be a theological undergirding of their faith, so as to lead to yet further faithfulness, which is where verse 5 fits in. The evidence of their election is to be found in their conversion itself. What is significant in this reminder is the experienced, evidential nature of what is to be recalled. Their election itself is a *positional* reality;[72] but their own appropriation of that reality came about through a combination of *experiential* factors: Paul's powerful, Spirit-inspired preaching of the gospel, resulting in their joyful experience of conversion, all orchestrated by the Holy Spirit. Thus, just as later in writing to the Galatians,[73] Paul here shows none of the contemporary Western church's anxiety about appealing to experience as part of the overall reality of coming to Christian faith.

In this case Paul's concern seems clear. He grounds their experienced faith in God's prior love and election (v. 4). And since he is appealing to their own conversion as a means of encouragement in the midst of present suffering, [74] the reminder is twofold: of the nature of *Paul's proclamation* of the gospel, that it was accompanied by the Holy Spirit's power (v. 5); and of *their own experience* of receiving the gospel ("the word"), that it was accompanied by an untrammeled joy produced by the Holy Spirit — despite the sufferings they also came to experience (v. 6). The net result of all this was their serving as a model for believers throughout Greece.

4 The "for" with which this sentence begins in the TNIV (cf. NRSV) is an attempt to capture the sense of the participle "knowing," as the cause or basis of

the apostles' thanksgiving. The content of what is known reflects Paul's understanding of the inclusion of Gentiles in the divine plan, given that his language deliberately echoes the foundational text of Jewish understanding of their relationship with God, Deuteronomy 7:7-8: "The LORD did not set his affection on you and *choose you* because you were more numerous than other peoples, . . . but it was because the LORD *loved you* . . . that he brought you out with a mighty hand."[75] The point, of course, is that Israel did nothing to deserve God's redemption from slavery and election as his people; it was God's doing altogether. Given that many of the first Gentile converts to Christ had regularly attended the Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica, it seems very likely that a goodly number of them would have heard Paul's usage here as a transfer of privilege to them as followers of the Jewish Messiah.

That such is the case seems especially so, given that the language "loved by God" modifies the vocative "brothers [and sisters]." This is the first of fourteen such vocatives in this letter, which, along with the eight in 2 Thessalonians, are by far the highest incidence of this vocative in Paul's extant letters.[76] The commonplace nature of this appellation should not make us immune to its considerable significance in the Pauline corpus, where it reflects the imagery of the church as God's household, where Christ is the householder and all who are his are family, related to one another as "brothers and sisters." This familial metaphor for the believing community can be traced back biblically to Exodus 2:11, where Moses goes out to visit his own "brothers" (= fellow Israelites) and sees an Egyptian beating one of his "brothers" — a usage that then carries throughout the Old Testament.[77] Usage by early Christians, and especially the inclusion of Gentiles, can be traced back directly to Jesus himself, where in a strictly family-oriented context he deliberately throws the net wide to include all in God's family who do God's will (Mark 3:34-35 // Matt 12:49-50 // Luke 8:20).[78]

The noun "election" itself is found elsewhere in Paul's letters only in Romans 9-11, all having to do with Israel.[79] Elsewhere Paul uses the verb (Eph 1:4) or the adjective "elect."[80] Although this language does not occur frequently in his letters, its occurrence in a passage like the present one indicates that it is presuppositional for him. It should be noted that in the present case Paul is thinking of the whole body of Thessalonian believers as elect, not individual believers. Indeed, although he refers once to an individual as "chosen" (Rom 16:13), his understanding of such election is presuppositionally related to a person's incorporation into the community of believers. Moreover, for Paul "election" is always a referent to believers, and thus reflects a reality after the

fact, not before; and as here it is always seen as an action of God's love, and thus it becomes a dynamic force in the life of the believing community.[81]

Almost certainly all the language of this opening clause ("elect, brothers [and sisters], loved by God"), as the first affirmation of what Paul "knows" about them, is in direct response to their present suffering at the hands of their fellow countrymen.[82] The Thessalonian believers may be disdained and persecuted by their pagan neighbors, but they are assured at the outset that they are loved by God and therewith his "chosen ones" in Thessalonica — and "brothers and sisters" of Paul and his companions and to all others who belong to God's newly formed people.

5 With these next two clauses, in what becomes an even longer sentence, Paul offers the *content*[83] of what he knows. First, he reminds the Thessalonians of the experiential, thus evidential, nature of their election, as to how it came about. Second, he then uses this as a point of departure to remind these believers about his (and Silas's and Timothy's) ministry among them, a matter elaborated at such length in 2:1-12 that one is led to believe that this issue has been raised by others (probably his detractors) to call into question the Thessalonians' own existence as believers.

The reason for this clause in its present context thus seems clear enough. What is less certain are some of the details, especially the phrase "in word only"[84] and the twin phrases "with power" and "with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction."[85] Regarding the first matter, the use of "word" in the singular is most likely for rhetorical effect, since it is followed by two further singular nouns, "power" and "Holy Spirit." Paul's emphasis lies with the adverb "only." His preaching was in fact a matter of "word," an oral communication of the truth of the gospel; his point is that it was not that *only,* since their conversion would then have been a matter of assent or persuasion alone. And whatever else, the phrase "not only in word" is not an attempt to play the Spirit off against the Word.[86] Rather, Paul seems to be doing two things with this contrast: First, he is setting up the argument in 2:1-12, that his preaching and the Thessalonians' response are quite unrelated to the kind of "word" one finds among the religious and philosophical charlatans. As they well know, and as he will argue in 2:1-12, his manner of life among them as proclaimer of the gospel was quite in contrast to such purveyors of empty words, who used "flattery as a mask for greed" (2:5). Paul's "word" was accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit and carried deep conviction.

Second, Paul wants to remind them, as he will the Corinthians in another context (1 Cor 2:1-5), that the message of the gospel is truth accompanied by experienced reality. It did indeed come "in word," meaning in the form of

proclaimed truth, as a message from God himself (see 2:4 and 13). But for this appeal the proof is in the eating. Thus God verified the truthfulness of the message by a display of his power through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's present emphasis, therefore, lies not with the persuasive *truth* of the gospel itself, even though that would almost certainly be the major point of contention on the part of his detractors. Indeed, what is striking about the phrase "our gospel" is its presuppositional nature; that is, Paul uses the term as something already well known to his readers, so that he does not need to fill in the content. But we may well surmise that his use of the phrase "the gospel of Christ" in 3:2 and "the gospel of our Lord Jesus" in 2 Thessalonians 1:8, both of which are almost certainly objective genitives, indicates that the "good news" he preached had Christ, crucified and now risen Lord, as its primary content. And such "good news" would have been seen as utter folly by the pagan opposition to the Thessalonian believers.

Nonetheless, as important as that content would have been to their being persuaded to follow Christ, Paul's present emphasis is on the Thessalonians' own *experience* of entry into the people of God when they gave assent to that content. Thus his present emphasis — for their sakes — is to remind them not of the gospel itself, but of their own experience of it; and he can make this appeal, as he does later in Galatians 3:1-6, because of the manifest experience of the Holy Spirit that accompanied their "conversion."

That much seems certain; but the specific nature of what Paul is appealing to is not as immediately clear, since there is a considerable textual variation that indicates early scribes had some difficulty with the phrase as well. At issue is whether Paul is intending to refer to a threefold accompanying reality ("*with* power, *with* the Holy Spirit and *with* deep conviction," NIV) or to a single reality where the second is a doublet that stands in apposition to "with power" ("*with* power [even] *with* the Holy Spirit and deep conviction," TNIV). The difference in this case is a matter of textual choice, where the primary criteria for making such choices support the latter as Paul's original text.[87]

But that textual choice does not solve the major problem, namely *how* the phrase modifies "our gospel came to you." Does it refer to Paul's actual preaching of the gospel,[88] to "signs and wonders" that accompanied that preaching (as in the similar passage in Rom 15:19),[89] or, as is almost certainly true of the similar passage in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5,[90] to the Thessalonians' actual conversion?[91] Or do two or all three of these somehow coalesce in this sentence?

Most likely the answer lies with this last suggestion, so that at least the two realities of Paul's Spirit-empowered preaching and their Spirit-experienced

conversion are both in view, the latter being the consequence of the former (or, in this case, they represent the two sides of one reality). Nonetheless, even though in context (esp. vv. 2-4 and 6-10) the overall emphasis is on their becoming and being Christian believers, the *primary* emphasis in verse 5 falls on Paul's Spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel that brought about their conversion. This seems certain from both the contrasting phrase, "not only in word," and the concluding clause, "even as you know what manner of men we were toward you for your own sakes." The latter in particular focuses on Paul's and his co-workers' preaching and behavior — and thus anticipates 2:1-12.

What this means, then, is that the twin phrases, "but in power" and "with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction," refer primarily to Paul's preaching, but not so much to the *manner*[92] (or style) of the preaching as to its Spirit-empowered *effectiveness.* This seems to be the best way to make sense of what might at first blush look like a mere compounding of words. Contrary to some,[93] the appeal can scarcely be to Paul's *own sense* that his ministry was accompanied by power. The sentence insists that his gospel "came *to you*"[94] in a certain manner. Thus the initial phrase on the positive side is not "with the Holy Spirit and power,"[95] but simply "in power," precisely because that for Paul is the proper contrast to coming merely "with speech" (cf. 1 Cor 2:1-5; 4:19). But lest "power" not be fully understood, Paul immediately qualifies by adding, "[that is], with the Holy Spirit and deep/full conviction." Thus, the Holy Spirit is being designated as the source of the power in his preaching the gospel, the evidence of which was the full conviction that accompanied his preaching and resulted in their conversion.[96]

To be sure, the meaning of the latter expression ("full conviction") is not that certain. Some[97] have argued that the Greek noun[98] should carry its ordinary meaning of "fullness" and thus refer to the great results of the work of the Spirit. Others[99] would see it as referring to what happened to the Thessalonians in their hearing and receiving the gospel, and still others,[100] to the assurance and confidence with which the missionaries presented the message. Most likely, as with the former phrase, it refers in a way both to Paul's preaching and to their response to it. His preaching was accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit so as to carry great conviction, which finally was evidenced by their conversion.

Whether this language also presupposes accompanying "signs and wonders" is less certain. Very likely it does that as well. That is, even though the primary referent in the phrase "with power, [that is], with the Holy Spirit and full conviction" is to Paul's Spirit-empowered proclamation of Christ, such passages as 2 Corinthians 12:12 and (esp.) Romans 15:18-19 indicate that his Spirit-

empowered word was regularly accompanied by Spirit-empowered miracles as well. Not only so, but the evidence from Galatians 3:1-5 shows that his converts' own experience of the Spirit was also accompanied by experiential phenomena to which Paul can appeal as evidence of their having become the children of God by faith. Thus, even though the first referent in the present language is to Paul's Spirit-anointed preaching of Christ, the very presence of the "power of the Spirit" most likely implies these other accompanying phenomena as well. And in any case, the Thessalonians undoubtedly experienced such phenomena, so that the reminder of Paul's preaching and their conversion as accompanied by the "power of the Spirit" would have brought to mind this whole complex of Spirit-empowered phenomena.[101]

In sum, this sentence points primarily to Paul's Spirit-empowered preaching that led directly to the Thessalonians' own reception of the Spirit in conversion, which is what Paul will go on to remind them of in verse 6. What is finally significant, of course, is that in both cases — his preaching and their conversion — the Spirit is the key; and there was an evidential expression to the work of the Spirit that Paul refers to as power, to which he can appeal so as to make his point stick. What follows — all the way through 3:10 — gives us all the necessary clues as to the reasons for this emphasis. The concern is twofold: their belonging to God's elect; and that by virtue of the work of Christ and the Spirit.

But this appeal is not quite enough, so Paul shifts from reminding them of the Spirit-inspired preaching that led to the Thessalonians' conversion to appealing to their own memory of what manner of men the three of them had been while in Thessalonica. This is in clear anticipation of the defense of the apostles', especially Paul's, own character that will be picked up in 2:1-12. "You know" what manner of men we were "among you[102] for your sake." This appeal to the Thessalonians' recall of what they "know" is one of the notably repeated themes in these two letters, occurring no fewer than nine times.[103] The later occurrences of the "you know" motif suggest that Paul is here already anticipating this emphasis on their recalling their own experience of his ministry. As 2:1-12 makes certain, Paul is doing so in light of some slanderous accusations against him that form part of the Thessalonians' current "suffering" for the sake of Christ. To this suffering Paul will return next (v. 6), along with a substantial reminder of how well known their turning to Christ had become (vv. 7-10). All of this together suggests that slanders against Paul and the Thessalonians' suffering merge at the point of what they have been experiencing at the hands of their detractors in Thessalonica.

6 This sentence has the closest kind of ties to what has just preceded. Indeed,

even though most English translations follow the Greek editors and put a full stop at the end of verse 5, it seems more likely that the "and" with which the present clause begins (omitted in the TNIV) is to be understood as a coordinating conjunction.[104] This would probably be seen more clearly had he not included the somewhat parenthetical "just as" clause at the end of our verse 5. Thus the full sentence appears to have the following structure (abbreviated in order to see its essential parts):

> Knowing your election, *that* our gospel came *(egenēthē)* to you . . . with power, (just as you know how we were toward you), *and* you became *(egenēthēmen)* imitators of us and of the Lord. . . .

Thus, even though the thanksgiving is beginning to get away from Paul somewhat, [105] this clause still forms part of it and elaborates the two concerns of verses 4-5: the reality of their own election and its relationship to Paul's ministry. It begins with the latter but concludes with, and thus emphasizes, the former. Paul has just said: "You know how *we* were toward you for your sakes"; now he adds: "indeed, *you yourselves*[106] became[107] imitators of us — and of the Lord." The content of their "imitation" is then spelled out in terms of their having received the word[108] in the midst of great affliction, but accompanied by the joy of the Holy Spirit.[109] Each of these items needs further comment.

It should be noted, first, that what they "received" is "the word,"[110] thus picking up the proclamation dimension of verse 5, and so verifying that "not in word only" is not downplaying the message itself, but rather is emphasizing that it was accompanied by the Spirit's power. This is further substantiated in verse 8, where "the word of [= that comes from] the Lord" has been broadcast throughout Macedonia and Achaia in the form of a report about its effectively bringing about the Thessalonians' putting their faith in God.

Secondly, for Paul the concept of becoming "imitators" ordinarily means far more than what is said in this instance.[111] Indeed, Paul's calling on his converts elsewhere to "imitate" him as he "imitated" Christ is the key to the ethical instructions given in his churches, where they have no "book" to follow. 1 Corinthians 11:1 provides the starting point: Paul considered himself a follower of the example and teaching of Christ; his following Christ then served as a "model" for his churches, who in turn, as verse 7 in our present passage makes clear, became "models" for others.

His present concern, however, is with their imitating Paul, and thus maintaining faith, in the midst of *suffering*.[112] For Paul, suffering was an

expected concomitant of discipleship (see 3:2-3 below); indeed, it is something believers "glory in" (Rom 5:3), not because they love to suffer, but because for Paul it is the mark of genuine discipleship. Hence he reminds them that in this matter — suffering as believers — they have his own example (cf. 2:1-2, 15; 3:8), and especially that of their common Lord, Jesus Christ.[113] So much is this a "matter of fact" for him that over a decade later he writes to their fellow Macedonians in Philippi that "it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him" (Phil 1:29). Such suffering as an expected dimension of life in Christ very likely also had an eschatological dimension to it; disciples were expected to join in the sufferings of the Messiah that would usher in the Eschaton.

What strikes one here is what he recalls for them as the evidence of their genuine conversion: their experience of *joy*, resulting from the Holy Spirit's invasion of their lives. The little phrase, "with the joy of the Holy Spirit," probably tells us much about both the paganism from which they had come and the life of the Spirit into which they had entered. On the one hand, life as a pagan may have had its moments of happiness, as it does for humanity in general, but by and large it was for them a life of heaviness and toil, arid in religion and empty in personal fulfillment — especially for the slaves and poor freedmen who would have made up a large sector of the typical early Christian congregation (cf. 1 Cor 1:26).[114] But in coming to Christ and thus receiving the Holy Spirit, they had been filled with such an unparalleled joy that even in the midst of genuine hardships related to their having become believers, this is the one characteristic of their life in the Spirit that Paul recalls for them as clear evidence of their conversion. This suggests in the strongest possible way that for Paul joy is one of the certain hallmarks of genuine spirituality (Spirit-uality?).

Thus we find here that remarkable collocation of joy and suffering found throughout the New Testament.[115] The early church understood suffering to be part of its lot, and believers were not to be surprised by it (1 Thess 3:2-3); yet because they had experienced their new life as the indwelling of the Spirit, they also lived with great joy. In the midst of present suffering, their experience of the eschatological Spirit had given them a foretaste of the life to come.[116] Precisely because of the Spirit's presence in this way, Paul will later in this letter describe the "will of God" in the form of three imperatives, the first of which is, "Rejoice always" (5:16-18). It should also be noted that, although not expressed elsewhere in quite this way, Paul will regularly pick up on the theme of joy in his letters, and in Galatians 5:22 will place this quality of life in the Spirit as second in the list of the Spirit's "fruit."

7 If our surmise that the "and" with which verse 6 begins functions grammatically to connect the second part of a (now very long) compound sentence, then the present result clause (v. 7) finally brings the whole to a conclusion. In any case, it brings the clause that began in verse 6 to its conclusion. As a further word of reassurance Paul informs the Thessalonian believers' that their "imitation" of Paul, Silas, and Timothy, and thus of the now-reigning Lord (see n. 48 above), has in turn served as a "model"[117] for "all the believers in Macedonia and [in] Achaia."[118]

That much is clear enough. The difficulties arise with the relationship of this sentence to that which follows immediately (as our v. 8), which elaborates by explaining "how" they had become such a model. "All the believers" refers to those who had come to faith[119] — almost certainly through the ministry of the three itinerants — in the two provinces that make up the whole of ancient Greece, which would include all of modern Greece and at least the southern part of modern Macedonia. Although his and Silas's path was most likely more narrowly circumscribed, Paul is well aware that word about the gospel and its affects in Thessalonica had spread like wildfire among the Jewish synagogues in Greece, and therefore especially among the Gentiles who attended the synagogues. And as the word spread, the Thessalonians served as a "model" of "faith in the midst of suffering" as the gospel continued west and southward. Thus Paul sees them, like a stone thrown into the water, as fitting into an ever-widening circle of "models" to be "imitated": Christ → Paul → Thessalonica → Macedonia and Achaia.

This passage has considerable significance, both theologically and in terms of Christian conversion, well beyond its first purpose of encouraging the Thessalonians by reminding them of both the fact and nature of their conversion. Indeed, it is of more than passing interest that Paul's first recorded thanksgiving is so full of information regarding his understanding of "conversion" as such. In fact, had the majority of people who made up the believing community in Thessalonica had Jewish origins, this "thanksgiving" would have been expressed quite differently. But as it is, it stands as the first — and vivid — reminder that early Christian conversion among Gentiles was an experienced reality, and that both "faith," here expressed as "deep conviction," and the gift of the Holy Spirit were its essential ingredients. Even so, it was not their "conversion" itself that was to serve as a model for others, but the way they welcomed the gospel in the context of "severe suffering" that served as the model, and continues still to do so where "conversion" takes place outside of cultures deeply influenced by

"Christendom."

2. The Thessalonians' Following Christ Had Become Well Known to Others (1:8-10)

> *8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia[120] — your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report[121] what happened when we visited you. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the[122] dead — Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

Our verses 8 and 9-10 are two separate explanatory sentences in Paul's Greek, which the TNIV has helpfully broken into three, so that the various connections are more immediately accessible to the English reader. His first sentence (v. 8) explains the *content* of verse 7 by way of elaboration; the second sentence (vv. 9-10) starts out (v. 9a) to explain *how* Paul and his companions have arrived at their knowledge of the Thessalonians noted in verse 8, with emphasis again on his/their role in the Thessalonians' becoming believers. The rest of the sentence (vv. 9b-10) then goes on to remind the Thessalonians about *the content of the report* regarding their own becoming followers of Christ. What is thus kept alive in this long explanation are the twin concerns of the Thessalonians' own (widely known) faith in Christ and Paul's and his companions' role in the same.

8 With another explanatory "for," Paul sets out to elaborate the content of verse 7. In so doing, however, his aim is not to specify *how* the Thessalonian believers had become a model for those in the rest of Macedonia and in Achaia who had come to believe. Rather, he notes the considerably extensive nature of the report itself. His emphasis is thus twofold: on the fact that it was *from you* — the first thing up in his sentence — that "the Lord's message" had gone out; and on the truly expansive *nature* of what had "rung out from you" — not only Macedonia and Achaia, but everywhere. At issue are the "what" and "how" of this report, which is expressed in a sentence whose grammar works technically, but whose overall sense is not immediately clear, thus the dash in the TNIV.

We begin with the structure of the sentence itself, which reads (somewhat literally):

> For from you has rung out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia; but everywhere your faith toward God has gone out.

The (apparent) grammatical difficulty is related to Paul's use of "not only" in the first clause, which ordinarily would be followed with a "but also." In this case, however, his concern is not with the specifics of the geographical dimension of what has "rung out/gone out," but with the *what* that has spread so broadly. Thus instead of the expected "also,"[123] the present clause basically repeats the concern, if not the actual content of the first clause.[124] What this means then (apparently) is that the two clauses should be viewed as in near apposition to each other. This is supported by the two verbs themselves, where the first one[125] is a metaphor for something's being "noised abroad," while the second is more literally descriptive ("has gone out"). If this is the case, and everything grammatically lies heavily in its favor, then we should understand the second clause as further explaining the first. Given this understanding of the difficult structure of Paul's sentence, that would mean further that the phrase "from you" is not to be taken as a form of "agency" — as though the Thessalonian believers themselves had preceded Paul in proclaiming Christ elsewhere[126] — but in its ordinary sense of "the point from which something begins."[127]

What has "rung out from you," Paul affirms, is "the word of the Lord," a phrase which in most cases, as it surely is in 4:17 below,[128] would be a subjective genitive, referring either to a word the Lord has spoken[129] or to the gospel message that has its origins with the Lord.[130] But in this first instance the phrase is best understood as an objective genitive, referring to the message *about* the Lord. It is also likely, therefore, that the phrase does not refer directly to the content of the gospel,[131] as though the message itself about Jesus had preceded the missionaries wherever they have gone in Greece. Rather, what has "rung out" from Thessalonica is a report about what the Lord has done in and among them, a word that has (probably) spread like wildfire from place to place, so that the synagogues in Berea and Corinth, to name the two we know about for sure, have heard about what happened in Thessalonica before Paul and Silas (and later Timothy) made their way there. To be sure, such a message would have had some measure of content of the gospel in it, or what has been reported would make little sense. The *content* of what was being noised abroad is what Paul will take up in verses 9-10; and that indeed does have some gospel content to it.

Nonetheless, it serves primarily to describe what has happened to the Thessalonians themselves, and does so in terms of what it would mean for Gentiles to respond to the message of the gospel.

Thus, as much as some might wish to think of the Thessalonian believers as becoming evangelists to the rest of Greece before Paul and Silas got there, the evidence of this letter (and of 2 Thessalonians) suggests otherwise. They have become a suffering minority in Thessalonica, who for the most part have stayed home and faced the pagan onslaught there.[132] Indeed, when Paul himself explains what he means, he notes that "your faith in God has become known everywhere, so that[133] we do not need to say anything about it." Thus "the word about the Lord" that has "rung out" from them is the fast-spreading report about "their faith, a faith which is (directed) toward God," which is further explained in verse 10 as their "turning to the living God from idols."[134] Thus Paul is here anticipating what he will say next in verses 9 and 10.

While that much seems clear from both the content and the forced grammar of Paul's sentence, what we do not know is *how* all of this happened. What we may guess with some degree of confidence is related to the significance of the city itself. Unlike Philippi, which served as a Roman outpost on the eastern end of the Macedonian plain, Thessalonica was a thriving Greco-Roman city, situated on a splendid seaport and sitting astraddle the very important Egnatian Way that connected Rome with all points east, especially Byzantium (later Constantinople and Istanbul). News from here spread naturally and swiftly to other parts of the two provinces by way both of ship and of the major roads that connected Thessalonica with Athens and Corinth in the south. And since, according to Acts 17 and 18, this is the route Paul and Silas themselves took, it would have been easy for news about the stirring things that had happened among these Gentiles — who had formerly attended the synagogue in Thessalonica — to make its way rather quickly west and south. Whether the Thessalonian believers themselves knew about their "fame" is moot — probably not — but in any case Paul's telling (or reminding) them of it here is undoubtedly intended to be a means of encouragement in the midst of their present suffering.

9-10 With this explanatory sentence Paul now concludes his considerable narrative of the notoriety of the Thessalonians' faith and of his and his companions' role in the same. The structure of the sentence tells it all. What "they themselves" (people in Macedonia and Achaia) report is twofold: what sort of welcome we had among you; and how you turned from idols to serve the living and true God. At the same time he concludes with a note regarding the "coming wrath," which will be the lot of those who are presently making life

miserable for the Thessalonian believers. It is to these detractors and their misrepresentations of Paul that he now turns.

Given the considerable *apologia* that follows immediately in 2:1-12, which is connected to the present narrative with an explanatory "for," one should not be too surprised by how the present sentence begins — with an explanatory: "for they themselves report *about us*,[135] what sort of welcome *we had* among you." Indeed, this is quite in keeping with the way the first long sentence in the thanksgiving concludes (v. 5b), where Paul would have them recall for themselves "how we lived among you for your sake." Although the emphasis throughout this thanksgiving report-turned-narrative is on the Thessalonians themselves, these two clauses together (v. 5b and v. 9a) remind the reader that the force of the opposition in Thessalonica was two-pronged: calling into question the Thessalonians' faith, which was based in part on calling into question Paul's ministry. So he begins this final explanatory sentence by focussing on his own ministry in Thessalonica, which is the first matter up in the long narrative that follows (2:1-12).

Nonetheless, the thrust of this final sentence does not focus on Paul and his companions but on the nature of the Thessalonians' own conversion story, where the emphasis lies with two aspects of that conversion: that in becoming followers of Christ they had abandoned lifeless idols in order to serve the living and true God; and that they presently await the consummation of their salvation at which time their enemies will experience God's wrath. As with so many such moments in Paul's letters, some sectors of New Testament scholarship are enamored with the possibility that the content of this clause had preexistence as a creed of some sort, especially so since much of what is said here does not occur elsewhere in his letters.[136] In any case, everything that is said here seems so carefully tailored to speak into the Thessalonians' own situation, having already been anticipated in verse 8, that the question of sources seems ultimately irrelevant.[137]

But one matter that is raised by this passage, which is also not fully answerable, has to do with the ethnicity of the believing community to whom Paul is writing. The text clearly presupposes a congregation composed primarily of pagan Gentiles, since Paul would scarcely use this language when addressing ethnic Jews, and probably not when addressing Gentile "God-fearers" as well. His referring to them as having "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God," which on the surface seems to be all-embracing, must in this case be understood as directed toward this formerly pagan majority. In this respect even God-fearers among them who had attached themselves to the synagogue would have previously belonged to the Gentile population that alone could be described

in this way. In the end, therefore, regarding the makeup of the believing community in Thessalonica this sentence tells us only that it was composed chiefly of Gentiles; and Paul's emphasis in this description thus lies with Gentile, rather than Jewish, conversion to the Christian gospel.[138]

Three points are made by Paul in this concluding sentence: (1) the contrast between the Thessalonians' "before" and "after," with scarcely hidden Jewish scorn for idolatry and a typically Jewish designation of God as "the living and true God"; (2) that they are currently "between the times" and are waiting for the conclusion of their salvation, which includes escaping the coming wrath (which their persecutors will indeed experience); and (3) that the one responsible for their salvation is the risen Jesus, here designated as "the Son of God."

One should note, first, that the passage breathes the perspective of Jewish monotheism. Both epithets, "the living God" and "the true God," reflect the language of such monotheism in Israel's long struggle against idolatry. To be sure, the two terms appear together only in Jeremiah 10:10 ("But Yahweh is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King");[139] nonetheless, they appear separately in a variety of polemical contexts.[140] Whatever else is true of the God of the Jews, he is "the *living* God," over against the *lifeless* idols of the pagan world; and precisely because he alone is the living God, he is therefore "the [one] *true* God" over against the *false* gods of idolatry. Moreover, the living and true God is further identified, here for the first time in the corpus, as the God "who raised [his Son] from the dead." This remarkable way of identifying the God of Israel occurs just often enough in Paul for Hans Küng to remark that " 'he who raised Jesus from the dead' becomes practically the designation of the Christian God."[141]

What is striking, therefore, on further reflection, is the designation of Christ as "*his Son* from heaven,[142] whom he raised from the dead — *Jesus,* who rescues us from the coming wrath." That is, the "living and true God" has a Son, who is currently "in heaven" by virtue of the Father's having raised him from the dead;[143] and this Son is none other than the earthly Jesus, the one who also rescues[144] us from the wrath of God that will be poured out on all who do not obey him (cf. 2 Thess 1:6-10). It should be noted that this is the earliest known reference in Christian literature to the resurrection of Christ, the single most crucial event in early — and all — Christian faith. What is further significant in this reference is the absolutely presuppositional way it is mentioned,[145] in the same way as the Son's present exaltation in heaven is assumed throughout the letter. This primary Christian assumption thus especially lies behind several items that follow: the prayer directed to him in 3:12-13; the mention of his

Parousia in 3:13; and the whole argument about the resurrection of believers in 4:13-18 (esp. v. 16).

With the designation "[God's] Son" what was assumed in 1:1 about God as Father now becomes explicit. Although the designation "Son" is not especially frequent in Paul, occurring only here in the Thessalonian correspondence, [146] it is expressed in such a presuppositional way that Paul assumes his readers to be on the same page with him. This designation of the *risen* Christ as "Son" appears again in 1 Corinthians 15:28; but it occurs most often in Paul's letters with reference to the Son's "giving his life" for us (2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20; 4:4-5; Rom 8:3, 32; Col 1:13). Paul also designates Christ as "Son" when he thinks of salvation as effecting the new creation, in which we are being transformed back into the divine image, whose perfect expression is to be found in God's Son (Rom 8:29-30).

Several passages in Paul indicate that the presuppositional beginning point for this title is Jewish messianism, namely 1 Corinthians 15:23-28; Romans 1:3-4 (and 8:32 indirectly); and Colossians 1:12-15.[147] Although one cannot be sure how much instruction the Thessalonians had received on this usage, Paul's reference here to the Son as *in heaven with the Father* most likely (presuppositionally) carries the double sense *(a)* of the Son's now reigning as *the Jewish Messiah*, seated at God's right hand (Ps 110:1), who *(b)* through his resurrection and exaltation has come to be understood as *the eternal Son*, who had been sent from the Father to redeem.[148]

Whether this double sense would have been available to the Thessalonians is perhaps moot. But both the internal evidence found elsewhere in these letters (Paul's intertextual use of the Septuagint) and the external evidence from Acts 17:1-6 would lead one to think so. The passage in Acts indicates that many of these former idolators had already attached themselves to the Jewish synagogue and thus formed the nucleus of the neophyte Christian community.[149] One may therefore also assume that they had already been instructed in the (now) double sense of Jesus as the Son of God.

It is of further interest that this single reference to "the Son" in this letter occurs in connection with his earthly name "Jesus," where the emphasis is on his role at the eschatological conclusion of things. This seems especially to be in anticipation of 4:13-18.[150] The significance of this is that in the latter passage Paul shifts in verse 14 — after explicit reference to Jesus' resurrection — from the name "Jesus" to the title "the Lord." This combination indicates that the two most significant messianic "titles," Lord and Son, which occur together a little later in 1 Corinthians 15:23-28, are already in place when Paul wrote this letter.

One should also note that in the present passage the emphasis is not on believers' being present with the Son at his coming, but on the fact that the now risen Jesus will "deliver us[151] from the wrath that is to come." It is of interest that the word "wrath" is used exclusively in the New Testament to refer to God's final judgment on the wicked, and thus is never used regarding believers, whose present lot is "tribulation/suffering."[152] Thus the focus here is not on the Thessalonian believers' final glory, but on their opponents' final destruction, an emphasis which fits altogether the overall perspective of the present narrative.[153] The encouragement, therefore, in this case is not with regard to their own future — that comes later — but on the fact that those who are making life miserable for them in Thessalonica, people who worship non-living, and therefore deaf and mute, idols are themselves destined for final judgment.

We should note finally that whether this passage had some kind of prior existence in a semi-creedal way is not only moot but ultimately irrelevant, since its point is precisely apropos to the present situation in Thessalonica. The Thessalonian believers themselves have abandoned "dead gods" for "the living and true God"; they may thus confidently await God's Son from heaven, who will himself mete out divine "wrath" on their enemies. And all of this works especially well if one presupposes that the issue being addressed — somewhat indirectly — is opposition from within the pagan community in Thessalonica. Since the nature of that opposition is what Paul turns to next, this is very likely Paul's way of deliberately introducing them into the narrative at this point as those destined to experience God's wrath.

Two matters from this first recorded description of the results of Christian "conversion" would seem to have ongoing significance. First, Paul was aware of the fact that the *news* of it had spread rapidly to other population centers. One may rightly assume that this happened by way of the Gentiles who had formerly been associated with the Jewish synagogues, but had now become followers of the Crucified One. Good news is to be shared; and these early believers were doing only what one should expect of them. Nonetheless, second, Paul's own emphasis is on the theological/experiential *content* of their conversion(s), which here focuses on the "before" and "after" of it. Former pagans, who had been worshipers of idols ("dead gods"), have now given themselves "to serve the living and true God." The end result of such conversion was a new orientation, an eschatological one, wherein they were now waiting for the final consummation. For Paul, after all, conversion was not a changing of religious beliefs; rather, through the gift of the Spirit a person has passed from death into

life — now and forever.

D. NARRATIVE PART 2: PAUL'S CONDUCT IN THESSALONICA (2:1-12)

Because of the unfortunate addition of chapter breaks and verse numbers in our Bibles,[154] one is given the impression that something new begins here, a position that has been abetted by scholarship in the final three decades of the preceding century. But in fact several features of this passage indicate that Paul is simply picking up and elaborating the concern expressed earlier at the end of verse 5 ("just as *you know* how we lived *among/toward you* for your sakes"). First, the passage begins with an explanatory "for,"[155] which connects this material to what has just been written. Second, there are three significant linguistic ties to the immediately preceding sentence (vv. 9-10), which began, "for they themselves *(autoi gar)* report what kind of entrance/visit *(eisodon*[156]*)* we had with you *(pros hymōn).*" This one begins, "for you yourselves *(autoi gar)* know our entrance/visit *(eisodon)* with you *(pros hymōn).*" Without the chapter break this would be clear to all. Third, one can hardly miss the repeated "as you know" that pervades the passage (vv. 1, 2, 5, 11), as well as the companion expressions, "you remember" in verse 9 and "you are witnesses" in verse 10. With these reminders Paul repeatedly urges the Thessalonian believers to recall the way things actually were when he and his companions came to them and lived among them. This phenomenon, unique to the Pauline corpus, also carries on the concerns that began in verse 5.

This means, therefore, that 1:5-10 serves as an introduction to the narrative that begins in earnest here. What is at stake is Paul's preaching (1:5) and the Thessalonians' becoming believers (v. 6) — of some renown, it turns out (vv. 7-8). He then concludes (vv. 9-10) by describing the results of "his visit" to them in terms of *its effects on the Thessalonians.* Paul now picks up the narrative about "his visit" in terms of the *nature of his own preaching* — including his conduct while among them — and by doing so, he thus elaborates both parts of 1:5 (the Thessalonians' experienced conversion, plus Paul's conduct). The present passage thus contrasts Paul and his companions with the kinds of itinerant philosophers and purveyors of "new religions" that some outsiders have apparently accused Paul himself of being like.

Except for the break at verse 10, our comments will follow the paragraphing of the TNIV, which recognizes by way of *content* the two basic parts of the narrative. First, in verses 1-6 everything has to do with Paul's and his companions' ministry as it is set out in sharp contrast to the well-known hypocrisy of other kinds of itinerants — purveyors of religion or philosophy with a view toward ingratiating themselves with their hearers. The transition takes place in verse 7a, where the apostle reminds the Thessalonians of what he and his companions were truly like — as innocent as "babes" among them. Second, in verses 7b-12 and with a sudden and remarkable change of images, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of what he, Silas, and Timothy had also been like among them, first (vv. 7b-8) caring for them as a nursing mother would her own child, and second (vv. 9-12) caring for them as a concerned father.

At the same time the passage is capable of a second kind of packaging, signaled by a series of explanatory "*for*'s" (vv. 1-2, 3-4, 5-8, 9-12).[157] Verses 1-2 introduce the present defense by reminding the Thessalonians that, despite the public abuse that he and Silas had suffered in Philippi, they nonetheless were emboldened by God to preach the gospel in Thessalonica. Verses 3-4 explain how that boldness had divine approval, so that it could not possibly have sprung from "error or guile." Verses 5-8 then further elaborate on this in two ways: first, by applying the more general statement of verses 3- 4 directly to his "coming" to them, and second, by reminding them that even though he could have exercised apostolic authority, his conduct rather was one of "innocence" (v. 7b) — similar to a nursing mother's attentive care for her children (v. 8). In verses 9-12, with yet another change of metaphor (to "father and children"), Paul concludes this part of the narrative by contrasting his actual ministry and conduct among them with that described negatively in verses 3-6.

All of this makes perfectly good sense of the narrative if our proposed reconstruction of the historical situation approximates reality somewhat closely. That is, with the return of Timothy (3:6) Paul has learned that a part of the Thessalonians' present suffering (both past and ongoing) at the hands of their (pagan) fellow citizens had included a considerable smear campaign against Paul — as just another religious charlatan, who curried their favor and then left hurriedly under suspect circumstances. By way of reminder, then, this is Paul's "defense" against the barrage of scurrilous innuendos of their (and thus his) enemies in Thessalonica.

In the process Paul calls on God as a witness (vv. 4, 5, 10) and reminds them of what they themselves know (vv. 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11). At the heart of it all is a series of negatives (vv. 3-6), as though Paul were responding to charges, which are countered by reminders as to what Paul and his companions were really

about — the gospel (vv. 2, 4, 8, 9), which came from the God who had called the Thessalonians into his own kingdom and glory (v. 12). It is difficult to imagine how one can understand much of this apart from the report of Timothy: that some people in Thessalonica are making life miserable for the believers, a part of whose focus is on Paul, as the leader in promulgating this new religion. The accusation apparently was threefold: *(a)* what Paul teaches is full of error; *(b)* he himself is less than honest (full of guile, flattery, impure motives); *(c)* the reason for which is greed. Paul then responds to these matters in reverse order: *(c)* in verse 8, he and his companions toiled with their own hands so as not to burden you; *(b)* in verses 10-11, their conduct was holy and righteous; *(a)* in verse 13, their gospel is the very word of God.

Finally, one should note the thoroughly theocentric character of the entire passage. Christ is mentioned but once (v. 7, “Christ’s apostles”), while God is mentioned by name nine times. The only other place in the Pauline corpus where something like this occurs is in the long narrative of human fallenness in Romans 1:18-3:20, where as here Christ is mentioned but one time in passing (2:16).[158] The reason for this in the present instance is not difficult to find. At stake here is not first of all the message per se, but the messenger; and whatever else, Paul understands his calling and apostleship to be the work of God the Father in his life. Hence the entire passage is all about something God has done; and Paul is ready to remind the Thessalonians of the same.

1. What Paul Was NOT like among the Thessalonians (2:1-7b)

> *1 [For][159] you know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. 2 We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. 3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. 4 On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. 5 [For] you know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness. 6 We were not looking for praise from any*

> *human being, not from you or anyone else, 7 even*[160] *though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our prerogatives. But we were like young children*[161] *among you.*

This paragraph begins with a word of reminder (see the repeated "you know," vv. 1, 3, 5) about Paul's and his companions' "entry" among them. The reminder in this case has to do with both *whence* and *how* they came to Thessalonica: that after having been abused and insulted in Philippi, they nonetheless took courage to share the gospel with the Thessalonians, even though that too was accompanied by struggle. The heart of this first section is dominated by two sets of "not/but" contrasts (vv. 3-4 and 5-7), in which each of the "not" parts of the contrast is expressed as a triplet, and where the "but" that follows expresses its radical opposite. On the "not" side Paul picks up language of what apparently was a common *topos* (form of speech) used by the Greek philosophers, in which they compared the true philosopher (oneself) with those who flatter others for gain or to get a following. This phenomenon in turn helps to explain the difficult — and rapid — change of images in verses 7 and 8.

Here, then, is the heart of this section, pared down to it barest elements:

> Our appeal was *not* based on error *nor* on impure motives *nor* on trickery;
> *but* as those approved by God we speak *not* as people-pleasers *but* before God
> For we did *not* use flattery *nor* wear masks to cover greed *nor* seek praise from human beings, *but* we were "innocents" [like babes] among you

Paul's language for the "not" side of these contrasts has much in common with a recognized form of "defense" used by some of the Cynic philosophers, in which the "defense" is a formal matter only, not a matter of reality. It has thus become popular to read Paul in light of these philosophers, suggesting that in his "borrowing" from such a *topos*, he is not really "defending" himself, but is simply setting forth his ministry in similar fashion in an exemplary manner, as a model for the Thessalonians to follow.[162] But this view seems to draw the wrong conclusion from Paul's use of this language.[163] If the philosophers were not in a real battle, Paul definitely was, for in this case the life of the believing community in Thessalonica is at stake. Thus we will better understand Paul if we see him as indeed using language from the philosophers; but as with so much else, he is here adapting it to express his concerns in a very real historical situation, where some from the pagan population were using Paul's "escaping town" so quickly as fodder against the believing community. Hence the

emphasis throughout is simultaneously on the truthfulness of the message and the integrity of the messenger. In this case these two concerns are inextricably intertwined.

1 The explanatory "for" at the beginning of this sentence indicates that it has close ties with what has preceded, which is further substantiated by Paul's picking up the word "visit" *(eisodon)*[164] from 1:9. There he was concerned primarily with the results of his "visit" in terms of *the Thessalonians*' "turning from idols to serve the living and true God," with emphasis on how well known this was throughout the Grecian provinces. Here he is concerned to remind them similarly about the nature of *his own* dimension of that "visit," that it was "not without results."[165] In so doing he returns to what he had said in 1:5 ("even as you know how we lived among you for your sake"), thus beginning a long apologetic regarding what manner of men the three of them had been during their stay in Thessalonica.

At the same time, Paul repeats the vocative "brothers and sisters" first used in 1:4 above (q.v.), which will be picked up again even more significantly in verse 9 in the present narrative. The reason for noting it again here is that it comes at the beginning of a long "defense" of the ministry of the apostolic trio when they first visited Thessalonica, throughout which Paul will use a series of family metaphors that is unique to the entire Pauline corpus.

The sentence begins with an emphatic "you yourselves[166] know," picking up the "as you know" from verse 5 and launching a series of no fewer than six such reminders in verses 1-12.[167] Such an emphatic positioning of himself with regard to his founding visit seems especially to play the lie to the suggestion that this passage functions as a piece of epideictic rhetoric. Paul is simply urging them to recall the way things were at the beginning for their own sakes — and at the same time to counteract apparent slanders against himself which are being used as part of the campaign against these new believers. So just as Paul "knows their election" (v. 4), so the Thessalonian believers "know" that the apostle's "visit" had good results — they themselves.

Thus he begins this *apologia* by reminding them again that his coming to them was "not in vain" (literally, not empty or void). This is the first of several such moments in Paul's letters where this language occurs, often with the verb "laboring" or "running" in vain,[168] in which instances he is almost certainly echoing language from the Septuagint of Isaiah 65:23.[169] If so, and there is every good reason to think so,[170] then Paul has from the beginning thought of his missionary activity in terms of this eschatological "promise" from God. His point with this litotes, of course, is to remind them of their own life-changing

response to “God’s good news” (v. 11).

2 What Paul now sets in contrast to his visit being “not in vain” is, first, *how* he and his companions came to them (having “previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi”). Here we have a piece of evidence that independently corroborates the basic elements of the account in Acts 16, but without details. At the same time, our knowledge of Luke’s narrative gives us some insight into Paul’s own use of “suffering” language, since in this case it meant for a Roman citizen to have been treated outrageously in Philippi by his having been flogged and imprisoned without trial.

Thus, repeating the “even as you know,” Paul reminds them that when he and his companions arrived in Thessalonica, it was under the less-than-auspicious circumstance of having been “invited” to leave a Roman colony at the eastern end of the Macedonian plain. Now they had come to Thessalonica, another city that had been especially favored by the first Romam emperor, and news of their “misadventure” in Philippi was sure to have followed them. Indeed, it is very likely that Paul himself had so informed them. In any case, news of his and Silas’s previous suffering, including having been treated in an insolent, spiteful manner[171] in Philippi, had become known to those who were to make up the Thessalonian community of faith.

But Paul was a follower of the crucified One and was not about to let mistreatment in one place keep him from telling people about Christ in another. So the main clause in his now long sentence puts it all into perspective, by way of reminder. Despite what had happened in Philippi, Paul and his companions “dared”[172] — with the help of “our” God — to speak[173] about “God’s gospel” to you.

The striking, and unnecessary, repetition of “God” in this sentence needs to be noted. First, the emphasis is on God’s being “*our* God,” not meaning that we possess him, but that we are his servants and thus his messengers, as one in an earlier time would identify himself as “the king’s messenger.” Because we are God’s messengers, Paul reminds them, we took boldness in his name to “speak” forth God’s “good news” to you, where Paul’s way of putting it here emphasizes not the *nature* of the presentation but of the veracity of its content.

Second, the gospel which was mentioned in 1:5 as “our gospel,” meaning the gospel we have been commissioned to proclaim, is throughout the present narrative called “*God’s* gospel” (vv. 2, 8, 9), meaning the good news that has its origins in the living and true God.[174] Later in the narrative (3:2) Paul will call it by its more common designation “the gospel of Christ,” which in that case is an objective genitive, meaning “the gospel that is all about Christ, and what he has

done." But throughout the present section (2:1- 12) the emphasis is on the fact that Paul and his companions were genuine representatives for "the living and true God"[175] to whom the Thessalonians had turned in rejecting their lifeless idols (1:9-10).

Finally, as though reluctant to let go of the thread with which the clause began, Paul reminds the Thessalonians once more at the end that he (and Silas, at least) did this preaching "in the face of strong opposition."[176] The metaphor lying behind this word suggests a great struggle on the part of Paul and his companions[177] in their preaching Christ in Thessalonica. He most likely returns to this theme in this way because of what the Thessalonians themselves are now experiencing from the same people. Thus Paul's ultimate point with this opening sentence seems to be: Whatever your opponents might be saying about us, you know better from your personal experience of us in your midst, as you also know from your own experience of the gospel (1:5-6).

3 With a second explanatory "for," and picking up on the preceding final phrase ("in the context of a great struggle"), Paul sets out to remind the Thessalonians of what his "appeal"[178] was *not* like, in both form and content, with emphasis on its character. The reminder is expressed with a nominal sentence,[179] whose emphasis, expressed negatively, is on its source, its motive, and its manner.

First, and using language common to the philosophers,[180] Paul presents his ministry as not having its source in "error" or mere "delusion."[181] Expressed positively, the emphasis lies on the *truth*fulness of the gospel, language Paul uses elsewhere when defending the gospel against his detractors. [182] Whatever else, the gospel is God's good news and therefore cannot have its source in error.

Second, his preaching was not based on "impure motives." In all of its other occurrences in Paul's letters this word refers to "sexual uncleanness,"[183] and it is so understood here by some commentators,[184] thus suggesting that the apostolic band was to be distinguished from the sensuality associated with some pagan religions. But three things seem to militate against that sense in this case: *(a)* it is not used with sexual overtones by the philosophers, whom Paul seems to be echoing here;[185] *(b)* such an understanding does not fit well between "error" and "trickery"; and *(c)* when Paul elaborates on these motives in what immediately follows, sexual immorality is not part of the picture. But if "impure motive" is what Paul is referring to, at issue still is "Of what kind?" which is best understood in light of the charge of "greed" in verses 5 and 6. That is, Paul's proclamation of Christ as savior did not have lying behind it a hidden factor of

"greed," hoping to make money off those who, out of gratitude, had responded positively to Paul's preaching — a failure that has had far too many living examples in the history of the church, especially in late-twentieth, early-twenty-first-century North America.

Third, Paul's preaching was not a concealed attempt to "trick you" into believing. With this phrase Paul entertains a new idea, referring to the "manner" of his preaching rather than his "motive." According to the philosophers, "trickery" was a common feature of those whose motives were "impure." [186] Significantly, this is the feature that will be refuted in particular in verses 5-7. Most likely this charge would have been made in light of the miraculous events that accompanied Paul's preaching, referred to in 1:5. But in Paul's case there was a huge difference; the "miraculous" events happened to the Thessalonians themselves, not in some extraordinary phenomena external to them. This also accounts for the "you know" that begins in 1:5 and carries through this present section in such a thoroughgoing way. Their own *experience* of the Holy Spirit's power serves as Paul's primary evidence against these various charges.

4 Given the nature of the charges in the "not" part of this sentence, the "but" clause comes as something of a surprise. That is, given the heavy emphasis on the alleged lack of truth and sincerity found in the charges, one might have expected some direct evidence to the contrary. But what Paul does rather is to turn his case over to God. So with a comparative ("just as . . . so also") clause, he sets forth his ministry in terms of *God's* approval of it, and thus not in need of human approval. The key word, "testing" (so as to "approve" something), occurs at the beginning and end of the clause, and in each case "God" is the (grammatical) subject.[187] That Paul and his companions have been "tested" by God so as to be "approved by God" is first of all evidenced by their being "entrusted with the gospel." And "just as" this is the case, "thus we speak."

The content of their speaking takes the form of another "not/but" contrast. The negation in this case is what takes the clause back to where the sentence began, to the three negatives that have just preceded. Since they have been "tested and thus approved by God," Paul therefore contends that his and his companions' public speech was not uttered "as trying to please people." Although the verb itself ("to please") occurs only in the first half of this clause (the "not" side), it is assumed in the immediately following reference to God, but with a slightly nuanced meaning. That is, on the negative side there is something wrong in the very doing of it ("trying to please *people*"), where the implication is that of "fawning" over someone to gain their approval (cf. Gal 1:10).[188] But "pleasing God," meaning to live in such a way as to bring pleasure to God, is always the

proper goal for the believer. Thus in 4:1 Paul urges the Thessalonians to live in a way that "pleases" God, while in 2:15 some are condemned for activity that was *not* pleasing to God.

Why Paul can express such confidence in his pleasing God turns out to be something that cannot be seen by others, and carries more significance for that very reason. We know, Paul contends, that our "speech" is pleasing to God because, and now using language from Jeremiah 11:20, God is the one who alone "tests our hearts."[189] For Paul this is the ultimate examination, because the all-seeing, all-knowing God has put Paul and his companions to the test, as it were, and have done so in the place that counts — their hearts — and they therefore have God's approval. Such a statement, of course, would fall on deaf ears in his detractors, the Thessalonian believers' enemies, but it is not intended for the detractors but for the believers themselves. And thus, without saying as much, the clear implication is that the Thessalonians themselves serve as the primary evidence that Paul and his companions have been "approved by God."

5 With a third explanatory "for"[190] Paul now takes the more general statements about his ministry in verses 3 and 4 and applies them specifically to the Thessalonian situation, calling on both the Thessalonians and God as witnesses. Together with the negatives in verses 6 and 7a, these two serve as the second threefold negation regarding Paul's ministry, in terms of what it was *not* like. At the same time these first two (v. 5) serve as a doublet. Thus regarding form, the second phrase repeats the first, except for the verb and the adverb "once" (or "at any time"[191]), which serve for both clauses. Moreover, both phrases are followed by a parenthetical verification of their trustworthiness. Thus, put more "literally" than the TNIV, Paul says:

> At no time were we ever [present among you][192] with a word of flattery, as you yourselves know, nor with a cover-up of greed, as God is our witness.

Both of the phrases aim at a similar pretext that was common among the itinerant charlatans. "Flattery"[193] has to do with the speaker's fawning on his hearers, "buttering them up" as it were, in order to gain a hearing. This is the only New Testament occurrence of the Greek word used here, but it was well known in Greek antiquity. Indeed, according to Dio Chrysostom, it was one of the primary means of an itinerant's personal gain.[194] But all the time such flattery was simply "a mask to cover up greed." This is the element that will be addressed again in verse 9, where Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers that instead of this kind of cozying up to people in order to milk them of their money,

he and his companions "worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you." Indeed, it is arguable that flattery is always a cover-up for some ulterior motive; in this case the accusation has been that Paul was using these believers in order to get personal gain from them.

Finally, we should note how well the two parenthetical phrases ("as you yourselves know/as God is our witness") fit the situation. "Flattery" can be easily detected by the vigilant; but only the God who alone can test hearts knows whether greed is the real motive.

6-7a With yet another negative ("nor"), but with a slight change in grammar, Paul adds a third disclaimer to the verb in verse 5. Not only were neither flattery nor greed to be associated with his and his companions' ministry in Thessalonica, but neither were they "seeking praise[195] from any human being." That is, they were not trying to gain *human* adulation in any shape or form. In a slightly different way, this repeats the phrase "not as people-pleasers" from verse 4. Thus the denials have moved from greed, to the equally dangerous "*seeking* praise and honor" from others. Adulation, after all, has its own way of beguiling the person receiving it, so much so that one soon begins to "seek" it. So sensitive is Paul to this commonplace failing that he adds the double negation: neither from you, nor from others. Who the "others" might refer to in this phrase cannot be known, but very likely it refers to fellow believers in other settings, be it Philippi or Jerusalem.

Even though Paul's present sentence has not ended, with this final "neither/nor" his long disclaimers that began in verse 3 come to an abrupt end. He does this with a final participial clause, which can only be concessive in relationship to the main verb "lived" in verse 5 — "even though," he points out, "as Christ's apostles[196] we could have asserted our prerogatives." At least that seems to be a fair representation in English of Paul's difficult Greek clause, which reads (literally): "although as Christ's apostles we could have been 'with weight.'" As with the colloquial English idiom "throw one's weight around," Paul and Silas could have made a point of their apostolic authority. But they chose not to do so, precisely so that they could not be wrongly accused of coming among the Thessalonians in the manner negated in the preceding two sentences. Thus, in this somewhat oblique way, Paul finally asserts his apostolic authority[197] — something he did not include even in the salutation — only to make the point that he did not use it.

It should also be noted that this is the first appearance of the word "apostle"

> in the New Testament, and while it may be moot as to whether it also includes Timothy in this case,[198] there can be little question that the plural intentionally includes Silas. The evidence from Paul's letters is that he knew nothing about "the Twelve Apostles" as a title on its own. Elsewhere he refers to "the Twelve" as being included, but not exclusively so, among those designated as "apostles" (1 Cor 15:5, 7-8). Thus he mentions the appearance of Christ to "the Twelve" (v. 5, an obvious title, since in fact they were only eleven), and then goes on to speak of an appearance "to James [and] then to all the apostles" (v. 7), in which the grammar seems intentionally to include James. In verse 8 he then includes himself as an "apostle" who had been "untimely born," but whose apostleship was legitimized by the fact that "I saw the [risen] Lord" (9:1).

Although in some other places Paul also uses the word "apostle" in its nontechnical sense (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25), his own apparent criteria for apostleship as a technical term are twofold: having seen the risen Lord, and having been "commissioned" by him (1 Cor 9:1). The net result is that Paul uses the designation to refer to several people other than the Twelve and himself.[199] But here he seems clearly to intend to refer to his own (and perhaps Silas's with him) apostolic authority, which he deliberately chose not to use, either when with them or now in this letter.

7b With that point having been made (they were apostles who refused to "throw their weight around"), Paul now concludes his sentence with imagery that is so unexpected that it has had no end of being tampered with, first by some fifth-century scribes and then by modern scholars, so that Paul's own sentence and wording have been reworked to make it more accommodating to later, including modern, tastes. The issue is primarily a textual one, whether Paul wrote *ēpioi* ("gentle") or *nēpioi* ("infants"). The textually preferred reading ("infants") has generally been dismissed as too jarring a metaphor for the context. But one wonders how this is so, since it is followed immediately by an equally astounding — and abrupt — metaphor, "nursing mother."

On the one hand, since the latter is (apparently) generally deemed to be less jarring, scholars have had little trouble with moving from the metaphor to its intent, that Paul and his companions showed the same kind of loving care toward the Thessalonians that a nursing mother does to her child. Nonetheless, it is in fact a remarkable analogy, unlike anything else in the Pauline corpus, and one wonders why scholars have not been jarred by it, especially since Paul himself is quite ready in verse 11 to change to the more comfortable "father/child" analogy.

On the other hand, the "nursing mother" metaphor makes perfectly good sense contextually, since Paul has just used the "infants" metaphor, whose point in context emphasizes the total *innocence* of the itinerant missionaries with regard to all that has been suggested about them.[200] But not all see it this way, and since the textual matter requires a considerable discussion in its own right, we note first the grammatical differences this textual choice involves.

If Paul in fact wrote "gentle," as most English translations and commentators prefer,[201] then the first part of verse 7 must conclude with the preceding clause, "even though as Christ's apostles, we could have asserted our prerogatives," and the new sentence then begins with a "but." Although there is no difficulty with beginning a sentence with "but," the problem in this case is that it creates an anomaly in the present argumentation. Our verse 5 is the third in a series of sentences (long sentences, to be sure) which have a "not/ but" contrast as their primary feature. In the first instance (vv. 1-2) the "not" clause is very brief ("[our coming] was not empty"). In the second instance (vv. 3-4) Paul begins with three "not" phrases, followed by its logical "but" contrast, which takes the form of a "just as/so" comparison. Similarly, in this third sentence (vv. 5-7a), he begins again with a threefold "neither/nor" and concludes with a striking "but" contrast. Thus Paul's three sentences are structured as follows:

1. Vv. 1-2 You know our visit — *not* empty was it, *but* we were emboldened by God to speak to you.
2. Vv. 3-4 For our appeal was *not* based on error, *nor* on impure motives, *nor* with guile, *but as* those approved by God, *thus* we speak.
3. Vv. 5-7b For we came *not* with flattery, *nor* with a mask of greed, *nor* by seeking human praise, *but* we became "infants/little children" in your midst.

This is then followed by another (typical) Pauline sentence that begins with a "as/thus(so)" contrast and concludes with another "not only/but also" clause. Thus:

4. Vv. 7c-8 *As* a nursing mother cares for her children *so* with deep longing we gladly shared with you *not only* God's gospel *but also* our very lives *because* you had become so beloved to us

Apart from the unusual, but explicable, combination of *hōs ean . . . houtōs* ("as though . . . so"), everything about this arrangement, it must be noted, is thoroughly Pauline. What has therefore caused so many scholars to abandon

these clear structures for the secondary reading in verse 7b is the apparently abrupt nature of the metaphor "babes/young children" in that clause. But in doing so, they must also burden Paul with a new sentence that has three consecutive ungrammatical clauses (at least ungrammatical for Paul): one (vv. 6-7a) that has no conclusion;[202] a second (v. 7b) that starts with a "but" and then concludes by breaking up Paul's "as if/thus" clause by dropping the "thus" clause, while turning Paul's "as though" into a simple comparative "as"; and a third clause (v. 8) that begins with a "thus," which must now become an (ungrammatical for Paul) intensive adverb ("so much") rather than the natural correlative ("thus") to the preceding "just as." Thus they end up with a structural and syntactical arrangement to Paul's sentences that looks like this (cf. NRSV, NASB, NIV, ESV):

> 6 Nor did we seek praise from mortals, neither from you nor from others,
> 7 even though, as apostles of Christ, we might have made our weight felt. *But* we were gentle among you,
> 8 *like* a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. *So* deeply do we care for you that we were willing etc.

The difficulty with this arrangement is that the three italicized words are now taken out of Paul's sequence (but. . . . Just as . . . so), and each is forced to have an unusual meaning. Thus the translators of the NRSV, and the others that go this route, have several grammatical difficulties to overcome. First, Paul's "but" *(alla)* is made to *begin* a sentence and to stand in contrast to the immediately preceding metaphor ("our weight felt," which was turned into "made demands on you"), rather than to stand in contrast to the threefold negatives in verses 5 and 6. Second, his "as if " *(hōs ean)* is turned into a "like," a meaning for this compound found nowhere else in Greek literature, let alone the New Testament;[203] and, third, his correlative "so" *(houtōs)* is turned into an intensive adverb ("so greatly"), which is another grammatical anomaly in the New Testament.[204]

However, since Paul's grammar makes perfectly good sense if the reading in the United Bible Societies/Nestle-Aland Greek text is considered as original, this suggests that the real issue with this passage is the resolution of the textual issue pointed out in note 8 above. And while it is true that a good *contextual* case can be made for "gentle," there are in fact no purely *textual* arguments that favor this reading. Indeed, the following textual considerations altogether favor

"infants/young children"[205] as the Pauline original.[206]

1. The most common text-critical "reason" for choosing "gentle" suggests that *nēpioi* ("infants") is the result of common dittography, wherein a scribe (or scribes) repeated the final *nu* of the immediately preceding verb.[207] In fact, however, this is no textual *argument* at all, but is rather an *explanation* as to how *nēpioi* might have arisen if one makes the prior assumption that *ēpioi* ("gentle") is the original reading. In such a case, however, the textual choice is made on the prior grounds of what Paul is most likely to have written in context, not on *textual* grounds per se. After all, if one begins with the opposite prior assumption, that *nēpioi* is original, then one can just as easily argue that *ēpioi* came about as the result of haplography, since omissions of letters in such cases occur just as frequently as dittography and there is no scribal predilection toward one or the other. The point is that the possibility of dittography or haplography is open-ended. Either may have happened, and each can be easily explained; but neither of these is an *argument* for one reading or the other as original.

   The result is that those (the decided majority) who favor "gentle" do so altogether on internal grounds and are quite dismissive of the textual evidence itself. Thus Malherbe (145) puts it plainly: "The majority of interpreters and translations have read *ēpioi . . . primarily on the grounds that* nēpioi *would be too incongruous*" (italics mine). In other words, since everything hinges on not being able to "make sense" of the noun, one settles for the adjective. But that is scarcely the way to resolve *textual* questions, especially when very good reasons can be shown to account for the reading that on every account is the textually superior one.

   The textual question, therefore, must be answered on other grounds. And at this point the issues are two — whether the interchange was accidental or intentional — and both of these favor "infants." That is, *(a)* if the add/omit *nu* were *accidental,* then one should surely opt for *nēpioi* on the basis of its superior attestation (see next paragraph); *(b)* likewise if the add/omit were *intentional,* then one should also opt for *nēpioi* on the twin grounds that the "more difficult" reading is to be preferred as the original and that that reading which best explains the origin of the other is most likely the original. A few more words about each of these matters.
2. The external evidence is decisively in favor of *nēpioi,* being supported by

the earliest evidence in the West (all the Old Latin) and in the East (P65), as well as by the predominance of what is most often considered the best evidence (in this case, all but Codex A of the Egyptian witnesses). One would seem to need especially strong transcriptional arguments to overrule this combination of evidence. In fact, the evidence for *ēpioi* is so much weaker than for *nēpioi* that under ordinary circumstances no living scholar would accept the former reading as original, which is what makes the note in the NRSV so misleading: "Other ancient authorities read *infants*." That note levels the ground on a textual decision that is decidedly not level, not even close.

What is seldom noted, however, is a further significant historical factor: Since all the known early evidence — empire-wide — attests *nēpioi*, those who favor *ēpioi* need to offer good *historical* reasons as to how the (accidental) corruption of adding the *nu* happened so early (and so often) so that it came to be the only text known for several centuries, while the "original" reading escaped all the known early evidence only to emerge much later in the monolithic, but patently secondary, evidence of the Byzantine tradition. This is not thereby to deny that such could have happened; but one wonders why only the "accident" is universally known in the first four Christian centuries.[209] On this matter, I want to "plead the cause of history, and in the name of history to plead the cause of the documents."[210]

3. The same holds true with regard to the issues of transcriptional probabilities (having to do with scribal proclivities). It turns out, in fact, that the *only* thing that favors *ēpioi* is internal evidence, predicated on what scholars deem Paul most likely to have written.[211] But the arguments raised in favor of *ēpioi* and against *nēpioi* on transcriptional grounds actually favor *nēpioi* only. That is, it was to alleviate the very difficulty that present-day scholars have with *nēpioi*, as malapropos to the argument, that some (not very early) scribes changed it to read *ēpioi*. This is further corroborated by the fact that several manuscripts have been "corrected" in this case, and that the direction of correction in every case but one (the tenth-c. Codex 326) is away from *nēpioi* in favor of *ēpioi*. Such "corrections" are obviously intentional, suggesting that most of the later corruptions to this text also moved *intentionally* in this direction (thus it is altogether unlikely to be the result of pure accident). What this means, then, is that all the evidence that is purely transcriptional favors the reading "infants."

4. When one turns from the transcriptional issue to the question of Pauline usage, here again the evidence favors “infants.” It should be noted that *ēpioi* is found elsewhere in the New Testament only in 2 Timothy 2:24,[212] whereas *nēpioi* occurs as a somewhat frequent metaphor in Paul. This latter fact has sometimes been used to condemn “infants” here, on the grounds that this metaphor is always pejorative in Paul. But such a comment is purely prejudicial, and fails to come to terms with Paul’s own fluid use of metaphors. After all, in 1 Corinthians alone he uses it pejoratively in 3:1-2, in a neutral sense in 13:11, and positively in 14:20.

   While this may seem like an abrupt change of metaphors,[214] it is so primarily if one thinks the “nurse” clause is syntactically related to the “infants” clause. But seen as separate sentences, they can easily be explained as in keeping with similar sudden shifts of metaphor elsewhere in Paul, where one metaphor triggers another in the apostle’s mind, and thus are related primarily by “catchword” and not by consistency in application.

   When we add the structural matters with which this discussion began, we may conclude with a very high degree of certainty that Paul himself wrote “infants,” and later scribes, who had the same difficulty with the metaphor as more modern interpreters, simply removed the offending letter *(nu)* and created a text much more to their liking.

In light of the high degree of certainty one may have regarding the Greek text behind the TNIV, this means that Paul is here making his case by using the strongest kind of metaphor to declare his and his companions’ “innocence” of the kinds of deceptions of which they apparently have been accused. When it comes to our relationship with you, Paul expostulates, even though our position as apostles gave us the right to do so, we refused to throw our weight around. Rather, in terms of attitude, we were as innocent as infants.[215]

With this shift of images Paul brings closure to the “not” side of this reminder of his and his companions’ ministry in Thessalonica. One can only speculate as to the reasons for all this. But for church leaders of a later time, this passage could serve as a helpful “checklist” for ongoing spiritual inventory. Although this might be true for all who profess Christ, it is especially so for those who serve Christ in more conspicuous roles. Note especially the “not’s,” which dominate the first half of this passage: error, impure motive, trickery, people-pleaser, flattery, greed, and human praise. Unfortunately these are not limited to the first

century. Paul's goal, on the other hand, is to be "approved by God" and thus a "God-pleaser."

2. What Paul WAS like among the Thessalonians (2:7c-12)

> *Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, 8 so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become*[216] *so dear to us. 9 Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we*[217] *worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.*[218] *10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. 11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls*[219] *you into his kingdom and glory.*

The mention of the apostles' conduct as being the opposite of other itinerants, so much so that they were among them as pure "innocents," little children as it were, touches off a series of metaphors about their ministry that has tended to be very difficult for some readers to negotiate, as Paul moves from "little children" to "nursing mother" to "father." Although this is indeed a rapid shift of metaphors, it is in fact the familial nature of these metaphors that makes sense of them as a package, where the first, "infants," immediately triggers the second, "nursing mother," which finally evolves into "father," the more normal one for Paul. The present section as a whole, therefore, is held together by this series of metaphors.

At the same time, and in keeping with what has preceded, Paul's primary reason for this "defense" of his ministry is to remind the Thessalonian believers of how utterly different reality was — when he and Silas and Timothy were present — from the vacuous charges that since then had been brought against the apostles. His ultimate concern is therefore to give expression to his genuine care for his friends, since absence from them without word of any kind has been a real burden for him, as 3:1-5 makes clear.

Thus, following the shift of metaphors in verse 8 to a nursing mother, where Paul's concern for his friends has been given voice, the rest of the section applies, and thus brings closure to, the argument that began in verse 1. The passage therefore concludes with three final reminders. In verse 9 they are invited to remember the twofold nature of "our toil and hardship" as Paul and his companions worked among them. In verse 10 they are called upon to bear witness themselves to the apostles' exemplary conduct while among them. Verses 11-12 then conclude the whole section by summarizing the argument as to his personal conduct while among them and thus by reminding them that the reason for his personal concern was for their own sakes: that they walk worthy of their conversion in the present and thereby be participants at the consummation.

7b-8 With a sudden change of metaphors that appears to have been triggered by the preceding "infant = innocent" comparison,[220] Paul also now shifts altogether the emphasis of this long "defense." Following the sentences that negate the charges being brought against him and his co-workers (vv. 3- 4, 5-7a), he now begins a series of positive reminders of the way things actually were when they were together in Thessalonica. The immediate concerns are all packaged in the present sentence, which also causes it to become somewhat convoluted. In contrast to the charges brought against them, the apostolic band not only did not "rip the believers off," as it were, but rather, he affirms, "we took delight in sharing our very lives with you, as we also shared with you God's gospel." But that delight now finds expression with a new "family of God" metaphor, expressed in terms of caring for them just as would a "nursing mother" for her own children.

The complexity of the sentence emerges because at the end Paul chooses to repeat in plain Greek what he began by way of metaphor. Thus the sentence is "enclosed" by this repetition, which, along with its singular emphasis (italicized below), may be displayed thus:

> Just *as a nursing mother cares* for her own children, so, in our longing for you, *we were pleased to share with you* not only God's gospel, but also *our very lives*, because *so beloved to us* you had become.

It is this central reality, "our sharing our very lives with you," that leads to the explanatory reminder in verse 9, having to do with their twofold "toil" of *(a)* working night and day so as not to be a burden to them, while *(b)* they proclaimed God's gospel to them.

Thus Paul begins this new (comparative) sentence by likening his and his

companions' relationship to the believers in Thessalonica to that of a nursing mother.[221] Again, as with the former metaphor, one must take Paul for his intent with the metaphor, and not press the details or particulars.[222] At issue is a continuing reminder by way of contrast between what the opposition has been suggesting about Paul and the reality that the Thessalonians themselves know. Rather than using these new believers for their own selfish ends, the apostolic band had only the good of the believers themselves in view when they were in Thessalonica. Paul's emphasis with the metaphor is on a nursing mother's "own"[223] children, which puts his relationship to the Thessalonians on a different plane altogether from that of the charlatans they have been accused of being. As with the immediately preceding metaphor (innocent little ones), Paul is pointing out the absurdity of the accusations against him by reminding the believers of the way things really were: infant-like in terms of motive; mother-like in terms of caring.

In the apodosis of his comparative sentence (the "thus/so" clause, v. 8), Paul begins with a participle that keeps the metaphor intact, but he then immediately spells out in plain Greek how that worked out in the reality of their earlier (on-site) relationship. It was because we had a nursing mother's kind of deep yearning[224] for you, he notes, that "we were delighted[225] to share"[226] God's gospel with you. The emphasis in Paul's sentence, however, lies finally with the "not only/but also" contrast that functions as the twofold object of the infinitive "to share." And this is now especially in keeping with the shift in emphasis that has taken place with this sentence. In the previous paragraph the emphasis lay with the apostles' *conduct,* as they "shared God's good news with you." Here the emphasis lies with "but our [very] *lives*[227] as well."[228] In the end it is this personal dimension of his relationship with the Thessalonians that separates him so thoroughly from the charlatans, who cared nothing for their hearers as people.

The ultimate cause of such a yearning — in terms of the present sentence — comes at the end: "because you had become our[229] beloved ones." This final clause thus pulls together both the metaphor with which the sentence begins and the historical reality that follows. The reason the missionary trio could not have been anything like what their detractors are now saying is that the apostolic band "loved them" in the way that a nursing mother loves her own children. Such love completely disallows the kind of dissimulation on the part of Paul and his companions that the Thessalonians' enemies are advocating.

9 Paul now follows the affirmations of the preceding sentence, and its implicit denials, with yet another sentence that begins with an explanatory "for."[230] What he elaborates in this case takes the Thessalonians back to the charges against him

implied in verses 5 and 6, especially the charge of "using flattery as a mask for greed." All he need do now is call on their memory. The main clause, which comes at the end, essentially repeats what was just said in verse 8: "We preached[231] God's gospel to you."[232] But that is preceded by the really important matter, which boils down to a thoroughgoing denial, by way of direct evidence, that he preached Christ to them for the sake of personal gain (thus countering the charge of "greed" [v. 5]). Whatever else, he was not in it for the money.

What the Thessalonian believers are now to recall are two matters: the hardship itself and the "laboring night and day."[233] Paul begins with the hardship, [234] which finds expression in the doublet, "toil and hardship."[235] The first of these is used at times as a near synonym for the regular word for "work," where the stress is on the "toiling" dimension of such work;[236] it has already been so used in the thanksgiving regarding the Thessalonians themselves. The second word[237] puts all the emphasis on the exertion and hardship dimension of such labor.

When Paul elaborates on this opening sentence with a purpose clause, it turns out that in this instance he is not referring directly to his "labor in the gospel," but to manual labor as such, which we discover in Acts 18:3 was that of tentmaker. Indeed, according to that account Paul was once again plying his trade in Corinth, at about the time the present letter would have been written. What becomes clear in the sentence is that Paul and his companions were not sustained by the largesse of those to whom they ministered, but in part by way of his (at least)[238] manual labor. As it turns out, this necessity also proved to be beneficial in another way, since Paul will appeal to his "working with his own hands" as in part due to necessity, but also in part because it afforded him opportunity "to provide them with an example" (2 Thess 3:9). In a much later letter (Phil 4:13-19) we learn further that he and his companions were also sustained in Thessalonica by recurring gifts from the believers in Philippi, with whom he had entered into a friendship relationship apparently unique among his congregations.[239]

Although we can never know for certain, it seems altogether likely that when Paul, Silas, and Timothy came to Thessalonica, they sensed the need not to live off the largesse of these new believers. Indeed, he expresses that need in terms of concern for them: "in order not to be a burden to anyone." [240] And while not stated as such, the whole passage (2:1-12) indicates that Paul had been led by the Spirit in that decision, since otherwise their accepting free "room and board" could have been used against them.[241] Now, at the end of the present argument,

Paul reminds the Thessalonians themselves of this reality — with emphasis on the toilsome nature of his everyday work that had freed him up to "proclaim God's gospel to you."

That Paul should do so is probably at the same time a reflection of his rabbinic training, since, according to *Aboth* 2:2, "Rabban Gamaliel, the Son of R. Judah the Patriarch, says: 'Fitting is learning in Torah along with a craft, for the labor put into the two of them makes one forget sin. And all learning of Torah that is not joined with labor is destined to be null and cause sin."[242] The present passage bears witness to Paul's own adherence to this kind of rabbinic tradition, in which he had been schooled.

10 Paul concludes this sustained *apologia* for his conduct while in Thessalonica with a final, very complex sentence that includes our verses 10 to 12. The nature of the appeal itself, including its convoluted expression, offers evidence that Paul is in a real "life and death" situation regarding the Thessalonians themselves and not simply using a standard "form" of philosophical talk. The sentence, which is noteworthy in part because it lacks the usual connector with which most Greek sentences begin,[243] comes in two clear parts, with its only verb appearing at the end of this first clause (v. 10). And since that verb does double duty (for this first clause and the second [vv. 11-12]),[244] we will look at them as two sentences, which is the way almost all English translations also handle the difficulty. In both clauses, it should be noted, Paul once again calls on the believers themselves to remember how things were, first (v. 10) with regard to his and his companions' *character* in terms of their relationships with the Thessalonians, and second (vv. 11-12), shifting to paternal imagery, with regard to his *conduct* toward them (appealing, consoling, imploring). And all of this has the single aim of the Thessalonian believers' walking worthy of the God who called them unto himself.

This first clause begins by continuing the "recall for yourselves" motif found throughout the passage. This time, however, he uses the language of the court. Needing two or more witnesses, Paul calls on God to join the Thessalonians in bearing such witness as to his exemplary character while in Thessalonica.[245] After all, he has called on God throughout the present narrative. When in Thessalonica he took courage "in God," whose "good news" he preached (v. 2); he was thus approved by God, who tests the hearts and whom alone Paul is aiming to please (v. 4). All of this is what is now being picked up again at the end of the narrative.

With three adverbs (which tend to work better as adjectives in English[246]), Paul once more puts all the emphasis on his observable behavior. The first word

(hosiōs), which appears only here in the New Testament, puts the emphasis on living in a way that is pleasing to God, thus picking up on God as his witness.[247] The second word *(dikaiōs)* puts the emphasis on living asyndeton here "has a rhetorical effect." This may also explain in part why the NIV translators chose to start a new paragraph here. in a way that is upright before others. At this point Paul is reflecting language about personal integrity that is common to the ancient world, both Greek and Jewish. Thus Josephus speaks of Samuel as a man who "governed the nation *hosiōs kai dikaiōs* (in a holy and just way),"[248] while much earlier Plato had referred to the value of a person's living "out his days in *dikaiōs kai hosiōs* (justice and piety)."[249]

The third adverb *(amemptōs)* puts emphasis on observable behavior that is without fault, thus "blameless."[250] That the emphasis is still on observable conduct is made clear in this instance by its recurrence in this letter (3:13[251] and 5:23) in contexts that refer to the behavior of the Thessalonian believers, but with orientation toward their being thus before God at the Parousia. In the present instance all the emphasis is on Paul's and his companions' conduct "toward[252] you who believe," meaning "in our relationship with you while present with you." This latter phrase, "you who believe,"[253] does not imply a different level of conduct toward unbelievers; rather, it is yet another moment in the passage where Paul reaffirms the Thessalonians in terms of their relationship to God. They are not simply those who "have believed," but are in fact, as he has learned from Timothy to his great relief (3:6-8), "those who continue to believe." But the present concern is with their memory of him when the apostolic band was there. So as at the beginning of the passage (v. 5), his appeal is to their own memory of the way things really were, despite the (apparent) barrage of misinformation to which they have been subjected by fellow townfolk in Thessalonica.

11-12 With one final "you know" Paul strikes the themes of the paragraph yet once more, but now with the double emphasis with which he began the thanksgiving in 1:4-5: his conduct in their midst, and their own conversion. But in contrast to the preceding sentence (v. 10), which emphasized his own personal behavior — and thus concluded the "apology" of the entire section — this time Paul directs all of the emphasis specifically toward them. His conduct while among them, he reassures them, was all for their sakes, especially with their eschatological salvation in view.

In thus reminding the Thessalonians of his relationship to them after their conversion, and with the immediately preceding "we were"[254] continuing as the verb which controls the whole, he now at the end gives content to what he would

have them here recall. Thus, he now reminds them, as he had also urged them while he was among them, to live in such a way as to realize the final eschatological goal. Thus the focus is twofold. First, he begins with the important matters upfront — with the Thessalonians themselves: "you know," he repeats for the fourth time, "how we were toward each one of you," which (remarkably) emphasizes the individual rather than the collective nature of his care. This is followed immediately by the comparative imagery, "as a father with *his own* children,"[255] where the emphasis in the pronoun lies with the personal dimension of the relationship.[256] Thus the pastoral care motif that was struck in verses 7 and 8 with the maternal metaphor is now changed into a paternal one. The essential difference between the two metaphors is in this case to be found in the three participles, which together describe what the ancients, both Greek and Roman, would have recognized as a father's duty, especially in the matter of the moral training of his children.[257]

For understandable reasons this is imagery to which Paul will return several times in letters to churches he had founded. Thus he thinks of a given community collectively in terms of a father with his "children," as in 1 Corinthians 4:14; 2 Corinthians 12:14, and Galatians 4:19. It is of interest that in each of these cases he is also pressing his apostolic authority on these two communities. In all other cases he uses the imagery to reflect his understanding of his relationship with Timothy,[258] with whom he obviously had developed a bonding that only this imagery could adequately reflect.

As with the compounding of the three adverbs in verse 10, the three participles in this sentence get their point across collectively rather than individually. That is, there is just enough semantic overlap between and among them that the final choice of an English equivalent is a matter of taste more than precision in meaning. The first verb[259] is by far the most frequent in his letters; the fact that it occurs most often in letters where he is appealing to the recipients (here, and 1 and 2 Corinthians)[260] suggests that in this case it leans toward "implore" or "appeal" (as in the NEB) rather than "exhort" (RSV, NASB, ESV) or "encourage" (TNIV). The second participle[261] occurs only here and in 5:14 in the entire corpus — although the two noun equivalents occur together in 1 Corinthians 14:3 as well, as the proper goal of true verbal Spirit gifting in the believing community. This latter passage, therefore, serves to verify that the point of such language is building people up, in this case by comforting them in times of difficulty,[262] all of which is in keeping with the "father and his own children" imagery with which the sentence began.

The third participle ("urging")[263] is found only here and in Galatians 5:3 and Ephesians 4:17 in Paul's letters, and only twice further in the New Testament (Acts 20:26; 26:22); it is also the word on which there is least precise agreement in the English translations.[264] In the two occurrences in Acts, as well as in Galatians 5:3, it carries its basic meaning of "testifying, bearing solemn witness" to something. This basic sense of the verb suggests that something like "solemnly implore" is the most likely sense in the present context.

As already noted, it is unlikely that the Thessalonians themselves would have thought through each of these words, since the strength of the appeal lies in its compounded emphasis as to what fathers do with their children to encourage them to take the right path. Paul's concern, however, lies less with what he does as a father than with the *goal* of such urging on his part, namely that they walk (= live, behave)[265] in a way worthy, not of their earthly "father" but of "the eternal God, who is calling you into his own kingdom and glory." That is, God is calling you to live under his rule now, so as to realize the fullness of that kingdom, including God's own glory, in the future.[266] And with that Paul once more strikes the eschatological note with which both the opening thanksgiving and the first part of the narrative concluded (1:3, 10), although in this instance his concern is with how they live now, in a way that is "worthy" of the God who calls them. One is not quite sure what to make of the present tense in the phrase "the God who calls you," since Paul ordinarily uses this verb in the aorist (past) tense when referring to people's conversion, as in 4:7 below and later in 2 Thessalonians 2:14. It probably has the same intent here, except that the present tense emphasizes the ongoing nature of that calling. In any case, it once more focuses on their present relationship with God rather than, as before, on what happened in the past when Paul was with them.[267]

Here is motive enough for perseverance — to live in such a way as to be "worthy of God." This kind of language in Paul places perseverance and Christian behavior in their ultimate context. Even though Paul serves as a surrogate "father" to them, his real concern is that they learn to live in such a way that they reflect God's own character, that they are worthy children of their heavenly Father.[268] This is not perfectionism but reality, since for Paul the goal of salvation is the restoration of Eden and the reshaping of God's people back into his own image, as that has been put on full display in the incarnation of his Son (Rom 8:29-30).[269] Thus the present emphasis is not on the future as such, but on their life in the present, life under God's present rule — with future glory as the ultimate goal of God's calling.

Implied, but not pursued — here or elsewhere in Paul — is the awful

possibility that those who fail to persevere will *not* attain the eschatological goal. This is neither a hidden threat nor pollyanish reassurance. It is spoken by one who knows the history of his own people well. And it is the note that will be struck again in a slightly different way at the end of next section of the narrative (2:19). It is not that Paul has doubts as to whether or not they will persevere, but that they, by the help of the Spirit, must indeed persevere so as to realize the final glory. And on this note his long *apologia* for his relationship to the Thessalonian believers comes to an end, although the story of their "in the meantime" relationship still needs to be given, which is what he picks up again in verse 17, after a brief word about how the Thessalonian believers have persevered to this point, despite their present suffering (vv. 13-16).

Although it lies beyond Paul's own reasons for recalling the integrity of his ministry while in Thessalonica, this passage has propaedeutic value for all times and seasons for those responsible for leadership in the church, whether pastor, elder, deacon, or teacher (whether seminary or Sunday school). What Paul recognizes clearly — and quite in contrast to many of the religious charlatans of his day — is that the connection between the *content* of the gospel and the *conduct* of those who preach/teach/confess it must be held closely together for the former to have integrity at all. Unfortunately the Elmer Gantrys of fiction have far too often existed in the real life of the church. The present passage would serve well as a regular (monthly? daily?) checklist for all who would be teachers/preachers of the gospel, not to mention for all the rest of God's people as well.

E. THE THANKSGIVING RENEWED (2:13)

> *13 And*[270] *we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which indeed is at work in you who believe.*

These words of renewed thanksgiving offer further evidence to support the analysis of the letter advocated in this commentary.[271] To be sure, at first reading one may rightly wonder whether Paul has lost his way and is finally returning to the thanksgiving from 1:2-3, which had tailed off into the long report of the Thessalonians' conversion (1:5-10) and of Paul's own conduct among them (2:1-12). The first thanksgiving report, however, put all of the emphasis on the *continuing faithfulness* of the Thessalonian believers themselves. This renewed thanksgiving puts the emphasis on their *original reception* of the gospel, a concern that flows directly out of the immediately preceding narrative. Thus Paul now focuses altogether on their conversion as such, with singular emphasis on their reception of the apostles' message as God's own word for them. At the same time, of course, the apostles' ministry among them is being confirmed.

When Paul returns to the narrative in verse 14,[272] he begins by reminding them that the kind of persecution they have had to endure in the past many months already had a long history in the believing community, starting with the "killing" of Jesus himself and his prophets (vv. 15-16). With that reminder of the universal nature of Christian suffering, Paul then (v. 17) picks up the dropped thread of the narrative. But now the focus is no longer on the Thessalonians as such, but on how the apostles had been faring in the meantime — especially regarding their anxiety about the continuing faithfulness of the Thessalonian believers.

13 In the preceding paragraph Paul had reminded the Thessalonians of the true nature of the apostles' ministry while among them. In so doing, he repeatedly returned to his "telling them the gospel" (vv. 2, 4, 8, 9). This is the theme that is now picked up and elaborated in this second thanksgiving. The opening words of the thanksgiving, however, have a degree of both awkwardness and ambiguity

that need unpacking, all of which makes good sense when one recognizes the passage for what it appears to be: a renewal of the thanksgiving that began in 1:2-3, which "literally" says: "And for this reason[273] also we continually give thanks, namely that . . . ,"[274] where the "and . . . also"[275] connect what follows to what precedes and, along with "for this reason," at the same time anticipate the content of the present thanksgiving. While this is a somewhat unusual use of the phrase "for this reason," it has also proven to be especially difficult for scholars to find the "reason" for giving thanks in what has preceded,[276] and especially to tie that to the actual content of the thanksgiving that follows.

Two matters are noteworthy at the outset. First, the eschatological outlook with which the preceding narrative concluded at the same time echoed a similar eschatological "conclusion" to the first thanksgiving and first part of the narrative (1:3 and 10). But here the focus has changed altogether — from their ongoing "faith-fulness" to a reminder of their conversion itself, and its relationship to Paul's ministry which he has just recalled for them. Thus, even though the sentence takes the form of a renewed thanksgiving, it is also Paul's way of shifting the narrative from his own ministry to a focus on what had happened to the Thessalonians as a result of that ministry. It is the renewed aspect of the thanksgiving that explains the double "and/also" with which Paul's sentence begins — the "and" serving as the link to verses 9-12; the "also" pointing forward to what he is about to say regarding their reception of the apostolic message.

Second, while the earlier thanksgiving anticipated the matters that need a measure of correction in the body of the letter (chs. 4-5), Paul now gives thanks for what came first chronologically — their becoming believers. Again, the reason for this seems discernible. Paul has just defended himself against his antagonists, who were hassling the Thessalonian believers in part by denigrating their (literal) "fly-by-night" apostle and teacher. So what he does now — by way of thanksgiving — is to remind them of their origins as believers, appealing not so much to the work of the Spirit (as, e.g., in Galatians), as to their own reception of Paul's proclamation of Christ, emphasizing twice that what they received was in fact God's own message.

Thus a primary feature of the thanksgiving is the redundancy about their response to God's message, first by way of a deliberate twin emphasis on both the divine and human source of their hearing that message, and then by way of contrast as to its being God's own word to them and not a merely human message. The first emphasis comes by way of the unusual "enclosed" word order of his introductory clause ("having received the message of hearing from us of

God"), whose ordinary word order would be, "having received God's message which you heard from us." By this word order Paul emphasizes the two realities simultaneously.

First, the message they heard and received[277] was a word that came from the eternal God, not from a merely human being. But, second, that message was something that they had in fact "heard from the apostles," where the emphasis lies on the verbal noun "hearing" *(akoē)*, having to do with both the act of hearing as such and its content.[278] Despite the unexpected grammar, Paul's double emphasis seems clear enough: the message of the gospel that they received, conveyed to them through the agency of the apostles, came ultimately from God.

In the main clause Paul simply reinforces both dimensions of the introductory clause. He does this, first, by qualifying the "heard from us" dimension of his phrase. Thus he picks up the first verb ("you received") by elaborating it with the main verb, "you accepted"[279] the word. But in so doing, he begins by qualifying the phrase "which you heard from us." As true and important as that was, the preceding context now calls for an emphasis on the *divine* origin of his proclamation of Christ. Thus he begins by noting that the word you received from us (mere men that we are) was *not* in fact a word that had merely human origins, despite whatever your detractors are now saying. Rather, he goes on, and now with an emphatic parenthetical "just as it truly is," what you "received" was none other than a message that has its origins in the living God.[280] The adjective "living," of course, is not in the text itself, but is implied by the final qualifying phrase in the present thanksgiving: "which is also [currently][281] at work in/among you who believe." Subtle as it might seem to the modern reader, this latter phrase ("which also is at work") is where the shift takes place in the narrative itself, from their past relationship to where things are in the present.

From our distance this kind of confidence — that words spoken by a human being function as a message from God — may seem bold indeed. For Paul such boldness is best explained on the basis of his own encounter with the risen Christ. The divine origin of the gospel is thus for Paul not something that he had thought through, as it were, but something that flowed out of his own being "set apart . . . and called by [God's] grace, . . . so that I might preach [his Son] among the Gentiles" (Gal 1:15-16), a call to apostleship that resulted from his own encounter with "Jesus our Lord" (1 Cor 9:1).

Two matters need further notice. First, at one level Paul's final "who" is ambiguous in Greek, as to whether its antecedent in the preceding phrase is "word" or "God," since grammatically either of them could be. Although some

have argued for "God" here,[282] that seems to be contradicted by the grammar itself, since, as BDAG points out, the "middle voice" of this verb occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only with an impersonal subject. Hence the entire range of English translations correctly recognize that it is "the word" that is active in/among them.

Second, and much more difficult to decide, is whether the prepositional phrase rendered "in you" in the TNIV means to be individualized like that, or whether it means "among you" as a body of believers,[283] which would then also infer "in you" individually as it is at work "among you" as a people.[284] While it is a decidedly minority opinion, both Pauline usage elsewhere and the present context seem to be much more concerned about the power of the gospel that is at work in their midst as a believing community than with the life of the individual believers, assuming that the latter is automatically included in the former. In any case, the corporate dimension of their life as believers is what is emphasized in what follows, even though it is being experienced by them as individuals. They have become "imitators" of the *churches* in Judea, not the *believers* in Judea.

In sum, Paul's concern in this second thanksgiving is to remind them that their response to his preaching was in fact a response to a message about Christ, which had been proclaimed by Paul and his colleagues when they were present in Thessalonica; indeed, it had rightfully been received by them as God's message, a message that is still actively at work among them.

This is a passage that is as easily brought into the contemporary world as the next one is not. But in so doing, one should show caution about Paul's referent, "the word of God." Here is a place where the English phrase "word of God" needs to be "translated" so as not to be confused with Scripture as such. Paul's gratitude has to do with the Thessalonians' hearing his preaching for what it was intended to be: God's own message of redemption and hope to a people who had been without God and hope in the world.

F. NARRATIVE PART 3: THE THESSALONIANS' (AND PAUL'S) ILL TREATMENT (2:14-16)

> *14 For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your fellow citizens the same things those churches suffered from the Jews,*[286] *15 who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets*[287] *and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone 16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God*[288] *has come upon them at last.*[285]

This passage, mostly a single long sentence in the Greek text,[289] has also long been a major crux, both for those who are simply reading through the letter and for New Testament scholarship itself.[290] So abrupt is this passage, beginning with the *hoti* ("because/that," rendered as a colon in the TNIV) toward the end of verse 14 — and so unexpected by the reader — that it is not surprising that more than one New Testament scholar has been willing to excise it as a later addition to the text by an "anti-Judaic" faction within early Christianity. [291] But this is a counsel of despair, which is trying to "rescue" Paul from early Christian anti-Semitism. But the passage is simply too Pauline to yield to such despair; and those who take this position never answer the real historical question: why has it been inserted *here* and not in a more "logical" place in other letters? In any case, this view does not have a single solid historical leg to stand on — and could only have arisen at a time in history when one (rightly) fears anything that could be taken as anti-Semitic.[292] But that is to misread Paul, who himself could be accused of such an attitude toward his own people, not only here but elsewhere. Thus scholarly integrity demands that one come to terms with the passage as having been written by one for whom its immediate context has touched a raw nerve regarding his own treatment by fellow, but non-believing, members of the Jewish community.[293] Unfortunately, and quite beyond Paul's own context, it has also served to inflame an anti-Jewish sentiment among some who would like to think of themselves as Christians, but at this point are acting otherwise.

The flow of the sentence is easy enough to trace. With an explanatory "for"[294] Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers of what will serve for him as primary evidence of the reality of their "having received the message" (v. 13), namely, that in so doing they became genuine followers of the believers within the Jewish community in Judea. The reason for this example is not difficult to discover, although not explicit in the text itself; rather, it comes to us by way of the evidence given in Luke's abbreviated (and telescoped?) account in Acts 17:1-10. A riot aroused by the Jewish community, but apparently then carried on by Gentiles,[295] had taken a nasty turn with regard to Paul and Silas, which had caused them to be rushed out of the city at night. So here Paul reminds them that the ultimate source of the initial disturbance came from unbelieving Jews; and thus the Thessalonian believers experienced the same sort of persecution from their "own fellow citizens" that the Jewish believing community had experienced in Judea.

That much, at least, seems clear and understandable; our difficulties arise with the elaboration of the persecution of believers in Judea (ironically carried out in part at the beginning by Paul himself!), in which Paul now throws the net wide, starting with Jesus, then (probably) Christian prophets, and finally Paul and his companions themselves, all with an eye toward those who would forbid them to proclaim Christ among the Gentiles. However, Paul's memory of that persecution is still sharp enough that he concludes by prophetically announcing their ultimate divine judgment. And at this point the narrative becomes much more oblique for those of us looking on from this historical distance.

14 With his fourth vocative in the letter, and with yet another explanatory "for," Paul sets out to tie the second thanksgiving to the hard realities of life as a believer in pagan Thessalonica. In so doing he also returns to the "imitation" motif that flowed out of the first thanksgiving (1:6), and again, as before, does so in the context of the Thessalonians' own suffering as followers of Christ. But with the comparison itself, "God's churches in Judea which are in Christ Jesus," the entire narrative shifts focus. With this phrase-turned-clause Paul accomplishes at least two things. First, he identifies the churches among the Jewish believers in Judea as also belonging to God; they are "*God's* churches *in Judea*,"[296] a geographical locator. Second, though belonging to God, as do all the churches, they presently, and always, exist "in Christ Jesus," the ultimate "location" of their existence. As in 1:1 above, in this second use of the word *ekklēsia* in the letter (and thus in the corpus), Paul clearly thinks of the gathered people in any given locale as "the church in that town/city."

But why, one might rightly wonder, does he choose to identify the "churches"

that are being "imitated" as being "in Judea"? Why not, for example, mention *Gentile* believers in Asia Minor? The most likely answer[297] would seem to lie with Paul's understanding of the church as God's eschatological people in whom the Abrahamic covenant is at last being fulfilled: "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3). While this is finally spelled out in detail in Romans, it is already at work, and articulated clearly, in Galatians. It is Paul's indomitable passion for the final and full realization of God's covenant with Abraham that drives him to think regularly in terms of "first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Rom 1:16). While this might be seen as reading too much into the present context, it is difficult to imagine that Paul had not fully instructed these Gentile converts in his understanding of their place in the divine scheme of things, especially assuming the basic historical reliability of the account in Acts 17.

And in this case the comparison works all the better, because what the Jewish and Gentile believers have in common is their "suffering" at the hands of "your own fellow citizens."[298] Although some have seen this phrase as referring to a Jewish instigation of the problem in Thessalonica,[299] that would be an unusual sense for the word "your own," since the Thessalonian believers were predominantly Gentiles.[300] This is made the more certain by Paul's addition regarding the Jewish believers in Judea that their persecution was perpetrated "by the Jews," in this case referring first of all to the original meaning of the Greek term, "the Judeans" (= the Jewish people of Judea).[301] There is nothing inherently pejorative to this designation; rather, it is for Paul a simple historical reality — after all, he himself was one of the them![302] — that the death of Jesus and the persecution of his followers were carried out by those from Jesus' own people group who had vigorously (and religiously!) rejected his claims and those of his followers. And it is in light of the historic rejection of their Messiah that Paul speaks so strongly regarding the Jewish opponents of Christ.[303] Thus the persecution these Gentile believers in Thessalonica have experienced is in keeping with what the Jewish believing community had been experiencing in Judea.

15-16a What happens next is a long litany against a sector of the Jewish community's sins against Jesus and his followers that comes in three basic, but unequal, parts. Paul first enumerates their "sins" (vv. 15-16a), then adds a result clause that expresses the cumulative effect of these misdeeds (v. 16b). He then concludes with an announcement of God's wrath = judgment against them (v. 16c). One can scarcely miss the very personal dimension of the enumeration, which not only includes their treatment of Paul but also ties that persecution very

closely to their previous treatment of his Lord and to Paul's own calling to the Gentile mission. Indeed, the litany concludes with the reason for everything. The Judean Jews' rejection of Jesus as their Messiah has entailed a rejection of the inclusion of (especially uncircumcised) Gentiles into the eschatological people of God that is being formed through Christ and the Spirit.

But while the whole is somewhat easily discerned, some of the details are not. The reason for this in part is the result of Paul's extensive barrage of Jewish misdeeds, which is so intense, and thus emotional, for him that it has become one of the many places in the New Testament where precision in understanding is very difficult for later readers. Not only are we not quite prepared for it here, but also we are simply too far removed from some of the details to have a very high degree of certainty. And in some ways our understanding has been affected by matters that Paul had nothing to do with: the insertion of verse numbers and punctuation into the text. On the one hand, a person can only wonder how the sentence would have been punctuated had it not had a number in front of it; on the other hand, the insertion of the comma has been a major factor in the historic (almost certainly incorrect) interpretation of the entire clause.

At issue ultimately are two related matters: (a) whether one views the participial modifier of "the Jews" as restrictive or nonrestrictive,[304] and (b) whether the litany that follows is to be understood in a broad, general way, and thus to include Jews of the Diaspora, or whether it is case specific to members of the Palestinian Jewish community. While these two issues are intimately related, the first is the crucial one, and should finally be resolved in light of Pauline usage elsewhere. The problem for the English reader, it should be noted, is that there is *no relative pronoun* in the Greek text; rather, what follows "the Jews" is a participial construction, where the definite article preceding the participle (lit. = "*the* also killing Jesus ones") functions like a relative pronoun in English. It must further be noted that this particular grammatical construction is rarely, if ever, nonrestrictive in Paul's letters. In fact, up to this point in the present letter there have been six such modifiers, and in each case they are restrictive.[305]

If one takes this grammatical reality seriously, then one should expect Paul's modifier in this case to be restrictive.[306] It is not all Jews who are in view, but those who in particular were responsible for the death of Jesus and the prophets. And if that is so, then one's first interpretive instincts should be to see whether one can make sense of the whole passage with this usage in view. In any case, this is the perspective from which the rest of Paul's long sentence will be interpreted in the comments that follows. Thus, it is not the Jewish community as such, nor as a whole, who are singled out here, but especially a part of the

Judean sector of the community, whose leaders violently opposed Christ and his early followers.

The enumeration itself is fourfold[307] but has six parts, which may be displayed thus (as much as possible in Paul's word order so as to retain his emphases):

> a. who both[308] the Lord Jesus killed[309] *(a')* and the prophets,
> b. and who us persecuted
> c. and who to God are not pleasing
> d. and who to all people are hostile, *(d')* by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles, so that they might be saved.

At issue finally in terms of overall interpretation are items *(a')* and the two *d* clauses. Furthermore, it seems quite clear that everything ultimately focuses on the final item, which for Paul and the Thessalonians together is the really sore spot. A few words are needed about each of the items, some of which are especially difficult to pin down in terms of historical specifics.

(a) It is of some interest that in this first reference to the death of Jesus in his letters, Paul says simply that "the [Judean] Jews *killed* Jesus" rather than "crucified him." This is probably because the Jews did not themselves crucify anyone; and in any case Paul's concern is not with the salvific dimension of Christ's death as "for us," but simply with the fact that the Jewish community itself was ultimately responsible for the death of their Messiah. God's own Son had been killed by God's own people, a fact that Paul, in what follows, sees as part of a pattern of rejection of their (one and only) God.

(a') By all counts the addition of "and the prophets" has been the most difficult part of this enumeration for later readers to discern what Paul intended. Historically this has been seen as a kind of afterthought, and thus as referring to the tradition about which Jesus himself refers in Matthew 23:33- 36 ("upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from Abel . . . to Zechariah, son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar"). Paul's point would then be that the same community that killed Jesus and had persecuted the early followers of Jesus is now simply carrying on what their forebears had done as well,[310] in which case "the Jews" is a much more generic, than case-specific, designation. That is, they are in the same *lineage* with those who before them had killed the prophets.

But there are considerable difficulties with this view. First, it does not seem to take Paul's own wording seriously enough, where "and the prophets" is *not* an

afterthought but the second part of a compound object, which in Paul's sentence belong together as one ("both Jesus and the prophets"). Only the separating of this obviously compound object of "Jewish killing" allows one to make the entire clause nonrestrictive. But, second, this view scarcely fits with what else is said about the "Jews" who are the grammatical subject of the long clause. It was specifically the "Judean Jews" who killed Jesus and who "persecuted us," who, along with others, are thus not pleasing to God and are hostile to all people. These same people, after all, did not kill the prophets of an earlier time; their forebears did. So to make this phrase refer to an earlier tradition of "killing the prophets" makes Paul a very untidy author at this point, since he could very easily have said, "who killed the Lord Jesus, as their fathers before them had killed the prophets." Moreover, the same Matthean passage noted above continues with the words, "I [Jesus] am sending you prophets, . . . some of them you *will kill*" (v. 34), while in the lament in verse 37 Jesus speaks to "Jerusalem" as "you who kill the prophets." Almost everyone recognizes that in "quoting" Jesus in this particular way, Matthew was well aware of what had already taken place among the followers of Jesus. If this is the correct understanding of the phrase, then Paul had in mind people like Stephen and James, viewing them as true Christian prophets. Thus, although the predominant view is possible grammatically, the view espoused here, despite its being a decidedly minority one, seems much more likely, since it fits both the grammar and the present context in a way the majority view does not.[311]

(b) The second phrase is even more difficult to pin down in terms of an actual historical moment. The verb itself can mean either "[who] persecuted us" or "[who] drove us out." The former would seem to be more likely if we were to understand the whole passage as somewhat generic, and thus as referring to any number of such instances, rather than as a case-specific reference to a single event. On the other hand, this immediate addition of the Jewish community's treatment of Paul makes considerable sense if at this point we take two other matters seriously: *(i)* that we in fact have limited access to Paul's own personal history, and *(ii)* that among the matters about which we have almost no information is Paul's own catalog of hardships listed in 2 Corinthians 11:22-29. Here, just a few years later, he enumerates among others things that "five times I received from *the Jews* [the same Greek word] the forty lashes minus one" (v. 24) and further as "in danger from my own people" (v. 26). One may readily grant that the latter item (v. 26) could easily be extended to what happened to Paul in the Diaspora,[312] but it is nearly impossible to imagine that the former (v. 24) could be, since it seems most highly unlikely that Diaspora Jews could have

so mistreated a *Roman citizen* — and no fewer than five times — while such things could easily have happened in Judea, where in these kinds of "religious" matters the Romans tended to turn a blind eye (as they seem obviously to have done regarding the stoning of Stephen). Thus, whether Paul meant "persecuted us" or "drove us out," the clause makes especially good sense as referring to the Judean Jews' treatment of Paul.[313]

(c-d) The third and fourth phrases in this enumeration are probably, as in the TNIV, to be understood together as a generalizing word that reflects on the relationship of these Jewish persecutors to both God and humankind. In anticipation of the final clause, which puts this whole litany into perspective (forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles with their salvation in view), Paul refers to them as simultaneously "not pleasing to God"[314] and thus as "hostile to all people."[315] That is, on the one hand what they have been about and are still doing is diametrically opposed to what God is doing in the world, while on the other hand their displeasing God finds its ultimate expression in their hostility to humanity. This, of course, is hyperbole. As we discover momentarily, such hostility takes the form of their trying to deny the gospel to the Gentiles. One can well understand, therefore, how Paul sees this as "jealousy" on their part.

(d') The purpose of this long and striking denunciation of the "Jews" — who had earlier been responsible for the persecution of "the churches of God in Judea, which belong to Christ Jesus" — is finally reached with this concluding modifier of the phrase "by the Jews" (mentioned at the end of our verse 15). How those responsible for killing both the Lord Jesus and the prophets have also "persecuted us" is by "[their effort][316] to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles" with their eternal salvation in view.

With this clause the entire sentence, from verse 14, begins to fall into place. Paul's ultimate concern has been for the Thessalonian believers, who are mostly Gentiles. In their positive response to the apostles' proclamation of Christ as savior of Jew and Gentile alike — and together as one people of God — they have experienced the same kind of suffering that the Jewish believers in Judea before them had suffered from a similar source. That is, the Thessalonian believers have been suffering at the hands of their fellow Gentile citizens just as the Jewish believers — and Paul as well, he will add — suffered at the hands of fellow Jewish citizens. And when that reality is spelled out in some detail, as going back to their killing Jesus himself, not to mention some early Christian prophets, the point of the entire enumeration is reached with this final clause, having to do with the salvation of the Thessalonians themselves. Thus with this final clause the link is complete:

a) You became imitators of the churches in Judea

b) in that you have suffered greatly from your fellow citizens in Thessalonica;
b') likewise the Jewish believers themselves suffered from fellow Jews [who were the same people responsible for the death of Christ and early Christian martyrdoms, . . .],

a') people who would also have forbidden you to become followers of Christ.

Thus the ultimate aim of this enumeration is to remind the Thessalonians that their own sufferings are quite in keeping both with the crucifixion itself and with the sufferings that ethnic Jewish believers have already undergone before them. Unfortunately, this aim can be deflected by the way Paul himself brings the whole to its final conclusion, which can easily distract the reader to reflect on other issues.

But the concluding elements that tend to distract the later reader make perfectly good sense in Paul's original context. As the Thessalonians themselves well know, the apostles' original harassment in Thessalonica had been instigated by fellow Jews, who were jealous of a "gospel" that allowed Gentiles to become full members of the people of God without also adhering to the minimum requirements of Torah that they followed in the Diaspora (circumcision, food laws, keeping sabbath). It is in this way, by persecuting Paul (and Silas?), that they had tried to stop the Christian message from reaching the Gentiles in Thessalonica. What Paul has done in this passage is basically to equate the *Thessalonians'* present suffering (1:6) with that which he, Silas, and other Jewish believers had experienced at the hands of *their* own people.

16b The immediate result of this Jewish antagonism toward Gentiles' receiving the good news without adhering to Torah is found in the final clause in Paul's (now very long) sentence: "In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit." Although the Greek clause itself is a bit awkward to put into English, its point seems clear enough. Indeed, Paul's word order gets at the double emphasis: "they fill to the full" their sins "always."[317]

That seems to mean that by their antagonism to the gospel as God's good news for the Gentiles on equal grounds with the Jews, these members of the Jewish community have been regularly ("always")[318] "stockpiling" their sins to the very top measure. The "always" at the end of the clause seems to imply that the "full

number" was not yet complete. In any case, it is this form of antagonism toward other people's becoming followers of "the Lord Jesus" (v. 15a) that leads to the word of judgment which concludes the passage.

16c If the immediate result of contemporary (for Paul) Jewish antagonism toward Christ had as its goal forbidding Gentiles from being saved, then the final result is God's judgment on them (in Paul's word order and thus his emphasis): "Has come on them the wrath *eis telos.*"[319] For good reason this final phrase has proven to be one of the more problematic passages in the entire Pauline corpus. The basic difficulties are with the verb "has come on them" and the concluding adverbial construction *eis telos*, since the two items stand in considerable tension with each other. And these in turn create a measure of difficulty for the word "wrath," which in Paul ordinarily refers to God's eschatological judgment, as in 1:10 and 5:9 in the present letter.

We begin with the verb, since it seems more certain than the meaning of "the wrath" and of the prepositional modifiers. Although the same verb occurs again in 4:15 of this letter ("we will not *precede* those who have fallen asleep"), its usage there is unique in the New Testament. Here its meaning is comparable to the usage in 2 Corinthians 10:14 ("for we did come to you [= reach you] with the gospel"). The point is that the verb in its aorist (past tense) form can hardly refer to anything other than an event that has already "arrived" for these who have become Christ's enemies. This understanding is further corroborated by the prepositional phrase *eis telos*, which literally means "at/to the end," but also can carry an adverbial sense of "finally." Under any normal circumstances that would be seen by all to be its meaning here.

But our problem in this instance is that the circumstances are anything but normal. The tension between the verb and its adverbial modifier rests finally with the subject of the sentence, literally "the wrath," which is just oblique enough to throw the whole sentence into a pool of confusion. Scribes in the West (associated also with translating the Greek into Latin) did exactly what the TNIV and many English versions have done — turn it specifically into "the wrath *of God.*" However, even though there can be little question that "the wrath" in view here has to do with God, the fact that Paul does not himself make that qualification should cause us to pause before making that specific addition to the text, since in Paul that combination invariably refers to the negative side of God's final judgment in the world.[320] At issue is what this shortened form can possibly mean regarding something that has already come on the Jewish opponents of Paul and his gospel. And it is precisely at this point that, from this distance, we can either speculate (which I find not at all useful) or simply admit

that we do not know to what Paul was specifically referring.[321] The most likely suggestion is that we are here dealing with a prophetic word on the part of the apostle. [322] Thus, Paul is so certain of God's soon-coming judgment on his ancient people that he speaks of it — future though it still is — as an event that has already taken place.

So is the Jewish Paul anti-Semitic, as has sometimes been suggested? [323] Hardly. He regularly strikes his note of passion for "the Jew first." But his own calling is to bring the good news to the Gentiles; his frustration is with fellow countryfolk who would thwart that calling and mission. Thus, it is hardly surprising that he should weigh in against those who have regularly tried to do this.

This is not a passage that is easily brought into a contemporary Christian church — in part because one fears doing anything that might sound antiSemitic, even though it is certainly not intended to be so. Nonetheless, it needs to be heard on its own terms, regarding opposition on the part of "religious" people, who think that any deviation from their own orthodoxy should be fair game for public abuse of some kind. And especially this passage allows for no continuation of the long history of anti-Semitism that has plagued the Christian church for centuries. After all, Paul is here passionately pro-God and pro-God's people, not anti-people as such.

G. NARRATIVE PART 4: IN THE MEANTIME (2:17-3:10)

Beginning with verse 17, the narrative of Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians takes a decided turn. To this point everything has been about that relationship in the recent past: his coming to them; their conversion; the nature of his ministry among them; their ongoing suffering at the hands of their fellow citizens. Now Paul begins to narrate how he and his companions have handled the absence since their hasty withdrawing from the city some months past.

The narrative, which Malherbe (179) rightly entitles "Reestablishing Contact," is in three clear parts, and is fully chronological. It begins in 2:17- 20 with an emphatic declaration of Paul's feeling bereft of them and his repeated attempts to return. His failure to do so is attributed ultimately to Satan's intervention; but he then concludes by explaining why he longed so to see them. The next paragraph (3:1-5) goes on to explain what he did instead since he could not come personally — send Timothy in his place. At the same time we are now given the reasons for his wanting to see them: it has to do with their "faith."[324] In light of their sufferings he desired two things, expressed in reverse order: *(a)* to strengthen and encourage them regarding their "faith" (v. 2), and *(b)* to learn about their "faith," whether they were in fact truly hanging in there (v. 5). The final paragraph (3:6-10) is primarily an expression of great relief. Timothy had returned full of good news regarding their "faith." So Paul concludes with thanksgiving, joy, and prayer — again, with regard to their "faith." All of which is then wrapped up with a prayer report (3:11-13), which flows directly out of the concerns in the present narrative.[325]

1. Paul Had Been Thwarted from Returning (2:17-20)

> *17 But, brothers and sisters, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. 18 For we wanted to come to you — certainly I, Paul, did,*

again and again — but Satan hindered us. 19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? 20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

It is hard to miss the sense of angst that emerges in this paragraph, even though it is being written on this side of Timothy's return with the good news (3:6-8). In many ways 3:8 says it all: "For now we live, since you are standing firm in the Lord." So even though the present set of sentences was written from that perspective, Paul's memory of his anxiety is still sharp and here finds repeated expression.[326] The anxiety had to do with the Thessalonians themselves; and although not expressed as such at this point — that comes next — it was all about the Thessalonians and their "faith." The various statements, therefore, tend to tumble over each other, as Paul simultaneously relates both his concern for them and his own anxiety, the kind that only a long period of silence can bring. The paragraph itself is in four discernible parts. He begins *(a)* with a participial phrase (v. 17a), declaring emphatically his sense of having been bereft of them — in terms of presence, not actuality. This is followed *(b)* by the main clause (vv. 17b-18), declaring his repeated efforts to return. He goes on *(c)* to attribute this failure ultimately to Satan (v. 18b), and concludes *(d)* by explaining *why* he longed so to see them (vv. 19-20), which takes an unexpected turn toward eschatology. Verse 19 expresses Paul's concern by way of a question, to which verse 20 offers the affirmative response.

17 With an emphatic "but we,"[327] which stands in immediate, stark contrast to the Judean Jews in verses 14-16,[328] and with yet another vocative ("brothers and sisters") — the fifth since 1:4 — Paul picks up the thread of the narrative that was dropped in verse 12, to which he had momentarily returned in verse 14. In the former narrative Paul reminded the Thessalonians of what he and his companions were like when *present* with them (as an apparent defense against his detractors in Thessalonica); the present sentence has altogether to do with his and their "relationship" during his *absence* from them. Thus Paul feels compelled to explain why he and Silas themselves had never returned, but had sent Timothy instead.

To make his point Paul uses one of the more remarkable metaphors in all his letters: Paul and his companions themselves have been "orphaned"[329] (TNIV, "torn away from") in being absent from these new believers. In doing so, he picks up on the first of the three metaphors that occurred in quick succession in the preceding narrative (vv. 1-12), where he was first as a "small child" among them (v. 7), then a "nursing mother" (v. 8), and finally a caring "father" (v. 11).

Returning to the first metaphor, he thinks of himself and Silas as "orphans." Although this word in English refers to children who have been bereft of their parents, in Greek it was also used, as here, to refer to parents bereft of their children. The metaphor works in this case because the two of them are the ones "away from home," as it were, in terms of their relationship to the Thessalonian believers.

Having made that point, Paul immediately qualifies it with two adverbial phrases that emphasize time and space. With regard to *time*, the separation has been only "for a short time,"[330] a relative term if ever there was one! It all depends on perspective. Nonetheless, in terms of actual time he and Silas had been away from them for only a relatively short time (probably not yet a year); but at a time in history when communication between distances was slow and irregular, no news was not necessarily good news.[331] With regard to *space*, and typical of letters of friendship, Paul quickly qualifies that the absence, though real in terms of personal contact, was not at all so in terms of memory and endearment (lit. = "in face, not in heart"). In the Greco-Roman world, as in our own, true friends were never understood as absent in the ultimate sense.

The intensity of Paul's feelings regarding this separation can be seen by the Greek word order, which makes impossible English: "All the more eagerly we made every effort your faces to see with great longing." Thus in Paul's sentence the whole is enclosed by the two adverbial modifers, "all the more eagerly"[332] and "with great longing,"[333] which will have considerable value in terms of his readers. What he longs for is "to see your faces" once again, an idiom which in Greek functions precisely as it does in English, where "seeing a person's face" means to see them "in person"; its strength as an idiom rests with the emphasis on bodily presence.

18 The intensity of Paul's feelings regarding this separation is furthered by his next sentence, which begins with an explanatory "for,"[334] as he goes on to explain the opening clause in two ways. He first elaborates on it with the further clause, "we wanted to come to you . . . again and again," and then offers a curt reason for failure ("but[335] Satan hindered[336] us"). The Greek idiom for the TNIV's "again and again" is (literally) "both once and twice" (cf. Phil 4:15), which is comparable to our "once and again," meaning several times but without an actual count.[337]

The more striking moment comes with the parenthetical interruption ("certainly I, Paul, did"), where for the first time in the letter we are made aware of what we could have guessed right along — that the letter, even though sent from the three of them, is actually from Paul himself, in terms of both initiation

and dictation.[338] So at this crucial point Paul momentarily steps out from behind the curtain, as it were, and emphasizes his own deep personal desire[339] — and attempts — to come back to Thessalonica to "see how they were doing," well aware that the near riot that drove him and Silas out of the city would undoubtedly spill over onto those who had chosen to become disciples.

The actual reason for failure to return is one of the mysteries in the Pauline corpus, since our knowledge is deficient in several areas. To begin with, we do not know the locations of these attempts (Berea? Athens? Corinth?). Moreover, we are left in the dark in terms of both the actual nature of the attempts and what then happened to prevent them, so that Paul could attribute it to Satan. And finally we are left only to speculate as to the specific events or circumstances he attributed to Satan himself[340] as thwarting his desire to return.[341] In any case, it stands in marked contrast to another "failure to return" situation in 1 Corinthians 16:12 (Apollos, in this case), which Paul attributes to God's not willing it. In this present situation Paul obviously saw the hand of the enemy as somehow involved in his thwarted plans; but as to specifics, we will never know and speculation is fruitless; indeed, it is possible (probable?) that the Thessalonians did not know as well.

19 With the explanatory "for" with which this new sentence begins, Paul does not do what many of us from our historical distance might have wished him to do — to go on to explain the reasons for his failure to return to Thessalonica.[342] Rather, his interest is personal and relational, so he explains what had compelled him to try to do so on several occasions. It had to do with the Thessalonians' eschatological future. This is now the fourth such reference in this letter (see 1:3, 10; and 2:12 above); and there are more to come (see 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11; and 5:23 below). In contrast to most of the others, the emphasis here is twofold: first, on the *Thessalonians themselves* as being present at the Lord's coming, emphasized especially by means of the parenthetical, "Is it not you?"[343] and second, on their actually being in our *Lord Jesus' presence* at his coming. At the same time Paul's own role in their being "present in the presence" is the first thing up in the sentence. All of this is undoubtedly setting the stage for his response to one of the major concerns that Timothy has brought back to Paul from Thessalonica, to which he will respond in some detail in 4:13-18 and 5:1-11.

The matter of first emphasis in both sentences (vv. 19 and 20) is Paul's own expected joy and honor at the Thessalonians' being present at the coming of the Lord. This anticipation of their presence with Paul at Christ's coming is first of all "our hope." Over against the watered-down sense that the word "hope" has

for most people in English,[344] this word is Paul's primary way of speaking about the *certainty* of the future. Whatever else, for Paul "hope abides" (1 Cor 13:13), in the sense that one lives in absolute confidence of a sure future that has been guaranteed by Christ's own resurrection from the dead (see on 1:3 above).

But in this sentence the word stands in some tension with that ordinary usage, since it is used of people rather than of Christ the guarantor. Furthermore, it is now expressed on this side of Timothy's return, so it appears to take on the unusual sense (for Paul) of either "the foundation of his expectation" regarding the future or "something that is hoped for."[345] In either case, it seems to fall slightly short of a guaranteed reality. Their being present with Paul at the coming of Christ is his desire, to be sure, and undoubtedly his expectation as well. But the very nature of the sentence seems to put it one step removed from the certainty about the future that he usually intends by this word. Thus, from the perspective of his having sent Timothy, the Thessalonian believers would have been Paul's "hope" in terms of his earnest desire and confidence in Christ's work in and among them. But now on this side of Timothy's return with the good new about them, they are part of his genuine "hope" regarding the coming of Christ.

Similarly, their expected presence at the coming of Christ will be Paul's own "joy." If it had turned out that they had fallen short of endurance, that joy would surely have been diminished. But it is not good feelings that Paul is referring to, as is so often the case with this noun in English. Rather, for Paul "joy" is not about feelings but about verbalizing, since the word finds its true meaning in its corresponding verb, "rejoice." It is less about how one "feels" and more about what one does in the presence of God; one "rejoices in the Lord" — which would be the way the Thessalonians would be Paul's "glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes."

The final item in the present triad is especially poorly understood when given its traditional rendering of "crown of boasting,"[346] since both English words in this phrase, not to mention its unusual locution, lead one to miss Paul's point altogether. The first problem is with the word "crown" itself, whose first meaning in English refers to the (usually) metal diadem worn by a king or other royalty; and it is hard to imagine that the English reader will picture anything else when hearing this word in a context like this. On the contrary, the "crown" Paul expects to receive at the coming of Christ has nothing at all to do with royalty; rather, its primary referent is the (usually laurel) wreath bestowed on the victor in one of the contests in the games, the winner's ultimate prize, as it were. Thus it is not the symbol of royalty, but of victory, or achievement.

The second problem is with the English word "boasting," which in some

contexts is what this Greek word can, and does, mean, especially in its frequently pejorative use by Paul in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Indeed, for most readers there is scarcely an instance where this English word does not first of all register negative connotations, even if its intent is positive. The key to Paul's usage of the Greek word is to be found in its very next appearance in his letters, in 1 Corinthians 1:29-31, where it has to do with putting one's confidence in something and thus to "glory" in it. There Paul concludes by citing Jeremiah 9:23-24 (LXX), where God through his prophet expostulates with his people: "Let not the wise *boast* of their wisdom, or the strong *boast* of their strength, or the rich *boast* of their riches; but let those who *boast boast* about this, that they understand and know me, that I am Yahweh, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on the earth, for in these I delight, declares Yahweh." This is almost certainly the origin of Paul's own double use of this word, which in its negative sense means to take both wrongful pride and thus false security in something, and in its positive sense means to put all of one's hope and security in the living God. Likewise here, with imagery from the games Paul is picturing himself as standing in the Lord's own presence at his coming, wearing the victor's wreath. But the "wreath" in this case is none other than the Thessalonian believers themselves, in whom he will glory because they are there with him in the Lord's presence at his Parousia.

Two further things need to be noted about the final phrase, "in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his Parousia." First, the Greek word *parousia* had a long history in the Greek-speaking world as "the official term for a visit of a person of high rank, esp[ecially] of kings and emperors visiting a province" (BDAG 2bα). Given Thessalonica's own pride of place in the Empire, it is therefore of some interest that except for its later appearance in 1 Corinthians 15:23, the word is otherwise used exclusively by Paul in our present two letters, and in each case but one (2 Thess 2:9, of the "lawless one") it refers to the "coming" of Christ.[347] In Paul's own usage, however, it is hardly the technical term that it later became in the Christian tradition, since he uses it several times of himself and others.[348]

Second, and related to the first observation, the combination ("the Lord, Jesus") occurs as many times in these two letters (nine in all) as in the rest of the corpus together.[349] This frequent identification of Jesus as "the Lord" is most likely related to the fact that he is writing to believers in a city that especially enjoyed Roman privileges, for whom the "coming" of the "Lord Caesar" would have been seen as Thessalonica's highest honor. These words, "the Lord, Jesus, at his coming," are almost certainly intended to encourage the beleaguered believers in Thessalonica, that the coming of "the (real) Lord" lies in their own

future.

20 Paul now follows his rhetorical question with the answer already implied in the rhetoric itself. “For you yourselves,” he now affirms, “are our glory and joy.” Four matters are noteworthy about this positive response to his own question. First, the repetition lacks the eschatological dimension of the prior question. What he says here is not about what they will be for him at the Lord’s coming, but about what they are for him now. And that is probably, second, why the word “hope” is not repeated. That word had altogether to do with their being present with him at Christ’s coming; here he is focussing on what they mean to him currently. And that leads in turn, third, to the probable reason for “glory” being substituted for “‘crown’ of boasting,” since the “crown” in view is that of the victor at the *end* of the race. Here he is interested only in what they presently mean to him. They are also his “glory,” probably in the sense of what he had already said about them in 1:8, that what the Lord had done in Thessalonica for them had resounded throughout the Grecian provinces; and he will therefore gladly “wear them” as his “glory” now. And that leads, fourth, to the one repeated word from the preceding enumeration: above all else, “you are our joy.” They are so in much the same way that new parents beam with delight over a newborn; and one cannot long be around such parents without experiencing their joy as well.[350] Paul and Silas may themselves have felt “orphaned” by the many months of absence from their Thessalonian “newborns” (v. 17); but the reality is that the Thessalonian believers are their “children” in the Lord, who are also therefore their present joy.

In some ways this is a remarkable paragraph, while it is also thoroughly Pauline. Paul’s concern is that of ordinary friendship — to tell them how greatly they have been missed and how he feels about the absence. But typical of the Apostle, everything his hand/pen touches turns into some word about Christ and the gospel. In this case his (barely) hidden concern is for their perseverance in Christ. Now written from the perspective of Timothy’s return, he thus overflows with joy that they are remaining faithful, an overflow that is ex-pressed ultimately in eschatological terms — his intense longing for them and him to be together in the Lord’s presence at his coming. Such a desire on his part is thus a scarcely subtle urging them on to continued perseverance. Everything for Paul has to do with “salvation,” and salvation for him has to do with both present and future realities.

2. The Sending of Timothy (3:1-5)

> *1 So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by*
> *ourselves in Athens. 2 We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker*
> *in God's servicea[351] in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and*
> *encourage you[352] in your faith, 3 so that no one would be unsettled by these*
> *trials. You know quite well that we are destined for them. 4 In fact, when we*
> *were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it*
> *turned out that way, as you well know. 5 For this reason, when I could stand*
> *it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some*
> *way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been*
> *useless.*
>
> [a] 2 Some manuscripts *brother and co-worker;* other manuscripts *brother and God's servant*

With this paragraph Paul's narrative proceeds apace, and in the telling all sorts of things fall into place in terms of the reasons for the letter itself. What we learn is what they already knew, that instead of Paul himself returning to Thessalonica (which is explained in the preceding paragraph), Timothy had come to them instead. What Paul is anxious for them to hear from his side is *why* Timothy — not "why Timothy rather than himself or Silas," but why Timothy at all. Thus the structure tells the tale. The paragraph is enclosed by the two sentences that begin "when we/I could stand it no longer," thereby tying it to 2:17-20. In both cases the sending of Timothy is followed by a purpose clause, having to do with their "faith" (vv. 3b and 5b), each of which is concluded by a further purpose clause which gives the reason for the first one.

The purpose of Timothy's having come thus turns out to be twofold: first, for the sake of *their faith,* so that they not be shaken by the inevitable afflictions; and second, for *Paul's own sake,* lest the Tempter in testing them had won the day and Paul's labor thus be empty. Between these two clauses there is a three-part explanation regarding their present hardships (thus taking us back to 2:14): the Thessalonians know "we were appointed to such"; they had been repeatedly told so previously; thus the hardship itself and their knowing about it coalesce ("even as it has happened, even as you know"). The only additional matter is the

commendation of Timothy in verse 2a.

The paragraph thus comes to us in four unequal sentences (vv. 1-3a, 3b, 4, 5), which we will comment on in their logical groupings (vv. 1-2a, the sending and commendation of Timothy; vv. 2b-3a, the reason for sending him; vv. 3b-4, suffering as Christian destiny; v. 5, the sending and its purpose repeated).

1-2a The explanation for Timothy's coming begins with the inferential conjunction, "therefore"[353] (= for this reason), rendered simply as "so" in the TNIV. What is about to be offered is an explanation for his sending Timothy to them; the reason for it lies with the preceding sentences: they themselves are part of Paul's eschatological hope. Because of this, and with concern lest it no longer be so, he sets out to detail both the fact of, and reasons for, the sending of Timothy. He was sent to them because "we could stand it[354] no longer," a "we" that becomes "I" in verse 5. The "what" Paul could no longer endure was not simply the separation itself, but as verse 3 makes clear, the need to learn about the status of "their faith."

Thus, picking up the emotion from 2:17 (we were "orphaned" from you), he now admits to being willing to be "abandoned" *alone*[355] in Athens in order to learn about the present condition of their faith. In so doing, Paul has left us with another difficulty regarding persons, geography, and chronology. On the one hand, he mentions no other geographical location of any kind in either of these two letters, thus giving us no certainty about his location at the time of the writing of the letters. Because of the presence of both Silas and Timothy (1:1), most scholars have (probably rightly) assumed that the two letters were written and sent from Corinth,[356] where the three of them were together for a longer period than Paul seems to have been in Athens, thus allowing time for the going and coming of Timothy. On the other hand, according to the present account Timothy had previously been sent from Athens; and although it is likely that they had agreed to meet again in Corinth, what is narrated about these events in Acts 17 and 18 is nonetheless a bit difficult to square precisely with the present narrative.[357] Moreover, because Paul uses "we" here, but resorts to "I" in verse 5, one cannot be sure about the presence or absence of Silas in Athens. According to the Acts account, Paul was alone in Athens because he had been hustled out of Berea and was to be joined there by Silas and Timothy; but instead he went on to Corinth, where the two of them eventually joined him. It is clear from this present narrative, however, that the three of them had been together in Athens, and that Timothy was sent to Thessalonica from there. While nothing significant is at stake here, it is likely that Luke has once again given us the essential information that got the three of them together in Corinth, since for

both writers Athens did not seem to have been a major center for Pauline missionary activity (this passing note is its only mention in the Pauline corpus).

What happens next comes to the modern reader as a bit of a surprise, since Paul "commends" Timothy to them as "our brother[358] and co-worker"; and Timothy has himself just returned from there, as verse 6 makes plain. In fact, if we did not have the next paragraph (vv. 6-10), the present sentence would be universally understood as a first sending of Timothy on a fact-finding visit.[359] Indeed, since this is an "after the fact" commendation (!), why do it at all? The answer in this case is a simple one. Paul is going to send Timothy back to Thessalonica as the bearer of the present letter; and the commendation is simply pro forma, where the bearer of a letter in the Greco-Roman world, even when known by the recipients, is "commended" — historically as a way of authenticating the letter by authenticating its bearer.

But in this case, what Paul says about Timothy has had a substantial history of being tampered with by subsequent copyists, since at first blush there is a considerable degree of ambiguity to the commendation. What Paul dictated was "our brother and co-worker"; but when he then added the possessive ("God's") to his clause, he left himself with a legacy of difficulties for later readers. The present difficulty thus lies with the fact that the word "co-worker" is followed by the possessive genitive "God's." As with the same combination later in 1 Corinthians 3:9, where Paul speaks of himself and Apollos as co-workers who both belong to God,[360] any genitive that immediately follows this particular word will be instinctively understood *not* as a possessive, but as the one *with whom* one is a co-worker. Thus if Paul were merely to have said "our co-worker," everyone in both Greek and English would correctly understand that to mean "one who works alongside us." Since Paul could hardly have meant "God's co-worker" in that sense,[361] early scribes did their best to help Paul out, hence the considerable array of secondary options to Paul's original text noted above (n. 28). But what Paul almost certainly intended is what one finds in the TNIV, that Timothy, who ultimately belongs to God, is being commended first of all as Paul's and Silas's own "brother," and further as their co-worker "in the gospel of Christ." At the same time he is *God's* person in all this missionary activity. Although Paul's phrase for this activity may mean, as the TNIV has it, "in *spreading* the gospel of Christ" (which as an English idiom means to evangelize), he far more likely intended, "in the *continuing* work of the gospel of Christ," which would thus include his past and present visit to Thessalonica.

2b-3a With this clause ("to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials") Paul offers the specific reasons for

having sent Timothy to them the earlier time, which are to be found in all three elements of the clause. The primary reason is expressed in the two verbs, "to strengthen and encourage," the first of which occurs four times in these two letters[362] and has to do with "establishing" them in Christ. The second one is not a redundancy, but rather picks up what he has already said in 2:11-12 about his prior relationship to them; there he spoke of his fatherly concern of "encouraging" them. Now his concern is about encouraging them "with regard to your faith."

This latter phrase thus brings us to the real object of Paul's concern. It was, and is, all about "your faith," a note that will be struck no fewer than five times in the present passage (vv. 2, 5, 6, 7, 10). Without further elaboration, one might tend to understand this word in light of its common use in Galatians and Romans, having to do with trusting in Christ vis-à-vis putting confidence in "doing the Law." But that narrower meaning will not do here, as the pickup of the word in verse 5 makes plain. Paul's obvious concern is not whether they are putting their trust in Christ for their salvation or not, but whether those who have already done so are remaining "faith-ful" in that "faith."[363] After all, as verse 5 makes plain, that is what the concern has been right along, and is thus the reason for sending Timothy in the first place. It seems clear from this passage that initial "faith" counts for very little if that faith does not endure through thick and thin. Thus in verse 10 he anticipates the content of our chapters 4 and 5, by indicating that their "faith" needed further instruction and encouragement.

The third element in the sentence offers the ultimate reason for his desire to strengthen them and encourage them regarding their faith. As had already happened when he was there, and as he knew would be the case once he and Silas had left hurriedly under something of a cloud, the Thessalonian believers would experience more than their share of "trials."[364] Paul has already alluded to these in 1:6 (TNIV, "severe suffering") as something they were already experiencing. His concern now is about whether they would "be *unsettled* by *these* [present] afflictions." Although some have suggested that this is the secondary reason for sending Timothy,[365] that seems to miss the deep concern of the passage by too much.

At issue in the passage is Paul's use of the verb the TNIV has translated "unsettled."[366] Its "literal" meaning, going back as far as Homer, had to do with dogs' wagging their tails. Hence a number of interpreters (but not translators) have understood it as referring to the beguiling deceptions of their opponents, who were flattering them in order to gain their favor and thus turn their backs on Christ.[367] But that meaning fits very poorly in the present context, not to

mention the larger context of the letter, where the issue is not with the Thessalonians' being beguiled by unbelievers, but with their being regularly subjected to various forms of distress[368] by them. Indeed, this verb makes most sense as standing in direct contrast to "strengthen" in the preceding clause.[369] This is especially so in light of the earlier use of this word in 1:6, where their *thlipsis* is compared to that of both Paul and of Christ himself. Moreover, Paul's specifying that he is concerned about "*these* trials," although such things had happened to them while he was among them, suggests that it is their ongoing hardships that he now has in view — hardships that he would now know more about with the return of Timothy.

3b-4 But rather than go on immediately to finish the narrative about the sending of Timothy, Paul interrupts himself to repeat a previously given pastoral response to such things. He does so, first, by reminding them that trials are simply part and parcel of Christian life, and, second, by elaborating how it is that they know this. So he begins, "[For] you (yourselves)[370] know quite well that we are destined[371] for [these trials]." And thus begins a most interesting sequence. Paul himself is deeply concerned about whether they are hanging in there, given that he knew they would suffer persecution. Moreover, as we learn next, he had repeatedly told them that such would happen. And now that Timothy has returned he is aware that such in fact has happened — and, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:1, it is going to happen again. So how does he comfort them? By reminding them, "I told you so." "In fact,"[372] he begins, "when we were with you, we kept telling[373] you that we would be persecuted." As Best (135) aptly puts it: "normality *is* persecution" (emphasis mine). And so Paul concludes this little interlude by returning to their own present reality, with a matter-of-fact "and it turned out that way, as you well know"![374]

But this reality is not to be made light of. The Christian faith, after all, beginning with our Lord himself, stands in total contradiction to the primary worldview and values of our fallen, broken world. It should therefore not be surprising that those who stand in opposition to such a world and its primary values — even if not verbally so, but by contrasting lifestyles — should regularly experience the scorn and hatred of those who prefer Satan's values to Christ's. Perhaps the single most unfortunate result of Christendom as a cultural reality has been that the overlay of a less than radical Christian worldview allows God's people to "coast" rather than to experience the kind of expected discipleship Paul speaks of here.

5 The "for this reason" with which this concluding sentence[375] begins is Paul's way of tying the preceding parenthetical moment (vv. 3b-4) to the way

this part of the narrative began. Thus Paul here repeats the essence of his opening sentence (vv. 1-3a), and does so by tying their present hardships to satanic activity, as he previously had done regarding his own inability to return (2:18). In so doing, he also — and this is the most striking feature of this wrap-up sentence — returns to the first person singular of that former sentence. Nonetheless, for all the repetition of verses 1-3a, the focus regarding the sending of Timothy has shifted altogether. In verse 2 he mentions the sending of Timothy from the Thessalonians' perspective (why he was coming to *them*); now he mentions it from his own perspective. Indeed, everything we could (or would) have guessed at heretofore is now spelled out in explicit detail.

Thus, "when I[376] could stand it no longer," Paul sent Timothy so as "to find out about your faith." That is, Timothy was first of all on a fact-finding mission, in which case he would also "encourage them regarding their faith" (v. 2). This is the key issue for Paul, their "faith," whether or not they were remaining "faithful" in persecution — which "faithfulness," of course, depended on their abiding "faith = trust" in God.

The rest of the sentence spells out the reasons for his concern, which comes in two parts. First, the same Satan who thwarted Paul's return to Thessalonica (2:18) would be at work among them as "the great Tester." In our present Western world there is a dual tendency with regard to the work of Satan: either not to recognize him at all, or to give him too much credit — as directly responsible for every ill that befalls one. Paul's view lay somewhere between these. He seldom in fact attributes human fallenness to the work of Satan;[377] on the other hand, he is quite ready to see Satan at work in the kind of persecution that would thwart the furtherance of the gospel.[378] The plain reality, which Paul knew well, was that the Thessalonian believers were being constantly harassed by their "fellow citizens" (2:14); from his perspective this harassment was being directed by Satan himself, even though those doing it would not have thought so. At issue for Paul was whether the "last straw" had been laid on the pile of their suffering, so that the believers will have broken under it. The good news, of course, was that such was not the case.

But since such a possibility existed, and since Paul cared deeply for them, he expressed this concern finally in the language of Isaiah 65:23, but in a negative way. Whereas Yahweh's eschatological people "will not labor in vain," Paul's concern is that the Tempter might have caused that to happen in the case of the Thessalonians. Thus this second paragraph in the present narrative concludes in a way similar to the first: concern over the proper eschatological conclusion to the Thessalonians' faith, even though there is not here a direct eschatological

word. Regarding the much-debated issue as to whether or not such *could* happen, Paul himself certainly seemed to think so, since the concern resurfaces in later letters.[379]

3. The Return of Timothy (3:6-10)

> *6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. 7 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. 8 For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. 9 How can we thank God*[380] *enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.*

Now at last comes the moment of great relief! The collapse of the nascent Christian community that might well have happened under present circumstances had not in fact happened; and this paragraph from beginning to end simply breathes gratitude — of the kind that finally finds expression in verse 9. Thus Paul's clauses fall all over themselves as he tries to communicate back to the Thessalonians his grateful relief. All of this is the more remarkable when one considers that the whole letter has been written from this perspective.

One of the reasons for this overflow of gratitude emerges with considerable clarity in this paragraph, namely the convergence of several friendship motifs,[381] especially the final clause in our verse 6 and the content of verses 8 and 9. Here, too, all of the preceding familial imagery now falls into place. Only in the passing moment in 2:7 are they reminded that he is an apostle, after all. Everywhere else familial imagery abounds: they are his "brothers and sisters" whatever else (repeated here in v. 7), so that his concern for them is like that of a nursing mother (2:7) or a caring father (2:11); and their long absence from each other has seemed to him as though he had become an "orphan" without them (2:18).

The paragraph itself comes in two long sentences, verses 6-8 and 9- 10, with almost every word being about them and him — Christ is mentioned but once (v.

8), while God is mentioned in prayer twice in verse 9. The first sentence expresses Paul's great relief regarding the Thessalonians' continuing faithfulness to Christ and their affection for him. Nonetheless, the clause at the end of the thanksgiving/prayer finally lets us in on the "why" of this letter and therefore of Timothy's going back to them again: there are some things "lacking in [their] faith," which he will "supply" when he sees them again. But in the meantime this letter must do.[382]

6 Paul's long sentence begins with a slightly adversative "but" and the adverb "now," which, contrary to the TNIV, is probably intended not to modify the verb "has come,"[383] but rather anticipates the main verb in the sentence in verse 7, "we were encouraged." To get there, however, Paul begins with a genitive absolute[384] whose primary purpose is not just to pick up on Timothy's return (from v. 5), but to put the right emphasis upfront: the *good news* that Timothy has brought with him "to us from you."[385] And with this mention, Timothy drops out of the narrative altogether, not to appear again until the salutation of the next letter (2 Thess 1:1).

What Timothy has done on his return is to "announce the good news[386] to us," of two kinds: first, "about your faith and love," while, second, the latter is elaborated in terms of their keeping Paul in good remembrance. The first word, "faith," thus picks up the concern from the preceding paragraph, as to the reason for sending Timothy in the first place. Having been sent "to find out about your faith" (v. 5), he has now returned with the good news that their faith (toward Christ) is intact. This is obviously the matter of first importance, as is made plain by the further elaboration in verse 7 and the concern further to "supply what is lacking in your faith" in verse 10.

Nonetheless, and not surprisingly given the angst expressed in what has preceded, what gets immediate attention is their "love." Whereas in some circumstances the combination of "faith and love" could be seen as directed toward Christ, the elaboration that immediately follows suggests that in this case it has to do with the apostles themselves.[387] The two words therefore pick up the two major concerns from the preceding narrative: what the persecution they are enduring might have done to their "faith," and what the slander of Paul (2:1-12) might have done to their "love." His concern throughout has had to do with whether the persecution and slander might have caused their faith to be shaken and their love to have diminished.

The grateful answer to both, of course, is "no." Paul will pick up on their faith, the primary concern, in the main clause (vv. 7-8); for now he finishes the present clause by elaborating on their love for him. The "good news" that Timothy has brought back is "that you always have 'good' memory of us." While the NIV's (unchanged in the TNIV) "pleasant memories of us" is a well-known contemporary idiom, it is also one that probably leads the reader slightly astray here. "Pleasant memories" have to do with good friendships, family gatherings, good times together, and the like; this word has to do with the fact that their memory of Paul is a good one, not clouded with doubts and misgivings — which of course has been part of the concern right along. The Thessalonians do indeed remember "our entrance to you" (2:1), and "what manner of men we were among you" (1:5). Thus he intends something like, "your good memory of us remains intact."

Furthermore, Timothy has reported that Paul's longing to see them, which has found such intense expression throughout the immediately preceding narrative, is reciprocated from their end: "You long[388] to see us, just as we also long to see you." This is simply all about being human — and family — where letters are nice, but not the same thing as real presence. Thus with these words Paul takes them back to where the present narrative began in 2:17, "out of our intense longing, making every effort to see you." At the some time, one must not lose the reciprocal nature of this longing. After all, Paul begins his clause on this note — that they also longed to see him. It must have been a special delight, therefore, for him to have learned that his longing for them was reciprocated from their end.

7 With a strong "therefore,"[389] and still another familial vocative (the sixth), "brothers and sisters," Paul now comes to the main clause in his sentence. Picking up on the language he had used about the reason for sending Timothy (v. 2b), he now reports that that reason had now been reciprocated by Timothy's

return. We sent him, he told them, "to . . . encourage you *with regard to* your faith"; Timothy has now returned so that we have been encouraged *through* your faith.[390] That is, their faith was not the "cause" of encouragement, but the "effective means" of it. As before, the emphasis on their "faith" is on its enduring quality of "faithfulness."

In typical fashion, and quite in keeping with the present narrative as a whole, between the two phrases "about you" and "through your faith" Paul in serts a final reminder of his own present circumstances. This encouragement about you and your faith came in the midst of "all our distress and persecution." Here are words that we are hardly prepared for, especially if our understanding of Paul's time in Corinth were based solely on Luke's brief account in Acts 18:1-18 (of an 18-month stay), where there are only two hints of persecution (vv. 6 and 12-13). Furthermore, whereas in writing our 1 Corinthians Paul focussed so strongly on issues in the church in Corinth, and the persecution there, one finds only a few hints of ill treatment in this letter (e.g., 2:1-3); and while there is more of it in 2 Corinthians, the latter is just ambiguous enough to leave us with uncertainty as to the location of much of the suffering spoken of there. But Paul is currently in Corinth, probably early on in his time there, and here we pick up that he is clearly smarting from some present "distress and persecution." The reason for mentioning it here, however, is not that Paul "loves to suffer," but almost surely as a way of tying his own present circumstance to theirs in verse 3 through the common word *thlipsis* ("trials").

8 One final time, and still in the same sentence, Paul ties together his own encouragement to their "faith-fulness." But he does so in this case with the strongest of language. For Paul whether or not they "stand firm"[391] in the Lord is a matter of life or death. His putting it so strongly is another indication of friendship, since friends in the Greco-Roman world "lived and died" together, as it were. Otherwise, had the Thessalonians' "faith" failed in some way, Paul's "distress and persecution" would function like "death" to him. And, as always, it is not their loyalty to Paul that concerns him, but their steadfast loyalty to Christ. This also explains this moment of unusual Greek, where a conjunction that ordinarily takes the subjunctive mood and expresses "supposition" ("*if* you are"), here has the indicative, and thus as the TNIV rightly has it, expresses affirmation, "*since* you are."[392] So with this final word of affirmation in this now long sentence, Paul brings the present narrative (from 2:17) to its fitting conclusion by turning it into thanksgiving to God (v. 9), which in turn evolves into yet one more prayer for the Thessalonians (v. 10).

9 The present, very complex sentence (vv. 9-10) is basically a rhetorical

question, responding directly to the good news found in the preceding, equally complicated sentence. Part of its complexity is related, first, to Paul's own emotional response to the good news brought by Timothy that Paul has just recounted for them. But its complexity is also related to the fact that in coming to the end of his long narrative about his and their past relationships, he is also anticipating what will come next in the letter. Thus, in some ways all the concerns of this letter get folded together in this single thanksgiving/ prayer: his concern about their "faith" after his and Silas's hasty withdrawal; his gratitude that their "faith" still endures, even through hardship; and his need to "mend" some things where their "faith" is lacking.

The sentence thus begins with a rhetorical question, where Paul's unabashed joy at Timothy's good report (after months of anxiety about them) bursts into an expansive, "What thanksgiving[393] is even possible over such good news?" That is followed (v. 10), still in the same sentence — and reasonably — with a prayer report expressing his most earnest longing before God to see them again. But the whole concludes on a very "down-to-earth" note, offering a basic reason for wanting to see them again: to supply what is lacking in their faith. As strange as this concluding moment might seem from our distance, it nonetheless flows very naturally in Paul's present setting, since in fact it sets forth the basic reason for the immediate return of Timothy to Thessalonica with this letter.

But one must not hasten too quickly to that final clause in our verse 10, since that would be to miss too much, and to suggest a less than sincere motive for the present letter. Indeed, that it is a kind of "add on" to his thanksgiving about their perseverance, and his longing to see them again is made clear by the fact that he stops to pray for them (vv. 11-13) before he picks up the matters that need immediate attention.

Whether intended as such or not, the thanksgiving itself is only indirectly about them. Rather, it is an expression of the overflow from Paul's heart that his own, now for him long, anxiety about "their faith" has been essentially relieved. All of its various parts indicate as much. The question thus begins with an (untranslated) "for" that connects it to the preceding sentence, but its exact relationship to what has preceded is not at all clear. Probably it is simply a rhetorical device, which serves as a proper way to introduce the rhetorical question itself. In light of what he has just narrated, and especially in light of Paul's now being able to "live" because of their continuing faithfulness, he simply sets out to ask rhetorically, "How can God be repayed[394] for such joy?" The language of "repayment" actually belongs to the arena of ancient friendship, where friends regularly "repay" each other in terms of their agreed reciprocity.

The surprise element is that it has been brought onto the present scene not as something between him and them, but between himself and God. The point here, of course, and thus the reason for the present rhetoric, is that such "repayment" of God is not possible at all. But it is a most effective way of expressing his sheer delight over Timothy's good news about them.

In making this point Paul (somewhat awkwardly) repeats himself three times, which in some ways says it all. First, he asks how he can *repay God* for his present joy in the *presence of God.* Whatever else, Timothy's report has brought him once more into God's presence with an overflow of gratitude, so much so that he is willing to ask rhetorically, "How can I possibly pay God back for my present joy about you?" Second, his joy is so expansive he refers to it as "all the joy in which we rejoice." Such redundancy could hardly have been missed by them. Third, his thanksgiving is "for you" and is offered "because of you." Together these repetitions are both effective on their side and revealing of his deep concern for them.

10 But while Paul is in God's presence, overflowing with joy and thanksgiving to God for them, he also prays for/about them, and this is where Paul's sentence begins to get a bit overloaded with present concerns. The prayer, he tells them, is regular (throughout "night and day";[395] cf. 2:9), and it is intense ("most earnestly"[396]). The primary object of the prayer is a most natural one, given the circumstances and the nature of the letter to this point: "to see you again" (which in the Greek idiom is "to see your faces").

But the final clause is the one that is least expected in terms of the present prayer and of what has been said to this point. His ultimate reason for wanting to see them is so that "we might supply what is lacking in your faith." This last phrase in particular reminds us that their "faith" in this passage is not about their way of entry into Christian life, but of the way they live out that faith in very practical, everyday circumstances, thus their "faith-fulness." Our difficulty from this long vantage point is with both the verb the TNIV has rendered as "supply" and its object, "the deficiencies." Although the main point seems easy enough to discern, and its particular historical referent almost certainly points forward to what Paul instructs in 4:1-5:11 that follows, the meaning here of the verb and its object together is less than certain.[397] The primary sense of the verb is "to cause [something] to be in condition to function well" (BDAG), and thus either to "restore" something to its working condition or simply to "prepare" it for such use. Because the object of the verb is "what is lacking in your faith," it most likely in this case means simply to "put it in proper condition." In any case, what follows is both correction (4:3-8; 4:9-12), thus "putting their faith into proper

condition," and instruction where their "faith" has been deficient (4:13-18), while 5:1-11 is a bit of both. In some ways, the NAB's "remedy the deficiencies of your faith"[398] would seem to get at both dimensions of the metaphor, although it might also sound a bit more pejorative in English than would have been intended in Greek.

But this is hardly the way for Paul to end this paragraph, which up to this point simply overflows with both relief and joy. So rather than move on directly to the "deficiencies," Paul chooses to conclude the now very long narrative with a prayer report that touches all the previous bases and anticipates what is to come.

From this passage (vv. 1-10), one can learn much about Paul both as a person and as a "pastor." On the personal side, this section is full of "friendship" motifs, as understood by ancient standards. Thus, even though they are his "disciples," as it were, he treats them in this letter altogether as his friends. Here in particular, therefore, those who have roles of church leadership can learn much about the true nature of such a relationship. This is not the apostle exercising "authority" over, but a friend coming "alongside," showing genuine concern for their welfare in Christ. At the same time, he demonstrates that "feelings" regarding friends are a genuine part of such relationships. Paul here exhibits none of the aloofness that has often characterized what has come to be called "Christian ministry," which seems too often to fall short of the apostolic kind.

H. THE PRAYER REPORT (3:11-13)

> *11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus*[399] *clear the way for us to come to you. 12 May the Lord*[400] *make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus*[401] *comes with all his holy ones.*[402]

With these words the long narrative with which this letter began (in 1:5) is now brought to an end. Here at last is the prayer report,[403] which in Paul's later letters, whenever they do appear, come right after the thanksgiving.[404] But one must be careful not to judge this letter in light of what Paul does later. In this earliest of his preserved letters Paul records a prayer for them that seems to have two purposes. First, he hereby concludes the narrative of his and the Thessalonians' past and present relationships on a note similar to, and thus forming a kind of inclusio with, the prayer of thanksgiving with which the letter began (1:2-3). At the same time, second, he anticipates the matters addressed in the rest of the letter,[405] where he deals with the "deficiencies" mentioned at the end of the preceding sentence (v. 10).

The prayer itself is in two parts. Verse 11, directed to both the Father and the Son, picks up the major concern of the preceding narrative, his long absence from the Thessalonian believers and his desire to see them again. Verses 11-12, directed only to Christ, anticipates the concerns of the rest of the letter: that *(a)* the Lord, Jesus, would cause the love Paul has thanked God for in 1:3 to increase and abound both among themselves (picked up in 4:9- 12) and for everyone else (including those who are giving them grief); and *(b)* the Lord will cause them to be *(i)* "blameless with regard to holiness" *(ii)* at Christ's parousia (the first part of which is picked up in 4:3-8, and the second in 4:13-18).[406]

11 Paul's first concern in praying for the Thessalonians has to do with his and their relationship — looked at from his side: this is what we pray for about ourselves; when we turn to you (v. 12), we express different concerns. The

present content is basically for the fulfillment of the first part of the preceding prayer report in verse 10: “night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again.” The prayer begins with an emphatic, “may our God and Father himself.”[407] The actual content of the prayer, that God and Christ will “*clear the way*[408] for us to come to you,” appears to be in direct response to the fact that up till now “Satan [has] hindered us” (2:18).

The prayer itself, however, begins in a way that should catch everyone’s attention. Here is a Jew, born and bred in, and deeply committed to, a monotheism where a person regularly repeated the traditional “creed” of all Judaism, the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, Israel, Yahweh your God, Yahweh is *one*.” But a couple of centuries before Paul, Yahweh’s sacred name was no longer spoken aloud, apparently so that no one would take it “in vain” and thus break the third commandment. So in the oral reading of the Hebrew text, *Adonai* (“Lord”) came to be substituted for *Yahweh*. This in turn was taken up in the Septuagint, where *kyrios* (“Lord”)[409] was consistently substituted for *Yahweh*, thus translating the oral substitution for the written word. So the oral *Shema* now took the form, “Hear, Israel, *kyrios* your *theos*, *kyrios* is one.” What Paul himself did with this most sacred tradition — and well before writing this letter[410] — is remarkable indeed. He is now praying to the *one theos* as “our God and Father” and to the *one kyrios* as “Jesus,” whom he had earlier identified as “God’s Son” (1:10).[411]

The clue to this extraordinary dividing up of the *Shema*, and the clear evidence that this is not guesswork on our part, is to be found in the letter written soon after this one (1 Cor 8:6), where Paul explicitly does this very thing. In contrast to the “gods” *(theoi)* many of the Greek pantheon and “lords” *(kyrioi)* many of the mystery cults, he says, for *us* there is *one theos,* whom he identifies as “the Father,” and *one kyrios,* whom he identifies with Jesus. The present prayer is certain evidence that what Paul says in this next letter is already well in place by the time he writes these earlier letters to the Thessalonian believers. That he does this in such a matter-of-fact way, and without explanation or argumentation, is at the same time sure evidence that he must have previously instructed them not only on the saving work of Christ, but also on *who* the divine Savior actually was. So while this opening prayer (v. 11) is directed primarily to God the Father, as the emphatic “himself” makes clear, the remarkable inclusion of the Son as the compound subject of the singular verb[412] seems to exist in anticipation of the rest of the prayer, which is directed solely to Christ.

Two further matters need to be noted, both christological. First, one should observe *(a)* that Paul can pray to both God the Father and the Lord Jesus

together as one (v. 11), *(b)* that he can pray to both together but single out one as the object (grammatical subject) of the concerns of prayer at a given time (vv. 12-13), and *(c)* that in these earliest two letters he can pray to either separately (for the Father see 1 Thess 1:2-3; 5:23; for Christ see 2 Thess 3:5 and 16).

Second, even though the first emphasis in this case is on God the Father, the final focus of the prayer is altogether on the Lord Jesus, which makes the singular verb and compound subject in verse 11 seem to be more than Paul's simply taking over "conventional liturgical language to which [he] and his readers were accustomed."[413] Indeed, this same phenomenon happens in reverse in 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, where Christ is mentioned first (including with the *autos* ["himself"]) while the pickup, exactly as in the present case, is with prayer addressed to the second divine person mentioned at the outset, namely God the Father. So one simply cannot be dismissive about the role of Christ in the present prayer.[414]

Together these realities indicate the very high place Christ had in Paul's understanding of God's identity. Here is a strict monotheist praying with ease to both the Father and the Son, focusing first on the one and then the other, and without a sense that his monotheism is being stretched or is in some kind of danger. One can only conjecture as to why Paul directs the continuation of the prayer to Christ rather than to the Father. Most likely it is related to an inherent difference for him between the two loves. In the later prayer in 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, the focus is on the Father's love for them, which issued in their experiencing by his grace "eternal comfort and good hope." Here the emphasis would tend toward the one whose love was expressed historically in his death "for us" (see on 2 Thess 2:13 below; cf. Gal 2:20). Paul wants the Lord who so loved them to cause their love for one another to abound.

12 With an emphatic "but as for you,"[415] the prayer now turns from desires regarding the apostle(s) toward the Thessalonians themselves. With Christ alone as the one to whom Paul now directs the prayer, his first concern (expressed in this verse) is that "the Lord [Jesus] make your love increase and overflow." Thus Paul picks up on the commendation in verse 6, that Timothy's report had included "your love." He now prays that such love will "increase," so as to "spill over" or "abound."[416] That Paul will pick up this latter verb in 4:10 seems to demonstrate the anticipatory nature of the present prayer.

But whereas in verse 6 above we were left with making an educated guess as to the direction of the love reported back to Paul, here he clearly indicates what direction he wants that love to go — "for each other and for everyone else." The first of these seems intentionally to anticipate what comes next, especially in

4:3-8 and 9-12. That it should also be directed toward "everyone else" is both all-embracing and ambiguous in terms of immediate concerns. It may be just a natural add-on, that Christian love must not be directed only toward one's brothers and sisters, but must reach beyond themselves as well. If so, it might also embrace their enemies in Thessalonica. But such generalities should probably not be pressed to specifics in a context like this. In any case, the final add-on, "just as ours does for you," brings the love back into focus, as concerned primarily for their internal relationships.

13 In this final clause of the prayer, Paul moves from their love for one another (to be taken up in 4:3-12) to what appears to be the major concern in the letter, some misunderstandings about the nature of the Parousia (to be taken up in 4:13-5:11). But the content of this clause is more certain than its immediate relationship to what has just preceded it.[417] With a clause that ordinarily expresses "result," and is undoubtedly intended to do so here, Paul in prayer desires that the Lord cause their love to increase and overflow, so that in this way Christ will also strengthen their hearts in holiness in preparation for his Parousia. Indeed, had Paul used a form of the verb "to be" or "to become," the whole clause would have made immediately good sense: "so that your hearts might be blameless . . . ," as a result of their abounding in love. Perhaps the best way to look at what he does is to see the whole for what it is ultimately intended to be: prayer for the very things that he needs to speak to in what immediately follows in our chapters 4 and 5. If so, then the grammar of "result" is most likely intended to be seen not as the immediate result of their increased love for one another, but as a second thing he prays that the Lord will do for them *in the context of* their increased love for one another.

Still addressing his prayer to Christ, Paul first asks that the risen Lord (1:10) "strengthen[418] your hearts." As the rest of the letter makes clear, Paul in typical Jewish fashion is ultimately concerned with their conduct, that it be "blameless in holiness." But to get there he prays for the strengthening of their hearts, another Jewish expression.[419] The heart needs strengthening since, as the "center and source of the whole inner life, with its thinking, feeling, and volition" (BDAG 1 b), it is the source of all purposeful conduct. The verb in this case is the same one that he had previously used regarding the reason for sending Timothy to visit them (v. 2). Now, however, he prays to the one who can ultimately cause it to happen. Timothy, therefore, could help to strengthen them and encourage them in their ongoing "faith-fulness." But only the Lord himself can strengthen them in their inner being for the two ways necessary for them to be prepared for his coming: "blameless" with regard to their outward, visible

conduct toward each other and the world;[420] and “in holiness” with regard to their relationship with God and Christ.

In other contexts such prayer would be seen as putting emphasis on their present daily conduct. And while that undoubtedly is Paul’s first concern here, it turns out that his focus is on their being that way when they end up in God’s presence at Christ’s Parousia. The result is that Paul’s sentence thus concludes with four prepositional phrases in a row: “in holiness,” “in the presence of our God and Father,” “at the coming of our Lord, Jesus,” and “with his holy ones” — although the last two belong together as a single unit. We will comment on these final three in their order of appearance, beginning with “in the presence of our God and Father.”

The present locution in prayer echoes what Paul had said earlier in 2:18 about their being found together at the Lord’s coming. But that earlier clause focussed altogether on his and their being together in *Christ’s* own presence at his Coming. Here, in the context of holiness, and anticipating the correctives that will follow immediately, he reminds them that the ultimate goal is for them all to arrive *together* “in the presence of our God and Father.” In doing so, and whether intentional on Paul’s part or not, he not only echoes the way the letter began in 1:3, but also thus creates an inclusio whereby the whole narrative of chapters 1-3 is framed by this reality. At the beginning his concern was to remind the Thessalonians that they are constantly being remembered “in the presence of our God and Father” as the apostles pray for them. Now his concern is for Christ to strengthen them in holiness in preparation for their being in God’s presence at Christ’s coming.

The more significant thing about this final prepositional phrase is that — the first of many instances in the corpus — Paul applies directly to Christ language from the Septuagint, where the Lord *(Kyrios)* is a substitute for the name of Yahweh. Thus, with the language *at the coming of our Lord, Jesus, with all his holy ones*, Paul’s intertextual appropriation of Zechariah 14:5 seems certain, since the language is too close to be merely accidental.[421] The two texts read:

> Paul at the coming **of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones**
> Zech and shall come **the Lord** my God and **all the holy ones with** him[422]

The christological import of this sentence lies with the fact that the *Kyrios* of the Septuagint is “Yahweh *my* God,” who will himself come to the Mount of Olives and carry out his eschatological victory over the nations. In Paul’s theology, the future coming of the *Lord* is always seen as the return of the present reigning Lord, Jesus Christ. What Paul has done seems clear enough: The future coming

of Yahweh is now to be understood as the future coming of "*our* Lord Jesus," who alone is *Kyrios* in Paul's new understanding — resulting from his own encounter with the risen Lord (see 1 Cor 9:1). One can scarcely miss the ease with which Paul now reads the *Kyrios* (= Yahweh) of Zechariah as referring to Christ, the Lord. So much is this so that in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, the coming Lord Jesus Christ has altogether assumed the role of judging God's enemies as well (see p. 257 below).

We should note at the end that the clear intertextual use of Zechariah 14:5 should resolve the final matter in the sentence, which has had a long history of debate, as to whether "the holy ones" refers to angels or Christian "saints."[423] The latter suggestion derives from what Paul says later in this letter (4:16), where "the living" will meet in the air those who have died, as they accompany Christ at his coming. But four matters would seem to settle this question decisively in favor of "angels." First, Paul's usage of the Zechariah text, which can only refer to "angels," should be seen as determinative, especially since that intertextual borrowing is the only contextual reason for the prepositional phrase ("with all his holy ones") to appear at all. As such Paul is echoing the words of Jesus found, for example, in Mark 8:38 (cf. Matt 25:31). Second, when this same language appears again in 2 Thessalonians 1:10, the fact that it appears as a doublet with "all who believe" points once again to the angelic host in that context. Third, in a similar context in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, but now with reference to the "revelation of the Lord" for judgment against his enemies, Paul specifically identifies "the holy ones" as "his powerful angels." Fourth, since the term *hoi hagioi* ("the holy ones") does not appear elsewhere in the current letter or the next as a designation for the newly formed people of God,[424] it is difficult to imagine how the Thessalonians themselves could have understood it in such a way.[425] Thus despite some forms of eschatological expectation among certain evangelical believers, this text scarcely serves to support their unique expression of Pauline eschatology, that either pre-raptured "saints" or "saints" who have died and are currently "with the Lord" will return to earth with Christ. Indeed, Paul says almost exactly the opposite later in this letter in 4:16, which is the passage through whose lens one must also understand 4:14.

Although the first petition of this prayer may at first glance seem to us to be less appropriate than others to carry over into the present, there are certainly many kinds of instances where it is in fact altogether fitting — especially in circumstances unlike this one, where people have had misunderstandings with each other. But the rest of the prayer seems to be appropriate for all times and

seasons, both for pastors regarding the Lord's people under their care and for parents with their children. It is hard to imagine a more appropriate prayer for all times and circumstances than verse 12; and verse 13, prayed vocally over children or congregation, may perhaps help those for whom it is prayed to become more conscious that life in the present is preparation for the life to come.

II. SUPPLYING WHAT IS LACKING (4:1-5:11)

With the narrative of their past relationships concluded by way of the preceding prayer report, Paul now turns to "supply what is lacking" (3:10) by way of letter, since he is unsure as to how soon "the Lord will clear the way for us to come to you" (3:11). In so doing, he shifts from using features common to letters of friendship to those common to letters of moral exhortation. Paul is almost certainly now addressing matters that Timothy has reported back to him. The instructions come in four clear parts. The first two (4:3-8 and 9-12) are basically behavioral matters: how believers in Christ are to live in the world and in relationship with one another. The third one, having to do with believers who have died before the coming of Christ (4:13-18), is the only new instruction in the letter; it is followed by the final, closely related question of the day of the Lord (5:1-11), in which the previous three items are brought together.

Thus, starting with verse 3, Paul begins a series of exhortations, which, apart from 4:13-18, are basically reminders, reinforcing *(a)* what they had previously been told, and *(b)* what most of them are in fact doing. Various reminders are thus found throughout the passage, beginning with the introduction in 4:1-2.[426]

> 4:1 *(a)* Just as you received from us *(b)* Just as you are also walking
> *(b)* that you do so all the more
> 4:2 *(a)* For you know what commandments we gave you
> 4:6 *(a)* Even as we told you before
> 4:9 *(a)* You have no need for us to write to you *(a)* For you yourselves are "God taught"
> 4:10 *(b)* For you are doing this very thing *(b)* Abound in it all the more
> *(a)* Even as we have commanded you
> [[4:13-18 "We do not want you *not to know*"]]
> 5:1 *(a)* You have no need for us to write to you
> 5:2 *(a)* For you yourselves know these things
> 5:11 *(b)* Even as you are also doing

On certain points, therefore, where they have been previously instructed,

Paul apparently senses a degree of wavering (4:3-8; 4:9-12); on another point they need instruction as such (4:13-18), almost certainly because it has arisen in the interim; and on a further related point (5:1-11) they need former instruction reemphasized in a new way. He then concludes the letter with some more "general" paraenesis (5:12-24), which begins (vv. 12 and 14) with the same verbs as in 4:1.

The most noticeable difference between what has preceded (chs. 1-3) and these final sections can be found in our own level of certainty/uncertainty regarding "what's going on." That is, even though in chapters 1-3 Paul also reminds them of what "you know," the whole is held together by a narrative that also lets us in on what they know. But here we are much more in the dark. The first matter addressed (4:3-8) is especially obscure in terms of specifics, as is 4:9-12; and the two eschatological sections, which have a degree of related-ness, are not at all easy regarding many specifics. Our problem is that to the degree that an author and his recipients share knowledge in common, the lesser our degree of certainty, since an author does not often spell out details known in common. The net result is that we have a great deal more tentative-ness here, and thus a good deal more historical guessing (speculation?).

A. INTRODUCTION (4:1-2)

> *1 As for other matters,[427] brothers and sisters, we[428] instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living.[429] Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.*

Several features of these two sentences indicate that they serve to introduce the whole of this larger section, not just verses 3-8. First, the very complexity of Paul's first sentence (all of v. 1) is best explained as his own (somewhat convoluted) attempt to make the transition from matters of friendship to those of moral exhortation. Second, the plural "instructions" in verse 2 rather demands that it anticipates more than the singular — and now repeated — instruction given earlier regarding sexual morality within marriage. Third, and especially telling, is the fact that much of the language of these two (Greek) sentences is repeated not in verses 3-8 but in verses 9-10, thus indicating that the concern expressed here carries over into the later material.

For the sake of commentary, and thus to help the reader see what Paul himself was doing, the comments on this verse will be based on the following "literal" rendering of Paul's Greek into not very good English (although the latter, good English, should remain as the goal of all good translation[430]): "As for what is left then, brothers and sisters, we entreat you and urge in the Lord Jesus, that just as you received from us how you ought to walk and please God, just as you also are walking, that you might abound all the more."

1 Paul begins this new section with a combination of another vocative (the seventh one) and the adverb *loipon*. Most modern English versions render the adverb as "finally," and are thus the source of an untold number of sermonic quips about Paul's use of such a word so far from the end of his letter. But it remains a singular mystery as to why so many later English translations have chosen to go this route,[431] when it had been rendered more adequately by both the (1611) Protestant KJV ("furthermore") and the (1610) Roman Catholic Rheims Version ("for the rest"). Paul uses it in this same way again in 2

Thessalonians 3:1, and in Philippians 3:1 and 4:8, where in each case it means simply, “as for what remains to be said.” Using the English adverb “finally” this far from the end of the letter simply fails to connote Paul’s intent. He is not here “wrapping up” anything; rather, this adverb is his way of moving on to what further needs to be said in the letter.[432]

Nonetheless, Paul at the same time shows considerable reluctance to get at “what remains to be said,” which serves as further evidence that friendship is still the primary thrust of the letter. Basically his appeal is that “we are about to repeat instructions that you have already received from us”; his reluctance to put it this way probably stems from Timothy’s report that for the most part the Thessalonian believers are living properly. But since it is not universally the case, Paul moves from friendship motifs to moments of exhortation by making sure they understand that he is aware that not all of them are involved in the errors that need correction. What follows, therefore, will be exhortation, to be sure, but it is exhortation aimed at so few of them that he feels the need to ease his way into speaking to a decided minority in the context of the gathered people of God.

Using a combination of verbs that had some currency in the ancient world,[433] Paul thus begins gently, “we entreat you, indeed we appeal to you in the Lord Jesus.” The verb “entreat (ask)”[434] is rare in Pauline exhortations, occurring only in letters of friendship (here; 5:12; 2 Thess 2:1; Phil 4:3). But since “entreat” might not be heard for the apostolic imperative that is needed, and in keeping with an apparently known idiom, he adds the more common, “we exhort/appeal.”[435] The basis of the appeal is their common bond “in the Lord Jesus.”[436] That is, the apostles make their appeal as those whose sphere of existence is “in the Lord Jesus,” the same (now reigning) Lord just mentioned in the preceding prayer, who will be coming in great glory with all the heavenly host. Though not said here, this usage likewise carries the assumption that this is also the sphere of the Thessalonians’ present existence. At the same time, it seems inherently also to be an appeal to the Lord’s authority with regard to the content of the exhortation.[437]

But having gotten that far into this introductory sentence, Paul chooses to back up momentarily and to commend these believers for their basically, and obviously predominantly, Christian behavior. Thus a sentence that could have been spoken simply — “we entreat you . . . to continue to live in a way that is pleasing to God” — ends up saying this in an almost apologetic way. In so doing, Paul emphasizes three intertwined realities: *(a)* their behavior, which *(b)* has to do with “pleasing God,” and *(c)* the apostolic source of their having

learned about it.

Paul in this case fronts the fact that he and his companions were the source of the Thessalonians' coming to know how believers are to live in the world. Repeating the verb he had already used in this regard in the thanksgiving in 3:13, he reminds them that they are to live ("walk"[438]) in conformity to that previous instruction. This is obviously the main point of everything, that Paul's preaching among them was not just about their "faith,"[439] and thus their relationship to God. Such "faith" included living/behaving in conformity to that faith; and only by so doing will they be living in such a way that their "faith" is thereby "pleasing to God." This latter phrase also picks up language from earlier in the letter, positively in 2:4 with regard to how the apostolic company had preached while among them in Thessalonica and negatively in 2:15 with regard to how the Judean Jewish community had treated Paul. Passages like this should remind one that the motto *sola fide* ("by faith alone"), which has to do with how one is *related* to God, when it is not accompanied by "living" in keeping with that "faith," becomes both non-Pauline and something of a mockery of the gospel he proclaimed.

That Christian behavior that is in keeping with the gospel is Paul's present chief concern is made certain by what appears as a kind of semi-apologetic addendum:[440] "just as you also are walking." Thus what follows is not primarily new instruction; rather, it is former instruction now repeated with the ultimate goal that what the (probably) large majority of them are already doing, "you [all] might do so all the more." With this language, therefore, Paul both praises the majority and introduces the much-needed reminders to the disobedient few.

2 But since Paul is about to zero in on a matter of morality that was not thought of as immoral in much of the Greco-Roman world, he concludes these introductory moments with the reminder that the ultimate source of his ethical instructions (commandments) is none other than "the Lord Jesus" himself. So with an explanatory "for," he offers a final summarizing sentence which serves as something of an inclusio with the way the preceding sentence began. There it was "we urge you *in* the Lord Jesus," where the Lord Jesus was the common sphere of the apostles' and Thessalonians' new, eschatological existence. Here he concludes by reminding them of "the instructions we gave you *through* the Lord Jesus," where the emphasis is on the source of the instructions.

The "instructions" that follow are basically two, having to do with "sexual immorality" and with some who are living "in a way that is both idle and disruptive."[441] The first of these was a pagan vice that was not considered so by the pagans themselves; the second is more tenuous as to both its source and its

way of being expressed among them, but is significant enough to receive special attention in the next letter (2 Thess 3:6-13).[442]

B. AVOIDING SEXUAL IMMORALITY (4:3-8)

3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid[443] *sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control your own bodya in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very*[444] *God who gives*[445] *you*[446] *his Holy Spirit.*

[a] 4 Or *learn to live with his own wife;* or learn to acquire a wife

Paul now turns to the first of the two matters where their "faith" is "deficient" (3:10), about which he had formerly instructed them, and about which he has just prayed that they might be "blameless" at the coming of the Lord (3:12- 13). His prayer was that they "will be blameless *in holiness*" at the coming of Christ. Now he picks up what this means for them in terms of sexual relations. In order to appreciate why "sexual immorality" is the first matter up, one needs to be reminded that what the Jewish, and its offspring Christian, community regarded as immoral was generally not considered to be so among pagan Gentiles. Indeed, the seventh commandment would have been seen as absurd by "the pagans, who do not know God," one of whose philosophers could say, as a matter of course, "Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children."[447] It is precisely for such reasons that the issue of "sexual immorality" has a consistent place in Pauline ethics. For people for whom sexual activity outside of marriage was considered not only not "immoral" but in fact a cultural norm, Paul's regularly returning to this matter in his letters makes a great deal of historical sense. It is also clear evidence that he would never have thought of himself or his fellow travelers within the believing community as doing anything other than continuing the

basic morality of the Torah and therefore also of Jesus himself.

Nonetheless, even though the primary concern is stated with explicit clarity, at least two of the details are much less so and call for more careful investigation, namely *(a)* the meaning of the Greek word *skeuos* (literally, "vessel") in verse 4, and *(b)* how disobedience in this matter is a way of "wronging" or "taking advantage of one's brother" in verse 6. Significantly, this present matter in particular comes under the rubric of "holiness" (vv. 3 and 7-8), and is expressed over against "the *ethnoi* ['peoples/Gentiles'], who do not know God" (v. 5).

The paragraph is composed of three sentences in Greek: an extremely complex one (vv. 3-6) in which previous instruction on sexual morality is spelled out in some detail, followed by two brief ones, one (v. 7) explanatory of the first in terms of God's will, and a concluding one (v. 8) indicating how disobedience on this matter is related to that will. The opening sentence is in fact a series of appositions to "the will of God" in verse 3, expressed in terms of holiness, which in this case is defined as abstaining from "sexual immorality." This in turn is spelled out in two ways, first in terms of a man's "keeping his 'vessel' in holiness" in contrast to pagans who do not know God, and finally in terms of not "wronging" a brother in this matter, since such sin will result in the Lord's punishment. Thus the series of five appositives moves successively — and one is led to think purposely on Paul's part — from a very general admonition to a more specific kind of sin (sexual immorality) to a case-specific instance of the same. Thus:

> *(a)* This is the will of God:
> *(b)* That you be holy
> *(c)* = Abstaining from sexual immorality
> *(d)* = Each one knowing how to possess his own "vessel" in holiness, not in lust
> *(e)* = No one overstepping the boundaries and cheating his brother or sister in this matter;
>
> *(concl.)* For the Lord is the avenger regarding all these things

What Paul seems to have done, therefore, is to use a specific case of sexual sin against a brother in the believing community[448] to deal once more with the larger issue of sexual immorality, since such teaching would be so utterly foreign to newly converted pagan believers in Christ.[449]

3 This opening clause serves as the "heading" for the rest of the paragraph. Thus Paul begins, "this is the[450] will of God," which is then defined by a series

of appositives, each one becoming more case specific as the long sentence unfolds. The first definition of "God's will" is broadly stated as "holiness/sanctification."[451] This word group, with its decidedly moral overtones, belongs exclusively to Diaspora Judaism and early Christianity. Nowhere in known pagan literature is anyone concerned with holiness or holy living.[452] The noun itself derives from the adjective "holy," and takes its meaning in the biblical revelation from God's pronouncement in Leviticus 19:2, "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy," which in that chapter in Leviticus finds expression in a whole variety of ways, including the ten commandments. Thus, even though objects set aside for sacred purposes could be referred to as "holy," the primary sense of the word within the biblical tradition has to do with moral rectitude — behavior that is in keeping with God's own character.

In the present case, "your holiness"[453] as "God's will" is expressed negatively — and narrowly — as abstention from "sexual immorality."[454] It is this broad word, which in biblical usage covers every kind of sexual sin,[455] that creates the first ambiguity for us in terms of the specifics. If we had only the clause that makes up our verses 4 and 5, this would be universally understood as sexual sin in general. But the clause in verse 6 gives us reason to pause, and to think that perhaps there is a very specific way this case of sexual immorality has found expression.

4-5 This next clause stands in apposition to verse 3 and therefore spells out the specific nature of the "sexual immorality" to be avoided. At the same time it is the place where most of our difficulties lie. The clause seems to begin simply enough: "[that] each of you 'know.' " But part of our present difficulty is to ascertain the sense of "know" in this context, whether it means "to understand how" (so BDAG 3) or something closer to "learn how" (BDAG 4) with regard to the object of the verb.[456] In either case it has been all too easy for some scholars to act as if this verb did not exist at all when they go on to deal with the difficult idiom that follows. Whatever else, Paul's first concern seems to be that someone is engaging in an illicit sexual relationship; otherwise the contrast that has been set up makes very little sense.

Paul's concern is thus expressed first positively (v. 4) and then negatively (v. 5); and whatever else, his two contrasting "in" phrases ("in holiness and honor" and "not in passionate lust") must be kept in view when decisions are made regarding the subject and verb of the clause, since both of these phrases have historically been the cause of considerable difficulty in understanding the passage. Moreover, there is no view, including the one opted for here, that is

without difficulty. So in the end the decision most often boils down to choosing the option with whose set of difficulties a scholar can most easily live.

The difficulties the reader/interpreter faces are the result of two matters: *(a)* Paul's use of the word "vessel" as the direct object of *(b)* a verb that ordinarily means to "acquire." Thus (literally): "This is God's will . . . that each of you know/learn to acquire his own vessel in holiness and honor, not in the passions of lust." For translators the solutions have varied. The King James Version (and its offspring, NKJV and NASU) has maintained the ambiguity of the metaphor, but has chosen to render the verb as "possess," a meaning which it has in the perfect tense, but not ordinarily in the present.

More often the English translations have assumed that Paul's use of "vessel" was intended as a *metaphor* for either "body" or "wife," assumptions that can be traced back to the second century. But as Lightfoot pointed out over a century ago, the choice between these two historic options is difficult "not because both are equally appropriate, but because neither is free from serious difficulty" (54). Although each of them is plagued with its own set of difficulties, the primary problem they share in common is that either could have been expressed in a straightforward manner as Paul does elsewhere, and there without the need of an obtuse metaphor, which can be found neither in Paul nor elsewhere in the ancient world. After all, Paul himself in other places speaks openly and directly about "wives" and "bodies," and therefore neither of them would seem to require such a strange metaphor, especially so had he intended "wife." It is thus the use of "vessel" itself that has created most of our difficulties and has more recently led some scholars to find a different solution, namely that Paul is not using an otherwise unknown *metaphor,*[457] but is here using "vessel" as a *euphemism* to refer to the male sexual organ; but even this "solution" is not without its difficulties. Thus we need to look at both the arguments for, and difficulties with, each of the three suggested options.[458]

Those who think Paul put "vessel" as a metaphor for "wife" do so primarily on three grounds: first, this option especially makes sense of the basic meaning of the verb itself, "to acquire" or "procure for oneself" (BDAG); second, they can thereby also make some sense of verse 6, which is then understood to mean, "acquire your own wife and don't mess around with a brother's wife"; and third, in 1 Peter 3:7 a man's wife is actually called "the weaker *vessel*."[459] It is also often noted that Sirach 36:24 actually uses this verb with "wife" as the object, thus "he who acquires a wife."[460]

But this view is riddled with so many difficulties that it has now become the minority option.[461] First, and for me most conclusive, is the fact that such a

metaphor is both unlike Paul elsewhere and seems completely unnecessary in this context. If Paul had meant "wife," why not say "wife" rather than use this otherwise unknown metaphor.[462] Second, the requirement is addressed to "each of you," which under all normal use of language would mean that all of the men are to get married. Third, the possessive "your own" is especially strange, unless it is a safeguard against sleeping with another man's wife; but the passage begins too generally for such a view, which in any case could have been said plainly and simply. Fourth, the passage from 1 Peter is of no real help, since by implication the man is also a "vessel," only a stronger one. In fact, "vessel" in this case is not actually a metaphor for "wife" as such, but speaks of her overall existence in first-century culture (at least physically so). But the far greater difficulty, fifth, is with the verb in verse 5. What would it mean for the one doing wrong to "acquire a wife in passionate lust," so that the believer is commanded not to do so?[463] That might work in the twenty-first century, but not in the traditional home in a first century setting, where wives were usually not "acquired" on the basis of "love," but for their ability to manage a household and to bear legitimate children.[464] Finally, sixth, verse 6 presents still greater difficulty for this view; how, one wonders, does one avoid defrauding a brother by acquiring his own wife, and do so not in passionate lust?

For these many reasons, therefore, a large number of interpreters and most English translators have opted for "body" as the intent of the assumed metaphor "vessel."[465] This view can deal with most of the objections to seeing the "vessel" as one's wife; furthermore, Paul does refer to the "body" as an "earthenware vessel" in 2 Corinthians 4:7. But this view also has its own set of difficulties. First, to make this work one must take the Greek verb *ktaomai*, which means to "acquire" or "possess [= own]," to mean something like "gain control over," for which there is no solid lexical evidence. Furthermore, second, it is not at all clear how this works in contrast to the pagans; is Paul suggesting that pagans were only and always using their bodies in a context of passionate lust? Indeed, it is the negative phrase regarding Gentiles that makes this view so difficult to sustain in the present argument. And third, it is also not clear how verse 6 works in light of such an understanding.

For both of these views, however, the primary difficulty remains: Why use an otherwise unknown metaphor for what could have been said plainly, if either of these were the issue?[466] To be sure, had we only these two options, then the evidence leans heavily in favor of "body." But that same evidence works also in favor of the view that Paul uses the noun "vessel" not as a metaphor, but as a euphemism for the male sexual organ.[467] The evidence for such usage can be

found in the Septuagint of 1 Samuel 21:5-6, where David's men were required to have "kept themselves from women" if they were to partake of the holy bread. David's response is that "of course they have been kept from women," as always when they set out on a mission. But in elaborating on this he reminds the priest: "The men's 'things' are holy even when the mission is not holy." The Hebrew word *kĕli* in this case was (correctly) translated by *skeuos* ("vessel") in the Septuagint, and has rather universally been understood to refer to the men's penises. If that is Paul's meaning here, then it is also the view that makes the most sense of the double modifiers, "in holiness and *honor*." Paul's point, then, is that the holiness he is concerned about has to do with a man's keeping his sexual organ holy and "with honor." It is this word that seems to be in focus when Paul completes his sentence in verse 6.

But as with the view that "vessel = body," the difficulty here still lies with the meaning of the verb, since the basic meaning "acquire" is hardly possible for either of these options. The most likely answer to this difficulty in both cases is that Paul was using the present tense of the verb with a meaning it ordinarily had in the perfect tense: to "possess" in the sense of "gain mastery over."[468] The difference between this last option and that of "body" is that it seems to make far more sense for Paul to use this more obtuse language as a euphemism rather than as a simple metaphor for something that could have been said directly without resorting to metaphorical language.

But before he goes on to the main concern of the passage, "not wronging or taking advantage of a brother in this matter," Paul sets out such "holiness" in striking contrast to the immorality of "the pagans," who are described in a twofold way: as "living in passionate lust" because at the same time "they do not know God." This contrast makes especially good sense if our understanding of Paul's use of "vessel = male sexual organ" is correct. As pointed out earlier (on v. 3), the pagan world simply did not think of sexual promiscuity or indulgence as "wrongdoing." Thus sexual immorality was not "immoral" to them. Therefore, to think like them on this matter, not to mention to live like them, means to live "in passionate lust" rather than in "holiness before God." And the reason for such a view of sexual immorality lies with the fact that they simply "do not know God."[469] "Knowledge of God" from Paul's biblical point of view assumes automatically knowledge of what it means to be created in the Creator's own image, originally designed, and now redeemed, to bear God's likeness in a world that does not know God. It therefore means to keep one's sexual organ within the bonds of marriage and thus in a way that is holy before God.

6 But in the specific case to which Paul is responding, the sexual sin does not

seem to be just a matter, for example, of a man's going to the prostitutes. Rather, Paul's grammar and the present clause indicate that it is directly related to what has been said to this point.[470] On that issue one can be quite sure;[471] but on the issues of *what* and *how*, we are left more in the dark. That is, we simply cannot be sure from this brief admonition exactly "what" the offender has been doing that Paul should describe his offense in terms of "not wronging or taking advantage of *his* brother in this matter"; nor can we therefore know "how" his action can be so described, in terms of its explicit relationship both to the prohibition that has preceded and the warning that follows. The best answer overall is that at least one case of sexual sin has been an adulterous situation with another man's wife, or perhaps with a household slave. This would seem at least to account for the doubling of the verb: that no one "overstep the boundaries"[472] and thus "take advantage of (= cheat)"[473] his Christian brother[474] in this matter.[475]

But if we are less than sure on the specifics of the case that called forth this long admonition, we can be sure that Paul does not think it a matter to be taken lightly. So drawing on language that echoes the Septuagint of Psalm 94:1, Paul reminds the offender — and thus the whole community as well — that divine justice will be meted out on such offenders of divine morality. But whereas the psalmist has it, "the God *(elohim)* of vengeance [is] the LORD *(Yahweh),*" in Paul it is now "the Lord = Jesus" who will bring about divine justice in this and all such cases.[476]

To be sure, some are ready to see this occurrence of *kyrios* as referring to God the Father.[477] But that not only runs roughshod over Paul's clear distinctions (as noted on 1:1 above), but it also fails to take seriously the ease with which Paul can substitute Christ as "Lord" in speaking of prerogatives which otherwise belong to God alone. After all, in Romans 14:10, referring to believers — and in a context where "the Lord = Christ Jesus" dominates the discussion — Paul speaks of "the judgment seat of God"; while in a similar context in 2 Corinthians 5:10, again referring to believers, he says that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." In the present text, unique to the New Testament, Paul's use of "avenger" occurs in a context in which the Lord Jesus himself will take the side of the wronged person.

Paul now brings this long sentence to a conclusion by picking up the "reminder of previous instructions" motif from the introduction in verses 1 and 2; thus, "as we have already told you and warned you." The new element here is the second verb, "[we] warned you," which in fact is the final word in Paul's own sentence. Although this verb will recur three times in 1 and 2 Timothy, this

is its only occurrence in the church corpus. Despite Bauer-Danker's placing this usage under the heading "to make a solemn declaration about the truth of something," it seems far more likely in this singular Pauline usage in letters to his churches to bear its second meaning, "to exhort with authority in matters of extraordinary importance." What is not at all clear is why and under what kind of circumstances Paul would have previously "warned" them that Christ would be the "avenger" for those who disregard instructions on sexual misconduct. Here one must simply take Paul at "face value," without knowing further details.

7 But Paul is not one to let the current matter drop at this point — with a word of warning to the one persisting in sexual sin that is ultimately against a brother in Christ. So, in what will become typical fashion for him, he brings the warning back to the primary matter, the fact that in calling them to become a part of his own people, God had made no room "for impurity," but rather had called the Thessalonian believers to live "in holiness." In so doing, Paul picks up language he had used earlier in the letter in 2:12, where he reminded them of how he had formerly "dealt with" them — as a father who urged them to "walk" in a manner "worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."

In the present case "the call" is defined by two contrasting prepositional phrases. Negatively, God's call excluded "impurity," where the preposition[478] tells them that God's purpose in calling them did not have sexual sin as its goal. Rather, Paul goes on, and now with a different preposition, God's calling of the Thessalonians to himself was for the purpose of their living "in holiness," meaning that "holiness" was to be the context that framed all of life both within and outside the community of faith.[479] They were to live in *holiness;* and so with that word Paul also "frames" the entire matter that began in verse 3.

8 With a very strong inferential conjunction,[480] used only here in his letters, Paul concludes this "reminder/warning" by indicating what refusal to conform amounts to: rejection of the very God who "gives you" the Holy Spirit so as to enable obedience at this point. Thus Paul does two things in this concluding sentence. First, he reminds them that the preceding prohibition is not merely human teaching; to reject it is to reject the eternal God himself.[481] Second, the gift of the Spirit, to whose presence Paul appeals as the first thing up when he reminded them of their actual conversion (1:6), now becomes Paul's final court of appeal as God's own personal enablement for them to abstain from sexual immorality. Thus the sequence is: to reject Paul's teaching is to reject God himself, the very God whose ongoing gift of the Spirit is what enables obedience at this point.

This argument has several features that need further explication, not only

because it contains some crucial implications as to Paul's understanding of the Spirit, but also because it assumes far more than it actually says.[482] First, Paul's own word order puts special emphasis on the Spirit as the *Holy* Spirit.[483] Thus the full designation "Holy Spirit" is not simply the Spirit's name — though that is also true. But just as "our *Lord* Jesus Christ" is both name and reality,[484] so also the Spirit, who in the Old Testament is most frequently designated "the Spirit of God," is in the New Testament designated the "*Holy* Spirit," both as name and reality — the Spirit is none other than the Spirit of the God who is himself "holy."[485] As the Spirit who in Paul's word order is emphasized as the *Holy* One, he is thus to be distinguished from all other "spirits." In the final analysis, therefore, we are here dealing with the character of God, and with Paul's understanding of the Christian ethic as the Spirit's reproducing that character in his people. Thus in a context where God's will is defined in terms of the Thessalonians' living in *holiness* (v. 3), so that they "gain mastery over their own vessels" in *holiness* (v. 4), because God has called them not to uncleanness but to *holiness* (v. 7), it is hardly surprising that Paul here emphasizes the Spirit as "the *Holy* One," who is thus the source of such "holiness" in the Thessalonian community.[486]

One should note further that in this first mention in the Pauline corpus of the actual "*gift* of the Spirit," he designates the Spirit as being given "into you." This unusual usage is most likely an intentional echo on Paul's part of the Septuagint of Ezekiel 37:6 and 14 ("I will give my Spirit into you"), which probably means something like, "I will *put* my Spirit in you."[487] This usage reflects a Pauline understanding of the gift of the Spirit as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises that God's own Spirit will come to indwell his people, "and you shall live" (Ezek 37:14; cf. 11:19). In later letters Paul will make this same point by referring to the Spirit as "given (or sent) into your hearts."[488]

Although there is some debate here, the use of the present participle, "who also gives" (see n. 20 above), seems intended to stress the ongoing work of the Spirit in their lives.[489] Although their previous conversion by the Spirit is the obvious presupposition of this usage, had Paul intended to refer to their conversion as such (as in 1:5-6),[490] he would have used the simple aorist, as in verse 7 and as he does elsewhere with regard to the Spirit.[491] This is very similar to the use of the present tense with "calls" in 2:12 and 5:24, and especially to the use of the present tense with the "granting" or "supplying" of the Spirit in Galatians 3:5 (cf. Phil 1:19). All of this is to say that Paul's concern here is not with their conversion, but with their present experience of God's *Holy* Spirit,

given to them by God precisely so that they might walk in holiness. Thus the Spirit is understood as the constant divine companion, by whose power one lives out holiness, that is, a truly Christian ethic.

Finally, both the nature of this argument (which brings in the presence of the Spirit in their lives as the clincher) and the emphasis on the "presentness" and "indwelling" nature of the Spirit as gift point to the Spirit as God's *effectual* empowerment in the struggle against sin. This does not mean that the Spirit guarantees perfection — hardly so — but it does mean that one is left without argument for helplessness. As Plummer (correctly) asserts: "This [gifting of Spirit] transformed their whole life; and it put an end to the pagan plea that [people have] no power to resist impure desires" (63). For Paul the presence of the Spirit was not simply God's gift as *an option* against sin; nor would he have understood the Spirit as present but ineffectively so. To the contrary, the dynamic that makes Paul's argument against sexual impurity possible is the experienced reality of the Spirit. Thus for Paul the Spirit is not only the key to becoming believers (1:6), but is the power for truly Christian behavior, and therefore makes disobedience on their part a difficult thing to argue for.

This passage has had an unfortunate, but understandable, checkered history of application in the church. It is a foundational passage for all so-called "holiness" groups, based on "holiness" as "God's will." And while that obviously has much going for it, Paul's concern is more case specific. In a world that has become increasingly more blatantly sexually active outside the marriage bond — very much like the pagan world Paul himself lived in — this passage should be a constant reminder that "holiness" and "sexual purity" belong together, exclusively so regarding "sexual purity," although "holiness" itself is a much larger concern for Paul. Thus "sexual purity" is not the whole of what it means to be "holy"; nonetheless, it is a significant part of such holiness. It is nearly offensive in our day to remind people that the first reason for sexual intercourse is not for pleasure, but for procreation; and God made it pleasurable so that procreation would happen. Thus, in a later letter (our 1 Corinthians) Paul will spend considerable energy on this question.

C. LOVING OTHERS BY WORKING WITH ONE'S OWN HANDS (4:9-12)

> *9 Now about your mutual love we*[492] *do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all the brothers and sisters*[493] *throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, dear friends, to do so more and more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your* [494] *hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*

Paul now turns to the second item reported by Timothy to him and Silas that needs to be addressed in a corrective way. As with the preceding matter, this too was anticipated in his prayer in 3:12-13, that "the Lord will cause your love for one another to abound." This concern is now picked up in terms of their having "been taught by God to love one another." Although this matter is here addressed in a seemingly casual way, it is in fact one to which Paul will return specifically in the "staccato imperatives" at the end of this letter (5:14); and since the present letter apparently failed to achieve its goal, he will pick it up even more vigorously in the next letter (2 Thess 3:6-15).

But the precise nature of the problem is not at all certain, and, as with all such matters, there has been plenty of guesswork.[495] Minimally, and in light of all the evidence in the two letters, we may assume that some people (men presumably) who could work for a living have for some reason chosen not to do so. They are thus (apparently) living off the largesse of others in the newly formed Christian community, householders who probably do in fact have the wherewithal to help them. *Why* the slackers might be doing so is simply not known, although it has been much debated.[496] But Paul the tentmaker, who himself refused to burden these new believers by living off their kindness (2:9), recognizes that the ultimate matter here is not "work" per se, but the meaning of love within the newly formed people of God as a divinely created *familia*, not to mention his further concern that they not bring shame on the gospel in the eyes of

unbelievers.

It is of interest in this instance that, much in keeping with the preceding matter, Paul does not begin by immediately taking on the slackers themselves. Rather, with what is known as a *captatio benevolentiae,* Paul begins with a word of praise for them all, so that he might ease into his words of correction for the small minority who need it. That he must return to this issue in a much stronger way in the next letter is evidence that it failed to work in the present case.

To be sure, some scholars have found the paragraph as a whole difficult to negotiate as dealing with a single issue, and have posited that Paul is here taking up two different issues.[497] But the grammar and structure of the two sentences seem conclusively to disallow such an option. Thus Paul begins with a commendation of the majority (vv. 9-10a), in which the entire matter is put in the context of believers' having familial love for one another. This is followed by a sentence that begins with an exhortation to do so all the more (v. 10b), before he goes on to deal directly with those who are not working so as to provide for their own sustenance (v. 11). The final reason for this corrective word is twofold: so as not to bring shame on the church before outsiders, and so that the persons involved would not "sponge" off others at this point (v. 12). Given Paul's need to return to this issue at some length in this next letter (2 Thess 3:6-15), it seems clear that these latter two items are the real issue for Paul.

Finally, we need also to note that nowhere in this first go around does Paul call those not carrying their own weight by the name he will use later on, *ataktoi* (= something like "disruptive-idle"). Here he simply admonishes them within the larger context of Christian love; and if we did not have the abbreviated "admonish the *ataktous*" in 5:14 and his own further, much less gentle, admonition in 2 Thessalonians, we would basically be in the dark regarding the present paragraph, which in turn would lead to far more guesses than those actually made.[498]

9-10a This opening sentence, which begins with a "now concerning," [499] spells out the basic concern of the paragraph without mentioning any of the details. From Paul's perspective at issue is *philadelphia* (TNIV, "mutual love"), a word that was used throughout the Greco-Roman world for love between actual siblings. But in this its first appearance in the New Testament [500] it has already assumed the familial relationship that God's newly formed people had with each other because of their common relationship to God through Christ. What is of interest is that Paul should use this word as the first thing up in what will evolve into an appeal to those who were slacking off by not working, and thus living off the benefit of others. This newly formed family relationship in Christ will thus

serve as the context for Paul's — in this case very slight — admonition to those who were living thus. Whether or not they themselves would have appealed to this new relationship in Christ as the basis for their non-activity cannot be known; what can be known is that Paul is ready to use this word as the framework for their hearing the admonition[501] that follows.

Nonetheless, at issue in this opening sentence is to determine to whom it is addressed. On the one hand, there can be little question that the whole church is presently in view. Both explanatory clauses that follow are addressed to "you" (plural); and both of them are expressed as such commonplace realities that Paul feels compelled to remind them that he really does "not need to write to you" on this matter. On the other hand, when he returns to the vocative "brothers and sisters" in verse 10b to urge them do so all the more, he has narrowed the focus so considerably that one can only assume that he is singling out the disruptive-idle as the main target for the whole paragraph. Of interest from our present distance is that nothing said in the present sentence would cause the disruptive-idle to know he was even indirectly aiming at them.

The first explanatory clause as to why Paul really should not need to write is plain enough: "for you yourselves[502] have been taught by God to love one another." Nor does anything said here prepare us in the slightest for the concluding sentence, where he spells out what this opening sentence is all about. In getting there he uses an otherwise unknown adjective, "God-taught." [503] Whether Paul is alluding to Isaiah 54:13 is possible, but moot.[504] What is surprising at this point is his appeal to being taught by God the Father rather than either by Christ the Son or through human mediation. Most likely this is an indirect appeal to the assumed knowledge of Scripture on their part that Paul displays throughout these two letters,[505] so that he has here appropriated the second of the "great commandments" as given by Jesus, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (reflecting Lev 19:18).[506] His point, then, is not that this is teaching peculiar to followers of Christ; rather, it is what would have been known by any of those who came to faith from the context of the synagogue, Jew or Gentile alike. Thus in the end the emphasis on their loving "each other" lies not so much on their *need* to do so, but on the *way* they should do so.[507] It should be further noted that "love" in this instance is not going to be described in the broader way that Paul does elsewhere (e.g., 1 Corinthians 13); here, rather, the emphasis will be on what love for others will *not* allow a person to do.

In this context Paul is also about to place the disruptive-idle within the context of the larger community of faith. So not only are they "taught by God" to love one another, but this is in fact what most of the community is already doing.

After all, none of this affirmation would have been necessary had not some among them *not* been living within this frame of reference. The surprising element in the sentence, if not the whole paragraph, is his reminder of the broad nature of their current love — "for *all* the brothers and sisters in the *whole* of Macedonia." One can only wonder as to how such love had found expression, since the "whole of Macedonia" at this time reached as far east as Philippi in the Macedonian plain and as far west as the Adriatic Sea, and thus included Berea in the middle. One need not speculate about what cannot be known, but it can be pointed out that in comparison to the other Macedonian towns where there were known believers, Thessalonica itself was a thriving metropolis by ancient standards. Thus work options were probably much greater there than was true in other places, including the fact that it was a center to which others might have had occasion to visit. And in any case, it was an ongoing concern of Paul's that his communities be aware of each other.

In sum, Paul's point is simple. These believers had already been taught by God to love one another, which instruction had found obvious expression both among them and beyond themselves. It is into this context that Paul now turns to address the abuse of this love on the part of a very small minority.

10b-11a Still keeping within the framework of the opening *captatio benevolentiae*, Paul begins the final sentence in this brief word of admonition by simply urging them to keep up the good work, as it were. Picking up the verb "we urge you" from verse 1, and with yet another vocative, "brothers and sisters,"[508] he now calls on them to abound all the more[509] in what they already are doing. But given all that has been said to this point, one is not quite prepared for the exhortation that follows. At the same time, what is said next as the main part of the present sentence indicates that everything has been heading here right along. At issue is not an admonition to the whole community to do more of what they are already doing, but to some within the community who are not doing so at all. Indeed, they are doing the exact opposite, and in so doing they are taking advantage of the love of the rest.

Thus Paul eases into this word of admonition in a most remarkable way, as though he knows that he needs to say it but is somewhat hesitant at the same time. Both the verb he uses here and the gradual succession of verbs in the admonition itself tell the story. He therefore begins with the imperative[510] "make it your ambition," in the sense that they "consider it the honorable thing to do." But now, in keeping with the nature of the way the whole admonition began, he uses a series of verbs that have the effect of "sneaking up on" those who need to hear it, which the TNIV has tried to show by placing a colon after the first one,

whose concern is then spelled out in the next two.

Thus with a splendid oxymoron[511] Paul urges that they "have ambition to lead a quiet life." This latter verb, however, is especially difficult to put into English in a way that does not mislead, since the adjective "quiet" usually carries the connotation either of "not speaking" or of "being restful." But Paul's present concern is with their relationship to others, in the sense of not intruding on their lives by becoming something of a burden to them. Thus "quiet" in this case has to do with some of them not being disruptive regarding the lives of others, which is made clear by the two elaborations that follow.

First, they are to "mind your own business," which in one sense is as nicely idiomatic in English as in the Greek, which is often put "mind your own affairs" (NRSV, ESV). But as with many such idioms, outside of the immediate context "mind your own business" is a much more pejorative idiom in English than Paul's own Greek intended.[512] His intent is that they "busy themselves with their own work" so that they will not need to be dependent on others for sustenance. Thus, second, they are to "work with your hands,"[513] which on the basis of the preceding clause means "with your *own* hands so as to be about your *own* work, and thus provide for your *own* needs."[514] By so doing they will no longer need to be supported by others in the believing community. And all of this, he concludes, is "just as we told you," which is a bit too weak in English for Paul's own "we instructed/directed you" — the verb of the cognate noun in verse 2 ("what *instructions* we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus"). This verb thus serves to form a kind of inclusio with verses 1 and 2 that have as an end result the tying together of the two matters in verses 3-12.

12 The final clause in this now long sentence, which is the primary way of expressing purpose in Greek, offers in this case what is at once both purpose and result; and since "result" is the main thrust of the clause, it is the primary focus of the majority of English translations. The result is twofold, which only at the end speaks directly to the implied issue of the preceding clause (v. 11), that the burden of caring for them will no longer be borne by others.

Picking up the Old Testament idiom of "walking in the ways of the Lord," Paul puts a missional concern as the first thing up in terms of how they "walk," meaning how they live their "daily life" in a way that is "fitting" as believers. Becoming followers of Christ does not mean they can live in a way that is utterly inappropriate as far as "outsiders" are concerned. The latter will have reasons enough in light of their own worldview to think that the believing community is off kilter regarding standards of behavior — including the matter of sexual purity just dealt with (vv. 3-8) — so the Thessalonian believers do not need an

issue as completely unnecessary as this for them to look foolish in the eyes of their Thessalonian neighbors.

But in many ways, this first reason given for the present exhortation is ultimately the lesser one; the real issue, as the whole passage has made clear, has to do with relationships within the believing community itself. Thus he concludes in a way that puts the burden on the disruptive-idle, but focuses primarily on the one being "burdened" by them: "so that you will not be dependent on anybody." At least that is how the majority of interpreters have understood the pronoun, including the entry in the Bauer-Danker lexicon; but the pronoun could also be neuter, and was so understood by the translators of the Revised English Bible (= "and at the same time never be in want"). The context in this case, including the careful way Paul has structured the whole argument, seems overwhelmingly to favor the majority here. At issue is not the "needs" of the slackers theselves, but their quite unnecessary imposition on the generosity of others.

Here is a passage which poses any number of difficulties for believers in the more affluent Western world. On the one hand, the idea of "private lives" is a more basic value in our cultures than was true in Paul's and the Thessalonians'. Thus if someone is not holding up their end, as it were, or is living off the largesse of others who can easily afford it, many people in a given congregation might not know anything about it. On the other hand, for any number of reasons, and not all of them attributed to indigence, many people in Christian congregations find themselves "living on the edge," as it were, and need the frequent help of others. But the point of the present passage has less to do with the details of such circumstances and altogether with one's attitude toward work and its availability, on the one hand, and one's ability, on the other. The task of the church in these circumstances might be to help people find work; and, whatever else, to make sure that they are cared for until they do.

D. ABOUT BELIEVERS WHO HAVE DIED (4:13-18)

> *13 Brothers and sisters, we*[515] *do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep*[516] *in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord,*[517] *will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left*[518] *will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

With these words we come at last to the first (and only) matter in this letter on which the Thessalonians are receiving instruction for the first time. This is made clear in three related ways: *(a)* it is the certain implication of the beginning clause, "we do not want you to be uninformed"; *(b)* it is the only material in the letter that does not contain "reminder" language; *(c)* Paul returns to this language when turning to further eschatological matters in 5:1-11 ("you have no need for me to write about this").[519] What this also means is that, although clearly related, the present material is but one aspect of the much larger eschatological picture to which he turns (returns?) in 5:1.

We may rightly assume, therefore, that this issue comes from the Thessalonian believers themselves and was brought back to Paul by Timothy.[520] At issue appears to be:[521] "What has happened to some among us who have died[522] before the coming of the Lord?" The *reasons* for this concern are unknown, and thus open to a great deal of speculation. The most likely reason would seem to be one in which the Thessalonians understood their present sufferings as related to the messianic woes that were expected to precede the Lord's coming; and now some (or one) have (has) died in the meantime, which has created considerable

distress among them, both about “the dead” and the Coming itself. In any case, Paul’s answer is in fact relatively plain and simple:[523] Believers who have died will be raised to join the living at Christ’s coming. But for a number of reasons this has appeared to many readers to be too simple. This passage has therefore elicited a considerable literature, not to mention a great deal of eschatological speculation, much of which seems several leagues removed from Paul’s own concern — to offer reassurance to these relatively new believers in Christ regarding a recent death (deaths?) among them. The one thing that seems certain as a presupposition on their part regarding the Parousia (Coming) is its relative “nearness”; otherwise their concern makes very little sense at all.[524]

The concern, therefore, is not for people in general who have died, but only for those who were a part of the believing community in Thessalonica and who have (apparently unexpectedly) died before the Coming. And even though Paul in the explanatory clause in verses 16-17b elaborates somewhat on the nature of the Coming, his interest throughout is on this singular issue, especially so in that particular explanatory clause.[525] Thus Paul’s ultimate concern is twofold, the expression of which serves to enclose the entire passage: that the believers in Thessalonica “do not sorrow as the rest of humankind who do not have this hope” (v. 13), and that they therefore “encourage one another with these words” of Christian hope (v. 18).[526] At the same time what lies behind the whole passage is Paul’s conviction, shared with the other early believers and based on Christ’s own resurrection, that a future *bodily* resurrection lies in the eschatological future of those who believe in Christ.

The flow of thought seems clear enough. The matter is presented in *verse 13:* the Thessalonians’ *sorrow* regarding believers who have died and Paul’s concern that the rest live in *hope. Verse 14* then offers the basic reason for not sorrowing as though there were *no* hope. Belief in Jesus’ own *resurrection* carries with it belief in the resurrection of “those ‘in him’ who have fallen asleep.” This clause also makes it clear that the issue is not with believers who are *living* at the time of the Parousia, but with whose who have *died* beforehand. Thus in the next sentence *(v. 15)* Paul offers a preceding word of explanation — a word attributed to Christ himself — which anticipates what follows, namely that the living do not have any advantage over the dead at the Parousia. His next sentence *(vv. 16-17a)* then spells out in some detail the nature of what he has affirmed in the preceding two sentences, whose concern nonetheless remains the same: the dead will join the living at the Parousia, so that *(v. 17b)* both will then be together eternally. He then concludes *(v. 18)* by telling them what they should do in light of all this: encourage each other. All of this seems so plainly said that one

wonders why there has been seemingly endless speculation regarding this passage, which would probably never have happened had it not been for an insatiable desire by so many later Christians to know more than Paul has here told the Thessalonians.[527]

13 With yet another vocative "brothers and sisters" (the ninth) Paul addresses the community on a matter about which they already have much information (see 5:1-6), but where that information apparently had had some presuppositions to it that now need to be addressed. The "day of the Lord" itself will come suddenly and unexpectedly (5:2-3), which they apparently had understood also to mean "quite soon," an understanding that caused them to become unsettled over the unexpected death of a (or some) member(s) of their community. So at issue is their needing to be informed "about those who are sleeping," which for the sake of second-language readers the TNIV translators have clarified as having to do with "sleeping in death."[528] Even though this euphemism for death can be found variously in the ancient world, Paul's threefold repetition of it in this passage seems to put a degree of emphasis on the nonfinality of death for those whom he will finally call "the dead in Christ."

Paul begins his explanation with what will become for him something of a stock phrase, "we do not want you to be uninformed [lit. 'without knowledge']," a formula that will occur five more times in the Pauline corpus.[529] Because these later uses cover such a broad range of concerns, they offer little help as to Paul's usage here. Most likely in this case he begins with this formula to introduce information that they had no reason heretofore to be concerned about, or perhaps to correct a false understanding regarding both the timing and significance of the Parousia.[530]

In any event, the purpose clause that follows, "that you do not grieve like the rest,[531] who have no hope,"[532] offers the reason for the "information" that is to follow in verses 14-17. Unfortunately, it is also a clause that has had its share of abuse in the history of the church, since on the surface it can be read in two ways, even though Paul most likely intended only one of them. His concern is not that they should not sorrow at all, as has sometimes been suggested, as though Christian hope has eliminated all expressions of sorrow as such.[533] Rather, his point is that believers who have hope in the resurrection do not sorrow *in the same way* as others, people who lack that hope. And on this point, the evidence is thoroughgoing that death in pagan antiquity was understood as final and complete,[534] so that untimely death often elicited unspeakable sorrow and mourning. Indeed, there is a sense of pitiable finality to death without hope of resurrection, which Paul expresses poignantly in terms of "even as the rest,

who have no hope." The remainder of the passage will go on to spell out the reason for the Thessalonians to live in hope regarding those among them who have died.

14 Paul begins where all Christian hope of a future bodily resurrection lies, with the resurrection of Jesus himself. This is his clear concern in this "just as/so also" sentence. Thus, the protasis states it plainly, "since[535] we believe that Jesus died and rose." What is unique about this clause is the verb for the resurrection, which in most instances in the New Testament is passive ("he was raised"), with God the Father as the assumed subject of the action. But here the emphasis is not on what happened to Jesus, but on what was true about him: He died and rose. The ordinary passive will appear by implication in the apodosis. Furthermore, because of the role of Christ in what follows, God the Father, who is mentioned only this once in the paragraph, is here seen as the active agent of believers' future resurrection.

Given their belief in Jesus' resurrection, but without repeating the verb itself, Paul thus goes on to spell out what "we [including them] further believe." But also given what is said in the protasis, one is set up to expect, "we also believe that those who were in Christ when they died will be raised." But that is not quite what we get, so that a straightforward reading of this clause in Paul's Greek text gives one several reasons to pause. Our difficulties are two, and stem in part from Paul's thoroughly christocentric worldview, so that Christ is mentioned twice in the clause in two different roles: first (apparently) as the active agent of believers' future resurrection, and second as the one who will accompany them. Thus all of Paul's present concerns have made their way into this sentence.

Our first difficulty is a conceptual (visual) one, created by the inherent tension between the phrase in this sentence, "God will bring 'those who have fallen asleep' *with him [Jesus],*" and the description in verse 17 that these same believers, as the first item on God's eschatological agenda, will rise from the grave at the command to do so. Thus the "comfort" expressed in verse 18 has to do with the certainty of their *resurrection* at Christ's coming. Here, however, they appear to be pictured as already with Jesus, which under normal circumstances one might expect to be the point of comfort. But not so; that is to be found in their resurrection. So how, one is inclined to ask, are the dead already present with the Lord, but are yet to be raised at the Parousia? The answer would seem to lie primarily with the fact that Paul himself saw no tension here. And since elsewhere he speaks of death in terms of being "absent from the body" but "present with the Lord," he most likely understood believers who have died to be already present with the Lord — whether consciously so or

not is never spoken to. But for Paul this being present with the Lord is not the real thing, as it were; that will happen only at the Eschaton, which is marked by the coming of Christ himself and the resurrection (i.e., the reembodiment) of believers who have died in the meantime.[536]

Our second difficulty has to do with the phrase "through Jesus," which in the T/NIV has been translated "in him," a rendering which in itself points out most of the difficulties. The problem here has to do with the placement of this phrase in Paul's sentence, which in a word-for-word rendering[537] reads: "so also God the sleeping through Jesus will bring with him." Most likely his intent was, "so also God through Jesus will bring the sleeping with him (Jesus),"[538] where Jesus is at once both the one who accompanies the dead who are to be raised and the agent of their being raised. But since this is a minority view, what makes this "most likely" needs elaboration.

The crucial exegetical matter is to note that this sentence is not trying to spell out the "how" of our future bodily resurrection but only the "fact" of it. Our difficulties arise from Paul's word order, where one ordinarily expects a prepositional phrase like this one ("through Jesus") to modify what immediately precedes it. Thus most English translations, even those that pride themselves with being "literal," understandably render it in a way similar to the TNIV, "those who have fallen asleep in him."[539] But the difficulty with this common view is that one can find no parallel in Paul where the preposition *dia,* which ordinarily expresses secondary agency (i.e., God does something "through" Jesus),[540] is used in a locative sense ("in" him).

Our problems at this point have stemmed primarily from three factors: *(a)* that the subject of the sentence is "God," who is mentioned only this once in the entire paragraph; *(b)* the word order itself, where Paul "fronts" the direct object, "those who are sleeping," since that is the singular concern throughout; and *(c)* the one already noted, that the phrase "through Jesus" immediately follows "those who are sleeping" in Paul's sentence, and in the vast majority of such instances would thus be understood to modify what has just preceded it.

(a) We begin by noting that if one momentarily sets aside the troubling phrase "through Jesus," Paul's concern is plainly stated. "God will bring with him [Jesus] those who are currently 'sleeping.'" This singular mention of "God" in the paragraph reveals Paul's own theological understanding of things, since for him God the Father is always the prime mover and *active cause* of everything. This change of subject, however, also accounts in part for some of our difficulties. Likewise, Christ the Son is regularly the primary *agent* of everything God does.[541] Thus, given Paul's overall understanding of things, the present

clause can only mean that when Jesus comes again, God will bring with *him* those who have died, the pronoun "him" at the end of the sentence thus referring back to its immediate antecedent, "Jesus."

(b) If we were then to rearrange Paul's word order into something more "normal" for us, the sentence would read, "God will bring those who are sleeping," rather than, "God those who are sleeping will bring." Paul's obtuse word order, which could be found only in poetry in our language, is perfectly acceptable in a highly inflected language like Greek, since case is determined by the formation of words, not by word order. But what this means further is that by Paul's "fronting" the direct object in this way, the first of the two prepositional phrases that follow is no longer in its "normal" position, even in Greek.

(c) Together these two observations lead us to a resolution of the sentence that makes sense both in terms of Pauline usage and meaning and of his theology, a "solution" that seems quite simple. What Paul most likely intended, in good English word order, is not that "God will bring those who sleep through Jesus with him," but that "God through Jesus will bring with him those who are currently sleeping in death."[542] Thus, as always for Paul, God is the prime mover, and Jesus is the agent of what God will do.

Finally, we should also note that Christ is twice referred to in this sentence by his earthly name "Jesus," without either of the further identifiers "Lord" or "Christ." Two matters are of interest here. First, generally speaking the use of "Jesus" alone is a rare phenomenon in Paul's letters, occurring only eighteen times in all, three of them in this letter (see on 1:10) and seven more in 2 Corinthians 4:5-14.[543] This is basically an indication that, for understandable reasons, in Paul's letters his primary interest regarding Christ is not in his earthly life per se, but in his death as "for us" and in Christ's current heavenly role in the ongoing life of the church. It is for this reason, second, that the further mention of "Jesus" in this passage is on first notice a bit unusual, since it is referring to him as presently in heaven, in which instances "Lord" is Paul's more common way of referring to the Savior. This apparently unusual phenomenon is best explained in light of the present context, where the emphasis is not on the Son's current heavenly role and reign, but on the fact that it is the risen *Jesus* who will return for his own at the Parousia.

15 With an explanatory "for,"[544] Paul proceeds to spell out in some detail the content of the preceding "thesis" sentence. The explanation itself carries all the way through the middle of our verse 17, and comes to us as either one long sentence in Greek or two or three shorter ones, depending on how one reads the "and" at the beginning of verse 16b and the "then" (TNIV "after that") at the

beginning of verse 17. In either case, almost everyone[545] considers all of verses 15b-17b to be a recital of what Paul here calls "the Lord's word." Thus he begins, "for *this* we tell you with/by a/the word of the Lord, namely *that. . . .*" The slashes indicate areas of considerable debate in terms of understanding what Paul is referring to.

Our difficulties stem from Paul's unusual anarthrous nouns (i.e., without a definite article), which could be rendered — although no one would think of doing so — a word of a Lord. Nonetheless, some have taken it to say, "*a* word of *the* Lord." But Paul's usage here is almost certainly a reflection of his using the Septuagint, where when "the Lord" refers to Yahweh, the translators regularly made this clear with a consistently anarthrous usage. Given that Paul is here deliberately echoing the Old Testament, the difficulties for us in the current passage are twofold: to whom does "the Lord" refer; and to "what" or "what kind of" word is he referring.

The first matter in fact is easily resolved, since Paul always and consistently uses "the Lord" *(kyrios)* to refer to Christ just as "God" *(theos)* always refers to the Father, a usage which stems from his dividing up of the traditional *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4 (see n. 27 above).[546] Thus, since for Paul there is only "one Lord," namely Jesus Christ, this phrase therefore refers to a word that Christ himself has spoken.[547] But the "when" and "where" of the speaking of that word is something that cannot be known from this distance. [548] Most likely Paul is here referring to the Jesus tradition that had come down to him; but it is also possible that it refers to a prophetic word Paul has received from Christ.[549] In either case, this well-known Yahweh phrase has now been appropriated to refer to Christ, who is the source of the information found in the rest of the sentence (through v. 17b). Thus Paul's point is simple: the risen Lord, Jesus himself, is the source of what follows. The implied high Christology assumed by this language should not be overlooked, where the Septuagint's *kyrios* = Yahweh is now *kyrios* = the risen Jesus.[550]

The actual content of this "word of the Lord" begins with a kind of "thesis" statement, which the rest of the long sentence will then elaborate in some detail. The matter at hand has to do with "the Parousia (= Coming) of the Lord." The *contrast* is between "the 'sleeping' " and "we the living,[551] who 'remain'[552] until the Coming," a contrast that will be repeated in verse 17; the *concern* is over the fate of those who have already died. Paul's "thesis" statement is intended to reassure the living, "those left till the coming of the Lord," that the dead are not *dis*advantaged because they have passed away before the Coming. Eventually in the sentence Paul will include "the living" (v. 17); but his obvious concern

throughout is with the fate of believers who have died *before* the Coming. His point is that death has not disadvantaged them; rather, as the first order of things at the Coming, they (those who were "in Christ" when they died) will be raised from the dead so as to join the living, and thus together they will "meet the Lord in the air."

Two further matters need discussion, since a good deal of misunderstanding has had its day here. First, Paul is *not* stating that he expects to be alive at the Parousia.[553] Rather, he was simply currently among "the living" who are set out in contrast to "the sleeping." His concern in fact has nothing to do with *who* will be living, but with the simple fact that they have no advantage over the dead regarding the Parousia. Or to put that another way: to be alive or dead is of no consequence at all regarding the coming of Christ. In other places, including later in this letter (5:10), Paul reckons with either possibility. Similarly, a few years later he can reflect on "whether we are 'at home' [in the body] or 'away from home' " (2 Cor 5:6-9) with regard to being alive or dead at the coming of Christ. In any case, Paul's (and "their" or "our") being among the living or the dead at the Coming of Christ is ultimately an irrelevancy; that, after all, is quite the point made in the passage as a whole.

Second, nothing in the text implies that the Thessalonians have some kind of "feverish expectation" regarding the Parousia.[554] They are simply concerned about those who have died beforehand; and when Paul himself goes on to speak about the "when" in 5:1-11, he makes it plain that they have no need of instruction, since the coming is totally "unexpected" in terms of precise timing. Thus his concern throughout this present passage is singular: to reassure the living that those who have died will in fact be present at the Coming.

16 With this clause Paul goes on to offer an explanation of what he has just affirmed. He does so with a brief description of the nature of the Parousia itself, whose primary feature, "the Lord will come down from heaven," can easily get lost in the surrounding sights and sounds, "sights" in the sense that Christ's "coming down from heaven" is otherwise assumed to be visible to those who await him. The description itself is an interesting collage of items, from Scripture and Jewish apocalyptic on the one hand, and from the "coming" of kings/emperors on the other. First of all, and whatever else, what is being described is "fanfare," the boisterous display that the Thessalonians would recognize as that which accompanied the "coming" (= visit) of the emperor to their city.[555] But Paul does this in part by using language from two key Old Testament texts: *(a)* the primary theophany in Exodus 19:16,[556] where Yahweh's "descent" (v. 18) is accompanied by a "thick cloud" and "a very loud trumpet

blast"; and *(b)* Psalm 47:5 (46:6 LXX), where this "coming" is rehearsed in song, but now regarding Yahweh's "enthronement" on the temple mount in Jerusalem, whose kingship is celebrated by his people. Paul's own language is an echo of the latter (put "literally"): "ascended God *with a shout*, the LORD *with the 'voice' of a trumpet.*"[557]

Whether the Thessalonians would have caught this is moot; the point is that Paul himself sets out to describe the *Parousia* of the *Lord*, Jesus, now by way of language from this well-known psalm regarding the "coming" of the LORD, Yahweh, *to* Mount Zion. What Paul appears to have done is to apply the language of the "Psalm of Ascent" to describe the coming from heaven of the truly Great King, the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who is now seen as "descending" in a way similar to the "descent" of Yahweh at Sinai. The psalmist, in celebrating Yahweh's "ascent" to Mount Zion after he "had subdued nations under us," thus picks up the motifs of Exodus for the enthronement of Yahweh, which was celebrated by accompanying "shouts of joy" and the "voice of the trumpet." In Paul's version a further "adjustment" to the language takes place, since this is now less "fanfare" with regard to the coming of Christ than it is "summoning" language, thus powerful imagery for "waking the sleeping," which after all is the singular point Paul is making in this context. Paul's "the Lord himself" is especially noteworthy in this regard, since it is in fact the Lord (Jesus) who had previously ascended on high who himself will return at the sounding of the trumpet.

It should be further pointed out that there is an "and" between only the second and third members of this description; thus, as the TNIV has it: "with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God." In ordinary English this would mean that the Coming is accompanied in three ways: a command, an archangel's voice, and God's trumpet. However, what is the standard English practice for a list is almost never used by a Greek writer, who would ordinarily have had two "ands" between the three phrases. What this indicates is, as the published Greek text has it, that the second and third items are intended to stand in apposition to "loud command (= summons)." [558] Thus, "with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God" spell out *how* the "summons" or "cry of command" will occur at the Coming. Whether Paul would have understood any of this language to be taken literally is in itself moot, since his only reason for including it at all is to give expression to the heavenly summons that is intended figuratively to "awaken the dead."

"Archangels," it should be noted, are not mentioned at all in the Old Testament. Rather, this is the language of intertestamental Judaism. Paul's own

phrase is anarthrous, and, as with the preceding "the word of the Lord" (v. 15), it is probably to be understood as the TNIV has it, "with *the* voice of *the* archangel." If so, then most likely Paul had in mind the archangel named "Michael," mentioned also in Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7, as well as in the somewhat earlier *Book of Enoch* 20:5,[559] whose origins can be traced to the Septuagint of Daniel 12:1.

The second element in the "summons," the "trumpet call of God," is a much more common item in the Jewish eschatological tradition.[560] As noted, the theme belongs first of all to the primary theophany on Sinai (Exod 19:16), which in turn found its way into Jewish eschatology (esp. apocalyptic) in a variety of ways. In Isaiah 27:13 the trumpet calls the exiles from As-syria and Egypt to worship on Zion; similarly, in Zechariah 9:14, "the Sovereign LORD will sound the trumpet" as he saves his "people on that day" (v. 16).[561] But more to Paul's own point is the eschatological discourse in Matthew 24, where Jesus himself refers to the coming "of the Son of Man . . . on the clouds of heavens" who "will send his angels with a loud trumpet call," in order to "gather his elect from the four winds" (vv. 30-31). It is thus the perfect imagery to include in a letter to "God's elect" in Thessalonica, for whom such trumpet calls would accompany state visits from Rome.

Finally, it should be noted again that everything in this description is aimed at the final clause, "and the dead in Christ will rise first," a phrase which has also had an unfortunate history of misinterpretation. Paul's own clear point comes in the following clause. His "first" means neither that they are the first to get to heaven, nor that they are the first to be raised — before others who will be raised for final judgment. Rather, as the next clause makes clear, they will be raised as the "first order of business," as it were, so that all believers, those who have died and those currently living, will be together to meet the coming Lord in the sky. Thus one should not make too much of the phrasing "the dead in Christ," who are Paul's only concern here. They are described in this way solely to distinguish them from all others who have died; at this point Paul simply has no interest whatever in the others.

17 This final clause in Paul's long sentence[562] brings "the living" back into the picture, to join the now raised "dead" in the great "meeting" of the Lord "in the air." It has unfortunately also been the source of a great deal of eschatological speculation that is quite unrelated to Paul's own interests. Thus he begins by deliberately repeating the description of the living from the beginning of verse 16: "we the living who are left." As before, this has nothing to do with anyone's being "left behind"; rather, it simply describes the living from the

perspective of those who have died, who are, after all, the primary reason for the passage at all. Having been preceded by those now dead, who will be raised as the first item on the eschatological agenda, the living at the time of the Parousia are simply "the remainder" *of those who believe*, and who will thus join those now raised from the dead to "meet the Lord in the air."

This latter phrase ("literally"), "for the meeting of the Lord in the air," is the point of everything, as the final reassuring clause makes clear: "and so we will be with the Lord forever." But the description itself (again "literally" and in Paul's word order), "together with them we shall be caught up in clouds for the meeting of the Lord in the air," is another fine mixture of Jewish apocalyptic and expectations that have their origin in Jesus himself. We look briefly at each of the five items in the clause, taking them in Paul's own order.

First, the phrase "together with them,"[563] which stands at the beginning of Paul's clause, is in fact the ultimate concern of the entire passage. The Thessalonians are not to sorrow as those without hope, because at the coming of Christ they will once more be "together with" those from among them who have died. Thus, this is much less a part of the "visual" language of the passage than it is a word of comfort, the first order of business for Paul.

Second, the verb "we shall be caught up," which could be especially strong imagery for this event,[564] is unlikely to be so in this case, in light of Paul's other use of this language in 2 Corinthians 12:2 and 4. Thus most English translations render it simply as "caught up," without any overtones of strength or violence.[565] Although this verb has been seen by some as referring to a "secret rapture of the church," Paul himself could hardly have intended such a meaning here. After all, for the Thessalonians themselves so to have understood it they would necessarily have needed *prior* instruction; but it is clear from this passage as a whole that Paul is informing them *for the first time* about the relationship of the "living" and the "dead" at the Parousia, so how could they have known about an "event" otherwise unknown in the church until the mid-nineteenth century?

Third, being caught up "in clouds" is the one certain apocalyptic element in the description. In this its only occurrence in Paul's letters, it is most likely related to the fact that this event is all about "meeting the Lord *in the air,*" who, according to the first clause in the sentence, is "descending from heaven." Here especially Paul's usage can be traced to the appearance of one like "a son of man" in Daniel 7:13, who is described as "coming with the clouds of heaven." According to the Synoptic records, Jesus himself made the connection between his coming as the Son of Man in final glory and Daniel's "son of man," whose coming is described in this way (e.g., Mark 13:26). Furthermore, Luke describes

the *ascent* of Jesus in terms of "a cloud hid him from their sight" (Acts 1:9). These various data suggest that it would be quite natural for Paul to describe the "ascent" of both the living and the dead in terms of being caught up "in the clouds" for their meeting with the Lord in the air, whose *descent* had come to be understood in this way.

Fourth, the *goal* of this ascent on the part of followers of Christ, both the present dead and the current living, is "to meet the Lord" in the air. The infinitive ("to meet") in the TNIV — and almost all other English translations — is actually a noun in Paul's Greek, which reads (when put literally), "for the meeting of the Lord in the air." This word in turn has had a considerable history of interpretation to the effect that it was a technical term for the ceremonial reception accorded distinguished persons at their "coming" to a given city or province. But a recent investigation of the word has demonstrated that this is unlikely, and that all the other accoutrements of such ceremonial receptions are altogether missing from this passage.[566]

Indeed, everything else that may be said beyond what Paul actually says is the result of piecing together various other materials, since many Christians tend not to be satisfied with leaving them "in the air," as it were. In fact, even though Paul speaks often and in a variety of ways about the *final glory* awaiting believers, there are only two passages where he explicitly "locates" believers' final destiny as "in heaven," 2 Corinthians 5:1 (certainly) and Colossians 1:5 (probably).[567] The reason for this is simple: Paul has almost no interest whatever in our final eschatological "geography"; rather, his interest is altogether personal, having to do with their being "with the Lord," whose "abode" is regularly expressed as "in heaven." For the one whose life's motto was "for me to live is Christ; to die is [to] gain [Christ]," location as such is basically an irrelevancy, and is mentioned only in passing when dealing with other matters. Perhaps people on all sides of the theological spectrum have something to learn from this, neither to make too much of Paul's very few references to our future location, nor to make too little of it, as though final destiny itself were something of an irrelevancy for him. His own concern is what in fact is picked up at the end of this very long sentence: "and so we will be with the Lord forever."

Fifth, the more surprising element in this description is the final phrase "in the air." Although, for those familiar with the passage, this seems like a natural thing to say, the fact is that this is the only occurrence in Paul's letters of this word with its proper first meaning, referring to "the atmosphere immediately above the earth's surface" (BDAG) — although it is also used in a negative sense to refer to the abode of the present powers of darkness (Eph 2:2). But this is

“surprising” to us only because Paul has no reason elsewhere to speak of this “space” at all. His reason for doing so here has altogether to do with the present imagery. The Lord himself is descending “from heaven,” and those who are being caught up to meet him are “from earth.” Hence their place of meeting is “in the air,” thus referring to the “space” between heaven and earth. And with that the description simply comes to an end; anything that one would say after that must be derived by piecing together all that Paul says eschatologically about believers’ relationship to the Coming.

Finally, Paul brings his explanation to a conclusion with the only really important matter in his eschatological understanding of things, already noted in item four above. Here there is no “return” to earth with those who meet him in the air, any more than there is any interest in heaven as the place of final destiny. His singularly driving concern in this entire description is the conclusion: “and so we will be with the Lord forever.” Here in particular one should note the complete absence of “geographical” locational language. The only location that interests Paul is being “with the Lord forever,” which, because the Lord himself is in heaven, means that this, too, is our final destiny. But that, along with almost everything else, is secondary, to the point of being irrelevant, to this singular reality. Probably (and unfortunately) this is also why there has been so much speculation by later believers, for whom “location” is all too often a primary way of thinking about the future.

18 With a final result clause Paul brings this entire discussion to its fitting end, in terms of the existential situation in Thessalonica itself: “Therefore encourage one another with these words.” It is of some interest that the word for “encouraging” one another is the same Greek word as the one whose primary (in the sense of most frequent) meaning in Paul’s letters is “exhort” or “appeal.” On its meaning in this letter, see the discussion of 2:12 above. Although it probably always carries a meaning close to “exhort,” in this case it clearly moves toward the sense of “encourage.” Thus, whatever else may be true of Paul’s “words” in this passage, their reason for being is not to satisfy their — nor our — eschatological curiosity; rather, the aim of everything is encouragement for people who have been recently bereft of those they love, and whose understanding of certain aspects of Christian eschatology was deficient, thus leading them “to sorrow as others who have no hope.” This encouragement will not, nor should it, totally diminish the sense of loss; but hopefully for Paul it will add the necessary dimension of sure hope to their sorrow, and thus qualify it immensely.

It does seem to be something of a shame that later believers have so often gone

to this text for the wrong reasons in terms of its own reason for being at all. Thus, it has been the source of untold, and often misguided, speculations about timing, whereas its only reason for existence is to comfort believers in Thessalonica in the face of loss. It is therefore altogether appropriate for it to be read at Christian memorial services, since there it would serve the same purpose as in its original setting. It is equally inappropriate for it to become the basis for the kind of false teaching that one finds, for example, in the “Left Behind” series of books and films that became popular in the last decade of the preceding century. This is about hope, not threat, and should continue to be treated as such in the church.

E. ABOUT THE DAY OF THE LORD (5:1-11)

Paul now turns from the Thessalonians' concern about believers who have died before the Lord's return (the Parousia) to the related matter of "the day of the Lord." The reason for addressing this issue here, however, is not immediately clear. On the one hand, it is quite closely related to what has preceded. The general content is totally eschatological, in which some Old Testament language is intermixed with some of the teaching of Jesus as it comes to us in the Gospels.[568] Moreover, verse 10 repeats, with different language to be sure, the key ideas from 4:13-18. Thus, "whether we are awake or asleep" corresponds to the preceding "the living" and "those who sleep," while "we may live together with him" corresponds to "so we will be with the Lord forever" in 4:17; and verse 11 basically repeats the conclusion of 4:18 about "encouraging one another with these words."

On the other hand, the present material is clearly not addressing the same issue at all. What has immediately preceded is all about "the dead" (= believers who have died), while the present passage is about "the living" (= how believers are to live in the present). Thus Paul here returns to the "recall" language that dominates so much of the letter through 4:12.[569] What is most noteworthy is that the Parousia ("the Coming") is not mentioned at all; rather, the present section has to do with living in light of the coming "day of the Lord." The presenting language is about "the times and seasons" with clear contrasts between those appointed to receive (eternal) salvation and those consigned to "wrath." But the major concern[570] is altogether with how the Thessalonian believers are to live in the present, while awaiting the Lord's return.[571]

What seems to account for this material, therefore, at least in part, is an attempt by Paul, in light of their present anxiety over some who have died *before* the Parousia, to remind them of the nature of the eschatological instruction they had previously received,[572] and to use this reminder as a way of pressing on them the need for genuinely godly living. He does this in a most fascinating manner. By way of the biblical phrase "day of the Lord" (v. 2), which has to do with God's judgment on the wicked (the Thessalonians' opponents in this case, without being mentioned), Paul moves quickly from metaphor to metaphor

(day/night; awake/sleeping; sober/drunken) as a way of both encouraging and warning the Thessalonians in their present "between the times" existence and reassuring them of God's righteous judgment on their enemies.

The net result is an exhortation whose concerns and main elements are easy enough to discern, but whose rapid movement from one metaphor to another gives one reason to pause — and wonder (admire?) — in light of the quickness of the Apostle's mind. The exhortation itself is in two clear parts (vv. 1-3 and 4-11 [as TNIV]), the first having to do with unbelievers, the second with believers.[573] Finally, it should be noted that the concluding affirmations (vv. 9-10) and exhortation (v. 11) appear also to serve as a kind of "lead in" to the series of exhortations with which the letter concludes (5:12-24).

1. The Day of the Lord and Unbelievers (5:1-3)

> *1 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the*[574] *day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While*[575] *people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on*[576] *them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*

What is immediately noticeable in these opening sentences is Paul's return to the motif of reminding the Thessalonians about some things on which they have already received instruction (see the introduction to 4:1-5:11, pp. 136- 37 above). The surprising feature is the content itself, since the perspective has to do with the day of the Lord in relationship to unbelievers rather than believers. But it is precisely this perspective that dictates how the admonitions that follow will proceed. Whatever else, the coming day of the Lord, which poses a threat only to unbelievers, will nonetheless serve — especially the "thief in the night" metaphor with which it is expressed — as the grounds for those admonitions.

1 With a second "now about" (see 4:9) and his tenth vocative ("brothers and sisters") Paul moves from the completely new concern taken up in 4:13-18 back to the reminder language that features in so much of the letter to this point. However else we are to understand Paul's use of "now about" in the present letter,[577] it functions here at least as a way of moving on to the next item to be

addressed. What we cannot know from this distance is what lies behind Paul's addressing this issue at all. It could be something that came to Paul from the Thessalonians by way of Timothy,[578] in which case Paul would be responding to questions or concerns they themselves had raised. Or it could be an issue either reported to Paul by Timothy regarding the Thessalonian community or simply a matter that Paul himself felt the need to remind them of, given their grief over some who have died before the Coming. In light of his use of the adverb "accurately" in the next clause ("very well" in the TNIV) it is probably the former (something brought to Paul by Timothy). But in either case, in light of their present bewilderment Paul chooses to do two things simultaneously: to remind them of the nature of the Lord's return and its effect on unbelievers; and thus to reinforce the need for readiness on the part of the believers themselves.

The phrase "times and seasons"[579] appears to be something of a stock phrase among early Christians having to do with the events of the End, since that is the context of its several occurrences in the Greek Bible. It is almost certainly to be taken as a hendiadys, where, as this Greek term itself implies, the two words function to express a single idea.[580] The fact that its four occurrences in the Greek Bible, including Wisdom 8:8, are all eschatological references suggests that it is a purposely ambiguous phrase to refer to events that belong to God's final eschatological "wrap-up," but events whose precise nature belongs to the wisdom and knowledge of God alone. This is made clear in the present instance by Paul's going on to elaborate what he is referring to in terms of the (eschatological) day of the Lord.

It is of further interest that the first point he makes regarding "the day of the Lord" is that what he is about to say is something they already know; hence on this matter "we have no need to write to you." But write he will, so this opening clause functions primarily as a way of telling the Thessalonians that what follows is information they have already received. His apparent concern is to reiterate the significance of what they know, which does not have to do with "cooling their enthusiasm," as some have suggested,[581] but with reminding them how they should live in light of its certainty.

2 With an explanatory "for" Paul now offers the immediate explanation as to why he has no need to write regarding "times and seasons." They already "know very well" about "the day of the Lord," a clause that has all the earmarks of parental language, where a parent, not for the first time, is about to tell the child something they *should* know very well but in any case need to be reminded. The clause thus begins with yet another emphatic "you yourselves"[582] know, the fourth in this letter. The adverb rendered "very well" in the TNIV,[583] which sits

in the emphatic first position in Paul's sentence, perhaps suggests that the issue raised here came to Paul from the Thessalonians. [584] Thus, with what may be a touch of irony, Paul's point is that what they want to know "accurately" is not something that can be known at all.[585] In any case, the *content* of what they already know becomes the metaphor from which the rest of the passage is a spin-off.

This is the first occurrence of the phrase "day of the Lord" in the Pauline corpus, and it is clear by the way it appears here that it is well known to the Thessalonians themselves. The phrase will occur again in the next letter (2 Thess 2:2) as a primary point of contention within the community, where some have asserted (probably in a prophetic utterance) that the day of the Lord has already come in some way. Thereafter it occurs infrequently, and only in passing rather than as a matter of discussion.[586] The language itself comes from the prophetic tradition, where it already had a degree of ambiguity. Apparently at an earlier period it was for the people themselves a day of expectation when Yahweh would come and restore Israel's fortunes. This is especially the perspective expressed in its earliest appearance in the Old Testament — in Amos 5:18, where the prophet turns the people's expectation of privilege on its head, announcing that it should be seen as a day to be dreaded because of God's coming judgment (5:20; 8:3, 9). And this is the perspective that is continued throughout most of the prophetic tradition, although the positive aspect can be found as well, especially in Isaiah (2:2-4; 11:10; 19:18-25; 25:6-9), but as "that day" without the explicit qualifier "of the Lord."[587] The judgmental aspect of the expected "day of the Lord" is what Paul picks up in this passage; but he will also turn it on its head as he goes on in verses 4-8 to make a wordplay on the "day/night" language in this opening clause. In any case, Paul's immediate concern is merely descriptive, reminding the Thessalonians of what they already know well: that (literally) "the day of the Lord, as a thief in the night, thus it comes."

Along with matters from the preceding passage, this particular imagery is further evidence that Paul is well acquainted with the Jesus tradition, again as it is found in Luke's version. After all, the "thief in the night" image does not occur at all in the prophets, but it is found in the teaching of Jesus: "But understand this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into" (Luke 12:39), a passage which is followed immediately with an appeal to readiness because of the unexpected nature of such thievery.[588] The point of the imagery both in the Gospel and here in Paul is that Christ's coming will be sudden and without

warning.[589]

One should also note that “the Lord” in this phrase is now Christ, rather than God the Father. The christological significance of this transfer of language should not be missed. The actual wording of this phrase in the Old Testament is “the day of Yahweh,” which in oral reading in the Jewish community had become “the day of *Adonai* [the Lord].” This in turn is what the Septuagint translators turned into “the day of *Kyrios* [Greek for ‘Lord’].” As with prayer addressed to Christ in 3:11-12, this is another moment which demonstrates that a very high Christology was already in place for Paul by the time he wrote this his earliest letter,[590] since “the Lord” in his phrase refers as always to Christ, not to God the Father.

3 Although there are several directions Paul could go with the preceding imagery, his immediate concern is to reassure the Thessalonians that the day of the Lord does not pose a threat to them.[591] Indeed, the entire passage lacks altogether the kind of “be watchful” language that so often accompanies this theme both in Scripture and in later applications of it in the church. Rather, and quite in keeping with the concern of the passage as a whole — to reassure the Thessalonians regarding the coming of the Lord — the clauses of the present verse are the only mention in this passage of the “downside” of the Parousia; here they serve as a reassurance that this aspect of the Coming exists strictly for those who are *not* followers of Christ. This, too, is what they “know accurately.”

Paul makes his point about the fate of unbelievers vis-à-vis the coming day of the Lord with a brief spelling out of the preceding imagery. In so doing, he abandons the day/night contrast as such. Rather, it is the *unexpected* nature of “the thief in the night” that gets a hearing. Borrowing from the prophetic tradition, especially Jeremiah 6:14,[592] Paul reaffirms the constant danger in which the unbeliever lives.[593] They live as though all were “peace and safety,” especially in a city which owed its present status to the Roman Empire, thus bringing them under the Roman *Pax*.[594] But in living so, and affirming it as “peace and safety,” they have thus disregarded the greater reality of God’s righteous judgments. Paul’s point is that such thinking is illusory. Rather, and now drawing from the Jesus tradition — especially as it is found in Luke 12:39 — Paul reassures the Thessalonians that “destruction will come on them [their unbelieving neighbors] suddenly.”[595] Although he uses different language from Luke 12:39 and thus makes a slightly different point,[596] Paul’s concern is still very much that of the Lord himself: the sudden and unexpected nature of their “destruction.”[597]

This seems the more certain when one considers that this application moves a considerable distance from the imagery of "thief in the night" in the preceding sentence. The "destruction" now is apparently envisioned as happening to the individual as such, while its "suddenness" is emphasized by the concluding analogy: the onset of birth pangs.[598] In many ways this second imagery is the more fitting, since it emphasizes both the suddenness of the Lord's coming and the concluding reality that "they [the unbelievers] will not escape."

One should note finally that the argument of this passage could have gotten by without the sentence that makes up our verse 3, especially so since Paul himself goes back to verse 2 when he actually applies the imagery to the Thessalonian believers in verse 4. In the present case, therefore, it almost certainly exists by way of contrast, not by way of warning. That is, as Paul will go on to say, believers are *not* going to be among those noted in this sentence. So the question remains, Why say it at all? The answer would seem to be that it allows Paul yet another opportunity to contrast the believers in Thessalonica with those in their city who are causing their present grief.[599] In any case, in verse 2 Paul emphasizes the *unexpected* nature of the Lord's coming in terms of "timing," something the Thessalonian believers themselves "know well," while in verse 3 he goes on to emphasize the *surprising and sudden* nature of that coming for those who are not expecting it at all.

As the rest of the passage that follows indicates, and as noted above, this reality is intended as a reassurance to the Thessalonian believers, not a threat. What will happen to others as "a thief in the night" is not a cause for anxiety for those who believe; rather, it serves as reassurance that their enemies, the source of their own present afflictions, will eventually "get theirs." Even so, having made this point, Paul will go on to use this reassuring word to "spur them on" to righteousness.

One of the unfortunate aspects of the emphasis in some North American Christian communities on the Lord's return is that this passage, which was intended as a word of reassurance and hope for these beleaguered believers, has so often been used by preachers as a *threat,* so as either to spur believers on to behave righteously or to frighten them so to do. But Paul's reassurances that follow make it clear that they are *not* to take it as a threat, but as an encouragement to live christianly in the face of their present hardships. In what follows, to be sure, his aim is to reassure them about their own future, but even there he reinforces his singular concern for them to *live* as Christ's people in the midst of their adversity. The greater problem for many of God's people in the

contemporary context of abundance and affluence is to live in this context *as Christ's people,* and thus as an alternative to the present world and its values.

2. The Day of the Lord and the Thessalonian Believers (5:4-11)

> *4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day*
> *should surprise you like a thief.*[600] *5 You are all children of the light and*
> *children of the day. We*[601] *do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So*
> *then, let us not be like others,*[602] *who are asleep, but let us be awake and*
> *sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get*
> *drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on*
> *faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 9 For*
> *God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our*
> *Lord Jesus Christ.*[603] *10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or*
> *asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another*
> *and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

Paul now comes to the main concern of this section: how the Thessalonians are to live in light of the *certainty* of the day of the Lord.[604] The entire passage is predicated on the language of "day" and "night" from verse 2, which by way of application also become "light" and "darkness"; this in turn is further extended to the *activities* of "day" and "night," both "sleeping" or "being awake," and "sobriety" or "drunkenness." While the latter imagery (sober/ drunken) seems to move a far stretch from where Paul began in verse 1, he most likely brings it into the picture at this point because of the inherent tension that exists in the day/night, awake/sleeping imagery. That is, being awake during the day and sleeping at night are normal things to do; it is sleeping during the day and being awake at night that would have been unseemly for his culture at large. Thus, to keep the imagery alive, Paul moves on to a nighttime activity that is always pejorative — drunkenness.

The flow of thought can be easily traced. Paul begins with an affirmation about the Thessalonian believers that puts them in sharp contrast to the certain (negative) future, just noted, of those who oppose them. "The day [of

judgment]" with its "thief in the night" imagery will not catch believers off guard because they are in fact "children of light and of the day" (vv. 4-5). Since this is so, Paul follows with a brief exhortation for them to live as "day people" (v. 6) in contrast to "night people," to which he adds a second nighttime activity, "drunkenness" (v. 7). Being "sober" (and alert) leads in turn, and in typical fashion, to yet another metaphor — of military preparedness (v. 8) — where he combines the Christian triad from 1:3 with the imagery of the soldier's armor from Isaiah 59:17. This leads finally, in rapid succession, to an affirmation of salvation (v. 9) with its final goal (v. 10), and a concluding exhortation (v. 11).

4-5 With the combination of an adversative "but [as for] you" and still another vocative "brothers and sisters" (number 11), Paul brings the Thessalonian believers back into the picture, now in clear contrast to those portrayed in verses 2b and 3 as destined for destruction. What they "know very well" as believers (v. 2) is the coming fate of unbelievers — especially those who oppose them in Thessalonica — for whom the coming of the day of the Lord is totally unexpected. Unlike them the Thessalonian believers do not live "in darkness"; but their opponents do, and they will thus be overtaken by the *day* of the Lord, in the same way that a thief surprises the unexpecting householder. But there are no surprises for God's people.

Paul's second sentence (v. 5a) is then introduced with an explanatory "for,"[605] wherein he goes on to spell out in plain Greek the implications of the opening sentence. The Thessalonians do not live "in darkness" be-cause in fact they are "children of the light," and therefore "children of the day."[606] Thus the contrast is complete, and perfectly balanced. The "*day* of the Lord" with its coming judgment will not be so for those who are "*day* people," and thus people "of the light." With considerable craft,[607] Paul here picks up the inherent contrast in verse 2 of "the *day* coming as a thief in the *night*," which will overtake the Thessalonian opposition. Believers, however, are "day" people, and thus people who live in "the light."[608]

What happens next is also typically Pauline — and not because he is unwilling to let the imagery go, as it were. Rather, with a new, now concluding, sentence he brings the comparison full circle by applying it to the Thessalonian believers. He does so again in contrast to their opponents in Thessalonica, "night" people who thus live "in darkness." At the same time, and again typical of Paul,[609] he changes the pronouns from "you" to "we," so as to include himself, Silas, and Timothy in this reality. Thus *you* are children of the day and therefore children of light, because *we* are not "night" people who as such dwell in "darkness."

6-7 With a strong "therefore"[610] Paul proceeds to offer a series of applications of the day/night, light/darkness imagery, in which he basically keeps the imagery intact, but at the same time adds a new wrinkle to their being "day people." The new contrast, begun in verse 6 and explained in verse 7, is between sobriety and drunkenness, the latter being characteristic of night people. Thus the new "take" on the imagery has to do with the *activities* associated with day or night. Paul's first application is straightforward. Given that he and they are not night but day people, "let us not sleep as do the rest, but let us be awake." Given further that Paul will use the same imagery some years later in writing to the believers in Rome (Rom 13:11-12), one should recognize this for the imagery that Paul intends it to be, and thus not press it beyond his present concerns.

Still in view is the intentional distinction between believers and unbelievers, especially those responsible for the Thessalonians' present suffering. Now by way of application Paul urges that as "day people" these believers themselves not be found sleeping (during the day, of course). Given its present place in the exhortation, this is imagery pure and simple, which does not carry some further, unexpressed meaning. The believers' present difficult situation in Thessalonica, not some form of "feverish expectation," is what drives the imagery. They are "day people," who are simply being reminded to live as such — the point that will be picked up in verse 8, where Paul shifts images altogether. What prompts the present imagery, and especially the further addition of "drunkenness" as a nighttime activity, is the inherent contrast between themselves as believers and the opposition in Thessalonica. So the point of the contrast is straightforward: Live as believers in Christ in your city, and do so in stark contrast to your pagan neighbors who do not know him.

To be sure, with this application of the imagery Paul has now moved a considerable distance from the presenting phrase in verse 1 ("now about times and seasons"), but not far from his own concerns in taking up this issue. The reason they should have no anxiety about "the day of the Lord" is that it will come as judgment on "night people," their opponents in Thessalonica. The latter are "the rest," who are now "asleep," but will awaken to a day of judgment that is coming. Thus most of what is said in these two verses has to do with "the rest ["the others," TNIV]," and it appears here as a way of urging the Thessalonian believers to live in a way that stands in stark contrast to that of these others.[611]

Thus the two nighttime images that characterize the opposition are "sleep" and "drunkenness." Paul's application is for the believers in Thessalonica to be the opposite of them: to be "awake" rather than "asleep," and to be "sober" rather than "drunken," which has to do with the way they live overall in their

very pagan city. All of this is pressed in verse 7 by the emphatic characterization, and thus reiteration, of their opponents as "night people," those who are "sleeping," on the one hand, and "getting drunk," on the other. Inherent in this contrast is the distinctly negative view of drunkenness that recurs throughout Scripture. But drunkenness as such is *not* Paul's point here; rather, it is to urge the kind of "soberness" that causes God's people to live sensibly and uprightly in a world that in its fallenness rejects God, and thus rejects God's people who stand in such utter contradiction to their worldview, including especially the way of life that proceeds from that worldview. It is this opposite way of life, the way of the believer, to which Paul turns next in the final exhortation of the passage.

8 With this very long sentence (vv. 8-10) Paul now brings the present exhortation to its fitting conclusion. He begins (v. 8) with a direct, hortatory application of the preceding imagery; then in typically Pauline fashion (v. 9) he offers the theological/experiential grounds for the exhortation, and concludes (v. 10) with a final purpose clause reminding them of the eschatological goal of the work of Christ for those who believe. All of this leads to a final, twofold exhortation (v. 11) intended to comfort and encourage them — and perhaps also intended to serve as the concluding word to all of 4:1-5:10.

Thus, by going back to the affirmation in our verse 5, Paul moves toward his conclusion with the reassertion that "we belong to the day." At the same time, and for understandable reasons, he abandons the former set of metaphors (day/night, awake/sleeping), which are not inherently pejorative, for the latter set (sober/drunken), which is altogether so, and urges, "let us be sober." But right at this point he also makes a sudden shift of images that will require the Thessalonians to be alert at another level as well. For what happens next is a finely woven texture of three different matters: a pickup of the imagery of being sober; a shift to military imagery; and a return to the triad of "faith, love, and hope" which was the substance of the opening thanksgiving in 1:3.[612]

The clause thus begins with a repetition of the second (and final) verb in verse 6: "let us be sober." But the contrast with which this imagery began — between believers and unbelievers, the latter being "night people" and thus also given to "drunkenness" — is now lost sight of altogether as Paul focuses singularly on the Thessalonian believers themselves. He does this by a most unexpected shift of metaphors, from sobriety vis-à-vis drunkenness to that of the soldier outfitted for combat. Thus, reflecting on the military imagery of Isaiah 59:17, where Yahweh clothes himself in military armor as he sets out to achieve justice,[613] Paul picks up on the breastplate and helmet, both of which, as is often pointed out,[614] are for defense, not weaponry. In doing so Paul substitutes "faith and

love" for Isaiah's "righteousness" and adds "hope" to Isaiah's "helmet of salvation." Thus he settles for a new image altogether: the believer's helmet having to do with with one's *hope* of salvation. But as always in Paul, "hope" is not, as it often is in English, a kind of watered-down wishfulness about the future (as in "I hope so" but have no certainty). Rather, for Paul this is a "content" word, full of assurance of the absolute certainty of the believer's future, predicated on the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus the phrase "hope of salvation" does not refer to a vague "hope" *for* salvation in the future; rather, this phrase has to do with one's certain future *based on* God's saving work effected by Christ.

Although it is true that with these words Paul has come a long way from verse 1 as far as his use of imagery is concerned, nonetheless his desire regarding the Thessalonians remains steady throughout: that in contrast to their opponents, who are destined for destruction, the believers in Thessalonica be on constant alert (= live righteously) as they await their final salvation at the coming of the Lord. To these matters, therefore, Paul returns as he brings this long exhortation to its conclusion, first (vv. 9-10a) by way of a clause that offers the theological reason for their constantly being on the alert, and second (v. 10b) with a final purpose clause that ties the entire passage together. And further typical of Paul, what generates the concluding clause is the language, "hope of *salvation,*" since this is the term which Paul now moves on to elaborate, both as a reminder and as grounds for their hope.

9-10a With this causal clause Paul now does two things at once. First, he again grounds the Thessalonian believers on God and Christ, and second, he thereby once more reminds them of the ultimate reason for their living in hope. The hope is expressed with a typical (for Paul) "not/but" contrast, in which the ultimate end of all peoples is spelled out in terms of "wrath" and "salvation." Thus with these words Paul instinctively (on the basis of the word "hope") shifts from life in the present toward the life of the future, which comes to fruition in the final purpose clause at the end of the sentence (v. 10b). Everything is predicated on the fact that the eternal God, who has offered redemption through Christ the Son, "appoints [or 'consigns'][615] us" for one destiny or the other.

The one destiny, to which God's people are *not* "appointed," is expressed in terms of "wrath."[616] This biblical term does not refer to an emotional response on God's part toward those who reject him, but to the retributive justice that is the (necessary) corollary of their rejection of God's grace and mercy. In using this language, therefore, Paul is once more reflecting his deep indebtedness to the Old Testament, where this term is used regularly in the Septuagint to refer to

the retributive dimension of God's justice.[617] The good news for the Thessalonian believers and Paul (note the continuing "us") — and for all who believe — is that this is *not* the destiny of those who by grace are God's own children.

The contrasting destiny, the one to which God's people *are* appointed, is expressed in terms of "for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ," where the phrase "for obtaining salvation" stands in immediate and direct contrast to "for wrath."[618] The striking feature is the addition of "obtaining," a word whose only other occurrence in this verbal sense in the Pauline corpus is found in the next letter (2 Thess 2:14).[619] What is "striking" about it is that at first blush it seems quite unnecessary. That is, Paul could easily have kept the contrast tight by saying "not for wrath but for salvation," which is in fact the point of the clause. The addition of the noun "obtaining" thus puts the emphasis not on the goal (salvation as such), but on the Thessalonian believers' actually realizing it. Their true destiny is to "obtain/ realize" the salvation that God has provided for them (and us) through Christ, and has *appointed* them/us to receive.

But having said that, Paul is not finished with his sentence,[620] since in typical fashion the mention of "our Lord Jesus Christ" in a context like this calls for the additional modifier, "who died for us." On any view,[621] this is the earliest occurrence of this specific language in Paul's letters.[622] The preposition "for" here means "on behalf of," thus pointing to Christ's death as having happened specifically "for our sakes." As such this final participial phrase serves to bookend the present clause (vv. 9b-10a in Greek) with the opening phrase "for the obtaining of salvation," which in turn serves as the spin-off elaboration of the preceding phrase, "the helmet of the hope of salvation." Thus this clause presents us with all the essential data for Paul's understanding of "salvation in Christ." In Paul's own order — the *goal:* "the obtaining of salvation"; the *agent:* "through our Lord Jesus Christ"; and the *means:* "who died on our behalf." It is of some interest that this is the only passage in the letter that spells out the primary theological concerns of the Apostle. It is thus also the clear evidence that such theology had long been in place before this letter was written. In many ways this is quintessential Paul, who began his exhortation with warfare imagery taken from Isaiah 59:17, and whose final phrase, "the helmet of the hope of salvation," is what is being elaborated here.

10b But Paul's sentence, and thus his present concern for the Thessalonians, is not completed. The finishing touch comes by way of a purpose clause, which simultaneously brings closure to the present sentence as well as to the entire paragraph that began in verse 1. The purpose of Christ's death "for us," just

noted in the preceding clause, is “that we might live with him” eternally, words which also echo the conclusion of the preceding passage (“so will we be with him forever”). But this theological and experiential reality is expressed here precisely to bring the present explanation-turned-exhortation to its fitting conclusion. Thus the clause opens by picking up the language of concern from the preceding exhortations. Paul’s point is found in the duplicate “whether” clauses with which he begins, where he picks up the two contrasting verbs in verse 6: “whether we are awake,” or “whether we are asleep.” But here, and in typical fashion for the Apostle, he uses them in a quite different way. Thus, whether believers are living at the time of the Parousia or have previously *died* ,[623] they have the same destiny.

At the same time, of course, this clause also serves to bring closure to the preceding issue addressed in 4:13-18. The concern there had to do with believers who are now “sleeping”; the concern here is with believers who are now living, or at least who are living at the time of Christ’s coming. This concern is addressed in part by the word order itself: “in order that . . . together with him we might live.” Paul’s emphasis is on the “together,” by means of which he ties the two sections together. There he dealt with the currently “sleeping,” meaning believers who have died before the Parousia; here he has been dealing with the “awake,” that is, with believers such as the Thessalonians who from Paul’s perspective could well be alive at the time of the Coming. What is most noticeable about this final purpose clause is its altogether affirmative nature, which thus not only brings the present argument to its fitting conclusion but also once more affirms the point of the immediately preceding section (4:13-18), that the dead in Christ shall live again. Thus for Paul the entire passage has to do not with threat lest they fail to shape up, but with urging them on in the midst of present difficulties.

11 With a strong “therefore”[624] (= “for this reason”) and two imperatives, followed by an affirmation, Paul now brings this series of affirmations and warnings to their conclusion. The first imperative, “encourage one another,” is the otherwise ambiguous word noted earlier in 2:12 (see n. 106), which he has already used to bring the preceding matter to its conclusion (4:18). As in the preceding instance there is scarcely any ambiguity here, since “appeal” or “exhort” is unlikely in this context. Thus, as before, they are urged to “encourage one another.” This is followed immediately with “build each other up,”[625] a verb that will appear much less frequently in Paul’s subsequent letters, but whose metaphorical sense has become common stock in English on the basis of Paul’s use of it in 1 Corinthians.[626]

What is striking in this case is Paul's concluding affirmation, "just as in fact you are doing." This affirmation also indicates the considerable difference between what has been addressed in this passage and the new information they have received in the preceding one. Both passages are intended to encourage; but in the former the believers themselves are to do the encouraging with Paul's words that precede (in 4:13-17). Here they are to continue to do what Paul affirms has been their regular habit. And even though he surely intends his own words to be a part of it, his immediate concern is for them to continue to do for one another what has been their ongoing habit. Paul's preceding words will serve only as part of the package, intended as they are primarily to remove any misunderstanding or anxiety with regard to "the day of the Lord."

In the later church the concerns that Paul addresses here have often fallen along the wayside, as it were, except for the occasional eschatologically focused groups whose singular passion has to do with the coming of the end. Paul's concern lies elsewhere. Even the metaphor of "the thief in the night" does not have to do with believers, but with unbelievers. His obvious concern regarding believers is not to frighten them into watchfulness, but to remind them of the need to be living in such a way as to be constantly "prepared" for that day. Thus the major part of the passage is neither explanation nor exhortation but affirmation. The exhortation that does appear calls for constant preparedness, which has to do not with living "uptightly," as it were, but uprightly, constantly "wearing" the armor of "faith, hope, and love." Nonetheless, the major concern is affirmation, that they (and we) have been "appointed" to "receive salvation," and thus must constantly live in hope, even as they (we) live in faith and love. And "hope" is not wishfulness regarding the future; it is certainty based on Christ's resurrection ("so that we may live together with him").

III. CONCLUDING MATTERS (5:12-28)

The basic substance of Paul's letter has now been concluded. Nonetheless, the letter is not yet finished. What happens next is in some ways unique to the Pauline corpus; at the same time it reveals something about Paul that we find throughout — his reluctance to bring things to a final conclusion! "Signing off " between friends has a long-standing history, right up to the present. So the very length of this material should be thought of in terms of a relationship between "friends," more than that of "mentor-student." Any parent who has sent off a first child to university will understand very well this reluctance to let go, on the one hand, and the felt need to cover all the bases, on the other.

Thus after the long narrative of past and present relationships (chs. 1- 3) and the various ways Paul has been "supplying what is lacking," by way of either correction or information (4:1-5:11), he concludes with a series of imperatives quite unlike anything else in his subsequent letters — at least in terms of length. One should note that only at verses 25-28 do we come to the more clearly formal parts of the letter closing, which themselves also exhibit evidence of friendship. But before that Paul offers a series of "summary exhortations" (vv. 12-22), which apparently cover a lot of necessary ground, before offering a final benediction which picks up the major concerns of the letter (vv. 23-24) — a commonplace matter that in Paul's hands has also been transformed by the gospel and friendship.

A. SUMMARY EXHORTATIONS (5:12-22)

Although the imperatives in this series are for the most part very brief, so that they may be styled "staccato," they do not thereby lack order or substance in terms of the actual situation in Thessalonica. Indeed, it is not easy to decide whether (or how many of) these exhortations are simply part of the more formal conclusion to the letter or whether they are very intentionally speaking into their present situation. For example, much briefer hortatory moments like these precede the final greetings in several of Paul's letters.[627] Nonetheless, they are noticeably absent — completely so — from his next letter to this church.[628] Furthermore, some of this material, especially verse 14, reflects matters in the letter itself. Very likely, therefore, even though some of this material may be more general in scope, much of it is also related to the actual situation in Thessalonica. In any case, the entire section has been set up by the concluding exhortation in verse 11: "encourage one another and build one another up" — which is what Paul himself now sets out to do for them.

A general structural pattern is discernible. Verses 12-13, with the verb "we ask you," basically give instructions on attitudes toward leaders, while verses 14-22, picking up the verb "urge" from verse 11, are a fourfold series of imperatives having to do for the most part with their life together as a believing community. The first two series (vv. 14 and 15) deal with relationships within the community; here, with the imperatives all sitting in their normal first position, Paul basically summarizes the preceding section of the letter (4:1-5:11), where he has "supplied what is lacking" (3:10). The last two series (vv. 16-18 and 19-22) then deal with the community at worship, and here the imperatives all stand in final position. Verses 16-18 encourage them to continue with basic Christian piety, which also reflects Paul's Jewish roots; and verses 19-22 bring up an entirely new concern, having to do with Christian prophecy. The whole then concludes with a prayer for their sanctification (vv. 23-24)

As noted, at issue for some interpreters is the question of how much of this besides verse 14 reflects specific matters in the Thessalonian community, and how much is related more to pastoral care in general. The most common approach to this question is a minimalist one, where a comparison is made with

Romans 12, so that all of this is seen to represent "general parenesis." Others take a maximalist view, that all of it responds to issues in the church; thus verses 12-13 are seen as over against "a criticism of Pauline leadership," while verses 19-22 respond to "conflict over ecstatic manifestations."[629]

The perspective from which this commentary is written is something of a middling one. Thus, given the apparently more general nature of verses 16-18, which reappear in a different form over a decade later at the end of Philippians,[630] one should exercise due caution here in finding them as responding to specific "issues." Nonetheless, since verse 14 is so specifically tailored to the present situation, and since 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 is probably related to the issue of "prophecy" in verses 19-22, it is very likely that this passage and verses 12-13 are case specific as well. But how much one can recreate the situations involved is much less certain, and one should probably use discretionary caution in any attempt to recreate the historical setting as such.

1. Attitudes toward Their Leaders (5:12-13)

> *12 Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.*

This first set of imperatives catches us a bit by surprise; but perhaps it should not. The surprise factor is not that the believing community had leaders — we should assume that to be so — but that Paul should address the community at all in this way. Nothing in what has preceded prepares one for this moment; leaders are neither called upon regarding the preceding matters, nor is there a hint that they are present at all. But this set of admonitions suggests that these leaders are finally responsible to see that the preceding correctives and admonitions are carried out. Or at least one might well assume that such is the nature of this request.

Furthermore, nothing in the content of the request indicates that this is a problem area in the church — unless one wishes to read some kind of issue into the final imperative, "live in peace with each other." But perhaps more to the point is the fact that this matter is not raised again in the letter that was written

soon after this one (our 2 Thessalonians), where Paul does return to some of the other matters raised in this letter. Not only so, but the request comes to them as just that, a request, and not as an outright imperative, which in itself is striking when one reads this in the context of the long series of imperatives that begin with the final one in this paragraph ("live at peace with each other"). Thus the two verbs that control the long sentence of our verses 12-13a) — *eidenai* (= "recognize, acknowledge") and *heigeisthai* ("esteem") — are a long way from the kinds of imperatives that call for obedience or submission to their leadership.

Indeed, in this regard the most striking feature of this request is the lack of identifying *nouns.* That is, those mentioned here are not specified by a noun that could also function as a title (overseer, elder, deacon, etc.). What we get rather is a series of three nominal participles that identify them by their activities. Paul's request comes by way of two infinitives; he wants the believing community to "acknowledge" and "esteem" those who work hard among them. Since this is his primary concern, the identity of these leaders, the issue of a much later time in the church, is not given at all but is simply assumed.

Finally, it is probably wrong for one to think that the three participles suggest three different kinds of leaders, each with his or her own responsibility, one of one kind, another of a second kind, and so on. Almost certainly these three participles are simply representative of the tasks that leaders are assumed to fulfill; and they are to be "acknowledged" for their leadership as such, not specifically for carrying out these various responsibilities. That is, these participles identify them for their "labors," not for their positions.

12 With the "maid-of-all-work" connective particle *de*, here properly translated "now" (= "now to move on to the next issue[s]"), and yet another vocative, "brothers and sisters" (number 12), Paul turns toward several matters that are at the same time intended to bring the letter to its conclusion. The request ("we ask you") is that they "know"[631] those who have responsibility for them in the Lord. As in English, the verb "know" in Greek has a considerable range of meaning. Here Paul most likely intended the nuance indicated by the TNIV's "acknowledge." That is, the believers are to "know" them in the sense that they recognize or acknowledge their activities of leadership among them. Most likely it is simply Paul's way of affirming the leadership of those responsible for carrying out the various instructions in this letter, since the one real corrective involved has to do with the unruly-idle — the first thing up in what follows.

Of special interest for those of us who read these words at a much later time in history are the three participles that describe what these leaders do. The fact that one definite article functions for all three participles indicates that Paul is not

referring to three different kinds of leaders, but to the variety of tasks that befall their leaders. And while the first and third of the participles are relatively straightforward ("who work hard among you"; "who admonish you"), that is much less so with the middle one, which the TNIV renders "care for you," but where most other English translations (including the NIV) have something like "who are over you in the Lord" ("who have charge of/over you"; NRSV/NASB). Both of these options, it should be noted, are legitimate renderings of the participle *proïstamenous* in terms of the *possible* meanings of the word; and both can be argued for in terms of the present context. So the only real issue is which sense Paul most likely had in mind in dictating this word; and our best help at this point is to be found in two places: Paul's usage elsewhere and its placement in the present clause.

But we begin where Paul does, with the phrase "those who work hard among you." Although this is the only occurrence in these two letters, this first verb is one of the most frequent words in Paul to describe "ministry."[632] The cognate noun in fact occurred earlier in this letter when Paul described the "work" of himself, Silas, and Timothy as "our labor" (2:9; 3:5); it is also the word that he uses in later letters regularly to refer to his apostolic "labors," such as in 1 Corinthians 15:10 ("I labored more than all the others") and Galatians 4:11 ("lest I have labored in vain among you").[633] But he also uses it of others, such as Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 16:16, and in Romans 16 of various friends who are involved in such "labor in the Lord."[634] This verb thus puts emphasis on the "labor, toil, grow weary" aspect of ministry, with no hint in most of these passages as to what this "labor" might specifically entail. Here, then, in its first occurrence in Paul's letters, those who are recognized and esteemed as leaders are characterized first as "working hard" at it.

Several considerations suggest that the TNIV has it right in translating the second participle as "[those] who care for you in the Lord,"[635] and thus improving on the NIV's "who are over you in the Lord." The first matter is the contextual one itself, in that the participles on either side of this one refer to *activities* of these persons, not to their status or position. Thus most English translations have the anomaly of a "positional" participle's being surrounded by two that describe quite diverse "activities." But three other considerations lead one to the rendering in the TNIV.

First, the only unambiguous usage of this verb in the Pauline corpus is found in Titus 3:8 and 14, where it means something like "busy oneself (with something)." Thus in 3:14, for example, most English translations have a rendering like "devote themselves to good works" (NRSV; cf. NIV, NAB).

Second, its occurrence earlier in Romans 12:8 is in a sentence very much like the present one, where it appears between participles having to do with "giving" and "showing mercy," and, as with the present instance, it has been rather universally translated as having to do with "leadership" in some way. But the context in Romans 12, as here, seems to demand a meaning that has to do with "caring for" others. That is, "giving," "*caring for,*" and "showing mercy" make far more sense contextually than do the "giving," "ruling" (as KJV), and "showing mercy" found in most English translations,[636] where such a rendering seems contextually to make less sense than does the alternative rendering in the TNIV footnote ("to provide for others").

Third, besides its occurrences in Titus 3 noted above, the verb *proïstēmi* occurs four times in 1 Timothy (3:3, 5, 12; 5:27). Here the evidence appears to be mixed. In its first occurrences in 3:3 and 5, it refers to a father's responsibility to his own household. But even though "leadership" is assumed by presupposition, the emphasis in these two appearances is on his "managing" his household with godly care, as the substituted synonym "take care of " in 3:5 indicates. The other two uses are ambiguous enough that either sense of the verb would work equally well. Thus in 3:12, the TNIV has "he must *manage* his children and household well." But this could just as easily have been rendered, "he must *care for* his children and household well," since the emphasis is not on his "governing" the household but on his "caring for" it in every way, including "managing" its affairs.[637]

So here also the word noticeably occurs not first, which one might have expected had Paul intended "who are over you in the Lord," but between two others that describe these leaders' "work." If the emphasis were in fact on their role of being "over the others" as such, one would then expect it to have appeared first in the list, with the other two participles describing their tasks. Thus one may rightly argue that the evidence here leans substantially toward describing their *task*, not their position.

Finally, besides their leaders' "working hard among" and having the responsibility of "caring for" the believing community, Paul expects this "work" and "care" sometimes to take the form of "admonishing"[638] them, as the need may arise. With this word he is now anticipating the one obvious corrective that begins the brief series of imperatives in verse 14, "admonish [TNIV, 'warn'] those who are idle and disruptive." Indeed, this word is the sure indication that the present instruction serves as the necessary introduction to the tasks these leaders must carry out, or help others so to do, in the community as a whole. Thus the believers are to "acknowledge" those who have primary responsibility

for following through on the admonitions that follow in verses 14 and 15. Paul's concern is that the believing community as a whole "acknowledge" or "recognize" their leaders for their "labor" among them.

13 The believers in turn are to comply with these admonitions as they "hold them [their leaders] in the highest regard in love because of their work." Here is where the leaders get their "strokes," as it were. And Paul's word order carries its own weight. First, those who labor among them are to be held "in the highest regard," which does not mean, as often has happened in later times in the church, to "exalt" them in some way. The leaders are protected from any form of people's "fawning" over them by the modifier "in love," which eliminates the option of thinking more highly of their leaders than they Christianly ought to. This operative phrase, "in love," means to care for them as fellow believers, in this case as "brothers" in the Lord. No room for titles or fawning here; love eliminates such ingratiating behavior. And the reason they are to hold them in such high regard is not because of their *position*, but "because of their *work*." After all, they will also be the ones who must take the lead in trying to help the disruptive-idle in verse 14 to carry their own weight by working for a living. Thus the primary word in the final phrase in this sentence is an across-the-board synonym with the "work hard" that describes their activities.[639]

It is also of considerable further interest that this earliest mention of church leadership in the New Testament comes by way of instruction to the community as a whole. What we learn about them, of course, is precious little, since we have only these participles that indicate their activities, not their "roles" or the "structures" within which they work. That they were leaders is certain; that they led the community in a variety of ways one may rightly assume; but their actual "positions" or "roles" are simply not known. What these admonitions to the community as a whole do indicate is that in the early Pauline churches their leaders were within the circle as it were, not outside of it in some way (as, e.g., "clergy"), and certainly not above it.[640] Indeed, these admonitions exist most likely because these were the realities (that "leaders" were within the circle). In such a case, where the ground is basically equal, those being led need an occasional reminder that they are to "acknowledge" or "recognize" their leaders for such "labor" among them.

Paul immediately follows this admonition with a second one, "Live in peace with each other," which at first sight may seem unrelated. Indeed, at issue for us at this distance is whether we should read anything at all into this final clause. Is it simply a kind of general word to the believers in Thessalonica, or is it case specific, suggesting a moderate form of correction? This admonition is such a

common feature in Paul's later letters[641] that one should perhaps not make too much of it here, especially since the wish of *shalom* was also a common feature of Jewish greetings. Granting that, however, one should note further that this is not in fact a wish of peace, but an imperative that calls them to "live in peace *with each other.*" Nonetheless, one should probably show restraint in suggesting that this single imperative points to some kind of tension among them, attached as it is at the end of a request that they "acknowledge" those who labor among them. At the same time this may well serve as Paul's way of passing on the mantle of leadership to those who "work hard" among them.

This earliest notation in the New Testament regarding church leadership is tantalizing for its brevity, and can likewise be frustrating because it assumes so much about which later believers would like more information. But perhaps even that can be a means of instruction. Paul's way of speaking about them by way of participles, rather than nouns, puts all the emphasis on their activities, not positions. Thus we learn a bit about what they *do,* but almost nothing about who they *are* or the "positions" they hold. This is especially trying for those of us who live in a culture that loves titles as a way of distinguishing people who are "important"! By turning such verbs into nouns one begins to focus more on position than person or function. Paul's concern is consistently on character and activity, not on "role." But since we can scarcely turn the clock back in the contemporary church, all of those who are in church leadership might use this passage as a valid "checklist" for personal inventory with regard to how one *cares for* those one is given the privilege to lead.

2. Imperatival Summation of the Letter (5:14-15)

> *14 And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.*

This second set of imperatives holds very few surprises, if any at all. Paul simply puts in staccato form the basic concerns of the letter, a kind of summation of all that has preceded. Given what has immediately preceded, one could argue that

these imperatives are now addressed to the leaders themselves,[642] which would be supported by two items in particular. First, the several imperatives that follow these (vv. 16-22) are especially matters where one would expect the leadership to take the lead; and second, these first five are the only ones in the entire group of fourteen (or fifteen), where the imperative stands in the normal first position. But even though one might naturally expect the leaders to take the initiative to follow through on these matters, Paul nonetheless does not address them directly. From his perspective these concerns belong to the entire community. Furthermore, one may assume that those who appear here as the direct objects (grammatically speaking) of all these imperatives (the disruptive-idle, disheartened, and the like) are also present when the letter is being read aloud in the community. Thus they should rightly expect their leaders to follow through regarding the admonitions.

14 That Paul is addressing the entire believing community is supported first by the fact that he begins with yet another familial vocative, "brothers and sisters" (number 13). To this point in the letter, as well as in its final occurrence in verse 25, this vocative has been consistently addressed to the community as a whole (see on 1:4 above). Thus, even though leaders will be expected to take the lead, these concerns are in fact, as always in Paul, matters in which the whole community is to be engaged.

The first item ("warn those who are idle and disruptive") picks up the concern from 4:11-12.[643] The verb in this case is the same one translated "admonish" in verse 12 above. The object of the verb, the *ataktoi* (TNIV, the "idle and disruptive") has had an interesting bit of translational history, especially in light of the fact that the KJV had correctly rendered it "the unruly."[644] Indeed, the translation "idlers" (NIV, NRSV, NAB, REB), even though it correctly points to an aspect of those who are in view here, does not in fact have a lexical leg to stand on.[645] The word *ataktos* meant literally to be "out of line"; at the same time it always carried a pejorative sense of being disruptive in some way. At some point in the history of English translation it was apparently assumed that the believers who were not working (refusing to work?) in Thessalonica were "out of line" in the sense of being "idle"; so they became "the idlers" instead of "the unruly," even though there is not a single piece of literary evidence to support such an understanding. Given the rest of the evidence of these two letters, they were most likely "out of line" not simply by not working, but also by their depending on others to take care of them; and in this sense, then, they were also being disruptive of the "shalom" that should otherwise exist within the community.

The second admonition is directed toward “the disheartened,” which the KJV had the misfortune to render as “comfort the feebleminded.” It is doubtful whether even in 1611 the word “feebleminded” pointed to people who had been so thoroughly overcome by present circumstances as to feel themselves unable (or simply unwilling) to continue (on in their service) within the beleaguered Christian community. In any case, such people seem to be in Paul’s purview when he urges the rest to “encourage”[646] them. It is quite possible, since the preceding imperative takes us back to those addressed in 4:9-12, that this one may very well pick up the issue of 4:13-18. In such a case they would probably have become disheartened because they had incorrect expectations about the “soon” coming of the Lord.[647] But it is equally possible that Paul is simply referring to those who have become disheartened by the constant barrage of opposition from their fellow townsfolk. In either, or any, case there are some within the believing community who needed encouragement, cheering up, as it were.

The third admonition, “help the weak,” is the one that might make us a bit more hesitant about the immediately preceding one as being case-specific in terms of what is said elsewhere in the letter. From our distance one simply cannot know whether the “weak” are those who are physically so,[648] and thus need “care” of a different kind, or whether they are “weak” with regard to their “faith.”[649] And nothing else in what has preceded really helps us here. But whoever they are, they need the support, or help, of the rest of the believing community. “Weakness,” it should be noted, has very often been held in disdain by others, who think of themselves as the “strong”; however, Paul has here captured one of the marks of truly Christian faith, as it has been exhibited in full by our Lord himself in his earthly life.[650]

Paul concludes this present series of staccato exhortations by urging that they “be patient with everyone.” This is also the one that seems to give a basis for seeing the preceding three as case specific, and thus as offering a general summarizing admonition regarding their attitudes toward those addressed in the first three. Thus, even though we cannot know with certainty how all-inclusive Paul’s “everyone” was intended to be, it at least included “everyone” within the believing community,[651] and especially those mentioned in the preceding three imperatives. At the same time it is the imperative that gives a measure of credence to the possibility that all four of these directives are aimed at the leadership rather than the community as a whole. But there is nothing said here that requires such a view; and Paul seems rather to be continuing his concern that the community as a whole take responsibility for all of these matters.

It should (especially) be noted that the verb in this case is not Paul's usual one when the concept of "patience" as such is involved. In contrast to his more usual *hypomonē*, which is regularly translated "patience" in English, the present word apparently originated as a way of describing those who were "long-tempered" vis-à-vis the "short-tempered." Thus, in contrast to *hypomonē*, this verb *(makrothymeite)* carries the sense of "suffering long" with regard to someone else. It is therefore the appropriate word to use regarding human relationships, while *hypomonē* moves in the direction of enduring difficult situations. That is, in human relationships more is needed than simply "being patient" with others, and Paul's word here implies that "something more," namely that they are to be "forbearing" toward, and thus "suffering long" with regard to, others in the believing community. Furthermore, this distinction between the two words regularly rendered as "patient/ patience" in English is consistent in Paul's own usage. "Patience" *(hypomonē)* is needed in trying situations; "forbearance [long suffering]" is what is required in interpersonal relationships — "with everyone."

15 With a final imperative Paul moves from specific concerns that apparently have been reported to him by Timothy, to a more general, and thus concluding, admonition in which he dips into the well-known Jesus tradition found in our Gospels in Matthew 5:38-42. In his teaching Jesus insisted that there be no "eye for an eye," but that his disciples "resist evil" by doing good. This is the tradition that Paul is apparently picking up and putting into his own words here. Thus, with two corresponding clauses he insists first (with perfect chiasm in his own sentence, and thus "literally"), "See that[652] no one wrong for wrong to anyone pays back."[653] The fact that such "repayment" is to be left in God's hands is not explicit here, but is certainly implied.

The real difficulty most of God's people have with this admonition is that God may not give such people what they deserve, but may show them the same kind of mercy that he showed to themselves! But Paul saw clearly that in a world where God's people are implicated in the same fallenness as all others, even the best of them do not see clearly the end from the beginning; and retaliation is simply not a part of becoming followers of the Crucified One. Thus he begins this final admonition with the prohibition of not "pay[ing] back wrong for wrong."

The second imperative then offers the truly Christian form of "paying back": "but always strive to do what is good[654] for each other and for everyone else." Here Paul's own word order catches his emphases. In contrast to paying back wrong for wrong, "always the good pursue," he insists. It must be "always," rather than "hit or miss"; it must be "what is good," rather than "wrong for

wrong"; and it must be "pursued," rather than done occasionally and at one's convenience.[655] The more striking moment comes at the end; "doing good" rather than retaliating has to do first of all with fellow believers, people within one's own community of faith. But here Paul urges that they extend "doing good" beyond the community of faith as such, and "strive to do what is good for everyone else" as well.[656] Thus whether they would prefer to think so or not, this would include the very people who are doing their best to make life miserable for people like themselves, who have chosen to follow Christ.

It is easy for the typical "American" reader of this letter to read past these staccato imperatives, since they pose special problems for people who have been raised on the "gospel" according to Ben Franklin, that "God helps those who help themselves." Instead of "helping" the weak, one should admonish them to "get with it" and "carry their own weight." But the God of Scripture is fortunately not a "typical American"; rather, he has revealed himself, both in the Old Testament and especially in the Incarnation, as the "God of the humble," the God who pleads the cause of the poor and indigent. Thus at this point Paul, by the Spirit, has placed himself in the long line of biblical authors who "plead the cause of the needy." Since these come by way of imperative, they should probably be taken much more seriously than many are wont to do.

3. Exhortation to Continue Basic Christian Piety (5:16-18)

> *16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

With the preceding community-related emphases in hand, Paul turns his attention next to how the community is to live its *corporate* life in the face of their present difficulties. Again, we encounter sets of "staccato imperatives," but now with the verbs themselves second, a most unusual word order for an imperative even in Greek. In this first set the verbs are preceded by nearly synonymous adverbs, in the next set by nouns or pronouns.[657] In both cases we are once again not quite prepared for what we get, which probably says

something about the distance factor between ourselves and these early Gentile believers. Nonetheless, anyone who has spent very much time in the leters of Paul will quickly recognize how thoroughly Pauline these admonitions are.

In light of the preceding verse 14 and verses 19-22 that follow, this present set of imperatives is best understood within the context of the gathered community at worship, the context in which the letter itself would be read.[658] That is, these are not aimed primarily toward how individual believers live out their faith in Thessalonica — although neither is that excluded — but with how these believers as a gathered community are to respond in the midst of their present difficulties. In addition, this first set focuses altogether on vocalized worship that is directed toward God, while the next set focuses on vocalized worship directed toward the building up of the believing community.

Indeed, the set of imperatives that immediately follows (vv. 19-22) comes as something of a surprise, in the sense that nothing in the letter itself or in the immediate context quite prepares us for what is there said. But one element of the surprise, its place in the immediate context, is alleviated somewhat if one recalls that for Paul the activities of rejoicing and prayer presuppose the activity of the Holy Spirit in the community.[659] Indeed, in some ways what Paul says in 1:6 prepares us for this understanding; there he recalls their experience of conversion as accompanied by both great affliction and the joy of the Holy Spirit.[660] The point is that Paul, in a thoroughgoing way, understood joy, prayer, and praise (thanksgiving) as both the result and the evidence of the Spirit's presence. Thus in Galatians 5:22, the second item on Paul's list of the "fruit" of the Spirit is joy, and in Romans 14:17 the joy of the Spirit is evidence of the presence of the kingdom of God. Similarly, 1 Corinthians 14:15; Romans 8:26-27, and Ephesians 6:18 all verify that for Paul prayer was especially an activity of the Spirit.

16 It is of some interest that the admonition "always rejoice" precedes the imperatives "continually pray" and "in all circumstances give thanks." This most likely reflects Paul's own piety as it has been conditioned by the Psalter. Thus, it is especially important in the context of the more saccharine Christianity of a later time to note that Paul's emphasis here is not so much on the *experience* of joy,[661] but on the active *expression* of it. They are to "rejoice always," which, as Philippians 4:4 bears out, means not simply to express joy in general, but specifically to "rejoice *in the Lord*." This is not a sugar-coated call for putting on a happy face in the midst of difficulties. Here is a church that is undergoing severe hardship because of its faith in Christ. God's will for such a community, both as individuals and as they gather for worship, is that as a matter of first

importance they continue to exalt Christ by rejoicing, with him as the focus.

17-18a In this context they should also "continually pray,"[662] constantly offering their petitions to God. Continual prayer is the ongoing reminder that God's children are always and wholly dependent on their heavenly Father for all things. It is also in this context that they are "in all circumstances" to "give thanks" — including those of their present lot. It is especially important to note that the modifier in this case does not say "*for* all things," but "*in* all circumstances." It is neither reasonable nor biblical piety to imagine that God wishes his children to be thankful *for* all things that befall them, good or ill. Rather, a thankful heart should simply be a way of life for those whom God has redeemed through Christ.

18b The "this" in Paul's concluding clause, "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you," is almost certainly intended to modify all three of the imperatives, not simply the giving of thanks in all circumstances.[663] Paul, after all, did not write in numbered verses! The three imperatives are intentionally similar in structure, all three beginning with a synonymous term for urging ongoing activity on their part: "always, continually, at all times."[664] Thus, all of "this" is a way of adhering to what God wills for his children.

One should note at the end that Paul himself is as good as his word. See especially 3:9-10, where he had already in this letter combined prayer, joy, and thanksgiving. He will do the same again in the much later letter to Philippi (Phil 1:3-4), where he mentions joy and thanksgiving as inherent to his praying — and the latter in the context of a trying imprisonment. Thus, what we find being urged on the Thessalonian believers is something that has already long marked the life of the apostle himself, and will continue to do so right to the end.

4. About Christian Prophecy (5:19-22)

> *19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire. 20 Do not treat prophecies with contempt, 21 but*[665] *test them all; hold on to what is good, 22 reject whatever is harmful.*[666]

On first reading this set of imperatives seems to appear abruptly in the letter, with very little that has preceded it preparing the reader for them. Nonetheless,

since it is a factor in the first major item addressed in 2 Thessalonians (2:1-2), here we also discover how little we really know about these earliest Christian communities in the Greco-Roman world. Along with 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Romans 12:6, it should indicate to us how thoroughgoing such phenomena were in the earliest communities. It is therefore possible, but by no means certain, that this final set of imperatives was saved for last because "prophecies" might lie behind some of the preceding difficulties, especially the issue raised in 5:1-10.

This series of imperatives is the earliest record in the New Testament of the basically charismatic[667] nature of these early communities. They are surprising mostly because nothing else in the letter has quite prepared us for them and because they seem to be so much more case specific than the immediately preceding, more general, exhortations in verses 15 and 16-18.[668] Not only so, but they are the only ones in the entire series of exhortations (from v. 12) which are expressed as prohibitions (vv. 19-20), and for which their positive counterparts (vv. 21-22) are qualifications. That leads one to make several contextual and structural observations before looking at each of the imperatives individually.

First, on the basis of the case-specific nature of verses 12-15 and the apparent pickup of this concern in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, this set of imperatives is probably best understood as speaking to a specific issue in the church in Thessalonica.[669] If this is the case, then it also raises the issue of the historical context into which they are spoken. Because this instruction is so condensed and because related material in these two letters so sparse, how is one to understand the specific historical setting of the concern here expressed?[670] The mention of "Spirit" (probably in the form of prophecy) as a possible source of the misguided teaching in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 (q.v.) opens the possibility that correction is more necessary than first meets the eye.

Even so, the question still remains, what situation is Paul addressing? Some structural observations are thus in order. As with the preceding set of three (vv. 16-18), these five imperatives are intended to be read together. They are given in two parts (vv. 19-20; 21-22): the first is a form of parallelism in which the second member specifies the first; the second set, which is in contrast to the first, specifies what they are to do instead, this time in a set of three, the first giving the general rule, which the final two spell out more specifically. Thus:

The Spirit do not quench;
Prophecies do not despise;
but
Test all things:

Hold fast to the good;
Avoid every evil form.

A basic exegetical issue is whether the emphasis lies on the first two imperatives (are some within the community less than delighted with such phenomena in the assembly?), or on the final three (do the first two set up the final three so that in correcting abuses they will not overcorrect?). It is also possible, of course, that since many of his Gentile converts were already well acquainted with "ecstasy" from their pagan past,[671] Paul is simply trying to offer some guidelines for perfectly valid — and normal — Spirit manifestations within their own gatherings for worship.[672]

Some have argued[673] that the problem in Thessalonica resulted from some disenchantment with these phenomena, in the form either of too much "ecstasy" (usually glossolalia, as in Corinth) or of misguided "ecstasy" (either by the unruly-idle, who are using prophecy to justify their behavior, or by some whose mistaken predictions about the day of the Lord have brought prophecy into disrepute). This is arguably supported by the grammar of the prohibitions themselves.[674]

But it seems more likely that Paul is here offering something preventative — perhaps related to their former experience with "ecstasy" of a more uncontrolled sort. The evidence from 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, at least, might suggest that Timothy has already informed Paul of some tendencies in worship that needed "adjustment" — but not elimination. Thus, some months later (2 Thess 2:2), even though Paul apparently does not know the precise source of the misrepresentation of his teaching, he does know that "the Spirit" (= "a prophetic utterance") is one of the possibilities. That is probably why in the same letter (2:15; cf. 2:5) he urges them to stay close to what has already been taught them during his first (and founding) visit and in our present letter.

In any case, in this our earliest encounter with the ministry of the Spirit in an early Christian community, instead of urging the Thessalonians to "fan into flame" or "earnestly desire" the Spirit and his manifestations among them, as in some later letters,[675] Paul urges them not to quench the Spirit in this regard. But by "not quenching" or "not despising" neither is he suggesting that anything goes in the name of the Spirit. They are to "test all things," holding fast the good and avoiding every evil form, but testing is not to lead to quenching the Spirit or the Spirit's gifts.

19 Paul begins this series in the most general way,[676] "Do not quench the Spirit."[677] Were this not followed by verse 20, one could justifiably understand

this as a more general word that included both ethical life and charismatic manifestations. But the next clause and the structure of the whole indicate that Paul already has something more specific in mind here.

Although the metaphorical use of the verb "quench"[678] goes beyond the common literal sense of "putting out [a fire]," the frequent collocation of the Spirit with fire[679] is the probable reason for the metaphor here.[680] Nonetheless, the emphasis lies not on the "fire" dimension of the metaphor, but on the stifling of the Spirit in their midst;[681] and just as in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, Paul's reference to "the Spirit" here most likely points to "charismatic manifestations." [682] Despite the fact that the ministries of the Spirit can be abused in the Christian community, Paul's own deep appreciation for the central role of the Spirit in individual and corporate life will not allow for correcting abuse by commanding disuse.[683] Rather, the antidote for abuse is proper use. Hence he begins these exhortations with the general caution, "Do not put out the Spirit's 'fire.'"

20 This next imperative spells out in a specific way the general caution of verse 19. "By not 'quenching' the Spirit," he goes on, "I mean in particular, 'Do not despise prophetic utterances.' " This is the earliest mention of "prophecy" (or "prophetic utterance") in the New Testament. Although not a frequent term in the Pauline corpus, it occurs in this earliest and in one of the latest of the letters (1 Timothy) as well as in 1 Corinthians and Romans.[684] The presupposition of the present passage as well as the argument of 1 Corinthians and the matter-of-fact mention of it in Romans 12:6 strongly suggest that this was a normal expression of the Spirit's activity in the early Christian communities.

But what "prophecy" may have actually entailed is quite another matter. The combined evidence in Paul, especially his later discussion in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, suggests at the least the following understanding. First, even though prophecy was an especially widespread phenomenon in the religions of antiquity,[685] Paul's understanding — as well as that of the other New Testament writers — was thoroughly conditioned by his own history in Judaism. The prophet was one who under inspiration of the Spirit spoke to God's people (e.g., Mic 3:8). The "inspired utterance" came by revelation and announced judgment (usually) or salvation. Often the word spoken had a futuristic element, so in that sense they also came to be seen as "predictors"; but that was only one element, and not necessarily the crucial one.

Second, with the outpouring of the Spirit at the end of the age, the early believers understood the prophecy of Joel 2:28-30 to have been fulfilled, so that "prophecy" not only became a renewed phenomenon but was also potentially available to all, since all now had received the Spirit in fullness. Thus even

though some people were eventually called “prophets” (1 Cor 12:28-29), probably because they were the frequent speakers of “prophecies,” the implication of 1 Corinthians 14 is that it was a gift widely available — at least potentially — to all.

Third, although the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament undoubtedly lay behind Paul’s understanding, at no point does he assume the prophet to be speaking anything other than an ad hoc word. This is especially evidenced by verses 21 and 22 in the present passage. Thus, there is never any sense in which a prophetic word was to be raised to the level of “inspired text.”

Since these kinds of utterances were probably a means of their hearing from God, perhaps in the form of his giving direction and encouragement to a persecuted community, and because such utterances are from the Holy Spirit, they must not be “despised.”[686] But also because such utterances come through merely human vessels, they must be tested, which is the point that he now moves on to make. Whether any of this refers to previous moments in the letter — for example, regarding the day of the Lord in 5:2 — is moot;[687] but the possibility of such lies with what Paul says later in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 (q.v.).

21a The adversative “but” which begins this sentence sets the whole matter in perspective. Even though they must not quench the Spirit by showing contempt for prophetic utterances, neither must they simply accept every utterance of this kind as from the Spirit. Rather, they must “test[688] all things.”[689] In all likelihood this is an earlier form of what in 1 Corinthians 12:10 and 14:29 Paul calls “discerning,” or “weighing,” the “spirits,” meaning in the first instance the “testing” of prophecies. And this in turn is the early Christian version of “testing the prophets” found in Deuteronomy 18:21-22.

All of that seems easy enough; the difficulty for us at this distance lies with determining *how* such prophecies were to be tested. That is, how does Paul understand such testing to take place, and by what criteria? For the most part we are standing on the outside looking in, since nowhere in Paul are criteria specifically offered. Nonetheless, two passages give us some clues.

First, in the discussion of 2 Thessalonians 2:2, it is suggested that 2 Thessalonians 2:15 may help. In a context where some of them have been badly shaken by a misrepresentation of his teaching about the day of the Lord, Paul exhorts them to “stand fast and to hold firm the *traditions* that you were *taught*, whether through *word* [= his original preaching of the gospel and the teaching that followed their coming to faith] or through *letter* [= in this case our 1 Thessalonians].” If this be so, then the first test is the apostolic proclamation of/teaching about Christ. This is a test that has to do with the theological or

doctrinal content of the utterance.

Second, in 1 Corinthians 14:3 Paul specifically says that the one who prophesies speaks edification, encouragement (or exhortation), and comfort. This is the test of purpose, as well as content, and has to do with its helpfulness to the believing community.[690]

The imperatives that follow offer help in yet another direction, but without specification: that somehow, presumably by the content, they should be able to discern the "good" from the "evil."

21b-22 Paul now concludes this brief set of imperatives about prophecies in their assembly by indicating what their twofold response to the testing should be. On the one hand, they are to "hold fast to what is good"; on the other hand, they are to "keep away from every evil form." The first of these is easy enough. According to Paul in a later passage (1 Cor 14:1-19), the reason for earnestly desiring prophecy in the community is that it "edifies" and is therefore an expression of love; in 14:20-25 it is also a sign for them that God is truly in their midst (because of its effect on unbelievers). The present criterion, therefore, is but another way of saying what recurs elsewhere in Pauline instructions on these matters, that the aim of all such activity is the "common good" (1 Cor 12:7), the building up of others.

Our difficulty with the present instruction lies with the final clause (lit. "abstain[691] from every evil form"). Since this comes as the final imperative in the series that began in verse 12, and since the verb is used earlier (4:3) in a context of "avoiding evil" in the ethical sense, this clause can easily get separated from its context and become a form of general instruction for the Christian community. Just as they are to "abstain from sexual immorality," so now he commands finally that they "abstain from every form of evil." And so it has been understood by several generations of Bible readers who were raised on the KJV,[692] which had the misfortune not only of having numbered the "verses," but also eventually of publishing as their standard edition a Bible in which every verse became its own paragraph.[693]

But here is a case where both Pauline usage and context should be decisive. Pauline usage, of course, is not the final criterion, but it is suggestive. The present order of *pas* ("every") + noun + adjective occurs elsewhere in Paul's letters in Ephesians 1:3 and 4:29, and especially with the expression "every good work," which occurs frequently in Paul's letters.[694] Its opposite, "every evil work" *(pantos ergou ponērou),* occurs in 2 Timothy 4:18. On the other side, there is no instance where this order occurs and the adjective is to be understood as a substantive, which makes the absence of the article with *ponērou* the more

telling here (cf. 2 Thess 3:3), whose presence would have made certain that Paul intended a noun. This in itself strongly suggests that "every evil form" is what he meant by this expression. But so also does the context itself.

Furthermore, Paul seems very likely to be here echoing the Septuagint of Job 1:8, where God says of Job that, as an upright man, he "is a man blameless, true, godly, abstaining from every evil deed."[695] Therefore, despite some difficulties with the language,[696] Paul almost certainly intended that they "avoid" or "keep distant from" every expression of "prophecy" that is not "good," but rather is an "evil kind." For the most part the difficulties with the language can be accounted for. The choice of the verb "keep away" *(apechesthe)* is best explained by Paul's use of "hold fast" *(katechete)* in the preceding clause as its natural rhyming antonym. The use of "every" then further explains the differences in the way the objects are expressed.[697] Thus the primary difficulty for scholars and translators has been the word order, where Paul has placed the two modifying adjectives on either side of the noun "form," so that "every evil form" is in the order of "every form that is evil."

What is more difficult to explain is the choice of the noun *eidous* ("form") rather than simply "what is evil," as in the preceding clause ("what is good"). The word *eidous* in this sense occurs only here in Paul, and means something close to "kind."[698] Thus, they are to "shun every kind that is evil." The best explanation here would seem to be an older one, that in Paul's view "good" is singular, whereas "evil" takes many forms. In any case, the context, and the verbal plays between the two final clauses, seems to demand that this final clause also refers to prophetic utterances.

It is also highly unlikely that Paul would actually allow that such "kinds" are truly of the Spirit. What he is urging, rather, is the testing of all "inspired" utterances, so that the Thessalonian believers may distinguish "the good" (= those from the Spirit) from every kind that when tested is found wanting, and therefore not of the Spirit. While we cannot be certain as to how Paul would have understood the latter, in terms of either source or content, possibly he would look upon the misrepresentation of his own teaching about the day of the Lord in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 as "an evil kind" of utterance which they must shun.

It should perhaps be noted in conclusion that the first mention of prophecy in the New Testament includes the imperative that all such prophecies (and by implication all other such "Spirit utterances" in the community) are to be tested. The awe with which many recent charismatics hold prophecy and "prophets," which in effect causes them almost never to be "tested," stands in basic contradiction to this Pauline injunction.

In sum, Paul in this passage is both encouraging and offering a proper response to spontaneous prophetic words in the gathered community in Thessalonica. Because some were apparently prophesying in ways that were less than helpful, Paul urges that all such speech be “tested” so that the good might truly edify God’s people.

It is of some interest that all of these staccato imperatives have found their rightful place in the life and/or instruction of the later church except for this final group having to do with prophetic speech in the gathered church. And on this latter concern, the contemporary church tends to be of two minds, both of which seem to be without adequate hermeneutical grounds on which to stand. On the one hand, what is without hermeneutical basis for those who are open to such ministries of the Spirit is for people to stand in such apparent “awe” of the possibility that the Spirit is speaking as to disregard altogether the imperative to “test all things.” Thus, in the interest of “not quenching” the Spirit, too much that when properly “tested” would prove to be not of the Spirit is allowed to be given community approbation because it was not “weighed” in terms of the guidelines offered in 1 Corinthians 14:3 (strengthening, encouragement, comfort). On the other hand, even though the prohibition of Spirit-inspired prophetic speech is understandable in terms of the history and makeup of the church of our day, it is hardly justifiable on hermeneutical grounds alone. One can understand such prohibition, of course, in contexts where such a spontaneous word might cause near heart failure for many. But the attempt to justify it on any other grounds — as appears to be so often the case — seems to be based on an altogether faulty hermeneutic. In any case, it seems to put one into a hermeneutical conundrum to consider the first triplet (vv. 16-18) as proper for all times and places, but to consider this final material (vv. 19-22) as belonging only to the Pauline churches — since Paul himself offers the means for keeping such speech within proper bounds.

B. BENEDICTION (5:23-24)

> *23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.*

With this twofold benedictory prayer[699] Paul concludes his letter by emphasizing his two major concerns in writing: that the Thessalonian believers continue on a course of holy living; and that they do so until the Parousia it-self. [700] Then, in typical fashion, he affirms for them that the God of peace to whom he directs his prayer, the One who "called" them to himself in the first place, will do as Paul has prayed. And while the content of the prayer seems at first glance to be quite manageable, it is a passage in Paul's letters that has received an extraordinary amount of attention because of the way Paul expresses his concerns.

The petition itself is in two clear parts, held together in somewhat chiastic fashion by the fact that the verb appears in the first position in the first request and the final position in the second one, and thus at the end of the entire sentence. His reason for this is most likely his collocation of the homophones *homoteleis* and *holoklēron* in the middle of his sentence (see the discussion below). By the very nature of what is said the two requests appear to be nearly synonymous, so that the first one offers the basic content of the prayer, while the second one elaborates on it by bringing together Paul's own two primary concerns in writing — their living holy lives in the present so as to be blameless at the coming of the Lord.

The prayer itself has several noteworthy features that need to be mentioned. Perhaps the most striking are the facts that (1) in both language and concern this is very nearly a repetition of the final petition (v. 13) in the prayer report in 3:11-13, and (2) that this nearly identical prayer in its first occurrence was directed to Christ, whereas here it is directed to God the Father alone. It is of high interest, therefore, that when this same basic prayer appears at the end of his second letter to this church, it is there directed to "the Lord [= Christ Jesus] of peace" (2 Thess 3:16). But in many ways the most singular moment of all is one that most

Western Christians would seldom ever notice — that the second petition here individualizes what began with a concern for the body of believers as a whole, a singular moment because Paul so rarely does this.

23 In directing his prayer to "the God of peace," Paul seems to have taken over one of the more characteristic moments of his Jewish heritage (where *shalom* was the commonplace greeting by all) and transformed it into the language of prayer. That is, rather than concluding with a standard "peace be with you," he prays that the God who alone establishes true peace may be at work among them to bring about their "wholeness." Most likely Paul had such a concern in mind as he began the dictation of the prayer. So whereas the prayer assumes the reality of the individual believers in Thessalonica, that concern will not be explicitly picked up until the second petition. The first concern, as throughout, is with the church as a body of believers. After all, "peace" in Paul rarely refers to the "well-arranged heart," as it were, but to the life of the community, that believers live together without conflict. This understanding appears to be behind the TNIV's shift from "wholly"[701] in the first clause, to "each of you in entirety" in the second.

It therefore seems especially fitting as a way of "signing off" on this letter. Although Paul does not put any of the issues raised in this letter in the context of internal conflict, they are in fact issues that are full of potential conflict, especially the matters of "working with one's own hands" and of "sexual immorality."

But even though Paul's concern throughout the letter has been with the community as a whole, the concern in his second, elaborating clause seems pointedly directed toward the individual, since at issue is that each of them be "blameless" at the Parousia. Thus, with a play on the sound of the two Greek words *holoteleis* and *holoklēron*,[702] Paul shifts from a prayer for the community as a whole to a unique moment of individualizing his concern for each of them. To make this clear he expresses that "wholeness" by referring to some ways of understanding the individual "parts" that make up the human person: "spirit, soul, and body." Unfortunately, what Paul most likely intended simply as a way of throwing the net wide in terms of being human has generated an enormous amount of energy and literature, not to mention theological groupings.[703] But this was most likely a somewhat off-handed moment in Paul. Indeed, it is highly doubtful whether he was trying to be precise, or even whether he himself could easily distinguish between "spirit" and "soul."[704] His concern is with the adjective-turned-adverb "in entirety"; and to make that point he includes the terms that he uses elsewhere to speak of the human person.[705]

It has sometimes been suggested that Paul's reference to "spirit" in this case is an oblique, or in some cases a rather direct, reference to the Holy Spirit, picking up the language regarding "the Spirit" from verse 19.[706] But this suggestion will simply not hold up. Indeed, the way the three terms are used together here makes it especially difficult to imagine that the Thessalonians could possibly have perceived the first term in this way. The emphasis, after all, lies on *their* being sanctified (not on the presence of the Spirit in their lives) and on the *entirety* of the human person that needs this sanctifying work of God (although "through his Spirit" would be implied).

If so, secondly, the two adjectives, although grammatically predicate, function in a kind of adverbial sense, and respectively also emphasize the thoroughgoing nature of their sanctification.[707] Seen in this way, the distinctions between them would mean something like "totally" (with emphasis on wholeness) and "in every possible expression of your humanity." The final adverb, "blamelessly," then adds the ethical/moral dimension to this thoroughgoing work of the Spirit. Just as in 3:13, Paul desires the final form of this activity to be expressed in their standing "blameless" before God at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.[708] Thus, before giving more attention to Paul's three anthropological terms, one needs only to note further that this is now the eighth reference to the Coming in this letter.[709]

Most of the discussion on the three anthropological terms has centered either in determining whether or not Paul intended some kind of distinction between the first two terms — and if so, what? — or in the related question whether Paul was a dichotomist or trichotomist. That discussion, however, while not insignificant, has missed Paul's point altogether.[710] His use of the term "spirit" may indeed have been occasioned by its proximity to verse 19; nonetheless, Paul's concern is singular: that they be sanctified completely. [711] In the context of this letter, and especially in light of the sentence's ties to 4:3-8, the present emphasis lies with *his inclusion of the body.* Very much as in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, although without the express language of the body as the Spirit's temple, Paul is concerned that this early, almost totally Gentile (cf. 1:9-10), congregation understand that salvation in Christ includes the sanctification of the body: it is now to be holy, and wholly for God's own purposes. Thus he wants them to stand blameless in holiness before God at the coming of Christ, and he insists (now in prayer) that such holiness be thoroughgoing in their lives, including the purity of the body.

What, then, shall we say of the first two terms? First, it is very likely, given the way Paul here expresses himself, that he might think of the human spirit and

soul as distinct entities in some way. But how he might think of them in this way is not at all clear from the rest of his letters. Since he tends to use such terms both broadly and somewhat interchangeably, one is hard pressed to come to final conclusions. Moreover, the emphasis on entirety suggests that he could easily have included "mind" without for a moment deviating from his concern. That is, whatever distinctions he may have understood are quite secondary to the greater concern of completeness.

Nonetheless, Paul probably did understand some distinction between "spirit" and "soul"; but it is not easy for us from this distance to discern what that might have been. In fact he does not often refer to the human spirit.[712] Whatever else, it refers to the interior, nonmaterial component of the human personality (see esp. 1 Cor 2:11). Moreover, those who see this usage as denoting that part of human existence that serves as the place of intersection between the human and the divine by means of the Holy Spirit are most likely moving in the right direction.[713] In any case, the stress here is that the body as well as the human spirit be kept blameless until the coming of Christ.[714]

Finally, one should not allow the foregoing discussion to minimize Paul's own concern that this sanctification be something that is going on now, and especially that it shall be so at the Coming itself.

24 It is of high interest that Paul concludes his prayer for them with an affirmation regarding its being realized. It has to do not so much with their effort — although he surely expects them to do their part — as with God's own faithfulness. The bottom line for Paul in all such matters is that God is completely trustworthy, not only "worthy" of our "trust," but absolutely to be relied on to carry out what has been promised. And here, for the first time in his letters, we are brought face to face with God's calling them to be his people and God's own readiness to complete what was begun by the Spirit. For the Thessalonians this is the needed reminder that neither their "sanctification" nor their being "preserved blameless" for the Parousia is dependent on their own personal struggling for it, but on their trusting the God who has already called them to himself, and who will thus bring to pass in their lives what God has begun. In the end everything depends on the single reality that God is absolutely faithful.

C. CLOSING GREETINGS AND FINAL GRACE (5:25-28)

25 Brothers and sisters, pray[715] *for us. 26 Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. 27 I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.*

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

With these words Paul at last brings the "concluding matters" at the end of this letter to their "final" conclusion. But in contrast to what has preceded, this is very clearly the moment of his actual "signing off." As with all such closing greetings in his subsequent letters, where the standard items are very much the same, and where some have a singular moment or two, this one has two elements that occur in most of the letters (vv. 26 and 28), plus a singular moment that does not recur in any of the later letters. Only the final "grace" occurs in all the letters; the charge to greet all of God's people (v. 26) occurs again in Romans, Philippians, and 2 Corinthians. But the other two elements are unique to this letter.

25 With his final vocative “brothers and sisters” (number 14) in this letter, Paul, who has just prayed for them, asks the Thessalonian believers to reciprocate in this matter. Indeed, so obvious is this that early scribes added a *kai* (“even, also”), so that the later text reads: “Brothers and sisters, pray *also* for us.” While one should probably not make too much of a unique moment like this, at least two matters might be suggested by it. First, without necessarily trying to do so, Paul here reflects the friendship motif we have noted throughout. Asking them to pray for him and his companions is a way of expressing mutual indebtedness between friends. Second, it may also indicate something about Paul’s own present situation in Corinth, where his relationship with that community of believers turned out to be not nearly at the same level of comradeship as those between him and his Macedonian churches.

26 The imperative to greet all God’s people occurs only occasionally in Paul’s letters,[716] and with the modifier “with a holy kiss” only in one other instance (2 Cor 13:12). But it is especially noteworthy that it occurs in this letter, where friendship is what drives so much that is said, since a “kiss”[717] in Greco-Roman culture was a natural greeting between friends, and especially within families, which is now the assumed relationship in the preceding vocative, “brothers and sisters.” Thus this word is a reminder to the whole community to keep their internal friendship alive, and demonstrate it regularly with the kiss that denoted such friendship. What would be most remarkable about this expression of mutual Christian love within the believing community is the radical crossing of social boundary lines that would have been involved, not only between Jew and Gentile but also between rich and poor, slave and free.[718]

27 Perhaps from our distance the most significant matter in the charge to have the letter read to all is the sudden shift from the first person plural, which Paul has basically maintained throughout, to the first person singular.[719] At this point Paul himself has most likely taken pen in hand and authenticated the letter by this final personal word. It is also further evidence that Paul is the actual “writer” of the letter, even though it began as from Silas and Timothy as well (1:1), which plural “authorship” was basically maintained throughout by the first person plural “we.” As pointed out on 1:1, the letter is to be understood as from all three of them, but Paul is the one responsible for its wording by way of dictation.

At our distance one can only be puzzled by Paul’s singular charge that “this letter [be] read to all the brothers and sisters.” Moreover, the charge is not a casual one; it is made “before the Lord [= Christ],” and therefore with the intent that it be seen as having divine approbation. Most likely this is a final word in the letter that has the unruly-idle in view. That is, Paul is not suggesting that they

be sought out and have this letter read to them; more likely this is his way of letting them know that he is herewith once more authorizing the leadership to direct them to mend their ways. One is led to think so only because in his next letter Paul must take up this issue one more time, and there with much greater forcefulness.

28 The one element that recurs in all the letters in the church corpus, as well as the Pastorals (1-2 Timothy, Titus), is the concluding "grace." Here, in its first occurrence in the corpus, it takes the form that becomes more or less standard throughout. While the "grace" itself occurs in all the letters,[720] the modifier "of the Lord Jesus Christ" occurs in some form, usually this one,[721] in all but Colossians. It is noteworthy that the standard "good-bye" in ancient letters was *errōso* (lit. "be strong"), which occurs in the New Testament only in the letter of James recorded in Acts 15:29. As with the salutation with which the letter began, this standard conclusion has been Christianized. It was "grace," God's own favor that is theirs through "the Lord, Jesus Christ," with which he greeted them at the beginning; and now that same "grace" is what he wishes for them in conclusion. It is the one word in Paul's vocabulary that embraces all that God has done, and that he desires that God will do, for his Thessalonian friends through Christ Jesus.

It is hardly surprising, given how Paul "Christianizes" the common greeting in contemporary letters, that he does the same with the concluding matters. Although it is true that, in many examples from Greco-Roman antiquity, writers of letters have shown themselves somewhat reluctant to "sign off," nonetheless there are few, if any, examples of what Paul does here — thoroughly modify standard stuff both by elaborating and by "Christianizing" it. And what begins here carries on throughout his life as a writer of letters to his churches (with the exception of Ephesians, which is best explained by understanding it as a "circular" letter to be read in many churches).

The Second Letter to the THESSALONIANS

Introduction to 2 Thessalonians

As noted in the Introduction to 1 Thessalonians, I have chosen to write a separate Introduction to the second letter so that it will be recognized as having its own “place in the sun” as a Pauline document, and not simply get absorbed in the Introduction to the first letter. However, in this case I will forego the material that is common to both letters and concentrate on the matters that are pertinent only to this letter on its own. Thus I will here deal with only the first and third matters from the previous Introduction: Authorship and Date, and Occasion for Writing.

I. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

If one were to take this letter at face value, as a "second"[722] letter from the apostolic trio to the believers in Thessalonica, then this section of the Introduction would be very brief indeed. And because the commentary is in fact written from that perspective — as the only way one can make good sense of it at all — it will be much briefer than some think is fair or reasonable. But the writing of a commentary on this letter in and of itself tends to push one toward authenticity regarding authorship, so that there has been only one significant commentary in English[723] over the past century and a half that has tried to make sense of this letter as a forgery.[724]

When one reads the literature by those who argue that Paul is not the author of this letter, one is struck by the "thinness" of the argumentation as such, especially since there is hardly a single argument that does not take some form of subjectivity on the part of its proponent(s). And at the end of the day, it becomes quite clear that had this letter not contained the material in 2:1-12, this view would not have arisen at all. Indeed, the most often-recurring argument against Pauline authorship is a very subjective one, that this letter lacks the "warmth" of the first one. But one may rightly wonder how this is an objective argument at all. And in any case, why should the letter not come across thus, given *(a)* that some misinformation regarding the day of the Lord has been attributed to Paul himself, and *(b)* that he has to deal with one situation (the disuptive-idle) for a second time and now at length!

I do not intend here to "reinvent" the wheel, as it were, regarding the arguments pro and con for Pauline authorship. This has been done several times, and I find especially salutary and useful the even-handed treatment of these matters in the commentary by Marshall (28-45) and the detailed "pro and con" handling of this question by Malherbe (349-74). But it is of some interest that those who argue most strongly against this letter as authentic have also seldom written a commentary on it, with the single exception in English of that by Richard noted above; and his attempt at trying to make sense of it as a forgery in itself would seem to push a reader back toward viewing the letter as authentic.

It is not my purpose here to go over all that ground yet again, and thus I advise the reader to consult the three commentaries just noted for the arguments pro and con.[725] I have chosen rather to introduce the present commentary only, and not to engage in further debate on this issue, except to note with approval the conclusion made by Marshall some years ago that "it is very doubtful whether a set of weak arguments adds up to one powerful one" (34). Since one can in fact make good sense of this letter as a follow-up to the first one, and since the internal data in the second letter basically push one in this direction, this will be the assumption of the present commentary.

In defense of going this route, however, I here offer a (very brief) sampling of items found in the second letter, in relationship to the same phenomena in the first letter, which would seem to push forgery beyond the bounds of ordinary historical probability. And what makes this sampling the more telling from my perspective is the "incidental" nature of these items, the kind of matters that would seem to require the "author" of the second let-ter to have gotten into the skin, as it were, of the author of the first letter, which of course would indeed be the case if it is authentic.

1. In both letters the thanksgiving evolves into a major item that Paul feels he needs to address, yet the two matters themselves are without an even remotely close relationship to one another (Paul's past relationships with the Thessalonians; and the fact that their persecutors are headed for divine judgment). How, one wonders, could a forger have pulled this off, and have done so in such a radically different manner from the first one, the only Pauline letter he knew.
2. The use of the vocative *adelphoi* ("brother [and sisters]) is distributed about the same number of times throughout the two letters, and at an extremely higher rate of occurrence when contrasted to the rest of the corpus; furthermore, it occurs in both letters toward the front of the elongated "thanksgiving," the length of which in both cases is yet another feature that does not happen elsewhere in the corpus.
3. In this same regard, these are the only two letters where on one occasion in each Paul elaborates on the vocative itself; in 1 Thessalonians 1:4 as "*adelphoi* loved by God," and in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 as "*adelphoi* loved by the Lord." A forger who knew well the first letter might have been able to do this, but could he have also done so by changing the second one so as to use the language of the Benjamin blessing in Deuteronomy 33:12?[726]
4. One of the features of Paul's later letters is his love of ὑπέρ *(hyper)*

compounds, so much so that in the commentary on Philippians (221) I suggest "that Paul virtually holds the copyright" on them. Thus Paul's thanksgiving (1:3) that the Thessalonians' faith "is growing more and more" *(hyperauxanei)* has all the earmarks of an authenticity that would be difficult for one who does not know the rest of the corpus to imitate.

5. Another feature found in these two letters is Paul's use of *pistis* (ordinarily, "faith") to refer to someone's "faithfulness." This is an especially striking feature in the first letter (see on 3:1 and 5); it occurs again at the opening of this letter in 1:3 and 4. Thus, even though in its first instance (v. 3) one could argue that "your faith" is what is increasing, that is more difficult to do with its next appearance in verse 4, where Paul commends them (in this order!) for "your perseverance and faith(fulness)."
6. Although the *specific* phenomenon does not occur elsewhere, the unusual redundancy in 1:3 of (literally) "the love of each one of all of you for one another" is an especially Pauline feature.
7. It would seem only remotely possible, if at all, for a forger to capture Paul's noteworthy use of *kyrios* to refer exclusively to Christ and *theos* to refer to God, a feature that is maintained throughout the second letter. On the other hand, this consistency is easily explained as Pauline, since in his next preserved letter (1 Cor 8:6) Paul breaks up the familiar *Shema* so that the word *kyrios* ("Lord") refers exclusively to Christ the Son, while the word *theos* ("God") is used equally exclusively to refer to God the Father.
8. The arresting intertextual use in 3:2 of precise language from the Septuagint of Isaiah 25:4, where it differs considerably from the Hebrew, is a feature that is so thoroughly Pauline that one can scarcely imagine a forger having been able to do this, especially one who knew only the first letter.
9. Perhaps the most striking feature of all is the anarthrous use of "the Lord" in the phrase *en kyriō,* which is found in abundance thoughout the corpus and occurs three times in the first letter (3:8; 4:1 [plus "Jesus"]; and 5:12), and occurs in the second letter twice (3:4 and 12 [plus "Jesus Christ"]). One would seem to need familiarity with the entire Pauline corpus to have been able to duplicate this phenomenon; but it makes perfectly good sense as stemming from Paul himself and thus reflecting a usage that was already in place and that will last a lifetime.

Finally, what is perhaps the most significant feature of all regarding this letter

is the fact that its author has a thoroughgoing acquaintance with, and use of, language and terms from the first letter, but knew next to nothing, if anything at all,[727] of the Paul of the later letters. As many have pointed out before, this phenomenon in itself calls the theory of pseudepigraphy into an extemely high level of suspicion, while at the same time it makes it nearly impossible that someone with knowledge of the whole corpus wrote it at a later time.

The ultimate question on this matter, of course, is “why?”; why would anyone care to write such a letter simply for the sake of “palming off” as Pauline the singular (even for Paul) eschatological material in 2:1-12 — and one could surely posit no other meaningful reason for a forgery. And to let that material sit in the middle of the letter rather than at the end would seem to make almost no sense at all.

At the end of the day, therefore, one must make allowance for our oth-erwise rather limited knowledge of Paul — on the basis of a somewhat small “literary” output — and note that all such idiosyncratic moments as 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (cf. esp. Romans 9-11) remind us how much we really do *not* know about Paul on the basis of this limited collection of letters — although, of course, they do tell us a great deal, and by and large show a considerable consistency in thought and content.

Given, therefore, the strong evidence in favor of viewing this letter as authentic, the question of *date* is related to the date suggested for the first letter — probably a few months later and thus probably sometime *circa* 50 CE.

II. OCCASION FOR WRITING

The “reasons” for the letter seem to be two, with perhaps a third one sitting in the wings, as it were. What is not easy to decide from our distance is whether one of these is more important than the other, or whether their order was dictated in this case simply by “new things first.” As for the “occasion” itself, most likely it had to do with the return of Timothy to Paul and Silas in Corinth with “mixed news” about the situation in Thessalonica. On the one hand, the issue of the disruptive-idle turned out to be a matter of much greater consequence than Paul had apparently assumed in writing the first letter; and if our reading of the order and timing of these letters is correct, then this issue was being addressed by letter for the first time in our 1 Thessalonians, the letter Timothy was just then bringing with him on that trip to Thessalonica. Thus with Timothy’s return Paul now needed to deal with it in greater detail and severity than had been done before; and probably it comes at the end so as to be “heard” better by those for whose sake it was written.

On the other hand, the matter of the timing of the “day of the Lord” had become a new issue altogether; and Paul’s own uncertainty as to how this misinformation had been presented as from him in some way (see the commentary on 2:2 and 15) only adds to its complication for later readers of the letter. But because this has happened, we also now become privy to a part of Paul’s eschatological perspective that he would otherwise have had no reason to include in any of his letters.

But almost certainly lying behind the tensions created by these two matters is the increasing severity of the outside persecution that Paul deals with in the “thanksgiving” in 1:5-10. Whereas this material also adds to our larger understanding of his eschatology as such, one should never lose sight of its first purpose — to reassure these beleaguered believers that their persecutors have their own divinely appointed destiny. And therefore, even though such knowledge would not necessarily lessen their present pain, it should have served as comfort to know that God has not forgotten them, while at the same time it reassured them of God’s ultimate justice regarding their persecutors.

All of this is to say, then, that even though this is not the most significant of

the Pauline letters in terms of our overall theological and ethical/behavioral insights into his gospel, it is not thereby so irrelevant as to assign it “cinderella” status among his letters. Here is another Pauline moment which as a whole helps us better to understand the nature of the final outcome of the gospel itself, while at the same time giving us insight into the “everyday” nature of living Christ in a very pagan culture.

Text, Exposition, and Notes

I. THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER (1:1-12)

Paul's second letter to the believers in Thessalonica appears to have followed hard on the heels of the first one, since each of the three issues addressed here is picked up in some way or another from the first letter. Moreover, the two major items in this case — the coming of the Lord and the unruly-idle — are now spoken to by a somewhat aggrieved apostle in an expanded form (2:1- 12; 3:6-13). The third item, addressed more indirectly in the first letter, deals with the believers' present persecution at the hands of fellow citizens in Thessalonica. In this letter it is the first thing up, as the major item in the opening thanksgiving (1:6-10).

Also similar to the first letter is the way that the first item Paul addresses flows directly out of the thanksgiving so as to defy neat packaging on our part.[728] In both letters Paul thus moves somewhat imperceptibly from his thanksgiving into the first area of concern that he carries for these (still new) believers. The thanksgiving is then followed, in what will also become typical of his later letters, by a report as to how he prays for them (1:11-12), a prayer which also anticipates concerns in the letter itself.[729]

A. SALUTATION (1:1-2)

1 Paul, Silas[730] and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
2 Grace and peace to you from God the[731] Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This salutation is very much like that of the first letter, a fairly good indication that it was written within a short time frame thereafter. At the same time, its two basic differences — the addition of "our" in verse 1 and the addition of the source of "grace and peace" — point the way toward the future regarding the Pauline salutations, but not the whole way. The wording of this salutation, therefore, represents an intermediate position between that in 1 Thessalonians and those in the rest of the corpus that follows.

1 For comments on the three writers see on 1 Thessalonians 1:1. The fact that the three of them are still together and thus are intended corporately to be responsible for the letter — even though Paul is the actual "author" while Silas is perhaps the scribe — is a certain indication that this letter was written soon after the first one. One may also assume that they are in the same place geographically as before, and that Timothy, after delivering the first letter, had now returned to Paul and Silas[732] with the information that led to the immediate writing of this one.

The first difference from the salutation in 1 Thessalonians is the addition of the "our" with "Father." It is also the first point of critique by those who think Paul did not write this letter. But that is a quite unnecessary conclusion to draw from this slight difference. Paul has here repeated the unique feature, found elsewhere only in 1 Thessalonians, of designating the church as existing simultaneously in God the Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ. The addition of "our" is the natural outflow of the habit already well established in the first letter, where, on the three occasions this designation is used for God after the salutation (1:3; 3:11, 13), Paul has already begun his lifelong habit of referring to

God as “our Father.”[733]

2 The second difference from the salutation in the first letter is the “addition” to the “grace” of its ultimate source: “from God *the* Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ.” Here is the kind of redundancy that becomes typical of Paul in his later letters.[734] Just as the church is affirmed to exist “*in* God *our* Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” so Paul now adds what will be found in all of his subsequent preserved letters, namely the *source* of this “grace and peace,” “God *the* Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”[735]

All of this is especially explicable as from Paul himself. For example, the letter throughout shows concern for Paul’s authority, yet here Paul keeps the “Paul and Silas and Timothy” in the salutation, with no appositional “apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ” as in his later letters, even though the content of the present letter might easily have called for such. Moreover, Paul

here keeps the first person plural throughout the letter, except for 2:5 and the signature at the end. Together these various items argue strongly in favor of the authenticity of the letter.

B. THANKSGIVING, INCLUDING THE FIRST ISSUE (1:3-10)

In this remarkable thanksgiving — a single sentence embracing all of verses 3-10 — Paul does two things. In the first part (vv. 3-4), and very typically, he thanks God for the perseverance of the Thessalonians in the midst of their present trials. But in the second part (vv. 6-9) he launches into a considerable pronouncement of coming judgment on those responsible for their suffering, while concluding (v. 10) with a word of eschatological hope for those who believe. The clauses that constitute our verse 5 serve a transitional role between these two distinguishable elements.

Thus, in a manner somewhat similar to that in 1 Thessalonians, but unlike that of his later letters, Paul uses the actual thanksgiving report (vv. 3- 4) to address his first major concern as well — the Thessalonian believers' ongoing persecution and suffering at the hands of their fellow Gentiles (vv. 6-9). The result is the most exceptional of the Pauline thanksgivings, in that, beginning with verse 6, he focuses less on the Thessalonians themselves and more on God's final judgment of their enemies.[736] This initial thanksgiving[737] thus evolves into the first of the three major concerns in the letter, namely to encourage the Thessalonian believers in the face of increased "persecutions and trials" (v. 4). The major part of it (vv. 6-10) is intended to demonstrate God's justice[738] in light of this present, apparently increased, persecution, concluding with the assurance of their own eschatological future. The result is a truly remarkable "thanksgiving," since ultimately it focuses not on the believers themselves but on God's final judgment of their enemies; and it is this future certainty that is apparently intended to encourage the Thessalonians and thus to cause them to take hope in the midst of present trials.

Although the whole of this very long sentence[739] has its enigmatic moments, one can at least track how it apparently evolved. Verse 3 offers the basic thanksgiving regarding their "faith" and "love," about which the apostolic band has boasted to others (v. 4). This is straightforward, standard stuff. Verse 5, by way of the puzzling apposition *endeigma* ("evidence" or "plain indication"), moves on[740] to remind them of God's coming righteous judgment on all of God's enemies (vv. 6-9). The sentence then concludes (v. 10) with the assurance

that the believers themselves will be counted worthy of the coming kingdom.

1. Thanksgiving for Perseverance in Suffering (1:3-4)

> *3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. 4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.*

This first part of the thanksgiving contains what one comes to expect of Paul at this point. He begins with gratitude to God for the Thessalonians themselves in light of what he has learned from Timothy regarding their standing firm in the present trying situation (v. 3). Indeed, by way of encouragement he informs them further that the apostles have boasted to others about their perseverance (v. 4), the end result of which, he goes on, is their own certain eschatological future (v. 5). All of this is fairly standard stuff; the surprise comes in his long elaboration of verse 5 in the rest of the sentence (vv. 6-10). Thus the thanksgiving proper (vv. 3-4) is typical of those that will appear in subsequent letters; at the same time, however, it has its share of unique features — a phenomenon that is also in keeping with all subsequent thanksgivings. These will be noted in the discussion that follows.

3 Paul begins his thanksgiving in this instance with two unique features: an emphasis on its obligatory nature and the inclusion of the vocative "brothers and sisters." The emphasis on its obligatory nature[741] can be taken in either of two ways: as emphasis on its divine necessity, or on the Thessalonians themselves — that thinking about them makes thanksgiving for them something of a compulsion. Most likely it is the latter.[742] In receiving news back from Timothy, Paul has a strong sense of divine obligation to thank God for them, both for their own growth in faith and love and especially for their perseverance in the midst of increased persecution.[743] At the same time the nature of this thanksgiving offers the basic model which will be reflected in all of Paul's subsequent thanksgivings — genuine thanksgiving, but for the very things that also need strengthening, and sometimes correction.[744]

Such giving of thanks "always for you, brothers and sisters,"[745] is fitting[746] because[747] of what Paul has learned about their staying true to the gospel in terms of both their *faithfulness* to Christ and their *love* for one another.[748] Indeed, they are more than simply staying true; in each case they are showing signs of "increase."[749] At the same time, it should be pointed out, these are also the two Christian virtues that need further attention in this community. In fact, the main parts of this letter address some deficiencies in these two aspects of Christian life for which they are also being praised. Thus both the content and the unusually long nature of the present "thanksgiving" seem aimed directly at their "faith" — as a means of bolstering it by reassuring them of God's sure eschatological justice, despite present circumstances. Bolstering this faith seems also the ultimate concern of the eschatological reminders in 2:1-12. The matter of "love" for everyone is then addressed in 3:6-16.

Thus Paul's first point of thanksgiving has to do with their "faith," which continues to carry its primary sense from 1 Thessalonians of "faithful trust" in God. After all, the issue for Paul in these letters is not simply with their "having faith" (= putting their trust in Christ), but with their ongoing steadfastness in that trust.[750] And since Paul had earlier alluded to some possible "deficiencies" in their "faith" (1 Thess 3:10), he now gives thanks to God[751] that their "faith[fulness]" is showing signs of abundant increase, perhaps especially because this is something for which he prayed in 1 Thessalonians 3:12. Even so, this is the concern that will be picked up immediately — both in the rest of the thanksgiving itself and especially in the matter about "the day of the Lord" in 2:1-12.

His second point of thanksgiving is also a matter that carries over from the first letter, that "the love every one of you has for each other is increasing." This bit of redundancy is especially Pauline. The point is easy to discern: that their love for one another within the believing community continues to be evident, indeed increasingly so.[752] One would like to think, therefore, that the admonition of 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 has thus taken root among most of them. But the present formulation is also a bit awkward. Paul is especially concerned to point out that everyone in the community is involved in this mutual love, thus (literally) "the love of each one of all of you for one another is growing." In Paul's understanding of Christian life, nothing could be more important than this. And even though it is easy for us at our distance to turn this into a Christian platitude, in fact here is a place where Paul has not only understood Christ himself, but has also kept this primary virtue at the forefront in writing to his churches. Even so, this is the issue that will be picked up — less explicitly, to be

sure — at the end of the letter, because it is in the matter of love that the unruly-idle are especially falling short.

4 The net result of their increasing faith and abounding love is that Paul and his companions (lit. "we ourselves"[753]) gladly boast about them in all of God's churches. However, with the content of that boast he also begins to move toward the first issue to be taken up in the letter — their suffering because of relentless persecution from unbelieving fellow townspeople. Thus the first matter to be picked up from the preceding clause is their "faith."[754] What the Thessalonian believers now need to hear is the content of his "boast" about them in the other churches. In so doing Paul uses the key words "patience" and "faith[fulness]," again reflecting the language and concerns of the first letter.

But in reminding them that he knows well the *context* of their faithfulness, Paul now shifts the thanksgiving altogether toward that context. He and his companions thus presently boast of the Thessalonian believers' "perseverance and faith[fulness]" in the context of "all the persecutions[755] and afflictions [756]" which they are currently enduring.[757] On the surface of things this would not seem to be a very comforting word. But Paul has regularly instructed his churches that persecution would be the expected lot of those who willingly follow a Messiah who had been crucified by the Romans as a state criminal. And such persecutions will regularly be accompanied by "afflictions" or "hardships" of all kinds. So Paul informs these beleaguered believers by way of thanksgiving that he regularly "boasts" about them in the other churches because of their endurance and continuing faithfulness in the midst of such persecution.

As he has done in 1 Thessalonians — and will do in almost all of his letters — Paul gives thanks for what God is already doing among these believers regarding matters that also need further attention. There is much to learn from this habit of Paul's. First of all, Paul recognizes more clearly than many who give leadership to the church that these are God's people, after all, and Paul is only the Lord's servant on their behalf. Second, he once more expresses gratitude for what God is already doing, thus putting the emphasis where it belongs, rather than focussing immediately on areas that need correction or improvement. May his tribe increase!

2. Judgment of the Persecutors and Salvation for God's People (1:5-10)

5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire[758] *with the angels of his power. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

As noted, Paul's first thanksgiving in this letter evolves into the first of the three major concerns of the letter[759] — to encourage the Thessalonian believers in the face of increased "persecutions and trials" (1:4). Thus the rest — indeed, the major part — of this long and convoluted "thanksgiving" is intended to demonstrate the justice of God in the face of the Thessalonians' present persecution. Our verse 5 serves as a transition between the two parts. Beginning at verse 6, where he (apparently) picks up the thrice-repeated verb *pay back* from the Septuagint of Isaiah 66:4-6,[760] Paul spells out the just judgment of God that the Thessalonians' present enemies will experience at the final revelation of Christ (vv. 6-7a). Significantly, it is Christ himself who will carry out the judgment at his coming (vv. 7b-10); equally significant, much of the passage is couched in language from several Old Testament judgment texts, where the Septuagint has *Kyrios* ("Lord," as the substitute term for Yahweh[761]) as the administrator of judgment.[762] Thus one of the striking features of this very long sentence is that Christ is now the *Kyrios* ("Lord") to whom Paul refers in these intertextual echoes. Thus, as already noted on 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13, by the time these letters were written[763] the early Christian communities, here represented by Paul, were already attributing to their risen Lord, Jesus, the *Kyrios* = Yahweh texts of the Old Testament. [764] In so doing, they were at once asserting Christ's own deity, while carefully not confusing him with the Father.

5 The next word in Paul's sentence, the noun "evidence,"[765] is not only puzzling but also sits awkwardly in terms of grammar; therefore, most English translations have done as the TNIV — supply a pronoun of some kind to aid the transition. Most likely Paul's noun *endeigma* is an accusative, which he intended

to stand in apposition to "your endurance and faithfulness" in the midst of persecution, since that seems to be the only thing in the preceding sentence that makes sense of what follows.[766] Thus what Paul probably intended is that "your faithful endurance in the midst of your present hardships" functions as a "sign" or "evidence"[767] — for the believers themselves. That much would have been easy enough had the word "evidence" not been followed immediately by the genitive, "of God's righteous judgment." But as the rest of the "thanksgiving" plays out, it seems clear that this phrase is purposefully anticipatory.[768] That is, Paul is concerned with two matters at once: that the Thessalonians' understand *(a)* the nature and purpose of their suffering, and *(b)* the role their suffering plays in anticipating God's righteous judgments on their enemies. The rest of the present clause spells out the first matter; the rest of the sentence itself (vv. 6-10) spells out the second.

Thus before going on to delineate God's righteous judgment on those responsible for their present "persecutions and trials," Paul reminds these believers of what will be the end result of their own present endurance. God's righteous judgment on their behalf will be that "you will be counted worthy[769] of the kingdom of God," since this is the ultimate goal "for which you are in fact[770] suffering." In this second occurrence of "kingdom of God" language in these letters (cf. 1 Thess 2:12), one cannot be sure whether it is intended as a future or present referent. Most likely it primarily refers to the presentness of God's rule[771] — they are currently suffering for the kingdom that transcends the kingdoms of this world. But at the same time it points to their future, so that present suffering has a role to play with regard to their presence in the final kingdom. Thus suffering is the lot of those who would be disciples of a suffering servant Messiah. Indeed, Christian suffering is always to be understood in this way.

Although there is a theological sense in which no one should consider themselves "worthy of the kingdom," Paul is not here thinking in later theological terms. The Thessalonian believers are currently suffering "for the sake of the kingdom," and God is the one who accounts them worthy of citizenship in that kingdom, both now and in the future. Thus Paul's final clause functions simultaneously both to affirm that their suffering is part of the larger package, as it were, and to assure them that the goal of all this is the ultimate one — being present in the final, eschatological kingdom, where God's gracious rule is absolute.[772]

6-7a In Paul's Greek sentence this clause begins with a conjunction that ordinarily would have the sense "if indeed," but in this context it carries little of

its conditional sense and more of what actually is so, thus "since indeed." [773] One should further note that since Paul's sentence at this point begins to get unmanageably long, the T/NIV translators have chosen to let the context carry the day; hence the striking affirmation stands by itself: "God is just" in fact. The rest of the clause (through v. 7a) spells out the nature of God's justice.

In effect Paul simply appeals to God's justice found in the Old Testament in the *lex talionis,* the law of just retribution.[774] Thus God's "just" dealings in this case are expressed in terms of what the Thessalonian believers have been experiencing — *thlipsis* ("affliction"),[775] which is what God will eventually mete out on their persecutors. In effect, therefore, this clause serves as the thesis sentence for all that follows. For the Thessalonian believers who are being persecuted by their fellow townspeople, God's justice will take a twofold form: "affliction" for those who are "afflicting" you, and "rest" for you who are being "afflicted." In God's time, Paul adds at the end, when you do experience rest, it will be "along with us," meaning Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Thus Paul reassures them of their mutual, certain eschatological future. But what is promised here is not temporal judgment — judgment on their enemies within their near future — but eschatological judgment. Everything in these two letters indicates that Paul and the Thessalonians lived fully in the tension of the "already/not yet" of God's rule. Life for them in the present is altogether predicated on Christ's resurrection, which has thus also guaranteed their own certain future.

The rest of this sentence will spell out in some detail these two elements of God's justice. In verses 7b-9, picking up language from several prophetic texts, Paul will delineate God's just judgment on their persecutors, while in verse 10 he concludes by noting that the same "revelation" of the Lord Jesus that means judgment on their persecutors will mean "glorification" for God's people.

7b-8 With this clause Paul presents the primary feature of God's eschatological denouement, and thus the key moment in his sentence — the return of Christ himself (= "the Parousia/ Coming"), which Paul now describes as "the revelation of the Lord Jesus."[776] It is when this "revelation" [777] occurs that divine justice will be served. So to heighten the effect of this moment for his beleaguered friends, Paul describes the "revelation" with three prepositional phrases, in this order: "from heaven, with the angels of his power, in blazing fire."[778] The first and third of these (first and second in the TNIV) echo what he had earlier affirmed in his first letter. First, Paul begins with the Lord's present location; he will be revealed "from heaven" (1 Thess 4:16; cf. 1:10) — biblical language for God's "dwelling place." At his ascension the risen Christ was "taken up into heaven," from whence, Paul had assured them in his first letter,

"he will descend" accompanied by various phenomena that are appropriate for "waking the dead" who will be raised at his coming. This spatial element of the coming is thus the first thing mentioned here as well.

Second (in Paul's Greek sentence), at his coming the Lord, Jesus, will be accompanied by "the angels of his power."[779] This latter phrase thus interprets Zechariah's "all his holy ones" (see 1 Thess 3:13) with concepts from Jewish apocalyptic. Most likely the phrase here means, "the angels who are the ministers of his power."[780]

Third,[781] the Lord's coming will also be accompanied with "blazing fire."[782] With this phrase Paul moves altogether into the sphere of Jewish apocalyptic. The phrase itself is an echo of Isaiah 66:15, while the end of the clause includes language from Isaiah 66:4. The significance of this intertextual echoing of Isaiah is best seen by a display of the three texts (where common language is underlined):

> Paul: of the Lord Jesus . . . in flaming fire, giving punishment to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
> Isa 66:15 The Lord as fire will come, and as a storm his chariots, to recompense with wrath, punishment and repudiation in flaming fire
> Isa 66:4 Says the Lord [v. 2], . . . I will repay them because I called them and they did not obey me

Paul's concern, of course, is to reassure the beleaguered Thessalonian believers that Christ at his coming will mete out God's just punishment on their persecutors. In doing so, Paul has thus turned to well-known passages from the Old Testament, about which three matters are significant. First, the *Lord* in both Isaiah passages is Yahweh, while the *Lord* in Paul's use of this language is specified as "the Lord, Jesus." This means, second, that "the Lord" who will come "in blazing fire" to mete out this judgment is now "the Lord, Jesus Christ," who will thus assume Yahweh's role in the prophetic text. Third, the reason for judgment in Isaiah is that "they do not obey me," where Isaiah's "me = Yahweh"; this is now expressed in terms of "the gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ." What has happened here, therefore, is that Paul has not only identified the Lord Jesus with the "Lord = Yahweh" of Isaiah's oracle, but the gospel of the Lord Jesus is also what the wicked have not obeyed, and they will therefore be judged by him. One can hardly escape the christological implications of such an intertextual interchange.

The nature of the judgment is expressed with a word that has to do with

"punishment," and often with the stronger sense of "vengeance."[783] Unfortunately the latter word in English carries such totally negative connotations that one is loathe to use it with reference to God. But if one thinks of the word in relationship with its cognate "to avenge oneself," then some of the sting is removed. In any case, there are two sides to the final divine "punishment." On the one hand, divine justice is being served; on the other hand, and from the human perspective, the greater "punishment" is to be "shut out" from the presence of the Lord, language that reflects the original punishment of the human race in Eden. This indeed is "full retribution" for human arrogance against God.

Given this clear echoing of Old Testament apocalyptic language, one therefore cannot be sure how literally some of it is to be taken, especially so in light of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, where the emphasis is altogether on the effect of the Coming on believers. Here the emphasis is on the effect of that coming on unbelievers, whose twofold description is that *(a)* they do not know God and therefore *(b)* do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although some have suggested, primarily on grammatical grounds, that Paul has two different groups in view,[784] that is probably to make fine distinctions which Paul did not intend. In his view rather, as a believer in Christ, these are now corresponding realities.[785] The only genuine "knowing" of God that is available to anyone is that which comes by way of the gospel, which has the person and work of Christ as its essential feature. Thus those who do not "know God" in *this* way, as obedience to "the gospel of our Lord Jesus," are thus destined for the "punishment" that the Lord himself will mete out.

9 Still continuing his long sentence, Paul now goes on to describe the judgment of the persecutors. They "will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might." The T/NIV's "will be punished" puts into an English passive what Paul's Greek expresses with an active verb and an object, (lit.) "[they] will pay the penalty." Thus the translators have turned Paul's striking metaphor into something a bit more manageable in English, but at the same time have lost the force of the metaphor itself. It is true, of course, that "being punished" is a form of "paying the penalty," but the change of grammatical subject (from "the persecutors' paying the penalty" to "their being punished [by God]") seems to put the emphasis at the wrong place. Granted that this latter description fits well the expected reality; nonetheless, Paul's emphasis is on their own just deserts, not on God's punishing activity. Thus Paul starts this clause with the assertion that "they will pay the penalty" for their failure to acknowledge God and to obey the

gospel of his Son.

Although there are some inherent difficulties in understanding precisely what Paul meant by "eternal destruction from the face of the Lord," most likely it reflects a Hebraism in which the *nature* of the judgment itself ("destruction") is collapsed into its *ultimate result* (being cut off "from the face of the Lord"). Moreover, part of our difficulty stems from Paul's once again deliberate use of Old Testament language, in this case of Isaiah 2:10 (LXX).[786]

> Paul — who . . . from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might.
> Isaiah — Hide from the face of the fear of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

Here Paul has not only brought language straight across from the Septuagint but has also kept the sense of Isaiah's text, which appears in a "day of the Lord" oracle of judgment against Judah. In Isaiah that judgment has to do with Israel's being cut off from the divine Presence; in Paul's use of this language "the Lord" is now assumed to be Christ himself. As such this is a certain instance, therefore, where a unique, unshared prerogative of Yahweh has now been appropriated to refer to Christ.[787]

In picking up the language of Isaiah in this way Paul considers the nature of the judgment to be twofold. First, it affirms the ultimate in terms of eternal loss — to be cut off forever from the divine presence, which in this case is to be found in Christ. Thus for Paul the *ultimate* judgment on those "who do not know God" because they have not "obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus" is not in this case some expression of "hell," but is to be forever incapable of knowing God's presence as it has been revealed in Christ. For beings created in the divine image this is the ultimate desolation.[788] Second, it means to miss out on "the glory of his might," both now and forever. This latter phrase is probably a Hebraism that means something like "the splendor of his glory as the Mighty One." If so, Paul is once more asserting a very high Christology, in which Christ again assumes the role of the Almighty.

It should be noted further that Paul has little or no interest in "hell" as such. For him eternal glory has to do with being in the presence of the Father and the risen Lord. The eternal judgment of the wicked is the absolute loss of such glory. It is probably an indictment against the later church that it has so often fixated on the gruesome nature of the "everlasting destruction," whereas Paul's emphasis is on their being shut out from God's presence — the ultimate loss. Thus, one is not surprised when, in a later letter, Paul thinks of the *believers'* eternal destiny in such terms only — "to depart and be with Christ" (Phil 1:23).

To be cut off from this possibility is what Paul sees as "everlasting destruction." Very likely it is the loss of this very highly *personal* dimension of heaven — and its loss as "eternal destruction" — that has resulted in the later church's frequent fixation on "heaven" or "hell" as a *place* to which people go. For Paul "heaven" has to do with the reality of "the coming of Christ" and the experience of "his mighty glory," as one dwells eternally in that glory.

10 At the conclusion of his now long sentence, Paul continues what he has said about Christ in verse 9, but expresses the positive dimension of Christ's "coming." Paul's own sentence actually concludes with the phrase "on that day," which from our perspective sits awkwardly at the very end the sentence. The "day," of course, is Old Testament language for the eschatological event that means eternal salvation for God's people and punishment for his foes. For our present purposes, two matters are noteworthy. First, the very awkwardness of the phrase calls the reader's attention to it.[789] Very likely, therefore, it serves with its companion "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus" in verse 7b as a deliberate framing device, thus making the whole of 7b-10 a kind of "day of the Lord" oracle in its own right. At the same time, second, its emphatic position at the end is almost certainly a deliberate response to the issue to be raised next (2:1-12), where someone (apparently in Paul's name) has declared among them that "the day of the Lord has already come."[790]

The heart of this final clause in the sentence spells out the twofold effect of Christ's coming on believers, both parts of which, when translated woodenly, have the capacity of sounding strange to modern ears. But as with much that has preceded, the key to this apparent strangeness lies with the fact that Paul is continuing deliberately to use language from Old Testament eschatological texts.

"When[ever][791] he comes," Paul begins, Christ himself "will be glorified in his holy people" (lit. "his holy ones," thus traditionally "his saints"). As in 1 Thessalonians 3:13, this could be a reference either to "God's holy people" or to "angels"; but in this case it is almost certainly the former. The reason one can be relatively certain here lies with the preposition "in," which would seem to be a most unusual way of referring to angels. Furthermore, that would be completely out of keeping with Paul's ordinary usage, and especially with his further appropriation here of language from the Septuagint — in this instance from Psalm 89:7 (LXX 88:8):

> Paul — when he comes to <u>be glorified in</u> [among] <u>his holy ones</u>
> Psalm 89 — God <u>being glorified in</u> the council of the <u>holy ones</u>

The only real issue in this case is whether Paul, in using this biblical language,

was intending the preposition “in” to be a true locative, so that Christ, as the TNIV has it, will be glorified *in* his people, or whether Paul intended the more distributive locative, “among” his people.[792] It seems altogether possible that Paul’s “in” in this case is a deliberate “in your face” word against the Thessalonians’ persecutors. Thus at the same eschatological event in which the latter will be “punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord [Jesus],” the people of God in Thessalonica will be among those who will bring eternal glory to Christ by being present among the redeemed. Thus Christ the Lord is “glorified *in them*” on that day.

Next, and now using language from Psalm 68:35 (LXX 67:36),[793] Paul affirms that Christ at his coming will be “marveled at among all those who believe.”

> Paul — and to be marveled at among all who believe
> Psalm 67 — Marvelous is God among his holy ones

Although the amount of such language is not as great as before, nonetheless the intertextual appropriation of the language of the Psalter seems certain, and this in a passage where Yahweh is referred to as *Elohim* (“God”) rather than by his Name, which came to be rendered as “Lord.”

What is striking in this passage is Paul’s deliberate use of this language from two places in the Psalter where the psalmists are extolling the unparalleled grandeur and greatness of Yahweh. For Paul that language perfectly fits the eschatological coming of Christ. Thus, with this series of echoes of “judgment” texts from the Old Testament, where Yahweh will “come” and mete out judgment, Paul, by way of the Septuagint’s use of *Kyrios*, now places Christ in God’s role as judge.

But with this apparently deliberate appropriation of texts from the Psalter Paul’s sentence has gotten away from him a bit; so to make sure that the Thessalonians do not miss the fact that all of this still has them in view, he adds, “This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.” That is, Paul wants the Thessalonian believers to recognize that they themselves will be among God’s “holy people,” who will “marvel at” the coming of Christ. This is therefore not a sort of “throwaway” clause, added at the end for their sakes; rather, it is quite the point toward which this entire recital has been heading right along. Whatever the nature of their present circumstances, with all the difficulties and suffering, Paul reassures them that they themselves will be among those who witness God’s judgment on their enemies when Christ comes “to give relief to you who are troubled” (v. 7).

Finally, in typical fashion Paul brings the Thessalonian believers and Paul and his companions together with the clause, “because you have believed our testimony,” not “gospel” in this case. At issue is not the proclamation of the gospel as such, but the relational factor. The Thessalonians became believers, destined for eternal glory, because “you believed our testimony to you.” At issue with this kind of language is not the “proclamation” itself, but the “witness” that Paul and his companions bore with regard to Jesus — as crucified, raised, and exalted. It was through their “believing” this “testimony” that they have been “included” in those who will themselves be “glorified” at Christ’s coming.

We should thus note at the end that Paul has not “lost his way,” as it were. Although it is true that from a later perspective the “thanksgiving” seems to take several twists and turns, in fact all of it has the Thessalonians and their present circumstances in view. Granted that they are experiencing considerable hardship, and granted that this is the direct result of their following Christ, what they need constantly to keep before them is the reality that the Crucified One, in and for whose name they are suffering, is also the Coming One. And at his coming, not only will they experience eternal glory, but their persecutors will experience the divine wrath.

Passages like this one have experienced a “mixed” review in the later church. For too many years they served to fuel the fires of eschatological expectations that had special interest in the fate of the wicked, whereas Paul in this passage is altogether concerned with comforting the suffering by reminding them of the just fate of their persecutors. Thus people who are especially keen on eschatological matters tend to use this passage primarily to work out the details of their own eschatological perspectives. But all of this kind of “application” tends to miss Paul’s own concerns by several leagues. He was speaking to a persecuted minority, to encourage them that in God’s own time there will be a great reversal of “fortunes.” And this word continues to function in precisely the same way for those millions of believers in our day who are in situations where following Christ means to be exposed to persecution, and often to danger as well.

C. PRAYER (1:11-12)

> *11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power*[794] *he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. 12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus*[795] *may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.b*
>
> [b] 12 Or *God and Lord, Jesus Christ*

In this letter Paul follows his thanksgiving with a prayer report. Thus what was separated by some distance in 1 Thessalonians, because of Paul's greater concern to set forth the narrative of his and their past relationships, is brought in at what will become the more standard practice in his later letters — a prayer report immediately following the thanksgiving report.[796] The prayer itself picks up three concerns from what has just preceded: first, echoing the concern of verse 5, he prays that "God may *make you worthy* of your calling"; second, echoing verse 3, he prays that God by his power will bring to fulfillment their every desire for goodness and work that flows out of their faith; and third, echoing verse 10, he prays that the eschatological "glorying in [God's] holy people" will begin to be accomplished in a mutual way in the present. With this prayer, therefore, Paul basically ties together the whole of these opening concerns.

11 Paul's way of connecting this prayer to what has preceded is with a slightly ambiguous "unto this," which the English translations have rendered variously as "wherefore" (KJV), "to this end" (NRSV, NASB, NAB), "in view of this" (NJB), or, as the TNIV and NJB have nicely put it, "with this in mind." The ambiguity lies with determining the antecedent of Paul's "this," which may cover the whole of the preceding "thanksgiving" or, perhaps more likely, the positive conclusion expressed at the very end (v. 10). In either case, Paul echoes language used in his thanksgiving in 1 Thessalonians 1:2, that he (and his companions) "pray for you" and do so "constantly." What follows spells out the

basic *content*[797] of his prayers and their ultimate *goal*.

The *content* of Paul's and his companions' constant prayer on behalf of these beleaguered believers is basically threefold, although it is expressed by way of two verbs ("make you worthy" and "fulfill" [TNIV, "bring to fruition"]). The first concern, which probably functions as the "thesis sentence" for the rest, is that "our God may make you worthy[798] of his calling." Although it is possible to read this as having to do with their final glory, the rest of the sentence makes certain that Paul is concerned with God's doing this in and for them now. In referring to their becoming believers as a result of God's "calling," Paul is echoing what he had said about them in his first letter (1 Thess 2:12). Thus even in such a passing moment as this, Paul regularly puts one's relationship with God in terms of God's call, not of one's believing in Christ. For Paul our believing is always understood to be in response to God's prior calling.

The second concern is the first way he desires God to make them worthy of his calling, namely that God "bring to fruition"[799] their "every desire for goodness." Thus the TNIV has (almost certainly correctly so) understood Paul's ambiguous "every desire of goodness" as an objective genitive; that is, "goodness" is what drives the Thessalonians' various desires. The alternative, a subjective genitive, would point toward every desire that "goodness" prompts in them. Although in a sense these both come out at the same place, Paul's emphasis in prayer is most likely on God's "fulfilling" their every desire to be and do what is good for the sake of others.

The third concern is expressed as the second way he desires God to make them worthy[800] of his calling, in this case that God "may bring to fruition . . . your every deed prompted by faith." Thus the emphasis in both cases lies with what the Thessalonian believers are to do as God "fulfills" these virtues and deeds in and among them. It is difficult not to see here, and in verse 12 that follows, that Paul is anticipating the issue that he must take up once again in 3:6-13. It is noteworthy that in this case Paul considers such deeds as resulting from their faith, which again, as elsewhere in these two letters, refers to their continuing faithful trust in God.

That this is the case seems all the more likely when one comes to the final phrase in the clause, "by his power." This unexpected moment would seem to put a special onus on the disruptive-idle, who can hardly claim "inability" as a reason for their not working with their own hands. At the same time, and probably for emphasis,[801] Paul adds that God will accomplish these things in them "with power,"[802] a phrase that is just ambiguous enough to require special attention.[803]

First, that Paul is not thinking here of "power" as a more abstract expression of one of the attributes of God[804] (that God is the all-powerful one) seems certain since he has just referred to God in this way (v. 9, "the glory of his might"); there he used the more appropriate word *ischys.* Second, in the thanksgiving in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 (q.v.), Paul has already referred to his preaching as coming to them "with power," which is immediately qualified as referring to the Holy Spirit. Finally, and perhaps more significantly, Paul elsewhere attributes these divinely wrought activities among God's people to the activity of the Spirit. Indeed, both "goodness" and "faith-(fulness)" are included, together and in this order, in Galatians 5:22 as fruit of the Spirit. Thus, even though because of the context Paul expresses it only in terms of "power," one may be reasonably sure that the Spirit's power is in view.

Two other features of this text are worthy of further note, having to do with some basic "tensions" in Pauline theology. *(a)* A healthy tension between divine activity and human responsibility runs throughout Paul's letters. Our present text indicates that the Pauline emphasis lies with God's prior action.[805] The Thessalonians' being made worthy of God's call, as evidenced by their goodness and faithful work, is first of all something that God brings about in their lives, and God does so by the power of the Spirit. This does not remove the imperative in Paul — not by a long way. Elsewhere he will urge such activities on his believing communities, often without mentioning the prior activity of God.

(b) Even though one may be quite sure that lying behind the word "power" is the divine Spirit, nonetheless Paul does use the Greek word for "power" here, not *pneuma* (Spirit), because that is his present emphasis. He is truly grateful to God that they are patiently enduring their present persecution and suffering; but he also knows that what they need in order to continue is God's *power* at work in their lives. In contrast to so much of subsequent Christianity, in which ethical life is very often taken much too lightly, Paul knows no genuine Christian life that is not also lived in such a way as to be worthy of this calling. But the church — and its individual members — are not left on their own, to their own devices as it were. Rather, God has committed himself to them to empower such a life through the indwelling Spirit.

12 Finally, verse 12 gives the reason for all of this, namely, that Christ himself will be glorified through those who walk in his ways and thus bear and share his glory. In so doing Paul once more appropriates language from the Septuagint where the divine name Yahweh has been rendered *Kyrios* and applies it to Christ. In this case the borrowed language echoes Isaiah 66:5, so that Paul thus concludes with an echo from the same Isaianic oracle with which he began in

verse 7.

Paul: so that might be glorified the name of our Lord Jesus in/among you
Isa.: so that the name of the Lord might be glorified

Although at first sight this usage may seem more tenuous as a case of genuine "intertextuality," there are especially good reasons for viewing it as such. First, Paul's language is that of the Septuagint Isaiah, a book with which Paul shows thoroughgoing acquaintance. Furthermore, second, Paul has just used language from this oracle earlier in verse 7. Third, Paul's wording in this instance differs considerably from the Hebrew, since the Septuagint translator was here trying to make sense of some difficult lines in the Hebrew text. Thus original words of taunt by the postexilic "aristocratic religious" to Yahweh's faithful ones ("Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy!") had been turned by the translator into a promise to the faithful that "the name of the Lord might be glorified" and their persecutors will thus be brought to shame.

What is significant in this case is the similarity of the Isaianic context with that of the Thessalonians. Toward the end of his "thanksgiving" Paul had set forth the demonstration of God's justice (vv. 7-10) with echoes from this same Isaianic oracle. At the same time he also picked up language from Isaiah 2 and from the Psalter to emphasize the contrasting eschatological futures of the Thessalonian believers and their tormentors. "Indeed," he says, God intends for Christ "to be glorified in his saints." Now Paul prays for the fulfillment of that promise by returning to Isaiah 66 — with language spoken into a context similar to theirs. And again, "the Name = YHWH" now belongs to Christ Jesus through the Septuagint's use of the anarthrous *Kyrios*[806] for the divine name.

But Paul's concern is for reciprocity of "glory"; that is, his primary prayer is for the name of the Lord to be glorified *in you* (believers). Although there is often an inherent ambiguity to this phrase in Greek, as to whether it means "in" or "among," in this case that ambiguity seems to be removed by what follows immediately, where Paul prays that they in turn will be glorified *in him* (the Lord Jesus). And all of this is in keeping with divine grace, grace which, as in the salutation, is simultaneously that "of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." This would hardly need further comment, except for the note in the TNIV: "Or [the grace of] our God and Lord, Jesus Christ."

Although this note renders what is a grammatical *possibility,* two matters stand strongly against it as a *probability.* First, despite how some would read this passage, as well as Romans 9:5 and Titus 2:13, there is simply no incontrovertible evidence *(a)* that Paul ever used *theos* to refer to Christ —

rather, it is the word he used exclusively to refer to the Father — and *(b)* that Paul ever used *kyrios* to refer to the Father, since this divine name is reserved exclusively for Christ. The definitive moment for these distinctions in Paul occurs in his next letter, in 1 Corinthians 8:6, where the *theos* of the *Shema* is applied to God the Father and the *kyrios* to Christ the Son. Second, this doubling of God and Christ is so thoroughgoing in these two letters that one would need especially strong evidence to think otherwise here, and such evidence is precisely what is lacking. So while my theological sensitivities would love to have it so, my exegetical sensitivities will not allow it — even as an alternative in this case.

Thus indirectly through prayer Paul concludes these opening matters to his letter by anticipating his final concerns in 3:6-15. But before that he must deal with an issue that has brought about considerable distress within the community — the timing of the day of the Lord.

As always there is much to learn from Paul's prayer reports. Thus even though this prayer could easily be cast off from its contextual moorings and still be understandable — and useful — it is especially significant in its present context. One can thus learn a great deal about prayer for others from this example. In the midst of the Thessalonian believers' pain and suffering, Paul's prayer for them focuses ultimately on God and his glory. Yet God's glory will be manifest as he fulfills in his people the desire of this prayer. And one should never lose sight of the fact that God's glory is intimately tied to Christ's being glorified in and among his people.

II. THE SECOND ISSUE: THE "WHEN" OF THE DAY OF THE LORD (2:1-17)

Following his thanksgiving, which evolved into an expression of reassurance for the suffering believers in Thessalonica, Paul launches immediately into the first of the two presenting issues that have called forth this letter. In this case both the language and the way the concern is expressed indicate that some matters addressed in the first letter have gone awry. This first passage is at once the most crucial and the most problematic in the letter. It is the most crucial because Paul now articulates for his and their sakes his understanding of what has been recently reported to him about the situation in Thessalonica; thus it serves as *the primary occasion* for the letter. Indeed, the other concerns — their unjust suffering (ch. 1) and the continuing difficulty with the unruly-idle (ch. 3) — are best understood as related to this one. Whatever was circulating among them about "the day of the Lord" (see 1 Thess 5:1-11) had resulted in some of them being shaken regarding their present sufferings and had allowed others to continue to take a dim view toward "working with their own hands."

The present argument itself is relatively straightforward, with easily identifiable parts. Our difficulties in understanding are the result of two further matters. First, Paul himself is not sure of the *source* of their misinformation, and especially as to how it could have been laid at his feet in some way. Second, his response is full of *reminders* of matters about which he had previously informed them while among them. These two realities together account for the major part of our challenges in understanding. To put that another way, when two parties are in conversation about something fairly well known to both of them, the eavesdropping outsider is left with a rather large amount of guesswork as to what is going on.[807] When this observation is applied to the present passage, what we are especially in the dark about is how much of this takes the form of reminders and how much is new information, in the sense that former information is being configured in a new way. The net result is that the reader/interpreter has an especially high information deficit at this point,[808] and must do the best he or she can to make sense of it all, affirming what seems to be certain and showing due

caution elsewhere.

At the same time this passage is also the most problematic in the letter because, crucial as it is, what it finally means is far from certain. The difficulty is twofold: (1) *What* has been communicated to them? What did it mean for them to have been told that (somehow) "the day of the Lord had (already) come"? (2) *How* has this been communicated to them, and how was that communication related to Paul? For the purposes of this commentary the first matter need not detain us, since to discover what *they* had come to believe, although it would be helpful, is not ultimately essential to our overall understanding. Nonetheless, since it is crucial to the whole letter but especially to how verse 2 is to be understood, we begin with a summary of conclusions.

First, it seems nearly impossible not to see this as related to some kind of misunderstanding of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, with its repeated mention of the day of the Lord (vv. 2, 4) and subsequent play on the themes of "day" and "night."

Second, in all probability the content of the misunderstanding has to do with someone's teaching that the day of the Lord is already present, or, perhaps more likely in light of the emphases in chapter 1, that it had already *begun* in some way. This alone seems to make sense of the argument that follows, in which Paul insists that, just as he had previously taught them, particular observable events must transpire *before* that day comes. The Day[809] not only will be *preceded* by certain events, but also the events surrounding it will simply be too visible for any of them to miss it when it does come.

Third, such erroneous teaching that the Day has in some way already come helps to explain the emphases in chapters 1 and 3. In light of what Paul had said in the earlier letter, the increase — and unjust nature — of their sufferings gives them considerable reason for anxiety, if the Day has already appeared. This also accounts for Paul's assurance in chapter 1 both of their own (future) vindication and of the just judgment of their adversaries. But the same reality would also support the reasoning of the unruly-idle. Since the day of the Lord has already arrived, and since they apparently took a dim view of work in any case,[810] why should they bother with work at all?

In any case, the interpreter must do the best one can, and have the integrity to note when one is guessing, or in some cases to present a variety of viable options. The one place where a degree of certainty can be had is in the attempt to describe the flow of the argument, even if many of the details remain uncertain. In this case, the passage itself can be set forth as to its various parts simply by describing Paul's own sentences.

The issue is presented in our *verses 1-2;* it has to do with the day of the Lord. But exactly what has gone wrong is less certain. Apparently some(one?) have/has declared in an authoritative way that the Day has already come (begun?), which has given rise to considerable consternation within the community. Paul's response is in three (relatively clear) parts. In *verses 3-4* he reminds them why the Day *cannot* have come yet — because certain events about which he had previously advised them will *precede* that day. In *verses 5-7* he goes on to outline for them what is currently *holding back* the Day; and since this is for them repeated information, much of this material remains as something of a mystery to later readers. In *verses 8-12*, he reiterates for them what *will happen* when the Day actually does come. Since the issue has been raised in a way that has caused some to be "shaken," Paul concludes in *verses 13-17* with a thanksgiving, an exhortation, and prayer, all of which have their steadfastness in view. Thus, whether intentionally so or not, the concern addressed in 2:1-12 is framed by thanksgiving and prayer (1:3-10/11-12 and 2:13-14/16-17).

A. THE ISSUE PRESENTED (2:1-2)

> *1 Concerning the coming of our*[811] *Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us — whether by prophecy, or by word of mouth or by letter — asserting that the day of the Lord*[812] *has already come.*

This is one of those sentences in Paul that, if we could be sure how to unpack it, many of our difficulties in understanding the entire passage would be resolved. But the sentence is in fact both complex in its own right and at the same time full of grammatical and lexical uncertainties. The TNIV has chosen (correctly) to "unpack" it by a slight rearrangement of the phrases. To help the reader see the difficulties, I here offer the following "word for word" version of verse 2 — without punctuation as in the Greek:

> that you not be quickly shaken in your minds nor alarmed whether through Spirit whether through word whether through letter as through us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

The *issue* itself is presented in a straightforward manner (v. 1). It has to do with "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him." The *concern* (v. 2) is related to some misguided information regarding this event, to the effect that "the day of the Lord has already come." The complexity lies in two places. First, what could this possibly mean, given that a visible Parousia of the kind described in the first letter (1 Thess 4:13-17) had not in fact happened. Second, the middle part of verse 2 is quite ambiguous. On the one hand, the misinformation had been attributed to Paul himself; on the other hand, Paul is not certain as to the actual *means* by which it had been communicated to them — all of which makes for an unusually complex sentence for later readers. Thus we are faced with one of those moments in Paul where what he says seems plain enough — and at this point the TNIV appears to have gotten it right — but what it means in terms of how this kind of misinformation took hold among these

early believers is not at all certain.

1 Our verse 1, which basically presents the subject matter, has three parts. First, Paul begins by presenting his request, "We ask you, brothers and sisters." The verb itself is the standard Greek word for requesting something from someone;[813] thus it scarcely alerts us to what comes next. At least it does not send up a red flag, as it were, indicating that what follows will be heavy. Ordinarily in moments like these Paul "urges" or "exhorts" his congregations toward (or away from) a given behavior; but here he simply "asks." The verb is followed, second, by the vocative "brothers and sisters," the second of seven in this letter.[814] And again it appears in such a way that one is hardly set up for the much stronger words that follow.

Third, the subject matter is then introduced with a preposition[815] that traditionally meant "on behalf of," but here must mean something like "with reference to." The concern itself is then expressed as a kind of "two sides of a single coin."[816] The more significant "side" of the event is mentioned first: "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," and thus the readers are introduced once more to the key word *Parousia*.[817] That this refers to what the later church referred to as "the second coming" is made certain by the second "side": "our gathering unto[818] him." At this point the person who has read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 will see that this is simply a condensed version of what Paul had said there, without any of the trimming.

2 Given this opening indication of the subject matter, one is poorly prepared for the content of Paul's request that makes up the rest of the sentence. In some ways the issue is plain enough. Some of the believers have been either "shaken out of [their] minds"[819] or simply "disturbed." And this has happened apparently "quickly,"[820] not meaning so soon after their conversion, but so readily upon hearing the false report. Paul's doubling of the verbs of distress probably points to two degrees of their being "shaken up" by what others among them have been saying about the day of the Lord — that it has "already come."[821] What this may have meant to its proponents, or how the Thessalonian believers would have understood it, lies ultimately in the realm of speculation. But in any case, it has had unsettling effects, and Paul is deeply concerned by what has been communicated to them, allegedly as ultimately coming from the apostle himself.

But a clause that on the surface seems plain enough in fact contains two difficulties that require considerable discussion:[822] *(a)* how has this thoroughly misguided understanding arisen among them at all, and *(b)* how is it related to anything Paul may have said or written? The problem is both *linguistic* (what

does *pneuma* [Spirit/spirit][823] mean here, especially as the first member of an apparently equivalent triad that includes "word" and "letter"?) and *grammatical* (how is the final phrase "as though by [*dia*] us" related to the preceding triad, which also is "by [*dia*]" these possible means?). The resolution of these difficulties involves two points.

First, one must take seriously that, as Paul's own sentence makes plain, he is *not at all sure* as to the exact *source* of the misinformation. That is, he truly does not know whether it has come to them through a prophetic utterance, through some other kind of spoken word, or from a forged letter. Furthermore, one must take equally seriously the explicit statements in 2:5 and 15 that Paul has indeed previously spoken to this question both when he was among them ("word") and in his earlier letter (our 1 Thessalonians). All of this becomes the more problematic when one considers on the basis of verses 3-12 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 that Paul himself had been quite clear on this matter and that their present position is a far cry from what he had taught or written. Thus Paul seems to be faced with a situation in which (1) he knows that his own teaching has been either ignored, misunderstood, or misrepresented (probably the latter), and (2) that even though he is not sure how this came about, the word circulating in Thessalonica is that what was currently being taught comes ultimately from Paul himself.

That leads, second, to the little phrase "as though through us," which in Paul's sentence follows hard on the heels of "whether by Spirit, whether by word, whether by letter."[824] All too frequently this has been understood as referring to the final item only (= "whether through a letter as though it had come from us").[825] This is usually supported by the signature in 3:17, that Paul in this case "signs" the letter in his own hand so that they will not mistake it for a forgery.[826]

As tempting as this reconstruction has been for many interpreters, it seems to run aground on what Paul actually says. First of all, such a position has great difficulty with 2:15, where Paul affirms that they are in fact to hold fast to what came to them from him by way of "word" and "letter." Moreover, if a forged letter were his concern here, then one would expect "as though *from* us"; after all, letters do not come "through" an author but "from" him or her. Indeed, the repetition of the "through" in this phrase not only tends to spell the death knell to this traditional understanding,[827] but also probably offers us the clue to what Paul did intend.

Because of the difficulty of the "through" *(dia)*, many have suggested that the phrase goes with all three of the preceding words.[828] Although this has more going for it grammatically, the problem with this solution lies with

understanding how “the Spirit” might have been understood as mediated “through us,” since Paul has not recently been on the scene. Nor is it easy to see how this erroneous view about “the day” could have been attributed to Paul on the basis of what he had said in his previous letter.

The best resolution to this matter, therefore, lies with our seeing the sentence as somewhat elliptical. The enigmatic “as though through us” is best understood, as the TNIV has it, as referring not directly to the *form* by which the misinformation has been mediated to them (i.e., Spirit, word, letter), but to the *content* of it, and thus to the clause that follows. In this case Paul is not saying that the letter did not come from him — it did indeed — but that *what they are now believing* about the day of the Lord did not come through him.[829] Thus Paul’s immediate concern is singular: he is in no way responsible for the misinformation regarding the Parousia that has in some way been attributed to him.

Thus the “logic” of Paul’s sentence seems to go as follows. His difficulty is twofold; first, he is aware that the misinformation has ultimately been *attributed* to him; but, second, he is not quite sure *how* it was communicated. He therefore begins with the latter item, the uncertain source, the first member of which is most likely the key to the whole. In all likelihood “Spirit” in this case refers to a “prophetic utterance.”[830] By means of the “Spirit” someone could easily have represented himself/herself as speaking in Paul’s behalf. But for Paul it would be equally possible that such a “prophecy” may have been given in the form of an authoritative interpretation of what he had previously taught or written (e.g., “the Spirit says that what Paul meant was . . .”). In any case, having mentioned the uncertain *source* by the repeated “whether through . . . ,” he now moves toward the misrepresented *content,* as though that content, by whatever means it came, could be attributed to him.

This way of reading Paul’s sentence also helps to explain the negative implications of the “how that” (*hōs hoti;* TNIV, “asserting that”)[831] that introduces the final clause. His intent seems clear enough; here, finally, is the content of what has been said in their midst that is currently troubling them. But the sentence itself has begun to get out of hand grammatically. Thus, the second word, *hoti* (“that”), serves to introduce the content of what has been said among them; the preceding *hōs* (“how”) picks up the sense of misrepresentation from the preceding phrase, and thus ties the two together. Teaching of this sort cannot in any way be attributed to Paul.

This understanding of Paul’s complex sentence, it should be further noted, makes sense of several matters in these letters. As noted in our comments on 1

Thessalonians 5:19-22, Paul has already anticipated the need for this community to be a bit more perceptive about "Spirit" utterances. Furthermore, and significantly, this explains why later on in the present passage (2:15) he refers again to "through word or through letter,"[832] and urges them to hold fast to what they have previously been taught by him. He knows that his former teaching was not ambiguous; they must therefore hold fast to what has been "handed down" to them *directly* from him. What is conspicuously missing in this second instance is the first member of the present triad, "through the Spirit" — very likely because this is what Paul himself believed to be the ultimate source of the difficulty.[833]

If so, then the fact that such abuses of "prophetic utterances" are not in themselves directly condemned is in this case probably due to his relative uncertainty about the actual cause. At the same time, if this approximates Paul's intent in 2:2, then in 2:15 he is also offering a criterion for "testing the spirits": "the *traditions* you were taught, whether orally or by our letter."[834]

B. PAUL'S RESPONSE (2:3-12)[835]

At issue, then, is the "when" of the day of the Lord as a future event rather than a present reality, an issue that is complicated (for us) by two factors: *(a)* Paul has already spoken to this issue in his first letter, and *(b)* he is not sure of the source of the present misguided teaching. But in either case, he now proceeds to set the matter straight by recalling for these believers what they have already been taught. In so doing he reminds them of three matters: first, certain events, which have not yet occurred (vv. 3-4), will *precede* that day; second, *what/who is holding back* that day has thus not yet been revealed (vv. 5-7); and third, the *nature* of the events that will actually transpire on that day needs to be described (vv. 8-12). Although it is not blatant, one can detect a minor degree of frustration on Paul's part. Thus the material comes to us with no fewer than two broken sentences (vv. 3 and 7); and in verse 5 Paul resorts to the only first person singular in the entire letter (until the sign-off in 3:17), as he reminds them specifically of what he himself had taught when present among them.

Two other preliminary matters need to be noted, by way of reminder, so as to read the passage on Paul's and the Thessalonians' terms, and thus avoid a great deal of eschatological misinformation. First, the basic content of the passage ends up having to do altogether with "those who are perishing," not with believers themselves, whose future had been addressed in the first letter (1 Thess 4:13-18 and 5:4-11). This is true even of the mention of the Lord Jesus in verse 8, where his coming has to do with his overthrowing "the lawless one." Second, the purpose of the passage is not to *inform* the Thessalonians about the future, but to *comfort* them in light of serious misinformation to which they are being subject. Finally, one should also note that the presentation shifts back and forth from the future (vv. 3b-4) to the present (vv. 5-7), then back to the future (vv. 8-10a) and again to the present (vv. 10b-12),[836] all of which is related to the preceding point, that Paul's aim is to comfort them in the present with regard to what lies still in the future — and all of this in response to the *mis*information about the day of the Lord just noted (that it "has already come"). Everything that follows must be understood as Paul's response to this misinformation rather than as "teaching" about the future in its own right.

Many of our present difficulties, one therefore needs to be reminded, stem from the fact that *Paul had already taught them all of this* when he was present among them. This is particularly true of the nominal participle *katechon/katechōn* (TNIV, "hold back"), which appears in the neuter in verse 6 and as a masculine noun in verse 7 — a term on which an enormous amount of ink has been spilled, with very little consensus as to resolution. The reason for this seems simple enough. Most of this is not new teaching for the Thessalonian church; thus there is much they already know, which will help them to "connect the dots" as it were, but which is simply not available to us. So here in particular is a place where too much certainty on the part of the interpreter should be less visible.[838]

1. What Will Precede That Day (2:3-4)

> *3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness*[837] *is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple,*[839] *proclaiming himself to be God.*

With these words our difficulties multiply, difficulties related to our distance from Paul and the Thessalonians. Nonetheless, even if there is a lack of certainty about some of the particulars, one can at least describe what Paul understands will take place. As verse 5 makes plain, he has already taught them that before the day of the Lord itself is revealed, there will be a general rebellion (presumably against God and his Christ) led by one whom Paul designates as "the man of lawlessness."[840] Moreover, the Thessalonians *already know* what is holding him/it back; so this is simply a reminder. Not only so, but the reader/interpreter must constantly keep in mind that the purpose of the present passage is *comfort*, not information; therefore, for the Thessalonian believers there was probably no new information here at all. Our difficulties lie with the fact that nowhere else in his extant letters does Paul come close to saying anything like the content of this sentence; thus we are here dealing with a truly singular moment, without help from other passages.

Furthermore, and whatever else may be heard or learned from this passage, the reader/interpreter must keep in mind that its intent is to *reassure* those who have become anxious through *mis*information. And Paul does this by calling to remembrance what the Thessalonians had previously been told, not by offering new information about the end times. Thus his concern is several leagues removed from the kinds of concerns that some later generations have brought to this passage. The reader, therefore, needs regularly to ask one of the primary exegetical questions: besides "*what* does all this mean?" at issue is "*why* was Paul reminding them of all this that they already knew?" — even if one will lack certainty regarding the latter.

3a Paul begins his response to the misinformation to which the Thessalonians have been subject by referring to it as "deceit":[841] "Let no one deceive you in any way." Although it is unlikely that the "deceit" is intentional in this case,[842] the very fact that they could have been taken in by such "teaching" lends weight to the possibility that its source had been a prophetic word, and thus a "Spirit-utterance" — which at the same time would have appeared to them to be a source of "authority" a step higher than that of the apostle.

Paul's own consternation becomes evident in two subtle ways. First, he adds the otherwise unnecessary "in any way" to his opening clause, referring specifically to the three options in verse 2, but in any other way as well. In its own way this clause, besides expressing Paul's dismay, effectually eliminates any teaching opposed to or different from his. Second, and equally telling, what follows ends up as a "broken" sentence[843] — a long "if/unless" clause (vv. 3b-4a) without a corresponding future indicative.[844] Thus Paul's clause does not have "that day will not come" in it; supplying these words (or something similar)[845] is necessary for the sake of the reader in English — and all other Indo-European languages, it should be noted.

3b Paul's explanation as to why they should not be deceived begins with a reminder about what must take place "first,"[846] namely, "the rebellion," which includes "the revelation of the man of lawlessness"[847] (= "the Rebel"), who is at the same time "the son of destruction," where the first descriptor deals with his character and the second with his ultimate destiny.[848] The present clause begins with a "because,"[849] which thus introduces the long explanation that follows. The Thessalonians are not to be deceived "because" of what Paul now goes on to remind them about the very *visible* events that must transpire *before* the day of the Lord itself, especially the great rebellion that is to precede it. Even though Paul himself does not use the term "Antichrist," [850] one of the reasons the Rebel

is frequently referred to by that name here is that the language Paul uses, "the *revelation*" of this figure, is a pickup of what he says of Christ in 1:7.

The Greek word rendered "rebellion" *(apostasia)* occurs in the New Testament only here and in Acts 21:21. In Acts it clearly means "to turn away from," thus "to become 'apostate,'" picking up in its English expression the same meaning as in the Greek. Furthermore, the several occurrences of the cognate verb[851] usually refer to a "turning away" that amounts to "apostasy," a deliberate and antagonistic rejection of Christ. But despite the usual meaning of this noun in Acts 21, it can hardly have that sense here, its earliest usage, since Paul clearly expects perseverance on the part of these believers. After all, nothing in the context indicates that *believers* will be deceived by the "lawless one." Therefore, this noun, which was rendered "falling away" in the KJV,[852] in more recent English translations has been correctly rendered "rebellion." [853] In secular Greek, in fact, the word was used to refer to a political or military revolt, not in the sense of "falling away" from a position once held, but of a rebellion against a power or deity to whom one was not committed.

Historically, therefore, this word has been understood to refer to some of God's own people (either believers or Jews) who have chosen to rebel against God and Christ in one way or another. But that seems to place far more emphasis on the primary meaning of the word as such, and not enough on its usage in the present context. Moreover, one should note further that in verses 10-12 part of "the revelation of the Rebel"[854] involves his powers and deceptions among "the perishing," not among believers. Therefore, in the present case, just as "the mystery of *lawlessness*" is already at work (v. 7), to be revealed in all its fullness and intensity with the "parousia" of the Rebel, so the language "rebellion" is used at the outset to describe this great satanic event.

But Paul is not one to leave such a description as his main focus, so he follows the descriptor "the Rebel" with the comforting word (for the Thessalonians) that he is "the man doomed to destruction." Again, the T/NIV has properly rendered the sense of Paul's semitism, "the son of destruction," into appropriate English. As elsewhere in the New Testament, the language "son of " is a Hebraism for one who shares in, or stands in close relationship to, someone or something. So Paul follows the description of the Rebel's character, "man of lawlessness," with a phrase that describes his ultimate destiny. He does so by (apparently) picking up language from Isaiah 57:4 LXX,[855] language also used by John (in the mouth of Jesus) to describe Judas in John 17:12. Thus Paul designates "the Rebel" — from the divine perspective and in the ancient language of the KJV — as "the son of perdition," meaning the "man doomed to destruction." This appositional

descriptor, one should note, is typical of Paul, who is loathe to give the last word to the evil one. Thus the one who in his rebellion would play havoc by means of his evil powers is also the one whose ultimate destiny is his own "destruction."

The rest of the passage (through v. 12) is basically an explication of the Rebel's activities and of his ultimate overthrow by the coming of the Lord Jesus. First up is his "anti-God" character (v. 4), then his current "hidden-ness" (vv. 5-7) and anti-God activities when he does come (v. 9a), which include his success among the wicked (vv. 9b-10a), who themselves will perish along with the Rebel at the coming of Christ (vv. 10b-12). Only the content of verse 8 breaks up this sequence by indicating that the Rebel will ultimately be destroyed by Christ at his coming. But before Paul moves on to these matters, he concludes his present broken sentence with a description of the Rebel's activities when he "is revealed."

4 The clause that constitutes our verse 4 sits in apposition to the twofold description of the Rebel that has preceded ("the lawless one/doomed to destruction"). Thus what Paul does next is to describe the Rebel's activities in a way that offers the divine reason for his doom. Everything about him reveals him as "anti-God,"[856] not in titular terms, but in terms of his activities. For much of the rest of the sentence Paul is indebted to the language of Daniel 11:36 LXX and Ezekiel 28:2. The first passage is a description of the self-exaltation of Antiochus IV, who styled himself as "Epiphanes" (the divinely manifested one); thus Daniel described him as "exalting himself against every deity and against 'the God of gods,' " meaning the one God above all others that might be thought of as "gods." This is both the language and the imagery that Paul uses in the first half of this clause (v. 4a). The description of the Rebel as "opposing and exalting himself over *everything that is called*[857] God or is worshiped"[858] is, as in the Old Testament passages, a way of describing his total arrogance. Thus with this adoption of the language of Daniel, Paul reveals his understanding of that passage as referring to an event that was yet to come,[859] as a reduplication of one of the truly awful tragedies in Jewish history, when Antiochus did this very thing.

The Ezekiel passage is a prophecy against the king of Tyre, who "in the pride of [his] heart" said, "I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god." Using Ezekiel's language and imagery, Paul thus reminds the Thessalonians that the evidence of the Rebel's arrogance will be to "set himself up[860] in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."[861] The temple, of course, is the one in Jerusalem, [862] which by this time had already been desecrated three times. The Holy Place had been entered by Antiochus in the third century BCE, by Pompey in the first century

BCE, and by the Roman emperor Caligula in 41 CE. What cannot be known from our distance is whether in the present passage Paul expected this to happen yet another time, or whether he was simply using well-known "anti-Christ" events to describe the Rebel's self-deification. More likely it is the latter, since by the time Paul wrote this letter the temple in Jerusalem no longer held any importance to him, except in a symbolic way to remind others of God's past presence with his people.

Thus in this opening description, Paul emphasizes the Rebel's opposition to God; indeed, when he does appear on the scene, he will stand in opposition to every known religious expression. The second description of the Rebel in verses 9-10 will emphasize his relationship to those who are to perish with him. But before that, Paul continues to remind the Thessalonians of previous instruction, in this case about the fact that the Rebel will be kept at bay until the appointed time.

2. What Holds Back That Day (2:5-7)

> *5 Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? 6 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.*

With what appears to be a degree of personal frustration with the Thessalonians for his needing to speak to this issue at all,[863] Paul now moves on to give a bit of detail as to what must yet take place before the Parousia will occur. Thus he follows his reminder about the fact of the Rebel's appearing with a further brief reminder as to why it has not yet — indeed, cannot have — happened. And here in particular those of us who read this letter at a much later time, and without their inside knowledge about "these things" that Paul "used to tell" them, are generally left with more questions than answers. One can understand the argument as such easily enough; our problems lie with some of the details, to which the Thessalonians had access but we do not.

Thus, after the reminder about his former teaching (v. 5), Paul recalls the basics of that teaching as to what must happen before the Parousia itself takes

place.[864] At the center of this reminder is the fact that some*thing* is "holding him back," which turns out to be some*one*, a person who is to be revealed "at the proper time" (v. 6). The content of verse 6 is then repeated (v. 7) with further elaboration to the effect that "the mystery of lawlessness" that is "already at work" will continue until the one who holds it back is removed. Since all of this is what "you (Thessalonians) know," we are left mostly in the dark at this point. Thus we can describe what it is they knew, but with almost no insight as to what it meant to them.

5 The question with which this part of Paul's response begins is also the beginning of our lack of information. "Don't you remember that when I[865] was with you I used to tell you these things?"[866] he asks. What is striking is the matter-of-fact way this is asked, striking in the sense that the eschatological details that follow appear to have been a part of his teaching regarding the death, resurrection, and eventual return of "our Lord, Jesus Christ" (v. 1). Yet it occurs here with details not found elsewhere in any of Paul's letters, so we are left with a large amount of guesswork.

This in turn highlights the ad hoc nature of this letter — and the others as well. It should be a constant reminder that there is much about Paul's theology, and especially his eschatology, that we do not know. In the present case our distance from these data is highlighted by his "when I was with you I used to tell[867] you these things." When one is reminded that the content of the present letter can be read aloud in about fifteen minutes, and that Paul had spent at least a few weeks there, it is perhaps more noteworthy that we learn as much as we do from his letters.[868] But on the present matter, his "when I was with you" leaves us with a measure of uncertainty regarding *details* about the coming of Christ, but about whose certainty as an *event* both Paul and the rest of the New Testament are in full agreement.

6 Not one to leave it there — simply reminding them that he had taught them about "these things" — Paul goes on to spell out the bare details as to what is "holding back" the appearance of the Rebel. And again this is something "you know,"[869] which also means that here in particular we are on the outside looking in, as it were.[870] Paul's sentence begins with an unusual "and now" — unusual in the sense that he is seldom given to parataxis (beginning sentences with "and"), but understandable in the present situation as a way of emphasizing his concern for the Thessalonian community. But in using the neuter accusative participle here ("what is holding back"), followed by the masculine singular in the next clause ("the one who holds back"), Paul let loose a long history of interpretation, trying to decipher what or who Paul had in mind, not to mention what the

relationship might be between this neuter and the following masculine noun. Most likely Paul is not here intending *two* different realities but one, which in this clause emphasizes the event itself, while with the second phrase he emphasizes who is responsible for it.[871]

Furthermore, Paul's following his "and" with the adverb "now" is equally ambiguous and has thus led to two different understandings, depending on whether the adverb is truly "temporal," having to do with "the present time" in some way or another, or whether it is "logical," having to do with the nature of the argument.[872] That is, did Paul intend, "and you now [= already] know what is holding back," or "and now [= to move the argument along] you yourselves know. . . ." Although a good case can be made for the latter option,[873] both the use of this adverb at all and its position in the sentence argue strongly for a "temporal" sense. But if so, the question still remains as to what it is intended to modify, the Thessalonians themselves as "now [= already] knowing" this, or "what is now [= presently] holding him back"?[874] To be sure, the house is rather evenly divided on this, but Paul's present concerns seem to favor the latter understanding, since at issue is not their already knowing what he is talking about, but the fact that something or someone is "now" (= currently) holding the Rebel back, so that he will appear at a later time.[875]

The end result[876] of the Rebel's currently being "held back" is that "he will (then) be revealed," which will happen "at his own time." But this clause also turns out to be one of the more obscure in the Pauline corpus, resulting from the reality that this is merely a reminder of what they "know" already. "Do you not remember?" he begins. What they know (or at least should remember) is that something is currently holding back the Rebel, so that "he may be revealed 'at his own time.' "[877] Although some interpreters would see the adjective "his own" to be emphatic, and render it "his appointed" time, that seems to put too much emphasis on purposeful, perhaps even divine, design. Most likely Paul intended nothing more than to describe the time of Christ's coming as that which will be *his* time to appear, but which is not presently the case. And since the Thessalonians "know" this, what follows is thus the bare bones of what they are to recall regarding the *present* time.

7 With an explanatory *gar* ("for") Paul goes on to spell out in the briefest of detail what were for him and his readers the two *present* realities, both of which are for later readers still full of "mystery." First, "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work"; and second, that condition will prevail "until he/it is taken out of the way." Or at least that seems to be what Paul's somewhat obscure sentence is intended to say. In one of the more difficult moments in the Pauline corpus,

this final (broken) sentence reads (literally): “Only the one who restrains now from the midst has happened.” Most likely, as with most English translations, Paul intended something like (beginning with v. 6): “And now you know what is restraining (him), so that he might be revealed in his own time; for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work — (but will) only (be so) until[878] the one who restrains (is removed) from our midst.” Thus Paul describes the present situation as one in which “the mystery of lawlessness” is currently being restrained.

What Paul intended by “*the mystery* of lawlessness” has proven to be something of a “mystery” on its own, especially for English readers for whom the word “mystery” probably means something quite different from Paul’s own usage. Rather than having to do with anything “mysterious,” the Greek word *mystērion* usually referred to something now hidden that would in time be revealed. But it is not certain whether that is Paul’s intent here. More likely it refers to a much greater revelation of “lawlessness” that is still in the future, but which has already made its presence felt in the world.

It is precisely because they did know what Paul meant that we do not; and therefore it is also of very little value for one to speculate regarding Paul’s intent here. Nonetheless, this lack of knowledge is also what has opened the door to any number of speculations. One of the more common, and one which from historical distance could be argued to make a great deal of sense, is the possibility that Paul intended the Roman Empire itself as “*that* which restrains” and the emperor himself as “*he* who restrains.” At the same time this very common option is suggested from considerable historical distance; it also assumes what cannot otherwise be known from Paul’s letters, namely that he looked upon the Empire as a great evil. After all, he was himself a citizen of the Empire, an empire that on the one hand had crucified his Lord but on the other hand had made possible the far-reaching spread of the gospel in his own day. So, at the end of the day, we should probably leave the sentence as it is — something that he and they both knew, and because they did know, we do not, and most likely never will this side of eternity.[879]

This also means that all speculations about later applications to one’s own present realities, whether it be Luther’s to the pope or twentieth-century North Americans’ to Hitler or Russian communism, are idle speculations. From our present distance the best position would seem to be, “Wait and see.”

3. What Will Take Place on That Day (2:8-12)

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus[880] *will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts*[881] *of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, 10 and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*

Although some details remain obscure, Paul's basic concern in this conclusion to the question of the "when" of the day of the Lord is easy enough to discern. In the preceding sentences he has made basically two points: first, that the day of the Lord cannot have come already, because it will be preceded by certain observable events known to them, events that have not yet happened; and second, that they already know this, because they also know what is holding back the revelation of the Rebel whose appearing will precede that of Christ. Thus our verses 3 and 4 were basically given over to describing the Rebel's "anti-God" character, while the content of verses 5- 7 had basically to do with what the believers themselves had previously been taught about the "revelation"[882] of the Rebel *prior* to Christ's own coming.

Paul's point in all of this is to reassure the Thessalonians that, given these realities about the coming of the Rebel before that of Christ, they should not let anyone "deceive" them to the contrary about the Parousia (v. 3). What now follows is a brief, but vivid, description of what will transpire when the Rebel does appear — which seems to have a twofold purpose in the present letter: first, to continue to reassure the Thessalonian believers that the "Coming" has not yet come; and second, to emphasize for their sakes that their present persecutors will in time get theirs, as it were. Thus the bulk of these two long sentences (vv. 8-10 and 11-12) focuses on what will happen to *un*believers at the Parousia.

Everything about the passage suggests that Paul is here offering a word of encouragement to these persecuted believers, since the emphasis is now altogether on God's ultimate, righteous judgment of their persecutors. Typically, however, Paul fronts his first sentence (v. 8) with Christ's own "coming" and his ultimate overthrow of the Rebel. But thereafter the passage deals exclusively with the way things will be when the Rebel appears just *before* Christ's *parousia*. The remainder of the first sentence (vv. 9-10a) thus begins by focusing on the

nature of the "coming" of the Rebel, including his powerful deceptions. But the ultimate focus of the sentence (v. 10b) is on those who will perish. This is almost certainly aimed in part at the Thessalonian believers' present opponents; thus they are described as those "who are perishing," because "they refused to love the truth and so be saved."

The second sentence in turn (vv. 11-12), typical of Paul's understanding of things, puts the emphasis on God's activity in all this — who will cause many of the believers' enemies to "believe the lie" and thus be doomed "to perish." So an argument that began with emphasis on the "still future" reality of Christ's coming ends up by reminding the believers that things will only get worse before they get better, with the reassurance that their present persecutors will be among those who perish "by the splendor of [Christ's] coming."

8 The "and *then*" with which this clause begins appears to stand as an emphatic way of saying, "and not before," over against whatever was currently circulating in Thessalonica that Paul noted at the beginning (v. 3). It is only after the events enumerated in verses 3b-4 have occurred that the Rebel himself will be "unveiled." But having got that far, and in typical fashion, Paul immediately shifts his focus onto Christ. To be sure, at the proper time "the lawless one will be revealed"; but Paul is simply incapable of giving him top billing. Thus the rest of the sentence (through v. 10) is composed of two relative clauses, where the "whom" of our verse 8 and the "whose" of verse 9 describe, in turn, first (v. 8), what will happen eventually to the Rebel himself, and, second (vv. 9-10), the nature of the Rebel's coming that is responsible in turn for his being overthrown by the Lord at *his* coming.

So what Paul says first about the Rebel is that he will eventually be slain by Christ at his Parousia. The rest of this clause is a moment of rare intertextuality in Paul's letters, rare because he here uses *kyrios* ("Lord") to refer to Christ in a passage whose primary language carries overtones of Jewish messianism.[883] As with 1 Thessalonians 1:10 (q.v.), this appears to be an allusion to Christ as Messiah, speaking of him as presently in heaven awaiting his role in the final judgment of the wicked. In making this point, Paul does two things.

First, he picks up the language of Isaiah 11:4 (LXX) and applies it to Christ's (second) coming:

> Paul Whom the Lord will slay with the breath of his mouth and will abolish at the manifestation of his Coming
> Isaiah and he will strike the land with the word of his mouth, and with the breath of his lip s he will slay the ungodly

Here Isaiah had prophesied that the coming "shoot from the stump of Jesse" would be characterized by righteousness and justice that will include his slaying of the wicked with "the breath of his mouth." With help from Psalm 32:6 (for the *form* of the phrase "the breath of his mouth"[884]) Paul combines the two lines of Isaiah's poetry into one and attributes this messianic future judgment to "the Lord = Jesus."

But, second, Paul is not finished; so reflecting his own Semitic (and biblical) background, he turns his own prose into a moment of Semitic poetry, so that the rest of Paul's sentence functions in very much the same way that synonymous parallelism does in the Psalter. Thus the second part clarifies the first by Paul's speaking of the Rebel's destruction in terms of Christ's "abolishing" him at his (Christ's) coming. That this is a poetic moment is demonstrated both by the redundancy of this clause in its own right, and by the (otherwise unnecessary) amplification of the "coming" itself. In plain prose Paul could easily have said simply, "at his coming"; but in this more poetic moment, the singular reality is amplified into "the manifestation of his coming," where "manifestation"[885] is intended to emphasize not just the *fact* of his coming, but especially its unmistakable and *evidential* character. That is, Christ's coming will hardly be "secret," since this word disallows such an option; rather, Christ's Parousia will be openly manifest to all, both those who await his coming and those who will be "abolished" when he comes.

At the same time, the poetic nature of this sentence seems to disallow altogether that these two lines of (now poetic) prose intend two different events. Indeed, it is the nature of such synonymous parallelism in Hebrew poetry that the second line usually simply elaborates or intensifies what is said in the first line. Thus it is the poetic nature of this clause that reinforces for the Thessalonian believers that their present persecutors are destined for divine judgment; they will be "slain" by Christ and thus "abolished" at his coming.

Finally, one should note that the poetic nature of this sentence, and especially Paul's deliberate borrowing of language from the Greek translation of Isaiah, likewise disallows speculation as to whether "the slain" are truly "abolished" in terms of ongoing existence. Given what Paul says elsewhere about the future of the wicked, one should probably not press what he says here beyond his immediate intent: to reassure a persecuted minority that God has not forgotten either them or their persecutors. Just as the Thessalonian believers have a sure future, so also do their persecutors, but not a future that they should look forward to!

9-10 With this clause Paul goes on to describe the "parousia" of the anti-

Christ figure, which will immediately precede that of Christ. His "coming," Paul says, will first of all be "in accordance with how Satan works." Thus the implacable enemy of humanity, who at an earlier time hindered Paul from coming to Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:18), will be responsible for the phenomena that will accompany the "coming" of the Rebel, the "lawless one." Elsewhere in the New Testament the present language ("miracles, signs and wonders") is used as authenticating the ministry and person of Jesus (Acts 2:22); and these phenomena are the same in kind as those mentioned else-where as accompanying (and in part authenticating) Paul's own apostolic ministry (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12). But according to Mark 13:32 (cf. Matt 24:24), Jesus himself predicted the rise of "false christs [plural]," who would perform great signs and wonders, which is probably the source of the traditional material reflected here by Paul.

For understandable reasons it has been common among English translations to treat Paul's prepositional phrase as a triplet, since without punctuation it reads "with all power *kai* ["and"] signs *kai* wonders of falsehood." Thus the KJV rendered it "with all power and signs and lying wonders,"[886] while the more contemporary NRSV (typical of most) has "all power, signs, lying wonders."[887] This kind of literalism, however, poses several difficulties, since by this understanding the "all" is seen to go with all three nouns, while the genitive "of falsehood" is made into an adjective modifying only the final word, "wonders." But this seems to miss Paul's own intent by too much. Since the first of these nouns is singular and the other two are plural, it seems far better to go the route of the TNIV,[888] which takes the two *kai*'s to mean "both/and." In this reading "both signs and wonders" stand, in apposition to "with all power," while the final genitive "of falsehood" (correctly, it would seem) is seen to modify the common doublet, "signs and wonders." Thus Paul most likely intended, "with every kind of powerful display, both signs and wonders based on falsehood" (which the TNIV has correctly put into better English, "signs and wonders that serve the lie").

Paul then follows this preposition with a second, companion one that creates a typical doublet, which most recent English translations have noted. When the two prepositional phrases are put "literally" they appear as:

> with every kind of power, both signs and wonders of falsehood and with every kind of deception of wickedness

The two sets of key words in this doublet are "power / deception" and their inimical source, "falsehood / wickedness." Paul thus clearly understands that

"signs and wonders" can accompany falsehood as well as truth. Indeed, that Satan can match the Spirit when it comes to displays of power is a foregone conclusion for Paul. Therefore, by his describing those of the Rebel as stemming from falsehood, he does not mean that they are "counterfeit" in the sense of not really occurring.[889] To the contrary, miracles they are indeed; but they issue from falsehood and as such are intended to deceive, to lead people astray after Satan.[890] In both instances (the true and the false), therefore, the "signs and wonders" are the work of "spirit," either the false spirit, as here, or the Holy Spirit, as in Paul's case. The key to Paul's understanding in the present passage rests with the last phrase, "those who are perishing." They are so, he continues, because they "refused to love the truth," on the one hand, and chose "to believe the lie," on the other. Since Satan has the power to do "signs and wonders," the key to Paul's usage lies with the two words "truth" and "lie," the two words that Paul will elaborate on in the rest of the passage. Thus he concludes the present sentence with a word of explanation regarding "those who are perishing." They are headed for "destruction"[891] precisely because they "were not receptive"[892] to a love for the truth,[893] while at the end (v. 12) they are simply those "who have not believed the truth."

Although the construction "to love the truth and so be saved" has for many something of an un-Pauline sound to it, especially for those who read Paul only through the lens of his battle with the Judaizers in Galatians and elaborated considerably in Romans, this is nonetheless a very Pauline way of speaking. This emphasis on "the truth" is the direct result of what has just been said in context regarding Satan's influence on nonbelievers. Satan is all about "believing the lie"; the logical — and therefore legitimate — contrast to that is "to love the truth and so be saved."

11 With the two clauses of this final sentence Paul goes on to offer the divine response to "those who are perishing because they refused to love the truth." One should note that all of this is a continuation of Paul's elaboration on the coming of the Rebel (vv. 8-9). And once again the reader must also remember that all of this is intended not as a threat to the Thessalonians, but as comfort for them in the midst of present persecution. Because people such as those who are persecuting them have already committed themselves to "loving" falsehood rather than the truth, "God sends them [literally] a working of delusion." The present tense of the verb needs to be noted. People's own failure to love the truth results in a divine response. God thus sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie;[894] that is, what they receive from God is a delusion of such power that they will believe in what is utterly false. And this is not about

just any falsehood, but *the* lie, the ultimate falsehood generated by the Evil One, that has caused them to reject the one and only God, who has been revealed in his Son, the savior of the world.

12 The final result[895] of people's resistance to God's mercy that has come through Christ will be "condemnation."[896] Paul's emphasis lies here, since the verb sits in first place in his sentence (lit. "will be condemned all . . ."). The verb is then followed by the not/but contrast that identifies them as God's own opponents, not just the Thessalonians'. Picking up the preceding themes of "delusion" and "lie," Paul announces their judgment negatively as coming because they "have not believed the truth." Indeed, their rejection of the truth, which for Paul has to do with the gospel itself, has led them also to have taken delight "in wickedness."

There is a sense, of course, in which with these final two clauses (vv. 11 and 12) Paul seems to have strayed considerably from the concerns with which this passage began — someone's having announced that "the day of the Lord" has already dawned. But that "sense" is the result of our own perspective, which differs considerably from his perspective — and theirs. A (probably prophetic) announcement such as that, in a community undergoing considerable presecution, is going to do precisely what Paul urges they should not let happen to them: to cause them to "be shaken." These final sentences, which deal altogether with the lot of their persecutors — and others — are thus fully understandable. While the Thessalonians themselves are not to be shaken by false prophecies, their opponents have every right to be so, even if that is not in fact presently happening to them. This, then, is the reason for Paul's singular emphasis in this final section, an emphasis which at the same time should serve to bolster the believers' resolve. Just before the much-awaited Parousia of the Lord himself, their enemies will be deceived by Satan's own "lawless one," whom the Lord will destroy at his own coming.

As one comes to the end of these corrective (not primarily instructive) words, several reflections come to mind. First, this passage has been the hotbed of every imaginable eschatological movement in the history of the church; and that in turn has caused a large part of the church to avoid the passage with benign neglect. On the one hand, what was intended by Paul to be corrective of a false eschatology has in turn become the basis of later competing eschatologies; on the other hand, because Paul's eschatological outlook and language have made some later Christians uncomfortable, they have simply acted as if it were not a part of inspired Scripture. But neither of these views is fair either to Paul or to

the Thessalonians.

What needs to be noted from this passage, second, is the Apostle's absolute certainty about the believers' future, despite the various forms of false teaching that may come along. And nowhere in the passage does Paul either mention or encourage heated expectation; indeed, the passage is not about expectation per se, but about an informed understanding regarding God's own future for those who are his. Thus this passage, which served as correction for the Thessalonians, should serve the later church as encouragement of the highest order.

God can be trusted with the future; and for those who so trust him, there is an underlying certainty that they too will be part of that future. And Paul's primary point needs regularly to be stressed. If the timing of the great coming day of the Lord is not known, believing in its certainty — and waiting patiently and expectantly for it — is part and parcel of the Christian gospel, as that comes to us through the New Testament.

Third, even though it is not a central point in any way, one should perhaps note the thoroughly presuppositional way Paul refers to what one might term "the miraculous." Granted that the reference to such in this passage has to do with miracles that advance falsehood, Paul uses such language only because he presupposes that miracles produced by the Holy Spirit are part and parcel of the Christian faith he knew and experienced. But it is the very "in passing" way they are referred to that in the end indicates how presuppositional such working of the Holy Spirit was for him and his churches — a presupposition that seems to have been lost in much of later Christendom. Fervent expectation has tended to be replaced with benign nonexpectation that God can (or will) do anything out of the ordinary. I for one think Paul and his churches had the better of it.

C. CONCLUSION (2:13-17)

It is common to view the items that follow Paul's response in verses 3-12 as something of an "interlude" before he takes up the (final) issue regarding the disruptive-idle.[897] But what should keep one from doing so is the clearly resumptive nature of verse 15, which serves as an inclusio with verse 2 above and thus holds the entire passage together. In light of that reality, this material can be better understood as Paul's bringing the preceding argument to its proper conclusion. Thus the present section has three discernible parts — a thanksgiving (vv. 13-14), a concluding word (v. 15), and a concluding prayer (vv. 16-17) — each of which is demonstrably related to the preceding argument; and as we will note, each has its own role to play as part of the conclusion.

The thanksgiving itself stands in bold relief to the "litany of the lost" that has just preceded it, and therefore should not be separated from it as something new. It seems intended to reassure the Thessalonian believers, in light of the immediately preceding recital of judgment on their enemies, that they themselves are destined to share in Christ's own glory. The concluding word that follows (v. 15) is then a final admonition for them to stand firm by holding fast to the "traditions" they have been taught, and which now have been reiterated for them. By picking up the language of verse 2, Paul's present admonition thus also serves as an inclusio: at the end bringing the argument back to its beginning. Finally, in light of the false reports, the prayer (vv. 16-17) is aimed at encouraging their "hearts" and strengthening them to continue to serve the Lord in "word and deed"; at the same time it anticipates the final matter to be taken up in the letter.

1. Thanksgiving (2:13-14)

13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits[a] to be saved through the

sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He[898] *called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

[a] Some manuscripts *because from the beginning God chose you*[899]

As noted, many scholars have found it easy to separate this prayer from its context,[900] and thus to see it as imitating the second "prayer report" in 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13. But it is quite unlikely that the letter's first recipients could possibly have understood it that way. In a document composed in uncials ("capital letters") and without breaks between either words or sentences — not to mention lacking paragraphs — the Thessalonians would have seen it for what it was almost certainly intended to be: a thanksgiving to God for them, standing in stark contrast to the immediately preceding gruesome litany of judgment and condemnation on those who are persecuting them.

The contrasts are several, and would have been immediate for them. Besides the more general one between the destinies of believers and of those deceived by the enemy, there is the obvious, explicit contrast between those who "have not believed the truth" (v. 12) and the Thessalonians themselves who are saved in part "through belief in the truth" (v. 13); indeed, the former have "believed the lie" (v. 11). The very uniqueness of this phrasing regarding salvation calls the later readers' attention to the contrast. Similarly, Paul contrasts the two destinies: the former "will be condemned" (v. 12), while believers have been chosen by God to "be saved" (v. 13). Finally, the two destinies stand in stark contrast in verse 14, where the Thessalonian believers are destined to "share in the glory of our Lord," vis-à-vis their opponents who are destined to "be condemned" and thus "to perish."

13 The opening words of this thanksgiving call to mind the prayer in 1:3. Paul continues to have a sense of divine compulsion to thank God for these believers. The singular difference between the way this prayer begins and the former one is found in the vocative, "brothers and sisters," to which Paul has here added, "loved by the Lord." In many ways this is a most remarkable — and thoroughly Pauline — addition, thoroughly Pauline because of the actual language used. In the opening thanksgiving of the first letter (1:4; q.v.), he echoed language from Deuteronomy 7:7-8 regarding Israel's constitution as Yahweh's people ("loved by God / chosen"). Here the same reality is expressed in terms of "loved by the Lord,"[901] which is the precise language of the Septuagint found in the blessing of Benjamin in Deuteronomy 33:12. This can hardly have been accidental, since we know from other places in Paul's letters that he himself was a Benjaminite

(Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5), something concerning which he takes a measure of pride. What he has done, therefore, whether they would have caught it or not, is to bestow on these "beloved" friends his own ancestral blessing: they "are loved by the Lord."[902]

One should perhaps note in passing that Paul makes rather consistent distinctions between God's love and that of Christ. God's love is the divine predicate on which Christ's love found expression in history through his sacrificial death on their/our behalf, a love that is actualized for the believer through "the sanctifying work of the Spirit." Thus the fact that believers are "loved by God" serves as the basis for everything. But one should also note that, in what appears to be a very unselfconscious way, Paul joins in one sentence the divine activities of God (the Father), Christ (the Son), and the Spirit on behalf of his beloved Thessalonians.

The result of Paul's putting his thanksgiving in this way turns out to be the first of nearly forty proto-Trinitarian[903] soteriological moments in Paul's letters,[904] which ordinarily elsewhere have the following "grammar" of salvation (see, e.g., Rom 5:1-8):

> Salvation is *predicated* on the love of God; it is *effected* by Christ through his death and resurrection; and *made effective* through the work of the Holy Spirit.

But here it takes the unusual form of:

> The Thessalonians have been *chosen and called by God* as firstfruits for salvation;
>
> > evidenced by the fact that they are *loved by the Lord;* and are thus *saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.*

What is striking here is not what is said about God, since throughout the Pauline corpus both "election" and "calling" are regularly attributed to God the Father. What is striking, rather, is that language usually reserved for God the Father is here freely attributed to "the Lord,"[905] and that language usually attributed to Christ is the special province of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, in the other five instances where Paul speaks of Christ's love (Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:14; Rom 8:35; Eph 3:19; 5:2), it is regularly tied explicitly to the love expressed in his redemptive death[906] (e.g., Gal 2:20, "the Son of God, . . . who loved me and

gave himself for me").

More commonly Paul speaks of the love *of God*, which serves for him as the subject of salvation. In fact, two (Greek) sentences later (2:16) this is precisely what is said: "God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope" (cf. 1 Thess 1:4). And even though the phrase "loved by the Lord" is probably in this case an allusion to Christ's saving work on the cross,[907] rather than the subject of their salvation as when it is said of the Father, it is nonetheless remarkable that this particular attribution takes place in one of Paul's triadic ways of speaking about salvation. It has been suggested with considerable insight[908] that the reason for the shift of language in this case is for it to stand in deliberate contrast to what the same Lord Jesus will do to those whom he "will . . . destroy by the splendor of his coming" (v. 8).[909] Thus in its second appearance in the corpus, God's love for his elect people is expressed in terms of their being loved by Christ the Lord, an attribute that in Paul's thinking is thus equally shared by Father and Son — by presupposition and without argumentation.[910]

It is of considerable interest that Paul has here chosen to refer to his Thessalonian friends as "firstfruits." To be sure, there are many who prefer the (surely secondary) reading, "from the beginning"; but there is every good reason to reject that reading as either a deliberate or accidental interchange of a concluding *sigma* (Σ) for a *nu* (N). Although the textual evidence seems to be decidedly against "from the beginning,"[911] those who still favor it do so because of Paul's strong emphasis in this passage on God's prior activity (where he is contrasting the Thessalonians' "salvation" — and thus their security — with the "judgment" of the deceived in vv. 10-12). Thus he would be assuring them that God's choice of them is "from the beginning [of time, can be the only possible intent, if original]." Great confidence can indeed be gained from such theological reassurance.

Nonetheless, the textual arguments seem rather fully on the side of "firstfruits," which is likewise intended to be an encouraging word, but in a slightly different way. Since Paul does not qualify "firstfruits" in any way,[912] he almost certainly intended these believers to see themselves as God's "firstfruits" *in Thessalonica.* Thus the imagery would function in two directions. First, it is intended to encourage them right in the midst of those who are responsible for their present grief, who are described in our verses 10-12 as to their wickedness and eventual ruin. In the Thessalonian believers God has chosen a people for his own name — his firstfruits, as it were, of the great eschatological harvest that is assumed in verse 14, a theme which recurs throughout this letter. Second, and at

the same time, it would therefore also function to encourage them that God has chosen still others from among their Thessalonian compatriots, who also shall escape the deception and resultant judgment and be "sanctified by the Spirit, as they believe the truth." If the believing community is relatively small and currently heavily persecuted, they need to hear from the divine perspective — that is, from the perspective of "God's having chosen them for salvation" — that there are still more, even from among their own townspeople, who will join them "for obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The goal of God's election is "salvation,"[913] language which can be — and for some has been — troubling for those who have been raised on Galatians and Romans as the only proper way to read and understand Paul. In this second occurrence of the word "salvation" in the Pauline corpus,[914] however, Paul is not thinking in terms of "how" the salvation effected by Christ is made effective for the believer ("by faith"), as in Galatians and Romans. Rather, his concern here is with the twofold means whereby a person becomes one of God's own people — and in this case especially in contrast to those who are not (in vv. 9-12). Thus having already described them as "loved by the Lord (Jesus)," and now portraying their salvation altogether as a matter effected by God (the Father), he goes on to describe its becoming effective in their lives; and, as usual in Paul, he places the divine means (the Spirit) before the human (believing the truth).[915]

Furthermore, in this instance Paul is not thinking about how each or any of them has/have been "saved." That is to put the emphasis on the individual in ways that would not concern Paul at this point; rather, he is here thinking of them corporately, as is evidenced by his word order. These believers are thus set out in contrast to the unbelieving ungodly described in verses 9-12. The latter were described as being beguiled by "the ways wickedness deceives those who are perishing"; and they are perishing because "they refuse to love the truth." The end result is that "they believe the lie" and "delight in wickedness." The Thessalonian believers, on the other hand, have been "chosen for salvation" that God has effected by the twofold means of "the sanctifying work of the Spirit and [their own] belief in the truth" (or, perhaps better, "putting their trust in the truth").

Thus Paul's word order in this case is both explicable and significant. Their becoming believers is first of all the result of God's "sanctifying work" (vis-à-vis "wickedness") effected by the Spirit (vis-à-vis "Satan"); their role has been to "believe the truth" (vis-à-vis "the lie" and "delighting in wickedness"). Thus this unique moment is neither "un-Pauline," as many assert, nor unlike the Paul of Romans and Galatians, as others seem to be anxious about. This is simply

typical Paul, whose way of speaking about the saving work of Christ is regularly in response to the current situation into which he is writing. The point is that Paul is not here trying to make a theological statement at all, but to remind the Thessalonians of their own *experience* of "salvation," part of which was that they believed the truth of the gospel when they heard it; and in that regard they stand in bold contrast to those who have *not* believed the truth and are thus destined to perish.

14 Having presented the Thessalonians' unbelieving opponents as destined "to perish" and the believers themselves as chosen by God "to be saved," Paul concludes his now long sentence by reminding them of both the *means* and *final destiny* of their calling. The clause begins with a neuter relative pronoun,[916] as Paul's way of embracing the entire preceding clause as its antecedent rather than any one part of it. Thus the same God who "chose them for salvation" effected the realization of that choosing "through our gospel."

But the striking moment in this prayer comes at the end, where Paul speaks of the final destiny of the believer in terms of "obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is true that on two other occasions Paul speaks of Christ in terms of "glory,"[918] but when this word is used as the eschatological goal of Christian redemption, it ordinarily refers to "the glory of God the Father," as in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 (". . . God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory"; cf. Phil 1:11; 2:11).

This common Old Testament word gives expression to the sheer majesty of the eternal God, unshared by any other, and to the wonder evoked by that majesty. It is Yahweh's "glory" that Moses desired to see (Exod 33:18), and which then filled the tabernacle (40:35) and the temple (1 Kings 8:11). Indeed, Yahweh expressly says that he will *not* share his glory with another (Isa 42:8: 48:11, referring in this case to other "gods"). But precisely because the divine Son already shares that glory, Paul can easily speak in such terms. In this instance, to be sure, the phrase most likely has to do with Christ's own present exaltation to glory, following his humiliation in death, an exaltation in which the Thessalonians will have a share. But even so, this attribution to Christ of language usually reserved for God is a remarkable way of speaking of the final goal of the Thessalonians' redemption.

2. Concluding Exhortation (2:15)

15 So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings[917] *we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.*

This concluding word is what makes clear that the preceding thanksgiving belongs to the *argument* of verses 1-12 and is not to be separated from it, as is done so often in the literature,[919] not to mention the translations. What makes this clear is Paul's deliberate pickup here of the language of verse 2, thus indicating that it serves with that sentence as an inclusio for the whole argument.[920]

15 With a second use in these letters of a strong "therefore,"[921] which the TNIV translators have properly captured as "so then," and a repeated vocative,[922] Paul proceeds to offer a concluding exhortation as to what the Thessalonians are to do in light of the preceding explanation regarding the day of the Lord. They are to do two things: "stand firm and hold fast the traditions."

The first imperative, "stand firm," is in direct response to the concern expressed in verse 2, that they not be "easily unsettled or alarmed" by teaching that is contrary to that of which Paul has just reminded them. Indeed, the whole of Paul's response, plus the concern expressed in verse 2 and repeated here by way of imperative, indicates that they were in fact on the verge of being "shaken." The second imperative indicates the means by which they are to stand firm: by holding fast to the "traditions,"[923] that is, to the teaching that has already been "handed down" to them by Paul himself. The use of the word "traditions" here, which has a long history in the Judaism in which Paul was raised, is his way of indicating that his teaching at the same time belongs to the much larger community of faith, of which they themselves have now become a part. Thus, by turning aside from his prior teaching, the Thessalonians have also turned aside from the common teaching of the early believers. But his concern at this point is with *his* teaching, which they are now disregarding.

That Paul intends the "traditions" in this case to refer to *his* own teaching is made certain by his twofold reference to its source: "whether by word of mouth," thus referring to his own teaching when he was among them, "or by letter," now referring to our 1 Thessalonians.[924] What should be most noticeable in this "inclusio" is the absence of the word "Spirit" from verse 2. As was suggested above, the most likely reason for this "omission" is that Paul suspects some sort of prophetic utterance in their midst to be the primary cause of their embracing the false teaching that "the day of the Lord has already come." Thus

Paul's way of dealing with the source of the teaching is positive, as over against reminding them of his own clear instruction in the former letter (1 Thess 5:19-22). There they were urged to "test them all"; here he once again offers them the basis for such "testing," since, if a misguided prophecy is indeed the issue, they have not adhered to his former instruction.

3. Prayer (2:16-17)

> *16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.*

Not one to leave his friends with an imperative of the kind offered in verse 15 as his final word on this matter, Paul turns immediately to offer prayer on their behalf, a prayer that is full of striking moments regarding Pauline theology, and especially his Christology. The basic concerns of the prayer seem to be two. On the one hand, he looks to the *past* by elaborating on Christ and the Father in terms of the Father's love for them by giving them "eternal encouragement and good hope." On the other hand, the prayer itself is for their *present* encouragement and strengthening, the former ("encouragement") in light of their present circumstances, the latter ("strengthening") with their continued Christian lifestyle in view. Thus the brief glance at the past functions as the basis for Paul's confidence in prayer regarding their present and future.

16-17 Before looking at the details as such, one needs to note contextually, first, that this prayer brings to a conclusion all of 2:1-17 — Paul's concern for the grossly mistaken eschatology that someone among them has put forward, which is profoundly unsettling an already unsettled community. At the same time, second, it concludes verses 13-15, where Paul exhorts the Thessalonian believers to stay with what they have already been taught (v. 15), after setting them (vv. 13-14) in stark contrast to those who believe the lie and will be condemned with the man of lawlessness (vv. 10- 12). Thus it appears to have the double function of reminding them of the past realities that have brought them to life and of urging them by God's help (Father and Son) to persist in "doing" righteousness ("every good deed and word").

Perhaps the easiest way into an analysis of the prayer itself is to note its

striking similarities to, and equally striking differences from, the prayer in 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13. And here in particular, and in a truly profound way, Paul's very high Christology is especially noticeable, not as something (ever) argued for, but as something simply assumed to be the common stock of early Christian belief. The best way to see this is by displaying both prayers together (mention of Christ is in **bold**; mention of God is underlined; the "translations" are my own):[925]

> **And may our Lord Jesus Christ** and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal encouragement and good hope in grace, **encourag e** your hearts and **strengthen** [you] in every good deed and word.

> May God, even our Father, and **our Lord Jesus direct** our way to you; and you **may the Lord cause to increase and abound** in love for one another and for all, just as also ours for you, **so as to strengthen** your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father **at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones**.

We note first the similarities, since looking at them together will settle some of the grammatical questions that have been raised in the present instance. (1) Both prayers are directed toward God the Father and the Lord Jesus together. (2) In both cases Paul, grammatically, has a compound subject ("God" and "Lord") with a singular verb. While some have argued that one should not make too much theologically of this phenomenon,[926] what must be noted here is that the same thing occurs in both cases, even though the subjects are in reverse order in the present instance.[927] (3) In the Greek text both prayers begin with the intensive "himself," which in each case must be grammatically understood to go with the first subject,[928] although, given the singular verb, it may very well be thought of as a collective singular.[929] (4) In both cases the elaboration is directed toward the second addressee of the prayer (but grammatical subject of the sentence): "the Lord" in 1 Thessalonians, "God the Father" in the present prayer. This phenomenon in turn seems to stand in some tension with the previous one. That is, the "himself " would seem to put the emphasis on the first member, yet the elaboration focuses only on the second. (5) Both prayers share as a basic concern that the Thessalonians will be "strengthened," a verb that occurs four times in these letters and only two times elsewhere in the Pauline corpus (Rom 1:11; 16:25).[930]

The singular significant difference, of course, is that the two grammatical

subjects are reversed in the present passage, so that if there were no elaboration at all, the emphasis might seem to lie with the first member, especially since in both cases this member is accompanied by the intensive pronoun "*himself*" ("may our God and Father *himself* and the Lord Jesus Christ" / "may our Lord Jesus Christ *himself* and God our Father"). And so it does in a way. Indeed, had we only one of these prayers, one could argue[931] by extrapolation that the emphasis in prayer for Paul is on the first one being addressed. But having both prayers, with their *reversal of order* and with the continuation of prayer addressed only to the *second* member, would seem to prevent that.

Indeed, here we are confronted with a prayer that is quite different from the former one. As noted, it still has the plural subject with singular verbs, but the "himself" now goes with the Lord Jesus Christ. The mention of God the Father is then elaborated as the one who "in grace has loved *us* and has given us eternal comfort and good hope." But then the two verbs that make up the actual prayer are (grammatically) assumed to be the joint action of the Lord Jesus and God the Father. The result, whether intended or not, is that the first verb, "encourage" *(parakaleō)*, picks up the second phrase about God that has just preceded ("eternal encouragement [*paraklēsis*]"), while the second verb "strengthen" *(stērixai)* was used of Christ in 1 Thessalonians 3:12 and will be picked up again in verse 3:3 that follows as affirmation about what Christ will do for them.

At issue for Paul, then, is the need for them to be "encouraged" and "strengthened," and even though that is the primary reason for the letter itself, Paul is also fully aware that this alone will not do it for them. Thus he prays for them at the end that, with the preceding explanations and argument in hand, they will indeed be encouraged so as not to be "shaken" by the false teaching circulating among them (perhaps [probably?] through a misguided Spirit utterance). In praying for God and Christ to "encourage your hearts," Paul is concerned that both divine persons will bolster them in this time of crisis, and especially for what lies ahead of them; in further praying for God and Christ to "strengthen you in every good deed and word,"[932] Paul is bringing them back to everyday life. At the same time he is now almost certainly also pointing toward 3:6-15. Thus the prayer functions both as a form of encouragement under present duress and as (a subtle form of) exhortation regarding their perseverance under that duress.

We should also note at the end that the concept of "good deeds," expressed here as a noun in the combination "every good deed," is a very Pauline way of speaking, language he will pick up again in 2 Corinthians 9:8, "that you may abound in *every good deed*." The problem in English is with the noun

"work/deed," which for some understandable historic reasons has fallen on bad days in certain sectors of Protestantism. But all one need do to get at Paul's intent is to change the phrase into its verbal equivalent, "that you may abound in *doing what is good*," since this is the aim of Paul's expression. Turning this phrase into "good deeds" becomes problematic not because it is incorrect, but because the English locution often carries baggage that is foreign to Paul's own concerns. His passion is for Christ's people to *do what is good* for others; thus here he prays that Christ and the Father will "strengthen the hearts" of God's people, so that they will abound in "doing the good" for one and all.

There is much to learn from these concluding materials that is applicable to anyone who has responsibility for ministry in the church. Perhaps the most noticeable thing about the section is the order itself, where thanksgiving flows directly out of the concluding sentence of the preceding discussion, in direct contrast to the behavior of those who are perishing. But the fact remains that the conclusion to the argument (v. 15) follows the thanksgiving (vv. 13-14), which in turn is followed by prayer (vv. 16-17). The most striking thing about both the thanksgiving and the prayer is how fitting they are in terms of the preceding explanation about the day of the Lord. As always in Paul, the emphasis in the thanksgiving is on God's activity toward them as expressed in their being loved by Christ and sanctified by the Spirit. At the end of the day, there-fore, when the apostle as teacher has done all he can by way of reassuring argumentation, he clearly recognizes that all is in vain without the enabling work of God — Father, Son, and Spirit — on their behalf.

At the same time, one can scarcely miss that the prayer responds directly to the thanksgiving. That is, what Paul thanks God for regarding his friends he is equally ready to remind them he prays for on their behalf. The order is both striking and realistic. While the preceding explanations are intended both to restore order and quell what could lead to error, Paul also recognizes that none of this will happen without divine aid. Hence Paul does not say, as we are often wont to do, "I'll pray for you"; rather, he lets them know the content of both his thanksgiving and his prayer on their behalf. The later church has much to learn here.

III. THE THIRD ISSUE: ABOUT THE DISRUPTIVE-IDLE (3:1-15)

Historically scholarship has had considerable difficulty with the materials in 2:13-17 and 3:1-5, which for some seem to lie unconnected between the two major concerns of the letter[933] (the timing of the day of the Lord [2:1-12] and the continued misbehavior of the disruptive-idle[934] [3:6-15]). But here is a place in the Pauline corpus where the one who inserted the numbers into the text — whether by good instinct or luck — seems to have gotten it right, despite some expressions of protest to the contrary. As was pointed out earlier,[935] the preceding thanksgiving (2:13-14), final exhortation (2:15), and prayer (2:16-17) serve nicely to bring the issue about the timing of the day of the Lord to a fitting conclusion.

Having dealt carefully and pastorally with that issue, Paul now turns to a final matter, in this case one that he had dealt with in the earlier letter (1 Thess 4:9-12), but apparently with little success — to get the disruptive-idle to choose to work for their own bread rather than be a burden to others. To get there he picks up a common feature from ancient rhetoric, starting with what appears to serve as a *captatio benevolentiae* (vv. 1-5), an introductory word of praise intended to gain a good hearing from them before addressing this difficult issue once more.[936] Thus Paul begins by setting himself and his own needs before the believing community (vv. 1-2a). With his explanation as to why he needs such prayer (v. 2b), and by way of further affirmation and prayer (vv. 3-5), he thus moves slowly toward the final issue at hand (vv. 6-15).[937]

A. A *CAPTATIO BENEVOLENTIAE* (3:1-5)

At issue regarding these opening sentences is to ask how they serve to introduce the admonitions that follow in verses 6-15 — or do they? And here one should allow what appear to be Paul's own instincts to be our guide. Having dealt with the primary issue that has come to him from them (regarding the day of the Lord), he must now return to an issue which he had dealt with in the first letter, but apparently unsuccessfully. How to get there, however, could have been an issue for him, especially since his former instructions on this matter had been clear enough, but had failed to achieve the desired results.

So Paul begins with an introduction that seems intended primarily to gain a good hearing from all of them,[938] starting with a readiness to be vulnerable himself by requesting prayer on his behalf (vv. 1-2a), and offering the reason why he needs such prayer (v. 2b). This is followed in turn by a carefully crafted set of affirmations regarding Christ's own faithfulness (v. 3) and the believers' readiness to do what is right (v. 4), plus a prayer on their behalf (v. 5). The latter is for the Lord Jesus himself to direct the hearts of all of them, but especially the disruptive-idle, into God's love (so that they will start working for their own sustenance) and Christ's perseverance (as they do so with his empowering).[939] What is striking, especially after the preceding prayer (in 2:16-17), is the absolute Christocentricity of this passage.[940] The transition itself is notably marked by Paul's use of the identical verb "we command" in verses 4 and 6.

1. A Request for Prayer (3:1-2a)

> *1 As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord [941] may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. 2 And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, . . .*

The content of Paul's desire for prayer regarding himself and his companions is twofold, and typical. As always, his primary concern is the spread of the gospel, and it is in this context that the request becomes more personal. Thus the second concern goes with the first, that Paul and his companions be delivered from those who would hinder their labor on behalf of the gospel.

1 That this request for prayer begins something new in the letter is made certain in two ways: first, by the opening *to loipon*,[942] an adverb that has traditionally been translated "finally," and thus served to make Paul the butt of many misguided jokes; and second, by the sixth (of seven) instance(s) of the vocative, "brothers and sisters." While it is true that at the very end of a letter, as in 2 Corinthians 13:11, *to loipon* does mean "finally," more often in Paul it appears somewhat earlier in the letter when he is picking up the last item(s) on his agenda. Thus it usually means, as it does here, "as for what remains to be said," which the TNIV translators have nicely caught with their "as for other matters."[943] Although it has been suggested that in this case it implies a movement toward secondary matters, it is much more likely, in light of Paul's later habits, that in fact, and as a point of emphasis, he has saved the final word for a matter that concerns him greatly — since the first time around had proven unsuccessful.

What "remains to be said" first is a request for prayer[944] *from* them, a request that follows nicely his own prayer *for* them (2:16-17). And here is an instance in the letter where the plural "for us," which has otherwise probably been primarily a polite literary plural, is almost certainly intended to refer to all three of them — Paul, Silas, and Timothy. But, typical of Paul, at issue in the Thessalonians' praying "for us" is not for safety or health, but for the cause of the gospel itself. In making this request for the gospel, (literally) "that the word of the Lord may run and be honored," Paul echoes very closely the language of Psalm 147:5 in the Septuagint, whose second strophe reads, "his word runs swiftly."[945] Thus, using the verb "to run" as a metaphor, Paul expresses his concern that the gospel "spread rapidly" in Achaia, where he is now,[946] and beyond.

However, despite this basically plain language, Paul's phrase "the word of the Lord" is from our distance quite ambiguous and has thus led to more than one interpretation. Because of the set phrase "word of the Lord," it has been argued that "the Lord" here refers to God the Father.[947] But that is against Paul's own usage elsewhere and is thoroughly misleading in context, especially since "the Lord" in all instances of this paragraph reflects Paul's standard usage as referring to Christ. Indeed, Paul's predominant use in these two letters of "the Lord" as a referent to Christ[948] makes it most highly improbable that Paul has suddenly

changed his referent and intends the Thessalonians to hear this one as "the word that comes from God." Thus if we follow Paul's own usage with this idiom, as, for example, in 1 Thessalonians 1:8, then he is here once again referring to the gospel itself, the "message about Christ."[949]

What Paul wants for the gospel, therefore, aided by their prayers, is that[950] it will "speed on its way" and that it will "be honored." The latter word, rendered "honored" by the TNIV, is Paul's standard word for something or someone's being "glorified," that is, receiving its proper glory and honor among people. Very likely, therefore, it is used here as an indirect reference to the victor's "crown" in a race.[951] But in this case, as a reference to the gospel, it is not eschatological glory that is in view, but present glory. The way it will be "glorified" among people is by their accepting its message as the good news from God that it really is,[952] and thus themselves becoming followers of the crucified, now glorified, One.

To make this point stick — prayer on behalf of the gospel as the Thessalonian believers' proper duty — Paul adds the phrase, regarding the spread of the gospel, "just as with you." This final phrase, which is verbless in the Greek text, is therefore probably not to be understood as having a temporal referent at all, but simply to the reality itself, both at its beginning and continuation.[953] What Paul is after here is the *reality* of the success of the gospel among them, not *when* this success occurred. Although this kind of reference does not occur often in Paul's letters, it is one of his basic working assumptions — that the gospel is God's good news that has reached him and his churches, and is thus good news for others as well. Good news is to be shared, and Paul's concern is that the Thessalonians will recognize this for themselves by making it a matter of prayer.

2a Paul's priorities are always in place when it comes to the gospel. Thus, the first matter when "praying for us" is for the spread of the gospel itself. But he is not thereby loathe to ask for prayer for himself and his companions, that they "be delivered from wicked and evil people."[954] With this clause Paul is once more echoing the language of his Bible, from Isaiah 25:4, where the Septuagint differs considerably from the traditional Hebrew text, reading (in part), "from wicked people you will deliver them."[955] The addition "and evil" thus throws the net widely. The first word,[956] rendered "wicked" in most English versions, has to do with people whose behavior is "out of place" in a pejorative sense.[957] The second word[958] is the more standard one for evil of all kinds. By the time this letter was written Paul had had plenty of experience with such people, especially in the Macedonian town/city of Philippi and Thessalonica. So, in making this

request for prayer from the Thessalonian believers, Paul is not simply being "spiritual"; he is speaking into what they themselves know to be the very real situation in which Paul constantly lived, always in danger from those who, with reference to the gospel, are "wicked and evil people." Indeed, it seems altogether likely that rather than a (decidedly negative) platitude, and especially in light of the preceding metaphor that alludes to the games, Paul is in this case being quite case specific. Thus, even though we may not know the specifics, one may rightly assume that he is here reflecting a very real situation in Corinth, where he is probably living at the time this letter was written.

2. Affirmation and Prayer (3:2b-5)

> *. . . for not everyone has faith. 3 But the Lord [959] is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. 4 We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command.[960] 5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*

With these words Paul moves in a series of steps, mostly with words of encouragement, that take him from offering a reason for their prayers on his behalf (v. 2b), to an affirmation of Christ's faithfulness to protect them from the evil one (v. 3), to a word of affirmation (v. 4) that anticipates the strong words of correction that follow in verses 6-15, to another moment of prayer for them (v. 5). The prayer is for the Lord (Jesus) to direct their hearts toward ongoing love and perseverance, qualities that are exemplified specifically in the Father and the Son. All of this is both reassurance on Paul's part — that the Thessalonians are actually doing what he has commanded — and an apparent hesitation, since what follows (vv. 6-10) makes it clear that not all are doing so. Thus he affirms the majority, while setting up the difficult task of once again warning the (probably small) minority who have not yet heeded his instructions from the first letter.

2b Paul concludes the foregoing request for prayer with a truism that at first sight hardly seems necessary. Of course they know that (literally) "not of all people is [the] faith."[961] After all, that is what the first part of this letter is all about: their *own* suffering at the hands of fellow citizens in Thessalonica who do

not “have faith.” Thus “the faith” is not objective here (= a reference to the content of the gospel), but is subjective, having to do with people’s (not) putting their trust in Christ. What is of interest in this case is that Paul refers to those outside the believing community in this negating way, rather than with further descriptors as to the nature of their evil deeds. This appears to have been deliberate on his part, so that he could use this negative language about his enemies in contrast to its positive expression of faith(fulness) found in Christ himself.

3 Here is a moment in the Greek text that would be immediately accessible to the recipients of the letter but is at the same time nearly impossible to put into similarly striking English. The concluding word in the request for prayer in verses 1-2 is the noun *pistis* (“faith”); the first word in this sentence is the adjective *pistos* (“faithful”). Thus these two words sit side by side, without a break between them and without punctuation. Indeed, it would have been basically impossible for his Greek readers to miss the wordplay. Those who have been opposing Paul and his companions, wherever they are at the time of this writing (probably Corinth), are people whose primary characteristic from Paul’s perspective is that they are people “without faith.” And as such, they are both unbelievers themselves and opponents of those who do — or would — believe. The power inherent in this juxtaposition of noun and adjective lies in the contrast between “the wicked and evil people” who oppose them and “the faithfulness” of Christ himself toward those who have “faith” and thus are “faith-ful.”

What is striking in this sentence, in light of the preceding request for prayer for himself and his companions, is the change of object — from “us” to “you.” This appears to be primary evidence that the preceding request for prayer is as much about the Thessalonians themselves as it is for the apostolic trio from whom this letter has come to them. That is, his concern seems to be one that places Paul’s and his companions’ need for divine deliverance in a context very similar to that of the Thessalonians themselves. Although he nowhere accuses the disruptive-idle of being under the influence of the evil one, the context of this request for prayer would seem to have more far-reaching considerations than one might see on first reading. This seems all the more likely in light of the affirmation and prayer that immediately follow.

In making his point Paul once again appeals to the Scriptures of Israel. One of the primary facets of Yahweh’s self-revelation to Israel is that Yahweh is a faithful God, always true to Godself and thus always true to Yahweh’s own character.[962] Thus Yahweh is so revealed at the key moment in Deuteronomy 7:9: “Know therefore that Yahweh [*Kyrios* in the LXX] your God is God; Yahweh is a faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations

of those who love Yahweh and keep Yahweh's commandments." Because of Yahweh's faithfulness, Yahweh can do no wrong (Deut 32:4); and it is to Yahweh's faithfulness that both psalmist (e.g., 145:13) and prophet (e.g., Isa 49:7) appeal. And so, too, does Paul, since its first occurrence in his letters is in 1 Thessalonians 5:24 ("faithful is the One who calls you, who will also do it"). And although this theme does not appear often hereafter in his letters, it does occur three times in his correspondence with (less than faithful) Corinth (1 Cor 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor 1:18).

Noteworthy in the above sampling is the fact that in the Old Testament it is God *(theos)* who is faithful. But here Paul attributes such faithfulness to Christ: "faithful is the Lord." It is true that some scholars argue on the basis of this Old Testament usage that Paul had God the Father in mind here as well.[963] But that seems to miss Paul's own Christology by too much, since in all of his extant letters Paul uses the word *Kyrios* exclusively to refer to Christ. In the present case three matters seem particularly to favor Paul's ordinary usage.

First, just two sentences earlier (2:16) — and with no "chapter" break(!) — Paul has identified "the Lord" with Jesus Christ, and has done so with the intensive pronoun "himself." One would seem to need extraordinary evidence to the contrary to overrule Paul's own identification. Second, in all other instances in his letters Paul clearly designates "God" (*theos* = the Father) as the One who is faithful; so why change that to *kyrios* here, one might ask, unless he intended a change of subject? Third, in the immediately following sentence Paul offers that his persuasion regarding the Thessalonians finds its basis *en kyriō* ("in the Lord"). Since this prepositional phrase in Paul's letters universally refers to Christ, it would be strange indeed for Paul in the present sentence to refer to God the Father in this way and then immediately to change referents in the next sentence. Thus *kyrios* (= Christ) is faithful, and Paul is therefore persuaded in *kyriō* (= Christ) about their response to this appeal.

Thus, given that Paul intended to identify "the Lord" as Christ, it is of some further interest that he uses a verb regarding Christ's activity here that is identical to the one used of the Father in the preceding prayer in 2:17. All of this, as elsewhere earlier in these letters, points to the fact that Paul's "high Christology" had been in place long before these two letters were written.

But there is a further ambiguity in Paul's Greek sentence that needs to be noted. What Christ's faithfulness will protect them from is *tou ponērou* (either "evil" itself or "the evil one"). The King James Version had opted for the former, "keep you from evil." But this rendering is altogether ambiguous, since the verb "keep" in this locution would tend to mean, "keep you from doing anything that is evil," and thus many a sermon has made this very point. But Paul's sentence

clearly intends not “keeping one from evil” in that sense, but protection of the believer from Satan himself, and his wiles, as in almost all of the modern English versions. Thus this is not a subtle exhortation but a word of encouragement, that in the same way in which Paul has prayed that he and his companions may be “delivered from wicked and evil *people*,” their faithful Lord, Jesus Christ, will protect the Thessalonians from the evil one himself — even though they will be constantly harassed by him in every kind of way.

It should be noted finally that this is one of those rare moments in Paul where he appears to be echoing the Gospel tradition. In the Matthean version of the so-called “Lord’s prayer,” one finds language very similar to that used by Paul here. In Matthew the prayer is “but deliver us from the evil one”; Paul’s affirmation is that the Lord himself will “protect you from the evil one.” Although the verbs are not synonymous, in effect they come out at the same place, since Matthew’s “deliver” does not have to do with being released from Satan’s grip but with “deliverance” in the very same sense as Paul’s “protect.”

4 Paul now follows his own affirmation of what Christ will do for the Thessalonian believers with a second affirmation related to his and his companions’ own persuasion[964] concerning them, that they are in fact both “doing and will continue to do the things we command.” This is most likely intended to be the “title” sentence for the admonitions that follow; and the only reason one would fail to recognize it as such stems from Paul’s “signing off ” this introductory passage with the prayer for them in verse 5. Indeed, without the prayer that follows,[965] one could hardly miss its role as the lead-in to verses 6-15. After all, the verb found at the end of almost all English versions, “what we command,”[966] is the first word up in verse 6 below, where Paul begins to address the matter of the disruptive-idle.

Paul’s confidence in this case is to be found “in the Lord,” a phrase that will hereafter become a standard formula for him.[967] Again, the “Lord” is Christ, who in this sentence thus functions as the source of Paul’s confidence regarding his Thessalonian friends. This is not to say that he lacks confidence in them, but to note that Paul’s confidence regarding them lies with what Christ himself will continue to do in and among them.[968] Almost certainly this is intended both to affirm the majority of them as diligent followers of Christ in terms of behavior and to anticipate the correction that is needed for the minority that have not yet caught on to what Christian deportment is all about. Thus he expresses confidence in them, that they will “continue[969] to do the things we command.”

This final clause is what makes one realize that Paul himself was aware of his apostolic relationship with a group of believers whom he considered first of all

to be his friends. But the very fact that some continue on a path of disobedience regarding "working with their own hands" causes Paul to "pull rank" at this point, but in a most unobtrusive manner. Thus he can both uphold his apostolic authority in the church and at the same time maintain the more essential relationship of "brother" to other "brothers and sisters" (v. 1) in this community of faith.

5 As another evidence of his and the Thessalonian believers' basic relationship as one of "friendship" rather than of "apostle and disciples," Paul concludes this final word of "introduction" to the corrective words that follow with yet another prayer on their behalf. But it is also one that can be read as a bit of a platitude before the axe falls, as it were. Indeed, for the Paul we know only from his literary remains, this is a most unusual kind of prayer for him to relate to these friends. Most often his prayers have close connections with the behavioral issues that he takes up in his letters; but here the prayer has altogether to do with their relationship with God and Christ.

As before, and always, "the Lord" to whom he prays is a reference to Christ.[970] While some think otherwise here, that it refers to God the Father,[971] that would stand in considerable tension with Paul's usage elsewhere in these letters, where "God" is always identified as *theos* ("God") and Christ as *ho kyrios* ("the Lord"). Indeed, it would make little sense of Pauline usage to make this usage of "Lord" refer to God, when in the preceding prayer report in 2:16-17 Paul has chosen to place Christ first as the one addressed in prayer and identified him as "the Lord" — and used the intensive pronoun in so doing — and then followed with *theos,* who is identified as "the Father." Only our familiarity with referring to God as "the Lord" and resistance to Paul's own language patterns and deliberate designations would make this instance of *kyrios* refer to God the Father.

What Paul wants from the Lord on their behalf is that he direct[972] their hearts into "God's love and Christ's perseverance." In many ways this is a most unusual moment in Paul's letters; and it is especially significant in terms of Paul's underlying Christology. In one sentence he both prays to Christ and then puts Christ's activity on their behalf on the same level as that of God the Father. Our only real difficulty with the clause is with what Paul intended by his final phrase, "into God's love and Christ's perseverance."

Of special interest in this prayer is Paul's (apparently) deliberate intertextual use of 1 Chronicles 29:18.[973] In David's prayer in conjunction with the gifts brought for the construction of the temple, he implores, "Lord, God of our fathers, . . . direct their hearts to you." Using this same language, Paul prays that

the Lord will “direct your hearts into the love of God.” Thus:

> Paul — **May the Lord direct** your **hearts** into the love of God
> 1 Chronicles — **Lord** God also **direct** their **hearts** toward you

Three items make one think that this is deliberate intertextuality: (1) the locution is both striking and unusual; in fact, the verb is found elsewhere in Paul only in the prayer in 1 Thessalonians 3:11; moreover, (2) the phrase “the Lord direct their/your hearts” toward God is *unique to these two passages* in the Bible;[974] and (3) the phrase is found in the mouth of the great king of Israel, David himself — and in prayer! — so that it is not a merely passing phrase used by a more obscure figure. Again, Paul attributes to Christ the Septuagint’s translation of the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) as *Kyrios*.[975]

Equally striking is the goal of this prayer on their behalf. One has little difficulty here with the phrase “the love of God,” which in this case most likely refers simultaneously to the love that both characterizes God and they themselves have experienced from God, and thus not their love for God.[976] But the same ease of understanding does not obtain with the second phrase, “Christ’s perseverance.” Here the options are several. Is Paul praying, as some have held, for the Thessalonian believers’ own “patient waiting for Christ,”[977] or that they will exhibit “the kind of perseverance found in Christ,”[978] or (in keeping with the preceding subjective genitive) that Christ will bestow his own perseverance on them?[979] Although each of these has had its proponents, it seems most likely in light of the preceding phrase that Paul intended a combination of the latter two options,[980] which is probably what the NIV translators (kept in the TNIV) intended by using the English possessive. If so, then his prayer is for Christ to endow them with the kind of perseverance he desplayed in a life destined for the cross — to be totally given over to achieving the ultimate goal. Thus Paul anticipates the admonition that follows, which is directed toward the church as a whole, but specifically in fact has the recalcitrant “idlers” in view.

The point of all this as an introduction to the correctives that follow is typical of Paul, in that he first presents the positive dimension of a group of believers, before settling in on those who are creating difficulties among them. Thus the whole community is being encouraged, while the recalcitrant are being set up in a positive way for the needed admonition that follows.

There is much to be learned from this passage. First, from the *captatio* itself, which has not always been viewed in a positive way, one may quickly recognize

that there is a (very) fine line between rightly praising people where such praise is merited and doing so with some ulterior motive in hand. Indeed, one cannot always be sure of one's own motives in such moments, but here is a place where one needs to give the Apostle "some slack," as it were. Christian courtesy demands that we begin by taking Paul at face value; after all, this is not very different from the very similar parenting technique of (honestly) praising a child for a job well done, while at the same time using such praise as a motive to stir the child on to other forms of good behavior. It is only when the praise is "trumped up" that such an approach should rightly be called into question. More significantly, one should note the very high Christology that is assumed throughout. Here especially the theory of forgery falls on hard times; it is difficult to imagine anyone being able to enter into Paul's skin so thoroughly in this regard as this passage displays, both intentionally and otherwise. And in this regard, one should not miss that the appeal to Christ's own faithfulness lies at the heart of everything, including his confidence in prayer at the end (v. 5).

B. EXHORTATION REGARDING THE DISRUPTIVE-IDLE (3:6-12)

At last Paul picks up the issue of the disruptive-idle once again.[981] In this instance the problem is spelled out clearly at the end, in verses 11-12, where he indicates what he knows about the situation. Some among them are living *ataktōs* (= disruptive-idle),[982] which is further defined in two ways, beginning with a play on the verb "to work" that is difficult to carry over into English. First (v. 11), they are not "working" *(ergazomenous)* but are being busybodies *(peri-ergazomenous);* second (v. 12), he urges on them his twofold corrective: *(a)* that they work "with quietness" (= not disturbing others), and *(b)* thus "eat their own bread" (= not sponging off the others). Everything Paul says on either side of these two sentences either gives grounds for the correction (vv. 7-10) or tells the community how to handle the *ataktoi* if they fail to conform (vv. 6 and 13-15).

It is often suggested that these people are living in this manner because they believe "the day of the Lord is at hand," which is understood in terms of their being imbued with feverish eschatological expectation.[983] But there are simply too many matters in these two letters that call this view into serious question. First, there is not a word in the exhortation that follows that even remotely hints that this was their motive; thus the suggestion is guesswork on the part of some scholars and nothing more. Second, in verse 9 Paul reminds them that he had dealt with this concern "even when we were with you," and there is nothing in either of these letters indicating that eschatological fervor was there from the beginning. Third, in speaking to eschatological issues in the first letter (4:13-18 and 5:1-11) there is no hint in either case that Paul was speaking to a heightened, or intense, eschatological expectation.

What this means, then, is that we simply do not know why some of them chose not to work and thus to live off the largesse of others. Was it disdain for work itself, because they were people of God's kingdom and thus a cut above needing to work? Was it pressing the gospel of the kingdom a bit too far, *expecting/demanding* the rich to care for the poor? Was it related to their eschatological understanding? Was it an attempt on Paul's part to break up dependencies created by patron-client relationships?[984] Or was it just plain laziness? We simply do not know; and in fact getting an answer to this question

would hardly affect our understanding of the text at all. All we know for sure is what Paul actually says, “We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive” (v. 11), meaning unwilling to work and thereby disrupting the *shalom* of the believing community.

Thus one should begin any discussion of this passage by admitting that even though the text itself is generally straightforward and overall easily accessible, in the end we know very little about the specifics as to what occasioned it, and especially so in terms of the motivation on the part of those living so. The only hint we get as to why Paul chose to work with his own hands while among them comes in a secondary way in verse 8, “so that we would not be a burden to any of you.” While that ultimately has theological reasons inherent in it, Paul is not here making his point for those reasons, but for the sake of the well-being of the community as a whole.

Paul’s response to the issue comes in three parts, in keeping with the paragraphing in the TNIV. But on closer inspection it is also one of the more unusual arguments in his extant letters. Thus he begins (vv. 6-10) by addressing the whole community, who are being urged to “shun” those who are unwilling to work. In so doing, the larger part of the section (vv. 7-9) has to do with Paul’s and his companions’ own example with regard to work. The second part (vv. 11-12) is then (finally?) aimed directly at the disruptive-idle themselves, although it still comes to them through what Paul is here telling the rest of the community, who are themselves commended in verse 13. The third part (vv. 14-15) tells the community what to do if the disruptive-idle do not heed the instructions given here; they are to be shunned, not as punishment but as a means of redemption. A careful reading of the whole reveals that Paul is clearly concerned that the disruptive-idle become active participants in the community of faith. Nonetheless, at the end of the day Paul’s greater concern, as usual, is for the community as a whole and their role as offering evidence of God’s rule on earth through their conduct in general and relationships as a community in particular.

1. The Issue Presented (3:6)

> *6 In the name of the[985] Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and dis-ruptive and does not live according to the teaching[986] you[987] received from us.*

In many ways this opening presentation of the issue comes in the strongest language in the entire passage, indeed in the entire letter. It is understandably addressed to the community as a whole, since that is the case with the letter as a whole, and there would be very little purpose in addressing the slackers themselves in any case. Nonetheless, if they should happen to be present when this letter is read to the whole community, they are about to get an earful.

6 Paul begins with one of the strongest adjurations to be found in his letters, "we command[988] you in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ," which is softened only by the appearance of the seventh (and final) vocative ("brothers and sisters") in the letter. Although two significant manuscripts omit Paul's "our" when referring to the Lord (see n. 53), by all reasonable criteria the pronoun is best understood as coming from Paul himself, not as an insertion by (many) later scribes. The reason for this singular "addition" to Paul's otherwise common way of speaking about Christ is most likely an intentional emphasis on Christ's lordship as the reality that all of them have in common.
He is "our" common Lord, and therefore what Paul is about to command them is predicated on that lordship.

The appearance of the vocative at this point is most likely aimed not at the slackers, although they too would be included, but at the rest of the believing community, who are addressed throughout. By anyone's reckoning, the command itself is especially unusual for Paul and thus quite unexpected. His aim, as in his earlier dealing with this issue, is ultimately the well-being of the entire community. But his means of getting there is what catches our attention. Eventually he will put it plainly to the disruptive-idle themselves; they are to get to work so as to "earn the bread they eat" (v. 12).

But to get there Paul tells the entire community that they are to shun[989] "every believer [Gk. *adelphos*, 'brother'][990] who is idle and disruptive," people who apparently have paid no attention to the words of correction in the first letter (1 Thess 4:9-12). The basic reason for the "shunning" given here is related to the fact that they have disregarded Paul's former exhortation. To make this point he refers to them as "walking[991] in an idle and disruptive way"; by so doing, they are not "walking according to the 'traditions' which they received from us." The fact that there is more than one who is living *ataktōs* becomes clear at this point by way of a subtle grammatical reality. The shunning is in regard to "every brother" who is living this way; in giving the reason for it Paul picks up language from 2:15, where the community as a whole had been commended for "keeping the traditions." Here the disruptive-idle are to be censured because *they*

are not living in keeping with “the traditions” that the community had “received from us.”[992]

This final verb, “they[993] received,” puts the emphasis on the fact that as part of the believing community “they themselves” were party to these instructions not only when Paul himself was present with them, but also in his earlier letter. He had passed on to them “the traditions,” to be sure. But here the emphasis is on their end. Not only had Paul passed on the teaching that was common to the early Christian community, but in this case he reminds the whole community that the disruptive-idle themselves had also “received” this teaching. So the community should expect no surprises, nothing new, in what follows; rather, he is about recall for all of them, but especially for the disruptive-idle, what was taught both by word and example. And the primary emphasis now lies with the latter, the example they had seen in his working with his own hands, even though as their teacher *(a)* he could have expected financial support from them, and *(b)* such working with his own hands might well have lowered his stature among some of them.

2. First Word for the Disruptive-Idle: Imitate Paul (3:7-10)

> *7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day,[994] laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “Anyone who is unwilling to work shall not eat.”*

With this explanation Paul is basically spelling out “the traditions” that had been “handed down to them.” At the same time, in his second use in the letter of the language of “tradition” (v. 6) the word takes a second form. In its first occurrence in 2:15 Paul mentions “the traditions you were *taught*,” referring to verbal teaching. In the introduction to this section (v. 6 above), he refers to “the

tradition they *received* from us." And although verbal communication undoubtedly accompanied Paul's choice to continue in the workplace while he was among them, his point here has altogether to do with what they should have learned from his *example.*

It should be further noted that at the heart of this passage (v. 8) Paul picks up language that he had used in the earlier letter (1 Thess 2:9), but here with a significant difference as to his reason for choosing to work. In the first letter he was defending his "right" to work with his own hands, apparently because some in the believing community had taken some excep-tion to his "working" and thus not accepting "support" from them. Here the same reality (his working to support himself and his companions) is being used to offer a model for the disruptive-idle to emulate. When looked at together, these two passages (from both letters) indicate that from the beginning of his time in Thessalonica Paul sensed that "work" was an issue for some of them. So now he must address the present situation in a more thoroughgoing way.[995]

7a Paul begins his correction with an explanatory "for," indicating that what follows will be an elaboration of the final point in the preceding sentence, "which *they* (= the disruptive-idle as part of the believing community) had received from us." But now he returns to the second person plural, accompanied by an emphatic "yourselves."[996] Thus Paul once more reminds the community, and especially the disruptive-idle, that this is something they "know." No surprises here, because Paul had spoken to it on two other occasions: when he was with them, and in his former letter (1 Thess 4:11-12). So there can be no excuses for the disruptive-idle to continue in their unacceptable patterns of behavior.

But the object of the verb "you (yourselves) know" comes as something of a surprise, since it has little to do with the content of what was taught and everything to do with Paul himself as an exemplary paradigm in this matter. Thus what they "know" is not in this case the kind of (doctrinal) teaching to which he refers in 2:15 ("the traditions you were taught"); rather, he is referring to his former instruction regarding how God's newly formed people live in community and in the world. At this point, therefore, Paul the follower of Christ is at the same time Paul the Jew, who was raised in a context where "tradition" was not simply doctrinal/theological "teaching" that was handed down, but (especially) teaching that had to do with how God's people live in the world.[997] That this is the case in the present context is made certain by his description that follows as to what was included in such instruction.[998] It had altogether to do with what is proper behavior for God's redeemed people.

7b-8 This clause begins with the Greek word *hoti*, which here can be introducing either a "causal" clause (= "because"), thus giving the *reason* for his conduct, or an "object" clause (= "that"), thus giving the *content* of his conduct as an exemplary paradigm. The TNIV in this case (almost certainly correctly so) has chosen the latter, bringing the former clause to a conclusion and beginning a new sentence with what amounts to the "content" of his former teaching. The teaching in this case is not a matter of "do as I say," but "do as I did"; and what he did tells the whole story in terms of the current difficulty among the believers in Thessalonica.

First (v. 7b), and putting it negatively, he reminds them that "we were not 'disorderly' when we were with you." Here is the sentence that has probably caused so many scholars and translators to lean toward "idle" for this Greek word, since what follows is an explanation as to how this was not so in his case; and on the surface one may argue so with some validity. But to do so is at the same time to neglect altogether the primary meaning of this Greek word ("out of order"). So what appears to have happened is the kind of thing one finds in the TNIV.

On the one hand, Paul's concern is with the people themselves who are "disorderly" in the sense of both "idle and (thereby) disruptive." On the other hand, Paul's primary concern appears at the end of our verse 8 ("not to be a burden to any of you"). So he concludes the present clause by reminding them that neither did he "eat the bread of anyone without paying for it." For most people in the contemporary Western world, this sounds so ordinary that it simply fails to catch our attention. But one needs to consider what this would have meant for him and them. Even though we do not know how long Paul and his companions were in Thessalonica, he had established a regular pattern of "working with his own hands," which became a kind of "damned if you do, and damned if you don't" issue in his case. As the disavowal in the first letter indicates (1 Thess 2:8-9), he had worked with his own hands at great personal cost so as "not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you." But at the same time this eliminated their being able to minister to him in a financial way. That earlier choice now fortunately benefits his present argument. His example of "working" so as not to burden anyone is precisely the model he can thus set before the disruptive-idle.

In the process of making this point Paul repeats nearly verbatim language used in the earlier letter.[999] As before, his reminder has three elements to it. First, we "worked night and day,"[1000] which is a way of saying that he was constantly having to work with his own hands. Second, such "work" was for him a matter

of “laboring and toiling,” which words together put emphasis on the work as labor in itself, which had a “toiling” dimension to it. In other words, he worked hard at his occupation, and on an ongoing basis. Third, the reason for doing so was a deliberate choice on his part, rather than necessity; and with this dimension we come to the real reason for his repeating himself on this matter. With what serves as an indirect word to the disruptive-idle Paul reminds them that he did this “so that we would not be a burden to any of you.” If one assumes, as one probably should, that the disruptive-idle would be present for the reading of the letter as a word from Paul to the church, this is thus aimed ultimately at them, but in an indirect way.

9 With this sentence Paul moves on to offer his explanation for the choice to work for his bread while in Thessalonica rather than to be dependent on any of them. The explanation comes in the form of a “not / but” clause, both sides of which are necessary explanations of the reminders regarding his “example” in the preceding sentences (vv. 7-8). The “not” clause is for Paul a significant (and necessary?) disclaimer having to do with his own “authority” as an apostle, a matter previously alluded to in the first letter (2:7). What Paul wants them to understand well at this point is that as an apostle of Christ he did in fact have the “right” to their support. Without that as the common assumption between him and them, the rest of the argument carries no weight.

But with that reminder in place he moves on to offer his primary reason for his choosing to “work with his hands” (1 Thess 4:11): “to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate.” From our distance, of course, one cannot be sure whether this motive was present from the beginning by design, or whether what may have begun as a “need” on his part very soon evolved into a “model” for the believers in Thessalonica. In either case, from his present perspective the latter soon came to function as the primary reason for his “working with his hands” (1 Thess 4:11). Thus what from Paul’s present perspective was *not* born out of necessity in order to “eat and drink” came to be understood as having as a secondary value, thus allowing him to “offer ourselves [Paul and his companions] as a model for you to imitate.”

With this final clause, “so that you might imitate us,” Paul thus “encloses” the argument that began with the same language at the beginning of verse 7, as to what they “know.” What began as an expression of “ought to” with regard to “following Paul’s example” concludes with a purpose clause that uses the same language to make the same point. Given what he had said as to his purpose in “working night and day” in verse 8 (“so as not to be a burden to any of you”), one cannot at the end be altogether sure of his *primary* reason for “working night and day.” Most likely he understood the two reasons to be the two sides of the

same coin. On the practical side of things, he worked "night and day" so as not to burden them; at the same time what was born of necessity came to be understood as offering them a model to imitate.

10 With his own model in hand, now understood as something for them to emulate, Paul concludes on a note that comes as something of a surprise to the later reader, but which reminds the Thessalonians of something that he "used to command"[1001] them when present with them. The "command" is simple enough: "If anyone is unwilling to work, neither shall that person eat."[1002] The "surprise" element for the later reader is the fact that Paul had had to make such a ruling, apparently in an ongoing way, when he and his companions were present with them.

Although we have no hints in the text itself as to *why* this had been a matter of concern even from the beginning of his ministry there,[1003] there can be little question that the issue is not a recent one, one that had come up after the apostolic trio had left Thessalonica. Both Paul's opening clause ("when we were with you") and his putting the verb in the imperfect ("we used to give you this command") indicate that something was not quite right among them from the beginning. The people to whom this command was directed are those singled out in verse 6 as "walking [= living] in an idle and disruptive" way. The rest of the section (vv. 11-12) will go on to spell out the details of what Paul knows about the situation.

3. The Issue and Exhortation Repeated (3:11-12)

> *11 We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in*[1004] *the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.*

With what from our distance comes as a bit of a surprise, Paul now both repeats and summarizes what he has said to this point (from v. 6). But what began as an imperative to the whole community (to shun "every brother" who is walking in a disorderly manner, and thus not in keeping with the "traditions" they had received from him) is now directed explicitly toward the disruptive-idle themselves (though still by way of speaking to the community as a whole). Thus

in two (Greek) sentences (vv. 11 and 12), Paul gathers together what has been said to this point and aims it directly at those needing correction. First (v. 11), he repeats the content of his opening sentence (v. 6), but now by way of a wordplay on the word "work"; second (v. 12), he speaks directly to the disruptive-idle, but in keeping with the whole passage does so in the third person rather than in the second. Thus the whole is directed toward the "some among you" who "are idle and disruptive"; and "such people" are now commanded directly to work with their own hands so as to "earn the bread they eat."

11 Toward the end of what began as a simple command in verse 6, Paul now lets the whole community know what he has learned from a source not now known to us, but most likely from Timothy on his return from Thessalonica after having delivered the first letter. In any case Paul has no hesitation regarding the validity of what he has "heard." The problem from an earlier time (noted in 1 Thess 4:10b-12) still persists; and the community is now being pressed hard to do something about it. So Paul's way of approaching the double command that follows in verse 12 is to spell out precisely what he has learned.

In so doing Paul begins by repeating the language he had used when entering into this issue in our verse 6, except that what in that first instance was a distributive singular ("every brother") is now expressed in the plural ("some among you"). This is the sure giveaway that in both letters Paul has been concerned with more than just one person who is living in a way that is "idle and disruptive" (for the meaning of which see v. 6 above). This plural further explains why in this second instance he is willing to give so much time to this matter, and to do so at the end of the letter as a way of emphasizing its importance.

But now with a considerable play on words Paul spells out how it is that they are not simply being "idlers," as historically they have been designated, but are disturbing the *shalom* of the community as a whole. Although wordplays are usually next to impossible to translate effectively from one language into another, the TNIV translators have chosen in this case to do that very thing, and at little or no expense to greater precision in English. Paul's problem is that these people are not simply not "working" *(ergazomenoi);* they are "meddling" (*peri*ergazomenoi = "working intrusively"), a wordplay that everyone in the Thessalonian community would have captured immediately, and which is also nicely caught by the TNIV's "not busy but busybodies." Since this is obviously deliberate on Paul's part, one can be sure that if straight talk itself will not get his point across, this bit of play on words should catch everyone's attention — especially those who are "guilty" regarding this matter.

12 The "indirection" of these imperatives is now continued by the "such

people" with which this sentence begins (nicely kept in the TNIV). At the same time the "indirection" also gives way to straightforward imperative, in this case emphasized by way of synonymous imperatives now addressed directly to the disruptive-idle themselves. Thus "we command"[1005] and "urge"[1006] such people. Not only so, but further to reinforce the emphatic imperatives, Paul in this case, as at the beginning of this section (v. 6), adds the basis on which the command is made; it is "in the Lord Jesus Christ," the eighth of nine occurrences of the full "name" in this letter.[1007]

The content of the command itself picks up the language put negatively in verse 10 and now applies it in a positive way to the unruly-idle. A part of Paul's emphasis can be seen in the word order itself (lit. "in order that in 'quietness' working, their own bread they might eat"). The emphasis here lies with their living or being "in a state of quietness without disturbance" (so BDAG). As before, this does not to have do with being "silent" as such, but, as the TNIV nicely put it, with their "settling down" so that (again literally) "their *own* bread they might eat."[1008] The clear implication of the combination of the phrase "in quietness" with the emphatic reflexive pronoun "their own" is that "quietness" has to do with not disturbing the *shalom* of the community by "sponging" off other believers; and further included is the implication that they have *chosen* not to work with their own hands. Thus they are not among those to whom life has dealt a hard blow, as it were. They rather have deliberately chosen not to work, and thus to live off the largesse of others; and whether the "others" in this case are "well to do" or not is neither suggested nor implied in the text as such, although in the nature of things in first-century Greco-Roman culture the wealthy would be the more likely primary targets of their indolence.

One should probably use divinely inspired caution when thinking about how a text like this applies in the kind of multicultural world in which most of the users of this commentary will have been raised, particularly because the word "work" has taken on a considerably different meaning from the world in which I was raised. "Work" had to do with manual labor, and the more difficult or intense it was the more truly it was understood as "work." In an earlier day it would have been unthinkable that my sitting at a computer writing this commentary would constitute work as much as that of the farmer or builder or "laborer" of any kind. Indeed, they had Paul's own example ("laboring and toiling" at his occupation) as biblical "proof" for such a view. But Paul's concern in this passage, as in its earlier expression in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-11, has to do with the "disruptive" nature of those who have chosen to go this route — which only adds to the

travesty of having translated Paul's Greek word *ataktōs* with the English word "idle." It is not "idleness" per se that concerns Paul, but the unruly nature of their refusal to work and thus disrupting the *shalom* of the entire community that concerns him. Against that kind of "idleness" there should be much legitimate concern in any community of faith.

C. EXHORTATION TO THE REST (3:13-15)

Having now commanded the disruptive-idle to "work with their own hands," Paul moves toward bringing this somewhat long exhortation to its conclusion. To do so he speaks first to those who are not a part of the problem, urging them not to "grow weary" in "doing what is good" (v. 13). And since these people, undoubtedly the majority of the believing community, are to carry out the "shunning" that is called for in the preceding "command" (v. 12), Paul concludes this exhortation by spelling out how they are to handle those who would remain disobedient, especially after having been shamed by the public reading of this letter. The majority are to "not associate with them," so that the disruptive-idle themselves might become truly "ashamed" of their conduct (v. 14); but in so doing, this same majority are not to forget that the "idlers" themselves are members of the family. Thus they are to be warned as "brothers or sisters" (v. 15) — still members of the family, to be sure, but now on the outside edge, as it were.

1. Always Do Good (3:13)

13 And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

For reasons that are not especially clear, the NIV translators (kept in the TNIV) chose to include this imperative not as the "heading" of the conclusion found in verses 14-15, but as the "conclusion" itself of the preceding exhortations. In this they were apparently following the lead of the RSV (also kept in the NRSV), thus making these two the only English translations to do so. But in going this way both translations have had to disregard Paul's own usage of the vocative "brothers and sisters," which in every one of its many occurrences in Paul's letters serves either as his way of "marking" a new section, or as a means of transition within a section. There is simply no analogy in Paul for using the

vocative to conclude an argument.

13 Although it is true that there are no certain indicators in the text that Paul is now speaking to the whole community, such an assumption alone seems to make sense of this exhortation. On the one hand, speaking in this way to the whole community, both the majority and the few who are disrupting the *shalom* of the community, allows Paul to urge the same imperative on all of them; none of them is ever to "tire of doing what is good." At the same time, on the other hand, it also serves as a useful way for Paul to preface what he will ask the whole community to do if the disruptive-idle do not follow through on the imperative. That it thus serves as the "heading" for the final guidelines regarding their treatment of the disruptive-idle seems to be made certain both by the content of the imperative itself and by the fact that it is followed by three further imperatives. Together these data suggest that Paul is thus bringing this issue to a conclusion by offering this general command as something of a "heading" for the final "correctives" that follow.

One should also note how Pauline this emphasis is. It is common in several contemporary situations, where Paul is considered as something of a theological hero, to think in terms of "doing the *right* thing." Although such language is not totally foreign to the apostle,[1009] his own emphasis is usually to be found in the present language, "doing what is *good.*" This may seem like a small matter to some; but it is an unfortunate part of church history that God's people are far more often concerned about the "right thing" than "the good thing," and often in ways that abandon altogether what is good. While Paul is concerned about both, his own emphases tend to lie with the latter, as in the present passage. After all, it is the "good thing" that is most often also the "right thing."

2. Shun the Disobedient (3:14-15)

> *14 Take special note of those who do not obey our instruction in this letter. Do*[1010] *not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard them as enemies, but warn them as fellow believers.*

We should probably read these final admonitions with the presupposition that the disruptive-idle are themselves, as least some of them, present for the reading of the letter. If so, they have by now already had their ears full; and because the

action here prescribed is going to bring them to utter "shame" in a culture where "honor" and "shame" are absolutely basic values, with these final words to the whole community Paul tries to soften the blow on them, as it were. Indeed, outside of an "honor/shame"-driven culture, these words tend to be difficult to understand — not in terms of the actual words themselves, but of what would have driven Paul to say them at all. On the one hand, he wants them truly to experience "shame"; on the other hand, he does not want such "shame" to drive them out of the community altogether. So in the end he seems to be speaking to both groups at the same time. He is quite prepared for the disruptive-idle to experience the shame of being put outside the believing community; but he seems obviously also hoping that it will not come to that. Hence the ambivalence that many modern readers experience when reading these words. If Paul is trying not to shame them, then why such words as these? The answer to which question seems to be a modified "yes" and "no." He is quite ready for them to experience the kind of shame within the believing community that will lead to their repentance; at the same time he is ready for them to experience this degree of shame "within" so that they will not have to experience the ultimate shame "outside," by their being disassociated from the community altogether. Thus all of what is said here makes sense only in such a culture where "honor" and "shame" stand at the highest level of values.

14 For the sake of good English the TNIV translators have rearranged Paul's word order, which in his Greek text puts all the emphasis on "anyone" who might disregard "our instruction in this letter." Although in some ways this might appear to come as something of a surprise at the end, it is in fact the clear indication that Paul knows well that not all will readily heed what he is currently pressing on the whole community. In effect, Paul is telling the community to "shun" the one who will still persist in being unruly-idle, who would be unwilling to conform even after this letter has been read in that person's presence. Indeed, the rest are to "take special note"[1011] of such a person.

But the way of "marking" a person who would still persist in being unruly-idle after this letter has been read aloud in the community is by not "associating"[1012] with him.[1013] And at this point everything hinges on his thus "feeling ashamed" in a shame-and-honor culture. Indeed, this is the first of only two instances in his letters where Paul suggests this kind of discipline for the person who is doing what is wrong.[1014] If these people are actually present at the reading of the letter, they will especially be singled out for shame, which Paul apparently hopes will have its own effective results by leading them to change their ways.

15 In one of the more surprising moments in this letter, Paul begins this qualifying sentence not with an expected “but,” but with an “and,” which in this case most likely would have been understood by them to mean something like “but at the same time.” Again, Paul’s emphases lie in part with his word order: “not as an enemy regard [him], but warn as a brother.” His obvious point is that their action must be carried out in a way that is redemptive rather than punitive.[1015] Paul recognizes clearly that “correction” can be done in a way that punishes but fails to redeem at the same time; and his concern throughout this entire passage is a redemptive one, for both the person(s) involved and the community as a whole.

This passage has had its own rocky history in the church. In the more Westernized and thus more “democratized” churches of the Western world, this kind of discipline is effective only in the most tightly constricted ethnic communities, where “banning” is a matter of enormous cultural shame. For the rest of the Western world, it tends to be a matter of “take or leave it” on the part of both the offenders and the community at large. Only in communions where there is especially strong power in the hands of church leaders does this kind of “banning” play a significant role. And this is merely an attempt to be observant (in the first sense of that word, meaning a good observer of the world in which one lives), not a suggestion as to how churches in more democratic societies should carry out these imperatives that were spoken into a much different cultural order. Any “ban” that would take place in the later church should at least have the possibility of effectiveness that this one would have had.

IV. CONCLUDING MATTERS (3:16-18)

Perhaps the most striking thing about the “concluding matters” in this letter is that apart from the “grace” itself, which in this case includes “you all,” is how different it is from that which concluded the first letter. Indeed, all one need do is compare the “conclusions” to his two preserved letters to the church in Corinth to recognize that such “differences” will become Paul’s stock-in-trade with regard to these matters.[1016] In this case, as in 2 Corinthians, the “final greetings” are brief and to the point: a benediction is followed by an authenticating moment and the final “sign-off” grace. The letter, apparently deliberately, ends on the same note with which it began, with a wish of “peace” and a final “grace,” thus picking up in reverse order “the grace to you and peace” from the salutation.

A. BENEDICTION (3:16)

> *16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you.*

Paul moves toward his final greeting in this letter in a very Jewish way, by offering the Thessalonians a "wish of peace," a prayer-wish that is singularly different from the one in his first letter, which focused on their living holy lives. Here Paul's concern is altogether on their experiencing Christ's *shalom* itself.

16 As Paul neared the end of his first letter, he prayed, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you in every way." But in the present letter, "holy living" as such has not been in focus at any point. Rather, what has been in focus is the coming day of the Lord and *shalom* within the believing community. Thus the prayer-wish in this case calls on "the Lord of peace" to grant them peace. In many ways this is the most "Jewish" of all the Pauline benedictions; but that is surely not the reason for it. In light of the preceding content (God's coming judgment on their enemies; the timing of the day of the Lord; and unrest caused by the disruptive-idle), this prayer is precisely what is needed. So quite in keeping with what will become his lifelong habit, the "grace" at the end of the letter focuses altogether on their *shalom.* And quite in keeping with the overall christological focus in this letter, the prayer is for "the Lord of peace" to give them peace.

As throughout the letter, therefore, this prayer has considerable christological implications that are simply assumed by Paul — and thus of his readers — and therefore not made a point of, as it is necessary for us to do. First, in keeping with the primary focus of the prayers in 2:16 and 3:5, the prayer itself is directed toward Christ, and again as in 3:5 to Christ only. In later letters this prayer is to "the God of peace,"[1017] but in keeping with the Christocentricity of this letter Paul addresses his prayer to "the Lord of peace." The prayer itself is that they will know this peace "at all times and in every way," the two phrases that embrace all of life, both temporally ("at all times") and experientially ("in every way").

It is therefore of some interest that the salutation of 1:2, which embraces both

Father and Son as the source of "grace and peace," at the end of the letter focuses altogether on the Son alone, which becomes all the more noticeable in the follow-up prayer, "The Lord be with you." This latter prayer is an especially noteworthy, final moment of (seldom noted[1018]) intertextuality in this letter. In this singular moment in his letters, Paul dips into his Jewish heritage with the traditional blessing, "The Lord be with you"; only in this case, given the nature of the letter, it becomes, "The Lord be with *all* of you." In so doing he appropriates language that in the Old Testament was seen as evidence of faithfulness to Yahweh, as the author of Ruth is keen to point out. Thus Boaz greets his workers with: "The LORD be with you"; to which they respond, "The LORD bless you!" (Ruth 2:4).[1019] Paul's greeting once again reflects the (in this case verbless) text of the Septuagint:

> Paul: The Lord (be) with all of you
> Ruth: The Lord (be) with you

Thus once more, again in an especially significant way, Paul has appropriated what strictly belonged to Yahweh in an Old Testament passage and applied it directly to Christ.

B. PAUL'S PERSONAL GREETING (3:17)

17 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

17 With this fifth — and final — occurrence in these two letters of the first person singular,[1020] Paul has obviously now taken pen in hand and "signed off" personally. Nonetheless, one of the genuine idiosyncrasies of New Testament scholarship is that those who deny that Paul wrote this letter use this greeting as their ultimate evidence to condemn it as *not* from him. But that seems to be a matter of grasping at straws. This same phenomenon occurs also in Galatians 6:11, and the same kind of argumentation should prevail against the authenticity of that letter, but of course no one would ever think of doing so. In the present case, in fact, the evidence within the letter itself indicates that Paul is not at all sure of the source of the misinformation that has created unrest among them (2:2 and 15); thus the present emphasis seems designed to disallow a forged letter as *one* of the options.

What these two clauses further indicate for us is what could otherwise have been observed only by the original recipients, namely that the penmanship of the body of the letter and of this closing greeting would have been obviously different. Although in one later instance we know the actual name of the "scribe" (Tertius; Rom 16:22), this letter and Galatians together offer the further evidence that Paul's letters were dictated by him, and he signed off on them at the end.

Of high, but ultimately unsolvable, interest is how many of his prior "all my letters" were penned to churches, as with our 1 Thessalonians and this one. In any case, this concluding phrase suggests that Paul had already begun the habit of communicating with his churches by way of letter, which further suggests — along with the missing correspondence to Corinth — that our collection is but a portion of the letters he wrote to his churches. At this point the historic doctrines of divine providence and divine inspiration take over in light of what the historical evidence cannot demonstrate, one way or the other.

C. THE GRACE (3:18)

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Since this closing "grace" is nearly identical to that in the first letter, I begin here by simply appending those comments, with only some slight modifications. But the one difference, the addition of "you all," needs further comment.

18 It is noteworthy that the standard "good-bye" in ancient letters was *errōso* (lit. "be strong"), which occurs in the New Testament only in the letter of James recorded in Acts 15:29. As with the salutation with which our letter began, this standard conclusion has been Christianized. It was "grace," God's own favor that is theirs through "the Lord, Jesus Christ," with which he greeted them at the beginning; and now that same "grace" is what he wishes for them in conclusion. It is the one word in Paul's vocabulary that embraces all that God has done, and that he desires that God will do, for his Thessalonian friends through Christ Jesus.

The addition of "you all" at the end of this salutation seems to be quite in keeping with the content of the letter itself, especially in light of the immediately preceding concern which Paul has chosen to deal with at the end. One should perhaps not make too much of such an otherwise "slight" addition, but since it is basically unique to this letter,[1021] more needs to be said. As with the proviso sentence that concludes the preceding instruction/correction (v. 15), this seems to be yet another way (subtle perhaps, but real nonetheless) of embracing the entire community in the concluding grace. Looked at in this way, it is perhaps his own offering of the right hand of fellowship to some who otherwise need correction in order to be part of the "all."

At the end we should note once more that those who think this letter to be a forgery are faced with enormous historical difficulties. The ultimate question is "why," why would anyone take the trouble to write such a letter in Paul's name — and for whose sake — one can only wonder? First of all, the time it would have taken its "author" to have entered so thoroughly into Paul's skin as to duplicate the scores of incidental matters that only an author can truly do seems

beyond the reach even of historical imagination. And then to do so with regard to matters that seem so much less weighty than others that might have been addressed would seem to be without purpose. This is not to put the letter itself down as less than important, but to ask the ultimate question of "why?"

Not only so, but the question of "how" must also be asked; how could a forger have so thoroughly entered into Paul's skin, as it were, and yet have kept to the grammar and stylistic matters that are related only to 1 Thessalonians in the Pauline corpus? In the end, this is a letter one can well understand Paul to have written after some things in the first letter had not gone as well as he might have hoped; but it seems beyond historical imagination that anyone this early in the church would have done so. And to have done so at a later date, without once yielding to the temptation to bring to it matters from the rest of the corpus only increases the difficulties. Thus this remains a "theory" pure and simple, and one that should eventually lose its place in Pauline studies.

INDEX OF MODERN AUTHORS

Amphoux. B.
Argyle, A. W.
Aristides
Ascough, R. S.
Athanasius
Aune. C.
Aus, R. D.

Bahr, G. J.
Bailey, J. A.
Balch. L.
Baltensweiler, H.
Bammel, E.
Barclay, J. M. G.
Bassler, J. M.
Baumert, N.
Baur, F. D.
Beale, G. K.
Beauvery, R.
Beck, H.
Beck, N. A.
Benson, G. P.
Bertram, G.
Best, E.
Black. A.
Blumenthal.
Bockmuehl, M. N. A.
Boers, H.
Brown.
Bruce, F. F.
Burke, T. J.
Byrskog, S.

Calvin, J.
Caragounis. C.
Carras, G. P.
Chadwick, H.
Chrysostom
Cicero
Collins, R. F.
Coppens, J.
Cortozzi, S.
Cosby, M. R.
Crawford.
Danker, F.
de Jonge, H. J.
Delobel, J.
Ps-Demosthenes
Dobschütz, E. von
Donfried, K. P.
Dunham. A.
Dunn, J. D. G.
Duplacy, J.
Dupont, J.

Eadie, J.
Edgar. C.
Edgar, T. R.
Ehrman, B.
Elgvin, T.
Ellicott. J.
Ellingworth, P.
Ellis, E. E.
Evans. A.
Exler, F. X. J.

Faw. E.
Fee, G. D.
Ferguson, E.
Findlay, G. G.
Forster, G.
Foucant.
Fowl, S.
Frame, J. E.
Fredrickson.
Fudge, E.
Funk, R. W.

Gaventa, B. R.
Geiger, G.
Giblin. H.
Gibromont, J.
Gilliard, F. D.
Gillman, J.
Green, G. L.
Grundmann, W.
Goulder, M. D.
Gundry, R.
Gunkel, H.

Haacker, K.
Harrison, J. R.
Hasler.
Heikel, J. A.
Heil, J. H.
Hendriksen, W.
Hengel, M.
Hewett, J. A.
Hiebert. E.
Hock, R. F.
Holmes, M. W.
Holtz, R.
Holtzmann, H. J.
Hoppe, R.
Horbury, W.
Howard, T. L.
Hughes, F. W.
Hunt, A. S.
Hunter, A. M.
Hurd, J. C.
Hurtado. W.
Hyldahl, N.

Jensen, J.
Jeremias, J.
Jerome
Jewett, R.
Judge, E. A.
Juel. H.

Keck. E.
Kemmler. W.
Kern, P. H.
Kim, S.
Klassen, W.
Kloppenborg, J.
Knox, A. D.
Koenig, J.
Koester, H.
Konradt, M.
Kuhn, H.-W.
Küng, H.
Kurichialnil, J.

Lake, K.
Lambrecht, J.
Lamp, J. S.
Langevin, P.-E.
Laurent, J. C. M.
Lautenschlager, M.
Legasse, S.
Lightfoot, J. B.
Lofthouse, W. F.
Louw, J. P.
Luchesi, E.
Lünemann, G.
Lyons, G.

Maarten, M. J. J.
Malherbe, A. J.
Malina, B.
Marshall. H.
Martin, W.
Masson.
Maurer.
McCaig, A.
McGehee, M.
Mearns. L.
Meeks, W. A.
Metzger, B. M.
Meyer, B. F.
Michaels, J. R.
Michel, O.
Milligan, G.
Mitchell, M. M.
Moffatt, J.
Moore, A. L.
Morris.
Moule. F. D.
Müller, P.-G.
Munck, J.
Murrell, N. S.

Nepper-Christensen, P.
Nestle, E.
Neusner, J.
Nicholl.
Nida, E. A.

O’Brien, P. T.
Ollrog, W.-H.
Omanson, R. L.

Parry, St. J. R.
Pearson, B. A.
Perdelwitz, R.
Peterson, E.
Pfitzner. C.
Plevnik, J.
Plummer, A.

Reinhartz, A.
Rensburg, F. J. J. van
Richard, E. J.
Richardson, P.
Rigaux, B.
Roberts, J. H.
Rosner, B.
Ross, J. M.
Russell, R.

Quarles. L.

Sailors, T. B.
Schlueter. J.
Schmidt. D.
Schnider, F.
Schubert, P.
Schweizer, E.
Simpson, J. W., Jr.
Smith.
Smith, J. E.
Spicq.
Stambaugh, J. E.
Steele, E. S.
Stein, R. H.
Stenger, W.
Stephenson, A. M. G.
Still, T. D.
Stowers, S. K.
Strauss, M. L.

Taylor, N. H.
Theodore of Mopsuestia
Theodoret
Thomas, R. L.
Tuckett. M.
Turner, N.

Unnik, W. C. van

Verhoef, E.

Wainwright, A.
Wanamaker. A.
Ware, J.
Waterman, G. H.
Watts, R.
Weatherly, J. A.
Weima, J. A. D.
Weiss, W.
Westcott & Hort
White, J. L.
Whiteley. E. H.
Wiles, G. P.
Winter, B. W.
Whitton, J.
Witherington, B., 115
Witmer, S. E.
Wortham, R. A.
Wright, N. T.

Yarbrough, O. L.

INDEX OF SUBJECTS

Alexander the Great
Angels: “archangels,” ; the “holy ones,” ; Jesus accompanied by the “angels of his power,”
Antiochus IV,
Anti-Semitism by early Christians
Athens
Authorship of first letter
Authorship of second letter (refuting forging arguments); and acquaintance with/use of language and terms from First Letter; anarthrous use of “the Lord,” ; the disruptive-idle and the *captatio benevolentiae*; intertextual use of the Septuagint of Isaiah; and Paul’s high Christology; and Paul’s personal closing greeting ; salutation and use of first person plural; the thanksgivings in both letters; unusual redundancies ; use of *hyper* compounds ; use of *kyrios* to refer to Christ and *theos* for God; use of *pistis* to refer to someone’s “faithfulness,” ; use of vocative *adelphoi* (“brothers and sisters”)

Believers who have died (exhortations of first letter concerning); anarthrous nouns; “archangels,” ; and belief in Jesus’ own resurrection; contemporary use/misunderstanding of this passage ; and encouragement to Thessalonian believers; “for the meeting of the Lord in the air,” ; and God as subject of sentence ; “in the air,” ; “in the clouds,” ; *Kyrios* as Jesus; language of intertestamental Judaism ; the “living who are left,” ; name “Jesus” used alone ; the Parousia/Coming ; and Paul’s high Christology ; phrase “through Jesus” immediately following “those who are sleeping,” ; Septuagint language ; “the dead in Christ will rise first,” ; and the Thessalonians’ sorrow; “the trumpet call of God” and Jewish eschatological tradition ; “together with them,” ; “we shall be caught up,” ; word order

Benediction (first letter); concluding with God’s own faithfulness ; directing to the “God of peace,” ; human “body,” ; human “soul,” ; human “spirit,” ; and Paul’s concern for the individual

Benediction (second letter); christological implications; “Lord of peace,” ; “the Lord be with you” (traditional Jewish blessing)

Caligula

Christology, high (first letter): and exhortation concerning day of the Lord and unbelievers; exhortations concerning believers who have died ; prayer report ; praying to God and "God's Son," ; the salutation and the church as "*in* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,"

Christology, high (second letter) ; and authorship issue; the Benediction; the disruptive-idle and the *captatio benevolentiae* ; the "when" of the day of the Lord and concluding prayer

Church leaders, attitudes toward (summary exhortation of first letter); admonition to live in peace with each other; holding in high regard "in love," ; nominal participles identifying leaders by their activities ; "those who admonish you," ; "those who care for you in the Lord," ; "those who work hard among you" (laborers)

Closing Greetings and Final Grace (first letter); asking the believers to pray for their brothers and sisters ; charge that the letter should be read to "all the brothers and sisters," ; Christianized concluding "grace," ; friendship motif; imperative to greet God's people "with a holy kiss," ; Paul's reluctance to conclude the letter; shift from first person plural to singular ; vocative "brothers and sisters,"

Closing Greeting (second letter)

Concluding Grace (first letter)

Concluding Grace (second letter) ; the concluding "you all,"

Conversion of the Thessalonians and Following Christ (first letter's narrative part 1); designation of Christ as "Son" raised from the dead ; as early Gentile converts ; "election," ; encouragement in the midst of suffering/persecution ; the experience of joy and suffering (and the Holy Spirit); imitation motif ; and Paul's Spirit-empowered preaching; phrase "our gospel," ; "power," ; reminder of Paul's teaching/ministry ; reminder of their experience of conversion; reminder that the message of the gospel is *truth* accompanied by experienced reality ; the Thessalonians' following Christ as becoming well known to others; vocative "brothers and sisters," ; "with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction,"

Corinth, city of; Paul's persecution and trials in; Timothy's return to ; and writing of first letter

Cynic philosophers

Daniel, Book of: the “Rebel” (“the man of lawlessness”) of second letter; “son of man” and first letter
Dating of first letter
Dating of second letter
Day of the Lord, the “when” of (second letter); applicability to contemporary church; “as though through us,” ; concept of “good deeds,” ; concluding exhortation ; concluding prayer ; concluding Thanksgiving ; and condemnation ; the content of Paul’s request ; and day/night themes in first letter; difficulties for the reader/interpreter; distinction between God’s love and Christ’s love; and the divine response (God’s activity); encouragement to the Thessalonians ; and “firstfruits,” ; and the “glory” of Jesus Christ; and Greek word “rebellion” *(apostasia)*; the issue presented (and the misinformation); *Kyrios* as Jesus; language of Septuagint; on the love of God; on the misinformation as “deceit,” ; and Paul’s eschatological outlook; and Paul’s high Christology; Paul’s intention to reassure the believers ; the “Rebel” and what is “holding back” his appearance ; the “Rebel” (“man of lawlessness”) and general rebellion ; the “Rebel’s” coming and those who will perish; and Roman Empire context; and Satan’s influence; and signs and wonders of “falsehood” (miracles) ; “Spirit” as “prophetic utterance,” ; teaching the Thessalonians things they already know; “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work,” ; “the mystery of lawlessness” itself ; vocative “brothers and sisters,” ; the way things will be when the Rebel appears (just before the Parousia); what holds back that day; what will precede that day; what will take place on that day; why the believers should not be deceived
Day of the Lord (exhortations of first letter concerning); Christ as *Kyrios* (Lord); contemporary use of; “day of the Lord,” ; “encourage one another” and “build each other up,” ; “for obtaining salvation,” ; God’s destiny to which people are “appointed,” ; and how believers should live in the present; how this passage differs from previous passage; “just in fact as you are doing” (concluding affirmation); language of day/night and awake/sleeping and sobriety /drunkenness; metaphor of soldier outfitted for combat and “hope of salvation,” ; and Old Testament prophetic tradition ; Paul’s efforts to clarify misinformation in second letter; Paul’s high Christology; and the purpose of Christ’s death as “for us,” ; as reassurance that it does not pose threat to them; as reminder about things the Thessalonians already know; and the Thessalonian believers; “thief in

the night” imagery ; “times and seasons,” ; and unbelievers; and the unexpected nature of the Lord’s coming ; the “whether” clauses
Deuteronomy: blessing of Benjamin ; and Paul’s admonitions concerning believers who have died; and prayer report of first letter; *Shema*; Yahweh’s self-revelation to Israel
Disruptive-idle (first letter): how the idle “walk,” ; the imposition on their neighbors; summary exhortation directed toward the *ataktoi*. *See also* Working with one’s hands (exhortations of first letter)
Disruptive-idle (second letter) ; adverb *to loipon* (“finally”) ; affirmation and prayer; affirmation of faithfulness of Christ to protect Paul from the evil one ; always do good (doing the right thing); applicability to multicultural world; *ataktos*; and authorship/forgery theory; the *captatio benevolentiae*; and “Christ’s perseverance,” ; and contemporary churches; deliberate intertextual use of 1 Chronicles ; exhortations directly to; exhortations to the rest (the community of believers); exhortation to imitate Paul (Paul as model) ; God as *theos* and Christ as *Kyrios* ; Greek word *hoti* ; the issue and exhortation repeated ; the issue presented ; language of Septuagint; living or being “in a state of quietness,” ; as not an eschatological exhortation; occasion for the passage ; Paul on own reasons for choosing to work; Paul on working with his hands; Paul’s confidence in his Thessalonian friends; Paul’s high Christology ; Paul’s request for prayer on his behalf; Paul’s surprising command; Paul’s wordplay; *pistis* (“faith”); prayer on behalf of the gospel ; prayer that Paul and his companions be delivered from “wicked and evil people,” ; repetition from first letter; shunning the disobedient ; and the “traditions” Paul already taught the Thessalonians; vocative “brothers and sisters,” ; “the word of the Lord,” ; and “working night and day,” ; and Yahweh’s self-revelation to Israel in Deuteronomy

Egnatian Way
Ekklēsia
Ēpioi (“gentle”) and the “nursing mother” metaphor
Evil: affirmation of faithfulness of Christ to protect Paul from; prayer that Paul and his companions be delivered from; and prophecies
Exhortations by Paul to the Thessalonians (first letter); about believers who have died ; about the day of the Lord (eschatological message); adverb *loipon* (“finally”); avoiding sexual immorality; how these sections differ from what has preceded ; loving others by working with one’s own hands ; and the Thessalonians’ “faith,” ; the verb “entreat,” . *See also* Exhortations (summary) by Paul to the Thessalonians (first letter)
Exhortations (summary) by Paul to the Thessalonians (first letter); to “always rejoice,” ; to “be patient with everyone,” ; concerning attitudes toward church leaders ; concerning Christian prophecy ; contemporary church usage of; to “continually pray,” ; to continue basic Christian piety (as community of believers) ; directed toward the *ataktoi* (idle and disruptive); directed toward “the disheartened,” ; general structural pattern; to “help the weak,” ; to “in all circumstances give thanks,” ; prohibition of not “paying back wrong for wrong,” ; vocative “brothers and sisters,”
Ezekiel and the “Rebel” (“the man of lawlessness”) of second letter

“Faith” of the Thessalonians (and first letter); encouragement *with regard to*/*through*; sending Timothy to find out about; sending Timothy to strengthen ; supplying what is lacking in ; Timothy’s return with message of; “work of faith,”
Falsehood, signs and wonders of
1 Thessalonians (overview): authorship/ writers; city of Corinth ; city of Thessalonica (Saloniki) and its Christian community; concluding matters; contrast to typical threefold salutations of Greco-Roman period letters; dating; Gentile converts; *Kyrios* as Yahweh as Jesus ; *Kyrios* (Christ) ; Paul’s apostolic authority; and Paul’s eschatological outlook ; Paul’s high Christology ; Paul’s reluctance to end the letter; place of writing ; the proposed occasion of the writing; the recipients/ audience; reminders about what the audience has already been taught/ already knows; *Theos* (God); the Thessalonians’ persecution/suffering ; vocative “brothers and sisters,”
Friendship motifs: first letter ; second letter

Glory: of Jesus Christ; and Paul's "hope" for the Thessalonians' presence at the coming of Christ; prayer that Christ himself will be glorified
Grace: concluding (first letter); concluding (second letter); theological meaning for Paul
Greco-Roman world: charismatic nature of earliest Christian communities ; city of Thessalonica (Saloniki) and its history; first letter's contrast to typical threefold salutations of; greetings "with a holy kiss," ; Paul's writing in context of; Roman civil war

Heaven: and the "living who are left," ; the Parousia and Jesus' coming "from,"
Holy Spirit: and "deep conviction" (first letter); and exhortations against sexual immorality; and the experience of joy and suffering; the "gift" of; prayer that God will accomplish these things "with power" (second letter)
Honor/shame-driven cultures and "shunning,"
Hope: "endurance inspired by," ; "hope of salvation," ; Paul's "hope" for Thessalonians' presence at the coming of Christ

Imitation: exhortation to the disruptive-idle to imitate Paul; first letter motif
Isaiah: and first letter; the Parousia and “blazing fire,” ; prayer that Christ himself will be glorified ; and second letter ; sending of Timothy in Paul’s place; verb “pay back,” ; and the “when” of the day of the Lord

Jewish treatment of Paul and the Thessalonians (first letter's narrative part 3); antagonism toward the Gentiles' receiving the gospel ; and early Christian anti-Semitism ; imitation motif ; and Jewish persecution in Judea; the [Judean] Jews and "killing" of Jesus; and Paul's eschatological outlook; Paul's litany against/enumeration of the Jewish community's sins; the persecution of Paul and the Thessalonian believers by; problematic nature of this passage ; "and the prophets," ; restrictive /nonrestrictive participial modifier ; word *ekklēsia*; the "wrath" of God on Jews (God's coming judgment on)

Joy: admonition to "always rejoice," ; the experience of joy and suffering (and the Holy Spirit); and Paul's hope for the Thessalonians' presence at the coming of Christ

Judgment of the Thessalonians' persecutors: and "blazing fire," ; divine justice and "vengeance," ; "everlasting destruction," ; first letter ; hell and eternal judgment ; Jesus accompanied by the "angels of his power," ; Jesus' coming "from heaven," ; and Jews ; later church interpretations ; noun "evidence," ; Paul's description of; Paul's reassurance about God's justice; and the return of Christ (Parousia); second letter; twofold nature of; verb "pay back" from Isaiah ; the "wrath" that is to come

Kyrios (Christ): first letter; second letter

“Lord’s prayer” in Gospel of Matthew

Love: distinction between God’s love and Christ’s love; holding church leaders in high regard “in love,” ; “labor of love,” ; on the love of God; the Thessalonians’ “love” for one another

Macedonia
Messiah

Nēpioi (“infants”) and the nursing mother metaphor “Nursing mother” metaphor (first letter)

Octavian (Augustus)

Parousia (Coming) and first letter: and the “crown of boasting,” ; description of; exhortations concerning believers who have died ; Greek word *parousia* and Paul’s use of; and Paul’s hope for the Thessalonians’ presence at; and Paul’s “joy,” ; prayer report and misunderstandings about the nature of; and the word “glory,”
Parousia (Coming) and second letter: and “blazing fire,” ; divine justice as/and “vengeance,” ; Jesus accompanied by the “angels of his power,” ; Jesus’ coming “from heaven,” ; Old Testament eschatological language; and perseverance in the midst of persecution /suffering; positive dimension of; reassuring the Thessalonian believers that they are among God’s holy people; as “revelation,” ; twofold effects on believers; and the way things will be when the Rebel appears before. *See also* Day of the Lord, the “when” of (second letter)
Patience
Paul, Silas, and Timothy during their absence from Thessalonica (first letter’s narrative part 1); and the “crown of boasting,” ; encouragement *with regard to* their faith/ *through* their faith; friendship motif; identification of Jesus as “Lord,” ; intensity of Paul’s feelings (regarding the separation) ; language of Isaiah; the metaphor of being “orphaned,” ; Paul and Silas thwarted from returning; and Paul in Corinth; and Paul’s commendation of Timothy; Paul’s concern about the Thessalonians’ persecution; Paul’s gratitude and relief; and Paul’s “joy,” ; and possibility of “repayment” of God; the reciprocal longing of Paul and the Thessalonians; the return of Timothy (with message of the Thessalonians’ faith); the rhetorical question about a thanksgiving; the sending of Timothy in Paul’s place; sending Timothy so that the Thessalonians will not be “unsettled” by their trials; sending Timothy to find out about their “faith,” ; sending Timothy to strengthen the Thessalonians’ faith ; supplying what is lacking in the Thessalonians’ faith ; and Thessalonians’ eschatological future (“hope” for their presence at the coming of Christ); the Thessalonians’ hardships and the word of Satan; Timothy’s announcement of the good news ; the vocative “brothers and sisters,” ; and the word “glory,”
Paul’s ministry and conduct in Thessalonica (first letter’s narrative part 2); “but” clauses; calling for the Thessalonians’ perseverance ; calling on the

Thessalonians to recall; connection to prior passage; differentiating from that of itinerant preachers /charlatans; “family of God” metaphor; “God’s gospel,” ; image of *ēpioi* (“gentle”)/*nēpioi* (“infants”); the “not/but” contrasts ; “not” clauses (what his ministry was “not” like); nursing mother metaphor; pastoral care motif (paternal metaphor); and Paul’s apostolic authority ; and Paul’s eschatological intent ; reminders of whence and how Paul and his companions came to the city; repetitions of “God,” ; theocentric nature of the passage; and the Thessalonians’ suffering; value of the passage for the church today; vocative “brothers and sisters,” ; what Paul’s preaching/ministry WAS like; what Paul’s preaching/ ministry was NOT like

Peace: admonition to live in peace with each other; “God of peace” and first letter’s Benediction; “Lord of peace” and second letter’s Benediction; theological meaning for Paul

Persecution and suffering of Paul

Persecution and suffering of the Thessalonians: first letter ; and second letter. *See also* Judgment of the Thessalonians’ persecutors; Thanksgiving and the Thessalonians’ perseverance in the midst of persecution/suffering (second letter)

Philippi, city of

Pistis (“faithfulness”)

Prayer following the Thanksgiving (second letter); Paul and his companions’ constant prayer on behalf of the believers; that Christ himself will be glorified (Septuagint/Isaiah) ; that God may “bring to fruition your every deed prompted by faith,” ; that God may “make you worthy,” ; that God will accomplish these things “with power” (and the Holy Spirit); that God will bring the fulfillment of their desires

Prayer report (first letter); asking that love increase and overflow ; being “blameless in holiness,” ; contemporary appropriation of; God *(theos)*; the “holy ones” (angels); *Kyrios* as Jesus; language of Septuagint (Zechariah); and misunderstandings about the nature of the Parousia; and Paul’s high Christology; praying to God and “God’s Son,” ; and the second letter on the “when” of the day of the Lord; two apparent purposes of the prayer

Prophecy: admonition “Do not despise prophetic utterances,” ; admonition “Do not quench the Spirit,” ; admonition to “test,” ; charismatic nature of earliest Christian communities; and context of city of Thessalonica; earliest mention in New Testament; and “ecstasy” by the unruly-idle; how prophecies should respond to testing; imperative/exhortation regarding; Old Testament prophetic tradition; Paul’s understanding of; reference to “Spirit” as “prophetic utterance,”

Rabbinic training, Paul’s
“Rebellion” *(apostasia)*
“Rebel” (“the man of lawlessness”): “coming” of, and those who will perish ; description and language of Daniel/Ezekiel; and general rebellion; and Satan’s influence on nonbelievers; signs and wonders of “falsehood” (miracles) ; the way things will be when the Rebel appears ; what is “holding back” appearance of; and the “when” of the day of the Lord
Roman civil war (42 BCE)
Roman Empire. *See* Greco-Roman world

Salutation (first letter); and Christ as “Lord,” ; the church as *ekklēsia*; the church as “*in* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” ; the church as “*of* the Thessalonians,” ; comparing to other letters in the corpus; differences from second letter’s salutation ; and God as “Father,” ; the greeting (grace and peace); and Paul’s high Christology; the recipients/audience; the writer(s)
Salutation (second letter); addition of the “our” with “Father,” ; differences from first letter’s salutation ; and Paul’s apostolic authority; the source of grace as from “God the Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ,” ; the three writers and use of first person plural
Salvation: and concluding Thanksgiving of second letter; and day of the Lord (eschatological message) of first letter; “for obtaining salvation,” ; “hope of,” ; the word “salvation” in the Pauline corpus 2 Thessalonians (overview): concluding matters; dating; and the first letter ; introduction; issue of the disruptive-idle ; issue of perseverance in the midst of persecution/suffering; issue of the “when” of the day of the Lord ; occasion for writing ; and Paul’s apostolic authority ; and Paul’s eschatological outlook ; Paul’s high Christology ; teaching the Thessalonians things they already know ; the thanksgivings in both letters; use of *kyrios* to refer to Christ; use of *pistis* to refer to someone’s “faithfulness,” ; use of *theos* for God ; vocative *adelphoi* (“brothers and sisters”)
Septuagint and first letter: and evil; and exhortations concerning believers who have died; and Gentile converts to Christianity; *Kyrios* as Yahweh/Jesus; prayer report and use of Zechariah
Septuagint and second letter: the Benediction and traditional Jewish blessing ; “blazing fire” (Jewish apocalyptic) ; blessing of Benjamin in Deuteronomy; the *captatio benevolentiae* and issue of disruptive-idle ; Isaiah ; prayer that Christ himself will be glorified; Psalms; the return of Christ (Parousia/Coming) ; verb “pay back,” ; and the “when” of the day of the Lord ; Yahweh’s self-revelation to Israel
Sexual immorality (exhortations of first letter concerning); disobedience and “wronging,” ; and “God’s will” defined as “holiness/ sanctification,” ; and the Holy Spirit; and “knowledge of God,” ; the Lord as Jesus; reminder to the Thessalonians that they were to “live in holiness,” ; reminder to the Thessalonians that to reject the teaching is to reject God ; the sexual immorality of the pagans ; use of this passage by historic “holiness” groups (and meaning

for the present day); and “vessel,”
Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4
“Shunning” the disruptive-idle
Signs and wonders of “falsehood” (miracles)
Silas: issue of role/non-role in writing the letters; Latin name *Silvanus* (Silas); thwarted from returning to Thessalonica; and writing of first letter. *See also* Paul, Silas, and Timothy during their absence from Thessalonica (first letter’s narrative part 1)
Skeuos (“vessel”)
Strabo

Thanksgiving and the Thessalonians’ perseverance in the midst of persecution /suffering (second letter): emphasis on the obligatory nature of thanksgiving; judgment of the persecutors and salvation for God’s people; *Kyrios* as Jesus Christ; Old Testament eschatological language ; Paul’s boasts about the Thessalonians to other churches; Paul’s expression of gratitude to God; the present “kingdom of God” and present suffering for the sake of; reassuring the Thessalonians about God’s justice ; reassuring the Thessalonians that they are among God’s holy people ; and return of Christ (Parousia/ Coming); the Thanksgiving for perseverance in suffering ; the Thessalonians’ “faith,” ; the Thessalonians’ “love” for one another; twofold nature of judgment; unique features of the Thanksgiving; verb “pay back,” ; vocative “brothers and sisters,” . *See also* Judgment of the Thessalonians’ persecutors
Thanksgiving (first) (first letter); adverb “continually,” ; “all for you” (the *ekklēsia*/community of believers); Christ as “Lord,” ; “endurance inspired by hope,” ; and evidential aspects of the Thessalonians’ election/conversion ; first clause; God as “Father,” ; “labor of love,” ; and Paul’s gratitude to God; phrases making up divine triad of faith, hope, and love; second participial clause; sentence structure; turning into narrative with prayer report at end; “work of faith,”
Thanksgiving (renewed) (first letter); emphasizing the believers’ original reception of the gospel; and eschatological outlook; the final “who” (the Word of God); “for this reason,” ; theme of “telling them the gospel,”
Theos (God) and first letter *Theos* (God) and second letter
Thessalonica (Saloniki), city of; ethnicities; founding of the church in the Jewish synagogue; Gentile converts; geography and strategic location; Greco-Roman history; length of the missionaries’ stay in
Timothy: announcement of the good news; Paul’s commendation of; relationship

with Paul and Silas on missionary tour; return to Corinth; return to Thessalonica (with message of Thessalonians' faith); sending to Thessalonica in Paul's place; and writing of first letter. *See also* Paul, Silas, and Timothy during their absence from Thessalonica (first letter's narrative part 1) "Vessel," ; as euphemism for male sexual organ; Greek *skeuos*; as metaphor for body ; as metaphor for wife
Vocative "brothers and sisters" and first letter: closing greetings and final grace; exhortation for working with one's hands; how the missionaries have handled their absence from the city; and Paul's preaching/ministry; reminding the Thessalonians of their experience of conversion; and summary exhortations
Vocative "brothers and sisters" and second letter: issue of the disruptive-idle ; refuting arguments of forgery ; and the thanksgiving for perseverance in the midst of suffering ; the "when" of the day of the Lord

Working with one's hands (exhortations of first letter); admonition to lead a quiet life and work with one's hands; determining who is addressed; and exhortation to the disruptive-idle in second letter; how the idle "walk," ; the imposition of the idle on their neighbors; the opening *captatio benevolentiae*; understanding this passage today; vocative "brothers and sisters," ; the word *philadelphia*. *See also* Disruptive-idle (first letter)

Zechariah

INDEX OF BIBLICAL AND OTHER ANCIENT REFERENCES

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis

3:13
12:3
15:15

Exodus

2:11
33:18
40:35

Numbers

11:12
14:21

Deuteronomy

5:3
6:4
7:7-8
7:9
9:13
18:21-22
32:4
33:12

Joshua

22:22

Judges

6:12

Ruth

2:4

1 Samuel

17:39

2 Samuel

7:12
18:19

1 Kings

2:10
8:11
11:43
22:50

1 Chronicles

29:18

2 Chronicles

12:14
19:3
29:19

Nehemiah

13:20

Job

14:12

Psalms

13:3
22:23
32:6
68:35
89:7
89:22
110:1
145:13
147:5

Proverbs

16:31

Isaiah

2:2-4
2:10

11:4
11:10
19:18-25
25:4
25:6-9
42:8
45:23
48:11
49:4
49:7
57:4
57:8
59:13
59:17
60:6
65:17-25
65:23
66:4-6
66:4
66:5
66:7
66:15

Jeremiah

2:5
6:4-5
6:14
6:24
6:26
9:23-24
10:10
11:20

20:12

Ezekiel

16:12
28:2

Daniel

5:23
7:13
8:23
11:36

Hosea

2:1

Joel

2:28-30
2:32
3:18

Amos

5:18
8:3
8:9

Obadiah

15-17

Micah

3:8

Zechariah

7:9
14

APOCRYPHA AND PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

2 Baruch

78:2

Bel and the Dragon

Bel 5

2 Esdras

2:41
4:36-37

1 Maccabees

2:15
3:30

2 Maccabees

6:14-15

Sirach

18:1
23:16
24:2

Testament of Levi

6:11

Wisdom of Solomon

12:27

OTHER EXTRABIBLICAL LITERATURE

Aboth
2:2
4:5

Josephus

War.595

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew

5:38-42
8:12
9:15
9:24
10:1-2
12:49-50
13:38
22:6
23:33-36
24:3
24:24
24:27
24:37
24:39

Mark

3:34-35
3:34
4:26
12:30

13:32

Luke

1:28
3:11
5:34
6:13
8:13
8:20
11:45
12:39
14:19
18:32
21:34
23:41

John

7:18
8:26
17:12

Acts

2:22
4:11
5:41

7:60
9:27-28
13:16-47
13:46
14:3
14:5
14:15
15:22-32
15:23-29
15:23
15:29
15:40-18:10
16:1-5
16:16-37
17
17:1-10
17:1-9
17:1-7
17:1-6
17:4
17:5-10
17:6
17:10
17:14
18:1-18
18:5
18:11
18:12
19:8
20:26
21:1-16
25:5
26:22
26:26

Romans

1:3-4
1:8
1:9
1:11
1:11
1:16
1:18-3:20
1:18
1:24
1:25
2:5
3:7
3:30
4:16
4:24
5:1-8
5:1-5
5:3-5
5:3
5:6
5:8
5:13
6:4
6:19
7:3
7:25
8:3
8:9
8:11
8:12
8:17
8:23

8:26-27
8:29-30
8:32
8:35
9-11
9:5
9:11
9:16
9:18
9:26
10:9
10:16
11:1
11:5
11:16
11:17
11:28
12:6
12:8
12:10
12:17-19
12:17
13:3
13:11-12
13:11
13:12
14:12
14:14
14:15
14:17
14:19
14:29
15:6
15:8
15:13
15:18-19

15:19
15:33
16:2
16:3-16
16:5
16:7
16:12
16:13
16:17-19
16:17-18
16:22
16:25

1 Corinthians

1:4
1:5
1:7-8
1:7
1:8
1:9
1:24
1:26
1:29-31
2:1-5
2:4-5
2:4
2:8
2:11
3:1-2
3:8
3:9
3:13

4:7
4:12
4:14
4:16
4:17
4:19
5:1-13
5:5
6:9
6:12-20
6:14
7:5
7:10
8:1
8:5
8:6
8:9
8:10
9:1
9:4-12
9:12
10:13
10:23
11:1
11:5
11:17
11:23
11:26
12-14
12:3
12:7
12:10
12:28-29
13:2
13:7
13:8

13:11
13:12
13:13
14:1-19
14:1
14:3
14:4
14:6
14:15
14:17
14:20-25
14:20
14:22
15:3
15:5
15:7-8
15:10
15:15
15:20
15:23-28
15:23
15:33
15:51
15:58
16:3
16:12
16:13-18
16:13-14
16:15-18
16:15
16:16
16:17
16:22

2 Corinthians

1:1
1:3
1:10-11
1:14
1:18
1:19
2:11
3:9
3:18
4:1
4:4
5:3
5:14
5:19
7:6
8:2
8:21
8:23
9:8
10-13
10:14
10:15
11:21
11:22-29
11:27
12:7
12:10
12:12
12:14
12:21
13:7
13:10

13:11
13:12

Galatians

1:1
1:2
1:6
1:8-12
1:9
1:10-13
1:10
1:14
1:15-16
1:22
1:23
2:2
2:4
2:5
2:5
2:6
2:10
2:14
2:20
3:1-6
3:1-6
3:1-5
3:14
3:22-25
4:4-7
4:4-6
4:4-5
4:4

4:11
4:14
4:16
4:19
5:3
5:5-6
5:10
5:13
5:14
5:19
5:22
6:6
6:7
6:9-10
6:10

Ephesians

1:3
1:3
1:13
1:14
1:18-19
1:20
2:2-3
2:10
2:13-14
2:19
3:19
4:2-5
4:17
4:19
4:21

4:28
4:29
4:31-32
5:2
5:3
5:6
6:18
6:23

Philippians

1:1
1:3-4
1:3
1:4
1:6
1:9-11
1:10
1:11
1:14
1:23
1:29
1:30
2:2
2:9-10
2:10
2:11
2:16
2:24
2:25
3:5
3:17
4:4

4:6
4:9
4:10-20
4:13-19
4:15
4:16
4:21

Colossians

1:1
1:3
1:4-5
1:5
1:9-11
1:10-13
1:10
1:12-15
1:13-17
1:13
1:27
1:29
2:1
2:4
2:8
2:12
3:5
3:6
3:12
4:1

1 Thessalonians

1:1
1:2
1:2-5
1:2-4
1:2-3
1:3
1:4-2:12
1:4-10
1:4-6
1:4-5
1:4
1:5-2:12
1:5-10
1:5-6
1:5
1:6-10
1:6-7
1:6
1:7-2:12
1:7-10
1:7
1:8
1:9-10
1:9
1:10
2:1-12
2:1-6
2:1-2
2:1
2:2-6
2:2-5
2:2

2:4
2:5-6
2:5
2:6
2:7-12
2:7-8
2:7
2:8-9
2:8
2:9-12
2:9-10
2:9
2:10
2:11-12
2:11
2:12
2:13-16
2:13-14
2:13
2:14-3:10
2:14-16
2:14-15
2:14
2:15-16
2:15
2:16
2:17-3:10
2:17-3:5
2:17-20
2:17
2:18
2:19-20
2:19
3:1-10
3:1-5
3:1-2

3:1
3:2-5
3:2-4
3:2-3
3:2
3:3-4
3:3
3:4
3:5
3:6-10
3:6-8
3:6
3:8
3:9-10
3:10
3:11-13
3:11
3:12-13
3:12
3:13
4:1-5:10
4:1-2
4:1
4:2
4:3-8
4:3
4:5
4:7
4:8
4:9-12
4:9-11
4:9
4:10-12
4:10
4:11-12
4:11

4:13-18
4:13-17
4:14-15
4:16-17
4:16
4:15
4:17
4:18
5:1-11
5:1-10
5:1
5:2
5:4-11
5:6
5:8-9
5:8
5:9-10
5:9
5:11
5:14
5:15
5:16-22
5:16-18
5:16
5:17
5:19-22
5:19-20
5:19
5:23
5:24
5:27

2 Thessalonians

1:1
1:2
1:3
1:4
1:5-10
1:5
1:6-10
1:7-10
1:7
1:8
1:10
1:11-12
1:12
2:1-17
2:1-12
2:1-2
2:1
2:2
2:3
2:5-6
2:5
2:8
2:9
2:11-12
2:11
2:13-17
2:13-15
2:13
2:14
2:15
2:16-17
2:16
2:17
3:1-5
3:2

3:3
3:4
3:5
3:6-15
3:6-13
3:6
3:7-10
3:7
3:8-9
3:8
3:9
3:10
3:11-12
3:12
3:15
3:16
3:17-18
3:17

Philemon

1
4
15

1 Timothy

1:2
1:18
3:3

3:5
3:12
4:1
4:3
4:10
4:12
4:14
5:10
5:27
6:14

2 Timothy

1:2
1:6-7
2:1
2:4
2:10
2:21
2:24
3:11
3:13
3:17
4:1
4:8
4:18

Titus

1:1
1:16

2:7
2:13
3:1
3:8
3:14

Hebrews

3:12
6:10-12
9:14
10:31

1 Peter

1:6
1:21
1:23
5:12

2 Peter

3:4
3:10

James

1:1
1:2
5:7-8

1 John

2:18
2:22
4:3

2 John

7

Revelation

2:2
3:3
7:2
6:11
15:7
16:5
21:3

1

I will also here assume the historical tradition to have it right that the numbers before each letter represent their proper chronological order; the one commentator who thinks otherwise (C. A. Wanamaker) has found few followers — for good reasons, I am convinced.

2

This assumes, contrary to a large body of evangelical scholars, that Galatians is not Paul's first letter, but was written after 2 Corinthians and before Romans. See the Introduction to my *Galatians: A Pentecostal Commentary* (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2007), 4-5.

3

The outside chronological "peg" for all of this calculation is the reference in Acts 18:12 to Paul's appearing before Gallio, whose tenure in Corinth can be accurately dated either 51-52 or 52-53 CE.

4

See esp. 2 Thess 2:5, where Paul's "Don't you remember that I used to tell you these things?" implies teaching on certain aspects of Christian eschatology that would seem to require more time than just two weeks.

5

For helpful studies of letter writing in the Greco-Roman period, see J. L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (FFNT; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), whose analysis is based on the Greek papyri, and S. K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (LEC 5; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), who throws the net more widely. Either (or both) of these is essential reading for the serious exegesis of one of the NT letters. Along with the useful collection of such letters in Stowers and White, see also A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar, eds., *Select Papyri I* (LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932), for further examples from the Greek papyri.

6

All the true "letters" in the NT follow this pattern (including the letter from James in Acts 15:23-29), except for 3 John, which lacks the standard greeting. For a collection of examples from the papyri, see F. X. J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter of the Epistolary Papyri (3rd c. B.C.-3rd c. A.D.)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923), 23-68; for a further collection and detailed study, see F. Schnider and W. Stenger, *Studien zum neutestamentlichen Briefformular* (NTTS 11; Leiden: Brill, 1987).

7

Noticeably absent in Galatians, 1 Timothy, and Titus.

8

See 1 Thess 3:11-13 and 2 Thess 1:11-12; cf. Col 1:9-11 and Phil 1:9-11.

9

For the judgment that this is Paul's first extant letter, see the Introduction to my commentary on Galatians (*Galatians: [A] Pentecostal Commentary* [Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2007], 4-5); cf. the present Introduction, pp. 4-5.

10

While this has always been true for this letter (cf. any two commentaries from an earlier period), it has become even more so for 1 Thessalonians with the advent of rhetorical analyses.

11

This would be true, it should be noted, even if we did not have Paul's later letters with which to compare this one. Whatever else, Paul is here breaking every known mold regarding letter writing, including — to use an anachronism — his own habits that begin in 2 Thessalonians and basically carry on thereafter.

12

This view is rejected by G. Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding* (SBLDS 73; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 177-201, in an argument that I find not wholly convincing. Part of his reason for rejection is the failure of scholarship to establish a polemical context for the letter, which assumes some opposition to Paul in the church community. On this matter I quite agree; but the opposition is not against Paul — and therefore *within* the Christian community — but most likely is pagan opposition to the Thessalonian believers (as 2:14-16 suggests), and Paul's role in their conversion is very likely a part of that opposition.

13

That the situation in Thessalonica may well be related to the charge against Paul in Acts 17:7 has been suggested by E. A. Judge, "The Decrees of Caesar at Thessalonica," *RTR* 30 (1971), 1-7; cf. K. P. Donfried, "The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence," *NTS* 31 (1985), 342-52; and Wanamaker, 113-14.

14

This assumes that the picture in Acts 17:1-10 is a generally accurate one. Several matters join to give credence to that account: Paul's obvious anxiety over their welfare, which had led to repeated attempts to return (2:18), to Timothy's being sent in his

15

Greek *Silvanus*, a variant of *Silas*

16

Some early manuscripts *you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*

place (3:1-2), and finally to his great relief in finding out that they were in fact persevering in their faith (3:6-8). It also seems to be corroborated by the need to defend his ministry among them (2:1-12; anticipated in the present passage [vv. 5-6, 9]), since the (probably Greek) persecutors of these new believers most likely knew of his sudden departure in the dead of night — from their point of view to "protect his own skin."

17

See esp. 2:17-3:10, where his concern over their faith(fulness) is almost certainly the basic reason for his trying over and again to return (2:18) and his sending Timothy instead (3:1-2). Note also his genuine relief that they are in fact standing fast in their faith (3:8), yet his awareness that there are "deficiencies" (3:10).

18

There is no definite article in the Greek text, which causes the secondary ἡμῶν ("our") to appear early on and eventually to become the Majority Text — influenced by the more standard form found elsewhere in Paul.

19

Although the addition found in the TNIV note is found as early as (4th c.), and becomes the standard in the later manuscript tradition, it is secondary on every count: (1) it is missing in all the earliest and best evidence across the board, both East and West; (2) these words are found in 2 Thessalonians in all known manuscripts without variation; thus (3) there is no way to account for such an early and widespread "omission" in this letter alone in the Pauline corpus.

20

He does so in seven letters in the corpus: 1 and 2 Thessalonians (Timothy and Silas), 1 Corinthians (Sosthenes), 2 Corinthians (Timothy), Colossians (Timothy), Philemon (Timothy), and Philippians (Timothy). There are no known *examples* outside the Pauline corpus. The only known *reference* to co-authorship is in Cicero, *Att.* 11.15.1: "For my part I have gathered from your letters — both that which you wrote in conjunction with others and the one you wrote in your own name . . ." (LCL 2:363). See the discussion in G. J. Bahr, "Paul and Letter Writing in the First Century," *CBQ* 28 (1966), 465-77.

21

Otherwise he designates himself an "apostle" or "prisoner" (Philemon); he includes his companion (Timothy) in the designation only once (Philippians), where he calls the two of them "servants of Christ Jesus."

22

In one of the truly idiosyncratic moments in NT scholarship, M. D. Goulder ("Silas in Thessalonica," *JSNT* 48 [1992], 87-106) suggests that Silas actually

became Paul's opponent and is responsible for the "false teachings" circulating in Thessalonica.

23

Although one cannot be certain, he is very likely the Silvanus/Silas who was responsible for the actual writing of 1 Peter (1 Pet 5:12; lit. "*through* Silvanus I have written briefly"), which was written from Rome.

24

On this issue for these two letters see, further, S. Byrskog, "Co-senders, Co-authors and Paul's Use of the First Person Plural," *ZNW* 87 (1996), 230-50. Cf. also J. C. M. Laurent, "Der *Pluralis maiestaticus* in den Thessalonicherbriefen," *STK* 41 (1868), 159-66; and W. F. Lofthouse, " 'I' and 'We' in the Pauline Letters," *BT* 6 (1955), 72-80.

25

Because Paul clearly took the lead (cf. 2:18 and 2 Thess 3:17), for the sake of convenience, and because he is almost certainly responsible for the primary dictation of it, I will throughout this commentary regularly designate Paul as the "writer," always meaning, of course, in the qualified sense discussed here.

26

For a useful discussion of this phrase, see R. F. Collins, *Studies in the First Letter to the Thessalonians* (BETL 66; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), 285-97.

27

On this see BDAG 2.

28

The myth that because its origins centuries earlier was a combination of the Greek ἐκ ("out") and καλέω ("call"), so that Christians are "the called out ones," should be laid to rest. The word was already in use by the time of Paul, both in the Greek world and in the Greek Bible, and had nothing to do with being "called out." It simply meant "an assembly." See my *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (3rd ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 79-80.

29

See further on 2:14, where the plural is used to designate the many communities of believers in the province of Judea; cf. Gal 1:2.

30

On the sociological question of the early churches as a religious "society" in the Greco-Roman world, see esp. W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 74-80; J. E. Stambaugh and D. L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social*

Environment (LEC; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 124-26, 140-41; and E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 131-36.

31

This has recently been called into question; for a brief rebuttal see G. D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 20-25.

32

In fact this phenomenon occurs only in these two instances out of 62 occurrences of the word ἐκκλησία in the Pauline corpus.

33

In Col 3:3, Paul does speak of believers as "having died," and their present life as now "hidden *with* Christ *in* God"; but that is quite different from this usage, which hereafter is "in Christ (Jesus)." For this reason, Best (62) sees the present usage as primarily instrumental ("salvation lies in what God accomplished" through Christ); but that is especially unlikely here. See 2:14 below.

34

See Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 36-38.

35

See esp. 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31; Gal 4:4-6; Rom 15:6; Eph 1:3.

36

That is, by the first Christian century the divine name (Yahweh) was no longer pronounced and had been replaced orally with *Adonai* ("Lord"), which then appeared at some early point in time in the Septuagint as κύριος. The LXX of Deut 6:4 thus reads: κύριος (Yahweh) ὁ θεὸς ἡμων κύριος (Yahweh) ες ἐστιν. What Paul has done in 1 Cor 8:6 is to attribute the κύριος to Christ the Son and the θεός to God the Father. See the full discussion in *Pauline Christology,* 89-94.

37

And all of this, it should be pointed out, because such an understanding of Psalm 110:1 was already common stock in the early church. It will also be pointed out how throughout these two letters the designation κύριος ("Lord") has become the exclusive designation for the exalted Jesus Christ, so that Christ is understood as the "Lord" in all of the OT echoes where that title occurs. See below on 3:12.

38

R. F. Collins (*Studies,* 139-40) argues (unconvincingly) that Paul has here taken over an earlier formula and adapted it to his own purposes. While all things are possible, not all possible things are equally probable. Indeed, it is of considerable interest that the most creative theologian in the early church is seen

as not capable of being creative at points like this, but must be assumed to be borrowing from others — and that without evidence. See further n. 74 on 1:9-10 below.

39

Gk. εἰρήνη; on this word see V. Hasler, *EDNT,* 1:394-97; and H. Beck and C. Brown, *NIDNTT,* 2:780-82. It is just possible that, since this Hebrew word had connotations of "well-being" inherent to it, Paul is here using this Jewish greeting as an equivalent of the "health wish" found in many of the papyrus letters; but one should perhaps also remember that the English "hello" is derived from "health to you"! Whether the greeting "shalom" carried with it a wish for health by the time of Paul seems moot, though possible.

40

At the same time, he may also be modifying a Jewish blessing formula (ἔλεος καὶ εἰρήνη, "mercy and peace") found, e.g., in *2 Bar.* 78:2 and echoed (in reverse order) in Gal 6:16. This cannot be demonstrated, of course, since Paul could very easily have made his theological point by adopting the blessing without modification. More likely the blessing formula lies in the background, but the modification is the result of his being a man of two worlds, as suggested here.

41

It should perhaps be noted that one cannot be sure that Paul himself is responsible for this "transformation into gospel" of traditional formulas. But his is the earliest evidence for it, and it is quite in keeping with what he does elsewhere.

42

Thus the letter also signs off with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

43

In Paul "peace" can refer in turn to (1) peace with God (= cessation of hostilities), (2) peace within the believing community, (3) inner peace in place of turmoil, and (4) rest or order within a context of worship. Other commentaries express more confidence than I could muster that one can isolate any of these nuances in the Pauline salutations. In the context of greetings to a community it at least includes (1) and (2), and perhaps (3).

44

On the probable eschatological dimension of this word in Paul, see C. H. Giblin, *In Hope of God's Glory: Pauline Theological Perspectives* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 96.

45

On this matter see P. Schubert, *Form and Function in the Pauline Thanksgivings*

(BZNW 20; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939), whose interests were, as the title indicates, on form and function; and P. T. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* (NovTSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977), whose discussion of this thanksgiving appears on pp. 141-66.

46

For this reason, both Schubert and O'Brien (preceding note) are prepared to argue that the thanksgiving itself extends through 3:10. In this they are followed by Malherbe and Beale, but this seems to be a clear case where "form" and "function" are at odds. Although structurally the fact that the prayer report begins in 3:11 could mean that the thanksgiving ends at 3:10, in fact the narrative of Paul's and their past relationship (1:5-2:12; 2:17-3:10) has very little to do with thanksgiving for them and everything to do with a narrative relating his own past relationship with them. What stands against such a view are the double realities that *(a)* Paul himself in 2:13-14 picks up the lost thread and thus repeats himself, including the theme of *imitatio;* and that *(b)* all the rest (1:4-2:12; 2:17-3:10) is an extended, consecutive narrative regarding his and their past relationships, right up to the time of this writing — which is not the stuff of thanksgivings. Others see the thanksgiving as extending through 1:10 (e.g., Findlay, Best, Bruce, Marshall, Richard, and Green), while Holmes takes it as going through v. 6. One can at least justify these latter on the basis of grammar; but in terms of content vv. 5-10 move far beyond thanksgiving to narrative as such.

47

And this is so, despite those who would perceive rhetorical features here as well (e.g., Wanamaker, Witherington; R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986]). If this is a rhetorical device, it is so by fiat, not because there is any analogy to it in the rhetoricians. For a critique of the contemporary enamorment with Greek rhetoric on the part of many NT scholars, see P. H. Kern, *Rhetoric and Galatians: Assessing an Approach to Paul's Epistle* (SNTSMS 101; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

48

See, among others, the KJV, NIV, NASB, NAB, JB, NRSV, REB; cf. Ellicott, Lightfoot, Findlay, Frame, von Dobschütz, Holtzmann, Bruce, Holmes, Green, Beale; O'Brien, *Thanksgivings.* Among those who take it with μνείαν ποιούμενοι ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν ἡμῶν ("mentioning you in our prayers"), as the TNIV; see RSV, NEB, GNB, NET, ESV, NLT, NJB; cf. Milligan, Moffatt, Rigaux, Best, Wanamaker, Morris, Richard, Malherbe. Marshall and Witherington are ambivalent.

49
Three times in this letter (here; 2:13; 5:17) and once in Romans (1:9). The word order in the next occurrence (2:13) would seem to be decisive (εὐχαριστου͵μεν τῳ͵ θεῳ͵ ἀδιαλείπτως). For those who are troubled by the "distance from the verb," see 1 Cor 15:58 (περισσεύοντες ἐν τῳ͵ ἔργῳ του͵ θεου͵ πάντοτε).

50
On the significance of this designation in the present letter, see the discussion of vocative ἀδελφοί ("brothers and sisters") in its first occurrence in 2:1 below.

51
Indeed, this is a place where so-called "literal" translations (e.g., KJV, ASV, NASU), by keeping Paul's word order intact, create considerable difficulty for the reader. Thus the NASU has it, ". . . steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father." The KJV and ASV at least tried to alleviate some of the difficulty by placing a comma after "Christ." The ESV, on the other hand, follows the RSV and most other contemporary translations by changing the word order in the same way as the T/NIV.

52
See, e.g., 2 Thess 2:17, where most English translations recognize that the "every" connected to "deed" and "good" connected to "word" go with both nouns ("every good deed and word").

53
They are best known from their next occurrence, in 1 Cor 13:13, where the order "faith, hope, love" is conditioned by that context; thereafter they occur in a variety of ways and contexts (Gal 5:5-6; Rom 5:1-5; Col 1:4-5; Eph 4:2-5). Outside Paul see 1 Pet 1:21-22 and Heb 6:10-12. Because of the latter two instances, A. M. Hunter (*Paul and His Predecessors* [2nd ed.; London: SCM, 1961], 33-35) argued that the phrases reflect a pre-Pauline formula that may go back to Jesus himself. For a full discussion of the triad in this letter see W. Weiss, "Glaube — Liebe — Hoffnung: Zu der Trias bei Paulus," *ZNW* 84 (1993), 196-217, who also tends to find them where they are not.

54
One should also note, whether intended by Paul or not, that in the case of both sets of nouns, there is an ascending order. One's life in Christ begins with "faith," manifests itself in "love," and lives in expectant "hope" of the future consummation. Thus faith "works," while love "toils," and hope "endures" (cf. Rev 2:2, regarding the church in Ephesus); on the latter three cf. Lightfoot, 11.

55
Although the second word (κόπος) leans heavily toward the "toiling" nature of work, it can also be used in some instances almost interchangeably with ἔργον,

the catchall word for “work, deeds, actions” of all kinds. Thus in Rom 16:5, Mary πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν εἰς ὑμᾶς (“worked very hard for you”), apparently referring to manual toil of some kind, while in v. 12, three women (Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis) ἐκοπιάσεν ἐν κυρίῳ (“worked hard in the Lord”), apparently referring to “doing the gospel” in some form or another (the ἔργον word group does not appear at all in Romans 16). Apart from the use in v. 5 Paul rarely uses the κόπος word group for work in general, and of all kinds, for which he ordinarily uses the ἔργον word group, especially for “doing the law,” or “doing good” in general. The fine distinction between the two words can perhaps best be seen in Paul’s use of them in 1 Corinthians 15:58: περισσεύοντες ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ τοῦ κυρίου πάντοτε, εἰδότες ὅτι ὁ κόπος ὑμῶν οὐκ ἔστιν κενὸς ἐν κυρίῳ (“always abounding in the ‘work’ of the Lord, knowing that your ‘labor’ is not in vain in the Lord”).

56

See, e.g., 1 Cor 1:5, “you have been enriched with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge” (TNIV), in light of chs. 8 and 12; cf. Phil 1:4, “for your partnership in the gospel,” in light of 4:10-20.

57

See, e.g., NJB, REB, GNB, and the note in NET (“These phrases denote Christian virtues in action: the work produced by faith, labor motivated by love, and endurance that stems from hope in Christ”). Cf. Lightfoot (10), who renders the phrases, “the work that comes of faith, the labour which springs from love, the patience that is born of hope”; cf. Milligan, 6; Frame, 76.

58

Although it should be pointed out that not all think so. BDAG (κόπος 2) suggests that they are descriptive/adjectival; thus “faithful work, loving deeds, hopeful endurance” (cf. NLT); but such a rendering is to lose sight of the uniquely Christian triad altogether.

59

In this regard see esp. 5:6 (what counts is “faith that ‘works’ through love”) and 6:9-10. One is not saved by “doing what is good,” but truly “saved” people will express their salvation through the fruit of the Spirit.

60

Collins (*Studies,* 212-13) would see the phrase as referring to “active faith”; but that seems to miss Paul considerably, esp. in light of the next phrase (“working love”?), not to mention Pauline usage elsewhere. Similarly, Best’s rendition (68), “achievement of faith,” seems to put the emphasis altogether in the wrong place.

61

And even in these letters it is not so narrowly constricted as some expressions of

Protestantism would have it; note, e.g., Paul's phrase "he is now preaching *the faith* he once tried to destroy" in Gal 1:23, where "the faith" is nearly equivalent to the gospel, just as its several occurrences in 3:1-10 in the present letter border very much on the sense of "faithfulness." See further the discussion by Collins, "The Faith of the Thessalonians," in *Studies*, 209-29.

62

The exceptions are rare. Frame (76) notes both possibilities, but considers the one option to mean "manual labour necessary to support missionary propaganda," rather than love within the Christian community that causes one to "work with one's own hands" and thus does not lean on the largesse of others for food; but in the end he leaves the decision itself open-ended (similarly Best, 67). Witherington (59) hints at the possibility argued for here, but without specific application.

63

Similarly, in the first of the next series of letters, Paul also reminds the Corinthians that "up to this very hour we labor *(kopiōmen)*, working *(ergazomenoi)* with our own hands" (1 Cor 4:12).

64

For the first two participles ("mentioning" and "remembering"), see pp. 20-21 above.

65

There have been occasional objections to the language of "conversion" regarding people becoming followers of Christ in the Pauline churches, since many of the original "converts" would have been attending the Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica and became followers of Christ from within that context. Moreover, in contemporary English "conversion" is often related to an "experience" of some kind. But in this case this seems to be exactly what Paul is narrating — their "experience" of conversion, given that it was accompanied by a powerful working of the Holy Spirit (vv. 4-6). Thus "conversion" seems to be the only proper language for what happened to these early believers; after all, it is the very experiential nature of it to which Paul here appeals!

66

At least that is what appears to have happened. The difficulties one has in isolating the "parts" of this opening passage are evidenced by both the NA27 and UBS4 Greek New Testaments, both of which have the same text, but are formatted somewhat differently. The UBS4 was designed for translators, and thus appears with "headings" — of a kind also found in the T/NIV. Thus they have "headings" at 1:3 ("The Thessalonians' Faith and Example") and 2:1 ("Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica"). Although these do tend to capture the

essence of each section, the headings themselves and the choice not to include the explanatory γάρ (“for”) in 2:1 set the reader up for a major break at 2:1, which is quite unjustifiable in light of Paul’s own usage and the pickup of the three key words from vv. 9-10 (see the introduction to 2:1-12 below).

67

One (pious?) scribe (C) changed Paul’s “our” to “God’s,” while the original scribe ofsimply added the word θεου. (thus “the gospel of our God”).

68

The TNIV here (correctly) follows B 33 r vgmss, which do not have the ἐν before πληροφορίᾳ; see the discussion below; cf. the judgment of H. Koester, “The Text of First Thessalonians,” in *The Living Text: Essays in Honor of Ernest W. Saunders* (ed. D. E. Groh and R. Jewett; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985), 219-27.

69

The TNIV here reflects the text of UBS^4, which reads ἐν ὑμῖν with B D F G Ψ 0278 it; all of B’s close companions (A C 33 1739) and others (P 048 81 104 1881 pc) do not have the ἐν, thus reading “we came *to* you.” The error is most likely a case of either haplography (so Best, 76) or dittography related to the ending of the immediately preceding verb ἐγενήθημεν. If the change was deliberate, then a good case can be made for either reading. In *GEP* I argued for the shorter reading as original; but now I am less sure. At issue is why a scribe (or scribes) would have deliberately changed either reading, since one can make perfectly good sense of either of them. At issue, then, is whether the Thessalonians are being reminded of Paul’s and his companions’ *relationship toward* (or *before;* so Frame) them; or of the apostles’ *conduct while among* them. The argument of 2:1-12, which emphasizes Paul’s *relationship* with the Thessalonians while there, would seem to favor the former reading (contra Koester, “Text,” 223).

70

Codex Vaticanus (B) and some Vulgate MSS add a καί (“and”) between “joy” and “Holy Spirit,” thus producing a text that translates “with joy *and* the Holy Spirit.” This looks like a mistaken understanding of Paul’s view of the relationship of joy to the Holy Spirit.

71

The singular τύπον, read by the best MSS from both Egypt and the West (B D 6 33 81 104 1739 1881 pc lat), is much to be preferred to the plural found in the Majority Text ( ) . Paul is thinking of the church collectively, not of believers individually.

72

That is, their salvation is an objective reality based on their "position" in Christ.

73

See Gal 3:1-6, where Paul's first appeal is to their experience of the Spirit, which is then grounded in the blessing of Abraham, where the concern is with the inclusion of Gentiles in that blessing and promise. See, further, G. D. Fee, *Galatians: [A] Pentecostal Commentary* (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2007), 103-13.

74

This seems to be the ultimate reason for this recall, even though it is expressed in terms of his (and Silas's and Timothy's) being reminded of their conversion when giving thanks in prayer.

75

That the two italicized phrases, ἐξελέξατο ὑμάς / τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ὑμᾶς, are echoed in Paul's phrases τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν / ἠγαπημένοι seems certain, since the language is both significant and unique to these two passages.

76

That is, it is proportionately the highest number. The highest actual number of occurrences are the 20 in 1 Corinthians, but the latter is a full four times longer than 1 Thessalonians — and two and one half times longer than 1 and 2 Thessalonians together.

77

See, e.g., Ps 22:23 (LXX 21:23); Zech 7:9, et al., which are almost always translated out in modern English versions, turning the language into "one's people," which is the meaning, to be sure, but lacks the punch of the metaphor.

78

Thus Mark 3:34: "Behold, my mother and my brothers (ἀδελφοί μου); . . . whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

79

Gk. ἐκλογήν; see Rom 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28. Paul more often uses the (synonymous) adjective, ἐκλεκτός.

80

Only four times with reference to people as "elect": Rom 16:13 (the only instance where it refers to a single individual); Col 3:12 (again referring to Gentiles); Tit 1:1, and 2 Tim 2:10, the latter two with reference to Christian believers.

81

One should perhaps note finally that those outside of Christ are non-elect by logical extension, not by Pauline affirmation. The idea of "double predestination" belongs to Western logic, not to biblical revelation.

82

So also K. P. Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 39 n. 80, 129-30.

83

This takes the combination εἰδότες . . . ὅτι in its normal sense (as in the nearly identical construction in 2:1 below; cf. 1 Cor 16:15; Rom 13:11), "knowing . . . that," over against the majority of scholars and translators, who see the ὅτι in this instance as causal. But the only reason for this, it would seem, is the distance of the ὅτι from the verb, which was brought about by the long vocative. It seems to make far more sense of Paul's sentence (now without the vocative) to mean, "we know your election, how that our gospel etc." rather than "we know your election, because. . . ." So also Lightfoot (12), Milligan (8), Best (73), Malherbe (110).

84

Gk. ἐν λόγῳ μόνον, which has been put into the plural by TNIV, REB, NJB, NET, et al. The latter has a note, "Or 'speech,' or 'an act of speaking,' " to clarify — or justify — the plural.

85

On these as "twin phrases" and not a "triad," see the discussion below (including n. 24).

86

On this point Kemmler's critique of much of the exegesis of this text is well taken. But his own solution, which sees the "but with" phrases as "additional testimonies" to the effectiveness of Paul's "word," seems to miss Paul's concern and argument by too much (see D. W. Kemmler, *Faith and Human Reason: A Study of Paul's Method of Preaching as Illustrated by 1-2 Thessalonians and Acts 17,2-4* [NovTSup 40; Leiden: Brill, 1975], 149-68).

87

This will have been said a bit strongly for some, but the lack of the ἐν before πληροφορίᾳ with ℵB 33 lat (the earliest and best evidence) is almost certainly the original text, since one can offer no reasonable explanation for its omission by scribes (esp. in light of its certain presence before the two preceding nouns, "power" and "Holy Spirit"), whereas that very fact easily explains why subsequent scribes would have added an ἐν before πληροφορίᾳ as well — to make all three nouns coordinate (so also Rigaux, 374, followed by Koester, "Text," 220). What this means, therefore, is that we are not here dealing with a "triad" (R. F. Collins, *Studies in the First Letter to the Thessalonians* (BETL 66; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984], 192 n. 95; Thomas, 244), but with epexegesis, where the second (compound) phrase further qualifies the first (cf.

Moffatt, 24).

88

As most commentaries.

89

As, e.g., C. H. Giblin, *The Threat to Faith: An Exegetical-Theological Re-examination of 2 Thessalonians 2* (AnBib 31; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 45: “Paul’s teaching was given in the power of the Spirit in that it was attended with miracles (1 Thes 1,5 . . .).” Cf. Marshall, 53-54; Wanamaker, 79; Grundmann, *TDNT* 2.311.

90

On this matter see the discussion in my commentary on 1 Corinthians (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 94-96.

91

As, e.g., Whiteley, 36: “The *power* associated with the *gospel* was . . . the power to work the ‘miracle’ of causing the heathen to believe.”

92

Contra Frame 81, among others.

93

For example, P. T. O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* (NovT 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 132, who argues that “ἐν δυνάμει does not so much refer to the outward signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit, as to the sense the preachers had that their message was striking home.” That seems to miss Paul’s own emphasis, which throughout is on the Thessalonians’ own recall of their conversion, including their remembering Paul’s preaching as Spirit-empowered — and thus effectual *on their behalf.*

94

Gk. ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμα.ς. The idiom basically means “to come to someone.”

95

As, e.g., in 1 Cor 2:4 (“with the demonstration of the Spirit and power”) and Rom 15:19 (“with the power of the Spirit”).

96

In one of the more idiosyncratic moments in NT scholarship, H.-W. Kuhn has argued that Paul is here reflecting the language of a Qumran text (see “Die Bedeutung der Qumrantexte für Verstandnis des Ersten Thessalonicherbriefes. Vorstellung des Münchener Projekts: Qumran und das Neue Testament,” in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls* [ed. J. T. Baretta and L. V. Montauer; Leiden: Brill, 1992], 1:339-53). This is idiosyncratic in part because Paul’s own usage is so distant from that of Qumran, and in part because this combination is such a thoroughly

Pauline perspective that even knowledge of the Qumran texts at this point would be irrelevant.

97

For example, Rigaux (377); for others, see Collins, *Studies*, 59 n. 350.

98

Gk. πληροφορία, a noun that does not appear in classical Greek authors. In fact, apart from P. Giess. 87 (see MM), it is used only by Christian authors. It derives from the verb πληροφορέω ("to fill [completely]" or "to fulfill"), and means either "fullness" or "full assurance, certainty."

99

For example, Masson, Moore, Bruce, Findlay, and Dunn (*Jesus and the Spirit* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 226, 417 n. 138); for his earlier position see the next note.

100

This is the majority view, held, among others, by Ellicott, Lightfoot, Frame, Moffatt, Whiteley, Hendriksen, Best, Morris, Hiebert, Marshall, O'Brien *(Introductory Thanksgivings)*, and Dunn (*Baptism in the Holy Spirit* [SBT 2/15; London: SCM, 1970], 105).

101

In an idiosyncratic moment in NT scholarship, N. Turner, followed by Best (75), argues that the lack of the definite article with πνεύματι ἁγίῳ indicates that Paul had only a "divine spirit" in view (*Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1965], 17-22). That this is manifestly wrong see Fee, *GEP*, 15-16.

102

On the textual choice of "among you," see p. 28 n. 6 above.

103

See 2:1, 2, 5, 11; 3:4; 4:1-2; 5:2; 2 Thess 2:5-6 and 3:7; cf. "you are witnesses" in 1 Thess 2:10.

104

Parataxis (beginning sentences with καί ["and"] in the Semitic fashion) is unusual for Paul; in most cases it can be shown to be intentionally linking sentences that are coordinate in some way.

105

So much so, that in 2:13 he *resumes* the thanksgiving ("and for this reason *also* we give thanks") which by 2:12 had rather totally gotten away from him; significantly, what he thanks God for once more is their reception of his preaching as the very word of God.

106

Cf. Rigaux, 380, “vous de votre coté” (but you, on your side).

107

Collins (*Studies,* 204 n. 142) would make something of the passive form of this verb; but what is inherent in meaning in such a common verb will hardly carry such force.

108

Gk. λόγος, i.e., the message of the gospel, which is further defined in v. 8 as ὁ λόγος του. κυρίου (“the word about the Lord”).

109

The genitive in this case is most likely to be understood as an ablative of source. The joy has come *from* the Spirit whom they had received. R. Jewett (*The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 100), as partial support for his historical reconstruction, asserts that this joy is thus “from a supernatural force manifesting itself in an ecstatic manner.” Perhaps so, but this text neither says nor implies as much, and the exhortation to “rejoice always” in 5:16 suggests that they need to be reminded to keep alive in worship what they had experienced in conversion.

110

It has been noted that Paul’s language here, both δεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον (“received the word”) and μετὰ χαρα.ς (“with joy”), is used in the Lukan version of the parable of the Sower; see G. P. Benson, “Note on 1 Thessalonians 1.6,” *ExpTim* 107 (1996), 143- 44. While this is a remarkable collocation of language, one cannot be sure whether there is some kind of “intertextuality” going on or not. Nonetheless, it is especially noteworthy that every certain allusion to the Gospel materials in Paul reflects the version later found in Luke’s Gospel.

111

On this matter, see Fee, *1 Corinthians,* 187-88, 490 (on 4:16 and 11:1), and the bibliography noted there. Cf. Adele Reinhartz, “On the Meaning of the Pauline Exhortation: ‘*mimētai mou ginesthe* — become imitators of me,’ ” *SR* 16 (1987), 393-403; and W. Martin, “ ‘Example’ and ‘Imitation’ in the Thessalonian Correspondence,” *SwJT* 42 (1999), 39-49.

112

Gk. θλῖΨις, a word that occurs at least once in every letter in the church corpus except Philemon (24x in all), always carrying the sense of burdensome suffering, thus “tribulation” or “affliction.”

113

It is worth noting that in this second reference to Christ in the letter, Paul picks up the title/name which, according to Phil 2:9-10, became Christ’s at his exaltation. That is especially striking here, since this title that became his by

divine investiture is here being used to refer to his earthly life. Thus they became imitators of "the Lord," not of "Jesus, the Messiah [Christ]" — although that is assumed. Paul has already identified the Lord as Jesus the Messiah in the salutation. This will become the predominant usage throughout the letter — perhaps unself-consciously, but at least reminding them constantly that the crucified One is now the risen, reigning Lord on high.

114

Despite E. A. Judge ("The Decrees of Caesar at Thessalonica," *RTR* 30 [1971], 1-7) et al. to the contrary; on this matter see the discussion in Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 80-82.

115

Cf. e.g. 2 Cor 8:2; Rom 5:3-5; Acts 5:41; Jas 1:2; 1 Pet 1:6.

116

As Rom 14:17 demonstrates, believers in Christ have indeed become subjects of a new kingdom, whose consummation they eagerly awaited, but whose present manifestation is joy in the Holy Spirit. Wanamaker (82) is therefore probably right that this experience of joy is in part related to their confidence in their imminent salvation by the return of Christ, to which Paul explicitly refers in vv. 9-10.

117

Gk. τύπος, a word that Paul uses similarly elsewhere to express the idea of someone's serving as an "example" or "pattern" for others to follow; see esp. 2 Thess 3:9 below; cf. Phil 3:17; 1 Tim 4:12; Tit 2:7. The clear difference in this case, indicated by the singular τύπον, is that Paul has the whole community in mind, not any individual as such.

118

Paul's sentence actually repeats the "in" (ἐν) before "Achaia," thus including both provinces as individually thought of, and therefore of the whole of Greece.

119

This is the first occurrence in Paul's letters of the verb "to believe" (πιστεύω), or, more properly in most cases in his letters, "to put one's trust in." The very offhanded way it occurs here is certain evidence that it had become a primary theme for him when proclaiming Christ among the Gentiles, and thus well before the battles that emerge in Galatians in particular had begun. Here, and elsewhere in these two letters (see esp. 2 Thess 2:11-12), the word has its primary sense of "believing" something, rather than its more frequent later sense of "trusting," by putting one's full confidence in, someone or something. The same is true of the noun πίστις, which in these two letters points to "belief in" just as often as it does "trust in" (see the discussion of 3:1-10 below). Indeed, in

these earlier letters, “believers” is basically a name for Christians; cf. 2:10, 13; 2 Thess 1:10; 1 Cor 14:22. Thereafter it falls out of use as a way of designating followers of Jesus, due to the faith/works of law issue that emerges in Galatians and Romans.

120

In a textual variation that can be carried over into English only awkwardly, several MSS repeat the second ἐν τῇ before Ἀχαΐᾳ, thus keeping the provinces separated in this second instance, whereas Paul intentionally puts them together as one in his broadening the geographical scope of what has been noised abroad. The decidedly original text (found in B K 6 33 365 614 630 1505 1739 *al* r vgmss) would be very difficult to account for as a deliberate omission.

121

The TNIV has chosen (correctly) to collapse Paul’s prepositional phrase περὶ ἡμῶν (“about us”) into the verb “we” at the end of the clause. Several MSS (B 81 323 614 629 630 945 a d al) read περὶ ὑμῶν (“about you”), thus creating a text that reads (literally): “They themselves report *about you*, what manner of entry *we* had to you.” That seems to be secondary on all counts, esp. since the preposition is otherwise totally redundant; whereas the original text at this point shifts the emphasis momentarily back to Paul and his companions.

122

In a textual variation that makes no difference for translating into English, the MS tradition is split between ἐκ νεκρῶν (P^{46vid} ACK33 629 945 1881* 2464 *al*) and ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν (ℵB D F G I Ψ 0278 33 1739 1881 MajT). In later letters Paul regularly has ἐκ νεκρῶν (1 Cor 15:12, 20; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; Phil 3:11; 2 Tim 2:8), but not in Eph 5:14 and Col 1:18.

123

Typically, later scribes (0278) “help Paul out” grammatically by supplying the expected καί (“also”), which therefore can be found in the KJV — and surprisingly so in the “literal” NASU, whose translators were using a critical text without it.

124

In fact, one could make perfectly good sense of Paul’s concerns if the sentence were read as two sentences with a full stop after “Lord.” Thus, “For from you has rung out the word of the Lord. Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but everywhere, your faith toward God has gone out.” But that seems less likely than Milligan’s suggestion (12) that it is “another ex[ample] of St Paul’s impetuous style.”

125

Gk. ἐξήχηται, which literally means to “ring out” as a bell, but metaphorically, as

here, simply to something's being "noised abroad." The English word "echo" is a borrowed word from its cognate noun ἦχω.

126

This is a common view; see, e.g., J. Ware, "The Thessalonians as a Missionary Congregation: 1 Thessalonians 1,5-8," *ZNW* 83 (1992), 126-31; cf. Bruce (16), Richard (72), Green (101), Beale (60-61). However, such a view puts considerable grammatical pressure on the phrase ἀφ' ὑμω.ν, and it does not fit well with the historical circumstances as we know about them elsewhere.

127

So BDAG ἀπό, 2a.

128

See the discussion of these two phrases in my *Pauline Christology*, 45. The TNIV's "the Lord's message" is much too ambiguous for the average English reader, where it would tend to mean "the message that has come from the Lord."

129

For this view see Lightfoot, 15; Findlay ("definitely"), 26.

130

So, e.g., Morris (51 n. 45); Wanamaker (83).

131

As Ellicott, 11; Milligan, 12; Best, 80 ("a synonym for the gospel"); Bruce, 17; Marshall, 55; Malherbe, 117; and most interpreters.

132

According to Acts 17, the Jewish community in Thessalonica was the source of the suffering, a reality that is noted in a secondary way in 1 Thess 2:14-15. But the language in Paul's "defense" of his preaching in 2:2-5 implies opposition from Gentile sources, there having to do with the unsavory itinerants well known in the Greek world.

133

Gk. ὥστε, which introduces a result clause, just as it did at the beginning of v. 7.

134

Thus Paul's unusual use of ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεόν ("which is toward God") is not a substitute way of speaking about putting one's trust *in* God; rather, the phrase here is anticipating the contrast in v. 9, "how you turned *to* [πρός] God from idols, to serve the living and true God."

135

For the textual variant "about you," see n. 58 above.

136

For affirmation of this perspective see, e.g., Collins, "Paul's Early Christology," in *Studies*, 253-84, who states matter-of-factly: "The pre-Pauline character of the

creedal formula found [here] . . . is now almost universally recognized." While some are prepared to make a great deal of this possibility, the plain fact is that what occurs here has been dictated by Paul as a concluding sentence in this opening narrative and thus has become Pauline, whatever else may be true of it.

137

For a similar sentiment, see J. Munck, "I Thess. 1:9-10 and the Missionary Preaching of Paul: Textual Exegesis and Hermeneutical Reflections," *NTS* 9 (1963), 95- 110. An enormous amount of energy has been poured into isolating and interpreting Paul's alleged "source" for this creedal moment; and much of this without due caution or proper controls. One can only wonder how scholarship might have reconstructed Isa 45:23 on the basis of the "creedal statement" in Phil 2:10, had they not had the source in this case.

138

C. Blumenthal ("Was sagt 1 Thess 1.9b-10 über die Adressaten des 1 Thess? Literarische und historische Erwägungen," *NTS* 51 [2005], 96-105) raises the question, unnecessarily it would seem, as to whether even the "God-fearers" had remained polytheistic. This seems to be contrary to their very reason for attaching themselves to the Jewish synagogue.

139

But see also *Jos. Asen.* 11:9-10.

140

For "the living God," see, among other things, the oath formula in Num 14:21, 28 ("as [surely as] I live"); cf. Hos 2:1 (cited by Paul in Rom 9:26). It became a standard formula in the polemics of Second Temple Judaism (Dan 5:23 [LXX] ; Bel 5 [Theod]; Sir 18:1; *Jub.* 21:3-4; *Jos. Asen.* 11:9-10). In the NT see esp. Acts 14:15, where the wording of conversion is just as it appears here; cf. 1 Tim 4:10; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 1 Pet 1:23; Rev 7:2; 15:7. For "the true God," see Wis 12:27; Josephus, *Ant.* 11:55; and in the NT esp. the Johannine literature (e.g., John 7:18; 8:26).

141

On Being a Christian (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 361; besides the present text, see 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:1; Rom 4:24; (6:4); 8:11(2x); 10:9; Col 2:12; Eph 1:20; cf. 1 Pet 1:21. Wanamaker (87) seems quite wrong, therefore, to refer to this phrase as an "afterthought."

142

A considerable literature has suggested that the "background" to this usage is Daniel's "son of man" (Dan 7:13). Understandable as this might be, given (1) Paul's language "await . . . from heaven," and (2) the fact that Jesus almost certainly used this Danielic "title" with reference to himself, there is nonetheless

scarcely a hint of any kind in the Pauline corpus that Paul is influenced by this language. What can be demonstrated is that he associates “Son of God” with the Davidic kingship (see Fee, *Pauline Christology,* ch. 14).

143

For a full discussion of the significance, and absolute uniqueness, of this reality for the earliest Christians, see N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), whose title reflects this earliest mention of the resurrection in the NT documents.

144

Gk. τὸν ῥυόμενον; the present tense here is probably not so much trying to say something about the “time” of the rescue — which in 5:9-10 is expressed in the past tense to refer to the saving event itself — as it is to put emphasis on the now exalted Son as the “Rescuer.”

145

This is the case in every mention of the resurrection in the NT outside the Gospels; moreover, it lies behind the earliest known prayer among the early Christians, the Aramaic *Marana tha* (“Lord, come”) used by Paul in 1 Cor 16:22.

146

And only 17 times in all, 11 of which occur in Galatians (4x) and Romans (7x). In the latter it appears as the first thing up (1:3-4), where it has both messianic and eternal implications; cf. Col 1:13-17. See the discussions in Fee, *Pauline Christology,* 240-44 and 293-303.

147

One of the disappointing features of M. Hengel’s otherwise especially useful study of this title (*The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976]) is his rather complete disregard of the use of this title for the Davidic king of Israel, which all the NT evidence together points to as the basic source of early Christian understanding. See esp. the discussion in *Pauline Christology,* ch. 14.

148

See esp. the discussion of 1 Cor 15:23-28; Gal 4:4; and Rom 8:3 in my *Pauline Christology.* See also D. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 174-75.

149

It is worth noting here that Acts 17 records Paul as entering the synagogue and for three sabbaths reasoning with them “*from the Scriptures,* explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, saying ‘This Jesus

I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah.' " The content of this "reasoning" had been presented earlier in Acts 13:16-47. There is no justifiable *historical* reason to doubt the essential accuracy of these pictures. Paul's own letters, including this one, are full verification that these earliest converts are well acquainted with the arguments that the crucified and risen Jesus is indeed the promised Jewish Messiah, God's exalted Son.

150

I say "especially" here, because the emphasis on the "Coming" is found throughout the letter (1:3; 2:12, 19-20; 3:13; 5:1-11, 23).

151

This noticeable shift from second person plural to first person plural is the first of many in Paul's letters when, in speaking about what God has done — or has in store — for the recipients of his letter, he changes pronouns from "you" (pl.) to "us," so as to include himself with them in God's activity on their behalf; see, e.g., Gal 3:14; Eph 1:18-19.

152

Failing to distinguish between these two words, ὀργή (wrath) and θλῖΨις (tribulation, affliction, suffering), the former having always and only to do with God's judgment on the wicked and the latter with present trials (of believers themselves), was one of the great failings of historic Dispensationalism, where these two terms were at times rather cavalierly interchanged in the presentation of the system.

153

Cf. J. H. Roberts, "The Eschatological Transitions to the Pauline Letter Body," *NovT* 20 (1986), 29-35, who discusses this one in conjunction with 1 Cor 1:7-8; Phil 1:10; and 2 Thess 1:6-10, where in each case the thanksgiving concludes on a similar eschatological note. One may rightly question, however, whether this one concludes Paul's "thanksgiving," since it is followed immediately by a γάρ, thus suggesting a continuation of the narrative that began in v. 5.

154

While these aid in "finding" things, they are unfortunate in that they cause people to read the Bible differently from the way they would read anything else; and, as here, they often create false divisions of thought. Even the language "chapter and verse" unwittingly advocates a kind of gnomic approach to Scripture that gets in the way of good reading. By taking out the numbers, one can easily see what Paul is concerned with.

155

Gk. γάρ, unfortunately omitted in the T/NIV and other English translations (e.g., NEB, GNB, NRSV).

156
Gk. εἴσοδον, literally “entrance,” thus “our coming” to you, or “our visit/time” with you; for the significance of this word and cognate ideas see S. Kim, “Paul’s Entry (εἴσοδος) and the Thessalonians’ Faith (1 Thessalonians 1-3),” *NTS* 51 (2005), 37-47.

157
This is the basic paragraphing of NA27, except that they have all of vv. 1-4 as one paragraph.

158
Which also accounts for the fact that these two letters (1 Thessalonians and Romans) have in common that God is explicitly mentioned more often than Christ (which happens elsewhere in the church corpus only in 2 Corinthians); see the data in my *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 26.

159
For the sake of the commentary that follows I have retained Paul’s “for” (γάρ) in brackets here and in v. 5.

160
Somewhere in the transmissional process of the TNIV, either in the translational, editing, or printing process, this verse number was transferred (logically) to the beginning of the next sentence. For the sake of the user of the Greek text — and every other English translation — I have chosen to go with the numbering found in all other sources, and have taken the liberty to change the TNIV accordingly.

161
The TNIV here (correctly) translates the νήπιοι of the UBS4/NA27 Greek text, which is the reading of all the early and widespread evidence, except the fifth century A (P65vid-* B C* D* F G I Ψ 104* 326c 2495 pc it vgww samss bo Clement, Origen); ἤπιοι (“gentle”) is read by the fifth-c. A (its earliest support) and the Majority Text (), as well as by the later correctors of C D Ψ and some MSS of the Sahidic. Historically, this has proven to be a very difficult textual choice. The external evidence, it should be noted, is overwhelmingly in support of νήπιοι, being read by all the significant early evidence both East and West (and is at least recognized as such by the ASV note, “most of the ancient authorities read *babes*,” which the NRSV watered down to “other ancient authorities read *infants*”). Transcriptionally, the issue is, first, whether the variant was the result of a copying accident or was intentional, and, second, which variant best explains how the other came about. For the full argument in favor of νήπιοι as the original reading, see the commentary below.

162

See esp. A. J. Malherbe, "'Gentle as a Nurse': The Cynic Background to 1 Thess. ii," *NovT* 12 (1970), 203-17; repr. in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 35-48. This is a particularly helpful article; its problem is that Malherbe assumes, and thus weighs in against, those who see this as a "defense" directed toward some disgruntled people within the believing community itself. But the whole of 1 and 2 Thessalonians indicates that the problem had *outside* origins, where the believers were being shamed for following such a "charlatan" as Paul. Although moderating this latter point some, in his commentary Malherbe continues to see the whole of 2:1-12 as intentionally exemplary.

163

So also J. A. D. Weima, "An Apology for the Apologetic Function of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12," *JSNT* 68 (1997), 73-99; and Kim, "Paul's Entry."

164

Paul's whole phrase reads, τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ("our 'entrance' to you"). Malherbe (135) cites a single philosopher (Lucian) who uses this verb "as the entrance to philosophy." Because so much of the language found in vv. 3-5 can also be found in the philosophical tradition, he then offers a considerable list of the philosophers who use a different phrase, εἰσιέναι πρός . . . , to speak of such an entrance. But it seems doubtful in the extreme whether Paul either intended such an allusion or that the Thessalonians would have so understood it; after all, this is a pickup from the preceding v. 9, which is narrative, pure and simple.

165

Gk. κενή = "empty" or "in vain." See further nn. 16 and 17 below.

166

This is the first of five instances in these two letters of the intensive αὐτοί with a second plural subject (see 1 Thess 3:3; 4:9; 5:2; 2 Thess 3:7), a phenomenon that is unique to these letters in the Pauline corpus.

167

Besides this one, see vv. 2, 5, 11 ("you know"), 9 ("you remember"), and 10 ("you are witnesses").

168

See 1 Cor 15:58; Gal 2:2; Phil 2:16.

169

Which reads οἱ δὲ ἐκλεκτοί μου οὐ κοπιάσουσιν εἰς κενόν ("but my chosen ones will not labor in vain"). Since this precise language (οὐ κοπιάσουσιν εἰς κενόν) occurs in Phil 2:16 and the equivalent noun κόπος in 1 Cor 15:58, it seems likely that for Paul this is a biblical phrase he has picked up and used on several

occasions.

170

Especially so when one observes the eschatological context of the Isaianic oracle — the great vision of the "new heavens and new earth" (Isa 65:17-25), which in turn is the eschatological response to the oracle in 49:4, when the Servant feels as though he "has labored in vain" (κενως ἐκοπίασα).

171

So BDAG for this word (ὑβρίζω), which occurs only here in the Pauline corpus, but four times in the Gospels and Acts (Matt 22:6; Luke 11:45; 18:32; Acts 14:5).

172

Gk. ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα, a verb that has to do with "speaking openly or fearlessly," which, when followed by an infinitive, as here, = "have the courage to" or "dare to." The verb occurs elsewhere in Paul only in Eph 6:20, but more frequently in the narrative of Acts, all but one (18:26 of Apollos) in relationship to Paul (9:27-28; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; 26:26).

173

Gk. λαλησαι; for this usage of λαλέω see BDAG 2b, which in such cases as this one means "*speak* and thereby *assert, proclaim, say . . . something.*" In this case it borders on the concept of "make an appeal" to you regarding the gospel.

174

That this is almost certainly the grammatical sense of the genitive, see, among others, Ellicott, 16; Lightfoot, 20; Rigaux, 404; Best, 91; Bruce, 25; Wanamaker, 93; Richard, 78; Malherbe, 137; Green, 117.

175

Indeed, this passage (vv. 1-12) is dominated by references to God (9x in all); noted also by Malherbe, 137; cf. n. 5 above.

176

Gk. ἐν πολλῷ ἀγωνι (lit., "in great conflict"), which some (Rigaux, Malherbe; Ellicott and Frame are ambivalent) would see as referring to internal anxiety on Paul's part (as in Col 2:1). But despite Malherbe to the contrary, nothing in the context supports such an understanding of the word ἀγων here (vv. 3-6 deal not with internal concerns in Paul, but public abuse; cf. the critique in Witherington, 72, and T. D. Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and Its Neighbors* [JSNTSS 183; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 128-30), which is used in the NT only figuratively, with reference to "the contest" in which believers find themselves (see Phil 1:30); cf. Lightfoot (20), "beset by much opposition." For the use of this word in Paul, see V. C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif* (NovTSup 16; Leiden: Brill, 1962).

177
This phrase should thus be understood in light of 1:6, where Paul speaks of the Thessalonians' becoming believers ἐν θλίΨει πολλ .(“in a context of much affliction,” perhaps referring esp. to verbal abuse), as over against the suggestion by Richard (79), that it involved “a public contest vying for the attention and allegiance of urban crowds.”

178
Gk. παράκλησις, a term that implies an appeal to the hearers' emotions as well as intellects. The point of such language by way of reminder is that these believers had not been persuaded merely by argumentation as such, but by an “appeal” that at the same time reached out to the emotional side of their being. On this usage see Kemmler, “1 Th 2,2f,” in *Faith and Human Reason*, 168-77.

179
Meaning a clause consisting primarily of nouns, with the verb “was” to be understood, which, because of the repeated οὐκ/οὐδὲ ἐκ, should be understood in this case as “coming from” (Ellicott, 17; Lightfoot, 20; Findlay, 36; Milligan, 17; Frame, 95; Rigaux, 406; Best, 93; Marshall, 64; Morris, 61; Wanamaker, 94; Richard, 79; Green, 118; Beale, 67; Witherington, 78), hence the TNIV's “does not spring from,” which the KJV had rendered literally (“*was* [italicized because it is not in the Greek] not of”), and which the NASU, with similar italics, rendered “does not *come* from.” The alternative is to see it as the basis of his proclamation; as GNB (“is not based on”).

180
But on this see W. Horbury (“1 Thessalonians ii.3 as Rebutting the Charge of False Prophecy,” *JTS* 33 [1982], 492-508), who sees the language as combatting charges of false prophecy.

181
Gk. ἐκ πλάνης. Some (e.g., Bruce, 26) argue for “deceit” here, thus making it simultaneously both active and passive (“not deceived, nor deceiving”). But since “truth and error” were part of the philosophical background, and since the “truthfulness” of the gospel is repeated in v. 13 below, “error” seems more likely here.

182
See, e.g., Gal 2:5, 14 (cf. 4:16); Col 1:5; cf. Eph 1:13; 4:21; expressed in Romans as “God's truth” (1:25; 3:7; 15:8).

183
Gk. ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας; see its later usage in 4:7; cf. Rom 1:24; 6:19; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 4:19; 5:3; Col 3:5.

184

This was especially true of many earlier interpreters (e.g., Lightfoot, 20-21; Milligan, 19; Frame, 95; Rigaux, 407; Bruce, 26; Morris, 71; but not Ellicott, 17); but this view has been generally abandoned (Beale, 66, is an exception) since Malherbe's demonstration (see n. 9 above) of the connection of this passage with ancient rhetors.

185

See, e.g., Demosthenes 21,119.

186

In fact this understanding can be traced as far back as Chrysostom, *Homily 2 on 1 Thessalonians*

187

It is of some interest, therefore, that both of its primary meanings appear in this first occurrence of the verb δοκιμάζω in the Pauline corpus, which sometimes refers to the procedure itself (as in 5:21 below) and other times to the result of the examination (as, e.g., in 1 Cor 16:3).

188

But even here there is some difference of opinion as to whether it is positive or negative; see my commentary on Galatians for the reasons for seeing it as negative there (*Galatians* [Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2007], 32-34).

189

See Jer 11:20 LXX (κύριε κρίνων δίκαια δο κιμ άζων νεφροὺς καὶ καρ δίας [*"Lord,* judging righteously, *testing* minds and *hearts"*]); cf. 20:12. As for the phrase itself, the "our" is still plural here, not a "literary singular"; and "heart" in such a phrase has to do with the "center and source of the whole inner life, w[ith] its thinking, feeling, and volition" (BDAG 1 b a).

190

Gk. γάρ; see the introductory discussion of this section and the comments on vv. 1 and 3 above. Ellicott (16) perceptively noted that the γάρ in v. 3 introduces "a reference to Paul's regular habit," while the one here refers "to that habit as specially evinced among the Thessalonians." For the sake of smoother English, it has been omitted in the TNIV as implied in the logic of the sentence itself.

191

This word (the enclitic τοτε) is assumed in the TNIV's "never," in comparison with its "not" for the conjunction οὔδε by itself in v. 3. This simply puts into one word what Paul says in two. Our two-word idiom would be "not once"; thus "never."

192

Gk. ἐγενήθημεν, that most flexible of Greek verbs, whose basic meaning is "come to be," which here means something like "we were among you," hence

“lived among you” (cf. NAB, “nor did we ever appear”; similarly NET). The KJV interestingly abandoned its “literal” posture here and rendered it “used” (cf. REB “resorted to”), thus putting the emphasis (correctly) on the prepositional phrases alone. The more recent English versions (N/RSV, T/NIV, NASU, ESV) have rendered it “came,” which seems to put more emphasis on his “showing up” in Thessalonica than on the way he “conducted himself” while among them.

193

Gk. κολακεία, a word which, according to Lightfoot (23), is “flattery not merely for the sake of giving pleasure to others but for the sake of self-interest,” a truly disgusting expression of humanity.

194

See Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 4.33, 35; 48.10.

195

Gk. δόξα, ordinarily “glory,” but in this context meaning “honor as enhancement or recognition of status or performance” (BDAG 3).

196

This somewhat rare use of the “vernacular possessive,” where in Greek the possessive *precedes* the thing possessed (the normal way of expressing possession in English), deliberately puts the emphasis on the possessor, “Christ” in this case. Thus his text reads, “as *Christ’s* apostles” we could have exerted the authority that comes from him. For this usage elsewhere (where a “vernacular possessive” puts emphasis on the possessive) see 1 Cor 1:24, where the crucified Messiah is called “*God’s* wisdom, *God’s* power”; cf. 1 Cor 3:9 (*God’s* co-workers, *God’s* field, *God’s* building).

197

Bruce (31) thinks otherwise, strangely so, given the way it appears in context; he “suggests” instead that the word “is used in a rather general sense,” and thus translates it “as Christ’s messengers.” His apparent reason for going this way is the plural, which here would include Timothy. But the very point being made here is that of “authority not being used,” so context seems to demand the more “technical” use of the term.

198

The reason for thinking that it probably does not include Timothy is the way Paul regularly excludes him from this title in the opening addresses of later letters, beginning with 2 Corinthians (“Paul, an apostle . . . and Timothy, our brother”); see also Col 1:1; Phlm 1; and Phil 1:1.

199

See Rom 16:7 (Andronicus and Junia); Gal 1:19 (James). Moreover, the idea that there were only twelve apostles arose from Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels,

where they indicate that Jesus himself designated “the Twelve” as apostles (Matt 10:1-2; Luke 6:13), but in neither case does either of them use the title “the Twelve Apostles.”

200

Morris (69), who also accepts “infants” as the Pauline original, apparently saw it as referring only to “babies” — although Paul’s use in 1 Cor 13:11 seems clearly to point otherwise. He then makes the unusual suggestion as to its point: that “the apostles spoke as simply as possible, as simply as babies. It is a strong expression for the extreme lengths to which they went to meet the needs of their hearers.” Perhaps it is this kind of misguided understanding of the metaphor that has led so many to adopt the secondary reading!

201

See, among others, KJV, ASV, RSV, NASU, ESV, GNB, NAB, REB; only NET, NJB (“lived unassumingly”), and TNIV go with the NA27/ UBSGNT4, whose editors considered it to be the original text (see the textual discussion in n. 8 above). For commentaries and further studies, see n. 53 below.

202

That is, it *begins* with a threefold “neither, neither, neither,” with an added concessive participle (“even though”), but has no main verb. The translations have found different ways of handling *their* (now ungrammatical) sentence: The NRSV and ESV add the verb “we [never] came” (cf. the NASU, but without italics in this case, which they always use for added words!); cf. REB, “we never resorted to”; NAB, “nor did we ever appear with”; NJB “never acted.”

203

The compound is so rare that one must take it seriously rather than to act as if it did not exist and thus simply to ignore the ἐάν. But neither its rarity nor its difficulty justifies ignoring it. The options seem to be two: (a) that it is a longer form of ὡς ἄν, and thus serves as a “marker indicating perspective or point of view,” and thus = “as though” (BDAG, on ὡς ἄν); or (b) that it be taken quite literally to mean “as if,” with an implied “we” as the ultimate point of reference; thus = “as if a nursing mother caring for her own infants, so we, deeply caring for you, were willing. . . .” For usage, cf. the Majority Text of Mark 4:26: οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία του. θεου. ὡς (ε)ὰν ἄνθρωπος βάλῃ τὸν σπόρον ἐπὶ τη.ς γη.ς (“So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground,” KJV; cf. NKJV).

204

The ESV translators at least recognized the extreme difficulty with this and turned it into an adverbial “so” = “thus,” and thereby returned to the KJV (cf. NASU).

205
Since this is clearly a metaphor, just as “nursing mother” is in the next clause, Paul’s most likely intent with the metaphor is to stress their total “innocence” of any of the skulduggery that he has disdained, a metaphor that S. Fowl considers to be “strained,” since even very young children are not among the “innocents” (see “A Metaphor in Distress: A Reading of ΝΗΠΙΟΙ in 1 Thessalonians 2.7,” *NTS* 36 [1990], 469-73). But that seems to be something of a quibble, since Paul’s contrast here is with the itinerant charlatans. It should be further noted that Paul’s own use of this word in his discussion of acting like “small children” in 1 Cor 13:11 indicates that the language “babies” that most commentators rightly resist here is not necessary to the context; thus the TNIV has rightly rendered it here as “young children,” just as it is universally recognized to be intended by Paul in the later passage in 1 Corinthians.

206
Contra B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (rev. ed. with B. Ehrman; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 328-30; cf. his minority report in B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; London/ New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 561-62; so also Best, Bruce, Ellicott, Hendriksen, Holmes, Marshall, Moffatt, Richard, Rigaux, Thomas, Wanamaker, Witherington. Cf. Koester (“The Text of First Thessalonians,” in *The Living Text* [Lanham, Md.: The University Press of America, 1985]), 225, who is characteristically bold: “There cannot be the slightest doubt that *nēpioi* is wrong.” For a similar judgment, see J. Delobel, “One Letter Too Many in Paul’s First Letter? A Study of (ν)ηπιοι in 1 Thess 2:7,” *LS* 20 (1995), 126-33.

In fact, of course, there is every kind of doubt, since *all the purely textual arguments* are quite in its favor. It is also favored, among others, by Westcott-Hort, Beale, Frame, Green, Lightfoot, Milligan, and Morris. So also J. Gribomont, “Facti sumus parvuli: La charge apostolique (1 Th 2,1-12),” in *Paul de Tarse: Apôtre de notre temps* (ed. A.-L. Descamps et al.; Série monographique de ‘Benedictina’; Section Paulinienne 1;
Rome: Abbaye de S. Paolo [1979]), 311-38; S. Fowl (note 52 above); F. J. J. van Rensberg, “An Argument for Reading νήπιοι in 1 Thessalonians 2:7,” in *A South African Perspective on the New Testament: Essays by South African New Testament Scholars Presented to Bruce M. Metzger* (ed. J. H. Petzer and P. T. Hartin; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 252-59; B. Gaventa, “Apostles as Babes and Nurses in 1 Thessalonians 2:7,” in *Faith and History: Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer* (ed. J. T. Carroll, C. H. Cosgrove, and E. E. Johnson; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 193-207; S. Cortozzi, “1 Thes 2:7 — A Review,” *FilolNT* 12 (1999), 155-60; T. B. Sailors, “Wedding Textual and Rhetorical Criticism to

Understand the Text of 1 Thessalonians 2.7," *JSNT* 80 (2000), 81-98; J. A. D. Weima, "But We Became Infants among You," *NTS* 46 (2000), 547-64; cf. G. D. Fee, "On Text and Commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians," in *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers* (ed. Eugene H. Lovering Jr.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 165-83; repr. in *To What End Exegesis?*, 70-74 (much of what follows has been excerpted from that study). So also C. Crawford, "The 'Tiny' Problem of 1 Thessalonians 2,7: The Case of the Curious Vocative," *Bib* 54 (1973), 69-72, who opts for a solution offered by Daniel Whitby in 1727, that the νήπιοι should be read as a vocative.

207

See, e.g., Metzger's dissenting argument in his *Textual Commentary.*

208

In fairness it must be pointed out that Metzger, *Text*, 231, acknowledges this reality — although not all commentators do so.

209

It must be noted that the inclusion of Clement in the UBS apparatus offers no substantial evidence at all, since the reading ἤπιοι in his case is almost certainly due to corruptions in the later transmission of *his* text.

210

The language is Jean Duplacy's ("Histoire des manuscrits et histoire du texte du N. T.: Quelques réflexions méthodologiques," *NTS* 12 [1965/66], 125).

211

Everyone points out that ἤπιοι makes perfectly good sense here. But rather than favoring ἤπιοι as the original reading (as Wanamaker [100] and Richard [82, boldly so] argue), it is a particularly strong reason for rejecting it as secondary. After all, this is precisely the case with the vast majority of secondary readings that fill the apparatuses of our Greek testaments. These readings exist primarily — and precisely — because for scribes they made more sense!

212

It has sometimes been argued that this makes ἤπιοι the "more difficult" reading in this case. But that implies, quite incorrectly in a case like this one, that a scribe was more conscious of how many times Paul used each word rather than he was of the sense of the immediate context. Scribes, after all, did not carry concordances with them, and ἤπιος is a common enough word, even if found only once in the NT.

213

See G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 679 n. 15. This point has also been made recently by Gaventa, "Apostles as Babes and Nurses," p. 196.

214
This in fact is often cited as the primary reason for adopting the secondary reading (e.g., Wanamaker [100]: “this fact alone weighs against νήπιοι”). But a century earlier Lightfoot (24-25) had already pointed out the weakness of such argumentation, since Paul is given to occasional sudden shifts of metaphor.

215
It has often been pointed out to me that “infants” are not always so “innocent”; but they are certainly innocent of the kind of skulduggery Paul is here dealing with.

216
Gk ἐγενήθητε (aorist passive), found in all the early witnesses and the best later ones (𝔓A B C D F C L P 0278 33 81 104 365 1241 1739 1881 2464), which most later MSS changed to what was perceived as the more grammatically correct perfect (γεγένησθε). This kind of “imprecision” occurs throughout the *koine* period; it has been regularly translated into English by the necessary perfect (T/NIV, NASB/U, N/RSV, ESV, etc.).

217
For reasons that are not altogether clear, but in keeping with what Paul himself does elsewhere (see, e.g., Gal 1:10-13), a later scribe (or scribes) added yet another explanatory γάρ to this clause, which eventually became the Majority Text and accordingly made its way into the KJV.

218
The TNIV presently has a new paragraph here, thus retaining the paragraphing of the NIV, which hopefully might change in a next edition.

219
This unexpected present tense was changed by several early witnesses to an expected aorist (𝔓A 104 326 945 1505 2464) and, although perhaps not in their exemplars, was translated thus into Latin, Syriac, and Coptic. It was so translated also in the KJV, but not in most of its progeny (ASV, NASB, N/RSV, ESV).

220
Cf. Frame (100): “The change from νήπιοι to τροφός is due to a natural association of ideas.”

221
Gk. τροφός, a NT *hapax legomenon* whose meaning here is not quite as certain as the English translations suggest. It at least refers to one who nurses; but there is a masculine form of the word which Paul does not use here. Although it could be a metaphor for a mother who nurses her infants, it could also refer to a wet nurse who does the same. If the latter, then the ἑαυτῆς (“her own”) is metaphorical, wherein a wet nurse treats the child as if it were “her own.”

Indeed, Chrysostom asks rhetorically, “Are they [the nurses] not more kindly disposed to them than mothers?” Best (101), on the other hand, expresses a more modern worldview: “a nurse could hardly be expected to show as much care for the children in her charge as their mother.” But in either case (nursing mother or wet nurse) it is a particularly striking metaphor to follow “infants.”

222

Although probably not intentional on Paul’s part, this affirmation stands in sharp contrast to Moses’s complaint to Yahweh in Num 11:12, that Yahweh should *not* expect him to “take them [Yahweh’s people] into [his] bosom as a nurse would carry her infant.”

223

Gk. τὰ ἑαυτῆ͵ς τέκνα, an emphasis that plays the lie to the slanders of vv. 3 and 5-6. This emphatic (by way of word order) reflexive pronoun was unfortunately moderated in the NIV (followed by the TNIV) to a simple possessive; so also the KJV, REB, NJB, and NAB.

224

Gk. ὁμειρόμενοι, another NT *hapax*, which means to “long for” someone with deep yearning (cf. N. Baumert, “ ‘Ομειρόμενοι in 1 Thess 2,8,” *Bib* 68 [1987], 552-63). It seems likely that it has double entendre at this point. Grammatically it functions as part of Paul’s reminding them of the past, but relationally it is equally true in the present. The causal implication of the clause is inherent in the participle itself.

225

Gk. εὐδοκου͵μεν, a verb whose primary meaning is “to take pleasure in something,” but which in some contexts can also mean “to resolve” or “to consent.” It is of some interest that BDAG put the former meaning in first position when discussing the noun, but in second position regarding the verb. Moreover, in what seems to be a rather arbitrary analysis based on whether or not the verb is followed by an infinitive, they offer for this idiom only the meaning “resolve, consent.” But a careful look at each of their entries indicates that in several cases, including this one, the meaning “to take pleasure in” fits better than the more brusque “to determine to” (contra Green [128], “an act of the will”).

In form the verb can be either present or imperfect, but in context it can be only imperfect (see the ἐγενήθητε [aorist passive] in the final clause [but brought forward in the TNIV for clearer English]); thus it refers to their past visit, not at this point to a yearning to be with them now.

226

Gk. μεταδου͵ναι, a basically Pauline word in the NT (here; Rom 1:11; 12:8; Eph

4:28); elsewhere only Luke 3:11. Although it is remotely possible that Paul might have had self-sacrifice in view, such an understanding goes far beyond what Paul seems to be saying here.

227

Gk. Ψυχάς, which the KJV, in its own concordant way, rendered as “souls.” Contemporary so-called “literal” translations render it “lives” (NASU!), or “selves” (NRSV, ESV), the latter also appearing in REB and NAB, while the NJB and NET use “lives” as in the present text (cf. Best, “our own being”). The Greek word itself covers a lot of ground, from “soul, life, life-principle” to “earthly life” to “person” (BDAG); interestingly, Bauer had placed the present usage under the heading “the inner human life [= soul],” and under the subheading “of feelings and emotions,” which was retained by Danker. But that seems doubtful here (despite, e.g., Marshall, Morris, Bruce, Wanamaker), where the emphasis is on the whole person rather than just the inner feelings (thus Richard [84], “*psychē* designates the whole person and that person’s behavior”; cf. Green, 129).

228

See J. Gillman, “Paul’s Εἴσοδος: The Proclaimed and the Proclaimer (1 Thess 2,8),” in Collins, *Thessalonians Correspondence,* pp. 62-70.

229

Paul’s Greek has διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε (lit. “because beloved to us you had become”), where the dative “to us” has the functional equivalence of a possessive.

230

Omitted for stylistic reasons in the NIV/TNIV, NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB, et al.; but kept in others such as NASU, ESV, NET et al. Best (103) thinks it has a “weakened sense” here and renders it “and,” but that seems unnecessary. An explanatory γάρ is still explanatory, even if in a less argumentative sense.

231

This is now the third time in this section — and the only times in the two letters — that Paul recalls the “event” of preaching/sharing the gospel in Thessalonica; and each of them is expressed differently (in Gal 1:8-12 the concern is with the *content* of what was preached, not the event as such). Thus in v. 2 (cf. v. 4) it is “tell (λαλῆσαι) you the gospel”; in v. 8 it is “share (μεταδοῦναι) the gospel”; and here it is “preach (ἐκηρύξαμεν) the gospel.” In no case in either of these two letters does he use the verb εὐαγγελίζεσθαι itself, which has the activity of preaching the gospel inherent in it. This will begin in his next letter (1 Corinthians) and carry on through the rest of the church corpus (excepting Colossians and Philemon). It occurs in this letter in 3:6 in its nontechnical sense

of “bringing good news.”

232

What cannot be known by this imagery is the *venue* of such “preaching.” R. F. Hock (*The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980], 32-42) has rightly pointed out that much of it may have taken place in the context of the “tent-making,” in keeping with one dimension of the philosophical tradition. But the verb “preached” (ἐκηρύξαμεν) is simply much too strong for the “shop talk” kind of evangelism.

233

Gk. νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, genitive of time = “during the night as well as the day,” rather than “all night and all day.”

234

Cf. R. F. Hock, “Paul’s Tentmaking and the Problem of His Social Class,” *JBL* 97 (1978), 555-64.

235

Gk. τὸν κόπον καὶ τὸν μόχθον. The same doublet occurs again in 2 Thess 3:8 and 2 Cor 11:27. This is the only instance in Paul where the verb μνημονευ- takes the accusative rather than the normal genitive; it is doubtful that there is any subtle meaning to it. When Paul picks up this theme later, but in passing, in 1 Cor 4:12, he adds ταῖς ἰδίαις χέρσιν (“with our own hands”), which is the giveaway that his “labor” was in fact “manual.”

236

See, e.g., 1:3 above regarding the Thessalonians themselves, and 3:3 below about himself; cf. 1 Cor 3:8; 15:58, among others.

237

Gk. μόχθον, used only by Paul in the NT and only in this combination; see n. 82 above.

238

At points like these Paul’s plural “we” and the actual content of the sentence are ambiguous for later readers. Did all three of them work at manual labor? We know only of Paul’s occupation — and that from the account in Acts. In such moments, of course, the Thessalonians had no need to read between the lines.

239

See Phil 4:13-19; for this understanding of the relationship between Paul and this community, see Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 2-7, 436-48.

240

Thus the suggestion by Hock *(Social Context),* that Paul made this choice so that it might serve in an exemplary way (thus emulating the philosophers), is a

conjecture that could well be supported by the double reasons given in 2 Thess 3:8-9: “so that we would not be a burden to any of you”; and “to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate.” But only the former concern is expressed in the present passage.

241

On the matter of how itinerants were maintained in the Greco-Roman world, see esp. the study by Hock (preceding note).

242

Translated by J. Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 675. The “Gamaliel” cited is from the third century, but he is here echoing the first-century Hillel, “Thus you have learned: Whoever derives worldly benefit from teachings of Torah takes his life from the world” (*Aboth* 4:5).

243

Because English is so unlike Greek in this regard, the asyndeton here is seldom noted in the commentaries. But Malherbe (149) observes, probably correctly, that the

244

Otherwise Lightfoot (28-29) and others (Malherbe, Witherington), who see the sentence as broken; for the view taken here cf. Best (109); it is recognized at least as an option by Green (133). Wanamaker (105), however, mistakenly identifies “as you are witnesses” as the main verb, which in turn means “double duty” is out of the question. Cf. also Richard (86), who suggests that the accusative (ἕνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν) also “seems to rule this out”; but that is to miss the force of the accusative, which has been fronted by Paul as the direct object of the participles that follow. It also creates some awkwardness in his interpretation of v. 11.

245

Lightfoot (27) sees this appeal as referring to what is outward and observable by the Thessalonians and what is inward and thus observable only to God. But that seems doubtful, since motive is not emphasized here in any way. A generation later than Paul, Josephus (*War* 1.595) reports that the wife of Pheroras, one of those who plotted to assassinate Herod, pled her case with Herod in these terms: “O king, and may God hear me too, as witness to the truth of my words, for he cannot be deceived” (Cornfield edition, p. 115).

246

Thus most English translations have done as the TNIV; see the following note.

247

The difficulty with translating adverbs into a second language is that the range of

meanings is broad enough so that translations tend to cover the gamut of possibilities. Here one finds “holy” (T/NIV, ESV), “pure” (NRSV, GNB), “devout” (REB), and “impeccably fair” (REB), the latter having joined the first two adverbs together.

248

Ant. 6.87 (LCL 5.310).

249

See *Republic* 1, p. 331A (LCL 5.18).

250

Indeed, these two ways of putting it (blameless, without fault) occur in most of the English translations.

251

In this case it occurs as an adjective, which in some of the Greek MSS (B L 0278 33 81 1241 et al.) was changed into the adverb.

252

Paul’s Greek is a straight dative, which Rigaux interprets as referring to his comportment when “among them,” a view reflected in the T/NIV. But as Best (105) points out, that view could have been expressed more easily with a preposition, as it is in 2:13 below.

253

For this usage see n. 56 on 1:7 above; for reasons that are not at all clear, the NIV translators (unchanged in the TNIV) turned this present tense participle into a past tense. While one may grant that the overall perspective of the narrative refers to the past, this participle brings their believing into the present (cf. the following participle in v. 12 [“who calls you”]).

254

Gk. ἐγενήθημεν, which implies more than just “being,” but carries the sense “proving to be” or “turning out to be” (see BDAG 7). For those who think otherwise, that a verb is “missing” here, see n. 91.

255
On Paul's use of paternal imagery in this letter, see T. J. Burke, "Pauline Paternity in 1 Thessalonians," *TynB* 51 (2000), 59-80.
256
Gk. ἑαυτου, rather than the simple possessive αὐτου (cf. v. 8 above). While in some contexts the reflexive and possessive pronouns can be used interchangeably, such is hardly the case here. This is a deliberate reminder that they are his own converts, whatever else.
257
Modern readers should exhibit due caution about reading their own cultural values back into the first-century world. But evidence from Greek literature indicates that at least one view of "correction" is that "a father should not use beatings but rather reason, exhortation, counsel, and praise of good conduct to instruct his children to follow virtue and shun vices" (Green, 134, citing Plutarch).
258
See 1 Cor 4:7; Phil 2:22; 1 Tim 1:2, 18; 2 Tim 1:2; 2:1. These latter four instances serve as quiet evidence of the genuinely Pauline nature of the Pastoral Epistles, whoever the actual "writer" may have been.
259
Gk. παρακαλουντες; Paul will use it again in further appeals in this letter (4:1, 10; 5:14) — not to mention that he urges them to do the same with one another (4:18 and 5:11).
260
Indeed, 60 percent of the occurrences in his extant letters (32 of 54) occur in these three.
261
Gk. παραμυθούμενοι; its cognate noun in 1 Cor 14:3 is usually rendered "comfort."
262
Green (136) thinks otherwise, offering extrabiblical evidence that the verb was used in these kinds of contexts with the view of persuading someone toward a certain kind of conduct.
263
Gk. μαρτυρόμενοι, for which BDAG offer two basic options: "to affirm something with solemnity," or "to urge something as a matter of great importance." They place the present usage under the second option.
264
They include "urging" (TNIV, GNB, REB), "charge" (RSV, ESV [whose

translators were “revising” the RSV]), “pleading” (NRSV, NAB), “imploring” (NASB), “insisting” (NAB, NET), and “appealing” (NJB).

265

Paul is here picking up a common deuteronomic metaphor for living righteously (i.e., in keeping with Torah); see, among others, Deut 5:33 (“Walk in obedience to all the LORD your God has commanded you”). It is of some interest that the LXX translators tended to translate out the metaphor and replace it with a simple “go (πορεύεσθαι) in the ways of the Lord,” but the metaphor is an obviously live one for Paul, who uses it some 17 times in his letters. The present expression occurs again in Col 1:10, except that “God” is there replaced with “the Lord” (= Christ). At the time of the writing of this commentary this is a metaphor in transition from a live to a dead one. The American black community can say, “Walk the talk,” most likely because of the deeply religious (biblical) roots of this culture. But I am assured that most North American young people would not understand it as a metaphor, which probably says something about the lack of biblical roots for the present generation.

266

This is the first of ten instances where Paul uses “kingdom of God” language, which is common in the Gospels as characterizing the ministry/teaching of Jesus himself. Not all see the present instance as reflecting the “already/not yet” aspect of the kingdom that characterized Jesus’ own proclamation, but both the context as a whole and the way the phrase sits in the present clause, especially with the present tense of the verb, suggest as much. On Paul’s use of the phrase see, K. Donfried, “The Kingdom of God in Paul,” in *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation* (ed. W. L. Willis; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1987), 175-90.

267

Cf. Best (108), “. . . denotes the continuous and effective call of God . . . which can reassure his readers that they will attain to the kingdom and the glory even though their walk is not always worthy of God.”

268

Rigaux (432-33) and Marshall (74) have pointed out that this idea can also be found in some expressions of Greek religion. Since one ultimately becomes like the God one worships, the differences between Paul and the philosophers on this point is immense indeed.

269

On this matter see my *Pauline Christology,* 249-51.

270

The καί represented by this “and” is found in the earliest and best of the MS

tradition: א A B P Ψ 6 81 1739 1881 pc m syh. It is lacking in D F G H 0278 33 𝔪 lat syr, omitted almost certainly for stylistic reasons, since Paul's sentence reads καὶ διὰ τουτο καὶ ("and for this reason also"), which can be as awkward in Greek as in English; and it is hard to imagine anyone's *adding* this καί to Paul's sentence, despite H. Koester ("The Text of First Thessalonians," in *The Living Text* [Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985]), who thinks this one can be disputed.

271

See pp. 7-8 above.

272

On the issue of the authenticity of vv. 14-16, where some would also include this verse, see n. 21 below.

273

Gk. διὰ τουτο, a phrase which functions in a variety of ways in Paul's letters. It is often transitional (= in light of all this; e.g., 2 Cor 4:1); and at times (as here, arguably) it tends to point forward (always in light of what has been said), as in 1 Cor 4:17; 2 Cor 13:10; Rom 4:16; Phlm 15. The difficulty here with making it pick up something that has preceded can be seen in the variety of suggestions that have been forthcoming, the most logical of which would seem to be the immediately preceding reference to God's "calling you into his kingdom and glory"; but that does not seem to offer an adequate reason for the present thanksgiving, which emphasizes the Thessalonians' hearing and receiving Paul's preaching as God's own word.

274

For this meaning of the ὅτι cf. Best (110); Bruce (44, who also notes support from BDF 442.12); Marshall (77); Morris (80); and P. T. O'Brien (*Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* [NovTSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977], 154). It should be pointed out that the T/NIV has helped the English reader by eliminating the causes of confusion, while at the same time making clear that what follows is the reason for the thanksgiving.

275

So also O'Brien (preceding note); Wanamaker (110), which he also argues points forward to the ὅτι (but as causal rather than offering the content of the thanksgiving). Frame (106) reads this as "*we* as well as *you*," which seems most highly unlikely, given Pauline usage elsewhere.

276

The eschatological conclusion to v. 12 is suggested by some, but that makes little sense at all, since at that point Paul is not so much affirming the Thessalonians as he is concluding the reminder of his former exhortations.

277
Gk. παραλαβόντες, which by this time had become semitechnical language in the church for "teaching that had been handed down," thus, "tradition" in its proper sense. This becomes especially clear in two passages in 1 Corinthians, first regarding the Lord's Supper, "I received [παρέλαβον] from the Lord what I 'handed down' [παρέδωκα] to you" (11:23), and second, regarding the gospel itself, and especially the role of the resurrection in that gospel, in 15:3 ("For I 'handed down' [παρέδωκα] . . . what also I had received [παρέλαβον]"). In both of these cases Paul is concerned that the Corinthians recognize the "traditional" nature of what he had "handed down" to them. In this earlier instance the emphasis is solely on the Thessalonians' "having received" the word.

278
BDAG list it only under the rubric "that which is heard," rendering the present passage as "the word of proclamation that goes out from us." But that seems to miss the emphasis on the "enclosed" genitive construction itself.

279
As with the preceding verb (see n. 8), this one (ἐδέξασθε [δέχομαι]) also moves close to a semitechnical term for "receiving by approval" what was "handed down" (cf. BDAG 5, "to indicate approval or conviction by accepting").

280
In the phrase λόγον θεου. the genitive can only be subjective (= functions as the subject of the verbal idea in the qualified noun), not objective (= "the message about God").

281
The TNIV translators chose to make this καί intensive rather than progressive; it had been unfortunately omitted altogether in the NIV (and NET). The concept of "currently" for this adverbial use of καί is expressed in the NAB as "now at work."

282
See e.g., Richard, 113-25.

283
For this early way of designating Christians, see n. 56 on 1:7 above (cf. 2:10).

284
The English Bible tradition has been heavily influenced by the KJV in this case and has gone predominantly with "in you," as have most commentators, the majority of whom do not note the matter at all. More recently both the NJB and NET have rendered it "among you," probably because this phrase in Paul most often means that, rather than something at work in the individual believers; cf. Col 3:16, where the TNIV (correcting the NIV) has, "may the message of Christ

dwell among you."

285

16 Or them fully

286

The TNIV, along with most English translations, put a nonrestrictive comma here. But there are good reasons to pause on this matter; see esp. F. D. Gilliard, "The Problem of the Antisemitic Comma between 1 Thessalonians 2.14 and 15," *NTS* 35 (1989), 481-502; and more recently, C. B. Amphoux, "1 Th 2,14-16: Quel Juifs sont-ils mis en cause par Paul?" *FilolNT* 16 (2003), 85-101. The entire sentence, in fact, makes far more sense if the "who" is understood as restrictive, despite the rejection by E. Verhoef, "Die Bedeutung des Artikels τω̃ν in 1 Thess 2.15," *Biblische Notizen* 80 (1995), 41-46. See the discussion below.

287

Related to the nonrestrictive comma (see preceding note), the majority of later witnesses (D1 Ψ 𝔓sy) added an interpretive ἰδίους ("their own") to distinguish these as the OT, not early Christian, prophets; thus the KJV: "and their own prophets." But it is highly doubtful whether this early interpretation is the correct one. See the discussion below.

288

The words "of God" are not in the Greek text, but for most scholars they seem to be implied from the context. Several witnesses in the Western textual tradition (D F G 629 latt) certainly thought so, or they would not have added these words to their texts. See the discussion below (p. 102).

289

The first sentence goes through to the clause about "heaping up their sins to the limit" (v. 16b). The final sentence in Greek is as the TNIV has it.

290

The bibliography is esp. large, most of it dealing with the "anti-Judaic" polemic; in chronological order see O. Michel, "Fragen zu 1 Thessalonicher 2,14-16: Antijüdische Polemik bei Paulus," in *Antijüdäismus im Neuen Testament? Exegetische und systematische Beitrage* (ed. W. P. Eckert, N. P. Levison, and Martin Stöhr; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1967), 50-59; P. Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 102-11; N. Hyldahl, "Jesus og joderne ifolge 1 Tess 2, 14-16," *SEÅ* 37/38 (1972/73), 238-54; J. Coppens, "Une diatribe antijuive dans I Thess. II,13-16," *ETL* 51 (1975), 90-95; K. L. Donfried, "Paul and Judaism: I Thessalonians 2:13-16 as a Test Case," *Int* 38 (1984), 242-53; G. Geiger, "1 Thess 2,13-16: Der Initiationstext des christlichen Antisemitismus?" *BL* 59 (1986), 154-60; J. C. Hurd, "Paul ahead of His Time: 1 Thess. 2:13-16," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity,* vol.

1: *Paul and the Gospels* (ed. P. Richardson and D. Granskou; Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 21-36; K. Haacker, "Elemente des heidnischen Antijudaismus im Neuen Testament," *Evangelische Theologie* 48 (1988), 404-18; P.-G. Müller, "The Human Paul of the New Testament: Anti-Judaism in I Thess 2:14-16," *BK* 44 (1989), 58-65; T. Holtz, "The Judgement on the Jews and the Salvation of All Israel: 1 Thes 2,15-16 and Rom 11,25-26," in *The Thessalonians Correspondence* (ed. R. F. Collins, 1990), 284-94; J. W. Simpson Jr., "The Problems Posed by 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16 and a Solution," *HBT* 12 (1990), 42-72; N. S. Murrell, "The Human Paul of the New Testament: Anti-Judaism in I Thess 2:14-16," *PEGLMBS* 14 (1994), 169-86; R. A. Wortham, "The Problem of Anti-Judaism in 1 Thess 2:14-16 and Related Pauline Texts," *BTB* 25 (1995), 37-44; S. Légasse, "Paul et les Juifs d'après 1 Thessaloniciens 2,13-16," *RB* 104 (1997), 527-91.

291

This was first argued by B. A. Pearson, "1 Thessalonians 2:13-16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation," *HTR* 64 (1971), 79-94; it was later seconded by H. Boers, "The Form-Critical Study of Paul's Letters: 1 Thessalonians as a Case Study," *NTS* 22 (1976), 140-58; N. A. Beck, "Anti-Jewish Polemic in the Epistles of Paul," in *Mature Christianity: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic in the New Testament* (London: Associated University Press, 1981), 39-50; D. D. Schmidt, "1 Thess 2:13-16: Linguistic Evidence for an Interpolation," *JBL* 102 (1983), 269-79; and L. E. Keck, "Images of Paul in the New Testament," *Int* 43 (1989), 341-51. The only *commentator* in English to take this position is Richard, 119-27; but the very difficulty he has in offering a commentary on such a view should speak for itself. Pearson's article also set off a series of responses arguing for authenticity: see esp. Carol J. Schlueter, *Filling Up the Measure: Polemical Hyperbole in 1 Thessalonians 2.14-16* (JSNTSS 98: Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), who also discusses earlier responses to Pearson; cf. now M. Bockmuehl, "1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 and the Church in Jerusalem," *TynB* 52 (2001), 1-31, who offers solid historical evidence for placing these references within known events in the latter part of the fifth decade of the first Christian century, and J. A. Weatherly, "The Authenticity of 1 Thessalonians 2.13-16: Additional Evidence," *JSNT* 42 (1991), 79-98.

292

Indeed, one wonders whether any of this misguided reading of the text could have happened before the holocaust.

293

Another inherent difficulty with the passage for some is to square it with Paul's attitude toward his own people expressed in Romans 11. For a cogent analysis

and solution to this issue see R. Hoppe, “Der Topos der Prophetenverfolgung,” *NTS* 50 (2004), 535-49.

294

Gk. γάρ, here a “marker of clarification” (BDAG 2).

295

Luke’s point seems clear enough: The agitation was begun by Thessalonian Jews, who were apparently distressed by Paul’s success in their synagogue. But the actual foment took on a decidedly Gentile character once the disturbance got seriously under way.

296

In a later letter (Gal 1:22) Paul claims to be unknown to these churches in a personal way; thus these two passages together attest to the fact that knowledge about fellow believers spread rather widely in these earliest communities of believers.

297

Although a view suggested by Calvin (348), and seconded by Frame (109), has much to commend it — that Paul is responding to a “thought that might have entered their minds, ‘If this is the true religion, why do the Jews, who are the holy people of God, oppose it with such hostility?’ ” Best (113) offers five other options without choosing one.

298

Gk. των ἰδίων συμφυλετων, a NT *hapax legomenon*, which refers to “members of the same tribe or people group” (BDAG, who offer “compatriot”) as its basic meaning.

299

E.g., Marshall (78-79), on the basis of the outburst against Jewish opposition that follows (vv. 15-16), which, he suggests, is otherwise “quite tangential and unnoticed”; cf. N. H. Taylor, “Who Persecuted the Thessalonian Christians?” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 58 (2002), 784-801. But Lightfoot (32) seems to have had it right, that “the opposition to the Gospel instigated by the Jews was taken up by the native population, without whose cooperation the Jews would have been powerless.” Thus, this phrase stands in marked opposition to the ὑπὸ των ’Ιουδαίων that follows, further reinforced as it is by the ἰδίων (your *own* fellow citizens). At issue, after all, is not who instigated the *original* persecution, but who is *currently* carrying it on in Thessalonica. And for Jews to be harassing in this way what is now a predominantly Gentile community (1:9) seems historically to be most highly unlikely. For an esp. helpful analysis of the possible source and nature of this harassment, see J. M. G. Barclay, “Conflict in Thessalonica,” *CBQ* 55 (1993), 512-30.

300
As is made certain in 1:9: “You turned from idols to serve the living and true God.” See the Introduction, pp. 6-7.
301
See further the discussion on v. 15 below.
302
Not as a native Judean, of course, but as one who had emigrated to Jerusalem to be trained as a rabbi.
303
This passage is often seen as “anti-Semitic”; but comma or no comma (see n. 16), such a view reflects a radical misunderstanding of both Paul and this passage.
304
That is, does it mean “the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and who . . .” (nonrestrictive), or “the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and who . . .” (restrictive). The former would mean, as most do understand it, that “the Jews” in general are responsible for the dreadful deeds that follow; the latter refers specifically and only to the Jews actually responsible for those deeds.
305
See 1:7 (πα.σιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐν [“all who believe, (living) in . . .”]); 1:10 (’Ιησου.ν τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμα.ς [“Jesus who rescues us”]); 2:4 (θεῳ. τῳ. δοκιμάζοντι [“(the) God who tests”]); 2:10 (ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν [“you who believe”]); 2:12 (του. θεου. του. καλου.ντος ὑμα.ς [“the God who calls you”]); 2:14 (τω.ν ἐκκλησιω.ν του. θεου. τω.ν οὐσω.ν ἐν τ῍Ιουδαίᾳ [“the churches of God which are in Judea”]). The next instance in the letter (4:5) is much more ambiguous, and is treated variously in the translations. Is it “the Gentiles who do not know God” (NASU) or “the pagans, who do not know God” (TNIV)? In light of Paul’s ordinary usage it is probably the former (see the discussion ad loc.). This is followed in 4:8 with τὸν θεὸν τὸν καὶ διδόντα τὸ πνευ.μα αὐτου. τὸ ἅγιον (“the God who also gives you his Holy Spirit”); cf. 4:15 and 17 (“we the living who remain”). All of these are best understood as restrictive. To make this one nonrestrictive thus makes it an “orphan” in terms of Pauline usage in this letter. Indeed, one wonders whether this comma could ever have happened if it were not for the (unfortunate) verse numbers that have been inserted into the text.
306
For this proposal and its proponents, see n. 16 above.
307

That is, Paul's sentence has four distinct modifiers of the phrase ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ("by the Jews"), while the first one has a compound object of the verb "killed" and the last one has a participial modifier explaining *how* they have been "hostile to everyone."

308

The (rather thoroughgoing) tendency to treat this καί as an adverb seems to miss Paul's own sentence structure by far too much. His clause reads: τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν καὶ τοὺς προφήτας . . . (who both the Lord Jesus killed and the prophets . . .). Under all normal circumstances — and these do appear to be "normal" — this should be the only way anyone would read this Greek clause. This grammatical note in itself, not to mention this visual "display" of the clause, should thus lead one to the proper understanding of who "the Jews" are in this clause.

309

Because of the unusual word order τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν καὶ τοὺς προφήτας ("who both the Lord killed Jesus and the prophets"), some have argued that "and the prophets" should go with what follows (= who killed the Lord Jesus, and who persecuted the prophets and us"); see esp. Milligan (30). But this has rightly been rejected by subsequent interpreters.

310

This is easily the majority view; see, among others, Ellicott, Lightfoot, Milligan, Frame, Best, and Bruce. The reasons for going this route seem to be two: (*a*) a long-standing tendency on the part of NT scholarship to set aside the NT evidence for prophecy and prophets in the early church (despite Paul's own affirmation that "God has set in the church first apostles, second prophets" (1 Cor 12:28); (*b*) an equally long-standing tendency to think immediately of the OT when someone uses the term "the prophets." But as Rigaux (447) has pointed out, this particular word order has already occurred twice in this letter (1:6, ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου ["you imitators of us became and of the Lord"]; 2:10, ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες καὶ ὁ θεός ["you are witnesses as is God"]). Thus, besides its reflecting a thoroughly Pauline worldview, this view makes far more sense of the present passage itself. For further argumentation in favor of his understanding, see F. D. Gilliard, "Paul and the Killing of the Prophets in 1 Thess. 2:15," *NovT* 36 (1994), 259-70, who also makes a strong case for translating the definite article as "his prophets." He notes Kirsopp Lake (*The Early Epistles of St. Paul* [London: Rivingtons, 1911], 87) and John Koenig (*Jews and Christians in Dialogue: New Testament Foundations* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979], 47) as also supporting this view.

311

Morris (84 n. 76) is one of the few commentators who even acknowledge this option, but dismisses it as "having no sufficient reason." But it seems to me that the opposite view ought to be the one that is challenged, since to take "and the prophets" as pointing backward not only interrupts the chronological sequence of Paul's sentence but offers no adequate understanding of the subject "the Jews," which then is simply a generic designation.

312

As T. D. Still, e.g., argues (*Conflict at Thessalonica* [JSNTSS; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 64-66).

313

Still's view (preceding note) that Paul is here referring to some Jews in Thessalonica as responsible for this action seems ultimately untenable, both as a historical improbability and as unnecessary.

314

Best (114) points out that the positive dimension of this phrase is one of Paul's favorite expressions; see 2:4 and 4:1 in this letter; cf. 1 Cor 7:32; Gal 1:10; Col 1:10; 2 Tim 2:4.

315

This last contrast is unfortunately blunted in the TNIV's "hostile to everyone." While that is something of a truism, it misses the striking θεός / ἀνθρώπους (God and human beings) contrast involved here.

316

These words are not in the Greek text itself, but have been supplied by the translators in order to make for a smoother and more immediately understandable sentence (cf. NLT, "by trying to keep us from").

317

Gk. εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας πάντοτε. The awkwardness comes from the aorist infinitive (usually punctiliar) accompanied by the adverb "always." For similar language, but without the "always," cf. Gen 15:16 LXX, οὔπω γὰρ ἀναπεπλήρωνται αἱ ἁμαρτίαι τῶν Αμορραίων ἕως τοῦ νῦν ("for the sins of the Amorites have not yet reached their full measure"; it is more distantly echoed in Dan 8:23 and 2 Macc 6:14-15). Whether intentional or not, Paul is using language found in the Genesis passage to suggest that the opposite is now true of "the Jews."

318

Marshall (80) suggests that Paul is here "using an idea which was current in apocalyptic thinking and in early Christianity," a view advanced first by E. Bammel, "Judenverfolgung und Naherwartung: Zur Eschatologie des Ersten Thessalonicherbriefs," *ZTK* 56 (1959), 294-315. But Marshall's alleged parallels

(Rev 6:11; 2 Esdr 2:41; 4:36- 37) have to do with the “full number” of martyrs, an idea that is only distantly related to this one, if at all.

319

Cf. *T. Levi* 6:11, ἔφθασε δὲ ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ του. θεου. εἰς τέλος, wording that is identical to Paul’s except for the του. θεου. (which was eventually added to Paul’s text as well). It is hard to know what to make of this phenomenon. It is altogether unlikely that Paul knew this work; moreover, there is good evidence for some Christian interpolations into the Testaments. And since our earliest MSS for this work date only from the tenth Christian century, it is more likely that this is an interpolation from Paul into the *Testament of Levi* than that the two authors should have independently landed on this identical wording — especially since the “of God” in *Testament of Levi* reflects a later scribal addition within the Christian community, which was already available to the interpolator of the Testaments.

On the larger question of this passage and Paul’s alleged anti-Semitism, see J. S. Lamp, “Is Paul Anti-Jewish? *Testament of Levi* 6 in the Interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16,” *CBQ* 65 (2003), 408-27, who demonstrates quite convincingly in light of the *Testament of Levi* passage that Paul is here making a reasonable — though admittedly passionate — assessment of the generally negative Jewish response to God’s work in Christ Jesus.

320

The full term (wrath of God) occurs only three times (see Rom 1:18; Col 3:6; Eph 5:6) and in each case points to God’s eschatological judgment on the wicked.

321

Indeed, had this sentence occurred in 2 Thessalonians rather than here, it would have been used rather universally to condemn that letter as post-AD 70 and therefore not by Paul. See further the Introduction, pp. 4-5.

322

Cf. Findlay (57) and Frame (114), “proleptic.”

323

See, e.g., Best (122), “It must be allowed that 1 Th. 2.16c shows Paul holding an unacceptable anti-Semitic position.” That seems to be similar to the suggestion that open public disapproval of a sitting American president makes that person anti-American!

324

See the discussion of this word in 3:2 below, where the reason for putting it in quotes is given.

325

R. W. Funk includes this passage in his discussion of Paul's "presence" being felt through his letters (see "The Apostolic Presence: Paul," in *Parables and Presence: Forms of the New Testament Tradition* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982], 81-102), a slightly revised edition of the study that first appeared in the John Knox *Festschrift* (*Christian History and Interpretation* [ed. W. R. Farmer, J. Knox, and C. F. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967], 249-68).

326

Indeed, Gaventa (40) suggests, "perhaps the most outstanding feature of this text is the way it interweaves a straighforward account of events with highly emotional interpretative remarks and asides."

327

Translators are divided on the force of this δέ. It occurs so frequently in Greek as a simple connective that it is frequently not translated at all (esp. in the NIV, some of which have been restored in the TNIV). In the present case many translations have perceived it as an adversative to what has preceded (T/NIV, NASU, ESV). But since the narrative that follows does not easily stand in an adversative relationship to vv. 14-16, the NRSV's "as for us" has perhaps best captured the sense of the relationship between the two paragraphs.

328

See also Morris (86); many think otherwise, tending to see it as simply picking up the narrative without any special contrast to what has immediately preceded (e.g., Rigaux, 457; Best, 124; Wanamaker, 120).

329

Gk. ἀπορφανίζω, a compound (ἀπό + ὀρφανίζω) which means "to make an orphan of" — a rare, but understandable, metaphor. Although some have doubted this as an intentional metaphor, understanding it as such goes back as far as Chrysostom (*Homilies on 1 Thessalonians,* 334), who contrasts it to four other words Paul might possibly have used instead of this one.

330

Gk. πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας, a combination of πρὸς καιρός ("for a time") and πρὸς ὥρας ("for an hour"), which works like our English idiom, "for a short space of time."

331

Indeed, one wonders whether such a text can be understood at all in current North American culture where e-mail and/or the cell phone have come to serve as an umbilical cord for many college students with regard to friends and family. The present college generation (some of our own grandchildren at the time of writing) have lost almost all sense of time and distance with regard to

communication with others. Will it be possible for them to have any genuine "feel" for Paul's anxiety here?

332

Gk. περισσοτέρως, which has elative force here (implying intensity), rather than comparative.

333

Gk. ἐπιθυμία, which is used in this positive sense in Paul only here and in Phil 1:23; otherwise it is totally negative and seen by Paul in Romans 7 as the primary sin, which disallows a view that one can keep the law without sinning.

334

In this case, however, it is expressed with a διότι (combined form of διά + ὅτι; lit. "because of this" = "for this reason").

335

Gk. καί; some earlier interpreters (e.g., Ellicott [34], Findlay [59]) rejected any adversative force here; but see BDAG 1bη.

336

Gk. ἐνέκοΨεν, a word which, as the combination ἐν + κόπτω implies, apparently originated as a military term for "cutting up" a road to make it impassable; see 3:11 below for Paul's response to it in prayer.

337

On this usage see L. Morris, "ΚΑΙ ΑΠΑ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΣ," *NovT* 1 (1956), 205-8; cf. the discussion in Rigaux (461). In the LXX see Deut 9:13; 1 Sam 17:39; Neh 13:20; 1 Macc 3:30. Earlier interpreters understood this locution to mean "not only once, but twice" (e.g., Ellicott, 34; Milligan, 34).

338

The singular "I" occurs four more times in the two letters (1 Thess 3:5; 5:27; 2 Thess 2:5; 3:17); this singular phenomenon is an especially weighty argument for the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians. How could a forger have done this, one wonders.

339

That is, the emphasis is not on Paul in *contrast* to others (so Ellicott, 34), but on Paul himself as especially having this desire.

340

Paul had none of the modern proclivities with regard to a personal Enemy to God and his work. He was, after all, well acquainted with the scriptural data and, with Jesus, was a man of his times who took such a reality with full seriousness; see further on 3:5.

341

The most plausible would seem to be that of Marshall (86), followed by

Wanamaker (122), who ties it to the “thorn in the flesh” in 2 Cor 12:7, which he likewise attributes to Satan. For a list of other speculations, see Frame, 121.

342

Which in itself is a remarkable moment, given our human tendency to elaborate on our “failures” to make sure the second party understands fully why and how it happened.

343

Paul’s Greek sentence is broken at this point, and its intensity probably accounts for its being verbless (but legitimately so in Greek); but his meaning seems clear. Putting his sentence into English, but keeping his word order, we read: “For who [is] our hope or joy or victor’s wreath of boasting — or [is it] not even you — in the presence of our Lord, Jesus, at his coming?” The punctuation, of course, is mine. Frame (122), followed by Best (129), makes a most unlikely suggestion that the καὶ ὑμεῖς implies, “you as well as others.” That is surely to throw a red herring into the middle of Paul’s perfectly understandable phrase.

344

As found, e.g., in the frequently used “I hope so,” which means something may or may not happen.

345

These are entries 2 and 3 respectively in BDAG, who place our passage under number 2 along with Col 1:27 (Christ Jesus, our hope of glory). Although this makes good sense regarding the latter, which almost certainly means “Christ Jesus, who through his death and resurrection has secured for us our hope [= certainty] about our future glory,” it seems far less likely here.

346

As in the RSV, NRSV, and ESV. The phrase itself occurs in the LXX of Prov 16:31, where it is said that “grey [or white] hair is a στέφανος καυχήσεως [crown of honour (NJB)]”; cf. Ezek 16:12. Wanamaker (124) suggests that these OT texts have no bearing here, which may be true in terms of Paul’s intent here, but surely not in wording.

347

See 1 Thess 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess 2:1, 8 (2:9); cf. 1 Cor 11:26 (“until he comes”). Elsewhere in the NT it is used in the Gospels exclusively by Matthew and only in ch. 24 (vv. 3, 27, 37, 39); Jas 5:7, 8; and 2 Pet 3:4. On the Parousia itself, see further A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (NovTSup 13; Leiden: Brill, 1966); and C. Brown, “The Parousia and Eschatology in the NT,” *NIDNTT* 2:901-35.

Elsewhere Paul speaks of this event as the ἀποκάλυΨις (“revelation”) of the Lord (2 Thess 1:7; 1 Cor 1:7); the “ἐπιφανείας (“manifestation”) of the Lord” (1

Tim 6:14; cf. 2 Tim 4:8; Tit 2:13); or “the day of the Lord” (1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16 [the latter two “of Christ”]).

348

With the meaning “coming” (as over against “presence”), see 1 Cor 16:17 (Stephanas and Fortunatus); 2 Cor 7:6 (Titus); Phil 1:26 (Paul).

349

For the full statistical data, see G. D. Fee, *Pauline Christology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 26.

350

This illustration came to mind because in the three weeks prior to the time of writing two sets of parents in our church house group had newborn girls. One can hardly miss the sheer delight such an event has been for them, and for those of us who have weekly been with them during the months of pregnancy, from the initial announcement to the actual birth. And that delight is what also enables the mothers to endure the early months of weariness, which is visible to the eye but seems minimal in comparison with the joy.

351

The TNIV here reflects what is almost certainly Paul’s original text (τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ [D* 33 b Ambrosiaster, read also by B, but without the τοῦ θεοῦ]), since it is the only one that can adequately explain the great diversity in the tradition. The problem, of course, even for ancient scribes, is that it looks as if Paul had said “our brother and God’s co-worker” (which in fact is the wording of the ESV!), which borders on nonsense in terms of Pauline usage and theology. The earliest, and primary, option was to substitute διάκονον for συνεργόν (“our brother and God’s servant”; so ℵ A P Ψ 0278 6 81 629* 1241 1739 pc lat co; Basil). Although this reading is preferred by some (RSV, Morris [94-95]), if it were original it would be nearly impossible to explain how the other variations came about (as Marshall, 90, correctly recognizes). The later (Majority) text conflated the two early texts, reading τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν καὶ διάκονον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ συνεργὸν ἡμῶν (“our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow labourer,” KJV, NKJV).

352

Paul’s Greek sentence has the ὑμᾶς (“you”) immediately after στηρίξαι (“to strengthen”), which the TNIV has chosen to put with the second word, “encourage,” and thus making it do double duty. Later scribes chose to repeat the ὑμᾶς after the second infinitive, thus the KJV’s “to establish you, and to comfort you.” Although a bit awkward to put into good English, Paul’s own sentence appears to intend the ὑμᾶς to be the object of the first verb (στηρίξαι) only, with the phrase “about your faith” as the object of the verb “to encourage.” Thus: “to

strengthen you and to encourage regarding your faith."

353

Gk. διό, which appears again in 5:11, and frequently in 2 Corinthians.

354

Gk στέγω, a verb that occurs again in v. 5, and elsewhere only twice more in Paul (1 Cor 9:12 and 13:7 [Love "endures" all things]).

355

On the issue of "alone," as to whether it refers to Paul only or to Paul and Silas, see K. P. Donfried, "Was Timothy in Athens? Some Exegetical Reflections on 1 Thess. 3.1-3," in *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 209-19 (which appeared first in German in the Knoch *Festschrift* [Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991], 189-96), who argues for "Paul only"; cf. Malherbe, 190. See also A. Wainwright, "Where Did Silas Go? (And What Was His Connection with *Galatians*?)," *JSNT* 8 (1980), 66-70, who conjectures that Silas had also been sent off somewhere (perhaps to Galatia). On the usage itself see C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 119.

356

Richard (152) is an exception. He rejects Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians and assumes that the mention of Athens here means that Paul was in Athens at the time of writing — which simply cannot be known.

357

This is not to say it cannot be done (cf. the preceding note), but rather that we are left with only possibilities and conjectures.

358

As with the recurring plural vocative "brothers [and sisters]," this designation at least includes Timothy as a fellow member of the Christian community; but the "our" in this case is probably intended to emphasize the closer, nearly familial bond that he has with Timothy. On the other hand, when Timothy's name is joined to that of Paul in later salutations, this is the regular way of referring to him (2 Cor 1:1; Col 1:1; Phlm 1). E. E. Ellis ("Paul and His Co-Workers," *NTS* 17 [1971], 437-52) is willing to include this as a "title" for Paul's co-workers, but that seems a bit of a stretch and is rejected by most NT scholars, although Wanamaker (128) is willing to allow that "it clearly designates Timothy as Paul's co-worker in this passage." Perhaps, but not necessarily, since that is what the next word is intended to do.

359

And this despite the aorist ἐπέμΨαμεν, which would then have been understood as an "epistolary aorist," meaning something put into the past tense from the

perspective not of the writer but from that of the recipients in their having received the letter.

360

Although this passage (1 Cor 3:9) has sometimes been used to justify the wrong meaning here (e.g., Frame, 127; Bruce, 61), that totally misses Paul's grammar in that case, where he uses the vernacular possessive (where the possessive is fronted) three times to emphasize that everyone (Paul, Apollos, the Corinthians) belongs to God and not to mere human beings. See the full argumentation in G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 134. It is this clear passage in 1 Corinthians that dictates how the combination should be understood in this earlier one.

361

This misunderstanding is put boldly in the ESV ("our brother and God's co-worker"); it was also so understood by Ellicott (37), Lightfoot (41), Milligan (37), Frame (127), and now by Wanamaker (128), Richard (150), Holmes (97), Malherbe (191); Witherington (92), and W.-H. Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 68-71. It is properly rejected by Green (159-60) and Beale (96). See the discussion in B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (rev. ed. with Bart Ehrman; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 240-42; and G. D. Fee and M. L. Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 79-80. Thus those who who make a great deal out of human beings' working together with God are involved in modern wishfulness rather than an exposition of Paul! Indeed, it is precisely the possibility of such misunderstanding that caused early scribes to tinker with the text in the first place.

362

Gk. στηρίζεσθαι; see further 3:13; 2 Thess 2:17; 3:3, the next two of which (3:13; 2 Thess 2:17) appear in his two major prayer reports in these two letters, and the final one (2 Thess 3:3) as a promissory note as to what the Lord will do for them.

363

Cf. Best (137, on v. 5): ". . . faith is a many-sided and complex conception."

364

Gk. θλίΨεσιν (θλῖΨις); cf. 1:6, where the T/NIV rendered it "[severe] suffering." This is one of the more difficult words to represent with adequate English; in fact, of its 45 occurrences in the NT the NIV rendered it 15 different ways. Nonetheless, "trials" is unique to the T/NIV among the English translations (as is the thoroughly inadequate "trouble" in 2 Thess 1:6), since the English word "trials" seldom picks up the sense of "oppression, affliction, tribulation" (BDAG

[“trouble that inflicts distress”]) that is inherent in the Greek word. A person may bring “trials” upon oneself; this word implies “affliction” that is not of one’s own doing, but comes from an outside source or sources.

365

See, e.g., Frame (127) and Hiebert (133-35).

366

Gk. σαίνω, a NT *hapax legomenon* (once-only word), and an otherwise rare verb in Greek, for which there had been very little external evidence until a 1941 papyrus discovery that contained the word with the present meaning; see H. Chadwick, “1 Thess. 3:3: σαίνεσθαι,” *JTS* 1 (1950), 156-58; and now Malherbe, 192-93.

367

Among commentaries in English see Lightfoot (42), Milligan (38), Frame (128), Morris (96), Richard (141-42), and Hiebert (133-35), a view that has led to a number of interesting conjectures as to how it might work at this point in Paul’s argument! The implication is that of the “tail-wagging dog” who is “trying to win favor by an ingratiating manner, *fawn upon, flatter*” (BDAG 1), a view that was also argued for by N. Baumert, “ ‘Wir lassen uns nicht beirren’: Semantische Fragen in 1 Thess 3,2f,” *FilolNT* 5 (1992), 45-60; cf. J. A. Heikel, “1. Thess. 3,2,” *TSK* 106 (1935), 316 (“deluded”). For those who favor the TNIV reading, see Malherbe (192-93), Green (161), H. Chadwick (previous note), and E. Bammel, “Preparation for the Perils of the Last Days: 1 Thessalonians 3:3,” in *Suffering and Martrydom in the New Testament: Studies Presented to G. M. Styler by the Cambridge New Testament Seminar* (ed. W. Horbury and B. McNeil; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 91-100. Others have chosen to emend the text: R. Perdelwitz, “Zu σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλῖΨεσιν ταύταις, 1 Thess. 3,3,” *TSK* 86 (1913), 613- 15 [δειλαίνεσθαι, “not be cowardly”]; A. D. Knox, “Τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίΨεσιν ταύταις (1 Thess. iii.3),” *JTS* 25 (1924), 290-91 (παθαίνεσθαι, “be filled with emotion”); and E. Nestle, “I Thess. iii.3,” *ExpTim* 18 (1907), 361-62, and St. John R. Parry, “σαίνεσθαι, I Thess. iii 3,” *JTS* 25 (1923/24), 405, who both opt for σιαίνεσθαι (“to be disheartened”), a view then picked up by Louw and Nida (1:374), Richard (141-42), and Beale (97) — although the lexical evidence for this view is especially thin. Rigaux has a full two-page discussion of these alternatives (470-71) before rejecting all of them.

368

Gk. θλῖΨις (cf. n. 49 on 1:6); see further BDAG 1, whose first meaning is “trouble that inflicts distress,” hence “*oppression, affliction, tribulation.*” There seems to be no adequate reason for an understanding of this word, used always

in this sense in Paul, as having in this one instance to do with being deceived by an ingratiating attitude toward them.

369

The contrast is thus between στηρίξαι (to strengthen) and σαίνεσθαι (to unsettle); cf. Findlay, 66.

370

For this emphasis see n. 13 on 2:1 above.

371

Gk. κείμεθα, whose primary meaning is to “lie” or “recline”; but it has taken on a considerable number of extended meanings such as this one, which, with the addition of διὰ τουτο (for this reason), means “to be there for this cause,” thus “to be destined” for something.

372

This nicely represents Paul’s καὶ γάρ, a combination that in cases like this means something close to “for even/also.”

373

Gk. προελέγομεν, which in the imperfect adds the “kept telling you” dimension to the verb.

374

Gk. καθὼς καὶ ἐγένετο καὶ οἴδατε, (lit.) “just as it both happened and you know.” The T/NIV has nicely handled this awkwardness. Although the NRSV (“so it turned out”) has moved away from the “came to pass” language of the KJV tradition (ASV, RSV), it can still be found in the NASU and ESV, even though such “biblish” no longer has meaning in English.

375

Both the NLT and ESV translators have chosen to make this sentence begin a new paragraph. Thus rather than seeing it as forming an inclusio with v. 1, as both the Greek and English traditions have had it, they apparently see Paul as starting up again. But in both translations it appears to fit quite awkwardly as an “introduction” to what follows.

376

This is the second of the five occurrences of the first singular in these letters; see n. 15 above (on 2:18).

377

But see 2 Cor 4:4, which is the notable exception (“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel”).

378

Besides 2 Cor 4:4 (see the previous note), see, e.g., 1 Cor 7:5 and 2 Cor 2:11.

379

See further my discussion of this issue regarding Phil 2:16 in *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 250: "[Paul's] answer seems to be twofold. On the one hand, such an expression as this makes sense only if such a potential really exists; on the other hand, Paul has such confidence in God regarding his converts that it would be unthinkable to him that the potential would ever be realized."

380

In place of Paul's θεῷ (“God”), several early manuscripts have κυρίῳ (א* D* F G a b vg^{mss}), probably under the influence of the κυρίῳ that concludes the preceding sentence (our v. 8). The same phenomenon is repeated by the scribe of א for the next occurrence of “God” in this sentence.

381

See my commentary on Philippians in this series (pp. 2-7) for the larger discussion of friendship in the Greco-Roman world.

382

See further M. M. Mitchell, “New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Convention: The Example of Timothy and Titus,” *JBL* 111 (1992), 641-62.

383

So also BDAG, who do not even offer the alternative understanding for this passage — for good reason, since there is no analogy in Paul for it, and the two analogies to this passage that do exist clearly intend a temporal “now” (Gal 1:10; 1 Cor 13:12b). The view adopted by the NIV (and kept in the TNIV; cf. now NRSV, NAB) can be traced back to Lightfoot (44); it was then picked up by Findlay (70), Milligan (40), Frame (131), Bruce (66), and Richard (158); but in this case it tends to miss what Paul is doing by too much.

384

A construction in Greek that has no English equivalent. It is in fact an adverbial clause (dependent on the main verb, v. 7), whose subject and verb are different from those in the main clause, to which it stands in a normally (as here) temporal relationship. Thus, “But now, since Timothy has come . . . , we have been greatly comforted. . . .”

385

Richard (157) sees this double prepositional phrase as emphasizing both “to us” and “from you,” thus suggesting that Timothy's return had a semimissional aspect to it as well. He is now *their* envoy back to Paul. But that seems to be a bit of a stretch, since nothing further in the passage either reflects or emphasizes such a perspective.

386

Gk. εὐαγγελισαμένου, its only occurrence in these two letters, and the only place in the corpus where it is not about "preaching the gospel"; here Paul is reflecting LXX usage (e.g., 2 Sam 18:19; Isa 60:6). Apart from two occurrences in Ephesians, its later usage is otherwise limited to the four major letters of the third missionary journey (1- 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans). Some would make the present usage also refer to a form of "proclaiming the gospel" (e.g., Masson [41], Best [139-40], Marshall [94], Beale [103]), but that seems to go quite beyond present concerns — although Wanamaker (133) surmises that it might be a kind of wordplay on the ultimate good news of the gospel.

387

So also Gaventa, 44. Some see this as internal to the Thessalonian community of believers (Ellicott, 41; Wanamaker, 134), others as "love" in general (Findlay, 70; Best, 140 [although he suggests that it thus includes love for Paul], Morris, 101). Green (167) sees it as twofold ("mutual love" and "love for God"). It is of some interest that so few see the word as related to the immediate situation — as though Paul were suddenly "spiritualizing" in some way. Since "faith" in this phrase is not "in general" but is especially case specific, why, one wonders, does "love" suddenly lose that same specificity?

388

Gk. ἐπιποθουντες, the first of seven occurrences in Paul's letters, once regarding the future bodily state (2 Cor 5:2); otherwise simply as a "longing for" someone (Phil 2:8; 2:26; cf. 2 Cor 9:14 between believers); but also, as here, "to see" someone (cf. Rom 1:11; 2 Tim 1:4). See further C. Spicq, "'Επιποθεῖν, Désirer ou chérir?" *RB* 64 (1957), 184-95.

389

Gk. διὰ τουτο (lit. "because of this" = "for this reason," referring to the content of v. 6), which is slightly stronger than the ordinary οὖν.

390

Gk. διὰ της ὑμων πίστεως, where διά with the genitive expresses "effective cause," not the basis for something, as with διά with the accusative. The enclosed ὑμων, rare enough in Paul so as always to be attention-getting, in its own way puts the emphasis on the Thessalonians' own continuing to be faithful in their faith.

391

Paul's Greek here takes the unusual form of ἐάν with the indicative, instead of the normal subjunctive, as all first-year Greek students dutifully learn. For its usage here see the comments below.

392

Cf. Marshall (96), ". . . it emphasises its factuality and at the same time contains

an implicit admonition to them to continue to stand fast and not be moved by their afflictions."

393

When the verb "to give thanks" is turned into a noun, as here, this would seem to be the only proper word to use in English. As Morris rightly observes: "not 'thanks' but the expression of thanks is meant."

394

Gk. ἀνταποδοῦναι, a verb which can be either positive or negative depending on the circumstances. When used again in 2 Thess 1:6, it will have to do with God's just retribution on the rebellious.

395

It occurs here in the genitive case, which = "time within which"; thus in the present clause it probably means something like "whenever praying during the night and day."

396

Gk. ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ, which will recur again in 5:13 (cf. Eph 3:20).

397

Cf., e.g., how this clause is handled by such diverse translations as the NRSV ("restore whatever is lacking"), NAB ("remedy the deficiencies"); REB ("make good whatever is lacking"); NJB ("make up any shortcomings").

398

Cf. Best, 144-45.

399

Several Greek MSS (D G 6 81 104 326 1175 pc) and early versions (Vulgate, Bohairic) added Χριστός here, so that it made its way into the KJV. See also the next two notes. Because this one is so poorly attested, it was not even included in the apparatus of the Nestle-Aland Greek text.

400

A few MSS (D* [but not d] G syr) add Ἰησοῦς but not Χριστός, thus conforming it to v. 11 (and at a earlier stage the addition of Χριστός to the latter phrase, but not here).

401

As in v. 1, several MSS add Χριστός here as well (G Ψ 16 104 319 321 1912 1738 *al*). H. Koester, "The Text of the New Testament," in *The Living Text* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985), is ready to argue for it as original, but that seems most highly unlikely here.

402

Many manuscripts have added an ἀμήν to this prayer (א* A D2 33 MajT); it is missing in א2 B D* F G Ψ 0278 6 104 365 1175 1505 1739 1881 *pc* syh. It is hard

to imagine the circumstances in which so many early and excellent witnesses would have omitted it had it been original.

403

Since all the verbs in this and the following prayer are in the optative mood, G. P. Wiles calls them "wish-prayers," to distinguish them from more direct prayers (*Paul's Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of Paul* [SNTSMS 24; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974]). He defines "wish-prayer" as "the expression of a desire that God take action regarding the person (s) mentioned in the wish" (p. 22). But as Bruce (70-71) points out, that is a somewhat artificial distinction, since there is little difference between the imperative ("Arise, Lord") in Num 10:35 and the "Let God arise" in Ps 68:1. Wiles's study also has the misfortune of limiting the "letters of Paul" to the seven accepted by all (and therefore excluding 2 Thessalonians), and unfortunately downplays the role of Christ in the prayer altogether (as belonging to "conventional language"). But how so, one wonders, when this phenomenon exists only in 1 and 2 Thessalonians in the NT — although such "wish-prayers" continue to be found in Paul's letters. Indeed, this is such an incredible lapse, especially in light of vv. 12-13 that follow, that one can only wonder how it got past editors.

404

This begins in 2 Thess 1:11-12; cf. Col 1:9-11; Eph 1:17-23; Phil 1:9-11. The relatively brief number of these, and the quite different ways they find expression, should probably cause NT scholars to be a bit more cautious in the way they make some pronouncements about "what Paul ordinarily does."

405

Thus the language "benediction" seems to be a misnomer for this prayer, as in R. Jewett, "The Form and Function of the Homiletic Benediction," *ATR* 51 (1969), 18-34.

406

So that the prayer in 3:12-13 and the first two items in ch. 4, where he "supplies what is lacking," end up in a chiastic form (AB BA). The emphasis in both cases (coming last and then first) is on their holiness.

407

Paul's own word order is αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν, which the KJV rendered rather woodenly as "now God himself and our Father," which might have worked had the καί been treated as ascensive: "May God himself, even our Father." But the word order here is typical for these two letters, where a modifier (αὐτός and ἡμῶν in this case) stands on either side of compound nouns and both modifiers are intended to go with the compound. Lock (136) would see the

αὐτός as going with both Father and Son, but v. 12 suggests otherwise. Lightfoot (50) doubts whether the αὐτός is emphatic, since it is a stylistic pattern in these earliest two letters (5:23; 2 Thess 2:16; 3:16 and elsewhere on 2 Cor 10:1). But when Paul uses it of himself in the latter passage, it has all the earmarks of emphasis.

408

Gk. κατευθύναι τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν, aorist optative, ordinarily used in a prayer-wish. The verb has to do with "making/creating a straight path" for some one to walk in.

409

Also rather consistently it was rendered κύριος without the article, probably as a way of distinguishing it from the rendering of *Adonai* itself as ὁ κύριος ("the Lord").

410

This is made clear by the fact that Paul assumes these matters without any explanation, including not even a reminder of what they have been taught.

411

The christological significance of this passage has had a long history in the church, appearing as early as in Athanasius's *Contra Arian* 3.11.

412

Some have tried to get around the clear implications of this grammatical point, but that will hardly work. Since the emphatic αὐτός is intended to go with only the Father, and therefore the verb must include him, the singular verb can scarcely be thought of as now referring only to Christ, the second divine "person" mentioned.

413

This is the language of Wiles, *Prayers*, 30.

414

As Wiles does by implication in his discussion of this prayer (*Prayers*, 54-55). Indeed, he only begrudgingly allows a place for Christ in the prayer at all — despite the fact that Christ is explicitly called upon in vv. 12-13. Christ's role in fact is limited to a single note, in which it is suggested that "perhaps Jesus was regarded as the divine agent of the requested action, as in the following verse [v. 12!]" (55 n. 3). That hardly takes seriously what Paul himself says. Cf. Calvin (356): "When . . . [Paul] speaks of both in the same terms, he teaches us that Christ possesses divinity and power in common with the Father."

415

Gk. ὑμᾶς δέ ("but as for you"), which is nearly impossible to put into good English, as the more rigid "literal" translations (NASU, ESV) demonstrate.

416
The two verbs are characterized by assonance (πλεονάσαι / περισσεύσαι) and are near synonyms (“cause to increase” / “cause to abound”). The dative modifier in this case (τἀγάπῃ, “with love”) probably expresses “manner,” having to do with the way in which he wants them to abound. Cf. Phil 1:9.

417
The clause reads (lit.) “so that he may strengthen your hearts blamelessly in holiness in the presence of our God and Father at the Parousia of our Lord, Jesus, with his holy ones.” The problem ultimately is with the verb “he may strengthen,” which is a strongly transitive verb and thus does not seem to fit the sentence well, as the “result” of what he prays in v. 12. On the other hand, that for which Paul prays will happen only as the “heart” has been “strengthened.”

418
Gk. στηρίξαι (third singular optative of στηρίζω); see n. 39 on v. 2 above. It is perhaps noteworthy here that Paul will refer to this need of the Thessalonians to be “strengthened” two further times in 2 Thessalonians, in the prayer in 2:17 and as a word of encouragement in 3:3. The first is directed toward God the Father, the second is with regard to Christ the Son, thus reflecting again the easy interchange Paul can make between Father and Son in terms of both prayer and expectation of fulfillment.

419
For this combination (“strengthen your heart”) see Ps 104:14 (LXX 103:15) and Sir 6:37 (cf. Jas 5:8).

420
See on 2:10 above regarding Paul’s and his companions’ own conduct among these believers.

421
The primary differences are the case and word order of “all” and “the holy ones.” But this is an echo, after all, not a citation; thus Paul has adapted it to his own sentence. The adaptation includes the article with κυρίου, in this case caused by his addition of the possessive pronoun “our.”

422
This can be seen more easily in the Greek text itself: Paul — ἐν τῇπαρουσίᾳ **τοῦ κυρίου** ἡμῶν ’Ιησοῦ **μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ**. Zech — καὶ ἥξει **κύριος** ὁ θεός μου καὶ **πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι μετ’ αὐτοῦ**. For further discussion see Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 43-44.

423
For this usage as referring to believers, but without taking the intertextual use of Zechariah with seriousness, see, among others, Calvin (357), Ellicott (47),

Findlay (77); for those who understand it as expounded here see Best (152-53), Marshall (102-3), Wanamaker (145), Richard (177-78), Malherbe (214), Green (181), Witherington (104); cf. J. M. Ross, “1 Thessalonians 3:13,” *BT* 26 (1975), 444, and R. L. Omanson, “Comings and Goings in the Bible,” *BT* 46 (1995), 112-19. Lightfoot (50), Milligan (45), Bruce (73- 74), Morris (111-12), and Holmes (116) suggest that it might include both angels and God’s people. Beale (110-11) remains ambivalent.

424

On the usage in 2 Thess 1:10, see the discussion ad loc.

425

This strong statement tends regularly to raise the question of whether the Thessalonians themselves would have picked up the echo. But that is raised by people who know their Bibles far less well than these early believers would have. After all, since the vast majority of them could not read (only between 15 to 20 percent would have been literate), but were read to, their memories of the written word by and large would have been infinitely better than those of a generation raised on television! The best analogy would be the parent (or grandparent, etc.) who reads a favorite book aloud (for the umpteenth time?) to a three-year-old who knows the tale practically by heart. When one either by accident or deliberately changes any of the words, the universal, and usually indignant, response by the “illiterate” child is, “Grandpa, that’s not how the story goes!” The point is that persons such as these early Thessalonian believers, who could not read for themselves but were regularly read to, would have known these biblical texts far better than most contemporary Christians do.

426

For the sake of seeing these data more clearly, I have chosen a more concordant rendering of the various passages.

427

Apparently because of the complexity of the present sentence, the original NIV translators chose not to have Paul’s οὖν explicitly represented in English. In doing so they followed a tradition that can be traced back to Codex Vaticanus (B), which was reflected later in the loosely related minuscules 33 629 630 1175 1739, and in parts of several versions (Latin [Vulgate], Syriac [Peshitta], Coptic [Bohairic]).

428

In rearranging Paul’s sentence so as to make sense of it in contemporary English, the NIV translators of necessity also dropped the redundant ἵνα with which this clause begins. This was anticipated throughout much of the copying and

translating tradition (ℵA D2 Ψ 1739 1881ℳ syh). To keep the ἵνα one must resort to very cumbersome English, as found in the NASU ("we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that [ἵνα], just as you received *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God, . . . that [ἵνα] you may excel still more."

429

A third way ancient scribes tried to alleviate this sentence was by omitting this (for us, as well as for them) awkward repetition of καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε ("just as you are walking"); modern "literal" translations (NASU, NRSV) resort to parentheses to make it work in English (ESV has commas). The omission was a very late move (D2 Ψℳ) that nonetheless found its way into the Majority Text that lies behind the KJV and NKJV.

430

On this whole question see G. D. Fee and M. L. Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). In this case the TNIV has made the text more readable, and thus understandable, in English by a slight rearrangement of Paul's word order. The goal of good translation, after all, is *meaning*, not a wooden reproduction of the Greek into unnatural English.

431

Especially the so-called "literal" translations (ASV, N/RSV, NASB/U, ESV), since it is a false conception of "literal" to imply that this adverb means "finally" in the present context. What is more surprising is that the same adverb appears in "dynamic equivalent" translations (e.g., NAB, NJB, GNB, NLT), including the NIV, which has been rightly corrected in the TNIV with its "as for other matters."

432

Cf. Bruce (78): "for the rest, then." Others recognize this intent, but are satisfied to leave "finally" in their text and to interpret it more broadly (e.g., Green, 182).

433

E.g., P. Oxy. 744 (ἐρωτω̣ σε καὶ παρακαλω̣ σε); P. Oxy. 294 (ἐρωτω̣ δέ σε καὶ παρακαλω̣); for others see the list in Rigaux (497).

434

Gk. ἐρωτω̣μεν, the ordinary verb for "asking," but which in contexts like these is most likely intended to take on a bit stronger sense than the milder English word "ask."

435

Gk. παρακαλου̣μεν, Paul's most common verb for exhortation or appeal with regard to proper conduct. See above on 2:12 and 3:12; cf. 4:10, 18; 5:11, 14 below. The verb occurs some 55 times in the corpus, usually with this sense, but see 3:7 above, where in the passive it takes on the extended meaning of being

“comforted.” The TNIV’s “urge” works nicely here.

436

Cf. Best (156), “[The phrase] connects writers and readers; both are related to Christ; both are within the church; it is only because of this that Paul can ask and request them and that they will accept his instruction.”

437

The GNB renders it, “in *the name of* the Lord Jesus,” which adds an element (the *authority* of the *name*) not intended by Paul, whose emphasis is on their common *existence* in Christ. The REB pushes the meaning a bit with its “as fellow-Christians.” The phrase, it should perhaps be noted, goes with both verbs, “ask” and “appeal” (so also Frame, 142).

438

Gk. περιπατεῖν, the verb for “walking”; for Pauline usage see n. 112 on 2:12 above.

439

On the reasons for putting “faith” in quotation marks, see the comments above on 3:2b-3a.

440

Cf. Frame (143), “second tactful reminder.”

441

For this language see the TNIV on 5:14, and the comments on pp. 209-10 below.

442

On the larger issue of the relationship of this passage to Pauline ethics in general, see ch. 7 in B. Rosner, *Understanding Paul’s Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 351-60, entitled “Seven Questions for Paul’s Ethics: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 as a Case Study.” For other studies on this passage see J. A. D. Weima, “ ‘How You Must Walk to Please God’: Holiness and Discipleship in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12,” in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. R. N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 98-119; and O. L. Yarbrough, “The Precepts of Marriage and Sexual Morality in 1 Thess 4:3-8,” in *Not like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (SBLDS 80; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 65-87.

443

The TNIV has put into proper English Paul’s Greek, which comes by way of a verb and a prepositional phrase: ἀπέχεσθ ε ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας (“that you stay away from sexual immorality”). Some later scribes turned Paul’s τῆς into πάσης (“every” [$\aleph^2$ Ψ 104 365 1149 syp]) or else simply added it (F G), thus “that you stay away from every kind of sexual immorality.”

444

This is the TNIV's way of including Paul's καί, which is bracketed in NA27, but is almost surely Paul's original text (with ℵ D* F G MajT lat Clement). Although its absence is supported by good manuscripts (A B I 33 1739* b pc), in the final analysis it seems far more likely that scribes omitted it as unnecessary than that it was added (precisely because it is difficult to imagine *why* they would have done so); cf. the similar expression in 2:12, where no such "addition" exists in the textual evidence. The presence of this καί is especially telling against the various commentators who think the emphasis here is on the substantival idea of "God the giver" rather than on the verbal, "the one who gives." See the discussion below.

445

Gk. δίδοντα (ℵ* B D F G I 365 2464 pc); later witnesses (A Ψ sy co) changed it to the aorist δόντα, on the pattern of Paul's usage elsewhere (Rom 5:5; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; cf. Gal 3:2: 4:6; Rom 8:15). Rigaux (514) adopts it on the pattern of the preceding οὐ ἐκάλεσεν (v. 7; cf. H. Koester, "The Text of the New Testament," in *The Living Text* [Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985], 263), but as Frame (156) had pointed out many years earlier, this is but another reason for later scribes to make the change. As to whether the present tense is significant, see the discussion below.

446

The ἡμᾶς ("us") found in A 6 365 1739 1881 a f m t pc is probably a secondary conformation to the ἡμᾶς found in v. 7. An earlier generation of Catholic scholars adopted this reading and used it as support for the apostolic succession; i.e., to reject Paul's teaching is the same as to reject God, who gave his Spirit to Paul in order to teach authoritatively. But even if ἡμᾶς were the original reading, it would mean "us Christians collectively" (Frame), as elsewhere in Paul where in semicreedal formulations he changes from the second plural to the all-inclusive first plural (e.g., Gal 4:6).

447

Ps.-Demosthenes, *Against Neaera* 122 (LCL), 444-47.

448

By the very nature of the argument, and the way it plays out in the whole paragraph, one should probably assume that there was a degree of consent on the part of the woman involved. C. C. Caragounis ("Parainesis on ἁγιασμός (1 Th 4:3-8)," *FilolNT* 15 [2002], 133-51) has argued that this entire passage should be understood as general paraenesis with no case-specific referent. But that seems especially difficult to maintain in light of the present verse.

449

G. P. Carras ("Jewish Ethics and Gentile Converts: Remarks on 1 Thes 4.3-8," in

R. F. Collins, *The Thessalonians Correspondence* [BETL 87; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990], 306-15) puts emphasis on the Jewish character of these instructions, but for Paul they have become especially Christian, as the whole argument of the passage indicates.

450

Paul's sentence reads without this definite article (θέλημα του῀ θεου῀), which apparently was absorbed by the emphatic οὗτος with which the clause began (cf. Bruce, 82). Frame (146) suggests that the present construction may reflect that Paul does not intend to imply that *all* of God's will is to be found in what follows; it is God's will, to be sure, but not the whole of it.

451

Gk. ἁγιασμός, a word that occurs three times in this passage and only five other times in the Pauline corpus (2 Thess 2:13; 1 Cor 1:30; Rom 6:19, 22; 1 Tim 2:15); it also occurs only ten times in the LXX.

452

This is not to say that the moralist philosophers were not concerned with moral behavior, but that this concern was never expressed with the language of "holiness." For this language Paul is altogether indebted to his Jewish roots and the use of the LXX in Diaspora synagogues.

453

Gk. ὁ ἁγιασμὸς ὑμῶ῀ν, a combination found only here in the NT.

454

Gk. πορνεία, which in the Greek world had to do with prostitution, but without pejorative overtones.

455

This was disputed by B. Malina ("Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication?" *NovT* 14 [1972], 10-17), who was properly refuted by J. Jensen ("Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication? A Critique of Bruce Malina," *NovT* 20 [1978], 161-84).

456

Frame (147-48) preferred to pick up the meaning of the verb in 5:12 (TNIV, "acknowledge"), which he wanted to extend to the idea of "respect." But he did so only because he assumes that τὸ ἑαυτου῀ σκευ῀ος refers to the man's "own wife," which is most highly doubtful. See the discussion below.

457

Some would object here that Peter uses this metaphor in 1 Pet 3:7 to refer to one's wife. But that usage is of very little help in the present case, since "vessel" is used not as a *substitute* for "wife," as it would be here, but as a contrast between the "wife" as the weaker "vessel" and the husband, who would be understood as the stronger "vessel"; as such it is almost certainly an indirect

reference to her physically. So in the end Peter's reference could be argued to favor "body" rather than "wife"!

458

Three other options have been offered. (1) For a different take on the option of σκευος = wife, see H. Baltensweiler, "Erwägungen zu 1 Thess 4.3-8," *TZ* 19 (1963), 1-13, who argues that it has to do with a distinctive Greek custom, related to the rights of a daughter who had inherited her father's property when there were no surviving sons. But this seems not only foreign to the present context, but makes the altogether unlikely assumption that the paragraph is responding to a query from them rather than a matter that has been brought to him by Timothy. See the refutation in Best, 163-64, who thereby also gives it far more time than it would seem to deserve, in terms of its being a live option. (2) J. M. Bassler suggested that Paul is advocating "spiritual marriages," a view that has found neither takers nor respondents (see "Σκευος: A Modest Proposal for Illuminating Paul's Use of Metaphor in 1 Thessalonians 4:4," in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* [ed. L. M. White and O. L. Yarbrough; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995], 53- 66). (3) D. Fredrickson argued that Paul is here promoting "passionless sex" (see "Passionless Sex in 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5," *Word & World* 23 [2003], 23-30).

459

In his significant and influential article in *TDNT* (7:358-67), C. Maurer has posited evidence for this usage from the LXX, a view that has been more recently championed in German scholarship by M. Konradt ("Εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμων τὸ ἑαυτου σκευος κτασθαι . . . : Zu Paulus' sexualethischer Weisung in 1 Thess 4,4f.," *ZNW* 92 [2001], 128- 35); cf. also R. F. Collins, *Studies in the First Letter to the Thessalonians* (BETL 66; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), 299-325. But this represents a highly questionable use of evidence that needs to be recognized for what it is.

460

This is ambiguous evidence at best, however, since Sirach had no difficulty with using "wife" with this verb, without resorting to a metaphor. There would seem to be a world of difference between saying, as Paul does, τὸ ἑαυτου σκευος κτασθαι ("to 'acquire' his own vessel") and ὁ κτώμενος γυναῖκα ("he who acquires a wife").

461

Found only in the NAB and GNB among contemporary English translations. Among older commentaries see Ellicott (52); Lightfoot (54-55); Findlay (81, who noted it as the majority opinion in his day); Frame (149). Among more recent ones see Best (163- 64), Malherbe (226-28), and Witherington (114). C.

Maurer gives the most significant argument for this view (*TDNT* 7:365-67); see also R. F. Collins, “This Is the Will of God: Your Sanctification (1 Thess 4:3),” *LTP* 39 (1983), 27-53; and O. L. Yarbrough, *Not like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (SBLDS 80; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 65-87. But see the rebuttal to Collins and Yarbrough by M. McGehee, “A Rejoinder to Two Recent Studies Dealing with 1 Thess 4:4,” *CBQ* 51 (1989), 82-89.

462

Some interpreters would object to this on the basis of 1 Pet 3:7; but, as noted, the alleged “parallel” is inexact. So the problem remains that as a metaphor for marriage this usage is otherwise unknown in the ancient world. The appeals to much later rabbinic uses, such as one finds in Maurer, are simply too late to be of use regarding Pauline usage, not to mention the fact (as Wanamaker, 152, points out) that the Thessalonians could not be expected to know Hebrew!

463

Best (162) circumvents this problem by taking the verb in the same durative sense necessary for the next two options.

464

The papyrus evidence from Egypt indicates that the average age of the man at marriage was in his early thirties, while his wife was in her middle/late teens; thus she went directly from the home of her father into that of a husband who had been sexually active for many years.

465

Among translations besides the T/NIV see NRSV, REB, NJB, ESV, NET. Commentators include Milligan (49), Rigaux (504-5), Morris (121), Richard (198), Holmes (126), Green (193-94), and Beale (119).

466

Richard (198) suggests that “Paul employs a metaphorical term to underscore the human being’s function as creature destined to reflect the holiness of the Creator.” But that is surely too sophisticated for the Thessalonians themselves to have caught.

467

This was first suggested by J. Whitton (“A Neglected Meaning for σκευος in 1 Thessalonians 4:4,” *NTS* 28 [1982], 142-43), and apparently favored by Bruce (83). I argued strongly for it in *GEP,* 51 n. 59; cf. now T. Elgvin, “ ‘To Master His Own Vessel’: 1 Thess 4:4 in Light of New Qumran Evidence,” *NTS* 43 (1997), 604-19; S. Légasse, “Vas suum possidere (1 Th 4,4),” *FilolNT* 10 (1997), 105-15; R. W. Yarbrough, “Sexual Gratification in 1 Thess 4:1-8,” *TrinJ* 20 (1999), 215-32; J. E. Smith, “1 Thess 4:4 — Breaking the Impasse,” *BBR* 11 (2001), 65-105; idem, “Another Look at 4Q416 2 ii.21: A Critical Parallel to

First Thessalonians 4:4," *CBQ* 63 (2001), 499-504. It is adopted also by Wanamaker (152); Marshall (108-9) leans this way by suggesting "the body in its sexual aspects."

468

It is of some interest that this understanding was already in place some four centuries ago and appears in both the KJV and Rheims ("how to possess").

469

This is an OT term used as a way of distinguishing Gentiles from Jews (e.g., Ps 79:6; Jer 10:25). It is possible, given Paul's later argument in Rom 1:24-27, that "not knowing God" implied idolatry as well.

470

Lightfoot (56) saw this as a result clause, but very few have followed him in this.

471

At least one would think so; but in fact those who see v. 4 as referring to one's own wife are hard pressed to make sense of this clause. Some in fact have argued for a change of subject matter here; see, e.g., R. Beauvery, "Πλεονεκτεῖν in 1 Thess 4.6a," *VD* 33 (1955), 78-85, a view taken up in commentaries only by Holtzmann and Richard. Even less likely is the suggestion by H. Baltensweiler ("Erwägungen zu I Thess 4.3-8," *TZ* 19 [1963], 1-13) that it refers to the Greek law of inheritance, where an only daughter would be required to marry a near kin in order to preserve the family line (see the rebuttal in Best, 163-64). For a refutation, see Collins, *Studies,* 299-325.

472

Gk. ὑπερβαίνειν, a NT *hapax legomenon*, which means to "transgress" by "going beyond proper limits in behavior" (BDAG), thus "overstep the boundaries."

473

Gk. πλεονεκτεῖν, otherwise in Paul only in 2 Corinthians, where Paul defines Satan in this way (2:11) or where he defends himself against such charges from within the community (7:2; 12:17, 18).

474

Lightfoot (57) would expand this to mean "his neighbor," but Paul's own use of familial language seems to preclude such a view. Paul's concern is similar to that expressed by the moral philosopher Musonius Rufus (frag. 12): "But of all sexual relations those involving adultery are most unlawful."

475

Gk. ἐν τῷ πράγματι, which Calvin (359-60) and others, picking up on the verb πλεονεκτεῖν, see as greed. But the further explanation in verse 7 seems to preclude such an understanding. Marshall (111), perhaps correctly, sees it as yet another euphemism for sexual relations.

476

Paul concludes his clause with περὶ πάντων τούτων = “regarding all these things,” where one surmises that he intends “regarding all such matters as the present one.”

477

See, e.g., Morris, 124; Richard, 204; Malherbe, 233 — although the latter admits that Paul sees Christ as “judge” (185-86, 212 on 1 Thess 2:19). Most others correctly see that Paul’s otherwise exclusive use of κύριος to refer to Christ should determine its meaning here, especially (as Frame, 158; Best, 166; and Marshall, 112, point out) in light of the emphatic ὁ θεός that follows in v. 7. So also E. S. Steele, “Jewish Scripture in 1 Thessalonians,” *BTB* 14 (1984), 15. Marshall, 112; Wanamaker, 156; and Beale, 122 (following Marshall), are the few who note that Paul is here using the language of Ps 94:1 (LXX). Richard (204) makes the remarkable comment that it must refer to God because Paul is using OT language here — a comment that seems insensitive to Paul’s regular application of OT (LXX) κύριος language to Christ; on this larger question see my *Pauline Christology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), passim.

478

Gk. ἐπί, which with the dative (as here) is a “marker of object or purpose.”

479

On the distinctions between the prepositions here, see N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1965), 121 — although his conclusions are probably a bit overstated.

480

Gk. τοιγαρουν, a combination of τοί (emphazing the reliability of what follows), γάρ (usually a marker of “cause”), and ον (the ordinary inferential conjunction).

481

Some have seen a verbal correspondence (through the use of ἀθετων) between this sentence and the saying of Jesus found in Luke 10:16 (noted in the margin of NA27); see, e.g., A. W. Argyle, “Parallels between the Pauline Epistles and Q,” *ExpTim* 60 (1948/ 49), 318-20. But this seems far more coincidental than purposeful on Paul’s part.

482

What follows is a condensed version of the discussion that first appeared in *GEP*, 50-53.

483

Thus Paul has it, τὸν θεὸν τὸν καὶ διδόντα τὸ πνευμα αὐτου τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμας (“the God who also gives the Spirit of him, the Holy, unto you”).

484

Jesus of Nazareth is none other than Lord (= the LXX designation for God himself) and Messiah (= the fulfillment of Jewish eschatological hopes).

485

This is made emphatic in this case by the word order, τὸ πνεμα αὐτου. τὸ ἅγιον ("the Spirit of him, the Holy"), where not only is there emphasis on the fact that God gives them *his* Spirit, but that that Spirit is also designated *holy.*

486

Although he also makes this point, Collins (*Studies,* 292) considers the addition of "Holy" to be Paul's way of making it "clear that it is to the Holy Spirit of Christian faith that the prophet [Ezekiel] was making reference."

487

Cf. Frame (156), "the εἰς is for dative or for ἐν; 'give to be in,' 'put in.' "

488

See 2 Cor 1:22; Gal 4:6; cf. the emphatic statement in 1 Cor 6:19, "the temple of the in you Holy Spirit."

489

Those who think otherwise (e.g., Marshall, Wanamaker, Green) see it as a "timeless reference," but at least some scribes thought otherwise and changed it to the aorist (see n. 20 above), in part perhaps so as not to allow the interpretation offered here; see further n. 66 below.

490

As Hiebert (176), e.g., explicitly says.

491

Apparently to avoid the implication of the present participle, some suggest that the emphasis is substantival, "God the Giver of the Holy Spirit" (e.g., Moffatt [35]; Findlay [90]; Hiebert [176]; J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* [SBT 2nd ser. 15; London: SCM, 1970], 106) and therefore at least as referring to conversion. The expressed concern here is to avoid the concept of "continuous or successive impartation" (Moffatt). But that is to avoid "second blessing theology" by an unnecessary expedient. Paul's concern is not on "successive gifts" of the Spirit, but on the present, ongoing work of the Spirit in their lives.

492

One cannot be sure here whether the T/NIV was following the critical text of NA26/27 and translating according to sense or following the reading found in the apparatus. The very fact that it could be either of these possibilities indicates the nature — and difficulty — of the textual problem. The original text is almost certainly ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν ("you have no need to write to you"), since such a reading could hardly have been deliberate on the part of a copyist (it is simply too unwieldy to have been so), and it is equally difficult to see how it could have

been accidental. Rather, at some point copyists simply “corrected” Paul and thus wrote what he almost surely intended: either “we have no need to write to you” (ἔχομεν γράφειν ὑμῖν [א c D* Ψ G Y 88 104 142 216 927 1311 1611 1739 2005 itd.g vg goth]) or “you have no need to be written to” (ἔχετε γράφεσθαι ὑμῖν [H 81 257 424* 1319 1518 1837 2127]). What is missing in the original is the pronoun ἡμας (“for us”), which all English versions that follow Paul’s original must insert in the text, either as the subject of the clause (as T/NIV) or as a prepositional phrase (“for us” — although most English translations that go this route have “for anyone”).

493

In place of Paul’s (somewhat redundant) εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς το ὺς ἐν (“all the brothers and sisters *who* are in”), read by the majority of MSS, some early manuscripts do not have the τούς, either as the result of haplography [φους, τους] (אA) or under the influence of Latin, which would not need it (D* F G 629 lat).

494

It is not easy to decide textually here whether Paul wrote ταῖς ἰδίαις χερσίν ὑμων (“your own hands” [א* A D2 33vid]) or simply ταῖς χερσίν ὑμων (“your hands” [א2 B D* F G Ψ 0278 6 104 365 1175 1505 1739 1881 *pc*]). This issue is complicated by three factors: (a) the possibility of haplography, that an original ἰδίαις was omitted because of the preceding ταῖς; however, (b) the better manuscript evidence leans toward the text without this definite article; and (c) that quite apart from these first two matters, one can easily explain how either of the two readings came about: either it could have been added by a scribe for the sake of emphasis, or it could have been omitted as unnecessary. On the whole, the TNIV (and most other English translations) probably has the better of it here, by not including what is unnecessary in any case. So also H. Koester, “The Text of the New Testament,” in *The Living Text* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985), 221.

495

Including the suggestion by J. Kloppenborg that the Thessalonians were well-acquainted with the Dioscuri (divine brothers who were well known for familial affection and self-sacrificing love), whom Paul is here indicating that it was all right for them to imitate (“ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΙΑ, ΘΕΟΔΙΔΑΚΤΟΣ and the Dioscuri: Rhetorical Engagement in 1 Thessalonians 4.9-12,” *NTS* 39 [1993], 265-89). Part of the difficulty in determining what lay behind this matter in Thessalonica has to do with determining from our distance how, or how much, vv. 9-10a are related to vv. 10b-12. See below.

496

The two most common views have to do with *(a)* their having such eager expectation for the coming of the Lord, much like nineteenth-c. adventists, that they were simply waiting for Christ's return, and/or *(b)* their having imbibed a (admittedly not universal) Greek distaste for manual labor, so that, because they were members of "God's new family," work was beneath them. The first of these is especially common, given the instruction that follows immediately (so Ellicott [58], Lightfoot [60], Findlay [92, hesitantly], Milligan [53], Best [175-76], Marshall [117], Bruce [91], Morris [130], Beale [128]); but that is much more likely a coincidental collocation, since Paul himself does *not* explicitly make such a connection. This is especially so in light of 2 Thess 3:6-14, where Paul returns to this problem in considerable detail but makes not the slightest hint of the cause per se. So caution would seem to be the better part of wisdom on this matter. I am of the opinion that the reasons were much more sociological than eschatological, but as to what nuance of Greek sociology I am far less certain than some. On the whole question, see the especially helpful excursus in Witherington, 122-24.

497

See, e.g., Calvin (361); Frame (157-63); Morris (130). Frame, e.g., thinks that the first matter has to with "brotherly love" (vv. 9-10a), and the other with some slackers who need "to work with their own hands" (vv. 10b-12). This view was furthered by the NIV, which not only broke it into two paragraphs, but made the second one start in the middle of Paul's own sentence (thus vv. 9-10 and 11-12)! The real problem with this view is that vv. 9-10a make very little sense without vv. 10b-12, nor do the latter make much sense without the former.

498

One of the more unusual "guesses" in this regard is that by A. J. Malherbe (first in "Exhortation in First Thessalonians," *NovT* 25 [1983], 484-502, and more recently in his commentary, 246-50), who sees Paul here as responding to the possibility of his converts' lapsing into Epicureanism. But for all of the learning Malherbe has brought to this discussion, he has for good reason not found many takers, if any.

A more plausible, but not necessarily more convincing, suggestion is that by Green (206-12), that Paul is dealing with the two sides of a patron-client relationship. But to get there he must treat v. 11 as unrelated grammatically to v. 10b, suggesting that it is "a second point in his exhortation" (209). But that is especially difficult to sustain grammatically, since the sentence structure itself seems to demand that the three infinitive phrases in v. 11 are in apposition to the first one at the end of v. 10, which in turn refers back to what God has taught them about the need "to love one another."

499
Gk. περὶ δέ; because the phrase is picked up again in 5:1 and in light of its repeated occurrences in 1 Corinthians, there are some who would argue that Paul is here also responding to a letter (or oral question) from Thessalonica that had been sent to him through Timothy (see, among others, Milligan [126], Frame [140], Green [202], J. R. Harris, "A Study in Letter-Writing," *Expositor* 5, no. 8 [1898], 161-80], and esp. C. E. Faw, "On the Writing of First Thessalonians," *JBL* 71 [1952], 217-32). Although this might have worked well for 5:1, it is highly doubtful here. What, one wonders, regarding φιλαδελφία might the majority have asked Paul (cf. Bruce, 89); whereas it makes perfectly good sense as Paul's choice of words with which to confront them regarding this issue.

500
It occurs elsewhere in Paul in Rom 12:10; and further in the NT in Heb 13:1; 1 Pet 1:22; and 2 Pet 1:7 (2x), always to refer to those in the community of faith, because through Christ the Son they have a common *Abba* in heaven (in Paul see esp. Gal 4:4-7).

501
On Paul's use of παρακαλοῦμεν ("exhort, urge, appeal to") see on v. 10b below.

502
This is the third (of four) instances of this emphatic pronoun in 1 Thessalonians (see also 2 Thess 3:3), a usage unique to these two letters in the corpus; cf. n. 13 on 2:1 above.

503
Gk. θεοδίδακτοι, a word that is otherwise unknown before this, its first appearance in Greek writings; nor is it, nor should it be expected to be, a word that appears in inscriptions. Whether Paul coined it or not cannot be known; in any case, its meaning is so plain that it scarcely matters. John 6:45, citing the LXX of Isa 54:13, has πάντες διδακτοὶ θεοῦ. ("all [are] taught by God"). For a recent discussion see S. E. Witmer, "Θεοδίδακτοι in 1 Thessalonians 4:9: A Pauline Theologism," *NTS* 52 (2006), 239-50.

504
"All of your 'sons' [will be] taught by God" (καὶ πάντας τοὺς υἱούς σου διδακτοὺς θεοῦ). While the concept is here, to be sure, the language itself is quite dissimilar.

505
On this matter see ch. 2 in my *Pauline Christology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007); cf. also pp. 20-25 in the introductory ch. 1.

506
Contra Best (173), who altogether downplays their knowledge of the LXX,

which seems strange, given that the evidence of Acts indicates that the original nucleus of believers came from Gentiles who were part of the Jewish synagogue.

507 On this matter, cf. Marshall, 115.

508 . This is now the eighth of these vocatives. Some might object to “and sisters” in this case, but at this point in his sentence Paul has not yet narrowed his focus; that comes in the next clause, which is joined to this one by a καί (“and”).

509

. Gk. περισσεύειν μαλλον, which is a redundancy in Greek, “to abound ‘more’ ” = “to a still greater degree.”

510

. Gk. φιλοτιμεῖσθαι, the present middle infinitive (the verb is deponent), which in indirect discourse, following the verb παρακαλουμεν, functions as an imperative. The verb itself is formed from the words “love” and “honor,” and thus has the sense of “consider it an honor,” thus “make it your ambition.”

511

. Noted by most interpreters, and is so whether intentional or not; Gk. φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν (lit. “strive hard to live quietly”).

512

. Indeed, one can only wonder what a person might think for whom English is a second language, where “business” is more commonly understood as one’s occupation. The present meaning turns up in the *Random House Collegiate Dictionary* as no. 6.

513

. One of the less convincing aspects of scholarship on this passage is the tendency to see this as being related to manual labor as over against other kinds of work. It seems much more likely that Paul, picking up on his own manual labor (2:9), used this as an idiom for work of any and all kinds. More questionable yet is the suggestion by Richard (212), who sees it as relating to the “biblical idiom ‘work of one’s hands’ and refers not to manual labor but to trades deemed proper by outsiders.” Whether Paul’s phrase is related to the OT one is moot at best, but that it did not refer to manual labor is simply wrong, since the OT usage refers specifically to manual labor in each of its positive uses (Deut 2:7; Job 1:10; Ps 90:17) and to the outcome of such “labor,” namely the creating of idols, when used negatively (Isa 2:8-9; Jer 1:16).

514

. Thus the later scribes who added “your own” to Paul’s clause (see n. 3 above) were probably moving Paul’s sentence in the right direction in terms of understanding.

515

. A few later manuscripts (104 614 630 1505 *l*846), plus the Syriac tradition, changed Paul’s plural θέλομεν to a singular θέλω here. It is of passing interest to note that this has occurred only at this singular point, where new instruction is being given.

516

. The present tense participle (κοιμωμένων) is read by all the early and best of

the textual tradition (א A B 0278 33 81 326 1175 1739 *l*846 pc; Origen); the perfect κεκοικημένων appears only in the West (in bilinguals D F G) and, finally, in most of the later Byzantine tradition. Among English translations only the wooden NKJV makes a distinction here ("those who have fallen asleep), where the KJV had simply "them which are asleep." The Douai-Rheims version (earliest Roman Catholic English translation and based on the Latin) has "them who have slept," which makes for an especially odd reading of the sentence.

517

. In one of its rare idiosyncratic moments, Codex Vaticanus (B) reads IY ("Jesus") here instead of KY ("Lord").

518

. Several witnesses from the Latin tradition (F G ar b Tert Ambst Spec) omit Paul's οἱ περιλειπόμενοι in this second instance. This removal of an apparently unnecessary redundancy is most likely a translational, rather than transcriptional, phenomenon; but see Metzger, *Textual Commentary* (565), who suggests "by some accidental oversight."

519

. Whether this passage is also related to the immediately preceding issue, as some think (e.g., Lightfoot, 62), is possible but moot. Paul himself makes no explicit connection between them (cf. Best, 180). What is explicit is that some are "grieving like the rest, who have no hope." Whether some are not working because of "feverish expectation" is moot, and, in any case, results from one's own reading of the text, not from anything Paul himself says. Indeed, the whole passage has an air of comforting by informing, not correction of behavior as such.

520

. Lightfoot (62) thinks otherwise, that "the indirect way in which the subject is introduced [suggests that] it does not seem to have been formally propounded to him by the Thessalonians." Perhaps so, but this view puts the onus on Timothy altogether. Green (213) thinks this is in response to a second question from the Thessalonians (vv. 9-12 being in response to the first). But that is to put too much stock in Paul's use of περὶ δέ in 4:9 and 5:1, which is not only not found here, but also the whole of this passage makes more sense as Paul's response to something reported to him than an answer to a question from them.

521

. I say "appears to be" because there has been an extraordinary amount of diversity in the literature on this passage. Calvin (362), e.g., suggested, "The main thing is that we must not grieve inordinately for the dead, because we will be raised again"; while Ellicott's "feverish anxiety" (p. 60) and Lightfoot's

“feverish anticipations of the immediate coming of Christ” (p. 62) seem to go far beyond anything Paul says explicitly here. His language is “grief,” which is related to the issue of “hope.” One can find “feverish expectation” here only by being told so by others, not by anything Paul himself says about them. For an overview of more recent views, see Wanamaker (164-66) and esp. Green (213-15). Much of this conversation involves considerable speculation about what Paul did or did not teach beforehand, as well as often suggesting shifts in Paul’s own thinking between this passage and 1 Cor 15. But in fact one has to “stare” at the text extremely hard to find the “problem” that is alleged to exist, esp. one that can be reconstructed in so many different ways! This is surely a case where the very high level of shared information between Paul and the Thessalonians leaves us very much on the outside looking in.

522

. How they have died is not told us; therefore, speculation seems quite useless in this case. K. Donfried (“The Imperial Cults and Political Conflict in 1 Thessalonians,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Eschatology* [ed. R. A. Horsley; Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997], 158-66) has raised the interesting possibility that the deaths were the result of persecutions that seem to be alluded to elsewhere in the letter, but there is no suggestion of such in any express way in the letter itself. That this passage is in response to the imperial cult in Thessalonica has been advocated by J. R. Harrison, “Paul and the Imperial Cult at Thessaloniki,” *JSNT* 25 (2002), 71-96.

523

. “Relatively,” because one can get two different mental pictures from this passage. In v. 14 God will bring “the sleeping” *with Jesus* when he comes; thus the imagery places them “in heaven” with him. But in v. 16 the language is altogether that of resurrection from the grave; thus the imagery places them, their bodies at least, on earth. This is further complicated by statements elsewhere to the effect that to “be absent from the body” means to “be present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8). Most likely this latter passage, along with our present v. 14, means that believers who have died are in God’s safe-keeping, as it were; but their final destiny awaits the resurrection of the body, hence the larger picture puts their being ultimately present with the Lord still in the future.

524

. So also Best (183), although he would not use the qualifier “relative.”

525

. As often happens with passages in Paul where he makes declarations without further elaboration, there is a long history of NT scholarship that considers Paul to have changed perspective on the matter of the Parousia in his later letters. For

a convenient overview of this discussion from one who argues for a minimalist position, see B. F. Meyer, “Did Paul’s View of the Resurrection of the Dead Undergo Development?” *TS* 47 (1986), 363-87.

526

. For a reading of this passage in the context of practices regarding the dead in other associations, see R. S. Ascough, “A Question of Death: Paul’s Community-Building Language in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18,” *JBL* 123 (2004), 509-30.

527

. For a helpful overview of this passage in the larger context of Christ’s own resurrection, see N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 213-19.

528

. Which is a considerable improvement over the NIV’s “those who fall asleep,” which was not only imprecise (i.e., it has to do with “those who are *already* ‘sleeping’ ”) but also misleading, since Paul is not here dealing with any and all who eventually die, as implied by the NIV (even though that is ultimately true as well). The NRSV has chosen to go the other route — give the plain sense of the euphemism (“who have died”) and put Paul’s own language in a note. The euphemism itself is a recurring biblical one (2 Sam 7:12; 1 Kings 2:10; 11:43; 22:50; Job 14:12; Ps 13:3; Matt 9:24; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor 15:51); it is also found throughout the Greco-Roman world (see BDAG 2 for several nonbiblical occurrences).

529

. See 1 Cor 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor 1:8; Rom 1:3; 11:25. These cover a broad range: correcting a false impression (Rom 1:13); solving difficult questions (1 Cor 12:1; Rom 11:25); as the heading for much-needed correction (1 Cor 10:1); and instruction about personal matters (2 Cor 1:8).

530

. There has been an inordinate amount of speculation as to *why* the Thessalonians did not know about what Paul here sets out to explain; but in the end it is all speculative and adds very little to the actual understanding of the passage. For the primary views, see Marshall, 120-22.

531

. Holmes (149) objects to this restrictive comma. But it seems necessary, since otherwise the grief is restricted only to those who have no hope. It seems much more likely that this is a typical Pauline blanket thrown over the whole Gentile world. The defining word here, after all, is “hope,” and for Paul that has to do only with Christian hope regarding the future that has been guaranteed by Christ and his resurrection.

532
. This is not to say, as Best, e.g., points out (185-86), that there were not some who believed in an afterlife of some sort; but as Marshall notes (119), they "lacked the certainty of life after death that was worthy to be called such and hence a reunion between the living and the dead." For the full survey of the ancient world, in which nothing remotely close to Christian belief in a future bodily resurrection can be found, see Wright, *Resurrection*, 32-206.

533
. E.g., Frame, 167. After all, God's mercy in restoring Epaphroditus, who by all ancient standards was expected to die, allowed Paul himself not to have "sorrow piled upon sorrow" (Phil 2:27).

534
. On this question, see the long discussion in Wright, *Resurrection* (n. 13 above). For a second-c. Christian expression of this lack of hope among pagans see Aristides (*ANF* 10:272-78).

535
. Gk. εἰ, which ordinarily begins a conditional sentence but in this case expresses an actual, not hypothetical, condition; therefore, the sense is "since we believe," not "if we do so." The TNIV made this plain by eliminating the protasis as such, and starting the apodosis with "and so."

536
. For a different resolution of this perceived tension, see P. Ellingworth, "Which Way Are We Going? A Verb of Movement, Especially in 1 Thess 4:14b," *BT* 25 (1974), 426-31, who suggests "will take to himself" as a possible rendering of Paul's ἄξει.

537
. One dare not use the word "translation" for what follows, since by definition that word has to do with transferring not just words, but *meaning*, from the original language into the receptor language. The present rendering should illustrate the folly of imagining that one can keep Paul's own word order and say anything meaningful in English.

538
. Cf. J. Plevnik, "The Destination of the Apostle and of the Faithful: Second Corinthians 4:13b-14 and First Thessalonians 4:14," *CBQ* 62 (2000), 83-95.

539
. See Calvin (363), who is among the many who have turned Paul's διὰ τοῦ ’Ιησοῦ into an ἐν ’Ιησοῦ and then comments on the phrase as though it were in fact the latter, a view which Witherington (131) asserts without evidence as being a legitimate option; cf. also the NASU, NKJB ("sleep in Jesus"!). The

REB and GNB actually change the direction of things: “God will bring those who died to be with Jesus” (REB!). Findlay (97), at least, tries to take the διά seriously, although I find it unconvincing (having fallen asleep through Jesus means that death has been robbed of its terrors). A different approach is taken by P. Nepper-Christensen, who would interpret the phrase as having to do with martyrs who died because of their loyalty to Christ (“Das verborgene Herrnwort: Eine Untersuchung über 1. Thess 4,13-18,” *ST* 19 [1965], 136-54). But despite the difficulties with giving the preposition a meaning it is not otherwise known to have, this is easily the majority view; see Rigaux (535-37), Bruce (97), Morris (139 [who strangely calls the other view tautologous]), Wanamaker (169), Gaventa (64), and Green (221), who appeals to C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 57.

540

. Note, e.g., Paul’s clear and significant use of prepositions in a key text like 1 Cor 8:6, where God the Father is the ultimate origin and goal of all things, of which Christ the Son is the active agent: All things are *from* and *for* the one God, the Father; likewise all things, both creation and redemption, are *through* Christ the Son. It is of considerable interest that BDAG does not have a single heading or subheading under διά that could remotely carry this frequently assumed/asserted meaning, yet on the basis of what *is* variable (Greek word order) so many are wedded to this otherwise unknown meaning for the preposition.

541

. On this feature of Pauline theology, see esp. what he does in 1 Cor 8:6 with the basic Jewish “confession” expressed in the *Shema* of Deut 6:4, “Listen, Israel, Yahweh your God, Yahweh is One,” which in the LXX became “the Lord your God, the Lord is One.” By means of this Greek translation, Paul can include Christ as “Lord” in the divine identity without ever using the word θεός as such (on this matter see my *Pauline Christology* [Peabody, Mass.,: Hendrickson, 2007], 88-94).

542

. It should thus be noted that this understanding involves only a simple reversal of word order; and given that word order is not predictable in Greek, it also means that all of Paul’s words and phrases keep their ordinary meaning. This “solution” was seen as early as Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia, two of the better exegetes in the early church; among commentaries see Best (reluctantly), 189; Richard, 226; and Malherbe, 266, who correctly makes the point that all other interpretations are forced readings of what is otherwise straightforward affirmation. It can also be found in the NAB and NRSV, and thus

the ESV. What amazes one is how often it has been rejected — on the basis of word order only(!), where Paul's own word order is already "nonnormal" through his fronting the direct object before the verb. Such rejection is all the more striking when one considers that most who go this route tend to "fumble around" with Paul's preposition and give it an *otherwise unknown meaning*, so as to maintain the one thing *not* necessary to maintain — Paul's word order as having a "normal" expected sense to it. It is of interest, therefore, that Ellicott (62; cf. Lightfoot [64]) would argue that understanding the preposition to go with "the sleeping" is "the simple and logical connexion" (perhaps for the preposition, but not for this sentence nor for Pauline theology as a whole!). For commentators who have gone this traditional route see n. 25 above.

543

. For these data see the convenient chart on usage in my *Pauline Christology,* p. 26.

544

. Omitted in the T/NIV as unnecessary, since the sentence itself carries the sense of "explanation."

545

. An exception is J. R. Michaels, who argues that it is limited to "we, the living, . . . will not precede those who have fallen asleep" (in "Everything That Rises Must Converge: Paul's Word from the Lord," in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry* (ed. T. F. Schmidt and M. Silva; JSNTSS 100; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 182-95.

546

. The only exceptions are twelve citations of the LXX (1 Cor 3:20; 14:21; 2 Cor 6:17, 18; Rom 4:8; 9:28, 29; 10:16; 11:3, 34; 12:19; 15:11), where the divine referent is irrelevant to Paul's citation of the passage (for this discussion see 87 n. 7 in *Pauline Christology*). For the two instances where many evangelical scholars think that Paul has used θεός to refer to Christ (Rom 9:5; Tit 2:13), see *Pauline Christology*, 272-77 and 442-46.

547

. So most commentaries: Calvin (364); Ellicott (62); Lightfoot (65); Findlay (98); Milligan (58); Rigaux (538-39); Marshall (125-26); Morris (141); Wanamaker (171); Holmes (150); Green (222); Beale (136); cf. J. Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1964), 80-83 — although there has been recent debate as to whether this is a saying otherwise unknown or a "midrashic" expression of sayings that are known to us through the Gospels.

548

. Which, nonetheless, is the kind of material that holds high interest for some

scholars. For a helpful overview of this issue in 1 Thessalonians see C. M. Tuckett, “Synoptic Tradition in 1 Thessalonians?” in Collins, ed, *The Thessalonians Correspondence,* 160-82.

549

. Cf. the discussion in L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 150-51. K. P. Donfried (*The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters* [Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 39-40) thinks it is the latter; so also Lightfoot, 65; Milligan, 58; Best, 191- 93; Bruce, 98-99; Richard, 226. This view has been esp. popular among German scholars (see Marshall, 267). Witherington (135) would have it both ways: “Perhaps the least problematic solution . . . [is] that Paul saw himself as a prophetic interpreter of both the sayings of the historical Jesus and of the OT and also as one who received direct messages from the risen Lord himself.” The most helpful recent overview of the two (sometimes seen as three) options is Malherbe (267-70), who himself thinks that “Paul spoke as a prophet” (270). For a helpful analysis of the “parallel” materials in the Gospel of Matthew, see G. H. Waterman (“The Sources of Paul’s Teaching on the 2nd Coming of Christ in 1 and 2 Thessalonians,” *JETS* 18 [1975], 105-13), who argues for a written source pre-dating our Gospels.

550

. On this passage itself, see my *Pauline Christology,* 45.

551

. The TNIV chooses “still alive” here, which is tendentious; it may work well for later generations, but it is doubtful whether Paul would have thought in this way.

552

. Gk. περιλειπόμενοι, a verb that occurs only six times in the LXX (with some textual variation, so that some MSS have it only four or five). In two instances (only) it refers to those who “still remained” (NRSV) in Israel after the exile (2 Chron 34:21; Hag 2:3); but in no case does it ever mean “left behind.” After all, “those who remain” are still living in the Promised Land, since they are the “remnant” who have not been taken into exile.

553

. An unfortunately disproportionate amount of attention in the literature has focused on Paul’s “expectation” here in light of what he says a few years later in 1 and 2 Corinthians. For a useful overview and satisfactory resolution of the issue, see R. H. Stein, “Did Paul’s Theology Develop? (1 Thess. 4:13-18),” in *Difficult Passages in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 82-88. An especially extreme position is taken by C. L. Mearns (“Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of I and II Thessalonians,” *NTS* 27

[1980/81], 137-57), who argues that the real development takes place in these letters, from an earlier "realized eschatology" to the "future eschatology" in evidence here.

554

. As many earlier interpreters would have it; see 165 n. 7 above.

555

. But see the objections in M. R. Cosby, "Hellenistic Formal Receptions and Paul's Use of ΑΠΑΝΤΗΣΙΣ in 1 Thessalonians 4:17," *BBR* 4 (1994), 15-34. My point, however, is not that all of this language can be found in such "comings," but that they will have background enough for such a coming to recognize what Paul is doing here.

556

. This is amazingly seldom noted in the commentaries; but see J. Dupont, " 'Avec le Seigneur' a la Parousie," in *ΣΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: L'union avec le Christ suivant Saint Paul* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952), 39-79.

557

. Although this echo is seldom noted in the literature, it was in fact well known in the early church. For details on this matter see *Pauline Christology,* 44-45; cf. C. A. Evans, "Ascending and Descending with a Shout: Psalm 47.6 and 1 Thessalonians 4.16," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders; JSNTSS 83; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 238-53. The use of Psalm 47 in this way was recognized by C. F. D. Moule (*The Origin of Christology* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977], 42), but it has otherwise been taken up by none of the commentaries in English.

558

. So also Findlay (100), "the second and third particulars, apparently, explicate the first"; cf. Milligan, 59; Bruce, 101; Richard, 229; Wanamaker, 173 (as an alternative); Malherbe, 274; L. Schmid, *TDNT* 3:658.

559

. This is also the opinion of BDAG ("probably"). This is based on Dan 12:1, which in the LXX reads Μιχαηλ ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ μέγας (cf. Theod. Μιχαηλ ὁ ἄρχων ὁ μέγας, which more closely reflects Daniel's Aramaic).

560

. On this matter see M. N. A. Bockmuehl, " 'The Trumpet Shall Sound': *Shofar* Symbolism and Its Reception in Early Christianity," in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel* (ed. W. Horbury; JSNTSS 48; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 199-225.

561

. It should be pointed out that the trumpet can also function as a signal for

coming disaster, as in Jer 6:1, 17.

562

. Which many think is also the end of the "saying" of Jesus, mentioned in v. 15, that Paul has been "citing" (or "rephrasing") or that has been given him by revelation. As with so many such things, no definitive conclusions are available, since the "saying" itself is not known to exist anywhere else. Since key elements of the "saying" reappear in 1 Cor 15:51-52, it is certainly part of Paul's own eschatological understanding.

563

. Gk. ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς, a phrase which in this case must be taken as a single grammatical component.

564

. So, e.g., Best (198); Bruce (102); Morris (145); Wanamaker (175, "implies . . . a force outside the individual"); Gaventa (66-67); cf. Jude 23 ("save some by 'snatching' them from the fire"), or Matt 11:12 ("violent people have been 'raiding' [the kingdom of heaven]"; cf. 12:29; 13:19). But its three uses in Paul lack both the strength and/or violence often attached to the word. Cf., similarly, Acts 8:39; 23:10, and probably Rev 12:5. So also Rigaux (545). Malherbe (276) has pointed out that this verb is common in the Greek "consolation tradition" regarding death, which Paul is now using "in a neat twist."

565

. The NET Bible is a notable exception; their note suggests that Paul is intentionally more forceful here, so they have "suddenly caught up." But since they do not do so in 2 Corinthians, their suggestion here has all the markings of a theological agenda getting in the way of translation.

566

. This common view had its origins in an article by E. Petersen ("Die Einholung des Kyrios," *ZST* 7 [1930], 682-702), but it had been called into serious question by J. Dupont (" 'Avec le Seigneur' a la Parousie," in *ΣΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩΙ*, 39-79), and more recently by M. Cosby ("Hellenistic Formal Receptions," *BBR* 4 [1994], 15-34), who has demonstrated that it is not a technical term at all, and that all the "formal" elements of such Hellenistic receptions are otherwise missing from the present passage — although it should be noted that not all are convinced by Cosby; see esp. R. Gundry ("A Brief Note on 'Hellenistic Formal Receptions and Paul's Use of ΑΠΑΝΤΗΣΙΣ in 1 Thessalonians 4:17,' " *BBR* 6 [1996], 39-41), who suggests that other contextual matters continue to support this view, which he had previously espoused in "The Hellenization of Dominical Tradition and Christianization of Jewish Tradition in the Eschatology of 1-2 Thessalonians," *NTS* 33 (1987), 161-78.

567

. One could imply such a locational understanding from other passages, such as Phil 3:20 (“our citizenship is in heaven”), or the promise of our being “with him,” whose present “location” is understood to be in heaven, but these are the only two where such an understanding is expressed explicitly.

568

. On this matter, see S. Kim, “The Jesus Tradition in 1 Thess 4.13-5.11,” *NTS* 48 (2002), 225-42, who argues that both passages arose out of a failure on the part of the Thessalonians to understand correctly the eschatological sayings of Jesus which Paul had passed on to them. This, of course, can be neither proved nor disproved; but what Kim has demonstrated is that Paul had knowledge of the teaching of Jesus in some form.

569

. In this regard see v. 1 (“no need to be written to”), v. 2 (“you know very well”), and v. 11 (“even as you are doing”).

570

. It is a matter of some interest that interpreters tend to show a great deal of commonality in their overall understanding of the text and its parts, while at the same time they reveal considerable variety in how they perceive the issue, its origins, and the *nature* of Paul’s response. Thus, e.g., Holmes (165) refers to “fear and concern about the fate of the living believers at the time of the Parousia”; Best (203) speaks of the Thessalonians’ being “worried about [the Parousia], not only in respect of the position of the dead, but seemingly also about the time when it would take place”; Malherbe (287) thinks of it as a “matter requiring attention [because of] the promises of some Christian prophets in Thessalonica of peace and security”; while Green (229) regards it as “the third question the Thessalonians addressed to him, . . . When would the day of the Lord arrive?” All of this should remind one that there is still a considerable degree of guesswork in the scholarly enterprise.

571

. Many see this as dealing with an issue of anxiety on the part of the Thessalonians (e.g., Findlay, 166-67; Milligan, 63; Frame, 178; Best, 203). But there is scarcely a hint of such in the passage itself; and it is surely too much weight to place on a single adverb (ἀκριβῶς in v. 2); see the discussion below.

572

. As with so many other things, some see this as a later interpolation into the letter, thus denying Pauline authorship; but in this case that is a counsel of despair. See the rebuttal by J. Plevnik, “1 Thess 5,1-11: Its Authenticity, Intention, and Message,” *Bib* 60 (1979), 71-90.

573

. To be sure, “clear” is often in the eye of the beholder. The NA27 Greek text (apparently alone) divides it into two parts (vv. 1-6, 7-11); and some interpreters (e.g., Beale, Witherington) prefer three parts (vv. 1-3, 4-7, 8-10/11).

574

. Paul’s phrase here is anarthrous (ἡμέρα κυρίου), as most often in the LXX (e.g., Joel 1:15; 2:1; 2:31 [LXX 3:4]; 3:14 [LXX 4:14]). This is the certain evidence that Paul is using this familiar phrase from the prophets, but now “the LORD” = YHWH is “the Lord” = the Risen Christ. See the discussion on v. 2 below. Some later Christian scribes (A Ψ 0278) apparently had a measure of difficulty with this anarthrous usage and added the article.

575

. Paul’s own text, found in* A F G 33 it vg Tert, lacks an expected conjunctive signal, which was variously “corrected” by early scribes (+ δε $\aleph^2$ B D 0226 6 104 1505 1739 1881 pc; + γαρ Ψ 0278). The split nature of the “correction” serves as rather certain evidence for a sentence without the conjunction. If either of the latter were original, one would be hard pressed to account for either an omission or a change to the alternative conjunction.

576

. Some “Western” witnesses (F G) have φανήσεται (“will be manifest”); since this is also the reading of b d Aug^{pt}, one wonders whether it derives from a poor translation into Latin.

577

. Gk. περὶ δέ; see the discussion on 4:9 above (pp. 158-59, n. 8).

578

. This is the more common view, although Green (230) thinks it comes by way of a letter from them to him.

579

. Gk. των χρόνων καὶ των καιρων; it occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Acts 1:7, in our Lord’s response to the disciples’ query about “restoring the kingdom to Israel.” For OT usage see Dan 2:21 (LXX); cf. Wis 8:8, as one of the things personified Wisdom knows (“the outcome of seasons and times,” NRSV). Given what appears to be a clear pickup of this language from Daniel (NIV, “times and seasons”), the NIV translators’ choice of “times and *dates*” here (unchanged in the TNIV) seems an especially unfortunate modernizing of the text. E. Lucchesi thinks we should look outside Scripture for this phrase, and settles on Philo (see “Précédents non bibliques à l’expression néo-testamentaire: ‘Les temps et les moments,’” *JTS* 28 [1977], 537-40), but that is most highly unlikely.

580
. One is therefore surprised to see how much time was given to the fine-tuning of the two words by earlier interpreters; see, e.g., Ellicott (67), Lightfoot (70-71), Milligan (63); among more recent interpreters only Morris (149) goes this way.
581
. See, e.g., Findlay (166-67), Milligan (63).
582
. Gk. αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἴδατε (lit. “for you yourselves accurately know”), where the adverb sits in the emphatic first position. This is the fourth use of the intensive pronoun in this letter; see on 2:1 above (n. 13).
583
. Gk. ἀκριβῶς, which occurs only this once in the Pauline corpus; its usage here is perhaps a reflection of the cognate adjective that recurs in Daniel, beginning at 2:45. Richard (250) would see this as “ironic,” based on what he perceives as “temporal speculations” on their part. The problem with this view is that the positive dimension of the passage (5:4-11) does not emphasize readiness, but sober Christian living in a context of the certainty of the future.
584
. So also Findlay, 108; Best, 205; Marshall, 132; Richard, 249; Holmes, 165; Green, 229. Malherbe (289) allows it as a likely option.
585
. Cf. Malherbe (290): “what you accurately know is that you cannot know what you seek to know.”
586
. See 1 Cor 1:8 (cf. 3:13); 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; cf. Rom 2:5; 13:12, where “the Day” appears without the genitive qualifier. In a later letter the phrase becomes “the day of Christ” (Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16).
587
. Cf. further Joel 2:32; 3:18; Obad 15-17; Zechariah 14.
588
. This understanding of the origins of this motif is supported by its further use in the NT; see 2 Pet 3:10 and Rev 3:3 and 16:5.
589
. Marshall (133) suggests that it “probably” also had “an element of uncertainness”; but that seems to move beyond Paul’s concern with the imagery here.
590
. For the full discussion of this phenomenon in Paul see my *Pauline Christology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007); this phrase is discussed on pp. 68-69.
591

. As noted in n. 8 above, the sentence begins without the usual conjunctive signal. One cannot be sure what to make of this in the present case. Of the scribes who supply a conjunction, those who add γάρ (“for”) were most likely on the right track (contra Malherbe [291], who thinks this is more contrastive than explanatory).

592

. Beale, 142 n., points out other possible allusions to this chapter of Jeremiah in the present context; note esp. Jer 6:24 (“pain like that of a woman in labor”); 6:26 (“suddenly the destroyer will come upon us”); and 6:4-5, where the enemy says, “Let us attack at night.”

593

. Malherbe (293) makes the intriguing suggestion that the (unexpressed) “they” in this sentence refers to false prophets within the Thessalonian community. This, of course, cannot be known, but it would help to explain the (otherwise unexpected) admonitions in 5:19-22. The difficulty with this view is that the “people” who say, “Peace and safety,” appear to be outside the community altogether, since they are destined for destruction. Moreover, when the (apparently) opposite of this emerges soon after this (see 2 Thess 2:1-2), Paul expresses uncertainty as to its source, although “prophetic utterance” is one of the clear options. What seems ultimately to stand against this view is Paul’s unwavering affirmation of the eternal destruction of those who are saying, “Peace and safety.” All of this is to note again that, as with many other matters in Paul’s letters, we stand on the outside looking in, as it were, and lack the degree of certainty that we would like.

594

. See, e.g., Green (234): “The Thessalonian population enjoyed both of these [peace and safety] during the mid-first century AD.”

595

. The language of this clause (αἰφνίδιος ἐφίσταται ὄλεθρος αὐτοῖς) seems to be Paul’s own, since it occurs nowhere else in the biblical tradition, except for his having αἰφνίδιος (“sudden”) in common with Luke 21:34.

596

. That is, Jesus is urging watchfulness on the part of his disciples; thus the imagery is expressed in such a way as to warn the disciples: “If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.” It is the unique nature of the imagery, in a context of the “Coming” of the Lord, which suggests that Paul knows and is alluding to this tradition.

597

. Findlay (109), following a suggestion by Lightfoot (72), thinks that Paul is here using an otherwise unknown saying of Jesus, which, of course, cannot be known.

598

. In a world of sanitized hospital delivery, the mute evidence of ancient inscriptions reminds us that in the Greco-Roman world many women died in the course of delivery. So this may have a subtly ominous note to it that most moderns would not suspect (cf. G. Bertram, *TDNT* 9:668, "the word denotes a physical process, a shattering which can bring close to death or cause death").

599

. See esp. 2:14-16 and 3:3-4 above.

600

. Some early witnesses (A B bopt) have turned Paul's singular into a plural here, resulting, as Metzger (*Textual Commentary,* 565) points out, "in near nonsense." Nonetheless, it was preferred by Westcott-Hort; Lightfoot (73); and Frame (184); and allowed by Best (209); cf. G. Förster ("1 Thessalonicher 5,1-10," *ZNW* 17 [1916], 169-77). Lightfoot suggested the improbable idea that Paul intended, "as though you were thieves."

601

. The entire Western tradition (D* F G it vgmss syp Ambrosiaster [but not the Douay-Rheims Vulgate]) changes this ἐσμέν to ἔστε ("you are"), thus conforming it to the preceding second plurals.

602

. In the interest of clear English, the NIV translators (kept in the TNIV) chose to rearrange Paul's order somewhat here, but at the same time they chose to translate his οἱ λοιποί (= the rest [of humankind]) as simply "others." But Paul's contrast is not with *some* others, as implied by this English rendition, but with *all* others.

603

. A few witnesses (P^{30vid} B b sa m vg^{mss}), some of them early, omit Χριστου. here, almost certainly as the result of homoioteleuton (ΣΟΥ/ΤΟΥ).

604

. The italics here emphasize what appears to be the perspective of the entire passage, as vis-à-vis those who see the whole as urging "readiness" for the Lord's return (e.g., Richard, 249-66). The latter seems to put far too much emphasis on v. 6 and not enough on the passage as a whole. As occurs regularly in Paul, indicatives (vv. 4-5) are followed by imperatives (vv. 6-8); but first person imperatives that include the apostle as well (see on v. 5b) seem to be a part of his renewed instruction over against the suggestion that he is warning them to be ready for Christ's coming.

605
. This is one of many Pauline γάρs that is omitted in functionally equivalent translations, such as the TNIV (cf. NEB, NJB), as unnecessary in English, since the explanatory sense of the conjunction is inherent in the English contrast itself.
606
. As is often pointed out, Paul is here using a common Hebrew idiom, "sons [= children] of," as a way of identifying people; see, e.g., Matt 8:12; 9:15; 13:38; Luke 5:34 et al. Because this is the only appearance of this Hebraism in the Pauline corpus, some scholars have used that to deny Pauline authorship here, but that is to remove Paul from his own heritage.
607
. Cf., e.g., Gal 3:22-25, where Paul moves easily from believers' being held "in custody under the law" (a prison metaphor) to the law serving as "pedagogue" until we "came of age." As here, this shift of metaphors allows Paul to shift emphases and thus go on to address his real concern for the Galatians.
608
. C. Foucant ("Les Fils du Jour [1 Thess 5,5]," in *The Thessalonians Correspondence* [ed. R. F. Collins], 348-55) argues that the eschatological sense of "day" from v. 2 is still at work here. Perhaps so, but at this point it will have become so distant as to be unnoticeable.
609
. See, e.g., Col 1:10-13; 2:13; 3:3-4; Eph 2:2-3, 13-14; 4:31-32.
610
. Gk. ἄρα οὖν, where "the ἄρα expresses the inference and οὖν the transition" (BDAG 2b [under ἄρα]); cf. 2 Thess 2:15; Gal 6:10; Rom 7:3, 25; 8:12; 9:16, 18; 14:12, 19; Eph 2:19.
611
. Whatever else, contemporary readers should not press Paul's own application beyond his immediate intent. Or if one does do so, at least acknowledge as much and not strap Paul with ideas quite beyond his immediate concern to *comfort* these believers, not threaten them.
612
. For their meaning in Paul see the discussion on pp. 22-24 above.
613
. Gk. καὶ ἐνεδύσατο δικαιοσύνην ὡς θ ώρ ακα καὶ περιέθετο περ ικεφ αλαίαν σωτη ρ ίου ἐπὶ τη̃ς κεφαλη̃ς ("And he *put on* righteousness as a *breastplate* and placed the *helmet* of *salvation* on his head"). Paul will pick up this imagery again in Eph 6:14 and 17. This echo of the Isaiah passage seems so certain that one is surprised at how easily it was overlooked in earlier commentaries (e.g.,

Calvin, Ellicott). Although Bruce (112) is cautious here, its certainty is further indicated, as Best (214) points out, by the fact that Paul limits himself to two pieces of armor for the triad of "faith, love, and hope."

614

. See, e.g., Milligan, 68; Best, 215; Malherbe, 297.

615

. Gk. ἔθετο, the aorist middle of τίθημι, one of the more flexible verbs in terms of meaning (cf. BDAG 1b, under which they offer a broad range of eight different "meanings," but which does not include the present passage). As with "put" or "place" in English, its sense is finally determined by context, which here takes on the sense of "consigning someone to something" (5b).

616

. Gk. εἰς ὀργήν (cf. 1:10 and 2:16), a term used by Paul and the other NT writers to refer primarily to the final retributive judgment on those who reject God and his love for them; see the discussion on 2:16 above. Best (216) chooses "anger" for this word, but in English that picks up an emotion that does not seem to be present in Paul's view of God.

617

. One of the unfortunate dimensions of historic Dispensationalism was its failure to distinguish between God's (always punitive) "wrath" and the ongoing experience of "tribulation" (Gk. θλῖΨις) as such, esp. since Paul and others make it clear that God's people are appointed/destined for the latter, but not the former.

618

. That is, Paul's sentence is so arranged that these two phrases stand in immediate contrast to each other (εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν), which most English translations have been able successfully to keep together.

619

. Gk. περιποίησις, which occurs elsewhere in Paul's letters only in Eph 1:14. Lightfoot (76) wished to make this verbal noun function in the other direction, "for adoption (by God) to salvation." But that seems to be far more subtle and altogether theologically driven than the Thessalonians would likely have been able to understand.

620

. The NIV, kept by the TNIV, rightly broke up Paul's long sentence into three sentences (vv. 8, 9, and 10). Translation, after all, is to put into *English* what Paul says in Greek. The causal connection between vv. 8 and 9 and the purposive intention of v. 10 are made clear in the TNIV, without the unnecessary (and burdensome in English) long sentence which works fine in Paul's Greek. See further G. D. Fee and M. L. Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its*

Worth (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

621

. That is, whether one believes that this or Galatians is Paul's first preserved letter, this is the first occurrence of this actual language, "died for us/our sins," which otherwise occurs surprisingly seldom in Paul's letters, given how foundational it is to his understanding of salvation. This is a clear case where the "quality" of the several occurrences is far more significant than their quantity.

622

. Cf. elsewhere 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:14, 15; Rom 5:6, 8; 14:15; see the discussion by H. J. de Jonge, "The Original Setting of the Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπέρ Formula," in Collins, ed., *Thessalonians Correspondence*, 229-35.

623

. In recent years there have been several (varying) attempts to make the metaphor "sleeping" refer to Thessalonian believers who are actually "sleeping" at the time of the Parousia (Edgar) or living below Paul's expectations of holiness urged on them in 4:1- 8 (Lautenschlager and Heil). See T. R. Edgar, "The Meaning of 'Sleep' in 1 Thessalonians 5:10," *JETS* 22 (1979), 345-49 ("sleep" is literal, not metaphorical; responded to by T. L. Howard, "The Meaning of 'Sleep' in 1 Thessalonians 5:10 — A Reappraisal," *GTJ* 6 [1985], 337-48); M. Lautenschlager, "Εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν: Zum Verhältnis von Heiligung und Heil in 1 Thess 5,10," *ZNW* 81 (1990), 39-59; J. H. Heil, "Those Now 'Asleep' (Not Dead) Must Be 'Awakened' for the Day of the Lord in 1 Thess 5.9-10," *NTS* 46 (2000), 464-71. The inherent problem with this perspective is its failure to take seriously the eschatological perspective that begins in v. 9 and concludes with "that we might live together with him," not to mention that the same metaphor has already been used to refer to "death" in 4:14-15 (and will appear again in 1 Cor 15:20).

624

. Gk. διό, used earlier in this letter in 3:1, and 25 times elsewhere in the corpus, nine of them in 2 Corinthians.

625

. There is also a change of direct object with this second verb; the first one is the common reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλους, the second the much less frequent ες τὸν ἕνα (lit. "one the other"), which occurs only here in the NT (cf. *T. Job* 27:3). This is almost certainly an instance of "elegant variation," where there is no difference in meaning at all.

626

See 1 Cor 8:1, 10; 10:23; 14:4 (2x), 17.

627

. See, e.g., 1 Cor 16:13-14 (15-18?), 2 Cor 13:11, and Rom 16:17-19.

628

. See the discussion of 2 Thess 3:17-18 below (pp. 341-43).

629

. See, e.g., R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

630

. See 4:4 (“rejoice”); and 4:6 (with “prayer” and “thanksgiving”). Although these are not precise parallels, the three “imperatives” occur at the same point in both letters.

631

. Gk. εἰδέναι, one of the two Greek verbs for “knowing.” This one has the larger number of options in terms of breadth of meaning. It was translated “know” in the KJV, whose intentionally “literal” offspring, the NASB, rendered it “appreciate”! The NRSV, ESV, NIV, and NAB have “respect,” which has all the markings of being uniquely late- twentieth century; after all, this is what is more specifically said in v. 13a. The TNIV appears to have cut a fine line between all of these with the less loaded term “acknowledge,” while at the same time keeping the basic “know” language and sense of the verb intact.

632

. Gk. τοὺς κοπιῶντας, the only appearance of this verb in the two Thessalonian letters; the pickup noun in v. 13 is ἔργον.

633

. See further Phil 2:16; Col 1:29; 1 Tim 4:10; cf. 1 Cor 3:8; 2 Cor 10:15.

634

. See v. 6 (Mary); v. 9 (Urbanus); v. 12 (Tryphena and Tryphosa); v. 12 (Persis), four of whom, interestingly, are women.

635

. Given the illogic of the order, “work hard, are over you, and admonish you,” one is somewhat taken aback by the large number of English translations that have chosen to continue this translational tradition; besides the TNIV only GNB (“who guide you”) goes the way argued for here. Among English commentaries over the past century plus who go this way, see Milligan (71-72), Best (224), Bruce (118), Holmes (179), Malherbe (310), Witherington (160); but decidedly not so Beale (160). W. A. Meeks offered a slightly different perspective on this second option, “who stand before you as protectors” (*The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], 134), indicating that these leaders served as the “patrons” of the community; this view was adopted by Wanamaker (193); cf. Richard (268),

“who are your benefactors.” This is a sociological fine-tuning of the option argued for here. It should be pointed out that this is not a modern democratization of first-c. culture, but an attempt to get the emphasis where Paul does, on the “benefaction” of these people, not on their “being over them” in some way.

636

. See, among others, NASB (“he who leads”); NRSV (“the leader”); NAB (“if one is over others”!); NJB (“if you are put in charge”).

637

. It is of further interest in this regard that the corresponding noun προστάτις is used of Phoebe in Rom 16:2, where it is universally agreed to mean something like “patron” or “benefactor.”

638

. Gk. νουθετέω, the first of three occurrences of this word in the two letters (here, v. 14, and 2 Thess 3:15, where Paul returns to this issue with much more vigor and detail).

639

. The TNIV has tried to capture the slight distinction between the two Greek words for “work” (the verb κοπιάω and the noun ἔργον) by rendering them “work hard” and “work.”

640

. Regarding this concern, see G. D. Fee, “*Laos* and Leadership under the New Covenant: Some Exegetical and Hermeneutical Observations on Church Order,” in *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 120-43.

641

. In this regard see 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 6:6; Rom 15:33; Eph 6:23; Phil 4:9. One is therefore caught a bit by surprise that Beale would make this imperative serve as a sort of “heading” for those that follow in vv. 13-22. The attempt for the most part seems especially forced.

642

. This was argued for in particular by Findlay, 124, following Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia; for a considerable refutation see Best, 228-29.

643

. This seems so clearly to be the case, esp. in light of 2 Thessalonians, that one is surprised by Malherbe’s rejection of it in favor of traditions derived from the moral philosophers; see “ ‘Pastoral Care’ in the Thessalonian Church,” *NTS* 36 (1990), 375-91.

644

. The rendering “the idle” apparently first appeared in the RSV (NT 1948); for reasons that are difficult to fathom, that meaning tended to take over among NT scholars, despite total lack of evidence for it.

645

. See the two entries in BDAG (ἀτακτέω / ἀτάκτως), who, regarding the verb, note that “the trans[lation] *be idle, lazy* does not take adequate account of Gr[eco]-Rom [an] social history.” In fact, there is no known evidence of any kind in its favor; cf. Gaventa, 81-82.

646

. Gk. παραμυθεῖσθε; see the discussion on 2:12 above (p. 82). The present usage tends to modify Green’s argument noted there (n. 108) that the verb more likely means something like “persuade.”

647

. This view is the one most frequently suggested; see Ellicott, 77; Best, 230 (as one option); cf. Marshall, 151; Wanamaker, 197.

648

. This option is altogether discounted by most commentators (e.g., Ellicott, 77; Milligan, 73 [“can only be the spiritually weak”]); but it has recently been put forward by Beale (166), and seconded by Witherington (163).

649

. Frame (198) identifies them with those “tempted to impurity” (4:3-8); Best (231) suggests that, “coming from paganism,” they are people who feel the need for rules. D. A. Black argues for a connection with those who are exhorted to watchfulness in 5:1- 11 (“The Weak in Thessalonica: A Study in Pauline Lexicography,” *JETS* 25 [1982], 307-21). From our distance, and with only this brief imperative to inform us, wisdom would suggest we simply admit that we cannot know who they are; cf. Morris (169). For a discussion of the concept of “weakness” as a philosophical category, see Malherbe (318-20), whose use of “clearly” is perhaps a bit strong in this case (our way as scholars of saying, “Shout loud, point weak here”?)

650

. See further the helpful comments by Green, who regards them as “those who had no social status or power since they were slaves or *liberati* (former slaves) or because of their economic situation” (p. 254).

651

. See Malherbe (320) for one who is willing to throw the net more widely here so as to include those on the outside as well.

652

. Gk. ὅρατε μή; only here in Paul; elsewhere he uses βλέπετε (1 Cor 8:9; Gal

5:14). The colloquial “see to it” is the American equivalent of Paul’s language here.

653. For this same kind of admonition elsewhere cf. Rom 12:17-19 (“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. . . . Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath”).

654. Here the TNIV has corrected a most unfortunate rendering in the NIV, “but always try to be kind.” This is simply not the same thing as “doing what is good” to others, and has a terribly saccharine ring to it. Cf. the objection by Holmes, 181, whose commentary was based on the NIV.

655. Cf. Gaventa (83): “What Paul encourages exceeds the conventions of ‘making nice’ to these people; it is active involvement that seeks their good because their good is that of the whole body of Christ.”

656. Malherbe (321) would limit this final καὶ εἰς πάντας to those within the believing community, but that seems unnecessary and creates an awkward redundancy (“to each other and to all of you”).

657. Except in the final instance, where the “evil” that stands in contrast to “the good” that precedes it is itself preceded by a prepositional phrase, which the Greek itself requires with the verb ἀπέχεσθε (i.e., ἀπέχεσθε ἀπό . . .). Gaventa (84) makes the further significant observation that each of the imperatives, except for those in v. 17, either begins with the letter π or one is found in the word immediately following the preposition or Greek article. Thus, πάντοτε, ἐν παντί, τὸ πνευμα, προφητείας, πάντα, ἀπὸ παντός. And in the adverb in v. 17 the π is found in the middle: ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε.

658. See Malherbe (328) and most commentaries, contra Thomas (290), e.g., who seems to reflect Western individualism more than Paul by entitling these verses, “Responsibilities to Oneself.”

659. So Ellicott (80); cf. Findlay (128): “From *joy, prayer,* and *thanksgiving* it is a natural transition to *the Spirit* and *prophecy.*”

660. Cf. Wanamaker (199-200) and Richard (271), who also make this point.

661. As, e.g., is emphasized by Green (250), who actually translates the verb “be

joyful”(!), and then uses only the noun “joy” in his two paragraphs of comment.

662

. The traditional translation “without ceasing” has been rightly challenged by C. Smith (“’Αδιαλείπτως Προσεύχεσθε: Is Paul Serious?” *Presbyterion* 22 [1996], 113-20), who offers “persistently” or “constantly” as more viable options in the present setting.

663

. Contra Ellicott (81) and Malherbe (330), who challenge this view on the basis of the singular “this.” But Paul is not setting forth three things that they must continue to do in worship, but a threefold expression of their worship, which together constitutes the “will of God” in this case.

664

. Gk. πάντοτε (“always, at all times”), ἀδιαλείπτως (“constantly, unceasingly”), ἐν παντί (“in every [circumstance]”).

665

. The omission of this δέ in the *textus receptus* (supported by ℵ* A 33 81 104 614 629 630 945 pm), along with the fact that each of these imperatives was assigned a verse number, has tended to destroy altogether the meaning of this series of imperatives as a set — and to cause untold harm in separatist churches. The δέ in this case was almost certainly an early scribal omission (in conformity to the whole series, all of which lack conjunctions), rather than added early and often by such a wide range of early witnesses (incl. B D G K P J 181 326 436 1241 1739 pm it vg cop goth eth). Metzger (*Textual Commentary,* 633, following Lightfoot, 84) suggests that the omission may have resulted from its being “absorbed by the following syllable,” but it is hard to see how that could have happened in this case (since it is followed by the δοκ-, not the -τε, of δοκιμάζετε).

666

. The genitive πονηρου̃ is ambiguous, and may be either a substantive (“every form of evil”), as most understand it, or an adjective, as in the TNIV (cf. Lightfoot [86], Frame [208], J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 236). For the argument in favor of going against the majority here, see the discussion below. Richard (272) opts for the substantive, but interprets it to refer “to questionable charismatic activity.”

667

. I use this word in this way with some misgivings, because there is a sense in which everything that is of the Spirit is “charismatic,” not simply the more visible manifestations of phenomena such as prophecy. Nonetheless, one of the current possibilities of meaning is this one — to refer to Christian communities

(or people) who are open to, and experiencing, these kinds of Spirit activity. That the present passage presupposes this is self-evident, hence the use of the term "charismatic" in this sense to describe them — and the rest of the early church. On this matter, though somewhat overstated, see H. Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979 [Ger. original, 1888]), 30-42.

668

. Morris (175-79), therefore, sees the whole of vv. 19-22 not as referring to prophetic utterances, but to general prohibitions, including one (v. 20) against despising prophecies. But this does not seem to take seriously enough either (1) the fact that the preceding three are a package of imperatives, (2) the structure of this particular series, or (3) the appearance and contrastive force of the δέ in v. 21, which is related specifically to prophecies.

669

. As is also the case, e.g., in 1 Cor 16:13-18; 2 Cor 13:11; Rom 16:17-19; cf. G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 825-26.

670

. Some interpreters have made it the basis for all the troubles Paul addresses in Thessalonica. But that is probably to read too much into too little evidence. See esp. Jewett, *Correspondence,* 161-78.

671

. See Fee, *1 Corinthians,* 574-82 (on 1 Cor 12:1-3).

672

. Cf. Wanamaker (201), who suggests that "Paul wished to encourage pneumatic activity as a sign of the eschatological times in which the Thessalonians found themselves." This passage seems to imply that the phenomena are more integral to early Christian initiation and experience than Wanamaker allows. Paul hardly needs to "encourage" what would have been *presuppositional* in the Pauline churches.

673

. E.g., Green, 261, who refers to them as "two exhortations that arrest attempts to impede the use of this gift within the church."

674

. The negative μή with the present imperative often has the force of "stop doing something," implying the forbidden action as already taking place. This is argued, e.g., by Hiebert (243) and Moore (83); but see Bruce (125), who correctly notes that, "like the positive imperatives in vv. 16-18 and 21-22, [these negative imperatives] indicate what they must habitually do (or refrain from doing)."

675
. For “fan into flame” see 2 Tim 1:6-7; for “earnestly desire” see 1 Cor 14:1.
676
. But see Gunkel (*Influence*, 30-31), who believes glossolalia to be “the Spirit’s most striking and characteristic activity,” and therefore considers πνευμα in this sentence to be “set next to προφητεία as the capacity for speaking in tongues.” Others see this first prohibition as referring to Spirit-gifting in general (Ellicott [81], Frame [205], Best [238], Wanamaker [202]), but as Malherbe (331) notes, “The context as well as the verb used . . . indicate that Paul is already referring to prophecy.”
677
. Since τὸ πνευμα holds first place in the sentence, one might argue that the emphasis lies here; however, this word order seems less emphatic than merely formal, since in each case the verb is the last member of the sentence (as was also true in the preceding set of “staccato imperatives,” vv. 16-18). More significantly, the definite article with πνευμα assures us that Paul is here referring to *the* Spirit, that is, the Spirit of the living God, whom each of them had come to experience at conversion (1:5-6).
678
. Gk. σβέννυμι. Moulton-Milligan offer a similar metaphorical usage from the first century (“you quenched the sunlight in us both”).
679
. But in the Pauline corpus only here and in 2 Tim 1:6-7 (“fan into flame the gift”).
680
. On this see esp. W. C. van Unnik, “ ‘Den Geist löschet nicht aus’ (1 Thessalonicher v 19),” *NovT* 10 (1968), 255-69.
681
. As over against a prohibition of an individual’s stifling the Spirit within oneself (as, e.g., Ellicott, 82; Bruce, 125).
682
. The language is from von Dobschütz (225) and is cited favorably by van Unnik (see n. 54 above) — although his distinction between v. 19 as referring to oneself and v. 20 to others is perhaps too neatly drawn.
683
. This can be seen most clearly in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Even after some rather strong words of correction about the Spirit’s activity among them, Paul refuses to allow these correctives to become a form of “quenching the Spirit’s fire.” Thus he concludes the whole by repeating the command that they “be zealous

for prophecy, and not forbid speaking in tongues." The corrective is to be found in their doing so "decently and in order."

684. Besides this passage see Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10; 13:2, 8; 14:6, 22; 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14. The verb, which speaks of the activity itself, occurs 11 further times, and includes the participation of women in 1 Cor 11:5.

685. See D. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 23-88.

686. Gk. ἐξουθενεῖτε, which here, as often in the NT, implies to "reject disdainfully" (BDAG; see Acts 4:11; Gal 4:14).

687. As, e.g., Best, 239.

688. Gk. δοκιμάζετε, which here means to "put to the test," in the sense of "examine" as to its trustworthiness. Cf. Luke 14:19, where a man excuses himself from the banquet so that he may go and "test/examine" a purchase of oxen.

689. From a very early time this saying was related to an *agraphon* of Jesus, "Be approved money changers." Cf. esp. the form in which it is cited by Clement: "Be ye approved money changers, who reject much, but retain the good." As Jeremias points out, this is probably how the logion itself was originally to be understood (J. Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus* [London: SPCK, 1958], 89-93). But despite this Clementine form, which has some obvious linguistic overtones with Paul, there is no reason to believe that Paul either knew or used the saying; and, in any case, Paul's concern moves in a considerably different direction.

690. Among the "criteria" passages, one might add 1 Cor 12:3, but, as noted in my commentary (*1 Corinthians*, 581), "Paul's point in context is not to establish a means of 'testing the spirits,' but to remind them that 'inspired utterance' as such is not evidence of being 'led of the Spirit.' "

691. Gk. ἀπέχεσθε; cf. 4:3: ἀπέχεσθε ὑμας ἀπὸ της πορνείας ("that you abstain from sexual immorality"); and 1 Tim 4:3 (where false teachers command "abstinence from foods, etc.").

692

. This possibility has also been entertained by some commentators (e.g., Ellicott, Moore, Hiebert, and Green), although the latter sees it as *including* the issue of false prophecy.

693

. The still greater misfortune is that this practice has been maintained by some recent English versions; see esp. the NASB/U, whose adherence to this practice seems inexcusable.

694

. See 2 Thess 2:11; 2 Cor 9:8; Col 1:10; 1 Tim 5:10; Tit 1:16; 3:1; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17.

695

. The Greek is quite close:
Paul: ἀπὸ παντὸς εἴδους πονηρου. ἀπέχεσθε LXX Job: ἀπεχόμενος ἀπὸ παντὸς πονηρου. πράγματος

696

. The choice of verbs seems especially perplexing to some, since Paul has an ample vocabulary to express "reject." Even more difficult is the modifier πονερου., which does not seem to balance the simple object, "the good," in the preceding clause. But all of this can be explained by Paul's choice of language from the LXX, where he has substituted εἴδους for πράγματος.

697

. In the middle voice, which is the only form of ἀπέχομαι that means "to avoid" or "keep distant from," it naturally takes the preposition ἀπό to complete its meaning.

698

. As BDAG; see, e.g., its use in Sir 23:16; 24:2; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 10.07, who uses a similar expression: παν εἴδους πονηρίας ("every form/kind of wickedness"). One wonders whether lying behind this usage is a correlation of "sin" with "idolatry" in the Jewish mind?

699

. This is my own terminology; Paul is in fact praying for them, but its form and placement at the end of the letter indicates that it serves as a kind of benediction as well. Cf. R. Jewett, who styles it a "homiletic benediction" ("The Form and Function of the Pauline Benediction," *ATR* 51 [1969] 18-34; *Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* [Leiden: Brill, 1971], 175-83). For the most thorough study of these "closings" in Paul's letters, see J. A. D. Weima, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1994), 174-86. On Wiles's *(Paul's Intercessory Prayers* [SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 1974]) less-than-helpful use of the language “wish-prayer” for this and all the prayers in the optative in the Pauline corpus, see n. 5 on 3:11-13 above.

700

. Cf. P.-É. Langevin, “L’intervention de Dieu, selon 1 Thess 5,23-24: Déja le salut par grâce,” in *The Thessalonians Correspondence* (ed. R. F. Collins), 236-56. Weima (preceding note) sees it as picking up a third item as well (“comfort in the face of persecution” [p. 181]), but that is less clear to me.

701

. Gk. ὁλοτελεῖς (NT *hapax legomenon*), an adjective in the predicate position that here probably functions adverbially; it is a quantitative (or “collective”; Milligan [78], Rigaux [596]) term for which BAGD offered “through and through” as a possible translation, but which BDAG changed to “in every way complete, quite perfect,” for which Danker then offers “make you completely holy in every way” for this passage. Lightfoot (87) considers the predicate usage preferable (“as proleptic, . . . ‘may he sanctify you so that ye be entire’ ”). Cf. Jewett (*Terms,* 176), who considers the adverbial use “indefensible” here, since Paul could have used the corresponding adverb ὁλοτελῶς. The adverbial understanding, however, which seems demanded by the emphasis and context, goes back as far as the Vulgate *(per omnia).* Moreover, it is not at all clear how “being entire” or “integral” (Jewett) makes much sense of the clearly ethical intent of ἁγιάσαι.

702

. Gk. ὁλόκληρον, according to BDAG, pertains to “being complete and meeting all expectation,” thus “with integrity, whole, complete, undamaged, intact, blameless.” It is difficult to see much essential difference in meaning from ὁλοτελεῖς. The best solution seems to be that of Milligan and Rigaux (preceding note), who, on the basis of derivation, see ὁλοτελεῖς as collective and ὁλόκληρον as distributive (i.e., “completely” and “in every part”).

703

. Indeed, the literature on this passage, besides the commentaries, is considerable. For a review of much of the Continental literature up through 1990, in several European languages, see R. F. Collins, *Studies in the First Letter to the Thessalonians* (BETL 66; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), 68-89.

704

. Even a casual look at the literature indicates that precision is difficult to come by; for a similar judgment regarding the three terms see Green, 268-69. For the concern of an earlier day over these matters, see A. McCaig (“Thoughts on the Tripartite Theory of Human Nature,” *EQ* 3 [1931], 121-38), who presents seven reasons why “trichotomy” is not a correct understanding of Paul.

705

. On the possible distinctions, see BDAG under πνευμα (3a). Although it is somewhat dated, see also the two entries in *TDNT* (E. Schweizer, "πνευμα," 6:415-37; idem, "Ψυχή," 9:648-56). What seems to be "clear" about this usage, and the possible distinctions, is that there is not much clarity in the literature itself. And in any case, Paul is not trying to be precise regarding the makeup of the human person, but all-inclusive in terms of what God will do for his people by means of the Spirit. What this seems to be, in fact, is a Pauline reworking of the familiar *Shema* of Deut 6:4.

706

. See, e.g., Frame (211-13), following von Dobschütz. This view, which has been generally rejected (e.g., Hendriksen, 147) or disregarded, has been recently revived by Jewett (*Terms*, 175-83) as a significant part of his understanding of this letter and of Paul's usage of πνευμα in general. According to Jewett, the occasion of 1 Thessalonians can best be explained in terms of a "radical millenarism," in which an ardent expectation of Christ's return combined with unbridled ecstasy to produce the various troubles in Thessalonica. The issue in 4:3-8 would then have been a "spiritual" separation of spirit and body, so that in "Spirit" one can do as one wills with the body, including illicit sexuality. That is because in their view they have been taken over by the divine Spirit. Hence, Paul urges that God's sanctifying activity excludes the notion that only "Spirit" will be redeemed (πνευμα = "the apportioned Spirit," i.e., the Spirit of God that has been severally apportioned to individual believers and more or less assumes the role of the human πνευμα) and that it includes "the whole person — not just the pneumatic inner man" (181). But it is not at all clear that the problem in Thessalonica is with "opponents" rather than simply with a lack of understanding and growth on the part of Gentile converts fresh out of paganism. Jewett probably reads a bit too much into only a few snippets of material from these two letters and, in the case of this verse, takes the additional step of seeing Paul as taking over the language of his opponents and reforming it. This seems too much to ask of the prayer, since one can make good sense of it by taking it in a more straightforward way.

707

. Many also see in the two lines a kind of chiasmus. In its barest form the sentence reads: ἁγιάσαι ὑμας ὁλοτελεῖς . . . ὁλόκληρον ὑμων τὸ πνευμα . . . τηρηθείη. Thus there is an ABC CBA order to (A) the verb, (B) the "you" and "your spirit etc.," and (C) the predicate adjective modifier of "you" and "your spirit." Understood in this way, the sentence is most often read: "May the God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit, soul, and body be preserved

complete [or ‘sound’].”

But this seems to make very little sense of Paul’s sentence, especially when one comes to the adverb “blamelessly,” which is usually turned into another adjective, resulting in (as the RSV): “May your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The problem here is that the first adjective (ὁλοτελεῖς) is treated as an adverb, but the second (ὁλόκληρον) as an adjective, while the one true adverb (ἀμέμπτως) in the sentence becomes a predicate adjective. Paul’s concern does not seem to be on the “wholeness” or “soundness” of one’s spirit, soul, and body at the Parousia, but on the “whole” person (i.e., spirit, soul, and body, and any other part of one’s being) being blamelessly preserved for the coming.

708

. Thus, even though not quite precise as to the meaning of ὁλόκληρον and its grammatically being a predicate adjective, the TNIV seems to have Paul’s *sense* right by rendering “sanctify” as a verb and the adjective as “blameless.” Richard (285) seems to miss Paul by too much in suggesting that “Paul is not here speaking of holiness as an ethical process or as social community activity. . . . Instead, he is referring to that soteriological activity which was begun by God in the Christ-event.” Making these mutually exclusive seems quite unnecessary.

709

. See 1:3, 10; 2:12, 19; 3:13; 4:13-17; and 5:1-10.

710

. Cf. Malherbe (339), who notes that “despite frequent claims to the contrary, Paul is writing rhetorically, and it is unnecessary to posit some liturgical tradition . . . or popular psychology . . . behind his words.”

711

. Cf. the usage in the similarly expressed love command in Mark 12:30 (par.), where “heart, soul, mind, and strength” function in the same way.

712

. There seem to be only 14 certain instances in which πνευμα refers to the human spirit; see *GEP,* ch. 2, n. 7.

713

. Despite Jewett to the contrary. Thus, e.g., Findlay (133): “for with man’s spirit the Holy Spirit directly associates Himself (Rom. viii.16).”

714

. On yet another front Juel’s point (250) is well taken: that sanctification here is not to be understood as a gradual progress toward a goal, but as a living out of the gift that has already been bestowed by grace. “Discipleship is life between the times, for God has not yet finished what he began. But the life of faith is not

a striving for more; it is living more fully in what has already been given, knowing that even efforts to live more appropriately as ‘saints’ (4:1-3) depend upon God who sanctifies.”

715

. The TNIV here reflects the reading of P^{30} B D* 0278 6 33 81 104 326 1505 1739 1881 2462 *pc* b syh sa Ambst; ℵA D^{1} F G Ivid Ψ lat syp bo have a καί here, which is most likely a secondary addition in response to the prayer for them that immediately precedes this request. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the circumstances in which a scribe might have deleted it, had it been original. It is of some surprise, therefore, that Malherbe (340) apparently considers the “addition” to be original.

716

. See 2 Cor 13:12; Phil 4:21; cf. Rom 16:3-16.

717

. The “kiss” in this case would not have been on the mouth, but on both cheeks, as it still is in some Eastern European countries.

718

. See further W. Klassen, “The Sacred Kiss in the New Testament: An Example of Social Boundary Lines,” *NTS* 39 (1993), 122-35.

719

. See n. 15 on 2:18 for the five instances of this phenomenon in the two letters.

720

. Although in Ephesians it takes the form, “Grace *to all who love* the Lord Jesus Christ.”

721

. The designation “Christ” is missing from 1 Corinthians and Romans.

722

. I put this in quotes because I do not intend for “second” to be a sequential number at this point — although I believe that to be so as well — but a numerical indicator only.

723

. That by Earl Richard in the Sacra Pagina series (see bibliography for details).

724

. NT scholars tend to be offended by this term; but what other term, one wonders, is appropriate for someone’s palming off as authentic a letter written in that person’s name without his or her approval?

725

. In any case, my own experience over many years is that the only people who

read these “Introductions” are other scholars or teachers, not the pastors or students who are the primary audience for this series of commentaries.

726

. In the commentary it is pointed out that in the second instance Paul has used the exact language of the blessing of Benjamin from Deut 33:12, Paul’s own family “crest,” as it were. How could a forger have known and done this? And to have done so by luck would seem to border on one chance in several billion.

727

. All one need do in this regard is to examine the cross-references in the margins of Nestle-Aland[27] to see how thoroughgoing this phenomenon actually is. At the end of such an examination the only cross-reference that would seem to have any substance at all in terms of use of similar language is the ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἀγαθῳ̣ (“in every good deed and word”) in 2:17, which is echoed again by Paul himself in 2 Cor 9:8, εἰς πα̣ν ἔργον ἀγαθόν (“unto every good deed”). And this is precisely the kind of “echo” that reflects an author’s own usage, rather than someone else’s trying hard to look like Paul with such limited knowledge of the rest of the corpus.

728

. This is a feature that in particular would seem most highly improbable for a forger to have been able to imitate; for the larger question of the authenticity of this letter, see the Introduction, pp. 238-41.

729

. Such a prayer occurs in 1 Thessalonians, of course (3:11-13), but not upfront as this one and the rest do.

730

1 Greek *Silvanus,* a variant of *Silas*

731

. In what appears to be one of the UBSGNT committee’s lesser moments, they chose to include the redundant ἡμω̣ν (“our” [KJV/NKJV]) in brackets and give it a [C] rating; indeed, Metzger (*Textual Commentary,* 567) indicates that it was included in the text in brackets “in order to represent the balance of probabilities.” The TNIV, and most other modern versions, have rightly omitted it. Three matters indicate that it is plainly secondary: *(a)* the external evidence is strongly in favor of exclusion; it is not found in B D P 0111 33 1739 1881 1985 it$^{d\ e\ mon}$, a combination of early evidence East and West that would be especially difficult to account for had it been original; *(b)* the variant found in the Majority Text (including ℵA G and the later Old Latin) would have required no thinking at all on the part of a scribe, while an “omission” would have; and scribes were

notoriously not “thinkers” of a kind who would deliberately “omit” this word as a redundancy; *(c)* it was a scribal commonplace to conform in such moments both to what immediately precedes (v. 1) and to what is found elsewhere in these two letters (1 Thess 1:3; 3:11, 13; 2 Thess 1:12; 2:16). For the inclusion of the pronoun, which seems to lack text-critical acumen, see Richard, 296.

732

. See on 1 Thess 3:1-5 for these details.

733

At this point, then, Paul is simply doing what is natural for him, whereas one would expect a forger who is trying to palm this letter off as Pauline to have followed the salutation of the first letter more slavishly.

734

That is, a forger who apparently knew only 1 Thessalonians would at this point seem to betray knowledge of Paul’s later letters as well.

735

It is difficult to imagine how a pseudepigrapher could have allowed himself such a redundancy, especially given that the only letter of Paul that is demonstrably known to him is our 1 Thessalonians. This kind of thing can be shown to be somewhat “typical” of Paul, whereas it is precisely the kind of *faux pas* a forger would want to avoid at all costs. Those who argue for forgery are thus caught on the horns of their own dilemma. On the one hand, they argue that all of this is too much like 1 Thessalonians to be authentic (“such repetition occurs in the prescript of no other Pauline letter” [J. A. Bailey, “Who Wrote II Thessalonians?” *NTS* 25 (1979), 131-45]); on the other hand, it is also argued that this repetition is not enough like that in Paul’s other letters to be authentic. But this view fails to note that the compounding of “God our Father” and “the Lord Jesus Christ” is a common feature of these two letters in a way that is less so in all the subsequent letters. Indeed, how a forger would have been able to pull this off creates enormous difficulties for the theory, especially since the addition of the source in v. 2 requires knowledge of the other Pauline letters, yet there is nothing else in this letter to suggest that the writer (even if Paul himself!) knew the rest of the corpus. The difficulty for the theory of “forgery” comes especially to the fore in the author’s inclusion of the source of the grace and peace, which is nearly impossible to account for without his having had knowledge of the other Pauline letters, yet nowhere else does the “forger” exhibit any knowledge of them.

736

As with all the arguments against authenticity, this feature cuts both ways. Some argue that it is so unlike Paul that he could not have written it. On the other hand,

one can argue, how could a forger have gotten away with something so "unlike Paul." Such arguments against authenticity are ultimately convincing only to those previously committed to such a view, since they are basically unsubstantial on their own merit.

737

For the second thanksgiving see on 2:13-14 below, pp. 299-304.

738

At least the actual content seems to suggest as much. Wanamaker (215), who sees all of this in rhetorical terms, suggests that one of its purposes is ("clearly") to "introduce the theme of the day of the Lord and the fact that it still remains in the future." Perhaps so, but it seems debatable whether the content itself actually does so. It would seem to take a lot of reading with that view in hand in order for one to perceive it in that way, since at no point is that emphasis actually articulated.

739

For an earlier attempt to shorten Paul's sentences into something more manageable, which in some ways anticipates the punctuation of the TNIV, see D. A. Dunham, "2 Thessalonians 1:3-10: A Study in Sentence Structure," *JETS* 24 (1981), 39-46.

740

By all counts this "verse" serves as the transition from the thanksgiving proper to the assurance of God's judgment on their persecutors. For those commentaries (e.g., Malherbe) and translations that prefer smaller paragraphs, the placement of this verse appears to be a matter of personal judgment. Those who see it as "concluding" the thanksgiving proper (e.g., NJB) include it with vv. 4-5; those who see it as "introducing" the rest of the sentence begin a new paragraph here (TNIV, NRSV, NAB; Malherbe). The former would have been my personal preference, but this is a judgment call, pure and simple.

741

This is used by many as condemning Pauline authorship, which is a puzzling view, to be sure, since one would have expected a forger to do exactly the opposite — namely, to adhere absolutely to 1 Thessalonians, since it would have been the only Pauline letter he knew. On the other hand, it has also engendered considerable discussion among those who affirm Pauline authorship; cf., e.g., Best (249-50), who suggests that "the obligation . . . is [in part] forced on Paul by what he sees in the Thessalonians; they deserve this thanksgiving." For a sane (and helpful) discussion of this language, see R. D. Aus, "The Liturgical Background of the Necessity and Propriety of Giving Thanks according to 2 Thes 1:3," *JBL* 92 (1973), 432-38.

742
Indeed, had Paul intended the former, the more appropriate expression would have been δεῖ (cf. Milligan, 86).
743
Cf. Marshall (170), “The thought is . . . of the obligation imposed by joyfulness and relief ”; and Holmes (211), “. . . [obligation] is not driven by duty but by gratitude to God for the divinely inspired growth experienced by the Thessalonians.”
744
This is a feature that is especially damning for the theory of forgery, since the alleged author apparently knows nothing at all of the rest of the corpus, yet writes with the kind of “instincts” that will emerge in later letters.
745
The appearance of this vocative in the thanksgiving is unique to this letter in the corpus; it will occur again in the thanksgiving in 2:13, in this latter case with the modifier “loved by the Lord.” Although this is another item that is used to argue against Pauline authorship, it is equally a feature that can cut both ways. After all, why would an imitator do this at all, let alone do it twice, since he would have no model for it? Whereas, given the frequency of this vocative in these two letters (see on 1 Thess 1:4), this is a feature that a forger would be expected to imitate more closely in keeping with the earlier letter, and thus not include it in the two thanksgiving reports.
746
Gk. ἄξιον, an adjective whose basic sense is “worthy,” but is also used, as here, in an impersonal sense of “what is fitting or proper.” The TNIV’s “rightly so” has nicely captured its meaning. Lightfoot (97) observes that this phrase serves to balance the obligatory nature of the thanksgiving — the divine obligation in the “we must”; the human with this “it is fitting.” But Aus (n. 13) has shown that this language has deep roots in Jewish liturgical prayers, especially so in contexts of suffering.
747
Gk. ὅτι, which in this case can be either causal or explanatory (= “that”); cause seems preferable here, as in most English versions and commentaries (cf. Best, 250).
748
It should be noted that these two nouns occurred twice together in the first letter (1 Thess 3:6; 5:8), and that they also express the major concerns of the first letter. But it should be further noted that in this letter only the matter of their “faith” gets picked up explicitly; the only further mention of “love” has to do

with God's love (2:16; 3:5).

749

The two verbs are near synonyms; the first (ὑπεραυξάνει) occurs only here in the NT, but it reflects Paul's love of ὑπέρ- compounds (see comments on Phil 2:9 in my *Philippians*). On the second verb, πλεονάζει, see the comments that follow.

750

On this question see the comments on 1 Thess 3:2 and 5 above (pp. 116-17, 20). Note also the title of C. H. Giblin's study of 2:1-12 (*The Threat to Faith: An Exegetical and Theological Re-examination of 2 Thessalonians 2* [AnBib 31; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967]). Morris (195; cf. P. T. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* [NovTSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977], 175) takes strong exception to this understanding, but his concern seems to be theologically driven. One might note, e.g., that in the letter most singularly driven by "faith" thus understood, Paul also uses the noun in this "un-Pauline" way to refer to what is believed in common (Gal 1:23: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching *the faith* he once tried to destroy"). Paul is not so easily boxed in as some in the Protestant tradition would wish to do.

751

As is usual for Paul; see 1 Thess 1:2; 1 Cor 1:4; Rom 1:8; Col 1:3; Phlm 4; Phil 1:3.

752

As O'Brien (*Introductory Thanksgivings,* 174) has pointed out, this increase is "diffusive rather than organic"; i.e., it does not mean that each of them has "more" love, but that the love they do have is increasingly evident among them.

753

Gk. αὐτοὺς ἡμας; although the αὐτούς would ordinarily be emphatic, here it most likely simply expresses contrast to the preceding "all of you" in v. 3. For other options see Best, 252.

754

In light of 3:6-15, their "increase of love" continues to be a matter that will need constant attention.

755

Gk. διωγμοῖς, a word that occurs five times in Paul (2 Cor 12:10; Rom 8:35; 2 Tim 3:11 [2x]) of the ten times in the NT. It is a term that refers specifically to external persecution inflicted by others.

756

Gk. τοῖς θλίΨεσιν; see the discussion of this word in n. 41 on 1 Thess 3:3. The rendering "trials" is unique to the T/NIV among the English versions. The word has to do rather with oppression or afflictions of various kinds.

757
Gk. ἀνέχεσθε, which here carries the sense of “undergoing something onerous . . . without giving in” (BDAG); cf. the similar usage in 1 Cor 4:12.

758
This phrase (ἐν πυρὶ φλογός) appears at the end of the present clause, from which it was separated when verse numbers were added. This created the unfortunate rendition of the KJV (kept in the NKJV) in which this phrase is understood to go with the participle δίδοντες (“give” = “pay back,” thus “in flaming fire taking vengeance”). The TNIV has nicely collapsed the participle into the verb with its rendering, “will punish.”

759
The other two are found in 2:1-12 (an apparently misguided prophetic word that the day of the Lord is already at hand) and 3:6-15 (the continuing problem of the disruptive-idle).

760
Gk. ἀνταποδίδωμι; the verb actually “encloses” the Isaianic oracle. I do not mean to suggest that Paul is necessarily *consciously* picking up this verb. But the fact that language from Isaiah 66 plays a significant role in our current vv. 8 and 12 suggests that this passage is in his head, as it were. On the possible influence of Isaiah 66 on this whole passage, see R. Aus, “The Relevance of Isaiah 66:7 to Revelation 12 and 2 Thessalonians 2,” *ZNW* 67 (1976), 252-68. This view is picked up esp. by Beale, 186-91, who sees it as Paul’s deliberately setting the believing Thessalonians in sharp contrast to their persecutors, who do not obey the gospel — just as in Isaiah 66 the “humble and contrite” stand in equally sharp contrast to those “who have chosen their own ways” (66:3).

761
Although this matter is still a debated issue in biblical scholarship, this phenomenon seems to support rather strongly that the oral substitution of *Adonai* (“Lord”) for Yahweh — lest the divine name itself be taken in vain — was well fixed in Jewish circles by the first Christian century. For the significance of this transfer of the κύριος = Yahweh to Christ in the Pauline churches, see my *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 41-55 et passim.

762
Although seldom noted by earlier commentators (e.g., Ellicott), this phenomenon has long been recognized by English commentators, beginning with Findlay (1904), and taken up more extensively by Frame (1912), who notes (correctly) that although “the description abounds in reminiscences from the LXX, there is but one approximately exact citation [v. 9 citing Isa 2:10].” Since

Best (1972), this has been more or less standard fare in the commentaries, some more cautiously than others. The christological implications have also often been noted, starting with Findlay (on v. 8, “Διδόντος transfers to the Lord Jesus the dread prerogative reserved in the O.T. for God alone,” 148); cf. Marshall, 1983 (on v. 9, “it is significant that language originally used of Yahweh is here applied to Jesus,” 179-80), and Wanamaker, 1990 (“The appropriation of texts originally written about God to describe Jesus as Lord was one of the most important developments of early christology and eventually led to the near-total identification of Christ with the nature and activities of God,” 229).

763

Probably slightly less than two decades from the date of the crucifixion/ resurrection.

764

See further the discussion of 1 Thess 3:11-13 above.

765

Gk. ἔνδειγμα, a NT *hapax.* Since it is a neuter noun, one cannot be sure in this context whether Paul intended it to be nominative or accusative; most likely it is accusative (so also most commentaries). Out of near necessity most English translations start a new sentence here, usually with an introductory "this," and make "sign" a predicate nominative. But it is not clear in these translations what the antecedent to "this" is; the T/NIV translators removed the ambiguity with their "all this," thus making all of vv. 3-4 "evidence," but that is probably a bit of a stretch. For a helpful discussion of the word in its present setting, see J. M. Bassler, "The Enigmatic Sign: 2 Thessalonians 1:5," *CBQ* 46 (1984), 496-510.

766

So most interpreters (see esp. Malherbe, 394); Bassler ("Enigmatic Sign") argued that in Paul's Greek sentence it more naturally stands in apposition to "in all the persecution and trials you are enduring," which she argues is supported by the *content* of v. 5, which focuses on their suffering, not perseverance. In this she has been followed only by Wanamaker (220-21) and Green (284).

767

So also Lightfoot, 100; Frame, 226; Bruce, 149; Morris, 198. Best (255) includes Paul's "boasting" as part of the "sign," but that seems doubtful.

768

Cf. Findlay (143), "They do not exhibit [divine justice], but 'point to' a future readjustment."

769

Gk. καταξιωθῆναι, which could possibly mean "make you worthy" (NRSV), but that is unlikely here; cf. the strong objection in Morris, 198.

770

The TNIV (and other English versions) omits Paul's καί, which seems to be an unnecessary expedient. The word functions adverbially here, with an intensive sense ("indeed, in fact").

771

To be sure, most commentaries suggest otherwise; see, among others, Marshall, 173; Bruce, 149; Green, 284-85; Beale, 184.

772

For an analysis of these eschatological climaxes to Paul's thanksgivings (1 Thess 1:10; here; 1 Cor 1:7-8; Phil 1:10), see J. H. Roberts, "The Eschatological Transitions to the Pauline Letter Body," *Neot* 20 (1986), 29-35.

773

Gk. εἰπέρ, used by Paul elsewhere in Rom 3:30; 8:9, 17; 1 Cor 8:5; 15:15; 2 Cor 5:3. Cf. Findlay (145), "the particle states rhetorically, in the form of a

hypothesis, a recognized fact."

774

Found in the OT in the well-known "an eye for an eye."

775

For the meaning of this word see n. 28 above.

776

Because of the unique nature of this material, a large number of interpreters consider vv. 7b-10 to be preformed material that Paul has taken over here. See esp. the arguments in Wanamaker (232). Although this has strong possibilities, the fact is that the material comes to us only from Paul and must be understood within this letter only — as a Pauline sentence. Everything else is speculation.

777

This same word is used regarding the "coming" of the Rebel in 2:3, which accounts in part for his being designated historically as the "Antichrist." See further below.

778

For understandable reasons (more logical and readable English), the T/NIV committee chose to reorder the last two; see also n. 28 above.

779

Many have taken this genitive as adjectival (his powerful/mighty angels; see, e.g., NRSV, REB, NAB), but as Lightfoot put it, this "interpretation must be discarded . . . [since] on this supposition the Apostle would dwell rather on the power of subordinate beings than of the Lord Himself "; cf. Best, 258.

780

So Lightfoot (102) and most commentaries; Best (259) prefers "the angels who belong to his power."

781

There is a considerable history of interpretation that understood this phrase to modify the διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν ("meting out vengeance"; TNIV, "he will punish") that follows. This accounts for the differing numbering system of the KJV (and the NA27) and most later English versions. Thus the KJV reads: 8*In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God.* Commentators are divided here; the majority follow the punctuation of the Greek text, but Marshall (177) and Wanamaker (226-27) prefer the historic position.

782

Although little is at stake here, there is considerable textual variation at this point in Paul's text, between ἐν φλογὶ πυρός *(in flame of fire)* (BDFGΨ 2464 pc a vg sy co; Irlat Tert), which would ordinarily be considered the stronger MS evidence, and ἐν πυρὶ φλογός *(in fire of flame)* (ℵA 0111 0278 33 1739 1881

Majdmsyhmg; Ambst). For a full discussion on my preferred textual choice (the first reading), see *Pauline Christology,* 58 n. 83.

783

Gk. ἐκδίκησεν; for which Plummer (22) offers the helpful rendition, "full retribution," which gets at the point of the word without the extremely negative overtones that words like "vengeance" have.

784

This was the view of many earlier interpreters (including Morris [203] and Marshall [177]), usually (but not always) suggesting that those who "do not know God" refers to pagans who have not accepted what can be known through general revelation, while the second have deliberately rejected the gospel after having heard it. This view was often argued as suggested by the repeated definite article. But this is probably to make too much of almost nothing. Cf. Best (160-61), who, regarding the repetition of the definite article, notes that it rather "emphasize[s] the enormity of their action." The one certain thing in this description is that Paul's language "not knowing God" has primarily Gentiles in view.

785

As Malherbe (401) points out by way of illustrations from the Psalter.

786

Noted as early as Tertullian (*Adv. Marc.* 3.16). The LXX translator in this case took some liberties with Isaiah's wording, probably in order to make clear what he assumed Isaiah had in mind. That is, "the fear of YHWH" has to do with seeing "his face." Paul, in turn, has kept the "face = presence" language and has omitted φόβου ("fear") because of where his present interests lie — with the return of the Lord Jesus, and thus with the persecutors themselves having to deal with being in the Lord's *presence* and thereby having to face his judgment.

787

On the use of "glory" with reference to Christ, see p. 304 below (on 2 Thess 2:14); cf. *Pauline Christology,* pp. 184-85 (on 2 Cor 3:18 and 4:4).

788

Since Paul is expressing this judgment only in terms of their total, irreparable exclusion from Christ, it is hardly useful to try to draw significant eschatological data regarding the "lost" from this clause, as, e.g., E. Fudge ("The Final End of the Wicked," *JETS* 27 [1984], 325-34), who argues for "annihilation" as the intent of Paul's ἀπό; cf. the response by C. L. Quarles ("The ΑΠΟ of 2 Thessalonians 1:9 and the Nature of Eternal Punishment," *WTJ* 59 [1997], 201-11), who suggests "divine punishment caused by or originating from the presence of the Lord."

789

Indeed, so awkward is it that even the KJV translators, in choosing to keep Paul's word order (as was their style), inserted a parenthesis around "because our testimony among you was believed," so that "in that day" could be seen by the reader (properly so) to modify the first part of v. 10.

790

Cf. Lightfoot (105), "enforce[s] the duty of waiting for the Lord's coming."

791

Gk. ὅταν = "at that time, whenever" (BDAG).

792

On this matter the majority of the more recent English translations tend toward "among." The rendering of the TNIV is the traditional one, being found in the KJV, and thus in its many progeny (ASV, NASB, ESV); it is also argued for by Lightfoot (104). The NRSV interestingly has "by his saints."

793

These echoes may seem a bit more tenuous than the others in this series. Indeed, were they the only echoes of the LXX in this passage, they would probably be scarcely noted in the literature. In fact, they were scarcely noted in the commentaries until Rigaux; since then cf. Best, 264-65; Marshall, 180; Bruce, 153; Wanamaker, 231; Malherbe, 404; Green, 294-95; but not Beale, 190, who would prefer to see it as still reflecting Isaiah 2 and 66.

794

This phrase (ἐν δυνάμει) occurs at the end of this sentence; it has been brought forward in the TNIV and most other contemporary English translations (the ESV being a notable exception).

795

Typically, a large number of MSS, some quite early, add Χριστου. ("Christ") so as to fill out the Lord's "name" (A F G P 0278 33 81 104 365 1505 1739 1881 lat sy bopt); it is missing in ℵ B D K L Ψ 0111 6 323 630 1175 1241 2464 *pm*.

796

It should perhaps be noted that this is the *only* feature in 2 Thessalonians that anticipates the rest of the corpus — which only adds to the difficulties for those who opt for pseudepigraphy. How could the forger know only *this* much about Paul from his other letters, without a hint of knowing anything else?

797

Cf. O'Brien (*Introductory Thanksgivings*, 178), " ἵνα introduces the certainty, not the purpose, of Paul's prayer."

798

But see Lightfoot (105), who argues that the verb means only "to account you

worthy"; for advocacy of the meaning adopted by the TNIV, see Best, 268-69; cf. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 179.

799

Gk. πληρώσῃ, which often means "fulfill," but in this case, as the TNIV and most English versions have it, means "bring to completion."

800

Gk. ἀξιώσῃ, a verb that can mean either "make worthy" or "consider/deem worthy." For later Christians this choice is full of theological pressuppositions; for Paul the options probably were not in view. His concern is that their "being worthy" is ultimately the result of divine activity.

801

So also Rigaux, 640.

802

Without justification F. W. Hughes (*Early Christian Rhetoric and 2 Thessalonians* [JSNTSS 30; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989], 55) translates this phrase by incorporating it into the preceding one, "every work of faith and power." This seems both careless and impossible with regard to Paul's Greek phrase.

803

So Whiteley (indirectly), Frame, and Bruce. Many would translate it adverbially, "that he powerfully fulfill" (e.g., Lightfoot, Ellicott, Best; most recently, Wanamaker), but this seems to miss Pauline usage elsewhere as well as its emphatic position here.

804

Cf. Hiebert, 297: "the characteristic power inherent in His nature."

805

In this regard one should note further how the prayer report finally ends in v. 12: "that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, *according to the grace* of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

806

That is, the way the translators kept from confusing this rendering with the more common *Adonai* ("Lord") was consistently to avoid using the article "the" with κύριος = Yahweh while keeping it when ὁ κύριος = *Adonai*.

807

Failure to note this simple historical reality seems to lie behind a large amount of scholarly inability to accept the letter as authentic.

808

Cf. Findlay (162): "This paragraph is the most obscure in the whole of the Pauline Epistles." Although some might vote for other paragraphs, the fact that

one very level-headed scholar thought so indicates the high level of obscurity that faces one here.

809

I have chosen to refer to “the day of the Lord” in this way (capitalized and without “of the Lord”) as a convenient way to refer to what should always be thought of in terms of the entire phrase.

810

On this matter see esp. R. Russell, “The Idle in 2 Thess 3.6-12: An Eschatological or a Social Problem?” *NTS* 34 (1988), 105-19; and D. C. Aune, “Trouble in Thessalonica: An Exegetical Study of I Thess 4:9-12, 5:12-14 and II Thess 3:6-15 in Light of First-Century Social Conditions” (Unpubl. Th.M. thesis; Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College, 1989).

811

B Ψ 33 and a few other witnesses (including syh and some MSS of the Vulgate) lack the ἡμῶν. Were this more widely attested, most textual critics, including this one, would think that the other witnesses had added the pronoun (as in 1:2), since this is Paul’s more usual form. But more likely here we have scribal omission for stylistic reasons, in light of the ἡμῶν that follows a few words later.

812

Against all earlier evidence in all forms (Greek, versions, the Fathers), the Majority Text has substituted Χριστου for κυρίου. This seems to be a later attempt to make sure that “Lord” equals “Christ” in this passage, which in fact it almost certainly does.

813

Gk. ἐρωτῶμεν δέ, the common verb for asking for information or making a request of someone. The δέ, which is very often adversative in Greek, is here recognized by most scholars to be simply transitional (thus Rigaux [647], “c’est un δέ de transition”; cf. the KJV’s “now”).

814

For the significance of this usage in these letters see n. 13 on 1 Thess 1:4.

815

Gk. ὑπέρ; with the genitive it has the basic meaning, “for the sake of,” but in the *koine* period it came to be almost synonymous with περί (“concerning, about”), with which it was often interchanged by early scribes. Even so, Findlay (163) wonders “whether ὑπέρ in St Paul ever quite loses the stronger meaning, *on behalf of*.” That is, it is in the very interest of Christ’s future advent that Paul feels compelled to write. In a truly idiosyncratic moment, the RV rendered the preposition “*by* his coming,” which the ASV altered to “touching his coming.” This is “translation” in terms of what one thinks an author *ought to* have said

rather than what he actually said.

816

This seems to be made certain by the fact that a single definite article controls both nouns (παρουσίας and ἐπισυναγωγῆς).

817

Gk. παρουσία, which occurred four times in the first letter (2:19; 3:12; 4:15; 5:23), and will occur twice more in this letter (vv. 8 and 9 in the present argument).

818

Gaventa (109) prefers "gathering together *before* him, in the sense that believers gather to witness and receive justice"; so also Richard, 324.

819

The TNIV has put Paul's Greek into nice idiomatic English. Paul has εἰς τὸ μὴ ταχέως σαλευθῆναι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νοός ("that you not be quickly shaken from your minds").

820

Gk. τάχεως, an adverb that here focuses on the speed of the action (BDAG 1 β); thus "readily" (Best); cf. Gal 1:6.

821

A. M. G. Stephenson ("On the Meaning of ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυριοῦ in 2 Thessalonians 2.2," *TU* 102 [1968], 442-51) suggested that it meant "at hand" = "near." But there is no known evidence for such a meaning for this verb.

822

Some of these difficulties with the Greek text have now been (properly) obscured by the TNIV's choice to bracket the threefold options, so that it does not appear that the only real option is the final one, "letter" — as in most English translations (e.g., KJV: ". . . nor by letter as from us, as that the day . . ."; NASU: "or a letter as if from us, to the effect that . . ."; the ESV makes the wrong point even stronger: ". . . spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that . . ."). The original NIV was ambiguous: "by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that. . . ."

823

Again, the TNIV has (correctly) translated in terms of the intent of Paul's word "Spirit," which in this case, given what he wrote in the first letter (5:19-22), is probably the source of real concern for the Apostle.

824

See the helpful discussion in R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 181-86, who categorizes the approaches to this phrase as being in one of three ways: (1)

to view the phrase as the work of a forger (which Jewett rightly sees breaks down in trying to interpret 2:15); (2) to deny that the phrase has any implications of forgery; (3) to view 1 Thessalonians as the letter, but to understand it as being misrepresented in some way (the view assumed in the present commentary).

825

E.g., Moffatt, Moore, Bruce; for English translations see n. 16 above.

826

See the comments on 3:17 below. As pointed out there, he signs off this way precisely because he is *not* sure whether the source was a forged letter.

827

This point of grammar is generally overlooked or ignored in the commentaries and translations (von Dobschütz [266] and C. H. Giblin [*The Threat to Faith: An Exegetical-Theological Re-examination of 2 Thessalonians 2* (AnBib 31; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 149] are exceptions). But that will not do, since Paul elsewhere shows considerable precision in his use of these two prepositions. For a primary source he always uses ἀπό (see 1 Thess 3:6 above: "now that Timothy has come to us *from* you"); when he refers to a secondary agent, that through which something has been mediated, he uses διά. In this regard see esp. the well-known demurrer in Gal 1:1, that his apostleship is neither ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων nor δι' ἀνθρώπου (it neither had its source in human beings, nor was it been mediated through a human being). We must accept it simply as wrong to translate the present phrase, "either *by* spirit or *by* word or *by* letter, as though *from* us" (NRSV; cf. NIV). Paul is not here referring to the *source* of the misinformation, but to its unknown *mediation* to them.

828

This is by far the more common option in the English commentaries, although Ellicott (107) limits it to the final two.

829

This view has been suggested, among others, by Findlay, 165 (" '*supposing that* it is through us,' namely, that the announcement of the arrival of 'the day' comes from the Lord through His Apostles and has their authority"), and Frame, 247 ("he disclaims simply all responsibility for the statement: 'the day of the Lord is present'"); cf. also Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence,* 184-86; von Dobschütz, 266-67; and Dibelius, 44.

830

This view was anticipated by Giblin, *Threat,* 149-50, 243, although his solution took the form of the question of authority. As with his view of πνευμα in 1 Thess 5:19, Gunkel (*The Influence of the Holy Spirit* [German orig. 1889; ET Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 31) thinks it refers to glossolalia here. But how,

one wonders, could such a miscommunication occur through a phenomenon that is not understood by either speaker or hearer?

831

For similar usage that is intended to discredit a point of view, see 2 Cor 11:21; for a positive use of this combination see 2 Cor 5:19.

832

In support of what has been argued above (n. 21) about Paul's use of διά, note that the δι' ἐπιστολης in 2:15 does *not* refer to the *source,* but to the *means* whereby the "traditions" have been given to them.

833

For a different view on the relationship between 1 Thess 5:19-22 and 2 Thess 2:2; 2:15, see F. W. Hughes, *Early Christian Rhetoric and Thessalonians* (JSNTSS; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 56-57, who interprets the allegedly non-Pauline author of 2 Thessalonians as denying the validity of "spirit," which is contrary to the genuine Paul in 1 Thess 5:19-20 ("a particularly jarring contrast" to the exhortation not to quench the Spirit — as though Paul had not written vv. 21-22 as well!). Cf. Giblin, *Threat,* 45, who also sees 2:15 as "factoring out" a "heavy reliance on charismatic utterances," but as a "modification" rather than a "follow-up" of 1 Thess 5:19-22.

834

It should perhaps be noted that this also sets the pattern for the church at a later time, which now of course has the "traditions" only in their written form.

835

As one might well expect, the literature on this passage is extensive. Thus, even though I have consulted much of it, I have chosen in this case to refer to only a limited number of secondary sources, to keep the commentary itself from being overwhelmed by the footnotes.

836

A phenomenon noted also by Malherbe (414).

837

Some manuscripts *sin*

838

We should perhaps also note at this point that both the narratival nature of this passage and Paul's own Semitic background emerge quite inauspiciously by way of the rare appearance of three sentences in a row in Paul's Greek, each of which begins with a καί ("and"; vv. 6, 8 and 11).

839

The Majority Text, in this case supported only by late witnesses (the earliest dating from the 10th c.), has an added ὡς θεόν ("as God") here; thus the KJV's

“so that he *as God* sitteth in the temple of God.” More likely the intent of the interpolation was for the “as God” to go with καθίσαι; thus, “so that he sets himself up as God in the temple of God.”

840

At least that seems to be the better choice textually, rather than “man of sin,” as the KJV (and its unfortunate stepchild, the so-called NKJV) has it. The choice is between ἀνομίας (“lawlessness” = “rebellion”), read by the earliest and best evidence (ℵB 81 1739 1881 cop; and many Fathers) and ἁμαρτίας (A D G K L P MajT lat; and many Fathers) (none of the extant papyri have this passage). At issue finally is what sat in front of a scribe(s) that he(they) saw as the alternative word. And here the better manuscripts should get the text-critical nod, since at a later time in the church “sin” is the greater concern, not “rebellion.” All of this is finally confirmed by the repeated reference to this person as “the lawless one” in v. 8, where there was no textual variation. (I call the NKJV “unfortunate” because it has simultaneously kept the worst feature of the KJV [its late Greek text] and eliminated its best feature [its classic expression of Elizabethan English].)

841

Gk. μὴ . . . ἐξαπατήσῃ. This warning against being deceived is picked up in several subsequent letters (1 Cor 6:9; 15:33; Gal 6:7; Col 2:4; 2 Tim 3:13), sometimes with this verb and sometimes with μὴ πλαναȣσθε. The present verb is used in Gen 3:13 LXX of the serpent’s deception of Eve.

842

Pace Lünemann (575), Eadie (264), and Best (280).

843

This is so only grammatically, of course. In context the “missing” apodosis (“it will not come”) is assumed by Paul, since it is the last phrase in the immediately preceding sentence (at the end of our v. 2). Nonetheless, one is struck by the fact that the sentence was never tinkered with by Greek scribes, while all the versions must supply a proper apodosis for the sake of the second language(s). This suggests that it was more readily accessible to native Greek speakers. In any case, translations into Indo-European languages are unanimous in supplying something like “it [or ‘that day’] will not come” (cf. the OL, *nise venerit;* and the KJV, where the translators always italicized words not found in the Greek text, “for *that day shall not come*, except . . .”). For later examples of similar anacoloutha, see Gal 2:4, 6; 5:13; Rom 4:16. As Findlay (166) pointed out years ago, Paul’s “style is that of a speaker, not of a studied writer.” These are *letters*, after all, not carefully honed treatises.

844

Thus, as with the long sentence that makes up the preceding thanksgiving, the verse numbering in this case was arbitrary, and without any apparent "sense" to it — except (perhaps) an attempt to keep "verses" at a relatively equal length.

845

Giblin (*Threat,* 122-39) suggests that the content of this clause should be supplied from what follows; but that requires a very unnatural reading of an ellipsis, and his own proposals seem too obtuse to be realistic (either "the judgment of God will not have been executed against the power of deception, removing them once and for all," or "the Lord will not have come in judgment to end definitively the deception that is the work of Satan"). One wonders how the Thessalonians themselves could have supplied either of these.

846

Gk. πρω̣τον, a word that is apparently "wrapped" into the TNIV's "until."

847

Some think of these as two separate events, one following the other; but that seems highly unlikely; cf. Marshall, 188.

848

Cf. Lightfoot (111), "the one term [lawless] expresses the intrinsic character, the other the ultimate destruction of the person . . . intended."

849

Gk. ὅτι; this point needs to be made here because this word functions more often in Paul to introduce direct or indirect discourse.

850

This term is found only in John in the NT (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7), and only in Polycarp's *To the Philippians* (7:1) in the early Church Fathers. Since Paul does not use this word, I have chosen to refer to this personage as "the Rebel," picking up the language of Paul himself from the noun ἀποστασία ("rebellion"; cf. LXX Josh 22:22; 2 Chron 29:19; 1 Macc 2:15).

851

Gk. ἀφίστημι; see esp. 1 Tim 4:1; Luke 8:13; Heb 3:12, which thus reflect a common usage of the cognate ἀφίσταναι in the LXX, which occurs most often as referring to a "turning away" from God (e.g., Isa 57:8; 59:13; Jer 2:5; et al.), in each case also reflecting what amounts to "rebellion."

852

And was so understood by many earlier commentators (Ellicott [108], Findlay [167], Milligan [98], Plummer [46]). Best (282-83) thinks of it in terms of Jewish rejection of the gospel. For the interpretation embraced here, cf. Frame, 251; Bruce, 167; Marshall, 189; Morris, 219; otherwise Malherbe, 418; Green, 307; Beale, 207.

853
So BDAG, who offer, “defiance of established system or authority”; cf. Calvin’s “a treacherous rebellion from God,” which he found to be applicable to the Roman church of his day (398-99); for English translations, see NRSV, REB (“Great Revolt,” NJB).

854
I have chosen to refer to this personage throughout as “the Rebel,” because the more precise rendering “the lawless one” seems too strained in English; and, in any case, “lawless” in English suggests someone who operates *outside* the law, whereas this personage is decidedly *over against* the law — probably both of God and the Empire — and therefore is the ultimate “rebel,” who in turn will lead the great rebellion against God and God’s people. Very likely this is the same person John refers to as ὁ ἀντίχριστος (“the Antichrist”; see 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7).

855
The Septuagint (57:3) has the plural, where the prophet is berating exilic Jewry for being υἱοὶ ἄνομοι (“lawless sons”); cf. also Ps 89:22 (88:23 LXX), where David’s enemy is designated as υἱὸς ἀνομίας (“a son of lawlessness”), a Hebraism for “rebel.”

856
It is not clear historically how or where the term “Antichrist” originated. Its only biblical use (ἀντίχριστος) is in 1 and 2 John (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7).

857
Gk. πάντα λεγόμενον θεόν. By inserting the λεγόμενον into the language of Daniel, Paul betrays the absolute monotheism that belongs to his generation. Thus Daniel’s “every deity” in Paul’s terms is “every *so-called* deity.”

858
Gk. σέβασμα, meaning “object of reverence,” which refers to things as well as to people. This phrase is the sure giveaway that Paul is echoing the Daniel passage, since it is otherwise so unnecessary to his present concerns.

859
At least that seems to be the plain sense of the passage; Lightfoot (112) preferred to understand the whole passage as representing “the impersonation of some evil principle or movement.”

860
Gk. ὥστε αὐτὸν . . . καθίσαι (lit. “so that he *sits* . . .”). Part of the arrogance is not simply that he would “set himself up” (as T/NIV), but that he would assume to *sit* on another’s throne, thus assuming a divine role for himself.

861

Gk. ὅτι ἐστὶν θεός; although the English translations have consistently rendered this as “God,” in light of the anarthrous θεός, it is possible that Paul intended simply that “he was a god,” or “divine.” After all, Antiochus himself was not a monotheist!

862

Although some early interpreters (Chrysostom, Theodoret, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Jerome), given that the temple had by then long been destroyed, understandably transferred it to the church — a view also adopted by some later interpreters as well (e.g., Lightfoot; Giblin, *Threat*, 76-80). Green (312-13) argues for a temple of the imperial cult in the city of Thessalonica itself; but that seems to be a bit of a stretch for Paul’s use of such biblical language as τὸν ναὸν του. θεου.̣, especially with the combined definite articles.

863

Cf. Findlay (174-75): this “reminder gently reproves the readers, who should not have been so easily disturbed by the alarmists, after what the Apostle had told them.”

864

Both Rigaux (662) and Malherbe (421) see this question as belonging to the preceding paragraph (thus vv. 3-5). Either way, this seems to be a case of “dealer’s choice.”

865

This is now the fourth instance in these two letters of this sudden shift to the first person singular; see n. 15 on 1 Thess 2:18. For a forger to pull off this subtlety seems beyond the reach of all historical probability.

866

This is also the fourth of six instances in these two letters of Paul’s urging them to “recall” what they had been taught; see 1 Thess 2:9; 3:4; 4:1; 5:1-2; 2 Thess 3:10.

867

Gk. ἔλεγον; this is a primary example of an iterative use of the Greek imperfect. Malherbe (421) sees it as slightly pejorative (“I kept on telling you”), but that seems unnecessary in this case.

868

There are some in the evangelical community who may be a bit distressed by this reality, especially as to how it might impact the doctrine of the divine inspiration of Scripture. The response, of course, is the historic one as to the basic perspicacity of Scripture. My greater concern lies with those who wish to know more on these matters than is given here, and thus to create eschatological schemes with far more confidence than the data would seem to allow. What

needs to be heard at this point is Paul's *certainty* regarding the Parousia, a certainty about which later generations perhaps need to be reminded. The "that-ness," not the "near-ness," of the Parousia is what drives Paul, and should encourage us; one must learn to trust God with regard to its timing.

869

Paul's sentence has *his* basic concerns in their order of emphasis: καὶ νυ.ν τὸ κατέχον οἴδατε ("and now what restrains you know"). As was their wont, the KJV translators chose in this case to put the object after the verb ("and now ye know what with-holdeth").

870

But this reality has not deterred interpreters over many centuries from taking strong positions in this regard!

871

It seems fruitless from this distance to join in the speculation as to what/ whom Paul intended by these enigmatic participles; that is, it is "fruitless" in the sense that since we can never know, we should simply rest there and come to terms with the *point* of all this, without knowing specific details. The most convenient overview of the various possibilities for these details can now be found in Green, 311-16.

872

It should be noted that this ambiguity is carried over into the historic rendering found in the KJV ("and now ye know"). This word order is related to the translators' tendency toward a more wooden literalism. But in so doing we cannot be sure from this distance how they understood the adverb, whether they meant "and now, ye know" or "and, ye now know."

873

It is in fact accepted by Lightfoot, Findlay, Rigaux, and Richard; however, it should be noted that none of Lightfoot's references for such usage is from Paul's letters.

874

As in the KJV, NKJV, T/NIV, NAB, REB, and NJB (in the latter two rendered "too"); most of the rest of the English versions (e.g., N/RSV, NASB/U, ESV, NJB) see it as temporal ("what is holding him back now"; NJB, "what is still holding him back"; cf. GNB). The NLT translators (apparently) chose the latter understanding, but made it more emphatic by putting it in the next clause (". . . for he can be revealed *only* when his time comes").

875

One should also note that the verb most commonly rendered "hold back" has been understood as intransitive by some interpreters, thus meaning "to hold

sway” (see Frame [258] and Best [299]).

876

Paul’s clause begins with an εἰς τό, which, when followed by an infinitive, expresses “result.” The “result” in this case is the Rebel’s being “revealed” in due time.

877

Gk. ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ; one is not quite sure how the NIV translators understood the reflexive ἑαυτοῦ so as to render it “proper.” Both the REB and NJB render it “his appointed time,” but see the comments that follow.

878

Gk. μόνον . . . ἕως; the “only” in this case seems to belong to the unexpressed protasis (= this situation will maintain *only* until . . .); cf. Lightfoot. See Gal 2:10 for a similar elliptical use of μόνον.

879

This, of course, does not impede ongoing speculation; see e.g., C. Nicholl, “Michael the Restrainer Removed (2 Thess. 2:6-7),” *JTS* 51 (2000), 27-53.

880

A difficult textual choice occurs here. On the one hand, very good evidence has “the Lord *Jesus*” (א A D F G P Ψ 0278 33 pc; latt sy co, Origen Didymus). But equally good evidence (B 1739 1881 MajT) lacks the Ἰησοῦς found in the rest. Since there can be little question that “the Lord” here is indeed Jesus, did some early scribes add “Jesus” in keeping with the frequency of this combination in these letters, or was the “Jesus” omitted because of parablepsis? Since the divine names were abbreviated very early in the copying tradition of the Greek NT, these two nouns would have sat side by side as ΚΣ ΙΣ, and without space between them. It is easy to see how scribes could have left the second word out. But since this combination occurs so often in these letters, and since the omission of one or the other occurs so rarely, it seems more likely in this case that the addition is secondary. Lightfoot (115) thought otherwise.

881

It is not absolutely certain how Paul intended the adjective πάσῃ (“all”) and the final genitive Ψεύδους (“of falsehood”) to be understood. The NRSV takes the “all” to go only with “power” and the “of falsehood” only with “wonders” (“all power, signs, lying wonders”); the NIV took them both to go with all three words (“all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders”). Since πάσῃ is singular and modifies the singular δυνάμει, the NRSV and TNIV probably have the better of it on this question. The adjective Ψεύδους is more difficult, but since it *follows* τέρασιν and therefore *can* include both nouns, and since the two words seem so clearly to go together and thus speak of a single reality, it seems

likely that Paul intended it to cover both of the preceding nouns, not just the final one. See further the discussion below.

882

Cf. vv. 3 and 6, where the language of "revelation" is actually used.

883

This is rare in the sense that in all other Pauline appropriations of OT κύριος texts to refer to Christ the κύριος represents the Tetratgrammaton (YHWH). Here the Isaianic context has to do with the future king himself.

884

Gk. τῳ̣ πνεύματι του̣ στόματος αὐτου̣. This is one of the rare instances in Paul where πνευμα simply means "breath," as in the LXX, and thus is not a referent to the Holy Spirit, *pace* Giblin, who interprets it as "the Spirit from the mouth of the Lord" (see *Threat,* 91-95); Milligan (103) attributes this view also to Athanasius (*Ad. Serap.* 1.6). But such a view runs aground at two points: (1) It does not take the metaphorical language seriously enough as metaphor. It is doubtful whether either Isaiah or Paul thought in terms of the Spirit of God in using this metaphor. (2) The use of the definite article with πνεύματι in this instance points away from reference to the Spirit, rather than toward it (on this matter see ch. 2 in *GEP*). On the probable meaning of the metaphor itself, as referring to the authoritative command of the king, see R. Watts, "The Meaning of *Alaw Yiqpesu Melakim Pihem* in Isaiah LII 15," *VT* 40 (1990), 327-35 (esp. 330-31).

885

Gk. ἐπιφανεία, a word that occurs only here in the Pauline church corpus. It appears five times in the Pastorals, once regarding the Incarnation (2 Tim 1:10) and four times as here (1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1, 8; Tit 2:13).

886

Cf. the equally "literal" NASB/U: "with all power and signs and false wonders." The very awkwardness of this rendering, not to mention its mixing of ideas, should have caught the translators' attention in this case.

887

See also Ellicott (116), Lightfoot (116-17), Milligan (104), Malherbe (425); but the problem with this view is the singular "power," followed by "signs" and "wonders," a threesome that makes very little sense. Lightfoot, e.g., cross-references 2 Cor 12:12; but this passage is *not* analogous, since there the three words are all plurals, held together by τε καί / καί (σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμασιν). Green (321) is uncharacteristically careless at this point, making all three words consistently plural.

888

Cf. Rom 15:19 (ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος θεου.); for 2 Cor 12:12, where they do constitute a triplet, see the preceding note.

889

Since this is the only real meaning of "counterfeit," the NIV seemed quite misleading to call them "counterfeit miracles, etc.," thus turning Paul's genitive "of falsehood" into something else altogether. This was correctly eliminated in the TNIV, which changed the phrase to read "signs and wonders that serve *the lie*." See also the RSV, which was even worse: "with pretended signs and wonders" — now corrected in the NRSV, but not fully adequately, to "lying wonders."

890

One wonders in passing whether this is not one of the reasons why in 2 Corinthians 10-13 Paul is so reluctant to bring forward "signs and wonders" as authenticating his ministry. He does not thereby deny them; but neither does he put much stock in them *as marks of authentication.* For him the evidence of apostleship lies ultimately not in the miraculous — in the sense of "signs and wonders," since Satan can also produce these — but in his own "imitation of Christ" in his sufferings and in the fruit of such imitation, the conversion of the Corinthians themselves.

891

Paul's word τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, the middle voice of ἀπόλλυμι, has to do with those who will experience eternal ruin. Nothing can be made of the nature of that destiny on the basis of the word alone, since it can range from "total destruction" to the less ominous sense of "ruin" as such.

892

Gk. ἐδέξαντο, which the TNIV here put into a more common idiom; thus Paul's "did not 'accept' a love for the truth" was rightly turned into "refused to love the truth."

893

This entire phrase, "did not accept a love for the truth that they might be saved," is one of the reasons why some have rejected Pauline authorship of this letter, since to them this sounds too far removed from the Paul of Romans and Galatians. But that seems to miss the ad hoc nature of Paul's letters by too much. This particular language was formulated ad hoc on the basis of the prior description of those who are perishing. And Paul himself is quite ready elsewhere to refer to the gospel in terms of "truth" (see, e.g., Gal 2:5, 14; Col 1:5 for this very phrase).

894

Some have had theological difficulty with this clause — that God should be

involved in what is otherwise evil. But this is an expression of divine judgment on those who have refused God's mercy. That the judgment in this case is temporal is simply incidental to the present point.

895

Paul's ἵνα, which ordinarily introduces a purpose clause, in this case introduces a clause that borders on result; thus the TNIV's "so that"; cf. NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB; NET has "and so."

896

Gk. κριθῶσιν, which in this passive expression implies the ultimate outcome of God's judgment of them.

897

Three recent commentaries in English in fact do this very thing (Holmes, Malherbe, Witherington), although Malherbe, at least, includes the thanksgiving in vv. 13- 14 with what precedes. For an earlier commentary that does the same, see Findlay.

898

A difficult textual choice faces one here, as to whether or not there is a καί ("also") following Paul's εἰς τό. The "difficulty" in this case is related to one's textual proclivities, in that it is missing in what most scholars consider to be the better evidence (Avid B D Ψ 33 1739 1881 MajTabm* vgmss syp Ambrosiaster), but its presence seems also to be the more difficult reading (i.e., it is difficult to imagine the circumstances in which scribes would have *added* a καί here when it seems so unnecessary to the overall sense). It is therefore bracketed in the UBS4-NA27 Greek text, and excluded from most English translations. Here is a case where the more difficult reading (found in ℵ FGP0278 81 365 2464 *al* lat syh) should prevail as original, and that Paul therefore wrote εἰς ὃ καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ("unto which also he called you").

899

On the surface, this might appear to be one of the more difficult textual choices in 2 Thessalonians (between ἀπαρχήν, "firstfruits" [B F G P 33 81 326 1739 itc,dem,div,f,x,z vg syrh copbo] and ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, "from the beginning" [ℵ D K L Ψ 104 181 pler itar,e,mon syp copsa]). The external evidence is fairly evenly divided, both East and West. Nor is the change likely to have happened by pure accident (except in the sense noted below, that a scribe looked at one thing but "saw" another). The commentaries tend to favor ἀπ' ἀρχῆς (Ellicott, Frame, Plummer, Hendriksen, Hiebert, Marshall, Morris, Wanamaker; otherwise Weiss, Moffatt, Bruce), while the English translations are more divided ("from the beginning," KJV, RSV, NASB, ESV, NJB, REB; "firstfruits," T/NIV, GNB, NAB, Moffatt, Knox). See further Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 568. Here is a

case where the dictum should prevail that, when things are otherwise generally equal, “the more difficult reading is more likely the original” (since scribes tended to ease difficulties, not intentionally create them). Thus the TNIV almost certainly has it right here.

900

This is especially true of versions, such as the T/NIV, that use “headings” to help readers navigate their way through the text.

901

Gk. ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ κυρίου; that Paul is borrowing his ancestral language seems certain in this case because of the anarthrous κυρίου, vis-à-vis the same phrase in 1 Thess 1:4, where God (θεός) is the one who loves (ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ). It is therefore remarkable that the majority of commentators have missed this certain echo of the LXX, which was first noted by Westcott-Hort and has been in the Nestle(-Aland) margin at least since 1950 (but see Findlay, 188); others (Frame, 279; Best, 312; Malherbe, 436) reference the LXX, but see little or no connection.

902

This reality, that it is so uniquely Pauline, subtle though it might be for later readers, is enough to quash all attempts to deny this letter as from Paul. How, one wonders, could a forger have been either so insightful or so “lucky” as to pull this off?

903

In light of some (legitimate) objections to my use of “Trinitarian” in *GEP* as proper nomenclature for Pauline theology — mostly because the word carries too much baggage from later discussions that are concerned with how the three divine “persons” cohere in unity of being — I have chosen to use “proto-Trinitarian” for those moments in Paul. It is borrowed from Stanley Porter (in I. H. Marshall, *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004], 122 n. 59) as a way of designating those texts where Paul himself, rigorous monotheist though he was, joins Father, Son, and Spirit in ways that indicate the full identity of the Son and Spirit with the Father, while not losing that monotheism.

904

For a full listing of these passages, see Fee, *GEP*, 48 n. 39.

905

That this refers to Christ and not to God (contra Rigaux, 371; Malherbe, 436; Green, 325[?]; Beale, 225) seems certain both on the basis of Pauline usage and on the basis of the grammar of the present sentence. Had Paul intended ὑπὸ κυρίου to equal the preceding τῷ θεῷ, then the simple, ordinary composition of

such a sentence would have been: τῷ θεῷ . . . ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ αὐτου, ὅτι εἵ λατο ὑμας ἀπαρχὴν ("to God, . . . loved by him, because he chose you as firstfruits"). Thus the awkward repetition of "God" as the subject of Paul's sentence occurs precisely because in the meantime he has mentioned a second subject ("the Lord"), thus necessitating his return to the first noun (cf. Lightfoot, 119; Best, 311; Marshall, 206). This grammatical reality, plus the fact that Paul makes a considerable point in these two letters of identifying Jesus Christ as ὁ κύριος, would seem to far outweigh the contextual considerations that Malherbe brings forward to suggest otherwise. Here is a place where Pauline usage must prevail over theological preferences.

906

Eph 3:19 is the notable exception.

907

Cf. Frame, 279; contra Morris, 238, who suggests that "there is probably no significance in the change."

908

E.g., Morris (238) and Marshall (206).

909

All of this, one might note further, is both too subtle and too Pauline to have been "imitated" by someone who chose to write this otherwise brief and nondescript letter in Paul's name. It is difficult to imagine the circumstances in which a Christian believer in the first century would have cared to do such a thing — and to what end, one wonders!

910

Thus reflecting what L. Kreitzer calls a "functional and conceptual overlap between Christ and God" (*Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology* [JSNTSS 19; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987]).

911

See n. 92 above; for the more extended argument on this matter see my *To What End Exegesis? Essays Textual, Exegetical, and Theological* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 75-76.

912

Those who favor ἀπ' ἀρχης often make the unwarranted assumption that Paul would have intended "firstfruits *of Macedonia*" had he used ἀπαρχήν in this passage, but that is hardly so. In fact, Paul qualifies this word geographically only in Rom 16:5 and 1 Cor 16:15, in both cases referring to individuals, with no particular emphasis on the "ingathering" of others. The qualifier "of the Spirit" in Rom 8:23 is most likely appositional (the Spirit himself is the firstfruits, guaranteeing the future reality). In the other three cases (Rom 11:16; 1 Cor

15:20, 23), whether qualified or not, the metaphor images the "firstfruits" of a much greater "ingathering." That would seem to be precisely the point being made here, so that the lack of a geographical genitive qualifier seems quite irrelevant.

913

Gk. εἰς σωτηρίαν, which the T/NIV has put as a verb, "to be saved."

914

See the discussion on 1 Thess 5:8-9 for its first occurrence.

915

That Paul intended a twofold reality in this case is made certain by the fact that the two phrases are the (grammatical) object of a single preposition. Thus, ". . . salvation by the Spirit's sanctification and trusting the truth."

916

Gk. εἰς ὅ (lit. "unto which"), which is "ungrammatical" in the sense that a

917

Or *traditions* relative pronoun technically agrees in gender and number with its antecedent, and there is no preceding noun that is neuter singular.

918

1 Cor 2:8: "crucified the Lord of glory"; 2 Cor 3:18/4:4: "we all with unveiled faces behold the glory of theLord" / "the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

919

Again, Findlay (191) is a notable exception.

920

It is striking, therefore, how often this clear connection is not noted in the earlier commentaries (e.g., Calvin, Ellicott, Plummer, Milligan), and in some of the later ones as well (e.g., Morris).

921

See n. 43 on 1 Thess 5:6 above.

922

The fourth in this letter; there are still three to come (3:1, 6, 13).

923

Gk. παραδόσεις, a word that occurs again in 3:6, and elsewhere in Paul in this positive sense only in 1 Cor 11:2 (regarding the Lord's Table), where it is accompanied by its cognate verb. The word occurs in Gal 1:14 regarding the Jewish "traditions" in which Paul was raised, and again in Col 2:8 with altogether negative connotations.

924

This reference to his former letter is what makes the reversing of the order of

these two letters (as, e.g., Wanamaker) a difficult exercise indeed.

925

Much of the first part of this discussion is taken from my *Pauline Christology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 73-76.

926

See, e.g., J. A. Hewett, “1 Thessalonians 3.13,” *ExpTim* 87 (1975-76), 54- 55 (cf. Lightfoot [48], Wanamaker [142], Bruce [71]), who suggests that “with two subjects the verb commonly agrees with the nearer of the two.” But the texts brought forward do not seem to be true illustrations. That is, “wind and sea” (Mark 4:41), “moth and rust” (Matt 6:19), and “silver and gold” (Jas 5:3) do not seem to make this point; rather, they are analogous to Paul’s use here, where the two are not thought of individually but collectively. Richard (167-68) solves this “problem” by postulating an early scribal corruption to Paul’s original text, which he reconstructs as “Now may God our Father himself, as also our Lord Jesus, direct.” But such a “reconstruction” is based on prejudice against this letter, pure and simple. Better, it would seem, to take Paul himself seriously, since he can pray to both together and to one or the other separately. Richard’s concern, it should be noted, is a legitimate one: not to read Paul in light of later Trinitarian formulations. On the other hand, this is the very kind of phenomenon that played a role in the later formulations.

927

Richard (see previous note) and Wiles (see next note), like many others, it should be noted, reject Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians, which makes more difficult the task of accounting for this phenomenon in 1 Thessalonians.

928

G. P. Wiles (*Paul’s Intercessory Prayers* [SNTSMS 24; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974], 30) suggests that “this must have been taken over from the conventional liturgical language to which the apostle and his readers were accustomed.” But “must have been” falls far short of actual demonstration. What is noteworthy is that the phenomenon exists only in 1 and 2 Thessalonians in the NT — although wish-prayers continue to be found in Paul’s letters (Wiles lists Rev 21:3 as well, but this is affirmation, not prayer).

929

So, e.g., Frame, 136-37, and Best, 147.

930

In these two letters three of the four have to do with divine strengthening, two of which have Christ as the subject (see above on 2 Thess 3:3), while the other (1 Thess 3:2) has to do with apostolic encouragement of God’s people. So also in Romans: 16:25 is divine; 1:11 is apostolic.

931
As Wiles does, see n. 120 above.
932
Paul's Greek reads: ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἀγαθῷ, which is a typical inclusio in Paul, so that the παντί ("every") and ἀγαθῷ ("good") are intended to go with both nouns, as the TNIV rightly has it.
933
See Holmes (251ff.), who in discussing the present section fails altogether to note the τὸ λοιπόν with which it begins; cf. Malherbe (443-48), who puts the whole section (2:15-3:5) under the rubric "Exhortation," even though the only exhortation in this entire section is 2:15; and Witherington (240), who follows R. Jewett (*The Thessalonian Correspondence* [Leiden: Brill, 1971]) at this point.
934
For this translation of ἀτάκτως, see the discussion on 1 Thess 5:14 above (pp. 209-10).
935
See p. 292 above.
936
Cf. Frame (288), who, without using this technical term, suggests, "wishing to get their willing obedience to the command [that follows], he seeks their sympathy in requesting their prayers for him and his cause, . . ."; contra Best (322), who sees it as "somewhat loosely attached to the preceding context and the following."
937
This seems to be a better way of viewing the connections between the sentences in this section than seeing it as simply moving "somewhat awkwardly from prayer request to prayer-wish" (Gaventa, 125).
938
This seems to make far better sense of the argument as a whole than the (in passing) suggestion by Witherington (242), that these sentences merely "foreshadow" vv. 6-13.
939
Viewed this way, one can see it as much more purposeful than many interpreters suggest (e.g., Rigaux, Morris, Wanamaker, Jewett [*Thessalonian Correspondence*], et al.); Wanamaker (273), e.g., calls it "roughly composed" (cf. Rigaux, 692).
940
Not all think so, it should be added (esp. Malherbe); but to deny that "the Lord" in this passage refers to Christ is to go against everything that is demonstrably

Pauline, including the author of this letter, whether Paul or otherwise. Indeed, Paul never uses ὁ κύριος to refer to God the Father; rather, it is his exclusive way of referring to Christ. This reality, consistent in these two letters, is made explicit in his next letter, in 1 Cor 8:6, where he breaks up the traditional *Shema* so that θεός consistently refers to the Father, while κύριος consistently (= always) refers to the Son. For the full discussion of these matters see my *Pauline Christology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007). This consistency, it should also be noted, is one of the stronger arguments for authenticity, since it would tend to be far too subtle for a forger to pull off some decades later.

941

Gk. ὁ λόγος του῀ κυρίου. A small handful of MSS (G P 33 489 927 vgmss) read θεου῀ here instead of κυρίου. This could have been the result either of careless copying as such (we are dealing with a single letter [ΘΥ/ΚΥ]) or of expectation, at a time when the *nomina sacra* were consistently abbreviated and "the word of God" was the more common term.

942

But see Witherington (240), who without evidence asserts that "in this case *to loipon* introduces the last section of a three-part prayer segment." That is to argue that Paul is using this adverb in an otherwise un-Pauline way. Indeed, here is a clear case where a certain kind of rhetorical analysis *intrudes* on Paul's text, not to mention on his usage of this adverbial construct elsewhere.

943

Cf. the discussion of the adverb in 1 Thess 4:1, where it functioned in much the same way as here — and there even further from the end of the letter. Morris (245) suggests (mistakenly, it would seem) that it here implies movement to a secondary matter in the letter. One might argue to the contrary that from Paul's perspective, given that he has now responded to issues from their end, he has reserved for last what *he* considers the more significant item. After all, the Thessalonian believers seemed not to consider it significant, even after he had spoken to it in the earlier letter.

944

Gk. προσεύχεσθε . . . περὶ η῀μω῀ν, where the present tense implies that it be an ongoing matter.

945

Paul's Greek reads: ἵνα ὁ λόγος του῀ κυρίου τρέχῃ; the LXX reads: ἕως τάχους δραμεῖται ὁ λόγος αὐτου῀. If to our ears τρέχῃ and δραμεῖται do not "echo," they would have for a native Greek speaker, just as "go" and "went" would for a native English speaker.

946

For reasons that are not at all clear, Calvin (386) assumes the letter to have been written during Paul's journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-16).

947

See, e.g., Malherbe (445), who makes a considerable point of it, but who thus misses Pauline usage by a wide margin (see next note). Witherington (241), on the other hand, without argumentation simply changes it to "the Word of God." But that will hardly do in light of Paul's own clear designations of the words κύριος ("Lord") and θεός ("God").

948

In the two letters together, apart from the more fulsome "Lord, Jesus Christ," Paul uses κύριος alone 23 times to refer to Christ, and another nine in the combination "Lord, Jesus"; on the other hand, he uses Χριστός alone only four times, and the combination "Christ Jesus" only twice. All of this changes considerably in the later corpus. For these statistics see my *Pauline Christology*, p. 83.

949

In context this seems far more likely than a subjective genitive, "the message that comes from Christ," since that locution is found nowhere else in the Pauline corpus.

950

Rather than an expected ὅτι Paul in this instance uses ἵνα, which ordinarily implies purpose; but here, as elsewhere in Paul, it functions to introduce the objective of the prayer.

951

Not all think so (e.g., Best [324] and Marshall [214]). The RSV curiously rendered this verb "and triumph," apparently as an American version of winning a race; but that misses Paul's metaphor by too much, so it was corrected in the NRSV to "be glorified everywhere."

952

Findlay (198) thinks otherwise, that it is "objective" in the sense that the gospel's "glory" is displayed in its saving effects.

953

Given that Paul's clause has no temporal referent, interpreters have shown considerable ambivalence regarding his intent here. The English versions tend toward a reference to the past (KJV and NRSV being the exceptions). The English commentaries are divided; the majority read it as something still present (Ellicott, Findlay, Plummer, Frame, Richard, Malherbe; cf. Rigaux [French]); others as referring to the time of their conversion (Bruce, Wanamaker, Green); while still others see it as including both past and present (Best, Marshall,

Morris, Witherington). But all of this seems foreign to Paul's verbless clause, which emphasizes the reality itself rather than the "when" of it.

954

In this regard, cf. Rom 15:13, and the indirect request for such prayer in 2 Cor 1:10b-11a. As others have pointed out (Malherbe, Green), Paul here describes the evil actions of these people, not just a character flaw in them.

955

Gk. ἀπὸ ἀνθρ ώπων πονηρ ω.ν ῥ ύσῃ αὐτούς; Paul's text reads: ἵνα ῥ υσθ ω.μεν ἀπὸ . . . πο νη ρ ω.ν ἀνθ ρ ώπων. This use of identical language seems hardly coincidental, given how often Paul cites or echoes the Greek OT, especially Isaiah. This very Pauline use of Isaiah, it should be noted further, puts enormous pressure on theories of forgery.

956

Gk. ἀτόπων (ἄτοπος), a word that is not necessarily pejorative, referring simply to what is "out of place." It is used three times in the NT with the present sense of being "out of place" by being "wicked" (cf. Luke 23:41; Acts 25:5). The Vulgate rendered it *importunus* (= unsuitable, unfavorable), a rendering Calvin (413) considered "quite a good translation," but who in this matter seems quite mistaken.

957

See, e.g., the three illustrations from the papyri in Milligan (110), where the word carries this pejorative sense but without the moral overtones intended by Paul here (e.g., P. Flor. 99 [1st/2nd c. CE], that parents of a prodigal son will no longer be responsible for his debts for ἄτοπόν τι πράξῃ ["any irresponsible deed"]). Beale (239) seems to miss Paul's concerns here by suggesting that "out of place" is the probable intended nuance, since that pairs very poorly indeed with πονηρω.ν, a word that can hardly be watered down in any way.

958

Gk. πονηρω.ν, the primary word in Greek standing in opposition to what is "good" or "upright."

959

Scribal expectations, that "the Lord" here is a reference to God the Father, caused some scribes, esp. in the West (A D F G 2462 it), to change this κύριος to θεός, which by the time of these scribes involved only a single letter in the abbreviated form: ΚΣ to ΘΣ. Cf. n. 9 above.

960

A large majority of manuscripts, both Greek and versional, supply a ὑμῖν ("you") here; but it is missing in too many early and widespread witnesses (ℵB D* Ψ 6 33 1739 b vg bomss Ambst) to be original. It is simply not the kind of word that

scribes would omit, either deliberately or carelessly, but, understandably, would have added.

961

As Lightfoot (125) observes, this is a litotes on Paul's part. For a similar litotes cf. Rom 10:16 ("not all the Israelites accepted the good news"); the vast majority in fact did not believe in Christ. Thus the wordplay on their "faith" and Christ's "faithfulness" is the most likely reason for this unusual expression.

962

Every time I reread this sentence I am dismayed by the inadequacy of the English language, where we are stuck with pronouns that are strictly gender related in speaking of the one and only God. Yahweh is simply God; and God does not have gender. Our problem lies with English pronouns, which are altogether gender related; so I have chosen to go the route of repeating the word "God" throughout.

963

So, e.g., Calvin (414), Green (337-38), and Malherbe (461), the latter allowing that "Christ" is "a possible but not necessary" understanding of this phrase. But the burden of proof would seem to rest with him, since Paul regularly identifies Christ explicitly as κύριος and nowhere else uses this term unambiguously to refer to God the Father. So the ground on which one might make a shift here from Christ to God seems esp. slippery — esp. so when Paul in his next letter explicitly divides up the LXX of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4) so that θεός consistently (and always) refers to God the Father (despite some who think otherwise regarding Rom 9:5 and Tit 2:13 [see the discussions in *Pauline Christology*]) and κύριος just as consistently always refers to Christ.

964

Paul's Greek word πεποίθαμεν, is the perfect tense of the verb that means "persuade," hence rendered "confident/confidence" in most contemporary English versions, including the more "wooden" NASU, where one might have expected "we are persuaded." This is the first of four instances of this phrase ("persuaded = confident in the Lord") in the corpus (see Gal 5:10; Rom 14:14; Phil 2:24 [cf. 1:14, where it is used of others]).

965

Contra Best (323), who thinks it "cannot be specially directed towards" the following warning about idleness. To the contrary, one can make the best sense of it as doing exactly that, which is then "interrupted" by the prayer in v. 5, which is likewise aimed at their obedience to the admonitions that follow.

966

The clause "you are doing and will continue to do," which concludes Paul's

sentence, is in fact the subject and verb of the sentence, while “what things we command,” which appears first, is the direct object. It is thus obvious where Paul’s own emphases lie, not with his command, but with their obedience.

967

Gk. ἐν κυρίῳ, a phrase that is uniquely Pauline in the NT, and rarely occurs even in the LXX, where the same idea is most often expressed as ἐπὶ κυρίῳ. This is one of the subtle phrases in this letter that directs considerable force against the theory of pseudonymity, since it is so uniquely Pauline but does not occur in 1 Thessalonians, the only Pauline letter that the writer of the present letter knows anything about.

968

Calvin (410) believes that the ἐν κυρίῳ in this case modifies Paul’s “command,” that “it was not his intention to lay any regulation except by command of the Lord.” But this seems to make Paul’s word order nearly incomprehensible.

969

This is an attempt on the part of the T/NIV translators to capture the sense of the future tense of the same verb, as it sits in conjunction with the present tense that precedes it (the “literal” NASB did the same thing, but put the “continue to” in italics, as though that meaning were not in the verb itself!).

970

That is, not that his prayer is always directed toward Christ, but that the title “Lord” always has Christ as its referent, not God the Father. Thus, on this point Witherington (243) is clearly mistaken in changing the referent from Christ to God.

971

See Malherbe, 447 and (apparently) Beale, 243-48. Most (correctly) see it as picking up from 2:16-17, where Christ has been specifically identified once more as ὁ κύριος. There was, after all, no chapter or verse break in Paul’s text, so how could the Thessalonians possibly think that in the very next sentences (vv. 3 and 5) ὁ κύριος suddenly changes identity? Many of the early Greek Fathers argued that this is a reference to the Holy Spirit, since God and Christ are mentioned in what follows. But that is an interpretation driven by Trinitarian theology, not by Pauline usage.

972

Gk. κατευθυναι, whose only other appearance in the Pauline corpus (and only in Luke 1:79 outside of Paul) is in the prayer in 1 Thess 3:11; thus in Paul it is relegated to these two moments of prayer, and in both cases it is something “the Lord” is being asked to do on behalf of Paul’s friends.

973

So most commentators (e.g., Findlay, 202; Rigaux, 699; Best, 329-30; Marshall, 217; Bruce, 202; Richard, 372; Malherbe, 447; Green, 339).

974

That is, these are the only two places where "the Lord" is the subject of this verb and "the heart" is the object. Hereafter in 2 Chronicles, the king himself does or does not "direct his own heart" to follow Yahweh (e.g., 12:14; 19:3).

975

What is further noteworthy in this case is that both 1 Thess 3:11 and this passage are expressed as *prayer;* and Paul's prayer is directed toward Christ as Lord.

976

Although Ellicott (127) thinks otherwise.

977

This unlikely view was held by Calvin, and appears in the KJV. It has been more recently advocated by J. Lambrecht, "Loving God and Steadfastly Awaiting Christ (2 Thessalonians 3,5)," *ETL* 76 (2000), 435-41. Lightfoot (128) suggests that it not be "hastily rejected," but does so in the end anyway.

978

See, among others, Ellicott, 127; Findlay, 203; Milligan, 112; Plummer, 92; Marshall, 218.

979

So Best, 218; Bruce, 278-79; Wanamaker, 279; Richard, 372; Holmes, 258.

980

So Bruce indirectly (202), and Morris (251).

981

See on 1 Thess 4:11-12 and 5:14 (pp. 161-64, 209-10) for Paul's earlier dealings with this issue.

982

On the meaning of this word see the discussion on 1 Thess 5:14 above; cf. C. Spicq, "Les Thessaloniciens 'inquiets' éteient-ils des paresseux?" *ST* 10 (1956), 1-13.

983

See, e.g., J. Kurichialnil, "If Any One Will Not Work, Let Him Not Eat," *Biblehashyam* 21 (1995), 184-203; for a slightly different take on the same basic view, see M. J. J. Maarten, "Paradise Regained or Still Lost? Eschatology and Disorderly Behaviour in 2 Thessalonians," *NTS* 38 (1992), 271-89.

984

This view has been set forth in two slightly different ways by R. Russell, "The Idle in 2 Thess 3.6-12: An Eschatological or a Social Problem?" *NTS* 34 (1988), 105-19; and B. W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as*

Benefactors and Citizens (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 41-60.

985

The NIV chose to go along with the witness of B and D* at this point, and

986

Or *tradition* omit the ἡμῶν found in all the other witnesses, a matter that was unfortunately not corrected in the TNIV. That this is an "omission" in these two MSS rather than an "addition" in all the rest of the evidence is made certain by its unusual nature. No scribe would think to add an "our" here to a locution that seldom has one, whereas the very commonness of the other reading is what would cause a scribe either carelessly or deliberately to omit it. It is also of some interest that Metzger chose not to comment on it in his *Textual Commentary,* because (apparently) he considered it of lesser importance.

987

The translators of the NIV (unfortunately kept in the TNIV) have chosen to follow a few other English versions in translating what by all ordinary standards of textual criticism must be considered as the "easier," therefore secondary, reading, παρελάβετε ("you received"), found in B Fgk G 104 327 436 442 1611 2005 2495 syrh cop goth arm), rather than the more awkward παρελάβοσαν ("they received"), found in ℵ* A (D) K L P plur. This is surely a case where the influence of Wescott and Hort still prevails, that the combination of B with significant members of the Western tradition should usually be considered original. But since much of this evidence comes from early versions, who have the same tendency as translators into English, it is of much less weight here than it would have had otherwise. It is hard to imagine circumstances under which scribes would have changed the perfectly normal "you received" into "they received," especially since what follows is a return to the second plural and thus continues to focus on the whole community. See further Metzger, *Textual Commentary,* 569.

988

Gk. παραγγέλλομεν, a verb that occurs five times in these two letters, in each case in relationship to the present issue (1 Thess 4:11; here, and vv. 6, 10, and 12 below).

989

Gk. στέλλεσθαι, a true middle in Greek (= keep yourselves away from); cf. Rom 16:17, where the same thing is said with quite different language regarding "those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned," a sentence which, had it occurred in 2 Thessalonians, would have been used to condemn it as non-Pauline!

990

One should perhaps note that the issue raised here has had a rocky history in the church. Basically, the more “exclusive” a believing community is, the more energy is devoted to obeying it; thus historically it is effectively carried out in the Protestant church only by “splinter” groups, who have a variety of “identity markers” to maintain.

991

On the reason for “translating out” this metaphor, see n. 112 on 1 Thess 2:11- 12 (p. 83).

992

This is another of the items in the letter used to condemn it as un-Pauline. But this same idea, expressed positively and with different words, occurs in 1 Cor 11:2. This is the kind of subtlety that is typical of an author, but one which would seem to be nearly impossible for an imposter to pull off.

993

For this translation see n. 54 above.

994

Gk. νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, a genitive of time supported by ℵB F G 33 81 104 255 256 263 442 1611 1845 1908 2005, and adopted by the UBS27; the alternative νυκτὰ καὶ ἡμέραν (A D K L P MajT) emphasizes the duration of their labors (= all day and all night long).

995

In what follows I have chosen to comment on Paul’s own sentences and clauses rather than on the verse numbering, which fails altogether to reflect what Paul was actually doing.

996

The is emphatic by way of word order: αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε (“yourselves you know”).

997

One might note how this concern is expressed in Paul’s next preserved letter (1 Cor 11:1) in a very similar way, but without using the same words.

998

At this point a certain sector of the Christian church wants to yell “foul,” because they think one really can divorce how one is related to God (by faith alone) from how one who has such faith must live in the world. But Paul was not privy to the kind of theology that thinks such division between faith and works can actually be made. Paul is obviously dead against anything that resembles “faith + works = a right relationship with God.” But as this passage makes plain, he equally spells death for “faith” that does not lead to “works” (= behavior) appropriate to that faith.

999
Thus for a more thorough discussion of this clause see on 1 Thess 2:9 above (pp. 77-78); cf. also 1 Cor 4:12, where Paul adds the phrase “with our own hands,” thus making it clear that these references are to “manual” labor.

1000
Gk. νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, which as before is a genitive of time (= during the day and night), rather than “all night and day.”

1001
Paul’s verb (παρηγγέλλομεν) is in the imperfect, thus implying an ongoing, or at least repeated, command.

1002
As an English-first-language Asian student put it in an exam many years ago, the motto simply put is “no workee, no eatee.”

1003
R. Jewett has presented the intriguing argument that at issue here are not meals in “house churches” but in “tenement churches,” which would have lacked an upper- or middle-class patron. Also, in such a setting the community together would be responsible for these “love” meals. In such a setting the present regulations would be considered absolutely essential; everyone must “pitch in,” as it were, if all are to eat. See “Tenement Churches and Communal Meals in the Early Church: The Implications of a Form-Critical Analysis of 2 Thessalonians 3:10,” *BR* 38 (1993), 23-43.

1004
The TNIV here represents what is by far the “more difficult” reading of ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησου Χριστῳ (ℵ* A B F G 0278 33 1739 1881 2464 lat); the TR follows the Majority Text in reading διὰ του κυρίου ἡμων (“through our Lord”). Here is a clear case where the “more difficult reading” must prevail as the original, since one cannot imagine how any scribe (or scribes) would have altered that perfectly understandable reading to that found in all the earlier and better witnesses.

1005
Gk. παραγγέλλομεν, thus picking up the same verb used above in vv. 3, 6, and 10 (see on 1 Thess 4:11); elsewhere in the church corpus only in 1 Cor 7:10 and 11:17.

1006
Gk. παρακαλουμεν, by far the more common verb in Paul and the rest of the NT. Paul uses it in every letter (including the Pastoral Epistles) except Galatians, including eight times in 1 Thessalonians and some 18 times in 2 Corinthians.

1007
In this letter always in this word order; for the statistics of usage in the entire

corpus, see my *Pauline Christology*, 26. The only two letters which exceed the usage in this letter are 1 Corinthians (10x / 8x in the present word order) and Romans (11x / 6x in the present word order).

1008

The emphasis here lies in the Greek text itself (ἵνα μετὰ ἡσυχίας ἐργαζόμενοι τὸν ἑαυτῶ.ν ἄρτον ἐσθίωσιν).

1009

See, e.g., Rom 12:17; 13:3; 1 Cor 9:4-12 (4x); 2 Cor 8:21; 13:7; Col 4:1. But it is striking that this kind of language seldom occurs in Paul's ethical imperatives (the uses in Romans 12 and 13 being the notable exceptions).

1010

Both the Latin tradition (D F G vg) and eventually the Majority Text (understandably) insert a καί before this imperative, so that Paul's text is made to read: του.τον σημειου.σθε καὶ μὴ συναναμίνυσθαι ("take special note of this person and do not associate with him/her"). One can hardly imagine the circumstances in which such an "allieving" *and* could have been dropped from the text, either accidentally or intentionally. But part of the strength of Paul's imperative lies in the abruptness of the second one.

1011

Gk. σημειου.σθε, a NT hapax legomenon. The word, which ordinarily means "to note down" something, in this case means to "mark" such a person by taking special notice of him (BDAG).

1012

Gk. συναναμίγνυσθαι; the same word will occur in Paul's next letter in terms of how the Corinthian community is to deal with the unrepentant man "living with his father's wife" (1 Cor 5:9).

1013

The use of the masculine pronoun here assumes that the cultural norm had to do with a man who is capable of, but unwilling to, work for his own sustenance.

1014

The other deals with the incestuous man in 1 Corinthians 5, a situation where such "shunning" is much more easily grasped by Christians in the Western world than is this one.

1015

One is reminded of a mother correcting her son with a spanking, accompanied by the words, "This hurts me more than it does you."

1016

This point in particular should spell death to theories of forgery, since a forger would be expected to "authenticate" the letter by adopting (or at least adapting)

the material from the first letter. But not so; the material here distinctly fits the present letter, and no other.

1017

See above on 1 Thess 5:23; cf. 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9.

1018

Exceptions are Marshall (230) and Richard (385).

1019

For this phenomenon, see also Judg 6:12 and Luke 1:28, both of which are preceded (as here) with the wish of peace.

1020

See p. 107 n. 15 on 1 Thess 2:18.

1021

I say “basically” because the “all” occurs also in the triadic benediction of 2 Corinthians, which is unique in the corpus; thus the “all” in that case is not quite the same as this one.