

## RELIGION REWRITTEN.

### INTRODUCTION, on religion and war.

Having outlined the shortcomings of official religion that have been exposed chiefly by the relatively new science of Evolution, there is another and very different shortcoming that must be addressed. Evolution has illuminated as being absurd the old dichotomy between the spiritually good and the materially bad. The splendour of the natural world, as revealed by science, takes us back to the rapture of the poet who wrote the 19<sup>th</sup> psalm; and this rapture suggests that the obsession with sin in the august doctrines of the Church is not far removed from introspective depression. And yet there is a form of evil which the Church does not seem to have the courage to address, save by turning its face away from it, and this is the evil of War, which can only be overcome by fighting! To think that “love” solves the problem of War, one must either have very little experience, or be on the verge of being certifiable.

In my opinion Church of England Christianity must come to terms with the last war, which I remember vividly, and when Britain was fighting for its life and for world freedom as well. If the Church fails to do so, either from laziness or from cowardice, and says it is all so long ago now there is no point in going over that ground again, it will lose all credibility. In the Second World War everything that we valued in this country, which was also valued in Europe, and maybe in the entire world, was at stake; and if we had lost, a thousand years of history would have been obliterated in a few brief battles, and never perhaps retrieved. It is no good the C.of E. saying it preaches an other-worldly religion; maybe it does, but it either approves of fighting Hitler, or it does not. It is no good the C.of E. claiming not to be concerned with the things of this world; all the probabilities are that it would have been obliterated by a victorious Nazi Germany, and it must decide whether it is glad it still exists after a fashion, or whether it would have preferred to be obliterated. It is over 60 years since the end of the War; and it is perfectly obvious that the clergy, as a public body, are never going to reconcile their beliefs with the necessity of fighting. So I had better do it myself.

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But how does one set about this task? By considering the nature of belief, and the nature of thought, because this is the only way of getting behind vocal beliefs and prejudices, to the reality that lies behind them. I discussed the nature of belief in my first book, “Man’s Relationship with God”; and my extensive argument was that the only beliefs you really believe are the ones you put into practice every day; intellectual beliefs to which the mind alone pays lip-service are so pale and shadowy in comparison that they hardly merit being called “beliefs” at all. I will not repeat the stages of that argument here. I am concerned here with the nature of thought, and with the increase which my Theory gives to our awareness of how reliable or unreliable our thought is, both professional thought and casual thought.

So although my book is primarily about religion, the chapter that considers chiefly the reliability of thought is Chapter 5, which sets out my Theory of Consciousness. I do not consider how we may have become conscious, which no sane person would ever try to explain; instead I set out my understanding of what the very beginnings of the discipline of consciousness are like. I have read Descartes’ Discourse on Method, and I do not remember him ever touching on this subject. And more recently, Professor Roger Scruton in one of his books on popular philosophy says that there is a tendency among philosophers to think that it is impossible to create a theory of consciousness, “as it always slips through your fingers”. Well, it did not slip through mine; and it links up Jung’s clinical experience with the practical everyday world. Jung said in the 1920s in Psychological Types, his first substantial book after his 5 years descent into the unconscious, that a theory of thought was then a seven sealed book. Well, my Theory of Consciousness turns over the first pages. It is now for others to develop its ideas, or think of better ones. There is no going back to the time before there was the insight which my theory provides. A theory of consciousness has come to stay!

Why do I say such a theory revolutionizes our concept of thought, and in particular philosophical thought? Because I understand from reading philosophers who ought to know,

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that philosophy through the centuries has had two principal aims, which are in fact incompatible. The first aim was to coordinate the work of specialists each working in their own limited field, and this presumably includes religion, into one grand scheme of knowledge. Not of course a thirst for detailed omniscience, but rather a framework holding the various fields of specialist knowledge together in a coherent whole. The second aim, from Descartes and Kant onwards, has been to make their subject into a strict science, with a definite method and assured results, exempt from doubt and scepticism. My Theory of Consciousness provides answers to both of these ambitions; but not answers which many philosophers will like.

The grand scheme of knowledge becomes a recognition that there are endless attitudes of mind in which thought can take place, each based on its own unspoken and usually unconscious assumptions, and held together by its own particular type of nervous tension in the body; and furthermore a recognition that it is impossible to reconcile two different attitudes of mind, even when they exist in the same rational being, because they are based on different assumptions. Actually it is a mercy that one cannot reconcile two different frames of mind, or we would never be able to make up our minds about anything. Making up one's mind (so far as it raises itself above prejudice) involves viewing the problem from various points of view, and then deciding as a matter of instinct or good judgement which decision to make. If you could reconcile different attitudes of mind, this would be impossible. Every problem would have only one solution, and this would rule out all sound judgement, and even worse the unerring judgement of genius. But the net result is to deny philosophers their grand scheme of knowledge. It's a mirage!

Their other aim of making philosophy a strict science ignores the fact that the whole of science and mathematics, (except the theory of numbers), depends on its assumptions and its axioms. And as various scientists have pointed out, the assumptions of science are fairly

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dodgy. Universal causality breaks down with the quantum theory of the atom and radioactivity, and the universal plan, or plan of growth, breaks down whenever you come across freewill. And as a practising lawyer I would not care to call as a witness anyone who denied the freedom of the will, because he would probably not stand up to 5 minutes cross-examination without either looking absurd, or his will crumpling. Thirdly science assumes you may safely disregard any spiritual content which the matter you are investigating may have. Similarly, if philosophers want their subject to be a strict science, they too must ignore the spiritual side of life, which means the greater part of human experience. So either their “strict discipline” is not worth having, or it hardly goes further than natural science does on its own. My Theory of Consciousness is a development of the theory of attitudes of Kant, Hegel and Collingwood; but not in the direction they intended. Probably it needed someone like myself, familiar with the workings of the mind in the work-a-day world to take it further; the academic mind had reached the end of its useful synthesis. In my Theory, the only reliable frame of mind is the “Perfectly Relaxed Consciousness”, in which thought as we normally understand it is not possible; so error and distortion are written into all human thought and communication, as a necessary part of our human condition. Were it not so, you could not live by faith; and life would lose its point, for the religious and irreligious alike. To imagine that human thought can reach certain and assured results is fantasy, outside the inorganic sciences; and even they may change, but so slowly as to be imperceptible to us.

So both aims of philosophy were in fact chasing the rainbow’s end – and you never reach it!

Now I am no philosopher, I am a retired lawyer; and the reader may ask how I have the temerity to claim to have solved problems which have puzzled philosophers for centuries? The answer is that 40 years experience in the Law Courts gives you a confidence about

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human nature which can never be gained amidst ancient colleges and their ivory towers. And I am confident my Theory of Consciousness revolutionizes the whole concept of thought.

Examining my theory in more detail, its influence on philosophy is best summed up by saying, “There is no such thing as pure logic”. Reasoning always takes place in an attitude of mind, and this attitude itself **moulds the reasoning** within it. For example; worthwhile legal thought or worthwhile military thought can only take place within the professional frames of mind of these two professions. We all know that the opinions of an armchair strategist are worthless, unless he is a retired soldier who has spent his life in the Army. Similarly in the Law, the opinions of a newly qualified lawyer on how to conduct a case, are more likely to lose it, than win it. Very seldom does the mental discipline of one profession illuminate another. **And my symbolism is that every attitude of mind has its own logic.**

So I postulate a single consciousness, “the Perfectly Relaxed Consciousness”, (or the Consciousness of God), in which thought as we normally understand it is not possible, and which at least approaches the ideal of being universal. Even if this is seldom, if ever, realized in practice, it is a useful concept; and the practice of meditation may be considered a close approximation to it. To think therefore, you need an attitude of mind under tension. For example: countless times when prosecuting I have imagined myself in the shoes of the accused to see how things looked through his eyes, and very interesting it was; but rather to my surprise I found you could not work out your cross-examination that way. To do that required an attitude of mind under tension; and with this tension went certain unspoken and usually unconscious assumptions, on which that attitude of mind was based. For example: as I have said, science has two basic assumptions, and in addition at least one other, namely that you can ignore any spiritual content which the matter you are investigating may have. This is why science always discovers that the Universe is mechanical – because it assumes it is mechanical before it begins! Indeed you could say that science’s job was to provide a

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mechanical description of the Universe, that provides at least a rough approximation to what one experiences in life.

So even in religion, the validity of thought, and its conclusions, will depend on the validity of the assumptions which the mind makes to start with. It is so easy to get into the frame of mind of Thomas Aquinas, who assumed God existed, and then proved he did exist. In just the same way, biologists assume that God does not exist, and is delusion, and then lo and behold they prove, to their own satisfaction, that He does not exist. But are we any further on? All logic, which ignores its basic assumptions, is like Achilles and the Tortoise.

Professor Eddington, who did much to popularise Einstein's Relativity in this country, had intimations of this towards the end of his career, and veered towards epistemology. He saw that what you discover is often predictable by considering from whence you start. All I do is make this a universal vision, that applies to all mental disciplines; to the most abstract theology, to the most casual conversation. What you say, and what you regard as a valid conclusion, is governed by the unconscious assumptions you make before you begin. The nervous tension they generate itself **moulds your reasoning**. So it follows that error and distortion are written into all human thought and communication, as a necessary part of our human condition, because your assumptions are never going to be wholly true.

The obtuseness of much of modern thought to the non-specialist is due, in my opinion, to the unfortunate habit of making false assumptions. To imagine that the mind is "private" to the individual is completely false; we can all read each other's thoughts to some extent. In every serious trial, the jury is asked to read the mind of the accused, often from his actions, and to say "beyond all reasonable doubt" that the mens rea of the offence is proved. And where you have the interpenetration of two minds, you can read thoughts with crystal clarity. It is simply untrue that the mind is a private place. To imagine that one can pontificate on the relationship of God to Man, without regard to the world of relationships that binds us

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all together in some kind of community, is sheer ignorance. It ignores the experience that the workings of our minds are influenced by our relationships with other people. It would also be a great benefit to me if philosophers and theologians would say what they have to say in simple English; and I have every sympathy with the plea in Michael Faraday's letter to the young Clerk Maxwell preserved in an account of an evening Meeting of the Royal Institute. It is worth quoting, "There is one thing I would be glad to ask you. When a mathematician engaged in investigating physical actions and results has arrived at his conclusions, may they not be expressed in common language as fully, clearly, and definitely as in mathematical formulae? If so, would it not be a great boon to such as I to express them so? –transporting them out of their hieroglyphics, that we might work on them by experiment". I agree.

Viewing my book more broadly, I attempt to bring the spiritual world alive. This world includes religion, but much more besides. It includes mountaineering, where the attitude of mind is paramount, particularly in deciding when to go on, and when to turn back because the risks are becoming too big. It also, of course, includes War, where morale is supreme. Napoleon's verdict was that the moral was to the physical as three to one; and he ought to have known. He meant the morale, the spirit, the esprit de corps of his men. Indeed the spiritual world may be said to reach its apotheosis either in Jesus, or in war such as the Second World War, when Britain was fighting not only for survival but for world freedom as well. The world is a unity; the world of matter and the world of spirit, are one world, not two. The world of conflict, even when it becomes as horrible as battle, and the world of religion are still one and the same creation; and have to be reconciled, unless you want a lop-sided view of life. Canon Raven, regius professor of divinity at Cambridge, in an eloquent passage in his first Riddell lecture to Durhan University in 1935, asks what has been the chief effect of the scientific movement and in particular the fact of evolution on our outlook? And his answer is that we have a knowledge and appreciation of the Universe, that no-one has ever

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had before, which religion would be foolish to ignore, and which dramatically helps form our concept of the Creator. And He made war a necessity if any civilized life was to be preserved.

I would only add that because the thoughts of the Army commander and of the clergyman are subject to the same analysis, and the same kind of errors, if false assumptions are made, so there is a discipline of thought and action that lies behind their individual self-disciplines. And therefore a reality that transcends both. So neither is in a position to criticise the other, unless he is prepared to enter the other's frame of mind; and in that event the clergyman would probably find there was nothing to criticise in the Army's thinking, and a good deal to criticise in his own. In a way it is similar to the Greek idea that fate is more powerful than the gods; or that there is a reality behind radioactive disintegration, when on an atomic scale it is unpredictable. In coining the phrase "Perfectly relaxed consciousness", I was asserting that there is a world behind the world of thought and belief, behind the world of appearances; although none of us has any idea how this world works. In every direction we seem to come up against a barrier beyond which our efforts to gain knowledge are frustrated.

Of course I hope that the pen is mightier than the sword; but that is in the long term. And I repeat that the only way I can think of solving the problem of War is by fighting. No-one knows why, but during the retreat of our army to Dunkirk, Adolf Hitler ordered his panzer army to halt for 48 hours; had he not done so General Guderian would have got to Dunkirk before we did, and our entire army would have been taken prisoner. Why did Hitler do it? Various suggestions have been made; but one thing surely we can confidently assert, that it was not due to the British peoples' "love" for Hitler? "Love" does not solve the problem of War; fighting does. And a Church which does not know if it prefers existence to obliteration, is hardly one likely to attract many proselytes. The C.of E. must come to terms with the last war, as it must come to terms with science; or perish.



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Actually it is not difficult. Because error and distortion are written into all human thought and communication, we are all driven in the end to rely on our own judgement and initiative. Or to demonstrate that we haven't got any! This is particularly so in War, where as the elder von Moltke said, no plan lasts longer than the first serious contact with the enemy, because junior commanders must then be allowed to act on their own initiative. So if Jesus saved the world, it was not so much in showing us the way to heaven, nor by relieving us of the burden of sin (although that is an unqualified mercy), it was in setting our spirits free, to act on our own initiative, and to exercise as best we can our own judgement. Best of all, if we do this in furtherance of what we believe are our vocations; and my vocation was to fight tooth and nail in the Law Courts for justice. Jesus, the culmination of countless ages of cosmic, geological, and biological evolution, sets Mankind free, if it is humble enough to invoke his spirit, to create a new heaven and a new earth if it wants to; because acting in his spirit will itself create the community that goes with it. Much as I love the Liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer; the vision it portrays is not exactly this one. But I end this book by concluding that the only certainty in this world lies in a sense of communion with the Almighty, which is in harmony with everything in the Prayer Book. And if you have sufficient imagination to look through His eyes, just for a moment, it is highly unlikely that He would have wanted Man to find "certainty" anywhere else, isn't it? So we end in agreement.

I hope that my contribution to a solution of the Church's difficulty in coming to terms both with science and the last War has sufficient intellectual rigour to withstand criticism, but sufficient suave urbanity to appeal to the ordinary reader. In summary, no intellectual discipline is worth much, until you have considered the unspoken and usually unconscious assumptions that underlie the attitude responsible for that discipline. This is equally true for religion, science and War.