

"THAT WHICH RESTRAINETH"
(A.R.V.) - II THESS. 2:6-8

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it represents no pronouncement of the Fellowship.)

Purpose of this Study

For years the writer has not been satisfied with the interpretation that Pagan Rome was the restraining power mentioned in these verses. Furthermore, the conviction has been growing that the Holy Spirit, which is Heaven's Representative, is the only power in the world capable of holding in check the forces of evil. Have we given this third Person of the God head His rightful place as our Helper against the enemy?

It is the purpose of this brief study:

- (1) To list and clarify the expressions used in the text.
- (2) To learn whether this "man of sin" was "restrained" by Paganism.
- (3) To determine if the "son of perdition" was checked by Pagan Rome.
- (4) To propose and weigh the evidence that "the mystery of iniquity" was held in bounds by Christ and His forces for good.
- (5) To investigate the possibility that the removal of the Holy Spirit from the church resulted in the clothing of the "two witnesses in sackcloth". (Rev. 11)

In order to have the verses involved clearly in mind,
a number of translations of II Thess. 2:6-8 are here presented.

Authorized

6. And now ye know that withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

cf. 4

7. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.
8. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

American Revised

6. And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season.
7. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way.
8. And then shall he be revealed, the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming.

Revised Standard

6. And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.
7. 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.
8. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming.

Weymouth

6. And now you know what restrains him, that he may be revealed only at his appointed time.
7. For lawlessness is already at work in secret: but in secret only until the man who now restrains it is removed.
8. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth, and overwhelm by the manifestation of His presence.

Douay

6. And now you know what withholdeth, that he may be revealed in his time.
7. For the mystery of iniquity already worketh: only that he who now holdeth do hold, until he be taken out of the way.
8. And then that wicked one shall be revealed: whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

Moffatt

6. Well, you can recall now what it is that restrains him from being revealed before his appointed time.

7. For the secret force of lawlessness is at work already; only, it cannot be revealed till he who at present restrains it is removed.
8. Then shall the Lawless One be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of His lips and quell by his appearing and arrival.

An American Translation

6. So now you know what it is that is holding him back from making his appearance before the appointed time arrives.
7. For disobedience is already secretly at work, but only until he who is now holding it in check is gotten out of the way.
8. Then the emboliment of disobedience will make his appearance, and the Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and annihilate him by his appearance and arrival.

SIGNIFICANT EXPRESSIONS

"Falling Away" - v. 3

This no doubt was the great apostacy which Paul saw beginning in his day, and the method of approach was to gain control of the minds of men and thus gradually usurp the place of God in the soul temple.

"Even at that early date he saw, creeping into the church, errors that would prepare the way for the development of the papacy. Little by little, at first in stealth and silence, and then more openly as it increased in strength and gained control of the minds of men, the mystery of iniquity carried forward its deceptive and blasphemous work." (G.C. 49)

The attempt of Satan to take over the temple of God as his throne which was "little by little, at first in stealth and silence, and then more openly as it increased in strength," has been continuous to the present time. Just to the extent that he succeeded did corruption enter the church and apostacy result. He will make his greatest attack and gain his greatest success just before the second coming of Christ.

"The kingdom of darkness shall continue until the advent of the Lord, and shall be consumed with the spirit of His mouth, and be destroyed with the brightness of His coming." (G.C. 321)

"The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of Spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will ~~be~~ follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience." (G.C. 588)

"Yet under one head, - the papal power, - the people will unite to oppose God in the person of His witnesses." (T. VII, 182)

"The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law.

The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old."

(G.C. 614)

"As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation." (G.C. 624)

"Mystery of Iniquity", "Son of Perdition", "That Wicked",

"Man of Sin" - v. 3, 7-8

All of these expressions apply primarily to Satan and secondarily to the papacy.

Satan himself abode not in the Truth; he is the mystery of iniquity." (T.M. 365)

"The 'man of sin,' which is also styled the 'mystery of iniquity,' the 'son of perdition,' and 'that wicked,' represents the papacy, which as foretold in prophecy, was to maintain its supremacy for 1260 years." (G.C. 356) ✓

"He who now Letteth" v. 7

"He who now holdeth" (Douay), "One that restraineth now" (A. R. C.), "The man who now restrains it" (Weymouth), "He who at present restrains it" (Moffatt), "He who now restrains it" (R.S.V.), "He who is now holding it in check" (An Am. Trans.).

The Greek word for "letteth" (Katecho) means "to hold down", and is the same word translated in verse 6 "withholdeth". These are the only times it is so translated of the 19 usages in the Bible. However, in v. 6 it is neuter gender while in V.7 it is masculine. (This is true also when the Holy Spirit is referred to in John 14 & 15) The pronoun "He", in both

instances, refers to the same force which is something other than the "mystery of iniquity," and "that wicked".

"THAT WHICH RESTRAINETH" - v. 6-7 (A.R.C.)

WAS the "Man of sin" "restrained" by Paganism?

Paganism came into the church when Christianity lost its simplicity and lowered its standards during the "latter end of the second century."

"What was the origin of the great apostasy? How did the church first depart from the simplicity of the gospel? By conforming to the practices of paganism, to facilitate the acceptance of Christianity by the heathen. The apostle Paul declared, even in his day, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." During the lives of the apostles the church remained comparatively pure. But toward the latter end of the second century most of the churches assumed a new form; the first simplicity disappeared, and insensibly, as the old disciples retired to their graves, their children, along with new converts, ... came forward and new-modeled the cause." To secure converts, the exalted standard of the Christian faith was lowered, and as the result a pagan flood, flowing into the church, carried with it its customs, practices, and idols. As the Christian religion secured the favor and support of secular rulers, it was nominally accepted by multitudes; but while in appearance Christians, many remained in substance pagans, especially worshipping in secret their idols." (G.C. 384,385)

The result of this union of Paganism with Christianity was the Papacy, and instead of the "Mystery of iniquity" being "restrained" by Paganism it with Christianity, produced the papacy. Furthermore, while Paganism gave way before the rise of the Papacy, it actually conquered "Christianity", and this was largely accomplished by the end of the second century.

"When the early church became corrupted by departing from the simplicity of the gospel and accepting heathen rites and customs she lost the Spirit and power of God; and in order to control the consciences of the people, she sought the support of the secular power. The result was the papacy, a church that controlled the power of the state, and employed it to further her own ends, especially for the punishment of "heresy." (G.C. 443)

"Little by little, at first in stealth and silence, and then more openly as it increased in strength and gained control of the minds of men, the mystery of iniquity carried forward its deceptive and blasphemous work. Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church. (G.C. 49)

"Paganism had given place to the papacy. The dragon had given to the beast his power, and his seat, and great authority". And now began the 1260 years of papal oppression foretold in the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. (G.C. 54)

"Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ.

"This compromise between paganism and Christianity resulted in the development of the 'man of sin' foretold in prophecy as opposing and exalting himself above God. That gigantic system of false religion is a masterpiece of Satan's power, a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will." (G.C. 50)

Conclusion

Since paganism won out over the "Christian" church and continued to live on under a disguise of Christian names and forms, and became a parent of the corrupt church - "that wicked" - it could not have restrained" that which it helped to create! and furthermore, since it was incorporated into the "Christian" church, it certainly was not "taken out of the way."

Was the "Son of Perdition" "restrained" by Pagan Rome?

Was the kingdom of Satan divided with one force working against the other? Did Satan not work through both Pagan Rome and the Papacy? Why then, would he use Pagan Rome, through which he was working, to "restrain" the rise of another power - the papacy - through which he planned to work far more effectively? Was Satan unable to control his forces so that he could not call off the forces of Pagan Rome in order to bring on the Papacy which is the "masterpiece of his power?" (G.C.50) Wasn't this "a house divided against itself" and thus doomed to failure? Isn't Satan too smart for that?

Even though on the surface there seems to be at times divisions among the forces of Satan, his purpose - destruction of both bad and good - is never divided or subordinated. Take the French Revolution, for instance. As long as Satan's ultimate plan - destruction of all - was fulfilled it made no difference to him who killed whom! They were just as dead one way as another and thus in his clutches.

"The willing subjects of Satan are faithful, active, and united in one object. And although they hate and war with one another, yet they improve every opportunity to advance their common interest. But the great Commander in Heaven and earth has limited Satan's power." (Vol. 1:346)

Did Pagan Rome "restrain" the rise of the Papacy? The only statements which even hint at it are found in the following quotations:

"The spirit of compromise and conformity was restrained for a time by the fierce persecutions which the church endured under paganism. But as persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions." (G.C. 49)

"Thus, as long as persecution continued, the church remained comparatively pure. But as it ceased, converts were added who were less sincere and devoted, and the way was opened for Satan to obtain a foothold." (G.C. 44)

But this second letter of Paul to the Thessalonians was written, according to the best authorities, about 51-2 A.D. The Greek word "arti", v. 7, ("Now", "just now", "this moment", opposite of future) is in the present tense indicating the "restraining power" was at work at that very time (51 A.D.), and not to be in some time in the future. In fact, during the first one-hundred years the Christians suffered more at the hands of the Jews than of Rome. Only two minor persecutions broke during this period, those under Nero and Domitian, and in each case it was only a local outburst caused by a whim or caprice of the emperor, and not to especially attack the Christians. The Chris-

tians had no separate identity until after 100 A.D. being classed as a sect of the Jews previously. Nero's persecution in 64 A.D. was at least ten years after the statement in Thessalonians was written, and Domitian's at least forty years after. In neither case were more than a few hundred victims killed.

Furthermore, during the next century, up to about 250 A.D., there was no studied plan on the part of Roman Government to obliterate Christianity. If one was accused of being a Christian, the accuser had to sign the statement and appear at the trial if called. It was a police power measure and only when mob psychology developed in the local provinces did persecutions break out on a large scale. After 250 A.D., one finds the leaders of the Roman Government deliberately planning empire-wide annihilation, but that was two-hundred years after Paul's statement was written.

Conclusion

The fact that Paul's statement given years before Rome ever persecuted the Christians, and at that time the "restraining" power was already functioning, would eliminate Pagan Rome as the "restraining power" on the point of chronology.

Then, when one remembers, that all of the major errors found in this "man of sin" were already in the "Christian" church, or were smiled upon by the majority of its members before the time of Constantine's edicts of toleration and Sunday, and his "conversion", it appears that Pagan Rome had not been removed before "that wicked" had become very prominent in the Roman Empire.

The only way in which persecution could "restrain" the rise of the "man of sin" was due to the fact that persecution always purifies the church of God and tends to keep it pure. This purity retained the reign

of the Holy Spirit in the soul-temple and in the church-temple.

Again, if Pagan Rome was the power which "restrained" the rise of the Papacy, why then should prophecy (Rev. 13:2) speak of the dragon (Pagan Rome) giving to the Papacy "his power, and his seat, and great authority"? This sounds more like full cooperation rather than conflict. Is it logical to think that a power which had opposed and fought against another power for hundreds of years would later bestow upon that power all his position and strength, and do it with willingness?

Then, too, it is difficult for the writer to see any serious division in Satan's ranks, especially when two major agencies of his are involved. It is agreed there are minor conflicts among Satan's forces, but if the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy teach anything on this point, it is that there has been displayed the greatest of unity and cooperation, in Satan's sole objective - that of destroying both bad and good.

Was the "Mystery of Iniquity" "restrained" by
the Agency of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit and Its temple

It is true that God alone can restrain Satan in his efforts to set up his throne in the temple of the soul as well as in the church, "because greater is he that is in you, then he that is in the world" (I John 4:4). This was no doubt speaking of the Spirit of God-the Holy spirit - (v. 2) which had been given to dwell within the heart of each true follower of Christ (John 14:17,20). The soul-temple must be defiled first before the church-temple can be.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (I Cor. 3:16, 17)

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall

be my people." (I Cor. 6:16)

Satan is powerless to drive the Holy Spirit from this soul-temple and as long as the Christian chooses God to rule in his life Satan - "mystery of iniquity" - is "restrained". The Holy Spirit is driven out - "taken out of the way" - only by the choice of the individual himself.

"The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan, with all his triumphant boasting, with all his confederacy of evil united against God and the laws of His government, stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions. They are to him an incomprehensible mystery." (T.L. 18)

"When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie, --to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to choose another master; for we are always free to do this." (S. C. 70)

Satan was trying in Paul's day to enthrone himself in the soul-temple of each child of God for "where God's throne should have been, Satan had placed his throne", but Jesus said, "Where Satan has set his throne, there shall I stand my cross. Satan shall be cast out, and I will be lifted up to draw all men unto me!" (6T. 236,237) Satan has continued persistently to try to break through and drive the Holy Spirit from the throne of the soul-temple.

"Satan is trying to set up his throne in the soul-temple. When he reigns, he makes himself heard and felt in angry passions, in words of bitterness that grieve and wound; but as light has no communion with darkness, and Christ no union with Belial, the man must be wholly for one or the other." (4T. 346)

"If we do not co-operate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place. The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness." (D.A. 324)

In a larger sense the temple of God is the church-temple but whether the soul-temple or the church-temple, man's only restraining power against

Satan is God's representative on earth - the Holy Spirit.

"The long-suffering of God toward Jerusalem only confirmed the Jews in their stubborn impenitence. In their hatred and cruelty toward the disciples of Jesus, they rejected the last offer of mercy. Then God withdrew His protection from them, and removed His restraining power from Satan and his angels, and the nation was left to the control of the leader she had chosen." (G.C. 28)

"Satan works through the elements also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls. He has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. When he was suffered to afflict Job, how quickly flocks and herds, servants, houses, children, were swept away, one trouble succeeding another as in a moment. It is God that shields His creatures, and hedges them in from the power of the destroyer. (G.C. 589)

"And the Lord will do just what He has declared that He would, -- He will withdraw His blessings from the earth, and remove His protecting care from those who are rebelling against His law, and teaching and forcing others to do the same. Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard." (G.C. 589)

"The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old. --A Single angel destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians, and filled the land with mourning. When David offended against God by numbering the people, one angel caused that terrible destruction by which his sin was punished. The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when he permits. There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere." (G.C. 614)

"While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, the restraint was removed, and Satan had entire control of the finally impenitent." (E.W. 280)

"But Jehovah has set Satan's bounds, --restrained his power, -- and not all the enemy's devices can convey one spark to Beal's altar." (P.E. 150)

"God alone can limit the power of Satan." (Vol. 1:341)

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.

Evil had been accumulating for centuries, and could only be restrained and resisted by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. Another spirit must be met; for the essence of evil was working in all ways, and the submission of man to this satanic captivity was amazing." (T.II. 392)

Methods used by Satan in establishing the "Man of sin"
The first method used was persecution in an attempt to obliterate

Christianity but that failed, and it failed because persecution always tends to purify the soul-temple where the Holy Spirit reigns.

"Paganism foresaw that should the gospel triumph, her temples and altars would be swept away; therefore she summoned her forces to destroy Christianity. The fires of persecution were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions, and driven from their homes." (G.C. 39)

"In vain were Satan's efforts to destroy the church of Christ by Violence. The great controversy in which the disciples of Jesus yielded up their lives, did not cease when these faithful standard-bearers fell at their post. By defeat they conquered. God's workmen were slain, but His work went steadily forward. The gospel continued to spread, and the number of its adherents to increase." (G.C. 41)

Failing in the use of force, which kept the temple pure, Satan next used his most effective weapon temporal prosperity and worldly honor - and he succeeded in deceiving the church members into a compromise. Thus the soul-temple was defiled and the Holy Spirit was "taken out of the way", at least in the majority of cases.

"Satan therefore laid his plans to war more successfully against the government of God, by planting his banner in the Christian church. If the followers of Christ would be deceived, and led to displease God, then their strength, fortitude, and firmness would fail, and they would fall an easy prey." (G.C. 42)

"The great adversary now endeavored to gain by artifice what he had failed to secure by force. Persecution ceased, and in its stead were substituted the dangerous allurements of temporal prosperity and worldly honor. Idolaters were led to receive a part of the Christian faith, while they rejected other essential truths.

They professed to accept Jesus as the Son of God, and to believe in His death and resurrection; but they had no conviction of sin, and felt no need of repentance or of a change of heart. With some concessions on their part, they proposed that Christians should make concessions, that all might unite on the platform of belief in Christ.

"Now the church was in fearful peril. Prison, torture, fire, and sword were blessings in comparison with this. Some of the Christians stood firm, declaring that they could make no compromise. Others were in favor of yielding or modifying some features of their faith, and uniting with those who had accepted a part of Christianity, urging that this might be the means of their full conversion. That was a time of deep anguish to the faithful followers of Christ. Under a cloak of pretended Christianity, Satan was insinuating himself into the church, to corrupt their faith, and turn their minds from the word of truth.

"Most of the Christians at last consented to lower their standard and a union was formed between Christianity and paganism. Although the worshippers of idols professed to be converted, and united with the church, they still clung to their idolatry, only changing the objects of their worship to images of Jesus, and even of Mary and the saints. The foul leaven of idolatry, thus brought into the church continued its baleful work. Unsound doctrines, superstitious rites, and idolatrous ceremonies were incorporated into her faith and worship." (G.C. 42, 43)

"This compromise between paganism and Christianity resulted in the development of the "man of sin" foretold in prophecy as opposing and exalting himself above God. That gigantic system of false religion is a masterpiece of Satan's power, -- a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will." (G.C. 50)

The Holy Spirit, on the throne of the soul-temple of each Christian, was the personification of all the powers of Heaven sent to "restrain" the "mystery of iniquity", and check its rise.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:20, 21)

"The gift of His Holy Spirit, rich full, and abundant, is to be to His church as an encompassing wall of fire, which the powers of hell shall not prevail against." (T. II. 18)

"What are these, in contrast with the errors of that day when the restraining Spirit of God shall be wholly withdrawn from the wicked, no longer to hold in check the outburst of human passion and satanic wrath.' The world will then behold, as never before, the results of Satan's rule." (G.C. 37)

Could the "taking away of that which Rostraineth" have
resulted in the "taking away of the Daily"?

With the influx of corruption into the temple of God, which restricted the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, the power of the Papacy increased. Gradually taking more and more power to himself he finally usurped not only the place of the Holy Spirit but that of Christ as well.

"The accession of the Roman Church to power marked the beginning of the Dark Ages. As her power increased, the darkness deepened. Faith was transferred from Christ, the true foundation, to the Pope of Rome. Instead of trusting in the Son of God for forgiveness of sins and for eternal salvation, the people looked to the pope, and to the priests and prelates to whom he delegated authority. They were taught that the pope was their earthly mediator, and that none could approach God except through him; and further, that he stood in the place of God to them, and was therefore to be implicitly obeyed. A deviation from his requirements was sufficient cause for the severest punishment to be visited upon the bodies and souls of the offenders. Thus the minds of the people were turned away from God to fallible, erring, and cruel men, nay, more, to the prince of darkness himself, who exercised his power through them." (G.C. 55)

"Thus the pope came to be almost universally acknowledged as the vicergerent of God on earth, endowed with authority over Church and state." (G.C. 51)

Then, with the removal of the restraining power, -the Holy Spirit- from the church, the "man of sin" soon substituted the mass for the "one sacrifice" made by Christ, and for the mediation of Christ was substituted confession to a human priest who claimed to forgive sins, and prayers to Virgin Mary as man's mediator with God.

Thus the "restraining" force, to all intents and purposes, was taken away from the minds and hearts of the great majority of the people in the same sense as the "daily" was "taken away", and the law of God was "changed".

War upon the Two Witnesses

Further, with the "taking away" of this restraining force= the Holy Spirit - There resulted the "Dark Ages" during which time the

"Two Witnesses prophesied in sackcloth" (Rev. 11:3-6). Primarily these two witnesses were the Living Witnessess - Christ and the Holy Spirit.

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Rev. 1:15)

"The Holy Spirit comes to the world as Christ's representative. It not only speaks the truth, but it is the truth -- the faithful and true Witness. It is the great Searcher of hearts, and is acquainted with the characters of all." (C.T. 68).

And secondarily, they were the Old and New Testaments which were obscured by the laity not being permitted to read them, by their scarcity, by their being kept in the Latin language, and by a cloud of pagan superstitions which surrounded them.

"Concerning the two witnesses, the prophet declares further, 'These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.' 'Thy word,' said the psalmist, 'is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' (Rev. 11:4; Ps. 119:105) The Two Witnesses represent the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Both are important testimonies to the origin and perpetuity of the law of God. Both are witnesses also of the plan of salvation. The types, sacrifices, and prophecies of the Old Testament point forward to a Saviour to come. The Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament tell of a Saviour who has come in the exact manner foretold by type and prophecy." (G.C. 267)

In order for Satan to maintain his sway over men, and establish the authority of the papal usurper, he must keep them in ignorance of the Scriptures. The Bible would exalt God, and place finite men in their true position; therefore its sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed. This logic was adopted by the Roman Church. For hundreds of years the circulation of the Bible was prohibited. The people were forbidden to read it or have it in their houses, and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions. Thus the pope came to be almost universally acknowledged as the vicegerent of God on earth, endowed with authority over Church and state. The detector of error having been removed, Satan worked according to his will." (G.C. 51)

The climax of this attack came during the French Revolution when for three and one-half years these "witnesses" were barred from France (See G.C. 265-288). This up surge of power on the part of Satan, "the beast of the bottomless pit", was due to the removal of God's "restraining" force - the Holy Spirit.

"The restraining Spirit of God, which imposes a check upon the cruel power of Satan, was in a great measure removed, and he whose only delight is the wretchedness of men, was permitted to work his will." (G.C. 286)

As the Spirit of God - "That which restraineth" - has continued to be removed through apostasy the power of the "mystery of iniquity" has increased down to our day. The Holy Spirit will be gradually withdrawn from the earth until at the close of probation Satan will have full control of the inhabitants of the earth save the small group who are sealed by God and kept by the Holy Spirit during the time of trouble.

"The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth. Plagues and judgments are already falling upon the despisers of the grace of God. The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude. The Agencies of evil are combining their forces, and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones. (9T.11)

"The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be at loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old. (G.C. 614)

Conclusion

If persecution or the use of force, kept the church comparatively pure and thus Pagan Rome was able to "restrain" the rise of the Papacy (G.C. 49), as many hold, then why did the Devil think his first tactics - the use of force - had failed (G.C. 42)? If Satan through Pagan Rome was to check the rise of the "man of sin", why did he not continue the use of force which had proved so successful in keeping the church pure and thereby delaying the appearance of this "man of sin"? And, if the use of force by Pagan Rome fulfilled II Thess. 2:6-8, then why did the

Devil feel that he had failed and change his plan of attack? Why did he cease the use of force (G.C. 42-43) and substitute for it temporal prosperity, ease, and worldly honor, which brought about the "man of sin", if he (Papacy) was the one Pagan Rome was fighting hard to hold down? The very heart of the arguments supporting Pagan Rome as the "restraining power" is unsound and valueless when force is replaced by ease and prosperity for them. Pagan Rome no longer "restrained" the rise of the "mystery of iniquity", but rather worked for him hand-in-glove, and, keep in mind the fact, that the power (Pagan Rome) which used force to "restrain" the "man of sin" was the same one (Pagan Rome) that used prosperity and compromise to pave the way for his rise to power.

If the taking away of the "Daily" was not the removal of Paganism or of Pagan Rome, but of Christ in His mediatorial work for man in the heavenly sanctuary and substituting for it a human system of mediation set up by the "man of sin", thus counterfeiting God's agencies for His Plan of Salvation, and, if the clothing of the "two witnesses in sackcloth" was the taking away or obscuring of the position and work of Christ and the Holy Spirit as presented in the Old and New Testaments, and this work too was accomplished by the same "man of sin" and during the same period of time, is it not logical to conclude that this "restraining" power to the Devil in setting up his counterfeit mediatorial system thus obscuring the work of the "two witnesses", was God and His Holy Spirit in the earth?

Some hold that if Paul had meant the Holy Spirit as the "restraining" power, he would have said so in just so many words.

That is not necessarily true. A truth or fact might be so well established that it need not to be repeated. In all of Paul's writing he emphasized the Holy Spirit and its work above any other one subject save that of Christ and Him Crucified, and no doubt he had taught the Thessalonians so thoroughly on that point that he needed only to say "remember ye" not, that, when I was with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time" (v. 5-6).

This is an argument from silence, and if one disregards it in this connection he must disregard it also concerning the Seventh-day Sabbath, for there is no specific command in all the New Testament that Christ's followers were to observe that day, while each of the other nine commandments is so stated.

Furthermore, is it logical to conclude, that when the church compromised and failed God that the "restraining" power which Heaven had placed in the world to counteract the Devil and his force ("mystery of iniquity"), was "taken out of the way" in the same sense as the ministration of Christ was "taken away" and God's law was "changed"?

Finally, it seems clear in view of references quoted in the body of this study (especially G.C. 614; E.W. 280; T. N. 392 that there is no other power in the universe that can "restrain" Satan and his activities in this world than that of God working through His Holy Spirit in the world. Since the "man of sin" was and is an agency of the Devil, it follows, that none but God through the Holy Spirit could have placed a check upon him, and, therefore, must have been "that which re-

straineth".

May I ask a few Questions?

Is it true: That the "man of sin" was to arise in the church?

Is it true: That if the church of God had remained pure, the "man of sin" could never have arisen and II Thess. 2:6-8 would never have been prophesied?

Is it true: That it was only as the church lost sight of Christ and removed the Holy Spirit - His Representative - by choosing another master - the "mystery of iniquity" - that the "man of sin" could and did arise?

The Writer therefore concludes : That the purity of the church which permitted the Holy Spirit to reign in the soul-temple was the sole restraint to the "man of sin" who was to arise in the church, and not Pagan Rome which was outside the church. As the church gradually apostatized, the "man of sin" gained in power until he hold a dominate position in the church-temple. There was a spiritual warfare - Eph. 6:10-17 - within the church and not against Pagan Rome. The purity of the church could be maintained only as the members were controlled by the Holy Spirit, which Spirit then restrained the rise of the "man of sin". As the Holy Spirit was grieved away through the apostacy of the members of the church "that which restraineth" was "taken out of the way", and "that wicked" - the Papacy was revealed which Christ will "consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."

Furthermore, Eph. 6:10-17 and T. H. 392 shows the church's warfare was not against flesh and blood (Pagan Rome) but with evil spirits with Satan as their leader. The only way to meet these spiritual forces was to the Spiritual Helper - the Holy Spirit. "Take the Spirit as your sword" (Hoffatt) and this power was in the church when Paul wrote II Thess. 2. When this weapon was removed through apostasy, the restraint on the "man of sin" was removed also, and he arose. Likewise, the armour was to be used against evil spirits (v. 13), and not against Pagan Rome. The real foe, then as now was Satan and his evil angels. The real restraining power, then as now, was the Holy Spirit. (T.H. 392)