RECENTLY the authorities of the Greek Orthodox Church celebrated the nineteen-hundredth anniversary of the bringing of the Christian faith to their land by St. Paul. It is an event that deserved to be celebrated; for it is one of the momentous things in the history of mankind. Somewhere about the same time the new faith came to Macedonia, it must also have arrived in Rome, perhaps a little earlier; and that, too, was an event which was destined to have great consequences. It is interesting to compare the two arrivals of Christianity in Europe. We know who brought it to Greece; we can fix the date with reasonable precision; and we can at least draw up an outline account of the reception given to the first missionaries. On the beginnings of the Church in Rome we are much less well informed. We do not know who first brought the good news; we do not know when it arrived or how it was received. We do know that when Paul wrote to Rome, in A.D. 55 or a year or two later, there was already a Christian community there. We may suppose that in the constant coming and going between the capital and the provinces it was inevitable that before long Christians should arrive in the city, brought there by business interests or by the nature of their work or simply by the normal operations of the

1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on Wednesday, the 12th of November 1952.

2 Thus, for example, one of our oldest Christian private letters (B.G.U., I. 27, ii/iii A.D.) is from a certain Irenaeus, one of the crew of a grain-ship plying between Egypt and Italy. While his ship was lying in port, he had taken the opportunity to go to Rome and visit the Christian community there. It is interesting to note that the term used for the Church is ὁ τόπος, on which see the note in my article on the Corinthian Correspondence (Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, vol. xxvi (1941), pp. 119 f.). We can readily imagine Christians
slave-market. There is nothing to suggest that the foundation of the Roman community was part of an organized missionary campaign such as St. Paul conducted in Greece.

The story of how this campaign began is told in Acts xv and xvi. The Conference at Jerusalem, which had laid down the terms on which Jewish and Gentile Christians should have table-fellowship, was over. Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by two leading members of the Jerusalem community, Judas Barsabbas and Silas, had returned to Antioch and delivered the letter from the Conference. After a time Judas and Silas, or Judas alone,1 returned to Jerusalem, while Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch teaching and preaching. The narrative of Acts goes on to tell how Paul suggested to Barnabas that they should revisit the South Galatian churches founded on the first missionary journey. The plan fell through because of a disagreement over Mark, whom Barnabas wanted as travelling companion and Paul did not. In the end Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus, while Paul, accompanied by Silas, took the overland route into Asia Minor.2

The activities of Paul and Silas are described in Acts xvi. 1-5, very summarily indeed. We hear of visits of Derbe and Lystra and of the circumcision of Timothy, who was at this time added to Paul’s staff. Many students of Acts and the Pauline epistles have felt a serious difficulty here in view of Paul’s emphatic repudiation of circumcision in his letter to the Galatians.3 I think that the difficulty is greatly reduced if we arriving in Rome at an earlier period in similar ways. Tertullian (Apol. 42) bears witness that Christians in his day were engaged in trade and shipping as well as in agriculture.

1 Acts xv. 33 ff. The text is in some uncertainty. The Western and Byzantine evidence in verse 34 asserts that Silas stayed in Antioch by his own choice. This statement is absent from the B text. It may be that it is a later insertion to pave the way for the announcement in verse 40 that Paul took Silas with him on the second missionary campaign. On the other hand, the statement that Paul took Silas is strange, if Silas had left Antioch for Jerusalem. If it is another Silas that is meant in verse 40, it must be said that he is very abruptly introduced.

2 Acts xv. 36-41. It is worth noticing that what in fact happened was that the places visited on the first journey were divided for the second. Cyprus, which Barnabas took on the first trip, had been the first place to be evangelized in the previous campaign.

3 Gal. v. 2 ff.
can accept the interpretation of the second chapter of Galatians which I proposed in 1940,¹ namely, that the issue of circumcision was not raised as a matter of principle till a much later date, when Paul was at Ephesus during the third missionary journey. On the second journey Paul was still trying to work through the synagogues of the Dispersion; and it was surely desirable from a practical point of view that he and his lieutenants should be qualified to address the synagogue congregations. So long as Timothy was uncircumcised he was disqualified from taking any active part in the synagogue service. It may well have seemed at this time that the operation was a small price to pay for the advantages that would accrue to the missionary enterprise.

We are told that the findings of the Jerusalem Conference were communicated to the churches; and that, as a result of the visit by the missionaries, the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily.

As we read this account of the second journey through South Galatia we get the impression that it is being hurried over. Either the writer is in haste to come to new developments of his theme, or, possibly, Paul himself was in a hurry to break new ground, his restless spirit demanding new worlds to conquer for the Kingdom of God. However it may be, the fact is that in three verses Paul is transported from South Galatia to Troas in the north-west corner of Asia Minor; and Troas marks a turning-point in the story second only to Antioch in importance.² For it is here that Paul has the dream in which he sees a Macedonian who begs him to "come over into Macedonia and help us".³ He and his associates interpret the dream as a call from God to extend the work of evangelization to Macedonia.⁴

² Acts xvi 4 f.
³ Lake and Cadbury remind us that the question has been raised how Paul knew that he was a Macedonian; and say that "to ask this is contrary to the psychology of dreams". As to the psychology of dreams I say nothing: I would say that to ask this is contrary to common sense. If someone comes to me and says "Come over into Scotland and help us", I shall assume that he is a Scot, without requiring that he wear a kilt and play a selection on the bagpipes to prove his identity. And in most cases I shall expect my guess to be correct.
⁴ Acts xvi. 9 f.
It is at this point that the first large stretch of narrative in the first person plural begins: “And when he saw the vision, immediately we began planning how to get away to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to bring the gospel to them.” This “we-section” continues as far as verse 17, when the party is at Philippi. From that point the third person is used until we come to xx. 6, again at Philippi, where the first person is resumed. There is a good deal to be said for the hypothesis that the person who speaks in this “we-section” is left behind when Paul leaves Philippi and remains in that neighbourhood until he is rejoined there by Paul in xx. 6.

The narrative of the journey from Troas is simple and straightforward. The sea passage with a favourable wind took two days and the party landed safely at Neapolis, the modern Cavalla, where they could join the great Roman trunk road, the Via Egnatia. From Neapolis they went to Philippi, and there the usual procedure in Pauline missionary work was followed. He began with the synagogue and converted a seller of purple-dyed wool from Thyatira, who entertained the missionaries in her house. In Acts xvi. 24 her name is given as Lydia; but it has been suggested by Johannes Weiss that this was a second name arising from that fact that Thyatira was a Lydian city, and that possibly the lady’s personal name was Euodia or Syntyche. After the story of Lydia the narrative of Acts goes on to describe how Paul exorcised an oracular spirit from a slave-girl, thus depriving her owners of a valuable source of income. They take action, and Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned. During the night there is an earthquake: the jailer and his family are converted, and next morning the prisoners are released. Paul makes formal protest at having been beaten, a punishment which ought not to be inflicted on a Roman citizen. This, we are told, caused some alarm among the Philippian magistrates, who came and asked them to do the city the favour of leaving it without delay. So they left, with the nucleus of a church established at the Thyatiran wool shop. As we know, this church grew and flourished, and remained the most consistently faithful to the Apostle of all his foundations. They

1 Das Urchristentum, p. 211. 2 Cf. Phil. iv. 2.
sent gifts to him from time to time; and, as we can see from the letter to the Philippians, they were very dear to him.

From Philippi the missionaries followed the Egnatian way through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, the modern Salonika. Here again Paul begins in the synagogue and makes converts, particularly among the adherents, that is, those Greeks who found the God of Israel more like their idea of what a God should be than any of the numerous occupants of their own Pantheon. For three Sabbaths Paul had had access to the Jewish congregation before opposition began to develop. Once aroused it no doubt quickly came to a head and before long a crowd, organized by the Jews, was demonstrating in front of the house where Paul and his friends were lodged. Failing to find the missionaries, they seized their host, Jason by name, and some of the converts, and brought them before the city magistrates alleging that the new religion was in fact revolutionary propaganda aimed at the overthrow of the Empire. The magistrates acted cautiously and contented themselves, for the time being, with binding Jason and the others over not to harbour seditious persons. This left the Thessalonian Christians with no alternative but to rid themselves of the incriminating evidence, in this case Paul and his assistants, as quickly and as quietly as possible. Accordingly Paul and Silas were sent away under cover of darkness to Beroea, a city lying about fifty miles to the west of Thessalonica on the road to Athens.

At Beroea the starting-point for the work was again the synagogue; and here the response was enthusiastic, many converts being made. But news of their success came back to Thessalonica; the synagogue authorities there took action and disturbances began in Beroea. Paul had to move on leaving Silas and Timothy behind. His Beroean escort brought him to Athens and returned home with instructions to Silas and Timothy to follow and report to their chief as quickly as possible.

In Athens Paul saw the whole apparatus of Greek religion displayed in the most impressive form. He saw entire and complete those temples and statues of which the battered and broken remains are still among the wonders of the world. The

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2 Acts xvii. 10.  
3 Acts xvii. 11-15.
sight filled him with horror. He began a campaign for mono­theism in the market-place and for Christian monotheism in the synagogue. In the market-place he found plenty to argue with him. The philosophically minded were prepared to talk about the nature of ultimate Reality endlessly; but as soon as Paul proposed to bring into the debate more particular matters such as Jesus and the resurrection, they became acutely aware of the "scandal of particularity" and concluded that it was not a genuine thinker that they were dealing with, but just another agent of some Oriental cult. In the end Paul appeared before the Areopagus and made a statement which is recorded in Acts xvii. 22-32. The results of this effort in Athens were disappointing and Paul later moved on to Corinth,¹ where he carried on an active and successful ministry for some eighteen months.

In his first letter to the Corinthians he reminds them that he came to Corinth in deep depression;² and it is open to us to think that his loss of confidence was due, in part at least, to the comparative failure of his effort at Athens. But not to this alone. Athens was his fourth attempt in Europe. In the first three his activities had been cut short just when he was getting a church well started; while at Athens his presentation of the gospel in a manner likely to be acceptable to a cultured and philosophical audience had fallen flat. It would not be tried again. He tells the Corinthians, "I made up my mind that among you my one and only subject would be Jesus the Messiah, and a crucified Messiah at that". We may perhaps think also that the polemic against the wisdom of this world in the early chapters of First Corinthians gains added point from his own experiments with it at Athens.

The letters to the Thessalonians belong to this period of Paul's life. They were written after his departure from Thessalonica and before his departure from Corinth. Our first task is to see whether we can give approximate dates to these events. The one secure link with secular chronology is the fact recorded in Acts that Paul was brought before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaea. It is possible on the basis of inscriptions and other

¹ Acts xvii. 32-xviii. 1. ² 1 Cor. ii. 1-5.
The evidence to date the proconsulship of Gallio with considerable confidence. The most important piece of evidence is the well-known inscription from Delphi giving the decision of the Emperor Claudius on some local dispute which had been referred to him by the proconsul Gallio. The document is dated in the 12th year of the Emperor's tribunicial power, that is, sometime between 25 January 52 and 24 January 53. It is also in the period between the 26th and 27th aclamations of Claudius as imperator. It is known from other sources that the 27th aclamation took place before 1 August 52, how long before we cannot say. The 26th aclamation may have fallen in Claudius's 11th year: if so, it must probably have been late in the year since four others would have to be fitted in before it. It follows that the Delphi case was considered in Rome and the decision issued between the latter part of 51 and 1 August 52 at the outside. More probably the limits should be narrowed to the period February-July 52. Further, Gallio must have been in office before the date of the decision, since it was he who had dealt with the case in its preliminary stages and had referred it to the Emperor. Now if Gallio took office in 52, arriving at Corinth in early summer, there is perhaps time for him to have completed the first hearing, prepared a report and sent it to Rome; than for the report to have gone through the usual channels, for the Imperial decision to have been taken and transmitted from Rome to Gallio; all before the 27th aclamation which occurred some time before 1 August. There is perhaps time; but at best it would be a tight fit. If, on the other hand, Gallio arrived at Corinth in the early summer of 51 there is ample time for all the coming and going. I therefore think that there is a slight balance of probability in favour of the view that Gallio was in office from the early summer of 51 to the early summer of 52, assuming that his proconsulship lasted one year.

If we now make the further assumptions that the charge against Paul was made near the end of his stay in Corinth and near the beginning of Gallio's term of office, we get the early

1 The relevant texts are given and discussed by Kirsopp Lake in The Beginnings of Christianity, v. 460-4.
Summer of 51 as the date of the hearing; and by reckoning back eighteen months from this point we come to late 49 or early 50 as the date of Paul’s arrival in Corinth. This means that the events described in Acts xvi. and xvii. will be assigned to the year 49. The letters to the Thessalonians will fall somewhere within the period of two years between the summer of 49 and the summer of 51.

From the letters themselves we learn that in spite of hostility and ill-treatment the Apostles had made a good beginning with the building up of the church at Thessalonica. They had put their hearts into the work and they had had their reward in that the gospel was taken up and held fast by their converts in spite of strong opposition and even persecution. In 2 Thess. ii. 9 Paul mentions that during his stay at Thessalonica he earned his own living working at his trade, so as not to be a burden on the brethren. He was thus able to rebut the charge, which was made against him by opponents, that he was out for gain.¹

But these are not the only facts to emerge from the study of the letters. We learn from 1 Thess. ii. 17-iii. 5 that the narrative of Acts is anything but complete. As we have already seen, when Paul left Beroea, Silas and Timothy remained behind; and the Beroean escort who had accompanied Paul to Athens brought back a message to them to follow Paul to Athens. Now Acts makes no mention that this instruction was ever carried out: Silas and Timothy do not reappear on the scene in Acts until xviii. 5, when Paul is already in Corinth. There would seem to be two possibilities. Either Paul left Athens so soon that Silas and Timothy had not time to overtake him there; or they did come to Athens and the fact is not recorded in Acts. A consideration of 1 Thess. ii. 17-iii. 5 suggests that the second alternative is to be preferred. In this passage Paul says:

But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire: because we would fain have come again unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us. . . . Wherefore when we could no longer forbear we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone; and sent Timothy, our brother and God’s minister in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in the matter of your faithfulness; so that no one should be shaken by these afflictions;

¹ 1 Thess. ii. 5.
for you yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed. . . . For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labour should be in vain.

From this it appears that Timothy, and probably Silas also, did come to Athens as instructed; and further that, while Paul was still at Athens, Timothy was sent on a mission to Thessalonica. It is therefore presumably the return from that errand that is recorded in Acts xviii. 5 at Corinth. It is also clear that Paul had good reason to be anxious about the welfare of the Thessalonian community. The Christians there were suffering persecution, and there was the ever-present danger that their faith might break down under stress of loss and suffering. Moreover, even when Timothy was able to bring good news of them, it was clear to Paul that their faith was by no means perfect: he says that he wishes he could be with them in person to make up their deficiencies in this respect.¹

Now it is surely probable that if Paul felt as strongly as he says he did about Thessalonian affairs, he would not only send Timothy, but also send with him a letter containing his own personal message. As long ago as the seventeenth century Hugo Grotius maintained that this was done and that 2 Thess. was the letter in question.² In more recent times the thesis of the priority of 2 Thess. has been defended again and again: I mention two of the latest defenders: J. C. West, who discussed the problem in the Journal of Theological Studies,³ and Johannes Weiss, who dealt with it in his Urchristentum.⁴ It seems to me to offer the best explanation of the facts. Before giving the reasons for holding it, we may consider the alternatives.

The Tübingen School rejected both Thessalonian epistles as spurious. Modern critical opinion on the Continent has tended to accept 1 Thess. and reject 2 Thess. The reason is that when you have read the first letter, the second appears like a pale ghost of its neighbour. As Johannes Weiss puts it,⁵ "the majority of critical scholars are doubtful of the genuineness of

¹ 1 Thess. iii. 10.
² Annotationes in Novum Testamentum, i (Amsterdam, 1641), 1032-42; ii (Paris, 1646), 651.
⁴ Das Urchristentum, pp. 213-23.
2 Thess. ; for, since they only read it in the shadow of 1 Thess., it appears to them as an insignificant and empty copy of 1 Thess.

So Jülicher in the seventh edition of his *Introduction* decides after considerable discussion that on the whole the best way of dealing with 2 Thess. is to cast it out of the authentic Pauline corpus. He may be regarded as a typical representative of the school referred to by Weiss.

The second alternative was proposed by Harnack in a paper read before the Berlin Academy in 1910. His thesis is that the likenesses between the two letters may be explained if we suppose that they were written at about the same time to two different addresses in Thessalonica. 1 Thess. was sent to the Gentile section of the Thessalonian church: 2 Thess. was written almost immediately afterwards for the Jewish Christian section of the same community. This view was adopted by Kirsopp Lake and fully discussed by him in his important work *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul.* Its chief weakness is that it puts too great a strain on the imagination. It is more than difficult to see how Paul, who lays such great stress on the unity of the Church, should have consented to recognize a cleavage of this sort by writing two letters to two sections of one Christian community. Further, there is no sign in the letters themselves of any such intention. They are both addressed to the Thessalonian church as a whole. And there is no sort of real evidence that any division of the kind suggested existed at Thessalonica. The evidence rather seems to point the other way. For example, 1 Thess. ii. 13-16, which on the two-addressee hypothesis is intended for the Gentile-Christian section in Thessalonica, speaks in a very appreciative way of the churches in Judaea and practically congratulates the readers of the letter on having been imitators of these Jewish Christians.

We may now turn to consider the view that both letters are genuine, and that 2 Thess. was written first. The arguments on which Weiss rested his case are as follows.

1 Pp. 61-101. This view is still held to be the most probable in *An Introduction to the New Testament* by K. and S. Lake (1938), pp. 131-6. There the view is taken that 2 Thess. was somewhat later than 1 Thess., and was written to the Jewish Christians in Thessalonica after "Paul had received some communication which made him realise that 1 Thessalonians was not quite satisfactory."
The Thessalonian community had to endure a good deal of persecution for their faith. These trials and tribulations are at their height in 2 Thess.: they are spoken of as past in 1 Thess.

(a) The troubles are present in 2 Thess. At the very beginning of the letter, immediately after the opening salutations, Paul speaks of conditions in Thessalonica. He commends the growing faith and love that are manifest in the life of the community and then goes on:

And so we on our part are boasting about you in all the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring. It is evidence of the just judgement of God that you should be adjudged worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering (granted that God holds it right to repay with affliction those who are afflicting you, and to grant rest with us to you who are at present afflicted, which he will do when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven . . .).\(^1\)

Here the contrast is between the trials which the Thessalonians are at the moment enduring and the very different lot which will be theirs at the Parousia. Then the situation will be reversed: those who are now being harried will receive their reward in the kingdom of God, and those who now reject the gospel and persecute the believers will receive dire punishment. In the meantime the faithful must continue faithful; and the missionaries pray constantly for them that they may be worthy of their high destiny.\(^2\)

They must be faithful: they must also be imperturbable. Whatever excited members may say in ecstasy or in the heat of preaching or teaching, even if documents come purporting to be from Paul himself, the Thessalonians are to keep their heads. The Parousia has not come and will not come before the powers of darkness have had their last fling. Before the real Parousia there must be a Satanic imitation of it, the revelation of the lawless one with all the apparatus of bogus signs and wonders. This will precipitate the end. The Lord Jesus will slay the pretender with the breath of his mouth.\(^3\) Come what may the recipients of the letter can rejoice, as its writer does, in the knowledge that they have received and responded to the call of God and that their future is safe in his hands.\(^4\)

\(^1\) 2 Thess. i. 4-7. \(^2\) 2 Thess. i. 11 f. \(^3\) 2 Thess. ii. 1-12. \(^4\) 2 Thess. ii. 13-iii. 5.
Next comes a particular warning made necessary by the fact that some members of the Thessalonian church have been carried off their feet by the expectation of an imminent Parousia, and have abandoned their normal life with its tasks and responsibilities. They are living in idleness waiting for the end; and they expect others to supply their needs while they wait. Paul’s direction is that they must work and earn their own living, and that nothing is to be done by the community to encourage members in lazy and parasitic ways of life. The letter closes with a note of authentication and blessings.

Read thus in its own light, and without asking about its relation to 1 Thess., it is a remarkably vivid picture that is presented: the picture of a young community on tip-toe of expectation, looking eagerly for the great divine intervention that is to end the existing order and usher in the better world which has been prepared for the faithful. The hope of this golden age just round the corner makes it easier to put up with the eccentricities of some members, and to bear the insults and injuries which are the daily portion of the young church. The letter deals simply and directly with these points. Regarding the Parousia it says that the end is not yet; and therefore the members of the church must carry on with their ordinary duties and bear their persecutions with patience and fortitude.

(b) When we turn from this simple note to 1 Thess., we are at once conscious that we have before us a more deliberate and carefully thought out letter. After the usual opening salutations it embarks on a detailed survey of the history of the church in Thessalonica from its first beginnings to the moment of writing. In the first chapter we have words of praise and thanksgiving for the remarkable progress made by the church, progress which is well known in Christian centres throughout Macedonia and Achaea. The second chapter is mainly concerned with Paul himself. Verses 1-12 give an account of his missionary work in Thessalonica with a good deal of emphasis on the purity of its motives and the unselfishness of its methods. Paul stresses the fact that when he was with them he was self-supporting, maintaining himself by working at his own trade. Then

1 2 Thess. iii. 6-15.
we have four verses on the relation of the Thessalonian com-
munity to the original Jewish-Christian community in Palestine: Macedonian Christianity is modelled on Judaean; and relations appear to be completely friendly. The only hostility to the spread of the gospel in lands outside Palestine comes from pagans or unconverted Jews. Paul's indignation with the latter is readily understandable when we remember that his missionary strategy, which was to use the synagogues of the Dispersion as landing-beaches for his assault on paganism, had been thwarted by the action of the synagogues themselves. Verses 17-20 explain, in somewhat cryptic terms ("Satan hindered us"), why Paul had not been able to pay another visit to Thessalonica, though plans had been made for it at least twice. Instead he had sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage them in their loyalty to their religion, so that none of them should be shaken by the troubles they were going through, since such things are involved in being a Christian. At a still earlier stage, when he was still with them, he had warned them of what he and they would have to bear; and his predictions had been fully justified by the event, as the Thessalonians knew only too well. After this short digression Paul returns to the situation as it appeared to him when he was at Athens. At length his anxiety became

1 Thess. ii. 18. Various explanations, none entirely free from objection, have been offered of the meaning of the phrase. They are admirably summarized in Frame's note in his commentary, p. 121. If we are not to leave the reference indefinite, we may perhaps think of some illness of Paul, comparing 2 Cor. xii. 7. See E. B. Allo's Commentary on 2 Cor. (Etudes Bibliques), pp. 313-23. The objection that it is unlikely that Paul, Silas, and Timothy would all be ill at the same time is met by the consideration that a visit by all three might well have to be postponed if the senior and most important member of the party fell ill.

2 I think that υπέρ τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν refers to the faithfulness of the Thessalonian Christians to their profession, as in 2 Thess. i. 4 where it is set alongside ἅμα ἀποκεφαλίστηκα, all the questions about the faith which disturbed us have been examined”. This seems to be enough to justify the rendering adopted in the text.
unbearable; and, since he could not go to Thessalonica himself, he sent Timothy to find out whether they were still faithful, or whether the tempter had seduced them and brought the labour of the missionaries to nothing.

It is clear that the afflictions described here are things that were happening some time before the writing of the present letter. In ii. 14 (ἐπάθετε), similarly, the persecution is something past, and apparently not continuing into the present. In iii. 4 it is something they had been duly warned about before it happened: then it happened, and now they know by their own experience what is involved in being a Christian in a pagan world. But nowhere in 1 Thess. is there anything to suggest that the persecution is still in progress. On the contrary, the passage, in which Paul speaks of Timothy’s return and report and of his own feelings on receiving it, suggests very strongly that the Thessalonian community is for the moment free from outside interference. This is borne out by the fact that the Apostle’s further counsels and exhortations all have to do with the internal discipline of the church and not with resistance to external enemies.

The trials and persecutions, which are a present threat in 2. Thess., are a thing of the past in 1 Thess. The inference is that 1 Thess. is the later document.

2. The internal difficulties of the Thessalonian church are in 2 Thess. a new development of which the writers of the letter have just heard. In 1 Thess. they are referred to as completely familiar to all concerned.

(a) In 2 Thess. iii. 11 ff. it is said:

We are informed that some of you are behaving irresponsibly, busybodies very busy doing nothing. Such persons we urge with all the authority that we have under the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down quietly to work and earn a

1 I take πίστιν in verse 5 to mean “faithfulness” as in verse 2.
2 1 Thess. iii. 1-5.
3 1 Thess. iii. 6-10, followed by a blessing in verses 11-13.
4 περίπερκόμενος. There is a play upon words in the Greek, which I have tried to represent in the translation. Theophrastus describes περίπερα in Char. xiii. His περίπερας is a fool, a fussy and inept meddler in other people’s affairs. At a later time other and more reprehensible qualities came to be attached to the word. For these see Farquharson’s commentary on Marcus Aurelius, vol. ii. pp. 490 f.
living for themselves. And you brethren who are already behaving properly—keep it up! If anyone refuses to obey this written instruction of ours, let him be a marked man, have nothing to do with him, that he may be shamed (into obedience). Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

All this is news which the writers of the letter have just learned about the troublesome minority at Thessalonica; and they give immediate instructions how the matter is to be dealt with. They also remind the members of the community that when they were at Thessalonica founding the church there, they had inculcated the virtues of honest work, both by precept and example; but they do not refer to any earlier letter, as we might expect, if 1 Thess. had preceded 2 Thess.

(b) When we turn to 1 Thess. we find references to the disorders dealt with in 2 Thess.; but they do not suggest that the disorders are a new thing. On the contrary, they allude to them as matters already well known to both the readers and the writers of 1 Thess. When the writers say, “we exhort you brethren, warn the irresponsible”, the full force of the exhortation is not appreciated unless we have in mind the things said in 2 Thess. iii. 11 ff. The same applies to the injunctions in 1 Thess. iv. 10-12. In this passage the writers refer to a specific injunction which they had previously given (καθὼς ὑμῖν παραγγέλαμεν, verse 11). It may well be that this is a reference to the injunction of 2 Thess. iii. 12 (τοῖς δὲ τοιούτοις παραγγέλλομεν, καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν Κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ).

The data concerning the internal difficulties at Thessalonica are best understood if we take 2 Thess. to be the earlier letter of the two.

3. The emphasis on the autograph closing greetings as a mark of genuineness in any letter claiming to be from Paul is pointless except in a first letter. The passage runs:

The greeting of me, Paul, in my own handwriting. This is the mark (of genuineness) in every letter (of mine). This is the way I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all (2 Thess. iii. 17 ff.).

That the warning against spurious letters purporting to come from the Apostle was not superfluous is clear from 2 Thess. ii. 2, where Thessalonians are warned against allowing themselves to

1 2 Thess. iii. 6-10.
be misled by such forged documents. The statement in iii. 17 was fully discussed by O. Roller. After careful consideration of similar passages in 1 Cor. xvi. 21; Gal. vi. 11; Col. iv. 18; Phil. v. 19, he concludes that the purpose of the note is to draw attention to the fact that there is no change of handwriting such as would appear if a secretary wrote the main body of the letter and the Apostle added only the concluding greetings. If Paul himself wrote the whole of 2 Thess. the purpose of the note in iii. 17 is to say: "This is my handwriting. I may not always write the whole letter myself, as I have done in this case; but I always write the closing greeting at least, and it will be in this handwriting. No letter without it is genuine." This intimation is very much to the point, if 2 Thess. is the first genuine letter of Paul to come to the Thessalonian church—they had already had at least one that was not genuine. The question may well be asked, why the Thessalonians should accept the document and the handwriting as Paul's merely because it claimed to be his. To this the answer will be that if, as has been suggested already, Timothy was the bearer of the letter, its authenticity would be independently guaranteed. The already known messenger authenticates the first letter: the already known handwriting will authenticate any future communication.

4. The statement (1 Thess. v. 1) that the Thessalonians have no need to be instructed about times and seasons is very much to the point, if the readers are already acquainted with the contents of 2 Thess. ii., where the time of the Parousia is dealt with at some length and in considerable detail.

So far I have taken the points made by Weiss, elaborating and adding to them where necessary. I now go on to some further considerations.

5. In 1 Thess. iv. 9-v. 11 we have a series of three didactic sections each introduced by the formula "Now concerning . . . ". This formula is familiar to us from 1 Cor. There it occurs six times, beginning with vii. 1, \( \text{peri } \delta \varepsilon \text{ ev } \gamma \nu \rho \alpha \gamma \nu \alpha \\

\footnote{Das Formular der Paulinischen Briefe (1933), pp. 187-91.}

\footnote{These are: iv. 9 \( \text{peri } \delta \varepsilon \text{ tis } \phi \lambda \alpha \delta \varepsilon \lambda \phi \iota \sigma s \), iv. 13 \( \text{peri } \tau \nu \text{ ko} \mu \mu \omega \mu \epsilon \nu \), iv. 1 \( \text{peri } \delta \varepsilon \text{ tv } \chi \rho \alpha \nu \),}
which makes it clear that the Apostle is replying to points raised in a letter from the Corinthians to him. An exact parallel from outside the Bible is to be seen in the letter of the Emperor Claudius to the citizens of Alexandria dated A.D. 41, less than a decade before the writing of 1 Thess. Here the Emperor says (ll. 52 f.) “Concerning the requests which you are anxious that I should grant I decide as follows”. The decisions follow. In line 66 we find, “Concerning the matter of the Senate . . .”, followed by an intimation of the steps being taken. We may therefore surmise that in 1 Thess. Paul is replying point by point to questions raised at Thessalonica and communicated to him either in a letter or verbally by Timothy. Now if 2 Thess. was taken to Thessalonica by Timothy, we should expect that the three points now to be dealt with will have arisen from statements made in 2 Thess. Let us see if this is the case.

(a) Concerning love of the brotherhood, you have no need of anyone to write to you; for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. What is more, you are putting it into practice in your treatment of all the brethren in Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to achieve even more, to make it your ambition to live quietly, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you; that your behaviour may win the respect of outsiders and you yourselves be independent.

In this passage the words “as we instructed you” may well be, as suggested above, a reference to the specific instruction given in 2 Thess. iii. 12. If that is so, the passage as a whole may be the answer to supplementary questions arising out of the whole passage 2 Thess. iii. 6-15. It may be, for example, that the strong measures proposed for dealing with the irresponsible minority were thought to be somewhat drastic, not least by the minority themselves. What becomes of the love of the brotherhood if members of it are to be treated in this way? The

1 P. Lond. 1912. The text of this important document was published with introduction, translation, and commentary by H. I. Bell in the volume Jews and Christians in Egypt (1924), pp. 1-37.
2 Cf. F. W. Beare, The First Epistle of Peter (1947), p. 84: “φιλαδελφία does not mean ‘brotherly love’ in general, but quite specifically ‘the love of the (Christian) brotherhood’, the mutual love which binds together the children of God in one family.”
3 Cf. M. Aur., i. 5, where these two things come in the reverse order: τὸ αὐτουργικὸν καὶ ἀπολύπραγμον.
4 1 Thess. iv. 9-12.
answer is that the Thessalonian community has shown, and is showing, that it understands very well what love of the brotherhood means, both within its own circle and in the wider field. There is, however, room for improvement; and that will come when it is realized by all that genuine love of the brotherhood includes not being parasitic on the brotherhood.

(b) The second section begins, “We do not wish you to remain ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are at rest, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.” It then goes on to explain that Christians who die before the Parousia will not be at any disadvantage when the Lord returns. On the contrary, they will have a certain priority: they will be raised from the dead first, and then those Christians who are still alive will be caught up along with them to meet the Lord in the air.

It seems clear that this is the answer to a question which must have run something like this: “What about the good Christians who die before the Second Coming?” Then we must ask in what circumstances such a question would be most likely to be asked, and surely the answer is that it would be when the Thessalonians had been told by Paul that the Parousia, which they were so eagerly expecting, would be deferred to the indefinite future. But this is precisely what is done in 2 Thess. ii. 1-12. The situation may be reconstructed thus.

There is at Thessalonica a young and enthusiastic community living in daily expectation of the dawning of the day of the Lord. They are being persecuted by enemies outside and troubled by eccentrics within. The question soon comes to be why the Parousia does not happen, and that carries with it the danger that being disappointed on this head the members will come to think that the whole gospel is a fraud or a delusion. The delay of the Parousia threatens the very existence of the community.

The statement in 2 Thess. ii. 1-12 meets this danger by saying what the “Little Apocalypse” in Mark xiii says: οὐπώ τὸ τέλος—“the end is not yet”¹. Before the Parousia there will be one last convulsive effort of the kingdom of Satan to assert

¹ Mark xiii. 7.
itself in the world: there will be a Satanic parousia, which will be tricked out with bogus signs and wonders and will lead many people astray. Then, and not till then, the genuine Parousia will take place and the power of evil be finally destroyed.

This answer, if accepted, clearly resolves the difficulties created by the delay of the Parousia; but it does so at the price of raising new questions. Among them is the question, "What about the brethren who may never live to see the delayed Parousia? Where is their share in the good time that is coming?"

This question is answered in 1 Thess. iv. 13-18. Those who have died in faith before the Parousia will be raised from the dead to share in it along with those who are still alive. Read in this way and in this order the two passages make perfect sense and illuminate one another.

(c) The third section is headed "Concerning the times and the seasons". Here again it is possible to frame the kind of question to which the statements in the section give an answer. And it is another supplementary question which would naturally arise out of the teaching on the delayed Parousia given in 2 Thess. A community waiting for an imminent Parousia is not greatly concerned about premonitory signs: it is the thing itself that is looked for. But if the thing itself is postponed and the watchers are told to expect something else first, then they are likely to ask for further details. The natural retort to "the end is not yet" is "how long then?" "What will be the signs that events are beginning to march, and when may we expect to see them?" Paul's answer is that no time-table can be drawn up. "The Lord will come like a thief in the night." This also favours the hypothesis that 2 Thess. preceded 1 Thess.

If this conclusion is well established we may reconstruct the order of events somewhat as follows.

A.D. 49 Paul sets out on the second missionary campaign, in the course of which he crosses from Asia Minor into Macedonia and there founds churches, including one at Thessalonica. After leaving the city he comes to Beroea and later goes on to Athens.

1 1 Thess. v. 1-11.
2 1 Thess. v. 2. This is the Q teaching on the final consummation, on which see my book The Sayings of Jesus (1949), pp. 114-48.
From Athens he sends word to Silas and Timothy to join him there. Later they arrive, probably bringing news of the trials and problems at Thessalonica, which they would no doubt have heard of at Beroea. They may even have brought a letter from the Thessalonian church to Paul, though we have no positive evidence for this. From Athens Timothy is sent to Thessalonica bearing 2 Thess. What Silas does at this juncture is unknown. All we know is that Paul went from Athens to Corinth alone.

Winter 49/50 Paul arrives in Corinth from Athens. Later he is joined by Silas and Timothy, the latter bringing a report on conditions at Thessalonica and a number of questions raised in the minds of the Thessalonian Christians by the message of 2 Thess. Paul then sends 1 Thess., partly to express his joy at the good news brought by Timothy and partly to deal with the questions that had been put to him. This letter should perhaps be dated early in A.D. 50.¹

¹ The question may be asked, why if 2 Thess. 1 Thess. is the correct order, the two letters appear in the order 1 Thess. 2 Thess. in the New Testament. The most probable answer is in one word—size. There seems to be a tendency to put the longest letters first in the Pauline corpus.