

April – June 2005

**T
H
E

L
I
N
K**

**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

Lessons from John's Gospel

chapter seventeen

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me.”

(John 17:25)

The titles by which God is addressed have varied throughout this prayer; often it is ‘Father’, once ‘Holy Father’, and now in conclusion, our Lord uses the term ‘Righteous Father’. What is the significance of this latest epithet?

In this verse, attention is drawn to two groups of people: those that ‘have not known Thee’, and those that ‘have known Thee’ – Unbelievers, and Believers. It is with reference to **both** of these companies that the Lord invokes the attribute of God’s **righteousness**; the meaning of the word being ‘accuracy’, ‘justice’, ‘equity’. Thus we are to learn that toward unbelievers and believers, God is equally righteous. His actions are just with regard to both parties.

Following the order set down in the verse under consideration, we look first at the unbelievers – ‘the world that hath not known Thee’. In the condemnation of the unbeliever, God is just, though the world might appear to lie in ignorance. *“That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”* (Romans 1:19-20). That which may be known of God is manifest in creation, vividly displayed in that which He has made. The eternal power of the Godhead is exhibited in whatever part of the

world man may live; but does the wonder and glory of the earth, the seas, and the skies above, cause men to enquire after the Creator? Is a spirit of wonder and adoration produced in their hearts, resulting in a true worship of the God of Heaven? Sadly the answer is no; yet these things are clearly seen, says the Almighty. Men should understand God's power and supremacy by the marvels of His handiwork. In wantonness and rebellion will mortals attend to the fables of men with their hypotheses of science falsely so called (cf 1 Timothy 6:20) such as those propounded by evolutionists and humanists. To this reckless attitude of turning from reality, God says: "*I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their **own thoughts***" (Isaiah 65:2). By the visible, obvious workmanship of a sovereign Creator, mankind's apparent ignorance is '**without excuse**'.

Not only is the One True God manifested by Creation, but infinitely more so by the Incarnation, and the sending into the world of His Son in fashion as a man. The Father sent forth His Son for the very purpose of bearing witness to the truth (cf John 18:37) that doubts, misconceptions and humanistic reasoning might be dispelled. When upon earth, the man Christ Jesus displayed the glory and power of the Father to the degree that He could truthfully state: "*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father*" (John 14:9). Despite His acts of power and words of authority, it did nothing other than generate further hatred to both Father and Son (cf John 15:24)

A very poignant word coming from the lips of Almighty God is recorded by one Old Testament prophet: "*What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*" (Isaiah 5:4). This Old Testament Scripture finds a link in one of the parables spoken by the Lord when He was upon earth: "*Then said the Lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved Son: it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him*" (Luke 20:13).

Could God have done more than to send His Son? Yet when the Son came, men despised Him, they hated Him without a cause and finally He was totally rejected. The Lord's words concerning the attitude of His creatures are most expressive: "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not*" (Matthew 23:37).

Whether it be in the manifestation of creation, or the revelation given in and through Jesus Christ, the worldling will **not** have God. "*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts*" (Psalm 10:4). Anything of a spiritual nature is foolishness to mortal man. Added to this, there is a scorn within, even a positive enmity. He will **not** seek after God; deliberately he turns to his **own** ways. By this, he is adjudged. "*This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*" (John 3:19). **This is the condemnation.** Men prefer to remain in spiritual darkness. "*Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life*" (John 5:40). "*They say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways*" (Job 21:14). With no fear of God being before men's eyes (cf Romans 3:18), and not liking to retain God in their knowledge (wilful ignorance), God gives them over to a reprobate mind (cf Romans 1:28).

Concerning this refractory mind-set, the Divine record is set forth unambiguously. The God of heaven will not have His law disregarded, neither will He be scorned or set at nought by mortals of earth. They are "*a people of no understanding; therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will show them no favour*" (Isaiah 27:11). To live godless is to die hopeless, and pass into a state of everlasting remorse and woe; but in this, God is absolutely **righteous**. In this judgment which will

surely come upon every unbelieving worldling, He is **just**. None will ever question the equity of His actions; not one will have an excuse. Every mouth will be stopped, and all the world will be found guilty before God (cf Romans 3:19). It is a most terrifying fact, that in the great final assize, not a single person of all generations of human history will challenge the justice of God. Every one will see their own guilt and stand in stony silence, being fully aware that in their fearful doom, the judgment meted out by the Supreme Sovereign is **righteous**, and that there is no extenuation. Herein is the justice of God revealed in all them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf 2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Turn now to the other company, of whom it is said ‘These have known Thee’ – the elect. Concerning these, the Lord again invokes the **righteous** character of His Father. How can this be true of a company of people who were by nature as much at enmity with God as the former? A people who were as ignorant and scornful of God as the worldlings, desiring none of Him or His ways. Indeed the Bible clearly states that they were “*the children of wrath even as others*” (Ephesians 2:3). Yet this vast number of the human race were elected unto eternal salvation and dealt with in grace. Where is the justice in this? How can the attribute of righteousness be aligned in this instance? If the Scriptures are searched, compared and held in balance, the supposed discrepancies disappear.

God never exercises mercy to the prejudice of His justice. He is always **righteous**. How that righteousness is to be seen and outworked in this second group, takes us immediately into the realm of atonement; the subject of suretyship and substitution. The sin and guilt of this vast number with its consequent divine wrath was never overlooked or connived, it became the charge and responsibility of another; one who could meet the claims of every detail of the law and suffer the just penalty which that law

demanded. This alone could provide the basis for a Holy God to act **righteously** towards these sinners whom He had chosen out of the world.

The Son of God accepted the amazing undertaking of suretyship. He came into bond for this Divinely elected company, accepting full responsibility at the bar of Holy Justice, knowing that it entailed the wrath of God being poured out upon Him without mitigation. It meant that every sin, of every repentant believing sinner of every generation of human history was to be imputed to Him. This imputation, or transfer, becoming **actual**, would render Him officially guilty; thus as the legal substitute for the guilty, He would endure the wrath of God in the sinners' stead. Through this satisfaction which Christ the Surety would effect, the sinner would be freed and legally acquitted, yea more, He would be **justified**. So efficacious and absolute would this work of atonement be, that the 'once guilty' would stand completely exonerated; not a single charge would remain whereby he might later be accused. The sinner thus covered is said to be 'in Christ', and of such, an official statement is issued: "*There is therefore now **no condemnation** to them which are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1). That person stands 'in Christ', as if he had never sinned. To the sinner, this is **sovereign grace**, but to Christ the Surety, it was **holy justice**, stern, just, accurate requital, involving the relentless vengeance of a Holy God being inflicted upon the substitute until every claim was fully met; for not until the last detail of the law's demands had been finalized and accepted could a just pardon be granted.

The equity of this Divine transaction of atonement can be feebly illustrated in the following way. Suppose a debtor owes a businessman £50,000. A friend comes into bond for that debtor. He approaches the creditor saying 'I have become guarantor for your debtor, it is official, I have signed a deed of suretyship, I am now legally bound to His liabilities. I know this man owes you

£50,000. I am prepared to make an offer of £30,000 to clear the matter up'. Would that be just? Would it satisfy the creditor? What is more, would it not leave the debtor still to find £20,000? That bankrupt could never be cleared of his debt by such a guarantor. The creditor must have in his hand the full total of £50,000 from the guarantor before he can clear the debtor, nothing less would be just and equitable.

The God of heaven “*will by no means clear the guilty*” (Exodus 34:7). He is **righteous**, full satisfaction for every sin must be exacted before He will give clearance. It is because the Son of God Himself became the **divine guarantor** and cleared **in total** all the sins of repentant believing sinners, that God can act **righteously** in giving to each one eternal life, and a flawless standing in the courts of Holy implacable justice.

This is all succinctly summed up in the New Testament: “*being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*” (Romans 3:24-26). The righteousness of God is positively asserted **as much** in the forgiveness of those who repent and believe, and in consequence are delivered from wrath to come, as it is in the eternal punishment of those who refuse to hear Him who has spoken from heaven (cf Hebrews 12:25). Almighty God is equally just in taking His sheep into heaven as He is in assigning the goats into hell. Unbelieving sinners bear their own iniquity. The wrath of God abideth eternally on them, because they would not come, that they might have life (cf John 5:40). Whilst believers, having heard the voice of God and responded, confessing their sins in repentance and faith, believing that “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (1 Timothy

1:15) receive the gift of eternal life – **but** this is upon the grounds of atonement, the absolute legal satisfaction made by Christ their surety. On **this basis** God can be just, and the justifier of Him that believeth on Jesus (cf Romans 3:26).

By these many scriptures, it is seen that there is nothing incongruous in our Lord addressing His Father as **righteous** both with respect to the unbelieving world and to believing sinners.

“Lord God Almighty, just and true are all Thy ways”
(Revelation 15:3).

W. H. Molland

“Divine Righteousness bestows heavenly glory on the elect. Divine Righteousness refuses to bestow it on the unbelieving world.”

A. W. Pink

Why were we delivered from the quagmire of iniquity and pollution of this world, if we want to wallow in it as long as we live? God’s holiness admonishes us that we must inhabit the holy city of Jerusalem if we wish to belong to the people of God. Jerusalem is hallowed ground; therefore it cannot be profaned by impure inhabitants. The Psalmist wrote, this one shall abide in the tabernacle of the Lord, who walks uprightly and works righteousness. The Sanctuary of the Holy One must be kept immaculate. Unless we ardently and prayerfully devote ourselves to Christ’s righteousness, we do not only faithlessly revolt from our Creator, but we also abjure Him as our Saviour

John Calvin

Seasons in the Soul

II. Spring

Of all the seasons of the year, it is perhaps the spring that is most imbued with joy, and hope, and assurance. Upon the dark scene of the waning winter, a change can be detected. The lengthening hours of daylight serve to illuminate an Earth newly bedecked with greenness. The developing verdure of spring spreads itself across the ground in all its enlivening hues; flowers spring forth; blossom beautifies the trees; birds grace the air with their early songs.

Though on times, contrary weather might suggest a revival of the winter, these spells are but short-lived, and the turning of the seasons is clear to see. Almighty God has once again honoured His covenant made with Noah, and with all humanity – Divine Providence is ever mindful of His ancient promise, and the procession of seasons constantly testify to His immutability. Springtime “joins with all nature in manifold witness to His great faithfulness, mercy, and love”.

As has already been demonstrated in these pages, the natural seasons of the year find a spiritual counterpart within the soul of man. For that too is a realm which is subject to varying conditions, and changing states. Where unbelief and sin hold their unbridled sway, there winter prevails in the heart, in all its dearth and deadness. Surely then it follows that the arrival of springtime in the soul is a valid illustration of the dawn of **salvation**, and **regeneration**.

It is this very theme that Solomon, inspired of the Holy Ghost, takes up in chapter two of his wonderful Song:

“My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away” (Song of Solomon 2:10-13).

There could be no more fitting description of the delightful experiences that accompany conversion than is given in these few lines. Each detail portrayed in this vernal scene has a spiritual application. Consider first the **cause** of the springtide here described. What was its origin? What precipitated its glad arrival? *“The voice of my beloved! behold, **He** cometh...”* is the cry which begins this scripture (v. 8) – the bridegroom’s approach is announced and acclaimed. His appearance produces this remarkable transformation, and ushers in the new season. He declares the dawning springtime, for He is the source of it. In His absence, winter abides; in His advent, spring arrives.

The application is patently clear: it is Christ alone, in His saving grace, and converting, life-imparting power that can resurrect the soul that lies, dead in trespasses and sin. His is the efficacious blood, the finished work, the all-prevailing Name. Indeed, *“there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). His too, is the love, so tenderly set forth in the allegory of Solomon’s Song, which courts, and charms, and strives with the souls of all His elect. That love alone can conquer and convert the stony, winter-bound heart. Christ is the Dayspring (cf Luke 1:78), the Sun of Righteousness (cf Malachi 4:2), which, rising upon the soul’s horizon, lightens its darkness (cf 2 Samuel 22:29), and brings in the year of grace, the year of jubilee. *“And **He** shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a*

morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain” (2 Samuel 23:4)

The glorious effects of Christ’s entrance into the saved soul are thus related: “*lo, the winter is past*” (v. 11) – every last vestige of the former season, all its sin and shame, is completely and verifiably dispelled. The transformation wrought by the Lord is absolute and entire. He is anointed of God “*to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*” (Isaiah 61:3). Where sin once abounded, there now grace much more abounds (cf Romans 5:20). The soul’s winter is forever past, and done away.

“*The flowers appear on the earth*”. Flowers – spring’s early blooms, are the prelude and portent of the changing season. In this country, it is perhaps the snowdrop that first appears, with daffodil and crocus following in quick succession. They break the still-frosty soil, and soon rise and blossom; colourful harbingers of the turning year, and sure evidences of springtide. In a similar way, within the newly converted soul there arise undeniable proofs of the work of grace. A reciprocal love for God, and for His Word, and for His children, our brethren – these are the ‘signs following’ that confirm conversion “*and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him*” (1 John 3:19). Love in deed and in truth; a holy desire for Christ; a yearning for spiritual development; hope kindled in the heart – such virtues are like flowers, which both beautify the sanctified soul, and give irrefutable assurance that the tremendous transformation has transpired.

“*The time of the singing [of birds] is come*”. After the long months of privation and hardship, which almost silence the sound of birdsong, it is a particular joy to hear the air once more thrill with their glad music. Native species take up their well-remembered themes again, whilst migrant birds return to swell the chorus –

“Their songs with every spring renewed”. Yet this detail but alludes to an expression of praise far more glorious and divine: namely, that which arises from the overflow of the Christian’s heart upon salvation. That one who has come into a saving relationship with God their Maker, is made “*wiser than the fowls of heaven*”, and is given “*songs in the night*” (cf Job 35:10-11); they have a new song imparted to them “*even praise unto our God*” (Psalm 40:3), a song which will resound into Eternity (cf Revelation 5:9). All the tribute that the lesser creation might involuntarily render to God cannot compare with the heartfelt peon of praise offered by a saved soul. Only the experience of regeneration will elicit worship of this calibre, for: “No mortal voice can sing the song that ransomed souls would raise”. How the saints in every age have proved that upon conversion “*the time of singing is come*”, for whom but they can truly sing, “*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*” (Luke 1:46-47)?

“*The voice of the turtle is heard in our land*”. Not without reason was the poet inspired to add this phrase. The turtledove was indeed a seasonal visitor to the skies of Israel (cf Jeremiah 8:7), its appearance testifying to the arrival of spring, (even as the cuckoo does in England). Yet, it is also a type of God the Holy Spirit, who “*descended in a bodily shape like a dove*” (Luke 3:22). He it is that graces the soul’s springtime with His divine effulgence, and holy unction. There He ever remains, the earnest and pledge of a heavenly inheritance, until the day of glorification; comforting, testifying, and assuring the believer. “*And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us*” (1 John 3:24).

“*The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell*”. No sooner have the flowers of spring blossomed than they are followed by the early development of fruit – the first green figs, and tender grapes. The ripening of summer, and ingathering of harvest-time are still a long way off, but

both find their origins here. For whilst spring may not be typified by abundance or maturity, it is the season of most rapid and prolific growth. Even so, the young child of God, having so recently tasted of His goodness in salvation, will brook no delay in obeying that commandment to “*bear much fruit*”, knowing that therein his Heavenly Father is glorified (cf John 15:8). It will become their earnest desire to bring forth, with patience, “*fruits meet for repentance*” (Matthew 3:8), “*the peaceable fruit of righteousness*” (Hebrews 12:11), and “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:22). What though such fruit has small and humble beginnings? The Divine Husbandman will not despise the day of small things, but will ensure that this fruit does not wither, and is brought forth, with blessedness, in its due season (cf Psalm 1). Does the Christian achieve this fruitfulness in his own strength? No – the same Lord, who turned the seasons within the soul, also inspires and empowers the fruit-bearing. “*From Me is thy fruit found*” (Hosea 14:8) declares the Almighty; whilst the Psalmist testifies: “*all my springs are in Thee*” (Psalm 87:7).

The delights of this spring-season in the soul of a believer are not restricted to those still on the threshold of the Christian pilgrimage. Saints of every age and condition can derive great blessing by reflecting upon that time when first they sought the Lord, and were found of Him. God richly blesses the Christians’ pathway with many springtime experiences – seasons of special love, and devotion, and nearness – and ever restores unto His children the joys of their salvation. Well did the hymn-writer say:

“Let every act of worship be
Like our espousals, Lord, to Thee;
Like the dear hour, when from above
We first received Thy pledge of love.

The gladness of that happy day –
Our hearts would wish it long to stay;
Nor let our faith forsake its hold,
Nor comfort sink, nor love grow cold.”

Let the believer, who desires to rekindle or regain their first love, be careful to hearken to the voice of their Lord. The Beloved of Solomon’s song had known a period of separation and distance from her Lover, with the sorrow and solitude which that entailed. But at length she hears His welcome voice once more, His dulcet tones heralding a vernal renaissance. “*The voice of my beloved!*” is her delighted cry. There is nothing more reviving or refreshing to the believer’s soul, than to hear the word of their Lord, arising from Holy Scripture, and applied personally to their own heart: “*the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice*” (John 3:29). If that sweet voice seems to be inaudible, it could be for want of standing, and waiting upon the Lord; or for lack of attentiveness to His Word; or the absence of that meek spirit which says: “*Speak, LORD; for Thy servant heareth*” (1 Samuel 3:9)

The charge of the Bridegroom to His beloved, twice repeated in this passage, is as instructive as it is delightful: “*Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away*” (v. 10, 13). First is the exhortation to ascend – to awake from sleep, and shake off sloth; to arise from solitude into fellowship and communion; to lift oneself from an earth-bound position of inaction, and to stand upright. The pleasures of spiritual springtime will never be enjoyed by those Christians who are dilatory, or idle; resting upon the laurels of past experiences; sleeping upon beds of carnal ease. The word of Christ to the soul is: “*Arise!*”!

With the exhortation comes, secondly, expressions of love from the Bridegroom. How amazing, that He, the Lord of Glory, “*the*

chiefest among ten thousand” (Song of Solomon 5:10), should call His redeemed people “*my fair one*”, and “*my love*”; yet as such He styles them. For every saint is endued with a beauty not their own, but divinely imparted by Him; thus of His people the Almighty says: “*thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD*” (Ezekiel 16:14). Christ is enamoured with His people, for He sees them in their true, spiritual state, as recipients of the glory He will give them; in that day when, seeing Him as He is, they will be made altogether like Him.

Justification enrobes the saint in the lustrous garment of Christ’s matchless righteousness; sanctification adds the adornment of “*the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price*” (1 Peter 3:4). How much more attractive does that Christian become, who proceeds to obey their Lord, and rise at His gracious beckoning?

Thirdly, the heavenly bridegroom says, “*come away*”. What a blessed call! It is an invitation to “*come*” and be led by Him, to walk with Him, and be united ever closer to Him. It is a command to forsake our former state, and make progress in spiritual matters. Such is the summons which He makes to all His saved ones, throughout their sojourn upon earth: to leave those things which are behind – the encumbrances of the world, and the remnants of the soul’s winter of sin – and instead, hearken to His high call, and press toward the mark. May God evermore give us grace so to do!

“Lord, on our souls Thy Spirit pour;
The moral waste within restore;
O let Thy love our spring-tide be,
And make us all bear fruit to Thee.

R. J. Steward

THE WORLD SYSTEM

Its Origin

Man's physical organization is such that he cannot obtain, by any investigation he is able to make, the slightest information concerning the causes of social conditions as he finds them in the world, or concerning the origin of the human family, or concerning the end towards which the world movements are hastening. Of these and kindred matters he cannot possibly know anything **except** by Divine revelation.

To speculate touching such matters is foolish and irrational in the extreme; for, apart from revelation, we have no data from which inferences may be drawn, and no possibility of securing such data. Therefore, to one who inquires concerning things spiritual and unseen, concerning the mysteries of sin, sickness, and death, and concerning the tendency of the human heart to evil, the first question to be settled is, Have we a revelation? If he answers that question in the negative, the inquiry is logically at an end.

We are not here entering upon a discussion of the question whether or not the Bible is true. Even the man who has not for himself decided that question in the affirmative may nevertheless profitably examine the explanation which Holy Scripture gives of the great complex world-system in which he finds himself. After so doing he will be able to test that explanation by the results of his observation, by the whole state of human affairs as revealed to him in his intercourse with his fellow-men and in his daily paper, and by what he finds in his own heart. It may be that, as the Scriptural explanation sheds its light upon the mysteries and perplexities of human nature and human history, he may not only come to comprehend the mysteries, but may also (which is of greater importance) come to realize that the light whereby he has explored them is indeed Divine.

Scripture says that the state of humanity in all its phases is the result of an experimental career upon which the parents of the race embarked without the sanction of God and in violation of His express command. It tells us further that the conception of this experiment did not originate with man, but was prompted by a spiritual being of great wisdom and power, who aimed to be man's leader in spiritual matters and to direct his career. We were not told what were the full results which Satan hoped to accomplish by alienating the human race from God and attaching it to himself, but we do know that he seeks to be worshipped (cf Luke 4:6-7, Revelation 13:4). It is, moreover, evident that his plan did not disclose as its object the destruction or injury of the race; but that, on the contrary, he represented himself as solicitous for the well-being of humanity, and for the achievement by it of the best possible results that are attainable **apart from God**.

Because of ignorance of what the Scriptures teach about Satan many people would violently resent the statement that the world is following his leadership. This, however, is not an occasion for a show of resentment. No candid person will deny that the enterprise upon which men are engaged consists essentially in the attempt to organize the best possible conditions that can be attained **apart from God**.

Who, then, **is** the god of this world; that is, its spiritual leader and organizer, the person according to whose ideals its activities are planned and its course directed? Satan himself declared that all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them are his, and that he can "*give them to whomsoever he will*" (Luke 4:5-6). This is a startling statement, and is not one of his lies, for Scripture repeatedly confirms the statement that Satan is the prince and god of this world (cf John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, Acts 26:18, 2 Corinthians 4:4). We wish to grasp the import of this statement, and then to test its

probability by our observations of the great and complex world-system which envelops us.

Scripture tells us further that the parents of our race were attracted by the supposed advantages of the career upon which Satan urged them to embark, the chief characteristic of that career (as set forth by the tempter) being the opportunity for **progress or self-improvement through the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge**. The first human pair exercised their power of choice by accepting the career thus offered to them, thereby committing the race to the consequences of that choice, the first consequence being death, or separation from God. Here again we pause to note that the Bible is the only book which offers an explanation of the stupendous fact of death. Infidel philosophy can but ignore it. Why should men die? Infidel philosophy can give no answer.

According to Scripture, therefore, we have in the world-system around us the consequence of the acceptance by the human family of Satan's programme and leadership, it having pleased God in His wisdom to permit the working out of this experiment until **His** time shall come for bringing it to its inevitable end.

It is particularly to be observed in the Scripture narrative that the Satanic programme, spread before the first man and woman, contained only what the natural mind adjudges to be a desirable and legitimate object of pursuit. Only one thing stood in the way, namely, a Divine commandment which to all appearance was arbitrary. Under the force of plausible reasoning, that restraint was overcome. God's love, and His wisdom in imposing it were called into question. Man then, for the first time, set himself to do what he has been prone to do ever since – namely, **to question and pass judgment upon the expediency of a Divine commandment**. He became, in a word, a 'higher critic'; that is to say, a man who assumes to criticise the Word of God. Thus it was that the human

family entered upon the stupendous experiment of devising a world-system according to Satanic principles.

The account of this momentous event given us in Scripture is exceedingly brief, but every word is charged with a Divine wealth of meaning. The brevity of the account is one of its Divine characteristics, since no human author could have dealt with such an event in that fashion. God does not tell us why, in the moral government of His universe and in the sight of His spiritual creatures, it was necessary that the great human experiment should be suffered to unfold itself through long centuries, until its failure should be demonstrated at every point; but He has seen fit to give us in concise form the history of the event which is the **cause** of all that confronts us in the world around.

Let us study that history, and the more attentively because it is, as a rule, grossly distorted and grievously misunderstood. And let us not fear to **scrutinise** it with the utmost rigidity, knowing that, if the account be true, we have here the **germ from which all human history**, with its cries and tears, “its oceans of blood and continents of misery”, **has unfolded**. If God has given this account, it will not be an allegory. He will not mock us in detailing the tragedy of His creation. If it be true, we shall read its truth in the social conditions of all the ages, and in the nature of each human heart. If it be true, its impress will certainly be observable upon the whole course of human affairs.

Philip Mauro

“A mighty struggle between opposing powers fills the history of the universe. It is the gigantic battle between good and evil, light and darkness, Satan and God.”

Erich Sauer

Editorial

Careful observation and serious analysis of modern trends should deeply concern sober minded people. ‘Positive thinking’, ‘self-worth’ and the ‘feel-good factor’ have been elevated to a level of great importance. These virtues represent a status which modern society strives to achieve. Added to this idiosyncrasy is the ongoing tendency to shift moral responsibility. A subtle form of victimization is becoming ever more prevalent, where blame for personal failure is attributed to some other cause or person. All this is an endeavour to off-load any sense of guilt. It was stated some years ago in an American publication, that guilt was a pollutant; a word not needed any more in the world. If such was the impression in America in a past decade, it is most certainly the case in Britain today, where great numbers of the population live as if they are in a ‘no-fault’ society. All these thoughts and persuasions are totally at variance with Biblical teaching. God, in His Holy Inspired Word, clearly sets forth universal total depravity. “*The whole world lieth in wickedness*” (1 John 5:19). To reinforce the indictment, a rider is added: “*There is none righteous, **no not one***” (Romans 3:10).

As is invariably the case, over a period of time, the ideals, patterns and influences of the unregenerate spread like leaven into the Church. To a very large degree, the people of God of this age embrace the world’s fads and opinions; particularly in the area of life-style. Far more Christians endeavour to live on the level of fallen, pleasure-loving society, than desire to be counted as fools for Christ’s sake (cf 1 Corinthians 4:10). Of those who name the name of Christ, there appear to be very few who deliberately, with calculated thought, **choose** to suffer affliction with the people of God; esteeming the reproach which this brings to be of far greater worth than any treasure, or pleasure which the world can give (cf Hebrews 11:25-26). Tragically, many professed believers in the

present day echo the thinking and motivation of the worldling by their manner of life. On the whole, Christians are growing less and less concerned with the all important matter of **sanctification**. The life of the child of God is to be '**separated** from evil' (cf Proverbs 8:13, 1 Corinthians 10:6); '**separated** from the world' (Exodus 33:16, Ezra 10:11); '**separated** from apostate Christendom' (cf Nehemiah 13:3, 2 Corinthians 6:17); and '**separated** unto God and His Word' (cf Numbers 6:2, Romans 1:1).

It is no exaggeration to say that we now live in a post-Christian society, and that this modern godless culture is abandoned to its own depravity; indeed, it exists under the righteous indignation of Almighty God, and awaits the impending final judgment. The inspired writing of Paul the Apostle becomes vibrant with power and reality in this twenty-first century. The inclusion of such words in Holy Scripture demands the immediate attention and imperative reaction of every true child of God. *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. Traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: **from such turn away**”* (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

The Church desperately needs to be awakened to the perilous times in which we live, and to the fact that **we**, the Christians of this generation have come to the kingdom for such a time as this (cf Esther 4:14); a time which could well be the **last days** of the Church's witness. Therefore, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness (cf 2 Peter 3:11)?

NOW AVAILABLE

The **2005 Catalogue** of Literature and Cassettes available from North Road Chapel.

Includes details of:

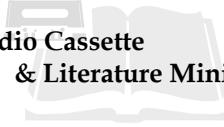
- Free Literature
- Book Sales
- Audio Cassette Sales
- The 'Link' Magazine
- Library of Recorded Sermons

For your **free** copy, please apply to:

The Bookroom Secretary
North Road Chapel
BIDEFORD
Devon
EX39 2NW

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL
(E V A N G E L I C A L)

NORTH ROAD BIDEFORD DEVON EX39 2NW



**Audio Cassette
& Literature Ministry**

Catalogue 2005

<p><small>For Books and Literature Enquiries, please contact:</small></p> <p>The Bookroom Secretary North Road Chapel North Road BIDEFORD Devon EX39 2NW</p>	<p><small>For Audio Cassette Enquiries and Loans, please contact:</small></p> <p>Mr D. C. Wort 90 Clifton Street BIDEFORD Devon EX39 4EX</p>
--	--

[No profit is made from the sale of the materials advertised]

ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION

Saturday 4th & Lord's Day 5th June 2005 D.V.

Preacher: Mr Alun McNabb
(Great Bridgeford)

a cordial invitation is extended to all