

SYDNEY TOOTH

Suddenness and Signs

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zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*
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Mohr Siebeck

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Sydney Tooth

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The Eschatologies of 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Mohr Siebeck

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For Doug,
Sophie, and Daniel

Preface

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Introduction

If one were to survey the vast mountain of secondary literature in Pauline scholarship, they might believe that Galatians and Romans are the letters that really matter. This is not to say that the rest of the Pauline corpus is neglected, but simply that in the broader discussions about Pauline literature and theology these two letters tend to dominate. This phenomenon is easy to explain given the focus on justification that has typically directed Pauline studies, particularly since the Reformation. Two letters that have often been side-lined as a result of this emphasis on justification are 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Neither of these letters contains language that would contribute to the debate, such as the *δικαι-* word group, and the closest either comes to addressing justification is the ambiguous statement found in 1 Thess 5:9–10: “For God has not appointed us for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.”¹ Instead, the focus of both letters is on topics such as the parousia and the day of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, and the timing of God’s future judgment.

For around seventeen centuries, 1 and 2 Thessalonians were understood as Paul’s two-part communication with the community of Christ-followers that he, along with Timothy and Silvanus, established in Thessalonica. As with most of the Pauline letters, it was only with the advent of historical criticism in the eighteenth century that questions were raised about their authenticity. F. C. Baur, for example, argued that both were pseudonymous.² While, despite Baur, the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians has been maintained and it is firmly established as genuine, 2 Thessalonians remains a highly disputed letter, and the current debate is at a stalemate. This is another reason that 2 Thessalonians, in particular, is often overlooked. It could further be argued that the sheer murkiness of 2 Thessalonians, with its unique and mysterious figures like the

¹ New Testament citations are from NA²⁸, Hebrew Bible citations are from *BHS*, and Greek Jewish scripture citations are from Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, eds., *Septuaginta*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006). Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own. For abbreviations I follow *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL, 2014).

² F. C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine: A Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Eduard Zeller, trans. A. Menzies, 2 vols., Theological Translation Fund Library 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1873–1875), 2:85–97.

man of lawlessness and the restrainer, keeps scholars at arm's length. However, both of these letters – whatever their authorship – provide rich material from Paul or the Pauline school on the nature of Jesus's return and God's impending judgment. Eschatology is arguably the most important theme in both 1 and 2 Thessalonians. In fact, it is the nature of their eschatologies that raises the most questions for the authorship of 2 Thessalonians, with many scholars considering 2 Thessalonians and its emphasis on a timeline of events that must still happen before the day of the Lord incompatible with the eschatology present in 1 Thessalonians, which seems to emphasise a sudden and impending arrival of the day of the Lord. In this work, my goal is to examine both of the eschatologies of 1 and 2 Thessalonians and thoroughly compare them in the hope of moving forward the debate on authorship and the place of these two letters within Pauline theology.

Terminology

Two terms heavily debated in this area of research are “eschatology” and “apocalyptic.” The relationship of these two terms is greatly disputed; some scholars have argued that we should understand them as designating the same concept, while others have argued for a strict distinction between the two. Therefore, both need clarification.

Eschatology

As has been repeatedly noted, eschatology is a relatively modern term first used in the seventeenth century³ and is an artificial category, certainly not a term Paul or any of the New Testament writers would have recognised; it has signified a multitude of different meanings over its relatively short history.⁴ From the Greek ἔσχατος, eschatology simply means discourse on “the last things,” though there is considerable debate around what those last things are and whether they are in any sense already realised in the present. In its earliest use, topics covered by the term included the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, the end of the world, hell, and eternal life.

³ According to Jörg Frey, “New Testament Eschatology – An Introduction: Classical Issues, Disputed Themes, and Current Perspectives,” in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 3–32, 6, Philipp Heinrich Friedlieb appears to be the first to use this term in 1644: *Eschatologia seu Florilegium theologicum exhibens locorum de morte, resurrectione mortuorum, extreme iudicio, consummatione seculi, inferno seu morte aeterna et denique vita aeterna*.

⁴ For a more thorough overview of the history of “eschatology,” see Frey, “New Testament Eschatology,” 3–32; D. E. Aune, “Eschatology (Early Christian),” *ABD* 2:594–609.

A focus on future events within New Testament studies is associated with Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, who both argued for a “consistent” (or “consequent” or “thoroughgoing”) eschatology in which Jesus is understood as a preacher of an imminent end to history.⁵ In contrast to this futurist perspective, C. H. Dodd argued for a “realised eschatology” in which Jesus’s preaching about the kingdom of God was not future-oriented but rather concerned with the present reality; in other words, the kingdom of God was not soon-to-come but already present.⁶ As the twentieth century unfolded, eschatology began to have reference to existential realities not just temporal events. For example, Bultmann argues, “eschatology in a true Christian understanding of it is not the future end of history, but history is swallowed up by eschatology.”⁷ That is, with Christ, history has in fact ended, and Christian existence is thus eschatological and to be lived in response to God’s presence. Partially in reaction to Bultmann, Oscar Cullmann attempted to combine the views of Dodd and Schweitzer into an “inaugurated eschatology,” famously illustrating the relationship of Jesus’s death and resurrection and the parousia with the analogy of the decisive battle in a war (e.g., D-day) and “Victory Day.”⁸ In this view God’s kingdom has come into the present world in certain ways through the death and resurrection of Jesus, but it will not be fully realised until the final victory of Jesus in his parousia. Thus, decisive eschatological events have indeed been fulfilled but there are more yet to come, and we live in the tension between inauguration and consummation, the tension between the “already-now” and the “not-yet.” As can be seen in this brief overview, in the span of less than four hundred years scholars have developed complex and opposing understandings of what eschatology means.

More recently, however, it has been recognised that both Second Temple Jewish writers and the New Testament writers also had diverse eschatological views that cannot easily be harmonised.⁹ Though the main divide as seen above has generally been between present-oriented and future-oriented eschatology, we must be aware of both aspects in the New Testament texts. Yet, these aspects likely cannot be understood as completely separated, for there may be future events that also impact the present or are initiated in the present,

⁵ Johannes Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892); Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1913).

⁶ C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1935).

⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, “History and Eschatology in the New Testament,” *NTS* 1 (1954): 5–16, 16.

⁸ Oscar Cullmann, *Christus und die Zeit: Die urchristliche Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1946), 72–73, 127–128.

⁹ As David Luckensmeyer, *The Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, NTOA 71 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 2, argues, “The eschatologies of early Jewish and Christian writers are so diverse that it is more accurate to steer clear of generic definitions.” Cf. Frey, “New Testament Eschatology,” 20.

nor are the two perspectives necessarily logically incompatible.¹⁰ I am by no means able to give an overarching definition for eschatology that will satisfy its full range of use in the New Testament texts and in theology. However, as will become obvious in the exegesis, both 1 and 2 Thessalonians are certainly future-oriented, and both point forward to events that will happen in a future time period that can be termed the “eschaton” or “end times,” by which I mean the period of time leading up to and including the definitive event, or events, in which God and/or other superhuman agents intervene in human history in a final way, such that the resulting aeon is categorically different from what has preceded. Thus, in the current book, I use eschatology to designate any passages dealing with events that are related to the end times, such as the parousia, the day of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, future judgment or wrath, and certain events that must take place in the lead up to this such as the revelation of the man of lawlessness. However, though these events certainly should be understood as still future in the author’s mind, they may be seen to have significant impact on the present identity and experience of the audience; this will be shown in the exegesis below.

Apocalyptic

Apocalyptic is one of the most contentious terms in recent Pauline studies given its multivalent connotations. Like eschatology, apocalyptic is a modern term derived from Greek, in this case from the word ἀποκάλυψις, which literally means “uncovering” or “revelation.” It was first introduced (as the German *Apokalyptik*) in 1832 by Gottfried Christian Friedrich Lücke in his work on the Book of Revelation to describe its literary context.¹¹ Yet, there has long been a lack of clarity in scholarship over what precisely is meant by apocalyptic. On the one hand, it has been understood as describing a specific genre of literature, usually including Daniel, Revelation, 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, Jubilees, 2 Baruch, 3 Baruch, 4 Ezra (2 Esdras), Apocalypse of Abraham, Testament of Abraham, Testament of Levi, Testament of Naphtali, Ascension of Isaiah, Shepherd of Hermas, and 3 Enoch.¹² On the other hand, it can describe a type of theology found in such texts – especially a focus on the dichotomous dualism of the

¹⁰Frey, “New Testament Eschatology,” 19, notes, “it appears textually inappropriate (and rather inspired from modern theological ideas) to construct a logical contradiction between future-orientation and present-orientation, as if an awareness of fulfilment or the gift of life in the present should exclude any kind of further expectation. In earliest Christianity, the opposite seems to have happened. The view that some Biblical promises had been fulfilled in Jesus’ coming or his acts, in his resurrection or in the gift of the Spirit, apparently rather intensified the hope for the completion in a near future.”

¹¹Gottfried Christian Friedrich Lücke, *Versuch einer vollständigen Einleitung in die Offenbarung Johannis und in die gesamte apokalyptische Literatur* (Bonn: Weber, 1832).

¹²This list is taken from Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 15.

“two ages.” In the 1970s, scholars attempted to define more precisely what was meant by apocalyptic. Paul Hanson distinguishes between “apocalypse” as a literary genre, “apocalyptic eschatology” as a perspective or worldview found in this genre (by which futurist eschatology is generally meant, in reliance on the historical apocalypses), and “apocalypticism” as a social movement.¹³ These distinctions suggest that even if a text is not an apocalypse it can contain apocalyptic eschatology or apocalypticism. John J. Collins maintains a similar threefold distinction,¹⁴ but his most significant contribution is defining apocalypse as “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world.”¹⁵ This definition has gained wide acceptance, though it is not without its critics. Martinus de Boer, for one, objects, “It may thus be better to think of an apocalypse as a smaller literary genre (*Form*) akin to prayer, parable or hymn, and not as a larger literary genre (*Gattung*) for a whole book such as letter, gospel, or history. By this definition, Mark 13 and 1 Thess. 4:13–18 are apocalypses (as generally recognized), but Mark and 1 Thessalonians, of course, are not.”¹⁶ In contrast, Collins argues that literature that is not strictly an apocalypse can still be regarded as apocalyptic if “it bears some resemblance to the core features of the genre apocalypse.”¹⁷ This, I think, is a better way

¹³ P. D. Hanson, “Apocalypticism,” *IDBSup* 28–34.

¹⁴ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 2–11.

¹⁵ John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” in *Semeia 14. Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. John J. Collins (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979): 1–20, 9. Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 48 objects to the emphasis on eschatology, arguing instead that revelation is the constitutive element of an apocalypse. However, Benjamin E. Reynolds and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Introduction,” in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition and the Shaping of New Testament Thought*, ed. Reynolds and Stuckenbruck (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017): 1–14, note that in Collins’s definition “eschatological salvation does not require an end-of-the-world scenario; instead, it may describe the way that apocalyptic literature gives hope to the righteous by looking beyond death” (6).

¹⁶ Martinus C. de Boer, “Apocalyptic as God’s Eschatological Activity in Paul’s Theology,” in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, Jason Maston (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 45–64, 47n9.

¹⁷ John J. Collins, “What Is Apocalyptic Literature?” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 1–16, 6. Jörg Frey, “Demythologizing Apocalyptic? On N. T. Wright’s Paul, Apocalyptic Interpretation, and the Constraints of Construction,” in *God and the Faithfulness of Paul*, ed. Christoph Heilig, J. Thomas Hewitt, and Michael F. Bird (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 516, gives a necessary caveat: “there is no motif or theme that is represented in all apocalypses or related texts. Therefore, any attempt to define precisely apocalyptic according to a particular feature such as pseudonymity, symbolism, cosmology, future-oriented eschatology, or a

to understand the relationship between texts such as 1 Thess 4:13–18 and an actual apocalypse – analogy, not identity.

In a parallel discussion, apocalyptic has been applied to a particular understanding of Paul and his theology initiated by Ernst Käsemann who argues, “Paul’s apostolic self-consciousness is only comprehensible on the basis of his apocalyptic.”¹⁸ By apocalyptic Käsemann means “the expectation of an imminent Parousia,” thus equating it with eschatology.¹⁹ Scholars such as J. Christiaan Beker, J. Louis Martyn, Martinus de Boer, Beverly Roberts Gaventa, and Douglas Campbell have followed in Käsemann’s footsteps, forming a group recognised as the “apocalyptic Paul” school.²⁰ Though each scholar has his or her own interpretation of what it means for Paul to be apocalyptic, they generally position themselves in opposition to salvation-historical continuity and highlight God’s punctiliar invasion into the world, discontinuous with history; thus, there is an emphasis on the dichotomy of the two ages. However, apocalyptic Paul scholars have been repeatedly criticised for failing to engage fully with the diversity of apocalypses and the complex thought represented by these varied books.²¹ In particular, J. P. Davies demonstrates that Second Temple apocalypses do not portray a dichotomy between salvation history and “two-ages dualism” in their eschatological perspectives; instead, Davies argues, “These apocalypses, while affirming the duality of the ‘two ages,’ nevertheless express a concern for the importance of redemptive history; the two eschatological themes are placed together in a creative and poetic tension. Setting the linear against the punctiliar under the banner of ‘apocalyptic’ is

‘dualism’ of two ages, etc. must necessarily fall short of accurately accounting for the wide range of apocalyptic thought.”

¹⁸ Ernst Käsemann, “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic,” in *New Testament Questions of Today*, ed. Ernst Käsemann, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1969), 108–137, 131.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 109n1.

²⁰ J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980); J. Louis Martyn, “Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 410–424; Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation, with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1997); Martinus C. de Boer, *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007); Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

²¹ Frey, “Demythologizing Apocalyptic?” 520, “We can see that the concepts of apocalyptic applied by Käsemann, Martyn, and de Boer are inappropriate in view of the variety of the Jewish apocalyptic texts.” N. T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* (London: SPCK, 2015), 139: “‘Apocalyptic’ is not ‘dualistic’ in and of itself. That is, it might or might not be; but the fact that a piece of writing exhibits the signs of the genre we may call ‘apocalyptic’ does not itself indicate dualism.”

arguably to assert a false dichotomy unsupported by the texts themselves.”²² The apocalyptic Paul school certainly is on solid ground in setting Paul within a context of Jewish apocalyptic literature given its prevalence in Second Temple Judaism, but in general they have failed to properly represent what this literature contains and how Paul is influenced by it. The weaknesses of the apocalyptic Paul perspective should caution us against homogenising the diverse views represented in Second Temple apocalyptic literature. Further, this confusion over the theological meaning of apocalyptic urges us to define it in light of what is actually found in literary apocalypses.

As will become clear in the exegesis below, it is undeniable that 1 and 2 Thessalonians interact with and develop Jewish apocalyptic tradition and contain motifs shared with apocalypses.²³ Thus, it is necessary to describe such elements as apocalyptic. Not wishing to enter the fray of the apocalyptic Paul debates, nor to predetermine the nature of the eschatological thought in 1 and 2 Thessalonians (especially if neither is written by Paul), in this work I will use “apocalyptic” to describe these shared images, motifs, and theology when they appear, guided by Collins’s definition of “apocalypse.” Since it is important to recognise the great diversity of apocalyptic literature and thought, when something is described as “apocalyptic” it will be done with reference to particular apocalyptic books such as Daniel, Revelation, 1 Enoch, and others.²⁴

Overview

I propose a different approach to examining 1 and 2 Thessalonians than is usually employed: I will leave aside the issue of authorship until after the two letters have been examined separately. The authorship of 2 Thessalonians in particular remains a highly contested issue, and commentators continue to make their interpretive decisions based on their predetermined stance on authorship. For example, on the basis of pseudonymity 2 Thessalonians is regularly understood as either refuting the eschatology of 1 Thessalonians or re-interpreting it

²² J. P. Davies, *Paul Among the Apocalypses? An Evaluation of the ‘apocalyptic Paul’ in the Context of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*, LSNT 562 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 109. Davies argues that these books are better understood as having “inaugurated eschatology” in that “The age to come has, to be sure, broken into this world, but that does not mean that there is no continuing eschatological role to be played by the present age” (106). Cf. Frey, “Demythologizing Apocalyptic?” 523.

²³ This fact is significant given the general lack of attention paid to the Thessalonian correspondence by these apocalyptic Paul scholars.

²⁴ In this, I follow Collins’s thought described above in which a text can be apocalyptic without being an apocalypse by analogy to the genre.

for a new situation (e.g., in light of the delay of the parousia).²⁵ But what if the eschatology of 2 Thessalonians were to be examined on its own merits? What new insights could we gain from this? This suggests the need for an exegesis of 2 Thessalonians that does not decide authorship in advance. Furthermore, nearly every study of the Thessalonian correspondence has proceeded with the assumption that 1 Thessalonians is a genuine Pauline letter.²⁶ Thus, the authorship of 1 Thessalonians must be reconsidered as well, for by assuming Pauline authorship we may also overlook important aspects of this letter which have been harmonised to fit with a wider Pauline theology. Therefore, the authorship of the two letters will not be reconsidered until the final chapter, once each letter is independently analysed and the two eschatologies have been compared. I am not the first to propose this method; indeed, it is inspired by the SBL Pauline theology Consultation's work in the 1980s–1990s in which they examined each Pauline letter on its own terms before producing a synthesis of Pauline theology.²⁷ This process brought out many distinctive features of each letter that had been overlooked in previous accounts of Pauline theology. Similarly, Colin Nicholl (whose work will be discussed further below) likewise leaves authorship decisions on 2 Thessalonians until the end in his analysis of the text, though he does presuppose Pauline authorship of 1 Thessalonians.²⁸ However, for the majority of treatments of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, authorship continues to be determined first and interpretative decisions made in light of these conclusions.

In some ways, my method necessarily produces an artificial interpretation. All letters have a particular author who has a particular intention and writes to a particular audience with particular problems. By bracketing out authorship, there is a danger that this particularity will be overlooked. Ultimately, correct interpretation must take into account the situation of the author and the audience, as far as that can be determined. I will focus on the evidence explicitly

²⁵ H. Holtzmann, "Zum zweiten Thessalonicherbrief," *ZNW* 2 (1901): 97–108 and Andreas Lindemann, "Zum Abfassungszweck des Zweiten Thessalonicherbriefs," *ZNW* 68 (1977): 35–47 both argue that the author of 2 Thessalonians seeks to replace 1 Thessalonians and to eliminate the idea of an imminent parousia from Christian theology. M. Eugene Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 209, 226–227, argues that 2 Thessalonians is an interpretation of 1 Thessalonians, helping a post-Pauline community understand that the end is not coming soon so they need to prepare to endure hardships for the foreseeable future.

²⁶ A notable exception is Marlene Crüsemann, *Die pseudepigraphen Briefe an die Gemeinde in Thessaloniki: Studien zu ihrer Abfassung und zur jüdisch-christlichen Sozialgeschichte*, BWANT 191 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010).

²⁷ The results of this project have been published in Jouette M. Bassler, David M. Hay, E. Elizabeth Johnson, eds., *Pauline theology*, 4 vols., SBLSymS 4, 21–23 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991–1997).

²⁸ Colin Nicholl, *From Hope to Despair in Thessalonica: Situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, SNTSMS 126 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

present in the text itself, which does limit some decisions. However, by following the logic of the arguments, I will be able to draw inferences that are not dependent on an exact context. Since both letters are intentionally located by the author(s) in the Pauline tradition, the Pauline letters form the closest comparison material, though they are not determinative for interpretation. I will also analyse these letters with reference to the rest of the New Testament, the Jewish scriptures and pseudepigrapha, and other Greco-Roman literature to allow the full range of possible interpretations.

The main goal of this book is a thorough analysis and comparison of the eschatologies of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Before the two letters can be compared, however, the eschatology of each letter must first be examined independently. In the first chapter of this study I analyse the eschatological passages of 1 Thessalonians – these are identified by content and key terms such as *parousia*, “the day of the Lord,” or related material. The passages thus identified and examined are 1 Thess 1:9–10, 2:13–16, 2:19–20, 3:13, 4:13–18, 5:1–11, and 5:23–24. I analyse each of these passages and then produce an overview of eschatology in 1 Thessalonians. In the second chapter I examine 2 Thess 1:4–12, 2:1–12, and 3:6–15. As in chapter 1, I analyse each of these passages and then provide an overview of eschatology in 2 Thessalonians. In the third chapter, I compare the eschatologies of 1 and 2 Thessalonians as outlined in the first two chapters. This chapter will focus on questions of coherence and consistency and determine how compatible the two letters are on the basis of their eschatologies. The individual analyses and the comparison raise important questions about tradition history, so in the fourth chapter I examine possible explanations for a shared eschatological tradition between the Thessalonian correspondence and the Synoptic eschatological discourse. In the final chapter, I am at last able to treat issues of critical introduction, particularly focusing on the issue of authorship in light of the preceding discussions.

Recent Research on Eschatology in the Thessalonian Correspondence

Though the Thessalonian correspondence has often been side-lined in favour of the *Hauptbriefe*, there is still a rich and mammoth body of scholarship on these two letters.²⁹ There was a noted uptick in interest in 1 and 2 Thessalonians

²⁹ For wider treatments of the secondary literature, see Raymond F. Collins “Recent Scholarship on Paul,” in *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, ed. Raymond F. Collins, BETL 66 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), 3–75; Earl Richard, “Contemporary Research on 1 (& 2) Thessalonians,” *BTB* 20 (1990): 107–115; Jeffrey A. D. Weima and Stanley A. Porter, *An Annotated Bibliography of 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, NTTS 26 (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Stanley E. Porter, “Developments in German and French Thessalonians Research: A Survey and Critique,” *CurBS* 7 (1999): 309–334; Sean A. Adams, “Evaluating

in the 1970s and 1980s. One reason for this increased interest was Abraham Malherbe's work in which he considered the Greco-Roman philosophical background of the letters; in particular, this encouraged a new focus on rhetorical criticism of the letters.³⁰ Additionally, the SBL Seminar on the Thessalonian Correspondence met for five years from 1979 to 1983, the SBL Pauline theology Consultation from 1985 to 1995 considered 1 and 2 Thessalonians in their first segment,³¹ and the *Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense* also dedicated their 1988 colloquium to an extensive examination of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.³² Due to the nature of the two letters, many of the resulting studies focused on particular eschatological elements. There have also been several significant monographs that include important analyses of Thessalonian eschatology as part of their larger projects. Additionally, a large number of commentaries have been published in the past fifty years, bringing further attention to the two letters.³³

This history of research is specifically focused on the most significant articles or monographs which have attempted to explain the eschatological views of one or both letters holistically, rather than those studies that just focus on one particular eschatological aspect or passage. There are many such studies which have incisively covered specific issues.³⁴ The passage most extensively

1 Thessalonians: An Outline of Holistic Approaches to 1 Thessalonians in the Last 25 Years," *CurBR* 8 (2009): 51–70.

³⁰ Abraham J. Malherbe, "'Gentle as a Nurse': The Cynic Background to 1 Thess. ii," *NovT* 12 (1970): 203–217; "Exhortation in First Thessalonians," *NovT* 25 (1983): 238–256. He further develops this work in *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) and *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 32B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

³¹ See Jouette M. Bassler, ed., *Pauline theology. Volume I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, SBLSymS 21 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

³² The published papers can be found in Raymond F. Collins, ed. *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, BETL 87 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990).

³³ Among the most important commentaries published in the past fifty years are: Wolfgang Trilling, *Der zweite Brief an die Thessalonicher*, EKKNT 14 (Zürich: Benziger, 1980); Traugott Holtz, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, EKKNT 13 (Zürich: Benziger, 1986); Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); Maarten J. J. Menken, *2 Thessalonians, New Testament Readings* (London: Routledge, 1994); Earl J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, SP 11 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995); Simon Légasse, *Les épîtres de Paul aux Thessaloniens*, LD 7 (Paris: Cerf, 1999); Malherbe, *Thessalonians*; Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Jeffrey A.D. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014); Tobias Nicklas, *Der zweite Thessalonicherbrief*, KEK 10/2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019). Though outside the fifty-year mark, the monumental contribution of Béda Rigaux, *Saint Paul. Les épîtres aux Thessaloniens*, EBib (Paris: Gabalda, 1956) continues to be a necessary discussion partner in any treatment of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

³⁴ For example, Matthias Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde. Eine Studie zur Bedeutung und Funktion von Gerichtsaussagen im Rahmen der paulinischen Ekklesiologie und Ethik*

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