

All of us well aware of the the theological-and-anthropological import of this passage. In fact, this, children, is how you learned the letter “A” in your schoolbooks - is it not? In the New England Primer? “In Adam’s fall, we sinned all.”

This is perfectly true and a matter of first principle: That through the fall our first father Adam; all mankind fell into an estate of sin and misery. That, of course, is the theological and anthropological import of this passage.

However, in that it is not sabbath day - and insofar as we have assembled for a very specific (and even civic) purpose - I would seek not so much to set forth how this verse informs our theology; as I would rather set forth how it may apply (if not now, then in due time) to technology (that is, to that insatiable desire we Americans have for progress).

For is this not precisely what the serpent here offered to man? A way for man to make progression from that rather humble plane of existence (his vocation to *tend and keep the garden...*) to a higher plane of existence - a divine plane of existence - to a high and lofty place where he finally stand and say (or at very least least think):

“Through knowledge and through the incarnation of knowledge...” (which is all technology is) “There is now nothing I will not be able to do.”

THIS was the empty promise that Satan brought to Adam and, alas, I perceive that it is the same old lie that he has presently set before our beloved America.

And lest any of you dismiss my words as merely those of an apocalyptic preacher, I will rather refer you to the testimony of a man far more intelligent and eloquent than I.

Our great american poet - our great american abolitionist - the great author of that centennial hymn we sang today - John Greenleaf Whittier - recently caused no small stir at our national Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.

While he was indeed willing to author a special hymn for the occasion - and while he was indeed welcomed as most honored guest - he yet refused to go and see the crown jewel of the entire exposition: The Corliss Engine.

Though there had never been a machine built like it before - though it was started by the hand of President Grant, and the Emperor of Brazil -- though it could produce some 1,400 horse power --

Though it would (by itself) power the rest of the exhibits of that entire Vanity Fair (including many other monuments to our modern age like Mr. Bell’s “Telephone” and Remington’s “Typographic Machine”) --

Mr. Whittier did not want to see it. He would not see it. He would not so much as stand in the presence of that forty-and-five foot behemoth! And when asked why, he could only liken it to the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

Now - We must indeed wonder: Were these merely the scruples of a old Quaker? Or (just perhaps) were his concerns more than mere scruples? More than that: Could his concerns, in fact, have been scriptural?

Beloved, I do not claim to have any infallible answer on this point, but this much, I will say: I am somewhat sympathetic with the old Quaker; in that there is something about all this progress that unsettles my soul.

I mean, do think of it, my friends: What has this insatiable and endless obsession with the pursuit of knowledge (and the application thereof through technology) accomplished for man?

Or, to state it somewhat differently and historically, where now are all those great civilizations which once excelled in knowledge (and the application thereof) above all others?

Where now are those who - through their unsurpassed knowledge and technology - built the Tower in Babel - erected the Pyramids in Egypt - established the Empire of Rome?

I will tell you where they are: Nowhere. And if they were anywhere at all to be found, it would be deep down in the bottomless pit of Hell.

And why? Why? Because they built great things? No -- of course not! But because they believed the lie of the serpent: That they could escape their creatureliness and become as gods through the acquisition of and application of knowledge.

O, may God help us, my friends. Yea, may God even hold us back, I say, if necessary; lest we also walk too quickly into this strange and somewhat scary thing called MODERNITY.

For listen, my friends and fellow-citizens: Though our state has seen fit to chose that word "Forward" as its official motto, I need to say that sometimes (at least according to scripture), the path FORWARD leads only to perditions flames.

So again, I pray: May God help us - May God hold us back if necessary - And may God hear us as we cry out today for his mercy and his grace as it has been revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ --

In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge - by whom the head of that lying serpent is crushed - to whom all nations have been given as an inheritance - and to whom therefore belongeth all glory, power, might, and dominion - both now and forever. Amen.