

All the Devil's Tricks!

by J.C. Philpot

J.C. Philpot's sermon warns Christians about the dangers of ignorance regarding Satan's schemes and emphasizes the need for discernment and vigilance against false teachings.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:11

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Satanic Deception"

Description

J.C. Philpot delves into the deceptive schemes of the devil, highlighting the ignorance many have regarding the advancing enemies of God's truth like Popery, Infidelity, and Spiritualism. He emphasizes the importance of not being outwitted by Satan's cunning tricks and urges believers to put on the whole armor of God to stand firm. Philpot warns against the dangers of being unaware of the spiritual battles surrounding us, especially in the forms of Popery, Infidelity, and Spiritualism, which target different dispositions of the human heart.

Transcript

All the devil's tricks!

by J. C. Philpot

Moving in our own comparatively narrow circle, and separated as much by principle as by precept and practice from the seething religious mass which, like a troubled sea, boils all around us, how little do most of us know of that outer world of scheming policy and energetic action which is ever tossing its restless waves against the strong barriers of divine revelation. Dull sounds, feeble echoes, passing whispers, and stray rumors ever and anon reach our ears about Popery, Infidelity, Socialism, etc.--and the pulpit sometimes blows a faint alarm against the awful progress which these destructive agents of Satan are making in every direction; but how few of us possess any clear, distinct, or definite knowledge either of the nature or the advance of these deadly enemies of the truth of God. In some respects this ignorance of ours is a mercy; for, as with our maiden daughters, there are subjects on which ignorance is a blessing and knowledge a blot, and there is deep truth in the well-known lines, "Where ignorance is bliss, 'Tis folly to be wise."

If your situation in life, if your natural habits and circumstances, if your quiet seclusion and little retired cot admit it, or if your sensitive mind and tender conscience shrink from any knowledge of any contact with the outer world, happy in your ignorance, do not desire to lift the veil. It may be your safeguard from many

sore exercises and grievous temptations which sadly assail those who are less happily circumstanced than you. Could, indeed, this happy ignorance be depended upon as a safeguard for all, as it is for you, the mercy couched in it would at once be doubled; but, unhappily, in this wretched world of ours, ignorance is no more a protection for those who have to battle with it, than the simplicity of a country bumpkin protects him in London streets from the artifices of frauds.

Since the fall a knowledge of good and evil has been man's inheritance; and even in divine things the matured Christian is he who has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Heb. 5:14.) While, then, we would sternly contend against the principle and practice of 'dabbling in evil' to learn its nature, and would firmly abide by the precept, "Keep yourself pure," yet there is in many cases a disadvantage in being altogether ignorant of what is passing around us, and with which we may unexpectedly be brought into contact, or have to grapple with as if for life or death.

In this world we cannot always live either with ourselves, or to and for ourselves, as if dear self were the sole object of our thought, cares and affection. We have wives or husbands, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and perhaps servants and dependants; or if free from such ties, we are bound up in church fellowship, or the strong bonds of affection with the people of God. In all or some of these we may feel the deepest interest, and most earnestly and affectionately desire their present and eternal welfare. For their sake, therefore, more than for our own, we cannot always preserve our happy ignorance. The most careful and watchful guardian of her daughters is not the mother who is ignorant of human nature and the snares laid for unsuspecting innocence--but she who has the keenest eye to discern the snake's nest in the grass, and crush each egg before it breaks out into a viper. We may have to guard and warn our children against a dangerous companion, or may see a subtle snare of Satan approaching, if not already entangling, a friend or fellow family member, and may be enabled to speak a word which may be owned and blessed to his deliverance from the temptation.

"So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for

we are not ignorant of his schemes." 2 Cor. 2:11

Satan is so wily . . .

his agents so surround us,

their designs are so masked,

their language so plausible,

their manners so insinuating,

their appearance often so imposing,

their arguments so subtle,

their activity so unwearied,

their insight into our weaknesses so keen,

their enmity against Christ and His gospel so implacable,

their lack of all principle and all honesty so thorough,
that the net may be drawing around us, before we
have the slightest suspicion of these infernal plots
being directed against us!

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able
to stand against all the devil's tricks!" Ephes. 6:11

And as we in our ignorant simplicity are unaware of the nature, so are we as little acquainted with the amazing extent of the operations thus going on around us. You read or hear, for instance, good reader, sometimes about nuns and nunneries, and form to yourself, perhaps, some dreamy idea of what a sad thing it must be for a young female to be shut up for life in one of these gloomy abodes, hopelessly subject in body and soul to the will of the superior of the house, if not exposed to the worse dominion of priests and father confessors. But have you any idea of the number of these poor creatures thus immured? What do you think of 10,000 nuns at this present moment in our good old Protestant England? Yes!--in that England whose very life blood is freedom from Popish thralldom there are 10,000 English women tied hand and foot by vows, and under the irresponsible dominion, government, tyranny--call it what you will, of mother superiors, priests, and confessors.

You have also heard, perhaps, of what is called, by a dreadful profanation of terms, "Spiritualism"--that is, the diabolical system of calling up, by some infernal jugglery, the spirits of the dead, and conversing with them. And how many figures do you think would represent the number of believers in this doctrine of devils? "Well," you answer, "perhaps, to take a large figure, one or two thousand." What do you think of five million? Well, then, gentle reader, it seems that you and we have been living in a considerable, and, perhaps, comfortable, state of ignorance of what is going on with such activity all around us. You may be happily secure against such awful delusions by your knowledge and love of the truth, and may tartly say, "What is all this noise about? Why do you want to bother me with all this stuff and nonsense about nuns and devil worshipers? I am not going to be caught in these traps of the devil." No! but that pleasing, amiable daughter of yours, whom you have this evening let go to a little party of friends; what security have you that there may not be among those young people some one who has been initiated into the mysteries of table turning and spirit rapping, and lend her some little book about "mediums and spiritual agencies," which, after your long family prayers are over, she is devouring in her bedroom, with all the zest of a new sensational novel? And her younger sister, that dear little girl, so full of smiles and affection, whom you are so fond of, and as she goes tripping off to school so merrily and innocently, and looks back to give you a nod, your very heart cries, "Bless the little darling!" how do you know whether some school teacher, or an elder pupil, who is drawing her by kindness to her bosom, is not tainted to the very core with Popish views, and is secretly instilling them into her mind?

Where do you think all these 10,000 nuns came from? Say that half were born Roman Catholics. Now that leaves 5,000 entangled in such meshes as we have named, and perverted from their Protestant faith. And just consider the probable amount of misery which many if not most of these misguided girls caused to their own families before they took so decided and fatal a step as entering a nunnery. Think of a daughter of yours, perhaps the most dutiful and affectionate of them all, (for those are soonest entangled,) turned Papist, withdrawing herself from all your Lord's Day and family worship, viewing you and her mother as

heretics, half the day at her beads and devotions upstairs, and running off at every opportunity to confess her sins and all your family secrets and affairs to some young priest. Scores, if not hundreds, of families in this country are thus being racked and torn to pieces by wives or daughters entangled in the nets laid for them by Popery under its various guises. And it is spreading in all directions, entangling the poor as well as the rich, the young as well as the old. The high church party are now drawing off our little village and Sunday schools into some large central school, under a certificated teacher, tainted, perhaps, to the very core with views which are really Popish though nominally Protestant, and thus carrying off the rising generation. We cannot enlarge on this subject, but these hints may show that the danger may be nearer at hand, even to you, than you dream.

But assume that, through the Lord's goodness and mercy, neither you nor yours are exposed to such snares and dangers, and that God's truth is not only your shield and defense, but that his grace or providence is stretched over those near and dear to you by earthly ties. Still there may be many of our readers less favored than yourself, to whom a word of instruction or warning may be seasonable. And even on the supposition that none of those under whose notice our words come need a warning sound, yet they may feel an interest in looking from their peaceful harbor on the storm-tossed sea, where many a ship is struggling and heaving amid the waves, and many a wreck may be seen through the white surf that is beating and curling over the rocks and shoals in the hazy distance.

There are three fearful shapes which Satan now seems to have chiefly assumed to deceive the nations, and though they all unite in denial and disbelief of the truth of God's Word; yet they each present their distinct aspects, and adapt themselves to the peculiar constitutions of men. These three desperate foes of God and man are Infidelity, Popery, and now this Spiritualism, or rather Devilism. And just observe how they meet and adapt themselves to the various dispositions of the human heart.

Some men naturally possess reasoning, arguing minds, which cannot be satisfied without penetrating into the causes of things, and revolt from everything supernatural, miraculous, and that does not lie quite level with the grasp of our mental faculties. Now these are the men who chiefly fall under the power of INFIDELITY. They do not see what our deepest thinkers are now fully agreed upon, that there are subjects which lie beyond the reach of pure mental reasoning, and which, therefore, can only be received, if received at all, by faith as distinct from logical argument. Rejecting, therefore, everything which they cannot reconcile to their reasoning mind, they fall an easy prey to infidelity; and as this at once sweeps away all those moral restraints connected with an eternal future state which hold others in check--they can, if sensually disposed, indulge in their passions and drink down sin like water. Hundreds, if not thousands of the working classes, and indeed of all classes, and none more so than some among the most educated and refined, are open or secret infidels!

But there is a peculiar class of mind which shrinks from infidelity as something horrible, as indeed it is, and repugnant to our natural conscience. If we may coin a word for the occasion, there is in some people A NATURAL RELIGIOSITY--that is, a disposition to be religious. If they had been born in Turkey, they would have been devout Muslims; if in Italy, they would have become priests, monks, or nuns, and as ready to burn a heretic as their fathers; if born and bred in England, they would be devout churchmen, pious dissenters, sisters of mercy, and so forth--just as the various circumstances of birth and education, habits and associations, might dispose or determine. Now to these naturally religious minds, when fully ripened and blended with a stern spirit of self-denial, which usually accompanies and grows up with it, no system so thoroughly adapts itself as that of Popery--for it just meets and gives full play to that habit of mind which yields, like clay, to every object of superstitious veneration.

Memory recalls to us two striking instances of the two natural dispositions which we have mentioned. We once well knew two brothers. We hardly like to mention their names, though none are better known through the breadth and length of the land. They were both men of most powerful intellect, refined and cultivated to the highest point by the most indefatigable study, and were distinguished ornaments of the famous University to which they belonged. Where and what are they now? One, the elder brother, whom we knew less intimately, is the most distinguished pervert from the Church of England that Rome has received! The other, once an intimate friend, an eminent professor of classical learning, is now an avowed infidel!

But whence came, humanly speaking, this strange difference, this wide divergence between two brothers of almost, if not altogether, equal abilities and similar education, habits, and associations, so that after acute mental struggles of years the one should finally settle at one pole of the most groveling superstition, believing in all the pretended miracles of the Romish saints, and the other at the opposite pole, denouncing Christianity itself as an imposture? May we not account for it from the constitutional difference of their minds--that the one is naturally credulous and superstitious, disposed to bow to authority, venerating names and ancient traditions--and the other is confident in its own reasoning powers, and determined to accept nothing but what can be logically proved?

But there is a third class of mind quite distinct from the two above-mentioned, though in many points allied to the first, which is naturally visionary, imaginative, ever living in a little world of its own, little disposed to bow to authority or venerate names or places, and still less unwilling and often unable to reason and argue, but very awake and alive to dreams, omens, supernatural appearances, and some breakings in of an unseen world--as distinct from that hard, stern, common-place, every-day world where men toil and sweat for their bread all their lives, and then die, and are thrust out of sight. What the soul is, what is a future state, what evidences there are, reliable and trustworthy, that there is one at all, what has become of departed friends--do they know anything about us, is their spirit ever near us?--many a mind that you little think of, is exercised with these thoughts and inquiries.

But you will say, "Why don't they believe the Bible? That would at once satisfy their minds, answer their inquiries, and clear up their anxieties." Yes, but that is the very thing they neither will nor can do. You can do it, because grace has touched your heart and you have felt the power of the word in your soul. But we are not speaking here of the believing, but of the unbelieving--not of the favored few who have received the love of the truth--but of the masses of society generally, the thousands who wander on without light or life, guide, guard, or God. Your talking about their reading and believing the Bible is almost like what the little daughter of Louis XVI said to her governess, when she told her that the people in Paris were starving for lack of bread--"Why don't they eat buns?"

You have bread and buns too; and with your well-spread table, your dinner and dessert, your finest of the wheat, and wine on the lees well refined--you can hardly conceive the case of poor creatures starving for bread "who are pulling off the salt leaves from the brushwood, and making a meal of roots." (Job 30:4)--who madly feed upon ashes, with a deceived heart, and a lie in their right hand. (Isa. 44:20.) It is of such we are speaking, for our present object is to show why it is that such damnable errors, as you justly see them to be, find so wide an acceptance, and number their converts and devotees by thousands and hundreds of thousands.

We are endeavoring to explain how it is that Satan has such rule and dominion, and why some are held fast in the chains of Popery, others bound hand and foot in the prison of Infidelity, and others are

bewildered and intoxicated with this last gust of smoke from the bottomless pit, this commerce with spirits, or rather with demons and devils, awfully miscalled Spiritualism.

But it is high time to come to our Review of the work at the head of our present article. We may freely, then, say that we have read a good part of it with much interest; and we confess that we had no idea of the vast prevalence of this new delusion, "Spiritualism," until we found it stated in it on seemingly such undeniable authority. Though the title of the work is "Spiritualism"--yet the title hardly gives a fair representation of its contents, for by far the greater part of it is devoted to show the craft, subtlety, and abominations of Popery. This subject was, of course, not altogether a new one to us, as we have read many works on Romanism and yet the authoress--for the work is the production of a lady, has sketched it in striking colors; and if she has not brought forward anything very new, yet she has put together many striking facts, and confirmed her assertions by proofs and evidence drawn from the writings and speeches both of the friends and foes of the Papal system. As far as we can judge, she sincerely loves the great truths of the gospel, and sees clearly and feels deeply the nature and prevalence of those fearful delusions of Satan which she aims to expose, with the hope that she may be made an instrument either of rescuing some of their miserable victims, or of warning others, lest they fall into the same trap.

The chief value of the book, we think, consists in the copious extracts which she has given from various sources of the present practical working of Puseyism and Popery; for what is mainly needed is not loud and sweeping declamation against this and that evil, but facts--solid, well substantiated facts, from which we can draw our own conclusions. Before we can form any right opinion, or come to a clear decision upon any case presented to our mind, we must have substantial evidence, plain facts, solid proofs--or our judgment is but a blind prejudice, a mere crediting reports and rumors, and adopting other people's views without knowing whether they are true or false. But when we get facts, proofs, undeniable evidence--then we move on solid ground, and our judgment has a firm basis to rest upon. These facts our authoress supplies; and thus enables us to see the very inside of some of those schemes of Satan whereby he is deceiving thousands to their perdition.

We who live outside the circle have little idea of what is going on within it. We hear or read perhaps of this or that high churchman, and what is now doing in the very parish church in the town or village where we live; and some friend or neighbor, or the children, may tell us of the late grand Christmas decorations, and the beautiful new altar-cloth, and the lighted candles, and the large flower vases, and the little chorister boys chanting and singing so prettily, and we may carelessly reply, "O poor creatures, with their dead forms!"

But it were well if these ceremonies were but dead forms! Dead indeed they are, dead enough according to our view of spiritual life and death--but in another sense they are filled with a life of their own, most active and energetic, and absorbing the mind and feelings of their devotees to an extent you perhaps little dream of. The old type of churchman has much passed away, and a new generation has sprung up which has almost ousted the quiet, regular orthodox rectors and vicars of our youth or of our fathers, who droned away to their scanty congregations half asleep under the shelter of the high-backed pews. A new spirit is abroad which is not only repairing and restoring churches, but, by resuscitating dead forms, seeks to animate them with a life hostile to the truth of God, hostile to our reformed principles, and is in secret league with Rome against our most prized religious and civil liberties.

A new life--not spiritual, for it is the very opposite; but a life of energy, zeal, and most bigoted, almost furious devotion to views and principles which are the very life blood of Popery, is now at work under these

very forms and ceremonies which seem to you so dead and unmeaning. They are so, and that justly to you; but there are thousands to whom they are signs and symbols of a religion to which they cling with the most fervid enthusiasm. In this consist both their delusiveness to their adherents and their danger to us.

Look at that poor Irish reaper going on a Sunday morning to mass at the Romish chapel. "O," you say, "what a poor foolish fellow he must be to worship a piece of bread!" But under that blind devotion you do not see the smouldering flame which makes him hate you as a heretic, with deadly hatred, and which, if urged on by a Fenian rebellion, would slake itself in your blood. So with these high-church forms--these raised altars, wax candles, intonings, and all the frippery and millinery of priestly vestments--which in the days of our fathers the whole parish would have hooted down as rank Popery. They appear at present to be only forms; but mark the spirit which breathes beneath them, as it sometimes breaks out in the pulpit, and see whether it be not the same as lighted up the Smithfield bonfires in the days of bloody Mary.

Here, then, is the chief value of a book like this. It enlightens our happy ignorance by bringing forward facts which cast a broad light on the doings and dealings of Satan and his agents!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/all-the-devils-tricks/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net