

# THE GOD-WORLD-I TRIANGLE.

## CHAPTER 1.

### THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE WORLD OF RELIGION.

It is not easy to see things in proportion. Indeed I have long held the view that it is the highest intellectual achievement; in colloquial language to see the wood for the trees. In the long run, this is far more important than having a detailed and profound technical knowledge of the intricacies of the wood. It might even be said to be wisdom: to see the salient features of life in true proportion. In the last century, we had two frightful world wars which most people think were the responsibility of Germany, whoever technically started them; although I expect we ought all to take a share of the blame in having created a spiritual world in which some people thought it was astute to begin war. As regards the 1914 War, H.A.L. Fisher in his History of Europe writes at the very end that the tragedy was that the War was fought on an issue that a few level-headed people could easily have composed, and with respect to which 99% of the population were wholly indifferent. And one cannot help thinking that if the Emperors of Germany, Austria, and Russia could have foreseen the end (that they would lose their thrones, that European civilization as it had existed in 1914 would be destroyed, and much of Europe reduced to chaos and starvation) they would have paused. They did not see it. But of course there was more to it than that. There was a seething mass of nationalism, and the dream of world conquest.

It came about like this. After the Franco-Prussian war, the third of Bismarck's little adventures to unite the many German states, Jacob Burckhardt the Swiss historian declared it would be "the doom of Germany" when he heard that the Kaiser had allowed himself to be crowned Emperor of Germany in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. It was the doom of Germany, in the sense that these three successful wars created a war-party in Germany, which Bismarck might be able to hold in check, but which no-one else could contain when Bismarck was gone. And we all know what happened next! The Schlieffen Plan, conceived by Count Alfred von Schlieffen when he was Chief of the German General Staff between 1891 and 1906, and which aimed to get to Paris in six weeks, was not a plan to defend the Reich. It was a plan to make Germany supreme in Europe. After it had gone disastrously and miraculously wrong, and four years later, the German army had to ask for an armistice; and the Allied governments dictated as brutal a peace treaty at Versailles on Germany in 1919, as Germany had on France at Versailles in 1871. The treaty of 1919, however technically just, probably inhibited the ability of law-abiding bourgeois Germans to gain firmly the upper

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hand in their country in the years after the War, and probably indirectly opened the door to Hitler's rise to power and the thirst for revenge. So it is instructive to hear what an intelligent German has to say about the complex of societies, statecraft and human relations.

Werner Heisenberg was an atomic physicist in the golden years of atomic research in the late 1920s. He played a leading role in trying to understand the nature of atomic structure, and the "Uncertainty Principle" is named after him. He was head of the German Atomic Energy Establishment for part of the 1939 War; and he claims he derailed any idea of Germany making an atomic bomb, by telling Hitler that it would take much longer than any war was likely to last. Well that may be true, or it may special pleading; but that difficult question can be left undecided. What one has to admit is that Heisenberg is brilliant at expressing difficult ideas in comprehensible language by his use of imaginative metaphors. And never more so than in his coining the metaphor of the **God-World-I Triangle**, to make the fiercely contrasting aspects of life comprehensible to ordinary people.

In my Chapter on the Beliefs of Jesus, at the end of my Reconciliation with Science and War, I do suggest that if Jesus was the complete manifestation of the Almighty, the Creator, then he should have manifested not only the mystery of Man, but the mystery of Nature and of Titanic World Events too. If Evolution has any truth in it, the Creator must have wanted Man, a hunter-gatherer for hundreds of thousands of years, to develop civilisation, and eventually an ordered, decent, just society. And whilst the Church makes a somewhat pathetic attempt to explain the mystery of Nature, by saying that Jesus was the Word through whom all things were created; it is quite obvious from the Gospels that Jesus knew no science, and had not the faintest conception of the modern idea of Evolution. And if he did imagine Jewish society evolving into the Kingdom of God, his idea of Evolution was as remote from ours, as Democritus's atoms are from Dalton's Law of Multiple Proportions, or Bohr's idea of the complementarity of waves and particles in atomic physics. I do not believe Jesus had the faintest conception of world politics, other than the stories of the Old Testament, which was his Bible. Incomparably great man that he was, if he was a man at all, he was a man of his time limited to the social and cultural world in which he grew up, as we all are. Jesus was not an original thinker; the Sermon on the Mount was taken from the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, which was written by a Pharisee one hundred years before Jesus was born. I understand that the Spirit of the writing and even some of the phrasing are identical. The forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness were wholly inadequate for him to work out a new philosophy. You need a period of three, four or even five years to think anything new. Without that apprenticeship, human thought is little better than shuffling

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round other people's thoughts: rather like re-arranging the pieces of a Chinese puzzle. The forty days in the wilderness were only enough for Jesus to decide which of the existing philosophies he should embrace and proclaim. And in his proclamation, he was pre-eminent. Indeed an original thinker is often not much good at proclamation. Newton was reluctant to publish his Principia, and only did so with the encouragement of Halley. Jesus was wrong when he said a disciple is not greater than his master; often in the world of affairs a disciple overtakes his master, and in time leaves him far behind. So I have no hesitation in admitting that Heisenberg, whatever his record in the War, has in his **God-World-I Triangle** produced a symbolism incomparably better than my concept of the need for Jesus to reveal the mystery of Man, of Nature, and of Titanic World Events. And that being so, I felt I had to see how my thought measured up to his.

Heisenberg says that a man or woman must come to terms with the **God-World-I Triangle**, both as an individual and as a member of a community or country. **The God-I side** of the triangle is the world of religious belief, and of intimate personal friendship. Or if you do not believe in God, it is Man's relationship to Einstein's central order of things: the relationship of the one to the many, which the Greek philosophers argued about long ago. **The World-I side** is the relationship of the individual to the community in which he or she lives. **The God-World side**, the world of the Geo-evolution of politics, and the threat of war.

If individuals do not come to terms with the three sides of the triangle, he says, at first they develop idiosyncrasies; then if they still do not come to terms with the Triangle, they go mad, and in the end stark raving mad. Of course this is only an hypothesis; he does not produce detailed evidence to prove it, and I doubt if one ever could. But I would have thought it a fair comment that our country has gone mad, largely through the collapse of religious belief; maybe only mad North-West by North, maybe only on one point of the compass; but some of the decisions of our Law Courts in recent years, I would have thought, could only be explained on this basis. And if you think about it, if this Universe was created by the Almighty, the Creator, it is understandable that He should have decreed that anyone who ignored Him, and persisted in ignoring Him, should end up mad and in hell. Irenaeus wrote (about 180 AD) that, 'God sustains the universe in being....He cannot be described by any of his creatures. But he is known to all of them....There is one God the Father who holds all things in being and gives being to all creation'. If that is correct, it is readily understandable that even God should eventually get tired of sustaining someone who resolutely ignores Him. And when you look up at the starry heavens at night, and at a space so vast as to be utterly beyond our comprehension, it is difficult to think it wasn't created by somebody!

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The first thing to grasp about the **God-World-I Triangle** is that Jesus only dealt with the **God-I side** of the Triangle. Even his exhortation that a man should love his neighbour as himself is part of the God-I side. His injunction to forgive seventy times seven times may be what the soul longs for in its relationship with God, and in regard to real friends; but it is a hopeless basis for running any sort of society, whether just or unjust. You can always hope to give a man one chance, if the offence is such as to allow it; on rare occasions two; once in a blue moon three. But never more, unless you are careless whether your society disintegrates. And many offenders must be punished severely on their first offence; for instance, those running a protection racket. Having spent all my professional life in Law and Order, I can say with a certain authority that the Church's views on maintaining a decent, just society are infantile. In a sense this is hardly surprising. Jesus washed his hands of the problem, as indeed he had to for political reasons, by saying, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's". And the Church in its determination to find everything it needs in the teaching of Jesus, is reluctant to admit that it finds nothing useful about running a society. Nor was Jesus well versed in history. In his vitriolic condemnation of the Pharisees, he was apparently unaware that the rebellion of the Maccabees kept Israel a monotheistic country and therefore gave him an audience to talk to, and was incidentally entirely the inspiration of the Pharisees. Jesus' view of World Events must have been formed by his reading Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, where you get rather a one-sided view of the realities of power politics.

The second thing to grasp about the **God-World-I Triangle** is that Confucius in his Analects is absolutely right that Man's harmonious relationship with the community is governed by tradition. Harmony on the motorway is only possible if everyone drives with good-manners. And you cannot legislate for good-manners; you can only practice them. You get a harmonious community, when everyone behaves as society expects them to behave. When some people refuse to behave properly, and seek to ride rough-shod over other people, you have to make laws to govern that part of everyday conduct; but it is an undesirable development. The public Acts of Parliament that the Victorians passed occupy slim volumes. And they were usually well drafted. Nowadays, yearly Acts of Parliament occupy three fat volumes, as well as four volumes of Statutory Instruments; and usually they are badly drafted. This is not civilisation. It is barbarian madness. Some politicians have boasted that they have abolished "Deference", as though they had done something clever. They had done something exceedingly foolish. They had simply opened the door for the barbarians to surge through. Everyone, from the highest in the land to the most miserable and lowest, wants to be treated with a little deference: to be treated as if he or she were a human being.

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Actually the only thing Confucius deals with in his Analects is the relationship of the citizen with the state. He only considers the **World-I side** of the Triangle. The Chinese had no belief in God at that time, so naturally Confucius does not deal with the God-I side of the Triangle. And Chapter 9 of my copy of the Analects begins, “The Master seldom spoke of...fate or humanity”. So evidently Confucius did not concern himself much with World events either. Since he concentrated entirely on the **World-I side** of the Triangle, it is not surprising that he got it absolutely right. Yet even he was criticised by the Legalists, who said that not everyone was capable to living up to his standards, so that the Ruler had to legislate for crime, because some people only understood the language of fear!

In the Bible the books that could be said to deal with larger issues are Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and in the Apocrypha the book of Ecclesiasticus. Jesus in his teaching never referred to these books, as far as I can remember. Islam on the other hand linked religious belief with the running of the community from the start; and Islamic political thought developed or evolved, during the centuries of conquest following the prophet’s death. However, I understand it stopped evolving in about 1250 AD, and is there still. So Islam does concern itself with the **World-I** side of the triangle; but whether one wants to live in a medieval world is a matter of taste.

In my opinion, ecclesiastical authorities should have little or nothing to do with the running of a decent, just society. It is all very well for Religion to be the leaven of society; but Ecclesiastical Courts have generally ended up a disgrace. The most blatant example was the Inquisition. It is hardly an accident that the composer Verdi should have portrayed the clergy, in his operas Aida and Don Carlos, as the most reactionary, stupid and cruel class in society. And Gibbon in his Decline and Fall accuses the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands of religious persecution on a scale and with a cruelty that vastly exceeded the relatively modest persecutions of the Roman Emperors. It is best to keep religious ideas out of politics; and that may include local politics. Particularly the religious idea that all men are equal. We are not all equal; we are not all the equal of Jesus, or Pericles; we are all unequal. Equality before the law is different. In practice that is what you want; not theories that we are all alike.

The third thing to grasp about the **God-World-I Triangle** is that religions are not noted for their tolerance of others whose opinions are different from their own; so their contribution to the **God-World** side of the Triangle today is of negligible benefit. Emmerich de Vattel (1714-1767) proposed in his Rules to prevent warfare getting completely out of hand that one should always credit one’s enemy with having a just cause. Unless you do this, there is no prospect of a negotiated peace; and War must be stone-age tribal war to the bitter

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end. This was forgotten in the world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, partly because they were democratic wars, and the fury of the populations had been aroused. Partly because no-one was prepared to negotiate with Hitler, or his henchmen, or with those who had put him into power. But I think with atomic weapons fairly widely distributed, it is wiser to remember the Rule. This surely means that ecclesiastics of any and every religion are best kept out of world decision making; their influence would only be malign, either promoting conflict with an aggressive faith, or promoting conflict by an abjectly supine lack of will. As I have never been involved in politics in any way, the opinions I express in public can only be those of the man-in-the-street. Yet Pericles, who was wiser and more experienced than Jesus in matters of state, considered it the highest privilege, I understand, and the highest duty of the citizen to take part in the proper administration and conduct of the state. Of course, none of us is the equal of Pericles, any more than we are the equal of Jesus. But I can at least say that anyone who has the vote would be well advised to read history, unless he is content that we should all slither into an atomic war, through his failure to recognise the seriousness of the issues involved, or see the other side's point of view. But I have to leave it there.

In my original Appendix, I wrote that I had opened a door, and was stepping through the door to admire the scenery beyond, but was incapable of going further. That is correct. My life and writings are only a beginning, one of many necessary beginnings, to overcome the ignorance and inadequacy of the clergy during the last two thousand years. By ignorance, I mean their refusal to search for truth, as opposed to orthodoxy, particularly scientific truth; and by inadequacy I mean their claim that the life and teaching of Jesus contained all the knowledge and wisdom necessary for salvation, when even he, in the Last Discourses, admitted that much more was needed. In this Postscript, I am admitting the inadequacy of my writing, by pointing out that one has much to learn from one's country's enemies; their thought may have produced symbolism far superior to one's own. And one should be modest enough to admit it. And my ignorance is only too obvious. So I am not attempting, in this Postscript, to add to what I have already written, but pointing out its grave limitations. The lives and writings of many others are necessary to take things a stage further.