
PRELIMINARY REMARKS

With regard to the concern of biblical criticism that questions the authenticity of the Second Letter to the Thessalonians, E. Reuss¹ has missed the “striking primary argument.” As H. Holtzmann sought to find it (the primary argument) in his description and study of the eschatological theme of the second chapter,² so he certainly gave expression to the prevailing opinion of the school of modern biblical criticism, as far as biblical criticism has generally disputed and questioned the Pauline origin of this little letter. Yet the efforts of the defense on the other hand have focused themselves thoroughly and predominantly on the same argument and topic.

It is my view that although certainly a suspicion can arise from the nature of the content and meaning of this passage, a thoroughly convincing argument against the Pauline origin and provenance of this letter does not allow itself to be documented on the basis of it. That which, for example, B. Bornemann,³ Jülicher,⁴ Zahn,⁵ and, among other viewpoints, Gunkel⁶ and Bousset⁷ have written along these lines about the passage that presents the Anti-Christ is not so easily discounted. That the reference of the passage points to Nero has by all means been totally discarded. One realizes that the traits of the Anti-Christ are not to be found with this description, which would then reveal the Roman ruler, a mother-murderer, the *Redivivus*, and

1. Reuss, *Die Geschichte*, 73.
2. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch*, 215.
3. Bornemann, *Die Thessalonicherbriefe*, 357ff.
4. Jülicher, *Einleitung*, 41ff., 48ff.
5. Zahn, *Einleitung*, 178ff.
6. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 221ff.
7. Bousset, *Der Antichrist*, 13.

a persecutor of Christians. Then too the argument and claim that this chapter has been influenced by the Book of Revelation no longer so easily finds the reception and belief it once had.

Totally independent from the concept of the eschatological passage, one can find with substantially better results that very “striking primary argument” with another aspect and point: *in the literary relationship of the Second Letter to the First Letter of the Thessalonians*. Many scholars have hardly at all taken note of this relationship;⁸ others have seriously examined it and have placed emphasis upon it; but without exception its meaning and significance have not been highly and properly enough evaluated by any of them.⁹

At least to me it appears that the matter is to be understood as follows. My judgment of this letter has wavered and swung back and forth for a rather long time. Yet a more exact and careful study of its relationship to the First Letter to the Thessalonians has led me to the viewpoint that its authenticity does not allow itself to be verified and sustained. However in this regard it is my opinion that despite all of the well-intended observations which have arisen from the comparison of these two letters, the strength of this argument has yet to become fully evident and understood, be that merely because one has not thoroughly enough collected, highlighted, followed up, and consequently pursued the observations that have been made. If I am mistaken about this, then the reader alone must decide.

Naturally it will not be possible to limit our study to only one aspect of the comparison. Then too much of what is often dealt with here will only be briefly touched on in this study; other aspects of the matter will require a detailed analysis and observation. Above all our effort should not remain with merely a negative assessment: it must be asked how this letter is to be positively understood and comprehended as document penned by pseudonym. Thus far biblical criticism has brought about valuable contributions to this question, but it has not attended to the matter with the same interest as it has with the formulation and substantiation of the negative

8. Klöpffer, “Der zweite Brief.” Also B. Weiss in his *Einleitung* deals briefly with this relationship.

9. Weizsäcker, *Der Apostolische Zeitalter*, 258. He makes this point a primary argument. On page 460 of his study, *Die Thessalonicherbriefe*, Bornemann finds this argument the most important but still maintains that the second letter is authentic. Holtzmann places special emphasis on this in his article, “Zum zweiten Thessalonicherbrief,” but concludes that the apocalyptic expectation of the second letter remains the decisive element.

assessment.¹⁰ Therefore, the scholarship has not sufficiently recognized and valued certain difficulties that stand in the way with regard to the dispute over the authenticity of the Second Letter to the Thessalonians.

SAMPLE

10. Bornemann, *Die Thessalonicherbriefe*, 478. He states, “. . . previously those who debate the authenticity of the second letter have neither made the attempt nor sought to elaborate on it to make clear the unique character and the distinct content of the second letter under the presupposition of its fictitiousness.”