Chapter 2
Early Christian Thinking on Hope

Martin I. Webber and Jacobus (Kobus) Kok

> *. . .neque solum cum laetitia vivendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi* (Leg. 2.14.36)
> *. . .we accept not only to live rationally with joy, but also to die with a better hope. (Text from http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/leg2.shtml#36, accessed December 6, 2019. See Aubert (1961, p. 213) for the context of the citation. All English translations are from the authors unless otherwise indicated.)*
> *Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα. (1Th 4:13) (All citations of the Greek New Testament are from Aland et al. (2012) unless otherwise indicated.)*
> *We do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, lest you grieve as the rest who do not have hope.*

Abstract Recent classical studies on hope have sought to correct a long-standing overemphasis on negative aspects of hope in antiquity, setting up possible correlations with early Christian and New Testament studies. These studies, however, have focused more on the contemporary relevance of hope and the particular emphases of certain texts, without taking into account classical advances. This chapter proposes a more integrative model to make up for this lack. The chapter consists of three

---

M. I. Webber (✉)
Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Research Associate at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa
e-mail: martin.webber@etf.edu

J. (K.) Kok
Research Center for Early Christianity, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium

University of Pretoria in South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

elements: a "bottom-up" approach, comprehensive textual analysis, and consideration of possible ancient frames. The aim is to facilitate understandings and nuances of hope. This model is then applied to the letter of 1 Thessalonians, arguably the earliest preserved Christian text. The results show to what extent the letter shares other developing conceptions and contexts related to hope, and how it specifically differs from them, with concluding observations for further study.

2.1 Introduction

The above citations illustrate two different perspectives on hope in the early imperial period of the Roman Empire arising in different sociological contexts. The first comes from Cicero, *De Legibus*, a political treatise written ca. 52 BCE. He extols the benefits of the Eleusinian mysteries, at least in part. The second occurs in a letter from the Apostle Paul to an early Christian community in Thessalonica, written about a century later (ca. 50 CE[1]). He reassures them regarding members who have died.

This chapter aims to assess recent research on the subject of hope in classics as well as theological and biblical studies, with a view to advancing our understanding of ancient perspectives. It begins by reviewing that research, showing that important gains have been registered, without much evidence of interaction between these two disciplines and with little methodological consensus (Sect. 2.1). Drawing on these gains, it then proposes a more integrative model analysing and correlating these (Sect. 2.2). It then applies this model to a specific case (Sect. 2.3) and concludes with observations for further study.

2.1.1 Classical Research on Hope

Recent studies on hope in classical studies have treated hope as an emotion as well as recognising the contextual complexity of the concept. Two in particular merit mention. The first, a collection of essays written to honour the classical scholar David Konstan, notes at the outset that "little has been written about the positive emotions in antiquity" with most recent studies focusing on negative ones: "the number of studies is plentiful, its range gives a lopsided impression, as if the ancients were interested in only negative emotions" (Caston and Kaster 2016, p. 1). This work seeks to redress the balance.

The second, later and broader in scope, launched De Gruyter's supplementary series on Ancient Emotions (Kazantzidis and Spatharas 2018a, b) in its Trends in Classic series. It aims to explore "Greek *elpis* and Latin *spes* in ancient literature, history, and art" (Kazantzidis and Spatharas 2018a, b, p. 1). The introduction to the

---

[1]See Hoppe (2016, pp. 63–64) and Malherbe (2000, pp. 71–75).

volume presents difficulties of definition, nuances, and to what extent ancient perceptions and conceptions differ from or correspond to modern ones. It classifies the "main semantic varieties of *elpis*" as follows: (1) "mere expectation" versus expectation of good or evil, (2) "neutral, propositional *elpis*", and (3) "desiderative and motivational *elpis*" with examples and implications of each variety. It then goes on to note semantic shifts from *elpis* to *spes* due to increasing Stoic influence, echoing findings of some of the book's constituent pieces. This implies that *spes* takes on more affective connotations than *elpis* and may be paired with different terms. After tracing this development in philosophical texts, the authors observe "By the time we reach Augustan Rome, religious belief in hope becomes increasingly ingrained in popular and cultic morality" (p. 26), becoming appropriated to the ideological ends of the regime. Thus they conclude, among other things, that "*spes* was exploited by the Romans to a considerable degree; such exploitation, alongside the emphasis placed on its divine qualities, indicates that, in contrast with the philosophical scepticism which surrounds the concept, the Romans did think of 'hope' also in a positive way" (p. 27). This framing of Greco-Roman concepts around hope represents a shift in interpreting how the ancients understood hope, not merely or predominantly as negative, but also with positive implications in societal and religious experience. It also demonstrates the effect of various societal, political, and religious contexts in developing ancient perspectives.

Two essays in the volume reflecting this shift have particular relevance for this article because of their potential resonance with early Christian contexts, those of Laurel Fulkerson (2018) and Angelos Chanoitis (2018). While Fulkerson primarily analyses the comic presentation of hope and the gods, along the way she offers two broader insights into classical Roman practice and understanding. First of all, she reminds the reader of the extent of worship of the divinity *Spes* in the late Republican period, drawing attention to a mid-third century dedication of a temple to her, with clear political and military associations. Along with other temples built and dedicated during this period "we can probably conclude that the gods selected for temple worship are those that appeal to the Roman people as a whole, or at least to the elite. Temples, then, are certainly political as well as religious events" (Fulkerson 2018, p. 163). A second observation comes at the conclusion of her article where she draws attention to "an ambiguity in the ancient treatment of hope" different from modern Western perspectives. This suggests a tendency to distinguish between what she terms "good" and "bad" kinds of hope. This tendency may explain, for example, the "very nuanced treatment of *elpis*" by the historian Polybius (second century BCE). "Or so I would explain his use of compounds of *elpis* (*euelpis*, *duselpis*, and the like), which seem to indicate a desire to securely distinguish between two kinds of hope," one more rational and the other more circumstantial (Fulkerson 2018, p. 167). Naturally, the question remains whether active worship of *Spes* and ambiguity over hope persisted into the early imperial period. Reference to this as a possible frame for interpreting early Christian (here Pauline) statements about hope should not be overlooked.

That question is partly answered in the affirmative by the essay of Chanoitis reviewing Greek epigraphic evidence (Chanoitis 2018). While he never cites an

inscription evoking or naming *Spes*,[2] he effectively traces development of hope and related concepts from the classical through to the Hellenistic and early imperial periods as reflected in inscriptions. His results may be summarized as follows (from Chanoitis 2018, pp. 362–363): (1) hopes and expectations are connected with "cognition and judgment" whether in the case of an athlete, untimely death of a child, recruitment of guards (in Tomis), or curses related to various trades. In these cases, peoples "have hope." (2) Hope appears around 100 BCE "for the first time. . .in public documents in the context of negotiations between unequal partners." Here Chanoitis notes these expressions of hope as showing increasing community and societal dependence on benefactors, especially the emperor. Patrons are those who "are hope." (3) Religious contexts reflect further development in the direction of "unconditional faith that may even defy reason" particularly in narrative accounts of miraculous healings, whether attributed to unknown deities or, for example, to Asclepius, among others. These people "receive hope" given to them by an external power. All of these formulations, with differing or parallel connotations, appear in early Christian texts, as will be shown later.[3]

These brief glimpses into ancient views of hope reflect complex views and associations. (1) Religious contexts evoking hope ambiguously exist in classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. (2) Hope is viewed as both "positive" and "negative" or "good" and "bad", depending on a number of variables. (3) Expression of hope is more than "merely" an emotion. (4) Hope, particularly in inscriptions, may be tied politically (and socially) to a benefactor, ultimately the emperor. (5) Parallel to that development, hope comes to be expressed in some religious contexts as a "given" from an external force or power.

2.1.2 Biblical and Theological Studies

Like their counterparts in classical studies, biblical and theological scholars in recent research tend to focus on insider interests. Regarding hope, that means either a synthetic treatment addressing a larger theological issue related to hope, often eschatology, or a study focusing on hope as presented in one particular document or context. The first type of study is represented by various writers. Kurt Erlemann (2014) has produced a monograph synthesizing New Testament data and concepts of hope to respond to contemporary concerns or uncertainties. This is equally the specific concern of Klaus-Peter März (2013). Even where Erlemann engages specific

---

[2]For this, see rather the essay of Andrew Stiles (2018) which gives evidence of continued care for the temple mentioned in Fulkerson's article. Based on the writings of Cicero, Stiles concludes "it seems probable that *spes* continued to be seen as a goddess in society more generally" (Stiles 2018, pp. 263–264, note 17).

[3]Chanoitis notes (2018, p. 362) that "Christianity promoted further the transformation of *elpis* from reasonable expectation to expression of dependence by associating *elpis* with unconditional faith," citing some later inscriptions.

texts, his primary interest seems to lie not in understanding hope in relation to its ancient contexts, but what meaning remains for readers today. More balanced in this regard is the volume edited by Jan van der Watt on New Testament eschatology (van der Watt 2011), but there, too, the (intrinsic?) relationship between hope and eschatology is assumed. See for example the "Preface" by van der Watt: "Eschatology focuses on specific events related to and expected at the 'end of times.'. . . . Hope is created (through, for instance, prophecy or prediction). . ." (van der Watt 2011, p. vi). A slightly different tack has been taken by two other scholars, yet again with an agenda set by contemporary questions. Matthew Hoskinson (2010) studies New Testament hope texts to arbitrate a centuries-old debate about the "assurance of salvation", as the title of the book indicates. David Neville confronts claimed tension between the peaceable mission of Jesus and a counter-emphasis on violent judgement or vengeance in five New Testament books (Neville 2013). Françoise Mies offers an exception to this pattern. Noting an apparent lacuna in the treatment of hope in Old Testament studies, she responds by proposing a broader biblical framework for renewed study of hope (Mies 2010, see the introduction, p. 705). Although limited in scope by its aim—to prepare future research on the theme throughout the Bible (Mies 2010, p. 705)—her proposal receives further attention in the following section on methodology. Other "hope" studies treat particular texts or books, most recently that of Christian Grappe (2018), who focuses on the book of Hebrews.[4] This narrow approach offers more occasions to interact with the context of the text in question, and sometimes with other relevant (ancient) texts. Grappe, for example, traces development of the "eschatological dimension" of hope from certain Old and Intertestamental Jewish texts to Hebrews (Grappe 2018, pp. 119–125). Overall, however, these studies give the impression of a closed, in-house conversation that appears oblivious to the larger historical and linguistic contexts in which views on hope are investigated.

2.2 Methodological Observations and Approach

The above review of recent studies on hope and related concepts from the perspectives of classical, and then from that of biblical scholars, leads to certain methodological questions. First, what evidence counts in examining hope in antiquity? Both classical and biblical studies tend to exclude or at best minimize the value of the texts of "the other" in their investigations, although linguistic and temporal overlap is evident. And indeed, as the opening reference from the Apostle Paul indicates, "our hope" is sometimes contrasted with "their (lack of) hope." Similar differentiation occurs among philosophical schools (for example, Epicureans versus Stoics), and the outlook regarding hope in (particularly funerary) inscriptions is varied (see

---

[4]Similarly Langford 2013 (on 1 Peter), Nelavala 2016 (on the parable of the vineyard and labourers), and Wright 2012 (on Revelation), among others.

Aubert 1961; Van Menxel 1983; and Chanoitis 2018). Given these differences, might it not be preferable to adopt what Kadlac terms a "bottom-up" approach to hope when comparing texts, and thus openness to differing perspectives in "other" relevant texts? In his words "my aim is to be somewhat more neutral with respect to the context in which virtuous hope might occur. . . .I thus approach hope from the 'bottom-up' as opposed to the 'top-down' in an effort to examine what can be said about hope as individuals tend to experience it in their daily lives" (Kadlac 2015, p. 338, n. 3, citing Barilan 2012, p. 167).

A related question then arises of how to relate various types and layers of data. In her recent reflection, Mies (2010) proposes a multi-faceted approach to framing a biblical study of hope. After anchoring it philosophically (pp. 705–706), she names three key elements for consideration: (1) orientation of the reflection, (2) modes of expression to examine, and (3) the role of reason in relation to hope (pp. 706–708). Regarding the first, hope is oriented on two axes, one temporal and the other relational. The temporal axis is the more complex, taking into account hope both as act, movement, or intention and hope as an object or end in view. The relational axis implies faith or confidence in another, hence the expression "to hope in." The character of the opposite of hope, despair or the absence of hope, temporally closed and self-referential, is also important here. In a given text, hope (or its opposite) may be expressed in three modes: in direct language, via symbols or metaphors, or in actions. This model offers a more comprehensive, if demanding, analysis of texts and contexts than is often articulated, in either group of studies surveyed above. Thus hope may well be expressed, for example, in the teachings of Jesus, whether through symbolic language in parables or by his acts of healing, even though ἐλπίζω [I hope] and ἐλπίς [hope] are never used of him in the canonical Gospels, a fact mentioned by Mies (2010, p. 716), but long ago observed by Joseph de Guibert (de Guibert 1913) and subsequent studies (including Spicq 1991). Finally, as already noted in some classical studies ([reference above]) hope and reason are connected in the sources, with the latter serving as support or motivation for the former (as one factor in distinguishing between "positive" or "negative" hope, say, for Polybius).

A third methodological issue relates to the contextual nature of the evidence, as we are mainly dealing with texts. As Ehrensberger reminds us: "Thus, the reading of a text, particularly, one like the Pauline letters, which emerges from a context and time not our own, requires a framework of reference and understanding which precedes this very same reading" (Ehrensberger 2007, p. 4). In other words, texts need to be located in, or correlated with, certain contexts in order to be properly interpreted.

These three concerns suggest the outline of our approach to reading and interpreting hope in the case study which follows. To the extent possible we adopt a "bottom-up" approach without prejudging the evidence. We will be sensitive both to the double orientation (temporal and relational) and various modes of expression of hope, not neglecting, where it occurs, the role of reason. For this particular case thirdly we propose and briefly evaluate some available contextual factors that could facilitate understanding of the text.

2.3   First Thessalonians as Case Study

In this section we will exegetically investigate through close reading as case study the earliest New Testament document known to us, namely the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. We focus on this New Testament text for various reasons. (1) Written to a predominantly if not exclusively non-Jewish audience (see Hoppe 2016, pp. 53–54; Míguez 2012, pp. 56–71; and Malherbe 2000, pp. 65–66), it facilitates a more bottom-up approach to hope, with less direct Jewish influence. (2) At least three recent studies claim hope as a central or recurring theme of the letter (Luckensmeyer 2009; Míguez 2012; and Milinovich 2014). (3) It contains limited examples of at least two of the three modes of expression of hope identified by Mies (lexical/semantic and metaphorical). (4) Historical Christian reception of the text also includes the thematic importance of hope (Thiselton 2011, noting at least nine references to hope among commentators from patristic until recent times). (5) Finally, various options of critical contextual correlation have been proposed to explain some of the letter's references to hope.

2.3.1   Lexical and Semantic Considerations

A starting point for lexical and semantic analysis recognizes the importance of identifying relevant semantic domains to be researched and words or expressions belonging to them. Cross-referencing Spicq (1991) and Louw and Nida (1989) yields the following linguistic matrix:

ἀναμένω, περιμένω, προσδέχομαι, ἐκδέχομαι: to remain in a place and/or state, with expectancy concerning a future event—"to await, to wait for." (L-N § 85.60); ἀπεκδέχομαι: to await eagerly or expectantly for some future event—"to look forward eagerly, to await expectantly." (L-N § 25.63); γρηγορέω: to remain awake because of the need to continue alert—"to stay awake, to be watchful." (L-N § 23.72); ἐκδέχομαι; ἐκδοχή: to expect something to happen, often implying waiting—"to expect, expectation." (L-N § 30.53); προσέχω, ἐπέχω: to be in a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately—"to pay attention to, to keep on the lookout for, to be alert for, to be on one's guard against." (L-N § 27.59); ἐλπίζω, ἀπελπίζω: to expect, with the implication of some benefit (L-N § 30.54), προελπίζω: to hope in a prior manner, either beforehand or prior to someone else (L-N § 25.60).[5]

Application to 1 Thessalonians identifies the following texts to analyze (with corresponding domains): 1:3 (ἐλπίς, L-N 25.59, 61, 62); 1:10 (ἀναμένω, L-N 85.60); 2:19 (ἐλπίς); 4:13 (ἐλπίς); 5:6, 10 (γρηγορέω, L-N 23.72) and 5:8 (ἐλπίς). Thus

---

[5]The antonymic expression for despair ἀνελπίστως ἔχειν [to be in despair] and the substantive ἀπόγνοια [despair] do not occur in the NT, although the condition of being without hope is mentioned twice: 1 Th 4:13 and Eph 2:12, see below.

these terms are grouped under basically three domains by Louw and Nida: "To hope, look forward" (25.59–64), "Sleep, waking" (23.66–77, in this case the latter), and "Remain or stay in space" (85.55–64, in this case "with expectancy of a future event"). What does Paul communicate regarding hope in each case?

1:3 and 1:10. In the first context (1:3) one notes the following associations: (1) ἐλπίς with πίστις [faith] and ἀγάπη [love], marking the earliest surviving Christian example citing hope as a virtue (see Rom 5:1–5; 1 Cor 13:13; Col 1:4–5); (2) also qualified by τῆς ὑπομονῆς [of endurance], a term semantically related to ἐλπίς elsewhere by Paul (Rom 5:4; 15:4[6]); (3) followed by a genitive designating the object of hope τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [in our Lord Jesus Christ] without however explicating here how that is understood (see similarly Col 1:27; 1 Tim 1:1; 1 P 1:3), that is, whether present or future; (4) taken up again at the end of the letter (5:8) via a military metaphor, to which we return below. The second (1:10) is more straightforward. It confirms by reports of others (1:8) both the past conversion of the Thessalonians through Paul and the double purpose of that conversion (a) present: to serve (δουλεύειν) the living and true God (1:9), and (b) future: to await (ἀναμένειν) the coming of the Son of God "from heaven." The first reference underscores the relation between the readers and the wider society, connected to a relation with Christ, the second focuses exclusively on the vertical relation with God and Christ.

2:19. This use of ἐλπίς comes closest to an emotional expression, since it refers directly to the readers along with other positive epithets, first in another triad (ἐλπὶς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος [hope or joy or crown]) and then immediately, in a parallel sentence, a pair of terms (repeating χαρὰ but adding δόξα [glory]). The intervening clause ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ [before our Lord Jesus when he appears] orients the first occurrence, as with 1:10 above, towards the future.[7] Standing in parallel with the second χαρὰ, designation of the readers as the δόξα[8] of Paul requires a present temporal reference. Thus regarding hope one notices in these first two passages both temporal and relational axes and, to the extent that Paul recalls earlier instruction, the role of reason in his remarks. These associated terms reflect an emotional relationship to Paul.

4:13. This passage presents the sole negative reference to ἐλπίς, via the expression ἐλπίδα (μὴ) ἔχειν [(not) to have hope], in the letter. This expression occurs

---

[6]See also de Guibert (1913, pp. 566–569), for similar LXX and other NT associations.

[7]This may also be the case with mention of στέφανος [crown], see 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12; 1 P 5:4.

[8]Malherbe (2000, p. 186) notes a similar manner of one person describing another by Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.1.1 [ca. 430] and particularly Seneca [ca. 63–64 CE] of Lucilius, *Epistle* 20.1, also there linked to joy and hope: "Si vales et te dignum putas qui aliquando fias tuus, gaudeo; mea enim gloria erit, si te istinc ubi sine spe exeundi fluctuaris extraxero." [If your health is good and you consider yourself worthy of becoming at last your own master, I rejoice. For the glory will be mine if I can drag you from the waves among which you are being tossed, with no hope of getting out.] (Text from http://thelatinlibrary.com/sen/seneca.ep2.shtml, accessed December 13, 2019).

seven times elsewhere in the New Testament. Of those, (1) one has no clear object in view (Rom 15:4), (2) others refer to present and or temporal expectations (2 Cor 3:12; 10:15), (3) one is semantically parallel to 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (Eph 2:12), and (4) three have God or Christ as object, two in the context of the Second Coming (Acts 24:15; Hb 6:18 and 1 Jn 3:3). Thus it is plausible that Paul here refers to the future Parousia, a reference that becomes more explicit as the passage unfolds (effectively from 4:14–5:11).[9]

Understanding of this passage depends on the response to three questions: (1) Why does Paul assume the readers are grieving (μὴ λυπῆσθε)[10] about those who have died (οἱ κοιμώμενοι)[11]? (2) Who are the "rest" (οἱ λοιποὶ, see 5:6, 20)? (3) In what sense do they lack hope?

Taking each of the questions in order: (1) Paul does not deny the possibility of grieving over loss (see Rom 12:15). It is the manner of grieving that concerns him (καθὼς). After mentioning other possible reasons that the readers might be grieving (Epicurean-like thinking, influence of Gnostic teachers, or lack of earlier Pauline instruction on the resurrection of Christians), Malherbe (2000) suggests (p. 284) the difficulty lay in bringing "the apocalyptic expectations of resurrection and Parousia together into a systematic view". Paul may have feared that upon the death of loved ones, the Thessalonians might grieve as non-Christians grieved.[12] The challenge that Paul had, was how to encourage the Thessalonians by bringing together two notions, the eschatological resurrection[13] and the Parousia (Malherbe 2000, p. 284). Paul had to do so, because he had to counter erroneous apocalyptic discourses which seem to have circulated in the midst of the faith community (1 Th 5:1–3).

We also see in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, written circa 54–55 CE, that Paul addressed the importance of the resurrection and the implication it had for those who had already died. Schnelle (2009, p. 347) correctly remarks that by the time Corinthians was written, there seems to have been many cases where people had died before the expected Parousia (cf. 1 Cor 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 29, 51). Nevertheless, Paul maintained a high expectation of the imminent return of Christ (1 Cor 7:29). In fact, it seems that Paul believed that he would still be alive when Jesus Christ returned (cf. 1 Th 4:17; 1 Cor 15:51–52 [πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα]). In 1 Corinthians 15:17–19 he says: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be

---

[9]See further on 4:13–18 the 19-page excursus of Luckensmeyer (2009, pp. 192–211), citing recent studies to date. "Parousia" refers to the final return of Christ to earth at the end of time.

[10]Use of μὴ is standard with non-indicative forms. With ἵνα it indicates negative purpose (Perschbacher 1995, p. 105).

[11]For Jewish precedents referring to death as sleep, see Hoppe (2016, p. 261, n. 176). He notes also that D. Luckensmeyer (2009, p. 213 ff.) gives pagan and Jewish examples, so the readers could have understood the reference.

[12]For such reactions see Van Menxel (1983, pp. 152–156) and Chanoitis (2018, pp. 352–257).

[13]See in this regard also 1 Corinthians 15:19.

pitied" (NIV). Here Paul may also be reacting against some form of a radical realized eschatology (Malherbe 2000, p. 369).

In the first century, several discourses circulated in Judaism that speculated on what would happen at the end of days to those who are still alive and to those who had already passed on (e.g. 4 Ezra 13:24; Pss Sol 17:44). In 4 Ezra 5:41–45 (cf. also 2 Bar 30:1–3), we see that certain Jews believed that the living and the dead would arrive simultaneously on judgement day. Malherbe argues that Paul draws on this kind of discourse and provides a new perspective. For the first time in Early Christian writings, he brings Parousia and apocalyptic resurrection expectations together. However, these notions already existed in the Pre-Pauline, Christ-following movement. The problematic challenge in Thessalonica was that people who Paul refers to as being false teachers preached a calming message of peace and security in the contemporary age, which Malherbe says, was "derived from apocalyptic speculation about times and seasons" and which "would defer the Parousia or at least lessen the sense of crisis associated with an expectation of the immanent end." When the notion of the Parousia was deferred, it had an impact on identity, ethos, and hope in the sense that the apocalyptic awareness was softened and lost its urgency. The Thessalonians fell into a form of grief and despair directly associated with a displaced sense of hope, displaced due to a new understanding of identity with reference to the Parousia.

(2) The second question may be answered by reference to its other occurrences in the letter (5:6, 20). These can only be those who are "outsiders" (that is, ignorant of Pauline instruction about the resurrection. They are, metaphorically speaking, those who "get drunk" and "sleep" at "night," a description of outsiders (see 4:12 τοὺς ἔξω).

(3) More difficult to answer is how these outsiders would have been understood by Paul as "not having hope." Among numerous proposed answers, three are presented here.

(a) Many scholars in their commentaries on 1 Thessalonians 4:13 are using examples to suggest that, outside of Christianity, there existed a general hopelessness as evident in literary and epigraphic data. For instance, F. F. Bruce (1982, p. 96) refers to Theocritus (*Idyll* 4.42) "hopes are for the living; the dead are without hope" (ἐλπίδες ἐν ζώοισιν, ἀνέλπιστοι δὲ θανόντες). The difficulty with this view is that it neglects a wide range of data and research, some recent, some less so (see above and Hoppe 2016, p. 262, n. 184) showing that belief and hope in an afterlife was widespread in the classical, Hellenistic, and early imperial periods.

(b) Malherbe (2000, pp. 281–283), however, confirms indirect evidence supporting non-Jewish belief and hope in the afterlife, most notably in the writings of Plutarch. This, as well as the above data, suggests a certain selectivity on the part of (some) biblical scholars in reading ancient Greek and Latin evidence. As already noted, he argues that such "lack of hope" was due either to lack of or misunderstanding of Pauline instruction relating to the apocalyptic events and the (delayed) Parousia of Christ.

(c) A related but nuanced alternative explanation is offered by Richard Ascough (2004). Considering similarities between the Thessalonian Christian community and voluntary associations, he links these to the social implications of funerary practices. As he notes with supporting evidence "[b]urial and group belonging cannot be

separated" (Ascough 2004, p. 518). Furthermore, "Certain voluntary associations are implicated in the social construction of fictive kinship" (Ascough 2004, p. 520), comparable to language used by Paul in 1 Thessalonians. He, like Malherbe, also points to evidence that for many non-Jews, death was not considered the end, but hope persisted. "Some non-Christians did hold onto a hope for postmortem reunion with loved ones" (Ascough 2004, p. 522). If one accepts his insight of the community importance attached to burials and group belonging and, with Ascough, supposes that for the readers death of community members may have threatened or disrupted this sense of solidarity, Paul may in part intend to reassure the living members of the group that this solidarity, although temporarily disrupted, was not the final word and that the dead remained part of the community. Thus all would benefit from the promised hope of reunion with the Lord (1 Th 4:17). Options b and c are not mutually exclusive and have the advantage of taking into account a broader range of ancient evidence than that of option a. Furthermore, they highlight the relational dimension of hope between Paul and his readers.

Míguez also stresses a gap between believer and unbeliever in understanding about the future, rather than what he terms a simple "religious difference" over beliefs in the afterlife (Míguez 2012, pp. 134–135): "Those without hope are those who ignore the realization of the *parousia*, those who lack an alternative vision, those who see only the circularity (or at most, the linearity) of history and ignore the possibility of a historical rupture, the dialectics of the unexpected—in political terms, of revolution, but in Pauline terms, of the messianic" (p. 135, emphasis original).

5:6,10. Twice in this section of the letter Paul appeals to the readers to join him in "staying awake" (γρηγορέω). For our purposes, the question is on what temporal axis this appeal should be situated—present and/or future. This depends, in part, under which semantic domain these occurrences are situated.[14] Relationally, however, a clear contrast is marked between the expected comportment of the readers and that of "the rest," that is, those outside the community:

Readers and Paul	Outsiders
υἱοὶ φωτός. . .καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας [sons of light. . .and sons of day] (v. 5)	[υἱοὶ] νυκτὸς. . .σκότους [(sons of) night. . .darkness] (vv. 4–5)
γρηγορῶμεν [let us be alert] (v. 6)	καθεύδουσιν[15] [they are sleeping] (vv. 6–7)
νήφωμεν [we are/let us be sober] (vv. 6, 8)	μεθύουσιν [they are drunk] (v. 7)

[14]Louw-Nida identify three interpretations of this verb in NT usage: "stay awake" (23.72) and "be alive" (23.97) as "Sleep, Waking," and "be alert" (27.56) as "Be ready to learn, Pay attention." Metaphorical pairing suggests "stay awake" but also may include "be alert", as both καθεύδω [I sleep] and γρηγορέω [I am alert] represent states of ζάω [I live] for Paul (5:10).

[15]In this connection we note a double use of the metaphor for "sleep." On the one hand, it refers to those who have already died (4:13–15; 5:10), but who nevertheless still belong to the community. On the other, it characterizes those unaware of the coming "revolution" or disruption, in the terms of Míguez (5: 6–7), the "rest" or outsiders.

Persistent use of the present tense in the above contrast shows that Paul intends to refer to the present conduct of readers versus outsiders. It constitutes, according to Míguez, a "decision concerning the future...made in the present, not in the sense that in the future they will receive the award for the performance of today, but because in this the future is anticipated" (Míguez 2012, p. 150).[16] Again Paul makes an explicit link between faith, hope, and love, the three virtues which have characterized their behavior up to now (compare 1:3 and 5:8), but this time via a military metaphor (θώραξ, περικεφαλαία), discussed in the following section. Of the three, hope occupies the most prominent position of emphasis (Malherbe 2000, p. 298). And as this part of the letter shows, for Paul hope operates relationally on different levels and with different types of connections or oppositions.

This overview of language and linguistic associations over hope in 1 Thessalonians has led to the following partial conclusions: (1) Regarding the temporal axes, they concern both the present and the future of Paul and his readers. (2) Relationally, Paul reserves hope for his readers, insofar as they have understood his (reiterated?) teaching regarding the Parousia and its role in safeguarding and/or restoring community solidarity. (3) Hope is expressed in various ways in a continuum from affection to "reasoned expectation." (4) "Maintenance," or retention of the kind of hope promoted in the letter, depends on the one hand on the reader's maintaining ethical boundaries in relation to outsiders and, on the other, on future divine initiative. To this extent, full realization of hope lies beyond the reach of the readers.

2.3.2 *Symbolic and Metaphorical Language Related to Hope*

As already noted, in addition to specific language about hope or its absence, 1 Thessalonians also includes different metaphorical or symbolic references to hope, principally of three types: family or kinship language, the stark contrast between light and darkness, and a specific metaphor related to military attire.

2.3.2.1   Family Language

Family or "kinship" language employed by Paul pervades the letter. As Meeks observes "both the number and intensity of the affective phrases in the Pauline letters are extremely unusual" (Meeks 1983, p. 86). These include, among others, Paul as a gentle nurse caring for children (1 Th 2:7), with affectionate attention (2:8), how much he missed and longed to see them (2:17), as expressed in the following section of the letter (2:17–3:11), a section on brotherly affection (4:9ff), and an

---

[16]According to Hoppe (2016, p. 304) a watchful attitude also characterizes the morally aware (and presumably responsible) person in Philo and Plutarch.

engagement with their grieving over those who had died (4:13–5:11). No fewer than 17 times in a few paragraphs he addresses them as ἀδελφοὶ (for the first time in 1:4 and the last in 5:25), more than in any other Pauline letter except 1 Corinthians. Although such language was not uncommon in Greek associations (see Ascough 2004, p. 520; Meeks 1983, p. 87), here combined with the change in the readers' social situation, it functions as part of forging their new community identity, including confession of the one God as Father (5x: 1:1,3; 2:11; 3:11,13). "Within the immediate task of Paul and his associates...confession of the one God had as its primary implication the consciousness of unity and singularity of the Christian groups themselves." (Meeks 1983, p. 169). Concerning the relational dimension of hope, this would serve to redress a situation "where they had been ostracized by their natural families" as is often supposed (de Villiers 2011, p. 327).

2.3.2.2 Light Versus Darkness

The prevalence of this dualistic metaphor in the ancient world makes it difficult to posit an origin for Paul, whether in Judaism or in Graeco-Roman thought.[17] As suggested above, its primary function in 1 Thessalonians is to strengthen the boundary between the readers and outsiders, with a view to promoting hope via ethical conduct. Echoes of a similar dualism are often cited in relation to the Qumran texts (Hoppe 2016, p. 301; Míguez 2012, p. 151; Malherbe 2000, p. 294). Noteworthy in the above named collection is the essay of Loren Stuckenbruck (Stuckenbruck 2011), coordinating such dualism with human nature in four second-Temple Jewish documents that antedate Qumran. As with 1 Thessalonians, these dualistic structures "played an important role in demarcating the identities of groups who saw themselves in religious conflict with either the conventionally wicked or with specific opponents. Ethical, cosmological, and anthropological dualisms were developed and deployed for this purpose, often in combination" (Lang et al. 2011, p. 13). The resemblance in strategy between these texts and 1 Thessalonians is remarkable.

2.3.2.3 Military Attire in 1 Thessalonians 5:8

Would it be going too far—or too simplistic—to follow initially the suggestion of Míguez that here Paul posits "a contrast with the arms of the Roman soldier, on which "the peace and security" (on which see further below) of the empire are based"

---

[17]See the most recent relevant essays in Lang et al. (2011) although not specifically socially and ethically focused.

(Míguez 2012, p. 151)? Similar metaphors appear elsewhere in Pauline literature (see especially Rom 13:12 and Eph 6:11–17).[18] In Romans the reference is more general (τὰ ὅπλα τοῦ φωτός [weapons of light]), yet also connected to the metaphor of light and darkness, and linked to ethical exhortation (Rom 12:13–14). However, in Ephesians the number of weapons named and their function are different, as well as their associations. In 1 Thessalonians, the θώραξ [breastplate] is πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης [of faith and love], but in Ephesians τῆς δικαιοσύνης [of righteousness], while the περικεφαλαία [helmet] in one case (Thessalonians) is ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας [hope of salvation], yet in the other (Ephesians) "merely" τοῦ σωτηρίου [of salvation]. Furthermore, both the danger and the types of weapons differ in the two contexts. For the readers of Thessalonians, the immediate threat comes from outsiders ignorant of the coming judgment (1 Th 5:1–3), while in Ephesians it is supernatural evil (Eph 6:11–12). By contrast, Satan is mentioned only once in 1 Thessalonians (2:18), somewhat cryptically. Comparative analysis of the use of the metaphor in all three contexts brings to light the specific emphases of the text under study: hope as virtue, along with love, and faith, faced with diametrically ethical opposition, with a view to obtaining deliverance at the Parousia.

These three groups of metaphors share a common function in relation to hope: to strengthen the community's new identity and focus relationships both internally and in dependence upon God, for the present and for the future.

Thus whether through specific expressions, conceptual associations, or metaphorical language and symbols, Paul references hope in 1 Thessalonians in various ways. For him, in temporal terms it includes present and future dimensions. Relationally, it concerns both insiders (among Christians) and, somewhat more negatively outsiders, as well as the vertical relationship with God and Christ. Surprisingly, Paul does not in this letter directly relate hope to reason.[19] The one question remaining is what frame might be most helpful for furthering our understanding of how hope functions in the letter.

2.4   Framing 1 Thessalonians in Context

Taking a step back from close analysis of the text, we now turn to look at some proposed frames for the letter. This part of our study takes as a point of departure the expression "peace and security" (εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, 1 Th 5:3), relating it in turn to hope, Epicureanism, Roman imperial ideology, and the apocalyptic perspective of Paul. All three groups (Christians, Epicureans, and Roman imperialists) held it as a kind of ideal, but worked it out in different ways.

---

[18]Commentaries allow for a generally accepted metaphor in Graeco-Roman texts, while also noting in 1 Thessalonians a specific link to LXX Isaiah 59:17.

[19]Contrary to Polybus, see above (Fulkerson 2018). This suggests matter for further study in other Pauline or New Testament texts, such as Romans 5 or the opening concatenation of 2 Peter.

2.4.1 Paul and Epicureanism

Malherbe (2014, p. 367) points out that Paul's relationship with Stoicism is well known. However, rather recently Malherbe and others have turned their attention to studying Paul's use of Epicurean elements. Malherbe (2014, p. 369) brings a new perspective to the table by proving that Paul in fact was injecting into his Christ-following Jewish apocalyptic framework a slogan ("peace and security") that belonged to Epicurean discourse. Malherbe for example turns to Lucretius (*De. Rer. Nat.* 5.1120–1130) and Epicurus (*Kyriai Doxai* 14) to show that the Epicureans strove to live an unobtrusive life in the company of intimate friends in a way which drew boundaries between themselves and their neighbors who strove ambitiously forward in life. For them, ἀσφάλεια [security] is a result of a quiet life (ἡσυχίας) and is expressed in some form of escape or withdrawal from the world (Epicurus, *Kyriai Doxai* 14) into their own created symbolic universe where they focus on what matters in the here and the now (Malherbe 2014, p. 370 and n. 18). According to this view, some would argue that in this symbolic universe all that matters is the present, and the people with whom you surround yourself, and there is no hope beyond the here and the now. There is also no fear of the gods or of some form of judgment at the end of time. Happiness is found in the context of the quiet retraction from the world amongst fellow brothers/sisters in the here and the now. But even this gives no security. Malherbe (2014, p. 370) quotes Epicurus (*Kyriai Doxai* 13): "There is no profit in attaining security (ἀσφάλεια) in relation to people, if things above and things beneath the earth and indeed all in the boundless universe remain matters of suspicion."

The Epicureans wanted to provide an alternative to their contemporaries' ambitious drive that prized φιλοτιμία [love of honor]. But the excessive drive for honor and social reputation was seen at the time as a virtue contributing to the common good (Malherbe 2014, p. 371). From this perspective, the Epicureans, with their attitude of withdrawal from the world of honor and public recognition, were frowned upon by contemporaries like Plutarch (see *Tranq. An.* 465F-466A, quoted by Malherbe 2014, p. 372 n. 27). Malherbe argues that Paul saw this withdrawal from the world as problematic (from a Christ-following perspective). In fact Paul motivates believers in all of his letters to be actively engaged in this life, and to show sensitivity to each other and to outsiders (cf. Gal 6:10). Malherbe correctly shows in his careful exegesis of Thessalonians that the καὶ before φιλοτιμεῖσθαι (in 1 Th 4:11) is explicative and that their love for each other should increase in at least three ways as expressed by the complementary infinitives that follow:

- ἡσυχάζειν [to live a quiet life]
- πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια [to mind one's own affairs]
- ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ἰδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν [to work with (your own) hands]

These concepts were not strange in ancient texts, in fact they were used by Stoics and are typical, specifically, of Epicureans who aimed to live a quiet life and tend to their own affairs. However, it is interesting that Paul here introduces an adverbial

purpose clause with the word ἵνα, i.e., that the purpose of all these actions should lead to proper behavior toward outsiders. This idea is very un-Epicurean. Now, what is interesting is that Paul is "consuming" words and concepts already found in the Epicurean discourses (Seneca, *Ep.* 68.10). But unlike the Epicureans, Paul wants his community to continue being actively engaged with the world. In fact, their behavior should lead to positive relationships with outsiders. They were not called (as would be the case with Epicureans) only to focus their attention on insiders, but also to engage practically with outsiders. They are not called to withdraw from the world with an inwardly directed gaze, but to live in a way that would be attractive to outsiders (Malherbe 2014, p. 373). This is a missional responsibility. For that reason they are not to stop working, but to work with their own hands, just as Paul continued to do while among them (1 Th 2:8–9). Giving up on this life, or quietly turning inward like the Epicureans, because one has some form of imminent hope of Christ's return, is not what Paul had in mind for the community of faith. Rather, they should be sober and awake (1 Th 5:3). This idea also appears in moral philosophers such as Plutarch (*Princ. Iner.* 781D; ibid., p. 373 n. 35). The Epicureans believed that one must "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die". In un-Epicurean fashion, Paul preached that one must sober up and be self-controlled (νήφωμεν in 1 Th 5:6), for the end of times, which will bring judgement, is imminent. This contrasts with the Epicurean notion of security (ἀσφάλεια) which Paul sketches as being a false and displaced form of security. Those who would preach such a message would be nothing less than false teachers and false prophets. Malherbe (2014, p. 374) is correct when he points out that Paul here reminds believers in Thessalonica of their eschatological identity that is to separate themselves from those not belonging to the in-group. He urges them not to be asleep like the rest (οἱ λοιποὶ) but be sober and ready. The rest, Paul says, have no hope (καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα in 1 Th 4:13; cf. also Eph 2:12). However, the moment one becomes aware of one's eschatological identity, one will begin to act soberly, Paul insists. Pauline insiders are clearly distinguished from outsiders, the "in" from the "out" indicating the boundary markers, most clearly expressed in 1 Thessalonians 5:6–8, as this article has shown.

Paul is clearly making use of words and concepts which circulated in the *Umwelt*, and which his readers would have recognized as being rather strongly un-Epicurean. Subsequently we see that Christians would purposefully try to differentiate themselves from Epicureans and, in their writings, show where the boundary lines were (see Schmid 1962, pp. 880–883, referred to by Malherbe 2014, p. 375 n. 43). In this early Pauline letter, we see how Paul carefully delineates the boundaries and tries to steer the young believers in the right direction, helping them in the process of constructing their own identity and boundaries.

2.4.2   Paul Countering Roman Imperial Ideology?

Another argument in research is that Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians, was countering Roman Imperial ideology by providing a form of hope rooted in the

Christ-event. In the past, scholars like Jewett (1986, pp. 124–125), Crossan and Reed (2004, p. 166), and others (such as Ehrensberger 2007) have drawn a parallel between Paul's notion of εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια and the Roman *Pax Romana* political slogan *pax et securitas* (peace and security).[20] According to this approach, Paul was countering well-known Roman Imperial ideological notions of peace and security. With his anti-Imperial message, Paul challenged the notion that Caesar was the great benefactor who provided peace and should be honored accordingly (as demonstrated by, among others, Chanoitis 2018, see above). According to Jewett (1986, p. 124), it was particularly the economically disadvantaged lower classes (whom the believers represented) who were "victims of this process of political co-optation." Kathy Ehrensberger (2007, pp. 10–11) argues that the Empire was strongly hierarchical and autocratic and it was clear that Caesar was the Father of the Fatherland, the Savior and the Great Peacemaker. Thus, when Paul claims that God is father and that God brought peace, he is directly going against and resisting the prevailing imperial discourses at that time. One is to have hope in God, not Caesar. This is certainly a point that the author of Luke-Acts picks up on in Acts 17:7. We do not have historical evidence that there was a synagogue or strong Jewish presence in Thessalonica, but we do have literary evidence created by the author of Acts. In Acts 17:7 the author places Paul and Silas engaging with Jews for 3 weeks in a synagogue (Acts 17:1–3). Acts states that many came to faith and joined Paul and Silas. Amongst them were devout Greeks and some of the leading women (Acts 17:4). Then, apparently, the Jews became jealous (cf. religious competition) and formed a mob in the marketplace to set the city in uproar (Acts 17:5). Eventually Jason, who housed/entertained Paul and Silas, was dragged in front of the city authorities by local people shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." (Act 17:6–7 NIV). Because of this uproar, the believers decided to immediately send Paul and Silas to Berea where there was also a synagogue in which Paul and Silas immediately went to preach.

Current archaeological and literary evidence calls into question the widely accepted claim of the ubiquity and influence of the emperor cult in certain areas of the Roman Empire (Miller 2010). For that reason one must also consider alternative explanations. To this end, the insights of Malherbe discussed above would also need to be considered seriously (and perhaps seen to be more likely), namely, that Paul was providing an alternative perspective on hope which could be contrasted to the forms of hope available in the *Umwelt*.

In our opinion, whichever direction one opts for, whether Paul was reacting against Epicurean discourse or anti-Imperial discourse, the point would still be that Paul introduces an apocalyptic notion and connects that with imminent eschatology and resurrection thought. What is unique is the way in which Paul places the focus on the resurrection of Jesus and on believers' future resurrection, with the

---

[20]See more recently Harrison (2016).

implications thereof for the early Christian conception of hope. Christian hope has a different content and focus. Bruce (1982, p. 97) says:

> The reality of his [Jesus'] death points to the divine miracle accomplished in his resurrection. His people's resurrection is a corollary of his, and therefore their death can be described as 'falling asleep' in the new Christian sense of that figure, but there was no precedent for *his* resurrection. 'If we believe that Jesus died and rose again,' the fullness of Christian hope follows. The continuing life of his people depends on, and is indeed an extension of, his own risen life (cf. Rom 8:11; also John 14:19, 'because I live, you will live also').

2.5   Conclusion

This chapter has given some indication of how studies on ancient views of hope have advanced, while suggesting the need for classical and biblical scholars to benefit from each other's results. Taking some cues from these studies, it proposed an integrative model to more adequately relate the relevant data and then applied this model to a close reading of 1 Thessalonians. Various associations with hope and its possible framing played a role for Paul in adjusting boundaries both inside and outside the community of his readers. In this regard, Paul reflects the movement in antiquity from reflection on individual to a stronger focus on the communal implications of hope. Its application to other early Christian texts awaits further study. We close with one insight in this regard.

From the perspective of the construction of social identity it could be interesting in the future to reflect on the way in which boundaries between insiders and outsiders were being created and in what direction Paul (and other early Christian leaders) wanted believers to move.[21] From the textual evidence it is clear that the Thessalonian believers had to deal dialogically with different discourses and social identities. Not only were some of them former pagans who turned to the true, living God (1 Th 1:9), but they were also influenced by a discourse on eschatology that would have had a direct influence on their identity. Eschatology and resurrection influence the future view of the self and from such a future view, the self from the present is pulled towards the (possible) future reality. If the conceptual frame of future reality and the future self changes, the current existential view of self will also change.

---

[21]The field of social identity research in New Testament Studies is a growing subfield as seen in recent and forthcoming social identity commentaries. Much research in this field could still be done. See in this regard Kok (2014) and Brawley (2020).

References

Aland, K., Aland, B. Karavidopoulous, J., Martini, Carlo M., & Metzger, B. (Eds.) (2012). *Novum Testamentum Graece (BNT)*. 28th ed. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. BibleWorks. v.9.

Ascough, R. (2004). A question of death: Paul's community-building language in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. *Journal of Biblical Literature, 123*(3), 509–530.

Aubert, J.-M. (June, 1961). La voix de l'espérance dans l'âme grecque antique. *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé, 2*, 205–216. https://doi.org/10.3406/bude.1961.3945

Barilan, Y. M. (2012). From hope in palliative care to hope as a virtue and a life skill. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology, 19*, 165–181.

Brawley, R. L. (2020). Luke: A social identity commentary. T&T Clark.

Bruce, F. F. (1982). *1 & 2 Thessalonians*. Word Biblical Commentary 45. Waco, TX.

Caston, R. R., & Kaster, R. A. (2016). Introduction. In R. R. Caston, & R. A. Kaster (Eds.), *Hope, joy, and affection in the classical world* (pp. 1–10). Emotions of the Past. Oxford University Press.

Chanoitis, A. (2018). *Elpis* in the Greek epigraphic evidence, from rational expectation to dependence from authority. In G. Kazantzidis, & D. Spatharas (Eds.), *Hope in ancient literature, history, and art* (pp. 351–364). Ancient Emotions 1. Trends in Classics 63. De Gruyter.

Crossan, J. D., & Reed, J. L. (2004). *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom*. HarperCollins.

Ehrensberger, K. (2007). *Paul and the dynamics of power: Communication and interaction in the early Christ-movement*. LNTS. T & T Clark.

Erlemann, K. (2014). *Vision oder Illusion? Zukunftshoffnungen im Neuen Testament*. Neukirchener Theologie.

Fulkerson, L. (2018). *Deos speravi (Miles)* 1209): Hope and the Gods in Roman comedy. In G. Kazantzidis, & D. Spatharas (Eds.), *Hope in ancient literature, history, and art* (pp. 153–170). Ancient Emotions 1. Trends in Classics 63. De Gruyter.

Grappe, C. (2018). Le motif de l'espérance en Hébreux. Son importance à la lumière de l'Ancien Testament, de la littérature intertestamentaire et en fonction de la place qui lui revient au sein de l'épître. *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, 98*(2), 117–136. https://doi.org/10.15122/isbn.978-2-406-09331-2.p.0004

Guibert, J. de (1913). Sur l'emploi d'elpis et ses synonymes dans le N.T. *Recherches de Science Religieuse, 4*(1), 565–569.

Harrison, J. R. (2016). Paul and empire 2: Negotiating the seduction of imperial 'peace and security' in Galatians, Thessalonians, and Philippians. In A. Winn (Ed.), *An introduction to empire in the New Testament* (pp. 165–184). Resources for Biblical Study 84. SBL Press.

Holladay, C. R., Fitzgerald, J. T., Sterling, G. E., & Thompson, J. W. (Eds.). (2014). *Light from the gentiles: Hellenistic philosophy and aarly Christianity. Collected essays, 1959-2012, by Abraham J. Malherbe*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 150/1. Brill.

Hoppe, R. (2016). *Der eerste Thessalonikerbrief. Kommentar*. Verlag Herder.

Hoskinson, M. C. (2010). *Assurance of salvation: Implications of a New Testament theology of hope*. BJU Press.

Jewett, R. (1986). *The Thessalonian correspondence: Pauline rhetoric and millenarian piety*. Foundations and Facets. Fortress.

Kadlac, A. (2015). The virtue of hope. *Ethical theory and moral practice, 18*(2), 337–354. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-014-9521-0

Kazantzidis, G., & Spatharas, D. (2018a). Introductory: 'Hope', *elpis*, *spes*: Affective and non-affective expectancy. In G. Kazantzidis, & D. Spatharas (Eds.), *Hope in ancient literature, history, and art* (pp. 1–34). Ancient Emotions 1. Trends in Classics 63. De Gruyter.

Kazantzidis, G. & Spatharas, D. (Eds.). (2018b) *Hope in Ancient Literature, History, and Art*. Ancient Emotions 1. Trends in Classics 63. De Gruyter.

Kok, J. (2014). Social identity complexity theory as heuristic tool in New Testament studies. *HTS Theological Studies, 70*(1). https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2708

Lang, A., Meyer, E. M., Reynolds, B. & Styers, R. (Eds.) (2011). Introduction. In A. Lang, E. M. Meyer, B. Reynolds, & R. Styers (Eds.), *Light against darkness: Dualism in ancient Mediterranean religion and the contemporary world* (pp. 7–18). Vandenhoek & Rupprecht.

Langford, J. (2013). *Defending hope: Semiotics and Intertextuality in 1 Peter*. Wipf & Stock.

Louw, J. E., & Nida, E. A. (1989). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2 vols. 2nd ed. United Bible Societies, BibleWorks, v. 9.

Luckensmeyer, D. (2009). *The eschatology of first Thessalonians*. NTOA. Vandenhoek & Rupprecht.

Malherbe, A. L. (2014). Anti-Epicurean rhetoric in 1 Thessalonians. In C. R. Holladay, J. T. Fitzgerald, G. E. Sterling, & J. W. Thompson (Eds.), *Light from the gentiles: Hellenistic philosophy and early Christianity. Collected Essays, 1959-2012, by Abraham J. Malherbe* (pp. 267–375). Supplements to Novum Testamentum 150/1. Brill.

Malherbe, A. L. (2000). *The letters to the Thessalonians*. Anchor Bible 32b. Doubleday.

März, K.-P. (2013). Die Hoffnung auf Leben—biblische Perspektiven. *Theologie der Gegenwart* 56(2), 82–97.

Meeks, W. A. (1983). *The first urban Christians: The social world of the apostle Paul.* Yale University Press.

Mies, F. (2010). L'espérance, de l'Ancien au Nouveau Testament paramètres pour la recherche. *Gregorianum, 91*(4), 705–724. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23582620

Míguez, N. O. (2012). *The practice of hope: Ideology and intention in first Thessalonians* (A. Martínez, Trans.)*. Augsburg Fortress.

Milinovich, T. (2014). Memory and hope in the midst of chaos: Reconsidering the structure of 1 Thessalonians. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 76*(3), 498–518.

Miller, C. (2010). The imperial cult in the Pauline cities of Asia Minor and Greece. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 72*(2), 314–332.

Nelavala, S. (2016). God as 'the King' and his act of reconciliation: Hope! Despair! A postcolonial Dalit feminist re-Interpretation of 'the vineyard and the laborers.' *Currents in Theology and Mission, 43*(3), 8–11.

Neville, D. J. (2013). *A peaceable hope: Contesting violent eschatology in New Testament narratives.* Baker Academic.

Perschbacher, W. J. (1995). *New Testament Greek syntax: An illustrated manual*. Moody Press.

Schmid, W. (1962). Epikur. *RAC* 5, 880–883.

Schnelle, U. (2009). *Theology of the New Testament* (M. E. Boring, Trans.). Baker Academic.

Spicq, C. (1991) ἐλπίζω, ἐλπὶς. In C. Spicq, *Lexique théologique du Nouveau Testament* (pp. 497–510). Cerf and Editions Universitaires Fribourg.

Stiles, A. (2018). Velleius Paterculus, the adoptions of 4 CE, and the *Spes* race. In G. Kazantzidis, & D. Spatharas (Eds.), *Hope in ancient literature, history, and art* (pp. 259–274). Ancient Emotions 1. Trends in Classics 63. De Gruyter.

Stuckenbruck, L. (2011). The interiorization of dualism within the human being in Second Temple Judaism: The treatise of the two spirits (1QS III:13-IV:26) in its tradition-historical context. In A. Lang, E. M. Meyer, B. Reynolds, & R. Styers (Eds.), *Light against darkness: Dualism in ancient Mediterranean religion and the contemporary world* (pp. 145–169). Vandenhoek & Rupprecht.

Thiselton, A. C. (2011). *1 & 2 Thessalonians through the centuries*. Blackwell Biblical Commentaries 41. Wiley-Blackwell.

Villiers, P. G. R. de (2011). In the presence of God: The eschatology of 1 Thessalonians. In J. G. van der Watt (Ed.), *Eschatology of the New Testament and some related documents* (pp. 302–332). WUNT 2:315. Mohr Siebeck.

Van Menxel, F. (1983). *ΕΛΠΙΣ, espoir, espérance: études sémantiques et théologiques du vocabulaire de l'espérance dans l'hellénisme et le judaïsme avant le Nouveau Testament.* Lang.

Watt, J. G. van der (2011). Preface. In J. G. van der Watt (Ed.), *Eschatology of the New Testament and some related documents* (pp. v–vii). WUNT 2:315. Mohr Siebeck.

Wright, N. T. (2012). Revelation and Christian hope: Political implications of the revelation to John. In R. B. Hays, & S. Alkier (Eds.), *Revelation and the politics of apocalyptic interpretation* (pp. 105–124). Baylor University Press.

Martin I. Webber   (Ph.D.) is Professor of New Testament and coordinator of the doctoral program at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven and Research Associate at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. His university teaching and research career has spanned three continents— North America, Africa, and Europe. Current research interests include Historical Jesus studies, situating the New Testament within Early Christian history and literature, and development of Early Christian identity.

Jacobus (Kobus) Kok   (Ph.D. Ph.D) is Full Professor and Head of Department of New Testament Studies and Co-Director of the Research Center for Early Christianity at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven (Belgium). He also serves as Professor Extraordinarius at the University of Pretoria in South Africa and is an NRF Y1 rated scholar.