

2 Thessalonians - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

Letters 3, 2 Thessalonians 2; Greek; Walking in Peace (2:7)

Beloved brother—,

I have examined a little the passage in 2 Thess. 2. I do not think one could translate ἐκ μέσου γένηται 'rises out of the midst.' Τίνομαι means to be or to become; thus ἐκ τίνος, a man who exists from another order than himself; but a man who comes out of the midst is, as to the sense, taken away from the midst. The only fault in this translation is that it expresses the thought that there is someone who takes away, which is not said. There is a passage quoted in our dictionaries—perhaps it is in Pape—of Plutarch's, which has these words. The lexicographer quotes it as proof of the ordinary sense attributed to these words. He is no longer present.

The English translation gives "he who letteth will let." There is no need however of the addition. "Only there is now he that withholdeth until he be taken out of the way:" this is, I doubt not, the true translation, μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἔως, etc.

God be praised that the brethren are walking in peace. I am at a good meeting of prayer and humiliation, which I believe will produce much good. God certainly helps us at this moment. He makes us go back over the effects of former negligence, but He brings us out of it. Conversions also are not wanting, and souls are added at least in London, and in other places. I believe the sense of His goodness spreads in hearts and encourages the brethren.... The Lord reveals Himself more and more—this is what is clear, and places His children on a simple ground -only they must break with the world to walk there. But souls are exercised.

Exeter, March 20th, 1852.

Letters 3, Antichrist (2:7)

Beloved brother—,

Now for your reasoning on 2 Thess. 2:7. I see we have the same thought as to the truth, so that I am not very anxious on the subject of the Greek. I suppose that you think that from the midst of the mystery the wicked one will arise, who will embody iniquity, so to speak, in his person—the Antichrist who will be destroyed. I believe it; only if I have rightly understood you think that the beast will exist no longer. But it seems to me that whether it be Daniel or the Apocalypse, they require that the beast shall be there until the judgment that will destroy it. The question remains, whether Antichrist is the beast embodied in its last head, as France in Napoleon (the 1st emperor); or if he is the false prophet who accompanies him.

Now as to the translation; the usage of the language is the way to understand it. Now ἐκ μέσου is an expression which hardly leaves room for discussion with regard to a particular interpretation. A thing is ἐν μέσῳ when it is placed before every one, as a prize for which they strive; for example, in a word, when a thing is there before (the object, or able to be the object of) the thoughts and pre-occupation of those who are there. Thus the adulterous woman, when all her accusers were gone away, was ἐν μέσῳ, still there. On the other hand, ἐκ μέσου γένεσθαι, or εἶναι, is an ordinary well-known phrase for being no longer there. It is not a question of being in the midst or from the midst of something; but in such a way as to be the object of the feelings and thoughts of the spectators. Take Pape if you have it: he will certainly give you proofs of it. I furnish you three from Wetstein, as you may not have access to it. οὐν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου ἡμῖν ἐσεσθῇ. (Herod. 8:22.) μικρὸν ἡτενθήκα ἢ παντὰ ἐκ μέσον, I have Anton. 8:12. ἔγνω ξῆν καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἐκ μέσου γενόμενος. (Plut. Timol., p. 238, 3.)

I believe that the aim of the apostle is not to designate him who hinders, but that there will be something that hinders, and that consequently the wicked one will not be revealed until that shall be gone—μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἔως, etc. The wicked one would have been revealed before his time by the movement of the principles and will of man, if there had not been something which arrested, bridled. The exterior form may vary, I believe it has varied. God now restrains it until the moment known to Him arrives. Then it is ἐκ μέσου, and the wicked one is manifested. Be assured, beloved brother, of the sincere affection of your brother in Jesus.