

INTRODUCTION

1 Recent scholarship on 1 Thessalonians

Like all Paul's letters, 1 Thessalonians has received much scholarly attention in recent decades. Since historical-critical interests drive much of this scholarly exertion, the question of origins remains the pervasive concern. Karl Donfried, a prominent Thessalonians scholar, articulates well the question motivating much contemporary scholarship on 1 Thessalonians: 'What was Thessalonica like when Paul first visited and established a Christian community there and what impact does this information have for understanding 1 and 2 Thessalonians?'¹

There have been a variety of answers to this question. To anchor ourselves somewhere within the sea of conference papers, arguments, counter-arguments and monographs provoked by 1 Thessalonians we shall focus on three seminal and prominent essays. When each of these essays appeared it moved the argument on significantly and inspired other scholars to adopt new lines of approach in understanding the original context of delivery and reception of 1 Thessalonians. As we shall see, the three essays – by Karl Donfried,² John Barclay³ and Abraham Malherbe⁴ – have come to act as nodal points within 1 Thessalonians scholarship.

Karl Donfried's signal essay of 1985, 'The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence', did not of course arise from a scholarly vacuum. Donfried's argument, that attention to the religious and civic cults prominent in first-century Thessalonica assists in understanding the letter's ethical and eschatological admonitions, is substantiated only

¹ K. P. Donfried, 'The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence', *NTS* 31 (1985), 336.

² *Ibid.*, 336–56.

³ J. M. G. Barclay, 'Conflict in Thessalonica', *CBQ* 55 (1993), 512–30.

⁴ A. J. Malherbe, "'Gentle as a Nurse': The Cynic Background to 1 Thess ii', *NovT* 12 (1970), 203–17.

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with the help of archaeological discoveries made earlier in the century.⁵ Straining hard to hear the ‘definite connotations’ for the first-century Thessalonians,⁶ Donfried attempts to place exhortations such as those in 1 Thess. 4:3–8 within the sexual excesses associated with the cult of Dionysus.⁷ For Donfried these ethical exhortations represent Paul’s attempt to mark out the distinctive behaviour expected of the Thessalonian church, in marked contrast to their former way of life, still evident in the numerous cults of Thessalonica.⁸ So too, if we are equipped with an awareness of Thessalonica’s religio-political climate, is it possible to understand the politically unsettling nature of Paul’s visit, testified not least in Acts 17:6–7. The Thessalonian Christians’ proclamation of another ‘kingdom’ (2:12) and ‘Lord’ (2:19) would have violated the Paphlagonian loyalty oath to Augustus and his successors.⁹ Political opposition to Paul’s gospel thus provides the context for the Thessalonian Christians’ frequently mentioned affliction and suffering,¹⁰ a persecution Donfried extends as far as possible martyrdom.¹¹

Donfried’s call to pay attention to the religio-political climate of 1 Thessalonians has been enthusiastically endorsed by subsequent interpreters. Holland Lee Hendrix, consolidating the arguments of various scholars,¹² reads the ‘peace and security’ slogan of 1 Thess. 5:3 as a direct riposte and critique of prominent *Pax Romana* propaganda.¹³ Relying upon epigraphic and numismatic evidence and recent archaeological discoveries, Hendrix argues that between the first century BCE and the first century CE there was a significant shift in the political affiliations of Thessalonica towards Rome.¹⁴ Paul’s apocalyptic prediction of what would happen to those who trust the Roman assurance of *pax et securitas* is thus to be understood from this political context, for it is those who rely upon the might of the Roman Empire who will ‘be the first to fall victim to the sudden wrath of God’.¹⁵

These counter-Imperial readings of 1 Thessalonians have found themselves congenial company within broader political readings of Paul’s

⁵ See, e.g., M. J. Vickers, ‘Hellenistic Thessaloniki’, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 92 (1972), 156–70, and C. Edson, ‘Cults of Thessalonica’, *HTR* 41 (1948), 153–204.

⁶ Donfried, ‘Cults’, 340. ⁷ *Ibid.*, 337. ⁸ *Ibid.*, 342.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 342–4. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 347–52. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 349–50.

¹² E.g. H. Koester, ‘From Paul’s Eschatology to the Apocalyptic Schemata of 2 Thessalonians’, in R. F. Collins, ed., *The Thessalonian Correspondence* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), pp. 449–50.

¹³ H. L. Hendrix, ‘Archaeology and Eschatology at Thessalonica’, in B. A. Pearson, ed., *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 441–58.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 114–18. ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

proclamation that have come into vogue. Central to the argument that Paul is an irritant of the Imperial system is the insistence that the background of Paul's use of 'gospel' (εὐαγγέλιον) is that the same word was associated with Imperial proclamations of victory and conquest. This is especially relevant for a letter in which the term 'gospel' has a proportionately high occurrence.¹⁶ Political readings of Paul have found expression in 1 Thessalonians scholarship most recently in J. R. Harrison's attempt to place the eschatological imagery of 1 Thess. 4:13–5:11 in an anti-Imperial, counter-cultural framework.¹⁷ Like the work of Donfried, which can be understood as its forefather, J. R. Harrison's article reconstructs the allusions and connotations as the letter's original audience would have heard them. Just as for Donfried, Harrison's driving concern is to understand the hostile response of the Romans, as evidenced in Acts 17:7.¹⁸ Harrison argues that Paul's chosen words and phrases throughout 1 Thessalonians, with their constant Imperial allusions, are 'a radical subversion of Roman eschatological imagery and terminology'.¹⁹ Sensitivity to the letter's Imperial context persuades us of Paul's intention: to demonstrate the superiority of the risen and returning Christ to worldly, yet dominant, Imperial eschatologies. Thus, the various other contexts that have been suggested for Paul's eschatological admonitions – Gnostics contradicting Paul by spiritualising belief in the resurrection or sheer ignorance on the part of the Thessalonians, to list just two – are displaced in favour of an image of Paul as a political subversive.

John Barclay's essay 'Conflict in Thessalonica' shares something in common with these 'political' readings of 1 Thessalonians, insofar as his prime interest is 'the conflict in Thessalonica between Christians and non-Christians'.²⁰ Barclay's careful analysis of the likely causes of conflict in Thessalonica steers away from Donfried's tentative suggestion that some Thessalonian Christians died for their faith.²¹ Rather, the suffering frequently mentioned in 1 Thessalonians is best understood as 'social harassment',²² emanating from fellow Gentiles angered by those who had abruptly shunned their regular civic and religious activities as a consequence of their conversion to Christianity.²³

John Barclay's essay is important, not just because it provides a refinement of the excesses evident in Donfried's and Robert Jewett's work on

¹⁶ K. P. Donfried, 'The Assembly of the Thessalonians: Reflections on the Ecclesiology of the Earliest Christian Letter', in R. Kampling and T. Soding, eds., *Ekklesiologie des Neuen Testaments: Für Karl Kertelge* (Herder: Freiburg, 1996), p. 397.

¹⁷ J. R. Harrison, 'Paul and the Imperial Gospel at Thessaloniki', *JSNT* 25 (2002), 71–96.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 78. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 92. ²⁰ Barclay, 'Conflict', 512.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 514, n. 6. ²² *Ibid.*, 514. ²³ *Ibid.*, 515.

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1 Thessalonians, but also in the overtures it makes to social-scientific study of the letter. After discussing the likely causes of the social conflict in first-century Thessalonica, Barclay examines the letter's dualist apocalyptic symbolism, and argues that if we are aware of the Thessalonians' sense of social dislocation, then it is clear that experience and symbol will become mutually reinforcing.²⁴ The apocalyptic contours of 1 Thessalonians are thus best understood if we are sensitive to the social implications of the Thessalonians' traumatic conversion.²⁵ In the conclusion, however, Barclay states explicitly what has been implicit throughout, his tentative interest in applying sociological models to the Thessalonians' conversion experience. Citing the influence of Louis Coser's *The Functions of Social Conflict*, Barclay states that 'opposition from outsiders can serve a beneficial function in defining the boundaries of a group and reinforcing its boundaries'.²⁶

Barclay's overtures to applying social-scientific approaches to study of 1 Thessalonians have been eagerly taken up by Todd Still and Craig S. De Vos. The work of these two scholars, in which sociological models of conflict are applied to the study of 1 Thessalonians, demonstrates the clear influence of John Barclay.²⁷

Todd Still's *Conflict at Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and its Neighbours* is explicitly concerned with recovering the nature of the suffering experienced by Paul's converts in Thessalonica, an instance of inter-group conflict which he proposes can be understood best through the lenses of social-scientific study of deviance and conflict.²⁸ The influence of John Barclay's work on the social situation in Thessalonica is evident throughout Still's monograph, with 'Conflict in Thessalonica' being cited some thirty-five times. For Still, the apocalyptic tone of 1 Thessalonians is Paul's polemical response to the social dislocation both he and his converts were experiencing;²⁹ the Thessalonian Christians would have attracted the opprobrium of non-Christian family, friends and acquaintances for identifying with an 'upstart movement',³⁰ and like Barclay

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 518. ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 519. ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 529.

²⁷ C. S. De Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationships of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with their Wider Civic Communities* (SBLDS 168; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), p. 1, p. 156 *passim*; T. Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and its Neighbours* (JSNTSup 183; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 17, 198, 209–14, 223–5 *passim*.

²⁸ For Still, *Conflict*, pp. 209–17, it is very important that the suffering endured by the Thessalonian Christians is not psychological, but involves some real level of physical harassment.

²⁹ Still, *Conflict*, pp. 197, 206. Cf. Barclay, 'Conflict', 516–20.

³⁰ Still, *Conflict*, p. 214. Cf. Barclay, 'Conflict', 515.

he argues that the suffering of the Thessalonians emanated exclusively from fellow Gentiles, and not a group of townspeople that might have included Jews.³¹ Likewise, in broad sympathy with Barclay's thesis, Still locates the source of this Gentile opposition in their suspicion that conversion to Christianity was 'subversive to the foundational institutions of Greco-Roman society, namely, family, religion and government'.³² Todd Still's more obviously independent contribution lies in his awareness of social-scientific study of intergroup conflict, and his application of this to the situation of external opposition portrayed in 1 Thessalonians. The conflict endured by the Thessalonian Christians, Still argues, had three effects: it reinforced the faith of the afflicted Christians; it strengthened congregational relations; and it served to heighten their eschatological hope in Christ's return.³³

Craig S. De Vos' *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationships of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with their Wider Civic Communities* demonstrates an equal indebtedness to Barclay's 1993 essay (as well as some of Barclay's earlier work). De Vos' aim is to draw on social-scientific theory to explain why some of Paul's churches experienced conflict with outsiders, whilst others did not.³⁴ Where Still gives a fairly broad overview of social-scientific study of intergroup conflict,³⁵ De Vos examines social-scientific theories of the development of conflict in Mediterranean societies, investigating why conflict might vary in intensity in different contexts. De Vos argues that Greco-Roman cities, with their high degree of socialisation, can be classified as *Gemeinschaft*-types of community,³⁶ those whose close internal bonds make them more predisposed to sharp conflict.³⁷ The differences between Greek and Roman societies in conflict response can be traced to divergent approaches and attitudes towards religion.³⁸ Consolidating his argument with a comparison between the social-structural composition of Greek and Roman cities,³⁹ De Vos proposes that Greek communities represent a higher-conflict culture than Roman communities (although both, being Mediterranean, represent a high-conflict culture). De Vos successively reconstructs the nature of first-century Thessalonica and the Christian community established by Paul before examining the 'severe

³¹ Still, *Conflict*, pp. 218–27. Cf. Barclay, 'Conflict', 514.

³² Still, *Conflict*, pp. 228–67 (esp. p. 267). Cf. Barclay, 'Conflict', 515.

³³ Still, *Conflict*, pp. 268–86. ³⁴ De Vos, *Church*, pp. 5–8.

³⁵ Still, *Conflict*, pp. 107–24.

³⁶ De Vos is drawing upon the sociology of F. Tönnies, *Community and Society: Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957).

³⁷ De Vos, *Church*, pp. 28–42. ³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 42–86. ³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 87–116.

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conflict' between the church and its civic neighbours.⁴⁰ This high level of conflict can be linked to Thessalonica's status as a *civitas libera* and a correspondingly dominant Greek mentality in terms of political structure and religious practice. Such conflict can be traced to a combination of Thessalonica's norms, values and beliefs; the lack of cross-cutting ties or ethnic integration within the Thessalonian church; and the Thessalonian Christians' impotence within the wider political structures of the city.⁴¹

Abraham Malherbe's essay "'Gentle as a Nurse": The Cynic Background to 1 Thess ii' decisively interrupted hitherto dominant interpretation of 1 Thess. 2:1–12. For many decades these verses had overwhelmingly been read as apologetic, though there was little agreement about whether Paul was defending himself from specific attacks by either Jewish or Gnostic opponents.⁴² There had been some occasional lone voices, not least that of Martin Dibelius in 1937, who proposed that Paul was drawing on examples of wandering Cynic philosophers who held up their selfless behaviour as a paradigm.⁴³

Malherbe's fuller exposition of this thesis in his 1970 essay has now come to represent an influential riposte to apologetic readings of 1 Thess. 2:1–12 and thus to reading the text always as a foil to an event lying behind it. Malherbe exposes the similarities in language and style between Paul and the Cynic philosopher Dio Chrysostom's (40–120 CE) Alexandrian oration in which he sets out the qualities of a true philosopher. Crucial for the thesis Malherbe is trying to draw out of this parallel is that in Dio's oration there is 'no question of his [Dio] having to defend himself here against *specific* charges that he was a charlatan'.⁴⁴ Rather, Dio's aim is to illustrate the kind of preacher he is, by comparing himself to other Cynic philosophers, many of whom he denigrates. Malherbe demonstrates how 'strikingly similar' are Dio's critical depiction of Cynic preachers and Paul's antithetical description of his own behaviour in Thessalonica.⁴⁵ Many of these similarities demonstrate compelling lexical parallels.⁴⁶ If these parallels convince us, it is not unreasonable to use Dio's context in helping us understand 1 Thessalonians 2:

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 123–77 (esp. p. 176). ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 292–300.

⁴² For the former view see J. E. Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St Paul to the Thessalonians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), pp. 9–10; for the latter view see W. Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, tr. J. E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), pp. 123–218.

⁴³ M. Dibelius, *An die Thessalonicher I, II; An die Philipper* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1937), pp. 7–11.

⁴⁴ Malherbe, "'Gentle as a Nurse'", 205 (my italics).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 216. ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 216–17.

One is not obliged to suppose that Dio was responding to specific statements that had been made about him personally. In view of the different types of Cynics who were about, it had become desirable, when describing oneself as a philosopher, to do so in negative and antithetic terms. This is the context within which Paul describes his activity in Thessalonica. We cannot determine from his description that he is making a personal apology.⁴⁷

Malherbe's argument is that Paul is not responding to a *specific* complaint, but is drawing upon traditional motifs used in discussion of Cynic preachers. In his subsequent work Malherbe has sought to demonstrate further Paul's paraenetic intentions in providing the Thessalonian Christians with a self-depiction worthy of imitation.

Malherbe's thesis has generally been well received, and with the recent enthusiasm for rhetorical readings of Paul's letters, there has been a general shift away from 'apologetic readings' of 1 Thess. 2:1–12. With now just a few voices of dissent, most scholars are convinced that in 1 Thess. 2:1–12 Paul's intention is to present before the Thessalonian Christians his own apostolic example as one worth emulating.⁴⁸ Whereas antithetical statements were previously read as mirrors of polemical situations, Malherbe's essay signalled a scholarly shift away from the 'reconstruction of unverifiable data behind the text' towards that which is only 'explicitly offered by the text'.⁴⁹

These three essays, by Karl Donfried, John Barclay and Abraham Malherbe, represent highly significant contributions to recent Thessalonians scholarship. They are important, not just for the new perspectives they have provided on 1 Thessalonians, but for the impetus they have given to subsequent political, social-scientific and rhetorical readings of Paul's letter. Moreover, they are contributions representative of the diverse field that is contemporary Pauline interpretation.

2 Theological interpretation of Scripture and interest in *Wirkungsgeschichte*

Despite all this scholarly exertion, which we have only glimpsed so far, there are still lacunae in the study of 1 Thessalonians. One such gap,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁴⁸ O. Merk, '1 Thessalonians 2:1–12: An Exegetical Study', in K. P. Donfried and J. Beutler, eds., *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 112.

⁴⁹ J. S. Vos, 'On the Background of 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12: A Response to Traugott Holtz', in Donfried and Beutler, *The Thessalonians Debate*, p. 82.

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which this study proposes to meet, is the epistle's theological interpretation. To be sure, there have been attempts to exposit the epistle's theology. Without presaging the critique presented in chapter 1, I shall say merely that such theological offerings have remained stubbornly tied to regnant historical-critical modes of reading.⁵⁰ There has been a notable silence in exposing theological treatments of 1 Thessalonians either to the text's history of interpretation or to (broadly) systematic categories of theological thought. This might seem unsurprising were it not both for the recent emergence of interest in the Bible's history of interpretation and use (it is worth noting that the two are slightly different), and the prominence and volume of those advocating a closer relationship between the disciplines of Biblical studies and systematic theology. Study of 1 Thessalonians has stood stubbornly aloof from both these academic currents.

Literature on both of these academic trends is voluminous. Within the last decade a growing band of scholars have argued for a closer relationship between theological categories of thought and Biblical studies. These appeals have emanated from both the guild of Biblical scholars and systematic theological colleagues, with the contributions of Francis Watson, John Webster and Stephen Fowl perhaps especially standing out.

Alongside this growing interest in the perceived need for systematic theology and Biblical scholarship to work more closely has been a growing awareness that one of the more interesting aspects of the Scriptural text is its life after it has left the pen of its author. As the quest for the authorial intention has waned, so examination of the Bible's history of effects has gathered momentum, with the academy gradually realising that one of the more engaging aspects of a text's history is the sheer variety of readings it has proved able to sustain. A variety of scholars have called attention to this aspect of the Biblical text's historicity,⁵¹ as readings capable of casting new perspectives on the text's ambiguities and richness of meaning, and of providing a 'hermeneutical bridge from the world of the text to the world of the Christian reader and his or her community'.⁵² Three German terms, all of them broadly within this school, are used to refer to three different areas of interest: *Wirkungsgeschichte* (history of effects); *Auslegungsgeschichte* (interpretation history); and *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (reception history).

⁵⁰ E.g. K. P. Donfried, 'The Theology of 1 Thessalonians', in K. P. Donfried and I. H. Marshall, *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1–79.

⁵¹ E.g. U. Luz, *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence, and Effects* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

⁵² M. Bockmuehl, 'A Commentator's Approach to the "Effective History" of Philippians', *JSNT* 60 (1995), 87.

This growing interest in the Bible's meaning and significance in the light of its reading and impact throughout history manifests itself in different forms. The commentaries of Ulrich Luz on Matthew and Anthony Thiselton on 1 Corinthians have sought to incorporate insights from the text's use and influence within their comments on the text. Allied to this is the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture series edited by Thomas C. Oden, which has translated and made available a wide selection of Patristic exegesis. Margaret Mitchell has recently offered a monograph on Chrysostom's exegesis of Paul. A new commentary series to be published by Blackwell promises 'a genuinely new approach in . . . [its] emphasis on the way the Bible has been used and interpreted through the ages, from the church fathers through to current popular culture, and in spheres as diverse as art and politics, hymns and official church statements'.⁵³ Interest in the Biblical text's afterlives – whether in the medium of relatively elite literature or through more diffuse cultural representations – is undeniably in ascendancy.

3 The contribution of this study

In this broad depiction of scholarly activity where does the contribution of this book lie? First, and most importantly, the book endeavours to make a contribution towards understanding 1 Thessalonians. In this sense the constantly stable element of our labours is the eighty-nine verses that make up this earliest extant Christian text. Choosing to focus on this text we inescapably become part of its continuing interpretation, some of whose recent trends were sketched above.

If the text of 1 Thessalonians is the focus of attention throughout this study, the constant mode of interpretation is theological. This is a study that attempts to make a contribution within the growing project of relating Biblical studies more closely to theological concerns. As one commentator sympathetic to the *Auslegungsgeschichte* states, 'the widespread rejection of theological interpretation in contemporary exegesis is a most extraordinary self-inflicted wound',⁵⁴ and it is with that similar conviction that I shall offer an interpretation of 1 Thessalonians

⁵³ <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/SeriesBySeries.asp?series=BC&SearchOrd=Rank&type=series&show=Sseries&subj=RB&site=1>.

⁵⁴ J. K. Riches, 'Theological Interpretation of the New Testament and the History of Religions – Some Reflections in the Light of Galatians 5:17', in A. Y. Collins and M. M. Mitchell, eds., *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy – Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on his 70th Birthday* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), p. 261.

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that constantly interacts with ‘systematic’ theological categories of thought. Correspondingly, one of the major themes of this book is a marked unease at the balkanisation inflicted upon the Christian theological endeavour. The fragmentation of theology – a symptom of its professionalisation within the context of post-Enlightenment universities – is a cause for regret, insofar as the various ways of thinking and exploring theologically (be they ‘systematic’ or ‘Biblical’) are directed towards the understanding of God revealed in Christ. In this sense, given its subject matter, Christian theology’s tendency to fragment into a myriad of disciplines which have come to forget their mutual relations is a fateful step.

Two theological *leitmotifs* recur implicitly and explicitly throughout the interpretations of the text I successively critique (Part I), explore (Part II) and propose (Part III). These *leitmotifs* guide and direct the shape of the argument as a whole. The first *leitmotiv* is the conviction that in 1 Thessalonians we are reading the issue of an apostle, and hence words of witness pointing to a reality calling for ever deeper attention and exploration. The second *leitmotiv* is that the revelation of God in Christ is a ceaselessly profound well of meaning, a depth and potential plumbed in the church’s reading of its Scripture. As this book progresses, the witness of the text will be accumulatively glimpsed, discerned and explored, as something that *emerges* from attention to the text’s interpretation history, an interpretation history situated within our understanding of revelation.

The importance of ‘witness’ and the text as an agency within the ‘process of revelation’ arises from the reading of two of the most important conversation partners for this book: Karl Barth and Dumitru Stăniloae. It is these theologians who have indicated the potential of grappling with the ‘witness’ character of Paul’s writing and the conception of revelation, in which Scriptural exegesis plays its part, best understood as an eschatological momentum.

From the work of Karl Barth (1886–1968) we have become convinced of the importance and urgency of wrestling with the miracle of witness within the words of Scripture, that aspect of the text which radically points away from itself and wills the transformation of its readers. This hermeneutical aspect of Karl Barth’s theological exegesis is receiving growing interest and inquiry, and will be enthusiastically followed through in our attempt to understand Paul’s thought. For Barth, Paul was above all a witness to revelation, and if we are to understand him we must prepare to be gripped by what gripped him. It is from within this commitment to Paul as an apostle, as one who sees things that we could not