CHAPTER SIX

THE TWO THANKSGIVINGS
OF 2 THESS. 1:3ff. AND 2:13f.

1. Links with the Introductory Thanksgiving of 1 Thessalonians

The introductory thanksgivings of 2 Thessalonians have linguistic, stylistic and structural similarities with, as well as differences from, the thanksgiving period of 1 Thessalonians. Structurally speaking, the thanksgiving passage of chap. 1 is, like that of the first letter, an example of a mixed type. The principal verb (εὐχαριστεῖν ὑπείλομεν, 1:3; cf. 2:13) is followed by the customary personal object (τῷ θεῷ), temporal adverb (πάντως), pronominal object phrase (περὶ ύμῶν), causal ὅτι-clause, and καθώς-clause. These elements are characteristic of the second category (type Ib). V. 11, however, commences with εἰς δὲ καὶ προσευχόμεθα, and exhibits something of the structure of the first category (type Ia), with its verb of intercessory prayer, and its final ἵνα-clause introducing the object of the petition. The εἰς δὲ καὶ προσευχόμεθα takes up the initial εὐχαριστεῖν ὑπείλομεν of v. 3 in a similar way to what was noted in Phil. 1:9 (καὶ τοῦτο προσεύχομαι) and Col. 1:9 (διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς εὐχαριστοῦμεν).

The second occurrence of the first εὐχαριστεῖω-formula in 2 Thess. 2:13 is like that of the first letter at chap. 2:13, and is another example of the second category. Apart from the customary καθώς-clause it is a complete thanksgiving 1 with its principal verb (ἡμεῖς δὲ ὑπείλομεν εὐχαριστεῖν, 2:13), personal object (τῷ θεῷ), temporal adverb (πάντως), pronominal object phrase (περὶ ύμῶν), and causal ὅτι-clause. The two letters are thus similar in that their thanksgiving periods are examples of a mixed type. Further, 1 and 2 Thessalonians are the only letters in the Pauline corpus which boast of more than one εὐχαριστεῖω-formula. 2

The thanksgiving periods of the second letter have material and stylistic similarities with the introductory thanksgiving of 1 Thess-

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1 Contra Schubert, Form, pp. 29f.
2 Ephesians contains an introductory eulogy (1:3ff.), and an introductory thanksgiving (1:15ff.).
The principal verb of the thanksgivings appears in the first person plural (εὐχαριστεῖν ὑφέλομεν, 1:3; cf. 2:13), ἄσκεσα is used in these thanksgiving reports (1:3 and 2:13), πίστις and ἀγάπη appear as important motifs (1:3f.), as also does ὑπομονή (1:4), persecutions appear as a backdrop to the Thessalonians’ progress, and election as a ground for thanksgiving occurs in both letters (ὅτι ἐλάτῳ ὑμᾶς ὁ θεός, 2:13; cf. 1 Thess. 1:4).

At the same time significant structural differences can be observed. In 1 Thessalonians the basic thanksgiving formula is repeated twice (2:13 and 3:9), while there is only one repetition in the second letter. Further, it was shown above that in 1 Thessalonians there was simply one thanksgiving, extending over three chapters. In 2 Thessalonians the limits of the opening thanksgiving period are clearly defined, so that the passage extends from vv. 3-12. The words of chap. 2:13, ὑμεῖς δὲ ὑφέλομεν εὐχαριστεῖν κτλ., which are designed to recall the thanksgiving of chap. 1:3ff., nevertheless constitute a separate thanksgiving. We can thus speak of the thanksgivings of 2 Thessalonians, anticipating that the first (1:3-12) has an epistolary, didactic and paraenetic function as well as giving evidence of Paul’s pastoral concern, while the second is specifically related to the problematic passage about the man of lawlessness (chap. 2:1-12). The opening thanksgiving period of 2 Thessalonians, like others in the Pauline corpus, functions as an introduction to the body of the letter, while its counterpart in 1 Thessalonians constitutes the main body of that letter.

Other independent features are as follows: the use of εὐχαριστεῖν ὑφέλομεν (1:3; cf. 2:13) instead of εὐχαριστοῦμεν; an unusual paren-