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# ***Eschatological Emphases in 1 Thessalonians and Galatians: Distinct Argumentative Strategies Related to External Conflict and Audience Response***

**John Anthony Dunne**

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## **Introduction**

1 Thessalonians is generally believed to be Paul's earliest extant letter. Depending on the methodology employed for reconstructing a chronology of Paul's life and letters, 1 Thessalonians is dated from the late 30s to the early 50s of the first century CE.<sup>1</sup>

1. John Knox argued that the most methodologically sound way to approach Pauline chronology is to begin with Paul's letters as primary sources, and, only after reconstructing a chronology on that basis alone, can Acts be brought in as corroborating evidence (see John Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul* [revised edition; London: SCM, 1989]). Some of the more well-known advocates of Knox's approach include, e.g., Charles Buck and Greer Taylor, *Saint Paul: A Study of the Development of His Thought* (New York: Schribner, 1969); Gerd Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Robert Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul's Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979). Most recently, Douglas A. Campbell has provided a major contribution to Pauline chronology utilizing Knox's methodology (see *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014]). An intriguing distinctive of Knox's approach is the possibility of dating 1 Thessalonians to the late 30s or early 40s (so, e.g., Karl Paul Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 69–117; D. Campbell, *Framing Paul*, 190–253; Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles*, 262), though Jewett is notable for not following this trend in giving the letter such an early date. Placing 1 Thessalonians in this early period provides a longer duration for Paul's theology to develop than is usually thought, allowing for the letter to be an early expression of Paul's eschatology. The way that 1 Thessalonians is able to be dated so early is through Paul's record of his ministry in Gal. 1–2. In particular, the fourteen-year gap (cf. Gal. 2.1) prior to Paul's second visit to Jerusalem recorded in Gal. 2.1–10 is understood to be the period in which the Aegean mission occurred. Although Paul does not mention this mission, the argument is that Paul passes quickly over the lengthy fourteen-year period without exhaustive detail, which allows for the possibility that it could have occurred during that time. Traditionally, given the witness of Acts, the Aegean mission is regarded as taking place later after the Jerusalem council (cf. Acts 15). Although a full assessment of Knox's approach cannot be offered here, I simply want to call into question the idea that the Aegean mission could have taken place in the fourteen-year period noted in Gal. 2.1. If Paul had indeed conducted the Aegean mission during that time, it would have helped his argument tremendously to mention it. In Gal. 1–2 Paul is eager to demonstrate that he is a slave of the Messiah (cf. Gal. 1.10) who resists any tampering with the authenticity of his Gentile mission, even when such comes from those who seemingly have the most authority—the Jerusalem church. Paul defends the fact that his gospel is not derivative but rather was directly received from the Messiah (Gal. 1.1, 11–12; cf. 1.15–16), and that he did not spend much time in Jerusalem: only fifteen days, and this occurred three years after his original conversion/call (Gal. 1.18). In fact, outside of that fifteen-day period he was far away from the city. Paul states that he went up to Syria and Cilicia

Regardless of where 1 Thessalonians is dated within this decade-plus time period, scholars tend to uphold the priority of 1 Thessalonians. There are many reasons for this assessment, and I do not wish to reevaluate the consensus in full. Rather, my present aim is to contend that one of the common reasons put forth for the priority of 1 Thessalonians, namely its alleged “primitive” eschatology, should not be viewed as determinative. Thus, what I want to call into question is the idea that we can date 1 Thessalonians relative to the other Pauline letters along a spectrum of development in Paul’s eschatology.<sup>2</sup> This spectrum is usually plotted from imminent expectation of the Parousia to a waning expectation accompanied by more “realized” expressions.<sup>3</sup> I am suspicious of claims that Paul’s eschatology developed (or perhaps, *digressed*),<sup>4</sup> either in a progressive or drastic manner,<sup>5</sup> but my concern in this paper is not to

(Gal. 1.21), meaning that he went even further away from Jerusalem. Surely, an Aegean mission would have been something for Paul to mention if he in fact went that far beyond Cilicia. The fact that Paul does not mention these travels seriously mitigates the proposal. It should be noted that this is more than an “argument from silence” because there are important rhetorical reasons for Paul to include this information. Furthermore, the gravity with which Paul takes his account of his travels can be seen in the oath he swears “before God” that he is not lying (Gal. 1.20; ἅ δὲ γράφω ὑμῖν, ἰδοὺ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι). We do not know exactly what Paul was doing during that period (cf. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* [London: SCM, 1997]), but if Paul was doing ministry in Corinth and Thessalonica, why would he fail to mention such a strong argument in favor of his distance and independence from Jerusalem? The irony here is that although advocates of Knox’s approach contend that they are doing their reconstruction from Paul’s letters for methodological purity, they do not follow Paul when he is most explicit on the topic.

2. For the sake of this study, when I refer to Paul’s letters and thought I have in mind the seven undisputed letters without implying the non-Pauline authorship of the other six.

3. It also goes without saying that this rules out the opposite trajectory, from realized eschatology to futuristic eschatology, though this suggestion is rare (not to mention much less persuasive). For this perspective, see Christopher L. Mearns, “Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of I and II Thessalonians,” *New Testament Studies* 27.2 (1981): 137–57; *idem*, “Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of 1 Corinthians,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 22 (1984): 19–35.

4. Albert Schweitzer (*The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, [Translated by William Montgomery; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998 (1931)], 52) affirmed strongly, “From his first letter to his last Paul’s thought is always uniformly dominated by the expectation of the immediate return of Jesus, of the Judgment, and the Messianic glory.” He then goes on to conclude after a brief survey, “If then Paul’s thought underwent a development it certainly did not consist in the slacking of his eschatological expectation as time went on” (Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 54). Similarly, James D. G. Dunn (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 311) notes that “there is a striking consistency in imminence of expectation throughout the undisputed letters of Paul.” In fact, he is able to conclude, “Paul’s conviction that the [P]arousia was imminent and becoming ever closer also seems to have remained remarkably untroubled by the progress of events and passing of time” (*Theology of Paul*, 313). Cf. also E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 441–42; J. W. Drane, “Theological Diversity in the Letters of St. Paul,” *Tyndale Bulletin* (1975): 25; Paul J. Achtemeier, “An Apocalyptic Shift in Early Christian Tradition: Reflections on Some Canonical Evidence,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45.2 (1983): 237.

5. In his two-part study on “The Mind of Paul” (in *New Testament Studies* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953], 67–128), C. H. Dodd argued that the development of Paul’s eschatology was not progressive, but abrupt, coming as the result of the near-death experience recorded in 2 Cor.

challenge the notion of development *per se*. I simply intend to provide reasons for thinking that the eschatology of 1 Thessalonians is not as primitive as is often thought. To explore this, I will compare 1 Thessalonians with another contender for the earliest extant Pauline letter—Galatians. The priority of Galatians is a minority view, and I do not intend to argue for it (nor even to argue for a particular provenance).<sup>6</sup> Rather, I wish to show simply that eschatology should not be the basis for the relative dating of these two letters. Instead, my thesis is that the eschatological language in each letter, while containing distinct emphases, is not substantively different, and, furthermore, that the distinct emphases are not the result of a development in Paul's thought, but instead are tailored to meet the specific needs of the situation that Paul is addressing.<sup>7</sup> In fact, this provides another helpful means of comparison because, as we will see, both letters were occasioned by external conflict. I will argue that one of the main reasons for the distinct eschatological emphases is precisely the *differing responses to external conflict* among the Thessalonians and Galatians. The following study will therefore proceed by surveying the situation and eschatological rhetoric of each letter in turn, before offering points to compare and points to contrast regarding the two letters and their unique circumstances.

### **Conflict in 1 Thessalonians**

When Paul originally preached the gospel to the Thessalonians it came on the heels of ill-treatment in Philippi (1 Thess. 2.2; προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες) and was itself occasioned by conflict (1 Thess. 2.2; ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι).<sup>8</sup> The Thessalonians demonstrated the genuineness of their faith by enduring affliction themselves during their initial reception of the gospel (1 Thess. 1.6; ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ). Due to their sufferings, the Thessalonians became imitators of Paul, his entourage, and even the Lord (1 Thess. 1.6; ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου). This seems to point to the fact that from the very beginning of their reception of the gospel they had faced opposition for their conversion, turning from idols to the living God (1

1.8. Dodd ("Mind of Paul," 81) refers to the impact of this event as a sort of "second conversion." In the aftermath of this experience the Parousia wanes in Paul's thinking as he comes to grips with the fact that he will most likely die beforehand (Dodd, "Mind of Paul," 111–13). For this perspective, see also the study by A. E. Harvey, who built upon this proposal in his *Renewal Through Suffering: A Study of 2 Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

6. The North Galatia v. South Galatia debate is well-known and well-worn. My arguments here do not depend upon a particular reconstruction. It is often assumed that a relatively early date for Galatians necessitates a South Galatian destination, but Paul could just as easily have written to newly founded churches in North Galatia as he could have written late to South Galatia.

7. As Dunn (*Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 311) states, the proposal regarding a development away from imminence due to the so-called delay of the Parousia "is probably giving too little weight to the circumstantial factors which determined the emphases of the different letters." Cf. also C. F. D. Moule, "The Influence of Circumstances on the use of Eschatological Terms," in *Essays in New Testament Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 184–99.

8. All Greek references are taken from the NA28.

Thess. 1.9).<sup>9</sup> They had demonstrated that the gospel really took hold within their communities (1 Thess. 1.5; 2.13), which led to a complete rejection of their former manner of life. In fact, Paul could see in their robust appropriation of the gospel that they were chosen by God (1 Thess. 1.4),<sup>10</sup> having been destined to receive salvation (cf. 1 Thess. 5.9) as they waited for the return of Christ (1 Thess. 1.10).

For some reason, Paul and his entourage were “torn” from Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2.17; ἀπορφανισθέντες) and were hindered by Satan from returning (1 Thess. 2.18; καὶ ἐνέκοπεν ἡμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς). Because of the continued conflict that the Thessalonians were experiencing (1 Thess. 2.14),<sup>11</sup> Paul was deeply concerned to know if the Thessalonians were persisting in their faith or if they had faltered under the pressure. So he decided to wait in Athens and to send Timothy back to Thessalonica to discern how the Thessalonians were responding (1 Thess. 3.1–2, 5). Paul was afraid that perhaps his labor among them had been in vain (1 Thess. 3.5; καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν), but when Timothy returned with positive word (1 Thess. 3.6–7), Paul was relieved to hear that the Thessalonians did not give in to the pressure to drop their commitment to Christ due to the conflict with outsiders.<sup>12</sup> Paul reminded them that they were destined for such opposition (1 Thess. 3.3; εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα), and that he had told them that this would happen in advance (1 Thess. 3.4). Their experience serves to provide certainty of their election, rather than to call it into question (cf. 1 Thess. 1.4; 5.9). Because they were standing fast (1 Thess. 3.8; ἐὼν ὑμεῖς στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ), it was as if Paul had life again (1 Thess. 3.8; νῦν ζῶμεν), highlighting just how concerned Paul was. At the time of writing of 1 Thessalonians, Paul wishes to return to them (3.11–12), and sends the letter in his absence.

9. On 1 Thess. 1.6 referring to external conflict, see Gerd Lüdemann, *The Earliest Christian Text: 1 Thessalonians* (revised ed.; Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2013), 31; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (WBC 45; Waco, TX: Waco, 1982), 16; Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 72–73; Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 77; M. Eugene Boring, *I & II Thessalonians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 65–66; Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 98.

10. Cf. Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 80; Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 37; Lüdemann, *Earliest Christian Text*, 32.

11. Paul says that the Thessalonians became ‘imitators’ (μιμηταί) of the Judean Christians because of the way they were mistreated by their own people too (1 Thess. 2.14–15). As in 1 Thessalonians 1.6–7, the imitation spoken of here is imitation of the right way to endure suffering and maintain firmness of faith. 1 Thess. 2.15 also similarly brings in the illtreatment of Jesus (τὸν κύριον) as in 1 Thess. 1.6–7, pointing to the fact that the same conflict is being referenced with the same assessment of their response.

12. Rightly Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 62; Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 93–94; Best, *First and Second Epistles*, 135–36; Green, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 161–64; Robert Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 93–94; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 101; D. Campbell, *Framing Paul*, 194–95.

Although we cannot determine with precision what the conflict in Thessalonica was like, most scholars agree that it was external (cf. 2 Cor. 8.1–2; Acts 17.1–9).<sup>13</sup> Todd Still has provided the most sustained treatment on the theme of conflict in 1 Thessalonians, concluding that it may have included physical abuse.<sup>14</sup> Karl Donfried is perhaps the most outspoken interpreter who understands the conflict to include physical harm, locating the persecution within the realm of the imperial cult.<sup>15</sup> However, some scholars are less inclined to refer to this conflict as “persecution,” favoring less loaded terms such as “social harassment.”<sup>16</sup> Regardless of what the conflict entailed, such as verbal abuse, physical abuse, etc., the conflict originated from outside the community and came as a result of the Thessalonians accepting the gospel. As far as Paul was concerned, the conflict was significant enough to possibly undermine their faith altogether (1 Thess. 3.5).

Although Paul was deeply worried about how the Thessalonians would respond in the midst of these struggles, there is no indication, as Barclay and Still have noted separately, that the Thessalonians were on the verge of committing apostasy in their predicament (cf. 1 Thess. 3.6).<sup>17</sup> Rather they remained faithful to the message they had received. The positive response of the Thessalonians in the midst of suffering had a direct effect on the nature of Paul’s rhetorical strategy in this letter. The first three chapters of 1 Thessalonians are essentially Paul’s expression of thanksgiving for the positive response of the church to the external conflict.<sup>18</sup> We can be certain that 1 Thessalonians would have been a very different letter if Timothy had told Paul that the Thessalonians were abandoning his message. In the midst of the suffering they had experienced, Paul reminds them of their *hope*—the glorious future that awaits them when Christ returns. With this understanding of the conflict, we now

13. The only significant pushback from this assessment comes from Abraham J. Malherbe, who argued that the sufferings of the Thessalonians were more internal, being related to the anxiety, stress, and feelings of isolation that resulted from their new foray into a brand new movement and Paul’s sudden departure from the community. See, e.g., Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 126–31, 193; *idem*, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 47–48, 51. However, it is not very likely that Paul would speak of internal distress as ‘imitation’ (μιμηταί in 1 Thess. 1.6 and 2.14), as an example for others who believe (τύπον in 1 Thess. 1.7), or as something the Thessalonians were appointed to experience (1 Thess. 3.3; εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα).

14. Todd D. Still, *Conflict in Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and Its Neighbours* (JSNTSup 183; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

15. Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 38, 41–46.

16. John M. G. Barclay, “Conflict in 1 Thessalonica,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55.3 (1993): 514; *idem*, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 184–85. Cf. Wayne A. Meeks, *First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (2nd ed.; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 174; E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle’s Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 194–95.

17. Barclay, “Conflict in Thessalonica,” 517; Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica*, 271.

18. So Frank J. Matera, *God’s Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 190.

turn to address the themes of eschatology in the letter and how these themes were tailored for the situation in Thessalonica.

### Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians

The return of Christ is certainly a major theme in 1 Thessalonians (cf. 1 Thess. 1.10; 2.19; 3.13; 4.13—5.11; 5.23). Depending on one's allegiance to Christ, his return is either a positive or negative event. Those who turn to the living God are delivered from the coming wrath by Jesus (1 Thess. 1.10; Ἰησοῦν τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς ἐρχομένης), and will obtain salvation instead of wrath (1 Thess. 5.9; ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλ' εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας). This wrath, however, will be meted out on those who do not belong to Christ, leading to destruction (1 Thess. 5.3; cf. 2 Thess. 1.4–10). Although its authenticity has been contested,<sup>19</sup> it is possible that 1 Thess. 2.16 and the reference to wrath coming upon Paul's Jewish opponents should be understood in relation to this (ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος). Of course, the passage is notoriously difficult to interpret. In particular, scholars have debated: (a) the meaning of the verb φθάνω here,<sup>20</sup> (b) the function of the aorist tense (ἔφθασεν), and (c) the meaning of the prepositional phrase εἰς τέλος.<sup>21</sup> Deciding how best to interpret 1 Thess. 2.16 is not necessary here. For our purposes, the verse either expresses that wrath has already arrived,<sup>22</sup> or that it will arrive in the

19. 1 Thess. 2.13–16 has a notorious track record, not least because of suspicions of latent anti-Semitism (and incompatibility with what Paul says in Rom. 9–11), but also because of the accusation of anachronism. Originally, F. C. Baur considered the whole letter to be dubious as a result (*Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings* [reprint; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003], 87–88), whereas subsequent scholars, convinced of the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians, contended that the passage, in part or in whole, was a later interpolation added to the text after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. So, e.g., Birger A. Pearson, “1 Thessalonians 2:13–16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 64.1 (1971): 79–94. However, at present there are very few scholars who dismiss the text as an interpolation. On the authenticity of 1 Thess. 2.13–16, see Lüdemann, *Earliest Christian Text*, 38–44, 113–15; Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 195–208; Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 164–79; Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 82–89; Best, *First and Second Epistles*, 109–23; Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 91–92; Green, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 143–50; Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 36–41.

20. BDAG, 1053, lists three types of glosses for φθάνω, (1) “come before, precede,” (2) “have just arrived,” or “arrive, reach,” and (3) “attain,” placing 1 Thess. 2.16 under the second option. James Hope Moulton and George Milligan (*The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* [reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 666–67) note that φθάνω in the New Testament usually means “to come” or “to arrive,” though the word originally had more of a temporal nuance of preceding, as in 1 Thess. 4.15 (φθάσωμεν).

21. The phrase εἰς τέλος is an adverbial modifier, with the sense being that the wrath of God has come (or will come) “at last,” “finally,” “forever,” “until the end,” or “in full.” David Luckensmeyer (*The Eschatology of First Thessalonians* [NTOA 71; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009], 158–59) interprets εἰς τέλος to mean “finally” or “at last.” C. F. D. Moule (*An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* [Second ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959], 70), glosses the prepositional phrase as “completely.”

22. Udo Schnelle (*Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* [Translated by M. Eugene Boring; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012], 180) argues that 1 Thess. 2.16, in the light of the election language in the letter,

future.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the best way forward is to understand that the wrath has arrived in some sense, but will come in full in the future (in keeping with the future orientation of wrath in 1 Thessalonians).<sup>24</sup> However we understand 1 Thess. 2.16, the Parousia is clearly associated elsewhere with wrath and judgment in 1 Thessalonians.

The return of Christ is therefore called “the Day of the Lord” (1 Thess. 5.2; ἡμέρα κυρίου), drawing together the OT themes and associations of that terrible day. Those who belong to the day need not fear it (1 Thess. 5.4), but it will come like a thief upon those who do not belong to the day. The return of Christ is therefore not strictly about salvation, but is part of a larger network of eschatological events, including the judgment.<sup>25</sup> In fact, this draws together the interconnected themes of eschatology and ethics in the letter; believers are to walk worthily, be blameless, and be holy for the Lord’s return because he is coming to judge before bringing he brings his people into his kingdom (1 Thess. 2.12, 19–20; 3.13; 4.3–8; 5.23–24).<sup>26</sup>

Yet 1 Thessalonians is not entirely futuristic; it also looks to the arrival, death, and resurrection of the Messiah (1 Thess. 1.10; 4.14; 5.10) as well as the outpouring of the Spirit (1 Thess. 4.8; 5.19) as key eschatological realities. In fact, the very Gentile mission itself is connected to this reality (cf. 1 Thess. 1.9–10).<sup>27</sup> To speak of these Gentile Thessalonians, who were formerly idolatrous pagans, *as the elect* (1 Thess. 1.4; 3.3; 5.9), speaks to “the present reality of salvation.”<sup>28</sup> In fact, these Gentiles are united to Israel’s Messiah, which roots the futuristic nature of salvation in a present eschatological reality: participation and union with Christ. God’s people will be

refers to the fact that God has withdrawn his election of Israel. However, most scholars who argue for a past referent for the coming of God’s wrath point to an event (or series of events) that demonstrate the truthfulness of Paul’s words. Green, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 149, argues that Paul is not speaking prophetically, but is referring to something perceptible by the readers. He links this to events in 49 CE, such as, the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius (cf. Suetonius, *Claud.*, 25) and the massacre of thousands of Jews at the Passover celebration from that year (cf. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.224–27). However, Green also points to the inauguration of wrath that had not yet reached its fulfillment. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 37, lists several other possible events that Paul may have referred to, such as, “the death of Agrippa in C.E. 44, the insurrection of Theudas in 44–46, the famine in Judea in 46–47[, and] the Jerusalem riot between 48–51.”

23. Luckensmeyer (*Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 155) contends that the aorist is a proleptic aorist, drawing upon verbal aspect theory, since all other references to wrath in 1 Thessalonians point to a future manifestation rather than something already realized. He contends that part of the weight for this reading is that there is no obvious candidate for a historical event, and Paul does not make reference to one (*Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 152). Fee, *First and Second Letters*, 102, notes that the aorist points to the certainty of the future judgment (not the timing).

24. G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians* (IVPNTC; Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 86–87, argues for an inaugurated experience of wrath through the hardening of Israel’s hearts (cf. Rom 9) with future culminations in the destruction of Jerusalem and then finally at the Day of Judgment.

25. Cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 1.8; 4.4–5; 5.5. On the relationship between the Parousia and the Judgment in Paul, see Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 221–243.

26. Rightly Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 221.

27. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 441–42.

28. Schnelle, *Apostle Paul*, 176.

resurrected (1 Thess. 4.16–17; 5.10), because they are united to Christ. The language of being “dead in Christ” (1 Thess. 4.16; οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ) implies a participatory logic.<sup>29</sup> The dead in Christ will be raised even as Christ was raised, and they will be σὺν αὐτῷ (cf. 1 Thess. 5.9–10).<sup>30</sup> As Plevnik states, “Those who have shared in the Easter event will also share in its completion.”<sup>31</sup>

However, this perspective on the hope that Christians can have in Christ is precisely something that the Thessalonians did not fully grasp. Paul’s words were intended to console those who feared that their recently deceased loved ones were somehow going to miss out on the Parousia and were grieving as if there was no hope for them (1 Thess. 4.13; ἵνα μὴ λυπηθῆτε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα). Donfried has made the intriguing observation that the famous triad of faith, hope, and love, which occurs together in the beginning (1 Thess. 1.3)<sup>32</sup> and the end of the letter (1 Thess. 5.8),<sup>33</sup> appears again in the middle with the report from Timothy, but without “hope” (1 Thess. 3.6; τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην).<sup>34</sup> The implication is that when Timothy returned with positive word about the Thessalonian response to their suffering, he could attest to their abiding love for one another, for Paul, and for the Lord, as well as their firm faith, but they had been rattled to a degree that their hope was shaken. Thus, the Thessalonians needed to be encouraged in this way.<sup>35</sup>

What we see then is that the eschatology is geared towards a community that needs to have their hope renewed. In particular, their hope in the face of death. Thus, when we address whether or not 1 Thessalonians reflects a primitive eschatology, we need to account for the relevance of what Paul says about eschatology for his readers. As Pieter G. R. de Villiers notes, “All these eschatological pronouncements in 1 Thessalonians are closely linked with the particular situation of the church in 1 Thessalonians.”<sup>36</sup> Luckensmeyer concludes as well that the motifs chosen for Paul’s eschatological discourse are due to “their applicability to the Thessalonian situation” and that Paul’s “systematic concern” in 1 Thessalonians “is to address a

29. See Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 119–20.

30. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 114–16; C. Campbell, *Paul and Union*, 227–28.

31. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 77.

32. 1 Thess. 1.3a: μνημονεύοντες ὑμῶν τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ὑπομονῆς τῆς ἐλπίδος ...

33. 1 Thess. 5.8: ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας.

34. Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 39–41.

35. Colin R. Nicholl (*From Hope to Despair in Thessalonica: Situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians* [SNTSMS 126; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008]) makes the intriguing argument for the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians based on a similar observation that the two letters provide evidence of a community moving on a trajectory from hope to despair.

36. Pieter G. R. de Villiers, “In the Presence of God: The Eschatology of 1 Thessalonians,” in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents* (edited by Jan G. van der Watt; WUNT II/315; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 325, cf. pages 326–27.

community in conflict.”<sup>37</sup> Though it is probably best not to think of Paul choosing these themes since, as Paul Foster notes, Paul was responding to specific questions and misunderstandings in a pastorally sensitive way.<sup>38</sup> I suggest, therefore, that if we take this seriously, it suggests that the eschatology of 1 Thessalonians need not be interpreted as an expression of the earliest Pauline eschatology.

It has been argued, however, that the chief way that 1 Thessalonians expresses primitivity is not through imminence *per se*, but through the possibility that early Christians believed they would not die.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the Thessalonians were shocked by the deaths of fellow Christians because they believed that Christ’s return was so imminent that they would all survive until his return. Or perhaps they believed that through baptism and the reception of the Spirit they had already crossed from death into new life, never to taste physical death.<sup>40</sup> Against these possibilities, Paul’s response in 1 Thess. 4.13–18 does not address who will or will not survive, but whether the dead have any part at all in the Parousia. In fact, Paul speaks about living and dying freely in 1 Thess. 5.10 without any concern to provide a caveat, which is telling. This suggests that the Thessalonians believed that the dead would either be disadvantaged or would miss out entirely on the Parousia. The latter is more likely, though Schweitzer famously suggested the former.<sup>41</sup> Although we might not be able to decide precisely why,<sup>42</sup> the Thessalonians do seem to have believed that those who had passed away would not be able to participate in the Parousia at all. As Barclay notes, this makes sense of why their grief could lead to hopelessness (cf. 1 Thess. 4.13).<sup>43</sup>

For our purposes, the crucial point is that this passage need not be understood as an indication of Paul’s earliest eschatological perspective within a developmental trajectory. If the Thessalonians themselves thought that they would not die before the Parousia, that does not mean that Paul thought the same thing. There is a crucial distinction there. If the Thessalonians believed they would survive, that would reflect

37. Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 327.

38. Paul Foster, “The Eschatology of the Thessalonian Correspondence: An Exercise in Pastoral Pedagogy and Constructive Theology,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 1.1 (2011): 57–81.

39. Lüdemann, *Earliest Christian Text*, 93; *idem*, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles*, 202, 209.

40. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 291. Cf. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 93–100.

41. Schweitzer (*Mysticism*, 90–100) argues that the Thessalonians believed that the deceased would miss out on the interim Messianic kingdom and would not be resurrected until the end of the millennial reign. However, against this view is the fact that Paul does not appear to have believed in an interim period beyond the current interadvental age (cf. 1 Cor. 15.20–28). Though more importantly, why would the Thessalonians grieve like there was no hope if they were still destined to be resurrected in the future?

42. For example, did Paul fail to teach on the resurrection, or did they misunderstand him? 1 Thess. 3.10 and the quick withdrawal from Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2.17) could suggest an incompleteness to Paul’s original teaching, but we cannot know for sure.

43. Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 220. Cf. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 95.

an early Thessalonian view rather than an early Pauline view. No matter when we date 1 Thessalonians, it is unthinkable that no Christians had died up to that point. This is not necessarily something the Thessalonians would have known. Paul would certainly have had to think through this issue before the Thessalonians did. Thus, reconciling death was new *for them*, not *for him*. Paul founded the church and wrote the letter sometime soon afterwards. In that brief interval, some members of the Thessalonian community died. We are not sure how they died, though it was probably not directly related to the external conflict they were experiencing.<sup>44</sup> The key point is that not a lot of time had passed and yet some Christians had died. Why would we suspect that this phenomenon of Christians dying was a new experience or was somehow difficult for Paul to account for? A Pharisee like Paul would have believed in the resurrection.<sup>45</sup> 1 Corinthians 15, for example, shows that the resurrection *per se* was an issue in Corinth, not that Paul had just come to believe in it. The conflict regarding the relationship between the Parousia and the death of Christians in 1 Thessalonians is therefore not reflective of an early-Pauline issue, but an early-Thessalonian issue.<sup>46</sup>

So the more crucial question for our purposes is whether *Paul* believed that they would survive until the Parousia. Many scholars contend that he did.<sup>47</sup> There are two important things to recognize here, however. First, Paul never says explicitly that he will survive until the Parousia, and neither does he say that other Christians will survive. He has in mind two groups: the survivors and the deceased. Some contend that Paul believed that he would be part of the former category because he uses the first person plural in 1 Thess. 4.15 and 4.17 to refer to the survivors (e.g. ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι). However, against this interpretation is the fact that Paul did not know if or when he would die, and so he identifies with those who are living since to identify with the dead would mean he knew that he would die beforehand.<sup>48</sup>

44. The question of how they died is of less concern for our purposes. Some suggest that it was the result of the persecution they were experiencing. This is certainly a possibility that would fit nicely with the references to suffering and conflict. See, esp., Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 41–46, 78, 120, 132–34. However, it seems odd that Paul would fail to mention that these people died as “martyrs.” So Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 158; Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 185, 219; *idem*, “Conflict in Thessalonica,” 514. Regardless of how they died, the key point is that they died soon after Paul founded the church in Thessalonica and this created further turmoil in the community.

45. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (COQG 3; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 215, notes the consistency of 1 Thess. 4.13–18 with belief in resurrection for a Pharisee, and that it is “functionally equivalent” to the similar language found in 1 Cor. 15.51–52.

46. Similarly, Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 190–91, f.n. 12.

47. So, e.g., R. H. Charles, *Eschatology: The Doctrine of A Future Life in Israel, Judaism, and Christianity, A Critical History* (New York: Schocken, 1963), 441; Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 270–71; Bruce, *1–2 Thessalonians*, xxxviii, 99; Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 159; Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 81, 96.

48. Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 134; *idem*, “Transcending Imminence: The Gordian Knot of Pauline Eschatology,” in *Eschatology in Bible & Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium* (ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott; Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 174.

Second, if Paul believed that he would survive, why did he refrain from picking a time or setting a date? In 1 Thess. 5.1 he refers to the times and seasons but never makes a prediction.<sup>49</sup> He simply calls for the church to be ready. What's more, in this time of waiting for the return of Christ, Paul expressly points to the fact that he does not know if he or the Thessalonians will in fact survive until the coming of Christ in 1 Thessalonians 5.10b, utilizing the first person plural again (ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν).<sup>50</sup>

It is important to reiterate again that the purpose of 1 Thess. 4.13–18 is to console a suffering community who have stayed firm in their faith despite their circumstances.<sup>51</sup> Note for example the refrain at the end of the two most sustained eschatological sections (1 Thess. 4.13–18 and 5.1–11) with the exhortation to encourage one another (cf. 1 Thess. 4.18; 5.11; παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους).

That Paul's primary intent is to console, even in 1 Thess. 4.13–18, can be seen in the elliptical way that Paul addresses the Parousia (i.e. several key events in the eschatological timeline that we might expect to find are missing). As Plevnik has pointed out, the absence of other relevant eschatological images is not because those things were rejected by Paul. The reason, he rightly affirms, is because of the role of this passage to console.<sup>52</sup> Paul is not addressing an eschatological timeline *per se*, or listing all relevant eschatological events. His elliptical approach demonstrates that his primary goal is not to inform them about eschatological matters in any sort of comprehensive manner, but to utilize the imagery for the purposes of consolation.

Part of Paul's message of consolation in 1 Thess. 4.13–18 is the belief that when the Lord returns the survivors will meet the Lord in the air on the clouds (1 Thess. 4.17). Again, given the elliptical nature of the passage, he does not spell out what occurs after that. Yet this language of meeting the Lord in the air, whether it refers to translation or to resurrection, is rooted in Daniel 7 and the vision of the Son of Man coming on the clouds, as suggested by N. T. Wright. Just as in Daniel, so here in 1 Thessalonians in keeping with the emphasis on conflict, the image conveys the vindication of God's suffering people.<sup>53</sup>

Because of their positive response to the conflict, the suffering of the Thessalonians will not render Paul's labor and ministry among them in vain (1 Thess. 3.5; εἰς κενόν). He is confident and pleased with their positive response to suffering (1 Thess. 3.8). The eschatological result of their positive response will be realized at the

49. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 140.

50. Here Paul is building off of the euphemism of sleeping for death as in Dan. 12.2 (cf. 1 Thess. 4.13; περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων). For the position that Paul held out both possibilities of surviving or dying before the Parousia, see Best, *First and Second Epistles*, 195–96; Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 134; Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 140; Fee, *First and Second Letters*, 175–76; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 233–36.

51. Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 119–20.

52. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 72–73.

53. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 215.

Lord's coming, when they will be Paul's hope, joy, and crown of boasting (1 Thess. 2.19; ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καύχησης). In the meantime, they are to wait for the Lord's return (1 Thess. 1.10; ἀναμένειν). As Luckensmeyer rightly affirms, "the motif of waiting implies nearness."<sup>54</sup> They are to wait with renewed hope in the glory that is to come, pursuing holiness and sanctification until he returns (1 Thess. 5.23), knowing that they belong to God and that he is at work in them (1 Thess. 5.24).

### Conflict in Galatians

The external threat in Galatians was different from what we just surveyed in 1 Thessalonians in a few important respects, and so too was the response to that external threat.<sup>55</sup> The main difference is that in Galatians the external threat came from a group of hostile "trouble-makers" or "agitators" who were advocating that the Gentiles appropriate Jewish customs, including the reception of circumcision (cf. Gal. 5.2–6), which Paul regarded as a false gospel (Gal. 1.8–9). Thus, the conflict included opposition as well as ideology, which is not paralleled in 1 Thessalonians. According to most accounts of Galatians, the opponents in Galatia were simply *promoting* their theology and nothing more. However, this does not really do justice to the way that Paul portrays the conflict. The agitators are depicted as hostile and divisive.<sup>56</sup> Because of their illegitimate advocacy of circumcision, Paul associates them with the flesh. Having begun with the Spirit, Paul asks his audience in Gal. 3.3, are you now being perfected in the flesh (νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε)? Paul says that the agitators want to have a good showing in the flesh (Gal. 6.12; εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί) and want to boast in the flesh of the Galatians (Gal. 6.13; ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχῶνται). The works of the flesh (τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός) in Gal. 5.19–21, importantly for this association, include in the core of the list a series of divisive and community-destroying activities (ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθειᾶ, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, φθόνοι).<sup>57</sup> Those who are

54. Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 235.

55. When I say external threat I do not mean to reject the case that the opponents were possibly locals (as argued by, e.g., Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002]; Justin K. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult: A Critical Analysis of the First-Century Social Context of Paul's Letter* [WUNT II/237; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008]). In Galatians, there is a clear us-them distinction, which means, at the very least, they were considered "outsiders" by Paul. The alternative proposal, that the agitators were from Jerusalem, lacks clear evidence. But however we understand the provenance of the agitators there is no escaping the us-them dichotomy. Therefore, we can speak of them as an external threat regardless of whether we are certain about their origin or not.

56. For an extended defense of this, see John Anthony Dunne, "Cast Out of the Aggressive Agitators (Gal 4:29–30): Suffering, Identity, and the Ethics of Expulsion in Paul's Mission to the Galatians," in *Sensitivity Towards Outsiders: Exploring the Dynamic Relationship between Mission and Ethos in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (ed. Jacobus [Kobus] Kok, Tobias Nicklas, Dieter T. Roth, and Christopher M. Hays; WUNT II; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 246–69.

57. Just before the string central vices is φαρμακεία, which may recall the imagery of the "evil eye" and bewitching in Gal. 3.1 (τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκαεν), further demonstrating the way that the list of

advocating circumcision, and those among the Galatians who are inclined to follow them, are promoting these works of the flesh in the community (cf. Gal. 5.15). As well, in the allegory of Gal. 4, Paul speaks of the Galatians as Isaac-children who are caught up in a conflict with Ishmael-children. These Ishmael children, born according to the flesh (ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθεῖς), are best understood as including the agitators, those whom Paul says are persecuting (ἐδίωκεν) the children of the Spirit *now* (Gal. 4.29; οὕτως καὶ νῦν). The portrait appears to be that the agitators were not simply advocating or promoting circumcision, but they were aggressively doing so. As Paul says it, they were *compelling* or *forcing* the Galatians to be circumcised in order to avoid persecution (Gal. 6.12; οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμεσθαι, μόνον ἵνα τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴ διώκωνται). Thus, because of pressure upon the agitators, as Paul sees it, they in turn were pressuring the Galatians.<sup>58</sup>

The Galatians, therefore, need the message of the cross in the midst of this particular conflict, and this is evident by the fact that the overwhelming christological emphasis in Galatians is that Christ died (cf. Gal. 1.1, 4; 2.19–21; 3.1, 13; 4.5; 5.24; 6.12, 14, 17). In Galatians Jesus is the crucified Christ, and this is the message that Paul thought his audience needed to receive in this situation. This is not only the case because the message of what the cross accomplished counters the ideology of the agitators (i.e., believers have died to the law with Christ and if righteousness came through the law then Christ died in vain; Gal. 2.18–21), but also because, I suggest, this emphasis was tailored for a community on the verge of committing apostasy by receiving circumcision. As Paul sees it, receiving circumcision in the midst of the present conflict would be for the purpose of alleviating the social tension.<sup>59</sup> The

the works of the flesh in Gal. 5.19–21 are tailored as a critique of those promoting the flesh through circumcision. That the vice list functions in this way can also be seen through the inclusion of ζῆλος in the list, which might be connected to the critique of the zealous behavior of the agitators towards the Galatians (cf. Gal. 4.17–18; ζηλοῦσιν...ζηλοῦσθαι).

58. Determining whether the pressure upon the agitators came from local Jewish (recently Peter Oakes, *Galatians*, [Paideia; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015], 187) or imperial authorities (Bruce Winter, “The Imperial Cult and Early Christians in Pisidian Antioch [Acts XIII 13–50 and Gal VI 11–18],” in *Actes du ler Congres International sur Antioche de Pisidie* [ed. T. Drew-Bear, Mehmet Tashalan, and Christine M. Thomas; Lyon: Kocaeli, 2002], 65–75), or perhaps a mix of the two (Hardin, *Galatians and The Imperial Cult*, 85–115), is not necessary. Some sort of pressure exacerbated the need for the agitators to promote circumcision among the Galatians. The idea that the pressure stems from Jerusalem has been suggested (see esp. Robert Jewett, “The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* [ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002], 324–47), though this position is too dependent upon the idea that the agitators were from Jerusalem, which is not clear.

59. On the suffering of Galatians, note the persecution of the children of the Spirit in Gal. 4.29, but see especially Paul’s question in Gal. 3.4: τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῆ; The interpretation of this verse is split between scholars who interpret πάσχω as a reference to the suffering of the Galatians that could end up being in vain, and those who understand the verb, in the light of the context about the Galatians’ reception of the Spirit, to refer to certain positive spiritual experiences that could be in vain. For a defense of the position that Paul asks the Galatians about their suffering, see John Anthony Dunne, “Suffering in Vain: A Study of the Interpretation of ΠΑΣΧΩ in Galatians 3.4,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36.1 (2013): 3–16.

question for the Galatians is this: are they actually willing to follow Christ *even* to the cross? In Galatians Paul's relationship has become strained (Gal. 4.16), and he is not sure how things will pan out. He fears that he may have labored over them in vain (Gal. 4.11; φοβοῦμαι ὑμᾶς μή πως εἰκῆ κεκοπίακα εἰς ὑμᾶς). If the Galatians go down the path they are on, there will be consequences, and hence the eschatological focus in Galatians is on the realities that they are turning away from and the threat of future judgment. It is to the eschatology of Galatians that we now turn.

### Eschatology in Galatians

Galatians is often thought to reflect a later period in Paul's thought, particularly when imminent eschatology had begun to wane. However, Galatians has not always been an easy letter to fit into a chronological grid on the basis of eschatology alone. Some scholars who contend that Paul's eschatology did in fact develop over time, appear to struggle with discerning where Galatians fits exactly. R. H. Charles famously contended that Paul's eschatology developed in four stages in the following sequence. The first period is found in 1–2 Thessalonians,<sup>60</sup> the second period is 1 Corinthians,<sup>61</sup> the third period is 2 Corinthians and Romans,<sup>62</sup> and the fourth period is Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians.<sup>63</sup> For some reason, Galatians is missing from the proposal. In Smalley's account he contends that the Pauline letters contain "a homogenous eschatological outlook, in which Paul's own background and intellect, as well as the differing milieu and problems of his readers, cause more or less the same thing to be said in different ways."<sup>64</sup> Yet, the intriguing point for our purposes is that he does not try to situate Galatians into this scheme. Both Charles and Smalley seem to be tacitly pointing to the fact that Galatians is hard to peg down.

A great scholarly example of how anomalous Galatians is can be seen with the work of J. C. Beker. In his study, *Paul the Apostle*, Beker was concerned to uncover the *coherence* of Paul's thought once the *contingency* of expression was properly taken into account. For Beker, that coherent gospel was the imminent triumph of God. Somewhat famously, Beker lamented that Galatians nearly undermined his whole project: "Galatians threatens to undo what I have posited as the coherent core of Pauline thought, the apocalyptic coordinates of the Christ-event that focus on the imminent, cosmic triumph of God."<sup>65</sup> The reason Galatians does this, he explains,

60. Charles, *Eschatology*, 438–45.

61. Charles, *Eschatology*, 445–54.

62. Charles, *Eschatology*, 455–61.

63. Charles, *Eschatology*, 461–63.

64. Stephen S. Smalley, "The Delay of Parousia," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83.1 (1964): 50.

65. J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 58.

is because “the eschatological present dominates the letter.”<sup>66</sup> Due to his grid of coherence/contingency, Beker accounts for this by attributing the uniqueness of Galatians to its exigency, stating, “the crisis situation demands the either/or of bondage under the law or freedom in Christ.”<sup>67</sup> While I think Beker is right to point to the crisis in Galatia as coloring the eschatological rhetoric, I disagree with him that this should be connected to the dating of Galatians.<sup>68</sup>

Recent studies on the eschatology of Galatians have tended to focus on whether it is an expression of an “apocalyptic” perspective, though this is noticeably different from the project of Beker who regarded the apocalyptic nature of Paul’s eschatology to be primarily the degree to which it expresses imminence. The so-called “apocalyptic” reading of Paul cannot be addressed at length here, and I have offered my assessment elsewhere,<sup>69</sup> but for our purposes it is worth noting that, by and large, the approach to Galatians advocated by scholars such as Beverly Gaventa, Susan Eastman, J. Louis Martyn, Martinus de Boer, and Douglas Campbell, among others, still understands the letter to be predominantly “realized” in its eschatology. J. Louis Martyn’s magisterial Anchor Bible commentary is regarded as the best articulation of this approach.<sup>70</sup> Martyn famously says that the key question for the Galatians is “what time is it?” If they really understood the nature of the *present time*, the issue of circumcision would be resolved. This is a helpful way to get to the heart of the problem in Galatian, but one thing is missing: the fact that the present time is leading to an imminent future. The most extensive study to shift the balance towards futurism is the work of Yon-Gyong Kwon. In his *Eschatology in Galatians*, Kwon provides a much-needed and helpful corrective to the neglect of the letter’s futuristic orientation.<sup>71</sup> However, in his effort to establish his proposal, Kwon goes too far. A more balanced proposal that recognizes that the futuristic and “realized” elements go hand-in-hand is needed, especially one that recognizes how the eschatology is

66. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 58. Cf. *idem*, *Paul’s Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 72.

67. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 58. In his study on eschatology in Galatians, Moisés Silva (“Eschatological Structures in Galatians,” in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry* [ed. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moisés Silva; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994], 161) critiques Beker for failing to recognize that Paul “grounds the future triumph of God’s righteousness in a carefully developed view of realized eschatology” (emphasis mine). With this critique, Silva attempts to show that Galatians is, in fact, a representation of Paul’s coherent gospel. However, Silva does not question whether the focus on “realized eschatology” is an accurate representation of Galatians.

68. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 42.

69. John Anthony Dunne, “Suffering and Covenantal Hope in Galatians: A Critique of the Apocalyptic Reading and Its Proponents,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68.1 (2015): 1–15.

70. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

71. Yon-Gyong Kwon, *Eschatology in Galatians: Rethinking Paul’s Response to the Crisis in Galatia* (WUNT II/183; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

tailored to the situation at hand. As we will see, Galatians is far more futuristic than is often assumed, and it also communicates imminent expectation as well.<sup>72</sup>

A recent study by Francois Tolmie divides the temporal references in Galatians to *before the fullness of time* and *in the fullness of time* on the basis of Gal. 4.4.<sup>73</sup> This helpfully categorizes the contrast in the letter between the former slavery that characterized the world (to the law, the *στοιχεῖα*, etc) and the new liberty found in Christ. However, Tolmie rightly notes that before the fullness of time there was also hope—God’s promises (cf. Gal. 3.8–9, 18). The present reality of salvation includes the coming of faith (Gal. 3.23; τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν), a metonymy for the whole Christ-event. The promised Spirit has been poured out on the newly redefined people of God inclusive of Gentiles (Gal. 3.2, 5, 14; 4.6–7),<sup>74</sup> demonstrating that Israel has been restored (cf. Gal 6.16),<sup>75</sup> and that the age of the new creation has dawned (Gal. 6.15).

I do not intend to provide a full account of the eschatology in Galatians, but simply want to provide some evidence that Galatians contains far more futuristic elements than is often recognized (elements that are still no less conditioned by the occasion). To start, consider the nature of justification. Those who profess faith are justified in the present as a proleptic announcement of the future verdict on the final day. That justification is future-oriented is clear from Gal. 2.16c, where Paul can say that no flesh *will be justified* (δικαιωθήσεται) *by works of the law*,<sup>76</sup> and in Gal.

72. *Contra* most. Cf. Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, 176), “The emphasis throughout Galatians is on present fulfillment of eschatological hopes.”

73. Francois Tolmie, “Living in Hope ‘in the Fullness of Time’: The Eschatology of Galatians,” in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents* (edited by Jan G. van der Watt; WUNT II/315; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

74. For the restoration of Israel, see especially Rodrigo J. Morales, *The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel: New Exodus and New Creation Motifs in Galatians* (WUNT II/282; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

75. Gal. 6.16 is highly contentious. Recently, Susan G. Eastman (“Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11,” *New Testament Studies* 56.3 [2010]: 367–95) has made a substantial defense of the position that the Israel of God refers to the ethnic people of Israel by pointing to the verse as a prayer for them to find mercy from God. Against this interpretation, however, is the emphasis in Galatians on Paul’s Gentile audience being drawn into the family of Abraham by faith and through their union with Christ (cf. Gal. 3.7, 9; 29; 4.28), and the impact of the full appellation, the Israel of God, since in the new creation there is neither Jew nor Greek (Gal. 3.28) and circumcision is no longer of any value (cf. Gal. 5.6; 6.15). Thus, the Israel of God is interpreted by most to be a reference to the newly constituted people of God comprised of both Jews and Gentiles by virtue of their union with Christ, the true see of Abraham (Gal. 3.16). So, e.g., Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *Saint Paul: Épître aux Galates* (Études Bibliques; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1950), 166; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), 209; Pierre Bonnard, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates* (Neuchâtel; Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1953), 131; Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 320–23; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990), 296–99; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 380–83; Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 398–403.

76. On Gal. 2.16 referring to the final judgment, see, e.g., Silva, “Eschatological Structures,”

5.5, where Paul speaks of awaiting the hope of righteousness (ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα).<sup>77</sup>

This understanding of justification coheres with the multiple allusions to the final judgment throughout the last few chapters of Galatians, allusions that are often missed. In Gal. 5.2, for example, Paul tells the Galatians that if they receive circumcision Christ will not benefit them (Gal. 5.2; Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει).<sup>78</sup> After announcing the works of the flesh in Gal. 5.19–21, Paul says those who perform these works will not inherit the kingdom of God (βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν). This is noted just before listing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5.22–23), which suggests that those who produce these fruit will inherit the kingdom. It is significant to point out as well that Paul says that he telling the Galatians about the works of the flesh in Gal. 5.21 *beforehand* (ἅ προλέγω ὑμῖν), which points further to the futuristic connotations of the passage.<sup>79</sup> In the light of these points here, I would also suggest that the use of the word φανερά in Gal. 5.19, just before recounting the works of flesh, should not be rendered as “evident, visible, or obvious” as most English translations and commentators do, but rather as “revealed” or “manifested.” Thus, Paul is not saying that the works of the flesh are “obvious,” but rather he is saying that they are revealed in advance as those things which will lead a person away from inheriting the Kingdom of God. This understanding of φανερά here is similar to Paul’s use of φανερός in 1 Cor. 3.13. There, in a similar judgment context, Paul writes that “each one’s work will become manifest (φανερὸν), for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done” (cf. also 1 Cor. 4.5). Thus, the whole dynamic of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit is inherently futuristic.

More examples of future judgment in Galatians can be illustrated. Referring to “the one troubling you” in Gal. 5.10 (ὁ δὲ ταρασσὼν ὑμᾶς), Paul says that “he will bear the judgment” (βαστάσει τὸ κρίμα). The reference to an individual is probably not a reference to a leader but is probably in keeping with the final judgment image since final judgment texts often focus upon individuals.<sup>80</sup> In Gal. 6.4–5 a final judgment

148–49; Kwon, *Eschatology in Galatians*, 18.

77. On Gal. 5.5 and waiting for the hope of righteousness as an allusion to the final judgment, see, e.g., Bonnard, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates*, 104; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), 231–32.

78. For Gal. 5.2 being a reference to the final judgment, see, e.g., Bonnard, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates*, 103; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 313.

79. In fact, Paul says that he has told them this already (Gal. 5.21; προεἶπον). This provides an intriguing insight into some of the futuristic elements in Paul’s original preaching. We do not have much information about Paul’s initial proclamation in Galatia, though we know that the Galatians received the Spirit through his preaching (Gal. 3.1–2). Although his ministry was occasioned by a ‘weakness of the flesh,’ he was well received by the Galatians (Gal. 4.13–14). Paul makes reference to the fact that the agitators have twisted what Paul and his entourage originally preached (Gal. 1.7–8), and that they originally told them to watch out for false teaching (Gal. 1.9; προειρήκαμεν).

80. For Gal. 5.10 as a final judgment image, see Tolmie, “Living in Hope,” 248; Bonnard, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates*, 106; Moo, *Galatians*, 336.

allusion with an individual focus appears again. Paul calls *each person* (ἕκαστος) to test their own work, and then each one will have (ἔξει) a boast in themselves and not in another. Then, with a γάρ, Paul explains in v.5 that each one (ἕκαστος) will bear (βαστάσει) his own load (φορτίον).<sup>81</sup> The pattern of boasting and bearing in Gal. 6.4–5 as eschatological boasting and eschatological bearing on the Day of Judgment leads to the possibility that, in Gal. 6.14–17, Paul’s eschatological boast in the cross (Gal. 6.14; Ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and present bearing of the marks of Jesus (Gal. 6.17; ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι μου βαστάζω) are to be interpreted in a similar eschatological light.<sup>82</sup> The marks of Jesus therefore are the marks that count on the final day in distinction to circumcision. In Gal. 6.7–9 there is an eschatological harvest metaphor for reaping what is sowed; if one sows to the flesh, he will reap corruption (Gal. 6.8; θερίσει φθοράν), but if one sows to the Spirit, he will reap eternal life (Gal. 6.8; θερίσει ζῶην αἰώνιον). We will reap (θερίσομεν), Paul writes, if we do not give up (Gal. 6.9; μὴ ἐκλύομενοι). This eschatological harvest language further underscores the futuristic implications of the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5.22–23, and points to the need to persevere to the end.

Thus, in alluding to the Day of Judgment in Galatians, the Parousia is alluded to by implication because it is part of a nexus of accompanying events. In other words, the part can refer to the whole. Dunn rightly notes this point, yet he concludes in regard to an imminent Parousia that “of all Paul’s major letters, Galatians seems least interested in the theme.”<sup>83</sup> He reiterates this by arguing, “In Galatians the failure to refer at all to Christ’s coming and judgment is also surprising, given, not least, the apocalyptic character of the opening reference to rescue ‘from the present evil age’ (1.4), the talk of ‘new creation’ (6.15), and the final warnings of eschatological retribution (6.7–9).”<sup>84</sup> In his commentary, Dunn also shies away from recognizing allusions to final judgment in, among other places, Gal. 5.10 and 6.4–5.<sup>85</sup> As we have seen, however, there are good reasons to find allusions to the final judgment in Galatians, and if they are genuinely intended by Paul, this ought to be interpreted as related to his Parousia expectation.

81. Cf. *4 Ezra* 7.104–105. For 6.4–5 as final judgment allusions, see Tolmie, “Living in Hope,” 249; Bonnard, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates*, 124–25; Franz Mußner, *Der Galaterbrief* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament; Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 401–2; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 361–63; David W. Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict: Paul’s Use of Apocalyptic Judgment Language in 1 Corinthians 3:5–4:5* (NovTSup 66; Leiden, 1992), 227; *idem*, “‘Each Will Bear His Own Burden’: Paul’s Creative Use of An Apocalyptic Motif,” *New Testament Studies* 40.2 (1994): 289–97.

82. For a defense of this interpretation, see John Anthony Dunne, *Persecution and Participation in Galatians* (WUNT II/454; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 93–110.

83. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 302.

84. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 309.

85. *Contra* James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 277, 326.

If Paul's allusions to the final judgment in Galatians are to be understood as part of an anticipation of the Parousia, we can see how the return of Christ functions very differently in Galatians than in 1 Thessalonians. In Galatians it is part of Paul's attempt to warn his readers about their current course of action. Paul's concern for the potential apostasy of his converts is further suggestive of the fact that they could potentially forfeit some future blessing. When recounting their initial reception of the Spirit in Gal. 3.1–5, Paul asks the Galatians, *τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῆ*, which should either be rendered *did you suffer so many things in vain, or, did you experience so many things in vain*. I argue for the former,<sup>86</sup> but the more important point here is that “in vain” suggests that a future reality could be compromised. This is expressed again in Gal. 4.11 when Paul admits that he fears that he may have labored in vain (*μή πως εἰκῆ κεκοπίακα εἰς ὑμᾶς*). Thus, in the light of the present conflict, it is clear that the entire letter is oriented towards the future course of action for Paul's readers, and the desire for their future Christological formation (Gal. 4.19).<sup>87</sup> Paul wants the Galatians to resist circumcision, and to endure opposition for the sake of the cross just as he has (Gal. 5.11; 6.17).

The future blessing that they will forfeit if they do not endure the present conflict is the inheritance (cf. Gal. 3.18). In Gal. 3.26–29, as a result of belonging to Christ and being united to him in baptism, the Galatians are said to be part of the seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise. In Gal. 4.7, those who have received the Spirit are made sons instead of slaves, and become an heir through God. In Gal. 4.30, as part of a scriptural citation from Genesis 21 that parallels the situation in Galatia, the text reads that the son of the slave girl will not inherit (*οὐ γὰρ μὴ κληρονομήσει*) alongside the son of the free woman, which directly applies the promise of inheritance to the Galatians. These texts point forward to a future inheritance rather than to the Galatians being heirs who already have their inheritance, such as the Spirit. Rather, the best answer from Galatians for the content of the inheritance comes in Gal. 5.21 where the kingdom of God is explicitly the referent of the inheritance.

In addition to the fact that there are multiple futuristic elements in Galatians, as we have seen, there are a few important places where I would suggest that imminence is also in view. As noted already, in Galatians 5.5, Paul speaks of the hope of righteousness (*ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης*), which suggests that righteousness is in some sense a future reality (even as it is also a present reality). Just as in 1 Thess. 1.10, so also in Galatians 5.5 *waiting* (*ἀπεκδεχόμεθα*) for the hope of righteousness implies imminence. This is made more compelling in the light of the language regarding the fullness of time in Gal. 4.4 (*ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου*). As Tolmie has noted, the fullness of time needs to be understood in the light of the evil powers present in the letter. He rightly affirms, “*Theologically, the nature of the ‘fullness of time’ implies*

86. Dunne, “Suffering in Vain,” 3–16.

87. Rightly noted by Tolmie, but with a different understanding of the conflict (see Tolmie, “Living in Hope,” 245–46).

that something still has to happen in the future.”<sup>88</sup> The overlap of the fullness of time with the present evil age suggests a tension which inherently points to a future eradication of these powers (cf. Gal. 1.4).<sup>89</sup> As well, I would add that the presence of suffering and conflict in the letter from the children of the flesh (cf. Gal. 4.29) adds additional fuel to this futuristic fire. But the key point to keep in mind is that if the fullness of time has come (Gal. 4.4), this suggests that time is almost up. In fact, the lack of time is suggested in Gal. 6.10. Paul says that Christians should do good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of faith, and he introduces this idea by saying “as we have time” (ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν). Seen in the light of Gal. 4.4 and the fullness of time, this reference in Gal. 6.10 is suggestive of the fact that Paul might not have thought that there was very much time left at all.<sup>90</sup> This is bolstered further by one final text. In Gal. 6.17 Paul says that no one should cause him trouble because he bears on his body the marks of Jesus. The verse begins with τοῦ λοιποῦ, which should not be translated as “finally,” as if it should be understood as signaling the final section of the letter like the accusative τὸ λοιπόν.<sup>91</sup> Rather τοῦ λοιποῦ is best understood as a genitive of time.<sup>92</sup> Essentially then the construction would mean “with the time that is left” or “with the remaining time,” which reinforces the imminence suggested in Gal. 6.10. Thus, in Galatians, the eschatology is more futuristic than is often assumed, and even contains imminent expression alongside references to present eschatological realities. Together, the imminent expression suggests that the present eschatological realities are like links in a potentially short chain of events.

### Comparing & Contrasting

This survey of 1 Thessalonians and Galatians should dissuade interpreters from assigning a relative date between the two letters on the basis of eschatology. In 1 Thessalonians, due to the positive response to external conflict, Paul consoles the Thessalonian community with the future hope of Christ’s return. In Galatians, however, the jury is still out as to how they will respond to the threat of the agitators, and so Paul must warn the Galatians about the consequences of their future course of action: judgment and apostasy. With this uncertainty Paul believes that if the Galatians make the wrong choice they will not be vindicated at the final judgment and will miss out on future blessing, including the inheritance. Although the Parousia is not mentioned in Galatians this should not be viewed as being less of a concern

88. Tolmie, “Living in Hope,” 253.

89. Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 52. *Contra* Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 176, who argues that the focus is squarely on what has already been done.

90. Similarly, Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 52.

91. Rightly Jeff Hubing, *Crucifixion and New Creation: The Strategic Purpose of Galatians 6:11–17* (LNTS 508; London/New York: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2015), 70.

92. Cf. David A. deSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 146.

for Paul. If the Judgment is part of a network of eschatological events accompanying the Parousia, as attested even in 1 Thessalonians, then Galatians can be viewed as focusing more on one feature of Christ's return, namely the Judgment, as a way to keep his audience from committing apostasy. Thus, the Parousia has not waned in importance in Galatians. In 1 Thessalonians, the emphasis is different because the situation and the response is different. As de Villiers states regarding 1 Thessalonians, "Other than in letters like Galatians, where certain views also seriously threatened the gospel, Paul responded to the dire situation in a special way. He does not focus in a polemical manner on exposing falsehoods or teaching 'truths.' He is the spiritual director of believers who need to be supported in their ongoing spiritual journey."<sup>93</sup> Indeed, but the reason why Paul does not critique a false teaching in 1 Thessalonians is because Paul is not combating the ideology of people who oppose his gospel (or that he perceives to oppose his gospel). The conflict in 1 Thessalonians did not entail concerns about the law, or the precise implications of Gentile inclusion.<sup>94</sup> It was due to their complete break with their former manner of life (cf. 1 Thess. 1.9–10), which was evidently somewhat unique in Paul's missionary experience.<sup>95</sup>

The distinct emphases were therefore tailored to each situation and do not undermine the substantive agreements between 1 Thessalonians and Galatians. Both letters refer to present eschatological realities and to future eschatological realities, and both contain anticipation of imminence. The imminent expectation itself has a decidedly different tone between the two letters. For the Galatians, the imminent eschatology serves as a warning that they need to stay on the path they are on and not abandon it for circumcision, whereas in 1 Thessalonians Paul consoles his readers with hope. The same events are spoken of from different angles (depending on whether Paul is consoling or warning). Thus, I contend that what better explains the distinct emphases is not development, but exigence.

The christological portraits are similarly consistent, though again there is a striking difference in emphasis. In 1 Thessalonians Jesus is the returning Messiah, whereas in Galatians he is the crucified Messiah. This is likewise part of Paul's

93. de Villiers, "In the Presence of God," 328.

94. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 53–54, sees this as proof that 1 Thessalonians was not written near the time of Galatians. Cf. also Schnelle, *Apostle Paul*, 188–89. Yet the lack of reference to these themes is not an indication of the letter's date, but rather the relevance of those issues to the circumstances in Thessalonica. The very nature of the Gentile mission itself demonstrates that Paul had thought through the implications of the law for Gentiles from the time of his conversion. See Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (WUNT II/4; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981); Dodd, "Mind of Christ," 78–79; Ernst Käsemann, "On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 117–18. Thus, the absence of references to the law in 1 Thessalonians does not demonstrate that conflict over the law had not occurred yet, but only that it was not relevant for the churches in Thessalonica.

95. Barclay compares the Thessalonians with the Corinthians in this regard, noting that the Corinthians added their Christian faith to their preexisting lifestyles and networks, leading to a comfortable position vis-à-vis "outsiders," whereas the Thessalonians made a sharp break with the past, leading to social ostracization and harassment. See Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 181–203.

tailored rhetoric to two different communities that have responded differently to external conflict. The Galatians need to be reminded of their solidarity with the crucified Messiah because of their attempts to alleviate their social tension, and the Thessalonians need to be encouraged in the midst of suffering with the hope of Christ's return.

The distinct eschatological emphases show, therefore, that Paul was not the proverbial handyman who only has a hammer and therefore is only able to see nails. Rather, as a good pastor and a good missionary, Paul's letters show us that he had a multi-faceted toolbox, so to speak, allowing him to address distinct problems with the appropriate tool for the job.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to demonstrate that both 1 Thessalonians and Galatians contain distinct eschatological emphases to suit Paul's argumentative strategy, and that the eschatology of the two letters should not be seen to be evidence for a particular reconstruction of the chronology of these letters or for a waning hope in the Parousia from one to the next (whichever one was written first). This study is not a defense of the priority of Galatians, but it does remove one of the common objections to Galatian priority.<sup>96</sup> I have deliberately left that issue to the side because I also wished to show that the certainty with which scholars assume that Paul's eschatology developed away from imminent expectation by the time Paul wrote Galatians needed to be challenged without requiring any conclusion about dating or provenance. Overall, this study calls into question that 1 Thessalonians reflects the most primitive form of eschatology and that Galatians can be seen as evidence of a development away from an imminent and futuristic eschatology. When exactly we date these two letters remains an open question, but eschatology should not be used for the purposes of relative dating between them, or for postulating development.

96. The present study opens the door for the possibility of Galatian priority to be determined on other grounds.