

Discourse 3. Bearing of Theology on other Branches of Knowledge

1.

1 {43} WHEN men of great intellect, who have long and intently and exclusively given
2 themselves to the study or investigation of some one particular branch of secular
3 knowledge, whose mental life is concentrated and hidden in their chosen pursuit, and
4 who have neither eyes nor ears for any thing which does not immediately bear upon it,
5 when such men are at length made to realize that there is a clamour all around them,
6 which must be heard, for what they have been so little accustomed to place in the
7 category of knowledge as Religion, and that they themselves are accused of
8 disaffection to it, they are impatient at the interruption; they call the demand tyrannical,
9 and the requisitionists bigots or fanatics. They are tempted to say, that their only wish is
10 to be let alone; for themselves, they are not dreaming of offending any one, or
11 interfering with any one; they are pursuing their own particular line, they have never
12 spoken a word against any one's religion, whoever he may be, and never mean to do
13 so. It does not follow that they deny the existence of a God, because they are not found
14 talking of it, when the topic would be utterly irrelevant. {44} All they say is, that there are
15 other beings in the world besides the Supreme Being; their business is with them. After
16 all, the creation is not the Creator, nor things secular religious. Theology and human
17 science are two things, not one, and have their respective provinces, contiguous it may
18 be and cognate to each other, but not identical. When we are contemplating earth, we
19 are not contemplating heaven; and when we are contemplating heaven, we are not
20 contemplating earth. Separate subjects should be treated separately. As division of
21 labour, so division of thought is the only means of successful application. "Let us go our
22 own way," they say, "and you go yours. We do not pretend to lecture on Theology, and
23 you have no claim to pronounce upon Science."

24 With this feeling they attempt a sort of compromise, between their opponents who claim
25 for Theology a free introduction into the Schools of Science, and themselves who would
26 exclude it altogether, and it is this: viz., that it should remain indeed excluded from the
27 public schools, but that it should be permitted in private, wherever a sufficient number of
28 persons is found to desire it. Such persons, they seem to say, may have it all their own
29 way, when they are by themselves, so that they do not attempt to disturb a
30 comprehensive system of instruction, acceptable and useful to all, by the intrusion of
31 opinions peculiar to their own minds.

32 I am now going to attempt a philosophical answer to this representation, that is, to the
33 project of teaching secular knowledge in the University Lecture Room, and remanding
34 religious knowledge to the parish priest, the catechism, and the parlour; and in doing so,
35 you must pardon me, Gentlemen, if my subject should oblige me to pursue a lengthy
36 and careful course of thought, which may be wearisome to the hearer:—I begin then
37 thus:— {45}

2.

Truth is the object of Knowledge of whatever kind; and when we inquire what is meant by Truth, I suppose it is right to answer that Truth means facts and their relations, which stand towards each other pretty much as subjects and predicates in logic. All that exists, as contemplated by the human mind, forms one large system or complex fact, and this of course resolves itself into an indefinite number of particular facts, which, as being portions of a whole, have countless relations of every kind, one towards another. Knowledge is the apprehension of these facts, whether in themselves, or in their mutual positions and bearings. And, as all taken together form one integral subject for contemplation, so there are no natural or real limits between part and part; one is ever running into another; all, as viewed by the mind, are combined together, and possess a correlative character one with another, from the internal mysteries of the Divine Essence down to our own sensations and consciousness, from the most solemn appointments of the Lord of all down to what may be called the accident of the hour, from the most glorious seraph down to the vilest and most noxious of reptiles.

Now, it is not wonderful that, with all its capabilities, the human mind cannot take in this whole vast fact at a single glance, or gain possession of it at once. Like a short-sighted reader, its eye pores closely, and travels slowly, over the awful volume which lies open for its inspection. Or again, as we deal with some huge structure of many parts and sides, the mind goes round about it, noting down, first one thing, then another, as it best may, and viewing it under different aspects, by way of making progress towards mastering the whole. So by degrees {46} and by circuitous advances does it rise aloft and subject to itself a knowledge of that universe into which it has been born.

These various partial views or abstractions, by means of which the mind looks out upon its object, are called sciences, and embrace respectively larger or smaller portions of the field of knowledge; sometimes extending far and wide, but superficially, sometimes with exactness over particular departments, sometimes occupied together on one and the same portion, sometimes holding one part in common, and then ranging on this side or that in absolute divergence one from the other. Thus Optics has for its subject the whole visible creation, so far forth as it is simply visible; Mental Philosophy has a narrower province, but a richer one. Astronomy, plane and physical, each has the same subject-matter, but views it or treats it differently; lastly, Geology and Comparative Anatomy have subject-matters partly the same, partly distinct. Now these views or sciences, as being abstractions, have far more to do with the relations of things than with things themselves. They tell us what things are, only or principally by telling us their relations, or assigning predicates to subjects; and therefore they never tell us all that can be said about a thing, even when they tell something, nor do they bring it before us, as the senses do. They arrange and classify facts; they reduce separate phenomena under a common law; they trace effects to a cause. Thus they serve to transfer our knowledge from the custody of memory to the surer and more abiding protection of philosophy, thereby providing both for its spread and its advance:—for, inasmuch as sciences are forms of knowledge, they enable the intellect to master and increase it; and, inasmuch as they are instruments, to communicate it readily to others. Still after all, they {47} proceed on the principle of a division of labour, even though that division is an abstraction, not a literal separation into parts; and, as the maker of a bridle or an

epaulet has not, on that account, any idea of the science of tactics or strategy, so in a parallel way, it is not every science which equally, nor any one which fully, enlightens the mind in the knowledge of things, as they are, or brings home to it the external object on which it wishes to gaze. Thus they differ in importance; and according to their importance will be their influence, not only on the mass of knowledge to which they all converge and contribute, but on each other.

Since then sciences are the results of mental processes about one and the same subject-matter, viewed under its various aspects, and are true results, as far as they go, yet at the same time separate and partial, it follows that on the one hand they need external assistance, one by one, by reason of their incompleteness, and on the other that they are able to afford it to each other, by reason, first, of their independence in themselves, and then of their connexion in their subject-matter. Viewed altogether, they approximate to a representation or subjective reflection of the objective truth, as nearly as is possible to the human mind, which advances towards the accurate apprehension of that object, in proportion to the number of sciences which it has mastered; and which, when certain sciences are away, in such a case has but a defective apprehension, in proportion to the value of the sciences which are thus wanting, and the importance of the field on which they are employed.

3.

Let us take, for instance, man himself as our object of contemplation; then at once we shall find we can view {48} him in a variety of relations; and according to those relations are the sciences of which he is the subject-matter, and according to our acquaintance with them is our possession of a true knowledge of him. We may view him in relation to the material elements of his body, or to his mental constitution, or to his household and family, or to the community in which he lives, or to the Being who made him; and in consequence we treat of him respectively as physiologists, or as moral philosophers, or as writers of economics, or of politics, or as theologians. When we think of him in all these relations together, or as the subject at once of all the sciences I have named, then we may be said to reach unto and rest in the idea of man as an object or external fact, similar to that which the eye takes of his outward form. On the other hand, according as we are only physiologists, or only politicians, or only moralists, so is our idea of man more or less unreal; we do not take in the whole of him, and the defect is greater or less, in proportion as the relation is, or is not, important, which is omitted, whether his relation to God, or to his king, or to his children, or to his own component parts. And if there be one relation, about which we know nothing at all except that it exists, then is our knowledge of him, confessedly and to our own consciousness, deficient and partial, and that, I repeat, in proportion to the importance of the relation.

That therefore is true of sciences in general which we are apt to think applies only to pure mathematics, though to pure mathematics it applies especially, viz., that they cannot be considered as simple representations or informants of things as they are. We are accustomed to say, and say truly, that the conclusions of pure mathematics are applied, corrected, and adapted, by mixed; but so too the conclusions of Anatomy,

Chemistry, {49} Dynamics, and other sciences, are revised and completed by each other. Those several conclusions do not represent whole and substantive things, but views, true, so far as they go; and in order to ascertain how far they do go, that is, how far they correspond to the object to which they belong, we must compare them with the views taken out of that object by other sciences. Did we proceed upon the abstract theory of forces, we should assign a much more ample range to a projectile than in fact the resistance of the air allows it to accomplish. Let, however, that resistance be made the subject of scientific analysis, and then we shall have a new science, assisting, and to a certain point completing, for the benefit of questions of fact, the science of projection. On the other hand, the science of projection itself, considered as belonging to the forces it contemplates, is not more perfect, as such, by this supplementary investigation. And in like manner, as regards the whole circle of sciences, one corrects another for purposes of fact, and one without the other cannot dogmatize, except hypothetically and upon its own abstract principles. For instance, the Newtonian philosophy requires the admission of certain metaphysical postulates, if it is to be more than a theory or an hypothesis; as, for instance, that what happened yesterday will happen tomorrow; that there is such a thing as matter, that our senses are trustworthy, that there is a logic of induction, and so on. Now to Newton metaphysicians grant all that he asks; but, if so be, they may not prove equally accommodating to another who asks something else, and then all his most logical conclusions in the science of physics would remain hopelessly on the stocks, though finished, and never could be launched into the sphere of fact.

Again, did I know nothing about the movement of {50} bodies, except what the theory of gravitation supplies, were I simply absorbed in that theory so as to make it measure all motion on earth and in the sky, I should indeed come to many right conclusions, I should hit off many important facts, ascertain many existing relations, and correct many popular errors: I should scout and ridicule with great success the old notion, that light bodies flew up and heavy bodies fell down; but I should go on with equal confidence to deny the phenomenon of capillary attraction. Here I should be wrong, but only because I carried out my science irrespectively of other sciences. In like manner, did I simply give myself to the investigation of the external action of body upon body, I might scoff at the very idea of chemical affinities and combinations, and reject it as simply unintelligible. Were I a mere chemist, I should deny the influence of mind upon bodily health; and so on, as regards the devotees of any science, or family of sciences, to the exclusion of others; they necessarily become bigots and quacks, scorning all principles and reported facts which do not belong to their own pursuit, and thinking to effect everything without aid from any other quarter. Thus, before now, chemistry has been substituted for medicine; and again, political economy, or intellectual enlightenment, or the reading of the Scriptures, has been cried up as a panacea against vice, malevolence, and misery.

4.

Summing up, Gentlemen, what I have said, I lay it down that all knowledge forms one whole, because its subject-matter is one; for the universe in its length and breadth is so intimately knit together, that we cannot separate off portion from portion, and operation

from operation, except by a mental abstraction; and then {51} again, as to its Creator, though He of course in His own Being is infinitely separate from it, and Theology has its departments towards which human knowledge has no relations, yet He has so implicated Himself with it, and taken it into His very bosom, by His presence in it, His providence over it, His impressions upon it, and His influences through it, that we cannot truly or fully contemplate it without in some main aspects contemplating Him. Next, sciences are the results of that mental abstraction, which I have spoken of, being the logical record of this or that aspect of the whole subject-matter of knowledge. As they all belong to one and the same circle of objects, they are one and all connected together; as they are but aspects of things, they are severally incomplete in their relation to the things themselves, though complete in their own idea and for their own respective purposes; on both accounts they at once need and subserve each other. And further, the comprehension of the bearings of one science on another, and the use of each to each, and the location and limitation and adjustment and due appreciation of them all, one with another, this belongs, I conceive, to a sort of science distinct from all of them, and in some sense a science of sciences, which is my own conception of what is meant by Philosophy, in the true sense of the word, and of a philosophical habit of mind, and which in these Discourses I shall call by that name. This is what I have to say about knowledge and philosophical knowledge generally; and now I proceed to apply it to the particular science, which has led me to draw it out.

I say, then, that the systematic omission of any one science from the catalogue prejudices the accuracy and completeness of our knowledge altogether, and that, in proportion to its importance. Not even Theology itself, {52} though it comes from heaven, though its truths were given once for all at the first, though they are more certain on account of the Giver than those of mathematics, not even Theology, so far as it is relative to us, or is the Science of Religion, do I exclude from the law to which every mental exercise is subject, viz., from that imperfection, which ever must attend the abstract, when it would determine the concrete. Nor do I speak only of Natural Religion; for even the teaching of the Catholic Church, in certain of its aspects, that is, its religious teaching, is variously influenced by the other sciences. Not to insist on the introduction of the Aristotelic philosophy into its phraseology, its explanation of dogmas is influenced by ecclesiastical acts or events; its interpretations of prophecy are directly affected by the issues of history; its comments upon Scripture by the conclusions of the astronomer and the geologist; and its casuistical decisions by the various experience, political, social, and psychological, with which times and places are ever supplying it.

What Theology gives, it has a right to take; or rather, the interests of Truth oblige it to take. If we would not be beguiled by dreams, if we would ascertain facts as they are, then, granting Theology is a real science, we cannot exclude it, and still call ourselves philosophers. I have asserted nothing as yet as to the pre-eminent dignity of Religious Truth; I only say, if there be Religious Truth at all, we cannot shut our eyes to it without prejudice to truth of every kind, physical, metaphysical, historical, and moral; for it bears upon all truth. And thus I answer the objection with which I opened this Discourse. I supposed the question put to me by a philosopher of the day, "Why cannot you go your way, and let us go ours?" I answer, in the name {53} of the Science of Religion, "When

209 Newton can dispense with the metaphysician, then may you dispense with us." So
210 much at first sight; now I am going on to claim a little more for Theology, by classing it
211 with branches of knowledge which may with greater decency be compared to it.

5.

212 Let us see, then, how this supercilious treatment of so momentous a science, for
213 momentous it must be, if there be a God, runs in a somewhat parallel case. The great
214 philosopher of antiquity, when he would enumerate the causes of the things that take
215 place in the world, after making mention of those which he considered to be physical
216 and material, adds, "and the mind and everything which is by means of man." [Note]
217 Certainly; it would have been a preposterous course, when he would trace the effects
218 he saw around him to their respective sources, had he directed his exclusive attention
219 upon some one class or order of originating principles, and ascribed to these everything
220 which happened anywhere. It would indeed have been unworthy a genius so curious, so
221 penetrating, so fertile, so analytical as Aristotle's, to have laid it down that everything on
222 the face of the earth could be accounted for by the material sciences, without the
223 hypothesis of moral agents. It is incredible that in the investigation of physical results he
224 could ignore so influential a being as man, or forget that, not only brute force and
225 elemental movement, but knowledge also is power. And this so much the more,
226 inasmuch as moral and spiritual agents belong to another, not to say a higher, order
227 than physical; so that the omission supposed would not have been merely an {54}
228 oversight in matters of detail, but a philosophical error, and a fault in division.

229 However, we live in an age of the world when the career of science and literature is little
230 affected by what was done, or would have been done, by this venerable authority; so,
231 we will suppose, in England or Ireland, in the middle of the nineteenth century, a set of
232 persons of name and celebrity to meet together, in spite of Aristotle, in order to adopt a
233 line of proceeding which they conceive the circumstances of the time render imperative.
234 We will suppose that a difficulty just now besets the enunciation and discussion of all
235 matters of science, in consequence of the extreme sensitiveness of large classes of the
236 community, clergy and laymen, on the subjects of necessity, responsibility, the standard
237 of morals, and the nature of virtue. Parties run so high, that the only way of avoiding
238 constant quarrelling in defence of this or that side of the question is, in the judgment of
239 the persons I am supposing, to shut up the subject of anthropology altogether. This is
240 accordingly done. Henceforth man is to be as if he were not, in the general course of
241 Education; the moral and mental sciences are to have no professorial chairs, and the
242 treatment of them is to be simply left as a matter of private judgment, which each
243 individual may carry out as he will. I can just fancy such a prohibition abstractedly
244 possible; but one thing I cannot fancy possible, viz., that the parties in question, after
245 this sweeping act of exclusion, should forthwith send out proposals on the basis of such
246 exclusion for publishing an Encyclopædia, or erecting a National University.

247 It is necessary, however, Gentlemen, for the sake of the illustration which I am setting
248 before you, to imagine what cannot be. I say, let us imagine a project for organizing a
249 system of scientific teaching, in which the {55} agency of man in the material world

cannot allowably be recognized, and may allowably be denied. Physical and mechanical causes are exclusively to be treated of; volition is a forbidden subject. A prospectus is put out, with a list of sciences, we will say, Astronomy, Optics, Hydrostatics, Galvanism, Pneumatics, Statics, Dynamics, Pure Mathematics, Geology, Botany, Physiology, Anatomy, and so forth; but not a word about the mind and its powers, except what is said in explanation of the omission. That explanation is to the effect that the parties concerned in the undertaking have given long and anxious thought to the subject, and have been reluctantly driven to the conclusion that it is simply impracticable to include in the list of University Lectures the Philosophy of Mind. What relieves, however, their regret is the reflection, that domestic feelings and polished manners are best cultivated in the family circle and in good society, in the observance of the sacred ties which unite father, mother, and child, in the correlative claims and duties of citizenship, in the exercise of disinterested loyalty and enlightened patriotism. With this apology, such as it is, they pass over the consideration of the human mind and its powers and works, "in solemn silence," in their scheme of University Education.

Let a charter be obtained for it; let professors be appointed, lectures given, examinations passed, degrees awarded:—what sort of exactness or trustworthiness, what philosophical largeness, will attach to views formed in an intellectual atmosphere thus deprived of some of the constituent elements of daylight? What judgment will foreign countries and future times pass on the labours of the most acute and accomplished of the philosophers who have been parties to so portentous an unreality? Here are professors gravely lecturing on medicine, or {56} history, or political economy, who, so far from being bound to acknowledge, are free to scoff at the action of mind upon matter, or of mind upon mind, or the claims of mutual justice and charity. Common sense indeed and public opinion set bounds at first to so intolerable a licence; yet, as time goes on, an omission which was originally but a matter of expedience, commends itself to the reason; and at length a professor is found, more hardy than his brethren, still however, as he himself maintains, with sincere respect for domestic feelings and good manners, who takes on him to deny psychology *in toto*, to pronounce the influence of mind in the visible world a superstition, and to account for every effect which is found in the world by the operation of physical causes. Hitherto intelligence and volition were accounted real powers; the muscles act, and their action cannot be represented by any scientific expression; a stone flies out of the hand and the propulsive force of the muscle resides in the will; but there has been a revolution, or at least a new theory in philosophy, and our Professor, I say, after speaking with the highest admiration of the human intellect, limits its independent action to the region of speculation, and denies that it can be a motive principle, or can exercise a special interference, in the material world. He ascribes every work, every external act of man, to the innate force or soul of the physical universe. He observes that spiritual agents are so mysterious and unintelligible, so uncertain in their laws, so vague in their operation, so sheltered from experience, that a wise man will have nothing to say to them. They belong to a different order of causes, which he leaves to those whose profession it is to investigate them, and he confines himself to the tangible and sure. Human exploits, human devices, human deeds, human productions, all that comes under {57} the scholastic terms of "genius" and "art," and the metaphysical ideas of "duty," "right," and "heroism," it is his

295 office to contemplate all these merely in their place in the eternal system of physical
296 cause and effect. At length he undertakes to show how the whole fabric of material
297 civilization has arisen from the constructive powers of physical elements and physical
298 laws. He descants upon palaces, castles, temples, exchanges, bridges, causeways,
299 and shows that they never could have grown into the imposing dimensions which they
300 present to us, but for the laws of gravitation and the cohesion of part with part. The pillar
301 would come down, the loftier the more speedily, did not the centre of gravity fall within
302 its base; and the most admired dome of Palladio or of Sir Christopher would give way,
303 were it not for the happy principle of the arch. He surveys the complicated machinery of
304 a single day's arrangements in a private family; our dress, our furniture, our hospitable
305 board; what would become of them, he asks, but for the laws of physical nature? Those
306 laws are the causes of our carpets, our furniture, our travelling, and our social
307 intercourse. Firm stitches have a natural power, in proportion to the toughness of the
308 material adopted, to keep together separate portions of cloth; sofas and chairs could not
309 turn upside down, even if they would; and it is a property of caloric to relax the fibres of
310 animal matter acting through water in one way, through oil in another, and this is the
311 whole mystery of the most elaborate *cuisine*:—but I should be tedious if I continued the
312 illustration.

6.

313 Now, Gentlemen, pray understand how it is to be here applied. I am not supposing that
314 the principles of {58} Theology and Psychology are the same, or arguing from the works
315 of man to the works of God, which Paley has done, which Hume has protested against.
316 I am not busying myself to prove the existence and attributes of God, by means of the
317 Argument from design. I am not proving anything at all about the Supreme Being. On
318 the contrary, I am assuming His existence, and I do but say this:—that, man existing, no
319 University Professor, who had suppressed in physical lectures the idea of volition, who
320 did not take volition for granted, could escape a one-sided, a radically false view of the
321 things which he discussed; not indeed that his own definitions, principles, and laws
322 would be wrong, or his abstract statements, but his considering his own study to be the
323 key of everything that takes place on the face of the earth, and his passing over
324 anthropology, this would be his error. I say, it would not be his science which was
325 untrue, but his so-called knowledge which was unreal. He would be deciding on facts by
326 means of theories. The various busy world, spread out before our eyes, is physical, but
327 it is more than physical; and, in making its actual system identical with his scientific
328 analysis, formed on a particular aspect, such a Professor as I have imagined was
329 betraying a want of philosophical depth, and an ignorance of what an University
330 Teaching ought to be. He was no longer a teacher of liberal knowledge, but a narrow-
331 minded bigot. While his doctrines professed to be conclusions formed upon an
332 hypothesis or partial truth, they were undeniable; not so if they professed to give results
333 in facts which he could grasp and take possession of. Granting, indeed, that a man's
334 arm is moved by a simple physical cause, then of course we may dispute about the
335 various external influences which, when it changes its position, sway it to and fro, like a
336 {59} scarecrow in a garden; but to assert that the motive cause *is* physical, this is an
337 assumption in a case, when our question is about a matter of fact, not about the logical

consequences of an assumed premiss. And, in like manner, if a people prays, and the wind changes, the rain ceases, the sun shines, and the harvest is safely housed, when no one expected it, our Professor may, if he will, consult the barometer, discourse about the atmosphere, and throw what has happened into an equation, ingenious, even though it be not true; but, should he proceed to rest the phenomenon, in matter of fact, simply upon a physical cause, to the exclusion of a divine, and to say that the given case actually belongs to his science because other like cases do, I must tell him, *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*: he is making his particular craft usurp and occupy the universe. This then is the drift of my illustration. If the creature is ever setting in motion an endless series of physical causes and effects, much more is the Creator; and as our excluding volition from our range of ideas is a denial of the soul, so our ignoring Divine Agency is a virtual denial of God. Moreover, supposing man can will and act of himself in spite of physics, to shut up this great truth, though one, is to put our whole encyclopædia of knowledge out of joint; and supposing God can will and act of Himself in this world which He has made, and we deny or slur it over, then we are throwing the circle of universal science into a like, or a far worse confusion.

Worse incomparably, for the idea of God, if there be a God, is infinitely higher than the idea of man, if there be man. If to blot out man's agency is to deface the book of knowledge, on the supposition of that agency existing, what must it be, supposing it exists, to blot out the agency of God? I have hitherto been engaged in {60} showing that all the sciences come to us as one, that they all relate to one and the same integral subject-matter, that each separately is more or less an abstraction, wholly true as an hypothesis, but not wholly trustworthy in the concrete, conversant with relations more than with facts, with principles more than with agents, needing the support and guarantee of its sister sciences, and giving in turn while it takes:—from which it follows that none can safely be omitted, if we would obtain the exactest knowledge possible of things as they are, and that the omission is more or less important, in proportion to the field which each covers, and the depth to which it penetrates, and the order to which it belongs; for its loss is a positive privation of an influence which exerts itself in the correction and completion of the rest. This is a general statement; but now as to Theology in particular, what, in matter of fact, are its pretensions, what its importance, what its influence upon other branches of knowledge, supposing there be a God, which it would not become me to set about proving? Has it vast dimensions, or does it lie in a nutshell? Will its omission be imperceptible, or will it destroy the equilibrium of the whole system of Knowledge? This is the inquiry to which I proceed.

7.

Now what is Theology? First, I will tell you what it is not. And here, in the first place (though of course I speak on the subject as a Catholic), observe that, strictly speaking, I am not assuming that Catholicism is true, while I make myself the champion of Theology. Catholicism has not formally entered into my argument hitherto, nor shall I just now assume any principle peculiar to it, for reasons which will appear in the sequel, {61} though of course I shall use Catholic language. Neither, secondly, will I fall into the fashion of the day, of identifying Natural Theology with Physical Theology; which said

Physical Theology is a most jejune study, considered as a science, and really is no science at all, for it is ordinarily nothing more than a series of pious or polemical remarks upon the physical world viewed religiously, whereas the word "Natural" properly comprehends man and society, and all that is involved therein, as the great Protestant writer, Dr. Butler, shows us. Nor, in the third place, do I mean by Theology polemics of any kind; for instance, what are called "the Evidences of Religion," or "the Christian Evidences;" for, though these constitute a science supplemental to Theology and are necessary in their place, they are not Theology itself, unless an army is synonymous with the body politic. Nor, fourthly, do I mean by Theology that vague thing called "Christianity," or "our common Christianity," or "Christianity the law of the land," if there is any man alive who can tell what it is. I discard it, for the very reason that it cannot throw itself into a proposition. Lastly, I do not understand by Theology, acquaintance with the Scriptures; for, though no person of religious feelings can read Scripture but he will find those feelings roused, and gain much knowledge of history into the bargain, yet historical reading and religious feeling are not science. I mean none of these things by Theology, I simply mean the Science of God, or the truths we know about God put into system; just as we have a science of the stars, and call it astronomy, or of the crust of the earth, and call it geology.

For instance, I mean, for this is the main point, that, as in the human frame there is a living principle, acting upon it and through it by means of volition, so, behind {62} the veil of the visible universe, there is an invisible, intelligent Being, acting on and through it, as and when He will. Further, I mean that this invisible Agent is in no sense a soul of the world, after the analogy of human nature, but, on the contrary, is absolutely distinct from the world, as being its Creator, Upholder, Governor, and Sovereign Lord. Here we are at once brought into the circle of doctrines which the idea of God embodies. I mean then by the Supreme Being, one who is simply self-dependent, and the only Being who is such; moreover, that He is without beginning or Eternal, and the only Eternal; that in consequence He has lived a whole eternity by Himself; and hence that He is all-sufficient, sufficient for His own blessedness, and all-blessed, and ever-blessed. Further, I mean a Being, who, having these prerogatives, has the Supreme Good, or rather is the Supreme Good, or has all the attributes of Good in infinite intenseness; all wisdom, all truth, all justice, all love, all holiness, all beautifulness; who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent; ineffably one, absolutely perfect; and such, that what we do not know and cannot even imagine of Him, is far more wonderful than what we do and can. I mean One who is sovereign over His own will and actions, though always according to the eternal Rule of right and wrong, which is Himself. I mean, moreover, that He created all things out of nothing, and preserves them every moment, and could destroy them as easily as He made them; and that, in consequence, He is separated from them by an abyss, and is incommunicable in all His attributes. And further, He has stamped upon all things, in the hour of their creation, their respective natures, and has given them their work and mission and their length of days, greater or less, in their appointed place. I mean, too, that He is ever present with His {63} works, one by one, and confronts every thing He has made by His particular and most loving Providence, and manifests Himself to each according to its needs: and has on rational beings imprinted the moral law, and given them power to obey it, imposing on them the duty of

425 worship and service, searching and scanning them through and through with His
426 omniscient eye, and putting before them a present trial and a judgment to come.

427 Such is what Theology teaches about God, a doctrine, as the very idea of its subject-
428 matter presupposes, so mysterious as in its fulness to lie beyond any system, and in
429 particular aspects to be simply external to nature, and to seem in parts even to be
430 irreconcilable with itself, the imagination being unable to embrace what the reason
431 determines. It teaches of a Being infinite, yet personal; all-blessed, yet ever operative;
432 absolutely separate from the creature, yet in every part of the creation at every moment;
433 above all things, yet under every thing. It teaches of a Being who, though the highest,
434 yet in the work of creation, conservation, government, retribution, makes Himself, as it
435 were, the minister and servant of all; who, though inhabiting eternity, allows Himself to
436 take an interest, and to have a sympathy, in the matters of space and time. His are all
437 beings, visible and invisible, the noblest and the vilest of them. His are the substance,
438 and the operation, and the results of that system of physical nature into which we are
439 born. His too are the powers and achievements of the intellectual essences, on which
440 He has bestowed an independent action and the gift of origination. The laws of the
441 universe, the principles of truth, the relation of one thing to another, their qualities and
442 virtues, the order and harmony of the whole, all that exists, is from {64} Him; and, if evil
443 is not from Him, as assuredly it is not, this is because evil has no substance of its own,
444 but is only the defect, excess, perversion, or corruption of that which has substance. All
445 we see, hear, and touch, the remote sidereal firmament, as well as our own sea and
446 land, and the elements which compose them, and the ordinances they obey, are His.
447 The primary atoms of matter, their properties, their mutual action, their disposition and
448 collocation, electricity, magnetism, gravitation, light, and whatever other subtle
449 principles or operations the wit of man is detecting or shall detect, are the work of His
450 hands. From Him has been every movement which has convulsed and re-fashioned the
451 surface of the earth. The most insignificant or unsightly insect is from Him, and good in
452 its kind; the ever-teeming, inexhaustible swarms of animalculæ, the myriads of living
453 motes invisible to the naked eye, the restless ever-spreading vegetation which creeps
454 like a garment over the whole earth, the lofty cedar, the umbrageous banana, are His.
455 His are the tribes and families of birds and beasts, their graceful forms, their wild
456 gestures, and their passionate cries.

457 And so in the intellectual, moral, social, and political world. Man, with his motives and
458 works, his languages, his propagation, his diffusion, is from Him. Agriculture, medicine,
459 and the arts of life, are His gifts. Society, laws, government, He is their sanction. The
460 pageant of earthly royalty has the semblance and the benediction of the Eternal King.
461 Peace and civilization, commerce and adventure, wars when just, conquest when
462 humane and necessary, have His cooperation, and His blessing upon them. The course
463 of events, the revolution of empires, the rise and fall of states, the periods and eras, the
464 progresses and the retrogressions of the world's {65} history, not indeed the incidental
465 sin, over-abundant as it is, but the great outlines and the results of human affairs, are
466 from His disposition. The elements and types and seminal principles and constructive
467 powers of the moral world, in ruins though it be, are to be referred to Him. He
468 "enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." His are the dictates of the moral

sense, and the retributive reproaches of conscience. To Him must be ascribed the rich endowments of the intellect, the irradiation of genius, the imagination of the poet, the sagacity of the politician, the wisdom (as Scripture calls it), which now rears and decorates the Temple, now manifests itself in proverb or in parable. The old saws of nations, the majestic precepts of philosophy, the luminous maxims of law, the oracles of individual wisdom, the traditionary rules of truth, justice, and religion, even though imbedded in the corruption, or alloyed with the pride, of the world, betoken His original agency, and His long-suffering presence. Even where there is habitual rebellion against Him, or profound far-spreading social depravity, still the undercurrent, or the heroic outburst, of natural virtue, as well as the yearnings of the heart after what it has not, and its presentiment of its true remedies, are to be ascribed to the Author of all good. Anticipations or reminiscences of His glory haunt the mind of the self-sufficient sage, and of the pagan devotee; His writing is upon the wall, whether of the Indian fane, or of the porticoes of Greece. He introduces Himself, He all but concurs, according to His good pleasure, and in His selected season, in the issues of unbelief, superstition, and false worship, and He changes the character of acts by His overruling operation. He condescends, though He gives no sanction, to the altars and shrines of imposture, and He makes His own fiat the {66} substitute for its sorceries. He speaks amid the incantations of Balaam, raises Samuel's spirit in the witch's cavern, prophesies of the Messiah by the tongue of the Sibyl, forces Python to recognize His ministers, and baptizes by the hand of the misbeliever. He is with the heathen dramatist in his denunciations of injustice and tyranny, and his auguries of divine vengeance upon crime. Even on the unseemly legends of a popular mythology He casts His shadow, and is dimly discerned in the ode or the epic, as in troubled water or in fantastic dreams. All that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful, all that is beneficent, be it great or small, be it perfect or fragmentary, natural as well as supernatural, moral as well as material, comes from Him.

8.

If this be a sketch, accurate in substance and as far as it goes, of the doctrines proper to Theology, and especially of the doctrine of a particular Providence, which is the portion of it most on a level with human sciences, I cannot understand at all how, supposing it to be true, it can fail, considered as knowledge, to exert a powerful influence on philosophy, literature, and every intellectual creation or discovery whatever. I cannot understand how it is possible, as the phrase goes, to blink the question of its truth or falsehood. It meets us with a profession and a proffer of the highest truths of which the human mind is capable; it embraces a range of subjects the most diversified and distant from each other. What science will not find one part or other of its province traversed by its path? What results of philosophic speculation are unquestionable, if they have been gained without inquiry as to what Theology had to say to them? Does it cast no light upon history? has it no influence {67} upon the principles of ethics? is it without any sort of bearing on physics, metaphysics, and political science? Can we drop it out of the circle of knowledge, without allowing, either that that circle is thereby mutilated, or on the other hand, that Theology is really no science?

511 And this dilemma is the more inevitable, because Theology is so precise and consistent
512 in its intellectual structure. When I speak of Theism or Monotheism, I am not throwing
513 together discordant doctrines; I am not merging belief, opinion, persuasion, of whatever
514 kind, into a shapeless aggregate, by the help of ambiguous words, and dignifying this
515 medley by the name of Theology. I speak of one idea unfolded in its just proportions,
516 carried out upon an intelligible method, and issuing in necessary and immutable results;
517 understood indeed at one time and place better than at another, held here and there
518 with more or less of inconsistency, but still, after all, in all times and places, where it is
519 found, the evolution, not of half-a-dozen ideas, but of one.

9.

520 And here I am led to another and most important point in the argument in its behalf,—I
521 mean its wide reception. Theology, as I have described it, is no accident of particular
522 minds, as are certain systems, for instance, of prophetic interpretation. It is not the
523 sudden birth of a crisis, as the Lutheran or Wesleyan doctrine. It is not the splendid
524 development of some uprising philosophy, as the Cartesian or Platonic. It is not the
525 fashion of a season, as certain medical treatments may be considered. It has had a
526 place, if not possession, in the intellectual world from time immemorial; it has been
527 received by minds the most various, and in systems of religion the most hostile to each
528 other. It has *primâ facie* claims {68} upon us, so imposing, that it can only be rejected on
529 the ground of those claims being nothing more than imposing, that is, being false. As to
530 our own countries, it occupies our language, it meets us at every turn in our literature, it
531 is the secret assumption, too axiomatic to be distinctly professed, of all our writers; nor
532 can we help assuming it ourselves, except by the most unnatural vigilance. Whoever
533 philosophizes, starts with it, and introduces it, when he will, without any apology. Bacon,
534 Hooker, Taylor, Cudworth, Locke, Newton, Clarke, Berkeley, and Butler, and it would be
535 as easy to find more, as difficult to find greater names among English authors, inculcate
536 or comment upon it. Men the most opposed, in creed or cast of mind, Addison and
537 Johnson, Shakespeare and Milton, Lord Herbert and Baxter, herald it forth. Nor is it an
538 English or a Protestant notion only; you track it across the Continent, you pursue it into
539 former ages. When was the world without it? Have the systems of Atheism or
540 Pantheism, as sciences, prevailed in the literature of nations, or received a formation or
541 attained a completeness such as Monotheism? We find it in old Greece, and even in
542 Rome, as well as in Judea and the East. We find it in popular literature, in philosophy, in
543 poetry, as a positive and settled teaching, differing not at all in the appearance it
544 presents, whether in Protestant England, or in schismatical Russia, or in the
545 Mahometan populations, or in the Catholic Church. If ever there was a subject of
546 thought, which had earned by prescription to be received among the studies of a
547 University, and which could not be rejected except on the score of convicted imposture,
548 as astrology or alchemy; if there be a science anywhere, which at least could claim not
549 to be ignored, but to be entertained, and either distinctly accepted or {69} distinctly
550 reprobated, or rather, which cannot be passed over in a scheme of universal instruction,
551 without involving a positive denial of its truth, it is thing ancient, this far-spreading
552 philosophy.

10.

553 And now, Gentlemen, I may bring a somewhat tedious discussion to a close. It will not
554 take many words to sum up what I have been urging. I say then, if the various branches
555 of knowledge, which are the matter of teaching in a University, so hang together, that
556 none can be neglected without prejudice to the perfection of the rest, and if Theology be
557 a branch of knowledge, of wide reception, of philosophical structure, of unutterable
558 importance, and of supreme influence, to what conclusion are we brought from these
559 two premisses but this? that to withdraw Theology from the public schools is to impair
560 the completeness and to invalidate the trustworthiness of all that is actually taught in
561 them.

562 But I have been insisting simply on Natural Theology, and that, because I wished to
563 carry along with me those who were not Catholics, and, again, as being confident, that
564 no one can really set himself to master and to teach the doctrine of an intelligent
565 Creator in its fulness, without going on a great deal farther than he at present dreams. I
566 say, then, secondly:—if this Science, even as human reason may attain to it, has such
567 claims on the regard, and enters so variously into the objects, of the Professor of
568 Universal Knowledge, how can any Catholic imagine that it is possible for him to
569 cultivate Philosophy and Science with due attention to their ultimate end, which is Truth,
570 supposing that system of revealed facts and principles, which Constitutes the Catholic
571 Faith, which goes so far beyond nature, and {70} which he knows to be most true, be
572 omitted from among the subjects of his teaching?

573 In a word, Religious Truth is not only a portion, but a condition of general knowledge. To
574 blot it out is nothing short, if I may so speak, of unravelling the web of University
575 Teaching. It is, according to the Greek proverb, to take the Spring from out of the year; it
576 is to imitate the preposterous proceeding of those tragedians who represented a drama
577 with the omission of its principal part.

Note

Arist. Ethic. Nicom., iii. 3.