

# "He...first destroys their mind"

Peter Ditzel

*For those whom God to ruine has design'd,  
He fits for Fate, and first destroys their Mind.  
John Dryden, The Hind and the Panther (1687)*

The idea that God first destroys the minds of those He determines to ruin doesn't originate with Dryden. Lycurgus of Sparta (c. 900-800 BC) is often credited with saying of the Greek gods, "When falls on man the anger of the gods, first from his mind they banish understanding." Publilius Syrus (85-43 BC) wrote, "Whom Fortune wishes to destroy she first makes mad." Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, writing in 1875, repeated the assertion in "The Masque of Pandora" by having Prometheus say, "Whom the Gods would destroy they first make mad." Does the Bible agree that God first strikes with madness those He is bringing to destruction? If so, are we now beginning to see it come to pass in the world?

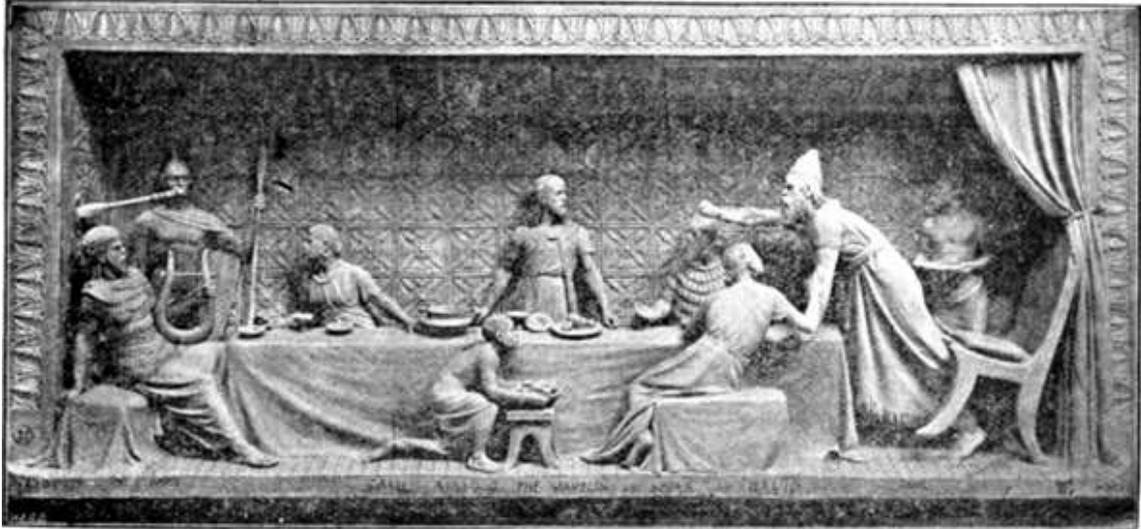
## **A Spirit of Stupor**

Predating the Greek quotes above by about six hundred years, God threatened the children of Israel that should they break His covenant, "The LORD will strike you with madness, with blindness, and with astonishment of heart" (Deuteronomy 28:28). So, the Bible does teach that God can and does afflict people with madness. Later, Isaiah wrote to the rebellious Jews, "For the Lord has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, the prophets; and he has covered your heads, the seers. All vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is educated, saying, 'Read this, please;' and he says, 'I can't, for it is sealed:' and the book is delivered to one who is not educated, saying, 'Read this, please;' and he says, 'I can't read'" (Isaiah 29:10-12). Notice that the Isaiah passage speaks of those whom one might turn to for leadership—the prophets, the seers, and the educated—as being unable to help because God has smitten them with intellectual blindness and blocked with seals their ability to reveal the truth. The madness that comes from God is a confounding of the mind.

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*Now the LORD's Spirit departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.*

*1 Samuel 16:14*

In the New Testament, John applies Isaiah 6:10 to the Jews of Jesus' day: "He has blinded their eyes and he hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and would turn, and I would heal them" (John 12:40). One of the primary ways God confuses people's minds is to blind them to the truth of the Gospel. Of the nation of Israel who rejected God's grace in favor of their own works, Paul says, "According as it is written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, to this very day'" (Romans 11:8).

The Jews' certainly demonstrated a corporate insanity when they rejected their Savior, called for His crucifixion, and asked for a criminal to be released instead. Notice also how they later reacted like wild animals to Stephen's testimony: "Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.... But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed at him with one accord. They threw him out of the city, and stoned him" (Acts 7:54, 57-58). That is not the response of rational people. It is a derangement of the mental faculties brought about by the God whom they had rejected.

But the Israelites were not the only people God blinded. Of the general population who rejected Him as God, the Bible says, "Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a

reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Romans 1:28).

Paul writes that those who are deceived by the lawless one are deceived "because they didn't receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Because of this, God sends them a working of error, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged who didn't believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:10b-12). The *Apostolic Bible Polyglot* translates "a working of error" as "an energy of delusion" [*energeian planēs*] or, as the King James Version says, "strong delusion."

Paul explains that, while the delusion is ultimately from God, God uses Satan, who is the god of this world, to accomplish this delusion: "In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Good News of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them" (2 Corinthians 4:4). This is more than just not keeping God in their minds on a personal level. It is disapproving of—banning—God from their system of knowledge: Forbidding God to be taught in school, omitting God from scientific discussions, refusing to consider the hand of God in history. So God strikes these people with a madness that causes them to be led by their carnal desires; contrary to the impartiality they claim to have, their thinking becomes biased by a hatred for God and His followers and a love for their natural lusts.

And so we read that they,

do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil habits, secret slanderers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 1:28b-32

### **And Then Destruction**

The Bible shows us that, besides groups of people, God can also curse specific individuals with madness. Read 1 Kings 22 where God so

confused Ahab's mind that he rejected what he knew was the truth, listened to what God's prophet clearly told him was a lying spirit, went into battle, and was killed.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he irrationally would not let Israel go: "The Lord said to Moses, 'When you go back into Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your hand, but I will harden his heart and he will not let the people go'" (Exodus 4:21). Several other Scriptures say just about the same thing. But Exodus 14:17 reveals that God's hardening was not just on Pharaoh: "Behold, I myself will harden the hearts of the Egyptians...." Joshua 11:20 explains further: "For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, to come against Israel in battle, that he might utterly destroy them, that they might have no favor, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses." So, God hardened both the leader and his people so that they would make a foolish decision and He could destroy them.

Is God's curse of madness something that happens only occasionally and suddenly? No. Man has been rejecting God and suffering madness throughout history. All nonbelievers suffer from spiritual blindness. Yet, there are times when it seems to heighten and culminate in some sort of destruction.

From man's continuously evil thoughts in Genesis 6:5 followed by the Flood that destroyed almost all human life, to the wickedness of Israel and Judah that led to their captivities, to the depravity that Josephus describes in Jerusalem prior to its destruction in AD 70, we can find peaks of depravity or madness followed by massive failure and sometimes even collapse. More recently, Darwinism and Christian modernism coincided with the amoral gay or naughty nineties of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and these were followed by the crazed decisions of world leaders that triggered World War I. After the prosperous, hedonistic, standards-challenging roaring twenties came the Great Depression which led to the insanity of fascism and Nazism and Japanese expansion and World War II.

I'll mention a few more peaks of madness, some of which are related to each other: The political chaos fueled by hedonism and corruption that led to the fall of the Roman Empire, the Roman emperor Valens for his own selfish political reasons giving the Visigoths admittance to Roman territory as refugees which caused friction and open rebellion and the eventual fall of Rome, Napoleon's megalomaniacal imperialist invasion of Russia, Hitler's megalomaniacal rise to power in Germany

and his instigation of World War II, Hitler's invasion of Russia motivated by his insane Lebensraum ideology coupled by fear that Russia was going to invade Romania, the American intelligence reports about a potential Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor being ignored due to hubris, (for the Japanese) the Japanese actually attacking Pearl Harbor because their superior self-image caused them to misjudge the American response, America's domino theory of Communism leading to its intervention in Vietnam, the 2003 invasion of Iraq which destabilized the region and led to the rise of ISIS.

### **Where Are We Today?**

So, if history verifies that madness from God often precedes destruction, where are we today? Of course, it's hard to say, but let's try to assess our degree of madness.

It almost goes without saying that the accepted world view today is secular humanism. Those who want to bring God into any serious scientific, social, philosophical, or political discussion are now not taken seriously or are even viewed with hostility. This amounts to a foolish rebuff based on a closed-minded emotionalism. It is also a rejection of thousands of years of history and thought simply because it is no longer fashionable or politically correct. To trash a worldview that is the foundation of your civilization is madness.

Again, ignoring thousands of years of precedent, this generation has undertaken to redefine marriage through legislation. Marriage can now be between two males or two females. But, if we are thinking, we must surely see that, using the same arguments, there is no reason for the redefinition to stop there. Why should not marriage include three or more people of any sex? In fact, why should not marriage be redefined as any group, of people or otherwise, in a sexual relationship? As those who will push for this definition one step at a time will point out, to define marriage any other way is discriminatory. But to redefine by mandate what has been generally regarded as the bedrock of civilized society is akin to randomly tinkering with the settings of a nuclear reactor. It could very well result in a complete meltdown. But a society that has been struck by insanity will do it anyway.

Now governments are trying to redefine the sexes<sup>1</sup> even though nature clearly does that for us. Nature defines reality in this matter. Yet, legislators, bureaucrats, and heads of state interdict nature's definition by imposing concocted definitions by fiat, thus rejecting reality. The definition of psychotic behavior is the "inability or opposition to recognize and accept reality and to relate this to others" (<http://www.rightdiagnosis.com/symptom/psychosis.htm>).

Worldwide, about 44 million babies die through induced abortion annually. There's not a single pro-abortion argument that stands up to rational scrutiny. Yet, this murder continues. Can anything be more insane? (See "The Annual Abortion Holocaust" for more information.) (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/abortionholocaust.htm>).

Years ago, when both television and I were young, television violence was a hotly debated topic. Many parents realized through common sense that allowing their children to daily see violence on television would risk their becoming violent. Today, the question is hardly considered, and it is difficult to find any recent studies or statistics. Yet, the average child is certainly exposed to much more violence through television, videos, movies, and games than ever before. Add to this the fact that schools teach our children that there is no God and that life arose purely by accident, implying that there is no purpose or sacredness to life. Is it any wonder why so many children walk into school and coldly shoot their teachers and classmates before committing suicide? They are merely reflecting the lunacy of the society that has formed their minds.

I'm going to give you some statistics for the United States, but similar trends affect the rest of the world. If you are a citizen of the United States, you owe a lot more money than you probably realize. That's because the United States' National Debt is over \$19 trillion. Each citizen's share of that debt is about \$60,000. Will it ever be paid off? Not likely. What will it eventually mean? No one knows. In the meantime, the debt increases about \$2.5 billion a day. (<http://www.usdebtclock.org>) Surely, this is insanity.

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<sup>1</sup> Some would insist on using the word "genders" here, so that one could physically be one of the sexes but identify as a different gender [I've seen lists of up to 63 genders]. But by definition, gender used in this way is a subjective, self-perception that may have no basis in reality. Similarly, someone suffering from anorexia nervosa can identify as fat even though the reality is the person is thin. Do we let the person remain self-deceived even though doing so is harmful? Are we to allow a tiny minority of self-deceived people disrupt and inconvenience everyone else and give their delusions legal, protected status similar to race? Am I to approve of someone of the male sex sharing a public restroom with my wife because he says he identifies with the female gender? Will I be allowed to share the oval office if I say that I identify as the president of the United States? Where do we draw the line?

In the affluent United States 2,483,539 children experienced homelessness in 2013 (the latest year for which I can find statistics). (<http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/mediadocs/280.pdf>). More than 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, a new case develops every 66 seconds, and by the middle of the century that will halve to every 33 seconds and there may be 13.8 million cases. Yet, the National Institutes of Health spends only \$480 million on Alzheimer's research compared to over \$3 billion on HIV/AIDS research, a disease that affects only about a fifth as many Americans and is not growing in numbers. Further, Americans spend about \$24 billion a year on video games (the world spends about \$91.5 billion) ("The Global Games Market") (<http://venturebeat.com/2015/04/22/video-games-will-make-91-5b-this-year/>). An ambassador from another planet learning of these statistics might be forgiven for leaving before making contact with us on the grounds that the population of our planet isn't rational enough to hold talks with him.

I could give many more examples of decisions we are making, problems we are ignoring, and policies governments are instituting that can be seen as the result of a collective madness. To anyone with the eyes to see what is happening, this can be very upsetting. What's more the world's leaders, and the people running for high office at the moment, give us little cause for hope. We can be left with a feeling of helplessness.

### **The Christian's Response**

Paul tells the Ephesians,

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their hearts; who having become callous gave themselves up to lust, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Ephesians 4:17-19

The minds of Christians are not dark. We can see what others cannot (John 3:3). The Christian's response to the madness of the world is so contrary to the natural response that it seems like foolishness. Time will prove it to be just the opposite. It is the response that flows from faith:

Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I will say, Rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

As Peter should have done, when the boisterous waves are all around us, we must keep our eyes on Jesus (Matthew 14:28-31). That's walking by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). And when the disciples received Jesus into the boat, "Immediately the boat was at the land where they were going" (John 6:21). Jesus not only removed all impediments to their progress from the earthly tempest, He miraculously brought them where they were going (the Greek literally says, "the boat became upon the land into which they were going"). Whatever chaos may be around us, we can "know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). God blinds, God hardens, and He even causes the madness that periodically grips peoples, nations, and even entire civilizations.

Is God unfair to do this? The *Apostolic Bible Polyglot* translates Romans 1:28 literally as, "And as they tried not to hold God in full knowledge, God delivered them up unto a debased mind, to do the things not fitting." However much they may scoff at the possibility of God's existence, there is really a level of their mind in which they have purposely rejected Him. That's why Paul could earlier write,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known of God is revealed in them, for God revealed it to them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse. Because, knowing God, they didn't glorify him as God, neither gave thanks, but became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

Romans 1:18-22

This doesn't apply only to admitted atheists. There are many who outwardly make a show of Christianity because it is to their benefit, good for their business, beneficial to their political careers: "They profess that they know God, but by their deeds they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work" (Titus 1:16).

Is God bringing down our civilization? Look around. Perhaps He is. We should also bear in mind that at the end of the time we are now in when the Gospel goes forth relatively freely, the Bible speaks of a short time when "Satan will be released from his prison, and he will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:7b-8). Satanic deception is certainly a means God uses to strike with madness and spiritual blindness.

Should we be frightened? Jesus said that when you hear disturbing news, "See that you aren't troubled" (Matthew 24:6), and, "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me" (John 14:1), and again, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, give I to you. Don't let your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (John 14:27). The political, economic, social, and moral upheaval we see is really nothing for believers to be anxious about, for "...he has said, 'I will in no way leave you, neither will I in any way forsake you.' So that with good courage we say, 'The Lord is my helper. I will not fear. What can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5b-6).