

The Fool hath said . . .

Yet the production of such a book at such a difficult time for publishers is highly meritorious.

Thoughtful people, it would seem, may be divided into three classes. There is the atheist who denies the existence of God; this is what "the fool hath said in his heart," for he is very foolish to say this, though he may be far from a fool in other matters.

Second, there are those who make no denials but have no faith and wish they had. This might perhaps be called the intellect in search of faith.

Third, there are those who believe but wish that they could really grasp what they believe. This is *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith in search of understanding.

Weird Throwback

We should not look askance at the atheist as if he were some weird throw-back or sport of nature. It might seem that all our notions except one arise ultimately from sensible experience, from things we have seen or touched or smelt or heard. But whence rises the idea of God, God transcendent, God absolute, the living God?

Logic may lead us to postulate that there must be a Ground of being, a Cause of all things, an unimaginable x. This x will be referred to as 'It.' But what leads man to say 'Thou'? Before this can be said, there must be some illumination of the mind from beyond the world of sense.

The atheist may be a very clever person, but he has not this illumination.

Of the man who, not denying,

lacks faith we may perhaps say that he is aware of God, yet does not realize that it is God of whom he is aware, nor can he move into faith until by some inner illumination of the spirit he must say 'Thou'. Christians (and others) say 'Thou' but are beset by perplexity, and faith seeks, or ought to seek, for understanding.

If God be defined with Anselm, "As that than which no greater can be conceived" the atheist understands the words, but they correspond, as he supposes, to no actual reality. Anselm's argument will not convince, the atheist, who is 'the fool' in the sense that he is living on a plane whence the view of deeper truth is blocked.

If indeed God is 'That than which no greater can be conceived', then certainly God must exist, for if existence were to be an attribute to be added to a Being that did not exist, that greater Being and not the less will be God by definition.

But the argument is only cogent to him who from his heart accepts the proposition (and not merely understands it) that God is 'That than which no greater can be conceived'. It is an argument cogent only to faith. It is not directed at the unbeliever.

The X called God

Is it of any apologetic value? One may doubt it. One may argue with the unbeliever that behind and beyond phenomena there must be an x, to be called God. But no man will call God 'Thou', unless God Himself has touched his heart and illumined his mind to this.

Is, then, apologetic useless? By no means. If we could shew that

our religion alone makes sense of the mystery and phantasmagoria of life, it would help many to make the leap of faith. Our arguments can be, and are most mysteriously, used by God to awaken faith, but faith is always in the last resort the gift of God, not the conclusion of any argument.

Misinterpreted

These reflections arise somewhat indirectly from reading Karl Barth's book. He has proved, I think, that Anselm has been greatly misinterpreted by many of his expositors. The existence of God is logically demonstrable to a faith that never doubted it. This may seem a meagre outcome from an agony of thought and argument—but only, I suppose, to those who are not drawn or empowered to excogitate the implications of their faith.

The psalmist says, according to our accustomed version, that the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. I am not quite sure what this means, but it sufficiently suggests that the candle, until the Lord shall have kindled it, is of very little use. Why the illumination comes to one and not to another is a mystery altogether beyond our comprehension, and arguments about predestination and effectual calling rather increase than reduce the mystery.

"Only this I know that, whereas I was blind, now I see"; but many more would see if we **cared** much more that they should see.

That is one element in the mystery which we should take to heart; it should concern us more than speculative questions.

I HAVE been reading the new English translation of Karl Barth's treatise on Anselm (*Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, S.C.M. Press, 25s). It is a difficult book in any language, and I should not feel qualified to review it. In the main the version seems to me excellent, though I note in places that the skill and care of the compositor are not what they were. Moreover the modern writer is not always happy with his pronouns, for grammar also is not what it was.