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## THEOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS AND 1 THESSALONIANS

This book proposes a theological reading of 1 Thessalonians, making an important response to the increasing demand within Biblical scholarship to relate more closely to theological concerns. Paddison's interpretation adheres very closely to the text and is divided into three parts. Part I offers a theological critique of dominant historical-critical readings of 1 Thessalonians. Part II examines the history of interpretation of 1 Thessalonians, focusing on the pre-modern exegesis of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin. Paddison explores what theological exegetes can learn from Thomas Aquinas' *Lectura* and John Calvin's commentary on 1 Thessalonians. Aided by the insights of these neglected pre-modern commentators, Part III presents a theologically driven interpretation of the letter. Theological exegesis is practised as a dialogue with Paul, the canon and a plethora of theological voices to elucidate Paddison's central argument that the astonishing subject matter of 1 Thessalonians is God's all-powerful hold over death.

ANGUS PADDISON is Postdoctoral Research Assistant in New Testament Studies at the University of Gloucestershire.

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To R. P. and L. A. P.

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## FOREWORD

It is as great a pleasure to introduce this important monograph to the reader as it was to watch, advise and encourage the research which forms its basis. In the diversifying world of New Testament scholarship, Dr Angus Paddison is positioned at the cutting edge of one of its most exciting developments – the rediscovery of the dialogue with theology about the *subject matter* of the New Testament. Several voices in recent years have called for this dialogue to be reopened, but there are still too few scholars able or willing to immerse themselves as deeply in theology as in exegesis, or vice versa. With freshness, boldness and prodigious industry, Paddison here explores not only why but also how such a dialogue should take place, and makes a distinct contribution in at least three areas.

In the first place, this volume analyses and critiques current historical criticism, as practised on 1 Thessalonians, for its failure to take sufficiently seriously the meaning-potential of the text, and for its focus on ‘archaeological’ features of the text to the exclusion of engagement with its subject matter. Not all readers will accept every element of this critique, but any reader with an ounce of theological interest in the New Testament will recognise the problem here exposed and the challenge here issued. Drawing on Barth’s reaction to the historical critics of his day, Paddison asks us to focus attention again on what the text is talking about and pointing towards. If a contemporary philosopher (for instance, Martha Nussbaum) can wrestle with the works of Plato or Seneca, not as historical curiosities but as serious contributors to our own philosophical problems, why does New Testament scholarship so rarely get beyond historical contextualisation of its texts to constructive engagement with their theological content? And why is this so rare even among those who believe that the New Testament is in some sense revelatory? Thus simply formulated (and Paddison’s formulation is far more sophisticated), the point may sound obvious; but it is extraordinary how rarely it is heard or heeded in mainstream New Testament scholarship, and Paddison’s challenge is truly welcome.



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Secondly, Paddison here shows, through two fine case-studies, the value of the history of interpretation in exploring the meanings of a New Testament text. In line with trends across the humanities, Biblical scholars are waking up to the significance of the Bible's extraordinarily rich history of effects. What historical criticism brackets out – in the pretence that we are the first readers of these texts – is here shown to be not only historically interesting, but also theologically vital, if we are to appreciate the power of these texts to generate new meanings in the process of interpretation. Eschewing a 'stamp-collecting' approach, which would catalogue every usage of his text, Paddison chooses to examine just two influential and indicative readings of 1 Thessalonians – by Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin. The depth and perceptiveness with which he analyses this material are, to my mind, a model of research in the history of interpretation, and should inspire and encourage other New Testament researchers to undertake similar ventures.

Finally, in the third part of this volume, Paddison puts his method into practice, in a theologically engaged reading of the eschatology of 1 Thessalonians. In a deliberately eclectic conversation across the ages (from the third to the twenty-first century) and inclusive of diverse theological traditions, the text of 1 Thessalonians is here plumbed for its theological potential in ways which greatly illumine Pauline theology and its contribution to Christian thought. Readers will notice the dynamic metaphors Paddison chooses (he aims to 'explore', 'unfold' and 'plumb' the truths which the text 'points towards'), since he regards the text not as a static repository of a single meaning, but as a ceaselessly productive source of meaning in the continuing process of interpretation. And for this purpose 1 Thessalonians and its eschatology are not just a conveniently circumscribed case-study: in its subject matter this text is also a paradigm of the process of interpretation, as it offers a present grace which is always incomplete, stretching towards the future in the mystery of God.

This monograph is thus in every respect timely, instructive and provocative. I hope that it will provoke New Testament scholars to further reflection on the nature and aims of our discipline, and lead some to develop similarly passionate dialogues with the text, with our theological heritage and with contemporary theologians – and with equally fruitful results.

JOHN M. G. BARCLAY  
University of Durham

## PREFACE

An earlier version of this work was produced as a Ph.D. thesis for the University of Glasgow. I appreciate greatly the rigorous questioning of my examiners, Professors John Riches and John Webster, and indeed their subsequent support. As this work moved to its present format Dr John Court was of great assistance, and Dr Katharina Brett a source of much patience.

Over the course of my studies I received financial support from the University of Glasgow, the Cross Trust (Perth) and my parents, Ronan and Lesley Paddison. To all these individuals and committees I am very grateful. My current post at the University of Gloucestershire has afforded me much-appreciated time to prepare this monograph and continue thinking about theological hermeneutics.

A host of people, far too many to mention, have been willing to talk theology and hermeneutics with me, and have been a constant source of provocation. Postgraduate friends – especially Marije Altorf, Mark Brummitt and Karen Wenell – broadened my reading and knowledge immeasurably, and assuaged the isolation of Ph.D. research. My supervisor, Professor John M. G. Barclay, was an endlessly generous source of scholarship, patience, guidance and enthusiasm. It is very fitting that he should be writing the foreword to this monograph.

There are, thankfully, people outside the ranks of New Testament studies and hermeneutics. Three in particular – Lesley Paddison, Dimitri Vastardis and Ben Leney – proved themselves to be superbly diligent and interested readers of the typescript, for which I am extremely thankful.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES ABOUT CITATION

AB	Anchor Bible
AJT	<i>Asia Journal of Theology</i>
ATR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CD	Karl Barth, <i>Church Dogmatics</i>
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CO	<i>Calvini Opera</i>
<i>Comm. Ex.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on Exodus</i>
<i>Comm. Gal.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on Galatians</i>
<i>Comm. Gen.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on Genesis</i>
<i>Comm. Heb.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on Hebrews</i>
<i>Comm. Isa.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on Isaiah</i>
<i>Comm. Jer.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on Jeremiah</i>
<i>Comm. Jn.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on John</i>
<i>Comm. 1 Peter</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on 1 Peter</i>
<i>Comm. 2 Peter</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on 2 Peter</i>
<i>Comm. Phil.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on Philippians</i>
<i>Comm. Psalms</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on the Psalms</i>
<i>Comm. Rom.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on Romans</i>
<i>Comm. 1 Cor.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on 1 Corinthians</i>
<i>Comm. 2 Cor.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on 2 Corinthians</i>
<i>Comm. 1 Thess.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on 1 Thessalonians</i>
<i>Comm. 2 Tim.</i>	Calvin's <i>Commentary on 2 Timothy</i>
<i>Comp. Theol.</i>	<i>Compendium of Theology</i>
CTJ	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
ELR	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
EQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
FOC	Fathers of the Church Series

*List of abbreviations*

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<i>GOTR</i>	<i>Greek Orthodox Theological Review</i>
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>ICC</i>	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JECH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JPT</i>	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series</i>
<i>JTS NS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies, New Series</i>
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>MT</i>	<i>Modern Theology</i>
<i>NICNT</i>	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIGTC</i>	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NLH</i>	<i>New Literary History</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NPNF<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.</i> Ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace, second series.
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca.</i> Ed. J.-P. Migne.
<i>RS</i>	<i>Religious Studies</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>SBL</i>	Society of Biblical Literature
<i>SBLDS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SCG</i>	<i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
<i>SP</i>	Sacra Pagina (commentary series)
<i>ST</i>	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>
<i>SVSQ</i>	<i>Saint Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly</i>
<i>SVTQ</i>	<i>Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TI</i>	<i>Theological Investigations</i>

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<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>USQR</i>	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

Where I cite the Biblical text in Greek, the translation supplied is my own; other Biblical quotations are from the NRSV. Quotations and citations from 1 Thessalonians usually lack ‘1 Thess.’ before the chapter and verse number, except where this might cause confusion.

In the course of chapter 2, the study on Thomas Aquinas, we shall be reading from both the critical edition of the text, as found in the Marietti edition of 1953, and Michael Duffy’s 1969 translation of the Thessalonians *Lectura* in the Aquinas Scripture Series. Citations will take the form of *Lectio* chapter number, lecture number and lecture division, followed by references to the translation.

In the course of chapter 3, the study on John Calvin, we shall be substantially reading from Ross Mackenzie’s translation, published in 1961 (and republished in 1972) in the Calvin’s Commentaries series (hereafter cited as *Comm. 1 Thess.*, followed by chapter and verse). References to Calvin’s other commentaries published in this Calvin’s Commentaries series and by the Calvin Translation Society also follow this format. Occasional reference will also be made to the critical text of the commentary as found in *Ioannis Calvini Opera quae Supersunt Omnia*, volume 52 of the Corpus Reformatorum series. Citations will follow the form *CO*, followed by volume and column.