

# A Short Note on II Thess 2:6-7 and being “out of the way”

By Craig M. White  
V. 1.3

“And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so **until he is out of the way.**” (II Thess 2:6-7)

"Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: **"Your brothers who hate you and cast you out** for my name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame."  
(Is 66:5)

"I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.

So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, **he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.**" (I John 3:9-10. Cp John 9:22, 30-35; Luke 6:22)

**History Research Projects**

GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001

[www.originofnations.org](http://www.originofnations.org)

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## **Introductory Remarks**

It has long been my view (and I am sure, the views of others) that one can take many Scriptures and apply it to one personally.

One that has often come to mind over the years but especially since 2011 has been II Thess 2:6-7. A number of people I know had witnessed or noticed disgraceful behaviours, deceit, ‘little white lies,’ jealousy and so forth. Others did no wrong and did not deserve the abuse – it was what certain ones stood for in terms of Church doctrine, philosophy and that members should use the spiritual gifts their Father has granted to them – this is what riled them.

Their technique was to form groups and then block off a member who would support Church teaching on various doctrines and block off the utilisation of gifts and talents. In particular, they wanted to prevent those who would provide input or feedback when certain ones spread their ideas and doctrines contrary to the Church.

They did not want those around that were loyal. Instead, they considered the church to be a sort of ‘debating chamber’ with few absolutes.

They wanted the loyal ones ‘out of the way’ as was revealed to me by some members. It got me thinking.

It became more and more obvious while witnessing their intrigue and behaviours that they wanted the loyalists ‘out of the way’ while they wined and dined others to get set up for ordination. Of course, they then began to keep quiet on their alternative doctrinal views in certain circles so as to not jeopardise their ambitions.

## **Various Translations**

Other translations should be viewed to assist in understand this important verse:

“For the mystery of lawlessness already works; only [there is] he who restrains now until he be gone.” (*Darby*)

“For the secret of this lawlessness is already at work, but only until the person now holding it back gets out of the way.” (*International Standard Version*)

“for the secret of the lawlessness doth already work, only he who is keeping down now *will hinder* — till he may be out of the way.” (*Young’s Literal Translation*)

“For the mystery of lawlessness already works. Only there is one who restrains now, until he is taken out of the way.” (*World English Bible*)

“For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way.” (*New Living Translation*)

## **An Old Sermon**

Apostasy is slow but sure. Only by having a ‘helicopter view’ or the capacity to look at a situation analytically can one spot what is really going on locally.

What triggers the above? The non-belief that we are descendants of the tribes of Israel and a refusal to teach and uphold this and other doctrines. Just because someone says they do believe a certain doctrine, such a statement is not enough and they cannot be trusted when they refuse to teach it and other doctrines. They must prove the doctrine and preach it and mention it regularly.

Some have entered the ministry not believing many doctrines and this leads to political correctness on a range of areas including open borders, refugees, the place of America in the world, constant snide remarks against Americans and their Presidents, against the Royals and British etc etc since 1995.

Drawing a salary for doing so little, undermining the doctrines and undermining long-time faithful members, refusing to do this or that is likely breach of contract, immoral and unethical to say the least.

Like teacher like student ...

Funnily enough I wrote the following on the weekend of 12 March 2018:

"I have been thinking a bit about this because I have been listening to an audio by Dr Hoeh on the early years of Ambassador College in which he addresses demon problems (also, I have been encouraged to write up something – though in summary form – about experiences). He says that demonic activities and infiltration was the no. 1 issue during the first 10 or more years of AC. The Devil wanted to undermine the fledgling Work by getting in there via his agents.

But later the devil changes tact and can be more confrontational - especially after the real or genuine Christians pass from the scene or are silenced, then he can bring in the full apostasy. This happened in the first century; it happened after the passing of HWA; it will happen again. In fact, it can happen in a smaller way, in local congregations (IIThess 2:6-7 applies in principle)."

Over the years I have wondered about the broad principle of IIThess 2:6-7 – can it apply to situations other than the apostasy of the first century I wondered? Hence my writing the above.

Well, well a day or two later in the afternoon I was driving and randomly was listening to Church of God sermons and studies and a Bible study started playing on Acts by a gentleman name Mr Dickenson and also Dr Hoeh. It is dated as 1974. I obtained this audio in the USA on the last night I was there in 2018 – it is the exact same audio that a friend converted from tape to MP3 for me several years ago and which I uploaded to my website – I kept it (like scores of others) for all these years – and this one from South Africa in the mid-1970s! The one I picked up in the USA, however, was a superior sound quality.

As I had not listened to that tape since the mid-1970s, to listen to it again was like magic – I had kept it all these years because I was so impressed by all the information and clarity of thinking.<sup>1</sup>

Anyway, it was a bit of a coincidence that Dr Hoeh made statements rather similar to the above regarding IIThess 2 that I had written about just a couple of days previous.

You can find the audio under the title '03\_The\_Book\_of\_Acts\_H\_L\_Hoeh\_1974\_WCG\_p64' at <http://www.friendsofsabbath.org/ABC/Lectures%20&%20Sermons/HL%20Hoeh%20sermons/>. The following is excerpted from minute 28 to 30:35:

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<sup>1</sup> Another I kept from the 1970s whilst living in South Africa was 'The Rhodesia Situation' located at <http://www.friendsofsabbath.org/ABC/Lectures%20&%20Sermons/GTA/> and well worth a listen after all this time.

"Furthermore, Paul said to the Thessalonians that there will come a time when one who now restrains will be taken out of the way - both a reference to his authority and a reference to the individual. And that the mystery of iniquity already works; and the extent to which Paul was in prison and not unable to put his finger on the pulse of problems was the degree to which a mystery of iniquity – **that is iniquity which doesn't appear at first to be what it is**, working in people, invisibly. Until there becomes in the church an explosion - that occurred because Paul was in prison. [*ie he was no longer in the way of the apostates several years after this prediction*]

Now it didn't develop all of a sudden. It took some years - in the same way that many individuals in this generation of the church allowed a mystery of iniquity – an iniquity is violation of God's Law - to eat away at their hearts and minds because Mr Armstrong was gone one third, one half of the time.

And those who should have been tending the house - were concerned at this departure instead of preventing iniquity from rising in the hearts of individuals. An explosion did occur in 1974 when individuals thought they could do what it turned out that they were, at that point, unable to do. [*though it happened far worse some 12 years later*]

I think the lesson here is very important. That there is a responsibility that comes on any group of people. When leadership focuses not on the group itself that has been raised up, but on some other area and those that are left become responsible both in terms of those have office **and those who are individuals – who have no direct office. We are all responsible**, for seeing that our conduct measures up to the law of God."

Very interesting – the spirit of iniquity which became the inner clique or Synagogue of Satan which took over the WCG after HWA's death, still lurks. These are nothing but sleeper cells waiting to strike again.

This time it doesn't strike at Sabbath and Holy Day observation but rather at smaller doctrines until the major ones have little doctrinal support. It includes a large amount of political correctness and even globalist views. This becomes the new type of apostasy as it weaves and worms its way about the body, reforming itself in a way so that it can reach its goal.

Go ahead and observe the Sabbath and Holy Days this new apostasy teaches, but water down so much else and insert political correctness into the teachings slowly and subtly.

Those that don't uphold the doctrines on flimsy excuses permit the false ideas to gain a firm foothold gradually gravitating up the ladder until the body becomes infected. Note IICor 11:13-15.

This agrees with the old Worldwide Church of God position on the issue:

"Read the rest of this alarming prophecy! "... sitteth in the temple of God, chewing himself that he is God... for the mystery of iniquity (a babylonish MYSTERY religion!) **doth ALREADY work (yes, Paul said it had its insidious beginnings even then!) only he who now letteth (an old word meaning "restrains") will let, until HE BECOME TO BE!**" (The original Greek verb, "ginomai" has this sense, rather than "taken out of the way," as it appears in the King James translation) "And then shall that WICKED (A WICKED ONE — ONE EVIL PERSON IN HIGH OFFICE — is the whole subject and content of this passage of scripture!) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (II Thess. 4:8)." (GT Armstrong GT, "And when you see the ABOMINATION...", *Plain Truth*, July 1963, p. 23) [emphasis mine]

"One prominent writer attempts to prove that II Thessalonians 2:7-8 ... has not yet begun to be fulfilled ... But notice the first part of verse 7:; **"For the mystery of iniquity DOTH ALREADY WORK"—even in Paul's day.**" (HL Hoeh, "The Secret Rapture: Fact or Fiction," *Plain Truth*, July, 1959, p. 30) [emphasis mine]

## Final Thoughts

Some time ago I read Marcus Cicero's speech to the Roman Senate around 63BC it rang a bell – a very loud bell:

"A nation [or Church] can survive its fools and even the ambitious [however, I question that], but it cannot survive treason from within. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is known and he carries his banners openly against the city. But the traitor moves among those within the gates freely, **his sly whispers rustling through all alleys**, heard in the very halls of government itself. For the traitor appears no traitor; he speaks in the accents familiar to his victim, and he wears their face and their garments and he appeals to the baseness that lies deep in the hearts of all men. He rots the soul of a nation [or Church]; he works secretly and unknown in the night to undermine the pillars of a city; he infects the body politic so that it can no longer resist. A murderer is less to fear. The traitor is the plague."

The above applies in principle very well. It sounds familiar.

Can we also heed the wisdom of Marcus Cato (234-149BC?):

"In heaven's name, men, **wake up while there is still time** and lend a hand to defend the Republic [or Church]. It is ... our liberty [doctrines] and [spiritual] lives that are at stake...

Do not imagine, gentlemen, that it was by force of arms that our ancestors transformed a petty state into this great republic. If it were so, it would now be at the height of its glory, since we have more subjects and citizens, more arms and horses, than they ever had.

No, it was something else entirely that made them great - something we entirely lack.

**They were hard workers at home, just rulers abroad, and to the senate-they brought minds that were not racked by guilt or enslaved by passion.** That is what we've lost.

'A plot has been hatched by citizens of the highest rank to set fire to their native city.' [emphasis mine]

Many of us can identify with that sentiment.

Apostasies will always be around us. These inner groups hold their secretive meetings 'leaving out' the faithful and slowly gnaw away at the Church promoting all sorts of ideas, slyly leading others astray. Some of these apostates leave in a huff (IJohn 2:19), but others stay on (Gal 2:4; Rom 16:17; IICor 11:26; IITim 3:5; Titus 3:10; IIThess 3:6; IJohn 1:9-11) having learned the art of slow moving attrition and manoeuvring.

If you are one of those being pushed 'out of the way,' it may be that you are on the spiritual hit list.

Notice some Scriptures that may apply in principle:

"Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: **"Your brothers who hate you and cast you out** for my name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame." (Is 66:5)

"I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.

So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, **he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.**" (IJohn 3:9-10. Cp John 9:22, 30-35; Luke 6:22)

If you are true to 'The Way' then the following should always be heeded, despite consequences:

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:17)

For we all have our part to play in exposing these issues, apostasies, false doctrines and the deliberate practice of not upholding many basic doctrines and truths.

**"Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them." (Eph 5:11)**

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## Appendix. Information gleaned from Commentaries

### Bullinger's Bible:

**"withholdeth** = holds fast. Greek. *katecho*. See the other occurrences of this word, 2Th\_2:7; Mat\_21:38. Luk\_4:42; Luk\_8:15; Luk\_14:9. Joh\_5:4. Act\_27:40. Rom\_1:18; Rom\_7:6. 1Co\_7:30; 1Co\_11:2; 1Co\_15:2. 2Co\_6:10. 1Th\_5:21. Phm\_1:13. Heb\_3:6, Heb\_3:14; Heb\_10:23.

**his time** = his own season. That which holds him fast is neuter. It is a place, the pit of the abyss (Rev\_9:1; Rev\_11:7; Rev\_13:1)."

### Vincent's Word studies:

#### **"What withholdeth (τὸ κατέχον)**

Better *restraineth*. The verb means *to hold fast*, as Luk\_8:15 : *to hold back*, as Luk\_4:42. See on Rom\_1:18. He refers to some power which hinders the revelation of the man of sin or Antichrist."

### Jamieson, Faussett and Brown:

**"what withholdeth** — that which *holds him back*; "keeps him in check": the power that has restrained the man of sin from his full and final development, is *the moral and conservative influence of political states* [Olshausen]: *the fabric of human polity* as a *coercive* power; as "he who now letteth" refers to *those who rule that polity* by which the great upbursting of godlessness is kept down [Alford]. The "what withholdeth" refers to the *general hindrance*; "he who now letteth," to *the person in whom that hindrance is summed up*. Romanism, as a forerunner of Antichrist, was thus kept in check by *the Roman emperor* (the then representative of the coercive power) until Constantine, having removed the seat of empire to Constantinople, the Roman bishop by degrees first raised himself to precedence, then to primacy, and then to sole empire above the secular power. The historical fact from which Paul starts in his prediction was probably the emperor Claudius' expulsion of the Jews, the representative of the anti-Christian adversary in Paul's day, from Rome, thus "withholding" them in some degree in their attacks on Christianity; this suggested the principle holding good to the end of time, and about

to find its final fulfillment in the removal of *the withholding person or authority*, whereupon Antichrist in his worst shape shall start up.

**that he might be** — *Greek*, "in order that": ye know that which keeps him back, in God's purposes, from being sooner manifested, "*in order that he may be revealed in his own time*" (that is, the time appointed by God to him as his proper time for being manifested), not sooner (compare Dan\_11:35). The removal of the withholding power will be when the civil polity, derived from the Roman empire, which is to be, in its last form, divided into ten kingdoms (Rev\_17:3, Rev\_17:11-13), shall, with its leading representative head for the time being ("he who now letteth," *Greek*, "withholdeth," as in 2Th\_2:6), yield to the prevalent godless "lawlessness" with "the lawless one" as its embodiment. *The elect Church* and *the Spirit* cannot well be, as Deuteronomy Burgh suggests, the *withholding* power meant; for both shall never be *wholly* "taken out of the way" (Mat\_28:20). However, the testimony of *the elect Church*, and *the Spirit* in her, are the great hindrance to the rise of the apostasy; and it is possible that, though the Lord shall have a faithful few even then, yet the full energy of the Spirit in *the visible Church*, counteracting the energy or "working" of "the mystery of lawlessness" by the testimony of the elect, shall have been so far "taken out of the way," or *set aside*, as to admit the manifestation of "the lawless one"; and so Deuteronomy Burgh's view may be right (Luk\_18:8; Rev\_11:3-12). This was a power of which the Thessalonians might easily "know" through Paul's instruction."

#### **Pulpit Commentary:**

"This chapter is involved in difficulties; it is the obscurest passage in the writings of Paul; it is pre-eminently one of those things in his Epistles which are hard to be understood (2Pe\_3:16). But it is to be observed that the description of the man of sin, though obscure to us, was not necessarily obscure to the Thessalonians. They had information on this point which we do not possess. The apostle, when at Thessalonica, had instructed them in this subject, and to these instructions he refers in the description which he here gives (2Th\_2:5, 2Th\_2:6). Nor was the information which he imparted to them indefinite and general, but definite and precise. He had described the nature of the apostasy, the characteristics of the man of sin, and the influences which retarded his manifestation (2Th\_2:3, 2Th\_2:4); and if these points were known to us, as they were to the Thessalonians, most of the obscurity which rests on this prediction would disappear. At present we give the exposition of the passage, reserving the discussion of the various theories concerning its interpretation to an excursus at the end of the chapter.

2Th\_2:1

**Now**; literally, *but*; a particle of transition. **We beseech you**. Passing from what he besought God for them to what he beseeches them. **Brethren, by**. Considered by some, as in the A.V., as a form of adjuration. Thus Calvin: "He adjures believers by the coming of Christ; for it is customary to adjure by those things which are regarded by us with reverence." But such a construction is unknown in the New Testament, and is besides unnatural. Others render the preposition "in behalf of" or "in the interest of," "as though he were pleading, in honour of that day, that the expectation of it might not be a source of disorder in the Church" (Jowett); but such a sense is too artificial. It is best to render it "concerning," or, as in the R.V., "touching." **The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**. Some (Whitby, Hammond) suppose that by the coming of the Lord Jesus was here meant his coming in spirit at the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the apostasy was the revolt of the Jews from the Romans; the restraining power being differently interpreted. But this is a forced and extravagant interpretation, and is completely overthrown by what the apostle says in the next verse, for the destruction of Jerusalem was imminent. Besides, the Thessalonians, who were chiefly Gentile converts, were too distant from Jerusalem to be much troubled by the destruction of that city. By the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, then, is here meant, as is the uniform meaning of the phrase in the writings of Paul, the second advent. **And by** (or, *concerning*) **our gathering together unto him**. The word translated

"gathering together" occurs only once again in the New Testament, where it is used with reference to the assembling of Christians for worship (Heb\_10:35). Here it is used with reference to the assembling of believers to Christ, when he shall be revealed from heaven; it refers, not to the raising of the dead, but to the gathering together of those who are then alive (see 1Th\_4:17)."

**Albert Barnes:**

**"And now ye know what withholdeth** - Margin, "holdeth." The reference is, to something that then operated to constrain or hold back the obvious tendency of things, so that the "man of sin" should not at once appear, or so that things should not soon so develop themselves as to give rise to this anti-Christian power. There were causes at work even then, which would ultimately lead to this; but there was also something which checked the tendency of things, so that the revelation or development of the "man of sin" was put off to a future period. The obvious meaning of this would be, that, when the apostle wrote, there was a tendency to what would occur under the great apostasy, and that this would soon develop itself if it were not restrained. If the reference is to the papacy, this would consist in corruptions already existing in the church, having a resemblance to those which afterward existed under that system, or which were the germ of that system."

**Expositor's Bible:**

"CHRIST cannot come, the Apostle has told us, until the falling away has first come, and the man of sin been revealed. In the verses before us, we are told that the man of sin himself cannot come, in the full sense of the word, he cannot be revealed in his true character of the counter-Christ, till a restraining force, known to the Thessalonians, but only obscurely alluded to by the Apostle, is taken out of the way. The Last Advent is thus at two removes from the present. First, there must be the removal of the power which holds the man of sin in check; then the culmination of evil in that great adversary of God; and not till then the return of the Lord in glory as Saviour and Judge.

We might think that this put the Advent to such a distance as practically to disconnect it from the present, and make it a matter of little interest to the Christian. But, as we have seen already, what is significant in this whole passage is the spiritual law which governs the future of the world, the law that good and evil must ripen together, and in conflict with each other; and it is involved in that law that the final state of the world, which brings on the Advent, is latent, in all its principles and spiritual features, in the present. That day is indissolubly connected with this. The life that we now live has all the importance, and ought to have all the intensity, which comes from its bearing the future in its bosom. Through the eyes of this New Testament prophet we can see the end from the beginning; and the day on which we happen to read his words is as critical, in its own nature, as the great day of the Lord.

The end, the Apostle tells us, is at some distance, but it is preparing. "The mystery of lawlessness doth already work." The forces which are hostile to God, and which, are to break out in the great apostasy, and the insane presumption of the man of sin, are even now in operation, but secretly. They are not visible to the careless, or to the infatuated, or to the spiritually blind; but the Apostle can discern them. Taught by the Spirit to read the signs of the times, he sees in the world around him symptoms of forces, secret, unorganised, to some extent inscrutable, yet unmistakable in their character. They are the beginnings of the apostasy, the first workings, fettered as yet and baffled, of the power which is to set itself in the place of God. He sees also, and has already told the Thessalonians, of another power of an opposite character. "Ye know," he says, "that which restraineth only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way." This restraining power is spoken of both in the neuter and the masculine, both as a principle or institution, and as a person"

**John Gill:**

**“And now ye know what withholdeth,....** Or hinders the revelation of the man of sin, or antichrist; by which is meant not the Apostle Paul, though he by his ministry was a very great hinderance of the growth of error, and the spread of evil practices in the churches, and so of the more open appearance of the man of sin in his forerunners; and after his departure from Ephesus, and imprisonment at Rome, and suffering death, there was a great falling off in the churches, and among professors of religion, which made way for the manifestation of antichrist in due time: nor the preaching of the Gospel, in its power and purity, in the several parts of the world; though so long as this obtained, got ground, and gained success, the man of sin could not show his head; and therefore it must, as it did, decline, and was gradually taken away that he might appear: nor the Spirit of God, as the spirit of truth and holiness, though as long as he continued in his gifts and operations of grace in the churches”