

1st April 2022

Fools

**“All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backwards mus’d on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu’ prime
An’ done nae-thing,
But stringing blethers to the rhyme
For fools to sing.”**

Robert Burns, The Vision

On April Fools’ Day or at any other time, I’m sure there are many of us who might look back with Burns and see the ways we’ve wasted our time with foolishness. Of course we should challenge Burns’ self-deprecating critique of his own productiveness. While he might feel he has “done nae-thing”, we know he has achieved a great deal. His “blethers ... for fools to sing” are far from that. But, nonetheless, he does what we all do and looks back on the foolishness of youth and wonders why he behaved as he did.

What then are we to make of these affirmations of St Paul?

We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ!

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.

Foolishness as Christians? “Wasted time”? Doing “nae-thing”? “Stringing blethers” in our beliefs, in rhyme or anything else?

In his 2001 book, *Fools for Christ*, the American scholar, Jaroslav Pelikan offers six essays on men who were considered “Fools for Christ”: Kierkegaard, Paul, Dostoevsky, Luther, Nietzsche and Bach. He writes:

The Holy is too great and too terrible when encountered directly for men of normal sanity to be able to contemplate it comfortably. Only those who cannot care for the consequences run the risk of the direct confrontation of the Holy.

On this April Fools’ Day, might we consider it appropriate in our Christian critique of ourselves *not* to be as self-critical as Burns? Can we give ourselves even more to the foolishness that is required of us, and, as a result, find ourselves ever closer to the holiness of God?

A prayer for today

Lord, take what the world considers foolishness in me and make it wise for you. Amen

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>