

SHAPED BY THE STORIES: NARRATIVE IN 1 THESSALONIANS

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THE TWO STORIES

1 Thessalonians makes several allusions to the kerygmatic narrative, that is, to the actions of God and Jesus for salvation, and to the members of the Thessalonian Christian congregation as the beneficiaries of those actions. Some of the events spoken of in the kerygmatic narrative are, of course, understood to be in the past and some in the future at the time that the letter is being written. As Petersen has pointed out,¹ whereas real stories—what we might call narrative proper—are told retrospectively, so that the whole story is in the past, letters and accounts of the kerygma stand in the middle of what they narrate. They look both back and forward in time.

1 Thessalonians includes from the parts of the kerygmatic story that took place in the *past* Jesus' death on behalf of Christians (for, that is, the inclusive "us" in 5:10) and his being raised from death by God (1:10; both death and resurrection in 4:14). Nothing earlier than Jesus' death is mentioned.² The *future* part of the kerygmatic narrative as it is referred to in 1 Thessalonians tells of these events: Jesus suddenly returns to earth from heaven (1:10; 2:19; 4:16; 5:2, 23) "with all his saints" (3:13), that is, with both deceased and still living Christians (inclusive "we/us," 4:14, 16f.). First dead Christians, then living Christians, meet Jesus "in the air" (4:16f.). The outcome of the story, that is, the new situation created by the completion of the events in the story, is the destiny of Christians, namely, "salvation" (5:8f.), "sanctification" (4:3; 5:18, 23), and an existence "with the Lord forever" (4:17; 5:10). But this future will be experienced as destruction by others (5:3).³

These allusions to the kerygmatic narrative are accompanied by and intertwined with another story, that of the interactions between the Thessalonian Christians and the Christian missionaries who are named as the letter's authors. What is mentioned includes the missionaries' preaching in Thessalonica and its positive and negative

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results (1:5f.; 2:2, 5-9, 13f.), including the key event of the response of those Thessalonians who were to become members of the church there, that they received God's word joyously (1:6; 2:13) and turned to God from idols to serve God and await Jesus (1:9f.).⁴ It also includes the further instructions and exhortation the missionaries gave to the new congregation (2:12; 3:4; 4:2, 6), and events within the relationship after the missionaries' departure (1:7-9; 2:17f.; 3:1-3, 5-9; see notes 7 and 8 for details).

Many of the references to both the kerygmatic narrative and the narrative about the missionaries and the Thessalonians are framed by *oidate* and with other expressions that function in the same way as *oidate*. They are referred to, that is, as what the addressees already "know" (*oidate* in 1:5; 2:1, 2, 5, 11f.; 3:3f.; 4:2; *mnēmoneuete* in 2:9, "you are witnesses" in 2:10).

But in three places the letter has narrative without this framing of "you know" clauses: in 2:14-16, in 3:1-10 (with a "you know" parenthesis in vv. 3b-4), and in 4:13-18.⁵ The first of these interruptions of the "you know" framing picks up on a story about "the Jews," about which we will have more to say later. The second and third (and perhaps the first) are places where the narrative goes into areas that the Thessalonian Christians—as the letter portrays the situation—do not already know what is being narrated and so are being told about it for the first time. The second interruption, 3:1-10, speaks of what has happened with the missionaries since their departure from Thessalonica, thus extending the story about the missionaries and the Thessalonian Christians. And the third interruption, 4:13-18, contains a clarifying eschatological teaching, which is thus an extension of the kerygmatic narrative.⁶ Part of the reason for the letter is to move what is on the "you do not know" side of things to join what is on the "you know" side.

What the Thessalonians know or do not know within the story about themselves and the missionaries is distinguished temporally: They know what happened before the missionaries left Thessalonica,⁷ but not what happened after that departure.⁸ But when Paul refers to the different parts of that story, the connections he makes are not all temporal. He is not telling the story but just alluding to parts of the story in the course of his letter. For instance, his mention of the missionaries' prediction of persecution comes when he is telling why he later sent Timothy back to Thessalonica (3:2-4); we thus have two temporally separated parts of the story connected by something other than a temporal link.

The epistolary prescript (1:1) introduces all the characters in both the kerygmatic narrative and the narrative about the missionaries and the Thessalonians, namely,⁹

1. the missionary group, which includes Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy and which corresponds to the epistolary "we," though many instances of that "we" represent just Paul,¹⁰
2. the members of the church in Thessalonica, which corresponds to the epistolary "you" and which is sometimes included with the missionaries and all other Christians in a broader "we,"¹¹
3. God,¹² and
4. Jesus.¹³

In a well-known article Helmut Koester referred to 1 Thessalonians as an "expenient in

Christian writing” meaning that Paul did much of the inventing of the genre of Christian letter in this document.¹⁴ Whether or not 1 Thessalonians was the first letter that Paul wrote to a congregation,¹⁵ Koester’s basic idea may be worth keeping in mind. And perhaps it can be extended to reinforce what we are saying about this letter’s prescript: perhaps Paul wanted to name at the outset the principal players in the kerygmatic drama as it intersected with the lives of his addressees. So he extended the typical epistolary prescript to name his missionary associates, God, and Jesus as well as himself and his addressees. And having done so once, perhaps he liked the result well enough to use it in the rest of his letters, though later he would run God and Jesus in with “grace and peace” (which he does not do here), sometimes also keeping Jesus’ name with the addressees, as here.¹⁶

Allusions to these two stories provide much of the content of the letter apart from the closing parts in 5:12-28. The translocal kerygmatic story and the local narrative about missionaries and Thessalonians are thus bound together as one story about the existence of the Thessalonian Christian congregation.

The link between the kerygmatic narrative and the narrative about the missionaries at the point of the Thessalonian Christians’ conversion is carried out most explicitly—and with some syntactic pain—in 2:13: The “word” that these Thessalonians received was “from us,” but was “of God,” “not of humans,” and “truly God’s.” 2:14-16 follows as a commentary on that conversion.¹⁷ A point of contact with the narrative about the missionaries and the Thessalonians is established in verse 14 with a reference to the Thessalonian Christians’ persecution, and then that is linked comparatively to a different story, one of persecution of Judean Christians by fellow Jews. This story about “the Jews,” like the kerygmatic narrative, also reaches its resolution eschatologically. It thus becomes ultimately a story about the retribution that answers such opposition to the gospel, which is where that story ends in 2:16.¹⁸

BOUNDARIES CREATED BY THE NARRATIVE

The fundamental narrative in the letter, that is, the linked stories of the kerygma and of the missionaries and the Thessalonians, draws lines dividing time and humanity and thus marks off some significant boundaries in the world of the Thessalonian Christians. There are two principal temporal boundaries. The first is defined by the conversion of these Thessalonians to Christian faith. The second is defined by the inauguration of the eschaton, that is, by the descent of Christ (4:16) and accompanying events. The present, the time in which this letter is written and received, is marked off on either side by these two boundaries of conversion and eschaton.

With regard to the first of these boundaries, to be converted is to *become* something that one has not been before (cf. *ginesthai* in 1:6 and 7 and then in 2:14), so that there are a “before” and an “after” in the convert’s life. For the Thessalonian Christians, the two sides of this boundary are characterized by, respectively, idols and the living God (1:9).

A similar periodization of past, present, and future is also in effect for the opponents of the missionaries according to the story about “the Jews.” Their opposition to the missionaries’ message is evidence that they have heard that message, whether directly or indirectly and to whatever degree of completeness. This, in turn, means that there was a time before they heard the message; then they heard it and reacted against it, at which point

they *became* opponents of it. Their response to the message thus initiates a period, the present, that will end with the eschatological wrath of God.

A distinction is thus introduced into humanity by how people respond to the preaching of the gospel, a distinction between the letter's inclusive "we" and the rest of humanity (or at least the gospel's opponents, though I doubt that Paul thought one way or the other about which it was). This distinction is also referred to with the interlinked metaphors of light versus darkness, day versus night, wakefulness versus sleep, and sobriety versus drunkenness (5:4-8) and will be marked finally by Jesus' rescue of the "we" from eschatological wrath (1:10; 5:9). Christians who are alive are also distinguished from Christians who have died (4:14-17), but that distinction will be broken down in the final goal of living with Christ forever; the shift in what "we" refers to from the beginning to the end of 4:17 is emphasized in 5:10. The distinction defined by acceptance or rejection of "the word of God" (2:13) will, however, be *confirmed* by the eschaton and is reflected in the distinction between the falsehood of "peace and security" maintained by "them," that is, by those who have rejected the word, and in the reality of their inevitable coming destruction (5:3).

Another distinction is created by the very fact that the story is told by the missionaries *to* the Thessalonian Christians. The missionaries' address to the Thessalonian Christians is what the relationship between the two groups has been all about, not just in the letter but from the beginning, when the kerygmatic story was first heard in Thessalonica. Here we have the distinction between the epistolary "we" over against the epistolary "you," which is so much a part of the letter—not only in its existence as a letter but also in what it says and indeed in its context in the relationship of the missionaries and the Thessalonian Christians, in which the primary action is the missionaries speaking *to* the Thessalonian Christians (and praying for them: 5:23). Indeed, Paul characterizes the relationship as a parent-children relationship in 2:11.

But Paul takes it as a positive sign that the simple structure of that relationship has been blurred or made more complex by the Thessalonian Christians' greater independence of the missionaries (*chreia* could almost be translated "dependence" in 1:8; 4:9, 12; 5:1). This greater independence is manifested in the Thessalonians' independent encouragement of each other (5:11, cf. 4:18), in their knowledge from God (4:9), and perhaps in their independent missionizing (if we can draw that from 1:7-9).¹⁹ The basis of this development in the relationship is that the missionaries' speaking to these Thessalonians has been effective (1:5; 2:1) so that now Paul's words to them about what the missionaries have taught can be repeated with this refrain of "you know." And this development in the relationship shapes the content of the epistolary thanksgiving (1:2f.).

THE STORYTELLER'S RHETORICAL STANDPOINT

Except to a small degree in 1:9, neither the kerygmatic narrative nor the story about the missionaries and the Thessalonians tells of the Thessalonians' conversion in anything approaching concrete terms. That event is, rather, told of in abstract and formalized terms. We learn nearly nothing from the surface of these descriptions about how this conversion actually came about in terms of specific events, persons (other than the presence and preaching of the missionaries), or social or cultural forces. Much more was involved than we are told about.

Sensitivity to the nature of the narrative in this letter as *rhetoric rather than report* invites us to speak not of what the letter tells *us* about its addressees but of what it tells *them* about themselves.²⁰ In other words, we can start looking in the letter not for information about the Thessalonians but for an understanding of what the letter is doing as it tells the addressees about themselves. Five things in particular come to mind.

First, the letter tells the Thessalonian Christians that they have been unified in their experience as Christians. The letter's "you," its addressees, are treated as a unit. We do not know how much the different members of this Christian group in Thessalonica had, in fact, begun to think of themselves as a unit and to identify with each other as such. Saying how much they did would be an undoable task within a quest for the historical Thessalonian Christians. In his exhortations Paul is careful not to say anything like "some of you are falling down in this matter."²¹ Treating these people as a unit, whatever they might have been in reality, is fundamental to the resocialization process—the shaping of a world for the Thessalonian Christians—that Paul is trying to make happen.

Here we see Paul following a policy that probably arose in his preaching and teaching work and that he would continue to adhere to. The Corinthian Christians, or at least some of them, tried to force Paul to deal with them as subgroups within the congregation, but he refused to do so (1 Cor. 1:10-13). There is in Paul's letters, as they might appear from our perspective, an air of detachment. They are certainly not as concrete and specific as they might have been. They almost entirely avoid naming names when dealing with church problems. To a large degree this is explained by this strong attachment on Paul's part to treating each of his addressees—each congregation or group of congregations—as a unit with a common—idealized rather than individualized—story.

Second, the Thessalonian Christians are told in this letter that they are doing a good job of expressing some fundamental Christian values. They are united not only in the experience of conversion but also in the faith, hope, and love that Paul is so relieved to know that they have (1:3; 3:6). Of course we can think of rhetorical reasons for Paul to typify his addressees in this way. By philophroneis he thus establishes goodwill with those he wishes to exhort, teach, and persuade, and he thus shows that he shares a common set of values with them—or, perhaps more importantly, that *they* share a common set of values with *him*.²²

A third thing that the Thessalonian Christians are told about themselves concerns what they were like before their conversion. Though Acts 17 speaks of Jews and "devout Greeks" among the Thessalonian Christians and places the beginning of their congregation in a synagogue, 1 Thess. 1:9 presents a very different picture, as is often noted. As he tells the Thessalonian Christians their story, Paul brings to them a Jewish picture of typical non-Jews as those who worship "idols" so that these Thessalonians can regard that picture as portraying themselves prior to their conversion. They may have all been such, in which case Acts is incorrect on that point. But whether or not they were polytheistic idol-worshippers—or to whatever extent they were—Paul makes identification of them as such part of his allusive telling of the story about their conversion. This is so apart from how we might answer the question of what these people were actually like before their conversion—again the quest for the historical Thessalonian Christians.

Fourth, this letter tells its addressees that they are, so to speak, "in" while others are

"out." As we have seen, their eschatological salvation will be matched by the destruction of others (5:3).

Fifth, the Thessalonian Christians are, as we have seen, told in this letter that they know all about this. Neither the kerygmatic narrative nor the story about the missionaries and the Thessalonians is laid out in straightforward, beginning-to-end fashion as if Paul were telling a story of which his addressees had no knowledge.²¹ Rather, allusive reminders are given to both stories. That they are reminders is emphasized by the repeated "you know." The addressees are supposed to understand Paul's construction of their past as something that they already have before he writes the letter. When he says "you know this," that is a signal not so much of what he thinks can be safely assumed as of what he most wants to convince the letter's readers and hearers of. "You know" is a way of saying "Remember it this way."

This perspective on that past—that it is something about which the author can say to the readers "you know it"—is, like the description of their conversion, something that the letter *brings to* the readers more than it is just a plain historical fact concerning the Thessalonian Christians. "You know" is a rhetorical device with certain purposes, not just an incidental observation. It compels us to ask what the storyteller hopes to achieve in this structuring—or restructuring—of the audience's memories.

So whatever may have been the complex actual circumstances by which a Christian congregation came into existence in Thessalonica and whatever the background of its members was, Paul gives them a self-understanding that includes a background untouched by Judaism, a conversion under his preaching and that of his associates, a present of persevering love for those missionaries, and everything that is a part of what we have designated "the kerygmatic narrative." We could speak here of "implied reader," but what we have could be better described as the text itself *shaping* the reader, telling those who will read and hear the letter how to understand themselves, what they are and what they are to be. If, under the influence or direction of the letter, they do come to remember (to "know") the story that way, then they will by that very fact become the kind of people that are shaped or brought into being by that story—the kind of people who have experienced this story in the way that it has been told.²⁴ The experience of conversion consists fundamentally in coming to understand oneself to be converted, of making a statement about oneself that becomes true by its very utterance. And if a group of people out of a larger society, such as the Thessalonian converts over against their compatriots (2:14), share that self-identification, then the stage is set for their resocialization.²⁵

THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

What, more specifically, then, does Paul hope to achieve in this structuring or restructuring of his audience's memories? What is his aim in telling the Thessalonians how to remember the mission and their own response to it? He does so (1) to validate their experience, (2) to provide a basis for exhortation regarding their behavior, (3) to give validation to his own work, and (4) to provide a tradition for the Thessalonian congregation. Looking at each of these four points in closer detail:

(1) In 2:14-16 Paul pulls together narratives about the Christians of Judea and Thessalonica in order to give validation to the Thessalonian Christians' experience. It real-

ly was God's word that they received (v. 13), and this is confirmed by their "imitation" of the Judean Christians, that is, by their becoming the victims of the opposition that has always come against dissemination of God's message of salvation.²⁶ Their joy and the spread of the news of their conversion provides similar affirmation (1:6-9).

(2) The story of the Thessalonian Christians' conversion and salvation takes place, from the letter's perspective, in the past and the future. The letter is at the center of the story, that is, in the present. The shaping of the Thessalonian Christians' memory is aimed at shaping their future.

The letter says, using the inclusive first person to refer to Christians in general, "God has not destined us for wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:9). Christians in the present are occupied in waiting for that salvation from wrath (1:10). But there is still preparation for the eschatological future going on, and apparently the outcome is not assured but is dependent on what happens in the present, in the middle of the story, since the missionaries exhort the Thessalonian Christians in view of the eschatological "kingdom and glory" (2:12) and pray that God will sanctify them, again in view of the eschaton (5:23). To say of the future "this is how it will be" is a basis for exhortation.

The letter—both as it is written and as it is read—is thus itself part of the story.²⁷ The moment in the present when the Thessalonian Christians hear the letter read is when the storyteller attempts to determine the outcome of the story by persuasion. Exhortation is always an effort to extend a story by seeking to implement a new direction in the story or to continue it on the same course. Here the latter—continuation—is the main aim. Though the letter's story about the missionaries and the Thessalonians, to look at that for a moment, is brought into the present, that story is not over yet. Some amount of resolution has been brought by the episode of Timothy's report (3:6-8). But Paul wants a further opportunity to give exhortation to the Thessalonian Christians, both in the future, in person (3:10f.) and now in the letter.

Fulfillment of the exhortation is the course toward the eschaton. It is, that is to say, what joins together the past and future parts of the kerygmatic narrative. The anticipated part of the narrative is what Paul wants to happen, and the purpose of the letter is to work toward that end by how it tells the story, by how it gives encouragement and exhortation to the addressees.²⁸ Between the past and the future is suspended a present defined by the past and the future, a time for remembering and recounting the past (and that with the aid of this letter), for awaiting the future (1:10), for the kind of exhortation that Paul gives in his letter on the basis of the narrative, and for faithfully carrying out the provisions of that exhortation so the past and future may be linked together.

(3) Just as the letter writer typifies the addressees, so also he typifies himself.²⁹ Paul gives a hint in 2:19 that the Thessalonian Christians' identity and integrity as a Christian congregation is what affirms the validity of what he and his missionary coworkers are doing. This self-validation is not simply what I Thessalonians is all about. Nor should we imagine some opposition to Paul calling forth this self-validation.³⁰ But the self-validation is certainly there. Paul is in effect saying "We missionaries must have done well, because you converts of ours turned out so well (according to the way I tell the story)." But part, at least, of the aim of this self-validation is to provide the rhetorical basis for exhortation. That is, what Paul is doing belongs partly to the realm of rhetorical ethos: "Remember me

in this way, so that you will receive my counsel regarding how you should live.⁷³¹

(4) A term we can use for what Paul gives the Thessalonian Christians as he shapes their memories is *tradition*. Obviously, this is not tradition in the sense of what has been passed on through many generations. And it may be strange to think of someone *creating* tradition, but that is just what Paul is doing as he shapes the memories of the Thessalonian Christian congregation, though much of what he uses is already traditional Christian in-talk. The tradition here includes both the translocal kerygmatic story and local tradition—both of them enshrined in this letter to be repeated and remembered and to shape this congregation.³² The members of the congregation are thus given a home (a metaphor similar in meaning to “narrative world”) so that they will feel no need to wander off looking for some other settling-place or to return to a familiar former residence. Their experiences and those of the missionaries are set within an all-encompassing context and thus made comprehensible and tolerable.

NOTES

1. N.R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p. 44.

2. So there is nothing about Jesus' activity as a teacher or about any sort of preexistence on his part, neither surprising in view of Paul's near lack of attention to these themes elsewhere (see, e.g., J.D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origin of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* [second edition; London: SCM, 1989], e.g., pp. 46, 195f., on preexistence, though he overstates the case at some points). Nor is there anything about divine revelation prior to Jesus' death, which is coupled with the absence of the Old Testament from this letter and with what the letter does say about “the Jews” in 2:14-16. The story about Israel plays no role in the narrative in this letter.

3. The reference to “the Lord” as “an avenger” in disputes within the congregation (4:6) may be another reference to eschatological judgment, this time affecting the congregation's members. It was, surprisingly, necessary for H.L. Hendrix to emphasize that “them” is distinct from “you” in 5:1-11 (“Archaeology and Eschatology at Thessalonica,” *The Future of Early Christianity*, B.A. Pearson, ed. [Festschrift for H. Koester; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], pp. 107-18, here 109f.).

4. We may also have allusions to this event of receiving and turning in references to the readers' “election” (*eklogē*, 1:4) and to God giving the Holy Spirit to them (4:8). But we would have to ask what sort of narrative action, if any, might be represented by “election” and whether the present tense “gives” in relation to the Holy Spirit implies something more sustained than God's response to the action of receiving the word and turning to God.

5. The third departure from the “you know” framing is emphasized by the *agnoō* device in 4:13.

6. There are different views of what sort of problem among the Thessalonian Christians prompted this clarifying eschatological teaching. See, e.g., J. Plevnik, “The Taking Up of the Faithful and the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984), pp. 274-83; T.H. Olbricht, “An Aristotelian Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Thessalonians,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians*, ed. D.L. Balch, E. Ferguson, and W.A. Meeks (Festschrift for A.J. Malherbe; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 216-36, here 227 with n. 64. H. Koester, “1 Thessalonians: Experiment in Christian Writing,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History*, ed. F.F. Church and T. George (Festschrift for G.H. Williams; Leiden: Brill, 1979), pp. 33-44, here 39f., questions whether there was such a problem at all.

7. Using the epistolary “we” and “you”: We suffered and were mistreated in Philippi before we came to Thessalonica (2:2). We preached the gospel to you and convinced you (1:5; 2:13), all the while facing strong opposition (2:2). We were sincere, gentle, and self-sacrificing toward you, we

did not try to get money from you (2:5-8, 10f), and we worked to support ourselves (2:9). You came to faith in spite of persecution (1:6; 2:14). We gave you instructions and exhortation in the Christian manner of life (2:12; 4:2, 6) and predicted that "we" (inclusive or just the missionaries?) would be persecuted (3:4).

8. Again using the epistolary "we" and "you": After we left you, reports of your coming to faith preceded us in many places (1:7-9), and your experience of persecution continued (3:3f). We longed much at that time to see you again (2:17). We (Paul: see note 10 below) wanted to come back to you, but Satan prevented that (2:18). So we (Paul) decided to send Timothy, even though this meant that we (Paul) would then be alone in Athens, to exhort you in person, so that persecution would not cause you to depart from faith (3:1-3, 5). Indeed, "I" was concerned that perhaps you had already done so (3:5). Timothy returned and brought us a good report, that you still believe, love fellow Christians, and think well of us (3:6; cf. 4:9f; 5:11). We are greatly encouraged by Timothy's report (3:7f) and thank God for it (3:9; cf. 1:2f).

9. Cf. B.C. Johanson, *To All the Brethren: A Text-Linguistic and Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians* (Coniectanea Biblica, New Testament Series 16; Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1987), 49. Smaller parts are played elsewhere in the letter by Satan (2:18; cf. 3:5), the Holy Spirit, and witnesses (1:8f), the latter much like a theatrical chorus. See further on analysis of the characters and groups: W. Meeke, "The Circle of Reference in Pauline Morality," in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians* (note 6 above), pp. 305-17, here 310; Koester, "Experiment," p. 36.

10. The manner in which the text slips from first person plural into first person singular in 2:18; 3:5; and 5:27 indicates that many, though not all, of the non-inclusive uses of the first person plural refer to Paul alone (see note 8 above and see further Johanson, *To All the Brethren*, p. 51, and references there). Mention of Timothy in the third person (3:2, 6) underlines this. Nothing is gained for understanding of the letter by suggesting that Silas/Silvanus had a major part in its composition. So I will refer to its *author*, not to plural authors.

11. All the instances of this inclusive "we" (3:3; 4:7f, 14, 15b, 17; 5:6, 8-10, and occurrences of "our Lord Jesus Christ") seem to be derived from kerygmatic traditional material (except possibly 3:4, though "we" there is probably non-inclusive).

"You" always represents the members of the Christian congregation in Thessalonica. But this "you" is viewed from three different perspectives according to the nature of the material in which it appears. First, in the kerygmatic narrative "you" represents the object of God's actions for salvation, seen within a larger collective, not defined geographically, of those who have the same part in the kerygmatic narrative that the "we" has there, that is, the broader "we" just mentioned. Second, in the story about the missionaries and the Thessalonians, "you" is the Thessalonian Christian congregation as distinguished from the non-inclusive epistolary "we," that is, from Paul and the other missionaries. Third, while in the narratives, "you" is always a unit with no consideration of internal distinctions, in exhortation, groups within "you" can be singled out (5:12, 14) and individuals can be addressed as individuals (4:4).

12. In the whole letter God is called "God Father" (four times), "God" (more than twenty times), "living and true God" (1:9), "the God of peace" (5:23), and "the one calling you" (5:24; cf. 4:7).

13. In the whole letter Jesus is called "Lord Jesus Christ" (five times), "Lord" (about nine times), "Lord Jesus" (six times), "Christ Jesus" (once), "Christ" (twice), and "Jesus" (twice).

14. Koester, "Experiment."

15. I do not find arguments for either Galatians (F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], p. 43ff.) or 2 Thessalonians (e.g., C.A. Wanamaker, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], p. 37ff.) being earlier than 1 Thessalonians convincing. If Koester's argument assumes that Christians relied entirely on oral tradition up to the time of 1 Thessalonians, that is, that they had not yet written down any of their traditions (see Koester,

"Experiment," pp. 40, 44), that is unwarranted.

16. It is noteworthy in this regard that 2 Thessalonians alone names both God and Jesus in *both* places and that Colossians alone puts Jesus in one place and God in the other.

17. That we are focusing here on narrative does not mean that we have no concern with history, that is, with the origin of the text. It is still worth asking whether 2:13-16 was part of the letter as it was originally written. I have argued that it was in "The Problems Posed by 1 Thessalonians and a Solution," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 12 (1990), pp. 42-72. A different argument to the same conclusion with regard to the history of the text, though not its meaning, is given by F.D. Gilliard in "The Problem of the Antisemitic Comma between 1 Thessalonians 2:14 and 15," *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989), pp. 481-502, and "Paul and the Killing of the Prophets in 1 Thess. 2:15," *Novum Testamentum* 36 (1994), pp. 259-70.

18. It is not uncommonly thought that "wrath" in 2:16c must refer to an event already in the past when that verse was written (whether as part of the letter or as a later interpolation); so, e.g., both B.A. Pearson, "1 Thessalonians 2:13-16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation," *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971), pp. 79-94, and, arguing against Pearson's interpolation view, R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), p. 37f. But that the condition for the fulfillment of the eschaton (a condition also mentioned in, e.g., Matt. 23:32; Dan. 8:23) is spoken of as being fulfilled in the previous clause ("so as to fill up the quantity of their sins") should indicate that the eschaton itself, not some calamity in history, is spoken of (proleptically) in the last clause of 2:16. See further my "Problems Posed by 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16," pp. 44-46.

19. But the dangerous possibility of dependence still faces the Thessalonian Christians: 4:12.

20. Unlike, e.g., Johanson, *To All the Brethren*, 50. As any letter speaks of its addressees, they are not present with the writer but must be remembered and typified or idealized (Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 55). Another instance in which remembering may be more rhetorical than referential is Galatians 2. Many investigations of the relation between Acts and Galatians 2 have, I believe, been hampered by too much of an assumption that Paul "gets the story right," so to speak.

21. This is not contradicted by the texts mentioned in the last sentence of note 11 above.

22. See further Olbricht, "Aristotelian Rhetorical Analysis," p. 228f.

23. The sequence is not referential but is determined by other concerns. Cf. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 48ff.

24. Cf. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 62: Acceptance of a common system of relevances leads the members of a group to a homogeneous self-typification.

25. Cf. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 61.

26. The link is weakened by the fact that it was not Jews, those who had been the agents of this consistent opposition, who persecuted the Thessalonian Christians. But Paul does not allow that to stop him from making the link. The consistent filling up of sins on the part of "the Jews," as the story goes (v. 16), is relevant to the self-understanding of these Christians in Thessalonica.

27. Cf. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 50.

28. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, pp. 45f., cf. 50.

29. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 55.

30. This is, in very general terms, one of the more important conclusions of George Lyons's rhetorical study of 1 Thessalonians in *Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding* (SBL Dissertation Series 73; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), p. 177ff. So also M. Dibelius, *An die Thessalonicher I II. An die Philipper* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1937), p. 11; A.J. Malherbe, "Gentle as a Nurse: The Cynic Background to 1 Thess ii," *Novum Testamentum* 12 (1970), pp. 203-17.

We should particularly avoid the pick-and-choose method described thus by Johanson (*To All the Brethren*, p. 3f.): "Or is it necessary for one to see a whole series of more or less urgent issues being addressed, viz., insinuations against the addressors' integrity (2:1ff.), afflictions of the addressees

(3:3ff.), moral problems (4:3ff.), idleness (4:11; 5:14), doctrinal difficulties (4:13ff.), failure in internal discipline (5:12), etc.?" Such an approach, which Johanson avoids, is likely to be uninformed about the letter's rhetorical standpoint.

31. Cf. Olbricht, "Aristotelian Rhetorical Analysis," p. 228f.; Meeks, "Circle of Reference," p. 309.

32. J.E. Morgan-Wynne, "2 Corinthians 8:18f. and the Question of a *Traditionsgrundlage* for Acts," *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1979), p. 172f., suggests, following J. Jervell, that the formation of *ekklesiai* and their continuing existence were regular subjects of preaching.

