

THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE

by

Vernon C. Grounds

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD (I)

THE MATERIALIST arrogantly asserts that there is no essential difference between a man and a dog, or a horse, or a gorilla. Regardless of his positiveness, however, the materialist is wrong, and he is wrong for three reasons.

- In the first place, man is different from animals because he alone possesses a spirit which gives him God-consciousness.
- In the second place, man alone possesses freedom of will. He can choose his own course of action, and no dog or horse or gorilla has the power to do that; it follows the prompting of its instincts.
- In the third place, man alone possesses the godly faculty of reason.

Of course, I admit that a dog may have some sort of rudimentary intelligence, but between the intelligence of a dog and the intelligence of a man there is a measureless gulf. And I for one will believe that there is no essential difference between the intelligence of a dog and the intelligence of a man only when the materialist can show that a dog has written a textbook on mathematics or astronomy.

Man's reason is a precious gift of God upon which we ought never to look with contempt. However Godlike the human reason may be, when man through pride sinfully perverts his mind, it is no longer worthy of respect.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things” (Romans 1:18-23).

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Romans 1:28).

Consequently, human wisdom in its godless self-sufficiency is frequently stupid, and, as Paul points out, the sages and thinkers of this world, professing themselves to be intellectually profound, are really pitifully silly.

The folly of human wisdom can be illustrated, I think, in three ways. To begin with, turning away from the knowledge of the true and living God, men become fools because they embrace the philosophy of atheism. They unintelligently deny the existence of their own Creator. They do it, no doubt, in the name of science and scholarship, and with an imposing display of logic and learning. But what does the Psalmist say about them?

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 53:1).

Yet how amazing it is that many outstanding thinkers who profess to be extremely wise have in their foolishness dared to deny God. Take, as an example, Karl Marx, the godfather of modern Russia. It was he who sneered, “Religion is the opiate of the people.” It was he who taught that faith in God and Jesus Christ must be wiped away from the face of the earth because it is an impediment to the progress of human society. It was he who insisted that his followers be avowed atheists. The world applauds his powerful intellect and admires his political and philosophical sagacity. But God takes the measure of Karl Marx in one word: **“Fool!”**

I think, also, of Frederick Nietzsche to whom Nazi Germany was so deeply indebted. It was he who wrote:

“What distinguishes us is not that we do not rediscover any God either in nature or behind nature but that we recognize what was worshiped as God not as divine — but as pitiable, as absurd, as injurious — not only an error but a crime against life. We deny God as God.”

It was he who also wrote:

“I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great depravity. — I call it the immortal blemish of mankind.”

It was he who insisted that morality is nonsense, that might is right, and that the superman must ruthlessly smash his way to power, stopping at nothing in order to achieve his goal.

Even scholars who hate Nazism admit their intellectual indebtedness to Frederick Nietzsche. They praise his profundity and his wisdom, much as they may dislike the way Adolf Hitler utilized the doctrines of their master. God, on the other hand, takes the measure of Frederick Nietzsche in one word: **“Fool!”**

I think, yet again, of John Dewey, professor at Columbia University, whose educational theories influenced American schools to an incalculable degree. It was he who asserted that there is no absolute right and wrong, and there is no destiny for human beings beyond this present life any more than for a grasshopper or a tadpole. Thus he wrote:

“Faith in the divine author and authority in which Western civilization confided, inherited ideas of the soul and its destiny, of fixed revelation, of completely stable institutions — have been made impossible for the cultivated mind of the Western world.”

He also wrote that there must be

“A surrender of that supernaturalism and fixed dogma and rigid institutionalism with which Christianity has been historically associated.”

In a word, according to Professor Dewey, atheism is the only creed an intelligent man can now embrace. The world looked upon John Dewey as probably the most distinguished intellect in the United States. He was honored and revered to the point of fulsomeness. God, on the other hand, took the measure of John Dewey in one word: “**Fool!**”

The whole matter comes down to this: Is everything in the universe the product of chance, or is everything in the universe the production of an Almighty Creator? Creation or chance, those are the alternatives, and faced by those alternatives, common sense cries out, “God!”

The Scottish philosopher, Beattie, waited until his son was five years old before attempting to talk with him concerning God. Then, in order to pave the way for a conversation on this august subject, he secretly planted garden cress in such a way that on growing up it would spell out the three initials of the child’s name.

Even the five-year-old boy had sense enough to see that someone had planned that planting, and he was led to see God as his Creator. Then what about the universe and ourselves? Will chance explain us or must we acknowledge a Creator? Faced with that choice common sense cries out, “God!” Only a fool cries out “Chance!”

As Gene Farrell exclaims in his poem, Incredulity:

Beyond the awe-inspiring range
Of telescopic eyes,
Great constellations wheel and spin
Through regimented skies.

While here a pin-point miracle
Of microscopic clay,
Alone in all the universe
Refuses to obey!

Refuses to obey the One
Who said, "Let there be light!"
And instantly ten million stars
Spoke majesty and might!

Refuses to accept the One
Who said, "Come unto Me,
And I will give you peace and joy
Through all eternity!"

Almighty God and Saviour, too,
Omnipotence and grace
Give chance to turn from chaos
God's order to embrace.

Yet men prefer to disobey,
Reject the gospel story,
Refuse to take eternal life,
Abundant grace, and glory.

Paul was wholly justified in pronouncing upon the godless sages of this world the stinging sentence, "**Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.**"

My friends, may I in all kindness address a word of advice to each one of you personally? Do not be a fool!

There is a God who made you and who will finally judge you. In fathomless love He gave His only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die as our substitute so that by faith in that all-sufficient atonement you and I, meriting eternal death, might nonetheless have everlasting life.

You may deny God, ignore Him, blaspheme Him, and completely forget Him. But some day you must and will face Him. I urge you, then, as Amos exhorted the ancient Israelites, "**Prepare to meet thy God.**" And do it now!

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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