

THE HUNT FOR THE WOZZLE

One day Piglet finds Pooh outside his house, and ask what he is doing

‘Hunting’ said Pooh

‘Hunting what?’

‘Tracking something’, said Winnie-the-Pooh very mysteriously.

‘Tracking what?’ said Piglet coming closer

‘That’s what I ask myself. I ask myself, What?’

‘What do you think you’ll answer?’

‘I shall have to wait until I catch up with it.’ Said Winnie-the-Pooh

There is a profundity about that exchange which is very close to our religious quest. There are an immense number of people who in one way or another are searching for something, but they don’t know what it is. There is a sense in which they know something is there, but they are not sure what it is, and don’t think they will know until they actually see it. St Augustine said ‘Our hearts are restless, until they find their rest in you’. Some years back the BBC had an excellent series on the major religions of the world which had the title ‘The Long Search’. In the book which provided the background to the series, Professor Ninian Smart said that men’s pictures of the world ‘impel some to sanctity and others to hatred. If we wish to understand humanity, we need to explore this gallery of pictures.’ The search for God is often hidden behind an initial search for an indefinable ‘something.’ It was that of course that Paul was picking up when he spoke to the gathered Athenians and tried to open a dialogue with them by saying that he had something to tell them about the ‘unknown God’ to whom they had erected an altar.

To return to our text: Piglet then is worried that they might be tracking a Woozle. We are never told what a Woozle is, but it is clearly quite frightening. That too is part of the human condition for some when they enter on the Long Search. There is something disturbing about what they might find - and the myths and the legends lead them to believe it may be dangerous. Fear of the nature of an Almighty God is a long-documented human fact. There is even a Latin tag which sums it up - the *Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinans* - the awful and intriguing mystery of God, we might loosely translate - that which draws us, and yet can repel us at the same time.

Pooh and Piglet continue to track this unknown creature, and are alarmed to find that there now seem to be tracks of two, and then still later that there are three. But one of the tracks is different, and Pooh suggests there might be alternatives:

It is either Two Woozles and one, as it might be Wizzle, or Two, as it might be, Wizzles and one, if so it is Woozle.

The plot thickens. Yet another set of tracks is perceived, and Piglet wants out of this whole enterprise. He finds there is something he has to do, at this very minute

I *think* that I have just remembered something. I have just remembered something that I forgot to do yesterday, and shan't be able to do tomorrow. So I suppose I really ought to go back and do it now.

'And straightway they began to make excuse - I have married a wife, I have bought a field, please have me excused.' When people get close to the discovery, or think they may be close to it, it can be a time to run away, to find the best of reasons that this isn't the moment to continue. Michel Quoist has a powerful prayer called 'Lord I have time' Part of it goes like this:

The child is playing, he hasn't time right now....later on...
The schoolboy has his homework to do, he hasn't time....later on
The student has his courses, and so much work, he hasn't time....later on....
The young man is at his sports, he hasn't time....later on....
The young married man has his new home to fix up, he hasn't time....later on
The grandparents have their grandchildren, they haven't time...later on...
They are ill, they have their treatments, they haven't time...later on...
They are dying, they have no.... too late! They have no more time.

It may be fear that drives us away, like Piglet, it may be alternatives, but like Piglet we are adept at finding the most pressing reasons for putting aside the search for God.

Then Piglet and Pooh find that Christopher Robin has been watching them from the branch of a tree. And he asks what they were doing, and says that they have been walking round in circles. Pooh suddenly has a thought:

He sat down and thought, in the most thoughtful way he could think. Then he fitted his paw into one of the tracks...and then he scratched his nose and stood up. 'Yes' said Winnie-the-Pooh. 'I see now' said Winnie-the-Pooh. 'I have been foolish and deluded' said he, 'and I am a bear of no brain at all.'

So Pooh comes to realise that instead of tracking something outside himself, the unknown, the mysterious, the potentially dangerous Woozle, or Wizzle, or both, he and Piglet have been tracking themselves.

That is a terrible and in a sense a normal risk in our Long Search for God. We fail to look beyond ourselves, and instead make God out of what we are. In *Christ and the Concrete City*, P.W.Turner wrote:

This is the sort of God we like
This is the sort of God we can worship.
His face is our face
Because we made his face in our image.
But from this other -
From this God who is a person,
Breaking and entering our lives,
From this God who meddles
With details that do not concern him:
passing judgement on habits of thought and speech,
Our practice in sex, sleep and labour,
Entering the innermost being.
From this meddling God,
from this interfering God,
Good Lord, deliver us.

The only way to avoid Pooh and Piglet's self-tracking is to be aware of the otherness of God, the objectivity of that for which we search. And that is exemplified in the Cross. God's love is not an idea to be tracked, but an event to be witnessed. And, unlike the search for the Woozle, it is completely outside ourselves.