

*On the Relationship Between R. G. Collingwood's Philosophy of Religion and  
Philosophy of History*

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## I

In 1917, T. S. Eliot connected R. G. Collingwood's *Religion and Philosophy* (1916), with an emerging theological tendency to view history and philosophy as only realisable within a religious order.<sup>1</sup> Collingwood, the Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy at Oxford after 1935, later wrote one of the most influential twentieth century works on the philosophy of history: *The Idea of History* (1946). Yet scholars have rarely related the central themes of *Religion and Philosophy* to his later philosophy of history. Instead, they have either artificially divided Collingwood's 'juvenile' theological ideas from his mature works on history, or only focused on the mystical aspects of his later philosophy.<sup>2</sup> This is misguided. For *Religion and Philosophy*, reveals how Collingwood developed his incipient philosophy of history as a response to the *theological* problems created by the reductionism of the two dominant early twentieth century English philosophical schools: Realism and Idealism. Seeking to resolve the theological problem of how finite man could be related to an infinite God, Collingwood outlined a new theory of the mind that predicated his philosophy of history. The integral importance of the theological ideas outlined in *Religion and Philosophy* to Collingwood's later philosophy of history demonstrates that the works of past historians cannot be studied in isolation from their underlying religious assumptions.

The scholarly neglect of *Religion and Philosophy* has been influenced by Collingwood's somewhat dismissive attitude towards his 'juvenile studies in theology' in his *Autobiography* (1939).<sup>3</sup> However, Collingwood was rarely complimentary about his past works, so this comment should not define the significance of *Religion and Philosophy*. Religion, moreover, was central to Collingwood's life. He chose to be baptized at the age of sixteen on the 7 July 1905 and he was confirmed into the Church of England on the 27 March 1906.<sup>4</sup> The importance of religion to Collingwood was reflected in his strong defences of the social role of Christianity. In a 1920 lecture on 'The Church', Collingwood envisaged a powerful institutional role for the

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<sup>1</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Review of Religion and Philosophy', *International Journal of Ethics* 27 (1917), p. 541.

<sup>2</sup> Studying *Religion and Philosophy* in isolation are: D. Jacquette, 'Collingwood on Religious Atonement', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 76/2 (2014), pp. 151–70; J. Kasuga, 'A Departure Between Two Extremes: R. G. Collingwood's Religion and Philosophy Reconsidered', *Idealistic Studies* 41/1-2 (2011), pp. 31-43; On the different stages of Collingwood's thought, see T. M. Knox, 'Editor's Preface', in R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, ed. T. M. Knox (Oxford, 1946), p. vii. On Collingwood's mysticism, see D. Bates, 'Rediscovering Collingwood's Spiritual History (In and Out of Context)', *History and Theory* 35/1 (1996), pp. 29–55.

<sup>3</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (London, 1939), p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> J. Patrick, *The Magdalen Metaphysicals: Idealism and Orthodoxy at Oxford 1901-1945* (Macon, Ga., 1985), p. 85.

Church as the determiner and enforcer of sacred Christian truths.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, in a draft paper on 'Religious Intolerance' for Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, Collingwood cautioned against the modern 'orgy of religious toleration', arguing that a Christian, who did not aggressively promote the truths of Revelation, was committing a 'crime'.<sup>6</sup> Collingwood's unpublished 1930 lecture on 'Science, Religion and Civilisation' continued to outline these themes, contending that the 'decay of religion' was the central cause of the unhappiness of the modern world.<sup>7</sup> As late as the *New Leviathan* (1942), part of Collingwood's solution to the predicaments of Western Civilisation was the revival of Christian idea of love as self-limitation.<sup>8</sup>

Not only was Christianity generally important to Collingwood, but his exposition of theology in *Religion and Philosophy* was chronologically connected to the development of his philosophy of history. In the *Autobiography*, Collingwood stated that *Religion and Philosophy* was written 'some years earlier' than 1917.<sup>9</sup> Collingwood also described how, after a period of 'dissatisfaction' with philosophical Realism at Oxford, he formulated his question and answer method of historical logic, whilst staring in disgust at the Albert Memorial 'A year or two after the outbreak of the war'.<sup>10</sup> In a 1914 manuscript on the 'Theory of History', Collingwood had already presented a well-developed philosophy of history.<sup>11</sup> Hence, Collingwood was considering the interrelated disciplines of philosophy, theology and history together in the period between 1912 and 1916.

What contextual reason did Collingwood have for considering these intellectual activities together? The reason was that the two dominant modes of philosophical inquiry at Oxford—Idealism and Realism—presented a reductionist account of existence that posed theological as well as moral problems. To understand Collingwood's perspective, it will first be necessary to present the central philosophical disputes between Francis Herbert Bradley, a Fellow of Merton College and the most systematic exponent of Idealism, and John Cook Wilson, the Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford and the leader of 'Oxford Realism'.

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<sup>5</sup> Oxford, Bodleian, Dep. Collingwood 1/4, microfilm, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Oxford, Bodleian, Dep. Collingwood 1/10, microfilm, pp. 1–4.

<sup>7</sup> Oxford, Bodleian, Dep. Collingwood 1/7, microfilm, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan, Or Man, Society, Civilisation and Barbarism*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford, 1947), pp. 57–9.

<sup>9</sup> Collingwood, *Autobiography*, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28–9.

<sup>11</sup> J. Patrick, 'Is 'The Theory of History' (1914) Collingwood's First Essay on the Philosophy of History?', *History and Theory*, 29/4 (1990), pp. 1–13.

Bradley had argued in *Appearance and Reality* (1893) that ‘the ideas by which we try to understand the universe’, such as, relation, cause and time, were inherently contradictory.<sup>12</sup> The reason being that these ideas were simplifying judgements imposed on an ‘Absolute’ reality of ‘a single and all-inclusive experience’.<sup>13</sup> Bradley contended that these judgements were only valid to the extent that they cohered with our experience as a totality.<sup>14</sup> Conversely, Wilson critiqued Bradley’s philosophical system, by arguing that knowledge, as a mental state, was qualitatively distinct from beliefs and judgements based on varying degrees of evidence.<sup>15</sup> Knowledge was, for Wilson, the immediate apprehension of a real, material object, which was ‘included in the apprehension as a part of the activity or reality of apprehending’.<sup>16</sup>

From *Religion and Philosophy* to *The Idea of History*, Collingwood consistently contended that these philosophical systems reduced the mind to a passive recipient of either undifferentiated experience, as Idealists argued, or the immediate apprehension of real objects, as Realists claimed.<sup>17</sup> The theological corollary of these philosophical assumptions was that Idealists reduced God to the immanent ground of experience, whilst Realists depicted Him as an absolutely transcendent object. On the one hand, Bradley, in his *Essays on Truth and Reality* (1914), argued that the idea of God as a distinct creative personality had to be sacrificed to support the more crucial conception of God’s immanence in our consciousness, of His ‘indwelling Life and Mind’.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Wilson argued in an 1898 paper, printed in *Statement and Inference* (1926), that the religious experience was a basic intuition of the absolutely transcendent grounding of the universe, ‘infinitely beyond himself, and all humanity’.<sup>19</sup>

In the same year that *Religion and Philosophy* was published, Samuel Alexander, a realist philosopher, began presenting the Gifford Lectures (1916–18) partly as a critique of this theological dichotomy between Idealist immanentism and Realist transcendentalism. Alexander attempted to overcome these reductionist tendencies by arguing that the mind and God were emergent, qualitatively different properties of a universe based in one natural

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<sup>12</sup> F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay* (London, 1893), p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144–7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 559–400.

<sup>15</sup> J. C. Wilson, *Statement and Inference with other Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 1, ed. A. S. L. Farquharson (Oxford, 1926), p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>17</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *Religion and Philosophy* (London, 1916), p. 73; Collingwood, *Idea of History*, pp. 141–2.

<sup>18</sup> F. H. Bradley, *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford, 1914), p. 433.

<sup>19</sup> J. C. Wilson, *Statement and Inference with other Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2, ed. A. S. L. Farquharson (Oxford, 1926), p. 864.

substance.<sup>20</sup> These premises justified Alexander's argument in 'Theism and Pantheism' (1927) that God was immanent insofar as he emerges from the processes of the world and transcendent in the sense that He has not yet been fully realised.<sup>21</sup>

## II

Alexander's 'process theology' represented a deeply heterodox solution to the religious problems created by Realism and Idealism. As a result, Collingwood's *Idea of Nature* (1945) critiqued Alexander's theology as contrary to our 'ordinary thoughts of God'.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Collingwood greatly respected Alexander.<sup>23</sup> And Collingwood outlined in *Religion and Philosophy* a more orthodox, partly historical solution to these theological problems, which determined the character of his philosophy of history. In this work, Collingwood's primary concern about Realism and Idealism was that these theories would make key aspects of Christian theology unsupportable. He contended that Realism and Idealism were two sides of the same fallacy. Realism explained thought 'as a kind of mechanism', whilst Idealism described mechanism as 'a form of spiritual activity'.<sup>24</sup> Both of these philosophical worldviews undermined Christian theology, which 'regards God as spirit, exercising creative power, however conceived, over the world of matter'.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, Collingwood defended a common-sense, 'plain man's dualism' that could accommodate a Christian theology, against the errors of Realism and Idealism.<sup>26</sup> Realism tended towards a materialism based in contradictory ideas, such as causation and motion.<sup>27</sup> Idealism conflicted with the fact that our experience of reflection was, for instance, intrinsically and qualitatively different to our experience of wearing 'boots'.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, although the 'current conception of mind' was not as contradictory as 'the current conception of matter', it had to account for the irreducible, qualitative differences between our experience of concrete objects and our experience of the activity of reflection.<sup>29</sup> Collingwood's solution was to interpret, 'matter as

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<sup>20</sup> S. Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity: the Gifford Lectures at Glasgow 1916–1918*, Vol. 2 (London, 1920), pp. 353–4.

<sup>21</sup> S. Alexander, 'Theism and Pantheism', in *Philosophical and Literary Pieces*, ed. J. Laird (London, 1939), p. 330.

<sup>22</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*, ed. T. M. Knox (Oxford, 1945), pp. 163–4.

<sup>23</sup> Collingwood praises Alexander's philosophical ability in: R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford, 1940), p. 172.

<sup>24</sup> Collingwood, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 73.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83–7.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

nothing else than mind itself in its concrete existence, and mind as the life and operation of matter.<sup>30</sup> In other words, Collingwood believed that the best phenomenological account of existence was of matter ordered by thought directed activity. He interpreted ‘thought’ as a basic, irreducibly distinct aspect of existence.

Startlingly, Collingwood’s 1934 ‘Conclusions to Lectures on Nature and Mind’, followed *Religion and Philosophy* by moving from a refutation of the doctrine of inert matter to a description of reality as determined by thought directed activity.<sup>31</sup> As in *Religion and Philosophy*, Collingwood argued that reflective activity is qualitatively and irreducibly distinct from sensation.<sup>32</sup> In this work, Collingwood immediately applied this philosophy of mind to his philosophy of history. For instance, he discussed how thought could be re-enacted because the activity of different minds ‘is their being’, so if they share the same activity ‘they actually share in each other’s being.’<sup>33</sup> Mind and history were understood through their theological implications. For Collingwood, the being, unity and necessity of God was the presupposition of the historical process.<sup>34</sup> As God was the ground of historical being, history reflected a religious purpose: the ‘eternal life of the mind as taken up into the being of God’ is embodied in the communal life of ‘a human society’.<sup>35</sup>

In *Religion and Philosophy*, Collingwood used these premises to make unorthodox defences of the central Christian mysteries. Collingwood’s clearest exposition of these philosophical ideas was in his discussion of the Incarnation of God in Christ. For Collingwood, Realism and Idealism created problems for the traditional Christian understanding of Christ possessing the ‘characteristics of Godhead, and fully and completely human in all the individuality of manhood.’<sup>36</sup> On the one hand, Idealism led to pantheism because, if ‘Man is spirit, and God is spirit’, there is no real distinction between God and man.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, insofar as Realism could support God’s existence, it led to an absolutely transcendent theism, or the view that Christ was completely distinct from mankind in his perfections.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> R. G. Collingwood, ‘Conclusions to Lectures on Nature and Mind’, in R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of History: and Other Writings in the Philosophy of History*, ed. W. H. Dray and J. van der Dussen (Oxford, 1999), p. 254.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, pp. 258–61.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 255.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 263.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 269.

<sup>36</sup> Collingwood, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 148.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 149.

However, Collingwood averred that the relationship between the divine nature and man in Christ should be conceived as ‘subsisting in virtue of an identity of thought or purpose between the persons concerned’.<sup>39</sup> If the being of mind was constituted only by thinking activity, not another property, such as time, ‘any man who fully knew the mind of God, and whose will was bent on the same ends as the divine will, would be himself both man and God in one’.<sup>40</sup> This perspective was justified because ‘mind was only definable in terms of the object of which it was conscious; and if God is infinite and man is really conscious of God, it seems to follow that man thereby becomes infinite.’<sup>41</sup> As the ‘life of the mind is whole’, God’s thought and man’s thought were in the same category of ‘things.’<sup>42</sup> As such, Christ possessed all the abilities of God and only limited himself out of choice.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, ascribing full omniscience and omnipotence to Christ seemed to destroy His human nature.<sup>44</sup> Collingwood argued that this was only the case, if thinking was conceived as a ‘Realist’ immediate apprehension of a truth, rather than as an activity. If thought was a free activity, God could not know in advance the ‘detailed history’ of every person.<sup>45</sup> Hence, Christ viewed human action ‘as a composer sees his symphony complete and perfect; but he cannot know beforehand every mistake of the performers.’<sup>46</sup> Christ understood the problems that will confront actors in history, but did not know the way they will choose to solve them. Christ’s omniscience was defined as the knowledge of the perfect historian, who fully understood the motivations of all human actors attempting to answer specific questions. As Collingwood stated:

‘History regarded in that way — not as a mere bundle of events but as a process of the solution of problems and the overcoming of difficulties — is altogether...summed up in the infinite personality of the God-Man.’<sup>47</sup>

In *Religion and Philosophy*, Collingwood’s historical solution to these theological problems led to a philosophy of history with striking similarities to his mature ideas. If the only way to transcend reductionist accounts of reality was to conceive of matter as ordered by free, object directed thought, it followed that history could not be reduced to an impersonal process that

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 152.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 155.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 155.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 156.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 157.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 157.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, pp. 166–7.

artificially divided this activity of thought. In the *Autobiography*, Collingwood claimed that he had formulated *Religion and Philosophy* to refute reductionist, psychological views of religion, exemplified by William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).<sup>48</sup> Collingwood's attack on the twin errors of Idealism and Realism depended on the idea that the activity of thought directed towards objects is qualitatively and irreducibly distinct from other facets of reality. The psychologist, by ignoring the object of the religious person's thought, described processes that are nowhere in a historical agent's conscious mind. Therefore, the psychologist 'is left with the cold unreality of thought which is the thought of nothing, action with no purpose, and fact with no meaning.'<sup>49</sup>

Collingwood reapplied this vindication of religion from reductionism to history in *Religion and Philosophy*. He argued that positivistic history, or external descriptions of a succession of causally related facts, and abstract philosophising, both ignored the freedom inherent in past action. There could be no uniform sociological processes in history because such uniformity was only characteristic of 'the less vital and more mechanical activities'.<sup>50</sup> Prefiguring his later, famous rejection of causation in history, Collingwood argued in his discussion of Kant's influence on Hegel that the term 'cause' is inapplicable, 'for we are dealing with the free activity of the mind, not with a mechanical process.'<sup>51</sup> Nor could history be reduced to positivistic questions about the evidential value of testimony of past actors. Claims, such as 'attested fact as such is liable to be misreported', were themselves generalisations founded on facts and were, therefore, self-refuting.<sup>52</sup>

This rejection of historical positivism justified Collingwood's position that history and philosophy were inextricably connected. Collingwood collapsed the distinction between facts and interpretations, claiming that 'what we call the construction is only our attempt to determine further details about the fact.'<sup>53</sup> As a result, history and philosophy presuppose each other.<sup>54</sup> The reason being that 'the universal never can exist at all except in the form of this or that particular.'<sup>55</sup> The philosophical presuppositions of history 'are philosophical truths which the historian finds historically exemplified.'<sup>56</sup> This relationship between philosophy and

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<sup>48</sup> Collingwood, *Autobiography*, p. 93.

<sup>49</sup> Collingwood, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 42.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 213.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 44–5.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 46.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.



history is given an explicitly theological tinge: that ‘every truth is temporal; as for instance the nature of God is historically revealed.’<sup>57</sup> To this end, Collingwood concluded emphatically that, ‘History and philosophy are therefore the same thing.’<sup>58</sup> This rejection of the distinction between facts and interpretation was later reflected in *The Idea of History*, which argued that ‘Philosophy cannot separate the study of knowing from the study of what is known.’<sup>59</sup>

Central to Collingwood’s mature philosophy of history was the belief that propositional logic was unsupportable because every statement was necessarily directed towards answering a question. Hence, the question a person was asking had to be known before the meaning of their statements could be deduced.<sup>60</sup> Collingwood’s theological concern for the freedom of human thought led him to develop an early form of this idea in *Religion and Philosophy*.<sup>61</sup> He condemned the positivist focus on ‘the outward aspect of the reality’, when ‘the true task of historical theology is to find out not only what was said, but what was meant.’<sup>62</sup> When applying this idea to early Church heresies, Collingwood argued against historical positivism by contending that historians must attempt ‘to comprehend the motives which led them to offer their various answers.’<sup>63</sup>

*Religion and Philosophy* also reveals new aspects to Collingwood’s much debated theory that history involves the re-enactment of past thoughts. Gardiner and several early scholars of Collingwood interpreted re-enactment as a methodology, whereby an imaginative sympathy enabled historians to understand past thought.<sup>64</sup> However, this perspective has been challenged by G. D’Oro, who argues that Collingwood’s theory of re-enactment in *The Idea of History* rests upon the belief that thought is a basic category of reality, distinct from other basic categories, such as number. The identity of thought, therefore, cannot be determined by another basic category, such as numerical identity, because thought is a completely distinct ‘thing.’ Hence, if two thoughts have the same quality, or logical structure and meaning, they are the same thought.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>59</sup> Collingwood, *Idea of History*, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Collingwood, *Autobiography*, pp. 29–44.

<sup>61</sup> Collingwood, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>64</sup> P. Gardiner, ‘The Objects of Historical Knowledge’, *Philosophy*, 27 (1952), pp. 211–220.

<sup>65</sup> G. D’Oro, ‘Collingwood on Re-enactment and the Identity of Thought’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 38/1 (2000), pp. 87–101.

*Religion and Philosophy* provides additional textual evidence for this interpretation. Collingwood's philosophical position in the *Idea of History* was preconfigured by his view of the mind (as described on pages 6–7) in *Religion and Philosophy*. In this work, he also presented a startlingly similar theory of re-enactment to that of *The Idea of History*. Collingwood argued that because thought is a basic metaphysical reality, 'truth is not circumscribed by the limits of space and time.'<sup>66</sup> In fact, it was possible for two men who had never met to share 'inward thoughts' as was the case with the 'ancient poet and his modern reader.'<sup>67</sup>

Yet just as this theory of thought was conceived as a response to theological problems, it had a deeper religious meaning. For Collingwood, the unity of thought reflected the spiritual community of humanity, united in the pursuit of God's purposes. This unity meant that 'all who know truth and lead a good life...participate in the life of God and in that of his human incarnation.'<sup>68</sup> Collingwood's concern for the freedom of human thought was related to God's ordering of the universe. Humans 'are free, but their freedom is not caprice, for they act in and through the whole and each other, so that the whole perpetually re-creates itself in their actions.'<sup>69</sup> In this way, an almost providential idea of the ultimate end of questioning activity underlay Collingwood's theory of historical re-enactment.

### III

Therefore, Collingwood's *Religion and Philosophy* outlined an incipient form of the central doctrines of his mature philosophy of history in order to solve the theological problems created by Realism and Idealism. After its publication in 1916, Collingwood continued to use the historical methodology of *Religion and Philosophy* to defend his particular perspective on Christianity. Alongside refining these pre-existing premises, Collingwood developed a view of historical action, within which religion was the central driving force.

The first example of this mix of continuity and change in Collingwood's philosophies of religion and history was his 1916 'Lectures on the Philosophy of Religious Evolution.' Like *Religion and Philosophy*, these lectures challenged reductionist, psychological views of religion by appealing to the irreducibility of human consciousness and the context specificity

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<sup>66</sup> Collingwood, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 160.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 160.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. 161.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p. 214.

of historical action.<sup>70</sup> However, Collingwood added a historical typology of religion as providing a comprehensive worldview of the cosmos and man's place within it.<sup>71</sup> Religion became the foundation of historical action because it was the only activity 'in which every aspect of the mind's activity is employed.'<sup>72</sup>

As religion was a foundational, comprehensive worldview, history formed an integral part of it. Collingwood argued in his 1918 'Lecture on the Philosophy of St Paul' that St Paul's philosophy was founded upon a historical division between three stages: the reign of Adam, the resurrection of Jesus and the third age of man striving towards unity with Christ.<sup>73</sup> The 'Philosophy of the Christian Religion' (1920), continued Collingwood's earlier defences of the intellectual aspects of religion, describing the question of the relationship between man and God as a variation on the philosophical question about 'the general relation between knowing subject and known object.'<sup>74</sup> Yet he also historicised these aspects of religion, contending that the philosophy of 'religion' could not be abstracted from the historically instantiated manifestations of religion in history.<sup>75</sup> Instead, the focus should be on the more 'concrete' study of the history of the 'philosophy of the Christian religion'.<sup>76</sup> For Christianity was the reason 'history is worth making, because the Holy Spirit makes it, and worth remembering because the Holy Spirit remembers it.'<sup>77</sup>

This increasing contemplation of the historical instantiations of the religious consciousness was the immediate context for R.G Collingwood's *Speculum Mentis* (1924), which presented a complex map of the relationships between different modes of knowledge. With regard to religion, much of *Speculum Mentis* was, as Collingwood stated, 'still in agreement' with *Religion and Philosophy*.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Collingwood retained the view that the central religious problem—the relationship between finite man to an infinite God—had only been solved by the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement.<sup>79</sup> Like the 'Philosophy of Religious

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<sup>70</sup> Oxford, Bodleian, Dep. Collingwood 1/2, microfilm, p. 33, p. 21.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 51.

<sup>73</sup> Oxford, Bodleian, Dep. Collingwood 1/3, microfilm, pp. 7–11.

<sup>74</sup> Oxford, Bodleian, Dep. Collingwood 1/5, microfilm, p. 8.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis, or, the Map of Knowledge* (Oxford, 1924), p. 108.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 145.

Evolution’, Collingwood aimed to present a more concrete, historical discussion of religion as a ‘cosmology’ and as the unifying force behind historical action.<sup>80</sup>

For Collingwood, religion was, like art, an imaginative exercise, but distinct from art in that it asserted the actual existence of its object: a holy God.<sup>81</sup> Yet Collingwood’s doctrine was not, as Knox has averred, sceptical of Christianity.<sup>82</sup> Religion was still the ‘intuitive’ mode of understanding the ‘absolute’ reality.<sup>83</sup> The religious sense of God was the presupposition that was necessary for the mind to even begin to frame philosophical questions about Him.<sup>84</sup> This perspective on religion, as the intuitive starting point for the activity of interpreting reality, was a reflection of the fact that *Speculum Mentis* outlined the first systematic statement of his question and answer methodology as an alternative to propositional logic.<sup>85</sup> Hence, Collingwood even went so far as to identify the ‘religious intellect’ with history, which was ‘intellect submitting itself with self-forgetful devotion to the claims of absolute fact’.<sup>86</sup>

These philosophical perspectives on the relationship between faith and historical action were further refined by Collingwood later in the 1920s. In a 1927 essay, ‘Reason is Faith Cultivating Itself’, Collingwood argued that all humans possessed a deep intuition of God and the work of reason was to explicate this sense of the divine.<sup>87</sup> Faith, combined with this activity of explication was, in turn, the well-spring of human action in history because: ‘All action begins with the immediate, indemonstrable, and irresistible feeling that we are filled and sustained by some power as yet unexpected ...’<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, Collingwood, in his 1928 ‘Faith and Reason’, depicted faith as the knowledge of the basic presuppositions of existence, such as the rationality of the universe, which in turn grounded historical action.<sup>89</sup> By this point Collingwood was, in his ‘Outline of a Philosophy of History’ (1928), presenting the central themes of his mature philosophy of history.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 115.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 119-20.

<sup>82</sup> Knox ‘Editor’s Preface’, p. xi.

<sup>83</sup> Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis*, p. 151.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 79.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 78.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>87</sup> R. G. Collingwood, ‘Reason is Faith Cultivating Itself’, in *Faith and Reason: Essays on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. L. Rubinoff (Chicago, 1968), p. 119.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 119.

<sup>89</sup> R. G. Collingwood, ‘Faith and Reason’, in *Faith and Reason: Essays on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. L. Rubinoff (Chicago, 1968), pp. 141–142.

<sup>90</sup> R. G. Collingwood, ‘Outline of a Philosophy of History’, in *The Idea of History: With Lectures 1926-1928*, ed. J. van der Dussen, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1994), pp. 439–450.

However, the gradual maturation of Collingwood's view of religious consciousness as the ultimate presupposition of human activity in history was reflected in his lectures on historiography (1936), printed in the *Idea of History*. He definitively stated that:

'the special problems of theoretical and practical life all take their special forms by segregation out of the body of the religious consciousness, and retain their vitality only so far as they preserve their connexion with it and with each other in it.'<sup>91</sup>

As religion ordered a meaningful existence, the views of past historians were intimately tied to prior theological and metaphysical shifts. Early Christian historiography reflected 'the Christian doctrines of original sin, grace, and creation'<sup>92</sup>, whilst Renaissance histories were dependent on a theological view of 'man as depicted by Christian thought, a creature of passion and impulse.'<sup>93</sup>

Similarly, Collingwood's manuscript work on folklore and fairy-tales (written before 1936), emphasised how the beliefs and rituals of 'primitive' religions, such as animism, were the foundation of past communal ways of life.<sup>94</sup> In the more theoretically focused, *Principles of History* (written in 1938–9), Collingwood also argued that the impetus for scientific activity derived from 'religious beliefs about nature and its creator God.'<sup>95</sup> Collingwood self-consciously applied this historiographical perspective to himself in his last major work of philosophy: the *Essay on Metaphysics* (1940). In this work, Collingwood identified his view of metaphysics—as a historical inquiry into the absolute presuppositions of different disciplines—with the traditions of the early Christian Church.<sup>96</sup> According to Collingwood, he was promoting the ideas of the Church Fathers, who had always viewed the existence of God as a presupposition of Christian thought, with history being the inquiry into the meaning of that foundational claim.<sup>97</sup> In this way, the connections between Collingwood's philosophy of religion and his philosophy of history vindicate his own perspective on the pervasiveness of half-hidden religious assumptions in the study of history.

Thus, Collingwood's *Religion and Philosophy* was not an immature work, easily separable from his later, more mature historical thought. His defence of an orthodox conception of God and the Incarnation, from the twin threats of Idealism and Realism, rested on certain

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<sup>91</sup> Collingwood, *Idea of History*, p. 315.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>94</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, ed. D. Boucher, P. Smallwood and W. James (Oxford, 2005), p. 191.

<sup>95</sup> Collingwood, *Principles of History*, p. 256.

<sup>96</sup> Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, p. 188.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p. 186.

philosophical assumptions about the relationship between thought and matter. And it was these assumptions that informed his philosophy of history. These presuppositions predicated refutations of reductionism in history, suggested the specificity of historical questions, and raised the possibility that past thoughts could be re-enacted.

Like most philosophies of history, Collingwood's later historical works remained intertwined with a set of theological arguments about the nature of reality and the human condition. In fact, Collingwood's post-1916 discussions of religion as the well-spring of human activity in history underpinned Collingwood's mature interpretation of past historiography. In this way, the humanist conclusions of *Religion and Philosophy* were a golden thread throughout Collingwood's thought. In all his works, Collingwood sought to escape from what he described in *Religion and Philosophy*, as the 'mood in which we have tired of the infinity and intimacy of the real, and lapse wearily into a ghost-land of our own, peopled by abstractions...'<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Collingwood, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 214.

