

[1965. *Scholasticism and the Reformation. Christianity Today 19 Nov.*]

Mr. Currey's letter contains some true and important observations. My title, "Fruits of the Reformation in Philosophy and Ethics" (not the editor's in larger type), no doubt implies that I am at least superficially acquainted with medieval philosophy; yet it does not imply that I intended to write a history of it. Admittedly the article of fewer than 1,500 words is "studded with inadequacies" as to scholasticism. I am even willing to admit that it is inadequate as to the fruits of the Reformation.

At the same time, what I wrote is, I believe, correct. When Mr. Currey tries to maintain that St. Thomas did not intend to "demonstrate" the existence of God, but was only giving "reasons of convenience," I am reminded of Thomas's remarks in *De veritate* Q. 10. Art. 12, and *passim*: "Some have said, as Rabbi Moses relates, that the fact God exists is not self-evident, not reached through demonstrations, but only accepted on faith. ... [This] opinion is obviously false, for we find that the existence of God has been proved by the philosophers with unimpeachable proofs." Further documentation may be found in my history of philosophy, *Thales to Dewey* (pp. 272-74). See also Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, especially chapter 2. W.T. Jones also, in *A History of Western Philosophy* (I, 444), says that the *Summa* "is in fact a huge, logically organized structure of propositions, like a vast Euclid, in which the place of every proposition is determined by its logical relations to all the others." Note that Euclid was not satisfied with "reasons of convenience."

The same is true of Anselm as well. "Leaving Christ out of view, as if nothing had ever been heard of him. [Anselm's argument] proves absolute reasons [not only the existence of God, but even] the impossibility that any man should be saved without him." He denies that his proof consists of aesthetic appreciation; he aims at rational proof, so as to convince one "unwilling to believe anything not previously proved by reason."

Mr. Currey says that I "laugh slyly at that cute old story" of angels dancing on the point of a needle. He assures us that it was not the point of a needle but the head of a pin. If Mr. Currey can show me the texts in which such a debate took place, I would be happy to see them. I admit my ignorance.: I have not found any manuscript evidence that such a debate took place. As for the relation between spirits and space, and whether the Aristotelian form horse has teeth, these matters were not germane to my subject. Like so much else, therefore, they were omitted.

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