



Paul's Jewish Matrix

THOMAS G. CASEY - JUSTIN TAYLOR (eds.)

With an introductory essay by Karl P. Donfried



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Pasquale BASTA is Professor of Biblical Hermeneutics at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, and Professor of Scripture at the Seminary of Basilicata, Italy.
Reimund BIERINGER is Professor of New Testament Exegesis in the Faculty of Theology of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium.
David BOLTON is a doctoral candidate in Christian-Jewish relations at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium.
Shaye J. D. COHEN is the Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations of Harvard University.
Adriana DESTRO is Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Bologna, Italy.
Karl Paul DONFRIED is the Elizabeth A. Woodson Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, USA.
Paula FREDRIKSEN is the William Goodwin Aurelio Chair Emerita of the Appreciation of Scripture at Boston University, USA.
Emmanuel NATHAN is a post-doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Theology in the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium.
Mauro PESCE is Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Bologna, Italy.
Antonio PITTA is Professor of New Testament at the Pontifical Lateran University, Rome, Italy.
Didier POLLEFEYT is Professor of Pastoral Theology in the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium.
Serge RUZER is Professor in the Department of Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel.

the old covenant or the ministry of the old covenant rather than the veil. We also clarified that 3:7-11 is not suggesting that only the ministry of the new covenant is characterized by δόξα. There is more continuity between the old and the new covenant in this text than many other interpretations suggest. Nevertheless this cannot blind us to the clear evidence of antithetical terminology (ministry of death vs. ministry of the Spirit; ministry of condemnation vs. ministry of justification; καταργέω vs. μένω; παλαιὰ διαθήκη vs. καινὴ διαθήκη). Even if we do not take this out of context and if we do not allow this to be read onesidedly, we need to acknowledge where Paul's preference and allegiance is found. Paul's christological and pneumatological Scriptural hermeneutics (3:14-17) needs to be read in its early Christian, first century context, but it cannot be ignored or denied. If and in as much as such christological and pneumatological hermeneutics carry dangerous potential for later readers, they need to take care not to actualize this potential. Here our own Scriptural hermeneutics is challenged.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ See Reimund Bieringer & Mary Elsbernd *Normativity of the Future: Reading Biblical and Other Authoritative Texts in an Eschatological Perspective* (Leuven - Paris and Walpole, MA, Peeters, 2010).

CHAPTER 7

PAUL, DECIDE, AND THE WRATH OF GOD: TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICAL READING OF 1 THESS 2:14-16

Didier Pollefeyt and David J. Bolton

1. THE TEXT NRSV/ NA27

14a For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators	ἡμεῖς γὰρ μιμηταὶ ἐγενήθητε, ἀδελφοί,
14b of the churches of God in Christ Jesus	τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν οὐσῶν ἐν τῇ
14c that are in Judea,	Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,
14d for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots	ὅτι τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίων συμφυλετῶν
14e as they did from the Jews,	καθὼς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων,
15a who killed both the Lord Jesus	τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτευνάντων Ἰησοῦν
15b and the prophets,	καὶ τοὺς προφῆτας
15c and drove us out;	καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐδιωξάντων
15d they displease God	καὶ θεῷ μὴ ἁρεσκόντων
15e and oppose everyone	καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων,
16a by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles	κωλύόντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλῆσαι
16b so that they may be saved.	ἵνα σωθῶσιν,
16c Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins;	εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας πάντοτε.
16d but God's wrath has overtaken them at last.	ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος.

2. INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE PROBLEM

1 Thess 2:14–16¹ is generally acknowledged to be the most vituperative and polemical statement by Paul against “the Jews” (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι). As Leon Morris has written, it is

a denunciation of the Jews more severe than anything else in the Pauline writings. It is not an outburst of temper but [...] the vehement condemnation, by a man in thorough sympathy with the mind and spirit of God, of the principles on which the Jews as a nation had acted at every period of their history.²

Five accusations are presented: (1) that they have caused suffering to the Judean churches (v.14a–e); (2) that they have killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets (v.15a–b); (3) that they have driven out the Jewish believers in Jesus (v.15c); (4) that they do not please God or humanity (v.15d–e) and (5) that they try to prevent the Gentile mission (v.16a–b).³ In light of this behaviour, their sins are said to have reached (or be reaching) intolerable levels with the outpouring of (divine) wrath εἰς τέλος (v.16c–d) as the inevitable result.

Owing to the difficulty of the text on a variety of issues, a wide range of scholarly responses have arisen that attempt to find a suitable ‘resolution’ to the problem. Is Paul the actual author of the text?; does the text refer to all Jews or just some Jews?; is it a normal example of contemporary intra-Jewish polemics?; how far is

¹ For an introduction to the epistle and its historical background see, e.g.: Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1959); F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (WBC vol. 45; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1982); Robert Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress, 1986); Carol J. Schlueter, *Filling Up the Measure: Polemical Hyperbole in 1 Thessalonians 2.14–16* (JSNTSup 98; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); Earl J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995); David Luckensmeyer, *The Eschatology of First Thessalonians* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).

² Morris, *Thessalonians*, 90.

³ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 123.

Paul responsible for the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of this passage? Our own proposal in this paper is threefold: we shall firstly place the pericope in the context of the letter as a whole; then give an overview of the various positions taken in response to it and finally present our own hermeneutical reading.

3. CONTEXTUALIZATION

Paul’s purpose in writing 1 Thess appears to be based around three main concerns: to express joy at the Thessalonians’ progress in the gospel; to vindicate his own mission as shown by the genuineness of their conversion; and to deal with various eschatological and practical matters.

A broad outline, giving more attention to our specific passage, may be presented as follows:⁴

- I. Salutation (1:1)
- II. Paul’s Relation to the Thessalonians (1:2–3:13)
 - A. Thanks for the Thessalonians (1:2–10)
 - B. Defense of Paul’s Apostleship and the Thessalonians’ Conversion (2:1–16)
 1. Positive Defense (2:1–12)
 2. Negative Defense (2:13–16)
 - a. The Thessalonians’ Reception of the Gospel (2:13–14a)
 - b. Their Opponents’ Rejection of the Gospel (2:14b–16)
 - C. Paul’s Desire to Visit (2:17–3:10)
 - D. Transitional Benediction (3:11–13)
- III. The Lord’s Return as a Motive for Sanctification (4:1–5:22)
- IV. Concluding Remarks (5:23–28)

⁴ This is largely taken from Daniel B. Wallace, “1 Thessalonians: Introduction, Outline, and Argument,” 9–11 [cited 25 August 2009]. Online <http://bible.org/series-page/1-thessalonians-introduction-outline-and-argument>. Wallace is Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary and maintains the above website.

First Thessalonians is virtually unanimously accepted as a genuine Pauline letter.⁵ It is referenced as belonging to the Marcion canon (mid-2nd century C.E.), the Muratorian canon (c.180 CE), as well as being quoted by name by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. It also appears in the most ancient manuscripts such as the Old Latin, Old Syriac, as well as in fragmentary form in P30, P46, and P65.⁶ Despite this external attestation our passage under consideration has often been deemed non-Pauline, even anti-Pauline. The reasons for this are many, and it is to them that we now turn.

4. VARIOUS STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THE PASSAGE

Let us now look to the content of the passage and present a critical overview of the various scholarly responses to it. Summaries have been given among others, by Josef Coppens (1975),⁷ Robert Jewett (1986),⁸ John W. Simpson (1988),⁹ Jon Weatherly (1991),¹⁰ Carol J. Schluter (1994),¹¹ Earl J. Richard (1995),¹² Jonas Holmstrand

His outline is more thorough than that given in other commentaries, such as Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 3; or I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (The New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 10–11. Bruce has given 1 Thess 2:13–16 the unfortunate title of “Further Thanksgiving.”

⁵ Wallace, “1 Thessalonians: Introduction,” 2.

⁶ Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett, eds., *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999), 118–119; 193–224; 345–351.

⁷ Josef Coppens, “Miscellanées bibliques. LXXX : Une diatribe antijuive dans 1 Thess., II, 13–16,” *ETL* 51 (1975): 90–95, here 91–93.

⁸ Robert Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 36–37.

⁹ John W. Simpson, *The Future of Non-Christian Jews: 1 Thessalonians 2:15–16 and Romans 9–11* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1990).

¹⁰ Jon Weatherly, “The Authenticity of 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16: Additional Evidence,” *JSTNT* 42 (1991): 79–98, here 79–91.

¹¹ Schluter, *Filling Up the Measure*.

¹² Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 17.

(1997),¹³ and David Luckensmeyer (2009).¹⁴ It is our purpose to present a critical overview of both sides of the positions taken.

4.1 Deutero-Pauline interpolation

Treating 1 Thess 2:14–16 as an interpolation is probably the most common analysis of the text. Such an approach does indeed seem “to offer the best of both worlds” for, according to John C. Hurd, “we are allowed to keep 1 Thessalonians as an authentic letter of Paul but the historical and theological difficulties posed by our passage are resolved by resigning it to a later period.”¹⁵ The arguments marshaled go back to the work of F. C. Baur (1875) who opined that the passage was a reflection of “a post-Pauline period” when both Gentile and even Jewish Christians “had begun to regard Jews as enemies of the gospel.”¹⁶ The general approach of viewing the passage as the later work of some anti-Jewish Gentile is based on various considerations such as the polemical tone of the passage, the use of un-Pauline terms, an unusual statement about imitating the Judean churches, the un-Pauline list of accusations and a definitive condemnation of the Jews that contradicts what Paul writes in Rom 11:26 that “all Israel will be saved.” In short the issues deal with textual, historical, form-critical and theological issues.

¹³ Jonas Holmstrand, *Markers and Meaning in Paul: An Analysis of 1 Thessalonians, Philippians and Galatians* (ConBNT 28; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1997), 42–46.

¹⁴ David Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 162–167.

¹⁵ John C. Hurd, “Paul Ahead of his Time: 1 Thess 2:13–16,” in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity* (ed. Peter Richardson and David Granskou; Waterloo, Ont: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 21–36, here 25.

¹⁶ Simpson, *Non-Christian Jews*, 66 n. 2.

4.1.1 Textual criticism

Textual criticism throws up something of a surprise. Despite the strong scholarly *Tendenz* to excuse the problem by appeal to interpolation (see e.g. the works by David Wenham, Norman Beck, and Birger Pearson¹⁷), the text critical apparatus reveals a bias in favor of inclusion. There is virtually no manuscript evidence that the passage is an interpolation.¹⁸ From the fourth century onwards basically all manuscripts contain the passage in its entirety. Only one eleventh-century manuscript (vatic. Lat. 5729) leaves out v.16d, yet it is highly improbable that this variant goes back to a Greek manuscript.¹⁹ The textual variants in vv.15–16 are of a very minor nature and could not be taken as supporting an interpolation, as William O. Walker confirms.²⁰ The difficulty comes however, with the discovery of early papyri containing fragments of 1 Thess. According to Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett the earliest textual fragments we have of the epistle are P46 (ca. 125–150 C. E.); P30 (ca. 225 C. E.) and P65 (ca. 250 C. E.).²¹ None of these fragments contain our passage. The nearest is P65 that has 1 Thess 2:1, 6–13, but then lacks the rest of the letter.²² P30 has nothing of chapters 1–2³ and P46 has 1:9–2:3 but then nothing of the rest of chapter 2, nor chapters 3–4.²⁴

¹⁷ David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1995), 319–320; Norman Beck, *Mature Christianity in the 21st Century: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic of the New Testament* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 82.

¹⁸ Daniel B. Wallace, *Is 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16 an Interpolation?*, 2 [cited 25 August 2009]. <http://bible.org/article/1-thessalonians-2:13-16-interpolation>. He shows that manuscripts A B D F G H I P 0208 0278 33 1739 Itala, Syriac, Coptic, Origen, Athanasius, Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom *et plures* all contain our passage.

¹⁹ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 162.

²⁰ William O. Walker, *Interpolation in the Pauline letters* (JNSTSup 213; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 211–212.

²¹ Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett, eds., *Earliest New Testament*, 118–119; 193–224; 345–351.

²² P65 (PSI XIV 1373) contains 1 Thess 1:3–2:1, 6–13.

²³ P30 (P. Oxy. 1598) contains 1 Thess 4:12–13, 16–17; 5:3, 8–10, 12–18, 25–28.

²⁴ P46 (P. Chester Beatty II and P. Mich. Inv. 6238) contains 1 Thess 1:1; 1:9–2:3; 5:5–5:9, 23–28.

Now at face value, the absence of our passage from these papyri may seem to suggest the possibility of an interpolation, but an honest appraisal has to admit that it is impossible to say, owing to the piecemeal nature of the evidence. Moreover we have discovered that Origen quotes verbatim from 1 Thess 2:14–15 in his *Commentary on Matthew* (ca. 246–248 C. E.).²⁵ He explicitly mentions that the words are from Paul. This places his witness to the authenticity of the text around the same time as P30 and P65. When the codices are also taken into account, it is fair to argue that textual criticism rather tends to support, more than challenge, Pauline authorship.

4.1.2 Historical criticism

Historical criticism presents more formidable arguments. The strongest of them may be grouped as follows: that Paul would not appeal to the churches in Judea as an example for his churches to imitate (v.14a–14c); that there is no evidence of persecutions of Christians in Judea at that time (c.50 CE); that nowhere else does Paul attribute the death of Jesus to the Jews (v.15a), and that the only possible historical referent to ἡ ὄργη (v.16d) has to be the later, post-Pauline destruction of the Temple in 70 C. E.²⁶

²⁵ Origen, “Commentary on Matthew,” Book II, chapter 10 in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (ed. Allan Menzies; vol. 10; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 425. The dating to 246–248 CE is based on internal evidence and the witness of Eusebius (H.E. vi. 36). Origen, commenting on Matt 13:57 here writes “And by Paul in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians like things are said: ‘For ye brethren became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen even as they did of the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drave us out, and please not God, and are contrary to all men.’”

²⁶ Birger A. Pearson, “1 Thessalonians 2:13–16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation,” *HTR* 64 (1971): 79–94, here 82–83, 86–88; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 162–163. Beck, *Mature Christianity*, 94, 79; Pearson, “1 Thessalonians 2:13–16,” 82–83; Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 120.

However, counter-arguments are also well known. Since Paul only uses the imitation (μιμητής) motif four times in the proto-Paulines (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6; 2:14) referring to himself and to the Lord, it is simply too categorical to argue that its use here is un-Pauline. Paul in fact does make reference to the churches of Christ in Judea in Gal 1:22. Moreover, though less plausibly, F. F. Bruce has argued that Silas, signified as a co-author of the letter, was a leading member of the church in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:22) and may have been responsible for this comparison.²⁷ In any case, as J. W. Simpson has pointed out, the imitation mentioned here is not an imperative, telling them to follow the Judean churches, but a description of an existing situation.²⁸ In their long-suffering steadfastness the Thessalonians are already imitating the Judean churches.

Regarding the evidence of persecution in Judea, other scholars have put forward a series of possible options. It could refer, either singularly or collectively, to the general persecution between 41–44 C. E. under the elder Herod Agrippa (cf. Acts 12:1)²⁹, to the revolt of Theudas in 44–46, to the Judean famine in 46–47 C. E., or to the aftermath of the expulsion of Jews from Rome in 49 C. E.³⁰ As concerns the attribution of the death of Jesus to the Jews, it has been pointed out that in 1 Cor 2:8 Paul blames the rulers (οἱ ἄρχοντες) as crucifying the Lord of glory in ignorance. Though it is debated who or what this phrase refers to (spiritual powers, Roman rulers, Jewish authorities?)³¹ it still shows that this may not be the only place where Paul implicates Jewish responsibility for Jesus' death.³²

²⁷ Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, xxxii; cf. Michael Goulder, "Silas in Thessalonica," *JNT* 48 (1992): 94.

²⁸ Simpson, *Non-Christian Jews*, 115.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

³¹ Pearson, "1 Thessalonians 2:13–16," 85; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 47; Pieter W. van der Horst, "Omgaan met anti-joodse teksten in het Nieuwe Testament," 1–13, here 8–9. [cited 25 August 2009].

³² <http://www.appelkerkenisrael.nl/Lezingen/pydhorst.pdf>.

³³ Acts is the only other New Testament book to charge οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι with Jesus' death (Acts 2:36; 3:15; 5:30; 7:52).

Though several scholars, most notably Birger A. Pearson, point to a necessary historical setting of post 70 C. E. and thus a post-Pauline authorship, this is not demanded by the syntax. Pearson contends that ἔφθασεν has to refer to a past event ("wrath has come"), and that only the destruction of the Temple could account for such wrath. Yet according to David Luckensmeyer, the aorist tense of the verb ἔφθασεν governing ἡ ὀργή can have both modal and temporal aspects, meaning that the wrath could be in the past, coming presently or still to come in the future, undercutting the claim that it has to refer to one specific historical referent.³³ Paul could thus still have written verse 16d.

In general then, despite the seeming strength of its arguments, historical criticism remains far from decisive in evidencing an interpolation in 1 Thess 2:14–16.

4.1.3 Form criticism

Turning to the arguments for interpolation from form criticism, we find that they largely centre around three things: (i) the fact that 1 Thess 2:13, often taken as a unit with 2:14–16, begins with a redundant and repetitive second thanksgiving (cf. 1:2–10); (ii) that these verses seem to interrupt the natural flow connecting 2:12 to 2:17;³⁴ and (iii) that the passage uses apparently un-Pauline phrases.³⁵ However, once again scholars have not been shy in supplying counter-arguments to these authorial challenges.

For while it is true that virtually all the Pauline thanksgivings come immediately after the opening salutations (Rom 1:8–9; 1 Cor 1:4–9; Phil 1:3–11, etc.) renewals of thanksgiving are not unknown (cf. Phil 1:3–8; 4:10–20) and in any case the two thanksgivings are dealing with two different matters, one introductory and general, the other more specific and embedded in a particular context. Furthermore, as

³³ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 158.

³⁴ Simpson, *Non-Christian Jews*, 70.

³⁵ Daryl Schmidt, "1 Thess 2.13–16: Linguistic Evidence for an Interpolation," *JBL* 102 (1983): 269–279.

Bruce and Murphy-O'Connor note, it is extremely difficult to be able to establish a vocabulary norm for Paul's letters.³⁶ In contrast to those who see an abrupt transition between 2:12–2:13 and 2:16–2:17, many scholars have also argued that 2:13–16 “is an integral part of 1 Thessalonians overall.”³⁷ Indeed Daniel Wallace has pointed out that 2:13–16 seems to form an *inclusio* with 1:2–10 regarding the parallel themes of thanksgiving (1:2/2:13), receiving the dynamic word of God (1:5/2:13), the Thessalonians' imitation (1:6/2:14), their perseverance in the midst of suffering (1:6/2:14), and the deliverance from wrath contrasted with the inescapability of wrath (1:9–10/2:16).³⁸ All this goes to show that while form criticism offers perhaps the strongest arguments for an interpolation, it is still far from enjoying a scholarly consensus since the counter-arguments for many are equally persuasive.

4.1.4 Theological criticism

As Jon Weatherly has in fact pointed out, most scholars base their interpolation theories on theological grounds rather than on textual, historical or form critical grounds.³⁹ One could summarize this approach as pitting ‘Paul against Paul,’ playing off his theology regarding the Jews in other authentic letters against the picture presented here. The main argument centers around the incompatibility of a wrath coming upon the Jews that is ἐἰς τέλος with what Paul writes about seven years later in Rom 9–11, especially 11:26 that

³⁶ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 164; Schmidt, “Interpolation,” 269–70; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, xxxii; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Opinions, His Skills* (GNS 41; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995), 34–35.

³⁷ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 164; Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, 86; Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 90; Schluter, *Filling Up the Measure*, 25; Simpson, *Non-Christian Jews*, 76.

³⁸ Daniel B. Wallace, “1 Thessalonians: Introduction,” 3 n. 6.
³⁹ Jon Weatherly, “The Authenticity of 1 Thess 2:13–16: Additional Evidence,” *JNTS* 42 (1991): 79–98, here 82–83.

“all Israel will be saved.” In 1 Thess 2:16 he appears to be damning the Jews while in Rom 11:26 he is heralding their redemption. Such blatant contradiction is seen to call for either an inconsistent Paul à la Heikki Räisänen⁴⁰ or a pseudo-Paul by way of interpolation. Owing to the unattractiveness of the first option, many scholars choose for the second.

However, both options have their problems. For while the former seems to overlook the contextual nature of Paul's writings and the fact that his is a theology ‘on the run’ and ‘in the making,’ the latter is an argument based on the need for theological harmonization, and a tendency to take the good and dismiss (as interpolation) the ugly. A third option is put forward by Hurd, that though Paul's “diatribe against the Jews quite properly offends us” yet “we are not thereby justified in improving his letter by removing the offending passage. The passage is part of the apocalyptic logic which is woven into the fabric of the whole letter.”⁴¹ Hurd has pinpointed the heart of the problem for theologically-based interpolative readings. Dismissing a passage as an interpolation because it seems to contradict Paul's theological discourse elsewhere is tenuous at best. Each letter has to be taken in its own right and allowed to speak with its own voice.

Taking stock of all the interpolation positions presented above, we are struck by the following question: in what way do these various approaches solve the anti-Jewish problem present in our text? It seems clear that any form of the interpolation argument has the effect, either implicitly or explicitly, of saving Paul from being anti-Jewish, at least in this letter. He cannot be held responsible for what he did not write. Yet when we see that the collective evidence in favor of an interpolation is far from being clear-cut, one wonders whether such an outcome, in its potential desirability, has overly

⁴⁰ Heikki Räisänen, *Römer 9–11 Analyse eines geistigen Ringens* (ANRW II 25.4 1987), 2891–2939, esp. 2925. With regard to our passage Räisänen argues that Paul makes two inconsistencies. Firstly that in 1 Thess 2:14–16 the Jews prevent him speaking to the Gentiles whereas in Rom 11:11f. it is actually Jewish unbelief that spurs him on to speak to them. Secondly that Paul ends with wrath in 1 Thess 2:16 whereas he ends with Israel's salvation in Rom 11:26.

⁴¹ Hurd, “Paul Ahead of his Time,” 35.

influenced the call to label our text as an interpolation. Cataloging a text or passage as an interpolation should be a matter of last resort. We simply raise the question, therefore, of whether the extreme polemical nature of this passage has led to an overhasty categorization by some considering the ambiguity of the evidence.

4.2 Canon within the canon

Related to this issue is whether any or all of the above approaches may in fact lead to the practical creation of a canon within the canon. That is, overlooking or disregarding those parts of Paul's letters that one now finds distasteful and emphasizing only those passages that please. This is so whether one calls those unpleasant parts interpolations or not.

J. Louis Martyn, for example, makes a good case of showing that the influential 1980 Resolution of the *Landesynode der Evangelischen*, a document by German Protestants seeking to renovate their relationship with Jews, falls into this trap. In its confession it puts ample weight on Rom 9–11 to the utter exclusion of 1 Thess 2:14–16 and other difficult passages such as Gal 4:21–5:1 and 2 Cor 3:6, 14.⁴² Martyn remarks that such exclusion by silence results in the creation of an "inner-canonical canon." He writes,

Small wonder that a group of European Christians, living after the Holocaust, and admirably intent on rectifying some of the most grievous wrongs done to Jews by Christians, should concentrate their attention on certain parts of the Pauline corpus, to the practical exclusion of others. All exegetes work with an operative canon within the canon, their own context and thus their own history inevitably playing a significant role in their interpretive labors.⁴³

⁴² J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 192–193.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 193.

This marginalizing of difficult texts in favor of universal ones raises several issues of its own. Firstly, it is clear that selecting those texts that one thinks present Paul in the best light, offers an incomplete portrait at the very least. Secondly, the working assumption that the message in Rom 9–11 is primarily a positive one vis-à-vis the Jews is seriously open to question.

In Rom 9:22–23 NRSV Paul appears to be equating the Jews (whom he terms his brethren and kinsmen κατὰ σάρκα Rom 9:3) with "objects of wrath that are made for destruction"; in 9:31–33 he charges them with a form of covenantal legalism (and not covenantal nomism) in that they fail to attain to a Torah-based righteousness since they pursue it through works and not faith; in 10:21 NRSV he forthrightly declares, roughly quoting Isaiah 65:2, that they are a "disobedient and contrary people"; and in 11:9–10 he cites a curse coming from David in Psalm 69:22–24 that the Jews' table may become a trap and a snare, that their eyes may be darkened and their backs bent continually; and finally in 11:19 he announces that the unbelieving Jews are broken branches out of the olive tree of Israel. This is quite a litany in itself, and actually reveals a certain amount of theological continuity with 1 Thess 2:14–16. Indeed it is only Paul's supreme conviction that God remains true to his previously elected people (Rom 11:1–2) and to his covenantal promises (11:26–27) that gives Paul the further hope in Romans that all will be well with Israel in the end (11:26–29).

It is therefore doubtful that the canon within the canon position, though well-meaning and sensitive to its times, suffices as a legitimate response to this problematic text. It is undertaken, as Walker argues, by those "who wish to use the biblical writings as a basis for Christian faith and practice" but it is not a valid "path for literary-historical scholarship."⁴⁴ It is the gap between these two worlds that our own hermeneutical approach seeks to address at the end of this paper.

Let us now consider other non-interpolation responses to the passage.

⁴⁴ Walker, *Interpolation*, 242.

4.3 Referent limitation

Taking Pauline authorship for granted, this position argues that Paul is referencing *some* Judean Jews, not all Jews non-restrictively. It is contended that Paul used the articular participial phrase translated in (v.15a) "who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets" to restrict the range of those Jews involved.⁴⁵ It is only those Jews who carried out these acts and those enumerated in the following verse that are referenced, not all Jews. In this way it is again put forward that there is no theological anomaly with what he says collectively about ethnic Israel's salvation in Rom 9–11.⁴⁶ Gilliard⁴⁷ and Koenig⁴⁸ in separate works all argue that the comma inserted in many translations between vv.14 and 15—"for you suffered the same thing from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets [...]"—illegitimately removes the restrictive limitation regarding the deeds of some Judean Jews to universally referring to all Jews without distinction. This move from the restrictive to the descriptive, it could be argued, raises questions of scholarly pre-understanding or prejudice.⁴⁹

Nonetheless, despite its grammatical veracity on this point, the referent limitation model overlooks the fact that the rest of the charges in v.15b–e are unrestricted in nature and take on a supra-temporal tone.⁵⁰ For taking the one long clause that defines οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as solely referring to a contemporary group of Paul "stretches the historical

context of 1 Thess 2:13–16 to breaking point."⁵¹ It is the Jewish people throughout history whom Paul is targeting as constantly resisting God's purposes to their own hurt. Paul is judging the whole historical people and not just the acts of some Jewish contemporaries. So we see that limiting the referent only addresses part of the problem, and not the whole.

4.4 Referent expansion

In the opposite direction to the above position, this approach contends that the phrase οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι should be theologized to refer abstractly to "hostility to God in general," rather than to any specific Jewish party or people. Yet this use of "the Jew within" as a trope for human evil conveys the troublesome idea that the Jew represents that part of human nature that needs to be overcome. Ernst Käsemann for example talks of "the hidden Jew in all of us," as "the man who validates rights and demands over against God on the basis of God's past dealings with him and to this extent is serving not God but an illusion."⁵² The problems inherent to this model are self-evident. It is unjustifiable, even from the basis of our passage in question, to portray the Jews as the archetype for evil in humanity. For though this position may actually think it is delivering a blow to any kind of dangerous anti-Jewishness by claiming that "we are all Jews," it actually has the opposite effect of demonizing the Jew as the enemy of God.⁵³

4.5 Intra-Jewish polemic

This brings us to our next model, that of intra-Jewish polemic. This position argues that it is better to understand the pericope as

⁴⁵ Frank D. Gilliard, "The Problem of the Antisemitic Comma between 1 Thessalonians 2:14 and 15," *NTS* 35 (1989): 481–502, here 491–2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 492.

⁴⁷ Gilliard, "Antisemitic Comma," *passim*.

⁴⁸ John Koenig, *Jews and Christians in Dialogue: New Testament Foundations* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster, 1979), 47–48.

⁴⁹ A similar thing happens in 2 Cor 11:24–26 where Paul writes that he received lashes ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων and that he has been in danger ἐξ ἐθνῶν. While the latter is translated in the NRSV "from Gentiles," the former is translated as "from the Jews". The insertion here of a definite article similarly universalises the designated group from some Jews, to all Jews in general. See Gilliard, "Antisemitic Comma," 493.

⁵⁰ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 18; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 141.

⁵¹ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 142.

⁵² E. Käsemann, "Paul and Israel," *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 186.

⁵³ See Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 213.

an intra-Jewish literary motif rather than as anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic.⁵⁴ It puts forward the idea that "heated rhetoric in the service of religious disputes was quite the norm in ancient times." David Turner comments that "such rhetoric was used in Jewish circles since the days of the biblical prophets, and that it continued to be used in the days of the Second Temple as various Jewish groups critiqued the religious establishment in Jerusalem."⁵⁵ In fact, he goes so far as to tell us that the use of such a motif was "a valid expression of authentic Jewish spirituality."⁵⁶

Turner gives a convenient overview of the rejection and even killing of the prophets in the Tanakh that includes "Ahab and Jezebel's rejection of Elijah and Micaiah (1 Kgs 18–19, 22), Amaziah's rejection of Amos (Amos 7:10–17), Pashhur's persecution of Jeremiah (Jer 20), Jehoiaquim's murder of Uriah son of Shemaiah (Jer 26:20–23), and Zedekiah's imprisonment of Jeremiah (Jer 37–38)." He also references the Second Temple Book of Jubilees (c. 150 B. C. E.) that "predicts the judgment which will come to Israel when they refuse to listen to the prophets (here called 'witnesses')) but instead kill them (1:12–14)."⁵⁷

The similarly construed "Woe oracles" announcing an impending negative divine judgement, are, according to Turner, also found in Second Temple Jewish literature, especially throughout the Apocrypha (Jdt 16:17; Sir 2:12–14; 41:8; 2 Esd 13:16, 19; 1 Macc 2:7, 23), in Josephus (*The Jewish War* 6.301–11) and in Qumran (1QPHqb 10:5; 11:2).⁵⁸ Others have similarly noted the striking parallel between Paul's language of wrath in v.16d–e and that contained in the Testament of Levi (6:11).⁵⁹

⁵⁴ E. P. Sanders, "Reflections on Anti-Judaism in the New Testament and Christianity," in *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels* (ed. William R. Farmer; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999), 265–286, here 268–269.

⁵⁵ David L. Turner, "Matthew 23 as a Prophetic Critique," *JBS* 4.1 (January 2004): 23–42, here 24.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 33–34.

⁵⁹ Jeffrey S. Lampe, "Is Paul Anti-Jewish? Testament of Levi 6 in the

As a result, Charles Wanamaker writes, "[f]rom [Paul] and his contemporaries' viewpoint, the persecution of the Christians in Judea represented a continuation of the phenomenon going back to the prophets of the OT period and recently manifested in the experiences of Jesus and Paul himself (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24)."⁶⁰ Consequently Linda McKinnish Bridges states that "Paul is not providing fuel for hatred – neither for the first century nor for the twenty-first." While it is admitted that "Paul is very angry" and "his language is harsh and negative, hurtful and spiteful," one must realize that "[t]his is language [...] from the inside to the inside. These words come from one faction of the Jewish-Christian debate to another in the first-century world. Language used by family members against other family members can often be more violent and harmful than language used by outsiders. These words belong to family conflict in the world of Paul."⁶¹

As Luke T. Johnson has pointed out, the apparent purpose of such rhetoric was primarily to define community self-identity by polarizing the other, and had much less to do with the actual facts or the supposed deeds of the other.⁶² In the words of Carol Schluter, "Paul, a skilled debater, used polemical hyperbole to polarize issues and to move his readers to his side while casting his opponents (in this case, the Jews) completely on the wrong side."⁶³

Thus we may summarize this approach as arguing that Paul, in listing Jewish sins and proclaiming divine wrath, is simply continuing a Jewish tradition that is a motivated self-critique, not done out of hatred, but out of grief for his own people. It is not to be feared for it "is in keeping with both the spirit of the prophets and the rhet-

Interpretation of 1 Thess 2:13–16," *CBQ* 65.3 (2003): 408–427. Testament of Levi 6:11 reads "But the wrath of the Lord came suddenly upon them to the uttermost."

⁶⁰ Charles Wannamaker, *Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 31.

⁶¹ Linda McKinnish Bridges, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (SHBC; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 56.

⁶² Luke T. Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic," *JBL* 108 (1989): 419–441.

⁶³ Schluter, *Filling Up the Measure*, 11.

oric of the times."⁶⁴ Based on such a premise, this position also assumes that Paul remains a Jew within Judaism, even if on the margins, and that the parting of the ways has not yet occurred.⁶⁵

However, at this point several questions need to be raised. For example, does the fact that Paul writes as a Jew deflate or defuse the polemical discourse? In light of the sheer extent of the critique and condemnation given against the Jews, is it not possible to classify Paul here as a Jew acting anti-Jewishly? That is not to say, of course, that he is a self-hating Jew,⁶⁶ but it is to say that he found little with which to identify in the mainstream or common Judaism of his day. In fact there is nothing in the passage itself that identifies Paul with οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as his own people. He appears to speak of himself as an outsider and an accuser, rather "than as a member of penitent Israel."⁶⁷ One could easily assume that this passage actually supports an early parting of the ways rather than disproves it. Paul, it would appear, has been able to distance himself from his own kind to such an extent that he is able to condemn them without a blush.

Similarly, one can also ask if this intra-Jewish position overlooks the issue of conflictual ethics, and whether one has the right, even in an intra-familial conflict, to neglect or negate a basic ethic for enemies? Paul himself writes in 1 Thess 5:15 NRSV "See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all." Further, it can also be argued that Paul ought to have been aware of the dangerous potential that he embedded in this text, especially in light of the revelatory claims that lay at the basis of his missionary activity and the integral role his letters played in that enterprise (cf. 1 Thess 2:13). Finally, the fact that

⁶⁴ Turner, "Prophetic Critique," 41.

⁶⁵ Schluter, *Filling Up the Measure*, 187. On the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity see James D. G. Dunn, ed. *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, AD 70 to 135* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1992).

⁶⁶ Pamela Eisenbaum, "Is Paul the Father of Misogyny and Antisemitism?" *Cross Currents* 50.4 (Winter, 2000): 506–524.

⁶⁷ Simpson, *Non-Christian Jews*, 100.

the Thessalonian community was largely or predominantly Gentile in composition moves Paul's words away from operating on an intra-Jewish level to functioning on a Gentile versus Jewish level, with all the perilous possibilities that that transition brings. In the end, the intra-Jewish polemic position, though valuable for its insights, leaves many questions unasked and unanswered.

4.6 The mysterious plan of God

This position, largely dependent upon Johannes Munck⁶⁸ and Karl Donfried,⁶⁹ puts forward the case that εἰς τέλος, the climax of the passage, should not be understood as conveying a finality or eternal state of condemnation, but rather that it means until the end of the age, that is the παρουσία.⁷⁰ Read in this light, it actually agrees theologically with Rom 11:25f. in that the current stubbornness of Israel vis-à-vis the gospel (equated with the outpouring of God's wrath in 1 Thess 2:16d) will ultimately be removed and Israel will be redeemed. In this sense εἰς τέλος carries the idea of the wrath as having a functional goal or purpose in the greater salvific plan of God.

Yet the problem with Paul's text in 1 Thess 2:14–16 is rather that there is no hope or promise of redemption once the τέλος or goal of the wrath has been reached. It is this very lack of hope that convinces scholars to see the wrath as final and forever. J. W. Simpson, for example, has argued that Paul is foregoing any further chance of repentance as he assumes such an imminent παρουσία in his own lifetime (1 Thess 4:15; 5:23) that he simply saw no time left for such repentance.⁷¹ Yet we need to ask, how does the Church today deal with this lack of hope now that the supposed early παρουσία has not

⁶⁸ Johannes Munck, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Rom 9–11* (tr. I. Nixon; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 64.

⁶⁹ Karl P. Donfried, "Paul and Judaism: 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16 as a Test Case," *Int* 38 (1984) 242–253, here 252.

⁷⁰ Cf. Simpson, *Non-Christian Jews*, 151.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

come? Does the Church still translate the εἰς τέλος as lasting for 2,000 years and continuing with no anticipation of remittance?

Or should we agree with C. Williamson that to read Paul "in good faith" is to read him forwards from Thessalonians to Romans, in tandem with his positive evolution regarding ethnic Israel, and that "to read him backward is to read him in bad faith"?⁷² This may be to pre-judge the issue, for the real question needing to be asked is whether Paul ever distanced himself from what he wrote in 1 Thess 2:14–16. As we have seen above, Rom 9–11 does not offer a profound theology of discontinuity with 1 Thess 2:14–16, but rather brings a severe critique with the hope of a final salvation based not on Israel's deeds, but actually despite them, on God's grace. So while the mysterious plan of God approach offers an alternative reading of εἰς τέλος, one that is functional and temporary rather than final and eternal, we still find that its advocates have to look outside 1 Thess 2:14–16 to Rom 11:25–36 to try to find a solution to the problem and build on the rather brittle idea of Paul's supposed u-turn vis-à-vis the Jews.⁷³

4.7 Intent and effect

This brings us to another type of argument, intent and effect. This position advocates that there is a distinction to be made between the intentionality governing a text and the effect it may have on its readers.⁷⁴ Two main points need to be made here. Firstly, that the author may or may not be self-consciously aware of that intentionality when speaking or writing, and secondly, that one's discourses (whether spoken or written) may "have unintended

ed effects."⁷⁵ If a person's rhetoric does in fact have an "unexpected effect" upon the reader(s), then that person tends to complain that he or she has "been misunderstood" since people are often satisfied that their "discourses express [their] good intentions."⁷⁶

In light of this approach, Luckensmeyer argues that while the effects of 1 Thess 2:14–16 have admittedly been adverse, Paul's intentionality remains pure.⁷⁷ Indeed, because of Paul's position within Judaism, and his self-conscious awareness that he writes as a Jew, Luckensmeyer maintains that any negative effects of the text cannot be charged to his account. Being within Judaism is again an appeal to the literary motif of intra-Jewish polemic discussed above (see 4.5) and it again side-steps the question raised there of whether a Jew within Judaism can also be anti-Jewish. In any case, Luckensmeyer finishes his argument by highlighting that Paul is not only limiting the charge of persecutors to 'some Jews' instead of all but is also including the Thessalonians own compatriots (v.14d) in the claim, stressing in turn that he is actually not anti-Judaistic, nor anti-Gentile but simply "anti-anyone-against-Christ-as-Kyrios."⁷⁸ So the argument goes that Paul's intention is not against the Jews per se but against every opponent of Christ, Jewish or non-Jewish.

Evidently, this is a very interesting position in that it takes not just the world of the text, but also the world of the author and the world of the reader into account. It makes it clear that these three entities are all interdependent to a certain degree. Further, a link is made between the author and the (potentially negative) consequences of his or her writings. But, once again, does this model go far enough? If Paul is equally against all those not accepting Jesus as Kyrios, why does he not equally list the sins of the Gentile compatriots in comparable terms, including the certainty of divine doom? Additionally, the quest to keep Paul's intention sacrosanct and thus divorced from the text's negative effects raises issues.

⁷⁵ Parre, "Anti-Semitism," 41.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Luckensmeyer, "Eschatology," 171.

⁷⁸ Luckensmeyer, "Eschatology," 169.

⁷² Clark Williamson, *Has God Rejected His People? Anti-Judaism in the Christian Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 63.

⁷³ See E.P. Sanders, "Did Paul's Theology Develop?" in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays* (ed. J. Ross Wagner, A. Katherine Grieb, C. Kavin Rowe; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 325–350.

⁷⁴ Daniel Parre, "Anti-Semitism in the New Testament: Confronting the Dark Side of Paul and Matthew's Teaching," *CTSR* 78 (1988): 31–52, here, 33–44. Cited and used by Luckensmeyer, "Eschatology," 170–171.

Does this not separate the author too much from any dangerous potential in his text? Indeed, just how far is the author responsible for the effects of the text, whether intended or not? Was Paul fully aware of the intentionality governing his text at this point? This brings us to our next position, that of resistant reading.

4.8 Resistant readings

This model suggests that Paul's human side is clearly seen in this passage, and that he is openly writing in anger and frustration against those Jews who have personally persecuted and prevented him from evangelizing the nations. Van der Horst⁷⁹ reminds us that Paul is not immune from venting his emotions on vellum, as his caustic remark about castration in Gal 5:12 reveals. Nonetheless, Van der Horst also notes that this text is part of our New Testament and is read in our Churches. Indeed he remarks that the statement that the Jews "displease God and oppose everyone" (v.15b) is very similar to classical pagan anti-Jewish comments by Tacitus and others and gives the impression that Paul is joining in pagan condemnation of his own people. Van der Horst is direct in his judgement: "Paul, (or whoever) you ought not to have written that!"⁸⁰ He is convinced that we have the right to "rap the fingers" of the Bible writers, if only in the sense of distancing ourselves from such comments while realizing their contextual character. He argues that it is only in recognizing and responding to the *Umwelt* of these statements that one can do good theology and at the same time relativize the author's polemics. According to him, such an approach will save us from the danger of biblicism (a kind of fundamentalist reading of the text) that eternally keeps alive the anti-Jewish feelings of any given biblical writer.

This method is clearly more critical of the author per se. In the name of the reader it judges that it was unwise for Paul to write what he did and so the Church should take distance from it. This

⁷⁹ Van der Horst, "Omgaan met anti-joodse teksten," 8 [cited 25 August 2009]. <http://www.appelkerkenisrael.nl/Lezingen/pvdhorst>.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 9 "Paulus (of welk ander dan ook), dat had je niet moeten schrijven!"

position seeks to resist what it considers an oppressive use of power in the discourse. Where is the alternative Jewish voice in this passage? Why is it silenced? Once more, however, one can ask if this position really does adequate justice to Paul himself. Is Paul simply to be left with bruised fingers for writing a bad text or does the idea of him imparting revelation through his letter writing not go deeper than this? The resistant reader model seems to leave us in a kind of binary opposition to the text and its author. Is there no room for moving beyond such a reading to a fresh engagement with the text that can lead us to a type of Ricoeurian second naïveté?⁸¹ This brings us to our third and final section: revelation in Pauline texts and how God writes straight on crooked lines.

5. REVELATION IN PAULINE TEXTS – GOD WRITES STRAIGHT ON CROOKED LINES⁸²

This has been no easy journey. We have seen that various attempts have been made to deal with this passage, with the majority trying either to justify Paul or limit the damage of the text. Some have gone so far as to make a connection between negative effects and Paul's intent, but only one model (that of resistant reading) has actually said that Paul was misguided to write what he did.

⁸¹ Central to Paul Ricoeur's work is a strong conviction that theological interpretation of the Bible ought to deal with the text's message, more than just its meaning. In other words, one ought to be concerned with engaging the divine reality to which the text bears witness. This is reflected in his method of observation, reflection and appropriation (coming to a second naïveté). In this desire he has similarities with Karl Barth and the post-liberal movement. See Mark I. Wallace, *Second Naïveté: Barth, Ricoeur, and the New Yale Theology* (Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics, 6; 2nd edn; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1995).

⁸² The phrase "God writes straight on crooked lines" is taken from Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frédérique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, "Wrestling with Johannine Anti-Judaism: A Hermeneutical Framework for the Analysis of the Current Debate," in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers of the Leuven Colloquium, 2000* (ed., Reimund Bieringer et al.; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001), 3–37 here 34.

An honest appraisal would take all these positions into consideration and grant that all of them have something of value to say. Yet it is our evaluation that none of them is capable of dealing with all the issues on its own. Regarding the various interpolation theories, we have seen that the balance of arguments is very tight, with, in our view, a bias in favor of inclusion. Nevertheless, no matter which side a scholar chooses in the debate, it still does not negate the fact that the text, as it now is, remains part of the Christian canon and thus scripturally authoritative.

Regarding the practical fall-back position of a canon within the canon approach, we would caution that the subjective and selective use of some Pauline texts as normative while neglecting other parts of the whole corpus is openly questionable. As regards referent limitation, it is true that while Paul should not be falsely accused, and the universalizing anti-Jewish comma ought to be removed from translations, the rest of the sweeping charges against "the Jews" still stands.

As concerns the referent expansion option, it presents a troubling caricature of the Jew as the basest part of human nature and simply needs to be rejected outright. Likewise, the literary motif of the intra-Jewish position only succeeds in displacing the problem but not removing it altogether. The author is still responsible for the passage, whatever its genre or type, and cannot, merely by being a Jew, avoid all responsibility for its history of effects.

With regard to the mysterious plan of God, it is important to note that εἰς τέλος can be interpreted in non-final ways. That it can indeed point to a goal beyond itself is significant. Unfortunately though, this further horizon is missing from the text. As for the intent and effect position, it is an important step forward. Yet its application in this case leaves other questions unanswered. It too quickly seeks to defend the author's intention and blame the interpreters for any negative effects of the text.

Finally, rapping the author's fingers for writing such polemic is a bold and controversial step yet one that is defended in the interest of good theology that disallows contextual outbursts of anger to become sacralized truths. While we would agree that divine inspiration does not do away with the humanness of the authors,

such an upbraiding of Paul and subsequent distancing from the text seem to disengage too much from the text as revelation. Can we honestly say that this is in the interests of good theology?

This is the point where hermeneutical approaches may go beyond the limits of the historical-critical method. While the latter remains an indispensable tool, it stops short of asking crucial questions that do deal with the revelatory nature of the text and its dialogue with the historical Church community.

In varying degrees of contrast to all the above approaches, we believe that "[a] hermeneutical approach will allow us to accept the normativity of a seemingly oppressive text."⁸³ It can enable us to do this by seeking a way that both includes, but goes beyond, the historical-critical approach, with its almost exclusive focus on authorial intention, and equally includes, but goes beyond, the reader response approach, with its rather exclusive interest in the meaning given by the reader.⁸⁴ In this regard we follow the hermeneutist Paul Ricoeur who escapes the polarization between authorial intent and the reader monopoly by stressing the importance of the text as a mediating and creative factor in the relations between both author and reader.⁸⁵ All three elements (text, author, reader) need to be taken into consideration, yet a certain priority is to be given to the text as *primus inter pares*.⁸⁶

According to Ricoeur, a text can in fact escape the finite horizon lived by its author.⁸⁷ In his joint work with A. LaCoque, *Penser La Bible*, he frames the biblical text as largely autonomous and in need

⁸³ R. Bieringer, "Come and you will see" (John 1:39): Dialogical Authority and Normativity of the Future in the Fourth Gospel and in Religious Education," in *Hermeneutics and Religious Education* (ed. H. Lombaerts & D. Pollefeyt; Leuven: Peeters Press, 2004), 179–202, here 186–7.

⁸⁴ Gregory J. Laughery, "Reading Ricoeur: Authors, Readers, and Texts," *European Journal of Theology* 9.2 (2000): 159–170.

⁸⁵ Laughery, "Reading Ricoeur," 161.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁸⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Tex.: Christian University Press), 30.

of fulfillment by the reading community.⁸⁸ For whereas historical-critical methods often focus exclusively on the historical world *behind* the text or the semantic world *in* the text, Ricoeur highlights the world projected *out in front of* the text. This unfolding of the world of the text in front of itself is most important.⁸⁹ On the one hand, the text, as revelation, though dependent on its author for mediation, goes beyond its author in its unfolding of the transcendent. On the other hand, the reader is "called to dialogue with the text,"⁹⁰ especially with this world as thrown out in front of the text.

So what is the unfolding world of 1 Thess 2:14–16? Is it unending eschatological wrath for the Jewish people? Remarkably, just two verses prior to our passage Paul's kerygma actually centered on "God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory" (1 Thess 2:12b). In a real way that divine invitation openly challenges what he most likely wrote four verses later in 2:16d. While 2:12b holds forth the universal and eschatological dimension of God's call to participate in his glorious reign, our passage of 2:14–16 leaves us with a text of dangerous potential that seems to replace that universal call with unremitting wrath for the Jews. It appears to offer a frightening apocalyptic dualism that has *apriori* and unconditionally condemned those who have not (yet) positively responded to that call.

It is our opinion that the author of 2:14–16 risks losing sight of the universal horizon of God's call in the heat of his immediate contextual conflict. It may be a very human and understandable response in the face of suffering, but limiting the horizon in 2:16d to one of utter condemnation is theologically hazardous to say the least. It has to be admitted that the negative use of this passage,

⁸⁸ Paul Ricoeur and A. LaCoque, *Penser La Bible* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), 12. See also Paul Ricoeur, "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology" in *idem*, *From Text to Action* (tr. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson; Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 270–307.

⁸⁹ Ricoeur, *Temps et Récit*, I, 22. Cited in Laughery, "Reading Ricoeur," 162.

⁹⁰ Angus Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics and 1 Thessalonians* (SNTSMS 133; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 48.

among others, in the formation of the 'theology of contempt' towards the Jewish people, chief among which is the charge of decide, gives pause for thought.⁹¹ Are the interpreters solely to blame, or does the evidence not point to the author's own humanity, in all its fragility? It is at just such a moment that the Church community may be called upon *not* to distance itself from the author and his work, but to challenge the author to see the bigger picture and the larger horizon, as revealed almost despite himself, within that same mediated text. So we need to ask, is there a further redemptive horizon in this text itself, unfolding with eschatological purpose and waiting for readers to perceive it and interact with it as providing an eschatological norm? We need to ask, theologically and pastorally, what is "the eschatological potential" of the text?⁹² To which ultimate end does it point? According to us, 1 Thess 2:14–16's own widest eschatological horizon is unfolded in the word σόζω (2:16b).

Σωτηρία is God's salvific will extending to all. Such is evidenced in Paul's own probable proclamation of the gospel in the synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–2) and in his salvific proclamation in this letter whose audience undoubtedly contained many Gentiles.⁹³ And it is this divine will to save all, though somewhat hidden in this pericope, that throws up another horizon. A horizon that can be recognized by the reader and be seen to transcend the narrower usage of it here as applying only to Gentiles (2:16b) and which is in fact overtaken in importance by an apocalyptic ὁργή (2:16d). Instead, we are persuaded in dialoguing with the text that God's call, God's σωτηρία, presents itself as the further and stronger horizon, one that can certainly include what is written in 2:16b, i.e. that

⁹¹ Blaming the destruction of Jerusalem on the Jewish crime of pressing for Jesus' death is already evidenced as early as Tertullian *Adv. Jud.* 13; Gospel of Peter 7:25, Barn. 5:12 etc. For a recent work on Paul's use of Kyrios to declare Jesus' deity, see Gordon Fee, *Pauline Christology: an Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007).

⁹² Angus Paddison, *Theological*, 52.

⁹³ Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 7. Cf. Acts 17:4.

salvation is for the Gentiles, but it cannot stop there. 1 Thess 1:10 and 5:9 highlight that within this epistle as a whole, ὁργή is not God's ultimate horizon for humanity, including the Jews, but σωτηρία is.⁹⁴ God's salvation reaches beyond God's wrath.

In our reading then, the revelatory text itself in 2:16b presents another horizon in tandem with 1:10, 5:9 and 2:12b that lies beyond what is mediated by the author in 2:16d. The inviting horizon thrown up by σώζω ultimately transcends any myopic vision on its author's behalf. In this way, through reader recognition of the revelatory nature of the text, and the text's own ability to unfold its fullest eschatological dimension even beyond the original authorial intention, the passage, over time, can actually recontextualize itself. In this particular case, we discovered that the text does contain a universal redemptive horizon that the author either missed or deliberately ignored. As a result we find that the pericope itself ends up challenging the author's confinement of the text to an apocalyptic dualism (salvation to the Gentiles, wrath to the Jews) that neglects to offer an ongoing salvific invitation to the Jews.

Hermeneutically speaking, it is the revelatory Word in Paul's words that should be our interest and enable us to discern where the wider redemptive horizon of the text lies in its ongoing unfolding of God's revelation.⁹⁵ In our theological-hermeneutical perspective, we find that this passage's own ultimate horizon of σώζω shoots beyond ἡ ὁργή εἰς τέλος, highlighting that God's covenantal faithfulness is greater than his wrath. In our view, the author should have been aware of this. As such, this position does

⁹⁴ 1 Thess 1:10 NRSV "and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead — Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming"; 1 Thess 5:9 NRSV "For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." The 'us' here includes Jews as much as Gentiles in its scope and shows that the will of God for both is salvation, not wrath.

⁹⁵ As Paul Ricoeur, "Contribution d'une réflexion sur le langage à une théologie de la parole," in *Exégèse et herméneutique : Parole de Dieu* (ed. Xavier Léon-Dufour; Paris: Seuil, 1971), 301–320, here 303, where he writes "All theology is a theology of the Word."

not need to fall back onto ambiguous interpolation theories to justify the author, nor does it need to look further afield to another letter to redeem this pericope's contents. Instead, it maintains the author's responsibility for what is written, while looking to the text as a source of continual unveiling to see what it is ultimately telling us about the kingdom of God. It thus allows that text, in dialogue with the contemporary reader, to be read eschatologically, recognizing it as a signpost to the kingdom that we are convinced offers σωτηρία for all.