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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)  
BIDEFORD**

# *Lessons from John's Gospel*

## *chapter seventeen*

*“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”* (John 17:21)

Here is a verse commonly quoted by the ecumenist as proof that all christendom should amalgamate in order to fulfil Christ's prayer. It is said, that today is a time to forget differences and overlook what previous generations stood for and against and by compromise, tolerance and love to come together as one, accomplishing our Lord's great desire, that through this means all the world might believe. Sad to say, many thousands have been duped into believing that such amalgamation is the meaning of this verse of Scripture. Is this the truth? Is such an interpretation in harmony, or at variance, with the overall teaching of the Word of God?

This is a deeply doctrinal subject and it requires us to gird up the loins of our mind (cf 1 Peter 1:13); to concentrate and to follow carefully, as the truth will only be uncovered by holding the Word of God entire and comparing Scripture with Scripture. Thus it is that the Holy Spirit will enable us to arrive at a right understanding of our Lord's words.

In this section of His prayer, Christ prays that His people may be one **as** He and the Father are one; **“one in us”**. This is a mystical union **not** an organized amalgamation brought about by the efforts and compromise of fallen man. Let the Scriptures demonstrate this: *“we, being many are **one body in Christ**, and every one members one of another”* (Romans 12:5). *“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is **His body**”* (Ephesians 1:22); *“and are built upon the foundation of*

*the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2:20–22). The great emphasis is **His body**, not the body of believers joined one to another: it is **“in Christ”**, or, as in the verse before us states, **“one in us”**.

Lord Jesus are we one with thee?  
O height, O depth of love!  
Once slain for us upon the tree,  
We’re one with thee above.

When God or Christ speaks, as in this case, of **“us”** then the Godhead is involved. For example in the first chapter of the Bible we read, *“And God said, Let us make man in our image”* (Genesis 1:26); *“God said”* – singular; *“Let us”* – plural. Here again is the mystery of the Trinity, only one God, yet three persons; and so it is, that both the singular and plural are often found in Holy Scripture. Where we read, as in this verse, *“one in us”* far from indicating isolated individuals, it speaks of a oneness mortals can never comprehend. This is mystical union and can only be understood through faith, by believing what is set out in Holy Writ. The Apostle Paul states that **Christ** dwells in our hearts by faith (cf Ephesians 3:17). The Apostle John writes that **God** dwelleth in us, and we in God (cf 1 John 4:16). Paul also states that the **Holy Spirit** dwelleth in us (cf Romans 8:11). From these Scriptures we learn that it is God who is in us and we in God. Just as the Three Persons within the Trinity are One so are all the elect of God one; every redeemed individual is in Christ and in God. This is all of God, through Sovereign Grace and not something that man can organize. The Father sent the Son to merit that Grace; the Son sent the Holy Spirit to apply it and therefore we, His elect, are said, by one Spirit to be baptized into the same body (cf 1 Corinthians 12:13), that is the

body of Christ. Ever must it be remembered that even in His humiliation when upon earth as mediator, Christ never ceased to be Divine. By taking to Himself a human nature, as man, He could render a complete and total satisfaction both preceptive and penal to God and to holy justice. Because of this He, the Lord Jesus Christ, holds a place of supreme honour. *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:9-11). This is enlarged upon in the Epistle to the Ephesians, *“and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all”* (Ephesians 1:19-23).

In Christ the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily and we are complete **in Him** (cf Colossians 2:9,10). By the union of the human nature with the Divine, in one person, Christ became Emmanuel, *“God with us”* (Matthew 1:23). God is in Christ, and the believer is in Christ; hence our Lord prays to His Father, *“**One in Us**”*. This is a great mystery (cf Ephesians 5:32), which we shall never fathom on this earth, but as the Lord told His disciples, *“at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you”* (John 14:20). We shall understand more fully in the eternal state, but even then, much will remain a great mystery that rebel sinners of Adam’s race should be reconciled to God to such an immense degree: *“**One in Us**”*.

Though this subject is intensely spiritual and can only be accepted by faith, yet it is reality. Our union to Christ is not an empty belief or vague notion, it is the real and actual truth. Let the Word of God substantiate this, *“For if we have been **planted** together in the likeness of His death we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection”* (Romans 6:5); *“But he that is **joined** unto the Lord is one spirit”* (1 Corinthians 6:17); *“For we are **made** partakers of Christ”* (Hebrews 3:14). The terms **planted**, **joined** and **made**, speak of an intimate, vital and actual relationship. This pertains to the Covenant of Grace and is one of the greatest themes of the New Testament; Christ is not just our Saviour, He is much more. By faith, we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved, henceforth He is in us and we in Him. *“Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit”* (1 John 4:13). *“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God”* (1 John 4:15).

O teach us, Lord, to know and own  
This wondrous mystery,  
That thou with us art truly one,  
And we are one with thee!

This oneness or union is likened unto marriage as instituted by God, where two become one flesh; elsewhere to the unity of root and branches. Another illustration is that of Head and members. It is incongruous to imagine a head without a body and we, believers, are living members of the body of Christ, He being the Head. The figure is that of an actual human body as the Scripture states, *“ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”* (1 Corinthians 12:27). This union is indissoluble; just as the Father and the Son, so are Christ and His members **one**. Three times during this prayer the Lord makes this comparison; *“that they may be one, as we are”* (v.11). *“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee”* (v.21); *“that they may be one, even as we are one”* (v.22).

The important, operative words in these statements are, *“as we are”*. The union between Christ and His elect people is of the same order as that which exists within the Trinity. It is an indivisible, everlasting, Holy union. One God, Three Persons each fulfilling differing roles, yet acting as one. So it is with the unity of the Church, which is the body of Christ; there are diversity of gifts and ministrations, but **one body** and **one Lord**. Each member is vital, none is more important or precious than another, we are all equally united to Christ, **as** He is to the Father. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ any more than Christ can be separated from His Father. We are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh (cf Ephesians 5:30). *“For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren”* (Hebrews 2:11).

The same Spirit that unites us to the Head, unites believers to one another, but **only** in the truth – *“And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”* (Ephesians 4:11-16). Further, *“if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind”* (Philippians 2:1,2). The unity of the faith is the **only** corporate unity which God recognizes and it is the

truth that edifies believers, causing them to, “*grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ*”. The Spirit of God effectually works through the Word to nourish the body to be of one mind unto the measure, or standard, of the stature of the fulness of Christ. This is to be “*one as We are*”.

The last phrase of v.21 “*that the world may believe that thou hast sent me*”, is used as an argument by the ecumenist to bring christendom together into one gathering in furtherance of unity. Is anyone so naïve to think, that, if all the churches and chapels of a locality amalgamated and ‘worshipped’ in one place, then the local populace would all believe in Jesus Christ? No! – it would have no such effect. But what **is** a mighty force and influence in any area is a Church, united in the truth, striving **together** for the faith of the gospel, “*endeavouring to keep the **unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:3). Though the numbers may be small, and the individuals insignificant in the eyes of the world, it is there the Lord commandeth the blessing. Harmony in the truth is the criterion. This is confirmed in the New Testament, “*and by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them*” (Acts 5:12,13).

When a united company of God’s people, realizing their position **in Christ**, that He is in them, and they are in Him, stand together for the truth, then to the world they will be “*terrible as an army with banners*” (Song of Solomon 6:4). This is the unity envisaged in John seventeen verse twenty-one, **not** ecumenical or denominational confederacy.

W.H.Molland

# *The Insidious Approaches of Satan to the Believer*

The subject of Satan, his power, influence and carefully constructed strategy, does not receive the emphasis it deserves in Christian ministry. Discounting nominal christendom, (which does not cause the Great Adversary much concern) this article is directed to believers and churches who profess to be orthodox in doctrine and practice, yet remain oblivious to the fact that Satan is at work in their midst. For this reason the word **INSIDIOUS** is used in the title. ‘Subtle’, ‘cunning’, and ‘crafty’ are all apt descriptions, but ‘insidious’ is much more comprehensive. It embraces such thoughts as treachery, lying in wait, working secretly, having long term designs to betray, harmful yet attractive, working gradually but dangerously.

The conduct, trends and life styles of many Christians call into question their boasted claims to orthodoxy, which are proved in practice to be no more than trite, hackneyed phraseology. Why is this? The answer is contained in one word: the **INSIDIOUSNESS** of Satan. He works secretly, having long term designs to betray; even his most attractive deployments, though they appear harmless, or even helpful, are not; such are his skills in the art of deception. Ever remember that Satan is not nearly so interested in what we **say**, as in what we **do**. This is very important with regard to a local church. Of what value is a sound ministry, if members act irresponsibly, and do not walk according to the Holy Scriptures under whose exposition they sit? Faithful, full-orbed preaching is essential, but is of little effect if the members do not practice the truth they hear, in their daily lives in the world. It is here that the god of this world, the Devil, is at work; gradually but dangerously,



and with discerning skill, amongst **all** Christians. Let believers beware for many are the insidious devices of Satan, of which several are now examined.

**AFFLUENCE.** In the present day in this part of the world, one of the most insidious and dangerous ploys of the Adversary is to create dissatisfaction; a desire for, and an increase of, temporal possessions. This is the spirit of the age and it affects the people of God in varying degrees, as Satan baits them with riches, position, pleasure and an improved standard of living. Is this the spirit of Christ? Are these the things for a Christian to strive after, as set out in Holy Scripture? How essential for every child of God is that petition, *“lead us not into temptation”* (Matthew 6:13), for in today’s social climate the believer is particularly vulnerable; many testimonies have been drowned by swimming in the warm waters of ease and carnal enjoyment. Riches, ease and pleasure can ruin; at best they are of no spiritual profit. *“Godliness with contentment is great gain”* (1 Timothy 6:6). *“Be content with such things as ye have”* (Hebrews 13:5).

**POVERTY.** Equally the Adversary can use this as a weapon. Where a Christian is in poor circumstances, Satan is adept at taking advantage of the situation. He will cause the individual to question God’s dealings with them and quickly suggest that, through necessity, it is permissible to act in a way, which would otherwise be unjustifiable. Our Lord was tempted in this very manner, *“When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread”* (Matthew 4:2,3). The Devil’s reasoning is, that the circumstances are abnormal, therefore the action is excusable. Many Christians under pressure, have taken up unsuitable employment, totally incongruous to a child of God and in so doing been sadly led astray. The Adversary is extremely clever, his actions exceedingly cunning and

whether in riches or poverty he adapts to suit each individual situation.

**EMISSARIES.** Satan often makes use of persons who will be useful in promoting his underhand, secret designs. He works out the particular details of the temptation, then implements it by the use of agents. Professing Christians as well as unbelievers are used for this purpose, depending on the particular plot and circumstances. In the Old Testament there was a man of the priestly tribe of Levi, named Korah, who was the emissary deployed by the Adversary, to stir up two hundred and fifty eminent men, princes in the assembly of Israel; setting them against God's two faithful servants, Moses and Aaron. It was Satan's expert plan, but a Levite was his agent to bring it about (cf Numbers 16:1-3). This incident should put every true believer on alert, for the Devil's schemes are just as insidious today. He is well aware that influential men in the church are a tremendous help to him, if he can only ensnare them. All too frequently is it true, that *"of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them"* (Acts 20:30).

**FAITHLESSNESS.** The focal point of Satan's attack upon the believer is his faith, which is an absolute trust and total reliance upon what God has said. It was this foundation which the Devil attacked in Eden. *"He said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"* (Genesis 3:1). His aim was to persuade Eve that she need not take the Word of God too seriously. Once he had drawn her into the position of believing that God did not necessarily mean what He said, she fell. Implicit trust in the Word of God is **all** important for, *"The just shall live by faith"* (Galatians 3:11). The true Christian can live no other way; faith is the fundamental grace. In the hour of Peter's greatest need the Lord prayed for him, that his **faith** fail not (cf Luke 22:32); this is the believer's sole defence. The Devil is to be resisted steadfast in the

faith (cf 1 Peter 5:9). Apart from faith there can be no resistance. The Christian's armour is set out in Ephesians chapter six; breastplate, footwear, helmet, sword, then is stated, "*above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*" (Ephesians 6:16). **Above all** – the shield of faith. A shield screens and protects the user. When attacked by Satan the believer has nothing to securely stand behind other than the Word of God; "*His truth shall be thy shield and buckler*" (Psalm 91:4). Every time Satan made his comprehensive insidious approaches to Christ in the wilderness, he was rebuffed, with the words, "*it is written*" (Matthew 4:4,7,10). In this again the Lord sets a perfect example which all His redeemed children are to follow (cf 1 Peter 2:21). The Christian's only sure defence is the shield of faith, "*which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3); namely the Holy Scriptures. God's Word being **truth** the Great Adversary cannot stand against it, for he is the Father of Lies and author of all deception. It is incumbent for every believer to know the Truth, for if Satan, by his fiendish treachery and diabolical subtlety can undermine our absolute confidence in the inspired Word, we shall lose our shield; there is no other protection.

**SMOOTH TALK.** Satan is, and always has been, a great encourager of rhetoric and teachings, which are pleasing to the flesh. It is one of his most harmful and insidious approaches in that it works gradually, being a long-term strategy. In Old Testament times he ensnared many professed leaders amongst the people of God, to the delight of their congregations. "*The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?*" (Jeremiah 5:31). In this twenty-first century, Satan's tactics are no different; he is always looking for emissaries within the ranks of the Lord's people and sadly he has little difficulty in finding them. Many of today's pulpiteers are, by their preaching, giving the impression believers have been brought into a pleasure park rather than marshalled on a

battlefield. The Scripture states “*that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22). The flesh is to be crucified (cf Galatians 5:24). The kingdom of heaven is to be taken with a holy violence (cf Matthew 11:12). The Christian is called upon to “*fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Timothy 6:12). Satan always seeks to weaken the Scriptures and tone down their strictness and discipline.

The antinomian approach is also his invention. Why be so rigid on the matter of obedience? Do not be so legalistic. Show a generous spirit; Christ having fully met all Divine claims, Christians are justified; in consequence they should make the most of the liberty into which they have been brought; why live as if still under the law? This reasoning is very insidious, and many have been caught in this net of the Satanic Fowler, which leads to a cheap easy-going profession. Is it not a fact that cheap bargain shops attract a lot of customers? Neither is it incorrect to say that, where there is a smooth, pleasing preacher, the people will gravitate; many are the occupants of pulpits today who are the purveyors of tawdry, novelty Christianity. The desperate need of the hour is men taught of God, who have an understanding of the times (cf 1 Chronicles 12:32); men who will fearlessly dispense Divine merchandise, bringing out from the storehouse of Truth, treasures both new and old (cf Matthew 13:52).

**IRRESPONSIBILITY.** Having been brought to new life in Christ, much devolves upon the child of God which was unknown before. Spiritual life is the antithesis to the natural life; in consequence there is an ongoing battle of the flesh warring against the now indwelling Spirit (cf Romans 7:23). This is an area never vacated by Satan and where his insidiousness in all probability is working undetected by the person concerned. The Adversary is particularly active here in three very deceptive ways. He **hinders**, he **discourages**, he **over-encourages**. In the matter of hindering, prayer is one of the Devil’s

major targets, and when the believer does pray, if not on guard he can soon become formal, having no grip with heaven, no conscious assurance that he has entered into the holy place. Meditation is another exercise which attracts the attention of the Adversary and which he will strenuously attempt to hinder. Listen to the preaching if you will, but do not meditate upon it. Failure in this produces ‘hearers’ of the Word and not ‘doers’ (cf James 1:23,25). Meditation is as a sheep chewing the cud, which is to that animal a vital part of digestion, converting the grass eaten into nourishment. In similar manner the sheep of God’s pasture are required to meditate upon the Truth; by so doing the believer is spiritually nourished. Mortification is another Christian duty. *“Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry”* (Colossians 3:5). By subduing the flesh, sin is checked and the Devil thwarted. Self examination is another obligation. *“Examine yourselves”* wrote Paul to the Corinthian believers. How necessary it is for every believer to pray in absolute sincerity *“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thought: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:23,24). Satan will do all he can to hinder these exercises and thus the Christian drifts from his solemn commitments, having been duped by the insidious influences of the Devil.

Added to the Adversary’s activity of hindering he often discourages concerning devotion. Why carry on? What are you accomplishing? What signs are there that this commitment is getting you anywhere? By it you are making yourself a slave, you could have a lot more leisure time if you eased up on some of those Christian involvements. If this approach is unsuccessful he will often work in a totally opposite manner, by influencing a believer to plunge deeper into spiritual activity. This at first may appear right, but how harmful it can be, to pile on responsibility, pressurize and

overwhelm with spiritual work, for it will inevitably create other problems. How treacherous is this mode of attack! It matters not to Satan how the ends are achieved, therefore the believer is to be fully aware of all these wiles and act responsibly.

**INCONSISTENCY.** God is a God of order and balance. His ways are equal (Ezekiel 18:25) meaning ‘consistent with His character’. The believing sinner by grace is brought into the family of God, as such he is “*to be conformed to the image of His Son*” (Romans 8:29); not conformed to the world but transformed by the renewing of the mind (cf Romans 12:2). Only this is consistent with the name he bears and the profession he makes. Here the mind comes into focus and this is Satan’s most favoured sphere of activity. With great assiduity he will sow his noxious seeds into man’s thinking in a most unsuspecting manner, with a view to bringing about inconsistency in a believer’s life. Upon this issue is the Christian to be most vigilant. A transformed life will only be in evidence to the degree in which man’s thoughts are being renewed and guarded day by day. The loins of the mind are to be girded, the thinking sober, balanced, not according to the former manner of life, but consistent with the Christian’s holy calling (cf 1 Peter 1:13-16); affections are to be set on things above (cf Colossians 3:2). The former conversation and the old man is to be put off and the child of God to be renewed in the spirit of the mind (cf Ephesians 4:22,23).

This aspect of Satan’s activity cannot be overemphasized for his ploy is ever to encourage man to be governed by his own thoughts rather than by what God has said. This was the case in Eden, and he, the Old Serpent, has never changed, nor is he likely to, because of his success. Again in this area he has agents. Thoughts which come from the minds of men, though they be professed believers and their reasoning sounds convincing, if they do not totally concur with the Word of God they must be dismissed. Has not God said, “*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,*

*saith the Lord*” (Isaiah 55:8)? When a man in preaching, or in spiritual conversation constantly says ‘I think’, his words need careful analysis, for they could well becloud the hearer’s mind. It is the entrance of God’s word which gives light and understanding unto the simple (cf Psalm 119:130). So insidious are the workings of Satan that he can and does, open the mouth of even good men, so that they multiply words without knowledge (cf Job 35:16). Let us not be ignorant of these many **insidious** devices, lest Satan should get an advantage over us (cf 2 Corinthians 2:11).

W.H.Molland

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## *The Deceiver of the World*

Satan is given, among other descriptive titles, that of a deceiver, “*that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which **deceiveth** the whole world*” (Revelation 12:9). Jesus Christ is truth, life, and light. Satan is deception, darkness, and death. The world, as now organized, is full “*with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). In order to have the capability of deception, the spurious thing must closely imitate the genuine. A lie does not deceive unless it has the guise of truth. The deceptive contrivance or device, in order to fulfill the object of its author, must have the promise and appearance of desirable properties while lacking the substance thereof.

The characteristic of deceitfulness may be discovered in Satan’s world-scheme at whatever point it may be closely scrutinized. Scripture speaks of the “*the deceitfulness of riches*” (Matthew 13:22), and this may well serve as the typical illustration of the subject, because there is in our day no other object so prominently set up by men before their own eyes as worthy of their most

strenuous efforts, no other object in the ardent pursuit of which so many human beings are intently engaged as the acquisition of money. From generation to generation man's experience has uniformly witnessed to the truth of the Scriptural statement touching the deceitfulness of riches; and yet the power of deception therein was never greater in its intensity or more disastrous in its results than at the present day. The amassing of colossal fortunes is one of the striking characteristics of the age. Men are, indeed, heaping up their treasure in the last days (cf James 5:3). No natural explanation will account for the deceptive power of riches. It can only be understood in the light of the explanation of Scripture that Satan is the god – that is to say, the architect, constructor, and engineer – of this world-system, and that his character inheres in his work.

But let the scrutinizing gaze of the inquirer be directed to any other object which the director of the world's affairs places before the minds of men, and he will perceive that the same quality of deceitfulness resides in them all. The apostle speaks of the "*deceitfulness of sin*" (Hebrews 3:13) and of its hardening effect upon the nature of man. This brief word of Scripture is a veritable searchlight whereby the depths of human nature and the very core of the world-system may be explored. It is beyond question a ray of the "*true light*" (John 1:9). Sin is deceitful, and men are beyond controversy hardened thereby. The truth of this appears on all sides.

Is there, then, no one to whom we may go; no one in whom there is no deceit and no darkness at all? Yes, there is One, even He of whom God says, "*This is My beloved Son: hear Him*" (Mark 9:7), and if we heed this command and listen to His words, what do we hear Him say concerning this world through which we are now passing? He has many things to say on this subject, solemn, pointed, urgent words. He says that it shall not profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul (cf Matthew 16:26). He says that if we are of the world the world will love us, for it loves its own; but



they who are His are not of the world, because He has chosen them out of the world, and therefore the world hates them (cf John 15:19). He says that if the world hates us we may know that it hated Him before it hated us (cf John 15:18). He foretold that the world would rejoice at His death (cf John 16:20), and declared that His disciples were not of the world, even as He was not of the world (cf John 17:14). The Apostle who was closest to His heart gives us a picture of the men of the world and the theme of their talk, saying, *“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them”* (1 John 4:5). Whoever has something to say in praise of the world, however false his flatteries may be, is sure of an audience. And through the same Apostle God speaks these piercing words, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”* (1 John 2:15-17).

What can this be but the direct consequence of the event described in the third chapter of Genesis? All the outward manifestations of evil in the world are classed under three heads. These manifestations have no explanation, and are absolutely incomprehensible without the event recorded in that chapter. With it *“all that is in the world”* is intelligible. The mother of all mankind *“saw that the tree was good for food”* – the lust of the flesh; *“and that it was pleasant to the eyes”* – the lust of the eyes; *“and a tree to be desired to make one wise”* (Genesis 3:6) – the pride of life.

Is it possible for any rational man, after paying the slightest attention to these Scriptures, and perceiving but a small fraction of the magnitude and universality of the truth contained in these few words, to doubt that they are from God? Surely it must be plain, upon the briefest consideration, that no man could have furnished

that explanation at the time the first book of the Bible was written (or, indeed, at any time), or have given the complementary comment upon it which we have received through the last of the inspired writers. This is not man; it is none other than the Alpha and Omega. The First and the Last, the Lord, who is and was and is to come the Almighty (cf Revelation 1:8).

But men love to be deceived. This is a common trait of humanity; and what can account for this fact but the explanation that the race, in Adam, submitted voluntarily to the influence of the deceiver of the world? This willingness to be deceived is strikingly evinced by the readiness with which the natural man gives ear to all who teach the pleasing doctrine that existing conditions in the main are satisfactory, and, anyhow, are steadily improving. We are exhorted to listen to the throb of the twentieth century activity and to keep in step with the march of progress. If this be too materialistic for some, the same vague and meaningless sentiments are put into various religious settings; as in a New Year's greeting to his flock by an eminent minister, the central exhortation was to 'bow before the sacred shrine of humanity'. Will any reader be surprised to hear that there was a demand for, and a wide distribution of, this greeting? Such phrases as these, whereof every worldling, whether clerical or secular, has a goodly stock, possess an amazing power of deception, producing upon the natural mind the effect of intellectual anaesthesia, an effect which cannot be counted for save by the account recorded in the third of Genesis.

Other evidences of the present working and widespread effects of this power of deception might be multiplied. We see it in the very general love of men for the improbable and unreal, and in the many ways in which human credulity manifests and gratifies itself; in the fondness for fiction, works of the imagination, romances, theatrical representations, so-called spiritualistic seances, feats of legerdemain, tales of occult happenings - in a word, anything and everything

which represents unreality as reality or which aims to cheat the senses. Falsehood has thus a power even to entertain, to administer gratification, and to divert the mind, though it can never satisfy the heart of man; and when falsehood is presented in attractive forms and with practiced skill, it is even exalted as ‘Art’, and to it high religious authorities attribute a beneficial influence; and it even finds its way into the churches.

Not such is the teaching of the Word of God. The man who is controlled thereby finds his delight in the Law of the Lord. His enjoyment is not in “*foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient*” (Ephesians 5:4); but he talks of “*all His wondrous works*” (Psalm 105:2). God’s words are in his heart; and he talks of them when he sits in his house, and when he walks by the way, and when he lies down, and when he rises up (cf Deuteronomy 6:6,7). Over him the deceiver has no power; for having been enlightened by the Word of God, he is not ignorant of the deceptive devices of the enemy.

**Philip Mauro**, born 1859  
Attorney-At-Law,  
New York City,

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**Announcement**

Lord’s Day 1<sup>st</sup> February 2004 was a memorable occasion as Nathan Abbott made his public confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by baptism. He has now been received into the membership of the Church. We thank God for His grace in salvation and for the gift of another young man to the Fellowship; we pray that he will be daily strengthened and encouraged in his new life and find much joy, succour and a sphere of service in his spiritual home at North Road Chapel.

# Editorial

This present generation has no greater need than to reassess the reality of evil. It is a fact that the foundations of society are not only being threatened, they are eroding and crumbling at an alarming rate. How can this be, seeing there has been much scientific advancement and technological development which should all contribute to improved standards and an increasing degree of satisfaction and contentment? Patently this is not the case, rather is the reverse obvious. Can civil authorities be blamed, successive weak governments giving ground on many issues, thereby failing to give strong leadership on vital matters? Is it possible that the current situation is just part of a cycle in human development which will turn full circle in a generation or two? None of these things are the cause, they are the effects of something infinitely greater; a deep seated spiritual malady spearheaded by a mighty spirit being, termed in Holy Scripture, Satan, The Devil, The Great Adversary. He is the one who leads an army of unseen principalities and powers of darkness, *“the angel of the bottomless pit”* (Revelation 9:11); *“the god of this world”* (2 Corinthians 4:4); he *“deceiveth the whole world”* (Revelation 12:9); working with all power, signs, lying wonders and deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish (cf 2 Thessalonians 2:9,10). Here lies the cause - **SATAN**. The reason of all sin and evil in the world, in its multiplicity of forms, is this mighty fallen spirit. This Satanic monster being a spirit, is unseen, nevertheless **REAL**; *“the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”* (Ephesians 2:2).

All the festering cancers of this world’s inconceivable wickedness are to be traced back to him. He is the originator and promoter of all evil, in all places, at all times. Men sneer at this and many would say, such a belief is unscientific, a hangover from the superstition of the ‘Dark Ages’. Vast numbers of modern pulpiteers have

consigned a personal devil to the scrap heap as being outdated dogma.

“And so they have voted the devil out,  
And of course the devil is gone;  
But simple folk would like to know  
Who carries his business on?”

The indisputable evidence confronting humanity is a world reeking in lust, crime, war, privation and misery, and notwithstanding science and technology, is causing men's hearts to fail them for fear of the things which are coming to pass (cf Luke 21:26). If there is no sinister power behind this phenomenon, Satan pulling the strings, the Devil fanning the passions, then one of the basic affirmations of Scripture is a lie! When Christ was upon earth, He lived, spoke and acted in light of the fact that there **WAS** an active personal devil. The whole of Divine revelation from Genesis to the Apocalypse testifies to this supernatural source of evil, a mighty spirit being, pledged to thwart the purposes of God and the establishing of the kingdom of grace in the hearts of men and women.

The mass of mankind do not realize the verity of this diabolical activity of Satan for he, the god of this world hath blinded their eyes (cf 2 Corinthians 4:4). It is his determined design to keep men in ignorance and ultimately to drown them in destruction and perdition. Sadly the average Christian is unaware and does not appreciate the depth of this all important aspect of doctrine, because the subject is rarely preached upon and expounded in its alarming reality; consequently the people of God are not equipped for the moral and spiritual calamities of the day. The Church is impotent when she ceases to be aware of the Great Adversary, and his tremendous forces of darkness arrayed against her. The Christian life is one of warfare. If the soldiers of Jesus Christ are not on the march and eager for the battle, let them be assured the demonic principalities are.

The call of the hour is *“Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion;”* (Isaiah 52:1). How the New Testament Church epistles bristle with figures drawn from the arena of battle! It was one of Paul’s favourite sources of symbolism. If he were present in this twenty-first century would he not with increased passion enforce those words, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers and spiritual wickedness.....therefore put on the whole armour of God (cf Ephesians 6:10-18)? How little of resolute battle is seen in the Church of Jesus Christ today! She has become so polite and gracious that nothing must be said which might injure or offend. If there are differences then they must be dealt with in such a manner that no one could possibly be upset. It may call for ambiguity, that is of little concern as long as peace and love is maintained. This is the fray of toy soldiers and dummy weapons, it is no battle whatsoever; nothing but a pretence of fighting the good fight of faith (cf 1 Timothy 6:12). Here is a game which the Great Adversary stands back and watches with complacency, for by this very means he deceives these **GOOD** and **GRACIOUS** men into a spirit of tolerance, thereby another of his insidious ends are achieved. Behind the veneer of Christian culture, politeness and so-called love lurks the serpent, and by it many aspects of the faith are dismissed or considered secondary. In this way Satan works as an angel of light (cf 2 Corinthians 11:14) and what should be a battlefield becomes a picnic area.

## **ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION**

**5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004 D.V.**

**Saturday 3.30 p.m. & 6.00 p.m. Tea served 5.00 p.m.**

**Lord’s Day 10.45 a.m. & 6.30 p.m.**

**Preacher: Mr Graham Bidston (CHISLEHURST)**

**A cordial invitation is extended to all**