

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

GOD'S FOOLS

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"God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise." – 1 Corinthians 1:27

"Did you see that bit in the 'Pall Mall Gazette' about Booth's Mission people?"

"What, about their commencing to build two new halls in a fortnight?"

"No; you never saw that in the 'Pall Mall,' I know; but about their being the Police Court again."

"What again?"

"Yes; some Whitechapel pet has been getting 'converted,' you know, and they took her home, some of them, and were going to get her nicely married, when she robbed them and moved on. The magistrate said he never knew such a case of absurdity and folly in all his life, and he has seen a good deal, you know."

What a set of fools they must be ! and there is no mistake about it, God's own people are fools.

Everybody says they are.

- ◆ The politician says that they are very foolish to hold tenaciously to a theory, when it is evidently opposed to "the spirit of the times."
- ◆ The man of business says it is folly not to take advantage of the openings Providence puts in your way – to take advantage, that is, of the ignorance of those whom you have dealings with, and of their faith in your statements.
- ◆ The publican says that they are a set of canting fools, who won't allow other people to make an honest living in peace.



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- ◆ The theatre proprietor and amusement dealer say they are a lot of silly fools who can't enjoy themselves, and don't want anyone else to do so either.
- ◆ The general public know very well what these religious fools are. But what matter to God's people what the world says of them? Of course the world is sure to hate them.
- ◆ Ah! But "the Church" says they are fools. That great mass of reputed Christians who attend places of worship, and who profess to sympathize with the objects of Christianity, condemn the true followers of Jesus.
- ◆ They say it is very foolish to be singular and bring upon yourself voluntary martyrdom:
 - ◆ to be always running to religious services
 - ◆ to give way to excitement
 - ◆ to expose yourself in bad weather
 - ◆ to lay yourself open to imposition
 - ◆ to understand Scripture in a strict and absolute sense
 - ◆ to understand it to mean anything in particular
 - ◆ to expect everyone to think as you do, or to attempt to force your own notions down other people's throats.
- ◆ In short, they say that to do any of these things, is to carry things to extremes, and bring religion into contempt.

But do not the statements made by those Christians themselves prove them to be fools?

- ◆ They say they went astray from the womb, and were lost.
- ◆ They say that when they tried to do what they know they ought, they found themselves unable.
- ◆ They say they could never have got right, but would have been lost, but for Jesus Christ who died for them.
- ◆ They say they were changed in a moment from being the worst of sinners to being God's own children by believing in Jesus.
- ◆ They say that through this same Jesus, a man may be entirely saved from going wrong, and that no one else can prevent him from so doing.
- ◆ They say they don't belong to the world, whether they are young or old; but that they have possessions 'beyond the river' – death they mean.
- ◆ They say they don't want anything in this world; but that their treasure is above, and that all their riches is God's love.

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- ◆ They say that it is good to be afflicted in this life, although they confess it isn't pleasant; but they say it will make it better for them in the world to come, and that whatever happens to them is for their good.
- ◆ They say God will give them whatever they need if they ask Him; because He has promised to do so.
- ◆ They say that they don't even know what to ask God for as they ought; but they say God's own Spirit asks for them.
- ◆ They say their religion is better than all the world.
- ◆ They say it is a good thing to die; and that they would rather die than live; and yet they don't wish to have their own way in that or anything else.
- ◆ What fools they must be! But God has chosen the fools to confound the wise men.

There was once a man who spent 120 years of his life in building a large vessel, because he said the world was going to be flooded. Everybody laughed at the silly fellow; but no one could get him to leave off, till the flood really came, and everybody but he and his family were drowned.

There was a man who had the choice between a very fine pasture-land and a very poor one, and he gave up the choice to his nephew, who, of course knew which to pick, and ended his career in a cave, while his uncle became the greatest prince of all those centuries.

There was a man who might have been an Egyptian prince in the days of Egypt's glory; but he chose to associate and suffer with slaves simply because they were God's people; and God made that man the founder of a new nation, which again and again crushed the power of Egypt.

This man led his people out of Egypt without any of the supplies or appliances of a great army, trusting simply in his God; and he won victories, and accomplished a march, such as no general in the world ever boasted, or ever dreamed of; but the people had not his bold faith; and when it came to invading the country they held back and refused to make the venture. One man, however, was insane enough to recommend them to go on, though he knew the strength of the fortifications and the determined attitude of the inhabitants. And after all those cowardly unbelievers were dead, God chose that man to lead their children into the country. He being in his dotage,

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moreover, so reduced the people to the level of his own enthusiastic stupidity, that they attempted to take a strong city by walking round it, and shouting; and the walls of it actually fell down while they were doing so.

There was a young man who risked his life many a time to serve his country and his king, and got hunted almost to death by them as a reward for it. And yet more than once, when he could have avenged himself, and got rid of his tormentors by killing the king, he refused to do so. And God called the stupid fellow a man after his own heart; and made him and his descendants kings forever.

The last of that line was once asked for tribute money not due from him when he had no money to play with; but instead of standing up for his rights, he actually worked a miracle to pay what he did not owe.

When men were killing him with every possible indignity and cruelty, he begged God to forgive them for it all, and said they did not know what they were doing. And He told His followers to preach salvation through His name to everyone; but to take care and begin with his own murderers! And God says, "This is my beloved Son; hear him."

The first preachers of this Savior were unlearned and ignorant men, poor, and without means of conveyance, and yet they undertook to preach the Gospel to every creature. Their words are now read in every part of the world, whilst the very names of the world's greatest philosophers are only known to a very small circle of learned men.

These men said they were honored when they were beaten and imprisoned for preaching, and they sang praise to God for it. And their followers enjoyed having their houses wrecked, they said, because they had houses in heaven that no one could meddle with.

There was one well-educated man in a very good position, who threw up his appointment and joined himself with those poor persecuted people. He brought upon himself, by his own folly, every conceivable hardship, and when he might reasonably have demanded a living from the poor people he had so assisted, he preferred to work at a trade to earn his own bread. Although a gentleman of



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the highest honor and integrity, he said he was glad to be held a rogue or anything else if only he could so serve God.

But God chose that that man should write words which have become the food of the loftiest intellects of modern times, and which form the standard of the highest honor and excellence.

Another distinguished man in England some 130 years ago, left the University of Oxford, where his learning and abilities would have won for him a high position, to preach to colliers and tanners, who in some cases mobbed him. But that man is now acknowledged to have wrought in this country such a revolution as no one of its statesmen ever achieved, and his name will not rest until it is placed amongst the very foremost of earth's sons. And God has chosen such people to confound the wise.

Why?

Why has God chosen the foolish?

- ◆ Because the loving Father chose to cause His sun to shine on men that loved darkness rather than light
- ◆ Because He chose to shower down blessings on men who make those blessings excuses for neglect of Him
- ◆ Because He chose to entrust a rich world to men who live by robbing him
- ◆ Because He chose to speak His word to men who laugh at his counsels and will not have His reproof
- ◆ Because He chose reveal Himself to men who try always to forget Him
- ◆ Because He chose to give His only begotten Son to save those who would destroy Him
- ◆ Because He chose to save by His free grace those who think it a hardship to submit to be saved
- ◆ Because He chose to offer everlasting life to those who love death
- ◆ Because He chose to condemn none but those who were condemned already

That is why He has chosen the foolish – the only ones who would imitate Him.

Why has He chosen the foolish? Because the adversary has always been distinguished for his wisdom, and has always made every man who listened to



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him so wise as not to need any of God's teaching, and not to waste his time in attending to it.

Why did He choose the foolish? Because, in a world spoiled and filled with suffering through the devil's wisdom, the best course for man was not to kick at pain and suffering and difficulty, but to triumph over them, so God had need of men who would not be wise enough to shirk burdens, but stupid enough to submit to them.

Why did He choose the foolish? Because He loved and wished to save all, and had need of agents who would despise nobody but honor everybody, and be the servants of all men.

Why did He choose the foolish? Because the wisdom of the world is foolishness, and the folly of these men is the highest wisdom.

Yes, ye wise ones! your wisdom will not enlighten you much in the blaze of the last great day.

Ye magistrates of England, we honor you, we applaud your impartiality, and your devotion to your duties. We shall continue to honor and obey you, however you may treat us. But we ask you, in all respect, when men come before you who have been trying to rescue the ruined ones you can only condemn, and who have suffered in the attempt, does British justice require of you (we say nothing of extra-judicial fairness and gentlemanly feeling) that you should add the heavy quota of your scorn to the wrong they have already suffered? Would it degrade your office to speak a cheering word to a man or a woman, even so poor, who has been trying to do good, and who has been requited with evil? Would it be an improper use of your experience to tell him kindly how he may follow his object more securely another time?

But, Sirs, be sure that these men are independent alike of your condemnation or your scorn. They are very poor and low, perhaps, but they have been raised by the breath of love divine, and they will reward you or be revenged upon you by raising the fallen still.

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Ye politicians, in your wisdom, ye have often made the people serve your ends; but ye have never yet known how to serve effectually the most needy of the people. Ye have schemed and planned; but does not Satan baffle all your schemes when they attempt good, and leave you only the barren offspring of your own befooled imaginations? Oh ye wise politicians, God has not chosen you, for ye have not chosen God. Listen to Him, obey Him, and He will exalt you.

Ye men of business, ye have invested, as ye think, in good securities, and obtained for yourselves a goodly portion – ye are very wise; but you will find the exchange very hard against you at the last great day of account. What will the profits if you have gained the whole world and lost your soul? What will become of all your property when the world is burnt? Oh, be fools enough to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves break not through and steal.

Ye publicans and pleasure-mongers, ye trappers of souls, right wisely have ye laid your nets. What crowds ye catch and hand over to your master the devil! What a rich and noble heritage of confusion and damnation ye are laying up for yourselves, ye wisest of the wise, for the great last day! Will your wise reasonings calm you, when ye stand before your Judge, and see then men and women upon whose misery and degradation and everlasting ruin ye have fattened and comforted yourselves?

Oh, be mad enough to halt before that awful day is here, and put away the evil of your doings from before the face of the Holy One.

And you, ye millions, ye crowds of unbelieving ones, how long will ye be blinded and led onward to destruction?

- ◆ Is it really wise to reject happiness and choose merry bitterness?
- ◆ Is it really wise to shut your eyes to your own real state before God?
- ◆ Is it really wise to forget God's tender love to you?
- ◆ Is it really wise to reject the Savior who bled and died for you, and who engages to reject none who come to God through Him?
- ◆ Is it really wise to put off to a more convenient season what can be most conveniently done now?
- ◆ Is it wise to be made fools of by the devil in time and to all eternity?

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And you, ye foolish ones. The Lord has chosen you – He loves you – He will lead you on. Despised and derided by high and low, the All-wise will honor and smile upon you. Deceived and cheated and wronged by those you seek to save, the Faithful and True will never fail nor forsake you. Hindered and delayed and baffled in your labor of love, the Almighty arm sustains you, and the voice of the changeless One calls you to go on and prosper.

Go on! For God and man, go on! And in every moment of cloud and shame, hear the voice of the God-man they mocked and crucified, saying, "Fear not, I have overcome the world."