

Theology of Wisdom as it Relates to Academia and Intellectualism

The Glorious Irony of the Ages

God's Plan was to circumvent the wisdom of the world and outsmart earth's "wise" by constructing a plan of salvation through faith, accomplished through the redemptive death of His Son on a Roman cross.

This is a crucial concept to understand, especially for those in universities dealing with professors who mistakenly represent themselves as being "neutral" and "intellectual" but are actually blind to the truth. They may be following consistent logic, but they are starting from the wrong place and building their construct on mistaken assumptions.

The most important message in the world (i.e. the Gospel) sounds foolish to non-Christians 1:18

- It is part of God's divine design that the gospel message--the only way to salvation--sounds foolish and offensive to unbelieving ears.
 - God does not seek to make the message more "presentable" or "palatable" to non-Christian tastes.
 - God does not apologize for this fact--He announces this as a way in which he can supremely triumph over the pomp and pretensions of a world that thinks it is so wise, but is actually so deceived and foolish.
- Actually, for the Christian, foolishness is seen in all of the *world's* wisdom. 1:20
 - Mutually contradictory systems of thought.
 - Reprobate lifestyles of many who claim worldly knowledge
 - Purposeless existences
 - Deleterious social implications from bankrupt philosophies

God has intentionally opposed the world's wisdom. 1:19; 27-29

- God could have constructed a system of salvation that would appeal to upper strata of social and "intellectual" people.
- God's purpose in opposing worldly wisdom to subvert human pride and exalt the humble. 1:29; 31

Worldly wisdom has never led to a proper knowledge of God 1:21a

- Unaided reason will never lead to a system of thought that parallels the Christian gospel.
- Unaided reason will never figure out a way to God

Because of this God planned to provide wisdom, power, and salvation through a message that sounds foolish to those who are worldly wise 1:21b-25

- Part of our calling is to accept those who are humble
- God used humble, unlikely methods in His dealings with people in the Old Testament
 - David slew Goliath with a slingshot
 - Naaman was cured of leprosy after dipping in the Jordan River seven times (even though it seemed foolish to him because there were better and cleaner rivers in Syria)

- The wisdom of God is revealed through the Spirit rather than attained through intelligence 2:10
- The wisdom of God will always be rejected by unaided reason ("natural man") 2:14
 - Even if the unbeliever is brilliant in his intelligence, divine truth will sound foolish and elude him because he actually can't understand it--not because of any logical deficiencies

It is by God's choice and design that there are few wise or important people who are Christians 1:26-28

- God could have made a system of salvation that appealed to wise and important people but He deliberately did not do this
- This was part of God's plan to oppose the world with its pomp and pretension.
- God bypassed human cleverness to filter out the proud--He resists them but gives grace to the humble.
- God's true wisdom is "hidden"--a mystery to those who are highly respected in the world's eyes 2:7-8

God has purposefully chosen unlikely people and unlikely means 1:27-28

- It is within His power and capability to do so.
- It is perfectly consistent with sound logic that God could construct a system of thought that was foolish or undesirable to non-Christians

God constructed a method of dispensing salvation that would be dependent upon FAITH (in a message) rather than upon INTELLIGENCE 1:18; 21

- Because salvation is predicated on faith, it is attainable to anyone--not just the well-cultured or intelligent
- The attainment of divine wisdom is not dependent on IQ or worldly sophistication
- When we come to God we come on HIS terms not OURS. God has every right to construct any kind of plan He wants.

The central core of Christianity and the source of power is the message of Christ's redemptive death 2:2; 4-5

God's new life and power are not dependent upon man's persuasion or eloquence 1:4

- The power of God (i.e., the empowering effect of the Spirit of God) is mediated through the proper presentation of the message of Jesus' atoning death
 - It is not mediated through philosophical arguments
 - It is not mediated through peripheral issues of the Christian life
 - It is not mediated though eloquent phrases or arguments

Conclusion

- God, by definition, is free to choose any method of salvation that He desires
- It is perfectly logical to postulate that God could construct a system of salvation that appears foolish to some (or even all) people. It is illogical to deny this possibility.
- It is likewise perfectly logical to postulate that man, using unaided reason, is deceived regarding the worthiness of the Christian message. What he thinks is true is not actually true, and what he thinks is false is not actually false.

- God uses unlikely things to accomplish His purposes
- God is opposed to worldly wisdom
- Worldly, natural wisdom is entirely deceptive and incapable of deciphering or figuring out the actual truth of God
- God made salvation, wisdom, and power dependent on the redemptive death of Christ
- God constructed a system whereby the saving power of Christ's redemptive death is mediated through (humble) faith rather than through intellectual attainment.
- The success of our evangelism is not dependent upon the beauty, eloquence, or persuasiveness of our speech, but on the clear exposition of Biblical truth as it relates to the crucifixion of Christ

Practical Applications

- Students should not be intimidated by intelligent professors who, while possessing great worldly knowledge, are utterly blind and hostile to spiritual realities.
- People should not be "reasoned into" Christian truth; our apologetics does not depend on our ability to refute the arguments of unbelievers. Our "wisdom" depends on faith (which is logically consistent, because it really is true), and God's power to save and reveal.
- A very powerful factor in our understanding of the world is the realization of the effect of deception. Taking the prospect of deception into account introduces a new dynamic in our way of reckoning things. God says that unaided reason is deceived and is incapable of "undeceiving" itself. (This is a logical possibility. It is illogical to say that this cannot happen.)
- We have encouragement to spread the Gospel. Although we should be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" we should not feel that people require eloquence or the testimony of important people in order to be saved. The power of God is mediated through a clear presentation of the gospel--the message of our crucified and resurrected Redeemer.

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