

# Postscript

I have been discussing the *rational* grounds of belief in God. Yet it is quite clear that actual decisions for or against such belief are not taken purely in the realm of pure intellectual reasoning. The inquirer is influenced by the atmosphere of the concrete historical community in which he conducts his quest, and by his place in that community.

Entertain now for a moment the indubitably false propositions that everything that I have written here is true, that everyone who ever reads the book is going to agree that it is true, and that after reading the book they are going to come to reasonably final conclusions about the truth or otherwise of Christian belief. They will nevertheless reach divergent conclusions because of their varying historical and personal situations. I do not think that we can avoid this being so; nor do I think that we should torment ourselves, or taunt each other, that it is so. It does not matter. A decision for atheism can be as valuable in one concrete historical situation as a decision for (some form of) Christianity in another; and I see no reason why God, if he exists, should not need atheists in some situations as much as Christians in others. After all, according to Christianity itself, at least as I understand it, we shall in the end be judged, not according to how much knowledge we have acquired in matters of specifically religious truth, but according to how much we have loved.

On the other hand I do not believe that a book such as this is therefore irrelevant, for I have in no way intimated either that cultural (or personal) conditioning amounts to cultural (or personal) determinism, or that the process of reaching a decision is insignificant.