

**THE RECEPTION HISTORY OF 2 THESSALONIANS  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JOHN CHRYSOSTOM,  
HAIMO OF AUXERRE, AND JOHN CALVIN**

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## Abstract

Taking up the concept of reception history/*Rezeptionsästhetik*, as described by its founder, Hans Robert Jauss, this project considers the way in which diverse contexts shape the ways in which readers of 2 Thessalonians have historically interpreted the epistle. Supplementing Jauss' methodology with insights from theological scholars, the larger questions of biblical meaning and continuity between biblical interpreters enters the discussion. In the former case, this research discounts the bifurcated directions of historical positivism that equates biblical meaning either with historical background or authorial intent. Related to this, the research proposes the continuity between historical interpreters of 2 Thessalonians be construed in terms of historical dialogue, which constitutes the being of the work.

Three historical interpreters of 2 Thessalonians from different historical periods of the Church serve as the receptive foci in this dissertation: John Chrysostom (early Church), Haimo of Auxerre (Medieval Church), and John Calvin (Reformation). Following Jauss' *Rezeptionsästhetik*, these interpreters are placed in their compositional contexts and in dialogue with modern interpreters of the same epistle. By passing through the various dimensions of the letter's otherness, the research brings to the fore potential present appropriations of meaning.

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## Abbreviations

<b>ANF</b>	The Ante-Nicene Fathers
<b>CCSL</b>	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
<b>CO</b>	John Calvin, <i>Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia</i> , ed. Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, Eduardus Reuss. 59 vols. Corpus Reformatorum vols. 29-87. Brunswick: C. A. Schwetschke et filium, 1863-1900.
<b>CR</b>	Corpus Reformatorum
<b>CSEL</b>	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
<b>FC</b>	The Fathers of the Church
<b>FCT</b>	John Chrysostom. <i>Interpretatio omnium epistolarum Paulinarum</i> . Edited by Frederick Field. Vol. 5. Bibliotheca Patrum Ecclesiae Catholicae. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1852.
<b>LCL</b>	Loeb Classical Library
<b>LW</b>	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American edition
<b>NPNF<sup>1</sup></b>	The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1
<b>NPNF<sup>2</sup></b>	The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2
<b>PG</b>	Patrologia graeca
<b>PL</b>	Patrologia latina

\*For further abbreviations, please consult *The SBL Handbook of Style*.



## Introduction

The primary thrust of this research is twofold. First, it seeks to outline the levels of continuity between pre-modern and modern interpreters of 2 Thessalonians. The respective methodologies and results of pre-modern and modern biblical scholars often appear so vastly divergent, that it is questionable whether one can argue that their works reflect any continuity rather than a dramatic break.

Furthermore, modern biblical commentators often perpetuate a sense of discontinuity with and superiority to pre-modern commentators, even if only implicitly in their lack of interaction with their forebears and their insistence on engaging with only the latest biblical scholarship. I propose that both a more holistic conception of history and a reconsideration of the assumed evolutionary advancement of knowledge<sup>1</sup> will lead to a comprehensive, more dynamic sense of understanding that illuminates continuity between interpretive eras, challenges biblical scholars to expand their understanding, and reads Scripture from an appropriate vantage. The current, dominant structure that has militated against such an approach might be termed historical positivism,<sup>2</sup> which manifests particularly in biblical studies as “historicism.”<sup>3</sup>

Second, this project explores the location of biblical meaning, looking particularly at the variety of meanings drawn out in the history of interpreting

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<sup>1</sup> Described by Gadamer as “law of progress.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel C. Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 3rd ed. (New York: Continuum, 2004), 253.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti, *Theory and History of Literature* 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 8 and 20–21.

<sup>3</sup> Following Paddison’s definition. Angus Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics and 1 Thessalonians*, SNTSMS 133 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18–20; see also Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 46–48.

2 Thessalonians, meanings attained through different hermeneutical paradigms. The broader ramifications of such a project lie, 1.) in its ability to expand the questions and concerns that readers bring to Scripture beyond those of historical positivism and; 2.) its reorientation of biblical studies toward the “subject matter”<sup>4</sup> of Scripture. Such a dedication to this “subject matter” should indicate the pursuit of this project from a Christian perspective.

Accomplishing the above-mentioned proposals demands the cessation of the historicist hermeneutical model and the advancement of a framework of understanding the history of a text, in this case 2 Thessalonians as an example, that is capable of putting these differing interpretations and methodological assumptions in dialogue. The system that presents a convincing and helpful challenge to historical-positivism and places the historical variety of biblical interpretations in dialogue, I contend, is the literary hermeneutical approach of *Rezeptionsästhetik* developed by Hans Robert Jauss.

More specifically, I propose that Jauss’ *Rezeptionsästhetik* and, more broadly, reception history offer an approach to biblical interpretation that can demonstrate continuity between interpretive eras through its more holistic understanding of history and meaning, which challenges a prevailing, limited concept of history within biblical studies as “what lies behind the text” and

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<sup>4</sup> From a canonical perspective, Seitz describes the subject matter as “the Triune God,” while Paddison speaks of it as God revealed in Jesus Christ. The points are complementary rather than exclusive. Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 18 and 25; Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 25–27. Both exhibit the influence of Barth, who saw Scripture’s subject matter as exerting “hermeneutical control.” Daniel Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 16; see also Morgan’s definition of *Sache* in *Sachkritik*. Robert Morgan, “*Sachkritik* in Reception History,” *JSNT* 33, no. 2 (2010): 177.

singularising notion of meaning often formulated as “authorial intention.”<sup>5</sup> The aim of this research is not simply to record a history of interpretation of 2 Thessalonians, but to explore how particular actualisations, or concretisations, of the epistle have shaped the history of interpretation, so that the old continues to speak through the new,<sup>6</sup> and how the interpreters from various time periods provoke the presuppositions and reveal a distinct historical perspective of the text from those of modern readers.

*Rezeptionsästhetik* functions as a summons to remain open to the content and claims of the text, to perceive the questions that the text and interpretations open for later generations, and to recognise the reader’s productive role in establishing meaning. These aims are a sharpening of the proposals mentioned above. As the hermeneutical framework of this dissertation, *Rezeptionsästhetik* receives more detailed attention later.

Though the bulk of this research concentrates on the interpretation of 2 Thessalonians during discrete historical occasions, it would be insufficient to explore these actualisations without first articulating several critical issues and a methodology that propel this research. Additionally, the scope of this dissertation requires a *selection* of pre-modern and modern representatives. Therefore, I have chosen scholars from general periods of church history—John Chrysostom, Haimo of Auxerre, and John Calvin—to demonstrate *a* perspective from their era, and to situate them in the exegetical contexts in which they arose through dialogue with contemporaries. The selection of these

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 6–9; 41; see a similar critique in Markus Bockmuehl, “A Commentator’s Approach to the ‘Effective History’ of Philippians,” *JSNT* 18, no. 69 (1995): 57.

<sup>6</sup> Jauss reverses this formulation for a particular emphasis about the history of a text, but it serves our point for the present. Hans Robert Jauss, “Tradition, Innovation, and Aesthetic Experience,” *The Journal for Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46, no. 3 (1988): 375.

three readers of 2 Thessalonians has to do with their place in its history as “epochal” interpreters. That is, they have exerted significant influence in the reception history of 2 Thessalonians. We will describe the concept of “epochal” moments in literary history more fully under the discussion of *Rezeptionsästhetik*.

Further to this selection of pre-modern interpreters, I have extended the dialogue to modern biblical scholars in order to draw out various (dis)continuities and the expansion of the conversation in different directions. Bearing these points in mind, the research plan proceeds in the chapters as follows:

The first chapter concentrates on background issues that generate a perspective of discontinuity between pre-modern and modern biblical scholarship by looking at guiding presuppositions and principles of historical positivism in biblical studies. This includes an exploration of the notions of historical objectivity, history, meaning, and revelation. After addressing these critical and seemingly disparate issues, I describe *Rezeptionsästhetik*/Jaussian reception history, modified by insights from theological scholarship, as a combined model for exploring the historical receptions of a text and as a model that rigorously challenges any understanding (i.e. presuppositions and actualisations) of a text, with the expected, positive outcome of expanding one’s horizon of understanding. In so doing, *Rezeptionsästhetik* will illuminate the continuity between the historical eras of biblical interpretation and bring to the fore exegetical conclusions reached in the history of interpreting 2 Thessalonians.

The remaining three chapters (excluding the conclusion) engage with pre-modern exegetes in a pattern that attempts to reveal the “aesthetic value”<sup>7</sup> of their readings in their “horizon of expectation”<sup>8</sup> through dialogue with their contemporaries. As mentioned above, these chapters will also include interaction with modern scholars in order to maximise the “horizontal expansion” as it relates to understanding. The chapters progress as follows:

Chapter three introduces John Chrysostom; the primary example of patristic interpretation of 2 Thessalonians. In this chapter, we explore a number of his interpretive assumptions (e.g. biblical inspiration and canon) as well as his exegetical decisions in both his homilies on 2 Thessalonians and other texts in which he incorporates the epistle.

Haimo of Auxerre represents a medieval voice in chapter four. His brief commentary on the epistle became a standard interpretation in the generations that followed, and his ability to blend patristic thought with his own insights make his work what Jauss would call an “epochal” moment in the history of 2 Thessalonians. The combination of the fact that few modern biblical scholars are familiar with his work and his perspective as a monk at the height of the Carolingian era who asks historically-shaped questions of this biblical book provides a provocative engagement with modern horizons of expectations as they relate to 2 Thessalonians.

The final chapter of this dissertation examines the work of the Swiss Reformer, John Calvin, on 2 Thessalonians. This includes a discussion on his

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<sup>7</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 25.

<sup>8</sup> This is the crux of Jauss’ third and fourth theses (discussed below) and much of his methodology. Ibid., 25–32; Hans Robert Jauss, *Question and Answer: Forms of Dialogic Understanding*, trans. Michael Hays, *Theory and History of Literature* 68 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 224–26; David Paul Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Princeton: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 148–52.

*historically-effected*<sup>9</sup> reading of the epistle, as well as an exploration into how Calvin interprets 2 Thessalonians in *The Institutes*, his commentary on the letter, and other theological works.

Following this chapter, I offer concluding remarks on the importance of reception history for biblical studies and the insights that the respective scholars bring to the interpretation of 2 Thessalonians specifically and Scripture more generally. I suggest that a theologically-modified reception history both challenges the dominant, historicist model of exegesis as the *primary* means of arriving at biblical meaning and that this form of reception history offers a more advantageous hermeneutical model. It does not reject classical historical research methods, but ably incorporates them within its paradigm.

Before proceeding on the topic of reception history, we must address two preliminary questions. First, why 2 Thessalonians? There are four parts to the answer. Most notably, the size of the epistle enables us to examine the reception history of the entire letter and therefore to construct a fuller picture of the paradigm within which it is understood. Secondly, 2 Thess 2:1-12 has a rich history of interpretation, and therefore offers an excellent case study for our hermeneutical model. Thirdly, and related to the previous point, the very nature of apocalyptic literature results in a referential openness that allows for ongoing appropriation and reinterpretation.<sup>10</sup> Lastly, the apocalyptic

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<sup>9</sup> “*Wirkungsgeschichtlich*”—Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 267–74; for the appropriate retranslation as “historically effected,” see Anthony C. Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: The Collected Works and New Essays of Anthony Thiselton* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 291–92.

<sup>10</sup> Taking Antichrist as his sample figure, Hughes speaks of him as “a symbol that ‘gives rise to thought’ along several different vectors, and his meaning is not exhausted in any one interpretation.” Kevin L. Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 6–7.



eschatology of 2 Thessalonians appropriately orients attention toward the “subject matter” of Scripture and the world that the Scriptures project,<sup>11</sup> rather than concentrating solely on what lies behind the text. This becomes particularly clear in the work of the pre-modern scholars.

The second question has to do with the dubious nature of 2 Thessalonians’ authorship. This challenge does not affect *Rezeptionsästhetik*, per se, though it certainly engenders issues with divine speech, meaning, and authority. Engaging with the weighty arguments of Wrede and Trilling<sup>12</sup> against the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians detracts from the overall aim of this project. This author accepts the Pauline authorship of the epistle primarily on the grounds of the early Church’s overwhelmingly negative view and *reception* of pseudonymous literature.<sup>13</sup> The debate over this issue is for another place and time.

We turn first to consider preliminary critical issues of biblical interpretation that contribute to the false notion of an insurmountable division between pre-modern and modern biblical scholarship. This will proceed into the methodology (i.e. *Rezeptionsästhetik*) of the dissertation that reflects a different perspective of the distinctions between these historical eras of scholarship and proffer a constructive way forward.

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<sup>11</sup> I.e. the eschatological consummation of history in Jesus Christ. J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 11 and 20.

<sup>12</sup> These two scholars offer the most substantial cases against the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians. This is not to deny other significant figures in this debate, such as Schmidt, Kern, Holtzmann, Baur, Masson, and Marxsen.

<sup>13</sup> For significant defenses of this position, see Armin D. Baum, *Pseudepigraphie und literarische Fälschung im frühen Christentum: mit ausgewählten Quellentexten samt deutscher Übersetzung*, WUNT 2:138 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Terry L. Wilder, *Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception: An Inquiry into Intention and Reception* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004).

# Chapter 1: Modern Biblical Studies and *Rezeptionsästhetik*

## 1. The Dis/continuity of Pre-Modern and Modern Biblical Scholarship

Though the distinctions between pre-modern and modern biblical scholarship materialise most immediately in the exegetical conclusions of the interpreters, these conclusions are the results of the presuppositions<sup>1</sup> and frameworks of understanding under which the scholars operate. They may announce these assumptions explicitly, or they may only appear implicitly in the structure and content of their interpretation. It is in these presuppositions and frameworks that the critical issues lay. Therefore, we will examine the key presuppositions that perpetuate not only a sense of discontinuity between pre-modern and modern biblical scholarship, but also a position that perceives modern interpretation as definitively superior. The primary modern assumption that will initiate and guide the discussion is the idea of objective interpretation. This topic and has been well-rehearsed in recent decades,<sup>2</sup> but we include it because it lays an important foundation for the other presuppositions that flow from this discussion: perspectives on history, meaning, and revelation.

### *I. Objectivity/Neutrality*

The push for objectivity/neutrality in biblical interpretation finds its roots in the Enlightenment. In the Medieval Church and society, knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> “Presuppositions” ought not to be taken pejoratively. Rather the usage here reflects Gadamer’s construal of the term, namely that presuppositions are the very elements that make understanding possible. This receives further clarification below.

<sup>2</sup> See particularly Francis Watson, *Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 3–14; Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 305–29. Critiques of the historical critical trajectory, however, already appear in the works of Stäudlin, Nietzsche, and Troeltsch. Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (London: Yale University Press, 1974), 167; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: E. W. Fritsch, 1874); Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922).

received its stability and foundation in the concept of the immutable ‘God,’ “which functioned as the highest truth to which all other truths referred as their ultimate guarantor. But from the time of the Enlightenment onward, ‘knowledge’ was redefined as what is knowable by the historical human subject through the exercise of observation and reason.”<sup>3</sup>

Contending for the sovereignty of reason, philosophers of the Enlightenment advocated a position of neutrality in philosophical inquiry that entailed setting aside all presuppositions in order to arrive at true, value-free understanding. Beginning with Descartes, this program advanced with increasing assurance of the priority of reason and an empirical approach to philosophy.<sup>4</sup> As the movement progressed, the philosophers discovered more biases to extirpate, including theological presuppositions (i.e. traditions) that tainted their empirically-derived conclusions. For Gadamer, the “global demand of the [E]nlightenment” that still plagues scholarship is not just setting aside biases, but the “overcoming of all prejudices.”<sup>5</sup>

Kant is a decisive figure in the transition between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, for he delineated between determinative (i.e. empirically-assessed) and reflective/aesthetic judgments. This latter category is a matter of

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<sup>3</sup> Bradley H. McLean, “The Crisis of Historicism: And the Problem of Historical Meaning in New Testament Studies,” *HeyJ* 53, no. 2 (2012): 225. The Radical Orthodoxy movement, though not dealing specifically with historicism in biblical studies, points beyond the Enlightenment to Duns Scotus (d. 1308) for the philosophical basis of this position in which epistemology is elevated above ontology, rather than placed alongside it. Catherine Pickstock, “Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance,” in *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009), 116–46.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that Descartes held theology in special regard and considered “revealed truths” to be beyond understanding and would not “submit them to the frailty of [his] reasoning.” René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1637), 5. Pickstock shows how this is truly (false) pious posturing that subordinates ontology to epistemology and results in the secularization of the “finite” realm; Catherine Pickstock, “Spatialization: The Middle of Modernity,” in *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009), 164–73. See also Harrisville’s introduction in Peter Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 8.

<sup>5</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 244.

taste, though Kant allows that they can make universal, communicable claims.<sup>6</sup> Aesthetic judgments govern morals, law, art, literature, theology, etc. and preferences therein, extending to the operative traditions in culture. By nature of his proposition, Kant establishes a divide between the humanities and sciences, advancing that the determinative judgments (i.e. of the sciences) are “knowledge.” This proves problematic for biblical scholars who want their work to be taken seriously as contributions to “knowledge.”<sup>7</sup>

Following on the Enlightenment, Romanticism took an (seemingly) inverse position toward tradition. Romantic philosophers saw the aesthetic judgments of tradition as formative of human behaviour and thus a “constitutive element of human life.”<sup>8</sup> It was able to do this by positing that tradition remained beyond the reach of rationality. Yet this maintained the Enlightenment’s antithesis between reason and tradition, rather than seeing the former as operative in the latter, and thereby rendered its vision of the elevated status of tradition as untenable.<sup>9</sup>

The transitional perspective between the Enlightenment and modern, historicist biblical studies materialised decisively in the work of the Romantic scholar Johann Gabler. He cleft a deep divide in theology, describing *dogmatic* theology as the rationalistic application of philosophy of divine things unique to a given age that is continually in flux and articulated by a theologian, while *biblical* theology, or biblical studies, is essentially the task of the historian, who must set aside convictions and whose vision pierces

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<sup>6</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 1.2.55-57. ed. Nicholas Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 165–69.

<sup>7</sup> Parris sees Schiller taking this division of judgment even further. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 70–72.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>9</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 281.

through “the thick gloom”<sup>10</sup> of theological encrustation on the text to perceive them at face value. Diverse interpretations of any biblical text in the history of the Church were methodologically problematic for Gabler, for the original author could not have intended to convey all of the meanings that the theologians of history had discerned. Biblical theology required streamlining and limiting the results of interpretation.

Accused by the Catholic Church that the Reformation would lead to interminable ecumenical fractures through diverse interpretations of Scripture, Luther (and perhaps Calvin more so) articulated a doctrine of *claritas Scripturae* that pointed toward a singular meaning of a text with the intention of limiting exegetical preponderances. Still experiencing the shockwaves of this instability, Gabler wanted to indicate “where firm truth could be found in a situation where all the old certainties seemed threatened”<sup>11</sup> by distinguishing between the truths of different eras (dogmatic theology) and the simple truth of religion (biblical theology). This entailed researching the historical context of biblical texts, but also isolating historical elements (i.e. elements of historical context that affected the biblical author) and extracting them so that the religious truth of the text could stand on its own.<sup>12</sup> Gabler sought a

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<sup>10</sup> John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, “J. P. Gabler and the Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality,” *SJT* 33, no. 2 (1980): 137. For a similar appraisal, see Frei, *The Eclipse*, 165–67.

<sup>11</sup> Sandys-Wunsch and Eldredge, “J. P. Gabler,” 144.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 145–46. Differently, Hengel locates the roots of “historical criticism” in Barthold Niebuhr (d. 1831). Perhaps this is because Gabler still sought “religious” meaning as the end of his enquiry. Martin Hengel, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years*, trans. Anna Maria Schwemer (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 322 n. 8. Gabler represents for us a *particular* turn on this path. McLean describes Leopold von Ranke (d. 1886), a historian proper, as the “father of historicism,” but this is entirely too late in the prioritisation of a particular understanding of history, particularly in biblical studies. Nevertheless, it represents an important turn in the development of the understanding of history that rejects transcendence, teleology, and the ability of philosophy to envisage meaning and value. McLean, “Crisis of Historicism,” 218; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 195–209. Again, I follow Paddison’s definition of “historicism” and take it as a hypernym under which the historical critical methodologies are subsumed. Following the work of Troeltsch,

“postconfessional mode of biblical discourse”<sup>13</sup> while “preserving Christian intellectual and religious forms”<sup>14</sup> at the same time. In this way, Gabler remains true to the distinctions of tradition and rationality of Romanticism that stem from Kant’s distinctions of types of judgment.

Affected by the rise of empiricism, those who followed Gabler did not pursue his course to the same end or with the same fervour.<sup>15</sup> Whereas Gabler and his ilk did not recognize history as an end in itself, but needed to be pragmatic,<sup>16</sup> modern biblical scholars frequently follow the course of historical research and conclude their task by producing “objective,” historical data. It is clear how the over-estimation of history in the latter matured from the former.

The advance of modernity, though critical of “rationality and natural law philosophy”<sup>17</sup> in the Enlightenment, likewise matured from its fruits. Marked by advances in the natural sciences, modernity rendered even biblical and theological scholarship in complete service to the empiricism of the natural sciences. The former became useful and scientific, whereas the latter was relegated to a secondary and inferior position. It was presumed that an empirical approach to biblical interpretation allowed the scholar to eject all biases and presuppositions so that the data of the text would reveal the true,

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Bambach identifies “historicism” with the German *Historismus*, a move with which I agree. Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 4. See also McLean, “Crisis of Historicism,” 221–23; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 198–99.

<sup>13</sup> Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Following Ollenburger, Adam remarks on the ironic nature of the biblical studies program that followed Gabler, who saw the historical approach as the only means of determining what was dispensable (i.e. the historical elements) in order to render pure Christian doctrine. A. K. M. Adam, *Faithful Interpretation: Reading the Bible in a Postmodern World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 27–28. Bultmann’s existentialist “demythologization” and the New Hermeneutic take up this program more appropriately.

<sup>16</sup> Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 239.

*historical meaning* of the text to the interpreter, who had cautiously attended the text with reason.

Though he qualifies it as “naïve,” Gadamer describes the task set out by Gabler and others as *historicism*, in which “we must set ourselves within the spirit of the age and think with its ideas and thoughts, not with our own, and thus advance towards historical objectivity.”<sup>18</sup> Objectivity is the first of two terms that give substance to the notion of historicism. The second term, “history,” receives attention further below.

Taking Gadamer’s point further, Daley sharply notes that “modern historical criticism... is *methodologically* atheistic, even if what it studies is some form or facet of religious belief, and even if it is practiced by believers.”<sup>19</sup> It is more appropriate, however, to speak of the program that has matured from Gabler as historical *criticisms*.<sup>20</sup> Though the historicism for which many modern biblical scholars advocate is not necessarily

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>19</sup> Brian F. Daley, “Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Some Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms,” in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), 72.

<sup>20</sup> Hengel championed this distinction in his article “Historische Methoden und Theologische Auslegung des Neuen Testaments” (1973), which has been recently republished in Martin Hengel, *Studien zum Urchristentum*, WUNT 234 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 99. See also Anthony C. Thiselton, “Canon, Community and Theological Construction,” in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al., The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 7 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 4. In order to avoid the appropriate critique of Hengel and Thiselton, we will henceforth refer to these collective methods under the designation “historicism,” as defined by Gadamer. Presuming to follow Hengel and critiquing “postmodern” biblical interpretation, Barr suggests: 1.) “historical-criticism” is better labelled as “biblical criticisms;” 2.) these criticisms are not “methods” because they do not furnish meaning, but only subject readers’ “meanings” to scrutiny and thus cohere with Gadamer’s program, and; 3.) no scholar who employs biblical criticism operates under the assumption that they offer “objective” interpretation or “absolute truth.” James Barr, *History and Ideology in the Old Testament: Biblical Studies at the End of a Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 32 and 45–47. The first point I accept. The second point, however, fails to consider the logical conclusion to which scholars carry these programs and the way that the methods must at least “suggest” a meaning through what they prioritise. Finally, the third point simply does not agree with Hengel’s own criticisms of specific scholars or the hermeneutical program proposed by Hirsch and followed by Vanhoozer, et al. See, for example Hengel, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch*, ix; Martin Hengel, *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle*, trans. Thomas Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 4.

antagonistically atheistic, the terminology aptly conveys the objectivity pursued in this model of biblical scholarship.

This atheistic agenda has persisted for generations, and though postmodernity has caused certain scholars in the field to question the inherited principles of modernity, historicism still dominates the work of many contemporary biblical scholars. In response to the growing interest in *Wirkungsgeschichte*, for example, Räisänen re-advances Gabler's "objectivity"<sup>21</sup> and modernism, arguing that "empirical historical and religious historical study"<sup>22</sup> is the priority of biblical interpretation that must precede a second, *optional*, theological stage of *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Scholars must eject theological biases so that they can master the biblical text and its pre-history, and then present scientifically verifiable results. Unlike many moderate biblical scholars, Räisänen is explicitly polemical and antagonistic toward those who hold to the exclusive claims of Christ in Scripture.<sup>23</sup>

Brevard Childs laments the ubiquity of this form of historicism, for it has led to a form of hermeneutics in which "biblical exegesis is an objective, descriptive enterprise, controlled solely by scientific criticism, to which the Christian theologian can at best add a few homiletical reflections for piety's

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<sup>21</sup> Heikki Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology*, vol. 2nd (London: SCM Press, 2000), 11–13.

<sup>22</sup> Heikki Räisänen, "The Effective 'History' of the Bible: A Challenge to Biblical Scholarship?," *SJT* 45 (1992): 309.

<sup>23</sup> Heikki Räisänen, "Biblical Critics in the Global Village," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 16–17. In a more recent work, Räisänen offers a *religionswissenschaftliche* approach to the rise of Christianity. The purpose of this project is to describe without having to accept, thus he avoids language of "inspiration" and "revelation." He labels this descriptive method as the objective "tool kit of the scholar," though he admits the complications of the term "objective." The problems with this project are as follows: 1.) Räisänen rehashes the false notion of empirical objectivity that *must* deny or bracket divine activity— adding a proviso does not render his "objectivity" more objective; 2.) it is not possible to merely "observe" the claims of early Christian faith— neutrality is a rejection of its claims, and; 3.) Räisänen reduces Christian claims to information. Thus the program terminates in itself and it has no socially formative capacity. Heikki Räisänen, *The Rise of Christian Beliefs: The Thought World of Early Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).



sake.”<sup>24</sup> Modernity’s quest for objectivity set the agenda and minimised the results of biblical interpretation by forgetting its primary attention to the subject matter of Scripture and the community to which it is addressed. The same general trend colours modern scholarship on 2 Thessalonians.

An emphatic objectivity drives an initial, gaping fissure between the hermeneutical foundations of biblical scholars of modernity and their interpretive forefathers. Reading and interpreting the Scriptures from the Church fathers through to the Reformers demanded an investment of faith in the texts, their authors (or, more appropriately to their context, the Divine author), the reason-shaping activity of the Holy Spirit, and an acceptance of certain ecclesial traditions that functioned as interpretive boundaries. Modernity’s advocacy for the superiority of objective, human reason led to a bracketing out of dogma and the “Spiritual” for the understanding of biblical texts.<sup>25</sup> Adhering to the objectivity of modernity ostensibly prohibits a perspective of continuity between modern and pre-modern exegetes.

Because *Rezeptionsästhetik* confronts such tendencies in biblical studies, a thorough critique of scholarly “neutrality” follows in the section articulating the hermeneutical method of Jauss. In the meantime, it is sufficient to bear in mind two points regarding reason and its perceived objectivity: 1.) “Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms, i.e. it is not its own master, but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates”<sup>26</sup>; and 2.) “the isolation of ‘biblical

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<sup>24</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus*, The Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1974), xiii. As we will see, this is a reality in stark contrast to the pre-modern scholars whom we engage.

<sup>25</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *History and Interpretation in New Testament Perspective*, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 9.

<sup>26</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 245.

exegesis' and 'biblical interpretation' from theology is itself arbitrary, reductive, and overshadowed by illusory notions of value-free inquiry. Non-theism or positivism is no more value-free than theism."<sup>27</sup>

The emphatic maintenance of "bias-free" exegesis propagated by historicism establishes the foundation of an interpretive paradigm that has several, logical repercussions for biblical studies. The branch that buds immediately from this foundation is a metaphysical construal of history that is central to historicist, biblical interpretation and has long-affected the trajectory of modern exegesis.

## **II. History**

The definition of history following Gabler relates to the circumstances surrounding the creation of a text. It means that a historicist commentator "looks to elements outside the work itself that were influential in its formation, on both the intention of the author and the literary conventions employed."<sup>28</sup> "History," as it relates to a biblical text, is a closed, or completed process;<sup>29</sup> a completion achieved in the reception of the first readers. "History" entails getting at the origins of a text— the elements that contributed to its formation, perceiving the mind of the author, and considering the intended effects for the original receptive community. This approach to history should be further characterised as "a privileging of metaphysical concepts of time, narrative, order, succession, continuity, and totality which derive from the single-point perspective of Cartesian and Kantian subjectivity and its corresponding

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<sup>27</sup> Thiselton, "Canon, Community and Theological Construction," 4. It is not only not value-free, but the person holding to objectivity "inevitably introduces subjective criteria concerning selection, perspective, and evaluation" into his/her supposedly objective work. Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 198.

<sup>28</sup> Ormond Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, Serie Teologia (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1997), 28.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, "Communicative Action and Promise in Interdisciplinary, Biblical, and Theological Hermeneutics," in *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 193; Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 54.

insistence on the values of objectivity, methodological clarity, and scientific truth.”<sup>30</sup> An objective reconstruction of “history” is the only way for the historicist to understand the meaning of the text.<sup>31</sup>

Compared with Räisänen, the theologically moderate James Dunn also tends toward historicism. He argues, “The NT is nothing if it is not first and foremost a series of documents written in the Greek of the first-century Mediterranean world” and that “The primary ‘text’ for us is the historical context”<sup>32</sup> of the NT documents. Admittedly, the *historical research* advocated by biblical historicists is *essential* and *beneficial* to biblical studies. Without historical-philological/lexical work, for example, scholars, ministers, and laypeople alike would have no access to the biblical texts, for they would not have resources for understanding the original languages and no one would have done the necessary groundwork of translating the original languages of Scripture. Responsible hermeneutics<sup>33</sup> cannot altogether dismiss historical research because ignoring the historical, cultural, and linguistic distance between the text and ourselves is naïve and can lead to misunderstandings and misappropriations.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, a historical approach to biblical studies provides necessary discipline in exegesis by delineating certain interpretive

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<sup>30</sup> Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis*, 11.

<sup>31</sup> See Paddison, who enlists Barr as an ally. Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 18–19.

<sup>32</sup> James D. G. Dunn, “Historical Text as Historical Text: Some Basic Hermeneutical Reflections in Relation to the New Testament,” in *Words Remembered Texts Renewed: Essays in Honour of J. F. A. Sawyer*, ed. J. Davies, G. Harvey, and W. G. E. Watson, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 195 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 346 and 353, respectively.

<sup>33</sup> By “responsible hermeneutics,” we have in mind a program of biblical interpretation that is fundamentally attentive to the “subject matter” of Scripture and its intended receptive community. Historical research must serve the former and guide the latter. Such a program must engage an ecclesial context where it may challenge and be challenged.

<sup>34</sup> David Paul Parris, *Reading the Bible with Giants* (London: Paternoster, 2006), xi.

boundaries<sup>35</sup> that prevent readers from projecting ideas back into the text.<sup>36</sup> An example will aid in illuminating this point.

In the second thanksgiving of 2 Thessalonians, Paul describes God's election of the Thessalonians "εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος" (2:13). The language of πνεῦμα elsewhere in the Pauline corpus (e.g. Rom. 8:9-11, 8:21-23; 1 Cor. 2:6-16, 12:3-11; 2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Gal. 4:6, 6:8; 1 Thess. 1:5, 4:1-10, 5:19, 5:23; cf. 1 Cor. 2:12) helpfully directs us to understand this, differently from his earlier use of the phrase (2:2), as a reference to the Holy Spirit. The anarthrous state of πνεύματος does not undermine this perspective, because, as a genitive noun following an anarthrous head noun (ἁγιασμῷ), it coheres with Apollonius' Corollary, which contends "in genitive phrases both the head noun and the genitive noun normally have or lack the article."<sup>37</sup> Substantive constructions of this type are typically definite, especially when the head noun is the object of a preposition,<sup>38</sup> as is the case with ἐν ἁγιασμῷ. Furthermore, the only parallel use of ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος in the NT appears in 1 Pet 1:2, which articulates a "trinitarian" formulation of the unified works of God the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ. All of this directs one to understand εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος (2 Thess 2:13) as a reference to the Holy Spirit, rather than as a generic allusion to some unifying human spirit, perhaps as in Hegel, or the "spirit" of the individual.<sup>39</sup> Attentive lexical-

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<sup>35</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 52.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 44.

<sup>37</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 239.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>39</sup> On the more ambiguous uses of "spirit" in Paul, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit: In Biblical Teaching, Through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming 2012), ch. 5.

historical work limits the interpretive trajectory of πνεύματος (2 Thess 2:13).<sup>40</sup> In terms of meaning, “we may doubt,” however, “whether historical exegesis, essential as it is, can do full justice to the potential of a single text. Much less can it give us clear directions about the meaning of the whole.”<sup>41</sup> This is a challenge to a hermeneutical method that overestimates the value of “history” in the terms of historicism.

From the more conservative end of the theological perspective, we find a strikingly similar understanding of history. In what has become a standard seminary textbook on biblical hermeneutics in the United States, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, Grant Osborne advises the biblical interpreter to begin their exegetical work by first situating a text in its historical context.<sup>42</sup> Carson echoes this and likewise suggests that the responsibility of the interpreter lies in “bridging the cultural gap from the original situation to our own day.”<sup>43</sup> This entails setting aside biases and then excluding nearly two thousand years of biblical interpretation in order to access the “closed” history of the text. Osborne even enlists the support of Gadamer in this regard, arguing that this is the fusion of horizons described by the philosopher.

This exhibits a profound misunderstanding of Gadamer’s work, and especially *Wirkungsgeschichte*. “The gulf between the ancient text and contemporary life cannot be bridged by an exclusively historical elucidation of the Bible” and Osborne appears to have fallen victim to the notion “that good

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<sup>40</sup> To this point Thiselton importantly adds, “[the] reason for historical enquiry arises from the task of determining the *life-word in relation to which the text draws its currency*.” Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 559.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Morgan and John Barton, *Biblical Interpretation*, Oxford Bible Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 411.

<sup>42</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> D. A. Carson, “Approaching the Bible,” ed. D. A. Carson et al., *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 15–16.

hermeneutics is mainly a matter of ‘fusing two horizons,’ the ancient and the modern: the two thousand years in between are of little interest.”<sup>44</sup> As with Räisänen and Dunn, Osborne et al. reduce historical truth and meaning to a commodity and apparently operate under the metaphysics of historicism that believes

‘history’ exists as an independent fact apart from the perception of the historian. In other words, [they] relate to their subject matter epistemologically in terms of a subject/object dichotomy. The New Testament scholar *qua* historian is construed as the single point of reference of an objective, rational, self-present *cogito*, distinct from, and outside the historical field being investigated.<sup>45</sup>

Gadamer’s approach to textual meaning is closer to a road through history than a bridge over it. He never suggests disregarding the history between the origination of a text and the modern context, nor the immediate ejection of traditions/pre-judgments, but rather only the scrutiny of them. Osborne is closer to Gabler and Räisänen in his understanding of history than he is to Gadamer. It is for the reasons above that Möller appeals to the scholarly community to renew the historical critical methodologies.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, Karl Barth avers that historical critical work is justified and necessary, but he complains that (then) recent commentators “stop at an interpretation of a text, which I cannot call an interpretation, but merely the first, primitive attempt at one.”<sup>47</sup> By this he means that the historical critical

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<sup>44</sup> Bockmuehl, “A Commentator’s Approach,” 57–58.

<sup>45</sup> McLean, “Crisis of Historicism,” 222.

<sup>46</sup> Möller lists three reasons for maintaining the historical critical methods, similar to those above: 1.) a denial of history fails to “account for the historically real,” e.g. we did not invent Hebrew or Greek; 2.) ethically, we have to allow for the text’s otherness; and 3.) knowledge of the past can critique present ideologies/voices of domination. See Möller in Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, eds., *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, The Scripture and Hermeneutic Series 1 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 163–65.

<sup>47</sup> “Aber nicht die historische Kritik mache ich ihnen zum Vorwurf... sondern ihr Stehenbleiben bei einer Erklärung des Textes, die ich keine Erklärung nennen kann, sondern nur den ersten primitiven Versuch einer solchen.” Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1933), x.

work is only preliminary, and not the complete task of biblical interpretation. This dissertation, therefore, does not object to the essential, historical research of responsible hermeneutics. Rather, the objections are to: 1.) the degradation of biblical studies to *historicism*. Due to the homogenous approach to history across the theological spectrum, it is clear that historicism/historical positivism is the larger problem and not historical criticism, per se; 2.) The limited *definition/scope of history* imposed upon biblical texts by historicism, and; 3.) making historical research the *first foray* into and the epistemological foundation of biblical studies. Inevitably intertwined with a hermeneutical method that operates under these objectionable propositions is a perception of biblical meaning with similar restrictions.

### ***III. Meaning***

For Gabler, the meaning of biblical texts rests in “what the holy writers felt about divine matters.”<sup>48</sup> This loaded phrase hints at what will unfold in the remainder of Gabler’s address namely that biblical meaning is 1.) singular and; 2.) the intention of the author. Stendahl refines the teaching of Gabler in his advocacy for a distinction between “what it [the biblical text] meant” and “what it means.”<sup>49</sup> The former of these distinctions becomes the task of the biblical theologian, while the latter is the responsibility of the systematician. Despite the plethora of critiques brought in recent years, Stendahl’s division is understandable, for it attempts to allow biblical texts to remain historically other while at the same time providing them room to speak presently, but these tasks are essentially competitive for Stendahl.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Sandys-Wunsch and Eldredge, “J. P. Gabler,” 137.

<sup>49</sup> Krister Stendahl, “Biblical Theology, Contemporary,” in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki*, ed. Heikki Räisänen (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 72–73.

<sup>50</sup> “Biblical Theology, Contemporary” in *Ibid.*, 78.

A bifurcation of meaning is not just the program of Stendahl, but manifests in the work of biblical scholars of all theological allegiances, who reach similar conclusions, though operating under different principles. From the school of (Bultmannian) existentialist theology, Ernst Fuchs follows Rudolph Bultmann in advocating preliminary historical work<sup>51</sup> that discovers the original meaning of biblical texts through the process of “demythologization.”<sup>52</sup> In the second step of this program, the interpreter seeks to understand *the* existential truth<sup>53</sup> that lies behind the text. Historically contextual elements that do not aid in this task are discarded as irrelevant to present meaning. The extracted existential truths are then pronounced in the speech-event (*Sprachereignis*) in the present to “*aid in the understanding of present experience.*”<sup>54</sup>

The main difficulty with Fuchs and the “New Hermeneutic” is its inability to accept anything that lies outside the realm of human experience (perhaps the apex of self-centred objectivity), which includes the bodily resurrection of Christ, and renders everything as the product of human language.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, producing existential truths for extraction does not

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<sup>51</sup> Thiselton rightly criticizes Fuchs and others of the New Hermeneutic for not emphasizing enough the historical work necessary for responsible hermeneutics. Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics*, 481–88.

<sup>52</sup> See Fuchs in John B. Cobb Jr., *The New Hermeneutic*, ed. James N. Robinson, vol. 2, *New Frontiers in Theology* (London: Harper and Row, 1964), 116–17.

<sup>53</sup> Elsewhere, Thiselton furthers his critique of the New hermeneutic for its over-emphasis on experience and existentialism that causes its proponents to ignore the directedness of certain biblical texts. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 190–95.

<sup>54</sup> Gerhard Ebeling, “The Word of God and Hermeneutics,” in *The New Hermeneutic*, ed. James N. Robinson and John B. Cobb Jr., vol. 2, *New Frontiers in Theology* (London: Harper and Row, 1964), 109.

<sup>55</sup> Bonhoeffer proleptically critiques the New Hermeneutic as an ontological approach incapable of accommodating revelation (i.e. God in Jesus Christ), which he conceives of as the only possible means of entering truth. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, trans. Hans-Richard Reuter, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 2* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 72–78 and 88–91; Thiselton further critiques them for reducing the resurrection to a linguistic event over against an event of objective history. Can it not be both? Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 193. He follows Pannenberg who sees the New Hermeneutic as offering a dualism of fact and value.



appear to be the historical focus of any of the biblical texts. In this case “meaning must be a thing that can be subtracted from the work. And if this meaning, as the very heart of the work, can be lifted out of the text, the work is then used up.”<sup>56</sup> Though Fuchs would not venture in this direction, for he certainly asserts the importance of Scripture as creating a place of meeting, Iser’s comment above discloses the danger of Fuchs’ method. It *can* ultimately dispense with the need to preserve the Bible once existential truths are extracted and it fractures the relationship between historical and present meaning. Fuchs’ first stage is decidedly historicist, while the second stage, though presuming the historicist results, remains largely independent of it.<sup>57</sup>

From the other end of the theological spectrum, Kevin Vanhoozer wrestles with issues brought to the fore by Ricoeur and Derrida, and engages critically with E. D. Hirsch, the preferred hermeneutical authority for many conservative scholars. Vanhoozer ultimately determines that the biblical scholar’s task remains one of understanding and distinguishing between meaning (i.e. what it meant) and its significance (i.e. what it means).<sup>58</sup> He contends “the text and its meaning remain independent of the process of interpretation and hence have the ability to transform the reader.”<sup>59</sup> Yet this

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Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The Revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth,” in *Theology as History*, ed. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb Jr., vol. 3, New Frontiers in Theology (London: Harper & Row, 1967), 126.

<sup>56</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 4.

<sup>57</sup> Ebeling, the other main proponent of the New Hermeneutic, argues that this “application to the present case is nevertheless not something entirely independent” of historical exposition, but the fulfilment of it. If the Scriptures were entirely devoted to existential truths, this would certainly be the case. Their overemphasis on existentialism, however, restricts the potential historical meaning of biblical texts to pre-determined parameters and denies the place of historical meaning for the present community. See Cobb Jr., *The New Hermeneutic*, 2:108–9.

<sup>58</sup> A program advocated by Hirsch, though reworked by Vanhoozer. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 259–65.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 467. Helpfully, Vanhoozer locates communication of truth in God. Yet this becomes complicated when he shifts from an emphasis on a historically discrete text by an

only raises further questions as to whether text and meaning can be simultaneously independent *and* sufficient to transform readers without the concept of address, and whether meaning, even historical meaning, if not somehow embodied and participatory, can be transformative.

The task set out in Vanhoozer's work becomes the pursuit of how the ancient author *would have applied* the texts were he alive today. His model of exegesis locates the *singular meaning* of the text in the distant past. Yet "the historically situated New Testament documents *themselves* in fact give no encouragement whatever to the idea that a quest for history 'behind' the texts promises access to their 'real' meaning and significance."<sup>60</sup>

Additionally, Vanhoozer's historicism amounts to an advocacy for the Christian to work out the *significance* (as opposed to *meaning*) of the historical results for the present and *apply* it to their lives by means of analogy. In essence, God spoke or revealed himself in some way in the past, the biblical authors captured this event, and Christians must apply the significance of that singular, textually frozen meaning.<sup>61</sup> The hermeneutical issue with divine speech has to do with our understanding of how God's voice is heard in Scripture— is it *directly*, through historical excavation, or is it *mediated* through the text and by those who came before us?

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individual author to the concept of canon and the divine author. D. Christopher Spinks, *The Bible and the Crisis of Meaning: Debates on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (T&T Clark, 2007), 92.

<sup>60</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 46–47. Emphasis original.

<sup>61</sup> At this convergence of history and meaning, Adam adds the sharp critique that historical criticism lacks the capacity, for example, to defend against heresy or to assert the divinity of Christ— only Chalcedonian Christianity can do that. Historicist methods have no access to theological claims. Adam, *Faithful Interpretation*, 37–55; similarly, Paddison criticises Donfried's historical approach to the theology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, observing that it is insufficient to draw conclusions about the situation of the original recipients of the letters in purely functional terms and then to attempt to draw analogies between that scenario and the present. Theology has to do, primarily, with the subject matter of the text. It is at this locus that the ancient and the modern meet. Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 34–37.

Added to these problems, the model is inadvertently anthropocentric.<sup>62</sup> The Christian reader must master the text through historical knowledge and self-application. This domination over biblical texts that historicism advances largely forgets “to make significant sense of them— or to understand *why they were written or how they survived*.”<sup>63</sup> Bockmuehl suggests, “At least for those communities who still feel that the Bible has something to say to them, to isolate the ancient meaning is not enough— even supposing such a thing could be done.”<sup>64</sup> Watson follows this point by reminding his readers to consider more seriously the biblical texts’ “role as holy scripture”<sup>65</sup> as opposed to simply historical documents, locating the purpose of Scripture in the context of communal worship and as the primary means of divine communication. This is not a dismissal of historical research or questions, but rather learning “how to bring historical thinking into the recovering of our own questions”<sup>66</sup>— i.e. perceiving how the Scriptures were answers to historical questions so as to make old questions comprehensible and therefore our own.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, it is not clear that a *strict division* between what a text meant and significance is possible. For historical “facts,” notably authorial intent,

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<sup>62</sup> Pannenberg makes a similar claim about historical criticism and its exclusion of “all transcendent reality.” Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, ed. George H. Kehm, trans. Paul J. Achtemeier, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 39–50. We can extend this to neo-Hirschianism in its implicit relegation of “transcendent reality” (i.e. divine speech) to events in the past.

<sup>63</sup> Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word*, 46. Emphasis added.

<sup>64</sup> Bockmuehl, “A Commentator’s Approach,” 58.

<sup>65</sup> Watson, *Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective*, 4.

<sup>66</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Reflections on My Philosophical Career,” in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, by Lewis Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), 8.

<sup>67</sup> Both Fuchs’ and Vanhoozer’s methods share what Stuhlmacher describes as the first functional characteristic (and difficulty) of historical-criticism: it detaches from “the present the historical phenomena which it examines, and despite all tradition and the history of their effects, describes them at a historical distance.” Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism*, 62.

only take on meaning in the context and process of *present* interpretation.<sup>68</sup>

Following this Hirschian model in restricting meaning

to a largely *semantic* notion of meaning or only to more straightforward models of inter-personal communication only postpones the problem. It does not help to use the term ‘significance’ as a catch-all for more complex and more context-relative examples as if these functioned only as subjective connotations, all of the same kind. What meaning *is*, as Wittgenstein observes, depends on the language-game from within which meaning-currency is drawn.<sup>69</sup>

For a faith tradition rooted in an expectant eschatological outlook, it is notably ironic that so much effort lies in excavating behind the text rather than looking forward at what the text has projected and continues to project in the Christian community in terms of meaning.<sup>70</sup> Historicist interpreters must bear in mind, first of all, that “the literal sense [of a text] is not merely the semantic or linguistic level of meaning alone, but an actualisation of the text for each successive generation of the community of faith based on the linguistic meaning in its canonical context,”<sup>71</sup> and, secondly, that “the notion that scripture has only one meaning is a fantastic idea and is certainly not advocated by the biblical writers themselves.”<sup>72</sup>

I am admittedly sympathetic to two operative concerns in Vanhoozer’s work that compel him and other conservative scholars to rely on Hirsch. Namely, the “historical” extremes of 1.) “liberal” theology, which takes the facticity of history behind biblical texts, especially the gospels, to be different

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<sup>68</sup> Ellis, *History and Interpretation*, 9; for a similar point, see Hengel, *Studien zum Urchristentum*, 100 (thesis 2.2.3); Parris adds to this critique that discerning authorial intention reduces understanding “to a subjective process that takes place between the creative mind of the author and reproductive mind of the interpreter. This stands in distinction to the meaning of the text that is objective and historically fixed.” Parris, *Reception Theory*, 171. Emphasis added.

<sup>69</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 13. Emphasis original.

<sup>70</sup> Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 24–25 and 52–54.

<sup>71</sup> Thiselton, “Canon, Community and Theological Construction,” 7.

<sup>72</sup> David C. Steinmetz, “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis,” in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl, Blackwell Readings in Modern Theology (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 31.

than what the biblical authors wrote about certain events, and; 2.) the “limitless play” that makes biblical meaning purely subjective in postmodern/socio-pragmatic hermeneutics. I am not convinced, however, that returning to a historicist hermeneutic offers a viable solution.

Again, this discussion of meaning only raises critical issues with historicist programs, which will receive fuller attention in the description of *Rezeptionsästhetik* as a model for biblical interpretation. It is sufficient to bring these issues to the foreground to see the ramifications for biblical construal of meaning, the concept of Holy Scripture, and the notion of ongoing Divine address and revelation through Scripture.

#### ***IV. Revelation***

Though Gabler advises a historically objective interpretive enterprise, it does not prevent him from likewise maintaining the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as a reality that Scripture affirms. Likewise, modern, conservative biblical scholars would not deny this revelatory event, nor would pre-modern interpreters. The difference between modern and pre-modern interpreters emerges, however, in their construals of revelation.

The implications of history and meaning in the historicist paradigm result in an interpretation of revelation as a historical occurrence. For this reason, Vanhoozer’s hermeneutical model first severs the ties between the past and present by locating the revelation in the past, and then attempts to reattach the severed parts by applying the significance of the historical meaning to the present situation apart from revelation. The twofold problem with this model is 1.) that it is not clear that such an immediate leap from the past to present application is possible without greater attention to the subject matter of

Scripture and a clearer delineation of authority<sup>73</sup> and; 2.) it fails to consider God's freedom in relation to the text in revelatory terms.

The primary issue for the present community of believers with this understanding of revelation is that it confirms that God acted and spoke several thousand years ago, but it is not clear that this is still the case. The concept of analogically "applying" truths resulting from past revelation makes it *entirely* the rational work of the believer, who has been abandoned to history by God.

Alternatively to Vanhoozer, Morgan proposes an understanding of revelation that has not been forcefully interlocked with historicism in which "revelation 'happens,' if at all, at the *present moment* of disclosure, when the foundational event becomes alive for a believer."<sup>74</sup> This is not a contention that the crucifixion and resurrection must recur indefinitely as long as people place their faith in God, but the advancement of a more dynamic and ongoing understanding of revelation. Barth removes the domination of human reason over revelation by arguing that revelation remains the unconditioned *decision of the Divine*.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Is authority located in the "objective" history as reconstructed event, or Scripture's subject matter, or both? This issue comes sharply to the fore in Wanamaker's commentary on 2 Thessalonians, in which he follows Vanhoozer's model of theological interpretation. The limited knowledge of the historical situation surrounding the epistle restricts, for Wanamaker, its theological import. Greater attention to the text's subject matter, notably its eschatological directedness in Christ, however, overcomes this basic difficulty. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 155–60.

<sup>74</sup> Morgan and Barton, *Biblical Interpretation*, 405.

<sup>75</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Thomas F. Torrance, and A. T. Mackay, trans. T. H. L. Parker, vol. 1.1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 133. Bonhoeffer locates the problem with the historicist approach to revelation in determining the relationship between the *being* of God in historical revelation and the mental *act* of comprehending the revelation by the interpreter. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 27–28. For Bonhoeffer's understanding of God as "Personality" that accounts for this being, see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Concerning the Christian Idea of God," *Journal of Religion* 12, no. 2 (1932): 180–81. Pannenberg concentrates specifically on the problem of revelation and history, arguing that history *is* the revelation of God (if only indirectly), so that comprehension of historical

The above discussion has served only to raise questions about the results of the historicist hermeneutics of biblical studies they relate to the central place of revelation in Christian faith and theology.<sup>76</sup> Namely, it does not realistically allow for continued revelation, and thereby restricts God's freedom to act and speak. Biblical studies, therefore, requires a way forward that sets aside historicism, can renew "historical" (in a fuller sense) research, considers the function and purpose of the Scriptures, and calls for an interpreter to scrutinise their own understanding of a text critically.

I contend that Jauss' *Rezeptionsästhetik*,<sup>77</sup> in part, provides a way forward that is able to accomplish the above goals. The foundations of this literary theory lay in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Gadamer, and for this reason a review of *Wirkungsgeschichte* will receive attention first, followed by Jauss' modifications of Gadamer.<sup>78</sup> In order to fit appropriately in the discussion of NT studies and because of *Rezeptionsästhetik*'s inherent openness to other disciplines, it receives helpful modifications from theologians, such as Thiselton, Parris, and Rush. *Rezeptionsästhetik* will provide the essential hermeneutical framework that encourages *scholarly responsibility* to acknowledge the continuity of the history of interpretation and its openness to the future, in order to prevent the regression to historicism.

## **2. Rezeptionsästhetik: A Hermeneutical Paradigm for Biblical Studies**

The historical developments that led to *Rezeptionsästhetik* could be enumerated endlessly. For the purposes of my work, however, it is sufficient

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revelation always and only remains partial, and it must be with reference to its *telos*. Delimiting the revelation of God to the past, as Osborne and Vanhoozer do, fails to do justice to his revelatory process in history and the eschaton. Wolfhart Pannenberg, ed., *Revelation as History* (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1968), 15–17, 131.

<sup>76</sup> Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 20–25.

<sup>77</sup> From this point, the terms *Rezeptionsästhetik* and "reception history" will be used interchangeably, though with the view to the type of "reception history" envisioned by Jauss.

<sup>78</sup> For a dynamic and insightful combination of Gadamer and Jauss for a hermeneutical model, see Parris, *Reception Theory*.

to begin with the more immediate impulse in *Wirkungsgeschichte* developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer. Jauss follows a number of Gadamer's principles regarding preconceptions/prejudices, tradition, history, horizons, understanding, and meaning, incorporating them into his literary history. Exploring these points of agreement first will later illuminate how Jauss incorporates, modifies, and distances himself from Gadamer.

### ***I. Gadamer and Wirkungsgeschichte***

As a work that employs the hermeneutical methodology of Jauss, it does not presume to do justice to the totality of Gadamer's thought. This section has a description of key concepts in Gadamer as they relate to Jauss as its aim. Two primary elements that Jauss takes over from Gadamer are the related ideas of preconceptions and tradition.

#### *i. Preconceptions, Traditions, and Horizons*

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer proceeds with the thesis that the *Geisteswissenschaften*<sup>79</sup> have their own logic and need to break decisively from their reliance on the methodology of the natural sciences—a reliance inherited from modernity and based upon the “neutrality” agenda set by the Enlightenment.<sup>80</sup> All understanding, Gadamer argues, proceeds from and is only made possible by “preconceptions” (*Vorurteile*; often translated “prejudices”). Put differently, this means that “objective” understanding is not possible in the sense advocated by the Enlightenment. Gadamer does not use *Vorurteile* here in a negative sense. By *Vorurteile* he means all of those factors (e.g. experience, grasp of language, construal of meaning, etc.) that people bring to a situation (e.g. a text) that make understanding possible. He argues,

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<sup>79</sup> A difficult term to translate into English, because American and British universities do not have “sciences of the spirit.” The closest approximate equivalent is “humanities,” though this also includes certain areas of the social sciences.

<sup>80</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 5–10.



“The prejudices [*Vorurteile*] of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.”<sup>81</sup>

Warnke summarises Gadamer’s construal of understanding through a play on *Vor-* terminology: “[b]efore I begin consciously to interpret a text or grasp the meaning of an object, I have already placed it within a certain context (*Vorhabe*), approached it from a certain perspective (*Vorsicht*), and conceived of it in a certain way (*Vorgriff*).”<sup>82</sup> A term that subsumes all of these concepts and avoids the negative associations in English with “prejudice” (*Vorurteil*) is the term “horizon” employed by both Gadamer and Jauss.

Turning to the pervasiveness of Enlightenment reasoning in Western thought, Gadamer contends, “the overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the [E]nlightenment, *will prove to be itself a prejudice*.”<sup>83</sup> He extends this critique to the historicism in biblical studies, which unreflectively shares the Enlightenment preconceptions relating to objectivity and reason. Gadamer concludes, therefore, that preconception-less understanding simply is not possible.

Instead, Gadamer proposes that openness to the meaning of the “other” (i.e. the text) is a superior starting-point for hermeneutics.<sup>84</sup> Here, the alterity

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 245. Outside of quotations, I prefer the term “preconception” as a translation of *Vorurteil*. Thiselton uses “pre-judgments,” but I feel that this can communicate a sense of active judgment prior to engagement with the “other.” Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 321. For the precursorial influence of Heidegger on this topic in Gadamer, see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Edward Robinson and John MacQuarrie (London: HarperCollins, 1962), 191.

<sup>82</sup> Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 77. This summary follows the usage of these terms by Gadamer and Heidegger. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 188–95.

<sup>83</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 244. Emphasis added.

<sup>84</sup> Vanhoozer would follow Gadamer on this point claiming that readerly domination over the text amounts to “interpretive rape.” Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 162. Käsemann, however, would accuse Vanhoozer of this very crime for leaping immediately into the historical background rather than beginning with simply listening to the text. Ernst

of the text does not have primarily or exclusively to do with its historical-cultural distance, but rather with the reality that the text does not originate in the reader. Gadamer finds an ally in Ricoeur in this regard, who contends that “distanciation,” recognising the otherness of the text, is the key to understanding.<sup>85</sup> This process does not involve neutrality, per se, or eliminating oneself from the interpretive equation, “but the conscious assimilation of one’s own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is *to be aware of one’s own bias*, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings.”<sup>86</sup> For Gadamer, this means that the preconceptions one brings to a text have the final word in terms of meaning, but that these preconceptions can be negotiated in dialogue with the text. One must surrender their preconceptions to the scrutiny of the “other” to see whether they stand, or require modification or rejection. It follows, then, that certain preconceptions are productive of knowledge and appropriate for understanding Scripture.<sup>87</sup>

A fitting conclusion for Gadamer’s view of preconceptions and objectivity is that “objectivity in interpretation consists not in the avoidance of the preconception but its confirmation; and arbitrary, inappropriate preconceptions are characterised not by the fact that they are preconceptions but only by the fact that they do not work out.”<sup>88</sup>

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Käsemann, “Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalyptik,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 59 (1963): 258–59 n. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 144.

<sup>86</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 238. Emphasis added.

<sup>87</sup> Ormond Rush makes a similar case for the justified and appropriate prejudice of the Catholic faith that yields fuller access to medieval literature. The absence of Catholic faith does not inhibit the aesthetic experience in reading, but it certainly enriches it. Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 17.

<sup>88</sup> Joel C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics* (London: Yale University Press, 1985), 166.

Having argued positively thus far for the place of preconceptions, Gadamer proposes that the larger network of our preconceptions, which he terms “tradition,” are likewise formative of knowledge, constitute being, and are appropriate to understanding.<sup>89</sup> He imputes authority to traditions because they are based on the recognition of their superiority that has been tested and sustained by/within history. This does not exempt a tradition from scrutiny, but illuminates its justification outside of reason *because it determines our institutions and attitudes prior to the application of reason*. Reason is operative within tradition.<sup>90</sup> The question for the reader/interpreter when they approach the “other” lies in whether the traditions that shape them are appropriate for understanding the “other” and whether they can accommodate its demands. Even biblical-historicists have tradition-shaped minds that lead them to ask particular questions and take note of particular elements of a biblical text. Vattimo confirms, “Things appear to us in the world only because we are in their midst and always already oriented toward seeking a specific meaning in them. In other words, we possess a preunderstanding that makes us interested subjects rather than neutral screens for an objective overview.”<sup>91</sup>

As with “preconceptions,” a “horizon” of understanding encapsulates the formative traditions that a person brings in the encounter with the other. Following Gadamer, Jauss describes a horizon of understanding “as [a]

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<sup>89</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980), 305–6.

<sup>90</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 246–49.

<sup>91</sup> Gianni Vattimo, “The Age of Interpretation,” in *The Future of Religion*, ed. Santiago Zabala (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 44.

historical<sup>92</sup> marker and, at the same time, the necessary condition for the possibility of experiential knowledge— [that] constitutes all structures of meaning related to human action and primary modes of comprehending the world.”<sup>93</sup> The benefit of the concept of “horizon” is that, even though they limit our understanding,<sup>94</sup> they can also expand to accommodate “room for what is new”<sup>95</sup> in the engagement with another horizon. Additionally, it avoids the negative associations of the term “prejudice” as well as those that certain Protestants may have with language of “tradition.”

## ii. History

The notion of “traditions” or their network as “horizons” indicates the importance that history, both as historical existence and the role of history as the transmission medium of horizons. Therefore, even reason is a historically-constituted element of understanding and knowledge that does not exist in an objective, ahistorical sense. Having a sturdier foundation in history over against the illusion of objectivity, readers of Scripture can again advocate time-tested, ecclesial traditions of reading as appropriate when they cohere with the *subject matter*<sup>96</sup> of and the *reasons why communities preserved* the Scriptures in the first place. Jauss lends his support in a broader sense by commenting, “[N]o text has ever been written so that philologists could read and interpret it philologically, or so that historians could do so historically.”<sup>97</sup> Bockmuehl specifies this notion by arguing that “nonecclesial and

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<sup>92</sup> It is “historical” insofar as it indicates the givenness of a person’s historical existence.

<sup>93</sup> Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 197.

<sup>94</sup> This is simply due to “our finitude and historical thrownness.” Parris, *Reception Theory*, 98. On “thrownness,” see the discussion below in this section.

<sup>95</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 45.

<sup>96</sup> This coherence with subject matter is precisely how Gadamer, following Aristotle, defines “truth”— coherence with subject matter. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “What Is Truth?,” in *Hermeneutics and Truth*, ed. Brice Wachterhauser (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994), 36–37; Parris, *Reception Theory*, 98.

<sup>97</sup> Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 219.

nontheological interpretation [of the NT] is from the start handicapped and ill-suited to the evident *intention* of the New Testament itself— and thus necessarily to the orientation of its *implied readers*.”<sup>98</sup>

The concept of implied readers receives attention more fully under the discussion of *Rezeptionsästhetik* as it relates to Wolfgang Iser. For now, it is significant to note that this restoration of otherness and the legitimacy of tradition shift the power of judgment to the text (esp. Scripture) over the reader and not vice-versa, which is the case in historicism.

Gadamer proceeds to argue that reason, though perceived of as objective in certain circles, “exists for us only in concrete, historical terms, i.e. it is not its own master, but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates.”<sup>99</sup> That is to say, “reason” is historically conditioned and not an atemporal, autonomous principle as is held in post-Enlightenment epistemology. This re-grounding of reason in history, as well as tradition and prejudices, promotes the place of history in the thought of both Gadamer and Jauss. The two abandon the narrow “history” of historicism, though, and Gadamer proposes a perspective of history in the broader sense of an ongoing process. Interpreters of Scripture find themselves in this process and cannot step outside of it as historicism naïvely proposes.

[H]istory does not belong to us, but we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live... The self-awareness of the individual is only a flicker in the closed circuits of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word*, 113. Emphasis added.

<sup>99</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 245.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

This perspective of “belonging” to history reflects Gadamer’s indebtedness to Heidegger, for it assumes human existence in terms of its “thrownness” (*Geworfenheit*)<sup>101</sup> into history—that which does not originate in the person, but in which they already find themselves participating.

In addition to the philosophical foundation, Grondin locates the “subterranean roots of Gadamer’s thought”<sup>102</sup> regarding history in his experience of the end of the First World War at the beginning of adulthood. Due to the pervasive sense in Germany that “unbridled science as pure technology”<sup>103</sup> led to the war, it is easy to appreciate Gadamer’s skepticism toward the natural sciences in his hermeneutics. Skepticism toward scientific progress and the outworking of the Enlightenment only sharpened after the Second World War, leading shortly to the critique of objectivity and mastery over history. For Gadamer, the cultural-intellectual ethos leading into the two World Wars exhibited the apex of unreflective subjectivity guided by the course of history, and the effects of the past on the present heightened his awareness of the control of history over the individual, rather than vice-versa.<sup>104</sup> This perspective of history was only accentuated by his being stricken with polio in 1922 and the resulting hyper-inflation following the First World War.

In taking such a position of history, Gadamer advances the primary importance of history in understanding. Human existence, in terms of

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<sup>101</sup> Heidegger describes “thrownness” as the veiled “whence” and “whither” of *Dasein* (“being there”; existence) in the world. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 174; Thiselton offers this concise definition: “the givenness of our ‘world’ is seen as the ‘thrown-ness’ or ‘facticity’ of our ‘existence’ and our being born into a situation which is not of our making or thinking. This constitutes the particularity of our being.” Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 279.

<sup>102</sup> Jean Grondin, *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography*, trans. Joel C. Weinsheimer, Yale Studies in Hermeneutics (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 57.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 56–57. For a broader scope of the factors leading to his perspective on history, see 53–70.

“thrownness” into history, leads Gadamer to advocate history as the alternative to method, because it already assumes the givenness of an interpreter’s situation and the truths communicated by that situation.<sup>105</sup> Attempting to set oneself outside of history and prejudice for the purpose of objectivity, therefore, is impossible. One does not have immediate access to being (in the sense of *existentiell*), but only to an interpretation of being (in the sense of “existential”) into which they are already thrown.<sup>106</sup> Removing the Enlightenment’s prejudice against prejudice enables interpreters to recognise the historical shape of their reason as well as their place within history as finite (i.e. historical) beings.<sup>107</sup> Thus, human rationality is not outside of, but rather participates in the transcendence of history.<sup>108</sup>

History, in the sense of an ongoing process, is a positive dimension in Gadamer’s thought. Along with Jauss, Gadamer prefers to speak of the “historic” as *geschichtlich* rather than in the limited sense of “historical” (*historisch*) that marks historicism. It is for this reason that Gadamer is able to challenge the historicist’s need to overcome the historical gap between themselves and the text under scrutiny by dismissing their own context and, in the case of biblical historicism, the thousands of years and miles that separate them from the original authors. Alternatively, for Gadamer,

Time is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged, because it separates, but it is actually the supportive ground of process in which the present is rooted. Hence temporal distance is not something that must be overcome... In fact the important thing is to recognise the distance in time as a positive and productive possibility of understanding. It is not a yawning abyss, but is filled with the continuity of customs and

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<sup>105</sup> Weinsheimer, *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics*, 2.

<sup>106</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 20–22.

<sup>107</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 244.

<sup>108</sup> Jens Zimmerman, *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 181.

traditions, in the light of which all that is handed down presents itself to us.<sup>109</sup>

The belief that a reader of Scripture can completely bracket their historically-shaped understanding from their reading in order to think with the thoughts, customs, and traditions of the first century Mediterranean world, for example, is not only naïve, it is also impossible. All historical reconstruction occurs in the reader's historical horizon, which has been shaped by the process of history. Gadamer terms this being shaped, or effected, by one's situatedness in history (i.e. "traditions") and particularly the effect of a text through history on the process of understanding as *Wirkungsgeschichte*.<sup>110</sup>

### iii. *Meaning*

As a concept relating to biblical interpretation, *Wirkungsgeschichte* solidifies the relationship between history (in the sense of *geschichtlich*) and meaning. Gadamer focuses his discussion of history on the history of effects of a text, that is the life it has in generations that follow its production. Meaning, therefore, cannot be delimited exclusively to authorial intent, but must go beyond the author and take place in the course of history as readers continue to engage with the text.<sup>111</sup> Arrival at meaning, i.e. "understanding," does not simply entail reproducing the author's intent, nor is this reproduction entirely possible. Understanding also necessitates a productive attitude in which the reader brings their historically-shaped horizon to the text and engages with it. For Gadamer, the reader must not impose their horizon on the text, but must bring questions to the text and, in turn, be questioned by the

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<sup>109</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 264–65.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 298–304; Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 307.

<sup>111</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 264. Knight speaks of this as the "indivisible fusion of meaning" that rejects the distinction of what a text means and what it meant. Mark Knight, "Wirkungsgeschichte, Reception History, Reception Theory," *JSNT* 33, no. 2 (2010): 143.



text.<sup>112</sup> “In Gadamer’s language, we renounce the manipulative ‘control’ epitomised by the ‘scientific method,’ and allow ourselves to enter unpredicted avenues into which mutual listening and genuine conversation leads.”<sup>113</sup> He is not advocating that any interpretation is equally legitimate, or that any question is valid.<sup>114</sup>

The place of question and answer in Gadamer does not materialise out of nowhere. Collingwood first reasserted the significance of the dialogue of question and answer as the proper understanding of history.<sup>115</sup> He perceived the practice of “history” as a science to be guided by the questions that the historian puts to history, and from which he/she receives an answer. The questions of each generation continue to drive the engine of historical dialogue.<sup>116</sup> Waismann, another predecessor of Gadamer, takes this point further:

We begin to realize that not every question can find an answer within the world of thought which gave it birth, that it is sometimes necessary for something quite fresh to happen, for man to pass to a new course of thought before the way to its solution can be opened up. Or, more truly, that a change in the intellectual subsoil robs the old question of its meaning so that it must first be replaced by a new one. Thus many a problem of today is *heir* to the one of yesterday.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 51–53.

<sup>113</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self*, Current Issues in Theology (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 13.

<sup>114</sup> Rush addresses these two concerns together by noting that the new understanding of a text “in light of the present question, is the meaning applicable in the present. Such meanings are not unlimited, since the question of the text is always constantly addressed back at the reader. It may happen that a particular readerly question does not bring forth a meaningful answer from the text. This may indicate that the question is not a legitimate one.” Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 122. At the same time, Gadamer does not offer a robust approach for determining when misinterpretation has taken place.

<sup>115</sup> Gadamer seems unaware of Bakhtin’s work in this regard. Likewise, Jauss’ early work displays ignorance of Bakhtin, but he eventually engages with Bakhtin when he dedicates a work specifically to the topic of dialogue. Because Jauss interacts directly with Bakhtin, he will receive attention later.

<sup>116</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 269–74.

<sup>117</sup> F. Waismann, *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1965), 413. Emphasis original.

Such language of “question” and “answer” discloses the crucial role for “dialogue” in Gadamer’s vision of “meaning” or “truth.”<sup>118</sup> For “dialogue,” Gadamer relies on Collingwood and Waismann, but he also importantly engages the dialectics of Hegel<sup>119</sup> with a view of “experience” as dialectical in nature. In this sense of “experience,” Gadamer envisions the encounter with the other, particularly the text or work of art. Construed in terms of the hermeneutical circle,<sup>120</sup> this has to do with the movement away from the horizon of the self to the other and back again. In the encounter with the other, “I”<sup>121</sup> am defamiliarised with a horizon not my own and “I” submit my preconceptions to the scrutinising horizon of the other. “I” understand the other as an answer to questions. In so doing, the other becomes familiar to the “I,” and as the “I” returns reflectively to itself, “it cancels out the otherness of the other.”<sup>122</sup> Put slightly differently, the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader meet and *understanding* occurs in the process of their fusion when the reader is changed by the experience. Therefore, meaning, the result of this fusion, is “eventful” in nature, rather than static.

This notion of experiential understanding that continually seeks expansion Gadamer terms *Bildung*.<sup>123</sup> It is understanding that has not reached a fixed point. The very nature of this transformation in dialogue with texts should cultivate a quality of openness in readers to new experiences and a realisation of historical finitude<sup>124</sup> that limits the breadth of our

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<sup>118</sup> Gadamer, “What Is Truth?,” 42–44.

<sup>119</sup> Platonic dialogue as well is significant to Gadamer, but tangential to our discussion. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 355–61; Gadamer, “What Is Truth?,” 42.

<sup>120</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 267–72.

<sup>121</sup> In total, “I” am a “historically effected consciousness” (i.e. a person shaped by their particular historical givenness, not a blank slate). *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>122</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 23.

<sup>123</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 8–16.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxii.

understanding.<sup>125</sup> This differs critically from Hegel on at least two points: 1.) Hegel's dialectic sees absolute knowledge, the point at which nothing is other to the self and "experience" reaches its conclusion, as the goal of this process. 2.) This pursuit of absolute knowledge treats the other as a "thing" to be mastered, a means to an end, rather than as an "other" who truly addresses me.<sup>126</sup> In Gadamer's eyes, this reduction of the "other" to "thing" comes about through the imposition of a methodology (e.g. historicism).<sup>127</sup>

Based on these insights, Gadamer contends that texts generate questions that the author may not have intended and that they may provide answers to questions that are only realised in later generations because of their location in a historical context. "The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and who he originally wrote for. It is certainly not identical with them, for it is always partly determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history."<sup>128</sup>

One cannot overstress the significance of this point for the Church. Without an approach to Scripture that bears in mind Gadamer's insights and discards a singularising emphasis on authorial intent and a closed concept of history, the Church *must* renounce vast swathes of formative doctrine.

The doctrine of the Trinity is a demonstrative case of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (as well as *Rezeptionsästhetik*). During the ecclesial debates of the 4th century C. E. the Church faced questions as to how it could

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<sup>125</sup> For this description of dialogue, see *Ibid.*, 360–62.

<sup>126</sup> Hegel uses language of "demanding" from the other and describes the positions of the self-conscious "I" and the "other" as "lordship" (*Herrschaft*) and "servitude" (*Knechtschaft*), respectively. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1988), 127–35.

<sup>127</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 24.

<sup>128</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 263.

affirm its worship of a single God, while holding to the Sonship of Jesus as well as the ministry and personhood of the Holy Spirit. The questions did not generate in the atemporal ether, but arose out of engagement with the Scriptures and the contemporary thought-world. Texts such as Gen 1, Prov 8,<sup>129</sup> Matt 28:19, John 1, 1 Cor 12:3-7,<sup>130</sup> 2 Cor 13:14, Col 1:15-20 all open larger questions relating to the nature and being of God. These questions and their answers are part of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the respective texts, as well as the biblical canon as a whole.

The fact that historic (*geschichtlich*) dialogue with texts continue to produce fresh meaning indicate that “true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process.”<sup>131</sup> Jauss essentially follows Gadamer in this respect, contending that meaning is not an “atemporal, basic element which is always already given; rather, it is the never-completed result of a process of progressive and enriching interpretation, which concretises—in an ever new and different manner—the textually immanent potential for meaning in the change of horizons of historical life-worlds.”<sup>132</sup>

This concept of a horizon is essential to both Gadamer and Jauss. Gadamer describes it in terms of the collective *expectations*<sup>133</sup> generated by reader’s background that they bring to the text. As described above, understanding happens when the horizon of the “other” enlarges the reader’s

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<sup>129</sup> The exegesis of Prov 8:22 particularly in the first four centuries of the Church is phenomenal, especially given the relative lack of engagement with it by the NT authors. Nevertheless, it was a foundational text for understanding the pre-existence and co-creative work of Jesus as part of the Godhead. Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 37, 46, and 122; Seitz, *Character*, 100 and 109.

<sup>130</sup> For treatment on this particular text in relation to reception history and the doctrine of the Trinity, see Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics*, 293.

<sup>131</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 265.

<sup>132</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, “The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval Literature,” *New Literary History* 10, no. 2 (1979): 183.

<sup>133</sup> Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 221.

horizon in a process Gadamer calls the “fusion of the horizons.”<sup>134</sup> The reader’s horizon expands, or “shifts,” to incorporate the insights given by the “other.” *Wirkungsgeschichte*, as a reflective endeavour, looks at the history of these shifts and the horizons of expectations with which readers historically approached, in our case, biblical texts. Additionally, it construes meaning in a historically holistic sense that takes into consideration the broad range of effects that have resulted from horizontal interaction with the text.

Gadamer supplements this dialogical understanding of meaning and truth with the concept of *Spiel* (“play” or “game”) that he takes over from Heidegger.<sup>135</sup> In opposition to Nietzsche particularly, but also the methodological control of the sciences, Heidegger suggests that existence and truth realized therein are characterised by “play.” Though we find ourselves “thrown” into existence (as *Dasein*), we construct a philosophical world of what is “essential” (particularly “truth”). In the flow of life, we proffer reasons for everything. This reasoning, however, does not lead toward absolute knowledge, but rather is countered by the withdrawal, or suspension, of the epistemological foundations of being. “Play” is the movement between reasoning and withdrawal. The same notion follows for truth, which Heidegger suggests entails both disclosure and concealment. This concealment is not negative, but the reality of being finite (i.e. we cannot know the total Being of another person or thing) and that truths pose further challenges or

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<sup>134</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 337.

<sup>135</sup> Heidegger speaks particularly of “being” (*Sein*) as bringing about the “temporal play-space” (*Zeit-Spiel-Raum*) in which beings interact. Martin Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1971), 130, 143, and 146. Gadamer follows Heidegger’s use of play against Schiller (i.e. the abstracted “free play” in the experience of art) and Nietzsche (i.e. meaningless play in an absurd world applied to tradition and history). Louis P. Blond, *Heidegger and Nietzsche: Overcoming Metaphysics*, Continuum Studies in Continental Philosophy (London: Continuum, 2010), 99–102; Parris, *Reception Theory*, 70–76.

questions. Truth for Heidegger, therefore, is constituted by the *thrownness* of *Dasein*.<sup>136</sup>

Gadamer takes up much of Heidegger's thought on "play" as a metaphor for being, though with a positive vision of tradition's role in making the "playful event of understanding possible," and he applies "play" to the experience of art, including texts. Though he does not envision "play" as teleological,<sup>137</sup> he asserts that the one who participates in the "play" loses his/herself in the "play," not by examining it objectively, but by becoming involved in it. Rendering the "play" an object for examination, as in a critical methodology, is to drop out of "play."

In terms of art, the experience of the work of art both involves and transforms the one participating in it. The work of art projects a world and the subject brings "a nexus of presuppositions and aims which determine what he does."<sup>138</sup> Truth arises through the transformation of the person who experiences the work of art in the world that it projects. Gadamer avoids subjectivity by noting that the work of art transcends the consciousness of the

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<sup>136</sup> See note 100 above. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 261; Parris, *Reception Theory*, 80. Watts also describes the relationship of "uncovering" and "concealment" of truth with Gadamer's metaphors of "world" and "earth." Michael Watts, *The Philosophy of Heidegger*, Continental European Philosophy (Durham: Acumen, 2011), 207–9. Heidegger's approach is not without difficulties. In a manner similar to radical orthodoxy, Smith questions the givenness of *Dasein* that subsumes ontology to epistemology. "Without the deity there is no adherence that is not reducible to the self. No matter how high or distant this self-caused cause is postulated or even if irreducibility is fundamental to *Dasein*'s constitution, the only way Being is not reduced to consciousness is if there is something outside the Self that doesn't need to account for itself. But man cannot ask of himself not to account for himself; even such an asking is still an accounting. The self is that which in order to be-the-self must account for itself, the possibility of epistemology resides in that act. But in order for man to have a meaningful ontological understanding of the world, i.e., for epistemology to recognize its rooted dependency on ontology, for language to play "catch-up" to Being, ontology must be recognized in its distinction as onto-theo-logic from its start and that requires accepting the longer way." Caitlin Smith Gilson, *The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Being-in-the-World: A Confrontation between St. Thomas Aquinas and Martin Heidegger* (London: Continuum, 2010), 155.

<sup>137</sup> Again, Pannenberg offers an important corrective at this juncture via universal history and eschatology. See Pannenberg, *Basic Questions*, 1:15–80 and 96–136; Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 330–38.

<sup>138</sup> Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 297.

individual because the work is what projects a world, fills the person, and transforms him/her. The person, therefore, experiences the work of art/play “as a reality that surpasses him.”<sup>139</sup> The hermeneutical implications of this construal of understanding and truth are decidedly significant to the discussion of meaning in biblical scholarship, particularly in the way that truth becomes eventful in nature, rather than distantly, subjectively, or textually isolated.

Our focus here has been to summarise the work of Gadamer as it influences and overlaps with Jauss’ hermeneutics. Space and focus does not allow for a substantial critique of his approach as offered by Apel, Betti, and Habermas, except where Jauss modifies Gadamer below. Our research looks next at Jauss’ and *Rezeptionsästhetik*. This exploration of his theory includes his modifications and inculcations of Gadamer, clarification of the advantages it offers to biblical studies, as well as several necessary modifications from theological scholarship.

## ***II. Jauss and Rezeptionsästhetik***

Hans Robert Jauss’ (1921-1997) early work concentrated on the literature of Marcel Proust<sup>140</sup> and the relationship between past and present, and history and literature. These latter interests matured further in Jauss’ study of medieval animal poetry,<sup>141</sup> in which he observed that, though temporally and culturally distant from these texts, such literature still had the capacity to evoke a pleasurable response in the reader. In 1966 Jauss became part of the faculty of the (then) newly-founded University of Konstanz, where he

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<sup>139</sup> “...als eine ihn übertreffende Wirklichkeit.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1990), 115. For Gadamer, truth is not an abstract concept, but ontological in nature.

<sup>140</sup> His dissertation on Proust was originally published in 1955. Hans Robert Jauss, *Zeit und Erinnerung in Marcel Prousts “A la recherche du temps perdu”: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie des Romans* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986).

<sup>141</sup> This was the focus of his habilitation. Hans Robert Jauss, *Untersuchungen zur mittelalterlichen Tierdichtung* (Tübingen: Walter de Gruyter, 1959).

established a literary studies program along with several, like-minded colleagues, including Wolfgang Iser.<sup>142</sup> These scholars developed a form of reader-response theory of literature simultaneously to the reader-response theorists in the United States, though the Konstanz School is a decidedly more cohesive movement.<sup>143</sup> Jauss' inaugural lecture at the University of Konstanz, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft*, introduced their collective proposal of what came to be known as reception history.<sup>144</sup> He directed the challenge of his lecture particularly at traditional approaches to literary history by taking advantage of significant, positive developments in this regard by two dominant schools of thought in the field of literature in Germany: Marxists and formalists. We turn now to these influences on Jauss' "aesthetic of reception" (*Rezeptionsästhetik*).

*i. Rezeptionsästhetik: Marxism and Formalism*

Jauss' relationship to Marxist and formalist literary theory is a complex one. On the one hand, he engages them because he is congenial to their conscientious distinction from positivistic approaches to literary history. On the other hand, Jauss recognises that these theories, though having divergent emphases for discerning meaning, are forced to present insufficient construals of meaning because of their shared, restrictive, interpretive meta-framework— a framework that views literature and its meaning in "a closed circle of... production and representation."<sup>145</sup> Put differently, the "literary

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<sup>142</sup> Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 12; Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 316–17.

<sup>143</sup> Thiselton helpfully draws out the level of disjunction between reader-response theorists in his article "Reader-Response is not One Thing," in Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics*, 489–514. Additionally, Jauss' *Rezeptionsästhetik* is at various stages author-centred, text-centred, and/or reader-centred, as opposed to the reader-centred, socio-pragmatic approaches of Rorty and Fish.

<sup>144</sup> Translated as "Literary History as Challenge to Literary Theory" in the volume *Toward and Aesthetic of Reception*.

<sup>145</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 18.



fact” is established by the text and merely displayed for the perceptive reader, who does not participate in any capacity to the production of meaning.<sup>146</sup>

Jauss highlights two primary advantageous transitions by certain Marxist literary theorists of his time, such as Karel Kosík, Werner Krauss, and Roger Garaudy. Firstly, they departed from “orthodox” Marxist aesthetics, which regarded modern developments of art and literature as decadent, and as mimetic reflections of socioeconomic factors.<sup>147</sup> Alternatively, Jauss recognises particularly in the works of the divergent Marxists attempts to revive dialectical understanding and the formative power of literature on society.<sup>148</sup> Secondly, their Marxist literary theory “does not have a relativistic or uncritical attitude toward tradition”<sup>149</sup> and it maintains the importance of the historicity (i.e. *geschichtlichkeit*) of a text. This is an important affinity with Gadamer.

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<sup>146</sup> “Ihre Methoden begreifen das *literarische Faktum* im geschlossenen Kreis einer Produktions- und Darstellungsästhetik... [Der] Leser... spielt in beiden Literaturtheorien eine äußerst beschränkte Rolle” Hans Robert Jauss, “Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft,” in *Rezeptionsästhetik*, Uni-Taschenbücher (München: Willhelm Fink Verlag, 1979), 126. Emphasis original.

<sup>147</sup> His primary “orthodox” interlocutor is Georg Lukács, who attempts to account for the ongoing influence of works of art while remanding them ultimately to the custody of their own age by appeal to the notion of the transcendental classic. His work is a somewhat veiled return to historical positivism. Yet Lukács undermines his own position in failing to consider how art of the “distant past [can] survive the annihilation of its socioeconomic base.” Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 13. Virtually the same conclusion follows for Lucien Goldmann, whose aesthetics cannot for art and literature’s capacity to reformulate one’s reality. Ibid., 14; Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 34.

<sup>148</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 14–16. This direction, as well as the influence of Heidegger is immediately evident in the opening paragraph of Kosík’s work, in which he speaks of dialectical thinking as human praxis by which “[m]an approaches reality primarily and immediately not as an abstract cognitive subject... but rather as an objectively and practically acting being, an historical individual who conducts his practical activity related to nature and to other people and realizes his own ends and interests within a particular complex of social relationships.” Karel Kosík, *Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study on Problems of Man and World* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1976), 1. Kosík in particular breaks from the mimetic aesthetics of Marxists like Lukács in arguing that, rather than perpetuating an aesthetics of abstraction, “the work lives to the extent that it has influence.” Ibid., 84, quoted in Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 15.

<sup>149</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 121.

Jauss aligns himself with this new trajectory in Marxist literary theory, but observes that 1.) it must elevate the reality formative role of literature above the economic-cultural determinative understanding of literature, and 2.) it requires the integration of the concept of an intersubjective horizon of expectation on the part of the reader.<sup>150</sup> Following this desideratum of attention to literature's influence in history clears the way for Jauss to argue that the influence of a work over its lifetime is part of the very "historical essence of the work," so that one must understand the history and meaning of art not only as representation, but also as a dialogue between other works and the readers through time with the capacity to shape the reader's perception.<sup>151</sup>

Formalism, likewise a reaction to positivism and represented by such key figures as Roman Jakobson, had its beginnings in Russia in the early twentieth century, yet faded quickly as a school due to the antagonism of Marxist literary theorists. Its influence, however, far outlasted the dispersal of the school. In an attempt to establish literary scholarship in its own right, the formalists evacuated literary scholarship of any "non-literary series,"<sup>152</sup> including history.<sup>153</sup> For the formalists, history is a construct outside of the literary realm, and therefore has nothing to contribute to the interpretation of literature. Formalism strives to interpret literature through the structures of a given text, such as plot, narrative voice (*skaz*), the use of poetic versus

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<sup>150</sup> From the German Democratic Republic, Manfred Hermann attempts a critique of Jauss' work, but essentially offers a revision of Rezeptionsästhetik that does not account for the productive role of the reader in reception or literary genres. He can only speak of the work's role in predetermining its reception without an interaction of the horizon of the reader, though he does not deny the reader a horizon. Hans Robert Jauss, "The Idealist Embarrassment: Observations on Marxist Aesthetics," trans. Peter Heath, *New Literary History* 7, no. 1 (1975): 202–5.

<sup>151</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 16.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> "Die formale Methode dagegen würde das literarische Werk von allen historischen Bedingungen lösen." Mandy Funke, *Rezeptionstheorie-Rezeptionsästhetik* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis-Verlag, 2004), 50.

practical language, dynamic structure (i.e. the interaction of all literary components), defamiliarisation, and literary evolution.<sup>154</sup> As the movement progressed, formalists such as Jakobson and Jurij Tynjanov began to more positively appropriate history into their understanding of literature, at least as the evolution of genres and works both diachronically and synchronically within that evolutionary process.

In Jauss' perspective, the formalists developed two concepts of lasting use to literary theory: 1.) the distinction between poetic language and practical language and; 2.) the shaping of literary genres synchronically and diachronically. This latter point may appear to be a concession to general history, but formalism describes it in terms of form-based relationships between literary events.<sup>155</sup> At this juncture, however, Jauss argues that denying a text's historicity overlooks the fact that literature is not only shaped within itself through its "own unique relationship of diachrony and synchrony, but also through its relationship to the general process of history."<sup>156</sup> Added to this difficulty, Jauss recognises a similar malady in formalism to Marxist literary theory, in that the reader does not actively contribute to the production of meaning of a text. Instead, in formalism, the reader has the task of discerning the forms and structures already contained therein, with this process serving as an end in itself.<sup>157</sup>

Therefore, Jauss proposes that *Rezeptionsästhetik* includes the benefits of formalism alongside the historical conditioning of literature from Marxism,

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<sup>154</sup> Nina Kolesnikoff, "Formalism, Russian," ed. Irene R. Makaryk, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 51–59.

<sup>155</sup> Seeing literature as an evolutionary generic succession through history (without reference to history) fails to account for the important aspects of a work's "historical horizon of origination, social function, and historical influence." Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 18.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>157</sup> Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 31.

and the dominating influence of Gadamer,<sup>158</sup> but he also pushes beyond them. He accomplishes this in part by understanding literature as a “triangle” composed of author, work, and the public, the last of which is a historically constructive energy,<sup>159</sup> and the one for whom the work is primarily written. This view recognises readers as co-creators of meaning, or, put differently, meanings do not merely subsist in a text, but are generated in the act of reading.<sup>160</sup> The author has created potential<sup>161</sup> in a text that is actualised historically in its reading. Texts do not lifelessly yield their singular meaning to communities over the generations, but “*texts have a formative influence upon readers and society*” and “*changing situations also have effects on how texts are read.*”<sup>162</sup>

## ii. *Rezeptionsästhetik: Seven Theses*

From this base of influences, Jauss progresses with a proposal for *Rezeptionsästhetik*, which he establishes in seven decisive theses described as a methodological grounding of literary history.<sup>163</sup> Before progressing on to these theses, it is important to clarify Jauss’ use of the term “aesthetic.” Simply put, “aesthetics” is the theory of art. Therefore, *Rezeptionsästhetik* is a theory of art/literature based on the reception art (i.e. the role of the receiver) through history, with particular emphasis on its evocative, communicative,

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<sup>158</sup> We see this particularly in the dialogical nature of understanding, the eventful nature of truth, his use of horizons, and his positive evaluation of history and truth. See Parris, *Reception Theory*, 127.

<sup>159</sup> Jauss, “Literaturgeschichte,” 127.

<sup>160</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>161</sup> Here, Jauss follows the linguistics of Saussure, who distinguishes between *la langue* (“language” as a structure and storehouse), which represents the *potential* of communication, and *la parole* (“speech”) as the actual act of communication. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 13–14; Thiselton helpfully unpacks the significance of Saussure for semantics and hermeneutics. Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics*, 197–207; Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 83 and 86.

<sup>162</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 99. Emphasis original.

<sup>163</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 20. The language of “method” draws the suspicion, but this receives attention below under “Challenges.”

and formative aspects.<sup>164</sup> Though all of Jauss' work falls under this vision of aesthetics, it does not exhaust his use of the term "aesthetic," and specific deployments require further clarification.

When Jauss speaks of "aesthetic pleasure" (a focal point in his work on Medieval literature), he has in mind the immediate accessibility a reader has to otherness of a text via the pleasure of reading that is constitutive of understanding. It is "an interplay of subject and aesthetic object in which there is pleasurable enjoyment of oneself in the encounter, as well as a pleasurable focus on the object that frees the knower from the constraints of everyday existence."<sup>165</sup> In this approach, the reader first commits his/herself to the direction of the text and takes on its perspective. This diverges from the historical positivist approach of constructing a historical context first in order to understand a text. "Aesthetic pleasure does not need the bridge of historical knowledge,"<sup>166</sup> because a reader does not need to transport themselves to a different historical context in order to experience the text. Alternatively, the aesthetic pleasure of the "prereflective reader experience... constitutes the necessary first hermeneutic bridge."<sup>167</sup> This response, which is a cognitive act gauged in terms of pleasure, marks the foundation of what Jauss terms the "aesthetic experience." It is an "aesthetic" experience because it is an orientation to the reader's experience of the work. This provides a provisional

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<sup>164</sup> This definition of "aesthetics" Jauss formulates against the conceptions of aesthetics in "the objectivism of historical positivism, the essentialism of all substantialist notions of art, and any notion of art for art's sake alone." Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 65. Significantly, "art" is not the object, but the triadic interrelation of author, work, and receiver as an "ongoing event of communication." Ibid., 71.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>167</sup> Jauss, "Alterity and Modernity," 182.

understanding of “aesthetic” in Jauss’ work, with further clarifications offered below, as we turn to his seven theses of *Rezeptionsästhetik*.

1.) The first thesis demands the removal of prejudices purported by historical objectivism, namely the ability of the historian to stand outside of a historical event and observe it without any external or internal influences affecting their interpretation. In Jauss’ view, this approach fails to consider contextual situatedness and its influence on the proponent as described by Gadamer. Any adherent to objective interpretation “inevitably introduces subjective criteria concerning selection, perspective, and evaluation into his supposedly objective reconstruction of the past.”<sup>168</sup>

Secondly, historical objectivism prohibits the grounding of the “aesthetics of *production* and *representation* in an aesthetics of *reception* and *influence*,”<sup>169</sup> which compose the history of the text. Historicism requires a dismissal of the effect of reception on the historian’s judgment.<sup>170</sup> Jauss’ method attempts to liberate literature from such this closed conception of history to a vision of a work’s history that has to do not just with its origination, but also with its ongoing historical existence through its receivers. This first thesis underscores “the role of the reader as the thread connecting a literary history of works. Because a work comes to effect in the response of the reader, the history of the work is to be conceived like a dialogue arising out of the horizon of expectation of the producer, work and readers in different historical periods of the work’s reception.”<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 198.

<sup>169</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 20–22. Emphasis mine.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>171</sup> Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 40.

2.) This model of reception history prioritises the reconstruction of the “horizon of expectations” as an “objectifiable system of expectations that arises for each work in the historical moment of its appearance.”<sup>172</sup> This horizon is composed of three elements: familiarity/expectations with regard to the genre of a work, intertextual relationships, and the relationship of the world created by the text and the reader’s world. These three dimensions of the horizon of expectations help account for the work’s influence at the moment of its appearance, but also protect *Rezeptionsästhetik* from descending into psychologism or relativism. These “horizons are operative in both producer and receiver” and help account for certain receptions.<sup>173</sup>

Reconstructing the “original” horizon does not solely connote the historical appearance of the original work (e.g. 2 Thessalonians) but also the “original” horizon of historical concretisations of the meaning of that work (e.g. the horizon of expectations when Calvin published his commentary on 2 Thessalonians). This is an important balance in the aesthetic experience that both traverses the full distance of a text’s alterity<sup>174</sup> and prevents the naïve consumption of a text in the form of an uncritical equation of the modern reader’s horizon with that of the text. Thiselton clarifies that part of the thrust of this thesis lies in the fact that readers often tend to avoid elements of a text that are personally threatening. Therefore, they may misrepresent a text in

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<sup>172</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 22.

<sup>173</sup> Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 40.

<sup>174</sup> “Alterity,” then, is both the text’s existence outside of the reader *and* its origination in another place and time. Jauss, “Alterity and Modernity,” 182–83.

order to suit their agenda.<sup>175</sup> An objectifiable system of expectations renders this less possible.

3.) Readers approach any text with a certain horizon of expectation as described above. The way in which a work “satisfies, surpasses, disappoints, or refutes” the horizon of expectations of the first readers “provides a criterion for the determination of its aesthetic value.”<sup>176</sup> An aesthetically distant<sup>177</sup> text can radically transform a reader’s horizons. This “aesthetic distance,” however, may disappear over the generations, and therefore requires later readers to reconstruct the original horizon (thesis two) and read “against the grain.” This thesis is a crucial warning to “Christianised” circles in which the readers of Scripture have become so familiar with the text that it has lost important dimensions of its otherness.<sup>178</sup>

An example of the “high” aesthetic value in the historic appearance of 2 Thessalonians might be the specific elevation of Jesus as Lord to the role of executing judgment in the “Day of the Lord” (2 Thess 1:7-2:2), a responsibility that had been reserved for YHWH in Jewish literature.<sup>179</sup> The horizon of the text provokes the horizon of expectations of the original readers with this particular Pauline reformulation of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, resulting in a change in the horizon of expectations of readers. Two thousand years of “tradition [i.e. interpretation] has a levelling, or homogenizing power

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<sup>175</sup> Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 317–18. This is a critical distinction of *Rezeptionsästhetik* from the radical reader-response theory of Fish and Rorty. Anthony C. Thiselton, “Reception Theory, H. R. Jauss and the Formative Power of Scripture,” *SJT* 65, no. 3 (2012): 291.

<sup>176</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 25.

<sup>177</sup> “Distance” is gauged according to a work’s deviation from the horizon of expectations of the original audience.

<sup>178</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 25.

<sup>179</sup> E.g. Psalm 1:5, 75:7; Isa 13, 66:15-16; Ezek 7:19, 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1-11, 2:31, 3:14; Amos 5:18; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7-2:15; Zech 14; Mal 3:1-5, 4; *1 Enoch* 1, 61; *2 Esdras* 7:33-44



on even the most innovative and provocative works,”<sup>180</sup> so that the aesthetic distance of this text is minimised. Reading against the grain of history and tradition recaptures the aesthetic value of a text and helps prevent the non-reflective consumption of texts.

4.) The reconstruction of the original horizon of expectations for a literary work reveals the questions to which the text was an answer. This thesis introduces the concept of dialogue that is central to *Rezeptionsästhetik*.<sup>181</sup> The reconstruction of the historical horizons of expectation aims, in part, to restore the otherness of the text.<sup>182</sup> At the same time the current reader poses questions to the text and receives answers from it. The horizons of the past do not replace the present reader’s horizon of expectation, but rather, when past horizons of expectation come into contact with the horizon of the present reader, it reveals their differences and creates a potential for the “change” of the present horizon, marked by an expansion in depth of the reader’s understanding. As Jauss observes, the aim of the project is not simply to contrast the horizons of expectation, but to seek possible meanings for the present through the mediation of horizons.<sup>183</sup>

In this thesis, Jauss introduces the concept of a “classic” work that has served to continually generate answers to questions. Gadamer advocated the concept of “classic” works that reveal timeless truths across horizons. He developed this concept from David Tracy, who described the “classic” as the hermeneutical “exemplar”<sup>184</sup> and the manner in which it “reaches out through

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<sup>180</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 134.

<sup>181</sup> Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 41.

<sup>182</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, vol. 3 (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 174.

<sup>183</sup> Jauss, “Alterity and Modernity,” 182.

<sup>184</sup> David Tracy, *Ambiguity and Plurality* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 14.

its history of effects to be received by another interpreter in another time.”<sup>185</sup>

Against his predecessor, Jauss contends that even “classics” are historically conditioned works. Their meaning is “actualized in the stages of its historical reception as it discloses itself to understanding judgment”<sup>186</sup> through the dialogue of question and answer. Therefore, a “classic” cannot be extracted from the temporal process.<sup>187</sup> Instead, it requires the consistent interaction of readers in order to condition its “classical” status.

Furthermore, asserting that a *text* communicates a “timeless truth” would require a readerly position outside of history.<sup>188</sup> It is more appropriate to speak of “multiply-timed” or “all-timed” truth. “In place of the work as a carrier or manifestation of truth comes the progressive concretisation of meaning, which is constituted in the convergence of text and reception, from a given work structure and appropriated interpretation.”<sup>189</sup> This understanding of textually articulated truth sees it as *an event* in which readers participate and by which they are addressed. For a theological hermeneutic, this thesis impinges on both pneumatology (i.e. the Holy Spirit’s work in communicating truth) and a concept of Scripture as “Word of God.” For example, even if one accepts the address of God as coming from *beyond time* through the Scriptures, it is actualized and understood temporally.<sup>190</sup> If there is such a thing as a “timeless truth,” we do not have access to it.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 16–17.

<sup>186</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 30.

<sup>187</sup> See Thiselton in Roger Lundin, Clarence Walhout, and Anthony Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), 198. Thiselton also offers a substantial critique of “timelessness” and its grounding in Platonist metaphysics. Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 95–101.

<sup>188</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 282–93.

<sup>189</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, “Der Leser als Instanz einer neuen Geschichte der Literatur,” *Poetica* 7 (1975): 335. Translation mine.

<sup>190</sup> This discussion extends too far beyond the scope of this work. Barth’s theological hermeneutic with the normative role of Scripture as “the concrete medium by which the

5.) Part of understanding a text's historicity necessitates situating it within a literary series in order to gauge its effects and aesthetic quality. In this way, Jauss organizes the dialogue of the above thesis chronologically. Examining any interpretation of a text within this literary series (i.e. its place in literary history) reveals how it confronted the horizon of expectations at the time of its appearance by disclosing the questions left behind by previous works to which the new work sought an answer. It follows from this that one must temporarily "canonise" the works in this literary series and perceive the history of a work in terms of diachrony. This broader view of history allows for a "virtual significance," or potential meaning, of the text, which the initial horizon did not allow, thereby accounting for the unfolding of meaning over time. New receptions of the text are new in both aesthetic and historical dimensions: aesthetic in the assumed axiological aim of offering an interpretation of past receptions; historical in the sense that they constitute the history of the work in the form of an ongoing dialogue.<sup>192</sup>

Reconstructing the horizons of expectation at various moments of reception enables one to read from another perspective—a different question than their own—and to expand their understanding. This expansion occurs in the provocation of their horizon of expectation through an experience that does not match with their expectation.<sup>193</sup>

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Church recalls God's revelation in the past, is called to expect revelation in the future, and is thereby challenged, empowered, and guided to proclaim," is a positive direction for potentially extending reception history. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1.1:124.

<sup>191</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 171. For an discussion on "timelessness" in hermeneutics, see Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 95–101.

<sup>192</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 35.

<sup>193</sup> It is in this expansion, the horizontal shift, that Jauss argues truth is recovered. Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 201.

6.) In addition to diachrony, an aesthetics of reception views literary history in terms of synchrony, thereby revealing the changes in interpretation that have occurred over time. By looking at a moment in history during a text's reception, the reader can see the forms, influences, genres, and contemporary works of a particular reception, which illuminate particular "epoch-making" moments in the reception of a text. This thesis delineates the diachronic and synchronic axes of history that are central to *Rezeptionsästhetik*.<sup>194</sup> Jauss incorporates this division from the linguistics of Saussure, who distinguished between the diachronic development of language and the static consequences that have nothing to do with the development.<sup>195</sup> In the same way, a diachronic perspective of history looks at the broad scope of how events have unfolded, whereas a synchronic perspective explores the context of a static historical "moment." Put slightly differently, texts are both influenced by works that preceded them and, in contemporaneity, to "their own particular history or time curves."<sup>196</sup>

The history of biblical interpretation depicts the notion of synchronic, epochal moments represented quite well. As an example, the "man of sin/lawlessness" (2 Thess 2:3-9) has been taken as a reference to "Antichrist," despite the absence of that term from the passage.<sup>197</sup> Through history, theologians have understood this as a man typified by Nero, the son of Satan, numerous people under a single title, a nebulous being, and even the papacy. In each of these readings, converging contextual elements led to their appearance in the history of 2 Thessalonians. Looking at these interpretations

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<sup>194</sup> Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 318.

<sup>195</sup> de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 81–84.

<sup>196</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 143.

<sup>197</sup> This interpretation is as early as Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.28.2 (ANF 1:557)

diachronically helps the reader to see the general history of reception, while looking at them synchronically returns to them the aesthetic character they have in relation to contemporaneous works, how they would have confronted the horizons of expectation, and why they became “epochal” moments in interpretation.

7.) The final thesis describes the completion of literary history’s task when it recognises itself as “special history” with a unique relationship to general history. It must, however, move beyond a “value-neutral representation” of history by advocating lived praxis in terms of the “socially formative function of literary texts.”<sup>198</sup> As Jauss puts it: “The social function of literature manifests itself in its genuine possibility only where the literary experience of the reader enters into the horizon of expectations of his lived praxis, preforms his understanding of the world, and thereby also has an effect on his social behavior.”<sup>199</sup> Literature cannot merely stand in history as a piece of art, the effects of which end at the conclusion of the reading process. Rather, it must enter into the horizon of expectation of the reader, reshape their understanding of the world, and result in a change in social behaviour.

It is of immediate importance to Jauss to include literary history as part of art history. Literature has the reader as its aim and is released to undergo engagement in the minds of those who interact with it in the same way as viewers of art. Literary history takes into account this interaction as part of the given text’s history and gauges its aesthetic value by the “rightness” of the

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<sup>198</sup> Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, 100.

<sup>199</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 39; in many ways, Jauss’ method anticipates Adam’s biblical theology as “signifying practice,” though Jauss and Gadamer combined offer a more holistic and encompassing approach to hermeneutics. A. K. M. Adam, “Poaching on Zion: Biblical Theology as Signifying Practice,” in *Reading Scripture with the Church: Toward a Hermeneutic for Theological Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 17–34.

question that it poses with reference to the subject matter of the text, and in relation to the original work and interpretations thereof. It is significant to note that art history and pragmatic history are linked by this notion of the piece of literature as a “historical event.”<sup>200</sup> The two diverge, however, when historicism takes the path of historical excavation prior to the event, while art history, though it must consider the results of this excavation, largely concerns itself with the ongoing reception of the text as progressive unfolding of its truth.

In distinction from a historically observable event in the past, literature continues to elicit interest “not because it was, but because, in a sense, it still is.”<sup>201</sup> Christian theology could affirm this statement by replacing the term “literature” with “Scripture.” For the Christian community the biblical texts are not simply historical documents, but they continue to bear fresh meaning and make demands on the readers who engage with them.<sup>202</sup>

Jauss goes further in averring that *Rezeptionsästhetik* must incorporate the open horizon of the future into the history of a piece of literature, for its history has not come to a conclusion so long as people continue to read it.<sup>203</sup> In Christian theology, we must qualify this with the eschatological limitations of history and the understanding of all meaning in relation to proleptic revelation of the *eschaton* in Jesus Christ, as emphasised by Moltmann and Pannenberg.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 53.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>202</sup> The limitations of historicism to affect social praxis are felt in the frequent attention to “historical” elements of a biblical book that are tangential or completely disconnected from the subject matter of Scripture. Seitz offers the redactional example of the tent of meeting (Exod 33-34) as a case study. Seitz, *Character*, 37–38.

<sup>203</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 61.

<sup>204</sup> On this point, see Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self*, 144–45; Pannenberg’s grounding of all history in the revelatory event of Jesus Christ encapsulates his

If Jauss' understanding of literary history has any weight, it must refuse to extract the "classic" from temporal processes,<sup>205</sup> and instead recognise its status as the result of generations of continual interaction with the text. This does not negate any lasting meaning of a text, but rather asserts that this meaning must be temporarily stabilised in the dynamic of reception and concretised with *each* reading.<sup>206</sup>

The need to resituate a classic within the flow of history stems from our personal "belongingness" to history. Traditions are transmitted within history, not of their own accord, but by the active reader. The tradition of the Bible as a "classic" has developed over generations by people who continually engage with the Scriptures. The process of tradition provides a safeguard against limitless interpretations, for fresh appropriations of a text "occur within the witness of tradition. Different eras do not merely replicate understandings, but neither do they make up what they like of a text."<sup>207</sup> Readers, shaped by traditions, come to a text and expand literary traditions by posing both old and new questions to and discovering answers within a text.

The formulation of his literary history on the productive works of Marxism, Formalism, and Gadamer, combined with his seven theses,<sup>208</sup> serve

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theologically essential view of universal history, which he takes up and modifies from Hegel. Without speaking of meaning in relation to the whole of history, that meaning offers a distorted picture of reality. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, ed. George H. Kehm, trans. Paul J. Achtemeier, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 62; E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 50 and 57. Jauss and Pannenberg actively engaged each other on this topic and hermeneutics more generally in the group *Poetik und Hermeneutik*. See Hans Robert Jauss, Manfred Fuhrmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg, eds., *Text und Applikation: Theologie, Jurisprudenz, und Literaturwissenschaft im hermeneutischen Gespräch*, *Poetik und Hermeneutik* 9 (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1981).

<sup>205</sup> See Thiselton in Lundin, Walhout, and Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics*, 198.

<sup>206</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3:172.

<sup>207</sup> See Thiselton in Lundin, Walhout, and Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics*, 194.

<sup>208</sup> For each of the seven theses, Thiselton proposes a corresponding thesis for a theological hermeneutic. Thiselton, "Reception Theory, H. R. Jauss and the Formative Power of Scripture," 291–96.

as the collective foundation to Jauss' *Rezeptionsästhetik*.<sup>209</sup> We explore next Jauss' approach to reading as a dialogue and its potential implications for biblical studies.

*iv. Rezeptionsästhetik: Question and Answer*

Crucial to Jauss' aesthetic of reception is the concept of reading and meaning formation as a dialogue with the text, which further constitutes the history of the text. By dialogue, Jauss highlights that the reader does not merely absorb a text as a source of information, but, in order to truly consider and inhabit the text, the engaging reader understands literature as a response to an original question as well as an answer to questions continually levelled against it. In his early work, Jauss traces his inheritance of the concept of dialogue to Collingwood by means of Gadamer, relying primarily upon the latter to develop dialogue as a key element in literary history and hermeneutics.<sup>210</sup> Later, Jauss adds Mikhail Bakhtin to his understanding of dialogue.

Bakhtin describes the internalisation of meaning in the process of reading as the transformation of the other's word "into one's own/other (or other/one's)," meaning that "in the process of dialogic communication, the object is transformed into the subject (the other's *I*)."<sup>211</sup> Jauss perceives in Bakhtin's work an aesthetic pleasure that occurs in two "contrary movements" of 1.) empathy with the other and 2.) recognition of the self in the other, which

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<sup>209</sup> Though the dimensions of *poiesis*, *aesthesis*, and *catharsis* in the aesthetic experience are important to Jauss' method, they are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Michael Shaw, Theory and History of Literature 3 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 22–110; for a summary of these concepts and their place in his method, see Parris, *Reception Theory*, 166–69.

<sup>210</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 29.

<sup>211</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson, University of Texas Press Slavic Series 8 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 145.



is a return to the self and internalisation of meaning.<sup>212</sup> Bakhtin requires expansion, however, in making clear what “enables the reader to understand the text in its alterity in the first place”<sup>213</sup> (i.e. the horizon against which alterity is gauged and temporal distance) and what the reader must contribute to the dialogue, beyond empathy, in order to engage his/her understanding in a dialogue “with a text and its earlier interpretations.”<sup>214</sup>

Jauss formulates the nature of textual dialogue in two directions. First, the nature of one’s engagement with and understanding of a text is dialogical in nature. The reader understands the text as an answer to a question. Secondly, the reader attempts to reconstruct the original horizon of expectations of the text in order to hear the original questions to which the text was an answer. In so doing they establish a gauge for measuring the aesthetic value of subsequent interpretations. Interpretations that proceed from the foundational text enter into a dialogical relationship with it through the recognition of the inaugural questions to which the text is an answer and by producing their own contemporary questions to which the original text<sup>215</sup> still serves as an answer. This latter point demarcates another aesthetic quality of a text: its ability to continue to provide answers in new contexts.<sup>216</sup>

New works in the process of reception tend not to simply imitate the predecessor without posing any new questions, for the new vantages produced by shifting contexts consistently generate the possibility for new questions.

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<sup>212</sup> Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 214.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>215</sup> This includes questions engendered by other concretisations of the text.

<sup>216</sup> Jauss critically modifies his third thesis in his later work by expanding the aesthetic value of a text from negation/provocation (which does not account well for the normative function of classics) to include its tradition-transmitting quality and its socially-formative function, among other elements. Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 224–25; Parris, *Reception Theory*, 137–38.

Any reception that merely copies its predecessor and genre is aesthetically inferior,<sup>217</sup> for it does not result in a shift of horizons. Certain receptions may articulate previous receptions more lucidly, but they do not confront, challenge, provoke, etc. the horizons of expectations of the reader. Jauss firmly contends that even when a textual “creation negates or surpasses all expectations, it still presupposes preliminary information and a trajectory of expectations against which to register the originality and novelty.”<sup>218</sup> These expectations are governed by preceding texts as well as the rules and structures of the given genre within which the work arises.

Jauss summarises the advantage of dialogue as a model for engaging with a text and its history as follows:

Conversation allows question and answer to confirm for themselves whether the other has understood in the same way, has understood differently, or has misunderstood altogether. It also makes it possible to test and try out a point of view, including one’s own preconceived views. It is this possibility before all others that makes a conversation dialectic. Question and answer also provide access to the otherness of the past at those moments when the question is rediscovered to which the text, within its historical horizon, was the answer.<sup>219</sup>

Pannenberg offers two important provisos regarding this dialogical form of understanding. First, even in the case that one agrees with the linguistic nature of understanding proposed by Gadamer and Jauss, the metaphorical language of “dialogue” differs with a text than in a conversation with a person. The dialogue with a text becomes a “language event (*Sprachsgeschehen*)... only when *the interpreter* finds the language that unites him with the text.”<sup>220</sup> Further, a text is not protected from misunderstanding like a conversation partner. The reader brings the text to speech through a

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<sup>217</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 89.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>219</sup> Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 62–63.

<sup>220</sup> Pannenberg, *Basic Questions*, 1:123.

creative process of drawing on their context (whether explicitly or implicitly) to find “a linguistic expression which combines the essential content of the text with his own contemporary horizon.”<sup>221</sup> This leads to his second point: the formulation of the “essential content of a text” is the formulation of an *assertion*. Communication (i.e. the fusion of horizons) necessitates the predicative function of language, whether in the restoration of the original horizon of a text, or in the contemporary understanding of the same. Assertions make language possible.<sup>222</sup> Therefore, Pannenberg balances this hermeneutic of question and answer that tilts in favour of the question.<sup>223</sup>

This is an important point for consideration, but it does not negate the validity of Jauss’ dialogue. Jauss readily admits the importance of textual answer, but he sees it belonging to the same horizon as the question, and not preceding it. Nevertheless, he suggests that the answering nature of the text operates as the primary point of its reception, though “it is not an invariable value within the work itself.”<sup>224</sup> Christian theology, therefore, can continue to affirm the primacy of God’s assertions through Scripture. The dialogue of question and answer does not deny the place of assertions in texts. Rather, it describes both the process of understanding and the historical existence of a text. God may very well make an assertion through a biblical passage, but the

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 1:123–24.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 1:124–28. Thiselton observes the essential nature of *dialogue* in Pannenberg between one’s “hermeneutical lifeworld” and the metacritical hermeneutical frame that forms the foundation of understanding. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 25.

<sup>223</sup> Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 444–45. Jauss’ particular emphasis on dialogue with attention to the receiver is an attempt to give full weight to the communicative nature of art and shift away from the monologue of “effect.” Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 68–69.

<sup>224</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 69.

reader will only comprehend it in reflecting on how it confronts their horizon of expectation.<sup>225</sup>

Dialogue is critical to *Rezeptionsästhetik*. The significant differentiation from Gadamer and identification with Pannenberg over dialogue appears in where Jauss places this in the process of reading. Therefore, Jauss' three-levelled description of reading requires attention.

v. *Rezeptionsästhetik: Three Readings*

In order to articulate the triadic nature of interpretation—understanding, interpretation, and application<sup>226</sup>—Jauss develops a heuristic model that correlates three levels of reading with these steps of interpretation. Corresponding to each of these respective levels, Jauss suggests that reading occurs on 1.) an aesthetically perceptual level; 2.) a retrospectively interpretive level, and; 3.) a historical level,<sup>227</sup> which includes the reconstruction of the original horizon of expectations, but also considers particular concretisations of meaning *throughout the text's history* (i.e. the aesthetic character of the text). The division is somewhat fabricated. Indeed, there is much overlap between them, but all three must take place in order to fully appreciate the historical nature of a text and its meaning potential. Significantly, each level of reading forms the horizon for the next reading, and the cycle repeats through the rereading of the text. The order of the readings is not critical, but it prioritises the horizon of the aesthetically perceptual reading. Whatever aspects may inform that horizon contribute to the concretisation of meaning.

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<sup>225</sup> This is a critical reversal of Gadamer's direction of questioning proceeding from the classic text to the recipient. Hans Robert Jauss, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 740.

<sup>226</sup> This triad is taken over from Gadamer. Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 139; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 306 ff.

<sup>227</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 139. Though the steps pass through varying emphases on the reader, author, and text, above all this method draws out the importance of the reader in Jauss' method. Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 115.

Aesthetically perceptual reading is simply a reading of comprehension. In this step, the reader absorbs the quality, style, and direction of the text. Parris uses the metaphor of dancing to describe these levels of reading, with the reader following in this first type. The aim of this reading is simply to submit to the leading of the text and take in its aesthetic quality. “In the first reading a ‘fusion’ of horizons takes place through the reader’s aesthetic experience of the text.”<sup>228</sup> This is the initiation, but not the completion of aesthetic experience. Aesthetically perceptual reading opens up the potential for questions and “delimits the space for *possible* concretizations,”<sup>229</sup> but *does not actually pose questions to the text*. This marks Jauss’ distinction from Gadamer: dialogue is not the initial step in understanding. Rather, aesthetic perception is the “performance” of the work akin to “play” that precedes reflective understanding. In this first level, readers are drawn to particular aspects of texts, often through their contextual impulses, such as Calvin’s eye for texts that emphasise the sovereignty of God.

Aesthetically perceptual reading is not reading as a *tabula rasa*, nor does it exclude the aspects that genre or traditions of reception may pre-determine of this understanding. It is a willing submission to the direction of the text, which is subconsciously guided only in part by these traditions. Readers may even actively bracket influential traditions of which they are aware in order to hear the text more openly. It is precisely in this manner of reading that new concretisations of meaning become possible. Beyond this, the second and third levels of reading scrutinise preconceptions further. Jauss

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<sup>228</sup> David Paul Parris, “Reception Theory: Philosophical Hermeneutics, Literary Theory, and Biblical Interpretation” (University of Nottingham, Theology and Religious Studies, 1999), 168. To differentiate from his published work, this title will not be shortened.

<sup>229</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 145. Emphasis added.

would readily follow Eco on the application of this description of reading to “open,” as opposed “closed,” texts.<sup>230</sup>

In the second reading, the possible concretisations have been opened and the reader proceeds to decipher the meaning of the text. Gadamer describes one’s comprehension of textual meaning as understanding it as an answer to a question. Therefore, recognising the meaning of a text indicates having understood the question, and thus to already have asked it.<sup>231</sup> Here, the influences of tradition and context shape the questions asked as well as the meaning derived. Rather than simply following wherever the text leads, the reader functions as a co-creator with the text, for they bring their traditions with them in the interpretive process. “In the second reading, a ‘mediation’ of the horizons of the text and the interpreter occurs through the logic of question and answer.”<sup>232</sup>

Lastly, Jauss describes the historical reading of a text, which includes the reconstruction of the original horizon of expectation and the historical interpretations of the text. This significantly expands the aesthetic experience of a text, by drawing the reader from their initial aesthetic response through the historical otherness of the text and mediating the original aesthetic experience of the text. This passage through the fullness of a text’s alterity leads to a reader’s deeper self-understanding through the appropriation of historically-distant questions, which can have a formative effect on the reader, and it concludes the aesthetic experience. The question as to whether this concern for present meaning is an imposition of modernity on the past fails to

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<sup>230</sup> An open text “embodies *generative processes* within its own structure.” Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 527; Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), 3–10 and 47–66.

<sup>231</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 368.

<sup>232</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 161.

realise that the process foregrounds the limitations of modern horizons, which can only be broadened by a text's historical alterity.<sup>233</sup> We also see that aesthetic experience is both pre-reflective, in that it is initially composed of a reader's pleasurable reading of a text, and reflective, because of the critical work of reconstructing historical horizons and the formulation of meaning as a response to reading.<sup>234</sup> Therefore, aesthetic experience is the *understanding* of a text in the fullness of its historical character, not as an autonomous work, that is construed in terms of *cognitive pleasure* and passes through understanding, interpretation, and application.<sup>235</sup>

In biblical studies, particularly historical-philological hermeneutics, the reading process is frequently reversed or shuffled, so that one must *first* examine the historical background in order to understand the text.<sup>236</sup> Furthermore, the operative methodology assumes that the discovery of meaning begins and ends with this level of reading. This method, however, already limits the possibility of asking contemporary questions by engaging with historical materials and situating it historically *first*. It is also often an attempt (in biblical studies) to leap over nearly 2,000 years of insights, thus failing to recognise the aesthetic quality and historicity of the text. Furthermore, it implicitly views the modern reader's place in history as an obstruction to understanding that one must overcome, rather than a new, historical vantage from which to appropriate texts and in which God may speak.

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<sup>233</sup> Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 17–21.

<sup>234</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 168–89.

<sup>235</sup> See note 270 below.

<sup>236</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 162; Hans Robert Jauss, "Limits and Tasks of Literary Hermeneutics," *Diogenes* 26, no. 109 (1980): 116.

Postponing this reading, however, allows for readings that naturally flow out of a contextual dialogue with the text and are equally constitutive of the meaning and history of the text. Historical enquiry charts the aesthetic range of a text and gauges the aesthetic value of a new reception. To exclude the third level of reading would mean that the “first two levels of reading would be lopsided in favor of our contemporary pre-understanding.”<sup>237</sup> This safeguard restricts incorrect readings, presents new possibilities for understanding, and reveals “voices of domination” may have entered into the reception of the text or traditions of the reader.<sup>238</sup>

Having reconstructed the original horizon, one has the task of examining the fuller history of the text— the ensuing receptions.<sup>239</sup> In this process, the aesthetic quality of a text comes to light and particular epochal moments of interpretation become clear. The reader gauges the readings in their substantiation by history, their establishment of traditions, their coherence with the text, and their comparison with the original horizon of expectation. Taking the insights from this process collectively creates the possibility for the transformation of the reader’s horizon of experience. If understanding stopped at historical reconstruction of horizons, then this would easily be a return to positivism. Yet Jauss vehemently rejects this as the end of hermeneutical enquiry. *Rezeptionsästhetik* views present meaning for social formation as the goal of interpretation. Furthermore, if we follow Pannenberg, we recognise that all meaning must be put in relation to a universal history, which is given its fullest content in the revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Parris, *Reading the Bible*, 173.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>239</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 148.

<sup>240</sup> Pannenberg, *Basic Questions*, 1:78–80.



Jauss' articulation of the three levels of reading completes the methodology of his hermeneutical model. Conceivably, this technique has numerous advantages for biblical hermeneutics. Before describing my particular appropriation of *Rezeptionsästhetik*, it is prudent to work through a number of challenges that it faces.

### **3. Challenges**

Jauss' reception history is not without concerns. The challenges to *Rezeptionsästhetik* relate to questions of relativism, reconstructing the original horizon of expectation, the use of "horizon," methodology, misinterpretations, "use" versus "effect," and the socially formative function of reception history. As this dissertation focuses on the potential use of Jauss for theology and hermeneutics, it seems well-advised to begin with foundational concerns from a theological perspective.

#### ***I. Relativism***

An immediate difficulty facing reception theory is that it allows for unlimited interpretations of a text. Unlike other forms of reader-response theory and postmodern hermeneutics, however, the original horizon of expectation, reading traditions, the formative value of an interpretation, and the text itself serve as guideposts (albeit "flexible") for interpretation in *Rezeptionsästhetik*.<sup>241</sup> Generally speaking, the stability of a particular textual meaning will be considered in relation to its historical persistence and its tradition-forming potential.<sup>242</sup> Additionally, the literary history of a work "progresses historically and follows a certain 'logic' that precipitates the

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<sup>241</sup> In a rather humorous response to a critique by Richard Rorty, Eco offers an interpretation of a screwdriver and concludes with the quite reasonable point, "To decide how a text works means to decide which one of its various aspects is or can become relevant or pertinent for a coherent interpretation of it, and which ones remain marginal and unable to support a coherent reading." See his "Reply" in Stefan Collini, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 146.

<sup>242</sup> Parris, *Reading the Bible*, 116.

formation and transformation of the aesthetic canon.”<sup>243</sup> Iser helpfully notes, “acts of comprehension are guided by the structures of the text, though the latter can never exercise complete control.”<sup>244</sup>

Thus those who use *Rezeptionsästhetik* can make determinations about what constitutes legitimate interpretations of a literary or a theological work.<sup>245</sup> Another author has stated the present aim of this project well as “steering between the Scylla of Cartesianism and the Charbydis of radical postmodern polyvalency.”<sup>246</sup>

In certain Christian circles this might cause one to question the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation and whether it speaks in a manner contrary to the established traditions or in ways not necessarily consistent with the course of the text. On the one hand, reception history does not preclude new interpretations, as new historical moments provide new interpretive vantages.

On the other hand, the reception history and the interpretive trajectory of a biblical text serve as helpful guides for one to determine whether interpretation might be called divinely-sourced, or whether the reader has simply affirmed what they wanted to find in the text— something that Jauss aims to destabilise in his second thesis.<sup>247</sup> Furthermore, “in the case of texts which are sacred, properly speaking, one cannot allow oneself too much licence, as there is usually a religious authority and tradition that lays claim to hold the key to its interpretation.”<sup>248</sup> Eco extends this argument of limitless

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<sup>243</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 147.

<sup>244</sup> Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 24.

<sup>245</sup> Jauss engages and incorporates part of Bultmann’s theological hermeneutics in his own work. Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 63–66.

<sup>246</sup> See Thiselton in Lundin, Walhout, and Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics*, 156.

<sup>247</sup> For an excellent summary of this thesis, see Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 317–18.

<sup>248</sup> Umberto Eco, “Overinterpreting Texts,” in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 52–53. Adam lends weight to this perspective by observing that there are no transcendent interpretive criteria in biblical

interpretation to the fourfold interpretation of scripture in the Middle Ages, which was “infinite in terms of time, but *limited in its options*.”<sup>249</sup> This is a helpful way for looking at biblical interpretation that is open to the *eschaton* and the freedom of God to act and speak.

Related to this objection of relativism is the question of who and how one chooses receptions of a biblical text to include in their “canon” of the text’s history. Admittedly, Jauss encourages that *all* receptions of work be taken up in order to give a full picture of the text’s aesthetic quality, and to continue adding works as they are discovered or created. Yet “Canonising” and evaluating all receptions of 2 Thessalonians simply is not possible, and even less so with all of Scripture. As a further criterion for selection, *Rezeptionsästhetik* includes in its canon of “classic” works those that can continue to answer new questions in changing horizons by the way that they “engage the contemporary public on the level of performative, motivating, and transformative norms, both literary and societal.”<sup>250</sup> Yet this canon is always held open and subject to scrutiny, so that it may be constantly reformulated.

Simply put, reception history must begin somewhere. Tracing the historical trends of interpretation has great potential for reshaping modern understanding of how and what readers are to do with Scripture. Not only can it expand horizons of understanding and expectation, it demonstrates how to ask better and broader questions of Scripture, and it encourages the remarriage of the currently diverse theological fields through engagement with historical voices and theological paradigms that have shaped biblical reading.

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hermeneutics, but many local ones (i.e. contextual criteria). Adam, *Faithful Interpretation*, 57–65.

<sup>249</sup> Eco, “Overinterpreting Texts,” 53. Emphasis added.

<sup>250</sup> Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 94.

## ***II. Reconstructing the Original Horizon and Otherness***

Perhaps the issue that receives the most critique is Jauss' emphasis on reconstructing the original horizon of expectation. Is this even possible? Is it not an attempt to apprehend the author's intention in the text? Angus Paddison has levelled a substantial critique against "excavatory" hermeneutics as the normative interpretive methodology, because the author's intent and the initial horizon of expectations are only partially recoverable, at best.<sup>251</sup> Furthermore, excavations of the past for understanding any biblical text have not produced universal agreement in biblical studies, but rather a preponderance of interpretations.

First, it is perhaps more helpful to speak of *textual directedness* than authorial intention,<sup>252</sup> because texts often communicate more than the author is aware, *especially* when put in dialogue with other texts (e.g. texts within the biblical canon).<sup>253</sup> This accounts for the historical richness of biblical interpretation.

Second, Jauss is not interested in the psychologism of authorial intention. *Rezeptionsästhetik* avoids psychologising by concentrating on the objectifiable horizons of expectation (cultural and literary) of the *readers* so as to judge the *aesthetic quality* of the text in question,<sup>254</sup> including the horizons of *each reception* of the text in question. Historical research has provided some assurances that can aid in interpretation and horizon reconstruction, but historical reconstruction does not equal the meaning of a text. Again, the goal

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<sup>251</sup> Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 18–20.

<sup>252</sup> Even language of a biblical author using a phrase *intentionally* is more helpful than "authorial intent." For a positive construction of biblical authority based on the dimensions of "behind," "within," and "in front of" a text, see Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics*, 637–38.

<sup>253</sup> Umberto Eco, "Between Author and Text," in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 73.

<sup>254</sup> See Parris' explanation of Jauss' second thesis. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 130–33.

of his project is not the historical or singular meaning of a text, but social formation (Gadamer's *Bildung*) and the formulation of contemporary questions for the concretisation truth. Not considering the original horizon of expectations would simply not be a complete reception history of a text.

A final critique has to do with whether it is necessary to reconstruct the initial horizon for the purpose of "reading against the grain" or restoring the "otherness" of the text. Is it not sufficient in the theological realm to assert Scripture's quality of otherness because it comes to the reader as "the Word of God?" This notion of divine otherness is certainly essential for theology. It does not logically follow, though, that we must exclude other categories of otherness that fall under this. Acknowledging otherness is an essential step in understanding that prevents naïve consumption of a text and imposition of desired meaning into a text. Reconstructing the original horizon, as well as later historical horizons of reception, aids in reading against the grain and enriches the process of understanding.

Focusing too exclusively on the otherness of Scripture in its divine origin runs the risk of making it inaccessibly transcendent. Doing likewise with historical construction neglects its *source, subject matter, and the community for which it is intended*. Affirming both dimensions of otherness in Scripture provides a twofold safeguard against eisegesis and asserts the revelatory activity of God *in history*.<sup>255</sup>

### ***III. Horizons and Methodology***

Robert Holub censures Jauss for his use of "horizon" and his methodology. These critiques, however, appear to amount to a lack of

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<sup>255</sup> This latter point coheres with the general aim of liberation theology. See Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 114–26.

connection between Jauss and Gadamer in the former, and a confusion of the aims of Jauss and Gadamer in the latter. The first argument revolves around the indiscriminate and indistinct use of the term “horizon.” Holub concludes this results in uncertainty as to what he means, particularly because various scholars and fields implemented the term “horizon” at the time.<sup>256</sup>

Admittedly, Jauss appears to use the term “horizon” almost as a catchword<sup>257</sup> throughout his work. Given Jauss’ background, however, it is not difficult to see how he has borrowed from and expanded the concept of “horizon” from Gadamer. In the particular case of the “horizon of expectations,” Jauss explicitly states the relationship of his use to that found in the works of Karl Mannheim and Karl Popper.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, the contexts in which Jauss deploys the terminology render its application apparent.

Holub argues additionally that, whereas Gadamer avoided describing a hermeneutical method, Jauss has, in fact, presented a methodology in which we must “bracket our own historical situatedness.”<sup>259</sup> The error with this critique lies in misrepresentation and assumption. Jauss never intends to simply replicate Gadamer, and even admits to establishing a method in his

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<sup>256</sup> Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction*, New Accents (London: Methuen, 1984), 59.

<sup>257</sup> The following are examples of Jauss’ use of “horizon”: open horizon of first reading, retrospective horizon of second reading, horizon of expectation, horizon of experience, horizon of interpretive understanding, horizon of interpretation, horizon of aesthetic experience, horizon of literary expectation, horizon of experience of life, and the transsubjective horizon of understanding.

<sup>258</sup> The term ultimately derives from Husserl’s phenomenology of perception. Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, xii and 40–41; Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine*, 79; Rush makes mention of the parallels between Jauss’ horizon of expectations and the same in the work of art historian E. H. Gombrich. Parris identifies Gombrich as the immediate source for Jauss’ use of the concept, yet I can find no reference to Gombrich in any of Jauss’ work. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 151.

<sup>259</sup> Holub, *Reception Theory*, 60; Knight follows a similar pattern of critique. Though he offers an insightful overview of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, reception theory, and reception history, his insight that Gadamer was not attempting to offer a methodology is decades old. Furthermore, Jauss and proponents of his reception history do not propose their method to the exclusion of historical methods. Knight, “*Wirkungsgeschichte*,” 137–46.

literary history,<sup>260</sup> though the process is open to creative use. He picks up in part where Gadamer, who has been critiqued for not articulating a methodology in his hermeneutics,<sup>261</sup> left off, though his methodology is not as rigid as Holub makes it seem. In *Rezeptionsästhetik*, Jauss seeks to display the “aesthetic” richness of a text found in its history of interpretation, which includes contemporary readings. “Bracketing” provides the reader with the opportunity to enrich their understanding of a text, but it is not the first step in the process of reading. The process involves a degree of freedom in interpretation, but it also scrutinises the horizon of the reader to prevent self-interested, dominating, oppressive, or simply incorrect readings that could have the potential to expand *ad infinitum*.

Gadamer’s specific objection to the use of method in the *Geisteswissenschaften* was that he saw it as an infection from the natural sciences. Alternatively, Gadamer proposed his *Wirkungsgeschichte* in which the “other” reveals the truth of itself to the interpreter, and that a method cannot be applied to the “other.” Jauss, however, approaches the “other” from a different angle. Rather than emphasising the *effect* of a work, Jauss advocates the “principle of the history of reception, which does not have as its starting-point the presumed objective truth of a work but rather the comprehending consciousness seen as the subject of aesthetic experience.”<sup>262</sup> One cannot suggest a method for being affected by something external; the “other.” Because he begins with the “comprehending consciousness” Jauss

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<sup>260</sup> “The question as to how literary history can today be *methodologically* grounded and written anew will be addressed in the following seven theses.” Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 20. Emphasis added.

<sup>261</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 328–29.

<sup>262</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, “The Theory of Reception: A Retrospective of Its Unrecognized Prehistory,” in *Literary Theory Today*, ed. Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 59.

can describe a method of reading and participating in the aesthetic experience that seeks to understand contextual forces that cause a reader to receive a text in a particular manner. The method does not begin, however, in the initial aesthetically perceptual reading (i.e. “play”) of the text, but in the reflective movements of interpretation and application.

#### ***IV. Misinterpretation and “Use” Versus “Effect”***

Because reception history opens biblical texts to indefinite interpretations (within a theologically-guided trajectory), it faces the difficulty of being able to articulate what counts as an appropriate interpretation.<sup>263</sup> Part of the problem lays in the fact that *Rezeptionsästhetik* is not immediately interested in misinterpretations, but in all receptions of text. Räsänen raises a similar concern with *Wirkungsgeschichte* by querying how one differentiates between “effect” and “use” of a text. He questions further as to how one can distinguish between the effects of a text and the general effects of culture/history on how one reads the text. In the midst of his argument, Räsänen conflates “reception” and “effect” as essentially the same.<sup>264</sup> Therein lies the problem. What Räsänen attempts to flatten, Jauss draws out as decided differences between *Wirkungsgeschichte* and *Rezeptionsästhetik*.

Today, the interaction of effect and reception is commonly defined in such a way that *effect* is the name given to the element of concretization determined by the text, while *reception* is the element determined by the person to whom the text is addressed. Thus the implication of the text and the explication of the addressee, the implicit and the historical reader are dependent on one another, and the text itself is thus able to limit the arbitrariness of the interpretation, guaranteeing the continuity of its experience beyond the present act of reception.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Parris raises this concern at the beginning of his dissertation. Parris, “Reception Theory: Philosophical Hermeneutics, Literary Theory, and Biblical Interpretation,” 10.

<sup>264</sup> Räsänen, “Effective ‘History’,” 311–14.

<sup>265</sup> Jauss, “The Theory of Reception,” 60. Emphasis original.



For Jauss, the text limits the capacity of misinterpretation and reception history examines the cultural particularities that a reader brings to the text. Both the *Wirkungsgeschichte* and *Rezeptionsästhetik* of a text include its misuse.<sup>266</sup> The latter recognises misuse as part of the text's history and challenges the reader to consider whether a particular misuse has posed legitimate questions to the text.<sup>267</sup> The aim of these programs is not simply to list what interpreters have said about biblical texts. Rather, they seek to examine the aesthetic quality of their reception in comparison with other receptions, to confront modern horizons of expectation with possibilities readers may not have considered, to reveal to later readers when interpretations have entered the dialogue, and to expose unrecognised prejudices so as to render the project of biblical hermeneutics both more *inclusive* and more *critical*. In so doing, *Rezeptionsästhetik* achieves a higher level of critical engagement with Scripture than historicism.<sup>268</sup>

An added level of protection against misinterpretation comes from the Christian community. "The best interpreters of scripture are those actively engaged in communities of biblical interpretation, and the single most important practice to cultivate is involvement in reading scripture with others who take its message seriously and who meet regularly to discern its meaning for life and faith."<sup>269</sup> Orientation toward the subject matter of Scripture within its intended audience is a necessary supplement to reception history that we suggest should be essential to a biblical studies program.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Bockmuehl, "A Commentator's Approach," 61.

<sup>267</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 44–46.

<sup>268</sup> "Kritischer müßten mir die Historisch-Kritischen sein!" Barth, *Der Römerbrief*, xii.

<sup>269</sup> Joel B. Green, "Scripture and Theology," *Interpretation* 56, no. 1 (2002): 16 and 19.

<sup>270</sup> It remains unclear why Morgan insists on holding theological interest in "subject matter" as separate from the reception history of Scripture, which, by its nature, is interested

## ***V. Social Formation/Application***

A final critique of *Rezeptionsästhetik* has to do with whether Jauss' model achieves anything that might resemble social formation. This is best addressed through the triad of comprehension, interpretation, and application that Jauss appropriates from Gadamer. Rather than distinguish the three as entirely separate, Gadamer demonstrates that when one interprets, they are already involved in the process of comprehending, and in comprehending, they are already applying what they have understood to their horizon of experience. All three of these elements should, in Gadamer's eyes, be subsumed under the larger category of *understanding*.<sup>271</sup> Application begins as a mental exercise and eventually matures into demonstrable social formation. The fact that many do not exhibit the socially formative capacity of literature, particularly Scripture, in their lives is actually an issue of whether the reader has submitted to the text as one who has been addressed.<sup>272</sup>

There are undoubtedly other critiques, including those from within the field of literary theory and philosophy. The above-mentioned criticisms represent, however, the weightiest arguments against *Rezeptionsästhetik*, with particular attention to theological concerns.

## **4. Rezeptionsästhetik in Biblical Studies**

Jauss' aesthetics of reception plays a significant role in biblical hermeneutics. By reading Scripture with the eyes of the contemporary

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in textual claims formulated as appropriate answers to questions. Reception history is neither unconcerned with valid interpretation, nor does it exclude adaptation by theological principles. If anything, *Rezeptionsästhetik*, in its concern that textual meanings *must* affect social praxis, it is more appropriately primed for theological interest in the "Sache" of Scripture than certain other methods. Morgan's reading, though rightly concerned with the hypothetical danger of reception history, reflects no engagement with Jauss and appears to be more of a critique of the history of interpretation than the methodology of *Rezeptionsästhetik*. Morgan, "Sachkritik," 189–90.

<sup>271</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 275–78.

<sup>272</sup> Lewis refers to such as "unliterary readers." C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 38.

historical context, questions arise to which the Scriptures provide new answers, as well as fresh appropriations of old questions. Engaging with the past receptions of the texts recognises the “history” of a text in a much more developed capacity than historicism and forces readers not only to engage with a text’s origination, but also its life beyond this. They have asked insightful and varied questions between its origination and our current reception that provoke a contemporary horizon of expectation by forcing one understanding to engage with another and consider the legitimacy of questions asked.

Further to this, reception history reveals that differences in biblical meaning do not confirm the evolutionary advancement of knowledge. Instead, it indicates differing paradigms in which certain meanings are validated or prioritised. A paradigm shift results when an older paradigm cannot adequately answer a question posed to a text.<sup>273</sup> We see precisely such a shift from primarily theological readings of the pre-modern era to primarily historical readings in modernity. Presently, the historicist paradigm is not epistemologically sufficient to address questions of a theological nature, and a paradigm shift has been messily underway for the last several decades. These questions unite the shifting paradigms both by the nature of ongoing dialogue and the inability of one paradigm to answer a question resulting in the formation of a new paradigm. This reality is the scarlet thread of continuity running through pre-modern and modern interpretations of Scripture.<sup>274</sup>

This is certainly not the first endeavour in utilising reception theory in biblical studies. Numerous articles as well as several commentaries have made

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<sup>273</sup> Occasionally, new discoveries (e.g. the Copernican revolution) render old answers obsolete and necessitate a new paradigm. This does not, however, cancel the historical dialogue and the “new” becomes so only in “the mediation of the new through the old.” Jauss, “Tradition,” 375.

<sup>274</sup> Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 69–70; Parris, *Reception Theory*, 174–200.

forays in the field. A brief review of several key works and series will prepare the way for our own offering of reception history.

## ***I. Major Works on Reception Theory***<sup>275</sup>

### *i. Brevard Childs*

Brevard Childs' commentary on Exodus is an early venture (1974) at incorporating reception theory into the biblical commentary genre. As is well known, he developed a particular strand of canonical criticism that concentrates on the final form of the text as the "vehicle of revelation and instruction"<sup>276</sup> and promotes an aim of seeking contemporary address through Scripture that closely parallels the work of Jauss.<sup>277</sup> Though the work offers a great deal of historical-philological detail like most modern commentaries, he also includes sections on the history of exegesis, which illuminate "the text by showing how the questions which are brought to bear by subsequent generations of interpreters influenced the answers which they received."<sup>278</sup> Such study helps us to understand the reality-shaping nature that Scripture has had through history.<sup>279</sup> In one example of the reception of a passage (Exod 1:8-2:10), Childs takes up the question of how Pharaoh could have raised a Hebrew in his household without suspicion. More recent commentators reject the passage's historicity and therefore preclude further discussion. Early Church and medieval commentators, however, focused on whether the midwives had been rewarded by God for lying and the theological-ethical implications of this to the extent that it became the focal text for discussions of

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<sup>275</sup> Unfortunately, Vásquez's impressive work on reception theory was published and discovered too late to adequately incorporate it into my research. Víctor Manuel Morales Vásquez, *Contours of a Biblical Reception Theory: Studies in the Rezeptionsgeschichte of Romans 13.1–7* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2011).

<sup>276</sup> Childs, *Exodus*, xv.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii. Childs rejects the results of historical-critical inquiry as the end of interpretation. See also Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (London: Continuum, 1992), 22–23 and 40–42.

<sup>278</sup> Childs, *Exodus*, xv.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

lying, including in the works of Augustine, Aquinas, Peter Martyr, and Calvin.<sup>280</sup>

Childs' work is a helpful and insightful early attempt at involving reception theory in the biblical commentary. Rather than focusing on every verse of Exodus and its history, he importantly limits the discussion to texts that have generated the most discussion through history. Such selection for a commentary is critical both for introducing a reader to important areas of reception and in setting boundaries in research.

ii. *Ulrich Luz*<sup>281</sup>

Ulrich Luz offers a more clearly defined implementation of reception theory than Childs by concretely importing Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte* into his commentary on Matthew. In this process, Luz distinguishes between the "history of interpretation" as commentaries and the "history of influences" as all other media,<sup>282</sup> an interesting, but perhaps captious, distinction. Unhelpfully, it can imply that commentaries do not have a historical influence and/or that they are not part of a biblical text's *Wirkungsgeschichte*, but Luz qualifies that the former includes the latter.<sup>283</sup>

In a manner strikingly reminiscent of Pannenberg, Luz warns that the historical-critical tools of biblical studies are crucial, but miss their purpose if they fail to lead the interpreter to meaning in the present. An attempt to bypass the historical dimension of a text's origination in an appeal to its existence as

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 22–24.

<sup>281</sup> Other significant contributions to reception theory in the (German) EKK series, which originally published Luz's work, include Ulrich Wilckens (Romans) and Wolfgang Schrage (1 Corinthians).

<sup>282</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss, vol. 1, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 95.

<sup>283</sup> Räisänen offers two important insights here that point to the need for *reception history* as well as *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Firstly, he argues that the distinction should not be between types of media, but between the actual effectiveness of particular receptions. Secondly, he asks whether one can distinguish between the effects of the Bible and the general effects of culture/civilization/history. Räisänen, "Effective 'History'," 311–12.

suprahistorical (i.e. Barth) only covers the issue without truly addressing the concern and the historical nature of the biblical texts.<sup>284</sup> Therefore, Luz suggests that the function of historical-critical exegesis is 1.) to distance/alienate the modern reader from the text and; 2.) to foreground the preconceptions of the modern interpreter through this alienation so that the process turns into self-reflection. He sees interpretation enriched through the incorporation of a text's *Wirkungsgeschichte*, which clarifies “for the interpreter (1) who he or she is in confrontation with the texts and (2) who he or she could be in confrontation with them.”<sup>285</sup> For Knight and Childs, the problem with Luz's model lay in its prioritisation of historical-criticism. Knight sees Luz making *Wirkungsgeschichte* an activity that “follows from exegesis rather than being intrinsic to it.”<sup>286</sup> From a theological perspective, Childs remarks that Luz makes the historical critical research the criteria of truth, rather than the rule of faith, with *Wirkungsgeschichte* only registering the “subjective interpretations”<sup>287</sup> of the Church.

In terms of which interpretations to prioritise in Matthew's *Wirkungsgeschichte*, Luz produces a rubric for selection that prioritises texts that are approximate to the original meaning of a passage and that influence our present pre-understanding of a text.<sup>288</sup> Unfortunately, this necessarily excludes provocative, maverick texts from consideration and can potentially perpetuate voices of dominance.

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<sup>284</sup> Cf. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions*, 1:15–16.

<sup>285</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 1:96.

<sup>286</sup> Knight, “*Wirkungsgeschichte*,” 142.

<sup>287</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 32.

<sup>288</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 1:95–96. Here Childs' criticism reverberates loudly.

None would question the magisterial quality of Luz's commentary on Matthew. Yet even in his reconstruction of the original horizon of expectations, a misstep shapes the remainder of his interpretation. Luz determines that the gospel came from a Jewish-Christian community in the first century that criticised Judaism as a group of insiders, thereby accounting for the harsh tone against "the Jews" in the gospel, and his interpretation proceeds within the strictures of this initial commitment. Matthew's gospel was intended for a Jewish-Christian audience.<sup>289</sup> It becomes clear throughout his commentary that Luz wants to defend Matthew against the anti-Semitic interpretations that it has engendered historically. Undoubtedly, the language of Matthew indicates a Jewish-Christian origin, but the emphasis on mission to the Gentiles (Matt 28:16-20) and the rapid and widespread dissemination of the gospel militate against such an insular audience.<sup>290</sup> Therefore, Luz raises important questions about the possibility of realistically recreating the horizons of expectations of a work and whether an attempt like his is not a venture into the psychologism that Jauss denounces.

*iii. The Blackwell Bible Commentaries (BBCS)*

The BBCS, edited by John Sawyer, Judith Kovacs, and Chris Rowland (and later volumes by David Gunn also), is the first commentary series completely dedicated to a "reception history"<sup>291</sup> of the Bible in the format of a commentary.<sup>292</sup> Because there are so many volumes in the series, we will

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 1:79–95.

<sup>290</sup> Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM Press, 2000), 76–78.

<sup>291</sup> The quotation marks are not to be taken as patronising, but indicate a distinction from our own definition of the term.

<sup>292</sup> Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), xi–xii.

dedicate our attention to the stated aim of the project and a selection of volumes from the series: Revelation, Judges, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Within the aim of presenting a reception history of the Bible, the series leaves a great deal of textual selection and the emphasis of particular passages to the individual authors. The shared expectation is that the series should produce a sampling of works from different eras and leave it to the readers to determine “the value, morality, and validity of particular interpretations.” There is a somewhat incautious use of the terms “reception history,” “history of influences,” and “history of interpretation” in the series description. It appears that the latter two follow Luz’s distinctions and that both should be classified under “reception history,” though *Wirkungsgeschichte* would be more appropriate in many cases.<sup>293</sup> It is also perplexing that a series dedicated to reception history fails to make mention of Jauss, even if in disagreement with his approach.<sup>294</sup>

The preface to the Revelation commentary only compounds the problem by the repeated and seemingly interchangeable appeal to all of the above terms, including *Wirkungsgeschichte*, subsuming them all under the concept of “reception history.”<sup>295</sup> The introductory chapter of the commentary offers an important framework for the more materially diverse commentary that follows, describing interpretive trends and categories that have

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> The exception to this comes not from the published works, but the series’ website in which an article in defence of the BBCS approach cites a paper by Mary Callaway, who outlines Jauss’ definition of meaning, horizons of expectations, timelessness, and his relationship to Gadamer approvingly. Nevertheless, confusion over terminology is not helped with the website, which emphasises its reliance on reception history, but bears the slogan “Tracing the Bible’s *influence* through the centuries.” Influence and reception are related, but distinct, as we have tried to show. Chris Heard, “In Defense of Reception History,” *Blackwell Bible Commentaries*, 12 June 2011, <<http://bbibcomm.net/?p=216>> (15 July 2012); Mary C. Callaway, “What’s the Use of Reception History?” (presented at the SBL general conference, San Antonio, 2004).

<sup>295</sup> Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, xiii–xiv.



materialised through the history of Revelation. Following this, Kovacs and Rowland describe a twofold structure for each chapter of the biblical book: the first part offers historical context for the biblical text, while the second explores the historical interpretations and is subdivided according to major themes.<sup>296</sup> This appears to follow Jauss' model of reading, with the assumption that the first and second steps (i.e. aesthetically perceptual and interpretive) have taken place, and that the reader can now incorporate the history of Revelation to deepen their self-understanding.

The benefit of offering a reception history of Revelation has to do with its necessarily “open” character inherent to its apocalyptic nature. The history of the apocalypse has an interpretive richness unparalleled by other biblical texts. This unveils, however, a critical weakness of the BBCS: an apparent standard word-limit assigned to every commentary.<sup>297</sup>

This may lead to a further weakness of the Revelation commentary in particular. Namely, the sections of reception/effective history group readings with similar themes together, but often with gaps of hundreds of years of interpretation between them. It fails to show active appropriation, or the taking up of the dialogue through the formulation of new questions. An example of this appears in the interpretation of Rev 1:1 and 19, which puts the reading of Victorinus of Pettau (d. early 4<sup>th</sup> century) alongside the Millerites (mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) without any other readings. The interpretations of Rev 1:4 are not even in historical order (Victorinus, Geneva Bible, Bede, Scofield Bible).<sup>298</sup> In this way, it is more exclusively a history of interpretation than a reception

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., xv. Kovacs and Rowland divide interpretations of Revelation into chronological, decoding, and actualizing patterns. Ibid., 8–11.

<sup>297</sup> Thiselton's 1 and 2 Thessalonians commentary is actually longer than either the Revelation and Judges commentary.

<sup>298</sup> Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, 42.

history. Biblical reception history has to be about more than showing interesting overlaps of thought. The frequent non-chronological development of reading traditions make it difficult to picture how the traditions developed and the contexts in which the readings were actualized, which can help modern readers to get a larger picture of the hermeneutical endeavour— such as how one responds to a text from a given context— and it helps to make them reflective about their own hermeneutical paradigm, raising questions of interpretive legitimacy. As a further example, a chronological ordering of the interpretations of the seals (5:1) could have shown how later readings of Bullinger, Wesley, and Newton are reactions against the tradition of Joachim of Fiore, but the non-chronological presentation obfuscates the historical dialogue.<sup>299</sup>

I would like to conclude with the Revelation commentary with two positive observations. First, the section on the millennium is the best example of a reception history that the book has to offer by tracing a wide range of diverse interpretations chronologically.<sup>300</sup> With a modern focus (especially in North America and its missions abroad) on the Millennium, this has the significant potential to engage modern horizons of expectation. Secondly, the commentary offers a number of more obscure and non-conformist readings, differently from Luz's commentary and the reception history that I offer on 2 Thessalonians below. These readings can provoke our horizons in a manner differently from those that have given shape to our current reading traditions.

Gunn's commentary on Judges reflects the diversity of the authors' understanding of how one "does" reception history. He wisely begins by

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 70–71.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 200–14.

limiting his engagement with the main stories of the book, which will have the most historical engagement,<sup>301</sup> and he opens each chapter with an abstract describing the narratives under consideration, without situating the book historically. This aligns well with Jauss' aesthetically perceptual reading. From here, he offers diachronic interpretations of the section. This consistent order is an advantage over the Revelation commentary, yet it still approximates more to a history of interpretation. It is unclear whether the absence of historical-critical research indicates that these models are incommensurable, or that this commentary should be read in conjunction with a historical-critical commentary. Also, synchronic cross-sections could help disclose why particular interpretations became influential, or how they were contextual responses, but we can attribute this absence to limitation of space.

Lastly, Thiselton's commentary in the BBCS on 1 and 2 Thessalonians amounts to a self-attempted reboot of the series. Before the publication of his commentary, Thiselton had already expressed reservations about the BBCS, remarking that (by that time) it largely amounted to a history of reception that did not measure up to the standards for reception history detailed by Luz.<sup>302</sup> The dissatisfaction with the BBCS approach to reception history materialises concretely in his extensive introduction, which details a reception history according to Jauss and emphasises the reconstruction of past horizons of expectations to illuminate "the hermeneutic difference between the former and

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<sup>301</sup> David M. Gunn, *Judges Through the Centuries*, 1st ed., Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Blackwell, 2005), 13–14.

<sup>302</sup> Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 319.

current understanding of a work”<sup>303</sup> for the purpose of enriching self-understanding.<sup>304</sup>

Thiselton also offers an abbreviated historical background for the Thessalonian corpus<sup>305</sup> and each chapter begins with a content overview of the section of the epistles for which he offers a reception history. The difficulty with this structure is the apparent prioritisation of the historical approach above aesthetically perceptual reading of the epistle.

His reception history of texts attempts to show receptive influences that shape the understanding of historical readers, leading them to receive the text in particular ways. This entails the presentation of material chronologically, similar to Gunn. In his first example of 2 Thessalonians, Thiselton traces an understanding of “faith” (2 Thess 1:4) that precedes any apparent interaction with the epistle through Clement of Rome, the *Epistle to Diognetus*, Ignatius, and Irenaeus before the first direct, extant allusion to 2 Thess 1:4-5 by Tertullian. This more clearly exemplifies the *receptive* dimension of reading over against the *effective* nature of the text.<sup>306</sup> He also presents a wide range of materials, including homilies, hymns, poems, and artwork. Taken together, Thiselton presents a methodologically more precise and clearly understood approach to reception history.

## ***II. A Reception History of 2 Thessalonians***

The research below offers a concentrated reception history of 2 Thessalonians that illustrates the synchronic developments of interpretation at three epochal moments of the text’s history clearly. This should allow for

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<sup>303</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 28.

<sup>304</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians Through the Centuries*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 1–6.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–18.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 180–81.

greater appreciation of the aesthetic value of the respective interpretations. Diachrony shows the questions that have been asked in the historical dialogue with the text, but synchrony better illuminates why interpreters asked *particular* questions. It is hoped that a display of punctiliar enquiry can aid the modern reader of Scripture in formulating “good” questions in their reading. Further, it lends itself better to the present *possessing* of past questions that leads to greater self-understanding and, thereby, to speaking about what the letter “means.” Restrictions enable us to offer an abbreviated theological *Rezeptionsästhetik* of 2 Thessalonians through a range of theological works,<sup>307</sup> but this should hopefully demonstrate the importance of the program. The historically chronological progression of each chapter and the placement of the pre-modern interpreters in dialogue with modern scholars offers a diachronic image of the epistle’s history, thus temporarily stabilising a “canon” of 2 Thessalonians. We look now at our early Church example of the reception of 2 Thessalonians: John Chrysostom.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> With Knight we understand Gadamer’s omission of commentaries in a biblical *Wirkungsgeschichte* as indicative, rather than definitive. A thorough reception history explores all resources. Knight, “*Wirkungsgeschichte*,” 138–39; see also Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 1:95. See also Räisänen’s emphasis on *effects* rather than *media* in note 283 above.

<sup>308</sup> Arranging this project thus does not bypass either the aesthetically perceptual reading or the reflectively interpretive reading. In the case of the first, it seems more appropriate to allow the reader (subconsciously) to determine the aspects of 2 Thessalonians that they notice or prioritise. With the latter, interpretation may take place immediately in/after the first reading, but it also necessarily takes place and integrates material more fully after the “historical” reading, as Jauss himself shows when he reverses the order in his reading of Gen 3. Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 95–100.

## Chapter 2: John Chrysostom

### 1. Background

John Chrysostom (349<sup>1</sup>-407) was born in the Syrian city of Antioch in the midst of great political, cultural, and ecclesiastical upheaval in the Byzantine Empire. Despite having lost his father at a young age, Chrysostom's social background saw that he was not without privilege and afforded him the finest education available during his time. This instruction included finishing school with formal training in rhetoric, which he completed under the renowned pagan rhetor of Antioch, Libanius, alongside Theodore, the eventual bishop of Mopsuestia.<sup>2</sup> Though having the potential to pursue a successful career in public service, Chrysostom's Christian background<sup>3</sup> likely influenced his decision to receive baptism within a year of completing his studies (c. 367) and to take up service as an aide to Meletius, the pro-Nicene bishop of Antioch. In conjunction with this assignment, Chrysostom began frequenting a local *askētērion* led by the pious, ascetic instructors Diodore and Carterius, from whom he received a theological education and his initial exposure to asceticism.<sup>4</sup> By 371, he was elevated to the position of lector under Meletius, but he abandoned his duties to pursue an ascetic lifestyle in the Syrian

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<sup>1</sup> Though historically debated, recent arguments favour Chrysostom's birth date in the year 349. See especially J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth* (London: Duckworth, 1995), 296–98. See also Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom*, *The Early Church Fathers* (London: Routledge, 2000), 3; Rudolf Brändle, *Johannes Chrysostomus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 6–7; Brändle, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, 23; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Divine Rhetoric: The Sermon on the Mount As Message and As Model in Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 16–18.

<sup>3</sup> For this likelihood, see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> For more on this educational period see Andrea Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 142–44.

wilderness shortly after his appointment. This was likely accelerated by Meletius' exile for adherence to Nicene Trinitarianism around the same time.<sup>5</sup>

During this retreat, Chrysostom spent four years taming his passions with a group of anchorite monks and an additional two years in isolation during which he applied himself to the memorisation of Scripture. His extreme denial eventually led to severe renal and gastro-intestinal issues that would affect him for the rest of his life. This debilitation, coupled with Meletius' return, led Chrysostom back to Antioch, where he resumed his duties as a lector. Within two years he was ordained a deacon. And only five years thence he received ordination into the priesthood by Flavian, Meletius' successor.<sup>6</sup>

Chrysostom found himself as a priest and soul-carer for one of the largest and strategically most important cities in the Byzantine Empire.<sup>7</sup> It was a city marked by a drastic dichotomy between the wealthy echelon of society and the poorer constituents;<sup>8</sup> a characteristic that it shared with Chrysostom's later bishopric, Constantinople. For this reason, Chrysostom's sermons frequently feature the topics of wealth and the Christian necessity of almsgiving.<sup>9</sup> Chrysostom's elevation to bishop of Constantinople (397) after the sudden death of Nectarius meant that Chrysostom found the ecclesial budget at his disposal, with which he was able to openly demonstrate the unity of his thought and praxis by quickly reconfiguring the expenditures and directing the primary funds away from building projects toward hospitals,

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<sup>5</sup> This was followed by an attempt to forcefully ordain Chrysostom into the priesthood, for which he considered himself unprepared. Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 25–26.

<sup>6</sup> Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 5–7.

<sup>7</sup> Brändle, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Impoverished parents were even known to blind their children in order to evoke sympathy from passersby. J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 97–98.

<sup>9</sup> Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 46. Aileen M. Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 133–70.

poorhouses, and similar charitable causes.<sup>10</sup> The combination of his confrontational character and his handling of episcopal power resulted in Chrysostom garnering powerful enemies in the ecclesial (notably Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria) and political realms (e.g. princess Eudoxia). Collectively, these enemies rallied against the bishop and sentenced him to exile (*in absentia*) at the Synod of the Oak (403).<sup>11</sup> The uproar that resulted led to a rescission of the order by the emperor, which he reinstated in 404. This exile initially took Chrysostom to Cucusus in Armenia, but he was finally sent to Pityus on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, nearly 700 miles from Constantinople. Due to the speed of the journey and his already fragile health, Chrysostom died in transit (407).<sup>12</sup> Approximately 900 extant texts from Chrysostom have endured the passage of time, with the homilies<sup>13</sup> constituting the bulk of this collection.

### ***I. 2 Thessalonians Homilies: Provenance, Audience, and Structure***

Earlier scholars dated the homilies on 2 Thessalonians to 402, thus placing them in the context of Constantinople near to the time of Chrysostom's exile.<sup>14</sup> Recent research has demonstrated, however, that the provenance of these and many (if not most) of Chrysostom's works are difficult to assert with confidence.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, we can only situate them

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<sup>10</sup> "God needs no golden goblets, but rather golden souls" Brändle, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, 74–75.

<sup>11</sup> The events leading to Chrysostom's exile are complex and spread out over several years. For the list of charges, see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 299–301.

<sup>12</sup> Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 10–11. See also Frederic Chase, *Chrysostom, a Study in the History of Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1887), 13–17. For the combined factors that led to his exile, see J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 198–222.

<sup>13</sup> Over 250 of these homilies are on the Pauline Epistles, excluding Galatians, for which Chrysostom offers a commentary.

<sup>14</sup> Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 172.

<sup>15</sup> For an in-depth evaluation of the dating of Chrysostom's homilies, see Wendy Mayer, *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom—Provenance*, OrChrAn 273 (Rome: Pontifica Istituto Orientale, 2005).



generally in the context of a large, prosperous city in the Byzantine Empire. This also has some effect on the assumed audience of these homilies. If given in Constantinople, for example, much of the royal court, numerous monastics, and clergy would constitute part of the audience. Since the homilies do not appear to target these groups, however, we can assume a general audience that includes members from every social stratum.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of composition, we must also plead ignorance. Chrysostom may have composed the homilies in advance himself or preached extemporaneously with a stenographer recording. Even after the sermon, the homily would have been edited, with subsequent redactions occurring throughout the history of the text. Still, the texts maintain Chrysostom's rhetorical features, display consistency of character, and provide a lasting legacy.<sup>17</sup>

Chrysostom's homiletical structure varies according to the type of homily (e.g. exegetical, topical, polemical, or *encomium*), and the content hinges on the liturgical and civic calendars, topical events, catechesis, or more purely exegetical aims.<sup>18</sup> His homilies on the Pauline epistles are best classed as exegetical and follow a general structure. He may offer an introductory homily (*hypothesis*), which gives an overview and introduces key themes from the letter,<sup>19</sup> while the remaining homilies attend to consecutive sections of the

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<sup>16</sup> For more on Chrysostom's audiences, see Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 25–30.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 30–31. The Migne text of the 2 Thessalonians homilies is considered relatively stable. For important variations, I have consulted the Field Critical Text (FCT).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 21. These factors can even result in variations within a homiletical series. For example, Chrysostom's first homily on Genesis marks the beginning of Lent and focuses on fasting, employing Gen 2:16-17 late in the homily as a figurative reference to fasting (PG 53:23), while many of the remaining homilies proceed more exegetically through Genesis.

<sup>19</sup> Young describes the introductory *hypothesis* and point by point examination of the text as characteristic of Antiochene interpretation. Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 171. Wilken adds that it is "shaped by historical setting, the author's intention, and literary character of the

epistle typically divided into two sections that present doctrine (the exegetical portion of the homily) and describe/exhort praxis (the “sermonic” portion of the homily). The sermonic portion may or may not be connected to the content of the epistle, and the homilies on a biblical book were not necessarily preached as a consecutive series.

This standard bipartite division betrays the esteem in which Chrysostom holds Paul, because it is modelled after a pattern he sees reflected in the letters of the apostle.<sup>20</sup> This imitation can be traced in part to his rhetorical education, for a skilled rhetor follows the example of rhetors who precede him, and because it provides him with attention to structural and methodological detail. That is to say his rhetorical education does not result in a strict adherence to Greco-Roman rhetoric, but rather that it heightens his awareness of Paul’s rhetoric and better enables him to make use of it for his own homiletical purposes. Pelikan adds the patristic era marks a decided shift in classical rhetoric to a more clearly delineated Christian rhetoric because of its reference and subject matter, describing the Scriptural homily as an entirely “distinctive genre for Christian rhetoric.”<sup>21</sup>

Chrysostom’s five homilies on 2 Thessalonians fit with the pattern described above.<sup>22</sup> They are better disposed to the program of *Rezeptionsästhetik* than other homiletical series because the exegetical and

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work.” Robert Louis Wilken, “*In novissimis diebus*: Biblical Promises, Jewish Hopes, and Early Christian Exegesis,” in *Norms of Faith and Life*, ed. E. Ferguson, Recent Studies in Early Christianity (New York: Garland, 1999), 148–49.

<sup>20</sup> Chase, *Chrysostom*, 155; Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 254–55.

<sup>21</sup> Pelikan, *Divine Rhetoric*, 31, cf. 3–33.

<sup>22</sup> Of the Pauline epistles, Chrysostom’s homilies on Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 Timothy, and Philemon share the same pattern of a *hypothesis* homily followed by exegetical homilies. The remaining Pauline epistles have no *hypothesis*, but maintain the bipartite, exegetical structure. See PG 60–62. The NT narrative homilies (Matthew, John, and Acts) also differ slightly from this pattern, though they tend to maintain the two-part structure exegesis and exhortation.

practical portions of the homilies are connected topically, rather than discoursing on a current event.

The first homily, as a *hypothesis*, offers a reconstruction of Paul's reasons for writing the letter: the Thessalonians were afraid the resurrection had passed and that the Judgment would soon follow because of the message of false teachers to this effect (correlating it with a similar situation in 2 Tim 2:1). The clear focus of 2 Thessalonians is to dispel this non-apostolic myth through a counter theology aimed at encouraging the Thessalonians in their current state of suffering as consistent with faith in Christ and by reasserting the events that must precede the resurrection, namely, the arrival of Antichrist. In a rhetorical move, Chrysostom parallels the false theology in Thessalonica with an apparent false teaching in his own locale (both wrought by Satan) about Antichrist arriving in humility as revealed by 2 Thessalonians. The epistle affirms that pride will characterise Antichrist. This leads to an extended discourse on pride, which is inconsistent with the Christian life. Pride features as a theme through the rest of the homilies on 2 Thessalonians, implicitly in some cases.

The remaining homilies on the epistle focus more specifically on its content and follow the bipartite structure mentioned above that begins with lemma-by-lemma exegesis leading to a sermonic discourse. Typically, a keyword in the concluding verse of exegesis serves as the theme or means to the topic that he discusses in the sermonic portion. Homily 2 exegetes 2 Thess 1:1-8, focusing specifically on the nature of grace, love, patience, and God's vengeance. This latter topic receives an excursus that goes beyond a description of the Judgment to focus on a cultivated fear that a Christian

should have toward hell. For Chrysostom, the appropriate attitude best develops through repeated engagement with the “divine discourse” of Scripture.

The third homily (1:9-2:5) begins with a discussion of hell, likely indicating the series nature of these homilies as well as its connection to the text of the epistle. The mention of the Lord’s “glory” and the saints’ relationship to that glory, and the nature of “calling” absorb his attention in the first four verses. Chrysostom equates “the coming of our Lord Jesus” (2:1) with the general resurrection, and observes how Paul encourages the Thessalonians thoroughly before proceeding to his own doctrine regarding the *eschaton*. The text leads into a discussion of the “man of sin” (2:3) as Antichrist, which Paul concludes with the question “Do you not remember that I told you these things...” (2:5). Chrysostom capitalises on this expression to teach the necessity of repeated instruction, particularly against the passions of wealth, pride, and sloth, which are countered by continual engagement with Scripture.

Chrysostom’s fourth homily (2:6-3:2) observes first the obscurity of τὸ κατέχον, which he understands as the Roman Empire, and the “mystery of lawlessness at work,” which he deems to be Nero. He then follows a Daniel-type timeline of kingdoms that must precede the arrival of Antichrist. His rhetorical education comes through in the repeated posing of questions,<sup>23</sup> namely in regard to how God could allow the “deception of those who are perishing” (2:10). He encourages his audience with the promise of salvation to

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<sup>23</sup> Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 20. This use of rhetorical questions, in many cases as anticipating arguments of the audience, is replete in his homilies. For a thorough use of structuring questions, cf. *Against those who Abandon the Church for the Circus Games and the Theatre* (PG 56:263-70).

those who “love the truth” (2:10), i.e. Christ. Chrysostom adds to the apocalyptic timeline that Elijah will precede Christ’s second coming. The closing verses (2:16-3:2) draw Chrysostom’s attention to prayer, leading into an exhortation to pray both because it is a means of God’s grace and because John, in a leadership scenario similar to Paul, greatly needs the prayers of his congregants. He reveals how prayer indicates equal participation for all in the divine.

His concluding homily on the epistle covers the remaining verses (3:3-18) and continues with the topic of prayer, associating it with the Lord’s promise of salvation. Chrysostom observes Paul’s rhetorical move of emphasising the Lord’s prerogative in salvation to keep the Thessalonians from thinking too highly of themselves. This is accompanied by reminders to remain in love and patience, which leads into the topic of the idle. With Paul, Chrysostom emphasises working with one’s hands. He also clarifies the nature of “withdrawal” (3:6) with not wearying in doing good by regarding the admonished as brother (3:13, 15). Chrysostom differentiates this from the treatment of the poor by members of his own congregation. The Christian should always help another in genuine need, without insulting them. The concluding prayer (3:18) is regarded as a real impartation of the grace and presence of Christ. Chrysostom connects this to the promise of Christ’s presence in the Great Commission (Matt 28:20), denouncing idleness and mistreatment of the poor as a contrast with the command to baptise and teach all the nations (28:19), which is the contingency of the promise. He concludes by offering practical ways for every congregant, but particular men, to be “teachers” of doctrine in all aspects of their lives.

## ***II. Influential Impulses for Interpreting 2 Thessalonians***

The instructive and rhetorical approach exhibited in his sermons reveal the salience with which he perceived the homily as “a powerful educative tool and medium of persuasion, as well as an effective means of forging a bond with those who actively listen to what he has to say.”<sup>24</sup> Chrysostom preached with “directness,”<sup>25</sup> avoiding the abstract, because of the conviction that the homily could have a profound effect on social behaviour, promoting a form of ascetic-moralism in his congregations.<sup>26</sup>

When looking specifically at Pauline texts, Chrysostom aims at perceiving the mind of the apostle<sup>27</sup> through the historical context of the given epistle and the rhetorical tools employed therein. Part of this task entails Chrysostom querying, “What is Paul doing as a pastor in this letter?” and he works out the answer in terms of Christian formation. This materialises particularly in his repeated themes of wealth, pride, and humility.<sup>28</sup> Each of these topics receive attention in his homilies on 2 Thessalonians.

In his reading, Chrysostom strives to illuminate the “meaning” of the text, in one sense, by following Paul’s “purpose” in the letter as a whole. At the same time, he sees the “meaning” of the text in the broader sense of God speaking presently in a way that has “practical” meaning for the congregation. It is important to note that, though the Antiochene tradition emphasises a literal reading of Scripture, the Scriptures *as a canonical whole* form the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 27. Chrysostom owed his interpretive predilection to the instruction of Diodore, who criticised allegory sharply. Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 19.

<sup>26</sup> Hartney, *John Chrysostom*, 33–34; Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 170 and 181.

<sup>27</sup> Chase, *Chrysostom*, 157.

<sup>28</sup> Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 21.

interpretive context, which differs from the construal of “literal”<sup>29</sup> interpretation in historical positivism.

One of the greatest influence on his homilies on 2 Thessalonians lies in Chrysostom’s ascetic background. This way of life, itself shaped by an emphasis on certain biblical impulses, leads to a particular view of Scripture’s centrality in the Antiochene ascetic tradition. It is marked by an eschatologically-oriented present in thought and action, constant redirection of attention to God, the promotion of humility, and the renunciation of making money.<sup>30</sup>

Rather than explore his work according to homily and the order of 2 Thessalonians, I examine aspects that shape Chrysostom’s reading of the epistle, both in terms of literary and social context, and the thematic guidance of the text. These topics (alluded to above) include: 1.) Chrysostom’s Antiochene exegetical heritage; 2.) his esteem for Paul; 3.) his training in rhetoric; 4.) a canonical reading of Scripture; 5.) monastic/ascetic influences; 6.) practical concerns regarding hell and apocalyptic material, and; 7.) general pastoral concerns for his congregation(s). Combined with the (primarily Christian) literature available at his time, these elements constitute the epistemological and interpretive framework with which Chrysostom approaches 2 Thessalonians. Though the text itself primarily provides the

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<sup>29</sup> “Literal” should be taken in the same way that Pannenberg evaluates Luther’s exegetical approach in which the “literal sense of Scriptures was still identical with their historical content” and doctrine could be identified “with the content of the biblical writings literally understood.” Pannenberg, *Basic Questions*, 1:6. This canonical unity is taken for granted in the Patristic era. Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 7 and 10.

<sup>30</sup> On the likely influence of Diodore here, see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 18; Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 28.

terms and concepts that he discusses, Chrysostom determines which facets he highlights and develops them in a particular direction.<sup>31</sup>

The list of topics is rather extensive and interwoven, so any decisive division between them is false. Further, The selection of sources might appear erratic or arbitrary, but they seem to me to be the dominant influences in Chrysostom's reading. The organisation of the topics is not necessarily hierarchical, but an arrangement that reveals how adjacent themes relate to one another. The chapter alternates between describing the paradigmatic elements that lead to a particular interpretation of a text and putting Chrysostom in dialogue with other theologians. On occasion, I concentrate solely on Chrysostom to see how his hermeneutical paradigm constantly returns to the subject matter of Scripture.

Understanding the aesthetic value of Chrysostom's work requires the temporary stabilisation of a canon of texts from the early Church, with particular attention dedicated to the Greek-speaking East and those from the Antiochene interpretive tradition. Situating it in this literary and historical context should reveal the manner in which Chrysostom's reading of 2 Thessalonians confronted the horizon of expectations at his time, and how this reading can expand the modern horizon of understanding when compared with recent interpreters on the same book.

### **2.1. Receptive Impulses: Antiochene Exegetical Heritage**

The Antiochene tradition of interpretation<sup>32</sup> both opens and delimits the direction of Chrysostom's interpretation.<sup>33</sup> Generally speaking, the

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<sup>31</sup> This is in keeping with Jauss' distinction of *effect* and *reception*. Hans Robert Jauss, "The Theory of Reception: A Retrospective of its Unrecognized Prehistory," in *Literary Theory Today*, ed. Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 60.



Antiochenes aimed to communicate the plain sense of the Scripture, but this did not prevent them from perceiving spiritual insights toward which the text pointed with a method they labelled θεωρία. “For *theoria* to operate they considered it necessary (a) that the literal sense of the sacred narrative should not be abolished, (b) that there should be a real correspondence between the historical fact and the further spiritual object discerned, and (c) that these two objects should be apprehended together, though of course in different ways.”<sup>34</sup>

The larger aim of Antiochene exegesis, particularly under Diodore, was *paraenesis* and instruction. By attending to the “sense of the text, the aim of the speaker, the cause, and the occasion for the composition,”<sup>35</sup> the exegete is able to penetrate to the “hidden meaning”<sup>36</sup> of the passage. This offered something of a middle ground between the allegory of Alexandria and rigid literalism because it preserved “the text’s underlying unity and logical coherence.”<sup>37</sup> Chrysostom divides “Scriptural statements into (a) those which

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<sup>32</sup> The Antiochene School can be divided into three periods according to its teachers. The first period began under Lucian; the second, or “golden age,” started with Diodore and extended through to the leadership of Theodore; the final “period of decay” came about through the association of Nestorius with Antioch. Chase, *Chrysostom*, 2. I accept Fairbairn’s (and many others’) stance against the clear-cut division of Antiochene and Alexandrian hermeneutics. Donald Fairbairn, “Patristic Exegesis and Theology: The Cart and the Horse,” *WTJ* 69 (2007): 1-19. This position, however, does not undermine the importance of Chrysostom’s Antiochene background or the stance that this period of Antiochene exegetes took against Alexandria.

<sup>33</sup> The use of “direction” over against “meaning” might appear pedantic, but it incorporates better the “senses” of Scripture than the latter.

<sup>34</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th rev. (London: Continuum, 2001), 76. See also Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 51.

<sup>35</sup> Susan Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy: The Making of a Saint and of a Heretic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 250. Cf. Chrysostom, *Against the Marcionists and the Manichaeans* 2, (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 9:201). Zaharopoulos describes *theoria* as presupposing *typology* rather than *allegory*, because allegory destroyed the historical significance of biblical narratives. Even Paul’s own use of “allegory” to describe an illustration of Sarah and Hager (Gal 4:24) is employed “catachrestically,” according to Chrysostom. Dimitri Z. Zaharopoulos, *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 112.

<sup>36</sup> Chrysostom, *Against the Marcionists and the Manichaeans*, 2 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 9:201).

<sup>37</sup> Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 250. Wallace-Hadrill contends that one of the main influences on Antiochene exegesis was the *mainstream* exegetical methodology of Jewish

allow a 'theoretic' in addition to the literal sense, (b) those which are to be understood solely in the literal sense, and (c) those which admit only of a meaning other than the literal, i.e. allegorical statements."<sup>38</sup> Compared to allegory, θεωρία features quite prominently in his works. Though not with every verse, certainly with every homily Chrysostom reaches the stage of θεωρία if practical, present meaning can be included in the idea of θεωρία.<sup>39</sup> Neither the degree of interpretive flexibility nor the consistent arrival at θεωρία mark the commentaries of his contemporaries Diodore, Theodore of Mopsuestia, or Theodoret of Cyrus.

Other aspects characterising Antiochene exegesis include questions of translation and etymology, attention to metaphorical language, and even comparisons of alternate readings. Much depends on the argument of the text and genre, which Antiochenes measure against other Scriptures, and the background of the particular text in question, most often described in a *hypothesis*. As mentioned above, *paranaesis* held the primary place in exegesis with the overall aim of moral, ethical, and dogmatic exhortation.<sup>40</sup> Chrysostom overcomes the hermeneutical distance between his time and the

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scholars, which held Philo at a distance. D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 30.

<sup>38</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 75.

<sup>39</sup> Though variously and often inconsistently defined by the Fathers, Chrysostom's homiletical conclusions could be categorised as "a spiritual illumination in the mind of... the later exegete." Bradley Nassif, "Theōria," ed. Everett Ferguson, Michael P. McHugh, and Frederick W. Norris, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1123. Nassif helpfully clarifies that Alexandrians also employed θεωρία, though it essentially amounted to allegory. Our definition of *theoria* also closely approaches Breck's. John Breck, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 36–37. Young describes *historia*, as "pure" accounting, as the foundational lens through which Scripture in Antiochene exegesis is read. *Theoria* has a mirroring coherence with the *historia* of the text, which differs from *allegoria* typified in the works of Origen and other Alexandrian exegetes. In the few cases of proper allegory in Scripture, Chrysostom argues that the text always offers an explanation (see *Interpretatio in Isaiam prophetam* 5 (PG 56:60). Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 176–82.

<sup>40</sup> This was viewed as the purpose of reading and rhetoric in Chrysostom's day. Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 81 and 248.

text through this combined moral aim and θεωρία, drawing a parallel through the rhetorical intent of the text and the belonging of his own congregation to the biblical narrative.<sup>41</sup> Though Origen's exegetical work influenced the flourishing school of Antioch under Lucian,<sup>42</sup> Chrysostom's divergence from Origen's homiletic structure reflects the development of Antiochene exegesis under Diodore. We look now at aspects from each homily that exemplify this Antiochene influence.

### ***I. Homily 1 (ὑπόθεσις): An Example of θεωρία and Paranaesis***

In his first homily on 2 Thessalonians, Chrysostom lays out two catalysts for the epistle's composition. Primarily, the "devil... took a different path" from teaching a false doctrine by means of "certain corrupt people... who said that the resurrection had already happened" in the first epistle to circulating the idea that "the Judgment and Christ's [P]arousia were imminent."<sup>43</sup> Therefore, Paul had to correct a dogmatic issue concerning the *eschaton*. Secondly, through this correction and the letter at large, Paul hoped to encourage the faithful so that they "might [not] faint on account of [their] sufferings."<sup>44</sup> In this process, Chrysostom focuses on the dominating presence of Antichrist in the letter and is able to make a connection with his congregational context with reference to a legend about Antichrist coming "on bended knees."<sup>45</sup> From the description in the epistle that "he will exalt himself against everything that is called god or object of worship, so as to sit in the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 171–73 and 248–54.

<sup>42</sup> Chase, *Chrysostom*, 3–5. For Antioch's gradual break and then denunciation of Origen, see James L. Kugel and Rowan Allen Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 178–90.

<sup>43</sup> "ὁ διάβολος... ἐτέραν ἤλθεν ὁδὸν, καὶ καταθεῖς ἀνθρώπους τινὰς λυμεῶνας... Τότε μὲν οὖν ἔλεγον ἐκεῖνοι τὴν ἀνάστασιν ἤδη γεγονέναι." John Chrysostom, *In epistulam ii ad Thessalonicenses* 1 (PG 62:468).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> "τοῦ κάμπτειν τὰ γόνατα." Ibid., 470.

temple of God exhibiting himself as if he is God” (2 Thess 2:4), Chrysostom counters the local folklore and reveals how this text serves as a key for θεωρία. This Scripture corrects a current misconception, but it also reveals a deep truth about the character of Antichrist, namely that he is “anointed unto pride.”<sup>46</sup> Being the chief characteristic of Antichrist, Chrysostom warns his congregation to avoid and dispel pride at all costs so as not to “fall into his condemnation.”<sup>47</sup> From this entry point, Chrysostom demonstrates how pride is the chief of sins *in terms of origin*. Pride stretches beyond venial sin to identification with Satan and the eschatological enemy of Christ. All of this he perceives through careful attention to the character of the Antichrist despite the fact that the term “pride” never appears in 2 Thessalonians. Close attention to Paul’s aim, the occasion of writing, the text, and his own context yields θεωρία. The motivation for discussing pride in this depth also stems from inherited theological traditions and his general pastoral concern for his congregation, but these points will receive attention later.

The reading of this strand of apocalyptic material not only as descriptive of eschatological events, but also a perennial problem of human conduct mirrors an approach developing simultaneously in the West through the Donatist Tyconius (d. late 4<sup>th</sup> century) and Augustine. Tyconius’ *Book of Rules* exhibits a keen interest in understanding “prophetic” texts and their implications for the lives of contemporary Christians.<sup>48</sup> In a modified manner, Augustine appropriated the seven interpretive rules of Tyconius into his

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<sup>46</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Thessalonians* 1 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:378).

<sup>47</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:470).

<sup>48</sup> Tyconius’ definition of “prophecy” extends broadly through the biblical literature. Pamela Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 9. See his preamble in F. Crawford Burkitt, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894), 1.

exegetical-theological enterprise,<sup>49</sup> which resulted in his shift to the Donatist's perspective on the Millennium.<sup>50</sup> His rules on "the Lord and his body" and "the devil and his body" parallel his rule on genus in species, which describes how a biblical reference to an individual entity may be an expression for its larger whole (e.g. a city within a nation) or vice-versa (e.g. Israel as a reference to the faithful within the larger nation). In this way, we can see how the pride of Antichrist applies aptly to the members of his body in a manner similar to Tyconius' rules.<sup>51</sup>

## ***II. Homily 2 (2 Thess 1:1-8): Examples of Translation, Paraenesis, and Exhortation***

The latter homilies on the epistle examine the Scripture more closely, with the initial portions structured similarly to the commentaries of Theodore, Theodoret,<sup>52</sup> and Severian of Gabala.<sup>53</sup> Chrysostom proceeds through the text, commenting on a verse at a time. In these homilies, the Scripture receiving comment contains part of the impulse that leads him into the "sermonic" portion of the homily. His Antiochene background shines through in his thorough explanation of the term εἴπερ in the phrase εἴπερ δίκαιον παρὰ θεῶ ἀνταποδοῦναι τοῖς θλίβουσιν ὑμᾶς θλίψιν (1:6). He clarifies that εἴπερ (if) is essentially synonymous with ἐπεὶ (because), so that it is not a question

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<sup>49</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* 3.30-37 (PL 34:16-121).

<sup>50</sup> Augustine, *The City of God* 20.7 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 2:426-27); Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xiii–xiv.

<sup>51</sup> In Tyconius' commentary on Revelation (extant only through later scholars) his methodology leads to a similar end, for "Antichrist ceased to be a person, but became identified with the *corpus diaboli*, the omnipresent evil, and the false Christians." Ibid., xiii.

<sup>52</sup> It is noteworthy that, even if one were to excise the sermonic sections from his homilies, Chrysostom's exegetical sections would form a larger commentary than either Theodore or Theodoret. His argument alone is lengthier than his contemporaries' combined.

<sup>53</sup> In the case of Severian, however, we have only fragments of a commentary on 2 Thessalonians. Based on the obvious parallels in the samples available, though, it is reasonable to assume that his commentary would have looked similar to those of Theodore and Theodoret in its complete form.

whether it is just for God to punish those who afflict the Thessalonians.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the ambiguity of this term raises concerns with Theodore, Theodoret, and Severian as well, to the extent that they feel it necessary to offer similar explanations.<sup>55</sup> John of Damascus, who often copies Chrysostom, reflects the influence of his forebears three centuries later in contending similarly.<sup>56</sup> Lastly, of the modern commentators, Malherbe and Witherington both rely on his contention regarding εἴπερ to support their own readings.<sup>57</sup>

Chrysostom's eventual attention to the description of the judgment in "flaming fire" and "vengeance" (1:8) leads into encouragement and paraenesis for his own community. Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians becomes the encouragement for future congregations: "Therefore, when we are in affliction, let us consider these things."<sup>58</sup> Beyond this, however, the epistle provides a description of hell that Christians ought always consider, "for no

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<sup>54</sup> We see similar attention in his translation of ἐνδειγμα (1:5) in the first homily, though he accounts for the term through its relationship to the content that precedes and follows it, rather than through the substitution of a synonym (PG 62:475). A closer example appears in *Homily 22* on Ephesians, in which he suggests that "ἐν" from the phrase "πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις" can also mean "in behalf of" or "on account of" ("τὸ ἐν ὑπὲρ ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ ἐν, διὰ ἐστὶν"; PG 62:159). As Chase points out, however, Greek enculturation also results in his overlooking important nuances of terms elsewhere in the NT. Chase, *Chrysostom*, 91–92.

<sup>55</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, "In epistolam B. Pauli ii Thessalonicenses," in *In epistolas B. Pauli commentarii*, ed. H. B. Swete, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1880), 44–45; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Interpretation epistolae ii ad Thessalonicenses* (PG 82:660); and Severian von Gabala, "Fragmenta in epistolam ii Ad Thessalonicenses," in *Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche*, ed. Karl Staab (Munich: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1933), 332. Chase contends that Pelagius relied on the Antiochenes, particularly Theodore, for his commentaries on the Pauline epistles. Thus the influence of Diodore's exegetical tradition spread quickly to the West. Chase, *Chrysostom*, 25; see also Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 162–63. Compare Pelagius: "Hic 'si tamen' confirmatis est, non dubitantis, quasi si dicat"; with Theodore: "nam quod dicit *si iustum est*, hoc dicit: *si tamen iustum est*" (italics original). In addition to the reference for Theodore above, see Pelagius, "Exposito in Ii Thessalonicenses," in *Pelagius's Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul*, ed. J. Armitage Robinson, vol. 9, Texts and Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), 440.

<sup>56</sup> "Ἀντὶ τοῦ, ἐπεὶ περ δίκαιον." John of Damascus, *In epistolam ii ad Thessalonicenses* (PG 95:920).

<sup>57</sup> Abraham Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, vol. 32B, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 396; Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 193. Witherington also makes reference to Theodoret.

<sup>58</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 2 (PG 62:476).

one holding hell before their eyes will fall into hell.”<sup>59</sup> Chrysostom unlocks a “hidden meaning” of Scripture’s function for the community of God while cautiously preserving “the underlying sense (λέξις) of the text.”<sup>60</sup>

### **III. Homily 3 (2 Thess 1:9-2:5): Paul’s Rhetorical Aim**

In his third homily, Chrysostom attends to Paul as the speaker and considers what he is doing with this portion of the letter. By encouraging the Thessalonians not “to be shaken in mind” (2:2), for example, Paul “gives security”<sup>61</sup> to the early church. Further, Chrysostom expounds on Antichrist from the mention of the “man of sin” (2:3), determining that he is both the “apostasy,” because he causes many to fall away, and that he is “the son of destruction,” because he is destined to that end.<sup>62</sup> Chrysostom also clarifies that the meaning of Antichrist “exhibiting himself as though he is God” (2:4) must be understood as demonstrative action and not simply as verbal claims on the part of this individual.<sup>63</sup> Paul’s question to the Thessalonians about their memory of instruction already given (2:5), leads into a discussion regarding the importance of repeated biblical instruction as a means to dehydrate and destroy the thorny roots of sin through the application of these “fiery” texts on the coming judgment.<sup>64</sup> Chrysostom does not draw an analogy between the text and his present, but concentrates his congregation’s attention on the extra-contextual promise of judgment.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 477.

<sup>60</sup> Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 250.

<sup>61</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 3 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:386).

<sup>62</sup> Though the UBS reads ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, the variant read by Chrysostom has early support in manuscripts A and D. Additionally, his geographically close contemporaries Theodore, Theodoret, and Severian (all of whom trained in Antioch) have the same variant in their commentaries. Though Chrysostom on occasion makes text-critical observations (see Chase, *Chrysostom*, 84.), he may simply not have had access to this variant reading.

<sup>63</sup> “Ἀποδεικνύντα, φησὶν, ἑαυτὸν Θεόν. Οὐκ εἶπε, λέγοντα, ἀλλὰ, πειρώμενον ἀποδεικνύναι· καὶ γὰρ ἔργα μεγάλα ἐργάζεται, καὶ σημεῖα ἐπιδείξεται θαυμαστά.” John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 3 (PG 62:482).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 483.

#### ***IV. Homily 4 (2:6-3:2): Translating τό κατέχον***

In the fourth homily, Chrysostom addresses Paul's nebulous reference τό κατέχον (2:6), considering two dominant interpretations of the phrase circulating at his time and Paul's reason for indirect speech. Of the options that this refers to the Holy Spirit or the Roman Empire, Chrysostom argues that Paul certainly had in mind the Roman Empire and that his surreptitious language was to deflect unnecessary persecution that may have resulted had he been more explicit. Though the difference in gender of τό κατέχον (2:6) and ὁ κατέχων (2:7) has caused a great deal of consternation for modern commentators, Chrysostom does not openly refer to it as a difficulty. Instead, he perceives the "mystery of lawlessness at work" (2:7) as a reference to Nero and connects his role as emperor to the specific exertion of the restraining power. The emperor functions as the personal force of restraint within the general power of the Empire.<sup>65</sup>

From a historical perspective, the reading of Nero causes some difficulty for Chrysostom, as it is largely assumed that the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians is contingent upon its having been written within a few months of the first epistle. If we assume the general consensus that dates 1 Thessalonians to sometime around 50 CE<sup>66</sup> and that the "mystery of

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<sup>65</sup> Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 4 (PG 62:486-87).

<sup>66</sup> The general trend in scholarship has been to date the Thessalonian correspondence with reference to Gallio's proconsulship. As representative of this view, Morris dates 1 Thessalonians to 50 CE, with a potential variance of one to two years based on Gallio taking office in Corinth during the summer of 51. Second Thessalonians would have followed shortly thereafter. Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 14; similarly Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 6 and 241. Donfried and Lüdemann mark the general exception to this dating by locating the correspondence in the early 40s. Karl P. Donfried, "1 Thessalonians, Acts, and the Early Paul," in *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, ed. R. F. Collins, BETL (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 1990), 4-8. Slingerland expands the dating of the epistles (or at least the first) to 47-54 CE. Dixon Slingerland, "Acts 18:1-18, the Gallio Inscription, and Absolute Pauline Chronology," *JBL* 110, no. 3 (1991): 439-449.



lawlessness” refers to Nero because he persecuted the early Christians beginning in 64 CE,<sup>67</sup> it would mean that the second epistle could not have been written until after the persecution began. This implied distance in time makes it difficult to account for the verbal agreement between 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Chrysostom, however, does not explicitly associate the “mystery of lawlessness” with Nero because of his persecution, but only because “this one wanted to be esteemed [as] a god.”<sup>68</sup> Even so, should Nero have staked his divine claim from the moment of assuming the purple in 54 CE,<sup>69</sup> three to four years makes the reliance issue somewhat difficult to overcome.

Chrysostom briefly draws attention to the verses asserting that those who “received not the love of the truth... might be judged” (2:10-12), noting that the phrase emphasises their condemnation, not their punishment, for Paul assumes their punishment prior to the judgment. The judgment simply leaves them without excuse for avoiding the punishment.<sup>70</sup> As he draws to the point of Paul’s request for supplication, Chrysostom points to this as a clear model for the necessity of prayer as well as for the congregation to pray for the well-being of their leader. Prayer by the multitude on behalf of the priest or bishop aids the leader in their weighty task of caring for the congregation, and in Chrysostom’s case it is the weight of a massive congregation in a flourishing metropolis.<sup>71</sup> Chrysostom grounds the fullness of the passage’s meaning in the way that it extends to the Church.

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<sup>67</sup> Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 35.

<sup>68</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 4 (PG 62:486).

<sup>69</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 33.

<sup>70</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 4 (PG 62:487).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 489-91.

#### ***V. Homily 5 (3:3-18): Translating “Patience” and Moral Formation***

When Chrysostom reaches the prayer of Paul for the Lord to “direct their hearts... into the patience of Christ” (3:5), he notes that “into the patience” may be understood in three ways: 1.) that we are to endure as Christ endured; 2.) that we should do those things that Paul commanded, or; 3.) that we wait patiently for the Parousia of the Lord. For Chrysostom, these options are not mutually exclusive and “patience” always implies endurance in affliction.<sup>72</sup> As he continues, he cautiously discusses the instruction Paul gives for admonishing a fellow Christian, noting the necessity of its enforcement by the way Paul seals the exhortation with the prayer “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways” (3:16). Chrysostom’s attention to the optative mood of δῶν enables this reading.<sup>73</sup>

Later, Chrysostom attends to the “signature” that closes the epistle, which has caused no small amount of controversy in the history of 2 Thessalonians. Paul concludes the epistle by noting that he has inscribed the “greeting with [his] own hand, which is how [he] write[s] in every letter” (3:17). Chrysostom, Theodore, and Theodoret do not share Grotius’<sup>74</sup> difficulty with the autograph by recognising a practise common in their own era. The “greeting” is not a “signature,” but the closing portion of the epistle and the handwriting indicated its authenticity.<sup>75</sup> Despite Grotius’ objection, modern scholars have come to confirm the Antiochenes’ reading of this

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<sup>72</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (PG 62:493).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 496.

<sup>74</sup> The emphatic signature in 2 Thessalonians and its absence from 1 Thessalonians caused Grotius to reverse the order of the epistles and regard the primary letter somewhat suspiciously. Hugo Grotius, *Annotationes ad Novum Testamentum*, vol. 7 (Gronigae: Zuidema, 1829), 180–82.

<sup>75</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (PG 62:493); Theodore of Mopsuestia, “In epist. ii Thess.,” 65; Theodoret of Cyrus, “The Second Letter to the Thessalonians,” in *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul*, trans. Robert Charles Hill, vol. 2 (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), 133.

phrase. Even Wanamaker, who advocates reversing the order of the epistles like Grotius, recognises that the “greeting” is *at least* the full phrase, “Ὁ ἄσπασμὸς τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ Παύλου,” and the indication of the way Paul writes is the change in handwriting in the autograph, rather than simply the signature.<sup>76</sup> Careful exegesis in the fifth century turns out to be good scholarship in the twentieth and it “satisfies”<sup>77</sup> both ancient and modern horizon of expectation.

As Chrysostom closes, these points of prayer and admonishment become the focus of the exhortation for his own congregation. For Chrysostom, Paul models how to admonish well those who have deviated from the traditions of the Church.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, having an awareness of what deserves admonishment, his audience knows how they ought to live, such that they are put in the position of “teaching” others by means of their upright living.<sup>79</sup>

Antiochene hermeneutics, therefore, provide key structural components for Chrysostom’s homilies because they advocate careful attention to the text with the open expectation of reaching *θεωρία*. In the same way, it guides his exegetical attention to specific terminology, which he strives to explicate contextually. The hermeneutical approach alone does not dictate the precise structure of the homily, but only the elements contained therein. In any given exegetical homily of Chrysostom, one can expect focused exegesis and a degree of practical instruction. These free-floating elements are locked into place by other structural influences. One such influence, his esteem for Paul, merits attention as it mature out of the Antiochene influence.

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<sup>76</sup> Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 292.

<sup>77</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 25.

<sup>78</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (PG 62:496-97).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 497-500.

## **2.2. Esteem for Paul**

As Mitchell's recent work on Chrysostom has shown, the apostle Paul exerts a commanding influence on the Church Father. The affection for Paul might be traced in part to his Antiochene provenance, where Paul was a favoured saint, alongside Peter.<sup>80</sup> An obvious example of his regard for Paul appears in his seven *encomia* on the apostle (PG 50:477-514), which Mitchell classifies as a form of epideictic rhetoric that extols a person in a threefold division of praise for the individual's "body, soul, and external circumstances."<sup>81</sup> This form of rhetoric, as an exegetical endeavour, does not simply describe the person in question, but aims at persuading the audience to adopt what has been praised. Thus, Paul's program of "imitation" (1 Cor 4:16, 11:1; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6-7) aligns well with this strand of classical rhetoric, and Chrysostom advances it to the fore.<sup>82</sup> Beyond the *encomia*, and throughout the entire corpus of his work, however, Paul continually materialises as "example, authority, conversation partner, and icon."<sup>83</sup> Additionally, Chrysostom clearly perceived the overlap between the his own life and the apostle's, as one forcefully placed into Christian ministry, constantly addressing contentious pastoral issues, and ending his life in exile.<sup>84</sup> What follows are several examples of Paul's influence on Chrysostom's 2 Thessalonians homilies.

### ***I. Structural Influence***

The clearest evidence for Chrysostom's esteem for the apostle Paul in his 2 Thessalonians homilies is their twofold division. He takes the first

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<sup>80</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Acta* 25 (PG 60:192); Margaret Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 67.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 98. See also 404-7 for a distinction between encomium and vita.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 49-55.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 68.

portion of Paul's epistles as a communication of doctrine, while the latter section describes practical issues for the community.<sup>85</sup> He explains the Scriptures because they must be taken as the basis of Christian thought and living, but he adds to it an excursus on the practical outworking (meaning) of certain points of the doctrine. In this sense, θεωρία is not distant theological abstraction, but rather it becomes guidance for living theologically. Looking again at the second homily, we note his close attention to Paul's "doctrine," which revolves around consolation in affliction by means of the grace of God.<sup>86</sup> This concentration leads into Chrysostom's exhortation that his congregation continually keep hell before their eyes so as to keep them from buckling under the weight of affliction and falling under condemnation at the Judgment.<sup>87</sup> The same bifurcation as a means of imitating the style of Paul follows for the remaining homilies on 2 Thessalonians.<sup>88</sup>

## ***II. Exegesis of Epistolary Practices***

In addition to the structural contribution of Chrysostom's esteem for Paul to these homilies, there are also numerous exegetical points that highlight this regard. Chrysostom directs attention to the thanksgiving "We are bound to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right" (1:3a), and calls his congregation to "witness [the] excess of humility"<sup>89</sup> in the apostle. For the thanksgiving is given to God for the good actions of the Thessalonians, which,

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<sup>85</sup> Chase, *Chrysostom*, 155–56.

<sup>86</sup> C.f. διὰ τοῦτο ὑπομιμνήσκει αὐτοὺς πρὸ πάντων τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ, ... ἐκεῖθεν ἔχουσι τὴν παραμυθίαν· John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 2 (PG 62:473).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 476–80.

<sup>88</sup> This extends even to the introductory homily, or *hypothesis*, as Chrysostom covers the doctrine of the epistle in broad strokes before relating it to the need for Christians to expel pride from their lives at all costs. Though not divided into two, equal parts, the transition into the practical section is clear: Ἐπόρουν μὲν οὖν τότε οἱ Θεσσαλονικεῖς ταῦτα, ἡμῖν δὲ χρησίμη γέγονεν ἡ ἐκείνων ἀπορία· John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:470).

<sup>89</sup> Ὅρα ταπεινοφροσύνης ὑπερβολήν· John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 2 (PG 62:473). In painting such a "portrait" of Paul, Chrysostom is summoning his hearers to mimesis. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 51.

Chrysostom contends, should be the hope of every Christian— that in seeing the good of the believer, people are directed to God, not the one performing the good.

The preceding sections have established an important foundation for reading Chrysostom. I would like now to introduce more clearly defined sections of contemporary and modern scholarship to illustrate the axes of diachrony and synchrony in the history of 2 Thessalonians, and to draw out its meaning potential to engage with a modern horizon of expectations.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Theodore likewise comments on 2 Thess 1:3a, though he takes it as an extension of the grace from the previous verse. He does not perceive this as a humble expression on the part of Paul, rather it indicates how great the behaviour of the Thessalonians must be for Paul to give thanks to God for them. Therefore, this thanksgiving directs one's attention to the greatness of what follows this verse: the reason(s) for the thanksgiving.<sup>90</sup> Theodoret follows his predecessor at Antioch by focusing on the impulse for the thanksgiving, namely their "perfect virtue"<sup>91</sup> demonstrated in their faith and love, rather than the direction of the thanksgiving to God and the character of Paul for such an emphasis. John of Damascus concentrates solely on the traits of faith and love that Paul commends.<sup>92</sup>

In its synchronic appearance, therefore, Chrysostom provokes the contemporary horizon of expectations with an interpretation that shifts the reader's focus to a theological principle based on the structure of the text. Reading against the grain of history helps recover the distinctiveness of

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<sup>90</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, "In epist. ii Thess.," 42–43.

<sup>91</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, "2 Thessalonians," 126.

<sup>92</sup> John of Damascus, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PG 95:920)

Chrysostom's voice, which, as we shall see, offers another perspective of the text from modern interpreters without doing it violence.

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

Modern scholars might regard Chrysostom's reading of the thanksgiving with caution for making too much out of a stylistic feature of Greco-Roman epistles.<sup>93</sup> At the same time, though Paul's letter generally adheres to the conventions of his socio-historical context, he modifies it for the particular purpose of the letter. Thiselton helpfully remarks on the importance of observing the difference between the "*expected* convention of the thanksgiving form and Paul's *distinctive* use of it."<sup>94</sup> O'Brien supplements this by noting the functional importance of the thanksgiving for Paul's message and that it would not be unnatural to assume that Paul was *actually* thankful to God for the reasons he mentions in the letter.<sup>95</sup> Chrysostom's assertion that Paul's thanksgiving demonstrates his humility and its orientation of his readers toward God does not factor into the modern understanding of epistolary rhetoric. This importantly expands the horizon beyond the rhetorical function of thanksgivings to a reading that correctly attends to the "Someone" beyond Scripture that motivated its writing.<sup>96</sup>

***III. Exegeting the Apostle's Virtue***

Later in the same homily, Chrysostom cites the fearful description of the Lord arriving "in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God" (1:8) as a means of encouragement to the Thessalonians to know

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<sup>93</sup> This might be traced early on to Paul Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings*, BZNW 20 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939).

<sup>94</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 87. Emphasis original.

<sup>95</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, "Thanksgiving and the Gospel in Paul," *New Testament Studies* 21 (1975): 145–46. For a more in-depth discussion, see Peter Thomas O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul*, vol. 49, NovTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

<sup>96</sup> Bruce L. McCormack, "Historical-Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis of the New Testament," *Lutheran Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (1991): 214.

that by their faithfulness they will avoid the “condemnation and vengeance”<sup>97</sup> of hell experienced by their afflicters. Further, it encourages them to endure in affliction. Chrysostom comments, however, that Ὁ σφόδρα ἐνάρητος is not compelled to faithfulness, or “virtue,” through fear of hell or “the prospect of the kingdom, but on account of Christ himself; just as Paul was.”<sup>98</sup> Within the early Church’s virtue-matrix of faith, hope, and love, with the last of these reflecting the height of virtue, Christians on varying stages of maturity are compelled to obedience through one of the above traits.<sup>99</sup>

This verse describes both the doctrine of the final Judgment and functions as an aid for those on a lower stratum of virtue (faith) until they graduate to subsistence in “perfect love”<sup>100</sup> for the sake of Christ alone. Paul is the exemplar the σφόδρα ἐνάρητος.

This point on the character of Paul resurfaces when Chrysostom proposes that Christians hold this terrifying doctrine of hell and judgment constantly before their eyes. Again, he suggests this as a transitional stage in the Christian life that should eventually lead to despising all things, including hell, in the same manner as Paul. Chrysostom chastises his congregation and

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<sup>97</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 2 (PG 62:476).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 476.

<sup>99</sup> This matrix is largely built upon 1 Cor 13:13, but the early Church also substantiated this perspective with 1 Thess 1:3, 5:8 (cf. 2 Thess 1:3, which omits “hope”); Heb 10:22-24; and 1 Pet 1:20-23. For similar perspectives of the nature of faith, hope, and love in the early Church, see Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*, trans. Thomas S. Hibbs (Regnery Gateway, 1996); Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 1:39:43 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 2:534); Augustine, *Treatise on Grace and Free Will* 34-38 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 5:458-60); John Cassian, *Conferences* 11:6-13 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 11:416-422); Cyprian of Carthage, *Treatises* 1:14 (ANF 5:425-26); and Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4:7 (PG 8:1264-65). See especially Cassian and Clement who appear to substitute “faith” with “fear” in a manner quite consistent with Chrysostom.

<sup>100</sup> Different from theologians like Basil, Chrysostom places “perfection of love within the reach of every Christian,” thus universalising what was often reserved for the Christian elite. Eric F. Osborn, “Love,” ed. Everett Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 695. Chrysostom proffers similar comments in his *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* 34:5 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 12:203-204); he also elevates love above faith in *Homilies on Hebrews* 19 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 14:454-57).



himself for not even being willing to bear a discourse on hell, which is for their advantage, while Paul despises it altogether for “the sake of the love of Christ.”<sup>101</sup> A shift away from reading the NT theologically accounts for the vanishing of Chrysostom’s voice on this point and an emphasis on “authorial intention” renders it difficult to revive. Without a more inclusive interpretive paradigm, biblical historicism excludes any truth in Chrysostom’s reading.

#### ***IV. The Influence of Pauline Language***

In the third homily, Chrysostom takes up a discussion on pride despite the fact that the topic does not appear in 2 Thessalonians. In part, this can be traced to the traditions of earlier Fathers. Yet, Chrysostom also exhibits substantial influence from Paul’s interaction with the church at Corinth. He uses the language of being “puffed-up” (φυσιόω) to describe the wicked, who will witness the glorification of those whom they afflicted in this life at the Parousia.<sup>102</sup> Instead of limiting its usage to the confines of the Church,<sup>103</sup> Chrysostom extends this description to non-believers who have taken part in the persecution of Christians. In this case, Paul’s vernacular has a clear effect on the practical dimension of Chrysostom’s homily. The influence of this Pauline concept is decidedly missing from the commentaries of Theodore, Theodoret, and (the fragments) of Severian. This is likely due to the fact that Chrysostom employs it for a dual, rhetorical-pastoral purpose, which is less of a concern for the commentary writers.

#### ***V. The Apostle as Imitative Model***

In his fifth homily, Chrysostom holds up Paul as the touchstone of how one ought to conduct themselves in their occupation. The apostle, being the only one with the “right to be idle” because of his great evangelistic work,

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<sup>101</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 2, 478.

<sup>102</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 3 (PG 62:480).

<sup>103</sup> See 1 Cor 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4.

refused this right so that he would be able to give to others.<sup>104</sup> He substantiates this with the point that Paul called the Thessalonians to follow his example (3:7), revealing that the model teacher “ought to be one more of life than of word.”<sup>105</sup> Certainly, this reading is guided by the text itself, but Chrysostom’s concentration on the point betrays his allegiance. Paul is not just the model for the Thessalonians, but for every Christian.

#### ***VI. Writing an Epistle in the Walls of Prayer***

Finally, Chrysostom notes the phrase “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all” (3:18) is Paul’s prayer (εὐχή) for the congregation.<sup>106</sup> Though Theodore does not observe likewise, Theodoret at least calls it a “blessing” (εὐλογία).<sup>107</sup> In closing with this prayer, Chrysostom sees Paul accomplishing two things: 1.) he reveals that everything that the Thessalonians did was spiritual, and; 2.) by ending in the same way that he began “guarding with strong walls what he had said elsewhere, and laying safe foundations, he brought it also to a safe end.”<sup>108</sup> In regard to the former point, Chrysostom recognises a profound theological concept in a simple expression. In the latter, he sees the caution of a great theologian, structuring his work with clear purpose.

Chrysostom’s esteem for Paul affects his homilies from their structure to the language he employs therein. His contemporaries, though they undoubtedly regarded Paul highly, do not reflect this level of influence or dedication. Related to his esteem for Paul, but also grounded in his educational background, is the bishop’s rhetorical reading of 2 Thessalonians.

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<sup>104</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (PG 62:494).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 497.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Epist. ii ad Thess.* (PG 82:673)

<sup>108</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 5 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:398).

It is related in that, though Chrysostom regards Paul as a simple man, he observes the rhetorical tools that the apostle intuitively employs.

### **2.3. Reading Rhetorically**

Another important influence on Chrysostom we have hinted at earlier: his rhetorical training and attention. Like his esteem for Paul, it can in part be traced to his birth and life in Antioch. The training in rhetoric for the theological scholars of Antioch was a given. As mentioned in the background above, early Christian scholars subjugated classical rhetorical tools to the special content of Scripture without losing attention to the rhetorical tools and intent of the text or failing to use them in their homilies. From the rhetorical schools came the primary emphasis on attention to the effect on the audience.<sup>109</sup> Mayer and Allen describe a few of the rhetorical tools of the trade as: repetitions of a word or phrase at the beginning of a clause (*epaphanora*), anticipating audience answers, juxtaposition of phrases (*parison*), stating a point negatively then positively (*arsis*), pretended doubt (*diaporesis*), and the use of particular metaphors.<sup>110</sup>

Chrysostom's division of each homily on 2 Thessalonians into two sections might be viewed as a rhetorical structure in general terms. More specifically, however, Chrysostom attends to the rhetorical strategy of Paul in his exegesis. In keeping with the audience-oriented nature of Antiochene rhetoric, I look primarily at the effects that Chrysostom sees Paul achieving in his epistle.

#### ***I. Rhetoric: Aim and Function***

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<sup>109</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 81 and 253.

<sup>110</sup> Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 20–21; Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 25. Chrysostom is particularly fond of metaphors. Medical and agricultural metaphors are standards of the rhetorical trade that he employs in his third homily (PG 62:483 and 484, respectively).

Early in his first homily, the bishop asks what Paul aims to do with 2 Thessalonians. Chrysostom sees the Apostle reaching out to the Thessalonians, distraught in their affliction, by praising them for their endurance and comforting them with the hope of the future. Rhetorically (and collectively), these elements encourage the Thessalonians to remain resolute in their faith. Chrysostom adds that Paul includes the detailed description of Antichrist in this letter to buttress his encouragement, “For the weak soul is quite fully assured, not simply when it hears [about something], but when it learns something in detail.”<sup>111</sup> The bishop looks at the text in terms of both *meaning* and the *function* (i.e. evoking a particular response).

#### *i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Theodoret appears to follow Chrysostom directly in reading this as comfort by means of future expectation, even using the same term, τὸν μελλόντων,<sup>112</sup> as Chrysostom. Severian as well notes the comfort extended by (future) “justice and great reward of Christ.”<sup>113</sup> It is possible that this was simply a common idea applied to 2 Thessalonians at the time, however, Theodore omits such a note in his *argumentum*.

#### *ii. Modern Scholarship*

The emphasis on the larger function of the letter likely reflects the rhetorical training of Chrysostom (and Theodoret) and the lack of such instruction accounts for the relative absence of this consideration in many modern commentators. Even with the recent surge of rhetorical criticism this attention to the rhetorical effect on the community often does not feature.

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<sup>111</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:469). This unfolding of Paul’s rhetoric should also have an effect on Chrysostom’s readers.

<sup>112</sup> Even the form of the verb is the same in the two works; John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:469); Theodoret of Cyrus, *epist. ii ad Thess.* (PG 82:657). The idea of *encouragement* by means “of the future hope” is clearer in Theodoret than in Chrysostom.

<sup>113</sup> Severian von Gabala, “Fragmenta,” 332.

Wanamaker, who sees the epistle as deliberative rhetoric, approaches Chrysostom's perspective when he observes, "The prospect of the righteous judgment of God in the near future was integral in maintaining the faith and commitment of new Christians when they encountered opposition from those around them in the face of the behavioral demands of the new religion."<sup>114</sup> Indeed, this prospect is integral in maintaining faith, but he does not appear to ask about the effect that the repetition of this doctrine would have on a community under the duress of persecution. Furthermore, deliberative rhetoric is employed primarily to "persuade the readers to think and act differently in the future,"<sup>115</sup> and does not necessarily include encouragement.<sup>116</sup>

On the other hand, Menken, who reads the epistle rhetorically, aligns himself with Chrysostom by the end of his reading of the first chapter when he comments, "We have to realize that [the gospel] serves to encourage the addressees to remain steadfast in their distress."<sup>117</sup> He implies that the gospel includes the description of the *eschaton* in 2 Thessalonians.

The same difficulty in observing the encouraging dimension of this letter is witnessed in modern commentators not influenced by a Greco-Roman rhetoric. Best denies that the prospect of the future functions to encourage. He argues, "it is *instead* an assurance that if they remain firm in persecution God will accept them."<sup>118</sup> Yet Fee counters, "It is this future certainty that is

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<sup>114</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 223.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>116</sup> Witherington is similar. He comes closest to Chrysostom when he says Paul "reassures" the Thessalonians that they are on the positive side of judgment. Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 198.

<sup>117</sup> Maarten J. J. Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, New Testament Readings (London: Routledge, 1994), 92.

<sup>118</sup> Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1972), 256. Emphasis added.

apparently intended to encourage the Thessalonians and thus cause them to take hope in the midst of present trials.”<sup>119</sup>

With proper training in rhetoric, it would be wise for the former group to follow Chrysostom by considering the structural nature of the Greco-Roman rhetoric *and* the utilisation of particular tools for a particular effect, and for the latter to consider more carefully the function of a discourse as a whole in a particular setting, as both Menken and Fee have done. For both groups, it is advisable to recognise the distinction between function and meaning. That is to say that, though the function may indicate the meaning in a particular context, it does not govern the range of meanings of a text, as Chrysostom shows in his considerations for the Thessalonians and then for his own congregation.

## ***II. Rhetoric: “Grace” as Invocation***

In addition to guiding his broader view, Chrysostom evaluates the rhetorical quality of specific verses. He describes the opening grace (1:2) as an invocation<sup>120</sup> by Paul on the Thessalonian congregation after having witnessed the greatness of God’s grace and because he desired to render them “well-disposed” toward him for the remainder of the epistle.

### *i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Commentators from the same period and locale do not place such an emphasis on the “grace.” Theodoret focuses instead on the relationship of the Father and the Son as equals, while Theodore only comments, “Fashioning the preface of the epistle, he begins thus...”<sup>121</sup> Turning to Theodore’s commentary

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<sup>119</sup> Fee, *Thessalonians*, 246.

<sup>120</sup> Literally, “He prays this on them” (ταύτην αὐτοῖς ἐπεύχεται). John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 2 (PG 62:473). Chrysostom uses the same language of invocation (ἐπεύχεται) with regard to the greeting in his first homily on 1 Timothy. See John Chrysostom, *In epistolam primum ad Timotheum commentarius* 1 (PG 62:505)

<sup>121</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, “In Epist. Ii Thess.,” 42.

on 1 Thessalonians, the reason for such a dismissive reading becomes clear: “He puts ‘grace’ in the same way that we are accustomed to [writing] ‘greetings’ in the prefaces of epistles.”<sup>122</sup>

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

In Bornemann, we find a slightly more developed sense of this greeting than Theodore. Commenting on 1 Thessalonians, he observes that χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη is a Christianisation of the letter-greetings of both Gentiles (χαίρειν) and the Jews (εἰρήνη; *shalom*), but little more than that.<sup>123</sup> Best accepts with the Greek and Jewish roots of this greeting, but notes that Paul has “transformed the customary greeting into one with deep theological import” and speaks to both Jewish and Greek Christians at Thessalonica.<sup>124</sup> He adds to this that grace and peace imply “the fullness of God’s free unmerited gift of salvation and a relationship between man and God.”<sup>125</sup>

Menken and Wanamaker follow Best on the origin of this greeting, though they add it is likely a liturgical formula. More importantly, they recognise the greeting as a prayer by the author by which “it is supposed that grace and peace come on those to whom the words are addressed”<sup>126</sup> and it evokes “in his readers a sense of divine blessing upon their lives.”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> This reading follows the available Greek fragment: τὸ χάρις ὑμῖν οὕτως ἡμεῖς τὸ ἐν ταῖς προγραφαῖς τῶν ἐπιστολῶν εἰώθαμεν. Theodore reduces the “grace” to a simple greeting based on its relationship to the term χαίρειν, which is the common epistolary greeting in Theodore’s time. Modern scholars have long recognised this relationship, and some have claimed, like Theodore, that one ought not to make much out of the greeting. Theodore of Mopsuestia, “In epistolam B. Pauli i Thessalonicenses,” 2.

<sup>123</sup> Wilhelm Bornemann, *Die Thessalonicherbriefe*, KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1894), 51–52.

<sup>124</sup> In fact, if Best recognises this as a prayer, he forgets to mention so. Best, *Thessalonians*, 63–64.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>126</sup> Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 81.

<sup>127</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 71.

Chrysostom's assertion regarding the grace was provocative in its time, and the modern expansions are mediated through his ancient voice.<sup>128</sup> Chrysostom's interpretation functions as the exegetical base. Best and Menken specify how the grace would have affected Paul's readers and the liturgical perspective leads to the incorporation of the grace in Christian worship. It is no longer just a prayer for a discrete group of believers, but also the prayer of Church. Thus this specific dialogue continues to connect pre-modern and modern interpretation.

### ***III. Rhetoric: Prayer as Encouragement***

In the same homily, Chrysostom notes the rhetorical function of Paul's language: "we ought always to give thanks to God for you brothers, as is right" (1:3). By such an expression, "he lifts their spirits, because their suffering is not worthy of weeping and lamenting, but rather of thanksgiving to God."<sup>129</sup> That is to say, by thanking God for the Thessalonians for their enduring faith in suffering, Paul encourages the congregation. Furthermore, this thanksgiving directs their minds away from themselves and toward God, forcing them to consider that someone's good actions ought to cause others to admire God before the individual.

#### *i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Theodore omits the former point regarding encouragement, but expands the latter, noting that thanksgiving is obligatory and further reveals the Thessalonians' need for the grace of God.<sup>130</sup> Theodoret, however, appears not to notice the direction or the obligation of the thanksgiving and, though he describes it as a "εὐφημία," he does not question the response that Paul strives

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<sup>128</sup> Jauss, "Tradition," 375.

<sup>129</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 2 (PG 62:473).

<sup>130</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, "In epist. ii Thess.," 43. See also Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 182.



to evoke in the Thessalonian church.<sup>131</sup> Though all three certainly had rhetorical training, Chrysostom's focus on preaching causes him to consider the evocative nature of the epistle.

From the Western Church around this time we might also add Augustine's reading of this verse.<sup>132</sup> He notes that Paul attaches the obligation as an addendum to the grace "lest they should make a boast of the great good which they were enjoying from God, as if they had it of their own mere selves."<sup>133</sup> Augustine's doctrinal concerns generally guide his reading, yet his rhetorical training pierces through the surface as he notes a different dimension of this statement. On the one hand, according to Chrysostom, this verse encourages believers to remain in the faith during persecution, on the other hand, according to Augustine, the verse reminds them that God enables their faith and perseverance by his grace. What Chrysostom only hints at by noting that one's good actions ought to cause others to admire God, Augustine makes more explicit by revealing God as the source of those good things. If Chrysostom influences Augustine's reading of 2 Thessalonians in any way, one can assume that the influence is only in one direction.

## *ii. Modern Scholarship*

Best breaks from this interpretation by commenting that the obligation arises out of Paul's personal relationship with the Thessalonians rather than

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<sup>131</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Epist. ii ad Thess.* (PG 82:660)

<sup>132</sup> Cooper has confidently shown that Anianus of Celeda translated many of Chrysostom's works into Latin within ten to fourteen years of Chrysostom's death. Kate Cooper, "An(n)ianus of Celeda and the Latin Readers of John Chrysostom," *StPatr* 27 (1993): 249-55. Altaner traces a relationship between Augustine and Chrysostom several decades prior to Cooper. Berthold Altaner, "Augustinus und Johannes Chrysostomus," *ZNW* 44, no. 1 (January 1953): 76-84. Augustine interacted with the work of the bishop in *Against Julian* within two decades of Chrysostom's death. On one occasion, Augustine rebuffs Julian of Eclanum's use of Chrysostom by enlisting Chrysostom to support his position that infants do not have sins of their own, but that does not preclude the effect of original sin. Augustine, *Against Julian* (FC 35:25-35, esp. 27).

<sup>133</sup> Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will* 38 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 5:460). *Against Julian* predates this treatise by several years.

out of “the nature of things.”<sup>134</sup> Here, he comes up forcefully against the reading of Chrysostom, who strives constantly to refocus attention on God. Best’s reading reifies the humanity of Paul and his relationships with actual people in Thessalonica in the first century, yet it is questionable whether his interpretation of ὀφείλομεν as indicative of the personal obligation is not somewhat forced. Fee puts these two interpretations in tension, but sides with Best in placing the *emphasis* of the thanksgiving on the Thessalonians. Still, he describes Paul as having “a strong sense of divine obligation to thank God for them,”<sup>135</sup> which seems to conflate his two options for the obligatory emphasis and reassert the divine impulse for giving thanks. These two modern authors follow Rigaux, who draws a distinction between the use of ὀφείλω, which is personal, and δεῖ which “est dans la nature des choses.”<sup>136</sup>

Ultimately, all modern interpretations perpetuate Chrysostom’s tradition of considering the *direction* of Paul’s obligation (i.e. God or the Thessalonians), whether through rejection or acceptance of his conclusion. Chrysostom’s dual reading considers both the ultimate source and aim of the thanksgiving and the rhetorical effect that the reading of this thanksgiving will have on the Thessalonian church. Reintegrating this into the discussion of 2 Thessalonians would broaden the horizon of understanding to push beyond Greco-Roman epistolary practices and semantics to a more theologically-constrained, God-centred reading of the epistle.

#### ***IV. Rhetoric: “Bringing Down Their Minds”***

The dual effect of Chrysostom’s rhetorical training and his Antiochene background appear in his exploration of the meaning of God making the

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<sup>134</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 249.

<sup>135</sup> Fee, *Thessalonians*, 248.

<sup>136</sup> Beda Rigaux, *Saint Paul: Les épîtres aux Thessaloniens*, Études Bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1956), 613.

Thessalonians worthy of his “calling” (1:11). Eyeing the subjunctive in the verse “that God might make/deem you worthy (ἀξιώση) of the calling” (1:1), Chrysostom contends that this indicates the “call” is neither God’s ultimate permission to enter the kingdom of heaven at the *eschaton*, nor the past calling into a life of discipleship that leads ultimately to salvation. Instead, he connects being “made worthy” with “every work of faith” (1:11), which he describes as “the patient endurance of persecutions.”<sup>137</sup> This coincides with his reading of being “counted worthy (καταξιωθῆναι) of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer” (1:5).

What sets Chrysostom’s exegesis apart, however, is his connecting ἀξιώση and κλησίς, and his contention that the Thessalonians “were not called.”<sup>138</sup> The latter point has the rhetorical effect of keeping the readers from becoming overly proud of themselves. The former point appears to work out under several assumptions. In the first case, being “made/deemed worthy” could simply refer to persecution that one suffers in the name of Christ. Being “made/deemed worthy of calling,” however, is that calling to the “bride-chamber” (ὁ νυμφίος); an indication that Chrysostom understands this passage as a reference to martyrdom. This perspective is strengthened by Chrysostom’s quotation of Heb 12:4. Only in this way, can the Thessalonians be at the full “persuasion” (πεισµα) of God. Chrysostom’s reading reflects the elevated view of martyrdom in the early Church, which understood martyrs as entering immediately into the presence (or “bride-chamber”) of God.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 3 (PG 62:480).

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Both the language of being “made worthy” and immediate translation into the “presence of God” is found in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 13.2, thus indicating the early development of this perspective. Similar connections of martyrdom and the “bridal-chamber” appear in Methodius, *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins* 7.3 (ANF 6:332); Leo the Great, *Letters*

Therefore, the bishop confidently contends that the Thessalonians have not yet been called.<sup>140</sup> This absence of “calling” functions as a sober reminder to prevent them from becoming “slothful”— a rhetorical strategy to encourage their remaining in the faith and to submit to God’s *πεισµα*.<sup>141</sup>

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

This reading differs starkly from those of his contemporaries. Theodore, for example, notes that the calling has occurred by means of the preaching of the gospel and, though it is the call to a salvific end in the *eschaton*, the Thessalonians responded to that call prior to the authorship of this epistle. It is possible to fall away from a type of calling, as Chrysostom warns, but Theodore perceives the calling as having already taken place and does not connect it with martyrdom.<sup>142</sup>

Theodoret essentially reiterates Theodore, though he concentrates on the nature of this prayer for the Thessalonians to produce endurance in persecution (cf. Chrysostom) so that they will remain in the calling.<sup>143</sup> John of Damascus even follows Chrysostom’s rhetorical understanding that this verse keeps the Thessalonians, as well as modern readers, from thinking too highly of themselves in their perseverance and good works. This does not, however,

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98.3 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 12:73); and Chrysostom’s *Homilies on S. Ignatius and S. Babylas* (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 9:135-43). We should here add that Chrysostom connects 2 Thessalonians with the Synoptic Apocalypse and the language of Matt 25:1-13.

<sup>140</sup> This sentence follows the NPNF: “for they were not called,” which differs from Migne, who reads: “δεικνὺς ὅτι πολλοὶ καὶ ἀπεβλήθησαν.” The NPNF translator clearly relies on the Field critical text and the *Catena Graecorum Patrum* (6.384), which read “οὐ γὰρ ἐκλήθησαν.” It is likely that Migne’s source misses the implicit understanding of martyrdom and attempted to resolve the difficulty of this reading through redaction. The difference in the above phrase and the absence of “But he speaks of that other calling” (Ἀλλ’ ἐκείνην τὴν κλήσιν φησὶ) from the PG text means that the Migne text attempts to reconstrue “calling” as an eschatological goal, but this renders the text awkward. See John Chrysostom, 2 *Thessalonians* 3 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:385); John Chrysostom, *In epistulam ii ad Thessalonicenses* 3 (FCT 5:463); John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 3 (PG 62:480).

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, “In epist. ii Thess.,” 47–48.

<sup>143</sup> “ὥστε ὑμᾶς ἀξιοθέντας τῆς κλήσεως.” Theodoret of Cyrus, *epist. ii ad Thess.* (PG 82:661). Hill translates this as “you have been granted the call”— bringing out the aorist-passive sense of Theodore’s reading. Theodoret of Cyrus, “2 Thessalonians,” 127.

deny that they have been called, but describes God as an “assistant” (συλλήπτωρ) in accomplishing “every desire of goodness and work of faith” (1:11) *after* the have been called.<sup>144</sup>

In the tenth century, Thietland of Einsiedeln initially pursues a similar reading to that of Chrysostom. He contends that, by his grace, God considered the Thessalonians “worthy” of his Kingdom (1:5), not because they suffered persecution.<sup>145</sup> Yet Thietland does not connect this concept of worthiness with God making the Thessalonians “worthy of calling” (1:11). He still establishes this worthiness in the grace of God, but thinks of “calling” in terms of a purpose.<sup>146</sup>

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

Looking at modern commentators, Wanamaker agrees that the prayer is for the salvation of Paul’s readers on the day of judgment, but he remains somewhat vague regarding the time of the call; describing it simply as “God’s call to the Thessalonians to share in eschatological salvation.”<sup>147</sup> If the “eschatological connotation”<sup>148</sup> of this call means an invitation to enter the kingdom *in the eschaton*, then he differs from the contemporaries of Chrysostom, but still does not approach his reading. Best weighs out only two possible readings of ἀξιώση in terms of time, pointing out that reading it as “*deem* worthy” locates the action in the *eschaton*, whereas “*make* worthy” has the connotation of a process involving the participation of God, as John of Damascus saw it. In the end, he reads it as “make worthy,” but qualifies that

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<sup>144</sup> John of Damascus, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PG 95:921)

<sup>145</sup> Thietland of Einsiedeln, “In epistolam ii ad Thessalonicenses,” in *Second Thessalonians: Two Early Medieval Apocalyptic Commentaries*, trans. Steven R. Cartwright, Teams (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 43–44.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 48–49.

<sup>147</sup> Wanamaker’s agreement with Frame in reading this as “*consider* worthy,” appears to locate his calling in the future. Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 233.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

only God can help achieve this and that it leads to a salvific end.<sup>149</sup> Rigaux likewise prefers reading it as “make worthy” because it fits with the intimate nature of the prayer (1:11-12) in which this phrase is situated.<sup>150</sup>

The text can clearly support either interpretation, yet Fee’s note that situating this quotation within the rest of the verse generates a sense that Paul is describing a present calling into a life oriented positively toward the *eschaton*. It is interesting that Chrysostom describes the other “types” of calling and yet rejects them as possible readings because of what he perceives the context dictates.

The issue of correctness lies in whether the bishop has posed a legitimate question to the text.<sup>151</sup> Based on the reading of “calling” as having not yet taken place, Chrysostom’s view of the rhetorical function of Paul’s prayer to motivate a particular way of living in the community certainly stands.<sup>152</sup> Associating it with martyrdom exclusively, though difficult, fits well with the tone of passage, despite the fact that it does not cohere with Paul’s general use of καλέω or κληῖσις elsewhere. Certainly, his prayer that God may “fulfil every good and every work of faith with power” (1:11) includes suffering or even death in persecution, but does it do so exclusively? In terms of relating “being made worthy” with suffering persecution, Chrysostom stands on solid biblical grounds,<sup>153</sup> and in this way provokes the horizon of Western scholarship, not to mention that of his own context. The restriction of

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<sup>149</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 268–69. Fee echoes this two-fold option, but notes that the rest of the sentence leads one to read it as “make worthy.” Fee, *Thessalonians*, 264.

<sup>150</sup> Rigaux, *Thessaloniens*, 639.

<sup>151</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 185.

<sup>152</sup> Witherington likewise notes, “One of the more effective ways of changing behavior is to let people overhear one’s prayers for them.” Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 199.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Acts 5:41 “κατηξιώθησαν” and 2 Thess 1:5 “καταξιώσθαι.” Chrysostom comments on the latter in this series of homilies, but, peculiarly, associates it with general suffering in persecution.

calling to martyrdom limits the openness of this phrase, but Chrysostom raises an important question in his reading.

The anomalous nature of the reading likely accounts for its near immediate disappearance from exegetical consideration as well as its absence from the *Glossa Ordinaria*.<sup>154</sup> At the same time, tradition does not always carry forward every question posed to the text because many are “erased by a definitive answer, others forgotten, renewed once more, or posed only at a comparatively late date.”<sup>155</sup> It appears that Chrysostom’s question of the relationship of worthiness, calling, and martyrdom is a potential victim of either of the former two categories and a shift in Christian society from frequent martyrdom under pagan rulers to relative security. The fact that no one presents a nuanced version of “being made worthy of calling” as suffering persecution likely indicates this post-Constantine security. The relatively stable interpretive options on this passage, however, do not rescind Chrysostom’s aesthetically valuable reading.

#### ***V. Rhetoric: “Preparing Their Hearts” for Reproof***

A final example of Chrysostom’s rhetorical reading appears in the fifth homily, where he observes Paul’s transition from an uplifting prayer (3:5) into a command (3:6). In the former verse, Paul prays for and commends the Thessalonians “into the love of God and into the patience of Christ” (3:5). Thus “he prepares their hearts beforehand”<sup>156</sup> with such kindness to render them willing to hear his reproof. Further, he perceives that the prayer exhorts

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<sup>154</sup> The *Glossa* includes Chrysostom’s comments on 1:10. See “Epistola Pauli ii ad Thessalonicenses” in Nicholas de Lyra, *Glossa Ordinaria*, vol. 6 (Venice, 1603), 668.

<sup>155</sup> Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 70.

<sup>156</sup> Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (PG 62:493). John Cassian makes similar observations regarding Paul’s rhetoric in 1 Thessalonians. John Cassian, *The Twelve Books on the Institutes of Coenobia and the Remedies for the Eight Principle Faults* 10.7 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 11:268).

the community to behaving in a certain manner that demonstrates the love of God and patience of Christ. He also thinks of the love of God as patient endurance, thereby appearing to take the phrases “into the love of God” and “into the patience of Christ” as synonymous.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Theodore makes this synonymous reading clearer by arguing that it should simply read: “into the love and patience of God and Christ.” He thereby circumvents the confusion resulting from Chrysostom’s reading and the potential of subordinating the Son.<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless, this colleague does not draw attention to the rhetorical function of the prayer.

Theodoret pursues a different route, apparently initiated by Basil of Caesarea,<sup>158</sup> in reading this as a prayer to the Holy Spirit that gives a “glimpse of the Trinity.”<sup>159</sup> It follows from the fact that the prayer reads “May the *Lord* direct your hearts into the love of *God* and into the patience of *Christ*” (3:5). Theodoret, like Basil, recognises “the Lord” as a reference to the Holy Spirit. Chrysostom and Theodore, however, remain cautiously Binitarian when reading this verse.

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

Malherbe notes the tendency of Patristic writers to interpret “Lord” as a reference to the Holy Spirit, yet he follows closer to Theodore and Chrysostom. The “Lord” is either a reference to God, in keeping with the trend of 3:1-5, or it may refer to both “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” as the use of *κατευθύναι* in 1 Thess 3:11 indicates.<sup>160</sup> Like Chrysostom, he notes

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<sup>157</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, “In Epist. II Thess.,” 61.

<sup>158</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 21.52 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 8:33).

<sup>159</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, “2 Thessalonians,” 131.

<sup>160</sup> Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:447.



that this prayer precedes admonishment, though he sees it as an exhortation, rather than as a means of endearing the audience.<sup>161</sup>

Witherington looks at 2 Thess 3:1-5 as an “interlude” between the main arguments of the epistle, preceding the *exhortatio* in 3:6. Structurally, it prepares the reader/listener for the *exhortatio*, but the effect of the content does not receive attention. Instead, the prayer functions *paraenetically*, encouraging the Thessalonians to manifest the love of God and the endurance of Christ in their context. Chrysostom’s reading sharpens the perspective of Witherington and Malherbe at this point, by considering both the *meaning* of the verses and the *dual function* of this prayer to encourage and exhort.<sup>162</sup> The closest modern ally to Chrysostom is Fee, who describes this prayer as “a bit of platitude”<sup>163</sup> and an “introduction to the corrective that follows... in that he first presents the positive dimension of a group of believers, before settling in on those who are creating difficulties among them. Thus the whole group is being encouraged, while the recalcitrant are being set up in a positive way for the needed admonition that follows.”<sup>164</sup> By reviving the rhetorical dimension in their interpretive framework the modern scholars approach Chrysostom’s reading.

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 447-48.

<sup>162</sup> Interestingly, the editor of the Catena recognises Chrysostom’s rhetorical observations as significant enough to include them while excluding other points of exegesis.

<sup>163</sup> Fee, *Thessalonians*, 321.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 323.

## **2.4. Reading the “Word of God” Canonically**<sup>165</sup>

As the previous section has shown, Chrysostom often enlists Scriptures external to 2 Thessalonians to support his reading of the epistle. This manner of reading is by no means unique in Chrysostom’s time, though the specific verses he incorporates in his exegesis of 2 Thessalonians might be. We contend that a particular understanding of the *origin* of Scripture shapes this *manner* of reading. This section links with rhetoric in that, while Chrysostom allows for the rhetorical particularities of the human writers of Scripture, he still situates this in the grander scheme of God as the true author.

### ***I. Reading Canonically: The Origin of Scripture***

When Chrysostom looks at Paul’s command for the congregation to withdraw from the idle “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 3:6), he understands this to mean Christ actually issues the command to the Thessalonian Christians.<sup>166</sup> It is clear that Chrysostom perceives the origin of the text in the divine.<sup>167</sup> He expands this understanding elsewhere when he challenges the behaviour of his congregation, querying whether the wealthy members in particular realise that as they enter during the reading of Scripture, the announcement “thus says the Lord” is not a liturgical gesture, but an assertion that “they enter the presence of the God, that it is He who addresses

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<sup>165</sup> Though this section may appear to blur the concepts of “canon” and “Scripture,” it holds to the distinctions made by Holmes regarding the biblical canon in the early Church. Describing Chrysostom’s canon would necessitate more detailed study of his use of biblical texts in his writings. For the purpose of this section, we can say that Chrysostom accepts Sirach as canonical. Michael W. Holmes, “The Biblical Canon,” ed. Susan Harvey and David Hunter, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>166</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (PG 62:493).

<sup>167</sup> For a patristic understanding of inspiration, see Robert C. Hill, “Psalm 45: a *locus classicus* for Patristic Thinking on Biblical Inspiration,” *StPatr* 25 (1993): 95. According to Kranz, Chrysostom adheres to verbal inspiration in which the Holy Spirit “lends” the biblical author his voice, yet he distinguishes between the historical “voice of the prophet” and the ongoing “instruction of the Holy Spirit.” Dirk Kranz, “Abriss zur patristischen Inspirationslehre der Heiligen Schrift (II),” *Alpha Omega* 10, no. 3 (2007): 357–60. See also Robert C. Hill, “St. John Chrysostom’s Teaching on Inspiration in His Old Testament Homilies” (Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomas de Urbe, 1981); Samuel Davidson, *Sacred Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T. Clark, 1843), 120–22.

them.”<sup>168</sup> He sharpens this point in the same homily by describing the Scriptures metaphorically as “letters sent by God.”<sup>169</sup> Here, Chrysostom discloses two important points regarding his view of Scripture: 1.) God is the true author behind every Scripture, and; 2.) God continues to speak whenever Scripture is read.<sup>170</sup> In essence, this latter point motivates Chrysostom in his preaching career, for God continues to proclaim and apply his Word in history.

Additionally, this collective view should evoke a particular response from historical Christian congregations. In relation to the content of 2 Thessalonians, according to Chrysostom, this means that the realisation of the source should cast out all pride from the Christian,<sup>171</sup> especially when the reader/hearer comprehends that pride is a characteristic of Antichrist.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, as Christ corrects the slothful in Thessalonica through Paul, so he continues to do so with the current reader/hearer.<sup>173</sup> This perspective of Scripture’s origin must necessarily have a reality-shaping effect on the Christian community such that the lives of Christians cohere with the divine discourse— particularly as it relates to Christ’s Lordship and reverent fear of God as God.<sup>174</sup> Chrysostom’s basic perspective of God as “biblical author” appropriately orients readers toward Scripture’s subject matter.

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<sup>168</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 3 (PG 62:484).

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Whether this occurs exclusively in the context of a gathered congregation or every instance reading of Scripture is unclear. It is important to note, though, that Chrysostom encouraged private reading of Scripture. See John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John* 11 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 14:38).

<sup>171</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 3 (PG 62:484).

<sup>172</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:470).

<sup>173</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 3 (PG 62:484-85).

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 484.

## ***II. Reading Canonically: The Manner***

Because of this view of divine authorship, Chrysostom, like his contemporaries, reads 2 Thessalonians canonically.<sup>175</sup> That is to say, he situates within the larger divine discourse of the body of biblical literature. Like modern commentators, the bishop of Constantinople looks to other Pauline letters for assistance in clarifying the content of 2 Thessalonians, but he goes beyond this. Locating the apocalyptic of 2 Thess 2:1-12 in the context of Matt 24-25 (similar to a number of modern theologians<sup>176</sup>) Chrysostom aims to clarify that, though the specific instant of Christ's return is unknown, there are certain "signs" that will precede it. The greatest sign, according to Chrysostom, is the proclamation of the gospel "to all nations" (Matt 24:14).<sup>177</sup> This suggestion resolves the apparently conflicting eschatologies in the NT and even in Paul, which cannot be resolved by 2 Thessalonians alone.

While associating the characteristic of pride with Antichrist, Chrysostom looks elsewhere in the canon to explicate the Lord's opposition to this trait, and therefore the necessity of the Christian to purge it from their life. He finds overwhelming support in Sirach,<sup>178</sup> which describes not knowing the Lord as "the beginning of pride" (Sirach 10:12-13)<sup>179</sup> that leads further to

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<sup>175</sup> O'Loughlin provides a helpful description of canonical reading in the early Church. T. O'Loughlin, "Christ and the Scriptures: The Chasm Between Modern and Pre-modern Exegesis," *The Month* 31 (1998): 480–81.

<sup>176</sup> For example, Fritz W. Röcker, *Belial und Katechon: Eine Untersuchung zu 2 Thess 2,1-12 und 1 Thess 4,13-5,11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 365–69; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1999), 54–59.

<sup>177</sup> Chrysostom, *In Epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:469-70).

<sup>178</sup> The Antiochene OT canon in the period of Diodore through to Theodoret clearly included Sirach. See Robert C. Hill, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 19–25.

<sup>179</sup> Sirach 10:12-14 is generally considered the basis for the "classical theological tradition that pride is the root of the evil in the rebellion against God." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together; Prayerbook of the Bible*, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 5 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 111.

“passions,” such as fornication (23:17) and the abuse of wealth (11:15).<sup>180</sup> Alternatively, quelling pride comes about through accepting the Scripturally-pronounced reality and applying the divine discourse (both in terms of reading Scripture and conversing about biblical truths; 20:20).<sup>181</sup>

Elsewhere, Chrysostom takes Paul’s request for prayer from the Thessalonians (2 Thess 3:1-2) and extends this request into a general instruction for Christians to pray for their deacons, priests, and bishops. The analogy might be made from the above verses alone, but Chrysostom provides explanatory grounds from other texts. He calls his entire congregation to pray because “the gift bestowed upon us by means of many” (2 Cor 1:11) results in the generous distribution of grace by God on the supplicants for their collective virtue, especially through the effect God works in the Christian leader by means of those prayers.

Furthermore, Chrysostom perceives the Christian life in terms of warfare against Satan and himself as a general in the battle, requiring the aid of many foot soldiers to overcome the powerful enemy. He compares the desire of the Israelite army for David (2 Sam 21:17) to what his own congregation should be for him, namely that in their desire to relieve an “old man” with many responsibilities by battling on his behalf. Here, the overwhelming responsibilities<sup>182</sup> of a metropolitan priest (potentially bishop) breach the surface of Chrysostom’s speech. He adds that the prayers of the

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<sup>180</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 1 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 13:378-79).

<sup>181</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 2 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 13:383).

<sup>182</sup> In addition to regular preaching at several churches in the city, Chrysostom had numerous responsibilities. At Antioch, any time not spent teaching and caring for his flock was taken by Flavian. At Constantinople, Chrysostom had the additional responsibilities of overseeing several monastic groups, entertaining visiting bishops, mediating between the emperor and high-ranking officials (and the Goths), intervening in ecclesial disputes in neighbouring sees, and administering the episcopal funds. Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 41–52; For a more detailed account of the extent of his responsibilities at Constantinople, see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 115–80.

congregation sustain the leader, taking up the rhetorical question of the prophet, “Do the shepherds feed themselves?” (Ezek 34:2 LXX). To drive the point home, he notes the powerful effectiveness of the prayers of others for Peter (Acts 12:5) and looks at promise of Christ to be with “two or three gathered in [his] name” (Matt 20:18). If Christ is with such a small group, will he not much more be with Chrysostom’s massive congregation?<sup>183</sup> All of this Chrysostom utilises in order to exegete a specific request that Paul made to a specific congregation, thereby developing his appeal into a rudimentary doctrine of prayer.

We might add to this one final point, namely that Chrysostom frequently reads trans-canonically *with* the Church by frequently enlisting the same Scriptures as other Fathers have to aid them in their reading of 2 Thessalonians. As an example, Chrysostom notes that the “deceit of the unrighteous” is exemplified in the way that the wicked choose Antichrist (2 Thess 2:10), even though he will state firmly, “I am not from God”—precisely the opposite of what Christ asserts about himself. Chrysostom sees Christ predicting this in saying, “I come in my Father’s name, but you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, though, you will receive him” (John 5:43).<sup>184</sup>

#### *i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Beginning with this final example, Theodoret also cites John 5:43 following a quotation of 2 Thess 2:10.<sup>185</sup> He potentially relied on Chrysostom for this connection, but it is more likely that this reflects a common patristic

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<sup>183</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 4 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:391-92).

<sup>184</sup> Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 4 (PG 62:487).

<sup>185</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, “2 Thessalonians,” 130.

sentiment regarding the Antichrist.<sup>186</sup> Theophylact (d. 710) likewise follows this pattern,<sup>187</sup> but his commentary largely copies from Chrysostom. Nevertheless, this reflects Chrysostom's ongoing influence.

Returning to the relationship of 2 Thessalonians and the Synoptic Apocalypse, all of Chrysostom's contemporaries who comment on the epistle relate these two texts in some manner.<sup>188</sup> Only Theodoret follows Chrysostom in his emphasis on the preaching of the gospel to all nations as an essential sign to precede the arrival of Antichrist.<sup>189</sup> Predictably, we see this point taken up in Theophylact,<sup>190</sup> and then transformed in Calvin's commentary on 2 Thessalonians (see below). This is a significant, provocative suggestion for the horizon of expectations of Chrysostom's day.

Lastly, Chrysostom's excursus on prayer is unmatched in the contemporary literature. The divine origin of Scripture affords Chrysostom the freedom to move through the canon in order to unpack the reasons for such a prayer and the necessity of extending it to the apostolic legacy. Thus he surpasses the horizon of expectation of his then contemporary readers, though his interpretation remains within the hermeneutical paradigm of the early Church.

#### *ii. Modern Scholarship*

Chrysostom's view of Scripture, both in terms of origin and the necessity to read canonically, is not unique. Any other theologian of the age

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<sup>186</sup> Ambrosiaster includes John 5:43 in his commentary on the epistle, though he associates it with the exaltation of the Antichrist (2 Thess 2:4), and uses it as evidence that, because Jesus said this to the Jews, the Antichrist will arise from amongst the Jews. Ambrosiaster, "Commentary on 2 Thessalonians" in Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Galatians-Philemon*, trans. and ed. Gerald L. Bray, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 115.

<sup>187</sup> Theophylact, *In epistolam ii ad Thessalonicenses* (PG 124:1345)

<sup>188</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, "In epist. ii Thess.," 51; Theodoret of Cyrus, "2 Thessalonians," 128 and 129; Severian von Gabala, "Fragmenta," 333.

<sup>189</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, "2 Thessalonians," 129.

<sup>190</sup> Theophylact, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PG 124:1344).

would reveal a similar view and methodology. When compared with modern biblical scholarship, however, Chrysostom stands out as somewhat anomalous. Fee is a fair representation of modern biblical interpretation for the purpose of providing an example. In his commentary on 2 Thessalonians, Fee is content to explicate the epistle through OT intertextual references,<sup>191</sup> in relation to the NT for the purpose of clarification of a rare term,<sup>192</sup> with attention to the other Pauline literature,<sup>193</sup> and with specific emphasis on 1 Thessalonians. Yet he does not make connections across the canon between shared ideas or terms. This is not a contention that Fee rejects a notion of Scripture as divinely-sourced. Rather, it shows that he construes it in different terms than Chrysostom and that the two have different aims exegetical aims.

The two points are hardly separable. For Fee, the central aim of commenting on 2 Thessalonians is to understand what Paul was originally saying to the Thessalonians.<sup>194</sup> The divine source might be vaguely implied by the fact that commenting assumes the authoritative status of the epistle. A doctrine of Scripture is not definitively worked out in this commentary, but it seems that the instruction in the epistle is to be taken as somehow analogous for the modern Christian. Scripture is a reservoir of ancient meaning.

Alternatively, Chrysostom expects to hear the voice of God in every interaction with Scripture. Exegesis is anticipatory. God certainly spoke in the

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<sup>191</sup> E.g. Fee, *Thessalonians*, 252 and 261–62.

<sup>192</sup> E.g. *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>193</sup> E.g. *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>194</sup> “Here is another Pauline moment which as a whole helps us better to understand the nature of the final outcome of the gospel itself, while at the same time giving us insight into the ‘everyday’ nature of living Christ in a very pagan culture.” *ibid.*, 242. Witherington offers even less than analogy in his introduction to the epistle, which situates the letter historically and seeks to understand it in those terms. He attempts something akin to Fee in his “Bridging the Horizons” sections, in which he describes the theological application of a particular aspect of the letter for the present. For the entire epistle, however, he offers only two such sections on the topics of “apostasy” and “work.” Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 29–36, 226–29, and 263–65.



past, but he continues to exert his freedom to speak through it in any engagement with it. “Analogy” is not a strong enough term for Chrysostom, nor does it appropriately capture what is happening. The bishop certainly desires to grasp what Paul was saying to the Thessalonians, as this provides helpful limits to the interpretation, but he hears the clarifying discourse of God throughout Scripture and recognises the pastoral need of his congregation to be shaped by the reality articulated in 2 Thessalonians, particularly, and Scripture as a whole, generally. The disappearance of Chrysostom’s emphases can be attributed to the shift of hermeneutical aims and the location of meaning from the subject matter of Scripture to history.

## **2.5. Monastic/Ascetic Influences**

As Chrysostom received his theological education primarily in the *askētērion* of Diodore and Carterios,<sup>195</sup> and in his monastic retreat to the region of Silpios,<sup>196</sup> much of the above discussions could be subsumed under the category of monastic/ascetic influences on Chrysostom’s reading of 2 Thessalonians. This background, however, has a decided influence on his reading with attention to *pride* and with his *concern for the poor*. Situating him within this context will help us to better understand the particular attention that he dedicates to these topics.

### ***I. Pride***

The term “pride” does not feature in 2 Thessalonians. Chrysostom generates the discussion initially in his first homily while providing an overview of the motivations for writing and the content of the epistle. He notes particularly the centrality of Antichrist<sup>197</sup> in Paul’s discussion, the

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<sup>195</sup> Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 18–20.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>197</sup> The tradition of reading the “man of lawlessness” as Antichrist was well-established by the time of Chrysostom. The beginning of this tradition can be traced *at least* as early as

doctrine given thereof, and the manner in which the specific information about this character serves rhetorically to encourage<sup>198</sup> the Thessalonian Christians.

Turning his attention to Antichrist's self-exaltation "above every so-called god and every object of worship" (2 Thess 2:4), Chrysostom takes the opportunity to address a legend circulating in the city at the time. Some people have apparently circulated the idea that Antichrist will arrive "bending [his] knees" as a gesture of submission to God.<sup>199</sup> Utilising the verse above, he reveals the contradictory nature of this folklore. Pushing further, he argues that this passage does not exhibit the humility of Antichrist, but rather his arrogance (ἀπρόνοια). Because of the clear implementation of Antichrist by Satan for his ends (2:9), Chrysostom establishes a connection of characteristics between the two figures: "For just as the devil fell because of arrogance, so also he who is operated by him is anointed into arrogance."<sup>200</sup> At this juncture, Chrysostom's exegesis extends into pastoral concern, and is rooted in both 1.) his theological training and 2.) a widespread tendency across the ascetic communities of the East.

#### *i. Contemporary Scholarship*

The two points are intimately related, but in regards to his theological training, Chrysostom has taken for granted a well-developed tradition in his citation of the fall of Satan. This tradition is largely built on the interpretation of Isa 14:12-17 and Ezek 28 (esp. vv. 11-18), which describe the fall of the

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Irenaeus (120-202), but potentially earlier. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.25 (ANF 1:553-54); Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), 58-60.

<sup>198</sup> "For a weak soul is then most fully assured, not merely when it hears, but when it learns something more particular." John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 1 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:378).

<sup>199</sup> Whether this is an illustration fabricated by Chrysostom for didactic purposes or a genuine rumour is unclear. It does not seem likely that the Church Father would concoct such a tale, but we have no evidence of such a view outside of Chrysostom. Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:470).

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

rulers of Babylon and Tyre, respectively. The Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* and its Greek counterpart of the same name, with roots in a supposed source from the first century CE,<sup>201</sup> take up these biblical texts (particularly Ezek 28) and incorporate the material into their supplemental stories to Gen 2-3.

Reading these OT texts as a description of Satan's fall continued in the Fathers with Origen, who saw the "prince of Tyre" (Ezek 28:1) and his relationship to "Eden" (28:13) as a clear indication that this was not a reference to the actual ruler of Tyre, but the "governing angel... set over that kingdom,"<sup>202</sup> whom Origen understood as Satan.<sup>203</sup>

Theodoret reads Ezekiel similarly, recognising Satan as an angel who formerly had authority over Eden before his fall.<sup>204</sup> Crucial to these passages that shapes the patristic understanding of Satan's fall is the emphasis on the role of "pride" (Ezek 28:2 and 16). It is with this history of reading that Chrysostom is able to compress the fall of Satan as due to "arrogance" (ἀπόνοια) or "pride" (ὕπερηφανία).<sup>205</sup> As this is the chief characteristic of the

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<sup>201</sup> Johnson contends that the two texts are based on an original Hebrew document or documents. M. D. Johnson, "Life of Adam and Eve," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (London: Doubleday, 1983), 251. Eldridge argues, however, that one may only go so far as to suggest that the base text for the *Apocalypse* "had a Semitic character." Michael D. Eldridge, *Dying Adam with his Multiethnic Family*, SVTP (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 52–56. See also James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament*, vol. 54, SNTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 86–87. The omission of 2 *Enoch* is due to the uncertainty of its date. See F. I. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse) of Enoch" in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (London: Doubleday, 1983), 91–97.

<sup>202</sup> Gary A. Anderson, "Ezekiel 28, the Fall of Satan, and the Adam Books," in *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays*, ed. Gary A. Anderson, Michael Stone, and Johannes Tromp (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 135.

<sup>203</sup> Origen, *Selecta in Ezechielem*, 28 (PG 13:820-21). See also Origen, *De Principiis* 1.5.4-5 (ANF 4:258-60); Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 2.10 (ANF 3:306); Richard H. Bell, *Deliver Us from Evil: Interpreting the Redemption from the Power of Satan in New Testament Theology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 12–13, 19.

<sup>204</sup> Anderson, "Ezekiel 28," 138.; Theodoret, *In Ezechielis*, (PG 81:1093).

<sup>205</sup> Chrysostom unifies and distinguishes these terms. The Antichrist openly exhibits ἀπόνοια, which is the "beginning of sin" in terms of foundation, namely that it sustains sin. At the same time Chrysostom cautions against ὕπερηφανία, which is the "beginning of sin" in terms of first impulse. The latter leads to the former. John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:470-71).

devil, Chrysostom easily applies the trait to the one through whom Satan will work as the *eschaton* approaches (2 Thess 2:9) and who mimics the behaviour described in Isa 14 and Ezek 28.

Admittedly, “pride” is a topic significantly addressed by numerous biblical texts, particularly the Psalms, Proverbs, and 1 Corinthians. The attention to pride certainly grows out of Chrysostom’s observation of Antichrist’s behaviour, yet he is also primed to notice this characteristic. Similarly, and likely in the same century as Chrysostom, Pseudo-Hippolytus references this particular passage and describes Antichrist as “lifted up in heart” and “haughty.”<sup>206</sup>

Additionally, numerous Fathers wrote on the vice of pride around the time of Chrysostom. In his ascetic works, Basil of Caesarea describes how the monastic community is to deal with the proud and the idle,<sup>207</sup> thus making an implicit connection to 2 Thessalonians. More significant, however, might be the work of the Syrian Pseudo-Macarius, who exemplifies well the theology of Syrian monasticism, in which Chrysostom had trained. In his spiritual homilies, dating to the 380s,<sup>208</sup> Pseudo-Macarius comments frequently on pride, at one point observing, “A proud mind is a great humiliation, while humility is a great uplifting of the mind and an honor and a dignity.”<sup>209</sup> Like

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<sup>206</sup> “ὑψοῦται τῇ καρδίᾳ” and “ὑψηλός,” respectively. Pseudo-Hippolytus, *Oratio S. Hippolyti de consummatione mundi, de Antichristo, et secundo adventu Domini hostri Jesu Christi* 25 (PG 10:928).

<sup>207</sup> Basil of Caesarea, “Rule XXIX” in *The Ascetic Works of Saint Basil*, ed. W. K. Lowther Clarke, Translations of Christian literature (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1925), 195–96. Basil’s connection to Chrysostom should not be underestimated. This Cappadocian Father studied with Diodore in Athens and maintained contact with his friend. See Basil of Caesarea, *The Letters* 134; Chase, *Chrysostom*, 10–11.

<sup>208</sup> George A. Maloney, *Pseudo-Macarius*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), xii.

<sup>209</sup> Pseudo-Macarius, “Homily 19” in *ibid.*, 149.

Chrysostom, he advances humility in place of pride.<sup>210</sup> Elsewhere, Pseudo-Macarius includes “pride” and “vainglory” in his list of vices,<sup>211</sup> and he issues a warning on the danger of pride in causing one to “fall away.”<sup>212</sup>

Around the same time as Pseudo-Macarius, Evagrius Ponticus composed his *Praktikos* in Egypt. Evagrius was raised near Antioch in the region of Pontus and heavily influenced by the Cappadocians, who trained him and encouraged his monastic lifestyle.<sup>213</sup> He settled in the Nitrian desert of Egypt, where numerous other monks, including John Cassian, would come under his theological influence.<sup>214</sup> The *Praktikos* significantly formed the foundation for the later developed “seven deadly sins.” In the *Praktikos*, Evagrius describes the eight passionate *logismoi* in relation to monasticism. He concludes with pride as “the cause of the most damaging fall for the soul,” which is quickly followed by a number of other vices and demons.<sup>215</sup>

Evagrius has a discernable effect on his student, Cassian, who puts together a list of the same eight passionate thoughts (though he switches the order of “sadness” and “anger”), which concludes with “pride” (ὕπερηφανία) as the most serious principle fault.<sup>216</sup> Cassian expounds a great deal on pride, even carrying forward the tradition that Lucifer, the archangel, fell by pride

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<sup>210</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:470-71).

<sup>211</sup> Pseudo-Macarius, “Homily 40,” in Maloney, *Pseudo-Macarius*, 214.

<sup>212</sup> Pseudo-Macarius, “The Great Letter,” in *ibid.*, 259–60. It is likely, in fact, that Pseudo-Macarius influenced Gregory of Nyssa, and that *De Institutio Christiano* is a reworking of *The Great Letter*, which would have further disseminated his teachings on vices and virtues. See *Ibid.*, 249-52

<sup>213</sup> For an example of Evagrius’ theological relationship to the Cappadocians, see Kevin Corrigan, *Evagrius and Basil*, Ashgate Studies in Philosophy and Theology in Late Antiquity (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); A. M. Casiday, *Evagrius Ponticus*, The Early Church Fathers (London: Routledge, 2006), 6–7.

<sup>214</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Evagrius Ponticus: Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, ed. J. E. Bamberger, Cistercian Studies Series 4 (Spencer, Mass: Spencer Publications, 1970), xxxv–xlvi.

<sup>215</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Praktikos* 14 in *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>216</sup> “Although it is the latest in our conflict with our faults and stands last on the list, yet in the order of time is the first.” John Cassian, *The Twelve Books on the Institutes of Coenobia and the Remedies for the Eight Principle Faults*, 12.1 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 11:280).

and became Satan.<sup>217</sup> Thus, Cassian shares the sentiment that the presence of pride in an individual (in his case, a monk) is identification with the devil. In the case of Cassian, it is likely that primarily Evagrius influenced his understanding of pride, but Chrysostom surely sharpened his views during his time at Constantinople.<sup>218</sup>

At first it may seem that Chrysostom's view of pride may have been distilled through Pseudo-Macarius and Evagrius Ponticus. Yet, Chrysostom exhibits incipient thoughts on this topic in his letter to Theodore (368 CE).<sup>219</sup> This is not to say that Pseudo-Macarius or Evagrius did not hone his thoughts on the topic, but that the sensitivity to this vice was ubiquitous in ascetic circles in the East during the time of Chrysostom prior to the writings of these Fathers. It is likely that Chrysostom would have come into contact with Evagrius' work at Constantinople, either through the preserved text or through Cassian. The sharpening of ascetic-moralism, both in terms of recognising the vice of pride and "extirpating"<sup>220</sup> it by humility, would then have been mutual in this regard.<sup>221</sup> Due to the issues of dating Chrysostom's homilies, however, we cannot be certain that Cassian had any specific influence on his homilies on 2 Thessalonians.

Assuming Chrysostom's stance toward pride as a product of his context, the sermon of Severian following Chrysostom's first exile is decidedly antagonistic. He argues, "[John's] boastful disposition" (τὸ

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 12.4.

<sup>218</sup> After the Anthropomorphite controversy, Cassian sought refuge under Chrysostom, who eventually ordained Cassian, at Constantinople. Richard J. Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth Century Gaul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>219</sup> John Chrysostom, *Ad Theodorum lapsum I* (PG 47:277-308).

<sup>220</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians 1* (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:378).

<sup>221</sup> John Cassian, *The Twelve Books*, 12.8 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 11:282).

ἀλιζονικὸν ἥθος αὐτοῦ) alone justified his deposition and followed this with the quote “God opposes the proud (ὑπερηφάνους)” (James 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5).<sup>222</sup> Whether we accept the historicity of Socrates’ account of this sermon or not, the historical context would justify the degree of outrage experienced by the (hypothetical) audience. Severian describes “ἥθος αὐτοῦ” as characterised by the very sin that Chrysostom taught to most deplorable.

In the broader history of reception we see the immediate influence of Chrysostom on Calvin’s reading of the Antichrist’s self-exaltation. Calvin possessed a copy of Chrysostom’s homilies and relied primarily on Chrysostom for exegetical guidance above Augustine.<sup>223</sup> When looking at the description of Antichrist as one who exalts himself over every object of worship and god, etc. (2 Thess 2:4), Calvin notes, “the pride and arrogance of Antichrist will be so great that he raises himself above the rank and number of the servants, and mounts the throne of God with intolerable pride.”<sup>224</sup> Significantly, Calvin notes both the *pride* and *arrogance* of Antichrist—the same terms as Chrysostom in his first homily on the epistle. Calvin’s reading, however, is not grounded in the context of ascetic-moralism of the fourth century, nor does he contrast it with the virtue of humility.

## ii. Modern Scholarship

<sup>222</sup> Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.16 (PG 67:714).

<sup>223</sup> John R. Walchenbach, *John Calvin as Biblical Commentator: An Investigation into Calvin’s Use of John Chrysostom as an Exegetical Tutor* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 1–43.

<sup>224</sup> According to the French edition: “l’orgueil et arrogance de l’Antichrist sera si grande.” Jean Calvin, *Commentaires de Jehan Calvin sur le Nouveau Testament: Sur les epistres de S. Paul aux Philippiens, Colossiens, Thessaloniens, à Timothée, Tite, Philémon et aux Hébreux, et sur les Epistres Canoniques de S. Pierre, S. Jehan, S. Jaques et S. Jude, autrement appelées catholiques* (Paris: Libr. de Ch. Meyrueis et Cie., 1855), 164. The Latin edition notes only “pride” (*superbia*), which is still the same terminology found in the Latin edition of Chrysostom. Jean Calvin, *Iohannis Calvini in omnes Pauli Apostoli epistolas: Epistolas ad Ephesios, Philippenses, Colossenses, Thessalonicenses, Timotheum, Titum, Philemonem, et Hebraeos Complectens*, ed. August Tholuck, vol. 2 (Halis Saxonum: Librariae Gebaueriae, 1831), 210; John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:470).

Turning to modern commentators on this same verse and topic, we observe similar attention to the pride of Antichrist in Rigaux.<sup>225</sup> In 2 Thess 2:4, he sees Paul characterises Antichrist by “une opposition *orgueilleuse* à tout ce qui est divin ou sacré... Impie, *orgueilleux*, blasphémateur, tels sont les traits qui stigmatisent l'horrible figure.”<sup>226</sup> Rigaux shows further that one can trace the opposition and pride against the sacred found here to Dan 11:36.<sup>227</sup> This reveals the textual relationship of our passage to the OT, which Chrysostom does not insinuate. In addition to this, Rigaux situates 2 Thessalonians further in the apocalyptic genre by way of comparison with other apocalyptic texts.

Wanamaker follows Rigaux in this regard, commenting on the relationship of the passage to Dan 11:36 as a description of Antiochus Epiphanes. He adds that in the tradition out of which 2 Thess 2:4 originated “the arrogance of the person of rebellion... would culminate or result in his usurpation of the temple of God to declare his own divinity.”<sup>228</sup> He extends the argument further by connecting the passage to Ezek 28:1-10 and Isa 14:4-20, in which historical rulers arrogated to themselves the claim of divinity.<sup>229</sup> In Chrysostom’s day, these passages were understood as a description of Satan’s fall, and served as the loaded background behind Chrysostom’s statement “Satan fell by arrogance.”<sup>230</sup> Wanamaker does not assume such a connection, but continues by grounding 2 Thessalonians in a context of religious-political turmoil, in which the pride of Caligula conflicted with the

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<sup>225</sup> Rigaux refers to the “man of lawlessness” as “anti-Dieu” rather than “Antéchrist.” Rigaux, *Thessaloniens*, 658.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 658. Emphasis added.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 246.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 247–48.

<sup>230</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 1 (PG 62:470).



beliefs of the early Christians. This ruler recapitulated Daniel's prophecy and served as a contemporary type for the future eschatological enemy of Christ. Through such rulers, the mystery of lawlessness continues to work, Wanamaker contends. He adds further that modern Christians face similar, yet more complex problems, such as nations and political figures arrogating to themselves "Christian symbols to legitimate their unjust and oppressive practices such as apartheid, militarism, and imperialism."<sup>231</sup> Wanamaker offers a pastoral reflection of the same tone as Chrysostom but locates the attention in a different place.

The history of interpretation shows that readers have understood the activity of Antichrist in terms of arrogance and pride, yet for Chrysostom these terms are couched in an inherited tradition regarding the fall of Satan and an ascetic-moralism that developed out of this tradition. His reading becomes introspective and provides correction, "satisfying" the original horizon of expectations, but his censure of pride has lost its sharpness in the progress of history. Rigaux's exegesis situates the letter in a literary and political context, which Wanamaker utilises to turn the gaze of Christians outward, that they might become aware of Antichrist-arrogance, systemic sin, exhibited by leaders or nations in the present and stand against it (though he does not specify how). These complementary readings, when taken together, generate a horizon of understanding pride and Antichrist in the world that is denser than any of the readings taken individually. The text is not simply about an eschatological event, but it is also about the manifestation of and identification with this eschatological figure *against* God in the present.

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<sup>231</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 248–49.

## II. Concern for the Poor

Connected to the issue of pride, is Chrysostom's concern for the poor. In his first homily on 2 Thessalonians, the bishop sees that pride quickly leads to an unhealthy thirst for wealth as well as contempt for the poor.<sup>232</sup> He does not qualify a specific "type" of poor. The discussion of the poor resurfaces with greater attention in his final homily on the epistle. On its own, the topic does not appear to have any relationship to the content of the letter. It grows out of reading Scripture that is both conscious of social context and an ascetic-moralism that has a developed and holistic understanding of practices described in Scripture.

In his fifth homily, Chrysostom perceives Paul as working night and day (2 Thess 3:8) *in order "to assist"*<sup>233</sup> *others*. In this way, Paul provides an example in how Christians should work and to what end (i.e. both to keep from being idle and to provide for those in need)<sup>234</sup> thereby uniting the issues of idleness and poverty. Chrysostom is clearly speaking of the poor Christians at this point, and potentially even monks, who have renounced both wealth and work. Chrysostom sharpens his chastisement of the congregants for insulting the beggar "who for your sake is poor,"<sup>235</sup> rather than giving and admonishing privately, as Paul instructed (3:15).<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians 2* (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:382).

<sup>233</sup> "ἐπικουρεῖν." John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (PG 62:494).

<sup>234</sup> As he has laid the groundwork in his first homily for understanding every sin as proceeding from and sustained by pride, the discussion on the topic of sin and almsgiving should not be understood as separate.

<sup>235</sup> The assumption here being that God allows the person to be poor for the sake of the giver's own "healing." John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (PG 62:496)

<sup>236</sup> Generally speaking, reactions to the structurally poor bordered on hostile. Reactions to the voluntary poor varied from kindness to mistreatment like those above. Chrysostom's challenge to his congregation to give generously to the poor (particularly the structurally poor) was a battle against the cultural ethos of viewing the poor with suspicion. Wendy Mayer, "Poverty and Generosity in the Time of Chrysostom," in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, ed. Susan R. Holman, Holy Cross Studies in Patristic Theology and History (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 140-58. Brändle argues that Chrysostom makes almsgiving a soteriological issue, looking particularly at his homily on Matt 25:34-35. Perhaps

In the first homily, the concern remains general: Chrysostom wants his congregation to expel pride, so that they might be appropriately concerned for the poor in general. He substantiates this in his sermon on almsgiving, in which he pleads with his congregants to give as Scripture compels them after he witnesses the extreme penury in the winter marketplace.<sup>237</sup>

The final homily concentrates on the specific manner of giving to the poor and certainly relates to a growing monastic movement within Christendom. The “idle” are not likely so because they believe the Day of the Lord is imminent, as in Paul’s day, but because the degree of their poverty necessitates their begging, even in the case of those who exert themselves constantly in spiritual work rather than physical work by which they can earn a living.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Situating this in the literary context of Chrysostom’s day, we see how far he extends monastic/ascetic-moralism and instruction to his congregants. In his *Longer Rules* for monastic communities, Basil not only makes an explicit connection between pride and idleness,<sup>238</sup> he also asserts that the “aim and intention with which the workers [monks] must work” is to provide for “those in want, not his own need.”<sup>239</sup> Like Chrysostom, he grounds this in Paul’s exhortation and reminder to the Thessalonians to follow the example that he gave them, quoting 2 Thess 3:8, 11, and 12. Both authors mine the text

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only an allusion to judgment appears in our text. Rudolf Brändle, “The Sweetest Passage: Matthew 25:31-46 and Assistance to the Poor in the Homilies of John Chrysostom” in *ibid.*, 127-39.

<sup>237</sup> John Chrysostom, *On Repentance and Almsgiving* (FC 96:131-49).

<sup>238</sup> Basil of Caesarea, “The Longer Rules” in Clarke, *The Ascetic Works of Saint Basil*, 195-96.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-15.

for doctrine. For one it relates particularly to governance of monastic communities, but to the other it applies equally to all Christians.<sup>240</sup>

Likewise regulating monastic communities, John Cassian pursues a similar tack as Basil and Chrysostom, though he expands the discussion and follows his master, Evagrius Ponticus,<sup>241</sup> by situating it in the discourse of the eight *logismoi*. Under the spirit of *acedia* (weariness) Cassian describes how this “noonday demon” afflicts the monk, but he provides a corrective firmly established in Scripture, particularly 2 Thessalonians. Likely writing in a monastic context at this point, Cassian reminds his readers of Paul’s example through manual labour, the admonition that the idle should not eat, and the proper manner of admonishing the disorderly brethren.<sup>242</sup> He does not, however, speak in terms of the aim of labour, like Basil, aside from its capacity to correct *acedia*. The absence of working so as to provide for the poor might be due simply to the fact that Cassian’s monasticism was coenobitic and withdrawn from society where one would readily encounter the needy. The influence of Evagrius on Cassian appears in the structure and terminology of *The 12 Books*, but this does not exclude the mutual influence of Cassian and Chrysostom on each other during their time together at Constantinople. Cassian’s reading of 2 Thess 3:6-15 demonstrates a number of affinities with Chrysostom.

Theodore reads 2 Thess 3:6-15 in an interesting light. Certainly, the able-bodied members must work with their hands, so as not to burden the community. At the same time, reading this passage too narrowly puts it in

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<sup>240</sup> Sterk, *Renouncing the World*, 146.

<sup>241</sup> The *Praktikos* is also intended for the monastic community, but Evagrius does not connect this explicitly to 2 Thessalonians. See “Praktikos 12” in Evagrius Ponticus, *Evagrius Ponticus: Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, 18–19.

<sup>242</sup> John Cassian, *The Twelve Books*, 10.7-16 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 11:268-72).

conflict with Paul’s challenging comments to the Corinthians about the gospel worker’s right to provision from the community (1 Cor 9:4-15). For this reason, Theodore contends that those engaged in teaching (i.e. priests and bishops) are free from working with their hands in a way that others are not, because they provide an essential service to the community.<sup>243</sup> He looks at the text from a position of a bishop who does not engage in manual labour and raises the question of how this exhortation reaches his profession. Theodore does not make a connection between work and provision for the needy. For Chrysostom, the connection is clear: *the idle are the poor*.<sup>244</sup> At the same time, Chrysostom offers a similar perspective to Theodore in a passing comment that alms are given to those who are unable to work and those who “are wholly occupied in the business of teaching.”<sup>245</sup> Chrysostom is somehow able to realise both of these answers in the text. The difference in the social contexts (Antioch or Constantinople vs. Mopsuestia) and the audience of the respective works (congregation vs. educated clergy) might account for the difference in the questions posed.

With Chrysostom, John of Damascus reads this passage as referring to those who beg for food, but he quickly follows this up with the comment that they should work, after Paul’s example. He then takes up a position similar to Theodore and Chrysostom in defending the right for “τοῖς τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον κηρύττουσιν” to live from the gospel (1 Cor 9:14),<sup>246</sup> likely eyeing his own post.

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<sup>243</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, “In epist. ii Thess.,” 62–63; see also Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 62–63.

<sup>244</sup> “[Paul] is discoursing concerning the poor.” John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians 5* (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:396).

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 394

<sup>246</sup> John of Damascus, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PG 95:928).

Centuries later, a significant reader of Chrysostom, John Calvin, exhibits the ongoing influence of the Church Father. Generally speaking, Calvin takes a harsh stance against those who do not labour, especially the monks of his day. Following Augustine in condemning idle monks, Calvin bewails their appeal to an “Order or other and sometimes with the name of some Rule” in defence of their idleness.<sup>247</sup> Calvin might have sharpened this accusation had he turned the *Longer Rule* or Cassian’s *12 Books* against them. Whereas the Fathers’ corrections to the monastic communities stems from intimate association with them as insiders, Calvin’s use of this passage comes as an outside observer.

Calvin finally engages with Chrysostom on this topic at 2 Thess 3:13. First, he cites Ambrose’s opinion that “this remark has been added so that the rich should not withdraw from motives of envy the assistance which they are giving to the poor.”<sup>248</sup> He then follows this with a similar comment from Chrysostom, who contends that the verse means a person who has been justifiably condemned as lazy should, nevertheless, not be deprived of food if they need it. Calvin argues, alternatively, that the intent of the verse is to prevent those who give generously from taking offence at the behaviour of the undeserving or those who take their generosity for granted and thereby retract the hand that gives to those in need. Here he synthesises the perspectives of Ambrose and Chrysostom into one. These Fathers mediate the “new” voice of the Reformer.

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<sup>247</sup> John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, Calvin’s Commentaries (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), 419.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 420.

What does not materialise in Calvin, however, is the characteristic sweetness with which Chrysostom speaks of the poor. Calvin concludes, “however the ingratitude, annoyance, pride, impertinence, and other unworthy behaviour on the part of the poor may trouble us, or discourage and disgust us, we must still strive never to abandon our desire to do good.”<sup>249</sup> Chrysostom’s question matures in a context in which he witnesses extreme poverty and the neglect of Christian responsibility to care for the poor. Calvin’s question, alternatively, reflects a diminished gap between the rich and poor, and the evident monastic neglect of biblical commands. Still, Calvin is able to envision the poor to whom Chrysostom refers, and therefore incorporates his thoughts.

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

Fee also picks up on Paul’s particular emphasis that these idlers are members of the Christian community.<sup>250</sup> For Chrysostom, this was analogous to the Christian poor, and for Calvin the monastics. After exploring the first century context in which this admonition arose, Fee urges “divinely inspired caution when thinking about how a text like this applies in the kind of multicultural world in which” most modern readers have been raised.<sup>251</sup> He argues that “work” cannot be understood in the same sense as in the first century because many in the Western context do not engage in manual labour in the same sense as Paul describes, yet they “work,” nevertheless. He contends, instead, that the emphasis should rather be placed on the unruly nature and refusal to work of these ‘busybodies’ which disturbs the peace of

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Fee, *Thessalonians*, 327.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 335.

the Christian community.”<sup>252</sup> Fee does not associate the command to “never tire of doing what is good” (3:13) with what precedes as its conclusion, but instead argues that it is the heading for what follows. “Doing what is good,” then, becomes obeying the instruction of the letter and shunning the idle with the purpose of their restoration (3:14-15). This grammatical shift reinforces Fee’s vision of these idlers primarily as “disruptive” rather than needy. Somewhat problematic for this reading, however, is Paul’s emphasis on “eating” (3:8, 10). If the idlers are simply disruptive, then how does depriving them of food accomplish any end and why point to his example of paying for his food? Nevertheless, Fee brings to bear an important point about the nature of work in a modern context as it relates to this text.

Additionally, the sixteen century contextual shift from Chrysostom to a Protestant context where few of the Christian poor are in their state simply because of a refusal to work and seek sustenance from their fellow believers means that Fee seeks an analogy elsewhere. He eventually settles on the difficulty of the fractured Church to enforce such regulations, but he encourages the churches that take this command seriously to admonish those who disrupt the community’s peace to do so in the spirit of 2 Thess 3:6-15.<sup>253</sup> The perspectives of Chrysostom and Fee compliment one another, yet reveal their historical distance. Chrysostom’s Church did not face the complications of enforcing church discipline of modern Protestant congregations.

Wanamaker pursues a similar reading to Fee, though he dedicates specific attention to Paul’s concern over how the disorderly, “urban poor” might draw unnecessary attention from outsiders, rather than as conscious

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 336–39.



rebellion against authority.<sup>254</sup> Unlike Fee, Wanamaker associates the command to “do what is good” (3:13) with what precedes and, like Calvin, sees this as directed at the well-behaved members of the community. He speculates as to whether this might be a way of preventing this group from giving to the genuinely needy, but quickly notes that this is not made clear by Paul. Instead, it is most likely that this is an exhortation to the readers not to behave like the disorderly.<sup>255</sup> Remaining in historical abstraction, Wanamaker is unable to comfortably illustrate an analogous scenario.

Ronald Russell offers a sociological interpretation of this passage, arguing that the situation described reflects the poor Christians of Thessalonica entering into patron-client relationships with the wealthier Christians of the community without actually seeking to support themselves.<sup>256</sup> This aligns him to a degree with Chrysostom, though it expands the understanding with some first century contextual insights. Malherbe, however, initially rejects this sociological reading of the passage, yet comes close to asserting the same point when he describes the scenario as reflecting many of the Thessalonian Christians taking advantage of the love of the community to avoid work.<sup>257</sup> He helpfully notes that Paul’s admonition not to weary in doing good (3:13) is “a reference to the material support the church had given to their fellow members in need rather than to doing what is good in general” and that “Paul is warning against overinterpretation of his directions.”<sup>258</sup> Here, a modern commentator comes closest to the perspective

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<sup>254</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 281–82.

<sup>255</sup> Fee, *Thessalonians*, 288.

<sup>256</sup> Robert Russell, “The Idle in 2 Thess 3:6-12: an Eschatological or a Social Problem?,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 105-119.

<sup>257</sup> Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:454–56.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 32B:458.

of Chrysostom and sharpens his practical application in the living body of the Church.

On both the issues of pride and concern for the poor, it is clear how exegesis and contemporary context interact and lead to the final form of Chrysostom's homilies. The theological impulses of his monastic/ascetic background give substance to his discussion of 2 Thessalonians and extend challenging, typically monastic morality to the average Christian. Such biblically-based living should not be restricted to a select group. Chrysostom's incorporation of these concerns into his reading shows how this epistle serves as an answer to his contextual questions and expand the modern horizon of understanding by grounding it practically in the experience of the Church. His reading of the "idle" as "the poor" is a unifying thread through interpretive history and the modern interpretation are expanded by a complimentary ancient reading of the same passage.

## **2.6. Hell and Apocalyptic**

Similar to his appropriation of ascetic-moralism out of pastoral concern for his community, Chrysostom's engagement with the topic of hell and apocalyptic material in his homilies on 2 Thessalonians is shaped by practical concerns. As this topic absorbs a great deal of Chrysostom's attention, dominates the text of 2 Thessalonians, and features widely in the Fathers and elsewhere, we will have to exercise a degree of selectivity with the material.

### ***1. Hell and Apocalyptic: 2 Thessalonians 1***

As Paul's letter turns toward the material related to the Day of the Lord, Chrysostom operates under the assumption that God has somehow *revealed* this material to the apostle. Concerning the end-time events

generally, Chrysostom makes reference to the resurrection, the Judgment, the coming of Antichrist, and the biblical description of hell in his first homily as a partial summary of the eschatological material in the first and second chapters of 2 Thessalonians.<sup>259</sup> He is not content, however, to let these points stand as doctrinal conceptions alone, but makes a crucial turn from theological abstraction to shaping the way one lives. This turn occurs in his description of false doctrines, sown by Satan, growing up in a person, so that they manipulate their worldview and lead to the neglect of significant points in Scripture (e.g. the renunciation of pride).<sup>260</sup>

Doctrine as theological abstraction is not sufficient for Chrysostom. He forcefully urges that the doctrine relating to the *eschaton* must affect the Christian living in the present. In truth, he desires that all Christians be compelled by the love of Christ into living in a manner consistent with the reality revealed in Scripture.<sup>261</sup> Yet until that compulsion develops, he points to the terrifying doctrine regarding the judgment of the wicked and punishment in hell as a means of shaping the way that one views his/herself. The terrifying description of God's eschatological wrath means, for Chrysostom, that one ought to live in a manner properly oriented to this end. It is more than awareness; it is living acknowledgement.<sup>262</sup> The emphasis on hell alone provokes the modern (Western) horizon, which tends to neglect or diminish this doctrine because of its offensiveness.

Elsewhere, Chrysostom makes note of the vengeance coming to the wicked (1:8), and insists that it encourages those who are afflicted because it

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<sup>259</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 1 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 13:377-79).

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

<sup>261</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 2 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 13:382 and 383).

<sup>262</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 1 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 13:379-80).

demonstrates the justice of God, but that it should not be a cause for the Christian to rejoice. Instead, he attempts to ground his congregation in the awareness that their salvation is one of grace, not merit. Furthermore, they ought to develop such thinking by concentrating on the blessing of the promised kingdom and the fearful reality of hell. In fact, Christians should concentrate more on the judgment and hell than the kingdom as a means of shaping their lives, “for fear has more power than the promise.”<sup>263</sup> The provocation mentioned above is sharpened by this emphasis.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

The holding of appropriate fear appears in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* when, in his dialogue with the proconsul, Polycarp dismisses the threat of death by means of the flaming pyre: “You threaten with a fire that burns for an hour and after a short while is extinguished; for you do not know about the fire of the coming judgment and eternal torment, reserved for the ungodly.”<sup>264</sup>

Irenaeus quotes the entirety of 2 Thess 1:7-10 as evidence against Gnostic groups who speak incessantly about the mercy of the Lord in the NT and neglect the passages referring to his Judgment, so as to defend their belief that the demiurge is the god of the OT and entirely distinct from the Son and Father of the NT.<sup>265</sup> For Irenaeus, teaching on the wrath of God in the Judgment is an essential part of Christian instruction.

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<sup>263</sup> “μᾶλλον γὰρ ὁ φόβος ἰσχύει τῆς ἐπαγγελίας.” John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 2 (PG 62:477).

<sup>264</sup> *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 11.2; cf. the introduction to “The Martyrdom of Polycarp” in Bart D. Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, LCL (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 383.

<sup>265</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.27.4 (ANF 1:501); Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 193.

Similarly, Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373) points out that though the Lord tends to offer help in the form of persuasion, he also reproves with fearful means, like the “flaming fire” of the coming judgment (1:8).<sup>266</sup>

Of his Antiochene contemporaries, however, Theodoret sees the fearsome nature of the coming Judgment only as a means of encouraging the afflicted. He does not take the next step in turning it into a warning for Christians from falling away, or for forgetting their existence in a state of grace.<sup>267</sup> The fragmentary nature of Severian’s commentary confirms that he agrees with Theodoret, but it is uncertain as to whether he sees the dimension of fear that this description of the Judgment should instil in Christians. His view of the event as an encouragement to the afflicted Thessalonians because it is punishment for their having been wronged,<sup>268</sup> however, make it likely that he did not read this in the same manner as Chrysostom, who sees the Judgment as grounded in agnosticism and lack of response to the gospel (1:8), or, put differently, God’s concern for his own glory.<sup>269</sup>

Though writing without a particular reference to 2 Thessalonians, Basil shares this perspective of living in the fear of the Lord. In a letter to a widow (c. 374), Basil reminds the woman that “to whomsoever there is present the vivid expectation of the threatened punishments, the fear which dwells in such will give them no opportunity of *falling into* ill considered actions.”<sup>270</sup> The striking resemblance of this language reveals that Chrysostom has taken up a

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<sup>266</sup> Raised in the same region as Chrysostom, it is important to note both his shared view of Scripture for reproof and his understanding of “the Lord” as the source of all Scripture. Ephraim Syrus, *Three Homilies: On Our Lord* 1.22 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 13:314).

<sup>267</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, “2 Thessalonians,” 126–27.

<sup>268</sup> Severian von Gabala, “Fragmenta,” 332.

<sup>269</sup> “...δι’ ἑαυτὸν ἀνάγκη τιμωρήσασθαι αὐτός.” John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 2 (FCT 5:455).

<sup>270</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *The Letters* 174 (Defarrari, LCL). Emphasis added.

topical discourse in the early Church, which is particularly appropriate to the tone of 2 Thessalonians and his view of “being worthy of calling” as a summons to martyrdom. Perhaps the only element that surpasses his horizon is his emphasis on divine grace.

Generations later, Calvin remains faithful to Chrysostom’s concern that the fearful doctrine of the Judgment and hell not be diminished. He avers, “Christ will avenge with the strictest severities the wrongs which the wicked inflict upon us.”<sup>271</sup> He adds to this the note that God punishes the rebellious “for the sake of his own glory,”<sup>272</sup> echoing Chrysostom, though this reading fits naturally with Calvin’s theology. He concentrates further on the terrible nature of hell in terms of its eternal duration, which signals that “the violent nature of that death will never cease.”<sup>273</sup>

## *ii. Modern Scholarship*

Malherbe reads this passage as pastorally motivated to comfort the Thessalonians within a framework in which God is just and personal vindication is forbidden. The primary aim of comforting the afflicted congregation is evident in the fact that Paul exercises restraint in describing the Judgment by only going into enough detail to serve his encouraging ends. Malherbe extends his agreement with Chrysostom by showing that those who experience the wrath of God in the Judgment are ultimately culpable because they reject God, not because they afflicted the Thessalonian believers.<sup>274</sup>

Witherington fails to consider the aspect of comfort that this apocalyptic portion of the letter brings to the Thessalonians, or believers who suffer in general. Nevertheless, he underlines with Chrysostom and Malherbe

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<sup>271</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 391.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 392.

<sup>274</sup> Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:398–401; see also his “Comment,” 406–8.

the eternal nature of hell in its dimensions of separation from God and in opposition to a doctrine of annihilation. For Witherington, the primary concern of this section, as the *exordium*, is to prepare the way for the *propositio*. That is to say, the Judgment (*exordium*) provides substantiating evidence for the claim that the eschatology troubling the Thessalonians is indeed false (*propositio*).<sup>275</sup> Though Chrysostom describes this as *an* aim of Paul, the rigid adherence to Greco-Roman rhetoric leads to reading the epistle too narrowly. More attention could helpfully be given to someone actually trained in rhetoric and who seeks to understand what the text communicates about God (i.e. Chrysostom).

## ***II. Hell and Apocalyptic: 2 Thessalonians 2***

Chrysostom holds something of a pragmatic and balanced view of 2 Thess 2:1-12, especially when considering the thoughts of his predecessors. He perceives this imposed limitation in the text itself, when Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the “traditions” that they received as a corrective of the speculative and false eschatology that presumes to know too much regarding the *eschaton*. Chrysostom echoes Paul: “It is tradition, do not seek further.”<sup>276</sup> This does not, however, prevent Chrysostom from making several observations about this passage. As noted previously, Chrysostom equates the “man of sin” with the Antichrist. He also labels him as the ἀποστασία, because he will cause many to fall away, and the “son of destruction” because he is destined to that end and will lead many to destruction. He denies that Antichrist is Satan, but recognises he is a man and the opponent of God. Looking at the phrase “taking his seat in the temple of God” (2:4),

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<sup>275</sup> Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 193–98.

<sup>276</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 4 (PG 62:488).

Chrysostom sees this as a reference to the Jerusalem Temple, but also sees it as the establishment of idolatry in every church.<sup>277</sup>

Finally,<sup>278</sup> Chrysostom alludes to the destruction of various kingdoms in Daniel (Dan 7), noting that the prophet has likewise made this timeline.<sup>279</sup> This connection reflects Chrysostom's awareness of 2 Thessalonians' place in a genre similar to other apocalyptic material, though he assumes the means of revelation to Paul rather than describes it.

Chrysostom also incorporates a tradition that perceives Antichrist as a man and an antitype of Christ. This is not as highly developed as in other Fathers, but its inclusion is important for revealing Chrysostom's dependence on his theological predecessors. The clearest example of this antitype reading appears in his fourth homily, in which he relates that Antichrist is "the lawless one, that he is the son of destruction, that his appearance is according to the work of Satan; but contrary [things] concerning the other, that he is the Saviour, that he brings countless blessings."<sup>280</sup>

For Chrysostom, instruction on this apocalyptic material is essential for several reasons: 1.) in his broader concern that people keep the fear of the Judgment before their eyes, this passage is particularly vivid;<sup>281</sup> 2.) it is a crucial doctrine taught by the apostle regarding the end times; 3.) repetition helps people to recognise the signs of the time, keeping them from forgetting, and; 4.) it keeps them from falling into sin by cultivating a mind appropriately

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<sup>277</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 3 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:386). In this suggestion that blends what will become the two major strands of interpretation regarding 2 Thess 2:1-12, Chrysostom predates Augustine, though he emphasises more the literal interpretation of the passage.

<sup>278</sup> Regarding Chrysostom's understanding of τὸ κατέχον and ὁ κατέχων, see pp. 110-11.

<sup>279</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 4 (PG 62:488).

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>281</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 2 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:382-84).



shaped by eschatological realities.<sup>282</sup> We might add to this list the pastoral need to address a theodical concern that rises out of the material, namely Paul's assertion that God permits the deceit of the wicked (2 Thess 2:10). Chrysostom responds to this concern that, regardless if Antichrist comes, these people still would not have believed in Christ, as history has already shown. The coming of Antichrist is a double-condemnation, because they will both deny the divinity of Christ and place faith in Antichrist.<sup>283</sup> By attending to these concerns, Chrysostom attempts to ground his congregation in an eschatologically-shaped reality.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

In regards to the reading *τό κατέχον* as the Roman Empire, Tertullian (160-225), whose works were quickly disseminated in both Latin and Greek, was the first to make such an association. He situates this argument, however, in the larger discussion that affirms the doctrine of the resurrection of flesh at the final Judgment.<sup>284</sup> At the same time, he exhibits a concern similar to Chrysostom in teaching sound eschatological doctrine.

Victorinus of Pettau (d. 304), another Latin writer, likewise pursued this interpretation in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, though without reference to the nature of the resurrection.<sup>285</sup> The closest reading to Chrysostom is found in Lactantius (250-325), another Latin-speaker, who notes, “the Roman name, by which the world is now ruled, will be taken away from the earth.”<sup>286</sup> He quickly follows this with a list of various kingdoms that have been destroyed (alluding to Daniel) reflecting a structure similar to

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<sup>282</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 3 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:386-87).

<sup>283</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 4 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:389).

<sup>284</sup> “What obstacle is there but the Roman State?” Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 3.24 (ANF 3:563); McGinn, *Antichrist*, 62.

<sup>285</sup> Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 11.7 (ANF 7:354).

<sup>286</sup> Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* 7.25 (ANF 7:212).

Chrysostom. Yet Lactantius' list includes the Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Assyrians while Chrysostom lists the Medes, Babylonians, Persians, and Macedonians. Despite the differences, it is clear that the association of the passage with Daniel was received and not created by Chrysostom. The dissemination and translation of Christian texts in the early Church should not be underestimated, particularly from publishing centres like Carthage (Tertullian) and Constantinople (Lactantius).

Hippolytus (170-235), concentrated on a different aspect of this apocalyptic material. He developed a thorough antitype reading of Antichrist in great detail, though without exclusive reference to 2 Thessalonians.<sup>287</sup> Pseudo-Hippolytus (mid-fourth century CE) continues this process with reference to 2 Thessalonians, going so far as to describe Antichrist as receiving circumcision so as to mirror Christ.<sup>288</sup> This concept of a reverse-replica of Christ, therefore, was well-worn before Chrysostom's day. Additionally, Chrysostom's imposed limitation of Scripture as tradition allows him to assert only that Antichrist is a man and counterpart to Christ. This is an interesting selection, given that, at the time, Antichrist was seen diversely as the devil, an individual, a corporate figure, the antitype of Christ, a magician, or a principle.<sup>289</sup>

In terms of the immediate context of Chrysostom's homilies, Severian reads τὸ κατέχον as the Holy Spirit.<sup>290</sup> This reading accounts for the neuter gender of τὸ κατέχον, but Chrysostom's question remains as to why Paul

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<sup>287</sup> Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* (ANF 5:204-19); see also Thiselton, *I and 2 Thessalonians*, 215; Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 31.

<sup>288</sup> Pseudo-Hippolytus, *De consummatione mundi* 22 (PG 10:925).

<sup>289</sup> Thiselton, *I and 2 Thessalonians*, 216–17.

<sup>290</sup> A variant reading of Severian says that which restrains is "the gifts of the Holy Spirit;" a view which Chrysostom and Theodore both dismiss, as the gifts had long since ceased in their times and the Antichrist had not yet appeared. Severian von Gabala, "Fragmenta," 334.

would refer to the Holy Spirit in such an oblique manner. Theodore and Theodoret agree with each other against both Severian and Chrysostom. They perceive “that which restrains” as a temporal limit set by divine decree.<sup>291</sup> For Theodoret, this makes more sense of the gospel going into all the world and overcoming “the deception of superstition” as a sign that precedes Antichrist’s arrival.<sup>292</sup> These readings encounter the difficulty, however, in explaining how the divine decree can be “taken out of the midst” (2:8).

Generally speaking, the medieval Greek and Latin commentators prefer Chrysostom’s reading. We witness such reading, for example, in John of Damascus, Haimo of Auxerre, and the *Glossa Ordinaria*.<sup>293</sup> Despite the disagreements of Chrysostom, Severian, Theodore, and Theodoret over τὸ κατέχον, all three advocate understanding the Antichrist as a man and a reverse replica of Christ.<sup>294</sup> Chrysostom’s exegesis tends to satisfy his horizon of expectations, though his pastoral emphases are provocative both then and now.

## ii. Modern Scholarship

Modern scholars have observed that the greatest shift in Paul’s apocalyptic theology comes with the realisation that, though the apocalyptic triumph of God is consummated in the future, the *eschaton* of God has proleptically punctuated history in Christ’s resurrection.<sup>295</sup> This means that the kingdom of God is a present, though partially veiled, reality with wide-ranging

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<sup>291</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, “In epist. ii Thess.,” 52–55.

<sup>292</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, “2 Thessalonians,” 129.

<sup>293</sup> John of Damascus, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PG 95:920); Haimo of Auxerre, “Exposition of the Second Letter to the Thessalonians,” in *Second Thessalonians: Two Early Medieval Apocalyptic Commentaries*, trans. and ed. Kevin L. Hughes, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 26–28; de Lyra, *Glossa Ordinaria*, 6:673–74.

<sup>294</sup> Severian might take this a bit further than the others in arguing that Satan comes in a “complete person.” Severian von Gabala, “Fragmenta,” 334–35; Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 221; Theodoret of Cyrus, “2 Thessalonians,” 128.

<sup>295</sup> Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 111; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 531.

effects for the people of God. For this reason, Paul recognises the necessity of a community shaped by the cross and the veracity of God's eschatological triumph, and he strives to establish his addressees firmly in this ontological realisation. At this point we hear both agreement<sup>296</sup> and disagreement with Chrysostom.

Though he may not do so exclusively in his works, Chrysostom tends to use "kingdom" language in his homilies on 2 Thessalonians only with reference to the future. At the same time, his emphatic position of a community living in a manner oriented toward the *eschaton* resonates with the position above. By asserting the proleptic manifestation of the kingdom in the present, modern scholarship significantly expands Chrysostom's interpretation. At the same time, the archbishop's reading finds concrete expression in a community in a manner that makes 2 Thessalonians more tangible. The apocalyptic material of the epistle is not exclusively addressed to the original audience, but also to the contemporary reader.

Regarding the apocalyptic material of 2 Thessalonians specifically, modern commentators have generally rejected reading ὁ κατέχων and τό κατέχων in relation to the Roman Empire, though they acknowledge the historical duration of this interpretation.<sup>297</sup> Bonhoeffer, however, reflects pervasion of this tradition when he asserts that ὁ κατέχων is the "power of the state to establish and maintain order... which still opposes effective resistance

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<sup>296</sup> We should also add here Rowland's insight that apocalyptic revelation occurs so that people "may see history in a totally new light," i.e. God's grand historical scheme. Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven* (London: SPCK, 1982), 13. Chrysostom sees this need to see reality rightly for both the original, suffering recipients, as well as those historically-distant and comfortable Christians of his own day.

<sup>297</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 296–301; Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 225–28; Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 110–13; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 250.

to the process of decay.”<sup>298</sup> Like the Roman Empire, governments are tools used by God for his ends, though they are “not without guilt.”<sup>299</sup> Bonhoeffer generalises what the Fathers had made specific.

Röcker, who recognises the historical reading of the Roman Empire in this passage and Bonhoeffer’s uptake of the concept, takes a stance closer to Calvin and situates his interpretation of ὁ κατέχων and τό κατέχων in terms of their relationship to the OT, Qumran texts, and the Little Apocalypse of Matt 24-25. He concludes that τό κατέχων is the proclamation of the gospel and ὁ κατέχων is the one who proclaims the gospel.<sup>300</sup>

Given his context, Chrysostom’s conclusion regarding ὁ κατέχων and τό κατέχων as the Roman emperor and the Empire, respectively, were appropriate answers to the questions posed by the archbishop, particularly in a framework shaped by an interpretation of Daniel.<sup>301</sup> Röcker’s research, however, places 2 Thessalonians in dialogue with a larger body of texts and, in a debate over *the historical meaning*, his conclusions bear greater weight than those of Chrysostom. The continuity of their work lies in their question: “What are ὁ κατέχων and τό κατέχων?” The historical meaning, however, does not exclude Bonhoeffer’s interpretation, because he seeks a *principle* for a theology of politics rather than the historical meaning of the passage.

Lastly, when considering the “man of lawlessness,” modern scholars often hesitate to equate him immediately with Antichrist, likely because of the

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<sup>298</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Neville Horton Smith (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 108–9.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>300</sup> Röcker, *Belial*, 487–88 and 514–15.

<sup>301</sup> We should add to this Chrysostom’s historical context, in which Julian attempted to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple— a perceived fulfillment of 2 Thess 2:4. This forms the basis for Wilken’s treatment of Chrysostom’s view of the Jews. Robert Louis Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004); Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 33.

absence of this title in the Pauline literature. It is clear in Best's commentary, however, that he interprets this "man of lawlessness" as the "anti-God" over against the Antichrist tradition.<sup>302</sup> Other commentators typically repeat the textual titles.

This divergence between the Fathers and modern scholars can be traced to differences in hermeneutical methodologies (i.e. the canonical and ecclesial-shaped readings of the early Church versus the historical methodologies typically employed in modern biblical scholarship). Nevertheless, many scholars observe the mirroring of this figure with Christ, as in their respective *parousiai*.<sup>303</sup> This idea, observed from the early Church, fits well with the concept of apocalyptic antinomies described by Martyn.<sup>304</sup>

Overall, Chrysostom's reading contributes to the reading of 2 Thess 2 for several reasons: 1.) in the history of influences, it perpetuates the historically dominant reading of τὸ κατέχον as the Roman Empire; 2.) it demonstrates speculative restraint with regard to difficult material, and; 3.) he moves beyond repetition of the text or doctrine to meaningful outworking of the material in a specific congregation, which is engendered by his pastoral concern. At the same time that modern scholarship expands by means of these contributions, it offers new insights based on further revelations regarding apocalyptic material and literary relationships.

## **2.7. General Pastoral Concern**

One final element, hinted at throughout the chapter, deserves attention as a motivating factor in Chrysostom's exegesis of 2 Thessalonians: general pastoral concern for the flock. We have seen how certain areas of his homilies

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<sup>302</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 283–84 and 288–89. See also n. 196 above.

<sup>303</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 245.

<sup>304</sup> J. L. Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *NTS* 31 (1985): 410-424.

reflect pastoral concerns as they relate to other influences on his exegesis. Under this influence specifically, though, two topics merit consideration: love and education.

### ***I. Love***<sup>305</sup>

Viewed as the highest virtue in the early Church, it is no surprise that love becomes a central aspect of Chrysostom's sermons. Beginning with his second homily, he notices the growth of the Thessalonians' love for one another (2:3). Drawing attention to the fact that it was "equal on the part of all," he challenges the divisive love that takes shape in his own congregation as groups become closely knit and withdraw from or exclude other members of the body.<sup>306</sup> He rebukes this form of "love" as injurious, characterising it as a misnomer that truly leads to divisions, distractions, and schisms. In its place, he reasserts the love of the Thessalonians, challenging them to love all, even one's enemies, and offers the particular example of stopping the gossip from speaking ill of another as love toward one another.<sup>307</sup>

Later, when observing Paul's humility in request for prayer, he connects this with the love that the apostle had for the Thessalonians and draws an analogy to his own relationship with his congregation. He perceives his own request for prayer as a bold gesture of imitation that is grounded in love. Prayer itself becomes a response of love that binds the body together. In it, Chrysostom sees the potential to form a close community able to forgive wrongs because, in the act of approaching God in prayer, they realise their place in his gracious love. This, he contends, is the reason why Christ asserts,

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<sup>305</sup> Mitchell describes Chrysostom's interpretive methodology as a "hermeneutic of love" in which love is the prerequisite for understanding the subject. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, xix and 31.

<sup>306</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians 2* (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:381).

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them” (Matt 18:20).<sup>308</sup>

Lastly, when considering Paul’s prayer that the Lord direct the hearts of the Thessalonians (2 Thess 3:5), he draws attention to the number of paths that draw us away from love, such as “vainglory” (κενοδοξία; one of the *logismoi*), affliction, and temptations. Chrysostom recognises the correct path as the one that leads toward the love of God. It is a path that includes Christian unity in love. It is a path on which one finds oneself when they demonstrate in living (e.g. despising wealth) their love for God above everything else, and on which they require the guiding assistance of God.<sup>309</sup> Again, Chrysostom’s interpretation pushes beyond the historical elements surrounding the text to the subject matter, the Someone who motivates its writing and who continues to speak through it.

## **II. Education**

Growing out his own love for his congregation, Chrysostom emphasises the education of his hearers. In general terms, the homilies can be taken as the clearest example of the importance of properly instructing his community. At the same time, when reading 2 Thessalonians, Chrysostom drives home the necessity of teaching. Looking at Paul’s reminder to the Thessalonians, “Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was with you?” (2:5), he reflects on the necessity of repeatedly reading and teaching Scriptures as a means of tending the spiritual “soil” of one’s soul. He pushes the point so far as to encourage his “disciples” to “do the things spoken for your recollection,” so as to express their education concretely. In order to

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<sup>308</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 4 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:391-92).

<sup>309</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (PG 62:493).



achieve this, however, the “soil” must be appropriately prepared to receive the repeated instruction and cleared of all “thorns.”<sup>310</sup> He asserts further that instruction is not the responsibility of the teacher alone, but is to be taken up by every Christian.

In his final homily, Chrysostom explicates this latter point in relation to Paul’s exhortation that the Thessalonians imitate the example that he gave them (3:7) and the prayer that “the Lord be with [all of]<sup>311</sup> you” (3:16). He contends that the prayer belongs to those who “do the things of the Lord.”<sup>312</sup> Matthew 28:19-20 gives weight to his interpretation in describing what to “do” (baptise and teach) and the promise of Christ’s presence (conditioned upon the “doing”). Chrysostom then raises the questions he perceives likely to be on the hearts of his congregants. What about those who are not teachers, like Chrysostom? Is Christ present with those not in the occupation of teaching the gospel?<sup>313</sup> The Church Father offers one response to address both concerns: every person is a teacher, first of him/herself, and then of others within their sphere of influence (e.g. children, spouses, servants).<sup>314</sup> When the congregants apply this practice of teaching the gospel and observing all that Christ has commanded (Matt 28:20), then they can pray for and expect Christ’s enduring presence (2 Thess 3:16; Matt 28:20).

Chrysostom’s interpretation does not cohere with his contemporaries or modern biblical scholars on this passage. Again, he illuminates the divergences of their *exegetical aims*. Yet, Chrysostom is able to critically

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<sup>310</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 3 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 13:386-87).

<sup>311</sup> πάντων is not present in Chrysostom’s manuscript.

<sup>312</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 5 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 13:396).

<sup>313</sup> The latter of these questions is implicit.

<sup>314</sup> John Chrysostom, *2 Thessalonians* 5 (NPNF<sup>I</sup> 13:396-98).

evaluate the text and to always return to Scripture's purpose of orienting its readers to God.

### **3. Conclusion**

In summary, we see how multiple influences culminate in Chrysostom's particular reading of 2 Thessalonians and that the Church Father does not interpret within a hermeneutical vacuum. A variety of elements from his background shape the questions that Chrysostom asks and the emphases that he makes:

His Antiochene exegetical heritage results in detailed attention to the semantic range of certain terminology, the historical meaning, and the λέξις of the text that leads to θεωρία and practical outworking for his congregation(s).

Second, Chrysostom's esteem for Paul influences his language and undergirds the bipartite division of his homilies, so that they include both doctrine (i.e. exegesis of Scripture) and praxis. Within this esteem we also see his advocating the emulation of the apostle as an exemplar of virtue and one for whom all things were spiritual.

Third, Chrysostom's rhetorical training leads to a cautious consideration of both Paul's aim in writing 2 Thessalonians and how it functions in the receptive community.

Fourth, the well-developed tradition of reading Scripture in its canonical context, shaped by a view of divine authorship of Scripture, guides Chrysostom's reading of the epistle and enables him to make connections between texts with diverse, human authors.

Perhaps the most theologically significant influence on Chrysostom is his monastic/ascetic background, which helps him to recognise issues related

to the *logismoi* and passions in the text, as well as causes him to advocate a semi-ascetic-moralism in his congregants.

Not satisfied with theological abstraction, Chrysostom also grounds his discussion on hell and apocalyptic material with practical concerns.

Lastly, his general pastoral concern tends to guide much of his discussion of 2 Thessalonians, particularly regarding communal, Christian love and education/instruction in Christian doctrine and living.

The compartmentalisation of these influences is a decidedly false construct, as the ubiquitous influences of pastoral concern and monasticism/asceticism demonstrate. Furthermore, these impulses are not to be taken as an exclusive or complete list, though they are notably influential. They provide a greater understanding of how and why Chrysostom reads 2 Thessalonians in the way that he does and, in some cases, how later interpreters receive and expand this reading.

## Chapter 3: Haimo of Auxerre

### 1. Background

Haimo of Auxerre arrived on the scene in the wake of the Carolingian reforms, which saw the shift of learning centres from the British Isles to the Continent and the “upgrading of the intellectual qualifications of the clergy, both monastic and secular.”<sup>1</sup> Of primary importance was education as preparation for the study of Scriptures. This entailed engagement with the Fathers and the Bible together as inseparable authorities.

Until the twentieth century, Haimo was largely forgotten and the bulk of his works were erroneously attributed to Haymo of Halberstadt (d. 853) or Remigius of Auxerre (d. 908).<sup>2</sup> Riggenschach’s rediscovery of Haimo around of the turn of the century<sup>3</sup> began the process of reconstructing this historically significant theologian.

The details of Haimo’s origins are unclear.<sup>4</sup> He certainly flourished during the Carolingian era at the Abbey of St. Germain in Auxerre, in modern-day France, and the bulk of his work came from 840-860.<sup>5</sup> Haimo follows the

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<sup>1</sup> Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition*, ed. Robert Baldock, The Yale Intellectual History of the West (London: Yale University Press, 1997), 66.

<sup>2</sup> For a more complete list of false attributions, see Johannes Heil, “Haimo’s Commentary on Paul: Sources, Methods and Theology,” in *Études d’exégèse carolingienne autour d’Haymon d’Auxerre*, ed. Sumi Shimahara, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 112–13.

<sup>3</sup> Eduard Riggenschach, *Die ältesten lateinischen Kommentare zum Hebräerbrief* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1907).

<sup>4</sup> Heil suggests Spain as Haimo’s place of birth because of, among other points, his eventual relocation to Cussy-les-Bois, which was populated at the time by Spanish emigrants, and his apparent alignment with the approach of Theodulf of Orléans over against the insular “exegesis and tradition” adopted by Alcuin and Rabanus Maurus. Heil, “Haimo’s Commentary,” 114–19.

<sup>5</sup> Riggenschach, *Die ältesten lateinischen Kommentare*, 80; Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), 39; John J. Contreni, “Haimo of Auxerre, Abbot of Sasceium (Cussy-les-Bois), and a New Sermon on 1 John v, 4-10,” *Revue Bénédictine* 85 (1975): 310; Louis Holtz, “Introduction,” in Murethach, *In Donati artem maiorem* (CCCM 40:xxiv); Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 146. Hughes Oliphant Old, proposes a date for Haimo’s birth around 790, yet somewhat perplexingly suggests the date of his death was in 855, against the scholarly consensus and without any indication as to his

significant work of Bede and the Irish scholars (e.g. Admonán<sup>6</sup>), and was himself educated by the Irish master Murethach.<sup>7</sup> The primary indication of Murethach's influence on Haimo is his use of phrases common to his master as well as grammatical and lexical concerns in his exegetical undertakings.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Haimo has a tendency to incorporate the method of *quaestiones* into his commentaries, an approach found in Fathers like Jerome, but also highly appropriated by the Irish exegetes.<sup>9</sup>

Evidence of a sermon on 1 John 5:4-10 from the abbot Haimo of Cussy-les-Bois indicates that Haimo was transferred to this abbey from St. Germain later in his life. He likely died sometime in 875-878.<sup>10</sup>

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decision for this date. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 216; His source is likely Ceslas Spicq, *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse Latine au Moyen Âge* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1944), 50.

<sup>6</sup> The hermeneutical influence of Admonán via Murethach is more abundantly clear in Haimo's other works, including the commentary on 1 Thessalonians. T. O'Loughlin, "Res, tempus, locus, persona: Admonán's Exegetical Method," in *Spes Scotorum Hope of Scots*, ed. Dauvit Broun and Thomas Owen Clancy (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 139–58.

<sup>7</sup> Holtz, "Introduction," xxix–xxx, xxxiii–xxxiv; Contreni has challenged this stance insofar as it places Murethach and Haimo in a teacher-student relationship. He suggests instead that they were colleagues in the 830s, John J. Contreni, "By Lions, Bishops Are Meant; by Wolves, Priests': History, Exegesis, and the Carolingian Church in Haimo of Auxerre's Commentary on Ezekiel," *Francia* 29, no. 1 (2002): 54; Heil follows Contreni in this regard, arguing further that Theodulf of Orléans was a key theological influence on Haimo, Johannes Heil, "Theodulf, Haimo, and Jewish Traditions of Biblical Learning: Exploring Carolingian Culture's Lost Spanish Heritage," in *Discovery and Distinction in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of John J. Contreni*, ed. Cullen J. Chandler and Steven Stofferahn (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, forthcoming), 118–20.

<sup>8</sup> Shared phraseology includes "ita iungendum; iunctio talis est; ita iungitur; sequitur; subauditur; subaudis; subaudiendum; ac si diceret; tale est ac si dicat; et est sensus; quare dicat, ipse subinfert (subintulit)." Holtz, "Introduction," xxx; see also Heil, "Haimo's Commentary," 107.

<sup>9</sup> Holtz traces the history of *quaestiones* to the early Church, with particular reference to Jerome, as a way of dealing with difficult texts in particular, Holtz, "Introduction," xxxi; in a later article, Holtz qualifies that Murethach's approach was not so much a pedagogy of *quaestiones* as it was, more broadly, a pedagogy of questioning ("la pédagogie du questionnement"), Louis Holtz, "Murethach et l'influence de la culture Irlandais à Auxerre," in *L'école Carolingienne d'Auxerre: De Murethach à Rémi, 830-908*, ed. Dominique Iona-Prat, Colette Judy, and Guy Lobrichon (Paris: Beauchesne, n.d.), 152; Heil likewise comments on the dialogical structure of Haimo's Pauline commentaries, though he speaks primarily in terms of Haimo's aim rather than the source of his methodology, Heil, "Haimo's Commentary," 107.

<sup>10</sup> Contreni, "Abbot of Sasceium," 311–17; In a more recent article, Contreni suggests that Haimo may have left for Cussy-les-Bois in the 850s. Contreni, "By Lions," 52–56;

Haimo followed on the heels of several excellent theological scholars, such as Bede, Alcuin, Claudius of Turin, and Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, and he engaged with each of these scholars in some capacity. Following the exegetical standards set by these predecessors, Haimo relied heavily on the Church Fathers in his work, but particularly in his commentaries. Where he differs from these scholars and contemporaries like Rabanus Maurus, Paschasius Radbertus, and Florus of Lyon, however, is in his ability to synthesise and summarise the Fathers seamlessly, rather than simply quote them in large blocks of text on a given biblical passage.

Additionally, Haimo contributes innovative insights in his exegesis, which likely accounts for the widespread influence of his works in the generations that followed. Such distinction from his predecessors garners only a nod from Beryl Smalley, who says, “Haimo stands on the line that divides the compiler of select extracts from the author of a commentary,” yet he is still bound by tradition and lacks the sophistication of John Scottus Eriugena.<sup>11</sup> As research on Haimo progresses, though, and more works authored by Haimo are uncovered, scholars are put in a position of having to recognise the significance and unique contributions of this now obscure monk,<sup>12</sup> an

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Riccardo Quadri, “Aimone di Auxerre alla luce Dei ‘collectanea’ di Heiric di Auxerre,” *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 6 (1963): 17–18.

<sup>11</sup> Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, 39–40.

<sup>12</sup> Heil goes so far as to describe Haimo as the “Höhepunkt der karolingischen Exegese.” Johannes Heil, *Kompilation oder Konstruktion? Die Juden in den Pauluskommentaren des 9. Jahrhunderts*, *Forschungen Zur Geschichte Der Juden* 6 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1998), 275; Swanson challenges Smalley’s argument by including Haimo along with John Scottus as two of the “more original scholars of the ninth-century” who move beyond simply listing sources to renewing the “tradition of scholarly comment,” Jenny Swanson, “The Glossa Ordinaria,” in *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 161; Matter locates Smalley’s failure to give Haimo higher consideration in her primary interest in the “literal sense of the biblical text.” E. Ann Matter, “Haimo’s Commentary on the Song of Songs and the Traditions of the Carolingian Schools,” in *Études d’exégèse Carolingienne autour d’Haymon d’Auxerre*, ed. Sumi Shimahara, *Collection Haut Moyen Âge* 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 49–90.

obscurity that might be traced to the Reformation scholars' distaste for theology after the Church Fathers.

The influence of Haimo extends in the immediate generations following him to scholars such as Heiric of Auxerre (his student), Remigius of Auxerre (student of Heiric), Ælfric of Eynsham, Adso of Montier-en-Der, and, later, on Peter Lombard. In the case of the former three, Haimo's importance is reflected primarily in his appearance beside the Church Fathers in their homilies.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the incorporation of Haimo in the various *Glossae* in circulation demonstrates the influential nature of this scholar's work.<sup>14</sup>

### ***I. 2 Thessalonians Commentary: Provenance, Audience, and Structure***

As the most widely-disseminated of his works,<sup>15</sup> Haimo's commentary on Paul played an important role in medieval exegesis of the apostle's letters. The limited scope of our research focuses on Haimo's interaction with 2 Thessalonians from this volume, but also gives occasional attention to his incorporation of 2 Thessalonians into his homilies and *florilegia*. All of these sources were likely composed during his time in Auxerre and disseminated by his students, who departed before his relocation.

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<sup>13</sup> Henri Barré, *Les homéliaires Carolingiens de l'école d'Auxerre: Authenticité, inventaire, tableaux comparatifs, initia*, Studi e Testi (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1962); Hill notes that Ælfric cites Haimo only twice and uses this as evidence for the higher regard with which Ælfric holds Bede, whom he cites more frequently. Joyce Hill, "Carolingian Perspectives on the Authority of Bede," in *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 244; In his introduction and commentary on Ælfric's homilies, however, Godden contends that Ælfric utilises Haimo much more frequently than the two explicit references. Ælfric of Eynsham, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies Introduction, Commentary, and Glossary*, ed. Malcolm Godden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), liv–lv.

<sup>14</sup> The significance of Haimo in this regard is exemplified in the Rusch Glossa, in which Haimo, Augustine, and Jerome are the only cited authorities on 2 Thessalonians. Adolph Rusch, *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria: Facsimile Reprints of the Editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strausburg 1480/81*, vol. 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 400–4.

<sup>15</sup> Iogna-Prat has tabulated a total of 166 extant manuscripts of Haimo's Pauline commentary dating up to the end of the fifteenth century. Dominique Iogna-Prat, "L'œuvre d'Haymon d'Auxerre: État de la question," in *L'école carolingienne d'Auxerre: De Murethach à Rémi, 830-908*, ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat, Colette Jeudy, and Guy Lobrichon (Paris: Beauchesne, 1991), 161.

The great range of influence that Haimo's work on 2 Thessalonians held in the Middle Ages as the transitional link between patristic scholarship and the High Middle Ages is the reason for its selection as an epochal moment in the history of the epistle.<sup>16</sup> He initiated a trajectory for hearing 2 Thessalonians in a particular manner and therefore accounts for the influence of his minimally-apocalyptic reading over against, say, the work of Thietland of Einsiedeln.

Admittedly, the dimensions and quality of Haimo's scholarship in the Pauline corpus is better represented by his Romans commentary. Yet, the 2 Thessalonians commentary provides an abridged view of his skill set and interpretive approach, while also introducing a critical turn in the history of 2 Thessalonians scholarship. As with all of his Pauline commentaries, Haimo introduces the letter with an *argumentum*<sup>17</sup> and proceeds to comment on select, consecutive lemmas. Theologically, this commentary represents a strand of what Hughes terms "apocalyptic realism," which understands Antichrist as "*imminent* and *external*" and 2 Thessalonians generally as a prophetic timeline of future events.<sup>18</sup> Haimo tends toward a more literal reading of Paul, yet fully adopts a Tyconian-Augustinian approach toward the Apocalypse. This spiritual, or "actualising," reading of Revelation allows the imagery of the text to be understood as correlative to the reader's present and perennial theological issues without restricting it to a single historical person

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<sup>16</sup> For a substantiation of this position, see Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 126 and 146–51.

<sup>17</sup> The only exception in the Migne text is the Colossians commentary, but the absence of the *argumentum* might be attributed to a poor manuscript source. The Migne Colossians text, unlike 2 Thessalonians, has a number of omissions when compared with extant manuscripts of Haimo's Pauline corpus. Ibid., 150.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 23.



or event.<sup>19</sup> Such interpretation has its roots in the seven interpretive keys of Tyconius discussed in the previous chapter. Haimo's Revelation commentary also differs from his 2 Thessalonians commentary by beginning with a *praefatio*, which introduces the setting in which John authored the book and details the nature of prophecy without describing the content or argument of Revelation.

Differing from the commentators of his time who either repeat in full the works of the Fathers or offer a selection of excerpts on the biblical book under investigation, Haimo's commentaries recapture something of the style of the Church Fathers. As I discuss later, Haimo's audience is likely an eclectic group of monks, scholars, and laity, with the commentary designed to faithfully bring together patristic material, offer new insights, and provide content for sermons.

Using the Vulgate text of 2 Thessalonians,<sup>20</sup> Haimo opens his commentary with an *argumentum*, which summarises his understanding of the epistle as the Apostle's response to the Thessalonians' fear that they would be condemned because of a misunderstanding of the content of the First Epistle. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul offers an eschatological timeline to reassure the Thessalonian church. Haimo follows the *argumentum* with commentary on all three chapters of the epistle, with attention dedicated only to selected lemmas, rather than every verse.

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<sup>19</sup> Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Comparisons with extant manuscripts have shown the Migne text of Haimo's 2 Thessalonians commentary (PL 117:777-84) to be reliable. It serves as my base text. Steven R. Cartwright and Kevin L. Hughes, eds., *Second Thessalonians: Two Early Medieval Apocalyptic Commentaries*, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 10. Haimo comments entirely in Latin. Though he occasionally makes reference to Greek and Hebrew terms in other commentaries, this is likely because of a patristic source than actual knowledge of the languages on the part of Haimo. We have no indication that he actually knew these biblical languages. See Haimo of Auxerre, *In epistolam ad Galatas* (PL 117:669).

On the first five verses of the book, he discusses the growth of faith and the providential nature of tribulation and judgment. Of the remaining verses of 2 Thess 1, Haimo (like Chrysostom) emphasises the causal force of *si tamen*, the physical nature of Christ's judgment with fire, the mutual "giving" of eternal punishment by the reprobate, and the reception of the gospel by the Thessalonians.

The bulk of his commentary concentrates on the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians. Haimo believes it to be a description of Christ's second-coming and the apocalyptic events that must precede it. The "apostasy" (2:3) he recognises as the desertion of all kingdoms from Roman rule, which has already taken place. Rome was "what restrains" (*quid detineat*; 2:6) the arrival of Antichrist, but is no longer in place. Therefore, his arrival is only now restricted by the providence of God. The "man of sin" (i.e. Antichrist; 2:3), who is the imitative son of Satan, indwelt by the fullness of iniquity, and inverse image of Christ, is yet to come and may either install himself in the Jerusalem Temple, or in the Church. The "mystery of iniquity already at work" (2:7) is the persecution of the Church from Nero to Diocletian, and then again with Julian. These are the members of Antichrist as the faithful are members of Christ. It follows in this paradigm that "he who now holds" (*ut qui tenet nunc*; 2:7) is the Roman emperor, as the specific manifestation of the kingdom's power. When the kingdom falls, Antichrist will arrive by the work of Satan, establishing his throne on the Mount of Olives and performing false miracles akin to those of Simon Magus, deceiving the reprobate under the permission of God (2:9-11). Either Christ or Michael will destroy Antichrist

(2:8). Therefore, the readers are to be consoled through the past gift of Christ's life in divine love and the expectation of the future kingdom (2:16-17).

Haimo offers the least material on the final chapter of the epistle, amounting to less than half a column in the Migne text. Of note is his exegesis of the variant readings *patientia Christi* (3:5), as patience in persecution, and *expectatione Christi*, as awaiting the arrival of Christ, without suggesting which variant is correct. Interestingly, Haimo virtually omits any discussion of Church discipline for the "busybodies," which is the section of chapter three that has received the most attention historically. He adds only that people must labour for their food, or else they should be brought to "our" (*nos*) attention for the purpose of rebuking. The openness of *nos* may be Haimo speaking in the first person in behalf of Paul, or his claiming of this ongoing responsibility for Church leadership as the legacy of the apostle. He concludes by appropriating the closing grace (3:18) of the letter as his own for his reader by offering only the Vulgate text without comment.

## ***II. Influential Impulses for Interpreting 2 Thessalonians***

As mentioned above, the most salient element that shaped medieval exegesis was patristic material on a given passage. Viewed as an intertwined authority with the Scriptures, Haimo continued the legacy of incorporating patristic readings into his exegesis, though with a decidedly unique approach. Due to the central role of the Fathers in the hermeneutics of this period, discussion as it relates to Haimo and 2 Thessalonians takes the primary position in the exploration of receptive impulses for our Carolingian theologian.

Next, our discussion moves to the influence of Murethach on Haimo's methodology, with particular attention dedicated to grammatical and lexical inquiries, *quaestiones*, and his lemma-by-lemma approach to the text.

A third consideration examines the influence of the contemporary context on Haimo's incorporation of heresies and ancient heretics in his exegesis.

The fourth section describes the nature of Haimo's publications for the purpose of sermon preparation. This topic will incorporate material from a homiliary by the monk as well as examine the simplistic Latin that he employs.

The final two sections look at Haimo's approach to the apocalyptic material of 2 Thessalonians (i.e. 2:1-12), which has been characterised as "apocalyptic realism."<sup>21</sup>

## **2.1 Receptive Impulses: The Fathers**

### ***I. Augustine***

The value of the Fathers to the Carolingians is not without precedent. The influential scholars of the British Isles who came before them established an exegetical trend in utilising the Fathers that they would follow. For all the ingenuity that Bede, as an example, exhibits in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, his commentary on Paul simply listing large blocks of text by Augustine on given passages of Scripture. Not laziness, but respect for Augustine motivates this approach to commenting.

In the case of 2 Thessalonians, Bede comments only on 2:1-12 and 3:14 by way of *City of God* 20.13 and Augustine's treatise on Psalm 100.<sup>22</sup> The English designation of Bede's work on the Pauline corpus as "excerpts" rather than as a commentary is more appropriate, as it does not engage

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<sup>21</sup> Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 165 and 243.

<sup>22</sup> Bede, *Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine on the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul*, trans. David Hurst (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1999), 291-94.

immediately with the epistle, nor does it comment on its entirety. Nevertheless, Bede serves as a representative of the biblical commentator's mind in the time leading up to and during much of the Carolingian era.

Haimo's contemporary, Florus of Lyon (d. 860), demonstrates an incredibly similar approach to Bede. Though he dedicates more attention to the fullness of 2 Thessalonians, his work amounts to an index of Augustine's works in which particular verses to 2 Thessalonians appear. Though he refers to a wider number of works by Augustine than Bede, he likewise does not comment on the 2 Thessalonians itself.<sup>23</sup>

In several respects, then, Haimo differs from his predecessors and contemporaries. Like Bede and Florus, Haimo generally relies heavily on Augustine, but he also gives great weight to the interpretations of Gregory the Great, Jerome, and Ambrosiaster.<sup>24</sup> The former three were highly significant authorities for the majority of medieval interpreters, yet Ambrosiaster tends to dominate Haimo's reading of the Pauline epistles.

Additionally, Haimo does not list large blocks of text from the Fathers, but tends to summarise and combine their thoughts in his own words without always citing the source upon which he relies. At times, he frequently combines differing views from amongst the Fathers on a passage without attempting to resolve the conflict, thereby respecting their authority and not

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<sup>23</sup> Florus of Lyon, *In epistolam ii ad Thessalonicenses*, (PL 119:397-398); though not available in Migne, Florus compiled similar indices of Jerome and Gregory. See Paul-Irénée Fransen, "Description de la collection Hiéronymienne de Florus de Lyons sur l'Apôtre," *Revue Bénédictine* 94 (1984): 195-228; Paul-Irénée Fransen, "Description de la collection Grégorienne de Florus de Lyons sur l'Apôtre," *Revue Bénédictine* 98 (1988): 278-317.

<sup>24</sup> Augustine, Gregory, Jerome, and Ambrose were the "four great fathers" of medieval exegesis. Haimo's primary reliance on Ambrosiaster alongside the former three throughout his Pauline commentary is indicative of the medieval ascription of Ambrosiaster's commentary to Ambrose. Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 123; to a lesser extent, Haimo used Origen, Chrysostom, Cassian, Cassiodor, Cyprian of Carthage, Ephraem, and Hilary of Poitiers. Heil, "Haimo's Commentary," 109.

going beyond permissible exegetical limits for a Carolingian monk.<sup>25</sup> The tradition of citing large portions of patristic authorities on a biblical text continues after the death of Haimo in the *Glossa Ordinaria*. This contextually distinctive approach to commentary construction resembles a patristic model. Thus Haimo provokes his horizon by reviving in part a historic form of commentary genre, yet he remains distinct by seamlessly blending his authoritative sources, without necessarily having to cite them. The unanswerable question has to do with whether Haimo wrote in this manner for emulatory purposes, or whether he considered his own position as authoritative (or both).

Other contemporaries who composed commentaries on 2 Thessalonians include Rabanus Maurus, Claude of Turin, and Sedulius Scottus. Rabanus refers to Augustine explicitly once, but cites a number of other Fathers, especially Theodore of Mopsuestia, who provides the structure for his commentary and whom he cites as “Ambrose.”<sup>26</sup> These commentaries are all eschatological in tone.

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<sup>25</sup> Kevin L. Hughes, “Haimo of Auxerre and the Fruition of Carolingian Hermeneutics,” in *Second Thessalonians: Two Early Medieval Apocalyptic Commentaries*, ed. E. Ann Matter, Teams (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 15–16; see also John J. Contreni, “Haimo of Auxerre’s Commentary on Ezechiel,” in *L’école Carolingienne d’Auxerre: De Murethach à Rémi, 830-908*, ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat, Colette Jeudy, and Guy Lobrichon, *L’histoire De L’actualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1991), 231; the limits of interpretation are set well by the Vincentian Canon as that which has been held “everywhere, always, and by all”—thus restricting “new” interpretations without reference to the Fathers. See Joseph W. Goering, “An Introduction to Medieval Christian Biblical Interpretation,” in *With Reverence for the Word*, ed. Jan McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Goering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 198.

<sup>26</sup> Kevin L. Hughes, “Augustine and Adversary: Strategies of Synthesis in Early Medieval Exegesis,” in *History, Apocalypse, and the Secular Imagination: New Essays on Augustine’s City of God*, ed. Mark Vessey, Karla Pollmann, and Allan D. Fitzgerald, *Augustinian Studies* (Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999), 228. Rabanus also makes use of Cassian, Jerome, and Gregory the Great. See, Rabanus Maurus, *Exposito in epistulam ii ad Thessalonicenses*, (PL 112:565-80).

Against the developed tradition of relating Augustine in any way possible to a biblical text,<sup>27</sup> Haimo only indirectly incorporates Augustine in his 2 Thessalonians commentary. On 2 Thess 1:4 Haimo cites Prosper, the authorised interpreter of Augustine, to elaborate on the sovereignty of God. Given the structure of his commentary, Haimo's work is something of a shock to the horizon of expectations of his first readers. The freedom of format "should" have seen the inclusion of Augustine.

The reason for this omission lies in Haimo's *argumentum* for the epistle. The Carolingian recognises the letter as a "thorough summary of the historical events and characters of the end, complete with an analysis of the theological issues that pertain to them."<sup>28</sup> Augustine is hesitant to assert such definitive statements about a text that remains obscure on details like the identity of the Restrainer and the man of lawlessness. Eventually, Augustine settles on a spiritual reading of 2 Thessalonians that sees the text articulating the activity of "Antichrist" at present in the Church and he dismisses overly-eschatological readings of the passage.<sup>29</sup>

In a context/tradition that has been shaped to read this passage eschatologically, Haimo faces a difficulty with Augustine. Rather than disagree openly with him, however, Haimo pursues a wiser route of

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<sup>27</sup> "Early Medieval exegetes revered the authority of Augustine, and few if any dared to challenge him directly. So great was Augustine's authority that the great doctrinal debates of the early Middle Ages— for example, the debate over predestination— were never understood to be for or against Augustine, but rather over those whose interpretation of Augustine was correct." Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 115–16.

<sup>28</sup> Hughes, "Augustine and Adversary," 230.

<sup>29</sup> Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 194–208, esp. 206–8; Hughes, "Augustine and Adversary," 223–26.

ommission and garnering patristic support from elsewhere, namely in the perspectives of Jerome, Gregory, and Ambrosiaster on the epistle.<sup>30</sup>

I return to Augustine later in discussing eschatology. Now we look at the primary patristic resources that Haimo uses for understanding 2 Thessalonians.

## **II. Ambrosiaster**

The dominance of Ambrosiaster (fl. c. 366-384)<sup>31</sup> in much of Haimo's commentary on the Pauline epistles can be attributed to his possession of the incomplete commentary on the same by Claude of Turin, who copied Ambrosiaster verbatim.<sup>32</sup> Different from Claude, the implied Ambrosiaster pervades Haimo's commentary on 2 Thessalonians like a whisper.<sup>33</sup>

Haimo generally adopts a modified Ambrosiasterian view of 2 Thessalonians. For example, Ambrosiaster speaks of the "double meaning" of the Lord's second advent (1:10), in that "Christ will come to punish the bad and glorify the good," appearing "brilliant (*clarus*) and wonderful" to the former.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Haimo summarises the dual natures of the Lord's appearance in his second advent as "brilliant (*clarus*) and enticing, but to the reprobate terrible and fierce."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> This omission is rendered starker by Haimo's heavy use of Augustine in his commentaries on Romans-2 Corinthians.

<sup>31</sup> D. G. Hunter, "Ambrosiaster," ed. Donald K. McKim, *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 123.

<sup>32</sup> Ruggenbach, *Die ältesten lateinischen Kommentare*, 78.

<sup>33</sup> As no complete commentary on Paul's epistles by Claude exists that includes 2 Thessalonians, we must assume either that Haimo had access to Ambrosiaster's works more directly, or perhaps, as Ruggenbach suggests regarding Hebrews, that Claude's work on 2 Thessalonians was mistakenly attributed to Atto of Vercelli (d. 960), whose commentary on the epistle is likewise a quotation of Ambrosiaster. Ibid., 78-80; Despite the existence of manuscripts dating to the ninth century, however, there are no extant copies of commentaries on the epistles to the Thessalonians by Claude. It is possible that Haimo possessed a copy of Ambrosiaster's commentary on 2 Thessalonians in another form. Heil, *Kompilation*, 224.

<sup>34</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad Thessalonicenses secunda* (CSEL 81:237).

<sup>35</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, "Exposition," 23.



Hundreds of years later, Peter Lombard (d. 1160) picks up on this double meaning in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians, using Haimo, yet also clarifying that the meaning extends not just to the Lord's appearance, but also his action. His advent means punishment or glorification for the respective groups. Haimo does not deny this, but Lombard sees the necessity of clarifying the effect of Christ's appearance.<sup>36</sup> Again, the old mediates the new— despite the distillation, Ambrosiaster instigates the qualified readings of Haimo and Lombard, and an 800 year interpretive tradition.

Haimo also summarises the Church Father's reading of 3:1 and 3:7-13.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, Haimo notes a variant reading of "in... et patientia Christi" (3:5) as "in expectatione Christi" in other manuscripts. It is possible that Haimo had several Vulgate manuscripts with variant readings, as the dissemination of "corrupted" versions of Jerome's translation was part of Alcuin's motivation for producing a critical edition of the Vulgate.<sup>38</sup> It is more likely, however, that Haimo includes this variant reading because it appears in Ambrosiaster. He provides two readings because they originate in authoritative sources and they bring out two potential meanings of the idea of "patience." He does not offer a solution, but simply presents historic, exegetical options for understanding the verse. What was definitive for the respective Father has become a non-exclusive suggestion.

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<sup>36</sup> "Ipse enim clarus et mirabilis videbitur in credentibus; severus autem apparebit in incredulosis, cum eos poenis aeternis coarctabit. Et est horum verborum brevis sensus. Veniet punire malos, et glorificare bonos, quia creditum." Peter Lombard, *In epistolam ii ad Thessalonicenses* (PL 192:315).

<sup>37</sup> On 3:1, compare "de cetero orandum hortatur, ut dignetur dñs doctrinam suam infatigabili cursu dirigere et transfundere per os apostolicum sui in aures audientium..." *ibid.*, 244. Emphasis added; "... ab ore nostro ad aures vestras, et auribus ad cor..." Haimo of Auxerre, *In epistolam ii ad Thessalonicenses*, (PL 117:782)

<sup>38</sup> This reading appears in the *I* textual tradition of the Vulgate. Hermann Josef Frede, ed., *Epistulae ad Thessalonicenses, Timotheum, Titum, Philemonem, Hebraeos*, vol. 25.1, *Vetus Latina* (Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 357–59.

I have postponed discussion on chapter two of the epistle because, though in general terms Haimo's reading coheres with Ambrosiaster's, he tends to make use of Jerome in this chapter, as we will discuss below. These Fathers' interpretations are similar, but Haimo's allusions to Jerome are clearer and more abundant than those to Ambrosiaster. The reasons for this preference are unclear.

### **III. Jerome and Gregory**

In the *argumentum*, Haimo ostensibly turns to Jerome for the explanation of Paul's nebulous description of the fall of the Roman Empire as due to the fear that open discussion of the topic would lead to unnecessary persecution of the Church.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, the absence of verbal overlap and the fact that several Fathers<sup>40</sup> held this view indicates that this was a common idea circulating during that period. Nevertheless, Jerome's *Epistle 121* seems to be the primary patristic source for Haimo's reading of 2 Thess 2:1-10, which comprises the bulk of his commentary and what he perceives as the primary material that Paul wanted to communicate in writing the epistle.<sup>41</sup>

In point eleven of this letter to Algasia, Jerome summarises Paul's reason for writing 2 Thessalonians in response to misunderstanding(s) of the first epistle. Regarding "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and of our gathering into him," the Church Father comments on the dual advents of

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<sup>39</sup> Jerome, *Epistle 121* (CSEL 56.3.54); In the notes on his translation of Haimo's text, Hughes cites Jerome and Ambrosiaster as potential sources, but Ambrosiaster makes a slightly different point in his *argumentum*, adding that the letter outlines the "tribulation of some of the brothers." See Ambrosiaster, *Ad Thess. sec.* (CSEL 81.3.235); Haimo of Auxerre, "Exposition," 32.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. John Chrysostom, *In Epist. ii ad Thess.* 4 (FCT 5:472-73).

<sup>41</sup> It is significant to note that, following 2:10, the final verse upon which Jerome comments, Haimo returns to using Ambrosiaster. At 2:14, for example, Haimo describes the acquisition of Lord's glory as believers working "for the increase of the body of Christ" (*augmentum faciatis corpori Christi*), Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.*, (PL 117:782); cf. "adquiruntur ad *augmentum* gloriae corporis Christi" and "quique enim deserto Diabolo... *augmentum faciunt* deo in corpore Christi" (both on 2:14), Ambrosiaster, *Ad Thess. sec.* (CSEL 81:242). Emphasis added.

Christ—the first in humility and the second in glory.<sup>42</sup> Haimo includes Jerome’s view at the same verse, but compresses it slightly. He also describes the second-coming of Christ, though in terms of “judgment” rather than “glory.” It seems that this reading makes more sense of the letter’s content than the uninvolved or generic term “glory.” Jerome’s question “What is the focus of the epistle?” and even his answer mediate Haimo’s reading, which hears a different response to the question in light of predominant topics in chapters one and two: the judgment of the wicked and Antichrist.

Shortly thereafter, Haimo quotes part of 2 Thess 2:2 and offers a concrete example of what it means not to “be frightened, as if the day of the Lord approaches... by a word.” Haimo suggests, “If someone says to you that he is an exegete and interpreter of prophecies: ‘I have gathered the meaning of the prophet Isaiah and Daniel and the other prophets, and I foresee that the Day of Judgment is imminent and that Christ is coming to judge’... do not be afraid.”<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, this appears to be a loose paraphrase of what Jerome described as the potential situation that gave rise to Paul’s necessity for writing the letter.<sup>44</sup> In Haimo’s commentary, though, it functions as both a warning in the mouth of the apostle to the historical congregation and to the present reader of Haimo’s work. This point feeds into our larger discussion of sermon preparation and apocalyptic toward the end of this chapter. It would suffice to add that Haimo may be attempting to quell any apocalyptic

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<sup>42</sup> “duos autem esse aduentus domini saluatoris et omnia prophetarum docent uolumina et euangeliorum fides, quod primum in humilitate uenerit et postea sit uenturus in gloria...” Jerome, *Epistle 121* (CSEL 56.3.51-52).

<sup>43</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, “Exposition,” 24–25.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. “igitur Thessalonicensium animos... uel aliquorum coniectura Esaiæ et Danihelis euangeliorum que uerba de antichristo praenuntiantia in illud tempus interpretantium mouerat atque turbauerat, ut in maiestate sua tunc Christum sperant esse uenturum.” Jerome, *Epistle 121* (CSEL 56.3.55).

predictions following the coronation of Charlemagne and leading up to the year 1,000.<sup>45</sup> Jerome and Haimo both write for pastoral reasons, yet in Haimo's excitable context, he hears in Paul's own wording a response to the question, "What if someone predicts 'The end is nigh?'" Haimo expands Jerome's reading and provokes his own horizon of expectations.

Regarding whether Christ or his archangel Michael destroys Antichrist (2:8), Haimo comments that it is irrelevant, because his destruction will come about by Christ's power. This issue does not present itself from the text of 2 Thessalonians, but from the divergent views of the Fathers. Most Fathers, Jerome included,<sup>46</sup> hold that Christ will destroy Antichrist. Gregory, however, presents the conundrum that Haimo seeks to resolve by seemingly asserting both positions in different works.<sup>47</sup> Because of the Fathers, a new problem has presented itself in the history of 2 Thessalonians. Haimo resolves the difficulty of the divergent readings by subsuming "Christ" and "Michael" under the answer "Christ's power." This change is not massive, but it is a shift in the reception of 2 Thessalonians.

The only point at which Haimo opts for a reading from Jerome not found in *Epistle 121* is when he takes up his commentary on Daniel in order to name the location of Antichrist's death: the Mount of Olives.<sup>48</sup> The Lord, or Michael by the Lord's power, will destroy Antichrist (2:8) "on his throne on

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<sup>45</sup> See Richard Landes, "The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern," *Speculum* 75, no. 1 (2000): esp. 110–45.

<sup>46</sup> Jerome, *Epistle 121* (CSEL 56.3.54).

<sup>47</sup> See Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia* 34.9 (CCSL 141:307) for the former; and his *Moralia in Iob* 32.15.26–27 (CCSL 143B:1650) for the latter. The difficulty is, in fact, a bit more complex, as Gregory asserts that Michael will destroy *Satan* (though he remains unnamed) in homily 34 on the Gospels, and that Christ will destroy the *Antichrist* "non angelorum bello" in his *Moralia*.

<sup>48</sup> Jerome, *Commentariorum in Danielelem* (CCSL 75A:933–34); Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 78–79.

the Mount Olivet in Babylon.”<sup>49</sup> By locating his death at the place of Christ’s ascension, Haimo carries forward this *tradition* of Antichrist operating as a reverse-replica of Christ that began with Hippolytus and Tertullian, and which most Fathers carried forward.<sup>50</sup> Haimo contributes to the reception history of 2 Thessalonians by reading the destruction of Antichrist according to Jerome’s Daniel commentary.

The final example of Haimo’s employment of Jerome appears at the same verse with which he concludes his letter. Noting that Antichrist comes with “every seduction of iniquity for those who are perishing” (2:10), Haimo observes that this refers to the Jews and Pagans “because they did not welcome the love of truth that they might be saved, that is... the Holy Spirit through whom the love of God is poured forth (*infunditur*) deep into our hearts.”<sup>51</sup> This quote simultaneously summarises and expands Jerome, who says, “[Antichrist deceives] by the permission of God on account of the Jews, who did not want to receive the love of truth, that is Christ, because the love of God is poured forth in (*diffusa est in*) the hearts of those who believe.”<sup>52</sup>

Jerome’s reading comes in response to the question he raises about why Antichrist is able to deceive people, even the elect, if that were possible (cf. 2 Thess 2:10; Matt 24:24). He answers this question with the statement above: God *allows* Antichrist to bring about the full condemnation of the Jews, who have not the love of God in their hearts.

Haimo’s incorporation of Jerome on this point is significant and modified. First of all, he includes *Pagans* as condemned with the Jews, in

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<sup>49</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, “Exposition,” 28.

<sup>50</sup> Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 214–17.

<sup>51</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, “Exposition,” 29. Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 117:782).

<sup>52</sup> Jerome, *Epistle 121* (CSEL 56.3.55).

keeping with his reading of 2 Thess 1:8 and Ambrosiaster's position.<sup>53</sup> Second, though he follows the point that God permits Antichrist to come and deceive the Pagans and Jews,<sup>54</sup> he remains unclear as to whether this brings about the complete condemnation of *all* Jews. In fact, in his commentary on Isaiah, Haimo asserts that a number of Jews must convert to faith in Christ and will better resist Antichrist than Gentile converts.<sup>55</sup> Jerome carefully avoids discussing any final conversion of the Jews.<sup>56</sup> By paraphrasing Jerome, Haimo is able to incorporate the Father seamlessly into his work, appeal to his authority, and yet has to address a new question generated by the conflict between Jerome and his own reading of Isaiah.

#### ***IV. Hippolytus and a Collective Patristic Tone***

In response to Antichrist setting himself up in the "temple of God, displaying himself as if he were a god" (2:4), Haimo proposes two patristic readings without attempting to resolve their differences. In the first example, he follows Hippolytus in suggesting that Antichrist will come from Babylon and the tribe of Dan, that the Jews<sup>57</sup> will regard him as their Messiah, and that he will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem where he will receive worship.<sup>58</sup> In the second solution, Haimo points out that "the temple of God" could refer to the Church. Augustine and Jerome both make note of these two options for the

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<sup>53</sup> "cum coeperit... ad dandum vindictum in paganos... et in Iudaeos." Ambrosiaster, *Ad Thess. sec.* (CSEL 81:237); cf. Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. i ad Thess.* (PL 117:767).

<sup>54</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, "Exposition," 30.

<sup>55</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, *Commentariorum in Isaiam* (PL 116:823-24, 880); It is important to note that Haimo also denied that the (unconverted) Jews would ever be redeemed— a perspective also against many of the Fathers. Johannes Heil, "Labourers in the Lord's Quarry: Carolingian Exegetes, Patristic Authority, and Theological Innovation, a Case Study in the Representation of Jews in the Commentaries on Paul," in *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, ed. Celia Chazelle and Burton van Name Edwards, *Medieval Church Studies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 78.

<sup>56</sup> Elisabeth Mégier, "Jewish Converts in the Early Church and Latin Christian Exegetes of Isaiah, C. 400-1150," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 59, no. 1 (2008): 13-14.

<sup>57</sup> With the above noted exception.

<sup>58</sup> Hippolytus, *Christ and Antichrist* 6, 14-15 (ANF 5:206-7).

meaning of “temple” and contend that the solution is uncertain.<sup>59</sup> Given his reliance on Jerome thus far, it seems likely that he draws the contention from here, though he does not confidently assert that “the Church” is a more probable interpretation as Jerome does.<sup>60</sup> Lastly, Chrysostom argues that it refers to both, in the sense that the worship of the Antichrist will extend out from the temple in Jerusalem into “every church.”<sup>61</sup> Because his sources of authority are marked by an inconsistency, Haimo simply collects the options together and puts them in a contextual dialogue. Placing texts side-by-side, though helpful in illuminating a difficulty, amounts largely to imitation and a low register of aesthetic value. Nevertheless, Haimo concretises the historic questions by posing them afresh in his horizon and reveals the importance of this tradition of questions.

Haimo’s primary reason for incorporating the Fathers is that he considers them exegetical authorities for reading Scripture appropriately. At the same time, Haimo marshals the Church Fathers *who agree with his understanding of the purpose of 2 Thessalonians*. Thus he selectively transmits receptions of the epistle. Additionally, the Fathers contribute to the flow of the commentary by providing structural pillars between which Haimo strings his freely-formed points.

#### *i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Haimo differs rather drastically from his contemporaries, who composed commentaries on 2 Thessalonians. As mentioned, Bede simply copies a large blocks of text from Augustine, but he does not engage with

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<sup>59</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.19 (CCSL 48:731); Jerome *Epistle 121* (CSEL 56.3.53).

<sup>60</sup> “uel Hierosolymis, ut quidam putant, uel in ecclesia, ut uerius arbitramur.” Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 4 (FCT 5:472-73).

Augustine or the epistle itself.<sup>62</sup> In many ways, Bede reflects the general shape of the commentary of his age.

Sedulius Scottus selectively copies Pelagius' commentary on 2 Thessalonians, with a few extracts in chapters two and three appearing to be original contributions. Nevertheless, the bulk of the work is simply verbatim agreement with Pelagius.<sup>63</sup> Rabanus Maurus differs only in that his entire commentary is a patchwork of patristic sources and he proffers no original insights.

These scholars offer *catenae* of the Fathers on 2 Thessalonians. This summary is not intended to diminish the important work of Bede, Sedulius, and Rabanus. They faithfully sought to preserve the patristic authors for later generations in the way that they saw appropriate. We might colour them as aesthetically “culinary.”<sup>64</sup> Haimo's approach, however, renders the patristic material accessible to later generations, while also asking contextual questions left behind by the assertions of his predecessors, such as “Where is Antichrist, given that Rome has fallen?” His use of patristic material in this dynamic manner and his deployment of a commentary genre reminiscent of the Fathers anticipates the arrival of Scholastic commentators by several centuries.<sup>65</sup>

## *ii. Modern Scholarship and the Fathers*

The general utilisation of patristic material in modern, Protestant commentaries on 2 Thessalonians could hardly be further from Haimo's approach. Regarded as a separate source and of less authority than Scripture,

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<sup>62</sup> Bede, *Saint Augustine*, 291–94.

<sup>63</sup> Unlike the rest of the Christian West, Pelagius' Pauline commentaries did not circulate anonymously or pseudonymously in Ireland and were, nevertheless, frequently used. Michael W. Herren and Shirley Ann Brown, *Christ in Celtic Christianity: Britain and Ireland from the Fifth to the Tenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), 98–101.

<sup>64</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 25.

<sup>65</sup> Contreni, “Abbot of Sasceium,” 304.



we observe at least two trends in the aforementioned commentaries: first, the Fathers feature much less prominently than other ancient sources, such as inter-testamental and pseudepigraphic literature, and modern works written on the topic.

Second, the Fathers are frequently set up as a foil to the “correct” interpretation of a given passage or simply relegated to a footnote without any engagement with their thought. Wanamaker, for example, cites the *Didache* and Polycarp’s *Epistle to the Philippians* in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians, but no patristic material after the apostolic fathers.<sup>66</sup> His primary interlocutors are modern scholars operating within a historical-critical framework. As Wanamaker largely asks historical questions, perhaps this excludes the Fathers, who are interested in larger, theological, pastoral, and existential questions, in addition to the historical questions regarding Paul’s reason for writing 2 Thessalonians. We observe a similar phenomenon in the commentaries of Fee (who mentions Athanasius and Chrysostom), Morris (who cites Chrysostom, Tertullian, and Theodore), and Witherington (who cites Chrysostom and Theodoret).<sup>67</sup>

Morris is an excellent example of the second trend as well. He comments that “the perseverance of Christ” (3:5) is a clear encouragement to the Thessalonians to imitate the patience of Christ in their suffering. In a footnote, he observes that Chrysostom proposes three options for understanding this passage: 1.) endure like Christ; 2.) by doing the commandments of God, and; 3.) waiting patiently for Christ. Yet Morris rejects the potential that the passage could refer to waiting patiently for the

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<sup>66</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 316.

<sup>67</sup> Fee, *Thessalonians*, 283, 291; Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 225, 251, 258; Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 189, 193.

return of Christ, given that “it is an unlikely understanding of the genitive.”<sup>68</sup>

What Morris overlooks, however, is the manner in which Chrysostom ties all three together in patience during affliction.<sup>69</sup>

Morris revives the dialogue in order to silence it and undercuts the authority of the Church Father, while Haimo reveals a fuller picture of the dialogue by placing patristic readings beside one another and by not openly challenging them. He allows the reader to enter the dialogue.<sup>70</sup> Despite Morris’ blunt treatment of patristic readings, he nevertheless betrays the continuity of his approach with pre-modern interpretation both through entering the dialogue with 2 Thessalonians and framing his answer with reference to an answer of the past.

We encounter a different approach with Catholic scholars, such as Rigaux and Malherbe. Malherbe tends to utilise the Fathers when they helpfully expound a portion of 2 Thessalonians. He notes that Chrysostom insightfully draws attention to ὑπεραυξάνει as emphasising the growth of the Thessalonians’ faith (1:3). In his comments on the opening thanksgiving, Malherbe draws attention to Theodoret and Chrysostom, who correctly highlight the rhetorical function of the letter to encourage and render the Thessalonians well-disposed to hearing what Paul has to say in the remainder of the letter.<sup>71</sup> The key differences between Malherbe and Haimo lay in the structural function of the Fathers in Haimo’s commentary and that Haimo

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<sup>68</sup> Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 251, fn. 11.

<sup>69</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (FCT 5:485).

<sup>70</sup> Thiselton’s commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians similarly displays the historical dialogue and explores the range of meanings in relation to questions posed to the texts. Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*.

<sup>71</sup> Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:384 and 388.

explores what the text projects in a future Church context, rather than just what lies behind the text.

Similarly, Rigaux considers the historical range of interpretive options for understanding judgment “on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (1:8), before concluding that it refers generally to the enemies of Christians.<sup>72</sup> Where the Fathers and others continue this discussion with reference to “those who are perishing” (2:10), however, Rigaux’s engages with a Calvinist tradition of reading, such that he rejects the verse as supporting predestination.<sup>73</sup> This reveals how the hermeneutical interests of the interpreter in part condition the nature and continuity of the dialogue with the text, which is not to be taken as negative, but an important part of the text’s history and, therefore, its being.

## **2.2 Receptive Impulses: Methodology and Murethach**

In addition to the Fathers, we perceive Murethach as a profound exegetical influence on Haimo’s. Yet it would be inappropriate to assume that he lacked any independence from Murethach in his hermeneutics. Therefore, we proceed on the assumption that Haimo exhibits a high degree of freedom built upon an exegetical foundation nurtured by Murethach.

### ***1. Grammatical Attention and Classical Examples***

Holtz established the relationship between Murethach and Haimo as master and student by means of Murethach’s reference to Haimo in his grammar.<sup>74</sup> Murethach’s only preserved work is a commentary on Donatus’

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<sup>72</sup> Rigaux, *Thessaloniciens*, 629.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 677.

<sup>74</sup> Holtz, “Introduction,” xxviii–xxix; Holtz, “Murethach et l’influence,” 150–51; Though Contreni argues for the possibility that Haimo and Murethach were colleagues, rather than master and pupil, in the 830s, it is important to note that he does not deny Haimo’s education under Murethach altogether, though he seems to suggest this. Even were this the case, it does not discount the influence of Murethach’s instruction on Haimo, see Contreni, “By Lions,” 53–54.

*Ars maior*,<sup>75</sup> which should indicate the importance of grammatical attention to a text for this teacher. In general terms, this attention to grammar entails commenting on meaning or sentence construction. In this process, it may become necessary to explicate terms, if necessary by exploring its etymology, and to specify the sentence construction under question with clear and simple terminology. As mentioned in the introduction, Murethach and Haimo, employ the same terminology to introduce an explanatory paraphrase.<sup>76</sup>

These phrases do not appear with as great a frequency in the 2 Thessalonians commentary as in Haimo's other commentaries and the majority he conglomerates at the commentary's conclusion. Clarifying Paul's conclusion, Haimo's reading follows thus: "*If some do not obey the word (3:14)— meaning (*subaudis*) ours or yours, that they not be lazy— by means of the letter (3:14)— meaning (*subaudis*) yours...*"<sup>77</sup>

Though not included in the prescribed list, we might also include the clarifying phrase "*id est*" ("that is") as reflecting the influence of Murethach and one of the aims of Haimo's commentary. Admittedly, *id est* is a difficult phrase to single out as reflecting a distinct style, or an educational heritage because of its commonplace nature. When marking the frequency with which it occurs in Haimo's commentary on 2 Thessalonians (28 times) as compared with the likes of Sedulius Scottus (6 times) and Rabanus Maurus (10 times), and the fact that he always follows this with a synonym for, or a clarification of the previous phrase, however, it becomes apparent that this is a stylistic

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<sup>75</sup> Holtz, "Murethach et l'influence," 152. "Donatus" in this chapter refers to Aelius Donatus, the Roman grammarian who trained Jerome, not Donatus Magnus, the historical schismatic of the fourth century.

<sup>76</sup> Holtz, "Introduction," xxx.

<sup>77</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 117:783).

feature of Haimo.<sup>78</sup> An example of this occurs in his reading of 2 Thess 1:7, in which he clarifies that “in the revelation [of the Lord Jesus]” is another way of saying “in [his] manifestation.”<sup>79</sup> The commentary is replete with similar examples.

A glance at contemporary commentaries on 2 Thessalonians initially reveals similar usage of these phrases shared between Haimo and Murethach, excepting *id est*, as we have already discussed. Looking at Rabanus Maurus’ commentary on the same letter, we see him employ the phrases *sequitur* and *ac si diceret*.<sup>80</sup> Closer attention to the passage and Rabanus’ sources reveal, however, that these do not originate with the medieval theologian, but are copied from the works of Jerome and Gregory, respectively.

In addition to these stock phrases, Haimo’s attention to grammatical detail demonstrates the influence of Murethach. The first example comes from his reading of “if indeed (*si tamen*) it is just for God to repay” (1:6). Following many Fathers,<sup>81</sup> Haimo recapitulates the question of the difficulty raised by “if,” as though the statement is dubious. Haimo continues the tradition of understanding the phrase to mean “because” along with the Fathers, but expands the horizon of expectation (slightly) by categorising it as a causal conjunction.<sup>82</sup>

Later in the same chapter, Haimo attempts to clarify the terminologically awkward phrase that “[the wicked] will give eternal punishment (*dabunt pœnas solvent*) in death” (1:9). Two converging

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<sup>78</sup> Similarly, in his commentary on 1 Thessalonians, he uses “*id est*” 58 times.

<sup>79</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 117:778).

<sup>80</sup> Rabanus Maurus, *Exposito in epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 116:571 and 572).

<sup>81</sup> Chrysostom, Theodore, Theodoret, Pelagius, and Severian all observe similarly.

<sup>82</sup> “*conjunctio causalis in hoc loco non pro dubitatione ponitur, sed pro affirmatione*,” Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.*, (PL 117:778). Emphasis added.

influences come to a head in Haimo's reading. In the first case, he clarifies the nebulous construction of "giving punishment" as meaning that the wicked "will give punishment to others, but they will also give it to and inflict it upon themselves."<sup>83</sup> He supplements this with an alternative definition of "to give" as meaning "to suffer/endure" through an example from Virgil.<sup>84</sup> Resorting to a classical source for an etymological explanation demonstrates the influence of Murethach on Haimo.<sup>85</sup>

The second influence on Haimo in this reading is his critical engagement with the Vulgate. For example, though Haimo offered the alternative reading of *expectatione* (2 Thess 3:5; Ambrosiaster) along with *patientia* (Vg.), he tends to support the Vulgate over a divergent reading in the Fathers even if he attempts to harmonise them. In this example, Ambrosiaster's text<sup>86</sup> reads more easily than the Vulgate, yet Haimo only approaches this reading by using the Latin of the Vulgate and working toward a definition that resembles Ambrosiaster's through etymological means. This preference occurs similarly when Haimo reads "firstfruits" (*primatiae*; 2:13)

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<sup>83</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, "Exposition," 23.

<sup>84</sup> "And for blood-red locks, Scylla gives punishment." *ibid.*; Virgil, *Georgics*, ed. Richard F Thomas, vol. 1, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 405. It appears that Chrysostom likewise alludes to Virgil's *Georgics* with his metaphor of drawing out moisture from thorns by means of fire (cf. "Sive illis omne per ignem excoquitur vitium atque exudat inutilis humor." *Georgics* 1.87-88). Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Thessalonians* 3 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 13:387). Though outside the range of this project, it would be interesting to chart the reception of Virgil by the Church.

<sup>85</sup> Contreni, "Commentary on Ezechiel," 231. Early in his Pauline commentary, Haimo implicitly clarifies his deployment of such sources as non-scriptural. Haimo of Auxerre, *In epistolam ad Romanos* (PG 117:366). For additional examples of his use of Virgil, see his *In epistolam ii ad Corinthos* (PG 117:613 and 643) and *In epistolam ad Ephesios* (PG 117:725); for Plato, see *In epistolam i ad Corinthos* (117:520) and *Exposito in Apocalypsin* 5.26 (PG 117:1128).

<sup>86</sup> "qui poenas solvent in interitum aeternum," Ambrosiaster, *Ad Thessalonicenses secunda* (CSEL 81:237).

instead of “from the beginning” (*a principio*) with Ambrosiaster on the same verse, despite Ambrosiaster’s reading being easier to follow.<sup>87</sup>

Returning to the example above on “to give” (1:9) meaning that the wicked “give” punishment to each other and themselves as it relates to the influence of the Vulgate, Haimo demonstrates how translations lead to new questions in the reception history of a text, as well as the potential dominance of a tradition over a critical reflection on a concept. As the authorised version of the Carolingian Empire, Haimo was not in a position to opt for the drastically different reading of Ambrosiaster against the Vulgate.<sup>88</sup> Under similar constraints, Lombard forwards Haimo’s question, attempting to harmonise the idea of “giving” and “suffering” because of the difficulty that the Latin presents. Some of the reprobate will “give” the punishment in eternity, while others will “suffer” the punishment, and the two groups will alternate roles *ad infinitum*.<sup>89</sup>

Modern commentators, relying on a relatively stable Greek manuscript tradition, do not face the same difficulty. They generally agree that the phrase should be translated “[the wicked] *will pay the penalty* (δικὴν τίσουσιν) of eternal destruction away from the face of the Lord...” (1:9).<sup>90</sup> This idea is certainly within the semantic range of *dabunt poenas*, but does not fit with its more common usage in the Middle Ages. A shift to the Greek original means that the problem for Haimo and Lombard has received a definitive answer.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.*, (PL 117:782); Ambrosiaster, *Ad Thessalonicensis secunda* (CSEL 81:242).

<sup>88</sup> The difference here between his consideration of *patientia* and *expectatione* (3:5), is that these concepts are synonymous and do not require a reformulation of the sentence, while Ambrosiaster’s reading in 1:9 is quite distinct from the Vulgate.

<sup>89</sup> Lombard, *In Epist ii ad Thess.* (PL 192:314-15).

<sup>90</sup> For example Fee, *Thessalonians*, 258; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:401–2; Rigaux, *Thessaloniens*, 630–31.

<sup>91</sup> Jauss, *Question and Answer*, 70.

Modern attention to this phrase has shifted instead to the meaning of “eternal destruction,”<sup>92</sup> which was, ironically, rather consistently understood in Medieval period.

### **2.3 Receptive Impulses: Against Heresies<sup>93</sup>**

Heresies, particularly historically distant heresies, feature prominently in Haimo’s works. Riegenbach even goes so far as to contend that defence against heresy is one of Haimo’s primary concerns.<sup>94</sup> In his 2 Thessalonians commentary concern over heresy materialises twice. First, Haimo takes a position toward predestination that follows on the controversy between Gottschalk of Orbais (d. 867) and Hincmar of Reims (d. 882). The second example is Haimo’s seemingly innocuous reference to Simon Magus. For clarity’s sake, these discussions blend Haimo’s reading with his contemporary context.

#### ***I. Double- or Single-Predestination?***

Gottschalk’s career began in the monastery of Fulda under the watchful eye of the abbot, Rabanus Maurus. After coming of age, Gottschalk sought and succeeded in gaining freedom from monasticism at the synod of Mainz (829). His abbot, Rabanus had attempted to constrain his bright pupil by accusing him of heresy with regard to his teaching on double-predestination, but was unsuccessful. Having travelled and taught extensively, primarily in Orbais and Corbie, Gottschalk found numerous allies to his position, such as Servatus Lupus, in which he maintained that God predestined

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<sup>92</sup> Witherington does not even comment on the phrase “they will suffer.” He turns immediately to the concept of “eternal destruction.” Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 196–97; The reading that many commentators want to deny is an understanding that the “destruction” could mean “annihilation,” though they often do not name a dialogue partner. See, for example, Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:402.

<sup>93</sup> It is important to note that the use of “heresy” is from the view of Haimo.

<sup>94</sup> Riegenbach, *Die ältesten lateinischen Kommentare*, 69; for the heresies castigated by Haimo, see Contreni, “Abbot of Sasceium,” 309; see also Quadri, “Aimone Di Auxerre.”



*both* the elect to salvation *and* the reprobate to damnation, expounding this doctrine from the teaching of Augustine.<sup>95</sup>

Rabanus, who held the orthodox view of single-predestination, marshalled the support of Gottschalk's primary opponent: Hincmar of Reims. The debate between the groups lasted for years and led to further doctrinal considerations for generations to come, namely with regard to the topics of atonement and the authority of the Fathers, particularly Augustine.<sup>96</sup> The debate circulated around the interrelation of grace, free-will, foreknowledge, and predestination as articulated by Augustine and eventually came out in favour of Hincmar and Rabanus, who had Gottschalk's position condemned at the council of Quiercy (853), Valence (855), and a synod at Langres (859).<sup>97</sup>

In this climate, Haimo enters a veritable minefield by commenting on a biblical text that makes frequent reference to the salvation of the saints and the condemnation of the wicked. The debate shapes his reading of 2 Thessalonians and he tows the orthodox line in the tone of Hincmar. Furthermore, Haimo arrives during a shift in the tradition from a focus on predestination and free-will to *whom God predestines*.

In his opening comments on the epistle, Haimo observes that the tribulations endured by the Thessalonians are "an example of the just judgment of God" (1:5). He qualifies this with an observation from Prosper: nothing happens unless God permits it. Thus God *allows* the saints to suffer as an indication of the greater degree of judgment that the wicked will endure for

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<sup>95</sup> Willemien Otten, "Carolingian Theology," in *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 77.

<sup>96</sup> For further discussion on the nature and arguments levelled in this debate, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*, vol. 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 80–95.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:93–94.

inflicting the elect.<sup>98</sup> Predestination relates primarily to salvation, but the suffering of the righteous does not preclude his sovereignty.

In the Lord's arrival in "flaming fire" to judge the reprobate (1:8), Haimo comments that the fire will simultaneously "purify the elect,"<sup>99</sup> and sweep the wicked into hell. At the beginning of chapter two, he calls the elect those "gathering" (2:1) to the Lord at his advent.<sup>100</sup> Lastly, as the chapter draws to a close, Haimo observes that God's sending the perishing a "work of error" (2:11) means that God will *permit* Antichrist to come to them and deceive them. In this way, their condemnation comes about by their free choice to reject "the love of truth" and to follow Antichrist instead.<sup>101</sup>

Nowhere does Haimo refer to the predestination of the wicked to condemnation, only the certainty that they will suffer, which falls under divine foreknowledge rather than predestination.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, Haimo only speaks of *the elect* as those being *preveniently-appointed* to an eternal outcome. With relation to the entirety of 2 Thessalonians, Haimo introduces a new aspect to its history from his ecclesial milieu in clarifying the dimensions of predestination and the permissive sovereignty of God.

#### *i. Modern Commentators*

Witherington picks up on this topic in the same initial verse as Haimo, yet he points to the idea of the Thessalonians being "considered worthy" as due to their endurance in persecution, rather than as the result of a divine fiat.

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<sup>98</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, *In Epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 117:778).

<sup>99</sup> "[flamma] purgabit electos" Ibid., 778-79. The fact that Haimo uses language of "the elect" in this discussion despite its absence from the epistle situates it more firmly in the context of the broader debate on predestination.

<sup>100</sup> Though he follows this with the point "either that crowd which will come with him or which will meet with him for judgment," this refers to the idea of "gathering" rather than election. He clarifies this by adding "all the elect are in Christ, as members joined to him"- a point he certainly would not make about the reprobate. Haimo of Auxerre, "Exposition," 24.

<sup>101</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, *In Epist. ii ad Thess.*, (PL 117:782).

<sup>102</sup> Hincmar draws this distinction against the work of Gottschalk. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 3:86.

God declares them worthy, but only in their faithful obedience.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Witherington observes that punishment is reserved for the wicked (1:8), and he makes no reference to predestination.<sup>104</sup> Though the language of election is absent from his discussion of 2:1, he makes a strikingly similar remark to Haimo at 2:11: “Paul is saying that God *allows* those who refuse to love the truth to have the consequences of their choice [i.e. deception], confirming them in their obduracy.”<sup>105</sup> The text may permit the reading of “allowal,” but Witherington (in keeping with his Wesleyan heritage) reflects the influence of a tradition incorporated by Haimo that is shaped by the ongoing debate over predestination inaugurated truly with Augustine and Pelagius.

Fee’s interpretation of 2 Thessalonians, however, shows that this shared reading does not *necessarily* emerge from the text. At these verses specifically and with regard to the epistle in general, Fee does not discuss the topic of election or even deem it necessary to clarify whether God only “allows” Antichrist to deceive the perishing or if his “sending” marks their predestined condemnation.<sup>106</sup> This furthers the notion that theological and interpretive interests guide exegesis.

Like Haimo, modern commentators’ readings of 2 Thessalonians reflect their sensitivity to theological currents of the time. More recent discussions of election (e.g. Witherington) are situated primarily in the ongoing debate between Calvinism and Arminianism, as opposed to the double- and single-predestination of Gottschalk and Hincmar. Yet this still indicates the historical continuity of the larger debate over predestination.

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<sup>103</sup> Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 192.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 195–96.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 224. Emphasis added.

<sup>106</sup> He simply repeats his translation that God “sends” the “working of delusion.” Fee, *Thessalonians*, 295.

Unlike Haimo, Fee does not seriously risk excommunication for not making his theological position on divine sovereignty abundantly clear. In the dialogue of question and answer, 2 Thessalonians was primed as a locus for the issue of the predestination of the saints and the wicked during the tenth century. A “new” commentary in Haimo’s format necessitated clarification on this topic, and thereby forcefully introduced an exegetical tradition into the reception history of 2 Thessalonians. In our present context, reading with Haimo revives his question of how this epistle communicates divine sovereignty and expands the horizons of experience and understanding. Further to this, his attention to theological ramifications more appropriately directs attention to the subject matter of Scripture.

## ***II. Simon Magus***

The second, and more specific reference to heresy in Haimo’s commentary is the historically distant Simon Magus. The inclusion of this character from Acts 8:9-24 in the commentary appears to offer little more than an example of how he reflects characteristics similar to the Antichrist by performing lying signs and miracles (2:9). In describing the Antichrist, Haimo remarks, “he will appear to resurrect the dead and do many other signs, but these are lies and foreign to the truth since he will delude men through magical art and illusion, just as Simon Magus deceived the one who, thinking he was killing Simon, beheaded a ram in his place.”<sup>107</sup> This reference to Simon’s act of subterfuge by substituting a ram for himself makes clear that Haimo has a more developed, apocryphal understanding of the heretic.

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<sup>107</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, “Exposition,” 29. Simon also appears in Haimo’s Philippians commentary in a misquote of Jerome about his claim to be the son of God and the Paraclete (PL 117:740; cf. Jerome *Commentarius in Matthaeum* 24.5 (PL 26:176)), in his 1 Timothy commentary as an example alongside Hymenaeus and Alexander of one who “fell away” (PL 117:788), and his Apocalypse commentary as a predecessor to the dragon and beast in the way that he performs false miracles (PL 117:1133; cf. Rev 16:14).

In the centuries leading up to Haimo, the heresy of simony (derived from the heretic's forename), or paying for a clerical position, was rife in the Christian world. At the Council of Chalcedon (451), simony received sole attention in the second canon and was condemned as heretical.<sup>108</sup> Gregory the Great went to extensive lengths to reform the Church in this regard, particularly in the areas of the world that seemed just beyond papal reach, such as Austrasia and Burgundy. For this reason, he frequently wrote to the queen of these regions, Brunhild,<sup>109</sup> layering flattery with requests that she strive to stamp out simony from her kingdom, though his attempts never matured into the council for which he had hoped.<sup>110</sup> In his works, Gregory articulated three types of simony: 1.) payment for a clerical office in money, 2.) payment of the same in esteem/flattery, and 3.) complacency in the perpetuation of simony when one has the power to stop it.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> "If any Bishop should ordain for money, and put to sale a grace which cannot be sold...let him who is convicted of this forfeit his own rank... And if any one should be found negotiating such shameful and unlawful transactions, let him also, if he is a clergyman, be deposed from his rank, and if he is a layman or monk, let him be anathematized." *The XXX Canons of the Holy and Fourth Synods, of Chalcedon*, Canon II (NNPF<sup>2</sup> 14:268-69). A briefer form of this condemnation appears earlier in the apocryphal work *The Apostolic Constitutions* on the lips of Peter: "If any bishop obtains that dignity by money, or even a presbyter or deacon, let him and the person that ordained him be deprived; and let him be entirely cut off from communion, as Simon Magus was by me Peter." *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* 8.47.30 (ANF 7:501).

<sup>109</sup> F. Homes Dudden, *Gregory the Great: His Place in History and Thought* (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1905), 46–48, 68–69.

<sup>110</sup> R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 172–75; In one letter, Gregory comments specifically on the office of bishop, remarking, "We have learnt that their office is handled with such great presumption there that laymen are suddenly consecrated as bishops, and that is extremely serious. But what are those men going to do, what will they provide for their people, who aspire to being made bishops not to benefit the people, but for their own honor?" He goes on to label this as "simoniacal heresy." Gregory the Great, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, trans. John R. C. Martyn, vol. 2, *Medieval Sources in Translation* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004), 676–77.

<sup>111</sup> Werner Goez, "Simonie," ed. Hans Dieter Betz et al., *RGG*, 4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 1329.

The heresy plagued the Church through the Middle Ages, even spreading its roots into monasticism<sup>112</sup> and eventually leading to the Investiture Controversy, which received official address in the Concordat of Worms in the twelfth-century.<sup>113</sup> By the thirteenth century, the heresy afflicted even the papal office, with Nicholas III serving as the prime example. For this reason, Dante encounters Nicholas in the eighth circle and third *bolgia* of hell, “where the Simonists are set.”<sup>114</sup>

The name Simon Magus immediately brought simony to mind in the ninth century. Haimo’s reference to Simon comes from and feeds into the ongoing repulsion toward simony. This provides the ecumenical context for Haimo’s use of the name Simon Magus. The apocryphal nature of his reference derives from another source.

The allusion to Simon deceiving an executioner by substituting a ram comes from the fourth century work *The Acts of Peter and Paul*. In this text, Peter, Paul, and Simon find themselves in the presence of Nero, who has pronounced Simon to be a god. Following a number of pseudo-magical feats and claiming messianic titles for himself, Simon flies through the air at a great

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<sup>112</sup> This manifested particularly in the Benedictine (Haimo’s order) monasteries of France, in that monastic candidate were expected to pay for their entry into the order Joseph H. Lynch, *Simoniack Entry into Religious Life from 1000 to 1260* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), esp. 83–106.

<sup>113</sup> Carter Lindberg, *A Brief History of Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 66–68; alongside clerical marriage, simony was the major catalyst for the papal reforms of the eleventh and twelfth-centuries. John A. F. Thomson, *The Western Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Arnold, 1998), 82–85.

<sup>114</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Inferno: The Divine Comedy*, trans. Allen Mandellbaum (New York: Bantam Dell, 1982), Canto XIX. This brief history on Simony is not intended to neglect the Reformation discussion of simony, but rather to give a writing context for Haimo. Indeed, Luther spoke frequently on the topic of simony and changed the trajectory of the discourse. He argued that the papacy, bishops, and the like were not guilty of simony when it came to selling offices or accepting payment for the pallium. This crime was bribery, not simony. True simony, in Luther’s vision, is impossible, because it entails the sale of gifts of the Holy Spirit, which no one can accomplish. Those who claim to sell remission of sins or other graces of God, which are spiritual goods, do so falsely. This is simony in Luther’s eyes, even though the entire act is a sham. Therefore, he restricts the broader definition of simony adopted by Haimo and other medieval theologians. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis 21-25* (LW 4:109-205).

height only to plummet to his death after Peter prays that the demons holding Simon aloft release him. Nero responds by having Peter and Paul executed.

Of note in this story are not only the false signs that Simon performs and which the apostles reveal to be false, but also Simon's claim to be the Son of God, his receiving circumcision, his "resurrection" after three days, his claim that he will ascend to heaven, and the use and application of the very words of Christ to himself.<sup>115</sup> Simon Magus is set up as the reverse replica of Christ such that he typifies the expected Antichrist.

Outside of the NT, Justin Martyr (d. 165) makes the earliest reference to Simon Magus, offering background information, describing his "miracles" as false, and revealing his claims to divinity.<sup>116</sup> Irenaeus follows his predecessor in his description of Simon, but adds to this that Simon is the source of a variety of heresies.<sup>117</sup> In these sources, Simon reflects exhibits characteristics of "Antichrist" in 2 Thessalonians.

In sources contemporary to *The Acts of Peter and Paul*, such as Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catechetical Lectures* and a Pseudo-Hippolytan homily, the conflation of Simon Magus with Antichrist is in full effect.<sup>118</sup> Cyril describes the Antichrist as a highly skilled magician,<sup>119</sup> while Pseudo-Hippolytus

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<sup>115</sup> *Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul* (ANF 8:477-85); reference to this apocryphal work appears again in twelfth-century Reims with regard to witchcraft during an event in which a woman flew out of a window, carried "by the ministry of evil spirits who once caught Simon Magus up into the air." Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, eds., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 253.

<sup>116</sup> Justin's language bears a striking resemblance to Thess 2:3-4, 9, and 11. Justin Martyr, *Apologia* 1.26 (PG 6:26).

<sup>117</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.23.2 (PG 7:671-72).

<sup>118</sup> McGinn, *Antichrist*, 70-71, 74; Wilhelm Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore*, trans. A. H. Keane (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 146-47. This conflation likely follows from Origen, who identified Simon as Antichrist in an immanent sense. Origen, *Commentaria in Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* (PG 13:1643 and 1659); McGinn, *Antichrist*, 300 n. 64.

<sup>119</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catacheses* 15:11 (PG 33:884).

comments on Antichrist's ability to fly by means of demonic levitation.<sup>120</sup>

Thus Haimo accesses a developed tradition of the text history of Acts 8:9-24 and 2 Thess 2.

Considering these ecclesial and apocryphal sources materials, Haimo's decision to include Simon Magus in this particular section of 2 Thessalonians is striking. Haimo has drawn together two significant strands of thought regarding Simon.<sup>121</sup> Not only is simony implicitly condemned, but Haimo also identifies any cleric who pays for their position with Antichrist.

The contention could be taken even further to claim that Haimo perceives these clergy as the "mystery of iniquity" already at work (2:7) in the line of Nero, Diocletian, and Julian the Apostate.<sup>122</sup> His commentary on Ezekiel strengthens this argument, for in it he openly describes bishops and priests who pay for their positions as lions and wolves, who consume their poor congregants and drag them into hell by their unauthorised and false administration of their office.<sup>123</sup> If these men prefigure Antichrist, then any miracles that occur under their administration, such as the transubstantiation<sup>124</sup> of the Eucharist, the crux of the Carolingian orthodox faith, does not

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<sup>120</sup> Pseudo-Hippolytus, *De consummatione mundi* 29 (PG 10:933).

<sup>121</sup> Predestination and Simon Magus are brought together in a thirteenth-century work that describes a heretical group that holds to the position that God predestines all good things, while the devil preordains all evil things- a position attributed by their accusers to Simon Magus. Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources*, 275; In the Life of Gregory VII (1128), Paul of Bernried reports the accusation that Henry IV was guilty of simony and described him as the "precursor of the Antichrist," yet this applies primarily to Henry's attempt to undermine the papacy and establish his own pope. Paul of Bernried, "The Life of Gregory VII," in *The Papal Reform of the Eleventh Century: Lives of Pope Leo IX and Pope Gregory VII*, trans. Ian Stuart Robinson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 310–14.

<sup>122</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, In Epist. ii ad Thess., (PL 117:781).

<sup>123</sup> We might also add to this his commentaries on Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. See Contreni, "By Lions," esp. 38–43.

<sup>124</sup> Admittedly, the term "transubstantiation" is anachronistic, but a belief in the real presence and "metamorphosis" of the elements antedates Haimo. See, for example, John Chrysostom, *De proditiōe Judae* 1.6 (PG 49:380), "τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμά μου, φησί. Τοῦτο τὸ ὄψμα μεταρρυθμίζει τὰ προκειμένα." Emphasis added.



genuinely occur. We see precisely such a concern arise over the effects of simony and lay investiture on the Eucharist in the eleventh and twelfth-centuries.<sup>125</sup>

Therefore, Haimo's interpretation of 2 Thessalonians with reference to Simon Magus is not merely provocative to his horizon of expectations. The monk has levelled a polemical challenge to the ecclesial realm by access to an interpretive tradition.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

In one sense Haimo models his work after Fathers like Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Augustine,<sup>126</sup> who wrote extensively against heresies. Despite converging contexts that nurture exegetical attention to heresy, Haimo remains unique for his time period in his inclusion of Simon in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians— this marks the way in which he surpasses his horizon of expectations.

Because of this distinctiveness, Lombard's reference to the heretic at exactly the same location (2:9) in his commentary on the epistle renders it conspicuous. He even makes use of the same example in which Simon substitutes a ram for himself at his execution. Lombard points primarily to Simon's claim of divinity as evidence that his works miraculous signs are lies. Even should they legitimately produce a genuine effect, it is only performed by the *permission* of God in order to attract the perishing to the larger

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<sup>125</sup> Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 3:212–13; Marcia L. Colish, *Peter Lombard*, vol. 2, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 575–80.

<sup>126</sup> In *The Heresies I* and *Answer to an Enemy of the Law and the Prophets* II.12.40, Augustine regards Simon as the inaugural heretic, in keeping with several other Fathers (e.g. Eusebius) and following on from Irenaeus. Augustine, *Arianism and Other Heresies*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Roland J. Teske, vol. 1.18, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1995), 34 and 440, respectively.

mendacity.<sup>127</sup> Haimo, despite Lombard's rewording of his predecessor on 2 Thessalonians, exerts commanding influence over the latter.<sup>128</sup> By Lombard's day, however, Haimo's reading has lost its causticness and already requires reading against the grain to restore its tone.

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

Like Haimo (and Paul), Rigaux contrasts the "false wonders (τέρασιν ψεύδους)" of the Antichrist with the "truth," as a Christian virtue, that the perishing denied (2:10). Furthermore, the Antichrist uses these miracles for the express purpose of deception.<sup>129</sup> Fee argues similarly, but stresses that the "falsehood" modifies both "signs" and "wonders" (2:9) and that this term does not indicate that they are counterfeit, but rather that they "are intended to deceive, to lead people astray after Satan."<sup>130</sup> Bornemann remains open on this point, arguing that the genitive ψεύδους can mean that the signs and wonders are false, or that they function as the means of drawing people into "the lie."<sup>131</sup>

Haimo, because he recognises Simon as the type for Antichrist, excludes Fee's perspective and accepts only the first of Bornemann's considerations. Antichrist accomplishes his works "through magical art and illusion,"<sup>132</sup> like Simon. Even in his suggested, alternative reading, that Antichrist's *advent* will come about by false signs and wonders in order to lead people to false worship, Haimo still adds that this will be accomplished

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<sup>127</sup> Lombard, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 192:320-21); later in this chapter, we will discuss how Lombard uses Haimo and Ambrosiaster as a foil for the "correct" reading found in Augustine. This rule, however, does not apply to all of Lombard's use of Haimo on 2 Thessalonians.

<sup>128</sup> Marcia L. Colish, *Peter Lombard*, vol. 1, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 205–7.

<sup>129</sup> Rigaux, *Thessaloniciens*, 675.

<sup>130</sup> Fee, *Thessalonians*, 294.

<sup>131</sup> Bornemann, *Die Thessalonicherbriefe*, 372.

<sup>132</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, "Exposition," 29.

through magical deception.<sup>133</sup> Rigaux’s reading resembles this alternative suggestion, because he contends that ψεύδους “refers not only to the source, but also to the goal, the purpose”<sup>134</sup> of Antichrist’s manifestation. Yet his mention of “source” points to Satan as the *deceptive power* (i.e. not God) behind Antichrist, rather than the notion that the signs do not genuinely occur. This is the general tone of modern scholars on this point,<sup>135</sup> completely against the readings of the early Church. It precludes an association between Antichrist and Simon Magus.

Haimo’s ecclesial-literary context brings the correlation of Simon Magus and Antichrist to a head. He has shifted the focus from Simon as a type for Antichrist and abstract discussion of the eschatological enemy of Christ, to simony as present identification with Antichrist. By the time of Lombard, Haimo’s question of the relationship of simony to Antichrist has already lost its subtext and force, such that it fades from the reception of 2 Thessalonians. The modern, historicist horizon of expectations for the epistle would benefit from reviving attention to such theological-practical considerations and enable greater integration of theological scholarship by ecclesial communities. It pushes beyond *analogy* by placing the ongoing practices of the Church under scrutiny.

#### 2.4. Receptive Impulses: Sermon Preparation

Though not apparently connected to the previous topic another receptive impulse that shapes Haimo’s work is the aim to provide a

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Rigaux, *Thessaloniciens*, 675.

<sup>135</sup> See also Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:425; Wanamaker even suggest that Paul’s familiarity with accounts of emperors, such as Gaius Caligula, performing miracles cements in the apostle’s mind that these miracles would be genuine. Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 259–60. Haimo may view the “signs” as false in the sense that they are accomplished by demonic powers, but it seems more likely that his use of such language as it will “appear” as though Antichrist has accomplished a feat and “illusion” indicates his belief that they are not genuine.

commentary to aid in sermon preparation. This motivating goal materialises specifically in his use of simple language, his exegetical particularities, the way in which the generations immediately following Haimo made use of his material, and his composition of a sermon on 1 John and homilies.

### ***I. Language***

In his commentary, Haimo writes in simple Latin, both in terms of syntax and vocabulary. To describe Haimo's language as "simple" is not to slight him as a scholar. If anything, this demonstrates his brilliance as a theologian, for he was able to compress the immensely complex Latin (and theology) of the Fathers into digestible selections.<sup>136</sup> For example, Haimo explicates the syntactically complex verse "If indeed it is just for God to repay" (1:6) with the simple phrase "the evil with evil things, and the good with good things."<sup>137</sup> We can add to this the earlier-noted way in which he introduces an explanation with the simple *id est* and how he offers synonyms to clarify terms throughout the commentary. Three brief examples will illustrate the latter. He explains "seduction" (2:10) as "deception," belief "in the truth" (2:12) as in "Christ," and consent "to iniquity" (2:12) as to "the devil."<sup>138</sup>

How his approach to language aids in sermon preparation is not immediately clear and hinges on a construal of the audience of this Benedictine.

### ***II. Audience***

Following Charlemagne's reforms of monasticism, Haimo furthers ecclesiastical education by expanding access to both Scripture and the Church

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<sup>136</sup> Heil describes his writing as "an even, easy, Latin, informing for advanced readers and understandable for beginners as well." Heil, "Theodulf," 113.

<sup>137</sup> "malis mala, et bonis bona." Haimo of Auxerre, In Epist. ii ad Thess., (PL 117:778).

<sup>138</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, "Exposition," 29 and 30.

Fathers in his commentary. His plain language is intelligible to those of a lower level of literacy, yet, overall, the commentary is detailed enough to offer a relatively comprehensive reflection on the epistle. We can certainly say that monks were Haimo's *reading* audience,<sup>139</sup> particularly because monks like Heiric, Remigius, and Ælfric of Eynsham were the scholars of the following generations who utilised his works. We can also add that *at least* monks composed part of Haimo's *listening* audience. For, though Gregory I strongly discouraged monks from public preaching,<sup>140</sup> monastics were often at the head of frontier evangelism and the lack of priests in certain regions meant that residents of those regions had no exposure to biblical instruction. Who better to teach them than those who spent their days studying Scripture? The very fact that the Carolingian reforms sought to curb monastic involvement in pastoral work indicates that monks were actively engaged in public preaching during Haimo's time.<sup>141</sup>

Though we cannot contend with any certainty that Haimo delivered his commentary on 2 Thessalonians as a homily in a *non-monastic* setting, this might account for the relatively sparse notes on chapter three of the epistle. The invocation to work in both Basil and Benedict's rules were targeted at the

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<sup>139</sup> Contreni, "By Lions," 43–45.

<sup>140</sup> Monks were to dedicate their lives of contemplation in withdrawal from the world. Additionally, most monastics were laity, not ordained clergy. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, 189–94; Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 70–71.

<sup>141</sup> Thomas L. Amos, "Monks and Pastoral Care in the Early Middle Ages," in *Religion, Culture, and Society in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Richard E. Sullivan*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and John J. Contreni (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1987), 174–75; The laity tended to prefer monks as spiritual guides over the clergy because of the corruption articulated by Haimo and the latter's lack of identification with the needs of the average person. Pierre Riché, *Daily Life in the World of Charlemagne*, trans. Jo Ann McNamara, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 202; In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, certain monks insisted that it was their right to preach. See, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, Publications of the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 29–32.

monastic community,<sup>142</sup> rather than the public at large. This is not to say that Haimo would discourage people from working, but that he saw the command of Paul in this chapter as aimed at those who had taken on the spiritually arduous life, rather than the Christian world at large.<sup>143</sup> Put differently, if this commentary was strictly for monks, why did Haimo overlook a section that spoke directly into their communal life, according to their predecessors? Even if he did not preach this commentary as a sermon publicly, the language<sup>144</sup> and the veritable omission of chapter three seem to indicate that Haimo had the wider public in mind when he wrote. The commentary helped prepare the parish priest and monk-priests for preaching on 2 Thessalonians to the average listener. Thus, both Haimo's perceived understanding of Paul's purpose for writing 2 Thessalonians (the doctrine of chapter two) and his prospective audience shapes his reading of the letter.

### ***III. Sermon and Homilies***

Another work of Haimo that contributes to the view that he wrote his 2 Thessalonians commentary as an aid in sermon preparation is a medieval sermon on 1 John 5:4-10 that locates the monk in his later career at Cussy-les-Bois. The similarities<sup>145</sup> between this sermon and the construction of his 2

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<sup>142</sup> For a common contemporary perspective in this regard, Smaragdus' commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict also takes up the monastic command to work, as read through the lens of 2 Thess 3. Smaragdus Abbas, *Commentaria in regulam Sancti Benedicti* (PL 102:884-87).

<sup>143</sup> This view resonates with Ortigues' perspective that Haimo was a theorist of the "three orders" (clergy, nobility, and the third estate) of Christian society. Edmond Ortigues, "L'élaboration de la théorie des trois ordres chez Haymon d'Auxerre," *Francia* 14 (1986): 29-43.

<sup>144</sup> Simple Latin made for easier translation into the vulgar tongue, which was the expected format of 9th century sermon for the general public. Riché, *Daily Life in the World of Charlemagne*, 200; this is precisely what Ælfric does when he uses Haimo in his homilies, which he composed in Old English Ælfric of Eynsham, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary, and Glossary*; for more on his use of Haimo, see Cyril L. Smetana, "Ælfric and the Homily of Haymo of Halberstadt," *Traditio* 17 (1961): 457-69.

<sup>145</sup> The similarities include a lemma-by-lemma exposition of the text, concern with historical heresies (e.g. Manichaeism), and introductory explanatory phrases (e.g. *hoc est* and

Thessalonians commentary insinuate that the commentary is an expanded version of a sermon that Haimo originally preached. Heil contends strongly that Haimo's Pauline commentaries in particular bear the marks of sermons developed into larger, expository works because the gaps in the commentary texts proceed or follow pericope extracts, indicating that Haimo filled in the text later.<sup>146</sup> This could offer another explanation for the relatively sparse exegesis of 2 Thess 1 and 3 around the detailed attention of chapter two.<sup>147</sup>

Along with the sermon on 1 John, Haimo's composition of several homilies indicates his desire to provide sermon material for later generations. Though several early manuscripts preserve homilies by Haimo on the epistles of Paul,<sup>148</sup> the Migne homily only offers passing references to 2 Thessalonians. Nevertheless, on the Second Sunday of Advent, Haimo offers a sermon that begins with Luke 21:25. Much like Jesus with his disciples, Haimo attempts to assuage the concerns of his audience by describing the events of the *eschaton* so that they may be prepared when it arrives. He articulates the arrival of the Antichrist, noting that he will oppose and exalt himself above "all that is called God or that is worshipped" (2 Thess 2:4).<sup>149</sup> Particularly in an age of erratic apocalyptic upheaval, Haimo's comments on 2

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*videlicet*). For the sermon text, see Contreni, "Abbot of Sasceium," 317–20. For further similarities between the sermon and Haimo's other works, see 308–10.

<sup>146</sup> Heil, *Kompilation*, 282–88, esp. 282–83. The same is apparent in his commentary on 1 Thessalonians, in which every chapter receives detailed attention with the exception of chapter three, which he summarises in two sentences. Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. i ad Thess.* (PL 117:767–68).

<sup>147</sup> In total, three main reasons for Haimo's attention to 2 Thess 2 have been discussed: 1.) he saw it as the primary purpose for Paul to write; 2.) the latter chapter applied primarily to monks, and was an addendum to the larger doctrinal core of the letter, and; 3.) his original sermon on the topic concentrated on the second chapter. The points are not mutually exclusive, but rather, the latter two flow from the first.

<sup>148</sup> Barré, *Les homéliaires Carolingiens de l'école d'Auxerre*, see esp. 61–66.

<sup>149</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, *Homiliae de Tempore 2* (PL 117:19).

Thess 2 appropriately guide a reader into a balanced and cautious reading of the epistle. This context will receive attention in the following section.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Though Rabanus and Florus likely intended for priests and monks to use their commentaries for sermon preparation, they did so by offering cumbersome and dense theological extracts from the Fathers that their readers would have to distil and translate into the vernacular. Sedulius is something of an exception to this group, and fits closer to Haimo. For example, both quickly clarify that the “man of sin” (2:3) is Antichrist; that the “revelation” (2:6) of which Paul later speaks refers also to Antichrist; the inclusion of Nero as one who “holds” (*tenet*) authority (2:7); and that “the patience of Christ” (3:5) refers to having patience in affliction (though Haimo also offers an alternative reading).<sup>150</sup> Sedulius and Haimo offer a more accessible text to the medieval sermon writer by asking, “What is essential for the edification of the congregation?”

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

Though many modern commentaries are certainly useful in sermon preparation, most lack the degree of accessibility found in Haimo. The NIGTC, for which Wanamaker produces his volume, for example, offers a technical evaluation of the Greek of the NT. Rigaux’s commentary is likewise technically detailed. Modern commentaries tend toward this direction of exploring all aspects of the text, rather than attention to a core message. This leaves the responsibility of delineating praxis in the hands of pastors with primarily historical material.

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<sup>150</sup> Sedulius Scotus, *In epistolam ii ad Thessalonicenses* (PL 103:223-24); Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 117:779-81, 783).



In terms of exegesis, we see that Wanamaker agrees with Haimo and his predecessors in taking εἴτερ (*si tamen*; 1:6) to mean “since” in the causal sense. Haimo bases the judgment of the “evil” and the “good” in the future (1:6) on the grounds of God’s just judgment exemplified in the *present endurance* of the Christians at Thessalonica (1:5). Yet then Haimo obfuscates the point by describing the *example* of their *present affliction* (1:5) as an indication of the severe degree of punishment that the wicked will suffer in the Judgment. This enables Haimo to summarise God’s retribution as “malis mala, et bonis bona.”<sup>151</sup> Wanamaker offers a helpful correction to Haimo in contending the sign/example of God’s just judgment is exclusively the suffering of the Thessalonians (1:5), which justifies the reading of 1:6 as repayment for “wickedness” or “goodness” in the present life and the reversal of roles in the Judgment. In this way, Wanamaker also offers a correction of Morris, who proposes a similar, dual-signification of God’s righteous judgment in the endurance *and* the suffering of the Thessalonians. For, endurance in persecution makes sense of being “counted worthy” (1:4), but it does not follow how endurance functions as a sign of God’s eschatological Judgment, nor that endurance leads to God’s retribution.<sup>152</sup>

Let us also compare the three, brief explanations of Haimo by way of synonyms (seduction=deception (2:10); the truth=Christ (2:12); the lie=Satan (2:12)) with modern research. Menken proceeds with the reading “deceit of sinfulness” (2:10), and adds to Haimo’s view that this language of deceit situates the passage firmly in apocalyptic eschatology, as numerous apocalyptic works (Dan 8:25, *I Enoch* 91:5-7, *Sibylline Oracles* 3:64-70, and

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 778.

<sup>152</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 222–24; Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 196–98.

*Didache* 16:4) anticipate such deception in the last days. Menken locates the passage in a theological-literary genre.<sup>153</sup>

Unable to read cross-canonically in a manner that would allow him to equate the statement of one biblical author with another (e.g. the truth=Christ; cf. 2 Thess 2:12, John 14:6), Menken omits the connection between “the truth” and “Christ” that Haimo takes as obvious. Menken only goes so far as to say, “‘The truth’... is a very broad concept, but in 2 Thessalonians it has in fact the restricted meaning of the *Christian* truth, that is, the gospel.”<sup>154</sup> Haimo’s context nearly forces him to equate the two, while Menken’s prevents it, because such express relations are not worked out within the epistle. Menken does, however, draw attention to the contrast of belief in the “truth” and taking pleasure in “sinfulness” (2 Thess 2:12) as found also in Rom 1:18 and 2:8.

Haimo likewise explores the contrast, but by substituting “Christ” and “the devil,” respectively. Here he reflects dedicated attention to the entire epistle as well as the effect of apocalyptic eschatology on his reading. Only verses earlier, he read that Antichrist arrives with “lying signs” by the “power of Satan” (2 Thess 2:9). Therefore, the equation of the devil with “sinfulness” and “the lie” (2:12) is based on an understanding of Satan as the source of deceit and sinfulness. It is only natural, then, to contrast “Christ” with “the devil” and “the truth” with “the lie” in keeping with apocalyptic antimonies that characterise Paul’s theology.<sup>155</sup> As a (potential) sermon, Haimo’s commentary demonstrates less concern in situating the epistle within a genre to cultivate an understanding of the letter than drawing relationships from within the epistle itself and the larger canon to present a concise reading to his

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<sup>153</sup> Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 115–16.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 117; see also 118. Emphasis original.

<sup>155</sup> Martyn, “Apocalyptic Antimonies,” 417.

audience that operates on a number of theological assumptions. The modern horizon of expectations, shaped by historicist concerns, has the potential to expand if it can incorporate Haimo's congregationally-directed theological reading, which helpfully remembers the purpose of Scripture as Scripture. At the same time, modern commentators offer critical insights into the Greek language, historical context, apocalyptic genre, and broader non-canonical literature that *can* prevent naïve assimilation of the text according to one's theological predilections and they offer the prioritisation of other interests in the consideration of meaning.

We could continue this discussion by comparing modern scholarship's relationship to the shared readings of Haimo and Sedulius at a number of points. This ventures too far, though, into the discussion of apocalyptic eschatology without providing a clearer picture of Haimo's relationship to this theological category. We address that topic below. As it absorbs a great deal of Haimo's attention, we will need to divide the subject matter into two sections: 1.) the general category of apocalyptic realism, and; 2.) Haimo's specific view of Antichrist.

## **2.5. Receptive Impulses: Apocalyptic Realism**

Given the influence of Augustine in the Middle Ages, it is important to first situate Haimo's apocalyptic reading of 2 Thessalonians in relation to this Church Father.

### ***I. Augustine's Spiritual Interpretation***

Writing in the aftermath of Rome's fall, Augustine sought to detach any connection between 2 Thessalonians, the arrival of Antichrist, and the collapse of Rome. Like Haimo, Augustine contends that one cannot know the date of the Lord's return, even in witnessing of the signs that must precede it.

The two part ways, however, because of two emphases on the part of Augustine.

In the first case, Augustine reads *refuga* (exile)<sup>156</sup> instead of *discessio* (falling away), which enables him to bypass including Rome in his exposition. Second, Augustine clearly prefers to read the “temple of God,” in the Tyconian spiritual sense, as the Church. Therefore, the “mystery of iniquity” is already at work in the body of Christ as the body of Antichrist that will mature to fruition in the last days. At the same time, Augustine permits that we learn from the epistle that “Christ will not come to judge before the Antichrist comes.”<sup>157</sup> These two crucial exegetical decisions, though, allow him to remain comfortably agnostic about the details of the *eschaton* and challenge the traditional perspectives that seek to read “Rome” or “Nero” as concrete textual referents. Augustine layers a sparsely literal framework with a heavily spiritual reading in allowing that Antichrist, as a figure, will come, but also that he is already present in the Church.<sup>158</sup>

Haimo adopts a spiritual reading of Revelation along with Augustine, but advances a literal reading of 2 Thessalonians against him. The reason for this appears in his perceived reasons for the writing of the respective books. Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to assuage the fear of a persecuted congregation, supplying evidence that the end has not yet arrived.<sup>159</sup> Literal instruction, we may even go so far as to call it catechesis, provides the comfort that they need.

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<sup>156</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.19 (CCSL 48:731).

<sup>157</sup> Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 107.

<sup>158</sup> “Augustine has endorsed the historical reality of the eschatological events in general, but he has also subverted that endorsement in his spiritual readings of texts like 2 Thessalonians 2.” Hughes, “Augustine and Adversary,” 227; McGinn locates “the heart of Augustine’s teaching on Antichrist” in both the influence of Tyconius and his reading of 1 John. McGinn, *Antichrist*, 77.

<sup>159</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 117:777).

John, on the other hand, received a vision in which symbols “are revealed to him from heaven in his mind.”<sup>160</sup> Hughes summarises the point well: “The difference between Haimo’s exposition of 2 Thessalonians and the Apocalypse is not one of apocalyptic perspective, but of genre. It is the difference between historical and visionary literature.”<sup>161</sup> Because of this, Haimo must rely on different patristic sources than Augustine, and he finds congenial views in the works of Jerome and Ambrosiaster.

## ***II. Haimo’s Apocalyptic Eschatology***

Before delving into 2 Thess 2, Haimo comments briefly on the eschatological content of chapter one. He notes that God permits all things to take place, including the suffering of the righteous in this life (1:4). Yet their suffering assures the reversal of their fate with the wicked in the Judgment (1:6), when the Lord afflicts the wicked (i.e. the pagans, heretics, false Christians, and the Jews) with the flame of fire (1:8). These will suffer eternal punishment (1:9), even if it should mean that they “give” punishment to one another, witnessing the coming of Christ as terrible and fierce. Here, Haimo perceives something of an apocalyptic dualism when he contrasts the twofold manner in which the single appearance of the Lord manifests to the reprobate and the righteous.

Haimo’s reading of chapter two comprises approximately 60 percent of his commentary and is dominated by a literal reading in the tone of Jerome and Ambrosiaster. After his introductory note that the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2:1) renders lucid the purpose of the chapter. Regarding the key phrases of the chapter, Haimo asserts that “the desertion” (*discessio*; 2:3) is

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<sup>160</sup> Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 164. Haimo of Auxerre, *Exposito in Apocalypsim* (PL 117:940).

<sup>161</sup> Hughes, “Augustine and Adversary,” 231.

the dissolution of the Roman Empire; the “man of sin” (2:3) is Antichrist; “the temple of God” (2:4) may refer to either the Jerusalem temple or the Church; the Roman Empire is “what restrains” (*detineat*; 2:6); the “mystery of iniquity” (2:7) is the work of the devil in persecuting and murdering the saints through “his members” (i.e. Nero, Diocletian, and Julian), and; the Roman emperor is “the one who restrains” (2:7) as the individual representative of the corporate power of Empire, who prefigures Antichrist.<sup>162</sup> There are several important points to his reading to draw out regarding the fall of Rome, the Millennium, and Antichrist.

Though it appears at times that Haimo sees the “rule of the Romans as not yet destroyed, nor have all the nations deserted them”<sup>163</sup> as his reality, closer attention reveals that, in these instances, he speaks as though from the *apostle’s present*, clarifying his point to the Thessalonians. This makes sense of how Haimo can, at the same time, refer to the collapse of the Roman Empire, “which we already see fulfilled.”<sup>164</sup> If this were not the case, Haimo would have no reason to account for the delay in Antichrist’s arrival.<sup>165</sup> Given the apocalyptic climate of the ninth century and the history of exegesis with regard to the projected Day of the Lord, Haimo has made a fascinatingly unique move. One might expect at this point a discussion of the Church’s

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<sup>162</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 117:779-81); on this argument, see Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 155–58.

<sup>163</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, “Exposition,” 27.

<sup>164</sup> “quod jam nos impletum videmus.” Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 117:780).

<sup>165</sup> “Tunc revelabitur ille iniquus postquam fuerit destructum Romanum imperium, non est ita intelligendum, quod statim dixerit illum venturum, sed primum illud destruendum, ac deinde Antichristum venturum, tempore a Deo disposito.” *Ibid.*, 781.

present existence in the sabbatical millennium, which should precede the arrival of Antichrist.<sup>166</sup>

The brilliance of his reading lies in the complete absence of a discussion regarding the sabbatical millennium and its relationship to the arrival of Antichrist. Even more, Haimo undermines the entire concept of the millennium and precise dating of apocalyptic events. The Christian expectation of a sabbatical millennium can be traced as early as the *Epistle of Barnabas* 7. “According to this theory, since the world was created in six days and God rested on the seventh, and since ‘a thousand years is as a day in the sight of the Lord,’ this fallen world of travail would last for six thousand years and then, finally, would come the sabbatical millennium.”<sup>167</sup> In this line of thinking, the Church developed the *annus mundi* dating system in the third century to predict the coming (prolonged) Sabbath, which it anticipated would begin in 500 C.E.<sup>168</sup> As this date approached, however, Christian scholars<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Haimo does precisely this in his Revelation commentary. The millennium must precede the Antichrist, but, for Haimo, 1,000 is simply an expression of perfection not to be taken literally. Haimo of Auxerre, *Expos. in Apoc.* (PL 117:1182).

<sup>167</sup> Landes, “Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000,” 110; For more detail on Barnabas as an early source for Christian millenarianism, see Richard Landes, “Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography 100-800 CE,” in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. Werner Verbeke, D. Verhelst, and Andries Welkenhuysen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 141–44.

<sup>168</sup> After *Barnabas*, early Christian sources for millennial expectations were the chronographies of Theophilus of Antioch and Clement of Alexandria. The most influential early authors in this regard, however, were Hippolytus and Lactantius. See Hippolytus of Rome, *On Daniel* 4 (ANF 5:179); Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* 7.14 (ANF 7:211-12); for a detailed discussion on Hippolytus as the primary source for early millenarianism, see Landes, “Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled,” 144–49.

<sup>169</sup> This began with Eusebius, whose view Jerome, Augustine, and Orosius endorsed. None of the above supported the idea of a sabbatical millennium, but the chronology that they embraced, nevertheless, placed the year 6000 A.M. in 800 C.E. See Burgess’ translation of Eusebius’ *Chronici canones* for Eusebius’ summary of his own calculations. Richard W. Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronology*, Historia (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999), 65; for Eusebius’ reaction to Hippolytus, see Landes, “Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled,” 149–56.

revised their prediction to 800 C.E., which, as it would turn out, was the year of Charlemagne's coronation.<sup>170</sup>

As the deadline approached again, Bede proposed a new dating system (*annus Domini*) with the incarnation functioning as its basis. The millennium received a new lease on life, but Bede also hoped to silence the questions of “rustics” regarding the impending arrival of the millennium (i.e. 800). Though Bede sought by his work and the *annus Domini* system to completely undermine any millenarianism,<sup>171</sup> this left the years between 800 and 1000/1033 in a state of suspended, eschatological expectation, punctuated with occasional and limited chiliastic outbreaks.<sup>172</sup> Thietland of Einsiedeln (d. 965) reflects such expectation in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians when he reads the *revelation* of “the lawless one” (2:8) as identical with the *release* of the dragon, who was bound in Christ's passion, after 1,000 years of imprisonment (Rev 20:1-3).<sup>173</sup>

The complete absence of the millennium from Haimo's commentary, therefore, renders his discussion as contextually conspicuous. In one sense, he observes Augustine's caution toward millennial expectations, yet different from the Church Father, Haimo does not appear to endorse any dating system

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<sup>170</sup> The coronation took place on December 25, 800— the first day of the new millennium. Brandes and Landes observe that the confluence of this date and the coronation would not have gone unnoticed. Wolfram Brandes, “Anastasios ὁ Δίκρος: Endzeiterwartung und Kaiserkritik,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 90, no. 1 (1997): 27; Landes, “Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000,” 114–15; Hughes adds to the discussion that Leo III may have been invoking the pseudo-Methodian “last world emperor” myth in coronating Charlemagne on this date, with the expectation of inaugurating the “millennium of peace.” Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 127.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Bede the Venerable, *De temporum ratione* 67 (CCSL 123B:535-37).

<sup>172</sup> Landes, “Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000,” 113–16.

<sup>173</sup> Thietland of Einsiedeln, “In Epistolam II Ad Thessalonicenses,” 55–56; Cartwright observes that Thietland's preference for “release” over “revelation” allows him to incorporate the discussion on Rev 20. Steven R. Cartwright, “Thietland's Commentary on 2 Thessalonians: Digressions on the Antichrist and the End of the Millennium,” in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. van Meter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 98.



(*annus mundi* or *annus Domini*) that would allow one to project the beginning of a new millennium. If anything, according to chiliastic expectations, the Antichrist should have arrived generations ago after the fall of Rome. Thus, Haimo has completely undercut one's ability to reliably propose the date of the Day of the Lord. His reading allows for either the *annus mundi* or *annus Domini* dating systems, but he subverts their power in the hands of the chiliast. In this regard, Haimo characterises a tendency that crystallises in Carolingian-Bedan theology: avoidance of universal history and denunciation of the sabbatical millennium.<sup>174</sup> The former is clear in his commentary; the latter is implicit.

This approach to the millennium coheres with Haimo's broader Augustinian- (and Scriptural-; cf. Matt 24:36) agnosticism toward the chronology of eschatological events in 2 Thess 2. Nevertheless, this does not hamper Haimo's confidence in asserting the events that must take place and their sequence, according to 2 Thessalonians. His apocalyptic timeline looks like this:

*discessio* from Rome → (*unknown length of time*) → the advent of Antichrist → (*unknown length of time*) → Christ/Michael destroys Antichrist → (*unknown length of time*) → the Final Judgment.

Furthermore, his commentary on Revelation, in which he describes all time following the redemption of the cross as eschatological, appears to nurture this uncertainty and align him even more closely with Augustine.<sup>175</sup> That is to say, predictions about the "millennium" or even the "end" overlook the fact that we have already entered the eschatological age. Different from

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<sup>174</sup> Landes, "Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled," 180–81.

<sup>175</sup> Guy Lobrichon, "Stalking the Signs: The Apocalyptic Commentaries," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. van Meter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 73–74.

Augustine, though, Haimo's interpretation of 2 Thessalonians is *entirely literal* and punctuated with temporal uncertainties.<sup>176</sup> Only through restoring Haimo's horizon of expectations does *Rezeptionsästhetik* disclose the aesthetic high point and provocative nature of his reading.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

As already noted, Haimo diverges from Bede (who simply quotes Augustine) and Thietland (who conflates 2 Thessalonians and Revelation). His reading largely resonates with Rabanus and Sedulius, who, though they largely quote Theodore and Pelagius, respectively, quote them in such a way as to advance a historical-literal reading of 2 Thessalonians. That it is to say, the three generally agree that 2 Thessalonians should be read as a literal account of events to come. Rabanus and Sedulius also do not offer any discussion of the millennium, but that can be attributed to their copying the Fathers.

They diverge from one another, however, in Rabanus' and Sedulius' inclusion of the Latin spiritual interpretation at certain crucial junctures in their commentaries. Rabanus, for example, quotes Augustine's reading of "what now restrains" (2 Thess 2:6) as the wicked and false individuals within the Church who must reach a critical-mass for Antichrist before he bursts on to the scene.<sup>177</sup>

Similarly, Sedulius perceives the "mystery of iniquity" (2:7) is both the foreshadowing of and "the presence of the Antichrist himself"<sup>178</sup> in those who teach false doctrine. He also clearly believes that the Roman Empire has not

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<sup>176</sup> Also, Haimo clearly sees the fall of Rome as coming after Paul, likely in the reign of Constantine, while Augustine argues that the power of the Empire collapsed in the cross.

<sup>177</sup> Rabanus Maurus, *Exposito in epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 116:572).

<sup>178</sup> Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 143.

fallen, and that Antichrist will only arrive after the appearance of another “restraining force,” that is, another Nero.<sup>179</sup>

Haimo, therefore, is strikingly unique in his capacity to embrace, yet hold separate his generic approaches to 2 Thessalonians and Revelation. For Haimo, “the Latin spiritual interpretation and the literal apocalyptic realism are valid interpretations of the apocalyptic tradition, but they should not be confused.”<sup>180</sup> Thus one may call Haimo an apocalyptic realist, but not exclusively.

Generations later, Peter Lombard takes up Haimo’s reading of 2 Thess 2 in a pejorative manner. Though it appears he offers a catena of Haimo, Ambrosiaster, and Augustine, the organisation of the materials, in fact, reveals that he is castigating the former two with the latter. For example, he introduces the view held by Haimo and Ambrosiaster that the “mystery of iniquity at work” (2:7) is a way for the apostle to refer obliquely to Nero, then he follows this with Augustine’s scathing reprimand of all individuals who have read the “restraining force” (2:6) as Rome and Nero as the “mystery of iniquity” (2:7). The placement of the material gives Augustine the last, corrective word and denigrates the apocalyptic realist reading of 2 Thessalonians.<sup>181</sup> Haimo functions as a foil for Lombard against which to read Augustine, at least in regards to portions of 2 Thess 2:1-12. Augustine’s perspective becomes a more comfortable reading in the generations further from the fall of Rome and thereby becomes a voice of dominance. Yet Haimo’s reading better addresses the conflicting eschatologies of the NT and the implied question of the millennium.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 143-44; Sedulius Scotus, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 103:223).

<sup>180</sup> Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 165.

<sup>181</sup> Peter Lombard, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 192:318-19).

ii. *Modern Scholarship*

Modern commentators typically follow Haimo's generic distinction and perceive 2 Thessalonians as an epistle written to address a concrete concern by outlining a series of events that must occur before the Lord comes in judgment.<sup>182</sup> Fee describes 2 Thess 2:1-12 as a passage "about an informed understanding regarding God's own future" in which "the timing of the great coming day of the Lord is not known."<sup>183</sup> This summary could equally apply to Haimo.

The difference lies in the specifics of their exegesis relating to the apocalyptic timeline. Wanamaker does not even mention the historical reading of the ἀποστασία (2:3) as Rome, but makes clear that the dominant usage of ἀποστασία in the LXX indicates that this will be a religious, not a political, rebellion. He accepts the individuality of the man of lawlessness, though he hesitates to label him as Antichrist. Lastly, in Wanamaker's eyes, at least 2 Thess 2:3-4 is no longer historically valid, because the temple fell in 70 C.E. "without the manifestation of the person of lawlessness or the return of Christ occurring."<sup>184</sup> Haimo's reading counters this with the two varying

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<sup>182</sup> Cf. J. Terence Forestell, "The Letters to the Thessalonians," in *The Jerome Bible Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph F. Fitzmeyer, and Roland E. Murphy, vol. 2 (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 234–35; Charles Homer Giblin, *The Threat to Faith: An Exegetical and Theological Reexamination of 2 Thessalonians 2* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 10, 18, and 29 (though he does not allow that the signs are exclusively temporal); according to Malherbe, Paul "lays out, in nonchronological fashion, a scheme in which future and present events alternate." Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:414; Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 28–30; Colin R. Nicholl, *From Hope to Despair in Thessalonica: Situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 126 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 119–25; Rigaux, *Thessaloniens*, 644–46; Wolfgang Trilling, *Der zweite Brief an die Thessalonicher*, EKKNT (Zürich; Einsiedeln; Köln: Benziger Verlag, 1980), 26–27 and 81; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 242–43; Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 34–35.

<sup>183</sup> Fee, *Thessalonians*, 296.

<sup>184</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 248.

interpretations of “temple,” the obvious point that the Jerusalem Temple can be rebuilt, and the openness of his timeline.<sup>185</sup>

Wanamaker attempts to conclude the dialogue on a point that the Church has historically perceived as ambiguous and he completely excludes the potential of a spiritual interpretation. This highlights again the restrictive nature of a historicist approach to Scripture, which fails to consider the divergent (theological) contexts in which the 2 Thessalonians can be put into play. The objection is not to historical considerations in exegesis, but to overconfident historical conclusions that claim exclusive access to meaning.

Against Haimo and a dominant strain of interpretation in the early Church, Nicholl proposes that Michael is the Restrainer and the Restraining Force (2:6-7), in keeping with a trend of Jewish apocalyptic literature, particularly Dan 12:1-2. He adds that it would be odd of Paul to speak negatively about the Roman Empire in an obscure manner, when that was not an issue for him in 1 Thessalonians. Furthermore, describing the Empire as the restraining force of profound evil would be a positive valuation.<sup>186</sup> This last point puts a difficult question to Haimo and this interpretive tradition. Yet a simple rebuttal appears in Paul’s positive description of government as a *restraint against evil* (Rom 13:1-7).

In the history of asking why 2 Thessalonians was written and how it relates to the “Day of the Lord,” however, Nicholl offers the greatest contribution. He contends that Thessalonians took the Day of the Lord and salvation as co-referential, and given their affliction, they believed that the Day of the Lord (a terrifying concept of judgment) had come upon them and

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<sup>185</sup> See n. 271 in chapter two above. For Chrysostom, this was very nearly a reality.

<sup>186</sup> Nicholl, *Hope to Despair*, 225–49; Witherington follows Nicholl’s reading. Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 208–12.

salvation had passed by.<sup>187</sup> Differently, Haimo imports the anachronistic concept of “perfection” into the dialogue, arguing that the Thessalonians were afraid of the Day because they had not yet been perfected. With regard to the question of the historical reason for the writing of 2 Thessalonians, Nicholl’s answer definitively supplants Haimo’s.

Malherbe acknowledges that the “mystery of lawlessness is already at work” (2 Thess 2:7) in some capacity, though its dimensions are uncertain. Haimo was confident in pointing to the wickedness of previous emperors. The two scholars come together, however, when Malherbe points out that, regardless of what the mystery is, it “takes place within and is circumscribed by God’s eschatological plan.”<sup>188</sup> God’s sovereignty remains crucial for understanding 2 Thessalonians.

Lastly, given the millennial excitement of the current, American context,<sup>189</sup> it is surprising that nearly all modern commentators on 2 Thessalonians omit any discussion regarding the millennium. An exception to this proclivity is Thiselton, who describes a significant theological trend in American Evangelicalism: premillennial dispensationalism.<sup>190</sup> The absence of the discussion from these commentators is likely due to a shared interpretive principle with Haimo that excludes such a reading and in which they distinguish between the genres of 2 Thessalonians and Revelation. Modern

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<sup>187</sup> Nicholl, *Hope to Despair*, 115–43.

<sup>188</sup> Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:423.

<sup>189</sup> Recent examples include the *Left Behind* series by LaHaye and Jenkins, and the rapture predictions of Harold Camping in 2011.

<sup>190</sup> Admittedly, his discussion is on 1 Thessalonians, rather than 2 Thessalonians. Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 143–45.

scholarship collectively challenges the legitimacy of millennial readings by leaving them out of the discussion.<sup>191</sup>

## **2.6 Receptive Impulses: Haimo's Antichrist**

Turning to a more concentrated dimension of Haimo's reading of 2 Thess 2:1-12, we must briefly attend to his picture of Antichrist. Following Thiselton, we recognise several perspectives on Antichrist in the early Church that can be distilled into six basic approaches for understanding this entity: the Antichrist is 1.) the devil; 2.) an individual, though a tool of Satan; 3.) a man and a corporate figure; 4.) a "reverse replica" of Christ; 5.) a magician, and; 6.) "a principle, applicable to the present and to all times."<sup>192</sup> By the ninth century, Haimo had a diverse and developed view of Antichrist from which to draw for his commentary.

### ***I. Antichrist: Son of the Devil***

Haimo describes the title "man of sin" (2:3) for Antichrist as appropriate, because he will be a man and "the source of all sins."<sup>193</sup> He clarifies this later in asserting that Antichrist will lead people to worship the devil by means of "lying signs and wonders" (2:9).

In a somewhat Hippolytan manner, he argues that the title "son of damnation" (2:3) means "son of the devil," though he qualifies that this is only by imitation and not by nature. In these two ways (i.e. performing false miracles and sonship via imitation) Antichrist is an *imperfect* reverse replica of Christ. In a similar manner, he points out that Antichrist "displaying himself *as if he were* a god" (2:4), reflects how "just as the fullness of divinity

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<sup>191</sup> Consistent with Haimo, the Catholic Church officially views the apostasy as defection from the Church and takes an explicit stance against any form of "millenarianism." See *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 675-76.

<sup>192</sup> These perspectives were not seen as mutually exclusive. Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 217; for the full discussion, see 213-17.

<sup>193</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, "Exposition," 25.

reposed in Christ, so the fullness of vice and every iniquity will dwell in that person called Antichrist.”<sup>194</sup>

He adds to this point that the devil will possess him, “but he will not give up his senses,” thereby remaining culpable for his iniquity.<sup>195</sup> It is crucial to Haimo that one recognise Antichrist’s limited function within the sovereignty of God, particularly in the time of his manifestation and his ability to deceive those who are perishing.<sup>196</sup>

One final point regarding Antichrist secures Haimo’s apocalyptic realist reading of 2 Thessalonians over against Augustine. He recognises “the mystery of iniquity at work” (2:7) in the persecuting emperors of the Roman Empire as “members” of Antichrist, but only in the sense that they prefigure his arrival. As Hughes correctly notes, Haimo does not make use of the “corporal metaphor,”<sup>197</sup> but this likely stems from his view of the parallels between Christ and Antichrist. Operating within this framework, it would be difficult for Haimo to suggest that a body of individuals were “Christ” before the incarnation. Alternatively several characters of the OT (e.g. Abel, Isaac, and David) *prefigure* Christ.<sup>198</sup>

#### *i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Though several generations prior to Haimo, Isidore of Seville (d. 636) exerted considerable influence on medieval theologians through his

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 26 and 29. We witness precisely such an intimate relationship between the Antichrist and the devil in the famous 16<sup>th</sup> century painting by Luca Signorelli, *Deeds of the Antichrist*, in which it is difficult to tell where Antichrist ends and Satan, whispering into his ear, begins.

<sup>196</sup> “...ac deinde Antichristum venturum, tempore a Deo disposito” and “[Deus] permittet ad eos venire Antichristum operatorem mendacii.” Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 117:781 and 782, respectively).

<sup>197</sup> Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 158.

<sup>198</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 117:781).



*Etymologiae*. Haimo made frequent use of the work elsewhere,<sup>199</sup> so his absence from the 2 Thessalonians commentary is noteworthy, though understandable. When writing about Satan, Isidore notes that this title means “adversary” or “transgressor,” and that elsewhere he is called “Antichrist (*Antichristus*), because he is to come against Christ.”<sup>200</sup> Isidore’s primary interest is the desire to clarify that this means “against Christ” rather than “before (*ante*) Christ,” as some appear to have argued.

This reading, however, misses the very distinction held in 2 Thess 2:9 that “the coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan.” Additionally, this perspective jeopardises a crucial element of Haimo’s understanding that the Antichrist is the reverse replica of Christ (i.e. Christ comes from the Father and the Antichrist comes from the devil). Fortunately, Haimo can take refuge in the orthodox readings of Jerome and Ambrosiaster, while Isidore’s interpretation finds its roots in Pelagius.<sup>201</sup> Haimo’s work sees that a particular tradition survives and silences a maverick reading that had influential potential.

Given Isidore’s view above, it is interesting that Sedulius proceeds with a different reading of Antichrist. When introducing the “man of sin” (2:3), Pelagius’ commentary reads “*Et revelatus fuerit homo peccati. Diaboli*

<sup>199</sup> Pierre Boucaud, “Claude de Turin et Haymon d’Auxerre,” in *Études d’exégèse Carolingienne autour d’Haymon d’Auxerre*, ed. Sumi Shimahara, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 198–99; Heil, “Haimo’s Commentary,” 110; Heil, “Theodulf,” 117–18.

<sup>200</sup> Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies*, trans. Stephen A. Barney et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), VIII.xi.19–20. Emphasis original.

<sup>201</sup> Though Isidore misreads Pelagius at this point, Pelagius is the historical root of this tradition nonetheless. Pelagius’ commentary reads “*Et revelatus fuerit homo peccati. Diaboli scilicet.*” If *diaboli* is taken as nominative, then it would mean the devil *is* Antichrist. If, however, one reads it as a genitive (with the case of *peccati*, which is more likely), it is describing the “revelation of the man of sin, namely [the man] of the devil,” thus equating “sin” with “devil.” This becomes clearer in the line that follows, in which Pelagius describes the devil possessing Antichrist, “as if he was born to him.” Pelagius, “Exposito in ii Thess.” 443. Cf. Bornemann, *Die Thessalonicherbriefe*, 403–4; Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 216; Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 69–70.

scilicet.”<sup>202</sup> Sedulius clarifies Pelagius’ reading thus: “*Homo. Antichristus. Peccati. Diaboli scilicet;*”<sup>203</sup> thereby remaining close to Haimo: the Antichrist is *of* the devil. Yet in suggesting that the “mystery of iniquity” (2:7) is a corporate Antichrist body preceding the arrival of an individual Antichrist, Sedulius fuses the spiritual reading of Augustine with literal reading of Pelagius. Haimo holds these perspectives apart on generic grounds, and sees “the mystery of iniquity at work” as Antichrist working through his members (without labelling them “Antichrist”) in the present through the dissemination of false doctrines. In the same way that Christ works through his members presently to proclaim the truth, so too the Antichrist spreads “the lie” in a reflective way.<sup>204</sup>

In spirit with Haimo, Rabanus proposes that the providence of God “restrains” the Antichrist. This would summarise Haimo’s broader perspective, despite the fact that he sees the “restrainer” (2:7) as the Roman emperor and “that which restrains” (2:6) as the Roman Empire. Because Rabanus selectively copies patristic texts, he has an overlap regarding what restrains Antichrist: God’s providence and the number of members that compose Antichrist’s body. If one sees the former as governing the latter, however, the issue is easily resolved. Furthermore, for Rabanus, the “lying works” (2:9) are primarily doctrinal or theological, and anyone who “denies that Christ is God is an Antichrist.”<sup>205</sup> Lastly, in keeping with Augustine and Gregory, Rabanus views the “mystery of iniquity” (2:7) as members of

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<sup>202</sup> Pelagius, “Exposito in ii Thess,” 443.

<sup>203</sup> Sedulius Scotus, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PL 103:223). I follow Sedulius’ reading of *diaboli* as a first-person genitive singular of *diabolus* against Thiselton, who appears to read this as a nominative singular. Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 222.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Rabanus Maurus, *Exposito in epist. ii ad Thess* (PL 116:572); English text from Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 134.

Antichrist's body who must reach a certain mass before Antichrist is revealed. Again, Haimo stands out as an abnormality for his refusal to incorporate the Latin spiritual tradition.

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

As an opening point regarding modern research on 2 Thessalonians, we can note the general scholarly consensus that, by the "man of lawlessness" (2:3), Paul has an individual, rather than a corporate body in mind.<sup>206</sup> This reading militates against the Latin spiritual interpretation of Augustine<sup>207</sup> in favour of the apocalyptic realist of Jerome, Ambrosiaster, and Haimo.

In a break with the ecclesial tradition, Fee does not use the term "Antichrist" to describe the "man of lawlessness" (2:3), rather he refers to him as the "Rebel," or the "anti-God" figure.<sup>208</sup> This develops from his view that the Rebel's acts, such as setting himself up in the temple of God as though he is God (2:4), are directed against God, rather than Christ. Fee also reads "son of destruction" (2:3) differently from Haimo, to mean the Rebel is destined for destruction.<sup>209</sup> In this way, their collective views are complementary. For Haimo's reading that "the son of damnation" means "son of the devil... damnation came through him and he himself damned the human race,"<sup>210</sup> does not exclude Fee's interpretation.

Following the critical text, Rigaux reads "the man of lawlessness" (ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας; 2:3) against Haimo's "man of sin" (*homo peccati*).

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<sup>206</sup> See Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:419.

<sup>207</sup> This is not to reject Augustine entirely, for the Church Father expected the arrival of an individual as the Antichrist and recognises the description of this event as part of Paul's aim in 2 Thessalonians. See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.19 (CCSL 48:731).

<sup>208</sup> Fee, *Thessalonians*, 282–83. He does refer to the "anti-Christ" figure on 292, but this appears to be accidental. Rigaux similarly characterises the figure as "anti-Dieu." Rigaux, *Thessaloniciens*, 658.

<sup>209</sup> Fee, *Thessalonians*, 280 and 282.

<sup>210</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, "Exposition," 25.

Haimo's explication of the epithet to mean "source"<sup>211</sup> compliments Rigaux's detailed definition of "lawlessness." Indeed, "lawlessness" can mean one who rebels "against the law or the Law,"<sup>212</sup> but as a genitive construct with the nominative "man" (ἄνθρωπος/*homo*) it can function as an attributive genitive (Rigaux) or a genitive of source (Haimo). Paul's (intentional?) lack of clarification allows for both readings and the trajectory of 2:4-12 flows in both directions: he leads many astray by his character (vv. 9-12) and exhibits lawlessness/sinfulness (vv. 4-5). Their respective foci concentrate on the Antichrist's effect on others (Haimo) and his relationship toward God (Rigaux). Nevertheless, modern text-critical research has led to a definitive stance of reading ἀνομίας instead of ἄνθρωπος, which will have an effect on the future trajectory of the dialogue with 2 Thessalonians. Putting these scholars in a "summit-dialogue"<sup>213</sup> displays how *Rezeptionsästhetik* purposefully brings together historical questions to expand one's horizon of understanding.

In keeping with Haimo, Best argues that "Anti-Christ" is an appropriate epithet "since he is the eschatological opponent of Christ (not of the historical Jesus)."<sup>214</sup> He admits that, though the term does not appear in 2 Thess 2, the passage is "one of the steps in the creation of the Anti-Christ concept" and the fact that "man of lawlessness" appears in the text, rather than

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<sup>211</sup> Sinfulness and lawlessness both imply rebellion against God. Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Rigaux, *Thessaloniens*, 655; cf. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:419.

<sup>213</sup> This phrase is Parris' translation of Jauss' important "Gipfeldialog der Autoren" concept. The "peaks" in this summit-dialogue represent the influential interpreters who inaugurated a tradition. The dialogue occurs in the uptake and expansion of a tradition by an interpreter that leads in a new interpretive trajectory. Importantly, the summit-dialogue preserves the historical playing field in which certain questions and answers were considered valid and it draws our attention to the more influential instances in a text's reception history, which is crucial to biblical studies, given the overwhelming number of interpretations of any biblical book. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 216–22; Hans Robert Jauss, "Der Leser als Instanz einer neuen Geschichte der Literatur," *Poetica* 7 (1975): 325–44, esp. 336–37.

<sup>214</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 288.

“Antichrist,” indicates the early date of this letter.<sup>215</sup> Both Best and Haimo accept at least the early tradition of associating the Antichrist with the man of lawlessness, even if Haimo also allows patristic authorities to shape his interpretation. Bornemann also resonates with the Carolingian monk in noting that the Antichrist is not identical with Satan, but the human tool of the evil one<sup>216</sup>— a relatively secure stance in modern scholarship. The nearly 2,000-year tradition has rendered this equation of Antichrist and the “man of lawlessness” stable. We witness continuity because the scholars continue to pose the same question in changing contexts.

A key difference between modern readings and Haimo is that the latter makes clear his expectation that the Day of the Lord and all of the events that precede it, will come about in the literal fashion of Paul’s description. Many modern scholars avoid taking a definitive stance or deny that the events can unfold as described.<sup>217</sup> This reflects the paradigm shift to modernism away from a medieval theological worldview shaped by the Jerome-Ambrosiaster tradition of reading 2 Thessalonians.

### **3. Conclusion**

In terms of originality and dissemination, Haimo is the most influential commentator on 2 Thessalonians from the Carolingian era. His interpretation features alongside the Fathers in various *Glossae* and later scholastics, such as Lombard, rely on him for their own exegesis (even if not always positively).

As we have seen, one of the primary impulses in his interpretation of the epistle is the collective voice of the Church Fathers on 2 Thessalonians. Surprisingly unique from the Alcuinian camp, Haimo does not perceive the

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>216</sup> Bornemann, *Die Thessalonicherbriefe*, 364.

<sup>217</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 248.

aim of preserving patristic thought as slavish regurgitation of their material. Instead, he extracts from their complex perspectives the kernel of their interpretation and interweaves it with his own thought in an easy to grasp manner. Haimo makes use of assertions by Jerome and Ambrosiaster regarding the restraining force as the Roman Empire to completely undercut any millenarian perspectives in his own time. In this example of reception history, Haimo demonstrates the “mediation of the new through the old!”<sup>218</sup> Furthermore, the Carolingian monk exhibits a bold freedom from the booming voice of Augustine in the Middle Ages by considering first Paul’s purpose in writing 2 Thessalonians and then not to following Augustine.

Murethach provides Haimo with a methodology that results in careful attention to the text. Yet this approach results in Haimo commenting only on what he deems important for understanding 2 Thessalonians. This, along with his audience and his purpose of providing material for sermons, results in the virtual omission of commentary on 2 Thess 3. Likely reserving the chapter for monks, following Basil’s Rules, he thereby leaves open the question of how this chapter continues “to mean” for the Church in the Reformation when certain regions dissolve monasticism.

Haimo’s relating Simon Magus to Antichrist bears several ramifications over simony and investiture in the medieval Church. In the reception history of this figure, Simon has developed from an obscure character in Acts 8:9-23, to being the first heretic of the Church, to a powerful, demonically-assisted opponent of Paul who prefigures the Antichrist, to being conflated with Antichrist. In Haimo’s work, these concepts converge and,

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<sup>218</sup> Jauss, “Tradition,” 375.

placed in the context of 2 Thess 2:9, culminate in an implicit and sharp condemnation of clerics who receive their position by means of simony.

Furthermore, Haimo carefully tows the line of single-predestination against the backdrop of the predestination controversy. Knowing that the Church condemned double-predestination as heresy, Haimo strikes a careful balance between the election of the faithful and God *allowing* the wicked to perish in keeping with their refusal “to welcome the love of the truth that they may be saved.”<sup>219</sup> He introduces into the reception history of 2 Thessalonians the question of the permissive and predestining dimensions of God’s sovereignty.

Finally, we see in Haimo caution regarding the *eschaton* and the events to precede it as shaped by the agnosticism of Scripture and Augustine on this topic, as well as the occasional chiliastic fervour of his age. Nevertheless, Paul’s literal description of events to come provides Haimo the comfort of articulating an apocalyptic timeline within the confines of orthodoxy. By reading 2 Thessalonians in this manner, Haimo falls within the apocalyptic realist camp, but only in regard to this letter. He recognises the spiritual reading of Revelation as valid given the generic differences between the works. Within his apocalyptic realist approach to 2 Thessalonians, Haimo sees the Antichrist as a literal figure, possessed by the devil, who, as the source of sin, will lead many to “believe in the lie” (2:12). He both perpetuates a tradition of interpretation and introduces a new element by questioning how the epistle relates to the millennium. Haimo’s eschatological framework offers much to the context of modern millennial perspective.

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<sup>219</sup> Haimo of Auxerre, “Exposition,” 29.

## Chapter 4: John Calvin

### 1. Background

John Calvin was born into a *bourgeois* family in Noyon, France, in 1509. He eventually moved to Paris<sup>1</sup> where he began his studies in the humanist educational rubric of his day. By this time, the Reformation(s) originating in Saxony and Zürich had gained significant momentum and was transitioning from localised annoyance to a legitimate threat to the Roman Church.

After beginning legal studies at the University of Orléans (1527),<sup>2</sup> Calvin came decidedly under the influence of humanism. Of particular importance to his later work were humanism's emphases on studying texts apart from the mediation of commentaries or glosses, rigorous training in grammar and rhetoric,<sup>3</sup> and education in classical languages.<sup>4</sup> The first of these emphases materialised for Calvin through immediate study of the *Corpus iuris civilis* from the sixth century, which shaped the contours of civil law in Calvin's day.<sup>5</sup>

Because of his associations with Protestantism, Calvin was eventually forced to seek asylum in Basel in 1535. Here he published his first edition of

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<sup>1</sup> As Cottret point out, whether one accepts the traditional date of 1523 or Parker's suggested revision of 1521 matters little. Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography*, trans. M. Wallace McDonald (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 11; the traditional dating can be traced to Jacques Desmay, "Remarques sur la vie de Jean Calvin, tirées des registres de Noyon, ville de sa Naissance," in *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France depuis Louis XI Jusqu'à Louis XVIII*, vol. 1, 5 vols. (Paris: Bourgogne et Martinet, 1835), 387-98; cf. T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1975), 156-61.

<sup>2</sup> The dates from this point onward follow Parker's chronology. See Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography*, 156-61.

<sup>3</sup> "By the first half of the fifteenth century, the *studia humanitatis* came to stand for a clearly defined cycle of scholarly disciplines, namely grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy..." Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 22.

<sup>4</sup> These included at least Latin and Greek, but also occasionally Hebrew for those studying theology.

<sup>5</sup> Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography*, 15.



the *Institutes* (1536). This text would function as a theological foundation for grappling with the remainder of his works. Within the year, he moved with Guillaume Farel to Geneva until their eviction over a theological dispute with the city Council in 1538.

Summoned back to Geneva in 1541, Calvin carried out his pastoral, scholarly, and even civic duties until his death in 1564. By his life's conclusion he had published commentaries on most books of the Bible, numerous theological tractates, and offered a final revision of the *Institutes* in 1559.<sup>6</sup>

***I. 2 Thessalonians Commentary and The Institutes: Provenance, Audience, and Structure***

The sheer volume of Calvin's work virtually ensured that he would engage with 2 Thessalonians on a number of occasions. As the dedication to Benedict Textor at the opening of his commentary on 2 Thessalonians indicates, Calvin authored this work in Geneva in 1550. In addition to this resource, I consult Calvin's 1559 edition of the *Institutes*, which he completed in the same locale. Additional materials, less frequently utilised, receive attention as they arise in our discussion.

In terms of the audience of these materials, there is an ostensible difference between Calvin's stated purpose in writing and the true, immediate reasoning behind it. He clearly insists that he aims for his works to be accessible by the average person in the vernacular. Yet Calvin publishes every work first in Latin, and then in French. As the scholarly language of Europe, Latin is not the most immediately accessible by the average man. Part of Calvin's audience is certainly scholars on both sides of the Reformation

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<sup>6</sup> The bulk of this background information is taken from Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography*; and Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography*.

divide. I use the phrase “ostensible difference,” however, because, by publishing in Latin, Calvin may have reached a wider audience than he would have with French, or he may have done so to avoid its dismissal as “unscholarly,” or it may have been a combination of both. Either way, Calvin had (and has) a wide audience of readers, from the average layperson to other Reformers (and Catholics) to world leaders. He has a broad base of readership.

When looking at our two primary sources for this reception history, the 2 Thessalonians commentary and the *Institutes*, their overall difference is best exemplified by the two primary patristic influences on Calvin’s work: Augustine and Chrysostom. The former guides his theological perspective, while the latter shapes his exegetical method.<sup>7</sup> This is clear in the number of times he cites Augustine in the *Institutes* over Chrysostom, and the reverse in his commentaries.<sup>8</sup> The primary methodological distinctions that they offer crystallise in the fact that he composes a dogmatic treatise and commentaries separately. This stands in opposition particularly to the work of his contemporary, Martin Bucer, who supplied his own commentaries with lengthy dogmatic discussions that often detract the focus from the biblical book under investigation. At the same time, his exegetical attention in his

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<sup>7</sup> Holder is emphatic about the dual-influence of these Fathers within the commentaries, arguing that Augustine guided Calvin’s *hermeneutical principles*, while Chrysostom governed his *rules of exegesis*. Holder, “Calvin as Commentator on the Pauline epistles,” 251–52. Following the discovery of Calvin’s annotated copy of the 1536 Latin edition of Chrysostom’s Works, Ganoczy has demonstrated the Reformer’s immediate access to the Church Father. For a hermeneutical analysis of the annotations, including his notes on Chrysostom’s third homily on 2 Thessalonians, see Alexandre Ganoczy and Klaus Müller, *Calvins handschriftliche Annotationen zu Chrysostomus: Ein Beitrag zur Hermeneutik Calvins* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1981), esp. 133–36; the edition possessed by Calvin: Desiderius Erasmus, ed., *Divi Chrysostomi archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opera, quatenus hunc Diem latio donare noscuntur, omnia* (Lutetiae Parisiorum: Apud Claudium Chevallonium, 1536).

<sup>8</sup> Citations alone are insufficient. This argument also bears in mind the number of times Calvin cites or utilises the respective Fathers *positively*. Walchenbach, *Calvin as Biblical Commentator*, 24–28 and 47–49; see also W. Ian P. Hazlett, “Calvin’s Latin Preface to his Proposed French Edition of Chrysostom’s Homilies: Translation and Commentary,” in *Humanism and Reform: The Church in Europe, England, and Scotland, 1400–1643*, ed. James Kirk, vol. 8, Studies in Church History (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 129–150.

commentaries varied from the selective brevity of Philip Melanchthon's *Loci communes* that considered only central topics of a biblical book.<sup>9</sup>

Against these, Calvin separated bulky, dogmatic discussions and biblical exegesis, though he did not sever the ties between the two.<sup>10</sup> He published the *Institutes* first so that he could avoid doctrinal asides in his commentaries, but also with the intent that it function as a *hermeneutical guide* that would prepare students for reading the Word of God.<sup>11</sup> This does not prohibit Calvin from making doctrinal assertions in his commentaries, but it certainly limits their breadth. At the same time, Calvin assumes the *Institutes* as a foundational text for understanding theological concepts that appear in his commentaries (as well as Scripture).

The *Institutes* is too massive a work to describe in detail here, but a few comments will be illuminative. This dogmatic theology intentionally differs from the works of his contemporaries and is divided into four books corresponding to the four parts of the Apostles' Creed. The first concentrates on God as Creator, the second on Christ as redeemer, the third on the Holy Spirit as mediating the grace of Christ, and the fourth on holy catholic church (including discussion of the sacraments and civil government). The majority of 2 Thessalonians citations fall in the third and fourth books. In the case of the former, the majority are from 2 Thess 1 and relate to the reception of

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<sup>9</sup> Calvin draws this distinction himself in the dedication of his first commentary (Romans). Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 2–3; T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 51–54; John L. Thompson, "Calvin as a Biblical Interpreter," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 61–62.

<sup>10</sup> David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Calvin himself makes this point in an explanation prefixed to the *Institutes*. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4–5; Holder, "Calvin as Commentator," 232–35; Wulfert de Greef, "Calvin's Writings," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 44–45.

Christ's grace. For the latter, most citations come from 2 Thess 2 and relate in some way to the approaching fullness of God's kingdom. Those verses relating to Church discipline (3:6-15) are also primarily found in the fourth book, which makes sense with its structure. Citations elsewhere in the *Institutes* are largely from the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians.

Calvin commented on most the Bible, excepting only 2-3 John and Revelation in the NT, and Judges-Job and Proverbs-Ecclesiastes in the OT. The 2 Thessalonians commentary is structured similarly to his other Pauline commentaries, and decidedly different from his law and gospel harmonies. Like many of his predecessors, this commentary opens with an *argumentum*. Similar to Chrysostom and Haimo, Calvin comments on select lemmas and proceeds through each verse of the book.

In his *argumentum*, Calvin suggests that Paul wrote the letter from Athens in order to prevent the Thessalonians from feeling he had neglected them by not visiting them on his return to Jerusalem. This does not appropriately address the apparent seriousness of issues raised in the epistle, not to mention the verbal overlap with 1 Thessalonians, which modern scholars equate with pseudonymity or evidence of its authorship soon after the first epistle. It is also an odd departure from his predecessors, who emphasise the theological concerns as motivation for its writing. After this, Calvin summarises the content as an exhortation to patience (chapter one), a correction to the belief that Christ's return was imminent (chapter two), and dealing with the idle (chapter three).

In commenting on the text itself, Calvin divides the chapters into digestible sections (1:1-7a, 7b-10, 11-12; 2:1-2, 3-4, 5-8, 9-12, 13-14, 15-17;

3:1-5, 6-10, 11-13, 14-18). Even after dividing it thus, he does comment on every verse,<sup>12</sup> but, similar to Haimo, he addresses what he considers most important. As his *argumentum* indicates, this entails an emphasis on encouragement in chapter one, primarily by directing the readers toward the eschatological assurances of God (i.e. the reversal of fortunes (1:5-9) and glorification with the Lord (1:10-12)).

Calvin's reading of chapter two differs from his preterist reading of Daniel, in which he sees the references to different beasts as a prophecy extending from Babylon to the Roman Empire, and therefore located entirely in the past.<sup>13</sup> In 2 Thess 2, Calvin sees an inaugurated prophecy awaiting fulfilment in the future, which he expected was not too distant. The "man of sin" (2:3), again, is Antichrist, but in a manner closer to Augustine than Chrysostom, this figure is a "body," rather than an individual, which Calvin equates with the preminent and continuing leadership of the papacy. Therefore the "temple of God" (2:4) must be the Church for Calvin. The only thing that "restrains" (2:6) Antichrist was the sending of the gospel to the Gentiles, which has already taken place. The destruction of Antichrist (i.e. the papacy and his adherents) comes about through the "breath of [the Lord Jesus'] mouth" (2:8), which Calvin equates with the active preaching of God's word. Therefore the victory does not come about in a grand cosmic battle, but gradually through continued proclamation until truth completely vanquishes its enemy. At some point, Christ himself will arrive. Calvin never hesitates to assert that all of this comes about according to the preordained work of God.

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<sup>12</sup> He omits discussion of 1:2, 7a; 2:17; 3:3, 5, 7-8, and 18.

<sup>13</sup> See the translator's preface and Calvin's comments. Jean Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, trans. Thomas Myers, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1852), xxxvi-xxxix and 186-87, respectively. In this volume, Calvin does not cite 2 Thessalonians once.

The final chapter offers a preliminary excursus on the nature of faith (3:1-2) before focusing on the treatment of the “ἄτακτος” (3:6). Calvin considers this “disorderliness” a form of laziness that results from not considering the purpose for which humanity was created (i.e. to glorify God). It includes a wide range of people, including certain poor individuals and monastics as a whole, or so it seems. For Calvin, this chapter offers directions for excommunication, which he sees extending to casual contact and the reception of communion, but not to hearing the preaching of God’s Word.

## ***II. Influential Impulses for Interpreting 2 Thessalonians***

A number of influences come to a head in Calvin’s reading of 2 Thessalonians. His humanist education is primary to his reception of the epistle. Specifically, humanism’s attention to rhetoric and penetration to source texts, altogether bypassing historical accretions attached to a work (e.g. *catenae*, glosses, and commentaries).<sup>14</sup> Of primary interest to Calvin is setting aside the spiritual interpretations of his predecessors that undermine the plain sense of the text, or the author’s intent,<sup>15</sup> in a way reminiscent of the

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<sup>14</sup> Humanism is not taken here as a historically transcendent entity, free from the influences of earlier generations. As T. F. Torrance has shown, Calvin’s humanist training had a decidedly Parisian influence through the earlier work of John Duns Scotus, William of Occam, and John Major Haddington. T. F. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988), 3–57.

<sup>15</sup> This phrase is frequently, and somewhat unhelpfully, used by numerous modern Calvin scholars. Cf. Thompson, “Calvin as a Biblical Interpreter,” 71. Thompson qualifies his definition of “authorial intent,” but has nevertheless selected a loaded term in the current hermeneutical discussion. Again, in the dedication of his first commentary, Calvin describes the commentator’s aim as unfolding “the mind of the writer whom he has undertaken to expound, he misses his mark, or at least strays outside his limits, by the extent to which he leads his readers away from the meaning of the author.” Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 1 (italics mine). Indeed this rings of the modern notion of “authorial intent,” but this overstates Calvin’s case. A literal reading of the text serves as a tether, yet the “mind of the author” includes a vast theological framework from which the commentator might draw to reach informed conclusions about the meaning of a passage, both in its historical context and for the modern reader. Steinmetz elucidates that Calvin “was interested in the biblical text less as an historical artifact than as a lifegiving [sic.] instrument of the Holy Spirit... he did not think that the letter of scripture could be so identified with the original setting of a biblical story or oracle that its significance remained limited to and exhausted by the past. In the letter that was also a lively Word of God, the Holy Spirit bound past and present together.” He adds that Calvin achieves this *primarily* through analogy. David C. Steinmetz, “Calvin and the Irrepressible Spirit,” *Ex*

Antiochenes against the Alexandrians. This did not mean, though, that Calvin abandoned commentaries entirely. Rather, these commentaries no longer held the same weight of authority that they had for previous generations. Unlike Haimo, for example, Calvin openly rejects the readings of the Fathers on numerous occasions.<sup>16</sup>

Two further relationships between the Church Fathers might be drawn at this juncture. In the first case, Calvin's life overlaps in significant ways with Chrysostom's. They both trained in rhetoric, both ministered as pastors, and both desired their works to be accessible to the larger public.<sup>17</sup> These elements feature in Calvin's commentary on 2 Thessalonians. Combined with the influence of humanism, this warrants giving primary attention to Calvin's rhetorical attentiveness followed by the hermeneutical role of pastoral concern to initiate the discussion of Calvin's receptive impulses.

We have already described the second connection between the Fathers and Calvin through the different primary ways in which he relies on Augustine theologically and Chrysostom for his exegetical method. Yet these influences

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*Auditu* 12 (1996): 104; Steinmetz argues further that, in terms of the general aims of the Reformation, "What the Protestants advocated was not letter in the historical-critical sense, the reconstructed story behind the story as presented, and not the letter in the sense of mere narrative line, though the narrative line was crucial to their exegesis. What they advocated was a letter pregnant with spiritual significance, a letter big-bellied with meanings formerly relegated by the quadriga to allegory or tropology... it is clear that the repudiation of the quadriga is not equivalent to the advocacy of a hermeneutic that collapses the meaning of a text into its original historical setting or that specifies the conscious intention of the human author who wrote or spoke it as the inviolable boundary of its meaning." David C. Steinmetz, "Divided by a Common Past: The Reshaping of Christian Exegetical Tradition in the Sixteenth Century," *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27, no. 2 (1997): 249.

<sup>16</sup> Lane has published a detailed study of Calvin's use of the Fathers within the framework of eleven theses. Of particular note are theses II (Calvin's use of the Fathers "is primarily a polemical appeal to authorities"), III ("Calvin is less interested in authorities but instead debates with other interpreters"), and IV (negative remarks about a patristic source "may be a mark of respect"). Anthony N.S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), esp. 1–13; see also David C. Steinmetz, "Calvin and the Patristic Exegesis of Paul," in *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. David C. Steinmetz, vol. 11, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 116–18.

<sup>17</sup> Walchenbach, *Calvin as Biblical Commentator*, 21; Thompson, "Calvin as a Biblical Interpreter," 63.

cooperate in any interpretive endeavour. In this way, Calvin's reading of 2 Thessalonians is guided both by the content of the epistle and doctrinal motivations. Therefore, doctrinal/theological conceptions characterise the next five impulses that shape his reading of 2 Thessalonians, with particular attention given to his view of Divine sovereignty, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Church, the salvific activity of God in Christians, and eschatology.

Connected with this final theological concept is the influence of the papacy and the Roman Church in general on his reading of 2 Thessalonians. Predictably, this colours his discussion of 2 Thess 2, and functions as the primary referent with which he associates the letter outside of his commentary. Its association with "eschatology" makes this topic a fittingly final receptive impulse to discuss.

### **2.1 Receptive Impulses: Humanist Rhetoric**

Similar to Chrysostom, the influence of Calvin's rhetorical training<sup>18</sup> materialises primarily through his attention to the rhetorical tools that Paul employs in 2 Thessalonians. Simply by the nature of its design, the *Institutes*, as compared with the commentary, does not lend itself to exploring the rhetorical function of biblical texts. Therefore, this section will focus almost exclusively on Calvin's attention to rhetoric in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians. Additionally, though this section operates under the assumption of Calvin's humanist education on his reading of the epistle, we also perceive the Reformer's reaction to renaissance humanist rhetoric in the

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<sup>18</sup> Renaissance humanist rhetoric entailed a return to classical rhetorical education similar to Chrysostom's day, though with Quintillian as the pedagogic resource. Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 336–38.



commentary by way of his own stated aim of brevity.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, Calvin cannot completely escape the pervasive influence of humanist rhetoric in tension with his claimed stark, simplistic clarity of biblical rhetoric.<sup>20</sup>

The entry point into this discussion comes through Calvin's dedication of the commentary to his physician, Benedict Textor. Clearly playing on Paul's sense of obligation to give thanks to God for the Thessalonians (1:3), Calvin prefaces his letter using similar terminology of obligation<sup>21</sup> to Textor for his concern over the health of Calvin and his wife, as well as his deep "concern for the common good of the Church" evident in his urgency for healing the Reformer.<sup>22</sup> His dedicatory choice matches the tone and content of the epistle. In this way he comes closest to rhetorical flair of Chrysostom.

From the outset, Calvin evaluates the rhetorical function of the letter. In his argument, he describes 2 Thess 1 as exhortative and the final chapter as both a commendation and encouragement. In the body of the commentary, two particular rhetorical patterns absorb Calvin's attention: rhetoric designed to affect a response from the readers and the reassertion of divine reality.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> He preferred "lucid brevity" to the eloquence of many rhetors. Thompson, "Calvin as a Biblical Interpreter," 62; Calvin made a parallel connection between "Divine accommodation" and the necessity of the pastor (or commentator) to accommodate his language to his audience. Hazlett helpfully clarifies this bridging function of rhetoric as "decorum." Hazlett, "Calvin's Latin Preface," 135–36.

<sup>20</sup> Holder, "Calvin as Commentator," 242–45.

<sup>21</sup> Compare his comment to Textor, "ego autem bis me potius tibi *obstrictum* esse sentio," with his interpretation of "Quemadmodum dignum est" (2 Thess 1:3): "His verbis ostendit Paulus, nos ad gratias Deo agendas *obstringi*." Jean Calvin, *In omnes Pauli apostoli epistolas: Epistolas ad Ephesios, Philippenses, Colossenses, Thessalonicenses, Timotheum, Titum, Philemonem, et Hebraeos complectens*, ed. August Tholuck, vol. 2 (Halis Saxonum: Librariae Gebaueriae, 1831), 200 and 202, respectively. The dedication is missing from the *CO* collection.

<sup>22</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 385.

<sup>23</sup> Both of these might be classified as deliberative rhetoric, though they are particular themes employed by Calvin. Admittedly, Calvin has several other categories of rhetorical observation, including consolatory rhetoric and assurance, but we have limited the discussion to the two listed above.

### ***I. Effective Rhetoric***

In the first example of rhetorical evaluation, we hear the voice of Chrysostom through Calvin. Commenting on Paul's impulse "to give thanks to" God for the faith and love of the Thessalonians, the Reformer observes that the apostle "begins by praising them, so that he may allow himself to proceed to exhorting them. In this way we have more success with those who are already on their way, when without remaining silent about their progress, we remind them how far distant they still are from their goal, and urge them to continue."<sup>24</sup> Paul has observed their growth in these areas since his previous epistle and he wants them to continue such development. Given his reliance on Chrysostom, it is likely that Calvin appropriates this rhetorical observation from his homilies, thereby sustaining a tradition.

On Paul's invocation of grace, Chrysostom observes the apostle's tactic as rendering the Thessalonians "well-disposed" so that they would be willing to hear the remainder of the letter, even should it contain rebuke.<sup>25</sup> As a general concept, Calvin follows the archbishop: Paul desires a particular response from the Thessalonians.<sup>26</sup> Yet, significantly, Calvin shifts Paul's strategy from the grace/greeting to the thanksgiving. In so doing, he moves from what might be considered a manipulative tactic on the part of the apostle (Chrysostom) to a logical process along which one must proceed in speaking with dedicated Christians: encourage them for their advancement, but urge them to continue to their goal. Despite the fact that he uses language of

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<sup>24</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 387.

<sup>25</sup> Erasmus' edition varies slightly from the PG. Erasmus, *Divi Chrysostomi*, vol. 4, 1145.

<sup>26</sup> The relationship between the two is implicit, along with several other examples from the commentary on 2 Thessalonians. Only four explicit references to Chrysostom appear in the commentary: John Calvin, *Commentarius in epistolam Pauli ad Thessalonicenses ii*, (CO 52:200, 209, 212, 215).

“success”<sup>27</sup> amongst hearers, this has nothing to do with manipulation, in Calvin’s eyes. Instead, the process of encouragement leading to exhortation is the *required* pastoral response to obedient Christians, which should evoke a particular reaction from them.

Calvin’s implementation of Chrysostom in this way, in the mediation of his new work through the old, lies on “the royal road of aesthetic experience.”<sup>28</sup> With Chrysostom serving as a gauge against which Calvin is read, we perceive the aesthetic distance between the two. Though Calvin prefers to relocate Chrysostom’s observation to a later verse, both should be taken up in the horizon of understanding to reshape one’s reading of 2 Thessalonians.

Leaving Chrysostom aside, Calvin turns his attention to the apostle’s confidence that the Thessalonians will do what Paul has commanded (3:4), noting his “confidence... made them much more ready to obey than if he had required an obedience from them that was hesitant or untrusting.”<sup>29</sup> In what appears to be a move to, again, prevent Paul from looking manipulative in seeking personal aims, Calvin asserts that the apostle gives them no regulation other than that which has been commanded by the Lord.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Paul did not even consider between the options of proclaiming confidence or demanding obedience. He simply inscribed what was appropriate to the congregation.

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<sup>27</sup> “sic enim plus proficimus apud eos qui iam in cursu sunt.” Ibid., (CO 52:187).

<sup>28</sup> Jauss, “Tradition,” 375.

<sup>29</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 415.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Scholars from Calvin's own day produced a number of commentaries on the Pauline epistles.<sup>31</sup> Given the restrictions of space for discussion and availability of sources, we will limit the discussion to a select few.

Ulrich Zwingli serves as our earliest interpreter from the period. Admittedly, he left no commentary on 2 Thessalonians, but the lectures from his *Prophezei* group include notes on the epistle. The main difference between Calvin and Zwingli in their respective works on the epistle is one of methodology. Zwingli's *loci* approach, similar to Melancthon's, results in his omitting discussion about these verses altogether, whereas Calvin's commentary draws out their rhetorical significance within the larger context of the epistle.<sup>32</sup>

The same follows for Martin Luther, who engages with 2 Thessalonians, though not in a commentary. Luther essentially excavates the epistle for theological resources without necessarily considering the rhetorical function of the particular parts of the letter. This probably accounts for the complete absence of reflection on 2 Thess 1:3 and 3:4 in his works.

The Catholic commentators, Cardinal Thomas Cajetan (1469-1543) and Gulielmus Estius (1542-1613), exegete in a verse-by-verse manner similar to Calvin. Cajetan, who commented before Calvin or Estius, views 1:3 primarily as the beginning of a commemorative discourse.<sup>33</sup> That is to say, he reads it as Paul positively *recalling* what the Thessalonians have done and

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<sup>31</sup> For a sample of commentators on Romans, for example, see Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 65.

<sup>32</sup> In his Greek NT annotations, Zwingli's only notes on 2 Thess 1:3 are definitions of ὑπεραστάνει and πλεονάζει. Ulrich Zwingli, *Annotationes* (CR 99:91).

<sup>33</sup> "Hincincipit narratio commemoratiua augmenti fidei dilectionis & patientie thessalonicensis." Thomas Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli et aliorum Apostolorum ad graecam veritatem castigatae* (Paris: Apud Iod. Badium Ascensium & Ioan. Paruum, & Ioannem Roigny, 1531), 136.

does not consider what Paul *may be trying to achieve* in writing it. Cajetan's view is descriptive, while Calvin considers function. The two perspectives can be taken together as correct, for, indeed, 1:3 marks the beginning of the thanksgiving. Nevertheless, Cajetan's representational description of the verse adds little to understanding the text that cannot be gathered simply from reading it.

When looking at 3:4, Cajetan understands the verse similar to Calvin: Paul and company's confidence that the Thessalonians will obey comes from the Lord. Yet Calvin asserts that the confidence is "founded upon" (*fundatam*)<sup>34</sup> the Lord, while Cajetan more clearly perceives it as coming from the Lord.<sup>35</sup> The difference might appear to be one purely of semantics, but Cajetan's perspective more clearly delineates that their confidence is not self-originating. Cajetan's view strengthens Calvin's reading and his overall perspective of Divine sovereignty. Though again, only Calvin considers the effect of this verse on the hearers in Thessalonica.

Interestingly, Estius draws attention to the relationship between this text and a variation of the *Sursum Corda*, the Eucharistic prayer in the Catholic and Eastern traditions in which the priest, facing the altar prays "Gratias agamus Deo nostro." The congregation responds "Dignum et iustum est," followed again by the priest: "Vere dignum et iustum est, nostibi semper et ubique gratias agere."<sup>36</sup> He describes the function of this Scripture in the context of worship, in which the verse shifts from a thanksgiving for the

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<sup>34</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:210).

<sup>35</sup> Cajetan supplements the confidence of the apostle and co-senders with the phrase "pro suasum autem habemus" as a way making completely clear that the confidence is Divinely-sourced and not simply their own strong desire. Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 138.

<sup>36</sup> Gulielmus Estius, *In omnes Divi Pauli & reliquas Apostolorum epistolas*, ed. Jakob Merlo-Horstius (Cologne: Petri Henningii, 1631), 741.

growth of faith and love in the community to a general thanksgiving directed to God (though implicitly having to do with the Eucharistic sacrifice) that should “always and everywhere” be offered. Furthermore, Estius considers their obligatory thanksgiving as “fitting” (1:3) with the righteous demands of God,<sup>37</sup> which coheres with Calvin’s view of the phrase as obligation toward God. By associating it with God’s righteousness, he renders the point even stronger.

Along with Cajetan, he clarifies that confidence “in Domino” (3:4) is better understood as “per Dominum, per gratiam Domini Jesu Christi.”<sup>38</sup> Again, this more clearly articulates the Divine action that results in their confidence, as opposed to the Reformer’s terminology, which makes the Lord sound conspicuously passive in the process.

## ii. *Modern Scholarship*

Given their emphasis on the rhetorical structure of 2 Thessalonians, Witherington and Wanamaker will serve as helpful modern comparisons with Calvin on this topic. Witherington’s rhetorical divisions of the epistle place the beginning of the *exordium* at 1:3. Following Quintilian, he observes that “sole purpose of the *exordium* is to prepare our audience in such a way that they will be disposed to lend a ready ear to the rest of our speech.”<sup>39</sup> As deliberative rhetoric, which is Witherington’s view of the epistle, Paul uses 2 Thessalonians to affect a change in the Christian community at Thessalonica, and the process begins with the *exordium*.

The unfortunate result of this rhetorical approach is that it dismisses the epistolary prescript (1:1-2) as having any substantial rhetorical purpose; a

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 755.

<sup>39</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 4.1.5 in Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 186.

perspective with which Chrysostom, a trained rhetor, would disagree. At the same time, it confirms Calvin's emphasis that 1:3 marks the beginning of Paul's praise of the Thessalonians, which will eventually allow him to progress to exhortation. Such a process is conducive to success in achieving one's rhetorical aims.

Nevertheless, Witherington's (over)emphasis on deliberative rhetoric runs the risk of eclipsing what Calvin has drawn out as well: Paul's pastoral responsibility of encouragement preceding his exhortation. Over-commitment to a single framework for understanding the biblical literature delimits not only our own understanding, but also the multiple forces at work within a text (e.g. apocalyptic and pastoral concern). Wanamaker's subtler approach in this regard enables him to describe the opening thanksgiving of the *exordium* as a genuine expression of praise on the part of the apostle for the Thessalonians growth in faith.<sup>40</sup> Still, Calvin provokes the modern horizon in his emphasis on the pastoral necessity of the verse.

On 3:4, Witherington adds little, except to clarify that Paul's assertion of "confidence" functions as an indirect command to the Thessalonians.<sup>41</sup> Wanamaker complicates the situation by adding that Paul's invocation of the Lord likely reflects "his reservations about the obedience of his converts."<sup>42</sup> He substantiates this with Paul's claiming a divine sanction to issue commands in 3:6 and 12. Partnered with Calvin's view of the verse, it gives the appearance that Paul is manipulating his audience, though it seems out of place to question the apostle's motives (to which we have no access). It would

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<sup>40</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 215–16.

<sup>41</sup> Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 243; cf. I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 216.

<sup>42</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 277.

be more helpful to speak in terms of the potential effect of his wording, or, as Calvin describes these rhetorical moves in both passages, they are self-imposed steps along which Paul must proceed before he moves on to a section of exhortation or instruction. The process is shaped by his pastoral concern for the Thessalonians. In a paradigm that seeks to attain *the* historical meaning, these perspectives must meet in a “summit dialogue” and be taken collectively into the horizon of understanding.

## ***II. Reassertion of the Divine Reality***

One of the other, primary ways in which Calvin evaluates the rhetorical structure and function of 2 Thessalonians manifests in his attention to Paul’s language that reasserts the need for and existence in reality as defined by God. In this section, we recognise that Calvin’s rhetoric is shaped both by his humanist education and a particular understanding of God’s sovereignty and Christian obligation within a theological framework, with Paul serving as exemplary of this understanding.

Calvin draws attention to Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians that they may reach a specific “end” (1:11), or goal. The articulation of the prayer in these terms and by what follows regarding their “calling,” Paul reminds them “that they are in continual need of God’s help.”<sup>43</sup> The Thessalonians have done well to grow in faith and love, and to persevere under persecution, but they have not attained the goal that they seek, and it will come to nothing if God has not established it. Even the above-mentioned accomplishments they have attained by the sustaining grace of God. Calvin makes precisely such a claim in the *Institutes* with this same verse, noting that Paul’s prayer evidences

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<sup>43</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 393.



their need for grace, as Christians cannot fulfil what is required of them.<sup>44</sup> Thus he extends a specific prayer into a general assertion about Christians: they must not forget their source and the God-sustained reality in which they exist.

In the later thanksgiving of the epistle (2:13; 2:12 Vg.), which follows on a description of the fate of the wicked, Calvin argues that the “δέ” in the phrase “Ἡμεῖς δὲ ὀφείλομεν εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν” (2:13) functions contrastively, drawing a sharp distinction between the wicked and the Thessalonians. This delineation should assure not only the Thessalonians, but also future Christians, that, though the apostasy will come, they need not fear or waver in faith, because he has warned them in advance and his prayer commends “further the grace of God towards them.”<sup>45</sup> By this phrase, Calvin clearly indicates his belief in the ongoing effect of this prayer, by which God sustains faithful Christians as the apostasy enters full swing. The prayer warns of what is to come, reminds Christians of the peace in which they exist, and places them in the protection of God.<sup>46</sup>

In the same verse, Calvin draws attention to the phrase “beloved by the Lord,” which gives the Thessalonians pause to consider that the love of God is all that delivers them “from the all but universal destruction of the world.”<sup>47</sup> Paul does not mechanically reuse the phrase from 1 Thess 1:4, it means something within its new context in 2 Thessalonians, particularly in its

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<sup>44</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:3.2.25.

<sup>45</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 408.

<sup>46</sup> Calvin makes use of 2 Thess 2:13 on several occasions in the *Institutes*, though always with reference to “sanctification by/in the Holy Spirit.” For this reason, we will attend to it later under doctrinal influences.

<sup>47</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 409.

contrastive position with the description of the wicked, as Calvin has shown. The influence of Calvin's doctrine of grace also sources his reading.

A final example of Calvin's rhetorical analysis comes in Paul's reminder to the Thessalonians of his difficult situation resulting from the fact that "not all have faith... but the Lord is faithful" (3:2-3). Perhaps in response to people who have questioned Paul's ministry, this verse redirects the Thessalonians' attention to God, who is faithful by nature of his being, over against the easily distracted minds and motives of people. It is a warning for Christians to locate their trust ultimately in God, instead of people. For many within the Church seek to disturb the faith, because many faithless have found their way into the Church by the working of the evil one.<sup>48</sup>

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Zwingli draws attention to the content of the prayer in 1:11, observing that, on that Day, "God will be admired and glorious to those who believe" and that he will bring all good to completion.<sup>49</sup>

Cajetan comments specifically on the prayer, though he essentially reiterates its content, describing it as about that "small group" who will attain the kingdom of God (cf. 1:5). Then, he connects it with Paul's instruction at the end of chapter two, which details the means of attaining the kingdom (2:12-16).<sup>50</sup> In essence, the two passages function together as a summary doctrine regarding the fate of the elect. Calvin holds a similar perspective overall, though he concentrates first on the rhetorical function of the prayer

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 414–15.

<sup>49</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, "In ii. epistolam ad Thessalonicenses annotationes," in *Huldrici Zuinglii Opera*, ed. Melchior Schuleri and Io. Schultessio, vol. 6, 1 (Zürich: Schultessiana, 1836), 240.

<sup>50</sup> Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 137.

and he would undoubtedly challenge how the Catholic author understood one could “attain” the kingdom.

Estius clarifies that the apostle’s prayer seeks the glorification and admiration of Christ in the believers at his advent (1:10), by means of his request that God make them worthy of his calling, namely, to accomplish his good pleasure eternally through granting patience in affliction (as “every work of faith”) by his grace,<sup>51</sup> so that this glorification comes to pass (1:11-12).<sup>52</sup> Like Cajetan and Zwingli, Estius’ reading concentrates on the content of the prayer.

Looking ahead at the thanksgiving prayer of 2:13, Estius likewise remarks on the sharp distinction drawn between the elect and the reprobate. He also exhibits a great deal of text-critical attention to the phrase “primitias” (ἀπαρχήν; 2:13), eventually agreeing with Jerome’s reading against Calvin, Ambrosiaster, and Cajetan (he cites the latter two). The primary influence on his decision has to do with Paul’s use of the phrase elsewhere to designate the first converts from a region. God’s choice of these “firstfruits” emphasise the goodness of God affecting salvation, rather than the merits of the individual.<sup>53</sup> Such language closely mirrors the vernacular of the Reformers, perhaps as an implicit effort to discredit their attack on Catholic doctrine. To this, he adds the “sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth” (2:13) as “the effect of

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<sup>51</sup> “...opus fidei, id est, patientiam in adversis... Nam potentia gratiae Dei maxime perspicitur in tolerandis adversus pro Christi nomini.” Estius, *In omnes d. Pauli*, 744. Emphasis added.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 752–53.

divine election,”<sup>54</sup> understanding this “spirit” as the “soul” or “heart” the believer, which “faith in the gospel” (i.e. “the truth”) purifies.<sup>55</sup>

Cajetan observes the shift from the reprobate to the elect, noting that God has chosen the elect Thessalonians, apart from their merits, to eternal salvation.<sup>56</sup> Here, we see a precedent in asserting the subject shift and unmerited grace of God in election, though Cajetan does not note function or the effect of describing the Thessalonians as “beloved by the Lord.”

Zwingli draws out this concept of distinction between the reprobate and the elect most clearly. He reads in this transition Paul’s implication of the deluded (2:10-11) as pseudo-religious hypocrites, as compared with the genuinely faithful, “true worshippers,” whom God had elected and sanctified.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, Zwingli and Cajetan reflect a common perspective regarding the contrast that this thanksgiving draws between two eschatological groups in which Calvin’s own reading fits. Yet the Genevan Reformer takes the contrast further by considering the epistle from the position of the audience. The thanksgiving certainly delineates between the wicked and the reprobate, but it also solidifies their foundation through Calvin’s view of the impending apostasy by reminding them of God’s grace. Even Estius, whose work parallels elements of Calvin’s exegesis, does not situate this in the discussion looking toward the *eschaton*.

Looking at the final example of rhetoric in this category, “but the Lord is faithful” (3:3), Zwingli proceeds with the view that this verse consoles the readers. In this way, he gives clearer attention to the audience’s role in reading

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<sup>54</sup> “Significantur effectus electionis diuinae.” *ibid.*, 753.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 139–40.

<sup>57</sup> Zwingli, “ii. Thessalonicenses,” 244–45.

and the construction of meaning. By this phrase, Zwingli hears Paul saying, “Do not give up, do not despair. God, who is faithful, will not abandon you.”<sup>58</sup> Like Calvin, he points out its contrastive nature to the line that has proceeded, “For not all have faith” (3:2).

Cajetan largely reiterates the text, though he expands that God “is faithful to his promises” equally in the future as he is in the present, such that he fortifies Christians against evil.<sup>59</sup> Estius echoes this perspective, speaking in terms of God’s promises and protection against evil, “namely the devil.”<sup>60</sup>

Oddly, though Calvin’s reading seems to imply the consolatory nature of the assertion in 3:3, he nowhere makes this clear. Indeed, at any time of persecution or encounter with those who “do not have faith” (3:2), Paul’s contention must console and encourage. Cajetan and Estius rightly argue that the verse affirms God’s faithfulness to his character, perceived primarily in his promises. Estius, however, qualifies that the passage does not demand faith in perseverance for all who call themselves Christians. Rather, the passage instils confidence in those enduring persecution, if they believe themselves to be of the elect. Only to such as these do “the absolute promises of the New Testament” belong.<sup>61</sup> Together, Cajetan and Estius affirm the theological realities disclosed by the passage.

For Calvin, however, the text goes further than this. Most significantly, it redirects the Thessalonians’ attention to God *as the source* of Christian faith and appropriately minimises confidence in individuals, or at least emphasises viewing the opinions and “reports” of people in light of God as the only truly

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<sup>58</sup> “nolite cedere, nolite desperare, deus qui fidelis est, non deseret vos.” Ibid., 246.

<sup>59</sup> Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 138.

<sup>60</sup> Gulielmus Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli epistolas item in catholicas commentarii*, ed. Joannes Holzammer, vol. 3 (Moguntiae: Sumptibus Francisci Kirchhemii, 1859), 579.

<sup>61</sup> Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 755.

faithful one. Christian confidence and consolation emerge from the reality of God's personhood, out of which flow theological truths. Therefore, any confidence and consolation is located in God as a being, rather than simply those truths that emerge from him. Thus, for Calvin, this verse is primarily about "God" and only secondarily about the fact that he "is faithful." This is what Calvin means in saying that Paul "calls them back to God."<sup>62</sup>

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

Frank Hughes locates Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians' worthiness (1:11) in the *exordium*, observing that it parallels Demosthenes *Epistle* 1, in which the author attempts to curry favour with his audience through the vehicle of prayer. At the same time, Hughes notes that this appears to urge the Thessalonians to worthiness by means of holy lives (i.e. "works of faith") and implicitly chastises those who are ἄτακτος (3:1-15).<sup>63</sup> Hughes thereby more thoroughly connects the content of the epistle. Still, it sounds odd to view the prayer as both endearing the audience, yet also rebuking a portion of the readers. Nevertheless, Paul's open announcement of the supplication that he offers to the Lord on behalf of the Thessalonians at least encourages them, and, as Hughes argues, likely puts them in the position of being willing to listen to him.

Witherington follows part of Hughes perspective, observing "One of the more effective ways of changing behavior is to let people overhear one's prayers for them."<sup>64</sup> Therefore, he also connects this prayer and the ἄτακτος of chapter three. He adds further, "Its rhetorical function is not just to convey

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<sup>62</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 414. "ipsos ad Deum revocat." Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:210).

<sup>63</sup> Frank Witt Hughes, *Early Christian Rhetoric and 2 Thessalonians*, JSNTSup (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 55.

<sup>64</sup> Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 199.

information about Paul's prayers but also to instigate transformation."<sup>65</sup> Witherington states Hughes position more strongly by separating 1:11-12 from the *exordium* (1:3-10) and labelling it as a *propositio* that mentions both the topics of "work" and "eschatological belief," thereby introducing the topics of chapters three and two, respectively. Furthermore, the verse clearly connects with the eschatological material of 1:5-10, particularly in relation to the kingdom of God, of which Paul desires the Thessalonians to take full part. Yet this entails faithful living in the present. God "enables and empowers" the "works of faith" (1:11) to come to fruition, thus indicating the cooperative activity of God and the Thessalonians.<sup>66</sup>

Wanamaker generally follows Hughes, including his structure of the epistle that places 1:11 in the *exordium*. Wanamaker's key contribution in this discussion is his concentration on the eschatological character of the verse and invocation as a reminder to the Thessalonians that "God is at work in their lives."<sup>67</sup>

All of the above contributions are important for the understanding of the passage, but they also miss a very basic component of the prayer that Calvin draws out: the act of prayer is a recognition of God's sovereignty and one's inability to accomplish anything apart from that God. For this reason, prayer should be offered "always" (1:11). Calvin also happily asserts the eschatological dimension of the prayer, though he certainly lacks the connection between this prayer and the material of the later chapters that Witherington shows particularly well. The scholars above more clearly outline the structure of the letter than the Reformer.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 200–1.

<sup>67</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 233–34.

On the second passage (2:13), Hughes describes the verse as the beginning of the second part of the *probatio* (proof). In this, he sees the emphasis on election, characterised by the “agricultural-cultic” language of “firstfruits.”<sup>68</sup> This emphasis on God’s saving work leads naturally into the topic of missionary vocation, which follows in 2:14.

Differently from Hughes, Witherington sees this passage as a thanksgiving, following on from a *refutatio* (2:1-12).<sup>69</sup> The prayer of 2:13-3:5 serves as a transition into the *probatio* (3:6-12) and a means of undergirding the “two major arguments of this discourse.”<sup>70</sup> Witherington stresses that the difference between this prayer of thanksgiving and that of 1:3 is the activity of God in the lives of the Thessalonians, instead of their virtues.<sup>71</sup> The divergence between Witherington and Calvin on this notion of divine activity will receive attention in a later discussion of doctrine. Like Zwingli, Cajetan, and Calvin, Witherington points to the contrast drawn between the elect, sanctified in truth, and the reprobate, who reject the truth (2:10).

Wanamaker makes this final point the clearest, noting that the contrast pertains to the election of the believers over against the damnation of the reprobate, rather than to Paul’s obligation to offer thanks for the Thessalonian converts. He adds to this that the description ἡγαπημένοι ὑπὸ κυρίου is frequently associated with “certainty regarding salvation.”<sup>72</sup>

Again, where Calvin stands out as distinct from the modern interpreters is in reading 2:13 not only as contrastive, but also as a means of

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<sup>68</sup> The preferred reading, against Calvin’s ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς. Hughes, *Early Christian Rhetoric*, 61.

<sup>69</sup> Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 31.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>72</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 265.



encouragement so that the Thessalonians do not fear the ensuing apostasy and as a reminder that God's gracious love alone delivers them from perdition. Calvin's freedom from the format of Greco-Roman rhetoric helps him to see the verse as pastoral in nature and gives him a degree of flexibility in interpretation that rhetorical readings may obscure or prohibit.

Finally, turning to 3:3, Wanamaker helpfully observes Paul's transition from discussing his own situation and need for deliverance from evil (3:2) to the assurance of God's faithfulness toward the Thessalonians (3:3) appears to stem from the apostle's identification of the same need in the letter's recipients. Additionally, Wanamaker notes the unusual phrase "the Lord is faithful," and argues that it refers to Christ rather than God, in keeping with the usage of "Lord" in the rest of the epistle.<sup>73</sup>

Witherington focuses on the fact that Paul does not pray for freedom from hardship, but that God establish and strengthen the Thessalonians.<sup>74</sup> Hughes adds to the conversation the rhetorical implication of 3:2-3:3 is that the Thessalonians should seek to be faithful.<sup>75</sup>

Taken together, these three authors offer important insights regarding the reading of 3:3. Calvin's observation that the text directs the readers back to God serves as a foundation for understanding the passage that is further sharpened by the views of the others. Clearly, he and Wanamaker do not agree on reading "the Lord" as Jesus, and though this could be worked out within a Trinitarian framework, Wanamaker's reading seems more consistent with the text.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>74</sup> Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 242.

<sup>75</sup> Hughes, *Early Christian Rhetoric*, 64.

In drawing this section to a close, we have seen how Calvin's humanist education inculcated an attention to both rhetorical elements and the function of biblical texts. Nevertheless, in coming into contact with what he perceived as the simplicity of Scripture, the rigid structure and verbosity of humanist rhetoric gave way to this simplicity without diminishing Calvin's sensitivity to Paul's rhetorical strategy in 2 Thessalonians. Calvin attempts to mimic the "simple-rhetoric" of Scripture, but never fully escapes the influence of his humanist education.<sup>76</sup> He provokes the modern horizon of expectation by drawing out an important difference between rhetorical tools, strategies, and functions of a biblical text (read within a particular theological framework) and the inflexible structure of Greco-Roman rhetoric that many modern NT commentators deploy as their primary hermeneutical key.

## **2.2 Receptive Impulses: Pastoral Concern**

The move from rhetoric to pastoral concern draws out another similarity between Calvin and John Chrysostom. The pastoral emphases in the 2 Thessalonians commentary do not necessarily reflect reliance upon Chrysostom so much as they highlight their common occupations. From the moment that he fled Paris, Calvin found himself in a pastoral role despite a lacking ordination. This occupation, coupled with the belief that every Christian should actively and personally engage with Scripture in their own language, compelled the Reformer to produce accessible commentaries for his wider, European congregation.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Holder, "Calvin as Commentator," 242; Richard C. Gamble, "*Brevitas et facilitas*: Toward an Understanding of Calvin's Hermeneutic," *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (1985): 1-17; Pierre Imbart de La Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme: Calvin et L'institution Chrétienne*, vol. 4 (Geneva: Slatkin Reprints, 1935), 13.

<sup>77</sup> For the speed at which Calvin's Pauline commentaries were published in French, see Holder, "Calvin as Commentator," 256.

In addition to the publication of the commentaries, Calvin's pastoral concern materialises as asides and exegetical manoeuvres that he makes within the commentaries.<sup>78</sup> "Pastoral concern" has a generic ring to it, therefore, we might clarify that this concern has primarily to do with shaping his readers into godly, obedient Christians generally through drawing universally applicable conclusions from the text under examination. Because these conclusions develop out of specific verses, and due to the great number of examples from the commentary, this section will proceed by examining the chronological appearances by chapters, rather than by topics.

### ***I. 2 Thessalonians 1***

Like his initial rhetorical observation, we witness Calvin's pastoral concern first in his comment on the opening thanksgiving (1:3), in which he takes Paul's obligation to give thanks for the growth of the Thessalonians in faith and love as having dual implications for Christians. From the perspective of the letter's recipients, Calvin points out that "the godly should all hold to the principle of examining themselves each day and seeing the extent of their progress," adding "Our own leisureliness is all the more disgraceful when we hardly move a single foot over a protracted period."<sup>79</sup> The specific content of Paul's praise becomes a challenge to Christians in general.

Calvin then looks at the verse from the apostle's position, perceiving his response as exemplary, and exhorts his readers: "Whenever the goodness

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<sup>78</sup> Holder adds that Calvin's rhetorical style in the commentaries is shaped by this pastoral concern. Ibid., 243; Elsewhere, he recognises the centrality of the congregation to Calvin's hermeneutic. In Calvin's theology, he argues, "the congregation functions as a 'community of discourse'- the communal context in which particular textual readings come to have meaning." R. Ward Holder, "*Ecclesia, Legenda Atque Intelligenda Scriptura*: The Church as Discerning Community in Calvin's Hermeneutics," *Calvin Theological Journal* 36, no. 2 (2001): 277–78; Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 2, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.1.9.

<sup>79</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 387–88.

of God shines forth, it is fitting that we should show appreciation of it. Then too, the well-being of our brethren ought to be of such concern to us that we reckon among our own blessings any blessing that has been bestowed on them.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, instruction in godly living is drawn from both *what* Paul praises and *the reason for his thanksgiving*. Somewhat irrespective of authorial intent, though not disregarding the textual content, the *meaning* of the text has to do with *the perspective from which it is viewed*.

In the next verse, as Paul commends the Thessalonians for their patience and faith in their persecutions (1:4), he implicitly encourages faithfulness in his readers by observing, “There is nothing... that sustains us in tribulation as faith does, and this truth is sufficiently clear from the fact that as soon as we cease to be aware of the promises of God, we completely fail.”<sup>81</sup> In this case, the example of the Thessalonians, as recorded by Paul, gives a lasting and certain theological truth that warns against neglecting the promises of God.

When considering the partial, present signs of God’s judgment to come (1:5-6), which indicate his restraint from judging in the present, Paul has offered a profound instruction for the character of the Christian “mind.”<sup>82</sup> This heuristic text directs Christians away from security in the world and the hopelessness in suffering to the certain future in which God exercises his office as Judge.

He argues similarly in the *Institutes* that the sufferings of Christians as the just judgment of God, which lead to their being “counted worthy” (1:5),

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 388.

<sup>81</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 388.

<sup>82</sup> “Insignis certe locus, quia docet quemadmodum excitandae sint *mentes* nostrae ab omnibus mundi obstaculis.” Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:189).

are qualified by the verses that follow, so that they are not to “prove that works have any worth but to strengthen hope in God’s Kingdom.”<sup>83</sup> In essence, these verses invite Christians into the Divine reality that is eschatologically defined in a manner similar to Pannenberg’s “universal” view of history.<sup>84</sup> With our minds shaped in this way, Calvin confidently asserts, “Death will thus be for us the image of life.”<sup>85</sup>

Considering God’s future act of “rendering vengeance” (1:8), Calvin resolves theodical issues of suffering in the present. He then turns to ask “whether it is lawful for us to seek revenge, because Paul promises revenge as something that may rightfully be sought.”<sup>86</sup> It appears that he anticipates this question only a sentence earlier when he describes vengeance as the eschatological “office” enjoined on Christ by God. Therefore, he can conclude that vengeance belongs to the Lord and that Christians must not pursue vengeance because: 1.) they must seek the good of all people, and; 2.) they might long for vengeance rendered on the wicked, but “wicked” is an eschatological category, and we do not have the knowledge of who these wicked are in advance of the eschaton.<sup>87</sup> In summation, for Calvin, this verse affirms that vengeance belongs to the Lord.<sup>88</sup>

Our final example comes in an attempt by Calvin to ground the verse in the experience of his congregants. Paul prays that God fulfil “every work of faith, with power” (1:11), which turns Calvin’s attention to the weakness of

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<sup>83</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:3.18.7.

<sup>84</sup> Pannenberg, *Basic Questions*, 2:62; Pannenberg, *Revelation as History*; Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, 50–57.

<sup>85</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 390.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 391–92.

<sup>88</sup> “Porro hoc ad Christum refertur, qui reddet ultionem. Significat enim Paulus, has illi a Deo patre iniunctas esse partes.” Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess. (CO 52:191)*. We might consider, then, how this understanding of vengeance played a role (if any) in the trial and execution of Servetus.

humans. This affords him the opportunity to remind his readers of the helplessness of people, when left on their own, so that they require divine “power” to make possible any “work of faith” (1:11). Calvin’s purpose is not to depress, but to encourage his readers to come to terms with the Divine reality that undergirds them.<sup>89</sup> As our section on rhetoric has shown, Calvin constantly directs the gaze of his readers God-ward in the hope that repetition will drive the point home and affect a consistent, satisfactory rest in the gracious sovereignty of God.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

The contemporary views of 1:3 do not deserve discussion again, as they received attention rather thoroughly under the topic of “effective rhetoric” above. We might only note that, for Calvin, the verse is more than a transition from the greeting.

On 1:4, Cajetan only reiterates that the boasting of Paul is due to the increased faith and love of the Thessalonians.<sup>90</sup> His reading is purely descriptive. Estius generally follows Cajetan, though he adds that the example encourages the larger Church (to endure persecution?).<sup>91</sup> In so doing, Estius has incorporated a fourth perspective in the discussion. Including Calvin’s comments, we have the view of the apostle, the first recipients, and the third-party “churches” to which Paul refers. All of these perspectives work together to draw out subtly varying dimensions of the text’s meaning(s) for the present Church.

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<sup>89</sup> In this way, Calvin approaches Chrysostom’s emphasis that his congregants constantly engage with the truths of Scripture and that they become aware of the Divine presence in the reading of Scripture.

<sup>90</sup> Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 136.

<sup>91</sup> “ut nos ipsi de vobis gloriemur apud alias Ecclesias Dei, vestro exemplo cohortantes caeteros.” Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 571.

At 1:5-6, Zwingli comments extensively, primarily with a pastoral interest in resolving the theodical issues presented by the verses. He compresses the ἔνδειγμα of God's just judgment into two points illuminated by his sending persecutions: 1.) the persecutions test the good as a means of preparing them for their future life in the kingdom, and; 2.) they give reason for God to punish the wicked, who afflicted the righteous.<sup>92</sup> Given his precursory role in the Reformation, Zwingli's similar stance to Calvin indicates that, though Calvin's reading might mature from his own theology, his reading is aesthetically neutral within the horizon of expectations of his time. This is not to critique Calvin for lacking creativity. Indeed, it would be suspicious and, perhaps, dangerous exegesis if Calvin presented revolutionary readings at every single verse. If anything, this may confirm the veracity of the reading, given its historical legacy.

Calvin's interpretation stands in stark contrast to Estius, who sees the patient suffering of the righteous as *meriting* eternal glory, rather than serving as an indication of God's election. In a rare move, Estius openly challenges a "heresy of Calvin and the other sects of our time" with a two point argument from 2 Thess 1:5-6. In the first case, he asserts that God purges believers presently by allowing or inflicting them with persecutions and tribulations. This is the primary purgative means of preparing them to enter the kingdom of God.<sup>93</sup> Secondly, because their endurance renders them worthy, their entry into the kingdom must be considered, in some part, as due to their merit and

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<sup>92</sup> "Duplici ergo ratione dominus persecutiones mittit idque iusto iudicio. Primum et boni per ignem probentur. Secundo ut mali puniatur, et sic declaretur iustum iudicium dei." Zwingli, "ii. Thessalonicenses," 239.

<sup>93</sup> Estius points to the purity of the gold stones of the heavenly city (Rev 21:21) as evidence for the ongoing need for believers to be purified. Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 742.

not grace *alone*. The “evidence of the righteous judgment of God” (1:5) is that he has withdrawn eternal punishment and allows the purifying, temporal punishment.<sup>94</sup> In this case, the two readings cannot be resolved as “standing in tension” with one another. One must be correct and the other false.

At 1:8 Luther enters the discussion. In his commentary on Genesis 49:1-2, he uses language common to the discussion<sup>95</sup> of God’s patient endurance of wickedness so that he may justly inflict vengeance on those who perpetuated it. Looking at the example of Jacob, who believed the promises of God, Luther draws a contrast between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous are characterised by faith, which both “believe[s] and fear[s] things that are invisible,”<sup>96</sup> namely the future judgment pronounced by God. Thus 2 Thess 1:8 functions as a threat, which the righteous take to heart, “[b]ut the ungodly do not fear, do not believe, do not hope, and do not care about God.”<sup>97</sup> The verse simultaneously warns the righteous and condemns the wicked. Calvin recognises a distinction between the two groups of people (though that deserves fuller discussion in another section), yet he does not explore the manner in which this verse *speaks to* the righteous and the wicked. His concern regarding Christians exacting vengeance in the present applies generally like Luther’s points, though it comes from asking a different question of the text, namely the parallel between the office(s) of the Lord and the manner in which his disciples must follow him.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.; cf. Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 203.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Zwingli, “ii. Thessalonicenses,” 239; Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 389.

<sup>96</sup> Martin Luther, *Commentary on Genesis* (LW 8:202).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.



Cajetan likewise emphasises the office of Christ as judge, reflecting a longstanding Christological tradition.<sup>98</sup> Calvin takes up the discussion, but he poses the new question “How does Christ function as exemplar?” tempered by temporal considerations (i.e. the *eschaton* has not arrived). When turning to the “work of faith in power” (1:11), Cajetan looks primarily to the Lord as the source of “power” to sustain believers with the gift of faith in persecutions and tribulation.<sup>99</sup> Again, Calvin would agree, but where Cajetan looks primarily about how this reveals the gracious goodness of God, Calvin reads the weakness, or incapacity of people to accomplish anything apart from this gracious source.

Initially, Zwingli offers the same reading as Cajetan, but then he proposes an alternative. He suggests that it could mean: “that your faith might be able to work,”<sup>100</sup> so that faith would be genuine and verifiable by the fruits it produces. In this way, the verse becomes a means of determining the efficaciousness of God’s grace in the individual. The absence of “working faith,” which should illuminate “the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” indicates that a person has feigned belief.<sup>101</sup>

In these collective readings we recognise a continuous strand of understanding “work of faith” as the endurance through persecution empowered by God. Calvin’s pastoral interpretation often extends or satisfies the horizon of expectation.

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<sup>98</sup> “participium dantis refertur ad domini iesu. Officium describitur ad quod exercendum veniet.” Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 136.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 137; Estius reads the passage similarly. Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli*, 3:573.

<sup>100</sup> Zwingli, “Ii. Thessalonicenses,” 241.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

ii. *Modern Scholarship*

In response to the challenge that the tone of 2 Thessalonians is colder, with the obligatory nature of his thanksgiving (1:3) used as an example, and therefore an indication of its pseudonymity, Malherbe contends that the phrase reflects a Jewish, liturgical background.<sup>102</sup> The construction is formulaic, not cold, and several apostolic Fathers make use of the formulation following Paul.<sup>103</sup> Taking up the banner of Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Calvin, Malherbe adds that this greeting has the rhetorical function of preparing the readers for the difficult material later (see *Effective Rhetoric* above), but also speaks “pastorally to the condition of Paul’s readers.”<sup>104</sup> This insight draws out the parallel between the work of Calvin and the same of Paul. To Calvin’s own pastoral views, Malherbe adds that Paul was obligated to give thanks for and boast about the Thessalonians, because they would not do the latter themselves. Part of the issue, as Malherbe sees it, is the Thessalonian’s recent conversion: “One of the problems of all converts to a new system of belief and practice that requires a transformation of the total person was uncertainty by the convert that he knew enough about the new way of life and its requirements, and that he was making sufficient progress.”<sup>105</sup>

Though Malherbe’s observation remains in the past, the logical pastoral application insinuated is the necessity of encouraging new converts in their growth of faith and love for one another. Calvin’s general exhortation to

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<sup>102</sup> Malherbe, however, offers no proof for such a background. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:382; Rigaux argues, therefore, that until we discover such Jewish liturgical formulations, we should assume the influence of Paul on the liturgical use of the phrase in later authors, and not vice versa. Rigaux, *Thessaloniciens*, 613.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *1 Clem* 38:4; *Barn* 5:3, 7:1; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:382.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 32B:389.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

give thanks wherever “the goodness of God shines forth,”<sup>106</sup> becomes more specific in the historical insight of Malherbe.

Menken helpfully situates 1:3-6 in its apocalyptic context. The verses remind the readers that tribulation and persecution must precede the end, and that the readers must continue to patiently wait “for God to realize fully the salvation he has begun in Christ.”<sup>107</sup> This reading sharpens Calvin’s perspective of the mindset with which one must wait for the coming kingdom. The genre forces the reader to ground the hope in the future in a particular source: the historical revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Malherbe follows this apocalyptic reading of 1:6 as a means of encouraging those experiencing persecution. He adds to it two important, biblical provisos for Paul’s theology of suffering: 1.) God’s judgment on the wicked differs from the law of retribution in Exod 21:23-25 because wickedness is not recompensed presently, but in the *eschaton*, and; 2.) any present suffering of the righteous is not punishment for sins. Therefore, Paul is reacting against a specific apocalyptic tradition that says otherwise.<sup>108</sup>

At 1:8, the influence of Chrysostom and the insight of Calvin meet one another in Malherbe. He recognises the description of the Lord “rendering vengeance” (1:8) as eschatological in character and shaped by an apocalyptic reading of Isa 66:15. After situating it thus, he remarks that the future location of judgment in the hands of God fits within the (Christian) apocalyptic paradigm, in which vengeance belongs entirely to God and must not be sought by Christians (Rom 12:19). He supplements this with Chrysostom’s

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<sup>106</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 388.

<sup>107</sup> Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 83.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *Pss Sol* 13:9-10; 2 Macc 6:12-16; 2 Bar 13:8-10; Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 408.

clarification that those “being repaid” are not described as the oppressors of the Thessalonians, but rather those who reject the gospel. God punishes them on his own account, for the preservation of his own glory.<sup>109</sup> Though he does not frame the discussion in pastoral terms, Malherbe’s situating the text within apocalyptic eschatology reinforces the significance of hope and encouragement instilled by the passage. The rehashing of these points in the context of a modern, critical commentary draws out their theological significance while simultaneously diminishing their pastoral direction. The audience has changed (i.e. scholars instead of the laity), and therefore the tone and content of the insights carried forward have transformed with it. Therefore, Calvin’s pastoral attentiveness has great expansive potential for the modern horizon of understanding, especially in his view of Scripture as demanding practical outworking, rather than as a repository for theology.

In the final example from chapter one, Menken asserts that Paul’s prayer (2 Thess 1:11) is not a prayer, but a report of the sender’s constant prayer for the people. It is questionable whether such a distinction is helpful or even necessary.<sup>110</sup> He adds that the prayer is of a twofold structure: first, he prays that they be deemed worthy of calling, thereby revealing that the audience has not yet received salvation, in the fullest definition of that term. Second, the prayer reveals how this might be achieved— through the complementary work of God in the believer and the Christian’s willingness to

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 400; Menken argues, however, that the connection between 2 Thess 1:6 and 8 is clear. Therefore, the oppressors receive a reciprocal response from God. This appears to miss the crucial insight, though, that the punishment is rooted first and foremost in *their rejection of God by rejecting the gospel*. Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 88–89.

<sup>110</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that the verse lacks the optative or subjunctive that typically characterises prayers. Cf. 2 Thess 3:5.

do the work required.<sup>111</sup> Malherbe makes much of the phrase “in power” as an indication of the source to keep the readers from thinking too much of their willingness.<sup>112</sup> Witherington largely agrees with the above points, though he concludes by observing that the readers “have now been prepared for the corrections of eschatology and ethics which follow in chs. 2-3.”

The primary difference between these modern scholars and Calvin lies in the tendency of the former, if they make an observation of Paul’s pastoral rhetoric, the observation remains in the past. Calvin, however, draws the point forward for his own congregations. Karl Barth described the distinction between Calvin’s commentaries and historicist commentaries as the Reformer’s ability to hear the words of Paul presently, such that “the walls which separate the sixteenth century from the first become transparent!”<sup>113</sup>

## ***II. 2 Thessalonians 2***

The conclusion of the previous section connects well with the opening pastoral remark from Calvin on chapter two of the epistle. In Paul’s beseeching (2:1) that the Thessalonians not be disturbed about the potential that the day of the Lord is already present (2:2), “at the same time he warns us to think of it only with reverence and restraint.”<sup>114</sup> Calvin has rendered historical walls transparent through the generic use of “us,” which gives the impression that this continues as long as Christians continue to engage with his work. The passage conveys more than a historical communication between Paul and the Thessalonians. When understood as Scripture, which Calvin certainly does, it functions as a vehicle of ongoing communication, or

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<sup>111</sup> Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 92–93.

<sup>112</sup> Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:411.

<sup>113</sup> Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwin C. Hoskyns, 6th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 7.

<sup>114</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 396.

dialogue, such that the apostle (and God through him) continues to speak. Even now, readers of 2 Thessalonians must not have an over-realised eschatology.

Taking Paul's description of the "apostasy" and the arrival of "the man of sin" (2:3) as prophetic predictions, Calvin sees these fulfilled already in the Church.<sup>115</sup> In this way, he views the passage from a different vantage than the original recipients would have and offers his readers a different encouragement based on that vantage. The "apostasy" from the Church,<sup>116</sup> for Calvin, began generations ago. Though it means the Church survives in a derelict state, Calvin points out that the fact that Paul predicted the apostasy and the arrival of the man of sin should encourage the Christian community, because this historical result is clearly "regulated by the purpose of God."<sup>117</sup> In a time of drastic ecclesial upheaval, this was an essential consolation for those committed to the cause of the Reformation. Assurance in the present state of things reinvigorates hope in the eschatological future. Though likely unfamiliar with the specific genre, Calvin perpetuates an apocalyptic frame of mind.

Though several other examples could be taken from the chapter, the final point of pastoral care combines two observations from adjacent verses. Certain of the present reign of Antichrist in the papacy, Calvin proceeds along a unique exegetical tack regarding "the one who now restrains" (2:7). Calvin

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<sup>115</sup> The view that 2 Thess 2:3 is a prophetic prediction by the apostle also appears in the *Institutes*. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:4.9.7.

<sup>116</sup> Calvin's reading of the apocalyptic section as a whole receives attention later in the chapter. It is sufficient to note here that the "apostasy" has to do with the Church rather than the Roman Empire.

<sup>117</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 399.

views the “mystery of lawlessness at work” and “the one who now holds”<sup>118</sup> (2:7) as references to an individual: Antichrist. Looking particularly at the latter phrase, Calvin determines that the participle ὁ κατέχων/*tenens* must be taken in the future tense, so that the term “now” (*modo*) functions as a temporal limitation on the Antichrist’s “holding” (*tenens*) of power. In this way, readers may be lifted up to know that Antichrist’s reign will not endure forever. Interestingly, the crux of the verse is the term “now,” which should cause believers “to ponder upon Christ’s unending reign, so that they may be sustained by it”<sup>119</sup> in the midst of present suffering. Again, the text has a different function given one’s position on the respective end of the prophecy. For the early Church, it was a warning. For Calvin’s congregations, it is an experienced reality.

In the verse that follows, Paul repeats the point that Antichrist will be revealed (2:8; cf. 2:6). The repetition has the aim of securely establishing the believing community prior to the unfolding of the event. In this way, they may be able to battle against the spiritual forces of Antichrist without being overwhelmed by the “inundation of impiety.”<sup>120</sup> Given that Antichrist has come, according to Calvin (in light of 1 John and Augustine), 2:7-8 directs the minds of believers beyond the situation at hand to the goal—the certain future of “Christ’s unending reign”—so that they might survive and struggle against evil in the present. In pastoral terms, Calvin offers a great deal to sustain and encourage his readers in the uncertain days of the Reformation. Further, his

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<sup>118</sup> Given Calvin’s interpretation of the passage as referring to the time during which Antichrist holds power, the translation “only [there is] one who now holds/possesses” (*solo tenens modo*) is more appropriate than the Torrance translation “only there is one that restraineth now.” See Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:201); cf. Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 404.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:201).

vision of eschatological time coheres with Haimo. The difference lies in the fact Calvin's exhorts his readers *further along the apocalyptic timeline* as Paul's prophecy unfolds.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

In Paul's warning the Thessalonians not to be "shaken in mind" or "troubled" that the Day of the Lord is at hand (2:2), Zwingli offers a general observation extending to all Christians: the impending arrival of that day causes fear in the hopeless, "but the godly do not fear this day... for they know themselves to be united with God."<sup>121</sup> Though Calvin and Zwingli draw different conclusions from the text, the two work in tandem. Zwingli advocates Christian confidence in their eschatological security, while Calvin restrains the confidence from extending beyond its limits (e.g. chiliastic enthusiasm).

Estius connects the warning not to be shaken in mind (2:2) with the fact that Paul had already instructed the believers on the topic of the return of Christ. This makes clear that the passage is reiteration, rather than new instruction. Furthermore, if the Day of the Lord should be long-delayed (as in Estius' day), the Thessalonians need only call to mind the instruction he gave while present with them.<sup>122</sup> Cajetan adds that, given a misunderstanding regarding the Day of the Lord from the first epistle, it was inevitable that the Thessalonians' minds would drift to and then focus on the topic. In addition to correcting the misunderstanding of his own epistle, Paul adds that the readers should not hearken to any other sources (e.g. "spirits," sermons, or letters) that explicitly announce that the Day of the Lord is at hand.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Zwingli, "ii. Thessalonicenses," 241.

<sup>122</sup> Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 745.

<sup>123</sup> Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 137.



Luther agrees with Calvin's reading of 2 Thess 2:3-4 as a prophecy, the majority of which they see fulfilled in their own day. He concentrates, however, on the phrases "man of sin" and "son of perdition" (2:3) for the purpose of substantiating his doctrine of Antichrist (i.e. the pope) and gives little attention to the "apostasy."<sup>124</sup> Zwingli likewise focuses on the pope as Antichrist, but not before speaking of the apostasy in terms of a portion of the elect falling away.<sup>125</sup> This perspective views Paul's prophecy from a later stage of fulfilment.

Cajetan views the apostasy as a defection from the Roman Empire.<sup>126</sup> Estius, however, proffers a hybridised vision of the Tyconian-Augustinian spiritual interpretation and the historical interpretation of Ambrosiaster in seeing the apostasy as defection from the Catholic Church generally and the pope specifically. That is to say, the language should be taken to refer symbolically to the Church, but the symbols have a one-to-one correspondence with the concepts that they represent, and the events described in the passage unfold in the chronological order of the apostasy. Thus, the apostasy, for Estius, began with Luther and continues with King James of England, in his own day. Estius openly defines the Reformation as the beginning of the apostasy, but he allows that the apostasy has not reached completion.<sup>127</sup> Though not expressly, this reading would function to encourage Catholics attempting to come to grips with the unfolding of the Protestant movement against the Roman Church. As we will see later, this

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<sup>124</sup> In a brief aside, Luther describes the apostasy as the fall of Rome. In this way, Antichrist's arrival mirrors the first advent of Christ, whom Zechariah foretold would arrive after the collapse of Babylon and Persia. Martin Luther, *Commentary on Zechariah* (LW 20:192).

<sup>125</sup> Zwingli, "ii. Thessalonicenses," 241-42.

<sup>126</sup> Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 138.

<sup>127</sup> Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 746-47.

vision reverses Calvin's perspective of the apostasy and the Church. In order to avoid encroaching on a later discussion, we will reserve further comments for the final section of the chapter.

In his reading of Psalm 80:12, Luther recognises a prophecy that must precede the arrival of Christ to destroy the "wicked congregation"<sup>128</sup> with "the breath of his mouth" (2 Thess 2:8). For Luther, those who turn aside from the path to "pluck fruit" on the other side of a broken down wall (Psalm 80:12) are those "who do not stand in Christ but pass by in fleeting vanity. Nor do they have anything firm and eternal, since they are outside of Christ."<sup>129</sup> Those outside the wall reach within to steal the fruit found there. Luther proposes that this refers allegorically to the walls of the Church and its fruit (i.e. its members), whom the wicked lead astray. Therefore, the psalmist "prays and prophesies"<sup>130</sup> for the elect against the thieving grasp of the wicked, who will be destroyed at the appearance of Christ (2 Thess 2:8). Thus, both in knowing these Scriptures and by means of the psalmist's prayer, the elect are prepared for the coming defection and the increase of lawlessness.<sup>131</sup>

Cajetan views Paul as revealing a series of mysteries to his readers in 2:3-8. The first of these, the "apostasy" of numerous kingdoms from Rome, he sees as already fulfilled.<sup>132</sup> Estius reports 2:7-8 as events that will come to pass, though he perceives the apostasy as under way in the Reformation.<sup>133</sup> Like Calvin, all of the contemporaries listed here view the apocalyptic portion

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<sup>128</sup> Martin Luther, *Commentary the Psalms* 80 (LW 11:100).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Luther makes a similar note in his comment on Psalm 101:3, in which he perceives David's caution toward the "lawbreaker" as both guarding himself and warning others. Luther, *Commentary on the Psalms* 101 (LW 20:178).

<sup>132</sup> Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 138–39.

<sup>133</sup> Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 746–47 and 750.

of the epistle as a prophecy given by the apostle. If the Catholic scholars offer any encouragement to their readers, it must be deduced, for it does not materialise explicitly. This point illuminates a helpful distinction between the perceived audiences of the respective commentaries. Calvin intended his works for the wider public and, therefore, writes with a pastoral attentiveness.<sup>134</sup> Cajetan and Estius write specifically for the educated clergy, who should proceed with the material to the next step of pastoral application for the congregation.

What persists in all of the readings is the tradition disseminated through Haimo: the Church has already entered the eschatological age and the apostasy has occurred— though they understand this in divergent ways.

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

Best remarks that numerous believers throughout the history of the Church have become unsettled when they dedicate too much attention to the Parousia and that this would have been especially the case of the first generation of Christians. Observing Paul's reference to being "shaken in mind," Best adds that though Christians possess renewed minds (Rom 12:1f.) and should, therefore, exhibit a degree of stability despite the appearance of novel theological propositions, nevertheless "they are in danger of being carried away by a new idea without adequately examining it."<sup>135</sup> As his reading of the apocalyptic material progresses, it becomes clear that Best likewise views 2 Thess 2:3 as initiating a prophetic discourse, within which he

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<sup>134</sup> One should observe the difference between Calvin's stated interest in writing for general accessibility by the laity and the fact that he initially composed all of his works in Latin, rather than French. This likely reflects his internal struggle to challenge the educated Roman Church and meet the pastoral needs of his congregants. Jean-Francois Gilmont, *John Calvin and the Printed Book*, trans. Karin Maag, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2005), 114–15.

<sup>135</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 275.

defines the “apostasy” as a religio-political revolt from God that had not yet occurred in Paul’s day (though he remains silent about his own).<sup>136</sup>

Morris reiterates the point that since the founding of the Church “there have been some Christians who have let their imagination rather than their reason dictate their understanding of the Parousia.”<sup>137</sup> Both Best and Morris note that the sentence beginning “Unless the apostasy comes first...” (2:3) remains incomplete. The logical and assumed clause to supply is “the Day of the Lord will not come.”<sup>138</sup> Calvin, overlooks this absence but clearly assumes the conclusion in his exegesis.<sup>139</sup>

When looking specifically at the “apostasy” (2:3), Morris speaks of it primarily in terms of rebellion against God. He adds, however, that is active rebellion, not simply apathy, and that the term thus defined directs our attention to “the supreme effort of Satan and his minions.”<sup>140</sup> That is to say, Satan strives presently to affect the apostasy of individuals against the Lord. He does not deny a massive, eschatological rebellion, but emphasises its character as against God rather than the Church.<sup>141</sup> This appears to be a reaction to the dialogue of the Reformation, but it does not adequately grasp that the scholars of that era would not have seen these as entirely separable.

Rigaux observes the single object of Paul in 2:2 as expressed in two infinitives: σαλευθῆναι and θροεῖσθαι. He seeks that the Thessalonians not be disturbed in any way by news about the Day of the Lord. This phrase, “the Day of the Lord,” Rigaux notes, plunges the discussion and readers into the

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 281–83.

<sup>137</sup> Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 214.

<sup>138</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 280; Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 218.

<sup>139</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 398–99.

<sup>140</sup> Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 218.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 218–19, fn. 17.

apocalyptic drama, which is characterised by traditional themes such as an “apostasy” (2:3).<sup>142</sup> When turning to 2:7-8, Rigaux helpfully assigns the verses to different sections within Paul’s apocalyptic discussion. Therefore, 2:7-8a, which describes the present activity of the mystery of lawlessness and terminates with the revelation of the “lawless one,” designates the conclusion of the first section. In terms of the apocalyptic timescale, they belong to the period of tribulation.

The second section is marked the transition from tribulation events to the advent of the Lord (2:8b).<sup>143</sup> These distinctions clearly delineate the stages of the apocalyptic timeline that can appear convoluted. Best adds to this the observation that the notion of “manifestation” (ἐπιφάνεια; 2:8) has a hostile connotation in Jewish texts (cf. 2 Macc 2:21; 3:24; 12:22; 14:15; 3 Macc 5:8). Therefore, the manifestation of the Lord specifically targets the lawless one for destruction. Like numerous others before him, Best concludes that, following the Lord’s manifestation, “there is no long battle, victory comes at once.”<sup>144</sup>

Following this reading, Morris adds that 2:8 announces the revelation of the lawless one for the third time in the epistle, thereby accentuating the point through repetition. His lack of freedom to appear at a self-designated time points to the sovereign restraint of God. Furthermore, the language of “revelation” indicates the “supernatural associations”<sup>145</sup> of the event. He adds that no action is required upon the Lord’s arrival to destroy this lawless one. His appearance sufficiently achieves this end. He concludes with an

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<sup>142</sup> Rigaux, *Thessaloniens*, 648 and 653.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 667–72.

<sup>144</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 304.

<sup>145</sup> Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 230.

observation extending to the present context: there is no need to fear the wicked of the present, for, “however illustrious evil people may be,” their “glory” will be revealed as infinitesimal, pathetic, and filthy at the revelation of the Lord on that Day.<sup>146</sup>

Bringing together these authors for a summit-dialogue, we realise the importance of Calvin’s encouragement regarding the divine regulation of history, which he borrows from Chrysostom and extends more concretely to the later readers as a concretisation of its truth for his present. Modern scholars largely assume this concept of sovereignty, yet they expand its importance as it relates to apocalyptic literature.

Again, to prevent redundancy in the final section of this chapter, our discussion regarding this chapter must conclude with the above observations. We turn our attention now to Calvin’s pastoral reading of 2 Thess 3.

### ***III. 2 Thessalonians 3***

Calvin’s overwhelming pastoral concern in 2 Thess 3 has to do with Church discipline. This discussion revolves around Paul’s response to those who might disobey his injunction that all of the members of the Christian community must work (3:12). In his comments, we see the confluence of the text’s effects and the receptive influences of Calvin’s own context.<sup>147</sup> Regarding “effect,” the discussion centralises on addressing those who refuse to obey Christian instruction. Regarding “reception,” however, we recognise Calvin’s use of “excommunication” language and the relationship of

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 231–32.

<sup>147</sup> Jauss repeatedly emphasises that “the text-reader relation (i.e., effect as the element that is conditioned by the text and reception as the element of concretization of meaning that is conditioned by the addressee) must be distinguished, worked out, and mediated if one wishes to see how expectation and experience mesh and whether an element of new significance emerges.” Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience*, xxxii; cf. Jauss, “The Theory of Reception,” 60.

rebellious individuals to the Church at large, rather than the specific community at Thessalonica.

Therefore, in connecting Paul's warning to any person who "does not obey our word" (3:14) with the fact that Paul has "no command but *from the Lord*" (cf. 2 Thess 3:6; 1 1 Thess 5:14; Cor 7:10),<sup>148</sup> is able to form a strong basis for the disciplinary action of excommunication. For those who openly rebel against God, Calvin argues that the Church must "point out their diseases to the physician [God?] whose task it is to heal them."<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, in having "no company with him" (2 Thess 3:14), the practice of excommunication treats with compulsion and brings into submission the rebellious, so that "they learn to obey."<sup>150</sup>

To Paul's aim that the individual "be ashamed" (3:14) Calvin adds that it teaches them to obey the commands of Holy Scripture, that it stems the contamination of their rebellion in the Church, prevents disgracing the Church, and that the example functions as a warning to others. He concludes his review of this verse with the insight that excommunication functions as a "bridle" (*fraeno*)<sup>151</sup> for the already impudent, but it prevents that impudence from expanding. In this way, the text is not simply against the idle, but any wanton individual within the Church and it operates under Calvin's assumption of humanity's corruption.

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<sup>148</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 421, italics original. The referent is not exactly clear. It may allude to 2 Thess 3:6, but Paul does not say, "We have no command," but rather, "We command you." Additionally, the only portion of this phrase that is a direct quote in the Latin appears to be "ex Domino," which makes tracing the reference difficult. See Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:215). In point of fact, this comes close to Chrysostom's affirmation of Scripture as "letters sent by God" noted in chapter 3 above.

<sup>149</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 421.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:216).

Calvin's closing pastoral remark follows on Paul's own that the community "not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother" (3:15). Again, like his theological predecessors (e.g. Chrysostom),<sup>152</sup> Calvin extends this practice as the general rule for Church discipline, and reminds his readers, "the intention of excommunication is not to drive men from the Lord's flock, but rather to bring them back again when they have wandered astray."<sup>153</sup> Calvin's concern, and the Church's at large, has expanded beyond a response to idleness to wilful rebellion within the Christian community. The dialogue is shaped by the text, but not without concerns stemming from the Reformation context.

In the *Institutes*, Calvin deals specifically with the Church's administration of discipline, relating every reference to 2 Thess 3:14-15 to excommunication, both in terms of its function and its application.<sup>154</sup> In one context, Calvin connects Paul's exhortation to Christ's declaration to Peter that whatever he "binds on earth will be bound in heaven" (Matt 18:18). Significantly, Calvin describes this as Christ's promise to the Church as "his people,"<sup>155</sup> rather than to Peter specifically, thereby withdrawing it from its longstanding location in the doctrine of papal authority. By bringing these texts together under the topic of excommunication, Calvin perceives this pronouncement by the Church as binding one to damnation, unless they should repent.

One of the earliest texts in which Calvin discusses excommunication, *Articles Concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at*

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<sup>152</sup> C.f. John Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 5 (PG 62:493). See also chapter 3 above.

<sup>153</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 422.

<sup>154</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:4.1.26 and 4.12.5.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:4.12.10.



*Geneva*, includes a similar appeal to Matt 18 (though not 2 Thess 3:14-15). This writing reveals that, from the outset, Calvin insisted on the power of the Church as a body of believers and particularly the lay leadership of a congregation to enforce excommunication.<sup>156</sup>

It is not insignificant that Calvin consistently advances the role of the Church in pronouncing and enforcing excommunication in his later works. In his time at Geneva, Calvin came into conflict with the political council of the city on several occasions over the location of authority to enforce excommunication. The first wrangling over this topic with the Genevan Council in 1538, in part a response to the *Articles*, resulted in the expulsion of Calvin and Farel from the city.<sup>157</sup> Though he had no difficulty in wresting excommunication from the hands of the Catholics, the leaders of his own city believed that the excommunicative power belonged to the Council, rather than the Church. The Church could pass a judgment, but enforcement belonged to civil authorities.

It is in this context that the nature of excommunication for Calvin and the Reformers becomes clear: it has to do primarily with the refusal to allow an individual participation in Holy Communion and only secondarily with the withdrawal of casual association. How could civil authorities prevent an excommunicant from receiving the Eucharist or force a pastor to administer the same? The issue arose again after Calvin's return to Geneva in 1543, prior to the authorship of his commentary. A decade later, the execution of excommunication became an issue during the tumult over Servetus (1553),

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<sup>156</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. J. K. S. Reid, vol. 22, The Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM Press, 1954), 47–53.

<sup>157</sup> Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 362.

and later that same year with Philibert Berthelier for public drunkenness.<sup>158</sup>

Thus, the discussion of excommunication in the *Institutes* under the topic of Church is decidedly pointed for Calvin, and he has to carefully strike a balance between taking the authority from the papacy without giving it to the civil magistrates in a Christian society.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

Martin Luther's "Sermon on the Ban" is dedicated specifically to the administration and function of excommunication. Like Calvin, he finds the source for its administration in Matt 18, but articulates various dimensions not found in Calvin's work. For instance, Luther speaks of two forms of excommunication (*der Bann*),<sup>159</sup> an inward one by which God withdraws spiritual communion from the rebellious individual and which cannot be implemented by the Church, and outward excommunication, which the Church administers and which revokes their access to Christian fellowship.

The second form of excommunication is divided into a smaller ban and a larger one, both of which are given by Jesus. The smaller ban is the revocation of fellowship between individuals when one sins against another (Matt 18:15), while the larger ban follows on from the smaller if the impudent individual refuses to repent after being confronted by a group of two or three witnesses. This larger ban involves cessation from Christian fellowship. Luther substantiates his definition of excommunication with Paul's warning

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<sup>158</sup> Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* (Leicester: Apollos, 1993), 43–45.

<sup>159</sup> Luther demonstrates the philological dimension of excommunication by pointing out to his congregation that Christians participate in "communio" (fellowship) with one another. The opposite of this concept, "excommunicatio," entails exclusion from fellowship. Martin Luther, "Ein Sermon von dem Bann," in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol. 6 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1888), 63.

“If anyone refuses to obey what we say in this letter... have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Thess 3:14).

In the larger context, Luther is railing against the arbitrary implementation and abuse of excommunication by Catholic Church authorities. By transferring “true” excommunication to the hands of God, Luther diminishes the authority of the Church with the hope of stemming abuse. Furthermore, as the aim of excommunication entails repentance, Luther insists that the individual under “the ban” be allowed to attend church services in order that they might hear the gospel. The rebellious person will be refused communion, but no one may deny him/her the spiritual sacrament through which God may speak and which God alone may revoke.<sup>160</sup>

Interestingly, Luther says nothing about the relationship of the text from 2 Thessalonians to those who do not work— the historical addressees of Paul. Calvin discusses a theorised historical context, which includes those who refuse to work, but locates the meaning of the text in his own horizon in applying the ecclesial tool of excommunication. The text offers a great deal more in a context where doctrine has been built upon key texts, such as 2 Thess 3:14-15. Joel Green’s observation is fitting here regarding the change in emphasis from the historical setting of the letter to the Reformation: “Scripture-formed patterns of thinking and acting might take different

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 63–75; Luther argues similarly, but briefly in the Smalcald Articles (2.9; ca. 1537). Zwingli offers a congruent assertion in his Sixty-Seven Theses (31-32; ca. 1523), as does the Anabaptist Balthasar Hubmaier in *A Christian Catechism* (ca. 1526), and Elizabeth I in the Thirty-Nine Articles (33; ca. 1563), thereby reflecting a trend in the Reformation to decentralise a particular power once concentrated in the hands of a few. See Denis R. Janz, *A Reformation Reader* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 136, 157, 175–76, and 322, respectively.

shapes— not because the words of Scripture have changed, but because the social contexts within which those words are read and put into play vary.”<sup>161</sup>

Cajetan reads Paul’s exhortation not to “weary in doing good” (3:13) as a reminder to the readers not to cease in giving alms and, like Calvin, the final verses (3:14-15) provides a basis for the doctrine of excommunication, which has to do mainly with the abrogation of common fellowship.<sup>162</sup>

Situating the chapter in the larger context of the epistle, namely Paul’s encouragement to a persecuted group, Zwingli understands the exhortation not to “weary in doing good” (3:13) as a reminder to a group that would be challenged to do so under the weight of numerous afflictions. To the conversation of excommunication, Zwingli adds, “Even if you withdraw from [the excommunicant] physically... embrace them in mind, love them...”<sup>163</sup>

Estius speaks of the closing verses (3:14-15) as a description of “ecclesiastical discipline,”<sup>164</sup> which Paul will enforce, but then cites and follows Cajetan’s perspective on excommunication, which belongs ultimately to the papacy.

In his locating excommunication in the Church as a holistic body, rather than a particular leader, Calvin satisfies the horizon of expectation established by Luther. He surpasses it, though, in asking how this relates to civil Christian governments and he renders the program more “democratic,”

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<sup>161</sup> Joel B. Green, *Seized by Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 20.

<sup>162</sup> Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 138–39. Both authors make reference to the poor either explicitly or implicitly, thereby revealing an influential reading that dates at least to Chrysostom.

<sup>163</sup> Zwingli, “ii. Thessalonicenses,” 248. See also note 163 above.

<sup>164</sup> Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 758.

ii. *Modern Scholarship*

Marshall discusses the nature of Paul's discipline, yet notes the difficulty in clearly defining what it means to "have nothing to do with them" (3:14). He sees the problems thus: 1.) What did "exclusion" entail? 2.) The idlers were still associated with the church, otherwise they could not be admonished for their behaviour. Therefore, in what capacity were they able to participate in Christian community? And; 3.) How did Paul enforce his instructions?

The first difficulty Marshall partially resolves by suggesting that a meal was central to Christian fellowship. This point might be taken further with cultural insights relating to Thessalonica in the Greco-Roman era. Archaeological evidence indicates that Thessalonica had an abnormally large number of religious voluntary associations.<sup>165</sup> One of the practices employed by such organisations against offenders of the group's charter included exclusion from corporate meals.<sup>166</sup> Given Paul's frequent appropriation of cultural particularities in service of the gospel<sup>167</sup> or even the frame of reference for the Thessalonian Christians (i.e. they were similar to, yet different from voluntary associations), it would not be a stretch to suggest that the Thessalonians Christians would have executed discipline in a manner

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<sup>165</sup> Pantelis Nigdelis, "Voluntary Associations in Roman Thessalonikē: In Search of Identity and Support in a Cosmopolitan Society," in *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonikē: Studies in Religion and Archaeology*, ed. Laura Salah Nasrallah, Charalambos Bakirtzis, and Steven J. Friesen, Harvard Theological Studies 64 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 13–48.

<sup>166</sup> Richard S. Ascough, "Of Memories and Meals: Greco-Roman Associations and the Early Jesus-Group at Thessalonikē," in *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonikē: Studies in Religion and Archaeology*, ed. Laura Salah Nasrallah, Charalambos Bakirtzis, and Steven J. Friesen, Harvard Theological Studies 64 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 142–47.

<sup>167</sup> Paul's use of the phrase εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια (1 Thess 5:3), for example, appears to be an indirect reference to the Roman *Pax* read through a prophetic lens (e.g. Amos 5:18-20). See Holland W. Hendrix, "Archaeology and Eschatology at Thessalonica," in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*, ed. Birger A. Pearson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 107–18.

similar to the voluntary associations. In essence, this addresses all three of Marshall's concerns.

Marshall then turns to the context of the modern Church in which "discipline is under a cloud,"<sup>168</sup> meaning that the practice has been largely abandoned. Any congregant placed under disciplinary exclusion will likely abandon the church enforcing discipline and join another. The sin of the individual would have to be quite scandalous, and would likely not include disagreeing with a church's doctrine, to bring about a disciplinary response. This change may point to a reaction against the application of exclusion in the past as well as the change in the nature of Christian community from relatively compact, close-knit communities that are not the norm of many modern, Western congregations.<sup>169</sup> Both Marshall and Calvin recognise the difficulty in enforcing discipline, but from different vantages that reflect societal transformation from the Reformation to the present, and both from the original context of 2 Thessalonians.

Best concentrates primarily on the historical context and insists adamantly that the admonishment of the impudent individual included exclusion from the communal meal. He adds to this that the text indicates the decidedly communal nature of admonishment and questions how one might "hold aloof" (3:6) and "not associate" (3:14) with such a person, yet still treat him as a "brother" (3:15). Thus, he contends that the text "suggests a very early stage in the development of discipline." Such an observation hints at why the Church has historically utilised the text for a doctrine of discipline,

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<sup>168</sup> Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 229.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. We might add that this view is typical of Western congregations, though it may not apply in the majority world.

but has developed it with complementary Scriptures in order to more clearly define the dimensions of Church discipline.

An excellent example from the modern era that provides a canonical view of Church discipline materialises in the work of Bonhoeffer, who writes under the dual influences of Calvin (via Barth) and his own Lutheran tradition in the context of Nazi Germany with the great need for stricter adherence to biblical principles in the Church against the demands of State. Bringing together a host of Scriptures,<sup>170</sup> Bonhoeffer views the discipline of exclusion to be enforced against any individual who “commits a sin of word or deed”<sup>171</sup> and stubbornly refuses to repent. The difficulty in excluding the individual, yet treating them as a brother remains in Bonhoeffer’s work, in which he can offer the only point of contact as continual confrontation “with the word of admonition.”<sup>172</sup> Recognising the prominent position held by leaders, which has the potential to attract false accusations through jealous, spiteful, or individuals who take pleasure in inciting controversy, Bonhoeffer offers additional provisos for bringing charges against them. He also adds that the continued persistence under exclusion is not the condemnation of the individual by the Church to damnation, but rather the self-condemnation of the persistently unrepentant sinner.<sup>173</sup>

Two interesting observations might be drawn from the reception history of this text. First, from an early date the Church has shifted from reading this text primarily with regard to “idlers” who disobey Paul’s

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<sup>170</sup> Matt 18:15, 17-20; Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 5:5, 11; 2 Cor 2:6-11; 2 Thess 3:6, 14-15; 1 Tim 1:20, 5:20-21, 6:5; 2 Tim 2:17, 25-26, 3:5, 4:15; Titus 3:11. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 272–74.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 273.

instruction to Christians in general who cause a disturbance in the community through wilful iniquity. This tradition perseveres.

Second, the term “excommunication” is conspicuously absent from many modern commentaries.<sup>174</sup> Perhaps this is because it is seen as an anachronism.

The fading of Luther and Calvin’s questions likely has to do with the decreased animosity between Catholic and Protestant scholars, who already assume how excommunication should be practiced in their own communities. Dialogue with this passage shifted from how the Church should implement discipline with an assumption about who had the authority to do so (early Church–medieval Church), to questions that accepted the former point while reconsidering the latter assumption (the Reformation), to modern (Western) questions that also accept the passage’s instruction for Church discipline in general, yet they mature from a fractious society oriented toward the individual. In many cases, the abundance of denominations resulted from rebellion against the excommunicative regulations that the Reformers attempted to put in place. The newer questions do not negate the Reformers’, but depict a priority based on the more immediate need.

### **2.3 Receptive Impulses: Theologically-Shaped Exegesis**

Diverging slightly from the pattern of investigation set above, we turn our attention to another critical receptive dimension of Calvin’s interaction with 2 Thessalonians: the doctrinal/theological “tools”<sup>175</sup> that shape his reading of the letter. This section will concentrate primarily on giving a

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<sup>174</sup> Exceptions include Best, *Thessalonians*, 344, and; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 289, both of whom use the term sparingly.

<sup>175</sup> For this language and a helpful evaluation of the theological nature of Calvin’s exegesis, see Richard C. Gamble, “Calvin as Theologian and Exegete: Is There Anything New?” in *The Organizational Structure of Calvin’s Theology*, vol. 7, Articles on Calvin and Calvinism (New York and London: Garland, 1992), 53–54 and 58–60.



coherent picture of Calvin's theological reading of 2 Thessalonians, without the divisions of *contemporary scholarship* and *modern scholarship* within each section, though insights from both will be incorporated along the way. It is hoped that this change in format should disclose the interwoven theological conceptions that govern his interpretation without disjunctive interruptions along the way.

Calvin interprets within a decidedly explicit theological framework that mutually shapes and is shaped by his reading of 2 Thessalonians. Of particular interest with regard to this epistle are Calvin's reading according to his theological conceptions of divine sovereignty, "kingdoms," the Church, divine action in the believer, and eschatology. Again, this doctrinal reading is not to be taken as comprehensive of Calvin's thought. Instead, it is an attempt to determine those factors that guide his dialogue with the text and lead to a "Calvinist" meaning in a sixteenth century context.

### ***I. Divine Sovereignty***

Marking the transition within the thanksgiving section (1:3-2:12) from the thanksgiving proper (1:3-4) to the first stage of parenesis (1:5-10),<sup>176</sup> Calvin determines that the "manifest token of the righteous judgment of God" (1:5) should be taken as "the wrongs and persecutions which the innocent suffer at the hands of rogues and criminals clearly show that one day God will be judge of the world."<sup>177</sup> He contends that this flies in the face of contemporary perspectives that the path of history is a result of chance and it

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<sup>176</sup> For this outline, see Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:ix.

<sup>177</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 388. Though Calvin insists that he omits "any reference to the interpretations of other commentators" at this point, he clearly shares the perspective of Chrysostom. Cf. Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 2 (PG 62:475).

implies God has no control therein.<sup>178</sup> He chalks this up to the unredeemed mind and offers a reading to combat such a position. The sovereignty of God is seen explicitly in the suffering of the righteous and the afflictive power of the persecutors, because in that scenario God points to the reversal of fortunes in the future. In this way, Calvin has adopted an apocalyptic eschatology (in part) without any awareness of such a genre.

As the first chapter concludes, Calvin notes that Paul could have ended with the prayer that the Thessalonians' faith be fulfilled by God (1:12), but he adds "good pleasure" (*beneplacitum*).<sup>179</sup> That is to say, "God was persuaded by nothing other than His own goodness"<sup>180</sup> to bring about salvation in his elect. We might helpfully add to this category of sovereignty the influence of Calvin's doctrine of grace on his reading, for shortly after the above argument, he adds that the whole of our salvation belongs to the "pure grace of God," unassisted by good works.<sup>181</sup> Calvin's rewording of the phrase "that our God may... fulfil... every work of faith" (1:12) as "that your faith may be fulfilled" (*ut impleatur fides vestra*)<sup>182</sup> renders his perspective unambiguous. God is not just fulfilling hypothetical/potential "works of faith," but the very faith of the individual in his sovereignty.

Barth traces Calvin's view of grace in the Middle Ages to Duns Scotus, who reckoned that only God's grace renders works meritorious in any

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<sup>178</sup> Wendel observes the relocation of Calvin's discussion of providence in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* to just after his doctrine of creation. The close proximity of the topics emphasises that "God is the Creator of the world: but having once created it he remains its absolute master, takes interest in it, intervenes in it at every moment, and abandons none of his power to the blind play of natural laws, still less to chance." Francois Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Collins, 1976), 177.

<sup>179</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:193).

<sup>180</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 394.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:193).

capacity.<sup>183</sup> Though Calvin may have encountered this dimension of Scotus' theology during his time in Paris, it most likely reached Calvin later, filtered through the lens of Luther, who contended similarly, but insisted on the *active nature* of grace within the sovereign activity of God.<sup>184</sup>

We will comment cautiously on 2 Thess 2:1-12 in order to avoid infringing on the discussion of the Antichrist that will conclude this chapter. Of "the one who now restrains" (ὁ κατέχων; 2:7) Calvin remarks that this indicates the temporary reign of Antichrist, whose limits "have been predetermined by God."<sup>185</sup> In the present and during the period of tribulation of Antichrist, "the breath of [Christ's] mouth" and the "appearance of his coming" (2:8) are euphemistic expressions for the gift of Christ's spiritual presence through the preaching of the gospel, which God has given to keep the elect safe from "all the wiles of Satan."<sup>186</sup> As the chapter proceeds, Calvin looks again to God's provision for the elect by limiting Satan's power over "them that are perishing" (2:10). This only further confirms the limited power of Satan and Antichrist, which they have through divine permission.<sup>187</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Calvin engages in the theodical debate of whether those "who did not receive the love of the truth" (2:10) extends only to those who wilfully reject the gospel, or also to those have never heard its message. He concludes, "My answer is that this particular judgment of God by which he

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<sup>183</sup> Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 34.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 42–43. See, Martin Luther, *Disputatio contra scholasticum theologiam*. 1517 (WA 1:225–28). It is important, nevertheless, to note how Calvin cautiously distanced himself from scholastic theologians, often referring to them, like Luther, as "sophistarum." See Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:193). For the complexity of Calvin's relationship to scholasticism, see Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 39–61.

<sup>185</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 404.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 405.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 406.

has punished open defiance does not prevent Him from striking with wonder those who have never heard a single word about Christ as often as He wills.”<sup>188</sup> He quickly follows this point, however, with the observation that this is not the focus of Paul’s discussion. In so doing, Calvin attempts to forcefully close off questions generated in the historical dialogue with the text.

On the same passage in his other works, Calvin’s discussion revolves around the relationship of Satan to God and the nature of election. In the *Institutes*, for example, Calvin repeatedly insists that the activity of the lawless one and the deception of the perishing (2:9-10) take place under the permissive control of God. Satan, in fact, is compelled to do the bidding of God, for though he is rebellious in will, he cannot help but accomplish the will of God.<sup>189</sup> Calvin draws this conclusion from the fact that the discussion concludes with God sending the “strong delusion” (2:11). Thus he avers that the individual is the author of his/her own just vengeance, Satan is the minister of it, and God sends the delusion,<sup>190</sup> such that “Satan intervenes to stir up the reprobate whenever the Lord by his providence destines them to one end or another.”<sup>191</sup> God uses both the wicked and Satan as instruments to accomplish his will.

In response to this reading of 2 Thessalonians, Calvin must elsewhere defend himself against the position that God is the author of sin and the predestination of the reprobate. The first point he addressed in a tractate against Castellio entitled *Brief Reply in Refutation of the Calumnies of a Certain Worthless Person*. He begins with the assertion that God gives Satan

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 407.

<sup>189</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:1.14.17.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 1:1.18.2.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 1:2.4.5.

the power to delude the reprobate (2:11) as well as sending a lying spirit to the prophets of Ahab for his deception (1 Kings 22:22). Therefore, Satan operates under the licence of God. For Calvin, the issue is primarily a matter of will. Both Satan and God may will the destruction of an individual, but Satan does so for corrupt purposes, while God does so for the greater purpose of his infinitely deep, providential purposes for the world. Thus the destruction of that individual may come about, but Satan, in seeking his own will, has accomplished the will of God under his permission.<sup>192</sup> This is strikingly reminiscent of Haimo.

Regarding the predestination of the reprobate, Calvin first undergirds his doctrine of the predestination of the elect with the God's choice of the elect to salvation and sanctification "from the beginning" (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς; 2 Thess 2:13).<sup>193</sup> Addressing his opponent Georgius of Sicily, who leaned toward universalism,<sup>194</sup> Calvin makes use of the same biblical texts as Georgius to refute his position. Taking up 2 Thess 2:13 again, Calvin rejects his opponent's position that predestination has anything to do with "being born at a certain time," as this overlooks the emphases on salvation and sanctification in the verse, and he argues that it clearly points to the preferential election of some over others.<sup>195</sup> If we recall from the previous chapter on Haimo, Calvin falls outside of the sanctioned perspective of predestination within the

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 1:1.18.2.

<sup>193</sup> John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (London: James Clarke, 1961), 105. For issues with the reading "from the beginning," see chapter three on Chrysostom above. The manuscript evidence can support this reading, but so does Calvin's predetermined view of predestination.

<sup>194</sup> See Reid's introduction in *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 159.

Medieval Church, because he advocates double-predestination, enlisting 2 Thess 2:11 as demonstrable of God's election of the reprobate.<sup>196</sup>

As Calvin transfers from this topic to the preservation of the elect, as it materialises in the closing thanksgiving of the section (2:13). Again, preferring the reading "God chose you from the beginning" (2:13), Calvin determines that Paul means Satan never threatens the salvation of the elect, which God has established "before the creation of the world."<sup>197</sup> He adds that we have no business attempting to penetrate the secret counsel of God, either for the reasoning behind his election, or as to whether one is elected.<sup>198</sup> Instead, he concludes that God offers outward tokens of his election to give believers confidence. Of particular note, Calvin advances the presence of the Spirit in the individual's life, which leads to ever-deepening faith and regeneration, as a guard against those who might use his doctrine as a licence for licentiousness.<sup>199</sup>

In Paul's benedictory prayer, in which he speaks of "the Lord of peace" (3:16), Calvin forwards part of his understanding of Christian prayer. Of significance is that the reference to peace indicates that the offering and maintenance of peace belongs to God.<sup>200</sup>

A final note on divine sovereignty focuses on the preservation of this epistle and the gospel connects the latter two chapters of the letter. In response to Paul's apparent comment about pseudonymous epistles (2:2), Calvin offers thanks to God for keeping spurious documents out of the canon and preserving

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<sup>196</sup> Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, 22:157 and 175.

<sup>197</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 409.

<sup>198</sup> Steinmetz addresses this topic in a certain fashion with attention to the debate over the absolute and ordained powers of God, part of which he sees clarified in relation to Calvin's views of providence and predestination. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 40–52.

<sup>199</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 409–10.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 422.

the authentic materials and concludes, “This certainly could not have taken place by chance or human effort, if God himself had not held Satan and all his ministers in check by His power.”<sup>201</sup> Calvin recognises this security as well in the signature offered at the letter’s conclusion (3:17), determining that its preservation is due to the “singular kindness of God.”<sup>202</sup>

Though debate frequently concentrates on Calvin’s view of predestination, his reading of 2 Thessalonians according to the guiding doctrine of divine sovereignty reveals a richer understanding of the dimensions of this element of his theology. God’s sovereignty extends to the fulfilment of faith in the elect as well as their preservation through any tribulation, it limits Antichrist and Satan in time and permission, includes double-predestination, reaches those who have never heard the gospel, asserts God’s continually active role in creation, and secured the preservation of sacred Scriptures for the Church.<sup>203</sup>

## ***II. The Kingdoms***

Flowing from the doctrine of divine sovereignty is Calvin’s view of the spiritual kingdoms presently at odds.<sup>204</sup> This appears in both the explicit

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 397. Had Calvin access to the Nag Hammadi library, their divergence from the canonical NT would render his view of divine sovereignty stronger.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 423.

<sup>203</sup> The heading of this section might be taken as “providence” rather than “sovereignty,” though it is more helpful to view the former as contained within the latter. Moreover, it is significant to note that predestination should be “regarded in some respects a particular application of the more general notion of Providence,” rather than the sole focus of Calvin’s theology, against the typical focus of the Reformer’s theology. Wendel, *Calvin*, 178; For the influence of Augustine on Calvin with regard to divine sovereignty, but particularly on his view of predestination, see Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1956); This Augustinian influence, coupled with his own reading of Scripture lead to his parting ways with Chrysostom at certain doctrinal junctures, though he still thought it necessary for the average Christian to engage with the Greek Father. See Hazlett, “Calvin’s Latin Preface,” 146–50.

<sup>204</sup> This ongoing awareness of dualities reflects a sensitivity to the apocalyptic genre, particularly in the imbalanced duality that favours the supreme sovereignty of God. Martyn dedicates more precise attention to this proclivity of the apocalyptic genre. Martyn, “Apocalyptic Antimonies”; J. L. Martyn, “Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Corinthians 5:16,” in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*,

mention of kingdoms as well as the duality he sees in the redeemed and unredeemed.

The first example of this perspective comes from Calvin's regard of Christian suffering as a "token of the righteous judgment of God" (1:5), in which he attempts to cultivate a Christian response against the "unredeemed instincts [which] conclude that there is no judgment of God, no punishment for men's crimes, and no reward for righteousness."<sup>205</sup> He adds to this that, based on the certain recompense of vengeance by God (1:6), believers ought not envy the temporary auspicious situation of the ungodly, who reject the righteousness of Paul and thereby "rob [God] of His office and power."<sup>206</sup> By nature of the kingdom contrast, Calvin nearly always offers a pastoral interpretation for his readers. As the epistle continues, for example, Calvin observes that the fearful description of the coming judgment has the aim of encouraging the godly that God's concern for their affliction is directly proportional to the devastating nature of his vengeance to come on the ungodly.<sup>207</sup>

At the outset of 2 Thess 3, Calvin reads "not all have faith" (3:2) as a reference to those "leading wicked and rotten lives" to "bring the Gospel into disrepute."<sup>208</sup> In so doing he draws a contrast between faithful Christians, "who have already entered the kingdom of heaven"<sup>209</sup> and the wicked, who participate in the physical church, but not the spiritual Church/kingdom of God.

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ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

<sup>205</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 389.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*



This receives decidedly more attention in the *Institutes*, in which he describes the papacy as the kingdom of Antichrist, along with all historical heresies, as set up against the kingdom of God (cf. 2 Thess 2:3-4, 7).<sup>210</sup> He adds to this an interpretation of the petition that “Thy kingdom come” (Matt 6:10) in the Lord’s Prayer seeks the full establishment of God’s kingdom against that of the presently expanding kingdom of Antichrist, which will come about in the complete destruction of Antichrist and all ungodliness (2 Thess 2:8). Because prayer is the chief means by which Christians receive the benefits of God (according to Calvin), they should faithfully pray for God to usher in his Kingdom.<sup>211</sup> Calvin renders lucid his view of the two kingdoms with reference to 2 Thess 2:13, when he describes the Church as that which is “actually in God’s presence by grace of adoption and true members of Christ by sanctification of the Holy Spirit,” though, as above, the outward church is intermingled with hypocrites.<sup>212</sup>

This latter description of hypocrites Calvin clearly associates with contemporary monasticism, relating the rebuke to the “idlers” (3:11) to the mendicants, who operate “under the pretext of religion.”<sup>213</sup> Calvin views them as the hypocrites within the outward church by designating them “dissolute and *lawless*.”<sup>214</sup> Thus he implicitly enmeshes the hypocritical monks and Antichrist, making it difficult to discern where one begins and the other ends. Further discussion on the “kingdoms” will receive attention under the closing section, which looks specifically at Calvin’s interpretation of 2 Thess 2:1-12.

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<sup>210</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:4.7.25.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 2:3.20.42. Calvin connects the reading of 2 Thess 3:2 in his commentary to the same point in the Lord’s prayer as well.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 2:4.1.7.

<sup>213</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 419.

<sup>214</sup> “...dissolutos esse et quasi exleges.” Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:214). Italics mine.

### ***III. The Church***

Connected to this theological reading of two kingdoms is Calvin's advancement of the nature of the Church. The "true" Church is unified by spiritual bonds across congregations, though it does not attach every congregant to the life of God, as we have noted above. In general terms, the body of the Reformer's work has primarily to do with the Church, aiming to explicate the mysteries of God for the average Christian reader, unite those readers by dogmatic considerations, and lead to a way of life consistent with the ethical impulses of Scripture.

Looking specifically at 2 Thessalonians, however, Calvin's primary focus with regard to the Church is articulation of its nature. Both the content of the epistle (i.e. the dualisms of wicked and righteous) and his historical context (i.e. the papacy as "the wicked" and the Church, as rearticulated by the Reformers, as "the righteous") nurture this reading. The latter in particular necessitates attention in this regard for Calvin, as he must both legitimate his abscission from the Roman Church and reveal the continuity of his "tradition" with the historical Church. This sets the stage for his reading of 2 Thessalonians within which the latter justification especially absorbs his interest.

We will avoid repeating the discussion of kingdoms and concentrate here on explicit references to the Church's nature and function. In the commentary and the *Institutes*, Calvin clusters the majority of his attention on the topic of the Church in the final chapter of the letter. This should not obscure his larger view of the Church, however, that comes to bear on his reading of 2 Thessalonians. Outside of chapter three, Calvin offers only an observation regarding the Church in response to Paul's obligatory

thanksgiving for the growth of the Thessalonians faith and love (1:3). Calvin considers these developments as due to God's goodness, adding, "If we consider the nature and holiness of the unity of Christ's body, there will be such a sharing in common amongst us that we shall consider the benefits enjoyed by every member to be the advantage of the whole Church. Consequently, in extolling the kindnesses of God we must always have regard to the whole Church."<sup>215</sup>

Superficially, this describes the appropriate response of the Church to any good experienced in the wider "body." Close attention here, however, reveals Calvin's view of the body of Christ and the two natures of Christ. For Calvin, Christ is undoubtedly present in the Christian community by his Holy Spirit, but, because his *physical* body suffers the spatial limitations of all other physical bodies, it can only be located in one place at any given time. Given the past occurrence of the ascension, therefore, Christ is *physically* present only in heaven. His *spiritual* nature is not limited thus and can pervade numerous regions.

This exploration of the natures of Christ, as manifest in the Church, becomes the particular focus in Calvin's understanding of Holy Communion.<sup>216</sup> He battles against the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and negotiates with the Zwinglians<sup>217</sup> an agreement over Communion. He perceives himself not as developing a radically new perspective, but rather

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<sup>215</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 388.

<sup>216</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:4.27.1–34.

<sup>217</sup> Calvin hammered out an agreement known as the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549) with Bullinger, Zwingli's successor at Zurich, in order to minimise their differences over the Eucharist. Many Lutherans saw this as a move on Calvin's part further away from Lutheranism. Most notable was Tilemann Hesshusen, who published *De praesentia corporis Christi in coena Domini, contra sacramentarios* against Calvin. Calvin responded in kind with *Dilucida explicatio sanae doctrinae de vera participatione carnis et sanguinis in sacra coena, ad discutiendas Hashusii nebulas*. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 172–74; Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, 22:257–324.

defending the tenets of the Nicene Creed. What appears of particular importance in the passage under investigation is that, because Calvin adheres to this view of Christ's natures, he sees the (true) Church as the very real physical presence of Christ on earth, which his spiritual nature inhabits. In this way, Christians are compelled to rejoice at any goodness experienced by the body, because a Spiritual animating force unites those physical parts.

The next prominent section in which Calvin attends to the nature of the Church is the third chapter of the epistle. In Paul's prayer "that the word of the Lord may run" (3:1) Calvin sees the apostle concerned for the entire Church, because it demonstrates primarily concern for "the glory of Christ and the common welfare of the Church," rather than (exclusively) Paul's personal interests.<sup>218</sup> The desire has to do with the unhindered dissemination of the gospel, which is clarified by "even as also it is with you" (3:1). Therefore, the Church is characterised by "those who have already entered the kingdom" and who pray in such a way, with the larger desire that God may bring about its complete manifestation.<sup>219</sup>

Drawing a connection between the Lord as the ultimate source of Paul's commands and the apostle's confidence that the Thessalonians will do as he has commanded (3:4), Calvin makes a decidedly contextually-shaped observation. The verse "defines the limits to his demands as well as to their obedience—it should only be to the Lord. Any, therefore, who do not observe this restriction offer Paul's example for the purpose of fettering the Church and subjecting it to their laws to no purpose."<sup>220</sup> This is a markedly unveiled

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<sup>218</sup> "Non tam igitur se unum respici vult, quam et Christi gloriam et communem ecclesiae salutem." Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:208).

<sup>219</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 413.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 415.

reference to the Catholic traditions. The “true” Church exhibits freedom from obedience to extraneously imposed (non-biblical) conditions, even should they come from an ecclesiastical authority. Though Paul likely did not *intend* this meaning, he created the *potential* for such a reading in a context where the location of the Lord’s “voice” was debated.

On the “disorderly/idle” (3:6-10), Calvin perceives the apostle to be addressing a particular issue regarding idle members of the community “who do not have any honourable or useful occupation.”<sup>221</sup> He sees these as individuals living for themselves, who forget their necessary loving service to their neighbour, and who fail to help others. Following Chrysostom, he argues that the Church must, as a command of Christ, sever fellowship with such “disorderly” Christians because they dishonour the body of Christ and “they are the taints and blots of religion.”<sup>222</sup> The aim of exclusion, he clarifies, is to bring about repentance and their return to the community (3:6, 14-15). He even cites the example of Simon Magus as not one cast into despair, but offered the opportunity to repent (Acts 8:22). Therefore, Simon’s desire for self-advancement through purchasing the power of the Holy Spirit represents an example of a “disorderly” congregant.<sup>223</sup> He broadens the category to include more than just those who do not work. Nevertheless, Calvin turns the text on monks as a prime example of non-working “Christians,” who make demands of sustenance on others.<sup>224</sup> This too fits under his perspective that the title “disorderly” applies to all who are self-focused.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 416.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 417.

<sup>223</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:4.1.26. The association of Simon with 2 Thessalonians at a different location and for a different purpose might be coincidental, but it might also reflect a shift in what Calvin considered appropriate resources for engaging Scripture.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 2:4.13.11. He draws this conclusion with relationship to 2 Thess 3:11.

In addition to bringing about repentance, Calvin sees the purpose of this excommunicative practice as preventative of tarnishing the Christian name and dishonouring God, as well as protecting the corruption of good people.<sup>225</sup> He unites the power to “bind and loose” (Matt 16:19) given by Christ with Paul’s insistence on disciplinary exclusion (2 Thess 3:6-15). Because of this, damnation is assured if the offender fails to repent, but the Church must cautiously and gently administer it “lest we slide from discipline to butchery.”<sup>226</sup>

In summary, Calvin’s vision of the Church, as it relates to 2 Thessalonians, entails a physical “body” of believers connected on a foundational level and animated by the life-giving Spirit of God. Any good (and conversely any negative experience) endured by an individual or segment thereof affects the entire body, and therefore necessitates a response of gratitude toward the Source of the body. Those within the true Church have already entered the kingdom of God and earnestly pray for its complete manifestation. Until that day, they dwell under Scripture as the sole voice of authority (or at least a particular reading of it), using it for daily guidance, including the administration of discipline.

#### ***IV. Divine Action in the Believer***

Calvin does not see the individuals of this body given life by this Holy Spirit in an abstract sense, but rather recognises the genuine activity of God in believers that draws them together as one. Any such activity in a Christian he helpfully explains in his evaluation of the Christian’s capacity to do “good”

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 2:4.12.5.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 2:4.12.10; In a fascinating, yet tangential move, Calvin uses 2 Thess 3:10 to defend infant baptism. Against those who argue that one must be of a mature age to receive baptism, Calvin argues that such logic must dictate that infants should be denied food, because they do not work! Ibid., 2:4.16.28–29.

(3:13) by attributing it wholly to the grace of God, who renders the good works as “ours” and then testifies that they are acceptable and deserve reward. The purpose of viewing not just works but the entire presence in the life of God is to ascribe due praise to his grace.<sup>227</sup> The further effect of this is that it should compel Christians to further good works because they are accompanied by a great promise and they expand participation in God’s kindness.<sup>228</sup>

In reading the opening thanksgiving for the Thessalonians’ faith and love, Calvin quickly takes hold of the obligatory direction toward God as evidence that God is the fount of these developments. The primary contrast here between Calvin and his contemporaries lies in their respective focal points. Cajetan and Estius, for example, both perceive the thanksgiving as an appropriate response to the Thessalonians’ growth of faith and love, but it remains logically unclear why that thanksgiving is directed toward God in Cajetan’s work and it is only vaguely clarified by Estius, who sees it as a response to the righteous demand of God. Calvin, alternatively, outlines an ontological assumption about the Christian person.<sup>229</sup>

He argues further that the association of the Thessalonians’ suffering and their being “considered worthy (*digni habeamini*) of the kingdom of God” (1:5) has nothing to do with worthiness *attained through afflictions*. Instead, Paul “is simply taking the common doctrine of Scripture that God destroys in us what is of the world, in order to restore a better life within us.”<sup>230</sup> Affliction is a means of sanctification that teaches believers “to renounce the world and

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<sup>227</sup> Calvin’s indebtedness to Luther for the centrality of grace in his theology cannot be overemphasised. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 157–58.

<sup>228</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:2.15.3.

<sup>229</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 387; Cajetan, *Epistolae Pauli*, 136; Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 741.

<sup>230</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 390.

aim at God's heavenly kingdom,"<sup>231</sup> it is in no way meritorious (a word he cautiously avoids<sup>232</sup>) nor is it purgative.

The conflict with Roman Catholic tradition becomes immediately apparent in Estius' reading of the same passage, who denounces Calvin as a heretic in part for his rejection of the need for temporal purgation of venial sins following the divine remission of eternal punishment. To Estius, the verse clearly indicates the necessary attainment of worthiness through affliction in order that believers might be stones of pure gold in the heavenly city (Rev 21:18).<sup>233</sup>

In the closing prayer report of the first chapter, Calvin observes that the very nature of prayer discloses the continual need of God's assistance. This alone is not an indication of the activity of God in the believer, but his accompanying observation that the prayer that God "fulfil every desire for goodness and every work of faith in power" (2 Thess 1:11) reveals that God must establish one's calling, which is realised "when he brings us to our goal."<sup>234</sup> He adds to this that the passage renders lucid that God affects every stage of salvation, achieving this through the ongoing formation and production of faith in the Christian. Thanks to Paul's conclusion that the glorification of the Lord be brought about "according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:12), Calvin can again ground his interpretation in the ultimate source of any good experienced or produced by the Christian: God's grace given particularly in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:3.25.2.

<sup>233</sup> Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 742.

<sup>234</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 393.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 394–95.



We might add to this doctrinal influence on Calvin's reading of 2 Thessalonians two brief points. In the first case, Calvin advances that, in contrast to the "working of error" (2:11) sent by God to the wicked, God enlightens believers by the Holy Spirit so that they comprehend and be fully affected by his "doctrine"<sup>236</sup> (i.e. the gospel). Apart from this illumination it is utterly impossible for a person to attain true "knowledge" of God.<sup>237</sup> Related to this is Paul's prayer that "the word of the Lord may run" (3:1), which Calvin takes to mean that the apostle's preaching will be powerful and efficacious. That is, the Holy Spirit will render it so.<sup>238</sup>

The second and final point under this doctrinal aspect of reading the epistle appears in Calvin's concluding observation of Paul's last words. He takes "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" (3:18) as a prayer that imparts the means of God's assistance to believers: "nempe gratiae Christi praesentia."<sup>239</sup>

#### **V. Eschatology<sup>240</sup>**

Eschatology, quite fittingly, is the final theological influence on Calvin to receive consideration. Again, this topic overlaps a great deal with material from 2 Thess 2, which we have reserved for the final section of this chapter, and therefore we will avoid encroachment where possible. Generally speaking, neither Calvin nor Luther developed a coherent system of "the last things," and on specific doctrines such as the "intermediate state, resurrection, return

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 407.

<sup>237</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:2.2.20–24; for a clarification of this doctrine, see Victor A. Shepherd, *The Nature and Function of Faith in the Theology of John Calvin*, NABPR Dissertation Series 2 (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 20–24.

<sup>238</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 413.; This discussion flows from his broader understanding of the Fall and free will. Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 159–83.

<sup>239</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:218).

<sup>240</sup> For a similar and illuminative reading of Calvin's eschatology in 1 Thessalonians, see Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 115–27. Though the topics of the immortality of the soul and universal transformation taken up by Paddison are only tangential to our discussion.

of Christ, judgment, and the future kingdom of God” Calvin offered “no creative reformulation of the church’s eschatology.”<sup>241</sup> The Reformers’ apparent reticence to develop a precise eschatology was due in part to a perceived misuse of the doctrine amongst Catholics and fanatics, albeit for different ends.<sup>242</sup> This hesitation with regard to eschatology likely accounts for Calvin’s failing to produce a commentary on Revelation, despite offering commentaries on the remainder of the NT.

All of this does not mean, however, that Calvin’s theology is devoid of an eschatological perspective. Despite his moderate eschatological position with regard to specific doctrines, Calvin’s theology is thoroughly *eschatologically-oriented*. Three primary aspects, hierarchically arranged, shape this orientation: Christ, history, and hope. Calvin eagerly expects the return of Christ and the consummation of history, but this expectation is founded upon the reality of Christ’s resurrection and the biblical assurance of his return. That reality enables him to live in the present with a mind toward the end, seeking actively to bring it about. This dominance of Christ in his gaze toward the eschaton leads Quistorp to assert that, for Calvin, “eschatology is Christology.”<sup>243</sup>

It should be evident in the preceding description how history and hope fall into place under Christ in Calvin’s “eschatology.” With the former, “the advent of Christ, his death and resurrection, is for Calvin the eschatological

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<sup>241</sup> David E. Holwerda, “Eschatology and History: A Look at Calvin’s Eschatological Vision,” in *Calvin’s Theology, Theology Proper, Eschatology*, vol. 9, Articles on Calvin and Calvinism (New York: Garland, 1992), 133.

<sup>242</sup> Quistorp helpfully describes fanatical misuse for “apocalyptic purposes,” whereas Holwerda’s emphasis in this regard on Calvin’s “basic anti-apocalyptic bias” we find less precise and necessitating nuance given our understanding of “apocalyptic.” Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Last Things*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), 11; Holwerda, “Eschatology and History: A Look at Calvin’s Eschatological Vision,” 148.

<sup>243</sup> Quistorp, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Last Things*, 22 and 192.

turning point of world history. At that moment the renovation of the world... was completed in Jesus Christ... Every subsequent event can have meaning only in relationship to that 'renovation of the world which took place at the advent of Christ.'"<sup>244</sup> Thus "the ascended Christ holds together the Advent and Return," governing all time and standing "at the center of Calvin's eschatological vision."<sup>245</sup>

In a way, Calvin's perspective reminds us of Haimo's understanding that all time following the redemption of the cross is eschatological.<sup>246</sup> Calvin's unique contribution with regard to history and time, however, is in his establishing these concepts in everyday life and seeing dynamic movement in history toward something, namely the kingdom of God, as opposed to the static view of history held within the Church of his time.<sup>247</sup> Both the view of Christ and time/history are concretised in the *hope* of the believer. All three of these themes underlie his reading of 2 Thessalonians.

His eschatological perspective of Christ remains largely implicit until his comment on 2 Thess 2:3, in which he describes the world as already "under the rule of Christ."<sup>248</sup> This perspective assumes the reality of the resurrection, yet it allows for the seeming contradiction of this rule with perceived reality in light of the necessary judgment to come. Through this

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<sup>244</sup> Holwerda, "Eschatology and History," 142; the latter portion of the quote is taken from Calvin's commentary on Gen 17:7 with reference to the Abrahamic covenant. Cf. "Hoc modo foedus perpetuum vocatur usque ad mundi renovationem, quae contigit adventus Christi." John Calvin, *Commentarius in Genesin*, ed. Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, vol. 1 (Berlin: Gustavum Bethge, 1838), 200.

<sup>245</sup> Holwerda, "Eschatology and History," 144.

<sup>246</sup> See pp. 197-98 above. Again, Calvin approaches Pannenberg's construal of universal history, though Pannenberg perceives all of history as "eschatologized" and receiving its meaning with reference to its end, modifying Hegel's philosophy with the proleptic revelation of Jesus Christ. See, Pannenberg, *Basic Questions*, 2:62; Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, 57.

<sup>247</sup> E. Harris Harbison, "History and Destiny," *Theology Today* 21, no. 4 (1965): 395-97. Harbison credits Calvin with the modern perception of historical "progress."

<sup>248</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 399.

perspective (Calvin's vision of God as the righteous judge of the world, who inflicts vengeance on the unjust and glorifies his saints) Calvin asserts "the principle of faith"<sup>249</sup>— a principle that is inextricably linked to "hope" for the Reformer.<sup>250</sup> This faith entails both trust and assurance in God's plan for history. Expanding outward from the central platform of Christ, history, and hope, Calvin incorporates Christian suffering, contempt for the world, and Christian responsibility for ushering in the kingdom of God into his eschatology.

As Calvin sees it, suffering for one's faith breeds necessary "contempt" for the world and sets one's mind "on things beyond: the retribution of Christ"<sup>251</sup> so that "whatever annoyances we suffer foreshadow to us the life to come."<sup>252</sup> Rather than concentrate on the affliction suffered by the ungodly in the judgment, Calvin regards this as a distraction from the aim "that the godly should pass over this brief course of their earthly life with eyes closed and their minds ever intent on the future manifestation of Christ's kingdom."<sup>253</sup>

Yet he ensures moderation against an overly-anticipatory eschatology by noting that Paul reminds his readers to think of the *eschaton* only with reverence and restraint (2:1)<sup>254</sup> and, following the apostle's emphasis (2:3), "that believers are to wage a protracted conflict before they gain the

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 389.

<sup>250</sup> For the regulatory function of hope in faith in Calvin, see Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, 16–22.

<sup>251</sup> Calvin on 2 Thess 1:6–7. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:3.9.5.

<sup>252</sup> Calvin on 2 Thess 1:6–8. Ibid., 2:3.25.10.

<sup>253</sup> See 2 Thess 1:10. Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 393.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 396.

victory.”<sup>255</sup> Only in this frame of mind are believers to “despise the world, put to death the flesh, and endure the Cross.”<sup>256</sup>

Calvin owes a great deal to the formative work of Thomas à Kempis, *De imitatione Christi*, which dominated the devotional life of students in Paris during Calvin’s period of matriculation there, for his denunciatory view of the world.<sup>257</sup> It would be a misconception, however, to describe Calvin’s vision of Christian suffering and contempt for the world as an unmitigated reception of à Kempis’ position. The latter proposes a very literal contempt for the world that leads to withdrawal and concentration on the interior life.

Alternatively, Calvin urges gratitude for earthly life, and “contempt for the world” has to do with the “rejection of what is *evil*, and a recognition that true life must be sought in Christ.”<sup>258</sup> In Calvin’s thought, then, “the world” functions as foil to “the heavenly,” though it does not rule out the presence of the heavenly in the world. Belief in the gospel, as Calvin would have it, transports the heart of the believer by means of hope into the heavenly presence of Christ so that they eagerly anticipate the day in which they fully participate in his glory; when their home and their location become one. This eschatological focus prevents them from fastening to “earthly pleasures,”<sup>259</sup> but it has necessary ramifications for life in the world, not a retreat from the world, as à Kempis would suggest.

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<sup>255</sup> Thus he provides a sure guard against the “Chiliasts.” Ibid., 398.

<sup>256</sup> In this way Calvin summarises “the patience of Christ” (3:5). Ibid., 416.

<sup>257</sup> Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 74; Holwerda, “Eschatology and History,” 138–39; for the widespread dissemination of à Kempis, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)*, vol. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 36–37.

<sup>258</sup> Holwerda, “Eschatology and History,” 139. Emphasis added.

<sup>259</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:2.10.3.

In Calvin's eschatology, Christians aid in bringing the world "under the rule of Christ" through the ongoing preaching of the word against the kingdom of Antichrist, which Calvin equates with the Lord Jesus slaying him "with the breath of his mouth" (2:8).<sup>260</sup> They also undergird this mission by continually praying "that the word of the Lord (i.e. preaching) may run" (3:1),<sup>261</sup> seeking to usher in the fullness of God's kingdom, so that their earthly and heavenly lives might be unified.

During the time of suspension between the ascension and second coming, Christians manifest their eschatological hope via ethical continuity with the heavenly kingdom. Thus, believers must persist in "love for God and in the hope of Christ's coming" (cf. 3:5) as a general principle for living in the world. In the specific situation of work and daily life, Calvin sees "disorderly" (3:6) behaviour as a failure to consider "the purpose for which we were formed and not to order our lives with the end in view, for it is only when we live in accordance with the rule of God that our life is set in order."<sup>262</sup>

In many ways, this eschatological current is reminiscent of Chrysostom, though perhaps more full-bodied in the manner that Calvin employs it. Moreover, the beauty of Calvin's eschatological reading is its ability to unify the content of all three chapters of the epistle by means of a theological basis— a difficult task for some modern readers of 2 Thessalonians.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 405.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 416; "Calvin's eschatological vision is in essence a call for decision and obedient action here and now." Holwerda, "Eschatology and History," 153.

<sup>263</sup> Best, for example, can see 2 Thess 3 as only "loosely attached" to the material that precedes. Best, *Thessalonians*, 322; see also Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 212; even Witherington has difficulty in connected 3:6ff with the rest of the letter, except to note that it is simply the beginning of a new section. Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 245.

The above discussion should render apparent that, though Calvin does not develop an eschatology proper, an eschatological perspective imbues his theological reading of 2 Thessalonians. Yet all that this eschatology entails must be considered as intimately related with and subservient to his Christology.<sup>264</sup> One crucial difference between Calvin and Luther is that Calvin did not speak of the time of Christ's second advent. An emphasis on the Parousia, though not inherently negative, could lead to an apocalyptic enthusiasm that Calvin wanted to avoid. Instead, "the basic thrust of [Calvin's] eschatological teaching is not to produce calculation, but patience and hope."<sup>265</sup> A review of eschatology and 2 Thessalonians for any scholar would not be complete, however, without giving detailed attention to their reading of 2 Thess 2.

#### **2.4 Receptive Impulses: The Papacy and Antichrist**

Though we are moving on from the heading "theological conceptions," it would be misleading to regard Calvin's interpretation of 2 Thess 2:1-12 as free from the influence of theological concepts in general or any of the above-mentioned topics specifically. Indeed, we should accept the interplay of theology and historical influences as a given. This section will focus, however, on his reading of the passage as a complete unit, drawing into the discussion the historical and theological influences on his reading without looking in extensive detail at the breadth of the latter as it relates to the rest of his work(s).

Like his predecessors, Calvin believes Paul is offering an apocalyptic timeline, though he recognises it as a symbolic-spiritual prophecy regarding

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<sup>264</sup> Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, 54.

<sup>265</sup> Holwerda, "Eschatology and History," 149.

the future. Thus he situates himself in the Tyconian-Augustinian interpretive tradition with regard to 2 Thessalonians.

From the outset of the timeline, Calvin differentiates himself from his predecessors because he does not see Paul's words as an exclusive prediction of the future, but also as a reality that began immediately after the ascension of Christ. The Lord had to first establish his kingdom in order for individuals to begin their "rebellion" (3:3) against it.<sup>266</sup> He rejects any notion of the apostasy as departure from the Roman Empire as "magis frivolum."<sup>267</sup> Instead, he proposes that the term "apostate" must mean a rebellion by "those who have previously enlisted in the service of Christ and His Gospel."<sup>268</sup> This may seem a reference to the papacy, but it is broader than that for Calvin both categorically and historically. In the *Institutes*, he clarifies that the apostasy first entails pastors forsaking God, which he sees already at work in Paul's warning against false teachers who have "wandered away" (1 Tim 1:6).<sup>269</sup>

From the foundation of Christ's kingdom, then, the apostasy has been in effect. Calvin adds to this apostasy all sects and heresies, including Islam, for he regards Mohammed as an apostate, who "turned his followers, the Turks, from Christ" and "tore away about half of the Church."<sup>270</sup> It is crucial for Calvin to establish this reading against the "Romanists" in order to justify the Reformation movement, yet he is battling both a static view of history, the

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<sup>266</sup> "Paul declares that when the world has been brought under the rule of Christ, *a defection will take place*." Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 399.

<sup>267</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:196).

<sup>268</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 399.

<sup>269</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:4.9.7.

<sup>270</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 399–400. In his commentary on 1 John 2:18–19, Calvin describes the heretics Cerinthus, Basilides, Marcion, Valentinus, Ebion, and Arius as both part of the apostasy and the mystery of iniquity that precede the Antichrist proper. John Calvin, *Commentarius in Iohannis Apostoli epistolam* (CO 55:322–23); Calvin also here rejects a medieval tradition, disseminated especially through Innocent III, that equated Islam with Antichrist. McGinn, *Antichrist*, 150–52.



prevalent view held within the Catholic Church regarding its ontological status, and even a particular reading of the epistle by Bruno the Carthusian (d. 1101).

Bruno develops the interpretation of Ambrosiaster into an emphasis that the apostasy entails “falling away” from the dual, intertwined, “Christian empires, both secular (such as kings), and spiritual (that is, the pope).”<sup>271</sup> The rebellion takes place primarily against the “spiritual empire,” which he reads as a collective unfaithful movement as depicted in the first beast of Rev 13. Until the date of the apostasy, these unfaithful exist as a hidden body within the Church.<sup>272</sup>

In the centuries following Bruno, however, interpretation of 2 Thess 2:1-12 followed this reading of the spiritual revolt in part, but incorporated a crucial modifier: Antichrist would arise as the leader of the Church, a concept that was unimaginable for Bruno.<sup>273</sup> Calvin, therefore, must not only prove that his movement is not the apostasy, but also that his reading more faithfully represents the NT, particularly 2 Thessalonians, and he is able to do so by accessing the more recent interpretive tradition.

Like Bruno (as well as Augustine), Calvin immediately takes the “temple of God” as a reference to the Church without seriously considering the other possibility.<sup>274</sup> He even agrees that Paul’s words function prophetically in describing a rebellion from the Church, though Calvin’s

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<sup>271</sup> For this translation of Bruno, see Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 197.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 198–99.

<sup>273</sup> Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 4:38. This can certainly be seen in Wycliffe and Hus, but is found even earlier in Frederick II Hohenstaufen (1194-1250), Peter Olivi (1248-98), and Ubertino of Casale (1259-1330). McGinn, *Antichrist*, 152–66.

<sup>274</sup> In his opening sentence on 2 Thess 2:3, Calvin describes the entire passage as “a gloomy prediction concerning the future dispersion of the Church.” Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 398. Emphasis added.

perspective differs in that he describes Paul as anticipating the ongoing rebellion of the faithful. It is not a large group in a single movement. Antichrist is part of this rebellion, but with the specific function of battling the true Church within the physical Church.

As the pre-Antichrist rebellion continues to unfold in history, Satan, meanwhile, lays a foundation upon which Antichrist might openly stand against the kingdom of Christ. Satan accomplishes this through the work of individuals who slowly build up the power of the papacy into the form that appears in Calvin's day. This rebellious work, preceding the outward manifestation of Antichrist, Calvin regards as the "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess 2:7), yet he also considers all of those who aided in its development as belonging to the kingdom of Antichrists by pointing to those rebellious individuals already present in the days of John (1 John 2:18).<sup>275</sup> The secret work of Antichrist would begin at an early stage so that it could affect the practice of many and appear as the appropriate form of Church until Antichrist could confidently and finally assert his position.

In the meantime (i.e. for Paul and the early Church) a "restraint" (τὸ κατέχον; 2 Thess 2:6) restricts the open appearance of this Antichrist kingdom. Calvin argues that Paul means "the doctrine of *the Gospel* was to spread far and wide until almost the whole world had been convicted of obstinacy and wilful malice."<sup>276</sup> Two influences are likely at work in this exegetical decision: 1.) the neuter gender of κατέχον and εὐαγγέλιον, and; 2.)

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 404; Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:4.7.25. Augustine also shares this canonical reading. The difference in Calvin's work lays in his refusal to recognise Antichrist as an individual, which Augustine admits, but then offers a spiritual reading because of the passage's obscurity.

<sup>276</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 402. Emphasis added. Torrance's translation "the doctrine of the Gospel" is a bit of a cumbersome rendering of Calvin's simpler "Haec igitur dilatio erat, donec completus esset *evangelii cursus*." Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:200). Emphasis added.

Chrysostom's introductory homily, in which he describes one of the primary signs to precede the second advent of Christ is the preaching of the gospel to all nations (Matt 24:14).

In terms of reception history, Calvin shifts Chrysostom's reading of gospel proclamation as a generic sign to a central location by understanding it as the nebulous referent, τὸ κατέχον, which must precede the arrival of Antichrist. His modification marks a break with the Church Father, for in advancing gospel proclamation as τὸ κατέχον, he rejects Chrysostom's position regarding the Roman Empire. Calvin offers a concession by noting that the eventual collapse of the Roman Empire would be an appropriate time for Antichrist to seize the opportunity, and this is what happened.<sup>277</sup> Thus, historical events and Paul's prophecy coincided, but they were not the same. Of course, this view of the restraint accords with Calvin's perspective of divine sovereignty, in which "the grace of God was to be offered to all... by his Gospel, in order that men's impiety might be more fully attested. This,

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<sup>277</sup> Chrysostom, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* 4 (PG 62:486-87). Calvin clearly regards this as an event that has already taken place: "There is not one of these things that was not later confirmed in actual experience." Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 403. It is likely that Calvin followed the perspective found in *History from the Decline of the Roman Empire*, by Flavio Biondo (published in 1483), which marked Rome's decline with the Visigoth invasion (410) of Rome. Both Machiavelli and, in a modified form, Melancthon took up this viewpoint. See Lester K. Little, "Calvin's Appreciation of Gregory the Great," *The Harvard Theological Review* 56, no. 2 (1963): 148-49; Philip Melancthon, *De Ecclesia Et De Auctoritate Verbi Dei*, ed. Robert Stupperich, vol. 1, Melancthon's Werke (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1951), 368. For Calvin, the turmoil in Europe initiated by the Visigoth invasion, then exacerbated by the Vandal invasion (455) distracted from the developments in the Roman See. The widespread strife in the Christian world generations later during the time of Gregory I (d. 604), however, resulted in the elevation of the Roman See for necessary spiritual stability in the midst of much uncertainty. Corruption, in many ways inadvertent, matured throughout these eras of upheaval, but it varied from pope to pope. For example, Calvin generally excludes Pope Gregory I (d. 604) from negative evaluation, though he is frequently less friendly toward Leo I (d. 461). As "the last bishop of Rome," in Calvin's eyes, Gregory still denied the supremacy of the papacy as the universal patriarch in reaction to the claim by John of Constantinople for that title. Gregory went so far as to declare that it marked the nearness of Antichrist. See Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:4.7 and 4.17.49. He asserts more directly that the "purer doctrine flourished" during the first five hundred years of the Church. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:1.11.13. Taking all of this into consideration, it becomes apparent how Calvin can assert the coinciding of Chrysostom's view that the "falling away" of Rome with the appearance of Antichrist without accepting his interpretation.

therefore, was the delay until the course of the Gospel was completed.”<sup>278</sup>

Through the revivification and modification of Chrysostom’s work Calvin inaugurates a decidedly unique interpretation of τό κατέχον. In Calvin’s paradigm and historical context, Chrysostom’s interpretation does not adequately answer the questions that the Reformer poses to the text.

Berengar of Tours (d. 1088) saw “that which restrains” as the completion of a divinely ordained period, marked by when the “fullness of the Gentiles enters the faith.”<sup>279</sup> But this is not necessarily the same as the proclamation of the gospel to all nations. The two scholars discover a similar solution to the enigmatic phrase from different angles. The older scholar considers the end that brings a conclusion to an era, while the Reformer sees the means as the grammatically linked emphasis.<sup>280</sup> Calvin certainly interacted with Berengar over the question of bodily presence in the Eucharist,<sup>281</sup> so it is not impossible that he engaged with his reading of this text as well, though, given Calvin’s accentuation of “the Gospel” in his theology, neither is the interaction necessary. The connection to Chrysostom is clearer.

After this restraint disappears,<sup>282</sup> Satan’s substantial construction of a suitable foundation for the “lawless one,” and the various sects and heresies

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<sup>278</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 403. One must conclude from this that Calvin believes that the Gospel has been preached to every nation. Holwerda, “Eschatology and History,” 150.

<sup>279</sup> “quo plenitudo gentium intrat ad fidem”— Berengar of Tours in Peter Lombard, *In epist. ii ad Thess.* (PG 192:318). Hughes he reads this passage in Lombard’s work as the fulfilment of the “great commission.” The concept utilised by Berengar, however, is from Rom 11, not Matt 28:18-20. Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 232–33. Nevertheless, Calvin speaks of “de universali gentium vocatione” on the same verse. Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:200).

<sup>280</sup> Interestingly, through the reading of Bede on Rev 20, Riddlebarger brings together the interpretive perspectives of Berengar, Calvin, and Nicholl. Kim Riddlebarger, *The Man of Sin: Uncovering the Truth About the Antichrist* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 131–32.

<sup>281</sup> Berengar initially shared Calvin’s stance on the Eucharist, but recanted his position under ecclesiastical pressure. For this reason, Calvin saw him as the source of “a superstitious carnal view of the Supper.” Lane, *John Calvin*, 45–46.

<sup>282</sup> He understands this from “And then” in the phrase “And then shall be revealed the lawless one” (2:8). Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 404.

have distracted attention, then Antichrist will appear. As noted above, Antichrist is better thought of as a kingdom composed of many individuals, yet Paul describes him as “a single individual, because it is a single reign, though there is a succession of individuals.”<sup>283</sup> Calvin sets up an interpretation that allows one to read the papacy as Antichrist.

Following a historical trend, Calvin perceives Antichrist as in “diametrical opposition to Christ,”<sup>284</sup> taking his cue from 2 Thess 2:4 in the lawless one’s counter claims to Christ. Later, Calvin draws the relationship between a biblical description of what belongs to God and the manner in which the pope claims them for himself. Among these powers Calvin lists the power of salvation (in terms of means and method), the implementation of ecclesiastical laws and doctrines,<sup>285</sup> and the creation of sacraments.<sup>286</sup> Following a traditional interpretation found in both Chrysostom and Haimo (against several modern commentators), Calvin agrees that Satan will perform “false miracles” (2 Thess 2:9-10) through Antichrist “by means of trickery”<sup>287</sup> and not with genuine miracles, and he points to this as further evidence that the papacy is Antichrist. This complies with Calvin’s perception of Antichrist as diametrically opposed with Christ, yet the point is somewhat nebulous.

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 400; He clarifies later that the singular case is due to the fact that it describes a single kingdom “which extends through many generations.” In so doing, he is also able to resolve the tension between 2 Thess 2:3 and 1 John 2:18-19. Ibid., 404.

<sup>284</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 400.

<sup>285</sup> Though he remains vague on this point in the commentary on 2 Thessalonians, he clarifies his point in his commentary on 1 Tim 4:1-5. As examples of corrupt doctrines, Calvin offers the consumption of meat on certain days of the week and the prohibition of marriage for monks and priests, which Calvin sees as idolatrous because they redirect attention toward the practice and away from God. John Calvin, *Commentarius in epistolam Pauli ad Timotheum i* (CO 52:292-98). See also his *Commentarius in Iacobi Apostoli epistolam* (CO 55:420) for the connection between “unus legislator” (James 4:12) and declaring the Pope Antichrist.

<sup>286</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 401; —, *Institutes*, 2:4.2.12; 4.7.24–25; 4.9.7.

<sup>287</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 406.

He clarifies this the preface of the *Institutes*, in which he reveals that his opponents have demanded miracles of him to confirm the truth of his message. He argues that the Reformers' gospel does not diverge from the historical Church and that a "miracle" verifies nothing for even Satan exhibits himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). His opponents could then turn the miracle against him. Calvin then addresses the apparent miracles offered by the Papists as evidence for the veracity of the Roman Church, highlighting particularly unspecified wonders wrought by the relics of saints. This only serves as fodder for Calvin's interpretation of 2 Thess 2:9-10 because he contends that draw people away from the worship of God, which coincides with the desires of Satan.<sup>288</sup>

Calvin recognises that the duration of Antichrist's kingdom will be extensive and the true Church will suffer. Yet, quite distinct from the traditional interpretation, Calvin sees the destruction of Antichrist by means of "the breath of [Christ's] mouth" (2 Thess 2:8) as a reference to Christ's word (cf. Isa 11:4) as *the gospel*. For Calvin, this means that the destruction of Antichrist is not a single event at the end of history, but rather it is a gradual destruction brought about by the proclamation of Christ's truth by the elect.<sup>289</sup> Thus Calvin undergirds the objective and legitimacy of the Reformation against the Catholic Church. The second advent of Christ receives only brief mention, but it marks the complete disappearance of Antichrist's kingdom.<sup>290</sup> Calvin situates the entire reading within his perspective of divine sovereignty,

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<sup>288</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:17.

<sup>289</sup> It is questionable whether this aspect of his work is good exegesis or forcing an interpretation to agree with his context. That is to say, do the influences of the text and Calvin's context converge and dialogue, or does the latter dominate the former?

<sup>290</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul*, 405.

reading ὁ κατέχων as a future participle to indicate the God's role as one who delimits the temporal reign of Antichrist.<sup>291</sup>

Given the levels of corruption in the Church during Calvin's life, including even the papacy,<sup>292</sup> and the influence of Augustine's spiritual interpretation of 2 Thess 2:1-12, it is not entirely shocking that the reception of the text veered in this direction. Calvin's reading of this passage is a summit-dialogue of several authors. Taking traditions from Chrysostom—notably his reference to the essential precursor of the gospel going to all nations and the acceptance of the apocalyptic timeline as a literal description of events—and the Tyconian-Augustine spiritual tradition—in reading 2 Thess 2:1-12 as referring to the Church—Calvin blends the two systems so that the apocalyptic timeline becomes a *literal* description of events that will unfold within the Church. This new tradition rapidly became a dominant Protestant reading of 2 Thessalonians with ramifications extending even to certain streams of Protestantism today. Calvin's exegesis of 2 Thess 2:1-12 does not materialise in a vacuum. In addition to these patristic sources, he builds upon the work and insights of closer predecessors, most notably Luther.

*i. Contemporary Scholarship*

The Catholic scholars, Cajetan and Estius, follow the more literal-historical reading of Ambrosiaster and Jerome. Cajetan in particular adds little of interest to the discussion. Estius has the responsibility of reinforcing the traditional interpretation in the aftermath of the Reformation. Therefore, he

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 404.

<sup>292</sup> Issues of licentiousness, simony, extravagance, and nepotism plagued the papacy in examples such as Boniface VIII (d. 1303) through the Avignon papacy, the Western Schism, and during the Reformation (e.g. Leo X). Catholic critics ranged from the author Dante (cited above in the chapter on Haimo) to Erasmus. Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 2, First. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 6–13. We might add to this the reassertion of the view by Cusa that councils had the right to correct an erring pope. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 4:105–6.

recognises the Roman Pontiff as the heir of and spiritual leader over the Roman Empire<sup>293</sup> and the “apostasy” (2:3) as a rebellion from this leadership. In so doing, he perfectly characterises the Reformation as the apostasy and the “mystery of iniquity at work” (2:7), and thus on the wrong side of the eschatological battle.<sup>294</sup> It means as well that Antichrist, whom Estius believes to be an individual who will function as the “chief organ of the devil,”<sup>295</sup> has not yet arrived. He even rebukes the Reformers for labelling the papacy as Antichrist because, to him, it would mean that Peter the apostle was Antichrist.<sup>296</sup> He engages with Augustine’s readings only occasionally and cursorily, regarding him as less concrete on the passage than other Fathers.

From the side of the Reformers, we see a continued utilisation of the spiritual interpretive tradition of 2 Thess 2:1-12. Zwingli offers a similar reading to Calvin, including a view of the “apostasy” (2:3) as false apostles and the papists,<sup>297</sup> the general declamation of the papacy as “Antichrist,” and the perspective that this text is a prophecy by Paul concerning the future.<sup>298</sup> Yet his reading lacks the precision and sophistication of Calvin or Luther.

As noted above, it is with particular reference to this latter Reformer that Calvin’s reading of 2 Thess 2:1-12 has been shaped. As could be

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<sup>293</sup> It becomes clear throughout his work, but particularly in his emphasis that the Roman Empire is “that which restrains” (2:6), that Estius has adopted the “two swords” perspective of the world propagated first by Pope Gelasius and demonstrated in Bruno the Carthusian’s commentary on 2 Thessalonians. In this perspective, secular power lies with Christian kings and spiritual authority resides in the papacy. Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 197–200; his citation of Gelasius renders the above point stronger. Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 749.

<sup>294</sup> Estius, *In omnes D. Pauli & reliquas*, 747 and 749.

<sup>295</sup> “Erit igitur Antichristus homo, non diabolus, *sed diaboli praecipuum organum*.” Ibid., 747.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 749. Calvin would, and does, respond to such a charge that the papacy has drifted to such an expansive degree from Peter through lack of moral consistency that they cannot evidence their claims to be his heirs. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:4.7.29.

<sup>297</sup> Zwingli as well perceives the true Church as in tact within the papal church, for he remarks that the phrase “apostasy” (*defectio*) is a synecdoche, for not all of the Church will fall away. Zwingli, “ii. Thessalonicenses,” 241.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 241–44.



expected, a large quantity of Luther's writings detail his perspective of the papacy, so we only offer a compressed vision.

Luther perceives the "mystery of lawlessness at work" (2:7) as the various heresies and sects that broke from the Church in the generations preceding the open revelation of Antichrist, and that will continue afterwards.<sup>299</sup> Antichrist cannot arrive, however, until the falling away (2:3) of the Roman Empire.<sup>300</sup> The divergence at this juncture is clear: Calvin reads the apostasy as religious rebellion, not political. The Reformers reunite, however, in Luther's conclusion that Antichrist is a plurality of individuals realised in a kingdom, namely the papacy.<sup>301</sup> Luther argues the titles "man of sin, the son of perdition" (2:3) fit the pope because he perpetuates sin through the insistence on works righteousness, the creation of practices he deems salvific while denying biblical practices, the misuse of the mass, his emphasis on the higher spirituality of monastics, and particularly in the permissive attitude toward sin in the offering of indulgences.<sup>302</sup> Above all of this, Luther adds that

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<sup>299</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on 1 John* (LW 30:253); *Ibid.*, 288; Martin Luther, *This is my Body* (LW 37:16).

<sup>300</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on Zechariah* (LW 20:192). Luther shared the perspective that the Church can be divided into historical periods with reference to levels of corruption. Following on the example given above, though Luther speaks negatively of the instruction of purgatory by Gregory I, he still speaks of him as "a holy man." Martin Luther, *The Misuse of the Mass* (LW 36:192). Though elsewhere he speaks less positively of the same man. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (LW 7:296-97). The open eruption of corruption in the papacy is exemplified for Luther in the decretals of Gregory IX (d. 1241). Martin Luther, *The Misuse of the Mass* (LW 36:138).

<sup>301</sup> The pope is "the true, genuine, final Antichrist." Luther, *The Misuse of the Mass* (LW 36:219).

<sup>302</sup> Luther, *Genesis* (LW 3:326; 7:344; 8:185); Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (LW 26:335; 27:110); Martin Luther, *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles* (LW 32:92); Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (LW 36:72); Luther, *The Misuse of the Mass* (LW 36:151); Martin Luther, *Concerning the Ministry* (LW 40:16). He goes so far as to assert that if it were alone for the insistence on clerical celibacy alone, the pope would be "the man of sin." Martin Luther, *Answer to the Hyperchristian Book* (LW 39:212). Luther offers his most detailed explanation of why the pope is "the man of sin" in *Ibid.*, 201-202. He even expands the terminology to "men of sin" so that he can include the "papists" in the condemnation. Martin Luther, *The Keys* (LW 40:353).

it is not just the individual who is characterised by sin, but his entire “government.”<sup>303</sup>

The implementation of indulgences leads into the manner in which the pope, as Antichrist, exalts himself above God (2:4), for he presumes to issue binding commands, which is the prerogative of God alone. Because the pope implements extraneous laws as binding, presumes to pronounce salvation, and takes on divine titles, he asserts himself above God, though Luther is careful to note that this is only in word and worship, yet not above his majesty, which would be impossible.<sup>304</sup> He asserts himself in this way in the Church— that is, “the temple of God” (2:4). In this realisation, Luther is careful to note that the true Church still exists within the one that Antichrist rules and that only spiritual, not physical separation can be attained in this age. It is for this reason of continued interconnection that Luther cautions the Anabaptists for rejecting everything associated with the papacy.<sup>305</sup> He expands this latter point with the Anabaptists by noting that, if the temple of God has still existed under and in spite of the papacy, then true baptism must have occurred during it. Since infant baptism was the dominant form of baptism, therefore, Luther

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<sup>303</sup> Martin Luther, *Why the Books of the Pope Were Burned* (LW 31:392).

<sup>304</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on the Psalms* (LW 13:190-91); Martin Luther, *Lectures on Isaiah* (LW 16:109); Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John* (LW 22:470); He adds that anyone who practices a self-invented holiness (e. g. clerics and monks) exalts his/herself above God. Luther, *Zechariah* (LW 20:263-64); Martin Luther, *The Sermon on the Mount* (LW 21:63); Luther, *Galatians* (LW 26:180, 257-59, 407-8); Martin Luther, *Lectures on 1 Timothy* (LW 28:377); Martin Luther, *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles* (LW 32:46 and 66); Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (LW 33:139); Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Alleged Imperial Edict* (LW 33:88-89; 34:67); Martin Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* (LW 38:190); Luther, *The Keys* (LW 40:349); Martin Luther, *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (LW 40:129-30).

<sup>305</sup> Martin Luther, *Against Latomus* (LW 32:139); Luther, *The Private Mass* (LW 38:210-11); Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 4:172–75. Luther notes that though the pope is stationed within the Church, technically he rules a synagogue. The logic behind this statement is that the pope offers a law of works for salvation, which characterises Luther’s view of Judaism, rather than grace. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Philemon* (LW 29:102). He largely assumes that “the temple of God” refers to the Church, but he offers his clearest definition of the “temple” as “Christendom” and openly rejects the notion that it intimates a building of “stones” (i. e. the Jerusalem temple) in *Concerning Rebaptism* (LW 40:232).

marshals this in his list of arguments in favour of infant baptism.<sup>306</sup> In this way, Luther is able to put into play a particular interpretation of the passage in a different theological context with doctrinal ramifications.

The “strong delusion” (2:11) coincides with the decretals, doctrines, and requirements of the pope obeyed by the masses, but it extends even further to include any unreflective obedience to a command as salvific. Many of these “errors” entered long ago, as in Gregory’s introduction of purgatory, but were overlooked as minor at the time, which was the insidious intention of Satan.<sup>307</sup> In Luther’s present, they had amassed in a large volume and people followed them because they had been established in generations prior. The “strong delusion” is well deserved, in Luther’s eyes, as individuals are responsible to engage with their traditions.<sup>308</sup> Those who adhere to these errors await their destruction by “the breath of [Christ’s] mouth” (2:8).

Like Calvin, Luther sees this happening presently, beginning with Hus, in the proclamation of the Gospel against the papacy.<sup>309</sup> Different from Calvin, however, Luther includes strong statements about the second advent of Christ as crucial to concluding this process of destruction.<sup>310</sup> Additionally, Luther

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<sup>306</sup> Luther, *Rebaptism* (LW 40:257).

<sup>307</sup> Luther, *Genesis* (LW 7:297); Luther, *The Misuse of the Mass* (LW 36:192).

<sup>308</sup> Luther’s list of “delusions” is extensive and includes, but is not limited to, numerous teachings of the papacy (e. g. indulgences, the mass as sacrifice, the elevation of monasticism, purgatory, etc.): Luther, *Genesis* (LW 2:354, 8:21); Luther, *John* (LW 22:58, 24:268-69); Luther, *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses* (LW 31:174-75 and 205-6); Martin Luther, *This is my Body* (LW 37:142-43); Islam in “Greece”: Luther, *Genesis* (LW 5:71); pride (or as the result of pride): Luther, *Genesis* (LW 4:127); Luther, *First Psalm Lectures* (LW 10:462, 11:65); Luther, *Psalms* (LW 14:246); Luther, *John* (LW 22:137 and 385); and “peaceful preaching” rather than confrontation with the gospel: Martin Luther, *Concerning the Answer of the Goat* (LW 39:133-34).

<sup>309</sup> Luther, *Genesis* (LW 8:226); Luther, *Concerning the Ministry* (LW 40:32). Unfortunately, this reveals that what Holwerda regards as the “most distinctive element in Calvin’s perspective” has an interpretive precedent. Holwerda, “Eschatology and History,” 151.

<sup>310</sup> Luther, *Psalms* (LW 13:258).

establishes connections between 2 Thessalonians and Revelation that Calvin (and Haimo), as largely anti-apocalyptic, avoids.<sup>311</sup>

In many ways, therefore, Calvin builds upon Luther, though he provides a more precise and unified interpretation of 2 Thess 2:3-12. The advantage and distinction that Luther brought to this reading of the papal Antichrist was to remove “the legendary historical accretions to the scriptural picture of Antichrist” amassed during the medieval period.<sup>312</sup>

Though Calvin is expositing on well-trod ground by advocating a papal Antichrist,<sup>313</sup> he offers a number keen insights to tighten up the vision relating to Antichrist in 2 Thess 2:3-12. His methodical reading of the letter reveals clearer parallels within the epistle and forces him to engage with difficult terminology, such as τὸ κατέχον and ὁ κατέχων, neither of which Luther addresses. For Calvin, the “falling away” (2:3) finds clearer explication in the NT (e. g. 1 Tim 1:6), rather than the OT (e. g. Luther’s reading of Zech 2:8), and it describes a rebellion against God from within the Church.<sup>314</sup> He connects this with “the mystery of iniquity at work” (2 Thess 2:7), casting his gaze at historical heresies.

His most unique contributions, however, may be in reading τὸ κατέχον as a reference to the proclamation of the gospel and in blending the literal and spiritual patristic readings of 2 Thess 2:1-12. Calvin’s interpretation has the

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<sup>311</sup> Luther, *Prefaces to the New Testament* (LW 35:407).

<sup>312</sup> McGinn, *Antichrist*, 207.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 173–208. Luther and Calvin both carry forward the tradition of the papal Antichrist traced particularly (perhaps erroneously) to Grosseteste through Wyclif and Hus, though the tradition might be traced to earlier than 1,000 CE. Ibid., 143–72; on Grosseteste, see J. J. McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Still, the answer to the question regarding the papacy and Antichrist is more readily received and sharply delimited during the Reformation.

<sup>314</sup> Luther may be vaguely alluding to this idea when he describes the church as “being abandoned in its latest devastation by the Turk or Antichrist,” but the reference is too nebulous to be certain. Luther, *Psalms* (LW 11:100).

ongoing potential to instil a healthy caution toward church leaders, regardless of their denominational leanings. Moreover, Calvin reveals that the power of Antichrist's kingdom, found within the Church, may only be overcome with the ongoing proclamation of the gospel. Potentially abstract theological concepts are grounded in accessible, daily praxis.

The obvious weakness of Calvin's interpretation and the overall framework within which he operates is his particular aversion to a dimension of apocalyptic eschatology, which results in a hesitancy to discuss the advent of Christ. As in Haimo's day, apocalyptic fervour surged during this new period of upheaval, admittedly from distinct stimuli. This reluctance does not, however, prevent Calvin from situating Christ as the centre of his theology. He tends to focus instead on Christ in a pneumatological capacity.

*ii. Modern Scholarship*

By this point in the dissertation, the discussion of modern scholars on 2 Thess 2:3-12 is relatively well-rehearsed. Nearly every modern commentator rejects both the Ambrosiaster<sup>315</sup> and the Tyconian-Augustinian traditions (at least implicitly), opting instead for an interpretation that situates the epistle within the apocalyptic genre and recognises potential contemporary referents or influences on Paul's letter. A general trend within this perspective is to view the "man of lawlessness" (2:3) as an individual who will arrive at the approach of the eschaton.<sup>316</sup> There is little room for Calvin and Luther's

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<sup>315</sup> Their appeal to concrete historical referents, however, ties them closer to the Ambrosiaster tradition.

<sup>316</sup> For example, Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 190–91; Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 102–8; Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 220–21; Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 217–18; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 32B:418–19; Malherbe also adds that any historical identification of the figure (e. g. the papacy) is erroneous because "he" is eschatological. Ibid., 32B:431–32. Given our discussion on Calvin's view of all history after the ascension as eschatological, it is not difficult to resolve this apparent tension. Rigaux and Giblin observe a degree of restraint and allow the Antichrist figure to remain nebulous. Rigaux, *Thessaloniens*, 658–59; Giblin, *Threat to Faith*, 60–61.

collective view of Antichrist, or of his/its gradual destruction through the proclamation of the gospel.

A more specific look at the phrase “temple of God” (2:4) draws out a deep contrast between the exegesis (both methodologically and in terms of conclusions) of Calvin and his modern counterparts. The majority of scholars insist that the above phrase references the Jerusalem Temple. Wanamaker goes so far as to argue that verse is no longer applicable, because of the Temple’s destruction in 70 CE; Paul’s prediction was simply wrong.<sup>317</sup> Likewise considering this “temple,” Witherington claims,

Paul is using multivalent apocalyptic prophetic language throughout this argument, language intended to be more evocative than literally descriptive. Had someone later objected that the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in A. D. 70 without Jesus’ involvement, Paul could have insisted that that event was but a type of the final Temple desecration and [P]arousia of Christ. But we cannot apply this ‘Temple language’ to the church. Paul is speaking in a largely Gentile context, and his audience will surely hear him as referring to an actual temple, in this case the Temple of the one true God that still stood in Jerusalem. Paul nowhere in 1 and 2 Thessalonians refers to the church as ‘the Temple of God.’<sup>318</sup>

It is difficult to grasp how the language of this passage might be considered “multivalent” when it can have only a single referent, or how this makes sense of the hypothetical Paul’s interjection that the temple he mentions is “the final Temple” *necessarily excludes* “the Church” as a referent. Furthermore, if it is “prophetic language,” need Paul even understand the full

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<sup>317</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 248.

<sup>318</sup> Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 219–20. Additional scholars who support this reading include Bornemann, *Die Thessalonicherbriefe*, 364; Wolfgang Trilling, *Untersuchung zum 2. Thessalonicherbrief*, Erfurter Theologische Studien (Leipzig: St. Benno Verlag, 1972), 86; few scholars offer compelling evidence or reasoning for why this “temple” must be the Jerusalem Temple. The exception has to be Röcker, who locates the background of 2 Thess 2:1–12 in the Jesus tradition of Matt 24:15 and Mark 13:14. Given the clear reference to the Jerusalem Temple in these texts, he advances a stronger case for the same referent. Röcker, *Belial*, 402–6. Nevertheless, the influence of the Synoptic Apocalypse tradition on Paul does not prohibit him from using similar concepts in a different manner, nor does it interdict the Church from reading the text in a spiritual matrix.

meaning of the phrase? Above all, the limitation of the interpretation to 1 and 2 Thessalonians is absolutely necessary to support Witherington's conclusion, because Paul uses precisely this language *in a Gentile context* to describe the Christian body as "the temple of God" in 1 Cor 3:16 and 17. For interpreters with a broader, canonical approach, like the Reformers, such a restriction would be preposterous. Even the limitation of interpretation to the two Thessalonian epistles is weaker than it first appears, because 2 Thessalonians references a "temple."

Giblin takes up a more canonical, or at least Pauline approach to the "temple of God." Given Paul's other references to "temple" (1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; and Eph 2:21), Giblin sees the text as more clearly pointing to the Church, though not in its "organizational-juridical aspects," and as an exegetically less difficult option than the Jerusalem or heavenly temples. At the same time, he observes that this does not prevent Paul from taking up the apocalyptic imagery of the temple in Daniel for a distinct purpose. Giblin demonstrates the influence of the text's reception history on his reading, though not Calvin explicitly.<sup>319</sup> Where Giblin expands beyond Calvin in a helpful way is in perceiving the "man of lawlessness" not only as anti-God, but decidedly anti-Christian in an antagonistic sense.<sup>320</sup>

One final point of contact between Calvin and modern scholars is in the recent monograph by Röcker, who, after a thorough review of the Qumran, rabbinical, apocryphal, and biblical literature, concludes that τό κατέχον is

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<sup>319</sup> Giblin, *Threat to Faith*, 76–80. Modern scholars who likewise hold this as a reference to the Church include Gregory K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 205–11; Riddlebarger, *Man of Sin*, 126.

<sup>320</sup> "[T]his embodiment of self-exaltation may readily be understood as the very antithesis of the believer. Like ἀδικία, ἀνομία is an opposite of δικαιοσύνη which comes by faith alone. Moreover, the participial form ἀντικείμενοι is used elsewhere by Paul (1 Cor 16,9; Phil 1,28; cf. 1 Tm 5,14) only to describe opposition to the faithful." Giblin, *Threat to Faith*, 65–66.

best understood as “die Evangeliumsverkündigung.”<sup>321</sup> Of particular importance for this reading, as with his historical predecessors, is understanding 2 Thess 2:1-12 in its relationship to the Synoptic Apocalypse. Calvin offers this foundational point, as well as the neuter gender of both κατέχον and εὐαγγέλιον in his evidence for suggesting that “the restraining force” is the proclamation of the gospel. Röcker, however, ably substantiates the argument for this reading against the alternatives of the Roman Empire or the Holy Spirit with more than Calvin’s rebuff that they are simply “too stupid.”<sup>322</sup>

The modern commentaries on 2 Thessalonians do well to draw one’s attention to the apocalyptic genre and they have access to a wider range of ancient texts to illuminate a “historical” reading of the epistle. Yet they also tend to overlook the open nature of apocalyptic texts for reinterpretation in successive generations and are generally weaker in pastoral emphases, if they offer any. This highlights a key distinction between Calvin’s interpretive aims and those of most contemporary biblical commentators. As a pastor, the Reformer sought to produce accessible, scholarly texts for the average Christian, while modern theologians tend to yield technical evaluations of a given text for a specialised audience.

### **3. Conclusion**

Though Calvin tends in his commentaries toward a singular, authorial meaning, much like his modern counterparts, his interpretation differs and is advantageous in at least two ways. First, he offers a distinctively “Calvinist” reading of 2 Thessalonians, both in terms of methodology and in conclusions.

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<sup>321</sup> Röcker, *Belial*, 514. See 422–515 for his detailed argument.

<sup>322</sup> “magis frivolum est.” Calvin, *Comm. 2 Thess.* (CO 52:196).



This entails a perspective that is contoured by a deep-seated pastoral concern for the average Christian, an eschatological understanding that demands a particular practical-ethical way of life,<sup>323</sup> and an all-encompassing grasp of God's sovereignty. All of these elements branch out from Calvin's Christological centre, which functions as the governing concept in his theology and exegesis, exemplified particularly in his eschatology and pneumatology (i. e. "divine action in the believer").

Second, though Calvin allegedly pursues Paul's "intention" and a singular meaning in the commentary, he lacks the same restrictions in the *Institutes*. In addition to the sections above, we might offer a brief example in his various emphases on the phrase "sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth" (2:13). Within his theological outlook, Calvin is variously able to assert that this phrase reveals Christ cannot be known apart from the sanctification of the Holy Spirit;<sup>324</sup> that the Spirit is qualified by the term "sanctification" because he builds up Christians presently, but is also the source of heavenly life;<sup>325</sup> that faith is the principal work of the Spirit and has no other source;<sup>326</sup> and that the "true" Church is delineated by the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>327</sup>

In terms of reception history, Calvin skilfully revives and modifies the Tyconian-Augustinian interpretation of 2 Thess 2:3-12. Because of this preservation, commentators must continue to engage the potential that "the

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<sup>323</sup> Hall describes these first two aspects as Calvin's concern for "edification and instruction," and he sees the source for it in the influence of biblical humanism. Basil Hall, "Calvin and Biblical Humanism," in *Influences Upon Calvin and Discussion of the 1559 Institutes*, ed. Richard C. Gamble, vol. 4, Articles on Calvin and Calvinism (New York and London: Garland, 1992), 66.

<sup>324</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:3.2.8.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:3.1.2.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:3.1.4.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:4.1.7.

temple of God” (2:4) can mean “the Church,” as well as the distinctively Calvinist suggestion that τó κατέχον is the “proclamation of the gospel.” He stands as an “epochal” interpreter of 2 Thessalonians for these above reasons, as well as the reincorporation of a pastoral perspective and the overt development of his own theological framework for understanding and guiding his exegesis. He is a prime example of both a reader shaped by particular exegetical biases and one who provokes both past and present horizons of expectation. Most importantly, his orientation toward the subject matter of Scripture more appropriately attends to its purpose than a historicist paradigm.

## Conclusion

This brings to an end our abbreviated<sup>1</sup> trek through the reception history of 2 Thessalonians across the peaks of Chrysostom, Haimo, Calvin, and modern interpreters. The results lead to several observations on the topics of reception history, our historical interpreters, and the notion of Scriptural “subject matter.”

### **1. Reception History**

Within our modified program of Jauss’ *Rezeptionsästhetik* we observe, first of all, that the “meanings” of 2 Thessalonians are determined by the operative hermeneutical paradigm. In addition to providing a framework for understanding the text in question, the paradigm also determines the value and priority of any given interpretation or meaning. Therefore, in the reception history of 2 Thessalonians specifically and Scripture generally, we do not witness the evolutionary “law of progress”<sup>2</sup> toward the “correct meaning” of a passage, but progressive concretisations of meaning<sup>3</sup> and the shift of hermeneutical paradigms— and, thereby, meaning valuations.

This relates to the challenge of subjectivity discussed in the introduction. How do we determine which reading(s) is/are correct? Or, phrased in a way that it is often meant: “How do I show another person that their interpretation is wrong?” What Jauss has shown us is that we do not have access to timeless truth, but only truth actualised (or spoken) in history, concretised in an engagement with a text. Determinations of exegetical

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<sup>1</sup> I style it as “abbreviated” because I do not suppose the research to be exhaustive of the receptive impulses of the respective scholars, but only indicative. Nor is it exhaustive of the reception history of 2 Thessalonians, which would be a monumental task.

<sup>2</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 253.

<sup>3</sup> Jauss, “Der Leser,” 335.

validity are made with reference to traditions, i.e. both ecclesial traditions and historically stabilised reading traditions.

Further, seeking for the timeless truth/meaning overlooks two crucial points: 1.) the meaning that a reader attains, say in a historicist quest, is not the same as “the historical meaning” because they pose the question in their present horizon. Therefore, through the mediation of horizons, the meaning is not concretised in the past or outside of time, but in the present.<sup>4</sup> 2.) New answers/meanings are implied in the text and brought out by appropriate questions. If they were not implied, then the questions would not find valid answers.<sup>5</sup>

Second, by understanding 2 Thessalonians as a *historical dialogue*, rather than solely a discrete text that originated in a moment in the first century CE, the continuity of interpretations through history becomes clear. By confronting 2 Thessalonians with questions and receiving answers, traditions of reading the epistle shape the questions of later generations. Interpreters of 2 Thessalonians are connected to one another generally by participating in the dialogue, but even more specifically by the way in which reading traditions guide their understanding of the letter. Certain readings will become stable and consistently re-concretised in the history of 2 Thessalonians, such as regarding the “man of lawlessness” as Antichrist.

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<sup>4</sup> Parris, *Reception Theory*, 154–56.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *The Dialogical and the Dialectical “Neveu De Rameau”: How Diderot Adopted Socrates and Hegel Adopted Diderot*, Protocol of the Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture 45 (Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1984), 55. Connected to this aim of evaluating the “correctness” of questions, Morgan observes that reception historians can recognise “how all historically critical theologians claim either more or less continuity with their scriptures.” Morgan, “*Sachkritik*,” 175.

Other questions are generated in response to these stable traditions, as we saw in the various suggestions of who Antichrist might be.

Third, reading the history of 2 Thessalonians draws out how interpretive traditions shape present interpretation— that is, it makes readers aware of their biases; expands one’s hermeneutical paradigm by interacting with the range of meanings and how they are attained; aids in asking new questions by broadening the hermeneutical field of “play;”<sup>6</sup> and helps readers determine which aspects of interpretation to prioritise. This latter point is conditioned by historical trends (i.e. paradigms) and aims of exegesis.

Fourth, the above-mentioned formative traditions establish horizons of expectations such that a reader’s initial understanding of a biblical text is not shaped primarily by historical-critical research, but through their aesthetic experience of the text.<sup>7</sup> This aesthetic understanding (e.g. Chrysostom’s observation of Antichrist’s pride) crucially sets up the potential concretisation of meanings (e.g. Chrysostom’s warning about pride) before a historical-critical reading, which *may* offer correction.

Fifth, *Rezeptionsästhetik* as a hermeneutical program constantly mediates the “otherness” of 2 Thessalonians through defamiliarisation. Both historical methods and reception history achieve this by reminding the reader that the text originates outside of them, thus guarding against naïve<sup>8</sup> consumption of 2 Thessalonians. Reception history goes further, however, as it constantly defamiliarises through historical concretisations of the text, in

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<sup>6</sup> To borrow a term from Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 100–4; see also Parris, *Reception Theory*, 80–83.

<sup>7</sup> One cannot overlook the essential role that aesthetic experience plays in the concretisation of possible questions in a retrospectively interpretive reading. See Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 145; Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience*, 3–13.

<sup>8</sup> This naivete includes both unreflective/uncritical readers and those who believe that the history behind the text gives one the theology of the text.

which different hermeneutical paradigms are operative and through which traditions entered a text's history. Defamiliarisation provokes the horizon of expectation and results in an expansion of the horizon of experience, even if the reader rejects a historical "meaning" of 2 Thessalonians. This rejection simply means that the ensuing understanding of 2 Thessalonians continues with negative reference to that meaning.

Lastly, the *Rezeptionsästhetik* of 2 Thessalonians carefully avoids deteriorating into psychologism in a more tangible way than historicism because it does not seek to penetrate the mind of the author. Instead it reifies an objectifiable cultural-literary horizon of expectations within which the author's *work* arose.<sup>9</sup> In this way it gauges the *aesthetic value* of historical receptions of 2 Thessalonians primarily with relation to literary works that preceded and followed the receptions under investigation. This final point relates to an important clarification about our chapters on Chrysostom, Haimo, and Calvin.

## **2. Historical Interpreters**

Incorporating sections on "contemporary scholarship" and "modern scholarship" in the preceding chapters should not, therefore, be seen as arbitrary or tangential. This was a twofold attempt to restore an original horizon of expectations so that the reader can pose questions to which the text gave an answer<sup>10</sup> and to situate the interpretations in its broader history to see how it confronts the modern horizon of expectations— again defamiliarising the reader.

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<sup>9</sup> See Jauss' theses 2-4. Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*, 22–32.

<sup>10</sup> "... and thereby to discover how the contemporary reader could have viewed and understood the work." *ibid.*, 28.

What, then, do our historical interpreters offer in the reception history of 2 Thessalonians? From each of the chapters, I would propose three elements of their interpretations that deserve attention.

### ***I. Chrysostom***

Chrysostom's emphasis on pride, conditioned by the Church's view of vices and his attention to the biblical treatment of the topic, is not only an important contribution to the traditional view of Antichrist as proud, but it also continues to provoke the modern horizon of expectations in reminding readers that being characterised as prideful identifies one with the eschatological enemy of Christ.

Second, slightly different from a modern emphasis on the description of judgment as a consolation to the Thessalonians, Chrysostom insists that the epistle places hell "before one's eyes" as a reminder of the grace in which Christians subsist and to prevent them from falling into it. Consolation is not about vindictiveness, but God's concern to preserve his own glory. Any discussion of hell as a reality provokes a modern, pluralistic horizon in which exclusivity is not a popular perspective.

Both of these points feed into a third important aspect of Chrysostom's reading: its pastoral attention. Through awareness of the pastoral motivation for Paul's writing, Chrysostom likewise directs his efforts.<sup>11</sup> Biblical interpretation is at its best when it coheres with a primary aim of Scripture itself: edification of the community of faith. This is not intended to denigrate secular scholarship. For such scholars often issue the greatest provocations to the horizons of Christianised readership. Perhaps the point implies the question of why their work is "meaningful."

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<sup>11</sup> Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 303–4.

## **II. Haimo**

The association of Simon Magus with Antichrist through apocryphal material in Haimo's commentary is in one sense irrelevant. Haimo connects the inaugural heretic to Antichrist not as a statement of historical fact, but an analogy drawn through a tradition of associating the two. The theological point that he drives home through this association is that paying for ministerial position (which is God-gifted) or seeking it for financial motives identifies one with Antichrist and, in the Catholic tradition, renders the Eucharist void.

Second, the absence of the millennium from his commentary raises appropriate questions about the eschatological age. Both in his generation and the modern context, it provokes a horizon of expectations that seeks to pinpoint the arrival of a sabbatical millennium in relation to any apocalyptic signals.

Connected to this is the final observation that his distinction of the genres of 2 Thessalonians and Revelation helpfully prevent him from uncautiously blending the two books into one apocalyptic timeline.<sup>12</sup> This reminds readers that, though part of one canon, not all texts can or should be read in the same manner.

## **III. Calvin**

Calvin's revival of the Augustinian tradition of reading the "temple of God" (2 Thess 2:4) as "the Church" reminds readers that despite a modern proclivity to view this as a specific reference to the Jerusalem Temple, this has not been definitively settled. His blending of the spiritual and literal traditions surpassed a contemporary horizon of expectations that saw the perspectives as

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<sup>12</sup> Haimo cites 2 Thessalonians in his commentary on Revelation a total of three times—on 8:8, 17:8, and 20:9. Haimo of Auxerre, *Expos. in Apoc.* (PL 11:937-1220).



distinct ways of viewing the passage, and it continues to provoke the modern horizon that insists it refers to the Jerusalem Temple.

Flowing from this reading is a secondary advantage, which cautions readers to be aware of the distinction between the Church and the “true” Church. It is not a warning to seek out the “true” members, but a reminder that many who participate in the regular functioning of the Church do so for self-oriented, ungodly reasons that detract from its true, purposeful worship.

Finally, more clearly than the other interpreters, Calvin displays the benefit of interpreting with theological attentiveness.<sup>13</sup> By reading 2 Thessalonians with divine sovereignty, grace, eschatology, the activity of God in the believer, etc. in mind, Calvin draws out textual aspects that are not immediately evident for those who attempt to “bracket out” theological “biases.” At the same time, this advantage is double-bladed and brings out what is best in *Rezeptionsästhetik*. Not only does this hermeneutical model allow for interpretive theological presuppositions, it also subjects them to critique and questions whether they appropriately dialogue with the text, or whether they dominate it.

The above elements reflect exegetical aspects distinct to the respective interpreters. Yet they all operate with under a hermeneutical commonground: directedness toward the subject matter of Scripture.

### **3. Subject Matter**

This ultimate aim of the study of Scripture, particularly exegesis, cannot be attenuated. Refusing to attend to the “subject matter” of Scripture fails to recognise what instigated the authorship of the biblical books, 2

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<sup>13</sup> Stuhlmacher likewise observes, “Protestant exegesis... lacks direction and orientation to the degree that it seeks to loosen or even surrender” its relation to systematic theology. Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism*, 77.

Thessalonians included. This is not an attack on antagonistically atheist biblical scholarship, but a challenge to the ongoing employment of historicism as the primary hermeneutical model for “correct” exegesis. Historicism continually fails to see beyond the empirical when it does not consider the “Someone”— real or imagined— who motivated biblical authorship and toward which it constantly points. Second Thessalonians was not written for a debate about its origins, but, as our pre-modern scholars have shown, to project a reality that its readers might inhabit and direct their attention to that “Someone” guiding history toward its *telos*.

Without a doubt, different interpretive aims (e.g. historical understanding of a book, systematic theology, doctrine, history of interpretation, pastoral instruction, etc.) shape exegetical results. Nevertheless, all appropriate engagement with 2 Thessalonians must in some way address the directedness of this epistle toward that “Someone” as “more than” what the letter contains. The *Rezeptionsästhetik* of 2 Thessalonians is beneficial in this regard because it at least forces interaction with hermeneutical paradigms within which this foundational understanding is operative. Further, reception history exhibits how that “Someone,” as an active force, may have guided interpretation in discrete historical periods.<sup>14</sup>

Historical methodologies certainly offer an advantage of defamiliarisation by exposing readers to a world foreign to their own and preventing the non-reflective consumption of 2 Thessalonians. I accept the absolute exigence of historical methodologies both from a perspective in how they set essential interpretive limits and from an aspect of the reception history

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<sup>14</sup> See Gadamer’s statement about the benefit of interpreting from a new historical vantage on p. 33 above.

of 2 Thessalonians that simply cannot deny the reality of any reception of the work.<sup>15</sup> Yet I *cannot* accord it the status as “first among equals”<sup>16</sup> because the aspect most crucial to Scripture, the “subject matter,” can only be partially grasped by historical inquiry.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore my research returns to that fundamental distinction between Gadamer and Jauss: a method. Based on all of the discussion above, I suggest that a theologically-modified Rezeptionsästhetik as a hermeneutical method better enables the modern-day exegete to enter into dialogue with 2 Thessalonians. This leads to the further suggestion that my project offers a Jaussian critique of over-confident and narrow methodologies.

The reception history of 2 Thessalonians exhibits the richness of meaning that might be drawn from the letter when distinct hermeneutical paradigms interact with it. In their own right, Chrysostom, Haimo, and Calvin are “epochal” interpreters of the text. Only through engagement with their writings along both synchronic and diachronic axes of 2 Thessalonians’ history do we witness the richness of their work and potentially expose our horizons of expectation to provocative suggestions of meaning. In seeing the questions to which 2 Thessalonians served as an answer for them, their

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<sup>15</sup> Hengel critically adds that the aims of historical and theological inquiry of a biblical book must be bound together, “damit der Wahrheitsanspruch des ausgelegten Texts in einer heute verantwortbaren Weise zur Sprache kommt,” thus approaching dialogical language similar to Gadamer and Jauss. Further, he strikes the balance that we seek in his theses 4.1.1 and 4.2. Hengel, *Studien zum Urchristentum*, 101 and 103. Our emphasis on reception history strives to bring out interpretive continuity, investigate traditions, and to elevate theological lenses that have long been neglected or relegated to a secondary position in exegesis.

<sup>16</sup> Against the perspective of Paul Joyce, “First Among Equals? The Historical-Critical Approach in the Marketplace of Methods,” in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Paul Joyce, and David E. Orton (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 17–27. For a similar critique, see thesis 2.4.1 in Hengel, *Studien zum Urchristentum*, 101.

<sup>17</sup> With Jauss, one must speak of all interpretation as “historical” because of its occurrence within history. Yet this does not preclude the openness of our biblical reception history to contextually-manifested theological truth as the “free self-communication of God at a concrete place in history, which historical research with all its methods cannot attain, nor does it desire to.” Hengel, *Studien zum Urchristentum*, 101.

questions become our own<sup>18</sup> and encourage further, distinct questioning on our own part. *Rezeptionsästhetik*, appropriately modified by a theological framework,<sup>19</sup> constantly reinforces that the dialogue with 2 Thessalonians remains open until an eschatological conclusion,

“ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ” (2 Thess 1:7).

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<sup>18</sup> Gadamer, “Reflections,” 8.

<sup>19</sup> This includes especially a concept of universal history.

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