

THE WESLEYAN HERITAGE LIBRARY
COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON
2 THESSALONIANS

by Adam Clarke.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

Wesleyan Heritage Publications

© 2002

A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

HOLY BIBLE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments
A derivative of Adam Clarke's Commentary for the Online Bible

produced by

Sulu D. Kelley
1690 Old Harmony Dr.
Concord, NC 28027-8031
(704) 782-4377

© 1994, 1995, 1997

© 1997 Registered U.S. Copyright Office

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

FOR an account of Thessalonica, and St. Paul's labours there, the reader is requested to consult the preface to the preceding epistle. That this second epistle was written shortly after the first, and from the same place too, is very probable, from this circumstance, that the same persons, *Paul*, *Silvanus*, and *Timotheus*, who addressed the Church at Thessalonica in the former epistle, address the same Church in this; and as three such apostolic men were rarely long together in the same place, it is very likely that the two epistles were written not only in the *same year*, but also within a very short time of each other. It appears that the person who carried the first epistle returned speedily to Corinth, and gave the apostle a particular account of the state of the Thessalonian Church; and, among other things, informed him that many were in expectation of the speedy arrival of the day of judgment; and that they inferred from his epistle already sent, ^{SC115}**1 Thessalonians 4:15, 17; 5:4, 6**, that it was to take place while the apostle and themselves should be yet alive. And it appears probable, from some parts of *this* epistle, that he was informed also that some, expecting this sudden appearance of the Lord Jesus, had given up all their secular concerns as inconsistent with a due preparation for such an important and awful event; see ^{SC108}**2 Thessalonians 3:6-13**. To correct such a misapprehension, and redeem them from an error, which, if appearing to rest on the authority of an apostle, must in its issue be ruinous to the cause of Christianity, St. Paul would feel himself constrained to write *immediately*; and this is a sufficient reason why these epistles should appear to have been written at so short a distance from each other. What rendered this speedy intervention of the apostle's authority and direction the more necessary, was, that there appear to have been some in that Church who professed to have a *revelation* concerning this thing, and to have endeavoured to confirm it by a *pretended report* from the apostle himself, and from the *words* already referred to in the *former epistle*; see here on ^{SC102}**2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2**: "We beseech you, brethren, be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by SPIRIT, nor by WORD, nor by LETTER as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." As the apostle, in this epistle, ^{SC102}**2 Thessalonians 3:2**, entreats the Thessalonians to pray the Lord that he and his companions *might be delivered from*

unreasonable and wicked men, Dr. Macknight supposes that the epistle was written soon after the insurrection of the Jews at Corinth, in which they dragged Paul before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, and accused him of persuading men to worship God contrary to the law; ~~<41813>~~ **Acts 18:13**. This argument places it also in the year 52, or 53, in the *twelfth* or *thirteenth* of Claudius the successor of Caius.

As there have been some eminent Christian writers who have entertained the same opinion with those at Thessalonica, that not only St. Paul, but other apostles of Christ, did believe that the day of general judgment should take place in their time, which opinion is shown by the event to be absolutely false; it appears to be a matter of the utmost consequence to the credit of Divine revelation, to rescue the character of the apostles from such an imputation. Dr. Macknight has written well on this subject, as the following extract from his preface to this epistle will prove:-

“Grotius, Locke, and others,” says he, “have affirmed that the apostles believed that the end of the world was to happen in their time; and that they have declared this to be their belief in various passages of their epistles. But these learned men, and all who join them in that opinion, have fallen into a most pernicious error; for thereby they destroy the authority of the Gospel revelation, at least as far as it is contained in the discourses and writings of the apostles; because, if they have erred in a matter of such importance, and which they affirm was revealed to them by Christ, they may have been mistaken in other matters also, where their inspiration is not more strongly asserted by them than in this instance. It is therefore necessary to clear them from so injurious an imputation.

“And first, with respect to Paul, who was an apostle of Christ, and Silvanus, who was a prophet, and a chief man among the brethren, and Timothy, who was eminent for his spiritual gifts, I observe that the epistle under our consideration affords the clearest proof that these men knew the truth concerning the coming of Christ to judge the world; for in it they expressly assured the Thessalonians that the persons who made them believe the day of judgment was at hand were deceiving them; that, before the day of judgment, there was to be a great apostasy in religion, occasioned by the man of sin, who at that time was restrained from showing himself, but who was to be revealed in his season; that, when revealed, he will *sit*, that is, remain a long time in the Church of God, as God, and showing

himself that he is God; and that, afterwards, he is to be destroyed. Now, as these events could not be accomplished in the course of a few years, the persons who foretold they were to happen before the coming of Christ certainly did not think the day of judgment would be in their lifetime. Besides, St. Paul, ^{<6123>}**Romans 11:23-26**, by a long chain of reasoning, having showed that, after the general conversion of the Gentiles, the Jews, in a body, are to be brought into the Christian Church, can any person be so absurd as to persevere in maintaining that this apostle believed the end of the world would happen in his lifetime?

“Next, with respect to the Apostle Peter, I think it plain, from the manner in which we has spoken of the coming of Christ, that he knew it was at a great distance; ^{<6103>}**2 Peter 3:3, 4, 8, 9**: ‘Knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For, from the time the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as at the beginning of the creation. But this one thing, let it not escape you, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord, who hath promised, doth not delay, in the manner some account delaying.’ Now, seeing Peter has here foretold that, in the last age, the wicked will mock at the promise of Christ’s coming, on account of its being long delayed; and, from the stability and regularity of the course of nature during so many ages, will argue that there is no probability that the world will ever come to an end; it is evident that he also knew the coming of Christ to judgement was at a very great distance at the time he wrote that epistle.

“The same may be said of James; for, in the hearing of the apostles, elders, and brethren assembled in the council of Jerusalem, he quoted passages from the Jewish prophets, to show that all the Gentiles were, at some future period, to seek after the Lord; ^{<4157>}**Acts 15:17**. But, if James looked for the general conversion of the Gentiles, he certainly could not imagine the end of the world would happen in his time.

“Lastly, the Apostle John, in his book of the Revelation, having foretold a great variety of important events respecting the political and religious state of the world, which could not be accomplished

in a few years, but required a series of ages to give them birth; there cannot be the least doubt that he likewise knew the truth concerning his Master's second coming; and therefore, to suppose that he imagined the day of judgment was to happen in his own lifetime, is a palpable mistake.

“Upon the whole, seeing the apostles and other inspired teachers of our religion certainly knew that the coming of Christ to judgment was at a great distance, every impartial person must be sensible they have been much injured, not by the enemies of revelation alone, but by some of its friends; who, upon the strength of certain expressions, the meaning, of which they evidently misunderstood, have endeavoured to persuade the world that the apostle ignorantly believed the day of judgment was at hand. These expressions may all be applied to other events, as shall be showed in the next section, and therefore they ought to be so applied; because candour requires that sense to be put on an author's words which renders him most consistent with himself.”

As the term *coming of Christ* has several acceptations in the sacred writings, and the applying any one of these to the subject to which in a given place it does not belong, may lead to very erroneous if not dangerous conclusions, as it appears to have done at Thessalonica; it is necessary to consider the different senses in which this phrase is used, that we may know its specific meaning in the different places where it occurs. Dr. Macknight, in the fourth section of his preface, intitled, *Different Comings of Christ are spoken of in the New Testament*, has treated this subject also with considerable judgment, as the reader will at once perceive.

“In this article I propose to show that there are other *comings* of Christ spoken of in Scripture besides his *coming to judgement*; and that there are other things besides this mundane system whose end is there foretold; and that it is of these other matters the apostles speak, when they represent the *day of their Master* and the *end of all things* as at hand.

“First, then, in the prophetic writings of the Jews (^{<10210>} **2 Samuel 22:10, 12;** ^{<1972>} **Psalm 97:2-5;** ^{<21901>} **Isaiah 19:1**) great exertions of the Divine power, whether for the salvation or destruction of nations, are called *the coming, the appearance, the presence of God*. Hence it was natural for the apostles, who were Jews, to call

any signal and evident interposition of Christ, as Governor of the world, for the accomplishment of his purposes, *his coming* and *his day*; accordingly, those exertions of his power and providence, whereby he destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, abrogated the Mosaic institutions, and established the Gospel, are called by the apostles *his coming*, and *day*; not only in allusion to the ancient prophetic language, but because Christ himself, in his prophecy concerning these events, recorded ^{<4B30>} **Matthew 24:30** &c., has termed them *the coming of the Son of man*, in allusion to the following prophecy of Daniel, of which his own prophecy is an explication; ^{<2713>} **Daniel 7:13, 14**: ‘I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days. And they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.’ This prophecy the Jewish doctors, with one consent, attribute to the Messiah, and of that temporal kingdom which they expected was to be given him. Farther, they supposed he would erect that temporal kingdom by great and visible exertions of his power for the destruction of his enemies; but they little suspected that themselves were of the number of those enemies whom he was to destroy; and that his kingdom was to be established upon the ruin of their state. Yet that was the true meaning of *the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven*. For, while the Jewish nation continued in Judea, and observed the institutions of Moses, they violently opposed the preaching of the Gospel, by which the Messiah was to reign over all people, nations, and languages. Wherefore, that the everlasting kingdom might be established effectually, it was necessary that Jerusalem and the Jewish state should be destroyed by the Roman armies. Now, since our Lord foretold this sad catastrophe in the words of the prophet Daniel, ^{<4B30>} **Matthew 24:30**, ‘And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;’ and after describing every particular of it with the greatest exactness, seeing he told his disciples, ^{<4B34>} **Matthew 24:34**, ‘This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled;’ can there be any doubt that the apostles, (who, when they wrote their epistles, certainly understood the true import of this prophecy,) by

their Master's coming and by *the end of all things*, which they represent as at hand, mean his coming to destroy Jerusalem, and to put an end to the institutions of Moses? It is no objection to this, that, when the apostles heard Christ declare, 'There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down,' they connected the end of the world or age with that event;

Matthew 24:3: 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, **και συντελειας του αιωνος**, and of the end of the age?' For as the Jewish doctors divided the duration of the world into three ages; the age before the law, the age under the law, and the age under the Messiah; the apostle knew that the age under the law was to end when the age under the Messiah began; and therefore by the *end of the age* they meant, even at that time, not the end of the world, but the end of the age under the law, in which the Jews had been greatly oppressed by the heathens. And although they did not then understand the purpose for which their Master was to come, nor the true nature of his kingdom; nor suspect that he was to make any change in the institutions of Moses; yet when they wrote their epistles, being illuminated by the Holy Ghost, they certainly knew that the institutions of Moses were to be abolished; and that their Master's kingdom was not a temporal but a spiritual dominion, in which all people, nations, and languages were to be governed, not by external force, but by the operation of truth upon their minds through the preaching of the Gospel.

'Farther, that the apostles, by *the coming* of Christ, which they represented as at hand when they wrote their epistles, meant his coming to establish his spiritual kingdom over all people, nations, and languages, and not his coming to put an end to this mundane system, is evident from what Christ himself told them,

Matthew 16:28: 'There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.' And, agreeably to this account of the coming of Christ and of the end of all things, I observe that every passage of their epistles, in which the apostles have spoken of these things *as at hand*, may with the greatest propriety be interpreted of Christ's coming to establish his everlasting kingdom over all people, nations, and languages, by destroying Jerusalem, putting an end to the law of

Moses, and spreading the Gospel through the world. Thus, ^{<6101>}**1 Corinthians 10:11**: ‘These things-are written for our admonition, upon whom **τα τελη των αιωνων**, the ends of the ages are come,’ means the end of the age under the law, and the beginning of the age under the Messiah. ^{<1046>}**Philippians 4:5**: ‘Let your moderation be known to all men: the Lord is nigh;’ namely, to destroy the Jews, your greatest adversaries. ^{<8126>}**Hebrews 9:26**: ‘But now once **επι συντελεια των αιωνων**, at the conclusion of the ages, (the Jewish jubilees,) hath he been manifested to abolish sin-offering by the sacrifice of himself.’ ^{<8125>}**Hebrews 10:25**: ‘Exhorting one another daily; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching,’ the day of Christ’s coming to destroy Jerusalem and the Jewish state. ^{<8137>}**Hebrews 10:37**: ‘For yet a little while, and he who is coming will come, and will not tarry.’ ^{<9137>}**James 5:7**: ‘Wherefore, be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.’ ^{<9138>}**James 5:8**: ‘Be ye also patient, strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord (to destroy the Jews, your persecutors) draweth nigh.’ ^{<9139>}**James 5:9**: ‘Behold the Judge standeth before the door.’ ^{<1007>}**1 Peter 4:7**: ‘The end of all things (the end of Jerusalem, and of the temple, and of all the Mosaic institutions) hath approached. Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.’ ^{<1018>}**1 John 2:18**: ‘Young children, it is the last hour of the Jewish state; and as ye have heard (from Christ, in his prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem) that antichrist cometh, so now there are many antichrists, whence we know that it is the last hour of the Jewish state.’

2. “There is another coming of Christ spoken of by the apostles, different likewise from his coming to judge the world, and to put an end to the present state of things; viz. his coming to destroy the *man of sin*. ^{<1118>}**2 Thessalonians 2:8**: ‘Him the Lord will consume by the breath of his mouth, and will render ineffectual by the bright shining of his coming.’ This singular event, which will contribute greatly to the honour of God and the good of his Church, being accomplished by a visible and extraordinary interposition of the power of Christ in the government of the world, is, agreeably to the Scripture style, fitly called *the coming of the Lord*, and *the bright shining of his coming*; but this coming is nowhere in the Scriptures said to be at hand.

3. “There is likewise *a day or coming of Christ*, spoken of by Paul, different from his coming to judgment, and from both the former comings; I mean his releasing his people from their present trial by death. ^{<40108>}**1 Corinthians 1:8**: ‘He also will confirm you unto the end, without accusation, in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

^{<50106>}**Philippians 1:6**: ‘He who hath begun in you a good work, will be completing it until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ It is true, the release of Christ’s servants from their present trial by death is accomplished, for the most part, by no extraordinary display of his power; yet it is fitly enough called his *day* and *coming*, because by his appointment all men die, and by his power each is carried to his own place after death. Besides, his servants in particular being put on their duty, like soldiers, must remain at their several posts till released by their commander: and when he releases them, he is fitly said to come for that purpose.

4. “Besides all these, there is a *day or coming of the Lord* to judge the world, and to put an end to the present state of things. This coming Christ himself has promised. ^{<401627>}**Matthew 16:27**: ‘The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his holy angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his work.’ Now this, being a real, personal appearing of Christ in the body, is, more properly than any other of his comings, called *the day* and *coming of Christ*. And the purposes of it being more important than those of his other comings, the exertions of his power for accomplishing them will be most signal and glorious. Hence this coming is, with great propriety, termed *the revelation of Jesus Christ*, and *the day* of his revelation, *when he shall be glorified in his saints, and admired of all them who believe*.

“Thus it appears that, when the apostles wrote, there were *four* comings of Christ to happen, three of them figurative, but the fourth a real appearance; that these different comings are frequently spoken of in Scripture; and that, although the coming of Christ to destroy Jerusalem, and to establish his everlasting kingdom, be represented by the apostles as then at hand, no passage from their writings can be produced in which his personal appearance to judge the world is said, or even insinuated, to be at hand. The truth is, if the different comings of Christ are distinguished as they ought to be, we shall find that the apostles have spoken of each of them

according to truth; and that the opinion which some Christians have unadvisedly espoused, to the great discredit of the inspiration of the apostles, has not the least foundation in Scripture.”

The epistle naturally divides itself into three parts, and each is contained in a separate chapter.

PART 1. CHAP. I.-Contains the address, and motives of consolation in their afflicted and persecuted state.

PART 2. CHAP. II.-Is partly prophetic, and partly didactic. It contains the doctrine concerning Christ's coming to judgment, and a prophecy concerning some future but great apostasy from the Christian faith.

PART 3. CHAP. III.-Is wholly hortatory; and contains a number of important advices relative to Christian virtues, and a proper behaviour in those situations in life in which it had pleased God to call them.

This is the *shortest* of all St. Paul's epistles to the Churches, but is of very great importance, and in many places very sublime, especially in the second part; and in this there are several very great difficulties, and some things hard to be understood. After all the pains and labour of learned men, it would be hazardous to say, *the meaning of every part is now clearly made out*. What increases the difficulty is, that the apostle refers to some *private communication* with themselves, no part of which is on record, and without which it would require St. Paul's inspiration to be able to fix the sense and meaning of all we find here. May the Father of lights give the reader a wise understanding in all things! Amen.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

Chronological Notes relative to this Epistle.

- Year of the Constantinopolitan era of the world, or that used by the Byzantine historians, 5560.
- Year of the Alexandrian era of the world, 5554.
- Year of the Antiochian era of the world, 5544.
- Year of the Julian period, 4762.
- Year of the world, according to Archbishop Usher, 4056.
- Year of the world, according to Eusebius, in his Chronicon, 4280.
- Year of the minor Jewish era of the world, or that in common use, 3812.
- Year of the Greater Rabbinical era of the world, 4411.
- Year from the Flood, according to Archbishop Usher, and the English Bible, 2400.
- Year of the Cali yuga, or Indian era of the Deluge, 3154.
- Year of the era of Iphitus, or since the first commencement of the Olympic games, 992.
- Year of the era of Nabonassar, king of Babylon, 799.
- Year of the CCVIIth Olympiad, 4.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Fabius Pictor, 799.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Frontinus, 803.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to the Fasti Capitolini, 804.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Varro, which was that most generally used, 805.
- Year of the era of the Seleucidæ, 364.
- Year of the Cesarean era of Antioch, 100.
- Year of the Julian era, 97.
- Year of the Spanish era, 90.
- Year from the birth of Jesus Christ according to Archbishop Usher, 56.
- Year of the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 52.
- Year of Ventidius Cumanus, governor of the Jews, 4.

- Year of Vologesus, king of the Parthians, 3.
- Year of Caius Numidius Quadratus, governor of Syria, 2.
- Year of Ananias, high priest of the Jews, 8.
- Year of the Dionysian period, or Easter Cycle, 53.
- Year of the Grecian Cycle of nineteen years, or Common Golden Number, 15; or the second year after the fifth embolismic.
- Year of the Jewish Cycle of nineteen years, 12, or the first after the fourth embolismic.
- Year of the Solar Cycle, 5.
- Dominical Letters, it being Bissextile, or Leap Year, BA.
- Day of the Jewish Passover, according to the Roman computation of time, the Calends of April, i.e. April 1st, which happened in this year on the Jewish Sabbath.
- Easter Sunday, April 2.
- Epact, or the moon's age on the 22d of March, or the XIth of the Calends of April, 4.
- Epact, according to the present mode of computation, or the moon's age on New Year's day, or the Calends of January, 11.
- Monthly Epacts, of the moon's age on the Calends of each month respectively, (beginning with January,) 11, 13, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 18, 20, 20.
- Number of Direction, or the number of days from the twenty-first of March (or the XIIth of the Calends of April) to the Jewish Passover, 10
- Year of Claudius Cæsar, the fifth emperor of the Romans, 12.
- Roman Consuls, Publius Cornelius Sylla Faustus, and Lucius Salvius Otho Titianus; and for the following year, (which is by some supposed to be the date of this epistle,) Decimus Junius Silanus, and Quintus Haterius Antoninus.

CHAPTER 1.

The salutation of St. Paul and his companions, 1, 2. The apostle gives thanks to God for their faith, love, and union; and for their patience under persecutions, 3, 4. Speaks of the coming of our

Lord Jesus Christ, the punishment of the ungodly, and the glorification of the righteous, 5-10. Prays that God may count them worthy of their calling, that the name of Jesus may be glorified in them, 11, 12.

NOTES ON CHAP. 1.

Verse 1. Paul, and Silvanus, &c.] See Clarke's notes on "^{<3001>}1 Thessalonians 1:1". This epistle was written a short time after the former: and as Silas and Timothy were still at Corinth, the apostle joins their names with his own, as in the former case.

Verse 3. Your faith groweth exceedingly] The word *υπεραυξανει* signifies *to grow luxuriantly*, as a good and healthy tree planted in a good soil; and if a *fruit tree*, bearing an abundance of fruit to compensate the labour of the husbandman. Faith is one of the *seeds* of the kingdom; this the apostle had *sowed* and *watered*, and God gave an abundant increase. Their faith was *multiplied*, and their love *abounded*; and this was not the case with some distinguished characters only, it was the case with *every one of them*.

Verse 4. We ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God] We hold you up as an example of what the grace of God, can produce when communicated to honest and faithful hearts.

For your patience and faith] From ^{<4175>}Acts 17:5, 13, and from ^{<3014>}1 Thessalonians 2:14, we learn, that the people of Thessalonica had suffered much persecution, both from the *Jews* and *their own countrymen*; but being thoroughly convinced of the truth of the Gospel, and feeling it to be the power of God unto salvation, no persecution could turn them aside from it. And having suffered for the truth, it was precious to them. Persecution never essentially injured the genuine Church of God.

Verse 5. A manifest token of the righteousness judgement of God] The persecutions and tribulations which you endure, are a manifest proof that God has judged righteously in calling you Gentiles into his Church; and these sufferings are also a proof that ye are *called in*; for they who enter into the kingdom of God go through great tribulation; your going through that tribulation is a proof that ye are entering in, and God sees it *right* and *just* that ye should be permitted to *suffer* before ye enjoy that endless felicity.

The words, however, may be understood in another sense, and will form this maxim: “The sufferings of the just, and the triumphs of the wicked, in this life, are a sure proof that there will be a future judgment, in which the wicked shall be punished and the righteous rewarded. “This maxim is not only true in itself, but it is most likely that this is the apostle’s meaning.

That ye may be counted worthy] Your patient endurance of these sufferings is a proof that ye are *rendered meet* for that glory on account of which ye suffer and, in a true Gospel sense of the word, *worthy* of that glory; for he who is *a child of God*, and a *partaker of the Divine nature*, is worthy of God’s kingdom, not because he has done any thing to merit it, but because he bears the *image of God*; and the *image* is that which gives the *title*.

Verse 6. Seeing it is a righteous thing] Though God neither rewards nor punishes in this life in a general way, yet he often gives proofs of his displeasure, especially against those who persecute his followers. They, therefore, who have given you tribulation, shall have tribulation in recompense.

Verse 7. And to you who are troubled, rest with us] And while they have *tribulation*, you shall have that eternal *rest* which remains for the people of God.

When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed] But this fulness of *tribulation* to them, and *rest* to you, shall not take place till the Lord Jesus come to judge the world.

With his mighty angels] The coming of God to judge the world is scarcely ever spoken of in the sacred writings without mentioning the holy angels, who are to accompany him, and to form his court or retinue. See ~~<6302>~~Deuteronomy 33:2; ~~<4251>~~Matthew 25:31; 16:27; 26:64; ~~<41038>~~Mark 8:38.

Verse 8. In flaming fire] *εν φλογι πυρος*. In *thunder and lightning*, taking vengeance—inflicting just punishment *on them that know not God*—the heathen who do not worship the true God, and will not *acknowledge* him, but worship idols; and on them *that obey not the Gospel*—the *Jews*, particularly who have rejected the Gospel, and persecuted Christ and his messengers; and all nominal Christians who, though they believe the Gospel as a revelation from God, yet do not *obey* it as a rule of life.

Verse 9. Who shall be punished] What this *everlasting destruction* consists in we cannot tell. It is not *annihilation*, for their *being* continues; and as the destruction is *everlasting*, it is an eternal *continuance* and *presence of substantial evil*, and *absence of all good*; for a part of this punishment consists in being banished from the *presence of the Lord*-excluded from his *approbation*, for ever; so that the light of his countenance can be no more enjoyed, as there will be an eternal impossibility of ever being reconciled to him.

The glory of his power] Never to see the face of God throughout eternity is a heart-rending, soul-appalling thought; and to be *banished* from the *glory of his power*, that power the *glory* of which is peculiarly manifested in *saving the lost* and *glorifying the faithful*, is what cannot be reflected on without confusion and dismay. But this must be the lot of all *who acknowledge not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

Verse 10. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints] As the grace of God is peculiarly glorified in saving sinners and making them into *saints*, this gracious *power* will be particularly manifested in the great day, when countless millions will appear before that throne who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

And to be admired] οαυμασθηναι. *To be wondered at among* and on the account of *all them that believe*. Much as true believers *admire* the perfections of the Redeemer of mankind, and much as they *wonder* at his amazing condescension in becoming man, and dying for the sins of the world; all their present amazement and wonder will be as nothing when compared with what they shall feel when they come to see him *in all his glory*, the glory that he had with the father before the world was. In reference to this we may apply those words of St. John: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” ~~ARC~~ **1 John 3:2.**

Instead of τοις πιστευουσιν, *them that believe*, τοις πιστευασιν, *them that have believed*, is the reading of ABCDEF, many others, the later *Syriac, Slavonic, Vulgate, and Itala*, with most of the *Greek fathers*. This reading is undoubtedly genuine.

Because our testimony-was believed in that day.] The members of this sentence seem to have been strangely transposed. I believe it should be read thus: “In that day, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired among all them that have believed; for our testimony was believed among you.” The Thessalonians had credited what the apostles had said and written, not only concerning Jesus Christ in general, but concerning the day of judgment in particular.

Verse 11. We pray-that our God would count you worthy] It is our earnest prayer that God would *make you worthy*, **αξιωση**, afford those continual supplies of grace by his Holy Spirit, without which you cannot adorn your holy vocation; you are called into the Christian Church, and, to be proper members of this Church, you must be members of the mystical *body* of Christ; and this implies that you should be holy, as he who has called you is holy.

Fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness] 1. The *goodness* of God-his own innate eternal kindness, has led him to call you into this state of salvation. 2. It is the *pleasure* of that goodness to save you unto eternal life. 3. It is the *good pleasure*; nothing can please God more than your receiving and retaining his utmost salvation. 4. It is *all* the good pleasure of his goodness thus to save you; this he has amply proved by sending his Son to die for you, *beyond* which gift he has none greater. In this, all the good pleasure of his goodness is astonishingly manifested. 5. And if you be faithful to his grace, he will *fulfil*-completely accomplish, all the good pleasure of his goodness in you; which goodness is to be apprehended and is to work by *faith*, the *power* of which must come from him, though the *act* or exercise of that power must be of yourselves; but the very *power* to believe affords *excitement* to the exercise of faith.

Verse 12. That the name of our Lord] This is the great *end* of your Christian calling, that Jesus who hath died for you may have his *passion* and *death* magnified in your *life* and *happiness*; that ye may show forth the virtues of him who called you from darkness into his marvellous light.

And ye in him] That his glorious excellence may be seen *upon you*; that ye may be *adorned* with the graces of his Spirit, as he is glorified by your salvation from all sin.

According to the grace] That your salvation may be such as God requires, and such as is worthy of his grace to communicate. God saves as becomes

God to save; and thus the dignity of his nature is seen in the excellence and glory of his work.

1. IT is an awful consideration to the people of the world, that persecutions and afflictions should be the lot of the true Church, and should be the proof of its being such; because this shows more than any thing else the *desperate state* of mankind, their total enmity to God; they persecute, not because the followers of God have done or can do them hurt, but they persecute because they have not the Spirit of Christ in them! Men may amuse themselves by arguing against the doctrine of *original sin*, or the *total depravity* of the soul of man; but while there is religious persecution in the world, there is the most absolute disproof of all their arguments. Nothing but a heart *wholly alienated from God* could ever devise the persecution or maltreatment of a man, for no other cause but that he has given himself up to glorify God with his body and spirit, which are his.

2. The *everlasting destruction* of the ungodly is a subject that should be continually placed before the eyes of men by the preachers of the Gospel. How shall a man be induced to take measures to escape a danger of the existence of which he is not convinced? Show him the *hell* which the justice of God has lighted up for the devil and his angels, and in which all Satan's children and followers must have their eternal portion. All the perfections of God require that he should *render to every man his due*. And what is the *due* of a sinner or a persecutor, of one who is a *determinate enemy to God*, goodness, and *good men*? Why, *everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. And if God did not award this to such persons, he could not be the *God of justice*.

3. The grand object of God in giving his Gospel to mankind is *to save them from their sins*, make them like himself, and take them to his eternal glory. He saves *according to the measure* of his eternal goodness; the scanty salvation contended for and expected by the generality of Christians, it would be dishonourable to God to administer. He saves *according to his grace*. His own eternal goodness and holiness is the *measure* of his salvation to man; not the *creeds* and *expectations* of any class of Christians. To be saved at all, we must not only be saved in God's way, and upon his own *terms*, but also according to his own *measure*. He who is not filled with the *fulnness* of God cannot expect the *glory* of God.

4. Another proof of the fall and degeneracy of men is, their general enmity to the *doctrine of holiness*; they cannot bear the thought of being sanctified through body, soul, and spirit, so as to perfect holiness in the fear of God. A spurious kind of Christianity is gaining ground in the world. Weakness, doubtfulness, littleness of faith, consciousness of inward corruptions, and sinful infirmities of different kinds, are by some considered the highest proofs of a *gracious state*; whereas in the primitive Church they would have been considered as evidences that the persons in question had received just light enough to show them their wretchedness and danger, but not the healing virtue of the blood of Christ.

II THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER 2.

He exhorts the Thessalonians to stand fast in the faith, and not to be alarmed at the rumours they heard concerning the sudden coming of Christ, 1, 2. Because, previously to this coming, there would be a great apostasy from the true faith, and a manifestation of a son of perdition, of whose unparalleled presumption he gives an awful description; as well as of his pernicious success among men, and the means which he would use to deceive and pervert the world; and particularly those who do not receive the love of the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, 3-12. He thanks God for their steadfastness; shows the great privileges to which they were called; and prays that they may be comforted and established in every good word and work, 13-17.

NOTES ON CHAP. 2.

Verse 1. We beseech you-by the coming of our Lord] It is evident that the Thessalonians, incited by deceived or false teachers, had taken a wrong meaning out of the words of the first epistle, ^{SCHE}1 Thessalonians 4:15, &c., concerning the *day of judgment*; and were led then to conclude that that day was *at hand*; and this had produced great confusion in the Church: to correct this mistake, the apostle sent them this second letter, in which he shows that this day must be necessarily *distant*, because a great work is to be done previously to its appearing.

Of the day of general judgment he had spoken before, and said that it should *come as a thief in the night*, i.e. when not expected; but he did not attempt to fix the time, nor did he insinuate that it was either *near at hand*, or *far off*. Now, however, he shows that it must necessarily be far off, because of the great transactions which must take place before it can come.

Verse 2. Be not soon shaken in mind] **απο του νοου**. *From the mind*; i.e. that they should retain the persuasion they had of the truths which he had before delivered to them; that they should still hold the same opinions, and hold fast the doctrines which they had been taught.

Neither by spirit] Any pretended *revelation*.

Nor by word] Any thing which any person may profess to have heard the apostle speak.

Nor by letter] Either the former one which he had sent, some passages of which have been misconceived and misconstrued; or by any other letter, *as from us*-pretending to have been written by us, the apostles, containing predictions of this kind. There is a diversity of opinion among critics concerning this last clause, some supposing that it refers simply to the *first epistle*; others supposing that a *forged epistle* is intended. I have joined the two senses.

The word **σαλευθηναί**, *to be shaken*, signifies to be agitated as a ship at sea in a storm, and strongly marks the confusion and distress which the Thessalonians had felt in their false apprehension of this coming of Christ.

As that the day of Christ is at hand.] In the *preface* to this epistle I have given a general view of the meaning of the phrase *the coming of Christ*. Now the question is: Whether does the apostle mean, the coming of Christ to execute judgment upon the *Jews*, and destroy their *polity*, or his coming at the end of time, to *judge the world*? There are certainly many expressions in the following verses that may be applied indifferently to *either*, and some seem to apply to the *one*, and not to the *other*; and yet the whole can scarcely be so interpreted as to suit *any one* of these comings exclusively. This is precisely the case with the predictions of our Lord relative to these great events; one is used to point out and illustrate the other. On this ground I am led to think that the apostle, in the following confessedly obscure words, has both these in view, speaking of none of them exclusively; for it is the custom of the inspired penmen, or rather of that Spirit by which they spoke, to point out as *many* certain events by one prediction as it was possible to do, and to choose the figures, metaphors, and similes accordingly; and thus, from the beginning, God has pointed out the things that *were not* by the things that *then existed*, making the one the types or significations of the other. As the apostle spoke by the same Spirit, he most probably followed the same plan; and thus the following prophecy is to be interpreted and understood.

Verse 3. Except there come a falling away first] We have the original word **αποστασια** in our word *apostasy*; and by this term we understand a *dereliction of the essential principles of religious truth*-either a *total abandonment* of Christianity itself, or such a *corruption* of its doctrines as renders the whole system completely inefficient to salvation. But what *this*

apostasy means is a question which has not yet, and perhaps never will be, answered to general satisfaction. At present I shall content myself with making a few literal remarks on this obscure prophecy, and afterwards give the opinions of learned men on its principal parts.

That man of sin] ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀμαρτίας. The same as the Hebrew expresses by *wa vya ish aven*, and I [*yl b vya ish beliyaal*]; the perverse, obstinate, and iniquitous man. It is worthy of remark that, among the rabbins, *Samael*, or the devil, is called *wa vyaw I [yl b vya ish beliyaal veish aven*, the man of Belial, and the man of iniquity; and that these titles are given to *Adam* after his fall.

The son of perdition] ὁ υἱος τῆς ἀπωλείας. *The son of destruction*; the same epithet that is given to Judas Iscariot, ^{<B1712>}**John 17:12**, where see the note. *The son of perdition*, and the *man of sin*, or, as some excellent MSS. and versions, with several of the fathers, read, *ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας*, *the lawless man*, see ^{<A008>}**2 Thessalonians 2:8**, must mean the same person or thing. It is also remarkable that the wicked Jews are styled by Isaiah, ^{<A004>}**Isaiah 1:4**, *mytyj vm mynb benim mashchithim*, “children of perdition;” persons who *destroy themselves* and *destroy others*.

Verse 4. Who opposeth and exalteth] He *stands against* and *exalts* himself *above* all Divine authority, and above every *object of adoration*, and every *institution* relative to Divine worship, *σεβασμα*, himself being the *source*, whence must originate all the *doctrines* of religion, and all its *rites* and *ceremonies*; so that *sitting in the temple of God*-having the *highest place* and *authority* in the *Christian Church*, he acts as *Godtaking* upon himself God’s titles and attributes, and arrogating to himself the authority that belongs to the Most High.

The words *ως θεον*, *as God*, are wanting in ABD, many others, Erpen’s *Arabic*, the *Coptic*, *Sahidic*, *Æthiopic*, *Armenian*, the *Vulgate*, some copies of the *Itala*, and the chief of the *Greek fathers*. *Griesbach* has left them out of the text, and *Professor White* says, *Certissime delenda*; “They should most certainly be erased.” There is indeed no evidence of their being authentic, and the text reads much better with out them: *So that he sitteth in the temple of God, &c.*

Verse 5. I told you these things] In several parts of this description of the *man of sin*, the apostle alludes to a conversation which had taken place

between him and the members of this Church when he was at Thessalonica; and this one circumstance will account for much of the *obscurity* that is in these verses. Besides, the apostle appears to speak with great *caution*, and does not at all wish to *publish* what he had communicated to them; the *hints* which he drops were sufficient to call the whole to their remembrance.

Verse 6. And now ye know what withholdeth] I told you this among other things; I informed you what it was that *prevented* this man of sin, this son of perdition, from revealing himself fully.

Verse 7. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work] There is a system of corrupt doctrine, which will lead to the general apostasy, already in existence, but it is a *mystery*; it is as yet *hidden*; it dare not show itself, because of that which *hindereth* or *withholdeth*. But when that which now *restraineth* shall be taken out of the way, then shall that wicked one be revealed—it will then be manifest who he is, and what he is. See the observations at the end of this chapter. “^{<3217>}2 Thessalonians 2:17”

Verse 8. Whom the Lord shall consume] He shall *blast* him so, that he shall *wither* and *die away*; and this shall be done by the *spirit of his mouth*—the words of eternal life, the true doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus; this shall be the instrument used to destroy this man of sin: therefore it is evident his death will not be a *sudden* but a *gradual* one; because it is by the *preaching of the truth* that he is to be exposed, overthrown, and finally destroyed.

The brightness of his coming] This may refer to that full manifestation of the truth which had been obscured and kept under by the *exaltation of this man of sin*.

Verse 9. Whose coming is after the working of Satan] The operation of God’s Spirit sends his messengers; the operation of Satan’s spirit sends his emissaries. The one comes **κατ’ ενεργειαν του θεου**, *after* or *according to the energy* or inward powerful working of God; the other comes **καρ’ ενεργειαν του σατανα**, according to the energy or inward working of Satan.

With all power] **παση δυναμει**. All kinds of miracles, like the Egyptian magicians; *and signs and lying wonders*: the word *lying* may be applied to the whole of these; they were *lying* miracles, *lying* signs, and *lying*

wonders; only *appearances* of what was *real*, and done to give credit to his presumption and imposture. Whereas God sent his messengers with *real* miracles, *real* signs, and *real* wonders; such Satan cannot produce.

Verse 10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness] With every art that cunning can invent and unrighteousness suggest, in order to delude and deceive.

In them that perish] *εν τοις απολλυμενοις.* Among them that are destroyed; and they are destroyed and perish because they would not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. So they perish because they obstinately refuse to be saved, and receive a *lie* in preference to the *truth*. This has been true of all the Jews from the days of the apostle until now.

Verse 11. God shall send them strong delusion] For this very cause, that they would not receive the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, therefore God permits *strong delusion* to occupy their minds; so that they believe a *lie* rather than the truth, prefer false apostles and their erroneous doctrines to the pure truths of the Gospel, brought to them by the well-accredited messengers of God; being ever ready to receive any false Messiah, while they systematically and virulently reject the true one.

Verse 12. That they all might be damned] *Ινα κριθωσι.* So that they may all be condemned who believed not the truth when it was proclaimed to them; but took pleasure in unrighteousness, preferring that to the way of holiness. Their condemnation was the effect of their refusal to believe the truth; and they refused to believe it because they loved their sins. For a farther and more pointed illustration of the preceding verses, see the conclusion of this chapter. “³²¹⁷2 Thessalonians 2:17”

Verses 13. & 14. God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, &c.] In your *calling*, God has shown the *purpose* that he had formed from the *beginning*, to call the Gentiles to the same privileges with the Jews, not through *circumcision*, and the observance of the Mosaic law, but by *faith* in Christ Jesus; but this simple way of salvation referred to the same *end*-holiness, without which no man, whether Jew or Gentile, can see the Lord.

Let us observe the order of Divine grace in this business: 1. They were to hear the *truth*-the doctrines of the Gospel. 2. They were to *believe* this *truth* when they heard it preached. 3. They were to receive the *Spirit* of God in believing the truth. 4. That Spirit was to *sanctify* their souls-produce an inward holiness, which was to lead to all outward conformity to God. 5. All this constituted their *salvation*-their being fitted for the inheritance among the saints in light. 6. They were to *obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*-that state of felicity for which they were fitted, by being saved here from their sins, and by being sanctified by the Spirit of God.

Verse 15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast] Their obtaining eternal glory depended on their *faithfulness* to the grace of God; for this *calling* did not necessarily and irresistibly lead to faith; nor their faith to the sanctification of the spirit; nor their sanctification of the spirit to the *glory* of our Lord Jesus. Had they not *attended* to the *calling*, they could not have *believed*; had they not *believed*, they could not have been *sanctified*; had they not been *sanctified* they could not have been *glorified*. All these things depended on each other; they were *stages* of the great journey; and at any of these stages they might have halted, and never finished their Christian race.

Hold the traditions which ye have been taught] The word *παρὰδοσις*, which we render *tradition*, signifies any thing *delivered* in the way of *teaching*; and here most obviously means the *doctrines* delivered by the apostle to the Thessalonians; whether in his *preaching*, *private conversation*, or by these *epistles*; and particularly the *first epistle*, as the apostle here states. Whatever these traditions were, as to their matter, they were a *revelation from God*; for they came by men who *spoke* and *acted* under the *inspiration of the Holy Spirit*; and on this ground the passage here can never with any propriety be brought to support the unapostolical and anti-apostolical traditions of the Romish Church; those being matters which are, confessedly, not taken from either Testament, nor were spoken either by a *prophet* or an *apostle*.

Verse 16. Now our Lord Jesus] As all your *grace* came from God through Christ, so the *power* that is necessary to strengthen and confirm you unto the end must come in the same way.

Everlasting consolation] *παρακλησιν αιωνιαν*. The *glad tidings* of the Gospel, and the *comfort* which ye have received through believing; a gift

which God had in his *original* purpose, in reference to the Gentiles; a purpose which has respected *all times* and *places*, and which shall continue to the *conclusion* of time; for the Gospel is *everlasting*, and shall not be superseded by any other dispensation. It is the *last* and *best* which God has provided for man; and it is *good tidings*, *everlasting consolation*-a complete system of complete peace and happiness. The words may also refer to the happiness which the believing Thessalonians then possessed.

And good hope through grace] The *hope* of the Gospel was the *resurrection of the body*, and the final *glorification* of it and the soul throughout eternity. This was the good hope which the Thessalonians had; not a hope that they *should be pardoned* or *sanctified*, &c. Pardon and holiness they *enjoyed*, therefore they were no objects of *hope*; but the resurrection of the body and eternal glory were necessarily *future*; these they had in expectation; these they hoped for; and, through the *grace* which they had already received they had a *good hope*-a well-grounded expectation, of this glorious state.

Verse 17. Comfort your hearts] Keep your souls ever under the influence of his Holy Spirit: *and stablish you*-confirm and strengthen you in your *belief* of every *good word* or doctrine, which we have delivered unto you; and in the *practice* of every *good work*, recommended and enjoined by the doctrines of the Gospel.

It is not enough that we *believe* the truth; we must *love* the truth. Antinomianism says: "Believe the doctrines, and ye are safe." The testimony borne by the Gospel is: *Believe, love, obey*: none of these can subsist without the other. The faith of a devil may exist without loving obedience; but the faith of a true believer *worketh by love*; and this faith and love have not respect to some *one* commandment, but to all; for God writes his *whole law* on the heart of every genuine Christian, and gives him that *love* which is the *fulfilling of the law*.

THE reader will have observed that, in going through this chapter, while examining the import of every leading word, I have avoided *fixing* any *specific meaning* to terms: the *apostasy* or *falling away*; the *man of sin*; *son of perdition*; *him who letteth* or *withholdeth*, &c. The reason is, I have found it extremely difficult to fix any sense to my own satisfaction; and it was natural for me to think that, if I could not satisfy myself, it was not likely I could satisfy my readers. But, as something should be said relative to the *persons* and *things* intended by the apostle, I choose to give rather

what others have said, than attempt any new mode of interpretation. The great *variety* of explanations given by wise and learned men only prove the difficulty of the place.

1. The general run of *Protestant* writers understand the whole as referring to the *popes* and *Church of Rome*, or the whole system of the *papacy*. 2. *Others* think that the defection of the *Jewish nation*, from their allegiance to the Roman emperor, is what is to be understood by the *apostasy* or *falling off*; and that all the other terms refer to the *destruction of Jerusalem*. 3. The *fathers* understood the *Antichrist* to be intended, but of this person they seem to have formed no specific idea. 4. Dr. *Hammond* refers the *apostasy* to the defection of the primitive Christians to the *Gnostic heresy*; and supposes that, by the *man of sin* and *son of perdition*, *Simon Magus* is meant. 5. *Grotius* applies the whole to *Caius Cæsar*. 6. *Wetstein* applies the *apostasy* to the rebellion and slaughter of the three princes that were proclaimed by the Roman armies, previously to the reign of *Vespasian*; and supposes *Titus* and the *Flavian* family to be intended by the *man of sin* and *son of perdition*. 7. *Schoettgen* contends strongly that the whole refers to the case of the Jews, incited to rebellion by the scribes and Pharisees, and to the utter and final destruction of the *rabbinic* and *Pharisaic system*; and thinks he finds something in their spirit and conduct, and in what has happened to them, to illustrate every word in this prophecy. Dr. *Whitby* is nearly of the same sentiments. 8. *Calmet* follows, in the main, the interpretation given by the ancient *fathers*; and wonders at the want of candour in the Protestant writers, who have gleaned up every abusive tale against the bishops and Church of Rome; and asks them, would they be willing that the Catholics should credit all the aspersions cast on Protestantism by its enemies? 9. Bishop *Newton* has examined the whole prophecy with his usual skill and judgment. The sum of what he says, as abridged by Dr. Dodd, I think it right to subjoin. The principal part of modern commentators follow his steps. He applies the whole to the *Romish Church*: the *apostasy*, its defection from the pure doctrines of Christianity; and the *man of sin*, &c. the general succession of the popes of Rome. But we must hear him for himself, as he takes up the subject in the order of the verses.

Verses 3, 4. *For that day shall not come, except, &c.*—"The day of Christ shall not come except there come the apostasy first." The apostasy here described is plainly not of a civil but of a religious nature; not a revolt from the government, but a defection from the true religion and worship. In the

original, it is *the apostasy*, with an article to give it an emphasis; the article being added signifies, “that famous and before-mentioned prophecy.” So likewise is the *man of sin* with the like article, and the like emphasis. If, then, the notion of the *man of sin* be derived from any ancient prophet, it must be derived from ^{<270725>}**Daniel 7:25; 11:36**. Any man may be satisfied that St. Paul alluded to Daniel’s description, because he has not only borrowed the same ideas, but has even adopted some of the phrases and expressions. *The man of sin* may signify either a single man, or a succession of men; a succession of men being meant in Daniel, it is probable that the same was intended here also. It is the more probable, because a single man appears hardly sufficient for the work here assigned; and it is agreeable to the phraseology of Scripture, and especially to that of the prophets, to speak of a body or number of men, under the character of one: thus, a *king*, ^{<270708>}**Daniel 7:8**; ^{<61701>}**Revelation 17:1-18**, is used for a succession of kings. The man of sin being to be expressed from ^{<270724>}**Daniel 7:24**, according to the Greek translation, *He shall exceed in evil all that went before him*; and he may fulfil the character either by promoting wickedness in general, or by advancing *idolatry* in particular, as the word *sin* signifies frequently in Scripture. The *son of perdition* is also the denomination of the traitor Judas, ^{<431712>}**John 17:12**, which implies that the *man of sin* should be, like Judas, a false apostle; like him, betray Christ; and, like him, be devoted to destruction. *Who opposeth, &c.*, is manifestly copied from Daniel, *He shall exalt himself, &c.* The features exactly resemble each other: *He opposeth and exalteth himself above all*; or, according to the Greek, *above every one that is called God, or that is worshipped*. The Greek word for worshipped is **σεβασμα**, alluding to the Greek title of the Roman emperors, **σεβαστος**, which signifies *august* or *venerable*. *He shall oppose*; for the prophets speak of things future as present; he shall oppose and exalt himself, not only above inferior magistrates, (who are sometimes called *gods* in holy writ,) but even above the greatest emperors; and shall arrogate to himself Divine honours. *So that he, as God, sitteth in the temple, &c.* By the temple of God the apostle could not well mean the temple of Jerusalem; because that, he knew, would be destroyed within a few years. After the death of Christ the temple of Jerusalem is never called by the apostles the *temple of God*; and if at any time they make mention of *the house* or *temple of God*, they mean the Church in general, or every particular believer. Who ever will consult ^{<441616>}**1 Corinthians 3:16, 17**; ^{<471616>}**2 Corinthians 6:16**; ^{<541615>}**1 Timothy 3:15**; ^{<611612>}**Revelation 3:12**; will want no examples to prove that, under the

Gospel dispensation, the *temple of God* is the Church of Christ; and the *man of sin sitting* implies this ruling and presiding there; and *sitting there as God* implies his claiming Divine authority in things spiritual as well as temporal; and *showing himself that he is God*, implies his doing it with ostentation.

Verses 5, 6, 7. *Remember ye not, &c.*-The apostle thought it part of his duty, as he made it a part of his preaching and doctrine, to forewarn his new converts of the grand apostasy that would infect the Church, even while he was at Thessalonica. From these verses it appears that *the man of sin* was not then revealed; *his time* was not yet come, or the season of his manifestation. *The mystery of iniquity was indeed already working*; the seeds of corruption were sown, but they were not grown up to maturity; the *man of sin* was yet hardly conceived in the womb; it must be some time before he could be brought forth; there was some obstacle that hindered his appearing. What this was we cannot determine with absolute certainty at so great a distance of time; but if we may rely upon the concurrent testimony of the fathers, it was the Roman empire. Most probably it was somewhat relating to the higher powers, because the apostle observes such caution; he mentioned it in discourse, but would not commit it to writing.

Verse 8. *Then shall that Wicked be revealed.*-When the obstacle, mentioned in the preceding verse, should be removed, *then shall that wicked, &c.* Nothing can be plainer than that the lawless, (*ο ανομοος*;) as the Greek signifies, *the wicked one*, here mentioned, and the *man of sin*, must be one and the same person. The apostle was speaking before of what *hindered* that he should be *revealed*, and would continue to hinder it till it was taken away; *and then the wicked one, &c.* Not that he should be consumed immediately after he was revealed. But the apostle, to comfort the Thessalonians, no sooner mentions his revelation than he foretells also his destruction, even before he describes his other qualifications. His other qualifications should have been described first, in order of time; but the apostle hastens to what was first and warmest in his thoughts and wishes: *Whom the Lord shall consume, &c.* If these two clauses refer to two distinct and different events, the meaning manifestly is, that the Lord Jesus shall gradually consume him with the free preaching and publication of his word; and shall utterly destroy him at his second coming, in the glory of his Father, with all the holy angels. If these two clauses relate to one and the same event, it is a pleonasm very usual in the sacred, as well as other oriental writings; and the purport plainly is, that the Lord Jesus shall

destroy him with the greatest facility, *when he shall be revealed from heaven*, as the apostle has expressed it in the preceding chapter.

Verses 9-12. *Whose coming is after, &c.*-The apostle was eager to foretell the destruction of the man of sin; and for this purpose having broken in upon his subject, he now returns to it again, and describes the other qualifications by which this wicked one should advance and establish himself in the world. He should rise to credit and authority by the most diabolical methods; should pretend to supernatural powers; and boast of revelations, visions, and miracles, false in themselves, and applied to promote false doctrines.

Verse 9. He should likewise practise all other wicked acts of deceit; should be guilty of the most impious frauds and impositions upon mankind; but should prevail only among those who are destitute of a sincere affection for the truth; whereby they might attain eternal salvation.

Verse 10. And indeed it is a just and righteous judgment of God, to give *them* over to vanities and lies in this world, and to condemnation in the next, who have no regard to truth and virtue, but delight in falsehood and wickedness; <XIII> **2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12.**

Upon this survey there appears little room to doubt of the genuine sense and meaning of the passage. The Thessalonians, as we have seen from some expressions in the former epistle, were alarmed as if the end of the world was at hand. The apostle, to correct their mistake and dissipate their fears, assures them that a great apostasy, or defection of the Christians from the true faith and worship, must happen before the coming of Christ. This apostasy all the concurrent marks and characters will justify us in charging upon the Church of Rome. The true Christian worship is the worship of *the one only God, through the one only Mediator, the man Christ Jesus*; and from this worship the Church of Rome has most notoriously departed, by substituting other mediators, and invoking and adoring saints and angels, nothing is apostasy, if idolatry be not. And are not the members of the Church of Rome guilty of idolatry in the worship of images, in the adoration of the host, in the invocation of angels and saints, and in the oblation of prayers and praises to the Virgin Mary, as much or more than to God blessed for ever? This is the grand corruption of the Christian Church: this is the *apostasy* as it is emphatically called, and deserves to be called; which was not only predicted by St. Paul, but by the Prophet Daniel likewise. If the apostasy be rightly charged upon the

Church of Rome, it follows of consequence that the *man of sin* is the pope; not meaning any pope in particular, but *the pope* in general, as the chief head and supporter of this apostasy. He is properly *the man of sin*, not only on account of the scandalous lives of many popes, but by reason of their most scandalous doctrines and principles; dispensing with the most necessary duties; and granting, or rather selling, pardons and indulgences to the most abominable crimes. Or, if by sin be meant *idolatry* in particular, as in the Old Testament, it is evident how he has perverted the worship of God to superstition and idolatry of the grossest kind. He also, like the false apostle, Judas, is *the son of perdition*; whether actively, as being the cause of destruction to others; or passively, as being devoted to destruction himself. *He opposeth*-he is the great adversary of God and man; persecuting and destroying, by *croisades*, inquisitions, and massacres, those Christians who prefer the word of God to the authority of men. The *heathen emperor* of Rome may have slain his thousands of innocent Christians; but the *Christian bishop* of Rome has slain his ten thousands. *He exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped*-not only above inferior magistrates, but likewise above bishops and primates; not only above bishops and primates, but likewise above kings and emperors; deposing some, obliging them to kiss his toe, to hold his stirrup, treading even upon the neck of a king, and kicking off the imperial crown with his foot; nay, not only kings and emperors, but likewise above Christ and God himself; *making even the word of God of none effect by his traditions*-forbidding what God has commanded; as marriage, the use of the Scriptures, &c.; and also commanding or allowing what God has forbidden, as idolatry, persecution, &c. *So that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, &c.*; he is therefore in profession a Christian, and a Christian bishop. *His sitting in the temple of God* implies plainly his having a seat or *cathedra* in the Christian Church; and he sitteth there *as God*, especially at his inauguration, when he sits upon the high altar in St. Peter's church, and makes the table of the Lord his footstool, and in that position receives adoration. At all times he exercises Divine authority in the Church, *showing himself that he is God*-affecting Divine titles, and asserting that his decrees are of the same or greater authority than the word of God. So that the pope is evidently, according to the titles given him in the public decretals, *The God upon earth*; at least there is no one, like him, *who exalteth himself above every god*; no one, like him, *who sitteth as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*. The foundations of popery were laid in the apostle's days, but of *which* the superstructure was

raised by degrees; and several ages passed before the building was completed, and *the man of sin revealed* in full perfection. The tradition that generally prevailed was that *that which hindered* was the Roman empire: this tradition might have been derived even from the apostle himself; and therefore the primitive Christians, in the public offices of the Church, prayed for its peace and welfare, as knowing that, when the Roman empire should be dissolved and broken in pieces, the empire of the *man of sin* would be raised upon its ruins. In the same proportion as the power of the empire decreased, the authority of the Church increased, and the latter at the expense and ruin of the former; till at length the pope grew up above all, and the *wicked*, or *lawless one*, was fully manifested and revealed. His coming is *after the energy of Satan*, &c; and does it require any particular proof that the pretensions of the pope, and the corruption of the Church of Rome, are all supported and authorized by feigned visions and miracles, by pious frauds and impositions of every kind? But how much soever the *man of sin* may be exalted, and how long soever he may reign, yet at last *the Lord shall consume him*, &c. This is partly taken from ^{<23104>}**Isaiah 11:4**, *And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked one*; where the Jews put an emphasis upon the words *the wicked one*; as appears from the Chaldee, which renders it, “He shall destroy the *wicked Roman*.” If the two clauses, as said in the note on ^{<23108>}**2 Thessalonians 2:8**, relate to two different events, the meaning is, “that the Lord Jesus shall gradually consume him with the free preaching of the Gospel; and shall utterly destroy him at his second coming in the glory of the Father.” The former began to take effect at the Reformation; and the latter will be accomplished in God’s appointed time. The *man of sin* is now upon the decline, and he will be totally abolished when Christ shall come in judgment. *Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, Hilary, Jerome, Augustine, and Chrysostom*, give much the same interpretation that has here been given of the whole passage. And it must be owned that this is the genuine meaning of the apostle; that this only is consistent with the context; that every other interpretation is forced and unnatural; that this is liable to no material objection; that it coincides perfectly with Daniel; that it is agreeable to the tradition of the primitive Church; and that it has been exactly fulfilled in all its particulars; which cannot be said of any other interpretation whatever. Such a prophecy as this is an illustrious proof of Divine revelation, and an excellent antidote to the poison of popery.

See the *Dissertations on the Prophecies*; and *Dodd*, as above.

10. Dr. Macknight proceeds, in general, on the plan of Bishop Newton; but, as he thinks that the apostle had the prophecy of Daniel, in Dan. 7, and 8, particularly in view, he collates his words with those of the prophet in the following way:—

Verse 3. *That man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.*-ὁ ἀνθρώπος της αμαρτιας, ουιος της απωλειας. “The article,” says he, “joined to these appellations, is emphatical, as in the former clause, importing that the ancient prophets had spoken of these persons, though under different names; particularly the Prophet Daniel, whose description of *the little horn* and *blasphemous king* agrees so exactly in meaning with Paul’s descriptions of the *man of sin*, and *son of perdition*, and *lawless one*, that there can be little doubt of their being the same persons; but this will best appear by a comparison of the passages:—

<3008> **2 Thessalonians 2:3.**

And that man of sin be revealed, *the son of perdition.*

<3004> **2 Thessalonians 2:4.**

Who opposeth and *exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped*; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

<3007> **2 Thessalonians 2:7.**

Only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.

<3008> **2 Thessalonians 2:8.**

And there shall that *wicked one* be revealed.

<5401> **1 Timothy 4:1.**

Giving heed to seducing spirits, and *doctrines of devils.*

<2072b> **Daniel 7:21.** And the same horn *made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.*

<2072s> **Daniel 7:25.** And he shall speak great words against the Most High; and shall *wear out the saints of the Most High.*

<2713b> **Daniel 11:36.** And the king shall do according to his will; and *he shall exalt himself above every god*, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods.

<2082s> **Daniel 8:25.** He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes.

<20708> **Daniel 7:8.** I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots.

<2072s> **Daniel 7:25.** And he shall think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hand. See <20824> **Daniel 8:24.**

<27138> **Daniel 11:38.** In his estate he shall *honour the god of forces (Mahuzzim, gods who are protectors, that is, tutelary angels and saints.)*

<5408> **1 Timothy 4:3.**
Forbidding to marry.

<5308> **2 Thessalonians 2:8.**
 Whom the Lord shall
 consume *with the Spirit of
 his mouth*, and shall
 destroy with the
 brightness of his coming.

<27137> **Daniel 11:37.** Neither shall he regard the
 God of his fathers, nor the *desire of women*.

<20711> **Daniel 7:11.** I beheld then, because of the
 voice of the great words which the horn spake; I
 beheld, even till *the beast was slain*, and his body
 destroyed, and given to the *burning flame*.

<20726> **Daniel 7:26.** And they shall take away his
 dominion, *to consume and destroy it* unto the
 end.

<20825> **Daniel 8:25.** He shall be broken without
 hand.

After entering into great detail in his notes, he sums up in the following manner:-

“Now as, in the prophecies of Daniel, empires governed by a succession of kings are denoted by a single emblem; such as, by a part of an image, a single beast, a horn, &c., of a beast; so in Paul’s prophecy, *the man of sin*, and *son of perdition*, and the *lawless one*, may denote an impious tyranny, exercised by a succession of men who cause great misery and ruin to others; and who, at length, shall be destroyed themselves. It is true, the papists contend that one person only is meant by these appellations, because they are in the singular number, and have the Greek article prefixed to them. But in Scripture we find other words in the singular number, with the article, used to denote a multitude of persons; for example, <6017> **Romans 1:17**; ο δικαίος, *the just one, by faith, shall live*; that is, all just persons whatever: <6007> **Titus 1:7**; ο επισκοπος, *the bishop must be blameless*; that is, all bishops must be so: <60107> **2 John 1:7**; ο πλανος, *the deceiver*, signifies many deceivers, as is plain from the preceding clause, where *many deceivers* are said to *have gone out*. In like manner the false teachers, who deceived Christ’s servants to commit fornication and idolatry, are called *that woman Jezebel*, <6121> **Revelation 2:20**, and the *whore of Babylon*, <60175> **Revelation 17:5**; and in this prophecy, <66107> **Revelation 17:7**, the Roman emperors, and magistrates under them, are called ο καταχων, *he who restraineth*. Farther, a succession of persons, arising one after another, is denoted by appellations in the singular number with the article; for example: the succession of the Jewish

high priests is thus denoted in the laws concerning them, **Leviticus 21:10, 15;** **Numbers 35:25-28.** As also the succession of the Jewish kings, **Deuteronomy 17:14;** **1 Samuel 8:11.** From these examples, therefore, it is plain that the names, *man of sin, son of perdition, lawless one*, although in the singular number, and with the article prefixed, may, according to the Scripture idiom, denote a multitude, and even a succession of persons arising one after another.

“The facts and circumstances mentioned in these prophecies are, for the most part, so peculiarly marked, that they will not easily apply, except to the persons and events intended by the Spirit of God. And therefore, in every case where different interpretations have been given of any prophecy, the proper method of ascertaining its meaning is to compare the various events to which it is thought to relate with the words of the prophecy, and to adopt that as the event intended which most exactly agrees in all its parts to the prophetic description.

“According to this rule, though many different interpretations have been given of the prophecy under consideration, that, in my opinion, will appear the best founded which makes it a prediction of the corruptions of Christianity, which began to be introduced into the Church in the apostle’s days, and wrought secretly all the time the heathen magistrates persecuted the Christians, but which showed themselves more openly after the empire received the faith of Christ, A. D. 312, and, by a gradual progress, ended in the monstrous errors and usurpations of the bishops of Rome, when the restraining power of the emperors was taken out of the way by the incursions of the barbarous nations, and the breaking of the empire into the ten kingdoms prefigured by the ten horns of Daniel’s fourth beast. Now, to be convinced of this, we need only compare the rise and progress of the papal tyranny with the descriptions of *the man of sin*, and *of the mystery of iniquity*, given in the writings of Daniel and Paul.

“And first, we have shown in note 1, on **2 Thessalonians 2:7**, that the mystery of iniquity, or the corrupt doctrines which ended in the errors and usurpations of the see of Rome, was working secretly in the apostle’s days, as he affirms, **2 Thessalonians**

2:7; and that the power of the Roman emperors, and of the magistrates under them, was that which then, and during the succeeding ages, restrained the *mystery of iniquity* in its working, and the *man of sin* from revealing himself. For, while the power of the state continued in the hands of the heathen rulers, and while they employed that power in persecuting the Christians, the corrupt doctrines and practices introduced by the false teachers did not spread so fast as otherwise they would have done. At least they were not produced to public view as the decisions of Heaven, to which all men were bound to pay implicit obedience. But, after the heathen magistrates were taken out of the way by the conversion of Constantine, and after he and his successors called the Christian bishops to meet in general councils, and enforced their assumption of Divine authority by the civil power; then did they in these councils arrogate to themselves the right of establishing what articles of faith and discipline they thought proper, and of anathematizing all who rejected their decrees; a claim which, in after times, the bishops of Rome transferred from general councils to themselves. It was in this period that the worship of saints and angels was introduced; celibacy was praised as the highest piety; meats of certain kinds were prohibited; and a variety of superstitious mortifications of the body were enjoined by the decrees of councils, in opposition to the express laws of God. In this period, likewise, idolatry and superstition were recommended to the people by false miracles, and every deceit which wickedness could suggest; such as the miraculous cures pretended to be performed by the bones and other relics of the martyrs, in order to induce the ignorant vulgar to worship them as mediators; the feigned visions of angels, who they said had appeared to this or that hermit, to recommend celibacy, fastings, mortifications of the body, and living in solitude; the apparitions of souls from purgatory, who begged that certain superstitions might be practised, for delivering them from that confinement: by all which, those assemblies of ecclesiastics, who by their decrees enjoined these practices, showed themselves to be *the man of sin*, and *lawless one*, in his first form, whose coming was to be with all power, and signs, and miracles of falsehood; and who opposed every one that is called god, or that is worshipped. For these general councils, by introducing the worship of saints and angels, robbed God of the worship due to him; and, by

substituting saints and angels as mediators, in the place of Christ, they degraded him from his office as mediator, or rendered it altogether useless. However, though they thus opposed God and Christ by their unrighteous decrees, they did not yet *exalt themselves* above every one who is called God, or an object of worship; neither did they sit yet in the temple of God, as God, and openly show themselves to be God. These blasphemous extravagances were to be acted in after times by a number of particular persons in succession, I mean by the bishops of Rome, after the power of the Christian Roman emperors and of the magistrates under them, was taken out of the way. For the bishops of that see, having very early obtained from the Christian emperors decrees in their own favour, soon raised themselves above all other bishops; and, by a variety of artifices, made the authority and influence of the whole body of the clergy centre in themselves; and claimed that infallible authority which was formerly exercised by general councils, of making articles of faith; and of establishing rules of discipline for the whole Christian community; and of determining, in the last resort, all differences among the clergy; and of anathematizing every one who did not submit to their unrighteous decisions. In this manner did the bishops of Rome establish in their own persons a spiritual dominion over the whole Christian world. But not content with this height of power, by dexterously employing the credit and influence which the ecclesiastics, now devoted to their will, had over the laity in all the countries where they lived, they interfered in many civil matters also; till at length they reared that intolerable fabric of spiritual and civil tyranny conjoined, whereby the understandings, the persons, and the properties, not of the laity only, but also of the clergy themselves, have for along time been most grievously enthralled, in all the countries where Christianity was professed.

“This height, however, of spiritual and civil tyranny united, the bishops of Rome did not attain till, as the apostle foretold, *that which restrained* was taken out of the way; or, till an end was put to the authority of the Roman emperors in the west, by the inroads of the barbarous nations; and, more especially, till the western empire was broken into the ten kingdoms, prefigured in Daniel’s vision by the ten horns of the fourth beast; for then it was that the

bishops of Rome made themselves the sovereigns of Rome and of its territory, and so became the little horn which Daniel beheld coming up among the ten horns, and which had *the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things*; to show that its dominion was founded on the deepest policy, and that its strength consisted in the bulls, excommunications, and anathemas, which, with intolerable audacity, it uttered against all who opposed its usurpations. And in process of time, the bishops of Rome having got possession of three of the kingdoms into which the western empire was broken, signified by three of the horns of Daniel's fourth beast being plucked up by the roots before the little horn, they call themselves the *vicars of Christ*, on pretence that Christ had transferred his whole authority to them. They also thought to change times and laws, as Daniel foretold; for, as the vicars of Christ, they assumed the power of saving and damning men at their own pleasure; and altered the terms of salvation, making it depend, not on faith and holiness, but on the superstitious practices which they had established; and sold the pardon of sins past, and even the liberty of sinning for the future, for money. Moreover, they openly made war with the saints who resisted their corrupt doctrines and practices, and prevailed against them, and wore out the saints of the Most High; for, by the cruel and bloody persecutions which they obliged the princes who acknowledged their authority to carry on against those who adhered to the pure doctrines and worship of Christ, they destroyed incredible numbers of them. Nay, by the terror of their excommunications and interdicts, they forced even the most powerful sovereigns to bend to their yoke: thus *with their mouth did they speak very great things*. At length they assumed the right of conferring kingdoms and of deposing princes, and actually deposed some, with the help of the potentates of their communion, who put their mandates in execution. Lastly, to render this exercise of their tyranny the more effectual, they arrogated the power of loosing subjects from their oaths of allegiance; whereby they made void the most sacred of all moral obligations, the obligation of allegiance. But this impious scheme of false doctrine, and the spiritual tyranny built upon it, agreeably to the predictions of the Prophet Daniel and of the Apostle Paul, began at the Reformation to be consumed by the breath of the Lord's mouth; that is, by the

Scriptures put into the hands of the laity, and by the preaching of true doctrine out of the Scriptures.

“Upon the whole, I think every impartial person who attentively considers the foregoing sketch must be sensible that, in the bishops of Rome, all the characters and actions ascribed by Daniel to the *little horn*, and by Paul to *the man of sin* and *the lawless one*, are clearly united. For, according to the strong workings of Satan, with all power, and signs, and miracles of falsehood, they have opposed Christ, and exalted themselves above all that is called god, or an object of worship; and have long sat in the temple of God, as God, showing themselves that they are God: that is, they exercise the power and prerogatives of God. And seeing, in the acquisition and exercise of their spiritual tyranny, they have trampled upon all laws, human and Divine; and have encouraged their votaries in the most enormous acts of wickedness; the Spirit of God has, with the greatest propriety, given them the appellations of *the man of sin*, *the son of perdition*, and *the lawless one*. Farther, as it is said the man of sin was to *be revealed in his season*, there can be little doubt that the dark ages, in which all learning was overturned by the irruption of the northern barbarians, were the season allotted to *the man of sin* for revealing himself. Accordingly, we know that in these ages the corruptions of Christianity and the usurpations of the clergy were carried to the greatest height. In short, the annals of the world cannot produce persons and events to which the things written in this passage can be applied with so much fitness as to the bishops of Rome. Why then should we be in any doubt concerning the interpretation and application of this famous prophecy?

“At the conclusion of our explication of the prophecy concerning *the man of sin*, it may be proper to observe, that the events foretold in it being such as never took place in the world before, and, in all probability, never will take place in it again; the foreknowledge of them was certainly a matter out of the reach of human conjecture or foresight. It is evident, therefore, that this prophecy, which from the beginning has stood on record, taken in conjunction with the accomplishment of it verified by the concurrent testimony of history, affords an illustrious proof of the Divine original of that revelation of which it makes a part, and of the inspiration of the

person from whose mouth it proceeded." See Dr. *Macknight's* Commentary and Notes, vol. iii., p. 100, &c.

With all this evidence before him, the intelligent reader will now be enabled to judge for himself, and to adopt for his own that opinion which appears to be the best supported by circumstances and facts. The labours of the above learned men have certainly *narrowed* the principal subjects of inquiry; and we may now safely state that, in this very obscure prophecy, the Spirit of God had in view either the *Jewish* or an *apostate Christian Church*, possessing great *spiritual* and *secular influence* and *jurisdiction*. That the words appear to apply best to the conduct of many of the *popes*, and the *corruptions of the Romish Church*, needs no proof; but to which of these Churches, or to what other Church or system, we should apply them, some men, as eminent for their piety as for their learning, hesitate to declare: yet I must acknowledge, that the most pointed part of the evidence here adduced tends to fix the whole on the *Romish Church*, and on none other.

Whatever may be intended here by the words *mystery of iniquity*, we may safely assert that it is a *mystery of iniquity* to *deny the use of the sacred Scriptures to the common people*; and that the Church that does so is afraid to come to the light. Nothing can be more preposterous and monstrous than to call people to embrace the doctrines of Christianity, and refuse them the opportunity of consulting the book in which they are contained. Persons who are denied the use of the sacred writings may be *manufactured* into different forms and modes; and be *mechanically* led to believe certain dogmas, and perform certain religious acts; but without the use of the Scriptures, they never can be intelligent Christians; they do not search the Scriptures, and therefore they cannot know Him of whom these Scriptures testify. The *mystery of iniquity* contained in this prohibition *works now*, and has worked *long*; but did it work in the apostles' times? Did it work in the Church at Thessalonica? Is it possible that the present *crop* should have been produced from so *remote a seed*? What does that most solemn adjuration of the apostle, ~~1~~ **1 Thessalonians 5:27**, mean? *I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be READ unto ALL the holy brethren*. Why was such a charge necessary? Why should it be given in so awful a manner? Does it not absolutely imply that there would be attempts made to keep *all* the holy brethren from seeing this epistle? And can we conceive that *less* was referred to in the delivery of this very awful adjuration? This *mystery of iniquity* did work *then* in the Christian Church;

even *then* attempts were made to *hide* the Scriptures from the common people. And does not this one consideration serve more to identify the prophecy than any thing else? Let him that readeth understand. See the notes on ~~<3157>~~ **1 Thessalonians 5:27**, and at the end of that chapter. {~~<3158>~~ **1 Thessalonians 5:28**}

II THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER 3.

The apostle recommends himself and his brethren to the prayers of the Church, that their preaching might be successful, and that they might be delivered from wicked men, 1, 2. Expresses his confidence in God and them, and prays that they may patiently wait for the coming of Christ, 3-5. Gives them directions concerning strict discipline in the Church; and shows how he and his fellow labourers had behaved among them, not availing themselves of their own power and authority, 6-9. Shows them how to treat disorderly and idle people, and not to get weary in well doing, 10-13. Directs them not to associate with those who obey not the orders contained in this epistle, 14, 15, Prays that they may have increasing peace, 16, And concludes with his salutation and benediction, 17, 18.

NOTES ON CHAP. 3.

Verse 1. Finally, brethren] The words **το λοιπον** do not mean *finally*, but, *furthermore-to come to a conclusion-what remains is this-I shall only add-*any of these phrases expresses the sense of the original.

Pray for us] God, in the order of his grace and providence, has made even the success of his Gospel dependent, in a certain measure, on the prayers of his followers. *Why* he should do so we cannot tell, but that he has done so we know; and they are not a little criminal who neglect to make fervent supplications for the prosperity of the cause of God.

May have free course] They were to pray that *the doctrine of the Lord, ο λογος του κυριου*, might run, **τρεχη**, an allusion to the races in the Olympic games: that, as it had already got into the stadium or race course, and had started fairly, so it might *run on*, get to the goal, and *be glorified*; i.e., gain the crown, appointed for him that should get first to the end of the course.

Verse 2. Unreasonable and wicked men] The word **ατοπων**, which we translate *unreasonable*, signifies rather *disorderly, unmanageable*; persons

out of their place-under no discipline, regardless of law and restraint, and ever acting agreeably to the disorderly and unreasonable impulse of their own minds.

For all men have not faith.] The word **πιστις** is without doubt, to be taken here for *fidelity* or *trustworthiness*, and not for *faith*; and this is agreeable to the meaning given to it in the very next verse: *But the Lord is faithful*, **πιστος δε εστιν ο κυριος**.

There are many, even of those who have received a measure of the Divine light, in whom we cannot *confide*; they are irregular, disorderly, and cannot be brought under regular discipline: to these we cannot trust either ourselves or any thing that concerns the cause of God. But the Lord is worthy of your whole *confidence*; doubt him not; he will establish you, and keep you from any evil to which you may be exposed by these or such like persons.

Verse 3. From evil.] **απο του πονηρου** may be translated, *from the devil* or *from the evil one*. They had disorderly men, wicked men, and the evil one or the devil, to contend with; God alone could support and give them the victory; he had *promised* to do it, and he might ever be *confided* in as being invariably *faithful*.

Verse 4. And we have confidence] We have no doubt of *God's* kindness towards you; he loves you, and will support you: and we can confide in *you*, that ye are now acting as we have desired you, and will continue so to do.

Verse 5. The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God] The love of God is the grand motive and principle of obedience; this must occupy your hearts: the heart is irregular in all its workings; God alone, by his Spirit, can *direct* it into his love, and *keep it right*; **κατευθυναι**, give a *proper direction* to all its passions, and keep them in order, regularity and purity.

The patience of Christ.] Such patience, under all your sufferings and persecutions, as Christ manifested under his. He bore meekly the contradiction of sinners against himself; and when he was reviled, he reviled not again.

Verse 6. That ye withdraw yourselves] Have no fellowship with those who will not submit to proper discipline; who do not keep their place; **ατακτως**, such as are out of their *rank*, and act according to their own

wills and caprices; and particularly such as are *idle* and *busybodies*. These he had ordered, ^{<3011>} **1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12**, that they should *study to be quiet, mind their own business, and work with their hands*; but it appears that they had paid no attention to this order, and now he desires the Church to exclude such from their communion.

And not after the tradition] This evidently refers to the orders contained in the *first epistle*; and that first epistle was the *tradition* which they had received from him. It was, therefore, no *unwritten word*, no *uncertain saying*, handed about from one to another; but a part of the *revelation* which God had given, and which they found in the body of his epistle. These are the only *traditions* which the Church of God is called to regard.

Verse 7. We behaved not ourselves disorderly] **οὐκ ἠτακτησάμεν.** *We did not go out of our rank—we kept our place, and discharged all its duties.*

Verse 8. Neither did we eat any man's bread for naught] We paid for what we bought, and worked with our hands that we might have money to buy what was necessary.

Labour and travail night and day] We were incessantly employed, either in preaching the Gospel, visiting from house to house, or working at our calling. As it is very evident that the Church at Thessalonica was very pious, and most affectionately attached to the apostle, they must have been *very poor*, seeing he was obliged to work hard to gain himself the necessaries of life. Had they been able to support him he would not have worked *with labour and travail night and day*, that he might not be burdensome to them; and, as we may presume that they were very poor, he could not have got his support among them without adding to their burdens. To this his generous mind could not submit; it is no wonder, therefore, that he is so severe against those who would not labour, but were a burden to the poor followers of God.

Verse 9. Not because we have not power] We have the power, **ἐξουσίαν**, the *right*, to be maintained by those in whose behalf we labour. *The labourer is worthy of his hire*, is a maxim universally acknowledged and respected; and *they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel*: the apostle did not claim his privilege, but laboured for his own support, that he might be an *example* to those whom he found otherwise disposed, and that he might spare the poor. See ^{<4001>} **1 Corinthians 9:1**, &c.

Verse 10. If any would not work, neither should he eat.] This is a just maxim, and universal nature inculcates it to man. If man *will work*, he *may eat*; if he do *not work*, he *neither can eat*, nor *should he eat*. The maxim is founded on these words of the Lord: *In the sweat of thy brow thou shall eat bread*. Industry is crowned with God's blessing; idleness is loaded with his curse. This maxim was a proverb among the Jews. Men who can work, and will rather support themselves by begging, should not get one morsel of bread. It is a sin to minister to necessities that are merely artificial.

Verse 11. For we hear that there are some] It is very likely that St. Paul kept up some sort of correspondence with the Thessalonian Church; for he had *heard* every thing that concerned their state, and it was from this information that he wrote his second epistle.

Disorderly] *ατακτως*. *Out of their rank-not keeping their own place.*

Working not at all] Either lounging at home, or becoming religious gossips; *μηδεν εργαζομενους*, *doing nothing.*

Busybodies.] *περιεργαζομενους*. *Doing every thing they should not do*-impertinent meddlers with other people's business; prying into other people's circumstances and domestic affairs; magnifying or minifying, mistaking or underrating, every thing; newsmongers and telltales; an abominable race, the curse of every neighbourhood where they live, and a pest to religious society. There is a fine *paronomasia* in the above words, and evidently intended by the apostle.

Verse 12. With quietness they work] *μετα ησυχιας*. *With silence;* leaving their tale-bearing and officious intermeddling. *Less noise and more work!*

That-they work, and eat their own bread.] Their *own* bread, because earned by their own honest *industry*. What a degrading thing to live on the *bounty* or *mercy* of another, while a man is able to acquire his own livelihood! He who can submit to this has lost the spirit of *independence*; and has in him a beggar's heart, and is capable of nothing but base and beggarly actions. Witness the great mass of the people of England, who by their dependence on the *poor rates* are, from being laborious, independent, and respect able, become idle, profligate, and knavish; the propagators and perpetrators of crime; a discredit to the nation, and a curse to society. The

apostle's command is a cure for such; and the Church of God should discountenance such, and disown them.

Verse 13. Be not weary in well-doing.] While ye stretch out no hand of relief to the *indolent* and *lazy*, do not forget the *real poor*-the genuine representatives of an impoverished Christ; and rather relieve a hundred undeserving objects, than pass by one who is a real object of charity.

Verse 14. If any man obey not] They had disobeyed his word in the *first epistle*, and the Church still continued to bear with them; now he tells the Church, if they still continue to disregard what is said to them, and particularly his word by this *second epistle*, they are to *mark them* as being totally incorrigible, and have no fellowship with them.

Some construe the words *δια της επιστολης* with *τουτον σημειουσθε*. *Give me information of that man by a letter*-let me hear of his continued obstinacy, and send me his name. This was probably in order to excommunicate him, and deliver him over to Satan for the destruction of the body, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. The words of the original will bear either construction, that in the *text*, or that given above.

Verse 15. Count him not as an enemy] Consider him still more an enemy to himself than to you; and *admonish him as a brother*, though you have ceased to hold religious communion with him. His soul is still of infinite value; labour to get it saved.

Verse 16. The Lord of peace] Jesus Christ, who is called *our peace*, ^{<4024>}**Ephesians 2:14**; and *The Prince of peace*, ^{<2306>}**Isaiah 9:6**. May he *give you peace*, for he is the *Fountain* and *Dispenser* of it.

Always] Both in your own consciences, and among yourselves.

By all means.] παντι τροπω. By all means, methods, occasions, instruments, and occurrences; peace or *prosperity* in every form and shape.

Instead of *εν παντι τροπω*, *in every way*, &c., *εν παντι τοπω*, *in every place*, is the reading of A*D*FG, some others; with the *Vulgate* and *Itala*. *Chrysostom*, *Ambrosiaster*, *Augustine*, and others, have the same reading: *May God grant you prosperity always, and everywhere*.

The Lord be with you all.] This is agreeable to the promise of our Lord: *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*; ^{<4030>}**Matthew**

28:20. May the Lord, who has promised to be always with his true disciples, be with you! Christians are the temple of God, and the temple of God has the Divine presence in it. May you ever continue to be his Church, that the Lord God may dwell among you!

Verse 17. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand] It is very likely that Paul employed an *amanuensis* generally, either to *write* what he *dictated*, or to make a *fair copy* of what he wrote. In either case the apostle always subscribed it, and wrote the salutation and benediction with his own hand; and this was what *authenticated* all his epistles. A measure of this kind would be very necessary if forged epistles were carried about in those times. **See Clarke's note on “~~4:16:21~~ 1 Corinthians 16:21”**, and see ~~5:10:18~~ **Colossians 4:18.**

Verse 18. The grace] The favour, blessing, and influence of our Lord Jesus Christ, *be with you all*-be your constant companion. May you ever feel his presence, and enjoy his benediction!

Amen.] So let be! God grant it! This word in this place, has more evidence in favour of its genuineness than it has in most other places; and was probably added here by the apostle himself, or by the Church of the Thessalonians.

The *subscriptions* to this epistle are various in the MSS. and VERSIONS. The latter are as follows:—

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.-*Common Greek text.*

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, which was written at Laodicea in Pisidia, was sent by the hands of Tychicus.-SYRIAC.

The end of the Epistle; and it was written at Athens.-ARABIC.

To the Thessalonians.-ÆTHIOPIC.

Written from Athens, and sent by Silvanus and Timotheus.-COPTIC.

No subscription in the VULGATE.

Written at Corinth.-Author of the SYNOPSIS.

—————sent by Titus and Onesimus.-*Latin Prologue.*

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, written from *Rome*.—No. 71, a MS. of the *Vatican* library, written about the eleventh century.

The chief of the MSS. either have no subscription, or agree with some of the above *versions*.

That the epistle was neither written at *Athens*, *Laodicea*, nor *Rome*, has been sufficiently proved; and that it was written, as well as the first, at *Corinth*, is extremely probable. See the preface, and what has been said on the preceding epistle.

I have often had occasion to observe that the *subscriptions* at the end of the sacred books are not of Divine origin; they are generally false; and yet some have quoted them as making a part of the sacred text, and have adduced them in support of some favourite opinions.

Finished correcting this epistle for a new edition, the shortest day in
1831.-A. C.