

## KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM? WELL, ACCORDING TO OUR WORLDLY WAY OF THINKING THEY ARE PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THING. KNOWLEDGE LEADS TO WISDOM. THE MORE KNOWLEDGE YOU HAVE, THE WISER YOU ARE.

BUT GOD LOOKS AT THINGS DIFFERENTLY. IN GOD'S EYES, NOT ALL KNOWLEDGE LEADS TO WISDOM. IN FACT SOME KNOWLEDGE LEADS IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. THAT'S WHY HE COMMANDED ADAM AND EVE TO REFRAIN FROM ACQUIRING THE KNOWLEDGE OF EVIL. THEY IGNORED HIS COMMAND, HOWEVER, BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO KNOW AS MUCH AS GOD KNOWS—INCLUDING THE KNOWLEDGE OF EVIL. AND SO THEY IMBIBED THE KNOWLEDGE OF EVIL AND THAT OPENED THE DOOR TO SIN AND DEATH WHICH TURNED PARADISE INTO A VALE OF TEARS. THE RESULT IS THAT WE NOW LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE THERE IS PLENTY OF KNOWLEDGE BUT VERY LITTLE WISDOM.

ORIGINALLY, OF COURSE, GOD CREATED US WITH A THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE. HE GAVE US INQUIRING MINDS WHICH ARE CAPABLE OF STORING AND APPLYING VAST AMOUNTS OF KNOWLEDGE. AND IF WE LIVED IN A WORLD WHERE THERE WAS NO SIN, WE WOULD USE THAT KNOWLEDGE IN GOOD WAYS. THE PROBLEM IS, WE DON'T LIVE IN A SINLESS WORLD, WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE SIN ABOUNDS AND WE DON'T ALWAYS USE THE KNOWLEDGE WE ACQUIRE IN GOOD WAYS.

IN HIS CLASSIC SATIRE, *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*, JONATHAN SWIFT DESCRIBES AN IDEALISTIC MAN BY THE NAME OF GULLIVER, WHO TRAVELS TO VARIOUS COUNTRIES SEARCHING FOR THE PERFECT SOCIETY. UNFORTUNATELY, EACH COUNTRY HE VISITS IS WORSE THAN THE LAST. FINALLY, HE IS DRIVEN MAD BY WHAT HE LEARNS. HE DESPAIRS OF MANKIND AND ENDS UP LIVING IN A BARN AND TALKING TO THE HORSES BECAUSE HE PREFERS THEIR COMPANY TO THAT OF HUMAN BEINGS.

ONE OF THE COUNTRIES GULLIVER VISITS IS CALLED LAPUTA, WHICH IN SPANISH MEANS "THE PROSTITUTE." LAPUTA IS GOVERNED BY SCIENTISTS WHOSE INTELLECTS HAVE RUN AMUCK. AS HE IS BEING GIVEN A TOUR OF THEIR GREAT UNIVERSITY, HE DESCRIBES VARIOUS RESEARCH PROJECTS THE SCIENTISTS ARE CONDUCTING. ONE SCIENTIST IS TRYING TO EXTRACT SUNBEAMS FROM CUCUMBERS SO THAT HE CAN SEAL THEM IN JARS AND SELL THEM ON CLOUDY DAYS. AN ARCHITECT HAS CONTRIVED A METHOD OF BUILDING HOUSES BY BEGINING WITH THE ROOF AND WORKING DOWN TO THE FOUNDATION, AFTER THE MANNER OF SPIDERS AND BEES. A BLIND SCIENTIST IS TRYING TO DISCOVER A WAY TO IDENTIFY COLORS BY SMELLING THEM. A PHYSICIAN IS TRYING TO CURE INDIGESTION BY PUMPING AIR INTO HIS PATIENTS. WHEN THEY DIE FROM BEING OVER-INFLATED HE ATTEMPTS TO RESUSCITATE THEM BY INFLATING THEM EVEN MORE. SWIFT GIVES NEW MEANING TO THE TERM "MAD SCIENTIST."

WE LAUGH AT THE ANTICS OF THE SCIENTISTS AT LAPUTA, BUT THEY ARE NOT AS FAR REMOVED FROM REALITY AS YOU MIGHT THINK. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING. BETWEEN 1900 AND 1940 A THEORY EMERGED WHICH GAINED WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE AMONG INTELLECTUALS IN EUROPE AND AMERICA. IT WAS CALLED EUGENICS AND IT PROPOSED

THAT THERE WAS A CRISIS IN THE HUMAN GENE POOL WHICH WAS LEADING TO A DETERIORATION OF THE HUMAN RACE. SUPERIOR HUMAN BEINGS WERE NOT BREEDING AS RAPIDLY AS INFERIOR ONES. THE INFERIOR ONES INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING: "FOREIGNERS, IMMIGRANTS, JEWS, HOMOSEXUALS, THE HANDICAPPED AND THE FEEBLE-MINDED." EUGENICISTS REFERRED TO THIS GROUP AS "DANGEROUS HUMAN PESTS" AND "A RISING TIDE OF IMBECILES" WHO WERE POLLUTING THE HUMAN RACE.

SUPPORTERS OF THIS THEORY INCLUDED WINSTON CHURCHILL, THEODORE ROOSEVELT, WOODROW WILSON, SUPREME COURT JUSTICES OLIVER WENDEL HOLMES AND LOUIS BRANDEIS, ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL, MARGARET SANGER (THE FOUNDER OF PLANNED PARENTHOOD), LELAND STANFORD (THE FOUNDER OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY, AND POPULAR AUTHORS H. G. WELLS AND GEORGE BERNARD SHAW. EUGENICS RESEARCH WAS CARRIED OUT AT HARVARD, YALE, PRINCETON AND JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY AND WAS FUNDED BY THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION AND THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION. LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS THE "EUGENICS CRISIS" WAS PASSED IN STATES FROM CALIFORNIA TO NEW YORK WITH THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL. VARIOUS STRATEGIES WERE PROPOSED AND ADOPTED TO DISCOURAGE OR PREVENT "INFERIOR HUMAN BEINGS" FROM PROPAGATING.

IN EUROPE, ONE SUCH STRATEGY SUGGESTED THAT UNDESIRABLES SHOULD SIMPLY BE ELIMINATED. THIS STRATEGY WAS ADOPTED BY ADOLF HITLER WHO USED IT TO JUSTIFY MURDERING OVER SIX MILLION JEWS IN WHAT CAME TO BE CALLED THE HOLOCAUST. I MIGHT ADD THAT TODAY IN AMERICA WE HAVE PROMINENT SCIENTISTS—ONE A NOBEL PRIZE WINNING SCIENTIST—WHO BELIEVE THAT IT IS ACCEPTABLE TO TAKE THE LIVES OF INFANTS WHO ARE PHYSICALLY COMPROMISED. [Note: Peter Singer, an Australian moral philosopher, who is the Ira W. DeCamp Prof. of Bioethics at Princeton University, and a Laureate Professor at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne, says that it is ethical to give parents the option to euthanize infants with disabilities, in consultation with physicians. Note: In the Netherlands, the birth rate for Down syndrome babies has basically dropped to zero.]

AFTER THE WAR AND THE HORRORS OF THE HOLOCAUST CAME TO LIGHT, NO ONE WOULD ADMIT TO HAVING EVER ENDORSED EUGENICS. BUT WHILE THE INTELLECTUAL FAD LASTED, NOT ONE PROMINENT SCIENTIFIC VOICE WAS RAISED IN PROTEST. THE HUMAN INTELLECT IS A GREAT GIFT, BUT LIKE ALL GIFTS, IT CAN BE TURNED TO EVIL. WHEN THE INTELLECT BECOMES DETACHED FROM MORAL AND SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS, IT CAN VENTURE INTO SOME VERY DARK PLACES.

WHEN WE BEGIN TO WORSHIP THE GIFT RATHER THAN THE GIVER OF THE GIFT, WE BECOME IDOLATERS. AND IDOLS ALWAYS DEVOUR THOSE WHO WORSHIP THEM.

DURING HIS MISSIONARY JOURNEYS, PAUL ENCOUNTERED SOME OF HIS GREATEST RESISTANCE FROM INTELLECTUALS—PEOPLE WHO USED REASON TO ATTACK AND OVERTURN HIS PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL. THE ATHENIANS WERE A CASE IN POINT. ATHENS WAS THE CULTURAL MECCA OF THE KNOWN WORLD AND ITS CITIZENS TOOK GREAT PRIDE IN THEIR CITY'S HISTORY. DURING ITS GOLDEN AGE, ATHENIANS HAD LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF WESTERN CULTURE. ATHENIANS LIKE PLATO AND SOCRATES INVENTED PHILOSOPHY, ARISTOTLE, INVENTED LOGIC AND LAID THE

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, SOPHOCLES INVENTED TRAGEDY, ARISTOPHANES INVENTED COMEDY, PLUTARCH, INVENTED BIOGRAPHY, AND EUCLID INVENTED GEOMETRY. THE ATHENIANS OF PAUL'S DAY WERE JUSTLY PROUD OF THEIR INTELLECTUAL FOREFATHERS.

AND WHEN PAUL PROCLAIMED TO THEM THAT GOD HAD FORGIVEN THEM THEIR SINS BY SENDING HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST, TO DIE FOR THEM AND RAISING HIM FROM THE DEAD HE WAS MET WITH SNEERS AND CONTEMPT. THEY KNEW, YOU SEE, THAT THE DEAD COULD NOT BE RAISED TO NEW LIFE BECAUSE THAT WAS SIMPLY NOT REASONABLE. SO THEY REJECTED THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION HE HAD BROUGHT TO THEM AND DIED IN THEIR SINS. SO PAUL LEFT ATHENS, HAVING MADE ONLY A FEW CONVERTS THERE, AND WENT TO CORINTH. LATER, IN HIS *FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS*, HE WROTE OF HIS ARRIVAL THERE:

*WHEN I CAME TO YOU, BROTHERS, I DID NOT COME WITH ELOQUENCE OR SUPERIOR WISDOM AS I PROCLAIMED TO YOU THE TESTIMONY ABOUT GOD. FOR I RESOLVED TO KNOW NOTHING WHILE I WAS WITH YOU EXCEPT JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED. MY MESSAGE AND MY PREACHING WERE NOT WITH WISE AND PERSUASIVE WORDS, BUT WITH A DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT'S POWER, SO THAT YOUR FAITH MIGHT NOT REST ON MEN'S WISDOM, BUT ON GOD'S POWER...FOR THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD IS HIGHER THAN THE WISDOM OF MAN.*

OH HOW THOSE WORDS APPLY TO OUR AGE!

IF THERE IS ANYTHING TODAY THAT DRAWS MEN'S WORSHIP AWAY FROM GOD—EVEN MORE THAN MATERIALISM—IT IS THE FALSE RELIGION OF SCIENTISM: THE BELIEF THAT ALL OF MAN'S PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED BY SCIENCE. WE HAVE DISCOVERED SO MUCH IN THE LAST FEW HUNDRED YEARS THAT WE CAN EASILY COME TO BELIEVE THAT SCIENCE CAN SOLVE ALL OF OUR PROBLEMS. BUT THERE IS ONE THING THAT SCIENCE CANNOT DO—AND IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL: SCIENCE CANNOT SAVED US FROM OUR SINFULNESS. ONLY GOD CAN DO THAT AND ONLY GOD DOES IT. AND HE DOESN'T DO IT THROUGH OUR INTELLECTS OR OUR POWER OF REASON: HE DOES IT BY CREATING FAITH IN OUR HEARTS IN THE SAVIOR OF MANKIND.

FAITH OPENS OUR EYES AND EARS AND MINDS TO GOD'S WISDOM, WHICH SURPASSES OURS AS FAR AS HEAVN SURPASSES THE EARTH.

*AS GOD SAYS IN THE PSALM: "MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS AND YOUR WAYS ARE NOT MY WAYS. AS THE HEAVENS ARE HIGHER THAN THE EARTH, SO ARE MY WAYS THAN YOUR WAYS AND MY THOUGHTS THAN YOUR THOUGHTS."*

BUT GOD'S WISDOM IS NOT A BOOK OF RULES OR A PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM. GOD'S WISDOM IS NOT A "WHAT" AT ALL—IT'S A "WHO." GOD'S WISDOM IS HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST, WHO CALLS TO EACH ONE OF US SAYING: *"BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO LISTENS TO ME, WATCHING DAILY AT MY DOORS, WAITING AT MY DOORWAY. FOR WHOEVER FINDS ME FINDS LIFE AND RECEIVES FAVOR FROM THE LORD."*

IN MILWAUKEE, WHERE KAREN AND I USED TO LIVE, PEOPLE USED TO ROW AND SAIL BOATS ON THE MILWAUKEE RIVER. THERE WERE SEVERAL BRIDGES ACROSS THE RIVER

AND THERE WAS A LOT OF GRAFFITI ON THE PYLONS THAT SUPPORTED THE BRIDGES.MY FAVORITE PIECE OF GRAFFITI WENT LIKE THIS:

“TO BE IS TO DO”...ARISTOTLE

“TO DO IS TO BE”...PLATO

“DO-BE-DO-BE-DO”...FRANK SINATRA

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, SINATRA’S WISDOM MAY BE IN THE RUNNING AS FAR AS WHAT THIS WORLD HAS TO OFFER. BUT WE HAVE THE WISDOM OF GOD WHICH SHOWS UP THIS WORLD’S WISDOM FOR WHAT IT REALLY IS: JUST DO-BE-DO-BE-DO. AMEN.

### **Genesis 3:1-5 The Fall**

<sup>3</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

<sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

<sup>4</sup> “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

### **1 Corinthians 1:18-25 & 2:1-5**

<sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

<sup>20</sup> Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. ...

<sup>2</sup> And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. <sup>2</sup> For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup> I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. <sup>4</sup> My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.

## **Luke 10:17-21**

<sup>17</sup> The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

<sup>18</sup> He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup> I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. <sup>20</sup> However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

<sup>21</sup> At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.