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The Ocassion and the Purpose of the Escahatological Proclamation of the Thessalonians Epistles of Paul

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Short Title

ESCHATOLOGY IN THESSALONIANS

THE OCCASION AND THE PURPOSE OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL PROCLAMATION
OF THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES OF PAUL

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

by

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June 1959

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CHAPTER I

PARUSIA IN THE EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS

Statement of the Problem

A New Testament epistle bears a close resemblance to a doctor's prescription. It relates itself to the immediate situation of the person to whom it is directed. If we study it we can infer with a great deal of accuracy the tendencies good or bad in the Church.¹

This statement, of course, is largely true. Generally speaking, the congregation at Thessalonica is in excellent condition. It is still very young but already has become an example of Christian devotion throughout Macedonia.² But it has its troubles too. It is reasonable to suppose from Paul's statements about deceit, impure motives, and guile, his reminder that he was careful not to flatter them, and his insistence that his motives in coming to them were not monetary reward, that insinuation along these lines had been made against him.³ A man does not ordinarily deny a sin unless first accused of it, unless indeed he anticipates such misunderstanding and action and seeks to avoid accusation. There were also other indications of trouble which, however, are not to the point of our study.⁴ The difference in tone between the two

¹Rollin Walker, The First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians in The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), p. 2967.

²1 Thess. 1:7.

³1 Thess. 2:3,5.

⁴Cp. 1 Thess. 2:17-20, assurance that he wanted to come to them; 4:3-8, danger of unchastity; 4:10-12, neglect of normal work.

letters indicates, at least to this writer, that these were minor problems. In the first letter Paul's attitude is one of gentle coaxing, of affection, of comfort. The second letter, however, breathes the commanding spirit which Paul knew well to exercise. His first letter, while successful on the whole, has not succeeded completely in accomplishing his purpose. There are still some who are disorderly and who are dangerous to the faith of the majority.⁵ And to combat this danger Paul becomes stern and much more drastic in the second letter.

It is therefore reasonable to say that the Thessalonian epistles were written to supply a need which had arisen and of which Paul had learned from Timothy whom he had sent to encourage and comfort the congregation.⁶ These reports of Timothy undoubtedly were the immediate occasion at least for the first letter.

The special concern of this study, however, is the problems of eschatology which had arisen. They receive considerable prominence and are discussed in some detail. It seems that there were false ideas concerning the doctrine of the Second Coming prevalent in the congregation, and Paul wishes not only to counteract these ideas, but also to emphasize the final importance of this doctrine.

Actually Paul must have given the Thessalonians rather detailed instruction concerning the second advent in the short time he was with them and is here in these letters reminding them of what they already know. As we shall see, this was an important doctrine to St. Paul—a doctrine

⁵Cp. especially chapter two.

⁶1 Thess. 3:2,6.

he had taught thoroughly for a good reason, a doctrine which now needed repetition for that reason as well as because of the fact that error had crept in. Therefore, in discussing the occasion and the purpose of the eschatological proclamation of the Thessalonian epistles of Paul, we shall be concerned with Parusia itself as Paul describes it, and the events which are to precede it, as a necessary prerequisite for an understanding of the purpose, the reason for its prominence in this book. The word, Parusia, is used in this paper to denote the Second Coming of Jesus.

The Fact and Details

Even a cursory examination of the Thessalonian letters discloses their eschatological tone. This should not be considered strange. The letters of Paul as such very often show this preoccupation with what he knows to be the consummation of his faith. Either divine judgment or divine reward are to him the end of every life and all of his preaching and teaching is colored by this eschatological direction. Thus he emphasizes the certainty of judgment according to works in Romans 2:11ff; the expectation of the coming as a climax to life in 1 Cor. 1:7ff; the eschatological reason for Christ's sacrifice, Gal. 1:14, and in every letter gives something more than a passing reference (as if to something unimportant) to this end and goal of his faith.⁷

But it is in his letters to the Thessalonians that he makes a special point, not only of stating the doctrine (though not exhaustively)

⁷Cp. Gal. 6:7-9, Phil. 3:10,11, 4:5; Col. 3:4; 1 Tim. 6:14-16; * 2 Tim. 2:10-13; 4:6-8.

* but also of referring to it time and again even when not speaking of it specifically. This in itself is a sound indication of the high and important place Paul gives to eschatological matters in his presentation of the faith.

x Paul is not particularly interested in proving the fact of the Parusia. He takes that for granted, and the tone of his letter as well as various allusions show that he does not have to prove the concept of Parusia to his hearers. What is necessary is to straighten them out in their thinking, so that their faith in a Parusia will be, first, correct as to its substance, and then that this faith will serve its purpose in the life of the Christian and find its proper place in the entire faith of the believer in Jesus Christ.

It is thus that Paul, without going into detail, continually reminds his readers of the promise and the fact of the second coming of Jesus in connection with the particular point he is making. For example, in almost the first words of the first epistle Paul thanks God for the inspiring faith of the Thessalonians, their missionary character, and their hope. These have become an example in Macedonia and show not only their service to God but also their new-found purpose, or the end of their faith, namely "to wait for his Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead; even Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath."⁸ Thus the purpose of his work among them was not only to bring them to serve the living God, but also that they should anticipate the coming of Jesus.

*⁸ 1 Thess. 1:10.

Again in chapter two a purpose of his hard work in Thessalonica was that "ye should walk worthy of God, who has called you into His Kingdom and glory";⁹ and in the same chapter, he says that his hope and joy and crown of rejoicing is this: "Are ye not in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?,"¹⁰ which in the final analysis is the reason for all of his work.

Then in chapter three Paul tells them of his joy in them, his solicitude for them, and then prays, in keeping with his feelings, that their love will increase in order that they may stand holy before the Father "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."¹¹

Again, at the end of the letter, after a detailed account of the Parusia and after a series of pastoral recommendations, he closes with the fervent plea: "Your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,"¹² this being the end purpose of all his preaching.

The same is true of the second letter. Such matter-of-fact statements as "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed",¹³ "When He shall come",¹⁴

⁹₁ Thess. 2:12.

¹⁰₁ Thess. 2:19.*

¹¹₁ Thess. 3:13.*

¹²₁ Thess. 5:23.*

¹³₂ Thess. 1:7.

¹⁴₂ Thess. 1:10.

"We beseech you by his coming";¹⁵ "I told you these things";¹⁶ and "For yourselves know perfectly,"¹⁷ all point up the fact that the Parusia is a given reality, a fact to be reckoned with for both Paul and his Thessalonian readers, and show that the Thessalonians knew that it was a thing of promise. But this fact and this promise is always a goal which shall be reached because of the great fact--the fact that they have been saved by their faith in Christ.¹⁸

But even though the general fact is known, there is much that needs relearning both as to content and as to value. And so Paul enters into a detailed description of the Parusia itself, limiting himself, however, to the details which are most needed by this particular congregation. This description is found in the first letter, chapter 4, verses 13-18.

Verse 13: Nor do I wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning * the sleeping ones, that ye do not (may not) sorrow, like the rest who have no hope. (v. 13)¹⁹

The opening words remind one of Romans 11:25 ("For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant"), 1 Cor. 10:1 ("Moreover brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant"). Paul uses this form *ὅν θέλωμεν* *ἵνα ὑμεῖς ἀγνοεῖτε* frequently in transition to a new and important thought. In Col. 2:1 and 1 Cor. 11:3 he uses the positive "I would that you knew." Both are forms soliciting earnest attention. Here the words introduce

¹⁵2 Thess. 2:1.

¹⁶2 Thess. 2:5.

¹⁷2 Thess. 5:12.

¹⁸1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:13-15.

¹⁹All translations of verses under discussion are by the author.

a considerable problem in the congregation. There is evidently some doubt concerning the blessedness of "their sleeping ones"--note the definite article. They have the impression that their dead will be at a distinct disadvantage at the coming of Christ. We might infer from + verses 15 to 17 that the Thessalonians had grave doubts concerning the resurrection of their dead, especially in view of verse 13, "Others who have no hope," and since Paul asserts their resurrection as a necessary result and gift of Christ's resurrection. But this does not seem tenable since Paul elsewhere commends them for their Christian faith in numerous ways and calls them "brethren," a term he could not very well use if the seal of their salvation, their resurrection, were denied. It seems more likely that the Thessalonians believed that their dead would not be able to take part in the happy reception of the descending Savior. Only the + living would have this joy.²⁰ At any rate, their lack of knowledge or their misunderstanding has brought them to sorrow inordinately, or like "the other ones who have no hope." This latter reference is, of course, to the heathen, who considered earthly life indispensable to happiness and had no hope of a life beyond it.

²⁰It may be argued, I believe, legitimately that Paul would have to say: "God will also raise up the dead" in his syllogism, instead of "will God bring with Him" if he means to prove the resurrection of the "sleeping ones." Instead he presupposes their resurrection in the form he uses. The hypothetical ϵ^1 can hardly be taken problematically since (a) without Christ's resurrection there is no Christianity and no saving faith, and (b) Paul does not go to great lengths to prove Christ's resurrection as he does in 1 Cor. 15. Instead he presents a syllogism: * "If (when) we believe what we believe, that Christ died and rose again, then we conclude that God will bring those who sleep in Jesus with Him. Where the Head is, there the members must be," 1 Cor. 15:20,23.

Therefore Paul reassures them with the following verses:

{ Verse 14: For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep through Jesus will God bring with Him.

He points his people to Jesus. Jesus, the One who died but rose again, is their security. Where He is, there His redeemed must also be, and when He comes, His redeemed will come with Him. Christ's death and resurrection has made this a certainty. Because they are His, they must forever be where He is (John 12:36) and are not, as it were, hidden in the grave in such a way that they might "miss out on something." It is interesting to note that Paul when speaking of Jesus does not speak of His "falling asleep," but of His "death" and "resurrection." Note also the οὕτως καὶ "even so also," "just so." As Christ was resurrected from death by the Father, so God will bring His dead through Christ (διὰ) to the Parusia with (σὺν) Christ. He will lead them, bring them up (ἄξει). The preposition διὰ is translated by Luther and the King James Version with "in" and is connected to κοίμηθέντες . But διὰ cannot be synonymous with ἐν . It expresses agency. Either the translation must be "died through Jesus" (by His agency) or as the Revised Standard Version translates "bring with Him through Jesus," connecting διὰ with ἄξει . Both are possible, the latter having a sort of sensus praegnans.

Verse 15: For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not anticipate the sleeping ones.

*^{ff} Paul now becomes more emphatic. ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου : "In a word of the Lord we say this unto you." There are various interpretations of this phrase. Some think that Christ's own eschatological discourses

are meant. But such a correspondence would be artificial, since Christ does not speak of the events immediately preceding judgment. Others believe it is a statement of Christ which had been preserved in tradition as in Acts 20:35. Theophylact, Calvin, and others had this view. But if it were such, one should expect an exact quotation. More probably this was an immediate revelation, as Luther holds.²¹ Paul's speech is emphatic and gives the impression that this is something new. It is a secret which they have not heard before. The Lord has told it to him directly, and he now passes it on.²² It is Jesus Himself who is giving the assurance. The comfort comes directly from Him. The living ones will not enjoy an advantage over the sleeping ones. This will surely not happen (*οὐ μὴ*). This is true regardless of which interpretation of "the word of the Lord" one wishes to accept.

It seems incontrovertable that the Thessalonians, together with ^{*}Paul, fully expected to be alive when Jesus would come. The contrast is between *ζῶντες* and *κοιμῶντες*. And this, of course, is one reason why the Thessalonians were worried about their dead. They too had anticipated the Coming. Were they now to be left out because they had the misfortune to die too soon? And what about those who might still die before the time came?

²¹Martin Luther, Saemtliche Schriften, edited by John George Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1885), XII, 2062.

²²Cp. 1 Kings 20:35 where the phrase is distinctly a sign of prophetic revelation.

Verse 16: For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the Trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Now follows the reason why the living will not enjoy an advantage over the dead. Paul gives the events of the Parusia in the order of their occurrence. The first emphasis is "The Lord," *αὐτός ὁ*
 * *κύριος* "Himself, the Lord." He is the one of Whom the Thessalonians should think. In view of the modifying *ἐν κελεύσματι* we think here not of Jesus Salvator but of Jesus Dominus, the powerful One, the Commanding One. He comes with the commanding order of a general officer. It is no longer "Jesus" as in verse 14, but "The Lord," the One in authority.²³ When the Lord comes, all ears will hear His command, and especially the dead will hear it. The command will be given through the voice of the archangel, the herald of Christ, and it will be accompanied by the trumpet of God, a sound which must penetrate into the tombs.

And in result, the dead in Christ will arise first. Much should be made of *πρώτων*. Its position is emphatic and precludes a chiliastic interpretation. It is not a first resurrection contrasted to a second, but a resurrection of the dead in the first place, contrasted to the living, the remaining ones of the next verse. Thus, the dead, rather than being left out or denied a certain glory, not only
 * participate in the whole Parusia, but actually are the first ones to receive the attention of the great Lord.

²³The word is also used as the command of drivers to the horses, hunters to dogs, and coxswains to the oarsmen. Liddell and Scott, A Lexicon, abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek English Lexicon (Twenty-Third Edition; Oxford: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889), p. 371.

Verse 17: Then we, the living, the remaining ones, shall be caught away together with them in the clouds for the meeting of the Lord in the air: and so shall we always be with the Lord.

The second result of the coming of the Lord is the removal from the earth of both the newly awakened sleeping ones and the living remaining ones. At the same time, together, they will be caught away, torn away,²⁴ from the earth to which they had been bound, to ride upon the clouds in triumphal procession with their Lord. All the believers will go to meet their coming Lord. There will be nothing to hold them back, nothing to prevent them. The air itself will carry them.

And finally, this detail is added (verse 17) to quell all doubt: "οὐτως, so, by the fact of being caught away and meeting the Lord, we will always be with the Lord."

Note that οὐ, the word of intimate communion, not *MEET*, is used.²⁵

The final result of the resurrection of Jesus is the reunion of His people with Him. We shall not enter further into this but will

²⁴ ἁρπάξω is "wegrissen" or "rob." Cp. ἁρπάξω Luke 18:11 and ἁρπάξω Heb. 10:34; also Jude 23, "Tearing out of fire." Thus, Paul's use of the word both here and in 2 Cor. 12:2,4 "caught up into paradise," literally implies an urgency or even a note of force, which indeed is reasonable in view of the fact that on both occasions there is a distinct element of helplessness (though not unwelcome) in the face of superior and supernatural power.

²⁵Cp. 1 Cor 5:11 for (a) the general meaning: "What naturally goes with"; (b) with active verbs, "to do something with someone or be in the same state with someone" as in 1k. 2:13 $\sigma\upsilon\nu \chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon$ and Phil. 1:23 "to be with someone," 1k. 23:32, Col. 3:3.

leave the implication to the final chapter. There is more factual instruction which Paul gives and which belongs to this first chapter.

* That the question concerning the time of the Parusia is not only a modern problem but a question which undoubtedly plagued the very first Christians is evident from Paul's detailed discussion, 1 Thess. 5:1-3. Though St. Paul in a mildly ironic way says of this matter, "you have no need to be written to," the question must have been there nevertheless. Though Paul states that they knew everything there was to know, he at the same time repeats what he says they already know, and uses some very striking language to be sure that he is understood.

Chapter 5, Verse 1: But concerning the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need to be written to.

Following as it does upon the details of the Parusia, this verse and specifically the τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν can refer only to the time and hour of Christ's coming. Indeed, these words might almost be taken as a technical term of eschatology.²⁶

The meaning of "times" and "seasons" is apparent from the text.

χρόνοι means a particular time (Zeitpunkt).²⁷ The text uses both words in the plural, "times and seasons." Possibly in view of other information Paul gives, which will be discussed later, it is accurate to say that the events both preceding and occurring during the Parusia

²⁶Cp. Acts 1:6,7.

²⁷Rom. 13:11 εἰδοτες, τὸν καιρὸν ; until a certain time: 1k. 4:13 and Acts 13:11 ἀγχι καιρὸν ; in that time: Matt. 11:25, 12:1, 14:1 ἐν σκαινῷ τῷ καιρῷ . When connected with a genitive it denotes when something occurs, as in 2 Tim. 4:6 ὁ καιρὸς τῆς ἀναλυσεως μου ἐφειλεται. Cp. also Matt. 26:18 ὁ καιρὸς μου ἐγγύς ἐστιν , again a particular, even determined time.

are included in this term. Thus the second coming of Christ prepared for, is ushered in, and is consummated by a series of single acts.

At any rate, it seems that the Thessalonians would have liked more information concerning the extent of time up to the Parusia $\chi\gamma\acute{o}\upsilon\sigma\iota$, and concerning the particular time, the moment of the Parusia, $\kappa\alpha\iota\zeta\omicron\iota$. But Paul simply tells them that they already know everything that is knowable, and briefly repeats what he had already told them at another time. He can do no more. He does not know himself how long it will be before the Lord's coming $\chi\gamma\acute{o}\upsilon\sigma\iota$ nor the specific time which will have to pass by then $\kappa\alpha\iota\zeta\omicron\iota$.

So he continues, Verse 2: For you yourselves know accurately that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief by night.

The sense is this: "The 'when' is not important, but the 'how' of the Lord's coming, as you know is important." The expression "Day of the Lord," is synonymous with "Parusia of the Lord." It is the last day, the day of revelation, the day of judgment. The Old Testament abounds in the term $\text{יְהוָה} \text{ יוֹם}$: יְהוָה , particularly in the Prophets.²⁸ In the Old Testament it is specifically the day of Yahweh and is used of God's day of judgment. In the New Testament, because judgment is committed to the Son, it becomes the day of Christ, of Jesus Christ, of the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁹

²⁸Cp. Is. 13:6, "The day of the Lord is at hand"; 13:9, "The day of the Lord cometh"; Amos 5:18, "The day of the Lord is darkness"; Joel 2:1, "The day of the Lord cometh"; 3:14, "The day of the Lord is near"; Zeph. 1:7, "The day of the Lord is at hand"; 1:14, "is near"; and others.

²⁹Cp. 2 Thess. 2:2; Phil. 1:6,10; 2:15; 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; and others.

* This day will come as a thief by night. A thief is known for his stealth. He does not warn of his coming. His victims are unsuspecting. He does his work at night under cover of darkness, when the house is asleep.³⁰

Verse 3 now comments further on the destructive aspect hinted at in the simple mention of the thief:

For when they say, Peace and security, then destruction comes upon them suddenly, as travail to her that is with child; and they shall surely not escape.

* The emphasis is on the warning not to let the Day come upon them by surprise, or rather, by surprise because they feel secure. He who says, "all is well," usually feels that way and acts that way. But destruction will fall without prior warning, without opportunity for preparation against it $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\sigma\tau\alpha\tau\alpha\iota$, "ueberfallen." It comes like the sudden pangs ushering in a birth. And the figure of gestation and birth introduces the idea that it is inescapable, absolutely so ($\omicron\upsilon\ \mu\acute{\iota}$).

* Thus St. Paul reiterates something which he feels to be of utmost importance. And, as subsequent history has proved, his words are most valuable, particularly to gainsay the time setters, to wake up the secure, and to encourage the sincere believers to keep themselves in a state of constant preparedness to greet the glorious appearance of Christ.

³⁰Cp. Obadiah 5; Rev. 3:3; 16:15 "I come as a thief." Also the parable of the Virgins and its nighttime allusion to the coming of the Bridegroom. Also the first Passover (and subsequent celebrations) took place at night when the avenging angel came in judgment, all incidents or examples of the preparation necessary to preserve the state of anticipation in the Christian and to sound a warning against unchristian complacency. Cp. also the beginning of the Church vigils, and especially the Easter vigil which at first were connected largely with the anticipated Parusia.

CHAPTER II

EVENTS PRECEDING THE PARUSIA

Paul had in his first letter made it quite clear to the Thessalonians that they were not to ask about the times and seasons of the Lord's Second Coming, chapter 4, verses 10-12.

We exhort you brethren, to abound more and more and endeavor earnestly to be quiet and to do your own things and to work with your own hands even as we enjoined on you; that you may walk in a becoming way towards those outside and may have need of no one.¹

And it is because of his failure to convince the Thessalonians in the first letter that he adds another thought: "The Lord will come again but not before certain events shall take place." Here 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 1-12, are of utmost importance. Paul begins:

Verses 1 and 2: Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him, that you be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by epistle, as if by us, as that the day of Christ is present.

He pleads with them, not only by the Coming, $\pi \alpha \rho \sigma \upsilon \sigma \iota \alpha$ ², but specifically also by "our gathering together to him," $\tau \eta \mu \omega \nu \epsilon \pi \iota \sigma \upsilon \nu \alpha \gamma \omega \gamma \eta \varsigma \epsilon \sigma \tau \iota \alpha \upsilon \tau \omega \nu$, not to allow themselves

¹All translations of verses under discussion are by the author.

²Parusia and synonyms: (a) Parusia (Christ's) 1 Thess. 11:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23, 2 Thess. 12:18, 1 Cor. 15:23, Jas. 5:7, 2 Pet. 1:16, 3:12, 1 John 2:28, Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; (of others) 1 Cor. 16:17, 2 Cor. 7:6, 7, 10:10, Phil. 1:26, 2:12, 2 Thess. 2:9, (b) (the Lord's) 1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5, 2 Cor. 1:14, 1 Thess. 5:2, 2 Thess. 2:2, Phil. 1:6, 10, 2:16, (the day by *autonomasia*) 2 Thess. 1:10, 2 Tim. 1:12 (c) $\epsilon \pi \iota \rho \alpha \upsilon \epsilon \iota \alpha$, 1 Tim. 6:11, 2 Tim. 1:10, 4:1, 8, Tit. 12:13--note also 2 Thess. 2:8 $\epsilon \tilde{\nu} \epsilon \pi \iota \rho \alpha \upsilon \epsilon \iota \alpha \epsilon \tilde{\nu} \varsigma \pi \alpha \rho \sigma \upsilon \sigma \iota \alpha \varsigma \alpha \upsilon \tau \omega \nu$ (d) $\alpha \pi \circ \alpha \lambda \lambda \upsilon \gamma \iota \varsigma$ 1 Cor. 1:7, 2 Thess. 1:7, Cp. also 1 Pet. 1:7, 4:3.

to be shaken and frightened. ἐπισυναγωγή occurs only once elsewhere in the New Testament, namely Heb. 10:25, where it is used of the meeting of a Christian congregation. It is often used in the Apocrypha to denote the congregation of the Israelites. The term seems to correspond to the ὑπάντησις of 1 Thess. 4:14-27, and is illustrated by Matt. 24:31, συναΐθουσι τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς αὐτοῦ. The coming of Christ and our gathering to Him are here united. There is a relatum et correlatum which precludes or should prevent their present state of mind. In effect Paul says:

If (when) Christ comes, we shall be with Him, so why all these fears? Even if, as you seem to think, that the Day is just about here, this should not be something which should unsettle you. But the Day is not at hand, and so there is even less reason to be worried.

And in the same breath Paul mentions the influences that have brought about this state of unsettlement so quickly ταχέως. They are suffering themselves to be shaken, σαλευθῆναι, as a ship torn from anchorage, "from your mind," thereby losing their good sense and power of reflection. They are permitting themselves to be troubled or frightened. is present tense and denotes continued action. This unrest should not be caused by spirit, by word, or by epistle. The first expression, δὲ πνεύματος, may refer to the gift of prophecy enjoyed by some.³

³James Everett Frame, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, the International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), XXIV, 246 states positively: "In the light of 1 Thess. 5:19 πνεῦμα refers clearly to the operation of the Spirit in charisma of prophecy."

But these gifts of prophecy were to be proved and not simply accepted unconditionally.⁴ Or it may refer to a pretended revelation of the Spirit, which idea the immediate context would support. They are not to be disturbed further, *διὰ λόγον* nor *δι' ἐπι-
στολῆς* / *ὡς δι' ἑμῶν* . Evidently there were those who had heard something Paul was supposed to have said or had seen a letter Paul was supposed to have written which gave them cause for anxiety. Just as there were false prophets abroad, so there was also probably a pseudo-Pauline letter in circulation which could cause the Thessalonians to believe that the Day of the Lord was upon them.⁵

St. Paul, however, pronounces such a "word" or such a "letter" as spurious.

Luther pointedly translates *ἐνετέθηκεν* with "vorhanden sei," the Authorized Version with "at hand," and the Revised Standard Version with "has come." The sense is: "It is present, here now, actually with us."⁶ This belief St. Paul, however, shows to be false already with the words "as that" *ὡς* before *ὅτι* , and then continues with his main argument.

⁴Cp. 1 Thess. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 14:32; Rom. 12:7.

⁵Frame rather believes *ἐπιστολῆς* to be an allusion to 1 Thess., *op. cit.*, p. 246. See Also J. B. Lightfoot, Notes on Epistles of St. Paul from unpublished Commentaries (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1895), p. 110, who quotes Paley in a supporting opinion but who does not himself agree.

⁶*ἐν ἐτέθηκεν* -- denotes strictly present time as in Rom. 8:38, 1 Cor. 3:22. The verb is very common in the papyri and inscriptions with reference to the current year," George Milligan, St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1908), p. 97. Cp. also 1 Cor. 7:26.

Verse 3: Not anyone should deceive you in any way, because (that day shall not come) unless the apostasy shall first have come, and the man of lawlessness, the son of perdition, shall have been revealed.

* St. Paul is moved to repeat and to strengthen his warning. The congregation should not permit itself to be misled in any way, for these ways are a fraud, ἐξ ἁπλῆς ψεύσεως, a delusion. He is very emphatic. Two things must happen "first," πρῶτον, before the last day may come: the apostasy must come, and the man of lawlessness must be revealed. Both times the definite article is used, indicating that his readers were familiar with both of these terms, which fact is also brought out by verse 5.

† The expression ἀποστασία, a later form for ἀπόστασις is always used in the New Testament for religious apostasy, or apostasy from God.⁷ It does not mean a political defection, for Paul's whole discourse is religious. It is not a heresy in Judaism, but an apostasy from the Christian faith, foretold by Christ in His eschatological discourse, Matt. 24:12 and Luke 18:8, and also by St. Paul, 2 Tim. 3:1-10.⁸ It means abandonment of a religion by passing over to another, or to none at all. In the Timothy passage the use of the word clearly indicates a leaving of the faith for the religion of devils. This is further borne out by verse 2 in which even the conscience is cauterized (effectively sealed off) and a pretense (ἐν ὑποκρίσει ψευδοῶν λόγων) is made of remaining in the faith. Though "the" whole "faith" is

⁷Acts 21:21, the very in 1 Tim. 4:1, Heb. 3:12.

⁸See Tillman, Die Wiederkunft Christi nach den Paulinischen Briefen (Freiburg - im - B, 1909), pp. 131-133.

"departed from" the impression remains that it is maintained. However, the faith itself is no longer professed.

The same is true of the passage in Acts. St. Paul, though accused of apostasy from Moses, has not actually apostatized and therefore can still say, "I am a Pharisee" believing in the resurrection.⁹

Failing to observe circumcision does not eradicate the Law of Moses but merely keeps it in its own place. He still believes in the promises made to Israel, Acts. 26:6ff, but now believes them as they are revealed in Christ.¹⁰ Thus the word does not seem to be used, at least not with any degree of frequency, of the corruption of a religion by persons who still profess that religion. Rather, it denotes a defection from God to a completely false religion or to atheism, especially in view of the following verses.¹¹ It is an apostasy which leads to malice and lawlessness, verse 7.

This therefore cannot refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the apostasy preceding that event, or the revolt of the Jews from the Romans, or other even less probable opinions, for none of these imply a general falling away from the true faith. According to some commentators it extends far beyond the limits of Judaism, and is the outcome of a

⁹Acts 23:6.

¹⁰In this connection compare also the English word "apostasy" which has precisely the same meaning of "abandonment" or "total departure from."

¹¹See Gottlieb Luenemann, A Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Thessalonians, edited by Meyer, translated by Paton Gloag (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1885), VIII, 596; S. T. Bloomfield, Greek Text with English Notes (Fifth American Edition; Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1848), II, 344; Frame, op. cit., pp. 250ff; Milligan, op. cit., p. 98; and Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 111.

general and hopeless revolt of the whole world against God and the order established by Him.¹² Frame's thought, that the apostasy is of non-Christians as a whole, cannot be supported by his contention that "St. Paul expects all believers to be saved" since also believers can apostatize.¹³ It is, as the definite article suggests, something well known to Paul's readers, something of which he had told them before the date of this letter. It must refer to an event in the future, the time immediately preceding the Day of Judgment. Though the exact time is, of course, not given, St. Paul seems to expect these events in his lifetime. We shall have more to say on this matter later.

* Now, connected with the apostasy and occurring after it is the revelation $\alpha\pi\omicron\kappa\alpha\lambda\upsilon\phi\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\nu}$ of the Man of Lawlessness. The apostasy comes first and then the Man of Lawlessness shall be revealed. The "and then" is not explicit in the text but is permissible and seems logical and probable, not only from the position of $\pi\epsilon\tilde{\omega}\tau\omicron\nu$ but also from the obvious connection with verse 7ff. This interpretation is, however, open to the objection that the apostasy and the revelation of the Man of Lawlessness are parallels and that $\pi\epsilon\tilde{\omega}\tau\omicron\nu$ may refer to both.¹⁴ The way for the revelation of the man of sin is opened by the apostasy. $\alpha\pi\omicron\kappa\alpha\lambda\upsilon\phi\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\nu}$ is emphatic and marks definitely the importance of the $\alpha\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\delta\acute{\alpha}$. . It is a parallel or counterpart to

¹²Cp. Milligan's excursus, op. cit., pp. 158-165.

¹³Frame, op. cit., p. 251.

¹⁴But note also that the consecutive $\kappa\alpha\iota$ indicates, and may possibly require, that the revelation is another historical event before the end or a condition of the fulfillment of the $\alpha\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\delta\acute{\alpha}$.

the ἀποκάλυψις of Jesus. As in the case of Jesus so in the case of the Man of Lawlessness a revelation takes place, a revelation in both cases of a "mystery." But who is this Man of Lawlessness? He is not a new concept to these Thessalonians, in view of the definite article and especially in view of verses 5 and 6. His character is known at least to the Thessalonians. St. Paul had said all this to them before and therefore they should be able to understand what he is talking about now.¹⁵

Now this is what is said of him. First he is not only ἁματωρός a sinner, as all men, but much stronger, ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, rather than ἁμαρτίας, as accepted by modern texts. Though lawlessness is sin, the use of ἀνομίας strengthens the thought. This man has no law but his own. He is a law unto himself. Therefore the sin of lawlessness is, as it were, personified in him. He is the direct opposite of Christ, who is so often called the Holy and Righteous One.¹⁶ In addition he is ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας. This is a Hebraism comparable to "the son of death," 1 Sam. 20:31, and other Hebrew expressions such as "son of stripes" and "sons of the bow."¹⁷ Luther's translation of υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας in John 17:12, "das verlorne Kind," is particularly apt. He is one who falls into perdition. The same word, ἀπώλεια, is used in Revelation of the Beast: "and the beast that was and is not, even he is

¹⁵It does not necessarily follow that this should be clear to any but the Thessalonians, and therefore one cannot today be too dogmatic about this passage.

¹⁶Acts 3:14; 7:52.

¹⁷Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 111.

the eighth and is of the seven and goeth into perdition" (Verdammis)

εἰς ἀπώλειαν ἵπταται . It is also used of Judas.¹⁸

Perdition then is eternal perdition or damnation.¹⁹ ἀπωλείας

indicates the final end of the one whose character is described as

εἰς ἀνομίας . It is, as Milligan states, "in direct antithesis, either stated or implied, to σωτηρία , full and complete blessedness, in harmony with the usage of the word in the Septuagint and later writings of the Jews."²⁰ Some exegetes have said that this fits only Satan. But Satan is distinguished from this person in verse 9: "His coming is according to the working of Satan."²¹

Now the characterization is enlarged in verse 4:

Who opposes and exalts himself²¹ above all called God or object of veneration, so as he (as God) sits down in the temple of God, setting himself forth that he is God.

It is a picture now, not only of being but one of activity. In ὁ ἀντι κείμενος καὶ ὑπερβιβόμενος we have a description in participial clauses joined by καὶ to emphasize the wicked character of the antichrist who not only is wicked but actively works out his wickedness. ἀντι κείμενος , the adversary, ὑπερβιβόμενος exalts himself vehemently or greatly. The verb ὑπερβιβέσθαι

¹⁸John 17:12.

¹⁹Cp. Phil. 3:19; Matt. 7:13.

²⁰Milligan, op. cit., p. 99.

²¹Or "who is the adversary and exalter."

is used in the New Testament only here and in 2 Cor. 12:7, where it is used in the sense of exalting beyond ability to measure.²²

† Further, he opposes and exalts himself over all that is called God or an object of veneration.²³ He is not only ἀντίθετος but a complete ἀντίθεος. He is on earth what Satan is in hell, the adversary or enemy of God.²⁴ In insolent wantonness he raises himself over not only the true God, but generally, over any other object of veneration and worship.²⁵

† He himself (αὐτόν is emphatic) has lost respect for everything godly and personally enthrones himself in the temple of God.²⁶ More than this, he sets himself forth blasphemously as God.

is used to mean to nominate or proclaim to an office in later Greek. Here the lawless one proclaims his own official state. Not only does he take possession of the temple as his rightful place, but also demands divine worship for himself. What is due to God he takes for himself.

²²Cp. use of - verbs by St. Paul, Eph. 4:10, 1:21; 2 Thess. 1:3; 2 Cor. 3:10; 9:14; Phil. 4:7.

²³Milligan, *op. cit.*, p. 112, asserts: "St. Paul inserts the word ἀντίθετος, where Daniel has simply πάντες θεοί, lest he should seem to allow the claim and so derogate from the majesty of the true God."

²⁴Cp. Zech. 3:1 ἡ φωνή; 1 Pet. 5:8 ἀντίδικός.

²⁵Cp. Dan. 7:25: "He shall speak great words against the Most High." Dan. 1:36: "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods."

²⁶ναόν, the sanctuary, not ἱερόν, the temple complex. Note also the definite article, thus the temple of the true God, or, as indeed it may be taken, the temple of God, meaning the well-known temple now standing. Cp. also Matt. 24:15: "Standing in the holy place."

* Further, verse 8, he is characterized as the lawless one, one who removes all authority from himself and himself becomes autonomous. His rule is without the check or restraint of a higher power.

His coming *παρουσία*, verse 9, is "according to the working of Satan," through the activity of Satan. Like Jesus he has an advent, like Jesus he comes from another power, and as in the case of Jesus miracles and signs are associated with him. He shall come "in every power, and signs, and wonders of falsehood," and, verse 10, "in every deceit of unrighteousness." This piling up of expressions points up the horror of the coming of the Man of Lawlessness. The *ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει*, etc., may be understood to refer to the great power (of the working of Satan) and the kinds of power or manifestations of this power, *ψεύδος* then, qualifying the whole expression. The next words (verse 10) *καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ τῆς ἀδικίας* refer to other ways by which the Man of Lawlessness will advance his designs, i.e., other than pretended miracles. *ἀδικίας* is a general term denoting any wrong act, or any breaking of the law. Together with the external signs of power, there is another sign, which is deceit, a deceit which has its origin in lawbreaking.

Thus the Man of Lawlessness is a caricature of Christ. As Christ received the power to do miracles, so Satan gives like power to the Man of Lawlessness. The difference is that the wonders of the Man of Lawlessness are lying wonders, i.e., either pretended miracles or miracles that pretend. We have no right to insist in this passage that the miracles of the antichrist are real; the words say only that they have the appearance of being real. They are wonders of falsehood and not actual

wonders.²⁷ The works are false in themselves, *ψευδούς*, and lead to falsehood. Thus it is doubtful whether these miracles of the anti-christ are intended to show that he possesses divine power. This text at least does not say so but is content to show the lying and deceitful character of both the antichrist as well as of the wonders associated with his coming. The text does not even say that antichrist does these wonders but that his advent, *παρουσία*, is attended by them.

Now, returning to verses 3 and 6, we find that this Man of Lawlessness shall be revealed, that is, uncovered, but not before that which the Thessalonians now know to restrain him will be removed. The position of *νῦν* makes it a particle of transition to a new communication, meaning "now then" or "and now," and does not permit its connection with *κατέχον*. For such use it would have to be *τὸ νῦν κατέχον* or *τὸ κατέχον νῦν*. *νῦν* may be temporal if it is considered to be displaced. The usual construction would be *τὸ νῦν κατέχον*. But if the displacement is deliberate, it is to emphasize the "nowness," or to say "at this time" and would modify *οἴδατε*. But the more satisfactory way is to take *καὶ νῦν* together in the emphatic sense of "and now" or "and for now." The emphasis of the whole sentence is not on *νῦν* but on *κατέχον*.²⁸ The sense is that the Thessalonians knew at this time that there was something hindering the revelation of the antichrist, and they also knew what the hindering force was.

²⁸See Frame, *op. cit.*, pp. 599-600, for a penetrating analysis of the various interpretations of *νῦν* in this passage. Cp. also Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

St. Paul had spoken of this before to them (not necessarily to anyone else) and so does not define the word. Literally it means that which suppresses, holds back, or checks. It may be a description of the checking power of law and order, as for example the power of the Roman Empire, with which St. Paul had had experience. It cannot be the power of Christ, or of the Holy Spirit since $\delta\ \kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\acute{\chi}\omega\upsilon$ is obviously the same power and, if so, God Himself, Who could hardly $\epsilon\kappa\ \mu\epsilon\sigma\sigma\omicron\upsilon$ $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\tau\alpha\iota$ "be removed." It must be some power operating already at this time which could also be personified, thus both a thing and a person, which stands between antichrist and Christ, and as shown by the following words, in harmony with God's purpose. More is not said and it remains for the historian to find something which fits the particulars. But so much is true: this suppressing power exists for a purpose, namely that the Man of Lawlessness may be revealed in his own time $\epsilon\upsilon\ \tau\omega$ $\epsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \theta\acute{\omega}$, not sooner and not later.

St. Paul then adds the thought, verse 7:

For the mystery of lawlessness is already working, only (there is) he who hinders at present until he be (gone) out of the midst. *

$\gamma\alpha\rho$, "for," explains the connection between "the restraining" and the "revelation of the antichrist." The mystery or secret of lawlessness is already being developed or has been set in operation, but is not yet full grown and will not be complete until whatever it is that restrains it is removed. Frame translates "the secret whose content is lawlessness" or "the mystery of which the characteristic feature or active principle is lawlessness."²⁹ $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\upsilon$ is used in its Biblical

²⁹Frame, op. cit., p. 263.

sense and points to a secret which will be revealed.³⁰ It is a mystery of lawlessness, i.e., a lawlessness which is a mystery or which is concealed.

μυστηρίον is contrasted with *ἀποκάλυψιν* and *ᾗδε* with *ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ κειμένῳ*. But the chief emphasis of the sentence lies on *μυστηρίον*, which on that account is not only placed first, but is besides separated from its further definition *τῆς ἀνομίας* by the verb and adverb. Taking into consideration the emphatic antithesis which *μυστηρίον* forms to *ἀποκάλυψιν* the natural meaning of the words can only be the mystery of wickedness, i.e., wickedness in so far as it is still a mystery. St. Paul thinks on the detached traces of lawlessness, recognizable in their true import only to a few as to himself, which already had appeared, but which only at a later period will concentrate themselves, and reach their climax in Antichrist As a mystery wickedness certainly works even now, only before Antichrist can be manifested we must wait, etc.³¹

This lawlessness corresponds to the apostasy of verse 3.³² It is mysterious in that it is still being restrained, and also in that it is only beginning to work.

Verse 8: And then will be revealed the lawless one whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and annul by the appearing of his coming.

In extension of the expression "in his own time," verse 6, this verse states the revelation and destruction of the antichrist.

³⁰Uses of *μυστηρίον* include (1) secret doctrine known to Christians through revelation but unknown to unbelievers as Matt. 13:11, Mk. 4:11, Luke 8:10, 1 Cor. 2:1--a doctrine which can be understood by faith, 1 Tim. 3:9, (2) that which man cannot grasp as 1 Cor. 13:2, 14:2, (3) that which is relatively hidden, or that which was hidden but now revealed plan of God (in general Eph. 1:9; 3:3; Col. 1:26) (in particular Rom. 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:51; Eph. 5:32), (4) the hidden sense of a word, as Acts 17:5, (5) the hidden sense of an appearance as Acts 1:20, 17:7.

³¹Frame, *op. cit.*, p. 600.

³²Cp. 2 Macc. 2:44--those are called *ἀνθρώποι ἀνομοί* whose *ἀποστασία* was mentioned at verse 15.

καὶ τότε, and then, balances καὶ νῦν .³³ The future takes the place of the present. What was said in verse 4 is now extended or is placed into its temporal order. After the restraint is lifted the lawless will be revealed.

ὁ ἀνόμος is the same as ὁ ἀνὺβωπος εἰς ἀνομίας of verse 3 and ἀποκαλυφθήσεσσι relates to ἀποκαλυφθῆναι, verse 3, and ἀποκαλυφθῆναι of verse 6.

Three times it is said that the lawless will be revealed, indicating the importance of this revelation. But unlike Jesus, who would be revealed in and for glory, the revelation of the antichrist will precede his destruction by the Lord, ὁ κύριος . κύριος is used most frequently in the new Testament to denote Jesus as Messiah, or Jesus as the one appointed by God to be King and Ruler. St. Paul uses the word without article in various passages, such as Col. 3:24 κυρίου, 2 Cor. 11:17, ἐν κυρίῳ 2 Cor. 2:12, and with the article or with predicate phrases, as a theological term, meaning the Savior Lord, rather than God or the Lord of the Old Testament.³⁴

Now this Lord will consume or slay the ἀνόμος with τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος and annul him or make him ineffectual by the ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ .³⁵ The first

³³Frame, op. cit., p. 265.

³⁴Cp. 2 Cor. 3:17; Rom. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:8; with predicate: 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 16:22; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Thess. 3:16.

³⁵Reading of ἀνελεῖ is better supported than ἀναλώσει .

mode of destruction may allude to Isaiah 11:4, which Lightfoot calls the original passage, or "an unconscious reminiscence of Psalm 32:6 where the same phrase balances the creative word of God."³⁶ The "breath of his mouth" is not a word of command but the breath itself. At least there is nothing in the text to indicate otherwise. Rather the parallel expressions "brightness of His presence" and "appearing of His coming" indicate a physical manifestation.

What we might call the second "phrase of destruction," "appearing of his coming" (presence), is much though not quite the same as the first. *ἐπιφάνεια* and *παρουσία* are more or less synonymous in Biblical usage.³⁷ Unlike the day of Yahweh, the Parusia is always * closely connected with the resurrection of the dead; its character is more spiritual; it is Christ, rather than God who is concerned in it. But St. Paul uses the word only in the Thessalonian letters and in 1 Cor. 15:23. It was a term for a Jewish idea given a Christian meaning. *ἐπιφάνεια* is used more often by St. Paul and is Hellenistic. It is used for "God's supernatural interpositions on behalf of his people,"³⁸ in the Greek Old Testament but by St. Paul other than here only in the Pastoral Epistles, and with one exception³⁹ it is always used of the second coming of Christ.

³⁶Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 115. Milligan agrees, *op. cit.*, p. 103. Cp. Frame, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

³⁷See note on page fifteen this chapter.

³⁸Milligan, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

³⁹2 Tim. 1:10.

Though these two terms are thus synonymous they are not quite the same. Together they mean "the openly present" Christ.

This Christ, or Lord, will kill the lawless and make him of no effect, *καταργήσει*, which is used in various shades of meaning and here would seem to contrast with the light of *ἐπιφάνεια* and connote "blackout" or "complete covering."

Thus St. Paul, gives a detailed though not exhaustive account of the events which should precede the Parusia of the Lord in order to accomplish the purposes which shall be discussed next.

CHAPTER III

THE VALUE OF THE DOCTRINE

Having traced in some detail the occasion for, and the burden of, the eschatological proclamation of the Thessalonian epistles, we must find the purpose of and the reason for the prominence which St. Paul gives to this proclamation. Doctrine is not given in order that it may be systematized by scholars, but that it may serve a definite need and purpose in the Christian heart.

It is not specious to say that the chief purpose of the Christian life, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, of the Christian man's living, is life itself. This, however, is not mere physical life, but the life with God which begins in time and finds its fulfillment in eternity. Doctrine is a means to life, and for the redeemed of God it is a guarantee of the life with God which he already possesses but which is not yet complete in him. Of course, this must be properly understood; the end purpose of Christian existence is the culmination of his Christian faith. This is something wholly different from the view of life offered by the non-Christian. For him there is little or no purpose in existence. As Bertrand Russell said,

the life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark . . . for man condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day.¹

¹Bertrand Russell, Logic and Mysticism, quoted by G. Richards, Christian Ways of Salvation (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 27.

How different from the Christian view of life! The Christian finds the vision of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Through Christ men become new creatures, for they are filled with a new faith and hope and love in the presence of eternity, whether that be above or before them. Jesus is the epitome of the new Kingdom, the Kingdom which has no end--the Kingdom which is timeless and spaceless as regards its life. Death cannot destroy it. Instead, death or the end of the world, whichever comes first, is actually the entrance way for the Christian's final realization of the Kingdom of Heaven. And it is this thought which St. Paul brings into such forceful play in nearly all his writings and especially here before us.

In his opening words of the first letter St. Paul gives thanks to God for the success of the Gospel in his congregation--which success centers in the fact that this congregation is alive in its new faith--a faith which has turned from idols to the service of the living and true God, and which waits for the coming of the resurrected Jesus "who delivers us from the coming wrath." Then in chapter two, verses 11 and 12, St. Paul gives as his purpose for exhorting and consoling and persuading and testifying to them as a father to his children, that they might "walk worthily of the God who calls you to his own kingdom and glory."

✕ Further, Paul asserts as his hope and joy and boasting crown the fact that his people, specifically these Thessalonians, are before our Lord Jesus at His Coming.² And this makes them his glory and joy.

²1 Thess. 2:19.

And furthermore, the purpose of Paul's prayer for their spiritual * advancement is that their hearts may be established blameless in holiness "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."³

And, in a very significant use of $\pi\upsilon\epsilon\tilde{\nu}\mu\alpha$, $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$, and $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha$, St. Paul prays that the whole Christian man, with all his bodily and spiritual faculties, may be preserved blameless "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴

Even a cursory reading of these passages without a detailed exegesis must result in the conviction that St. Paul's bent is eschatological. All points to one end, and "end" for St. Paul is really "beginning," the coming of Jesus, the Parusia.⁵

Thus to "be with Jesus," as Paul says elsewhere, is the hope of the believer, the destination at the end of his earthly journey. There is no need to dwell on or enlarge this thought here, but only to emphasize it as the basis for what follows.

If there is one purpose and end of the Christian faith—life with Jesus—a purpose to be realized at the Parusia—or at least, if this is

³1 Thess. 3:12,13.

⁴1 Thess. 5:23.

⁵Gottlieb Luenemann, A Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Thessalonians, edited by Meyer, translated by Paton Gloag (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1885), Vol. 8, 457: "The specific Christian mark, that which distinguishes Christians also from Jews, is the hope of the Parusia." Cp. also Acts 20:21; John 17:3. See also James Everett Frame, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), Vol. 35, 211.

a purpose--then the Christian life itself must give evidence of its purpose. Salvation, and in our sense salvation in its culmination, is not only a free gift to be taken and enjoyed. It is also a divine call to action. Otherwise the charge made by so many against those who profess salvation by faith alone, that they profess an unethical faith, would be justified. The divine dynamic gained through faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His coming must work itself out in a life of personal holiness and righteousness. The response of man, which remains man's response, albeit given by the Holy Spirit and empowered by the divine love, to the love of God in Jesus Christ is faith, faith working in love. The saving power of God which brings one to the joy of the hope of salvation in the last day produces love in the one thus blessed.

This principle St. Paul brings out most emphatically. Returning to the first chapter of the first letter we find St. Paul heaping words of praise upon his congregation for the fact that their faith was not a static thing which they all took for granted and which was satisfied to rest on its laurels. Rather their faith was a living powerful force which not only grew in its own conviction but also evidenced its power by its "work of faith," "labor of love," "patience of hope," by its reception "of the Word in much affliction with joy," by their "being examples" to others, by their "service of the living and true God," and by their waiting for His Son from heaven.

This all is not mere flattery, nor is it Paul's way of praising his own ministry. It enunciates a principle which is paralleled again and again in the New Testament, that the faith which produces salvation and

which waits for eventual salvation⁶ is never inactive but always pulsing with life. It is not necessary to pick out every passage in these letters to make this point. But see how fervently St. Paul expresses just this:

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.⁷

The same drive toward sanctification (wholly) and blamelessness is emphasized in the concluding chapter and climaxed in verse 23.⁸

One of the most striking phrases to be found in the New Testament is "quench not the Spirit."⁹ Though this passage is taken by most expositors to relate to the supernatural gifts found in the Church¹⁰ and rightly so in view of the following verse, still we cannot exclude the ordinary influences and graces given to everyone by the Holy Spirit, the grace of the Christian life being chief among them. This is especially true in view of the progressive thought of the whole paragraph where

⁶"eventual" in the sense of "ultimate," the event being the Parusia.

⁷1 Thess. 3:12,13.

⁸Frame, op. cit., p. 210, notes $\epsilon\chi\iota\delta\sigma\alpha\iota\ \psi\mu\alpha\varsigma\ \sigma\lambda\omicron\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ "consecrate you throughout," "through and through" (Luther). The note of consecration already struck in 3:13 and 4:3-8 is heard again. As in those passages so here consecration includes not only religion, devotion to God, but conduct, ethical soundness. Furthermore, since Paul has in mind the consecration not only of the soul but of the body (4:3-8) it is probable that $\sigma\lambda\omicron\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ is to be taken not qualitatively, "so that you may be perfect" but quantitatively, "wholly," that is, $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\tau\iota\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \psi\chi\eta\varsigma$.

⁹1 Thess. 5:19.

¹⁰1 Cor. 12 and 14.

St. Paul not only gives direction for the Christian life, but also warns against that which is not consistent with the Christian's high calling.

No less is the emphasis on the Christian life in the second letter. Growth in faith and progress in sanctification form the burden of the introductory paragraph¹¹ and a large portion of the closing chapter. Key phrases are "faith groweth exceedingly," "charity aboundeth," "patience," "endure," "both do and will do the things we command," "withdraw from disorderly conduct."¹²

And, indeed, to what other end could such a doctrine lead? In the light of St. Paul's and other apostolic witnesses, the faith of the Christian, which is always eschatological in its projection, cannot help but produce its results already and especially in the present life. This is, of course, not to say that the doctrine of the Parusia is itself the efficient cause of sanctification. Sanctification is always the result of justification, or proceeds out of justification, and is the work of the Holy Spirit.

However, since faith in the atonement is the direct causative principle of sanctification, and since faith in the atonement directs the life of the Christian to its perfection at the Parusia, so inversely, the Parusia, being the Christian's ultimate goal, a goal toward which he strives in faith, will urge and drive him by the power of the Holy Spirit to perfect his life--in Luther's thought, to work to become what he is and what he shall surely be, a perfect soul in heaven.

¹¹1 Thess. 1:3-5.

¹²2 Thess. 1:3,4, 3:4, 3:6.

Of great importance in this connection is the doctrine of election. "Because God chose you from the beginning to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth whereto he called you by our glad tidings to obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹³ God chooses His people to salvation. Their salvation is sure because they have nothing to do with it. They need never fear that they have not done enough, or been holy enough to merit salvation. But election to salvation itself demands growth. Not only are they chosen, but they are also called. And their being chosen and being called is realized in their consecration to God which is given them by the Spirit, *ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος*, and their Spirit-given will to believe the truth. The construction of Paul's thought is particularly beautiful and designed specifically for the comfort of those who are in danger of *σλευθῆναι* and *θεοεἰσθῆναι*. They have only to ask themselves whether they believe that the Spirit is in them and whether they believe the Gospel to know beyond all doubt that God has elected them to the salvation to which they were called from the beginning, *ἀπ' ἀρχῆς*.¹⁴ And, knowing that they have been chosen they may know that their election is also secure. Security comes by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, who strengthens faith and who causes the believer to live out his faith in good works.

¹³2 Thess. 2:13,14.

¹⁴Either from the beginning of Christianity or the beginning of time, Paul usually uses *πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων*, *ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων*, or *πρὸ κλικβολῆς κόσμου* to denote "from eternity." See Frame, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

The fact of the Parusia and its promise to all believers, to all who are called to this hope, is in itself an exhortation not only to steadfastness in the hope and faith they have, but to the increase, growth, and manifestation of that hope in works of the Spirit. These indeed are not in any way to be construed as an evidence of a perfection which gives one the Parusia and makes one deserving of the Parusia, but an evidence of the perfection of Christ gained through His sacrifice and resurrection, appropriated by faith, and imitated in life through the power of the Holy Ghost. The knowledge that there will be a Parusia, attested to so firmly by St. Paul, serves also to confirm the believer's faith in his own election.

Of far greater importance, however, than the matter of Christian growth, is the comfort to be derived from the doctrine of the Parusia. The life of man in general, being what it is, and the life of the religionist who relies on something else than the work of the Savior, must be constantly fraught with the worry generated by insecurity and fear of ultimate inadequacy. There is a natural fear of death which separates the sufferer from the world and the love which he knows. Such fear is conquerable, outwardly at least, by man's natural or acquired inner strength, or by his ability to sublimate. But the fear of God who after death claims His right of judgment is quite another thing. Then the word of fear is not "I will die," but "What will become of me when I die?"

How fortunate the Christian is who has the promise of the Parusia. For him there is no doubt concerning his eventual destiny. He has been delivered from this fear, and that with glorious assurance. This is the primary assurance St. Paul enunciates so clearly in both Thessalonian

letters. It finds its deepest expression in the words: "to await His Son¹⁵ from the heavens, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath."¹⁶ "The nearness of the thing expected is suggested by the very idea of waiting."¹⁷

Here we have the point which distinguishes the Christian religion from Judaism; and this, coupled with the preceding verse, contains a brief summary of the most important doctrine of the Christian faith, theoretical and practical. "Waiting for Jesus' advent" is a beautiful expression, signifying that the Thessalonians have received Jesus as their Redeemer. It implies obedience to His precepts, faithful profession of His religion, and, above all, a spring of comfort which never stops flowing even in the dry years of adversity. The deliverance of τὸν ζυόμενον (1 Thess. 1:10) is a present deliverance which began with our Lord's sacrifice and is continually carried forward until its completion at the Parusia when spiritual as well as temporal death will be swallowed up in victory. It is a deliverance from wrath now sure ὥστε παρακαλεῖτε .¹⁸ "The hope of the returning Christ presupposes faith in Christ as also ζυόμενον clearly points to faith

¹⁵This is the only time Jesus is mentioned as "Son" in either letter.

¹⁶1 Thess. 1:10 ἀναμένειν is used only here in the New Testament. Elsewhere ἀπεκδέχεται is used in the same sense. Cp. Rom. 8:19,25, 1 Cor. 1:7, 2 Thess. 3:5 for the same metaphors.

¹⁷Frame, op. cit., p. 88.

¹⁸The present tense denotes certainty of action of "what is done at all times," as in the expression: "the sun shines."

in Christ as its necessary condition and presumption."¹⁹ is used here together with the name of Jesus in a beautiful play on words. Jesus as His very Name implies, is the deliverer.²⁰

And this thought of comfort is continued and urged after St. Paul's description of the advent in chapter four in the words: "So encourage one another with these words."²¹ The meaning is: "Since this will happen, your fears are groundless and by the very speaking of these very words that I have used you will not only be comforted yourself but will also comfort others." St. Paul uses an expression here which may corroborate Luther's affirmation that grace is received through "the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren."²² Certainly the grace of comfort is so received. The point, however, is that St. Paul not only speaks comfort but enjoins his readers to comfort each other in an active way. They can avoid much bitterness, discomfort, and misery and be filled with joy if they will take this verse and its admonition seriously not only regarding apocalyptic hope but all of life.

Further guaranteeing and strengthening this comfort St. Paul in the second letter offers additional help and counsel. Calvin and others take the passage in 2 Thess. 1:4-7 and make it say a good deal less than comfort. They make suffering and persecution a proof of the righteous

¹⁹Luenemann, op. cit., p. 457.

²⁰Matt. 1:21.

²¹1 Thess. 4:18 τούτοις, the very words.

²²Smalcald Articles Part III, Art. IV in Triglot Concordia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 491.

judgment of God and almost a purifying process by which the elect are saved. This is, however, to miss the force of the passage completely besides vitiating it. St. Paul begins by boasting. But what is his boast? Is it not the endurance and faith of his people throughout their persecution?²³ And is not this in itself a proof or guarantee of the righteous judgment of God that they will be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God for which they are suffering? It is God Himself who gives them the ability so to endure, and their endurance is a sure sign of their victory. This is not to say that their patience will earn their reward at the Parusia, but that it shows that their reward of grace is sure. Their endurance is evidence of the faith which will bring them to the Parusia.

Nicht das blosse Truebsalleiden an sich ist ein Erweis des Gerichts, etwa also Abbueszen der Sunden, oder also Vorzeichen, dasz das Gericht kommen muesse; das tut nicht das blosse Leiden on sich selber, sondern das Leiden in Geduld und Glauben, wie denn auch das *εἰς ἀνεκχομένη* zu solchen gesagt wird, deren Geduld und Glaube geruehrt werden kann; und in *ἀνεκχομένη* selber liegt das geduldige Aufsichnehmen. Also dieses geduldiges Tragen ist ein Erweis des gerechten Gerichts Gottes.²⁴

There seems to be good reason to take *εἰς τὸ καταψιωθῆναι* with *σικαιῶς κατόπισθεν*, so as to point out the happy consequences of bearing afflictions with patience. *εἰς τὸ*, as Frame and others

²³See *πᾶσιν* verse 4. The persecutions have been repeated. It was not just an isolated instance, but a continual enduring.

²⁴C. A. Auberlen and C. Riggerbach in Die Beiden Briefe Pauli an die Thessalonicher, in Theologisch-homiletisches Bibelwerk, edited by J. P. Lange (Bielefeld and Leibzig: Verlag v. Velhagen und Klasing, 1867), X, 102.

point out, usually expresses purpose in Pauline writing. Thus the purpose of the righteous judgment of God is that they be counted worthy of the Kingdom.²⁵ Beyond this, St. Paul continues, the end result or final end of suffering is the Kingdom of God or the Parusia.

He then goes on to make the same point and to strengthen it positively and negatively. "Those who now cause your tribulation will by the righteous judgment of God receive their right reward, *τιμωρις* ." They have caused tribulation, *τιβοουσιν* and they will receive it, *τιωριν* . *ειτεδ δικαιου* is confirmatory—"inasmuch as it is righteous"—God can do no other. The wicked cannot always evade judgment. An end to the suffering must come because God is righteous, and when it comes the persecutors will be punished.

The force of this passage is tremendous. It expresses what our dogmaticians have called ius talionis, the principle of recompense, which cannot be thwarted.²⁶ There is nothing hypothetical or problematical in this matter. This is the righteousness of God in which it is impossible for Him not to act rightly in dealing with the tormentor and the tormented. His justice demands that the oppressors become the oppressed. With the measure that they measured it will be measured to them again. Paul proves the necessity of the judgment by the spectacle of the actual world, in which the innocent are so often the victims. This momentary derangement of the moral order which God has established must sooner or later cease.

²⁵For analysis of the construction see Frame, op. cit., p. 226.

²⁶Cf. Rom. 2:6.

The world to come will be the reverse of the present one; then sorrow and shame will be the portion of the persecutors, while rest and glory will be given to the persecuted.

In close connection, verse 7 presents this positive comfort. Not only will the oppressors receive their just reward according to God's righteousness, but the same righteousness will give to the Thessalonians their rest. Properly the words mean "release from affliction."²⁷ Thus the participation in suffering will be replaced by a like participation in relief from suffering. In awarding the crown, God performs an act of justice, and pronounces a judgment equally just in refusing to give the crown to the wicked. In both cases there is retribution, 2 Thess. 1:6,7.

What is this relief from $\sqrt{\lambda\tau\psi\iota\varsigma}$? It is, according to verse 5, entrance into the kingdom of God,²⁸ or the joy of being with Jesus. Thus it is not a mere palliative or release but a positive and wonderful remedy. As is brought out in the following verses, the judgment of God upon the evil ones, separation from God, $\alpha\pi\omicron\ \pi\tau\epsilon\sigma\omega\pi\omicron\nu$, is contrasted with the state of the Thessalonian sufferers who will be counted worthy of the Kingdom, that is, worthy of being with God. Thus a complete transformation of their present lot is shown to be in store for the believers "in the revelation of the Lord Jesus."

²⁷S. T. Bloomfield, Greek Text with English Notes (Fifth American Edition; Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1848), II, 341.

²⁸The Kingdom of God, 2 Thess. 1:5. St. Paul generally gives it an eschatological meaning, 1 Cor. 6:9,10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5, 2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:1,18. Cp. the Church Militant and Triumphant, 1 Cor. 15:24; Col. 1:13; 4:11, 1 Thess. 2:12. The spirit of Christianity or the essence of the Gospel, Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20. For St. Paul the Kingdom of God is also the Kingdom of Christ.

This whole passage is difficult of interpretation because it would be impossible to state more clearly that the Kingdom of God is won by conquest, gained and merited, 2 Thess. 1:5-10. It seems that the merit is ours and that we can demand reward from God's justice. We may compare also St. Paul's words to Timothy: "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day; and not only to me but to them also that love his coming."²⁹ The crown of righteousness is lawfully gained and the Judge, if he is just, is bound to award it without arbitrariness or injustice. Out of context this can be nothing but work-righteousness. In context, however, the righteousness of Christ is declared to be ours.

Usually St. Paul uses the word "Parusia"³⁰ which means "presence," as in 1 Cor. 16:17 and 2 Cor. 10:10; "the coming," as in 2 Cor. 7:6,7; Phil. 1:26; 2 Thess. 2:9; especially the "coming again of Christ from heaven" in contrast to His first coming in the flesh. In this sense also the concepts of judgment and resurrection of the dead are included.³¹

²⁹2 Tim. 4:8.

³⁰Cp. 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15, etc.

³¹Matt. 24:3; 37:39; 1 Cor. 15:23; 2 Thess. 2:1,8; James 5:7,8; 2 Pet. 1:16; 3:4; 3:12; 1 John 2:28.

Here he uses ἄπο κἀλυσί 32 revelation, as in 1 Cor. 1:7, which is more definite and vivid. Jesus, who is now hidden, will be revealed as Lord and Judge and will appear visibly and publicly. Further, this revelation will take place from heaven with the angels of His power.

And now St. Paul turns from comfort to warning.³³ The Jesus who will be revealed will be revealed in flaming fire, "taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." It is a tremendous majesty and glory with which the Lord will reveal Himself. He comes in the light of flame, the Old Testament symbol of God's appearance and presence, especially of God's coming to judgment.³⁴ What is said of God in the Old Testament is referred here to Christ.³⁵ He will come "awarding vengeance" δίδόντος ἐκδίκησιν, an expression used only here in the New Testament, upon two classes of people. In a

³² ἄπο κἀλυσί in Paul, denotes regularly a prophetic revelation in the Spirit; here, however, and in 1 Cor. 1:7, it is equivalent to παρόντις. Underlying this use of ἄπο κἀλυσί may be the idea that the Son of Man is hidden before God and that the elect, though they knew him in the Spirit, do not behold Him visibly until he comes to function as Messiah—Frame, op. cit., p. 231.

³³We have discussed at some length the warnings against "time-setters," morbid restlessness and excitement, disorderliness, and generally false beliefs concerning the Parusia in the first two chapters and therefore will concern ourselves only with specific warnings here.

³⁴Cp. Gen. 15:17; Ex. 3:2; 13:21,22; 19:18; Ps. 97:3; Is. 29:6; 30:30; Dan. 7:9,10.

³⁵Cp. 1 Cor. 3:13; Heb. 10:27; 12:29.

"unique parallellism" the heathen, or those who do not know God, and the Jews, or those who do not obey the Gospel, are sentenced to their just due. These are not only unbelievers in general, it would seem from the context, but specifically the Jews who instigated and the gentiles who carried out the oppressions.³⁶ The damning fault of the one is not knowing God, *μη εἰδότες θεόν*, a wilful ignorance in Biblical usage,³⁷ and of the other rejection of knowledge, *μη ὑπακούουσιν τῷ ἐν'αγγελίῳ*, particularly the rejection of the Gospel. Lightfoot thinks that the repetition of the article implies that two distinct classes are meant--those who reject the light of natural religion, and those who reject the Gospel.³⁸ Frame says the usage of Paul makes it probable though not certain.³⁹ Milligen claims:

It is doubtful whether any such distinction was in the writer's mind, nor can it be strictly applied, for Gentiles as well as Jews can be taxed with disobedience while the wilful ignorance of the Gospel, which alone can be thought of here, is elsewhere directly ascribed to the Jews. It is more in keeping with the Hebraistic strain of the whole passage, to take both clauses as referring to the same general class, viz. all who as the result of wilful ignorance or disobedience oppose themselves to God.⁴⁰

"Our Lord Jesus Christ" lays claim to faith and obedience, but they refuse Him this and must therefore be punished.⁴¹

³⁶Cp. 1 Thess. 2:14-16; Acts 17:5-10.

³⁷Cp. Rom. 2:14.

³⁸J. B. Lightfoot, Notes on Epistles of St. Paul from unpublished Commentaries (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1895), p. 103.

³⁹Frame, op. cit., p. 233.

⁴⁰George Milligan, St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1908), p. 90.

⁴¹Cp. "They received not the love of the truth" 2 Thess. 2:10.

Their punishment is "suffering the penalty of eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His strength." The relative *οὕτως*, quippe qui, "those that," refers back to the two classes named in verse 8 and indicates the reason for their punishment. "Destruction" is not annihilation but separation from Christ forever. In the opinion of this writer, the text taken in its context may also well indicate, though it does not insist on, a more positive perdition, particularly in view of the closing words, "and from the glory of His power," thus: The perdition comes from the presence of the Lord by means of His almighty power which is shown in glory. Thus *ἀπὸ* is rendered in the sense of "from the source." The Lord is the conveyor of destruction.⁴² Milligan asserts "that since the words are borrowed from Isaiah 2:10,19,21 *ἀπὸ* is best understood neither temporally nor causally but locally in the sense of separation from the face of the Lord."⁴³ Lightfoot also considers this interpretation "grammatically more probable."⁴⁴ Frame permits the causal sense and the meaning "from the source," but prefers to take *ἀπὸ* in the simple sense of separation.⁴⁵

This is indeed a powerful and striking warning against the sin of unbelief, meant not only to show the Thessalonians that their eventual release shall come, but also that they themselves should beware of the same sin. Suffering, in the experience of the parish pastor, sometimes

⁴²Verse 10 fits well to this exegesis.

⁴³Milligan, op. cit., p. 91. Cp. also Rom. 9:3, 2 Cor. 11:3.

⁴⁴Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 103.

⁴⁵Frame, op. cit., p. 235.

turns the Christian away from his Lord instead of accomplishing its purpose. It is therefore most important to remember and study the Thessalonian situation and these striking words of the apostle to safeguard against possible fall in the face of affliction.

But even more powerful and striking is the warning expressed in the second chapter of the second letter in connection with the destruction of the *ἀνομοί*, verse 8. There, those who received not "the love of the truth" will be damned together with the *ἀνομοί*, verses 10-12. As Frame so aptly states,

the phrase *ἐγὼ ἀγάπησεν ἐπὶ ἀληθείας*, suggests that God had sent them the divine power to create in them a love for the truth of God, and that they had refused to welcome the heavenly visitor.⁴⁶

The sense is: "They had no desire for the truth, but hardened themselves against it." They wanted nothing to do with the Christian truth. This becomes a particularly fatal fault when it is remembered why this truth was offered to them, as to all men, namely, that they might be saved. Eternal salvation was the purpose and goal, but the attainment of this goal was a matter of indifference to them.

This warning becomes even more forceful when we realize that the antichrist is sent as a retribution upon indifference. Not only is he evil himself, but his very evil is used to punish those who refuse to receive the truth. The coming of the antichrist is for the doomed, and *ἀντὶ ὧν*, is their own fault. *ἀντὶ ὧν* is used frequently in the Septuagint but elsewhere in the New Testament only in Luke. It always means "because" except for Luke 12:3 where it means "wherefore."

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 270.

And, because the doomed did not accept the love of truth γ^c
 $\lambda \gamma \nu \epsilon \iota \alpha$ God sends them (is to send)⁴⁷ strong delusions, or as
 Luther very expressively translates, "kraeftige Irrtuemer."⁴⁸ Literally
 the meaning is, he sends them a power of efficaciousness of error.
 Error is already extant, but at the time of the antichrist error will
 arise in power and activity. Not only will it come, but God will send
 it. $\delta \nu \epsilon \iota \sigma$ is placed emphatically. It is God who sends the
 delusion though it seems as though the $\alpha \nu \theta \rho \omega \pi \circ \varsigma$ is responsible for
 it. He punishes evil with evil, deliberate and persistent rejection
 of the truth with strong delusions. He does this in order that those
 who do not believe the truth will believe lies, the direct opposite to
 truth. This is God's terrifying judgment⁴⁹ upon unbelief.

This forceful and penetrating warning to the Thessalonians and to
 all men reminds one of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus,

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world,
 and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were
 evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither
 cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.⁵⁰

Here is the antecedent and consequent will of God. God is in
 supreme control of the world, accomplishing justice even through the
 works of evil. He wishes to save all men, but when His salvation is

⁴⁷ $\pi \epsilon \mu \nu \tau \epsilon \iota$ not $\pi \tau \epsilon \mu \nu \epsilon \iota$. The present tense is used as in
 verse 9 in accordance with the ordinary language of prophecy. See
 Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 118; and Frame, op. cit., p. 271.

⁴⁸ Verses 11 and 12.

⁴⁹ $\kappa \alpha \tau \alpha \nu \omega \pi \tau \iota \nu$.

⁵⁰ John 3:19-20.

rejected God sends the *ζυεργαία* . *πλάνης* whose function it is, as a servant of the divine purpose, to prepare the way for final judgment by first deluding the minds of the doomed into believing the falsehood of the *ἔνομος*.⁵¹ Sin is punished by sin and is followed by judgment.

A more devastating description and warning could hardly be found, a warning which must have given pause to those of St. Paul's readers who were permitting themselves to be "shaken in mind," to be "faint-hearted," and to doubt the truth they had learned. It should also give pause to those in modern times who resist the gracious work of the Holy Spirit and show no interest in the Gospel.

Even more so, it should give pause to those Christians who have become infected with what one might call the American religion--the religion of tolerance--which has made such tremendous and insidious inroads on the thinking of American Christians. It is the spirit which is willing to tolerate what it considers minor defections from the truth or the spirit which decries the position that there is only one truth. It is the spirit which permits Christians to grow lax in their adherence to the whole truth and then to any part of it. It is the spirit which allows church bodies to make common cause with heterodoxy and to effect unity under the guise of ecumenicity. At the same time it is also the spirit which fosters separatism in the name of orthodoxy. It is the spirit of compromise which abhors the pointed repugnance of the New Testament writers to error. It is the spirit which must inevitably lead

⁵¹Frame, op. cit., p. 272.

to destruction if it is not checked. For indifference to the truth must lead to rejection of the truth, which in turn suffers the terrible consequence of believing the lie. This purpose of St. Paul's eschatological proclamation dare not be minimized.

But a final purpose, which St. Paul holds forth so clearly and beautifully, is the purpose of all creation, and particularly the purpose of the children of God, the glory of Jesus Christ and the glory of the believer in Him.

The glory of our Lord Jesus was the aim of the Father in the entire dispensation of the Gospel, as St. Paul brings out so clearly in Philip-
pians⁵² and is therefore the governing object of the apostle's prayer
and work.⁵³ To glorify the name of Lord Jesus is to exalt Him to the

height of His character and attributes, or more definitely to show that
Jesus is Lord, giving Him τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὀνομα.

In the Parusia His redeemed people will supply the best reason for call-

ing Jesus "Lord."⁵⁴ The general description of the ground of Christ's

advent to glory in verse 10, ἐν τοῖς ἀγίοις αὐτοῦ ἐν πάνσιν

τοῖς πιστεύουσιν is now translated into the specific and consoling

ἐν ὑμῖν .⁵⁵ The Thessalonian Church and therefore all believers

will supply δόξα καὶ χαρά to the Lord Jesus Himself so that

all who see Him will praise Him, on seeing His completed work "in you."

⁵²Phil. 2:9-11.

⁵³Phil. 1:20.

⁵⁴Cp. 1 Pet. 1:7; Rev. 1:5; 1:9ff.

⁵⁵Cp. 1 Pet. 1:14ff.

And more, the glory accruing to the name of Jesus in the Thessalonians will shine in their own character, now that they are "presented perfect" in Him, so that His highest glory carries their glory with it. This is not merely a "being glorified with Him" as in 2 Tim. 2:11ff., but "in Him," implying the intrinsic union of Christ and His own as set forth by St. Paul so beautifully in Corinthians under the figure of the Body and its members,⁵⁶ a union which is brought to its wonderful consummation in the Parusia.⁵⁷

The whole expression reminds one of the prophets who comfort their persecuted people and the remnant of Israel with the anticipation "that the name of the Lord shall be glorified and He shall appear to your joy."⁵⁸ That the *δόξα κυρίου* is to be manifested to the whole world in Israel's redemption from her oppressors was the grand consolation of exilic prophecy.

All this is in accordance with the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, that the glorification of Christ and Christians in each other should come about. That Christ should find His glory in men, and share His glory with them, is the greatest conceivable favor, *ἡ ἀγαθία*, a favor on God's part since "He gave up His own Son" for this end.⁵⁹ In His grace our Lord prayed to the Father's grace for His disciples

⁵⁶Cp. 1 Cor. 12:12-27.

⁵⁷Cp. Rev. 11:7 and the figure of the marriage of the Lamb.

⁵⁸Cp. Is. 66:5; 49:3; Ezek. 28:22. Cp. especially Ezek. 39:21.

⁵⁹Cp. Rom. 4:24f.; 8:32; John 3:16.

"that they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."⁵⁹

To pray so was the highest possible mark of love that Jesus could give to His children.

The point of the passage is, in the words of W. Neil,

That Jesus will be seen to be all that His Name implies--Messiah and Lord. The climax of God's purpose will be reached when at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The Thessalonians' example of Christian behavior will be a testimonial to the Lord on His Day. Men will marvel the more at the power and holiness of One who is able to effect such a change in His followers To be known as Christ's men at His coming will be to share in the honors paid to Him--just as He is held in higher honor because of them.⁶⁰

And all this is due to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace flows through Jesus from God in other passages, but here "both the Father and the Son are regarded as the fountain of love and favor which makes possible the mutual glorification referred to in the previous words."⁶¹

Thus the doctrine of last things in St. Paul's letters is found to be a doctrine of beauty and glory, of comfort and consolation, of judgment upon the unbeliever but of inexhaustible hope for the believer. Above all it upholds and emphasizes the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in Whom, by Whom, and through Whom His Redeemed are themselves glorified.

⁵⁹Cp. John 17:23f.

⁶⁰William Neil, The Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1950), p. 154.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 154. See also Milligan, op. cit., p. 94.

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