

The Characteristics of
the Age and their
Significance

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2 Cor. 4:3, 4

We are to consider some of the characteristics of our age. It must be assumed that my hearers know that there is a plan of the ages clearly revealed in Scripture, and that by an “age” is meant a distinct period of time, marked off from other ages, and distinguished by certain marks peculiar to itself. Thus, the age preceding the present age was the day of Israel or the day of the Law; the present is the day of Grace or day of salvation; the next will be a day of Judgment, or the day of the Lord, when God’s judgments, described in the Book of Revelation (chapters 4-19), will be in the earth; and that age will be followed by the millennial day, or the age of Christ’s Reign upon Earth.

Our present purpose is to throw the light of Scripture upon the conspicuous marks of this age, and to examine them under that light. By no other means could we possibly understand their significance; and when viewed in that light the doings and achievements of the age are seen to be totally different from what they formerly appeared to be. We shall see in that light that we have been totally deceived concerning the real source of the inspiration of the age,

¹Notes of an address.

concerning the real purpose concealed beneath its grandest projects and achievements, and concerning the real end towards which all its prodigious expenditure of effort is tending. But we should not be surprised at this. Nay, we should expect to have our ideas about these things completely transformed under the light of the inspired Word; for we remember that those ideas were impressed upon us in our unregenerate days, and that they are the ideas which are everywhere accepted, and which are zealously contended for by the leaders of the age and the apostles of its progress and civilization. It is therefore to be presumed that they are altogether wrong; and such, indeed, is the case.

I give you, at the outset, one word of exhortation, a word which fell from the lips of our Divine Lord (John 12:36): “*Believe in the light* that ye may be the children of the light.” Even though the light reveal a state of things exactly contrary to what you previously supposed; even though it show you that the things which you most highly esteemed are in their real nature thoroughly *evil*, never-theless, I beg you to “believe in the light.” Our Lord else-where said, “that which is *highly esteemed among men* is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

We are now about to view the boasted achievements of the age as they appear in the sight of God.

THE STRIKING CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS AGE

This age has characteristics of the most striking sort. That must necessarily follow from the event which closed up the affairs of the preceding age and ushered in the present day, namely, the crucifixion of the Son of God at the hands of His rebellious creature, man.

The cross of Christ makes a tremendous difference in the dispensational dealings of God. It puts Christ in a distinct place, namely, at the right hand of the majesty on high. That is His especial place for *this age* and for *this age only*. He took that place after His ascension, and will occupy it until His enemies are made His footstool; that is, till the end of the age.

It puts the Holy Spirit in a special place, namely, in the earth with a special mission to believers and to the world.

It puts Satan in a special place. Christ came to His own, and His own received Him not. They chose a murderer and crucified the Son of God. Hence Satan became “the god of *this age*” (2 Cor. 4:4). He is not the god of any other age.

It puts the world in a new and distinctive place, namely, under the guilt of rejecting Christ.²

It puts the believer in a distinct place, that is representatively in the heavenlies in Christ, and as to the world and all its affairs and doings, crucified (Gal. 6:14). The believer's place in this age is *in Christ*, in the midst of a new creation, wherein all things are new, and all things are of God (2 Cor. 5:17, 18).

THE OPPOSING SPIRITS

The Scriptures which have been already referred to, and others which will be hereafter referred to, make mention of two mighty Spirits. One is the Holy Spirit of God, who descended to earth at Pentecost, and who indwells the Church, the "One Body," and individual believers, members of that Body. The other is Satan, that mighty spirit, the greatest, so far as we know, of all created intelligences, higher in authority than the Archangel (Jude 9), and who only Jehovah can rebuke (Zech. 3:2); that being who sealed up the sum, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, who has assumed the spiritual direction of the affairs of this age as its

²"The World" may be briefly defined as that system which includes all who reject Christ, and includes also their Christless pursuits and activities of all sorts, humanitarian and benevolent as well as positively wicked and criminal.

god, and has been for 1800 years directing its progress with consummate wisdom and tireless energy, and filling the earth with his vast schemes of improvement.

The Holy Spirit now indwells and works in the *children of God*. Satan is “the spirit that now works in the *children of disobedience*” (Eph. 2:2). It is to this great being and to his projects for the age that our attention is to be directed. The Scripture cited above (2 Cor. 4:4) gives us his title as “god of this age” (hence the age is designated in Gal. 1:4 “this present *evil* age” and in Eph. 6:13 as “the *evil day*”). This Scripture also clearly states his great purpose, which is to blind the minds of the unbelieving so that the light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ should not shine unto them.

This Scripture throws a light upon the scene around us, upon the world and its activities, in which light their significance can be clearly comprehended. Our lord refused to receive the kingdoms of the world and “the *glory of them*” from the prince of this world (Luke 4:5, 6). His earthly glory is, therefore, postponed. We, who have believed, have heard “the Gospel of the *glory of Christ*” (R.V.), that is to say, the Gospel or “good news” of the *coming glory* of Christ, and we know that when He shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him *in glory* (Col. 3:4). Hence, believers should have no part in, and should do nothing to contribute to, the sham

glories of this age. Hence, on the other hand, the great purpose of the god of this age is to blind the minds of the unbelieving mass and thus shut out from them the good news of the coming glory of Christ. In this undertaking he has been so eminently successful that many, probably the majority, of the Lord's own people are, to a greater or less extent, deceived as to the character of the age and its real purpose.

FORCES IN CONFLICT

The means which Satan has most successfully employed to further this object of blinding men's minds is to promote numerous humanitarian, reformatory, remedial and benevolent enterprises, and thereby to render the age as illustrious as possible, thus commending it to good people, whether saved or unsaved. By this means he deceives Christians to the true nature and tendencies of the age, throws them off their guard, and even enlists their efforts and money in schemes of betterment which, so far from leading sinners Christ, tend rather to show them how to build up their "self-respect" and "self-reliance." The preaching of the Gospel, on the contrary, tends to break down and destroy *all* self-respect and self-reliance; and its

work is not complete in any individual soul until that result is fully accomplished.

Thus, even Christians are deceived in large numbers, and are induced to contribute to the glory of this age and to the success of the great purpose of the god of this age. It is not in the resorts of the vicious, nor even in the doings of a frivolous and Christless society, that Satan's great power and ingenuity are displayed, but in the temperance movements reformatories and philanthropies of the age, and in the pulpits from which the gospel of the world's progress and betterment is preached to the entire satisfaction of "the world," which occupies the pews, and of the god of the world who occupies his seat of empire, with his associated powers, principalities and world rulers in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12,R.V.)

For the spiritual conflict of the age consists in this: The Spirit of God aims to convince the world that it needs Christ; the spirit of the world aims to convince it that it can get along very well without Christ, and that it is making splendid progress in that direction. The Spirit of God witnesses to believers that *all* their needs are fully supplied in Christ, that they are dependent on the world for *nothing*, and that their place is outside the world-system. The spirit of the world testifies to believers that Christ does *not* supply every need,

that they must seek part at least of their help and of their gratification from the world, and he calls their attention loudly to its many innocent pleasures and pursuits, and to its many helpful expedients, seeking to persuade them that their place is *in* the world trying to improve it. For, the spirit of the world aims to make the world better. The Spirit of God aims to *convince the world of sin*. These aims are directly opposed to each other. Every one can readily decide for himself which of them he is assisting.

THE WORLD AND ITS WORKS

The assertion that the works of the world are *all* evil is one that is hard for many of God's children to receive. They have been so used from their very infancy to hearing the praises of the age and its marvelous progress chorused on every side that they do not readily receive the clear witness of the Word of God on this weighty subject. Then, moreover, the devil is so exceedingly clever, and has elaborated in his world-system so many works and enterprises that seem to be good and praiseworthy, that we poor silly sheep would be led astray did we not hear the voice of the Shepherd, who is "the faithful and true witness" declaring of the world "but Me it hateth because I testify of it that *the works thereof are evil*."

What, *all* its works? Yes, all of them. Our Lord makes no exception, and we dare make none.

And how could it be otherwise? How could the unregenerate man do any but *evil* works? It is impossible. Indeed, his best works are his very worst. Take, for example, the world's moral agencies, such as its temperance movements. Suppose a poor drunkard is induced, by signing a pledge or otherwise, to "reform" and "quit his bad habits," instead of being led to Christ to receive from Him a new nature and eternal life. That man has been taught that something has been done for him *without Christ*, and the work of the temperance society may be the means of carrying that soul to Hell. Any scheme which offers improvement or help apart from a *change of nature* is directly opposed to the work of the Holy Spirit, and is in the interest of the spirit of the world. And yet the children of God are drawn into these things and help them along.

But, apart from the benevolences and moral agencies of the age (which, I say with all deliberation, are *its very worst features, except its Christless churches and religions*), what are the leading characteristics of the age, upon which it chiefly prides itself? If we were to ask this question of one of the leaders of the age we should get an answer something to this effect: "The present age is chiefly characterized by a

great extension of man's knowledge of, and of his control over, the resources and forces of nature. It is an age of applied science, that is to say, of science applied to practical ends (as distinguished from pure science) looking to the betterment of mankind. It is an age of marvelous progress in discoveries and inventions; of the unprecedented advancement of the arts and industries; an age of steam and electricity, of rapid movement of men and merchandise, of instantaneous communication of messages to the ends of the earth; an age of wireless telegraph and horseless carriage; of turbine engine and dyno-electric generator." Or, briefly, in the inspired words of Scripture it is emphatically "man's day" (1 Cor. 4:3, *marg.*).

And if we were to ask how long this is to continue we should be informed that no limit can be set to material development or to man's career of prosperity. The apostles of progress, on the contrary, look forward to greater and still greater conquests over nature in unending vistas of the future.

This description would tally exactly with the inspired descriptions of the age, as, for example, the designation "man's day," also Eph. 2:2. But God's word, instead of saying that the career of humanity as now directed is to continue indefinitely, says on the contrary that the day of man will end

(describing the character of its last hours so that they can now be readily recognized), and declares further that it will be followed by “the day of the Lord,” “that great and terrible day.”

THE SPECIAL TRIUMPHS OF THE AGE

If now we inquire what are the particular triumphs of the age, and especially those latest achievements which render our own times to illustrious, the spirit of the age would direct our attention to the faster railway trains, larger and swifter steamboats, taller buildings, more powerful battleships, more destructive guns and explosives, to the more numerous and potent corporations, the gigantic manufacturing enterprises, increased commerce, colossal individual fortunes, etc. etc.³

We do not hear it contended that the age is conspicuous for righteousness or that the dominating motives of men are purer and more unselfish than those of bygone days.

What then is “progress”? Is it faster railway trains, bigger steamboats, more powerful battleships, more crowded cities, more numerous accidents, crimes and suicides, vaster fortunes, taller buildings? We have already in New York City twenty-four storey buildings, but these have not raised the

³And now to the latest triumph of human genius, the flying machine.

standards of honesty, decency, and civic righteousness. They have not brought men nearer to God. A forty-six story building is now in course of erection. When completed, will the standards of life be raised? How tall must buildings be, what speed must trains and automobiles attain, how far must the influence and reach of the great corporations extend, how many "Dreadnoughts" must be put into commission, before men become righteous and cease to be lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, and lovers of themselves, rather than lovers of God?

It is not difficult, dear friends; to understand what this all means if we are willing to turn the light of Scripture upon the world-system, and to "believe in the light." All these things of which men boast, upon which they are toiling so arduously, so pathetically, and to which they are looking so credulously to transform the world and make it a tolerable abiding-place for humanity, have back of them the directing agency of *the god of this age*, and are carried forward with the single purpose of blinding men's minds, so that they shall not look for the coming glory of Christ, but for a glory to be reached by the advancement of civilization. Its object is to deceive men into looking, not for the coming of Christ as the *only* thing that will bring blessing to the earth and its inhabitants, but to the working out of a few more centuries of

progress of science, of education, civilization, legislation, sanitation and medication. These are the things to which we are bidden to look for the deliverance of humanity from its wretchedness, sorrow, pain, misery, poverty, disease and vice. These age-movements are charged with a tremendous power of deception, so much so that many of the wisest and best of men have been and are deluded into the belief that the condition of the world-system is really improving, and that eventually, as the result of the gradual operation of these beneficent movements, humanity will be delivered from its wretched plight. Such deceptive power has this gospel of the age that many who profess faith in God's word believe the gospel of the age notwithstanding the many declarations of that Word that the present age will close in the most awful state of wickedness, violence and apostasy that the world has ever witnessed.

This is the reason why the doctrine of the post-millennial coming of Christ is so much in favor. That doctrine harmonizes perfectly with the gospel of the age, and is utterly irreconcilable with Scripture. It announces that the world is making such splendid progress, as the result of the beneficent forces operating within the system, that we shall have, after a while, *a millennium without Christ*. A millennium is to be ushered in by the development of

automatic machinery. Well has the wise preacher exclaimed: “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Eccles. 7:29).

THE LEADERS OF THE AGE

The age has always had its leaders, men of ability who are imbued with the “spirit of the age,” and who influence the direction and the rate of progress of the age-movement. But while the leaders have necessarily changed with each generation, the presence of a mighty and unchanging power, a master mind back of them all, is evidenced by the steadiness with which the age has held to its course throughout the centuries.

These leaders (or “rulers” or “princes”) are named in 1 Cor. 2:8; and we are there reminded of their first act, which has shaped the course of the entire age-movement. We give the literal rendering of verses 6-8.

“We speak wisdom among the full grown, not that *of this age*, nor of the rulers (or leaders) *of this age*, but the hidden wisdom which God determined before the ages, and which *none of the rulers of this age had come to know*, for had they known it they would not in that case have crucified the LORD of GLORY.”

The first act, then, of the leaders of the age was to crucify the *Lord of Glory*. Having thus got rid of Him, as they supposed, they proceeded to render the age illustrious and to procure for it a fictitious glory by a scheme of progress and development, to which scheme they have given the imposing title of “civilization.”

Who were these first leaders or rulers of the age who have had such worthy successors to carry forward their work in each succeeding generation? They were *first*, the Romans, the political leaders; *second*, the Greeks, the intellectual leaders, the rulers of the world’s wisdom and culture; and *third*, the Jews, the religious and moral leaders of the age. And so the earthly title of our Lord was inscribed upon His cross in these three languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

It need hardly be said that the attitude of the world’s political, intellectual and religious leaders towards Christ has not changed in the least since that day. All the significant phases of the age-movement have had for their object to justify the action of the first leaders of the age, to show that they did well in rejecting and casting out the Lord of Glory, and to show that the world can get along very well, and is, in fact, making splendid progress without Him. Do

you wish to be found helping this scheme in any way, or believing in and looking for a millennium without Christ?

“THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD”

If we would understand the actions and behavior of a man we must know his spirit. So, if the world has a spirit, the character and motives which actuate that spirit would explain the characteristics of the world. We often hear, as an ordinary figure of speech, of the “spirit of the age;” and that spirit is always mentioned in terms of respect and admiration. To say that one is imbued with the spirit of the age is to pay him high compliment. If we turn to 1 Cor. 2:12 we find the spirit of the world distinctly named and again mentioned in direct opposition to the Spirit of God. The apostle there says:

“For we have received, *not the spirit of the world* but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

Put this Scripture with John 14:17: “The Spirit of Truth, whom the world *cannot receive*.”

We, believers, *have* received the Spirit of Truth. Him the world *cannot* receive. It is an impossibility. The spirit of the world we have not received; the Spirit of Truth the world *cannot* receive. We have properly *nothing*

whatever to do with the world and its spirit. We have no part or place in any of its aims, enterprises, pursuits, plans or projects—none at all.

On the other hand, the world *cannot* receive the Spirit of God, and hence cannot have any conception of, or any interest whatever, in *His* plans and purposes. Here, then, there is a necessity of conflict. Those who have received the Spirit of God and who submit to His guidance find themselves in direct opposition to the entire course of the age. The world has not received the Holy Spirit, and indeed *cannot* receive Him; hence, even were it possible for the leaders of the age to maintain good works, the believer would none the less be bound to shun them. The only wish he can entertain with respect to an age whereof Satan is the god is that it may speedily come to an end.

This Scripture also gives us one of the purposes for which we (believers) have received the Holy Spirit. It is in order “that we may know the things which are fully given us of God.” The presence of this clause in a verse which speaks of “the spirit of the world” is highly significant. We have seen that the spirit of the world has filled the world with a multitude of “things” (and is contriving new ones every day), the purpose of which is to keep people occupied with “what is going on in the world,” to keep up and stimulate their

interest, to excite their admiration, and to arouse, if possible, their enthusiasm. But God has His things also. Every verse of this chapter (1 Cor. 2) from the 9th to the 15th makes reference to “things,” “the things of God,” “the things of the Spirit,” “the deep things of God,” “the things which God has prepared for them that love Him,” and which He has revealed unto us by His Spirit. These things include all the possessions of God, which He has given to Christ, who is “the heir of *all things*” (Heb. 1:2), by whom and for whom “*all things* were created” (Col. 1:16), and who has said “*all things*” that the Father hath are mine: (John 16:15). All these things the Father has freely given to us in Christ. “He that spared not *His own Son*, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also *freely* give us *all things*?” *How shall He not?*

But the Father has done something more for us. How should we get acquainted with the things which He has freely given to us unless we had the One “who searches all things, yea, the deep things of God” to show them to us? This is in accordance with our Lord’s promise when, speaking of the Spirit who was to come, He said: “He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you” (John 16:14, 15).

Now the spirit of the world desires by every possible means to prevent us from getting acquainted with and interested in the precious things that are freely given to us of God. Nothing so effectually separates the believer from the world and its things and doings and turns his affections away from them, as to get acquainted with the things of Christ. On the other hand, nothing so interferes with the believer's progress in the knowledge of the things of Christ as to be taken up with the affairs and enterprises of the world, and to be in accord with their aims. It matters not what is the character of the things of the world in which the believer becomes interested, whether it be its politics, its business, or its pleasures, or its vices, or its philanthropies. Whether it be one class of things or another, the purpose of the spirit of the world will be equally well accomplished.

THE BELIEVER'S ATTITUDE

Hence, the only possible course for the believer is to withdraw *wholly* from the world and its affairs, and be as our Lord, who could say "the prince of this world cometh, and hath *nothing* in Me." Our Lord gave no directions to His disciples to start a temperance movement, or to endow a college or library, or to erect church buildings, or to do any of the things that pass in this day for "Christian work," and

which the world can admire and can take part in, because they tend to embellish and adorn its Christless civilization. His one command to us was “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached *in His Name* among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem: (Luke 24:47).

THE PERSONS IN WHOM THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD WORKS

In Eph. 2:2 we have a very important statement bearing directly on our subject. We are there reminded that we once “walked according to the *course of this world*, according to the prince of the power of the air, the *spirit* that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”

The god of the age and spirit of the world is here given another title. We learn that he is the head of those evil spiritual powers which occupy the space surrounding our earth. These are the Christian’s *spiritual* foes, and they are brought prominently to our notice in this epistle which contains God’s highest revelation of our place in the heavenlies and of the *spiritual* blessings appropriate to that place. Here we learn that God has blessed us with every *spiritual* blessing in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 1:3). But our possession and enjoyment of these spiritual blessings are vigorously disputed by the spiritual enemies in the same

heavenly places; for we contend, “not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirits in the heavenlies” Eph 6:2). Of this vast and mighty host, constituting “the powers of the air,” Satan is the prince, the commander-in-chief.

Very few Christians have anything like a correct idea of the nature of this mighty being, or of the sphere in which he operates, or of the purposes which he is seeking to accomplish. This deplorable ignorance is due to the fact that the current conception of Satan is derived, not from Scripture, but from Faust and the comic papers.

The wicked spirits, or demons, who form part of this spiritual host, displayed abnormal activity at the time of our Lord’s first coming; and now again, as His second coming approaches, they are aroused to a state of great activity. Spirit “control” and “possessions,” accompanied by unusual physical demonstrations, rigor, protracted unconsciousness, convulsions, hysterics, spasmodic movements, strange noises, which may or may not be articulate speech of some sort (and hence easily confounded with the Holy Spirit’s “gift of tongues”), are now quite common and becoming more so. These abnormal manifestations are no longer confined to circles where

spiritism, hypnotism, and the like are openly cultivated, but are now breaking out among groups of God's people who have been induced to stray away from Scriptural ground to seek for excitements and "experiences," who are urged by misguided teachers to yield themselves, to come under "control," to seek "power" instead of weakness, and otherwise to disregard the plain injunctions of Scripture. The unhappy and restless souls who are thus misled expose themselves to the power of the enemy who is quick to take advantage of it. The only place of safety in these closing hours of the age is on *Scriptural ground*. Nowhere in the Word of God is there any warrant for seeking the experiences which so many are now seeking, under the direction of the teachers and leaders who have suddenly come into prominence, who are pushing aside those to whom God has given a knowledge of His Word and the gift of teaching, and who never open their lips without betraying gross negligence of Scripture.

"BROTHERHOOD. . . . FATHERHOOD"

This passage also tells us that the prince of these powers of the air is the "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." We often hear of the "brotherhood of man and the "fatherhood of God." This is the only "brotherhood of

man” of which the Scripture speaks, and they who compose that brotherhood are not the children of God, but “the children of disobedience.” And it is Satan who is working—literally “energizing”—in them. And what stupendous energy they display as we see them applying themselves on every hand to the execution of the great projects which are to render the age illustrious and to make the earth a comfortable habitation for man in his state of disobedience! (The word “disobedience” in this passage means obstinate rebellion.) We have here (and we get it nowhere but in the Bible) a satisfactory explanation of the tremendous exertions put forth in the direction of glorifying the age by achievements hitherto unheard of. The energy for these vast projects is supplied by that mighty being who has in the age his *supreme opportunity* to demonstrate what humanity can achieve under his leadership, for in the age that is soon coming he will not be a prince and god, with his headquarters in the heavenly places, but a fettered captive in the abyss.

Another expression in this passage challenges our attention. I wish there were time to dwell upon and bring out the truth embedded in it—“according to the course of this world.” This is literally “the age of the cosmos”—a very suggestive expression. Surely we are in the period or age of

the exploitation by man of the *physical world*, of the forces and resources of nature. There has been nothing like it in any previous age. The forces which humanity has mastered and is able to utilize are being more and more concentrated upon material or physical development in fields of applied science, construction, manufacture, commerce, etc, multiplying and exchanging commodities. Other pursuits and interests of previous times, as literature, art, agriculture and the like, are falling into the background. It is the age of machinery.

The Spirit of God is not working in these things. The energy employed in them is from the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. If we look for the work which the Spirit of God is now carrying on we shall find it in the last verse of this chapter (Eph. 2). There we read of a temple that is being erected upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. The enterprises of the spirit of the world are numerous. He is erecting many buildings. The Spirit of God is forming but one. The work of the spirit of the world is carried on with great demonstration and noise. That of the Spirit of God is accomplished unobtrusively and in silence. The achievements of the spirit of the world are for present display and admiration. The work of the Spirit of God is for future display. It is to be the wonder of the universe

throughout the eternal ages; “that in *the ages to come* He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7).

The child of God, who recognizes his place as a living stone in this temple which is being built for a habitation of God through the Spirit, will see that he has no part or concern in the activities of the children of disobedience.

THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

Lastly we refer, very briefly, to a passage which presents again these two antagonistic Spirits, namely, 1 John 4:5, 6.

“They (unbelievers) are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.”

Is it not so? Those who speak of the world, who sound its praises, who laud its progress and its civilization are *of* the world, and they are sure of an audience. “The world heareth them.” Many of our modern preachers understand this principle thoroughly. They preach the gospel of the age, and so “the world” goes to church to hear them, and contributes liberally to their support.

“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us. Hereby know we the *Spirit of Truth*, and the *spirit of error*.”

This is very easy to apply. Where the theme is the world and its doings, the gathering, no matter what it may call itself, is under the direction of the spirit of error. He is here given this special name because *not one good thing that is said of the world is true*. It is all *error*.

The god of this age is just as energetic and resourceful in his character of “the spirit of error” as he is in his character of “the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.” All works of fiction, the imaginations of unrenewed minds, romances, poetry, theatrical representations—everything, in a word, which presents unreality as reality—is not from the Spirit of Truth, but from the spirit of error, and serves the great purpose of keeping the mind from resting on Christ.

The most effective instruments which the devil employs for this purpose are the unconverted poets. Through them he succeeds even in spreading the idea that all the sorrows, griefs, calamities and misfortunes that befall man are part of God’s plan for humanity. There is abroad an enormous mass of religious poetry, from which Christ is left out, and which is eagerly devoured by pious souls. The doctrine running through them all is that boldly expressed by Pope’s well-known line “whatever is right;” whereas it is entirely safe to say that whatever is in man and his world is wrong; or that

expressed in a line of Browning (which many quote as if it were Scripture), namely, “God’s in His heaven and all’s well with the world;” whereas the pertinent fact is that *Satan* is in heaven and that’s what is *ill* with the world.

Whatever offers to the world or to man encouragement, or promise, or improvement, *apart from Christ*, has its source, not from the Spirit of Truth, who the world *cannot* receive, but from the spirit of error—the spirit of the world. But we, brethren, *have not received the spirit of the world*. Let us then have nothing to do with either his enterprises or his deceptions.

“We know that we are of God and the *whole world* lieth in the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know *Him that is true*, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:19, 20).

