

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

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INTRODUCTION

Its GENUINENESS is attested by POLYCARP [*Epistle to the Philippians*, 11], who alludes to ^{<SIB>}2 Thessalonians 3:15. JUSTIN MARTYR [*Dialogue with Trypho*, p. 193.32], alludes to ^{<SIB>}2 Thessalonians 2:3. IRENÆUS [*Against Heresies*, 7.2] quotes ^{<SIB>}2 Thessalonians 2:8. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA [*Miscellanies*, 1.5, p. 554; *The Instructor*, 1.17], quotes ^{<SIB>}2 Thessalonians 3:2, as Paul's words. TERTULLIAN [*On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 24] quotes ^{<SIB>}2 Thessalonians 2:1,2, as part of Paul's Epistle.

DESIGN. — The accounts from Thessalonica, after the sending of the first Epistle, represented the faith and love of the Christians there as on the increase; and their constancy amidst persecutions unshaken. One error of doctrine, however, resulting in practical evil, had sprung up among them. The apostle's description of Christ's sudden second coming (^{<SIB>}1 Thessalonians 4:13, etc., and ^{<SIB>}1 Thessalonians 5:2), and the possibility of its being at any time, led them to believe it was *actually* at hand. Some professed to know by "the Spirit" (^{<SIB>}2 Thessalonians 2:2) that it was so; and others alleged that Paul had said so when with them. A letter, too, purporting to be from the apostle to that effect, seems to have been circulated among them. (That ^{<SIB>}2 Thessalonians 2:2 refers to such a spurious letter, rather than to Paul's first Epistle, appears likely from the statement, ^{<SIB>}2 Thessalonians 3:17, as to his autograph salutation being the mark whereby his genuine letters might be known). Hence some neglected their daily business and threw themselves on the charity of others, as if their sole duty was to wait for the coming of the Lord. This error, therefore, needed rectifying, and forms a leading topic of the second Epistle. He in it tells them (^{<SIB>}2 Thessalonians 2:1-17), that before the

Lord shall come, there must first be a great *apostasy*, and *the Man of Sin* must be revealed; and that the Lord's sudden coming is no ground for neglecting daily business; that to do so would only bring scandal on the Church, and was contrary to his own practice among them (⁵¹⁰² Thessalonians 3:7-9), and that the faithful must withdraw themselves from such disorderly professors (⁵¹⁰² Thessalonians 3:6,10-15). Thus, there are *three* divisions of the Epistle:

- (1) ⁵¹⁰² Thessalonians 1:1-12. Commendations of the Thessalonians' faith, love, and patience, amidst persecutions.
- (2) ⁵¹⁰² Thessalonians 2:1-17. The error as to the immediate coming of Christ corrected, and the previous rise and downfall of the Man of Sin foretold.
- (3) ⁵¹⁰² Thessalonians 3:1-16. Exhortations to orderly conduct in their whole walk, with prayers for them to the God of peace, followed by his autograph salutation and benediction.

DATE OF WRITING. — AS the Epistle is written in the joint names of Timothy and Silas, as well as his own, and as these were with him while at Corinth, and not with him for a long time subsequently to his having left that city (compare ⁴¹⁸⁸ Acts 18:18, with ⁴¹⁹² Acts 19:22; indeed, as to Silas, it is doubtful whether he was ever subsequently with Paul), it follows, the *place* of writing must have been Corinth, and the *date*, during the one "year and six months" of his stay there, ⁴¹⁸¹ Acts 18:11 (namely, beginning with the autumn of A.D. 52, and ending with the spring of A.D. 54), say about six months after his first Epistle, early in A.D. 53.

STYLE. — The style is not different from that of most of Paul's other writings, except in the prophetic portion of it (⁵¹⁰² Thessalonians 2:1-12), which is distinguished from them in subject matter. As is usual in his more solemn passages (for instance, in the denunciatory and prophetic portions of his Epistles, for example, compare ⁵¹⁰⁶ Colossians 2:8,16, with ⁵¹⁰² Thessalonians 2:3; ⁴¹⁹¹ 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, with ⁵¹⁰² Thessalonians 2:8,9; ⁵¹⁰⁸ Romans 1:18, with ⁵¹⁰² Thessalonians 2:8,10), his diction here is more lofty, abrupt, and elliptical. As the former Epistle dwells mostly on the second Advent in its aspect of glory to the sleeping and the living saints (⁵¹⁰¹ Thessalonians 4:1-5:28), so this Epistle dwells mostly on it in

its aspect of everlasting destruction to the wicked and him who shall be the final consummation of wickedness, the Man of Sin. So far was Paul from laboring under an erroneous impression as to Christ's speedy coming, when he wrote his first Epistle (which rationalists impute to him), that he had distinctly told them, when he was with them, the same truths as to the apostasy being about first to arise, which he now insists upon in this second Epistle (^{<S18F>}2 Thessalonians 2:5). Several points of coincidence occur between the two Epistles, confirming the genuineness of the latter. Thus, compare ^{<S18D>}2 Thessalonians 3:2, with ^{<S18E>}1 Thessalonians 2:15,16; again, ^{<S18D>}2 Thessalonians 2:9, the Man of Sin "coming after the working of Satan," with ^{<S18E>}1 Thessalonians 2:18 3:5, where Satan's incipient work as the *hinderer* of the Gospel, and the *tempter*, appears; again, mild *warning* is enjoined, ^{<S18F4>}1 Thessalonians 5:14; but, in this second Epistle, when the evil had grown worse, stricter discipline (^{<S18D>}2 Thessalonians 3:6,14): "withdraw from" the "company" of such.

Paul probably visited Thessalonica on his way to Asia subsequently (^{<A18D>}Acts 20:4), and took with him thence Aristarchus and Secundus: the former became his "companion in travel" and shared with him his perils at Ephesus, also those of his shipwreck, and was his "fellow prisoner" at Rome (^{<A18D>}Acts 27:2 ^{<S18D0>}Colossians 4:10 ^{<S18D2>}Philemon 1:24). According to tradition he became bishop of Apamea.

CHAPTER 1

2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-12.

**ADDRESS AND SALUTATION: INTRODUCTION:
THANKSGIVING FOR THEIR GROWTH IN FAITH AND LOVE,
AND FOR THEIR PATIENCE IN PERSECUTIONS, WHICH ARE A
TOKEN FOR GOOD EVERLASTING TO THEM, AND FOR
PERDITION TO THEIR ADVERSARIES AT CHRIST'S COMING:
PRAYER FOR THEIR PERFECTION.**

1. **in God our Father** — still more endearing than the address, <sup><SUB>1</sup>Thessalonians 1:1 “in God THE Father.”
2. **from God our Father** — So some oldest manuscripts read. Others omit “our.”
3. **We are bound** — *Greek*, “We owe it as a debt” (<sup><SUB>2</sup>Thessalonians 2:13). They had prayed for the Thessalonians (<sup><SUB>1</sup>Thessalonians 3:12) that they might “increase and abound in love”; their prayer having been heard, it is a small but a bounden return for them to make, to thank God for it. Thus, Paul and his fellow missionaries practice what they preach (<sup><SUB>1</sup>Thessalonians 5:18). In <sup><SUB>1</sup>Thessalonians 1:3, their thanksgiving was for the Thessalonians’ faith, love, and patience”; here, for their *exceeding growth in faith*, and for their *charity abounding*. “We are bound” expresses the duty of thanksgiving from its subjective side as an inward conviction. “As it is meet,” from the *objective*: side as something answering to the state of circumstances [ALFORD]. Observe the exact correspondence of the prayer (<sup><SUB>1</sup>Thessalonians 3:12, “The Lord make you to abound in love”) and the answer, “The love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (compare <sup><SUB>1</sup>Thessalonians 4:10).

meet — right.

4. **glory in you** — make our boast of you, literally, “in your case.” “Ourselves” implies that not merely did they hear others speaking of the

Thessalonians' faith, but they, the missionaries *themselves*, boasted of it. Compare ^{<500>}1 Thessalonians 1:8, wherein the apostle said, their faith was so well known in various places, that he and his fellow missionaries had no need to speak of it; but here he says, so abounding is their love, combined with faith and patience, that he and his fellow missionaries *themselves*, make it a matter of glorying in the various churches elsewhere (he was now at Corinth in Achaia, and boasted there of the faith of the Macedonian churches, ^{<400>}2 Corinthians 10:15-17 8:1, at the same time giving the glory to the Lord), not only looking forward to glorying thereat at Christ's coming (^{<500>}1 Thessalonians 2:19), but doing so even now.

patience — in ^{<500>}1 Thessalonians 1:3, “patience of hope.” Here *hope* is tacitly implied as the ground of their patience; ^{<500>}2 Thessalonians 1:5,7 state the object of their hope, namely, the kingdom for which they suffer.

tribulations — literally, “pressures.” The Jews were the instigators of the populace and of the magistrates against Christians (^{<400>}Acts 17:6,8).

which ye endure — *Greek*, “are (now) enduring.”

5. Which — Your *enduring* these tribulations is a “token of the righteous judgment of God,” manifested in your being enabled to endure them, and in your adversaries thereby filling up the measure of their guilt. The judgment is even now begun, but its consummation will be at the Lord's coming. David (^{<500>}Psalm 73:1-14) and Jeremiah (^{<400>}Jeremiah 12:1-4) were perplexed at the wicked prospering and the godly suffering. But Paul, by the light of the New Testament, makes this fact a matter of consolation. It is a *proof* (so the *Greek*) of the future judgment, which will set to rights the anomalies of the present state, by rewarding the now suffering saint, and by punishing the persecutor. And even now “the Judge of all the earth does right” (^{<400>}Genesis 18:25); for the godly are in themselves sinful and need chastisement to amend them. What they suffer unjustly at the hands of cruel men they suffer justly at the hands of God; and they have their evil things here that they may escape condemnation with the world and have their good things hereafter (^{<400>}Luke 16:25 ^{<400>}1 Corinthians 11:32) [EDMUNDS].

that ye may be counted worthy — expressing the purpose of God's “righteous judgment” as regards you.

for which — *Greek*, “*in behalf of which ye are also suffering*” (compare ^{<454>}Acts 5:41 ^{<9>}16 ^{<502>}Philippians 1:29). “Worthy” implies that, though men are justified by faith, they shall be judged “according to their works” (^{<612>}Revelation 20:12; compare ^{<502>}1 Thessalonians 2:12 ^{<40061>}1 Peter 1:6,7 ^{<614>}Revelation 20:4). The “also” implies the connection between *the suffering for the kingdom* and *being counted worthy* of it. Compare ^{<487>}Romans 8:17,18.

6. seeing it is a righteous thing — This justifies the assertion above of there being a “*righteous judgment*” (^{<502>}2 Thessalonians 1:5), namely, “seeing that it is (literally, ‘*if at least, if at all events it is*’) a *righteous thing* with (that is, in the estimation of) God” (which, as we all feel, it certainly is). Our own innate feeling of what is just, in this confirms what is revealed.

recompense — requite *in kind*, namely, *tribulation* to them that trouble you (*affliction* to those that *afflict* you); and to you who are *troubled*, *rest from trouble*.

7. rest — governed by “to recompense” (^{<506>}2 Thessalonians 1:6). The *Greek* is literally, “relaxation”; loosening of the *tension* which had preceded; *relaxing* of the strings of endurance now so tightly drawn. The *Greek* word for “rest,” ^{<4128>}Matthew 11:28, is distinct, namely, *cessation* from labor. Also, ^{<300>}Hebrews 4:9, “A keeping of sabbath.”

with us — namely, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, the writers, who are troubled like yourselves.

when — at the time when ... ; not sooner, not later.

with his mighty angels — rather as the *Greek*, “with the angels of His might,” or “power,” that is, the angels who are the ministers by whom He makes His might to be recognized (^{<4134>}Matthew 13:41,52). It is not *their* might, but HIS might, which is the prominent thought.

8. In flaming fire — *Greek*, “In flame of fire”; or, as other oldest manuscripts read, “*in fire of flame*.” This *flame of fire* accompanied His manifestation in the bush (^{<4002>}Exodus 3:2); also His giving of the law at Sinai (^{<4048>}Exodus 19:18). Also it shall accompany His revelation at His advent (^{<2009>}Daniel 7:9,10), symbolizing His own bright glory and His

consuming vengeance against His foes (^{<5802>}Hebrews 10:27 12:29 ^{<6102>}2 Peter 3:7,10).

taking — literally, “*giving*” them, as their portion, “vengeance.”

know not God — the Gentiles primarily (^{<5706>}Psalm 79:6 ^{<6008>}Galatians 4:8 ^{<5005>}1 Thessalonians 4:5); not of course those *involuntarily* not knowing God, but those *wilfully* not knowing Him, as Pharaoh, who might have known God if he would, but who boasted “I know not the Lord” (^{<6002>}Exodus 5:2); and as the heathen persecutors who might have known God by the preaching of those whom they persecuted. Secondarily, all who “profess to know God but in works deny Him” (^{<5016>}Titus 1:16).

obey not the gospel — primarily the unbelieving Jews (^{<5806>}Romans 10:3,16); secondarily, all who obey not the truth (^{<6008>}Romans 2:8).

Christ — omitted by some of the oldest manuscripts, and retained by others.

9. Who — *Greek*, “persons who,” etc.

destruction from the presence of the Lord — driven *far from* His presence [ALFORD]. The sentence *emanating from Him* in person, sitting as Judge [BENGEL], and *driving them far from Him* (^{<6254>}Matthew 25:41 ^{<6016>}Revelation 6:16 12:14; compare ^{<6012>}1 Peter 3:12 ^{<6101>}Isaiah 2:10,19). “The presence of the Lord” is the source whence the sentence goes forth; “the glory of His power” is the instrument whereby the sentence is carried into execution [EDMUNDS]. But ALFORD better interprets the latter clause (see ^{<5010>}2 Thessalonians 1:10), driven “from the manifestation of His power *in the glorification of His saints.*” *Cast out from the presence of the Lord* is the idea at the root of eternal death, the law of evil left to its unrestricted working, without one counteracting influence of the presence of God, who is the source of all light and holiness (^{<6124>}Isaiah 66:24 ^{<6094>}Mark 9:44).

10. “When He shall have come.”

glorified in his saints — as the element and mirror IN which His glory shall shine brightly (^{<5870>}John 17:10).

admired in all them that believe — *Greek*, “them that *believed.*” Once they *believed*, now they *see*: they had taken His word on trust. Now His

word is made good and they need faith no longer. With *wonder* all celestial intelligences (^{400E}Ephesians 3:10) shall see and *admire* the Redeemer on account of the excellencies which He has wrought in them.

because, etc. — Supply for the sense, among whom (namely, those who shall be found to have believed) *you*, too, shall be; “because our testimony unto (so the *Greek* for ‘among’) you was believed” (and was not rejected as by those “who obey not the Gospel,” ^{500B}2 Thessalonians 1:8). The early preaching of the Gospel was not abstract discussions, but a *testimony* to facts and truths experimentally known (^{424B}Luke 24:48 ^{400B}Acts 1:8). *Faith* is defined by BISHOP PEARSON as “an assent unto truths, credible upon the testimony of God, delivered unto us by the apostles and prophets” (originally delivering their testimony orally, but now in their writings). “Glorified in His saints” reminds us that *holiness* is *glory* in the bud; *glory* is *holiness* manifested.

11. Wherefore — *Greek*, “With a view to which,” namely, His glorification in you as His saints.

also — We not only anticipate the coming glorification of our Lord *in His saints*, but we also pray concerning (so the *Greek*) YOU.

our God — whom we serve.

count you worthy — The prominent position of the “You” in the *Greek* makes it the emphatic word of the sentence. May *you* be found among the saints whom God shall count worthy of their calling (^{400E}Ephesians 4:1)! There is no dignity in us independent of God’s calling of us (^{500B}2 Timothy 1:9). *The calling* here is not merely the first actual call, but the whole of God’s electing act, originating in His “purpose of grace given us in Christ before the world began,” and having its consummation in glory.

the good pleasure of, etc. — on the part of God [BENGE].

faith — on your part. ALFORD refers the former clause, “good pleasure of his goodness,” also to *man*, arguing that the *Greek* for “goodness” is never applied to God, and translates, “All [that is, every possible] *right purpose of goodness*.” WAHL, “All *sweetness* of goodness,” that is, impart in full to you all the refreshing delights of goodness. I think that, as in the previous and parallel clause, “calling” refers to GOD’S purpose; and as the *Greek* for

“good pleasure” mostly is used of *God*, we ought to translate, “fulfill (His) every gracious Purpose of goodness (*on your part*),” that is, fully perfect in you all goodness according to *His gracious purpose*. Thus, “the grace of our God,” ^{<3012>}2 Thessalonians 1:12, corresponds to *God’s* “good pleasure” here, which confirms the *English Version*, just as “the grace of the *Lord Jesus Christ*” is parallel to “work of *faith*,” as Christ especially is the object of faith. “The work of faith”; *Greek*, (no article; supply from the previous clause *all*) *work of faith*”; faith manifested by *work*, which is its perfected development (^{<3004>}James 1:4; compare *Note*, see on ^{<3001>}1 Thessalonians 1:3). *Working reality of faith*.

with power — *Greek*, “in power,” that is, “*powerfully fulfill* in you” (^{<3011>}Colossians 1:11).

12. the name of our Lord Jesus — Our Lord Jesus *in His manifested personality* as the God-man.

in you, and ye in him — reciprocal glorification; compare ^{<3005>}Isaiah 28:5, “*The Lord of hosts* shall be ... a crown of glory and ... a diadem of beauty unto ... His people,” with ^{<3013>}Isaiah 62:3, “*Thou (Zion)* shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem,” etc. (^{<3010>}John 21:10 ^{<3024>}Galatians 1:24 ^{<3014>}1 Peter 4:14). The believer’s graces redound to Christ’s glory, and His glory, as their Head, reflects glory on them as the members.

the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ — There is but one *Greek* article to both, implying the inseparable unity of God and the Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER 2

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-17.

CORRECTION OF THEIR ERROR AS TO CHRIST'S IMMEDIATE COMING. THE APOSTASY THAT MUST PRECEDE IT. EXHORTATION TO STEADFASTNESS, INTRODUCED WITH THANKSGIVING FOR THEIR ELECTION BY GOD.

1. Now — rather, “But”; marking the transition from his prayers *for* them to entreaties *to* them.

we beseech you — or “entreat you.” He uses affectionate entreaty, rather than stern reproof, to win them over to the right view.

by — rather, “with respect to”; as the *Greek* for “of” (⁴⁰⁰⁸2 Corinthians 1:8).

our gathering together unto him — the consummating or final gathering together of the saints to Him at His coming, as announced, ⁴²⁸¹Matthew 24:31 ⁵⁰⁴⁷1 Thessalonians 4:17. The *Greek* noun is nowhere else found except in ⁵⁰²⁵Hebrews 10:25, said of *the assembling together* of believers for *congregational* worship. Our instinctive fears of the judgment are dispelled by the thought of being gathered together UNTO HIM (“even as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings”), which ensures our safety.

2. soon — on trifling grounds, without due consideration.

shaken — literally, “tossed” as ships tossed by an agitated sea. Compare for the same image, ⁴⁰¹⁴Ephesians 4:14.

in mind — rather as the *Greek*, “*from* your mind,” that is, from your mental steadfastness on the subject.

troubled — This verb applies to *emotional* agitation; as “shaken” to *intellectual*.

by spirit — by a *person professing* to have the *spirit* of prophecy (^{<418>}1 Corinthians 12:8-10 ^{<419>}1 John 4:1-3). The Thessalonians had been warned (^{<511>}1 Thessalonians 5:20,21) to “prove” such professed prophesyings, and to “hold fast (only) that which is good.”

by word — *of mouth* (compare ^{<515>}2 Thessalonians 2:5,15); some word or saying alleged to be that of Paul, orally communicated. If oral tradition was liable to such perversion in the apostolic age (compare a similar instance, ^{<423>}John 21:23), how much more in our age!

by letter as from us — purporting to be from us, whereas it is a forgery. Hence he gives a test by which to know his genuine letters (^{<517>}2 Thessalonians 3:17).

day of Christ — The oldest manuscripts read, “day of *the Lord*.”

is at hand — rather, “is *immediately imminent*,” literally, “is *present*”; “is *instantly coming*.” Christ and His apostles always taught that the day of the Lord’s coming *is at hand*; and it is not likely that Paul would imply anything contrary here; what he denies is, that it is so *immediately imminent, instant, or present*, as to justify the neglect of everyday worldly duties. CHRYSOSTOM, and after him ALFORD, translates, “is (already) present” (compare ^{<518>}2 Timothy 2:18), a kindred error. But in ^{<519>}2 Timothy 3:1, the same *Greek* verb is translated “come.” WAHL supports this view. The *Greek* is usually used of actual presence; but is quite susceptible of the translation, “is all but present.”

3. by any means — *Greek*, “in any manner.” Christ, in ^{<424>}Matthew 24:4, gives the same warning in connection with the same event. He had indicated three ways (^{<511>}2 Thessalonians 2:2) in which they might be deceived (compare other ways, ^{<511>}2 Thessalonians 2:9, and ^{<425>}Matthew 24:5,24).

a falling away — rather as the *Greek*, “*the falling away*,” or “apostasy,” namely, *the one of which* “I told you” before (^{<517>}2 Thessalonians 2:5), “when I was yet with you,” and of which the Lord gave some intimation (^{<424>}Matthew 24:10-12 ^{<426>}John 5:43).

that man of sin be revealed — The *Greek* order is, “And there have been revealed the man of sin.” As Christ was first in *mystery*, and afterwards

revealed (^{<5186>}1 Timothy 3:16), so Antichrist (the term used ^{<6128>}1 John 2:18 4:3) is first in mystery, and afterwards shall be developed and revealed (^{<5112>}2 Thessalonians 2:7-9). As righteousness found its embodiment in Christ, “the Lord our righteousness,” so “sin” shall have its embodiment in “the man of sin.” *The hindering* power meanwhile restrains its manifestation; when that shall be removed, then this manifestation shall take place. The articles, “*the apostasy*,” and “*the man of sin*,” may also refer to their being *well known as foretold* in ^{<2108>}Daniel 7:8,25, “the little horn speaking great words against the Most High, and thinking to change times and laws”; and ^{<2116>}Daniel 11:36, the wilful king who “shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods; neither shall he regard any god.”

the son of perdition — a title applied besides to Judas (the traitor, ^{<6172>}John 17:12), and to none else. Antichrist (the second “beast” coming up out of the earth); therefore he shall at first be “like a lamb, while he speaks as a dragon” (^{<6631>}Revelation 13:11); “coming in peaceably and by flatteries,” “working deceitfully,” but “his heart shall be against the holy covenant” (^{<2112>}Daniel 11:21,23,28,30). Seeds of “the falling away” soon appear (^{<5001>}1 Timothy 4:1-3), but the full development and concentration of these anti-Christian elements in one person are still to appear. Contrast the King of Zion’s coming as JESUS:

- (1) righteous or *just*;
- (2) having *salvation*;
- (3) *lowly*;

whereas Antichrist is:

- (1) “the man of (the embodiment of) *sin*;
- (2) the son of *perdition*;
- (3) *exalting himself* above all that is worshipped.

He is *the son of perdition*, as consigning many to it, and finally doomed to it himself (^{<6678>}Revelation 17:18,11). “He whose essence and inheritance is perdition” [ALFORD]. AS “the *kingdom* of heaven” is first brought before us in the abstract, then in the concrete, the *King*, the Lord Jesus; so here,

first we have (^{311B}2 Thessalonians 2:7) “the mystery of *iniquity*,” then “the *iniquitous one*” (^{311B}2 Thessalonians 2:8). Doubtless “the apostasy” of *Romanism* (the abstract) is one of the greatest instances of the working of *the mystery of iniquity*, and its blasphemous claims for the Pope (the concrete) are forerunners of the final concentration of blasphemy in *the man of sin*, who shall not merely, as the Pope, usurp God’s honor as *vicegerent* of God, but *oppose* God openly at last.

4. ^{211B} Daniel 11:36,37 is here referred to. The words used there as to Antiochus Epiphanes, Paul implies, shall even be more applicable to the man of sin, who is the New Testament actual Antichrist, as Antiochus was the Old Testament typical Antichrist. The previous world kingdoms had each one extraordinary person as its representative head and embodiment (thus Babylon had Nebuchadnezzar, ^{203B} Daniel 2:38, end; Medo-Persia had Cyrus; Greece had Alexander, and Antiochus Epiphanes, the forerunner of Antichrist); so the fourth and last world kingdom, under which we now live, shall have one final head, the concentrated embodiment of all the *sin* and *lawless iniquity* which have been in pagan and papal Rome. Rome’s final phase will probably be an unholy alliance between idolatrous superstition and godless infidelity.

Who opposeth and exalteth himself — There is but one *Greek* article to both participles, implying that the reason why he *opposeth himself* is in order that he may *exalt himself above*, etc. ALFORD takes the former clause absolutely, “He that withstands (CHRIST),” that is, Antichrist (^{111B}1 John 2:18). As at the conclusion of the Old Testament period, Israel apostate allied itself with the heathen world power against Jesus and His apostles (^{121B} Luke 23:12; and at Thessalonica, ^{417B} Acts 17:5-9), and was in righteous retribution punished by the instrumentality of the world power itself (Jerusalem being destroyed by Rome), ^{203B} Daniel 9:26,27; so the degenerate Church (become an “harlot”), allying itself with the godless world power (the “beast” of Revelation) against vital religion (that is, the harlot sitting on the beast), shall be judged by that world power which shall be finally embodied in Antichrist (^{331B} Zechariah 13:8,9 14:2 ^{617C} Revelation 17:16,17). In this early Epistle, the apostate Jewish Church as the harlot, and pagan Rome as the beast, form the historical background on which Paul draws his prophetic sketch of the apostasy. In the Pastoral Epistles, which were later, this prophecy appears in connection with Gnosticism, which had at

that time infected the Church. The harlot (the apostate Church) is first to be judged by the beast (the world power) and its kings (⁽⁶⁷⁶⁾ Revelation 17:16); and afterwards the beasts and their allies (with the personal Antichrist at their head, who seems to rise after the judgment on the harlot, or apostate Church) shall be judged by the coming of Jesus Himself (⁽⁶⁸¹⁾ Revelation 19:20). Anti-Christian tendencies produce different Antichrists: these separate Antichrists shall hereafter find their consummation in an individual exceeding them all in the intensity of his evil character [AUBERLEN]. But judgment soon overtakes him. He is necessarily *a child of death*, immediately after his *ascent as the beast out of the bottomless pit going into perdition* (⁽⁶⁷⁸⁾ Revelation 17:8,11). *Idolatry of self, spiritual pride, and rebellion against God*, are his characteristics; as *Christ-worship, humility, and dependence on God*, characterize Christianity. He not merely *assumes* Christ's character (as the "false Christs," ⁽⁶⁸⁴⁾ Matthew 24:24), but "*opposes*" Christ. The *Greek* implies one *situated on an opposite side* (compare ⁽⁶⁹¹⁾ 1 John 2:22 ⁽⁶⁹²⁾ 2 John 1:7). One who, on the destruction of every religion, shall seek to establish his own throne, and for God's great truth, "God is man," to substitute his own lie, "Man is God" [TRENCH].

above all that is called God — (⁽⁶⁸⁵⁾ 1 Corinthians 8:5). The Pope (for instance, Clement VI) has even commanded the angels to admit into Paradise, without the alleged pains of purgatory, certain souls. But still this is only a foreshadowing of the Antichrist, who will not, as the Pope, act *in God's name*, but *against* God.

or that is worshipped — Rome here again gives a presage of Antichrist. The *Greek* is *Sebasma*; and *Sebastus* is the *Greek* for Augustus, who was worshipped as the secular ruler and divine vicegerent. The papacy has risen on the overthrow of *Caesar's* power. Antichrist shall exalt himself above *every* object of worship, whether on earth as the Caesar, or in heaven as God. The various prefigurations of Antichrist, Mohammed, Rome, Napoleon, and modern infidel secularism, contain only *some*, not *all*, his characteristics. It is the union of all in some one person that shall form the full Antichrist, as the union in one Person, Jesus, of all the types and prophecies constituted the full Christ [OLSHAUSEN].

in the temple of God ... that he is God — “He will reign a time, times, and half a time” (²⁷⁰²Daniel 7:25), that is, three and a half years, and will sit *in the temple at Jerusalem*: then the Lord shall come from heaven and cast him into the take of fire and shall bring to the saints the times of their reigning, the seventh day of hallowed rest, and give to Abraham the promised inheritance” [IRENÆUS, *Against Heresies*, 30.4].

showing himself — with blasphemous and arrogant DISPLAY (Compare a type, ⁴¹²³Acts 12:21-23). The earliest Fathers unanimously looked for a personal Antichrist. Two objections exist to Romanism being regarded *the* Antichrist, though probably Romanism will leave its *culmination* in him:

(1) So far is Romanism from *opposing all that is called God*, that adoration of gods and lords many (the Virgin Mary and saints) is a leading feature in it;

(2) the papacy has existed for more than twelve centuries, and yet Christ is not come, whereas the prophecy regards the final Antichrist as short-lived, and soon going to perdition through the coming of Christ (⁴¹⁷³Revelation 17:18,11). Gregory the Great declared against the patriarch of Constantinople, that whosoever should assume the title of “universal bishop” would be “the forerunner of Antichrist.” The papacy fulfilled this his undesigned prophecy. The Pope has been called by his followers, “Our Lord God the Pope”; and at his inauguration in St. Peter’s, seated in his chair upon the high altar, which is treated as his footstool, he has vividly foreshadowed him who “exalteth himself above all that is called God.” An objection fatal to interpreting *the temple of God* here as *the Church* (⁴¹⁸⁶1 Corinthians 3:16,17 6:19) is, the apostle would never designate the *apostate* anti-Christian Church “the temple of God.” It is likely that, as Messiah was revealed among the Jews at Jerusalem, so Antimesiah shall appear among them when restored to their own land, and after they have rebuilt their *temple at Jerusalem*. Thus ²⁷¹⁴Daniel 11:41,45 (see on ²⁷¹⁴Daniel 11:41; ²⁷¹⁵Daniel 11:45), corresponds, “He shall enter the glorious land (Judea), and he shall plant the tabernacles of his palaces between the seas in *the glorious holy mountain*”; and then (²⁷¹¹Daniel 12:1) “Michael, the great prince, shall stand up” to deliver God’s people. Compare *Note*, see on ²⁷¹⁰Daniel 9:26,27. Also the king of

Assyria, type of Antichrist (^{234D} Isaiah 14:12-14). “Lucifer” (a title of Messiah, assumed by Antichrist, ^{622C} Revelation 22:16); “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.” “I will sit upon the *mount of the congregation* (that is, God’s place of meeting His people of old, the temple), *in the sides of the north* (^{98D} Psalm 48:2); I will be like the Most High.” ^{610F} Revelation 11:1,2, “The temple of God ... the holy city” (namely, Jerusalem, ^{404B} Matthew 4:5), compare ^{968B} Psalm 68:18,29, referring to a period since Christ’s ascension, therefore not yet fulfilled (^{231E} Isaiah 2:1-3 ^{301E} Ezekiel 40:1-44:31 ^{314F} Zechariah 14:16-20 ^{301E} Malachi 3:1). “In the temple of God,” implies that it an *internal*, not an external, enemy which shall assail the Church. Antichrist shall, the first three and a half years of the prophetical week, keep the covenant, then break it and usurp divine honors in the midst of the week. Some think Antichrist will be a Jew. At all events he will, “by flatteries,” bring many, not only of the Gentiles, but also of “the tribes” of Israel (so the *Greek* for “kindreds,” ^{610B} Revelation 11:8,9), to own him as their long-looked-for Messiah, in the same “city where our Lord was crucified.” “Sitteth” here implies his occupying the place of power and majesty in opposition to Him who “sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (^{300B} Hebrews 1:3), and who shall come to “sit” there where the usurper had sat (^{426B} Matthew 26:64). See on ^{232D} Daniel 9:27; ^{610B} Revelation 11:2,3,9,11. Compare ^{330E} Ezekiel 38:2,3,6,9,10,13,14,16, as to Tyre, the type of Antichrist, characterized by similar blasphemous arrogance.

5. Remember, etc. — confuting those who represent Paul as having labored under error as to Christ’s immediate coming when writing his first Epistle, and as now correcting that error.

I told you — more than once, literally, “I was telling,” or “used to tell.”

6. now ye know — by my having told you. The power must have been one “known” to the Thessalonians.

what withholdeth — that which *holds him back*; “keeps him in check”: the power that has restrained the man of sin from his full and final development, is *the moral and conservative influence of political states* [OLSHAUSEN]: *the fabric of human polity* as a *coercive* power; as “he who now letteth” refers to *those who rule that polity* by which the great

upbursting of godlessness is kept down [ALFORD]. The “what withholdeth” refers to the *general hindrance*; “he who now letteth,” to *the person in whom that hindrance is summed up*. Romanism, as a forerunner of Antichrist, was thus kept in check by *the Roman emperor* (the then representative of the coercive power) until Constantine, having removed the seat of empire to Constantinople, the Roman bishop by degrees first raised himself to precedence, then to primacy, and then to sole empire above the secular power. The historical fact from which Paul starts in his prediction was probably the emperor Claudius’ expulsion of the Jews, the representative of the anti-Christian adversary in Paul’s day, from Rome, thus “withholding” them in some degree in their attacks on Christianity; this suggested the principle holding good to the end of time, and about to find its final fulfillment in the removal of *the withholding person or authority*, whereupon Antichrist in his worst shape shall start up.

that he might be — *Greek*, “in order that”: ye know that which keeps him back, in God’s purposes, from being sooner manifested, “*in order that he may be revealed in his own time*” (that is, the time appointed by God to him as his proper time for being manifested), not sooner (compare ²⁷¹⁵Daniel 11:35). The removal of the withholding power will be when the civil polity, derived from the Roman empire, which is to be, in its last form, divided into ten kingdoms (⁶⁷¹⁵Revelation 17:3,11-13), shall, with its leading representative head for the time being (“he who now letteth,” *Greek*, “withholdeth,” as in ⁵⁰¹⁶2 Thessalonians 2:6), yield to the prevalent godless “lawlessness” with “the lawless one” as its embodiment. *The elect Church* and *the Spirit* cannot well be, as DE BURGH suggests, the *withholding* power meant; for both shall never be *wholly* “taken out of the way” (⁴⁸³Matthew 28:20). However, the testimony of *the elect Church*, and *the Spirit* in her, are the great hindrance to the rise of the apostasy; and it is possible that, though the Lord shall have a faithful few even then, yet the full energy of the Spirit in *the visible Church*, counteracting the energy or “working” of “the mystery of lawlessness” by the testimony of the elect, shall have been so far “taken out of the way,” or *set aside*, as to admit the manifestation of “the lawless one”; and so DE BURGH’S view may be right (²⁸⁰⁵Luke 18:8 ⁶¹¹⁰Revelation 11:3-12). This was a power of which the Thessalonians might easily “know” through Paul’s instruction.

7. the mystery of iniquity — the counterwork to “the mystery of godliness” (⁵⁰⁶1 Timothy 3:16). Anti-Christianity *latently* working, as distinguished from its final *open* manifestation. “Mystery” in Scripture means, not what remains always a secret, but that which is for a while hidden, but in due time manifested (compare ⁴⁸⁸Ephesians 3:4,5). Satan will resort to a mode of opposition more conformed to the then imminent “appearing” and “presence” of the Savior, and will anticipate Him with a last effort to maintain the dominion of the world [DE BURGH], just as at His first advent he rushed into open opposition, by taking possession of the bodies of men. “Iniquity,” *Greek*, “*lawlessness*”; defiant rejection of God’s *law* (compare *Note*, see on ³⁸⁹Zechariah 5:9, ³⁵⁰Zechariah 5:10). “*Wickedness*” (translated by the *Septuagint* by the same *Greek*, meaning “*lawlessness*,” which Paul employs here), embodied there as a woman, answers to “the mystery of iniquity,” here embodied finally in “the man of sin”: as the former was ultimately banished for ever from the Holy Land to her own congenial soil, Babylon, so iniquity and the man of sin shall fall before Michael and the Lord Himself, who shall appear as the Deliverer of His people (²⁷¹Daniel 12:1-3 ³⁴⁴Zechariah 14:3-9). Compare ⁴⁰²Matthew 12:43. The Jewish nation dispossessed of the evil spirit, the demon of idolatry being cast out through the Babylonian captivity, receives ultimately a worse form of the evil spirit, Christ-opposing self-righteousness. Also, the Christian Church in course of time taken possession of by the demon of Romish idolatry, then dispossessed of it by the Reformation, then its house “garnished” by hypocrisy, secularity, and rationalism, but “swept empty” of living faith, then finally apostatizing and repossessed by “the man of sin,” and *outwardly* destroyed for a brief time (though even then Christ shall have witnesses for Him among both the Jews, ³⁸⁹Zechariah 13:9, and Gentiles, ⁴¹³Matthew 28:20), when Christ shall suddenly come (²⁷¹Daniel 11:32-45 ⁴²⁷Luke 18:7,8).

already — (⁶⁰⁰2 John 1:9:10 ⁵⁰⁶Colossians 2:18-23 ⁵⁰¹1 Timothy 4:1); compare “even now already” (⁶⁰⁸1 John 2:18 4:3) as distinguished from “in his own time” of being revealed *hereafter*. Antiquity, it appears from hence, is not a justification for unscriptural us.ages or dogmas, since these were “already,” even in Paul’s time, beginning to spring up: the written word is the only sure test. “Judaism infecting Christianity is the fuel; the

mystery of iniquity is the spark.” “It is one and the same impurity diffusing itself over many ages” [BENGEL].

only he who now letteth will let — The italicized words are not in the *Greek*. Therefore, translate rather, “only (that is, the continuance of the MYSTERY of iniquity-working will be *only*) until he who now *withholdeth* (the same *Greek* as in ^{<S100>}2 Thessalonians 2:6) be taken out of the way.” “Only (*waiting*, ^{<S003>}Hebrews 10:13) until he,” etc. Then it will work no longer in *mystery*, but in open manifestation.

8. Translate, “the lawless one”; the embodiment of all the godless “lawlessness” which has been working in “mystery” for ages (^{<S100>}2 Thessalonians 2:7): “the man of sin” (^{<S100>}2 Thessalonians 2:3).

whom the Lord — Some of the oldest manuscripts read, “the Lord *Jesus*.” How awful that He whose very name means *God-Savior*, should appear as the Destroyer; but the *salvation* of the Church requires the destruction of her foe. As the reign of Israel in Canaan was ushered in by judgments on the nations for *apostasy* (for the Canaanites were originally worshippers of the true God: thus Melchisedek, king of Salem, was the “priest of the most high God,” ^{<G148>}Genesis 14:18: Ammon and Moab came from righteous Lot), so the Son of David’s reign in Zion and over the whole earth, is to be ushered in by judgments on the apostate Christian world.

consume ... and ... destroy — So ^{<202>}Daniel 7:26, “consume and destroy”; ^{<215>}Daniel 11:45. He shall “consume” him by His mere breath (^{<2310>}Isaiah 11:4 30:33): the sentence of judgment being the sharp sword that goeth out of His mouth (^{<695>}Revelation 19:15,21). Antichrist’s manifestation and destruction are declared in the same breath; at his greatest height he is nearest his fall, like Herod his type (^{<302>}Isaiah 1:24-27 ^{<412>}Acts 12:20-23). As the advancing fire, while still at a distance consumes little insects [CHRYSOSTOM] by its mere heat, so Christ’s mere approach is enough to consume Antichrist. The mere “appearance of the coming” of the Lord of glory is sufficient to show to Antichrist his perfect nothingness. He is seized and “cast alive into the take of fire” (^{<691>}Revelation 19:20). So the world kingdoms, and the kingdom of the beast, give place to that of the Son of man and His saints. The *Greek* for “destroy” means “abolish” (the same *Greek* is so translated, ^{<511>}2 Timothy 1:10); that is, cause every vestige of him to disappear. Compare as to Gog attacking Israel and

destroyed by Jehovah (^{<380>}Ezekiel 38:1-39:29), so as not to leave a vestige of him.

with the brightness of his coming — *Greek*, “the *manifestation*, (or *appearance*) of His *presence*”: the first outburst of His advent — the first gleam of His presence — is enough to *abolish* utterly all traces of Antichrist, as darkness disappears before the dawning day. Next, his adherents are “slain with the sword out of His mouth” (^{<692>}Revelation 19:21). BENGEL’S distinction between “the appearance of His coming” and the “coming” itself is not justified by ^{<514>}1 Timothy 6:14 ^{<510>}2 Timothy 1:10 4:1,8 ^{<503>}Titus 2:13, where the same *Greek* for “*appearing*” (*English Version*, here “the brightness”) plainly refers to *the coming itself*. The expression, “*manifestation* (appearing) of His presence,” is used in awful contrast to the *revelation* of the wicked one in the beginning of the verse.

9. whose coming — The same *Greek* as was used for *the Lord’s coming* (^{<512>}2 Thessalonians 2:8) or personal “presence.”

is — in its essential character.

after — *according to* the working (“energy”) of Satan, as opposed to the *energy* or *working* of the Holy Spirit in the Church (see on ^{<411>}Ephesians 1:19). As Christ is related to God, so is Antichrist to Satan, his visible embodiment and manifestation: Satan works through him. ^{<692>}Revelation 13:2, “The dragon gave him (the beast) his power ... seat ... great authority.”

lying wonders — literally, “wonders” or “prodigies of falsehood.” His “power, signs, and wonders,” all have *falsehood* for their base, essence, and aim (^{<484>}John 8:44), [ALFORD]. In ^{<424>}Matthew 24:24 Jesus implies that the miracles shall be real, though demoniac, such mysterious effects of the powers of darkness as we read of in the case of the Egyptian sorcerers, not such as Jesus performed in their character, power, or aim; for they are against the revealed Word, and therefore not to be accepted as evidences of truth; nay, on the authority of that sure Word of prophecy (here, and ^{<424>}Matthew 24:24), to be known and rejected as wrought in support of *falsehood* (^{<613>}Deuteronomy 13:1-3,5 ^{<409>}Galatians 1:8,9 ^{<631>}Revelation 13:11-15 19:20). The same three *Greek* words occur for *miracles of Jesus* (^{<422>}Acts 2:22 ^{<304>}Hebrews 2:4); showing that as the Egyptian magicians

imitated Moses (^{<538R>}2 Timothy 3:1-8), so Antichrist will try to imitate Christ's works as a "sign," or *proof* of divinity.

10. deceivableness — rather as *Greek*, "deceit of (to promote) unrighteousness" (^{<512D>}2 Thessalonians 2:12).

in — The oldest manuscripts and versions omit "in." Translate, "*unto* them that *are perishing*" (^{<47D>}2 Corinthians 2:15,16 4:3): the victims of him whose very name describes his *perishing* nature, "the son of perdition"; in contrast to *you* whom (^{<512D>}2 Thessalonians 2:13) "God hath from the beginning chosen to *salvation* through *sanctification* of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

because — literally, "in requital for"; in just retribution for their having no *love* for the truth which was within their reach (on account of its putting a check on their bad passions), and for their having "pleasure in unrighteousness" (^{<512D>}2 Thessalonians 2:12 ^{<461B>}Romans 1:18); they are *lost* because they loved not, but rejected, the truth which would have *saved* them.

received not — *Greek*, "welcomed not"; admitted it not cordially.

love of the truth — not merely love of *truth*, but love of THE *truth* (and of, Jesus who is *the Truth*, in opposition to Satan's "lie," ^{<312D>}2 Thessalonians 2:9,11 ^{<412D>}John 8:42-44), can *save* (^{<492D>}Ephesians 4:21). We are required not merely to assent to, but to *love* the truth (^{<312D>}Psalm 119:97). The Jews rejected Him who came in His divine Father's name; they will receive Antichrist coming in *his own* name (^{<452D>}John 5:43). Their pleasant sin shall prove their terrible scourge.

11. for this cause — because "they received not the love of the truth." The best safeguard against error is "the love of the truth."

shall send — *Greek*, "sends," or "is sending"; the "delusion" is already beginning. God judicially sends hardness of heart on those who have rejected the truth, and gives them up in righteous judgment to Satan's delusions (^{<216D>}Isaiah 6:9,10 ^{<412D>}Romans 1:24-26,28). They first cast off the love of the truth, then God gives them up to Satan's delusions, then they settle down into "believing the lie": an awful climax (^{<122D>}1 Kings 22:22,23 ^{<349D>}Ezekiel 14:9 ^{<326D>}Job 12:16 ^{<412D>}Matthew 24:5,11 ^{<501D>}1 Timothy 4:1).

strong delusion — *Greek*, “the powerful working of error,” answering to the energizing “working of Satan” (^{<500>}2 Thessalonians 2:9); the same expression as is applied to the Holy Ghost’s operation in believers: “powerful” or “effectual (energizing) working” (^{<400>}Ephesians 1:19).

believe a lie — rather, “*the lie*” which Antichrist tells them, appealing to his miracles as proofs of it ... (^{<500>}2 Thessalonians 2:9).

12. they all ... damned — rather as *Greek*, “that *all*,” etc. He here states the general proposition which applies specially to Antichrist’s adherents. Not all in the Church of Rome, or other anti-Christian systems, shall be damned, but only “all who believed not the truth,” *when offered to them*, “but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (^{<400>}Romans 1:32 2:8). Love of *unrighteousness* being the great obstacle to *believing the truth*.

13. But — In delightful contrast to the damnation of the lost (^{<500>}2 Thessalonians 2:12) stands the “salvation” of Paul’s converts.

are bound — in duty (^{<500>}2 Thessalonians 1:3).

thanks ... to God — not to ourselves, your ministers, nor to you, our converts.

beloved of the Lord — Jesus (^{<400>}Romans 8:37 ^{<400>}Galatians 2:20 ^{<400>}Ephesians 5:2,25). Elsewhere *God the Father* is said to love us (^{<500>}2 Thessalonians 2:16 ^{<400>}John 3:16 ^{<400>}Ephesians 2:4 ^{<500>}Colossians 3:12). Therefore Jesus and the Father are one.

from the beginning — “before the foundation of the world” (^{<400>}Ephesians 1:4; compare ^{<400>}1 Corinthians 2:7 ^{<500>}2 Timothy 1:9); in contrast to those that shall “worship the beast, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (^{<400>}Revelation 13:8). Some of the oldest manuscripts read as *English Version*, but other oldest manuscripts and *Vulgate* read, “as *first-fruits*.” The Thessalonians were among the first converts in Europe (compare ^{<500>}Romans 16:5 ^{<400>}1 Corinthians 16:15). In a more general sense, it occurs in ^{<500>}James 1:18 ^{<400>}Revelation 14:4; so I understand it here including the more restricted sense.

chosen you — The *Greek*, is not the ordinary word for “elected,” implying His eternal *selection*; but *taken for Himself*, implying His having *adopted* them in His eternal purpose. It is found in the *Septuagint* (^{¹Deuteronomy 7:7 10:15).}

through — rather as *Greek*, “in sanctification” as the element in which *the choice to salvation* had place (compare ^{¹Peter 1:2), standing in contrast to the “unrighteousness,” the element in which Antichrist’s followers are given over by God to *damnation* (^{²Thessalonians 2:12).}}

of the Spirit — wrought by the Spirit who sanctifies all the elect people of God, first by eternally consecrating them to perfect holiness in Christ, once for all, next by progressively imparting it.

belief of the truth — contrasted with “believed not the truth” (^{²Thessalonians 2:12).}

14. you — The oldest manuscripts read, “us.”

by our gospel — “*through*” the Gospel which we preach.

to ... glory — In ^{²Thessalonians 2:13 it was “salvation,” that is, deliverance from all evil, of body and soul (^{¹Thessalonians 5:9); here it is positive good, even “glory,” and that “the glory of our Lord Jesus” Himself, which believers are privileged to share with Him (^{¹John 17:22,24 ^{¹Romans 8:17,29 ^{²Timothy 2:10).}}}}}

15. Therefore — God’s sovereign choice of believers, so far from being a ground for inaction on their part, is the strongest incentive to action and perseverance in it. Compare the argument, ^{¹Philippians 2:12,13, “Work out *your own* salvation, FOR it is God which worketh in you,” etc. We cannot fully explain this in *theory*; but to the sincere and humble, the *practical* acting on the principle is plain. “Privilege first, duty afterwards” [EDMUNDS].}

stand fast — so as not to be “shaken or troubled” (^{²Thessalonians 2:2).}

hold — so as not to let go. Adding nothing, subtracting nothing [BENGEL]. The Thessalonians had not held fast his oral instructions but had suffered themselves to be imposed upon by pretended spirit-revelations, and words

and letters pretending to be from Paul (^{380B} 2 Thessalonians 2:2), to the effect that “the day of the Lord was instantly imminent.”

traditions — truths *delivered* and *transmitted* orally, or in writing (^{380B} 2 Thessalonians 3:6 ^{401B} 1 Corinthians 11:2; Greek, “traditions”). The Greek verb from which the noun comes, is used by Paul in ^{412B} 1 Corinthians 11:23 15:3. From the *three* passages in which “tradition” is used in a good sense, Rome has argued for her accumulation of *uninspired* traditions, virtually overriding God’s Word, while put forward as of co-ordinate authority with it. She forgets the *ten* passages (^{405B} Matthew 15:2,3,6 ^{400B} Mark 7:3,5,8,9,13 ^{404A} Galatians 1:14 ^{500B} Colossians 2:8) stigmatizing *man’s uninspired* traditions. Not even the apostles’ sayings were all inspired (for example, Peter’s dissimulation, ^{421B} Galatians 2:11-14), but only when they claimed to be so, as in their words afterwards embodied in their canonical writings. Oral inspiration was necessary in their case, until the canon of the written Word should be complete; they proved their possession of inspiration by miracles wrought in support of the new revelation, which revelation, moreover, accorded with the existing Old Testament revelation; an additional test needed besides miracles (^{600B} Deuteronomy 13:1-6 ^{447B} Acts 17:11). When the canon was complete, the infallibility of the living men was transferred to the written Word, now the sole unerring guide, interpreted by the Holy Spirit. Little else has come down to us by the most *ancient* and *universal* tradition save this, the all-sufficiency of Scripture for salvation. Therefore, by tradition, we are constrained to cast off all tradition not contained in, or not provable by, Scripture. The Fathers are valuable *witnesses to historical facts*, which give force to the *intimations* of Scripture: such as the Christian Lord’s day, the baptism of infants, and the genuineness of the canon of Scripture. Tradition (in the sense of *human testimony*) cannot establish a *doctrine*, but can *authenticate a fact*, such as the facts just mentioned. Inspired tradition, in Paul’s sense, is not a supplementary oral tradition completing *our* written Word, but it is identical with the written Word *now* complete; then the latter not being complete, the tradition was necessarily in part oral, in part written, and continued so until, the latter being complete before the death of St. John, the last apostle, the former was no longer needed. Scripture is, according to Paul, the complete and sufficient rule in all that appertains to making “the man of God *perfect, thoroughly furnished* unto *all good works*” (^{386B} 2

Timothy 3:16,17). It is by leaving Paul's God-inspired tradition for human traditions that Rome has become the forerunner and parent of the Antichrist. It is striking that, from this very chapter denouncing Antichrist, she should draw an argument for her "traditions" by which she fosters anti-Christianity. Because the apostles' oral word was as trustworthy as their written word, it by no means follows that the oral word of those *not apostles* is as trustworthy as the *written* word of those who were apostles or inspired evangelists. No tradition of the apostles except their written word can be *proved* genuine on satisfactory evidence. We are no more bound to accept implicitly the Fathers' interpretations of Scripture, because we accept the Scripture canon on their testimony, than we are bound to accept the Jews' interpretation of the Old Testament, because we accept the Old Testament canon on their testimony.

our epistle — as distinguished from a "letter AS from us," ^{5:10}2 Thessalonians 2:2, namely, that purports to be from us, but is not. He refers to his first Epistle to the Thessalonians.

16, 17. himself — by His own might, as contrasted with our feebleness; ensuring the efficacy of our prayer. Here *our Lord Jesus* stands first; in ^{5:11}1 Thessalonians 3:11, "God our Father."

which ... loved us — in the work of our redemption. Referring both to *our Lord Jesus* (^{8:37}Romans 8:37 ^{2:20}Galatians 2:20) and God *our Father* (^{3:16}John 3:16).

everlasting consolation — not transitory, as worldly consolations in trials (^{8:38,39}Romans 8:38,39). This for all time present, and then "good hope" for the future [ALFORD].

through grace — rather as *Greek* "IN grace"; to be joined to "hath given." Grace is the element in which the gift was made.

17. Comfort your hearts — unsettled as you have been through those who announced the immediate coming of the Lord.

good word and work — The oldest manuscripts invert the order, "work and word." *Establishment* in these were what the young converts at Thessalonica needed, not fanatical teaching (compare ^{15:58}1 Corinthians 15:58).

CHAPTER 3

2 THESSALONIANS 3:1-18.

HE ASKS THEIR PRAYERS: HIS CONFIDENCE IN THEM: PRAYER FOR THEM: CHARGES AGAINST DISORDERLY IDLE CONDUCT; HIS OWN EXAMPLE: CONCLUDING PRAYER AND SALUTATION.

1. Finally — literally, “As to what remains.”

may have free course — literally, “may run”; spread rapidly without a drag on the wheels of its course. That the new-creating word may “run,” as “swiftly” as the creative word at the first (^{<4E75>}Psalm 147:15). The opposite is the word of God being “bound” (^{<51D>}2 Timothy 2:9).

glorified — by sinners accepting it (^{<4138>}Acts 13:48 ^{<4023>}Galatians 1:23,24). Contrast “evil spoken of” (^{<4044>}1 Peter 4:14).

as it is with you — (^{<51D5>}1 Thessalonians 1:6 4:10 5:11).

2. that we ... be delivered from unreasonable ... men — literally, men *out of place, inept, unseemly: out of the way bad*: more than ordinarily bad. An undesigned coincidence with ^{<4485>}Acts 18:5-9. Paul was now at Corinth, where the JEWS “opposed themselves” to his preaching: in answer to his prayers and those of his converts at Thessalonica and elsewhere, “the Lord, in vision,” assured him of exemption from “the hurt,” and of success in bringing in “much people.” On the unreasonable, out-of-the way perversity of the Jews, as known to the Thessalonians, see ^{<51D5>}1 Thessalonians 2:15,16.

have not faith — or as *Greek*, “the faith” of the Christian: the only antidote to what is “unreasonable and wicked.” The Thessalonians, from their ready acceptance of the Gospel (^{<51D5>}1 Thessalonians 1:5,6), might think “all” would similarly receive it; but the Jews were far from having such a readiness to believe the truth.

3. faithful — alluding to “faith” (^{<S18B>}2 Thessalonians 3:2): though many will not believe, the Lord (other very old manuscripts read “God”) is still to be believed in as faithful to His promises (^{<S18A>}1 Thessalonians 5:24 ^{<S18B>}2 Timothy 2:13). *Faith* on the part of man answers to faithfulness on the part of God.

stablish you — as he had prayed (^{<S17>}2 Thessalonians 2:17). Though it was on himself that wicked men were making their onset, he turns away from asking the Thessalonians’ prayers for HIS deliverance (^{<S18B>}2 Thessalonians 3:2: so unselfish was he, even in religion), to express his assurance of THEIR establishment in the faith, and preservation from evil. This assurance thus exactly answers to his prayer for them (^{<S17>}2 Thessalonians 2:17), “Our Lord ... *stablish* you in every good word and work.” He has before his mind the Lord’s Prayer, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”; where, as here, the translation may be, “from the evil one”; the great hinderer of “every good word and work.” Compare ^{<S18A>}Matthew 13:19, “the wicked one.”

4. we have confidence in the Lord — as “faithful” (^{<S18B>}2 Thessalonians 3:3). Have confidence in no man when left to himself [BENGE].

that ye both do — Some of the oldest manuscripts insert a clause, “that ye both have done” before, “and are doing, and will do.” He means the *majority* by “ye,” not *all* of them (compare ^{<S18B>}2 Thessalonians 3:11 1:3 ^{<S18A>}1 Thessalonians 3:6).

5. If “the Lord” be here the Holy Ghost (^{<S18B>}2 Corinthians 3:17), the three Persons of the Trinity will occur in this verse.

love of God — love to God.

patient waiting for Christ — rather as *Greek*, “the patience (endurance) of Christ,” namely, which Christ showed [ALFORD] (^{<S18B>}2 Thessalonians 2:4 ^{<S18A>}1 Thessalonians 1:3). ESTIUS, however, supports *English Version* (compare ^{<S18A>}Revelation 1:9 3:10). At all events, this grace, “patience,” or *persevering endurance*, is connected with the “hope” (^{<S18B>}1 Thessalonians 1:3,10) of *Christ’s coming*. In ALFORD’S translation we may compare ^{<S18A>}Hebrews 12:1,2, “Run with *patience (endurance)* ... looking to JESUS ... who, for the joy that was before Him, *endured* the cross”; so WE are to

endure, as looking for the hope to be realized at His coming (^{<580>} Hebrews 10:36,37).

6. we command you — Hereby he puts to a particular test their obedience in general to his *commands*, which obedience he had recognized in ^{<580>} 2 Thessalonians 3:4.

withdraw — literally, “to furl the sails”; as we say, *to steer clear of* (compare ^{<584>} 2 Thessalonians 3:14). Some had given up labor as though the Lord’s day was immediately coming. He had enjoined mild censure of such in ^{<584>} 1 Thessalonians 5:14, “Warn ... the unruly”; but now that the mischief had become more confirmed, he enjoins stricter discipline, namely, withdrawal from their company (compare ^{<481>} 1 Corinthians 5:11 ^{<500>} 2 John 1:10:11): not a formal sentence of excommunication, such as was subsequently passed on more heinous offenders (as in ^{<485>} 1 Corinthians 5:5 ^{<502>} 1 Timothy 1:20). He says “brother,” that is, professing Christian; for in the case of unprofessing heathen, believers needed not be so strict (^{<480>} 1 Corinthians 5:10-13).

disorderly — Paul plainly would not have sanctioned the *order* of Mendicant Friars, who reduce such a “disorderly” and lazy life to a system. Call it not an *order*, but a *burden* to the community (BENGEL, alluding to the *Greek*, ^{<580>} 2 Thessalonians 3:8, for “be chargeable,” literally, “be a burden”).

the tradition — the oral instruction which he had given to them when present (^{<580>} 2 Thessalonians 3:10), and subsequently committed to writing (^{<501>} 1 Thessalonians 4:11,12).

which he received of us — Some oldest manuscripts read, “ye received”; others, “they received.” The *English Version* reading has no very old authority.

7. how ye ought to follow us — how ye ought to live so as to “imitate (so the *Greek* for ‘follow’) us” (compare *Notes*, see on ^{<481>} 1 Corinthians 11:1; ^{<500>} 1 Thessalonians 1:6).

8. eat any man’s bread — *Greek*, “eat bread *from* any man,” that is, live at anyone’s expense. Contrast ^{<582>} 2 Thessalonians 3:12, “eat THEIR OWN bread.”

wrought — (^{448b}Acts 20:34). In both Epistles they state they maintained themselves by labor; but in this second Epistle they do so in order to offer themselves herein as an example to the idle; whereas, in the first, their object in doing so is to vindicate themselves from all imputation of mercenary motives in preaching the Gospel (^{518b}1 Thessalonians 2:5,9) [EDMUNDS]. They preached gratuitously though they might have claimed maintenance from their converts.

labor and travail — “toil and hardship” (see on ^{518b}1 Thessalonians 2:9).

night and day — scarcely allowing time for repose.

chargeable — *Greek*, “a burden,” or “burdensome.” The Philippians did not regard it as a *burden* to contribute to his support (^{309b}Philippians 4:15,16), sending to him while he was in this very Thessalonica (^{448b}Acts 16:15,34,40). Many Thessalonians, doubtless, would have felt it a privilege to contribute, but as he saw some idlers among them who would have made a pretext of his example to justify themselves, he waived his right. His reason for the same course at Corinth was to mark how different were his aims from those of the false teachers who sought their own lucre (^{470b}2 Corinthians 11:9,12,13). It is at the very time and place of writing these Epistles that Paul is expressly said to have *wrought at tent-making* with Aquila (^{448b}Acts 18:3); an undesigned coincidence.

9. (^{490b}1 Corinthians 9:4-6, etc. ^{480b}Galatians 6:6.)

10. For even — Translate, “For *also*.” We not only set you the example, but gave a positive “command.”

commanded — *Greek* imperfect, “We were commanding”; we kept charge of you.

would not work — *Greek*, “*is unwilling* to work.” BENGEL makes this to be the argument: not that such a one is to have his food withdrawn from him by others; but he proves from the necessity of *eating* the necessity of *working*; using this pleasantry, Let him who will not work *show himself an angel*, that is, do without food as the angels do (but since he cannot do without food, then he ought to be not unwilling to work). It seems to me simpler to take it as a punishment of the idle. Paul often quotes good adages current among the people, stamping them with inspired approval.

In the *Hebrew*, “*Bereshith Rabba*,” the same saying is found; and in the book *Zeror*, “He who will not work before the sabbath, must not eat on the sabbath.”

11. busy bodies — In the *Greek* the similarity of sound marks the antithesis, “Doing none of their own business, yet overdoing in the business of others.” Busy about everyone’s business but their own. “Nature abhors a vacuum”; so if not doing one’s own business, one is apt to meddle with his neighbor’s business. Idleness is the parent of busybodies (^{<S1B3>}1 Timothy 5:13). Contrast ^{<S1B1>}1 Thessalonians 4:11.

12. by — The oldest manuscripts read, “IN the Lord Jesus.” So the *Greek*, ^{<S1B1>}1 Thessalonians 4:1, implying the sphere wherein such conduct is appropriate and consistent. “We exhort you thus, as *ministers* IN *Christ*, exhorting our people IN Christ.”

with quietness — quiet industry; laying aside restless, bustling, intermeddling officiousness (^{<S1B1>}2 Thessalonians 3:11).

their own — bread earned by themselves, not another’s bread (^{<S1B2>}2 Thessalonians 3:8).

13. be not weary — The oldest manuscripts read, “Be not cowardly in”; do not be wanting in strenuousness in doing well. EDMUNDS explains it: Do not *culpably* neglect to do well, namely, with patient industry do your duty in your several callings. In contrast to the “disorderly, not-working busybodies” (^{<S1B1>}2 Thessalonians 3:11; compare ^{<S1B1>}Galatians 6:9).

14. note that man — mark him in your own mind as one to be avoided (^{<S1B2>}2 Thessalonians 3:6).

that he may be ashamed — *Greek*, “made to turn and look into himself, and so be put to shame.” Feeling himself shunned by godly brethren, he may become ashamed of his course.

15. admonish him as a brother — not yet excommunicated (compare ^{<S1B7>}Leviticus 19:17). Do not shun him in contemptuous silence, but tell him why he is so avoided (^{<S1B5>}Matthew 18:15 ^{<S1B4>}1 Thessalonians 5:14).

16. Lord of peace — Jesus Christ. The same title is given to Him as to the Father, “the GOD of peace” (^{<S1B3>}Romans 15:33 16:20 ^{<S1B12>}2 Corinthians

13:11). An appropriate title in the prayer here, where the harmony of the Christian community was liable to interruption from the “disorderly.” The *Greek* article requires the translation, “Give you *the* peace” which it is “His to give.” “Peace” outward and inward, here and hereafter (^{<5417>}Romans 14:17).

always — unbroken, not changing with outward circumstances.

by all means — *Greek*, “in every way.” Most of the oldest manuscripts read, “in every *place*”; thus he prays for their peace *in all times* (“always”) *and places*.

Lord be with you all — May He bless you not only with *peace*, but also with His *presence* (^{<4831>}Matthew 28:20). Even the disorderly brethren (compare ^{<5385>}2 Thessalonians 3:15, “a brother”) are included in this prayer.

17. The Epistle was written by an amanuensis (perhaps Silas or Timothy), and only the closing salutation written by Paul’s “own hand” (compare ^{<5162>}Romans 16:22 ^{<6121>}1 Corinthians 16:21 ^{<5088>}Colossians 4:18). Wherever Paul does not subjoin this autograph salutation, we may presume he wrote the whole Epistle himself (^{<4811>}Galatians 6:11).

which — *which* autograph salutation.

the token — to distinguish genuine Epistles from spurious ones put forth in my name (^{<5102>}2 Thessalonians 2:2).

in every epistle — Some think he signed his name to every Epistle with his own hand; but as there is no trace of this in any manuscripts of *all* the Epistles, it is more likely that he alludes to *his writing with his own hand in closing every Epistle*, even in those Epistles (Romans, Second Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, First Thessalonians) wherein he does not specify his having done so.

so I write — so I sign my name: this is a specimen of my *handwriting*, by which to distinguish my genuine letters from forgeries.

18. He closes every Epistle by praying for GRACE to those whom he addresses.

Amen — omitted in the oldest manuscripts It was doubtless the response of the congregation after hearing the Epistle read publicly; hence it crept into copies.

The Subscription is spurious, as the Epistle was written not “from Athens,” but from *Corinth*.