
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Wrede tells us in the preface to his study of the Second Letter to the Thessalonians that for a certain time he could not decide for or against the authenticity of this letter that tradition ascribes to the Apostle Paul. Unlike those scholars who had used the eschatological argument to reach a “definite” decision for or against authenticity, he was never satisfied with it and did not consider that argument to be definitive. One must assume that though he had doubts, he must have always held the suspicion that the letter was not Paul’s but could not quite put his finger on those characteristics of it that gave rise to this opinion. It seems that he must have spent a rather long time with the attempt to find a more precise way to describe and document a definite factual approach to the dilemma.

It must have been that as he began juxtaposing the verses of the two letters to the Thessalonians, placing them side by side in the order that they occurred in their respective texts, he happened upon what for him became the most valid solution. Not only was he able to locate some exact parallels of words, phrases, and sentences, he also could find definite related words, verses, and related passages that precisely mirrored and reflected their counterparts in the First Letter to the Thessalonians. What must have been the final discovery was the related structure of the two letters that enabled him to declare at long last, “Eureka.” Wrede’s order of the Greek parallels has been reproduced with his original annotations in this translation; for since they form the foundation of his argument, it was deemed essential to present them in the manner in which he laid them out.

This sense of discovery permeates his study, particularly the first chapter, but it extends also throughout this work. Even when he addresses the possible origin of this letter and its destination, he continues the adventure by postulating that it may have been written in Phrygia where within in a short amount of time it was added to the collection of Paul’s letters in

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surrounding Christian communities before it eventually found its way to Rome where Marcion added it to his *Apostolikon*. As I translated the text, it was this perceived sense of excitement of his that made the endeavor a captivating one. It seemed each day he took me on another adventure as though he were telling a story, even though he was writing an exegetical study.

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June 2016

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