



### TAKE A SECOND LOOK

Foreword: This is the fifth of a series of articles. The purpose of each article is to make some biblical or non-biblical word or phrase more meaningful. They are offered as purely personal footnotes on the language of the Kingdom.

#### No. 5: **Wiles of the Devil** (n.b. adapted from 1966)

Graduation issue of Bethany **Beacon**)

We are all familiar with the passage introduced by this phrase in Ephesians 6: 11ff. The passage has to do with the Christian's defensive and offensive **armor** — armor to use in his skirmishes against Satan's wiles. I believe it would be worthwhile to look at some of those **wiles**, or **schemes**, as some translations have it.

It seems to me that Satan has polished up at least three of his old schemes and is using them to advantage in the form of three popular fallacies. These fallacies seem to have a common aim — confusion among church people and the resulting hurt to the Church's witness. Anyone who has read **Paradise Lost** cannot forget Milton's picture of Satan as the ruler of Chaos and the enemy of order. We must remember that in the 1960's Satan is still the author of confusion. I shall name these schemes the "either-or" fallacy, the "broad generalization" fallacy, and the "one-fact" fallacy.

#### **Either-or Fallacy**

Anyone who watches the secular or religious press with a spiritually sensitive eye must soon notice the either-or fallacy whenever religious issues are discussed. This fallacy has been especially popular in the Canadian secular press in recent years. Many Canadian journalists have fallen for Satan's line that modern Christians must be either "**ignorant fundamentalists**" or

"enlightened liberals." (Neither the distinction nor the adjectives are mine!) The usual impression is that we must **either** hold to the Bible and sacrifice our intellectual honesty **or** discard the Bible and maintain our intellectual honesty. Time and again this fallacy has turned up in articles concerning the United Church Sunday-School Curriculum or academic freedom at Acadia University or ecumenical matters. We must not be caught by this trick of the Devil! Nor should we promote it by maintaining any unnecessary ignorance. We Christians need not hide our heads in the sand in order to believe in the Bible as the authoritative and inerrant Word of God. There are dozens of Bible scholars, hundreds of books, and several excellent periodicals in the modern evangelical movement to help us find our way to an intellectually satisfying reconciliation of secular and religious facts.

#### **Broad Generalization Fallacy**

The broad generalization fallacy is the old shotgun device — let fly in all directions and hurt whoever is within range. The analogy can be carried further — the thin-skinned innocents get hurt most. The scheme of the Devil is to trick us into making broad general statements or into endorsing those made by others. Often this is a variant of the either-or fallacy — an idea or a group or a man is either all good or all bad.

As with many vices, generalization is a virtue gone wrong. As children we learn to generalize our knowledge: all stoves are hot, all bulls are dangerous, all cars can kill, all mothers are loving, all girls (or boys) are to be shunned. When we grow up, however, we must learn to distrust many generalizations and begin to judge individual cases on their merits. Do not let Satan trick you into wholesale denunciations of entire groups of people — especially church groups. We must be **wise**, in this age, seeking to turn the **ecumenical** spirit to **evangelistic** use. Let us save whatever and whomever we can by watching and exploiting the opportunities our age affords. Let us check ourselves often by the standard in **Galatians 6: 1**. It is more profitable for the Kingdom to win people than it is to win arguments.

#### **One-Fact Fallacy**

Satan also produces confusion in this age by soothing people into a satisfaction with one little corner of truth — or else by leading them to construct a web of "truth" from one little fact. Do not commit yourself to some far-reaching judgment until the facts are in — at least enough of them to form a trustworthy pattern. Satan can produce so much confusion if he can fire up a man with one little fact. It is the man of one fact who causes divisions and indulges in the party-spirit and vainglory we are warned of in **Galatians 5**. The man of one fact

# the King's highway

THIS ISSUE

NEWS FROM RHODESIA

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