



September 24, 2021

A Whirling World of Ideas

*(14) Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming...we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. - **Ephesians 4:14-15***

Ideas are subtle things. As with the motion of the earth, which occurs without our noticing it, we are normally unaware of the ideas moving us. The ideas that govern our lifestyles are even more disconcerting, for they cause people to behave in ways that undermine their own well-being. In the words of Paul, without knowing it, people are “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Eph. 4:14). And behind all that trickery and craftiness is the great trickster, the devil.

Satan governs nations by the way people understand themselves. One example of this is found in the United States, where we talk about “the American way” of life. There is certainly something good in that, and in the foundational principles upon which the country was built. But by the time it gets presented on television, in newspapers, and through other media, or even sometimes in our churches, it has been turned into something tremendously destructive. For example, most Americans think that they ought to be able to do what they want to do whenever they want to do it. This understanding of freedom is often identified with the American way of life. That is as crude and straightforward a statement of Satan as you will ever find. If there is anything you ought not to do, it is to do what you want to do whenever you want to do it.

Of course, there is a true value to freedom, and our country was in large measure founded by people who understood how essential and costly freedom is to the moral development of genuinely good persons. They had no way of understanding that by the twenty-first century it would be transformed from the freedom to pursue virtue into a freedom from moral restraint. The pursuit of happiness, and the security of life and liberty, as the Founding Fathers understood it, are very good things and very much a reflection of ideals that express the kingdom of God. But those ideals have been perverted over time.

Such perversion is not unusual. All good ideas—true ideas—that have been in the stream of human history for a while become perverted. Why? Precisely because Satan is at work on them, distorting their meaning.

Reflect: *It is no different with the church historically. If you go to the town of Assisi in Italy, you will find many people who talk a great deal about Saint Francis, many monuments to him, and many businesses thriving by selling memorabilia. But you will not find anyone who carries in himself the fire that Francis carried. No doubt many fine folks are there, but they do not have the character of Francis, nor do they do the deeds of Francis, nor have his effects.*

(Q) As those who are genuinely interested to honor Jesus with our lives, are there ways that we too can be like those fine folks of Assisi? Those who talk of Jesus, promote Him and even esteem Him in various ways while not wholeheartedly pursuing His character and His deeds?