

Mightier Than The Sword (Part Five)

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Given 13-Jun-15; Sermon #1272c

Last week I began my commentary reminding us of the advice given by Franklin Roosevelt to his son-in-law regarding the extensive careful planning done in Washington, D.C., to ensure that the political party in power remained in power. Their object was to control situations and thus shape the direction that party's agenda took. I did that because I want us to understand that much the same sort of operations are going on shaping the world we live in, and thus, we must deal with them.

There are two major forces at work in this world. They are both invisible and they both have powers of intellect and the freedom of movement far beyond mankind's powers to bring to pass what they hope to achieve in behalf of their agenda.

The one power, of course, is God who is supreme over all. His will will be done, but we don't always know exactly what His will is. There are times that He allows horrible things to go on and we don't know why. It surely tests our faith in His lovingkindness.

The other [force] is Satan and we know he is an absolutely merciless being, combined with intelligence far beyond a man's. Add to that thousands of years of experience in dealing with men, and at the same time he is also exceedingly, brilliantly and persuasively clever with his deceptions. He is exceedingly adept at hiding his existence from a nation's leadership. But he operates from a very simple means of persuasion: Offer men something they can't resist. That is the pattern he began with Adam and Eve. It works almost every time.

That is essentially what he has done through the philosophers we have been hearing about. Satan offers men things they can't resist. It is God and Satan who are setting the major circumstances in our time. God, of course, has complete control, but we must by faith negotiate our way within what He

permits Satan to develop for us to live in and through. Sometime this is not easy to reject what Satan offers.

Last week, the subject was John Locke. It is helpful to remember that he was not adamantly against religion. He regarded it as a needful, stabilizing influence in men's lives. He still believed in God but he didn't believe in many major doctrines. Though he wasn't against religion per se, he believed that men should have the liberty to choose for themselves what they believed. There's the trap.

Locke lived through that period of British history when the national church and its doctrines were more or less imposed on the citizenry. However, the national church concept, like that in Catholic countries or the Church of England in Britain, was gradually losing its persuasive powers. They were being replaced by many, many small Protestant sects arising almost monthly. Groups that eventually became what we today call Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist, Church of Christ, Baptist, and others.

Those groups formed around men who preached some of the familiar doctrines but also had new ones that attracted people's attention. Many of the spiritual leaders of those small but vigorous sects were reading papers authored by men like Locke. Those leaders further interpreted what Locke wrote of and inserted some of them into their spiritual teachings. It was therefore actually very easy for me to determine that if doctrine means anything at all to God's purpose, the founders of this nation (who were also students of John Locke, among others) were not establishing this nation on a purely Christian doctrinal basis. Even at the beginning, we never were truly a Christian nation.

II Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Here is where John Locke went astray. According to John Locke, one's own mind is sufficient to discern truth, apart from divine revelation. John Locke was what was called a "latitudinarian" in his time. He wanted the latitude for men to choose their own doctrinal beliefs. His thinking became quite

popular. This is one reason why the Protestants split up so much—because of the influence of a man like him. It was very hard for men to resist choosing their own doctrinal basis.

John Locke was actually fairly even-handed compared to the next philosopher, whose life we will just scratch the surface of today. This man is a real dilly. The next philosopher to impact strongly on the Western world doesn't appear on the surface to have had a great deal of influence in America, but did he ever have a lot! He was very influential in Europe, especially France. His name is Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Locke died in 1704; Rousseau was born in 1712.

You may have heard of him, but probably just barely. One author I read stated that of all the modern philosophers—incidentally, other philosophers rate Rousseau as probably the first of the modern philosophers. He lived in the eighteenth century. One author I read stated that of all the modern philosophers, the most imposing figure is the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Have you ever heard of Will Durant? Will Durant and his wife, Ariel, authored the massive, 11-volume set of world history. We have the set in our library here at the church building; it is an impressive work. (Incidentally, he got his doctorate in philosophy.) Durant dedicated one entire volume of almost 1,000 pages to "Rousseau and the Revolution." Rousseau is very highly lauded. Durant says, "Rousseau had more effect upon posterity [that which follows] than any other writer or thinker of that eighteenth century in which writers were more influential than they had ever been before."

Another author said the following:

Rousseau fingerprints are all over the institutions of the modern world. Schools, churches, and governments have incorporated his ideologies in their organizational methodologies. For example, governments antedating the modern age [that is, governments before Rousseau] barely consumed 5-10% of their national incomes. After Rousseau, democratic statism [which Rousseau proposed] came to dominate almost every nation in the world, and now most governments consume over 50% of their national income.

You wonder why the United States and almost all the Western nations are in debt? They spend more than they take in.

Historian Paul Johnson (a modern writer) recognizes Rousseau as the most influential of all the philosophers who gave birth to the modern world. He says in his book, *The Intellectuals*,

Rousseau is the first of the modern intellectuals, their archetype and in many ways the most influential of them all. Older men like Voltaire had started the work of demolishing the altars [church] and enthroning reason [human reason]. But Rousseau was the first to combine all the salient characteristics . . . the assertion of his right to reject the existing order in its entirety; confidence in his capacity to refashion it from the bottom in accordance with principles of his own devising; belief that this could be achieved by political process; and not least, recognition of the huge part instinct, intuition, and impulse play in human conduct.

There is more to come regarding this man. He was quite an influential philosopher.