

A recent conversation with some wise brethren brought to light a few of the difficulties with the binding and loosing of Satan (Revelation 20) within premillennial and amillennial eschatologies. I found the last chapter of Philip Mauro's 1922 book, *The Hope of Israel: What is it?* to be helpful on this subject.

Mauro (1859-1952) was "a member of the bar of the Supreme Court of the United States and one of the foremost patent lawyers of his day." In the famous Scopes trial, it was the argument prepared by Mauro whereby William Jennings Bryan won the case. It is also noteworthy that he "was a passenger on the British ocean liner RMS *Carpathia* when it rescued the passengers of the *Titanic* in April 1912."

Most relevant for our purposes, however, is Mauro's departure from his early embrace of premillennial dispensationalism and subsequent dismantling of that system. Consider the following from *The Hope of Israel*:

SATAN BOUND AND LOOSED In verses 1-3 John describes the coming down from heaven of a mighty angel, who lays hold upon the Devil, and binds him and casts him into the bottomless pit, "till the thousand years should be fulfilled," after which "he must be loosed a little season"; and verse 7 says: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison."

As Dr. Stanford says: "We must regard this as either a complete or a partial depriving of Satan of his power." And he goes on to say:

"It must for two reasons be the latter:

"The first reason is that the complete stripping of Satan of his power follows in our text (Rev. XX) immediately after this limitation of his power. The severer and the final judgment and punishment are described in verse 10. The preceding binding of Satan was therefore something less than a complete taking-away of his power.

"The second reason is that Christ Himself, when He was on earth, bound Satan. He said so: 'How can one enter into the strong man's house, and seize his goods,' He asked, 'except he first bind the strong man?' (Mat. 12:29). The strong man is Satan. The stronger than he, who binds him, is Jesus. "But Satan is not so bound as to have no power at all. It is a limiting of his power, a circumscribing of his influence and

activities that is meant."

A passage in Hebrews will help us at this point: "For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him thafi had the power of death that is the Devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14, 15).

This clearly refers to the same truth as that declared by Christ in Matthew 12 :29 ; for the one whose power was destroyed by Jesus is expressly said to be "the Devil," and those who are delivered from his power, "the children," are "the goods" of which Jesus, by His death, has despoiled him. It is evident too, that "destroy him" does not mean the complete deprivation of his power, for he still exercises the power of death, and on a large scale ; but it means the crippling and limiting of that power, which Satan can now exercise only on those who believe not.

The above is in full agreement with the words of Christ to the seventy, when they returned to Him with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy Name. And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (Lu. 10:19). Here was a binding of Satan, in that his power was greatly restricted.

In John's vision the binding of Satan was done by the instrumentality of an angel from heaven; and by the passage in Hebrews we learn that the effective cause of the breaking of his power was the death of Jesus Christ. It is pertinent therefore to recall that, on the morning of His resurrection, "the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door" (Mat. 28 :2) . There is a suggestive correspondence between the action of opening the door of the tomb of the Lord Jesus, rolling away the great stone by means of which His body had been sealed therein, and the action of shutting Satan up in the abyss and setting a seal upon him. It suggests that both actions were performed by the same mighty angel and at the same time.

Again quoting from Dr. Stafford :

"That Satan's power is greatly limited in the Christian age but not wholly destroyed is certainly the fact. Consider that Jesus said as He approached His death on the

cross, 'Now is the prince of this world cast out' (Jno. 12:31. Cf. 16:11). But He did not cast him out in every sense; for He said afterward, 'The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me' (Jno. 14 :30) . Here are conceptions of the limiting of Satan, or the casting out of Satan, that should guide us in interpreting Rev. 20:1-3. There ought to be no doubt at all as to the soundness and safety of this method of procedure.

"If now we have reasoned correctly up to this point, it is easy to say what 'the thousand years' signifies. It is the Christian age, extending up to 'a little time' before Christ comes again. 'The thousand years, have become nearly two thousand years. Or are we now in 'the little time' that follows that period? I do not know [though the late war and its consequences make it seem likely]. But this is certain: We are either in the millennium, or we have passed through it and we have entered the 'little time,' when from all quarters attacks are made on the very citadel of Christianity itself."

Whether or not Dr. Stafford's explanation of this very difficult passage of Scripture is in all essential particulars correct, the present writer feels constrained to say concerning it, that on the one hand, it has more scriptural evidence in its favor than any other explanation of the passage that has come to the writer's knowledge up to now ; whereas, on the other hand, he knows of nothing in the Scriptures that contradicts it.

And whatever be the true sense and meaning of the passage, it certainly lends not the slightest support to the doctrine of the restoration of the Jewish nation in a coming age and its exaltation to the position of lordship over the nations of the world.

Mauro, P., *The Hope of Israel: What is it?*, Hamilton Bros., Boston, MA, 1929, pp. 257-61.

The full text of *The Hope of Israel* is available [here](#) as well as a 2015 reprint by Resurrected Books. *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (1927) is also recommended and available as a paperback reprint [here](#).

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