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Helps for Young Christians.

No. A.4.

Satan's Opposition to Christ

BY

W. W. FEREDAY.

(Author of "*Elisha, the Prophet.*" "*Coming Events.*"
"*On the Holy Spirit,*" etc., etc.)

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SATAN'S OPPOSITION **—— TO CHRIST ——**

**IN HIS OFFICES OF
PRIEST, PROPHET AND KING.**

○ ○ ○

SATAN is as surely opposed to the Lord Jesus as the world is to the Father, and the flesh to the Holy Spirit. It is not proposed to consider in these pages every form in which this opposition displays itself; it is our purpose simply to look at it in connection with the offices which our blessed Lord is pleased to sustain of Priest, Prophet and King. The exercise of these the enemy would fain hinder altogether; but, seeing that is impossible, he seeks to nullify their holy effects, and so he resists them in every possible way.

During the present period the Lord is acting for His people as

PRIEST

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in the heavenly sanctuary. This is brought out fully in the epistle to the Hebrews. In that epistle believers are looked at as in the wilderness, compassed about with infirmities, and subject to trials and temptations, in every way treading a serious path toward the rest of God. We need help along the road, God only knows how deeply; the priestly service of our blessed Lord above is His gracious provision for our need. His propitiation, once effected, is the basis of all that He is at present doing for us (Heb. ii. 17). He sympathises with us in our trials, having been tried Himself (Heb. iv. 14). He makes intercession for us day by day (Heb. vii. 25); and He receives from our hands all our spiritual sacrifices, and passes them up to God (Heb. xiii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 5). Because of His priestly service, God is able to bear with us in all our frailty and imperfections. His eye is ever upon the perfections of the great High Priest, and upon the infinite value of His atoning work, which is more than sufficient to cover all. Our future is thus guaranteed; every saint, however feeble and faulty, will yet appear before God in the heavenly Jerusalem, that glorious city which He has prepared for all His pilgrim people (Heb. xi. 16; xii. 22; xiii. 14).

His grace to us arouses the rancour of Satan. Consequently he sets himself to oppose the Lord

in His ministry of love on behalf of His own. What a word is that in Rev. xii. 10! After the expulsion of the Dragon and his angels from heaven, it is said "the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." It is evident that Satan still abides in the heavenly places, and it is further evident that he has even access (on occasion) to the presence of God. Job's first chapter furnishes us with an example of his evil work. When God enquired if he had considered His servant Job that there was none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil, the adversary vilely insinuated that the patriarch only served God for present advantage, and might easily be induced to curse God to His face. With what malignant delight did he avail himself of the divine permission to test God's servant by stripping him of everything he possessed! The thought that not only is the eye of God upon us day by day, but the eye of Satan also, is a very solemn one, and should produce holy diligence with regard to every detail of our walk and conversation. Why should we put weapons into the hand of the adversary? Why should we furnish him with opportunity to accuse us before God? Yet how true are the lines:—

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Though the restless foe accuses,
Sins recounting like a flood ;
Every charge our God refuses,
Christ has answered with His blood.

God will not permit this opposition on the part of the enemy to continue indefinitely. At the present time He bears in longsuffering patience with Satan as with the world, but there is a moment fixed when this will end. Isaiah xxiv. 21 refers to it. "It shall come to pass in that day that Jehovah will punish the host of the high ones that are on high (the Dragon and his angels) and the kings of the earth upon the earth." The war in heaven, described in Rev. xii. 7-9, takes place after the home-taking of the heavenly saints. When we go in, the foe is cast out, never more to have a footing in the heavenly places. Hence the shout of triumph: "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power (or authority) of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down." But how ominous are the words that follow! "Woe to the earth and to the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Rev. xii. 10.12).

Being thus for ever precluded from further opposition to the Lord Jesus in His office as

Priest, the enemy next seeks to oppose Him as

PROPHET.

Ages ago, Moses told the people of Israel: "Jehovah, thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of Jehovah thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of Jehovah my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not" (Deut. xviii. 15-16). Jehovah's fiery manifestation of Himself on Mount Sinai terrified the people; they could not endure either the sight or His words. Hence His gracious assurance that He would speak to them in a man. Among the questions put to John the Baptist was, "Art thou the Prophet?" (John i. 21), an evident allusion to the promise or prophecy in Deut. xviii. The Prophet like unto Moses has come; the "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. i. 1-2); but His people refused to recognize Him, and rejected Him to their hurt. So the warning in Deut. xviii. 19 has come true; God's judgment has long been upon disobedient Israel.

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When Satan is cast out of the heavenly places at the end, he will find a considerable number of the people again in their land, with their national hopes revived by the events which have operated in their favour. This will give him a fresh opportunity for his opposition to God's Christ. He will raise up a false prophet, the Anti-Christ, and will present him to the people as the long-expected one (Rev. xix. 20 ; 1 John ii. 22). The mass will receive him, as the Lord forewarned long ago (John v. 43). Filled and energised by Satan, in his infidel pride he will take his seat in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thess. ii. 4). His voice is the voice of God—such is his blasphemous pretension! Judea's last king before the Roman overthrow remarkably foreshadows the Anti-Christ in this awful evil (Acts xii. 22). The pretensions of the Roman pontiffs, however serious, will be altogether eclipsed by those of the false Christ. Those will be days of darkness and delusion indeed for Israel. The shepherd they have accepted will not visit those who are about to perish, nor seek those that are scattered, nor heal that which is wounded, nor feed that which is sound ; but he will eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their hoofs in pieces (Zech. xi. 16). Having refused to walk in the light of God, and having kindled their own fire, and compassed themselves

about with firebrands, they are divinely given up to walk in the light of their own fire, with the issue from the hand of God that they shall lie down in sorrow (Isa. l. 11). Satan's prophet will imitate the true Christ by performing miracles in confirmation of his claims. In this connection it is significant that the Spirit uses almost identical expressions concerning him as concerning the Lord Jesus (compare 2 Thess. ii. 3 with Acts ii. 22). Well might the Holy One weep as He thought of the bitter sorrow in store for His beloved people because they knew not the time of their visitation (Luke xix. 41-44).

But though Jerusalem will be the seat of the false prophet, his malignant influence will extend far beyond the limits of the land of Israel. He will not only lead the Jewish people astray from the true God, but Christendom will follow his lead also. Dan. xi. 36-45 shows us his connection with the Jews; 2 Thess. ii. shows his connection with Christendom. There will be a strange union in that day between Judaism and Christendom - a kind of universal religion will prevail.

For the coming apostasy Satan is already busily preparing the minds of men. God's voice, speaking in the written Word, no longer commands even the respect of the majority; *man's* voice is openly preferred instead. Scientists

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have but to assert that they have disproved by their discoveries some of the statements of Scripture, and they are readily believed, without even honest enquiry. Representatives of the school known as "the Higher Critics" are suffered to call in question the faith of centuries, and men lend a willing ear to their folly. In these and other ways Satan is preparing men for the last great imposture—*his* prophet in contrast with *God's*.

The restless adversary will not be content to oppose the Lord in His character of Prophet; at the same epoch he will raise up opposition to Him also as

KING.

Long ago the Son declared the divine decree concerning Himself: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psa. ii. 8). It is the purpose of God to establish Him upon the hill of His holiness in Zion, not only as King of Israel, but as King of kings and Lord of lords. As Zechariah puts it: "The Lord shall be king over all the earth" (Zech. xiv. 9). God's purpose, once declared, is known to Satan as to others. In the past he has acted the murderer's part in his desire to frustrate the divine will. He inspired Pharaoh to decree the destruction of all the male children of Israel's race (Exo. i. 22); later, when it became clear that God's King was to come through David's line he

sought the extinction of that family, first by means of Athaliah (2 Kings xi. i.) and then by means of Pekah and Rezin (Isa. vii. 6). Then when it was reported that the King was really born, he roused up Herod to endeavour to slay Him (Matt. ii. 13). We are reminded of these numerous intrigues in the vision of the sun-clothed woman confronted by the Dragon in Rev. xii. 1-6. This method having failed, Satan will seek to imitate God's design. Thus, when he is cast out of the heavenly places he will raise up *his* king of kings and lord of lords in opposition to *God's* appointed King. Rev. xiii. shows us his two principal instruments in the evil developments of the last days. The second half of the chapter brings before us the false prophet, the first half Satan's king. The beast that rises up out of the sea* having seven heads and ten horns is identical with the fourth beast of Dan. vii. It is the Roman Empire, revived by Satanic power at the end of the age. From amongst the ten horns, Daniel saw an eleventh arise, "before whom three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots: and behold in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things" (Dan. vii. 8).

*It may be a question with some of our readers why the beast should be said to rise up "out of the sea" (Rev. xiii. 1; Dan. vii. 3), and also "out of the earth" (Dan. vii. 17). The answer is that the one shows us the *circumstances* which will lead to its reappearance—the disordered condition of the nations; and the other gives us the *moral character* of its dominion—earthly, in contrast with the kingdom of the Son of man, which is heavenly.

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The eleventh horn so completely wields the power of the whole beast that he and the beast are viewed in prophecy as practically identical; hence its blasphemous doings are universally attributed to the beast itself. By dint of power or strategy this super-man will succeed in getting three of the European kingdoms under his influence; then seven others will agree to join the confederacy for mutual advantage. Each monarch will retain his own throne (as in the German Empire, before the great war), but will recognize the general headship of "the little horn." "They have one mind, and shall give their power and authority unto the beast . . . For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Rev. xvii. 13-17). Here then we have Satan's king of kings and lord of lords. At last he has found one willing to receive from *his* hands "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," once refused by the Son of God (Matt. iv. 8). So it is written of Europe's last great potentate "*the Dragon gave him* his power and his throne, and great authority" (Rev. xiii. 2). It would seem to have been Satan's intention to bring this condition of things about at the beginning of the last century by means of the first Napoleon, but God's time had not then come to permit it, and so the adversary's schemes were blasted, and his disappointed instrument died in exile.

What are God's thoughts as He observes the

powers of the world gathering themselves together under Satanic leadership against Himself and against His Anointed? "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psa. ii. 4). Vain the united forces of earth and hell when God rises up.

When He makes bare His arm,
Who can His work withstand?

When the due time arrives He will upset all creature schemes of opposition by introducing His Son once more upon the scene; not then in lowly grace bringing salvation, but in resistless might for the destruction of all His foes. Psalm xlv. and Rev. xix. both describe the triumphant progress of God's King to the throne of Israel and of the earth. The hosts of Europe will indeed be marshalled, but only to be food for the fowls of heaven. The leaders—the beast and the false prophet—will be taken, and be consigned forthwith to the lake of fire (Rev. xix. 20). Terrible doom! They will be distinguished from the mass of the ungodly by being sent to their punishment without passing through death, and without appearing before the great white throne, at least a thousand years later. He who has deceived them, the great arch-conspirator, Satan, will then be confined in the bottomless pit, while God's King reigns over the earth (Rev. xx. 1). As Priest He will sit upon His throne; and in perfect fulfilment of the Melchizedek type, He will minister blessing to all in the name of the Most High God

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Possessor of heaven and earth (Zech. vi. 13; Gen. xiv. 18-20). He will answer to the divine ideal as described in the last words of David: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4).

Thus will God confound all the schemes of the enemy, and give effect to His own purposes of grace, bringing in rest and glory. Under the beneficent rule of the Man of His appointment, creation's groan will be hushed for ever.

(Many of the quotations in this paper are taken from the Revised Version).

W. W. FEREDAY.



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