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the Ways in Which We Fool Ourselves, 1962.

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THE WAYS IN WHICH WE FOOL OURSELVES

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

THE TEMPLE

Today is April first -- also known as April Fool or All-Fools Day. Why the first day of the lovely month of April should be so designated, no one knows. April first is given over to folly. Innocent people are sportively imposed upon. Some are sent on bootless errands. Others, in ^{sundry} other ways, are made to appear ridiculous.

Feasts of Fools, burlesque and quasi-religious festivals, were ^{widely} observed in the Middle Ages, ^{some times} with the connivance and ^{even} sometimes with the cooperation of the church itself. At such times, sacred rituals and objects were travestied by the populace, and what would otherwise be regarded as sacrilege, were on these occasions tolerated and condoned. These feasts were probably survivals of the ancient pagan Saturnalia, when the Roman mobs cut loose in high spirits, and indulged in all forms of ribaldry, buffoonery and license. These were explosive days of release from the dull routine, ~~the hard exactions~~, the cares and disciplines of every-day life.

Professional fools or jesters existed in all times and in all countries. Kings had their official royal fools whose function it was to amuse them and their courts, to cause laughter by their very looks, their dress, their antics or their wit. They operated on the principle of Rosaline in "As You Like It": "I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad".

Sometimes these court fools were deformed human creatures, who by their very ugliness, their dwarfed and deformed bodies, ^{which} were dressed up fantastically

in motley, with cap, bells and baubles, excited laughter and gayety. There was an active trade in the Middle Ages in these manufactured human monstrosities, just as there was in castrated boys who were trained to become adult soprano singers in church choirs. Even Pope Leo X, we are told, liked to keep at his court in the Vatican a number of jesters and buffoons. This accorded with the custom of his father and of contemporary kings, "To bring him a person whose wit, deformity or imbecility could refresh his spirit, was an open sesame to his heart".

Why lords and ladies should feel better and be amused on watching stunted, humpbacked dwarfs, freaks and monstrosities, only a ~~psychoanalyst~~^{logist} can say. To have a taste for such fare is evidently some form of sadism and human depravity. In the Roman Empire, it was customary for wealthy people to keep half-witted and deformed slaves in their houses for purposes of entertainment, and the greater the deformity, the higher was their purchase price.

The professional fool was to be found everywhere, among all cultures, and he has survived to this day in the circus-clown, the slap-stick comedian, and the "dummy" in the ventriloquist act. He was not always a helpless fool. Sometimes he merely "played" the fool. The "witty" fool is not unknown to good literature.

Enid Welsford, who wrote an interesting book, "The Fool" - His Social and Literary History" -- concludes that these fools served a variety of purposes.

The Fool or clown was primarily the butt or laughing-stock -- "He Who Gets Slapped". He was the safety-valve for the suppressed instincts of the bully in all men.

But he also provided a subtler balm for the fears and wounds of those who are afflicted with an inferiority complex -- which is true of the greater part of humanity, if we may believe our psychologists. Most men are subject to the blows of fate and of people stronger and wiser than themselves. The Fool represents the cause of the stupid against the clever, of the weak against the strong. Every man is prepared to identify himself with the Fool as he turns the tables on his chastisers, defeats the powerful, outwits the wise, and assumes the most effective of all roles, the role of David against Goliath, the role of the pariah triumphant. "It is this note of subtly disguised self-pity," says the author, "that Charlie Chaplin strikes with such genius and with such success."

But, it is not of such professional fools that I wish to speak this morning. These belong to the world of entertainment, where they amuse ~~and~~ ~~delight~~ people by their very ^{looks, slyness,} ~~appearance,~~ ~~their~~ clumsiness or ~~their~~ stupidity.

Nor do I wish to speak of the large element of folly which is to be found in every one of us. "What fools these mortals be," declared Robin Goodfellow, a Puck, in Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," but few mortals are ^{really} ~~prepared~~ to admit it. ^{TP} We beguile ourselves into believing that we know more than we really do. Few of us have the wisdom to say: ^{762 1jk} ~~13/11~~ ^{13/11} "I am ignorant, I do not know." The longings of our hearts ^{Requently} ~~flash~~ shimmering mirages before our eyes. Our strong desires feed our proliferating fancies. How often do men deceive themselves into believing that what is bad is really for their good; that what they have obtained they really merited; that they can be happy only when rich; that what really counts are clothes ~~and~~ ~~jewels and cars~~ and fine feathers. How often do people persuade themselves that they are admired when they are only flattered; that they can have love without

sacrifice, power without vexation, ~~and~~ that their strength will ^{forever} be inexhaustible,
and ^{that} time will never run out for them. How many self-deluded people think that
they are casting in indestructible bronze when they are only writing in dust!
It is out of these self-deceptions that so much of the pathos and tragedy of
human existence derive, and so much of its comedy and bitter irony.



~~It is against such wilful blindness that the Psalmist prays:~~

~~"Lighten my eyes, but I sleep the sleep of death".~~

But not even of this type of folly do I wish to speak this morning, ~~no~~ ^{any} more than of Pierrot, Punch or Harlequin, of stage or pantomime. I wish to speak of the ^{social fool, the} fool as the Bible knows him.

In the Bible ^{the fool} ~~he~~ is not a deformed person. He is not fantastically accoutered and does not sport a cap and bells. He is not retained by anyone for purposes of entertainment. In fact, he does not amuse at all, and he is ^{considered} always evil.

The Bible has many names for this kind of a fool. The Book of Proverbs, especially, abounds in references to him. He is called ^{רִשָּׁוֹן, רִשָּׁוֹן, רִשָּׁוֹן} ~~רִשָּׁוֹן~~ -- most often ^{רִשָּׁוֹן} -- probably from the verb ^{רָשָׁה} -- which means "to grow thick", as of fluids. The Bible is very sharp in condemning him, almost as sharp as it is in condemning the ^{outright man} wicked and the sinner. In some instances, the two -- the Fool and the wicked, ^{רִשָּׁוֹן} and the ^{רָשָׁה} are placed in juxtaposition.

What is there about the fool that so arouses Biblical anger? Well, in the first place he is thick-set and will not budge. He is satisfied with things as they are, and with himself. ~~He is content to remain what he is.~~ He is proud and arrogant. He will not consider anything new. When experience would suggest another course, he "digs in"; he simply will not budge. He always knows better. He resents the intrusion of new ideas and abhors ~~those~~ ^{those who} teachers of new ideas. He hates instruction and correction. It is not that he is incapable of learning. He simply sets himself against it. There is a Hindu saying: "Though a fool spend all his life with wise men, he will know

the truth no more than a spoon knows the taste of soup". He never acknowledges a mistake. He is always right.

Scripture itself is at a loss to know whether to argue with such a fool or not. We read: "Answer^w not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself". And again we read: "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes" (26.4-5).

But the smugness, the stupid obstinacy, the closed, impervious mind, the impudent contempt of learning of such fools are denounced and condemned in the Bible in no uncertain terms.

"Fools despise wisdom and instruction" (1.7).

"A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
but only in expressing his opinion" (18.2).

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own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice" (12.15).

"In the mouth of the fool is a rod of pride" (14.3).

"The complacency of fools shall destroy them"

- אדם חכם יאמץ עצה - (1.32)

But this same stubborn, knowledge-resisting, and truth-rejecting fool will at the same time go completely hay-wire when it comes to accepting evil rumors, hate propoganda, hearsay and scandal-mongering. He will accept them without a moment's reflection or examination. Education he will resist, but not propoganda. He will listen avidly to the bigot, the fire-brand, the sower of discord and suspicion among men. וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמָעַל בְּאָזְנוֹ יִקְבֹּץ (14.15) --

"The fool believes everything". But he will turn a deaf ear to the sage, the sober scholar, the sound thinker, the friend of man.

Such credulous dolts -- and remember that "ever since Adam, fools have been in the majority" -- are veritable putty in the hands of ~~every~~ crafty political adventurer. Through a skillful exploitation of their easy credulity, -- which readily conforms to their innate desire to believe what they are told -- ^{for} ~~and~~ what we wish, we generally believe to be true, and the easiest person to deceive is one's self -- free societies have been overthrown by unscrupulous and wicked men and great evil has been wrought in the world. Time and again, fools, moved and incited by crafty knaves, have destroyed the world. Tell these people the simple truth, and they will reject it out of hand. Tell them the big lie, and they will shout "Sieg Heil" in wild acclaim. Give them resounding slogans, give them rousing catch-words, give them things or people to hate and add a touch of intriguing secrecy to your plan of operation, and they are yours body and soul.

And once these men, so cold and unresponsive to truth, are bewitched by half-truths, by distorted facts, by canards and flying rumors, they become terribly belligerent about it. They go on the war-path. They want to destroy and to annihilate. They are not interested in correcting, in improving, in adjusting, in compromising, ⁱⁿ ~~to~~ employ ⁱⁿ the techniques of peaceful progress. They want a show-down! They do not look ahead and consider the possible consequences of their provocative belligerency.

A few weeks ago, eighteen thousand Rightists rallied in Madison Square Garden ~~in~~ New York City to demonstrate for a refurbished neo-conservatism. Among the major speakers was one who called for "new orders" ^{which should be} ~~to be given as~~ _{1/5/41 in Germany} as follows:

with much of the past and is resolutely reaching out for a new, and fuller way of life for all men. There is no call ^{among them} for vision ~~among them~~, for moral initiative, for courage, for faith. Because of fear or frustration, or spiritual exhaustion, they choose "to leave the straight and righteous paths and to turn back and walk in the ways of darkness".

Quite recently I read a fine article by Barbara Ward in the Atlantic magazine, titled "In Time of Trial". She writes of men and nations in our Western World who are unwilling to face the radical changes of the New Age. As far as our own country is concerned, she declares:

"The refusal to face change is there, in the tendency to look with nostalgia to a golden past in which America was free of Communists and allies and taxes and unions and "big government", in the exaltation of purely nationalist interests, in economic isolationism and the growth of the protectionist spirit."

And she concludes her article with these words:

"In its roots and aspirations, Western civilization is turned toward the future, not the past; toward experiment, not the status quo; toward creation; toward " a new heaven and a new earth", not a safe and static world. It is precisely this quality of inventiveness, of vision, of courage to dream that has made Western society, for good and evil, the catalyst and prime mover in a world of magnificent but somnolent civilizations. If that quality were lost today, if no vision of the future informed its policies, no lift of hope encouraged its efforts, no faith to go further and do better inspired its aims, then the hulk of its greatness might survive. But the spirit would be dead. The trial of soul we face today is to outdream the Communist visionaries,

outwork the Communist fanatics, and outdare the voices of defeatism and discouragement within our own society. And this is precisely the challenge which Western man, again and again in his millennial record, has met and measured and triumphantly overcome."

Quite in keeping with this fearless call to build, in faith and vision, the good society of tomorrow, is the one single fool whom the Bible greatly extolls -- the Fool of Faith -- the man whom foolish men deem to be a fool because he speaks to them of truth, of justice, of brotherhood, of peace -- the prophet whom men call a fool: *הַכֹּהֵן הַיָּחִיד*, the spiritual leader whom people bait and brand as mad: *הַכֹּהֵן הַיָּחִיד הַיָּחִיד.*

It is these Fools of God, ~~who~~ ^{who} once mocked, reviled, stoned or consigned to the flames, ^{who} gave us, because they loved mankind with such stern, unbending purpose, and with such boundless passion for justice, equality and peace, -- whatever we now possess of truth, goodness and beauty, who discovered new worlds for us and who dispelled the gross darkness which enveloped us.

Every generation spurned its prophets, for they were ^{to} goads and prods. ^{more} They drove men forward on rugged roads to higher levels and ~~the~~ luminous peaks. Always they demanded the arduous better from men who were content to rest at ease in Zion. Each prophet was a stone which the builders rejected, but which became the chief corner-stone of ^{and nobler} the new society.

God be praised for those Fools of Faith who were the wisest ^d men. Would that we had more such fools among the very ^{so} knowing, practical and worldly-wise statesmen of our day who are driving our world ^{near} precipitously to the brink of ruin.

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to keep at his court in the Vatican a number of jesters and buffoons. This accorded with the custom of his father and of contemporary kings...¹¹To bring him a person whose wit, deformity or imbecility could refresh his spirit, was an open sesame to his heart".

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The Bible has many names for this kind of a fool. The Book of Proverbs, especially, abounds in references to him. He is called ^{חָכָם, נָכָר, מְרִיר, מְרִיר} ~~חָכָם, נָכָר, מְרִיר, מְרִיר~~ -- most often ^{חָכָם} -- probably from the verb ^{חָכַם} -- which means "to grow thick", as of fluids. The Bible is very sharp in condemning him, almost as sharp as it is in condemning the wicked and the sinner. In some instances, the two -- the Fool and the wicked, ^{חָכָם} and the ^{רָע} are placed in juxtaposition.

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hearsay and scandal-mongering. He will accept them without a moment's reflection or examination. Education he will resist, but not propoganda. He will listen avidly to the bigot, the fire-brand, the sower of discord and suspicion among men.

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Such credulous dolts -- and remember that "ever since Adam, fools have been in the majority" -- are veritable putty in the hands of ^{every} crafty political adventurer. Through a skillful exploitation of their easy credulity, which readily conforms to their innate desire to believe what they are told -- and what we wish we generally believe to be true, and the easiest person to deceive is one's self -- **Free** societies have been overthrown by unscrupulous and wicked men and great evil has been wrought in the world. Time and again, fools, moved ^{incited} and by crafty knaves, have destroyed the world. Tell these people the simple truth, and they will reject it out of hand. Tell them the big lie, and they will shout, ^{Sieg, Heil!} in wild acclaim. Give them resounding slogans, give them rousing catch-words, give them things ^{or} people to hate and add a touch of intriguing secrecy to your plan of operation, and they are yours body and soul.

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A few weeks ago, eighteen thousand Rightists rallied in Madison Square Garden in New York City. *to demonstrate for the contest a refurbished neo-conservative.* Among the major speakers was a ~~Mr. Bozell, the~~ *one* editor of the National Review Magazine. He called for "new orders" to be given as follows:

"To the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Prepare for an immediate landing in Havana.

"To the Commander in Berlin: Tear down the wall.

"To our chief of mission in the Congo: Change sides.

"To the chief of the C.I.A.: You are to encourage liberation movements in every nation of the world under Communist. "

Of such irresponsible and prating windbags -- and the word "fool" is derived from a Latin word which means a windbag -- Scriptures say:

7237 2222 file 12 "The mouth of a fool is an imminent ruin."

these windbags
All ~~those~~ who do not see things as ~~they~~ *they* do are, by that very ~~step~~ *taken*, scheming and cowardly enemies of all that is sacred, of family, home, country and ~~true~~ religion. *These men* ~~They~~ take up the cudgels for the Almighty. Without their vigilance, the Lord God of Hosts might easily be defeated by the communists...

Over and over again, *the Bible* Scriptures speak of the contentiousness of the fool who is continually sowing discord - *8/22/ file 6 -*

"Every fool goes *about* snarling". "A fool's lips call for strife, and his mouth incites to blows" (18.6). "A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both."

such men blustering
I suspect that ~~these/fools~~ who go about ~~blustering~~ swaggering and swash-buckling in ~~these~~ perilous times and in ~~our~~ *a* tense and dangerously poised world of ~~ours~~ are really enamored of strife, as such, of destructiveness and upheaval

for their own sake. They ^{prefer} ~~would rather have~~ ruin and chaos ^{to} ~~than~~ orderly progress. They ^{are in} ~~favor~~ all change, provided it is a change backward, not forward.

(212 x10000 "Upheaval is in his heart."

They have no constructive program for the future of ~~our~~ ^a democratic society in a revolutionary age which has definitely broken with ~~so~~ much of the past ~~to~~ and is resolutely reaching out for a new, and fuller way of life for all ^{men}. There is no call for vision among them, for ^{moral invitation} ~~experiments~~, for courage, for faith. They ^{become} ~~choose~~ ^{out} of fear or frustration, or spiritual exhaustion, ^{they choose} "to leave the straight and righteous paths and to turn back and walk in the ways of darkness."

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Quite in keeping with ^{this} the fearless call to build ^{in faith and vision} the good society of to-morrow the world of tomorrow, ^{single} in vision and faith, is the one fool whom the Bible greatly extolls -- the Fool of Faith -- the ^{man} fool whom foolish men ^{deem to be a fine} condemn because he speaks ^{to} to them of truth, of justice, of brotherhood, of peace -- the prophet whom men called a fool. ^{WBS} ^{AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES} ^{1023 file} the spiritual ^{leader} man whom people ^{bait and} call

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It is those fools of God who, once mocked, reviled, stoned or consigned to the flames, gave us ^{over to} whatever we now possess of truth, goodness and beauty in our lives, who discovered new worlds for ^{us} men and dispelled the ^{from} darkness which enveloped ^{them} us.

Every generation spurned ^{its prophets} them, for ^{that} they were ^{good} and ^{prudent} and they drove men ^{forward} on rugged roads to higher levels. ^{over 2} Always they ^{demand} elicited the arduous better from men who were content to rest at ease in Zion. Each prophet was a ^{stone} which the builders rejected but which became the chief corner stone of the new society.

God be praised for those Fools of faith who were the wisest men. ^{Would that} we had more such fools among the very ^{renewing} practical and wisely-voiced statesmen, ^{our day} who are driving our world ^{precipitously} to the brink of ruin.

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Sometimes these court fools were deformed human creatures, who by their very ugliness, their dwarfed and deformed bodies, ^{which} were dressed up fantastically

in motley, with cap, bells and baubles, excited laughter and gayety. There was an active trade in the Middle Ages in these manufactured human monstrosities, just as there was in castrated boys who were trained to become adult soprano singers in church choirs. Even Pope Leo X, we are told, liked to keep at his court in the Vatican a number of jesters and buffoons. This accorded with the custom of his father and of contemporary kings - "To bring him a person whose wit, deformity or imbecility could refresh his spirit, was an open sesame to his heart".

Why lords and ladies should feel better and be amused on watching stunted, humpbacked dwarfs, freaks and monstrosities, only a ^{logist} psychoanalyst can say. To have a taste for such fare is evidently some form of sadism and human depravity. In the Roman Empire, it was customary for wealthy people to keep half-witted and deformed slaves in their houses for purposes of entertainment, and the greater the deformity, the higher was their purchase price.

The professional fool was to be found everywhere, among all cultures, and he has survived to this day in the circus-clown, the slap-stick comedian, ^{and} the "dummy" in the ventriloquist act. He was not always a helpless fool. Sometimes he merely "played" the fool. The "witty" fool is not unknown to good literature.

Enid Welsford, who wrote an interesting book, "The Fool" - His Social and Literary History" -- concludes that these fools served a variety of purposes.

The Fool or clown was primarily the butt or laughing-stock -- "He Who Gets Slapped". He was the safety-valve for the suppressed instincts of the bully in all men.

But he also provided a subtler balm for the fears and wounds of those who are afflicted with an inferiority complex -- which is true of the greater part of humanity, if we may believe our psychologists. Most men are subject to the blows of fate and of people stronger and wiser than themselves. The Fool represents the cause of the stupid against the clever, of the weak against the strong. Every man is prepared to identify himself with the Fool as he turns the tables on his chastisers, defeats the powerful, outwits the wise, and assumes the most effective of all roles, the role of David against Goliath, the role of the pariah triumphant. "It is this note of subtly disguised self-pity," says the author, "that Charlie Chaplin strikes with such genius and with such success."

But, it is not of such professional fools that I wish to speak this morning. These belong to the world of entertainment, where they amuse people by their very looks, slyness, clumsiness or stupidity.

Nor do I wish to speak of the large element of folly which is to be found in every one of us. "What fools these mortals be," declared Robin Goodfellow, a Puck, in Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream", but few mortals are really prepared to admit it.

We beguile ourselves into believing that we know more than we really do. Few of us have the wisdom to say: "I am ignorant, I do not know." The longings of our hearts frequently flash shimmering mirages before our eyes. Our strong desires feed our proliferating fancies. How often do men deceive themselves into believing that what is bad is really for their own good; that what they have obtained they really merited; that they can be happy only when rich; that what really counts are clothes and fine feathers. How often do people persuade themselves that they are admired when they are only flattered; that they can have love without sacrifice, power without vexation, that their strength will forever be inexhaustible, and that time will never run out for them. How many self-deluded people think that they are casting in indestructible bronze when they are only writing in dust! It is out of these self-deceptions that so much of the pathos and tragedy of human existence derive, and so

much of its comedy and bitter irony.

It is against such wilful blindness that the Psalmist prays:

~~"Lighten my eyes, but I sleep the sleep of death".~~

But not even of this type of folly do I wish to speak this morning, *no*
~~any~~ more than of Pierrot, Punch or Harlequin of stage or pantomime. I wish to
speak of the ^{social fool} fool as the Bible knows him.

In the Bible he is not a deformed person. He is not fantastically ac-
countered and does not sport a cap and bells. He is not retained by anyone
for purposes of entertainment. In fact, he does not amuse at all, and he is
^{considered} always evil.

The Bible has many names for this kind of a fool. The Book of Proverbs,
especially, abounds in references to him. He is called

-- most often *WRHS* -- probably from the verb -- which
means "to grow thick", as of fluids. The Bible is very sharp in condemning
him, almost as sharp as it is in condemning the ^{outright man} wicked, and the sinner. In some
instances, the two -- the Fool and the wicked, and the are placed in
juxtaposition.

What is there about the fool that so arouses Biblical anger? Well,
in the first place he is thick-set and will not budge. He is satisfied with
things as they are and with himself. ~~He is content to remain what he is.~~ He
is proud and arrogant. He will not consider anything new. When experience
would suggest another course, he "digs in"; he simply will not budge. He
always knows better. He resents the intrusion of new ideas and abhors the ~~the~~ ^{those who}
teach~~ers~~ of new ideas. He hates instruction and correction. It is not that he
is incapable of learning. He simply sets himself against it. There is a
Hindu saying: "Though a fool spend all his life with wise men, he will know

the truth no more than a spoon knows the taste of soup". He never acknowledges a mistake. He is always right.

Scripture itself is at a loss to know whether to argue with such a fool or not. We read: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself". And again we read: "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes" (26.4-5).

But the smugness, the stupid obstinacy, the closed, impervious mind, the impudent contempt of learning of such fools are denounced and condemned in the Bible in no uncertain terms.

"Fools despise wisdom and instruction" (1.7).

A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
but only in expressing his opinion" (18.2).

"The way of a fool is (always) right in his
own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice" (12.15).

"In the mouth of the fool is a rod of pride" (14.3).

"The complacency of fools shall destroy them"

- (1.32)

But this same stubborn, knowledge-resisting, and truth-rejecting fool will at the same time go completely hay-wire when it comes to accepting evil rumors, hate propaganda, hearsay and scandal-mongering. He will accept them without a moment's reflection or examination. Education he will resist, but not propaganda. He will listen avidly to the bigot, the fire-brand, the sower of discord and suspicion among men. (14.15) --

"The fool believes everything". But he will turn a deaf ear to the sage, the sober scholar, the sound thinker, the friend of man.

Such credulous dolts -- and remember that "ever since Adam, fools have been in the majority" -- are veritable putty in the hands of ~~every~~ crafty political adventurer. Through a skillful exploitation of their easy credulity, which readily conforms to their innate desire to believe what they are told -- ~~for~~ ^{and} what we wish we generally believe to be true, and the easiest person to deceive is one's self -- free societies have been overthrown by unscrupulous and wicked men and great evil has been wrought in the world. Time and again, fools, moved and incited by crafty knaves, have destroyed the world. Tell these people the simple truth, and they will reject it out of hand. Tell them the big lie, and they will shout "Sieg Heil" in wild acclaim. Give them resounding slogans, give them rousing catch-words, give them things or people to hate and add a touch of intriguing secrecy to your plan of operation, and they are yours body and soul.

And once these men, so cold and unresponsive to truth, are bewitched by half-truths, by distorted facts, by canards and flying rumors, they become terribly belligerent about it. They go on the war-path. They want to destroy and to annihilate. They are not interested in correcting, in improving, in adjusting, in compromising, ⁱⁿ ~~to~~ ⁱⁿ employ the techniques of peaceful progress. They want a show-down. They ~~do~~ ^{do} not look ahead and consider the possible consequences of their provocative belligerency.

A few weeks ago, eighteen thousand Rightists rallied in Madison Square Garden ~~in~~ New York City to demonstrate for a refurbished neo-conservatism. Among the major speakers was one who called for "new orders" ^{which should be} ~~to be~~ given ^{immediately} ~~as~~ as follows:

"To the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Prepare for an immediate landing in Havana.

"To the Commander in Berlin: Tear down the wall.

"To our chief of mission in the Congo: Change sides.

"To the chief of the C.I.A.: You are to encourage liberation movements in every nation of the world under Communist."

Of such irresponsible and prating windbags -- and the word "fool" is derived from a Latin word which means "a windbag" -- Scriptures say:

"The mount of a fool is an imminent ruin."

All who do not see things as these ~~windbags~~^{fools} do are, by that very token, ^{to be}

^{regarded as} ~~scheming and cowardly~~ enemies of all that is sacred, of family, home, country and religion. These men take up the cudgels for the Almighty. Without their vigilance, the Lord God of Hosts might easily be defeated by the communists...

Over and over again, the Bible speaks of the contentiousness of the fool who is continually sowing discord "Every fool goes about snarling". "A fool's lips call for strife, and his mouth incites to blows" (18.6). "A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both."

I suspect that such men who go about, swaggering and swash-buckling in perilous times ~~and~~^{our} in a tense and dangerously poised world, are really enamored of strife, ~~as such~~^{itself}, of destructiveness and upheaval for their own sake. They prefer ruin and chaos to orderly progress. They are in favor of all change, provided it is a change backward, not forward.

"Upheaval is in his heart." They have no constructive program for the future of a democratic society in a revolutionary age which has definitely broken

with much of the past and is resolutely reaching out for a new, and fuller way of life for all men. There is no call ^{among them} for vision, ~~among them~~, for moral initiative, for courage, for faith. Because of fear or frustration, or spiritual exhaustion, they choose "to leave the straight and righteous paths and to turn back and walk in the ways of darkness".

Quite recently I read a fine article by Barbara Ward in the Atlantic magazine, titled "In Time of Trial". She writes of men and nations in our Western World who are unwilling to face the radical changes of the New Age. As far as our own country is concerned, she declares:

"The refusal to face change is there, in the tendency to look with nostalgia to a golden past in which America was free of Communists and allies and taxes and unions and "big government", in the exaltation of pure nationalist interests, in economic isolationism and the growth of the protectionist spirit."

And she concludes her article with these words:

"In its roots and aspirations, Western civilization is turned toward the future, not the past; toward experiment, not the status quo; toward creation; toward "a new heaven and a new earth", not a safe and static world. It is precisely this quality of inventiveness, of vision, of courage to dream that has made Western society, for good and evil, the catalyst and prime mover in a world of magnificent but somnolent civilizations. If that quality were lost today, if no vision of the future informed its policies, no lift of hope encouraged its efforts, no faith to go further and do better inspired its aims, then the bulk of its greatness might survive. But the spirit would be dead. The trial of soul we face today is to outdream the Communist visionaries,

outwork the Communist fanatics, and outdare the voices of defeatism and discouragement within our own society. And this is precisely the challenge which Western man, again and again in his millennial record, has met and measured and triumphantly overcome."

Quite in keeping with this fearless call to build, in faith and vision, the good society of tomorrow, is the one single fool whom the Bible greatly extolls -- the Fool of Faith -- the man whom foolish men deem to be a fool because he speaks to them of truth, of justice, of brotherhood, of peace -- the prophet whom men call a fool. , the spiritual leader whom people bait and brand as mad:

It is these Fools of God ~~who~~, once mocked, reviled, stoned or consigned to the flames, gave us, because they loved mankind with such stern, unbending purpose, and with such boundless passion for justice, equality and peace, whatever we now possess of truth, goodness and beauty, who discovered new worlds for us and who dispelled the gross darkness which enveloped us.

Every generation spurned its prophets, for they were ^{to} goads and prods ^{more} and they drove men forward on rugged roads to higher levels and ~~the~~ luminous peaks. Always they demanded the arduous better from men who were content to rest at ease in Zion. Each prophet was a stone which the builders rejected, but which became the chief corner-stone of the new ^{and nobler} society.

God be praised for those Fools of Faith who were the wisest ^{of} men. Would that we had more such fools among the very knowing, practical and worldly-wise statesmen of our day who are driving our world ^{so} precipitously ^{near} to the brink of ruin.

SUNDAY MORNING
April 1, 1962