

## THE SUPERIORITY OF SCIENCE

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THE fundamental thesis of this discussion is that science has no claim to the superior place in which it has been so wholeheartedly enshrined today. It is immensely inferior to religion and theology. In placing science before theology and religion men are standing on their heads, their eyes are close to the ground, the little things look big to them while the bigger, higher things seem far away, so hard to see and so ridiculously mixed up that they hardly merit a passing thought.

In the course of this study the words "science," "religion" and "theology" will appear frequently; to forestall misunderstandings and consequent objections we will explain immediately what we mean by these words. When we speak of science we speak only of experimental sciences strictly so called, of matter sufficiently proven and unanimously admitted by the scientific world; which of course rules scientific charlatans completely out of this paper. Religion means the rendering to God the cult that is due Him, as it has been taught and practiced by the Roman Catholic Church for the past twenty centuries. The terms theology and religion are not two different things, nor yet the same thing. Religion is the broader term; theology is nothing more than a statement, illustration, defense and development of the truths of faith upon which religion is based. In other words, it is a kind of text-book of religion. When comparing science with theology we are really comparing the text-books of science and of religion; which comparison is of course limited.

Science is inferior in its very starting point to theology. It is inferior because it starts on a supposition. It starts with a truth without which it would be helpless, which however it does not and cannot prove. A baseball expert who has all the theory of the game, knows how every situation should be handled, the art of pitching, batting and all the rest, but who has both legs cut off, would make a very poor player. An automobile without gasoline, or without a driver to control and direct it, would break no records. Science without this fundamental principle of which

we speak is more helpless than the legless wonder, more stationary than the driverless car. Before science can begin it demands this truth: the reasoning of the mind of man is reliable—an unprovable principle.

This is plain enough. Science starts out to investigate things with the aid of the human mind; it accepts only what it can prove. In other words, science assumes that it is not being deceived, that the mind is proving something, that the nightmare of Kantian forms is really a nightmare. No scientist has ever proved this. This truth is without his field; he appeals to philosophy, a higher science. But no philosopher ever has or ever will prove it. He can show that it is fitting, most highly probable, a case of common sense, and so on; but as to actual proof, he must go back to the existence of a God Who is Truth, a God Who has bestowed this gift for the purpose of helping man, not of tormenting or destroying him. And when the philosopher has gone back that far he is in the field of theology, natural or supernatural.

Theology needs no supposition to start with. Strictly speaking it demands only the gift of faith and a revelation. For instance, a man having the gift of faith accepts at once the revelation of the primary truth of theology, God exists. How does he know that the revelation is true, that he is not being deceived? Why that is what faith means—knowing a true font of revelation and accepting the truths coming from that font. Hence the first principle of theology—God exists—is not a supposition but a fact recognized and accepted by faith.

There are numberless ways of proving this truth: philosophical demonstrations, moral arguments, psychological arguments, and so on. In fact it is a truth that the scientific, social and economic world must not only accept but strenuously propagate if their temples are not to come tumbling down on their heads. But the point here to be made is not that this truth is so well founded, so easily and completely proven; but that it was established from the very beginning. In other words, that theology started from an evident fact, a truth not from any other human science but from the science of heaven alone.

Science is inferior to theology in its method of procedure. It advances by individual experiments, from these it generalizes on the grounds of an incomplete synthesis. For example, science examines the mouth of a man and perceives that he has teeth;

it extends its examination to thousands of men in thousands of different places and finds the results always the same—in every place men, at some time or another, have teeth. So far we have the process of synthesis or induction; next comes the generalization—all men have teeth. It is evident that science has not and cannot examine all men in all places, it cannot look into every human mouth. It is not wholly inconceivable that men might arise who would not have teeth; or that there have been men without teeth. But it is as nearly certain as the process of induction can make it that the ordinary condition of men postulates teeth.

Theology proceeds, for the most part, in just the reverse way. Of course it does not despise induction any more than science despises deduction and for the same reason, they are both perfectly valid methods of reasoning. But the usual process of theology is by perfect analysis, by deduction. In other words, it starts with the general truth and deduces the particular truths contained in it. Thus instead of examining all men concerning teeth, theology would start out with the certain truth “all men have teeth”; from this truth it would know that men, wherever and whenever they lived, have teeth. Of course this particular example doesn't fall within the realms of theology at all, as would, for example, the deduction of the attributes of God. It is given here merely to bring out clearly how much safer and more certain the method of theology is than that of science.

Indeed perfect analysis is the one field in which the human intellect can be sure of itself because it is the one field where man proceeds step by step right to the very end of his argument. It is like coming down a flight of steps, we cannot but help notice if one of the steps be missing. It is an old truth, little known by present day writers, one that every one admits as soon as he has grasped its meaning; namely, it is much safer, more certain, to come down to particulars from a general truth than to jump to generalizations from particular facts. This is exactly the difference between the methods of theology and science.

Just at this point an objection is usually brought up. This certain universal truth from which theology deduces, where does it come from? We know the origin of the generalization of science, we can and have proved it; but this starting point of a theological argument, how can you expect us to accept that? In simpler language, this objection brings up that absurd old

sophistry that the experimental facts of science are superior to the principles of faith used by theology because the one is proven, the other is merely accepted on the authority of God.

How shallow and thoughtless is this objection! One man drinks his beverage direct from a glass while another drinks his through a straw. Which one is surer that he has had no admixture of impurity in his drink? By the same token, where does the superiority of science come in when it has proven the facts by reason? Theologians are taking the truth directly on the authority of God; scientists are taking their truths no less on the authority of God, but indirectly. They are banking their all on the truth of God when He made the human intellect, when He created the world science examines and subjected it to certain permanent and intelligible laws. In other words, they are drinking from the same font of truth, but scientists are drinking through the straw of human intellect and the visible creation; theologians are drinking directly from the font itself. If God cannot be trusted in His direct revelations, how can He be trusted in His creations. If He deceived once, why should He tell the truth so consistently for the benefit of scientists?

There is yet another point worth noticing in regard to the methods of science and theology. It is this: science needs theology; theology does not need science. Science advances by individual experiments; it examines specimen after specimen, as extensively and thoroughly as the human mind is capable of doing. The idea may be summed up like this. Picture a man walking through a field. There are ditches in that field and many broad places which avoid the ditches. If our friend is coming along slowly, his eyes glued to the ground, examining every inch of territory he covers, he stands a very good chance of ending up in the ditch. This is exactly the case with science. It is moving along examining every inch of its way, but with a confessed disinterest in the general outlay of the field. Not so theology. It begins with a general plan of the field, shows a man the best route and guides him along it. If he desires he may stop here and there, or everywhere, to examine the ground scientifically; but he has the plan in his mind to keep him from the ditches.

After all it is man's object to pass through the field of life without falling into the ditches of error, not to examine every step of the way. From all of which it is quite apparent that



science needs theology but theology does not need science. Science may help, may help greatly; but it is not absolutely necessary. It is not the chief aim of life, it should not occupy the place of honor, it is not in a position to sneer at the other members of our mental family. It is a servant and must keep its place.

Science is inferior to theology in its starting point and method, two places where it is supposedly established beyond all hope of eviction. Let us now examine the results and subject matter of religion and science. Here the contrast is so striking that it needs little more than mere statement. For instance, as to results. Science has produced some truly marvellous results, especially within the last century. It would be foolish to try to impugn these results; nor will we make such an attempt. Rather we will admit all that can be said about these marvels, then pass on to show that the results of religion are superior to them.

The weak points of scientific accomplishments arise, for the most part, from the material with which science deals and from the nature of men, by whom and for whom science advances. The first weak point is that many of the results of science can be as easily applied for evil purposes as for good, and still remain scientific. Take for instance the World War. No one will deny that the development of poison gases was a scientific achievement; but who will pretend that this development was absolutely good, good under every condition? The contrary is true of religion and its statement in theology; its results are good, ennobling, inspiring, of immense assistance to man wherever and whenever they appear. There are no evil results of true religion as there are of true science. The result of religion cannot be perverted by the mind of man. If perversion takes place in what looks like religion anything more than a superficial examination will make it at once apparent that it is not religion at all but a travesty upon it. Take the idea of humility as inculcated by Catholicism. It would seem, at first glance, that nothing would more easily suffer perversion; yet it would be as easy to pervert humility as to make the truth a lie, because humility is just the truth. The difference between the results of religion and science is the difference between good clean fresh air and ether; one is good, even necessary, at all times for all men; the other can as easily be a deadly enemy as a merciful friend.

Again science at best can help a man with its results for only a brief space of years; it stops short at death. During the brief life of man many of its results have a softening, degenerating effect by catering to bodily comfort. Religion produces its greatest effect at the portal of death and it endures forever. During the life of man the effects of religion are ennobling and a source of courageous endeavor, hardihood and boundless energy. The difference is the difference we may notice in gifts to children: a box of candy is pleasant but in a short time it is gone, it may make the child sick and certainly hasn't a very lasting effect; while a book cultivates the child's mind, gives him new motives and has a lasting effect upon him. Science is the candy, religion the book.

The third weak point in the results of science is that they are after all, only a hobby to a man; they do not make up the all important business of his life. Man is a success or failure according as he reaches the end for which he was made or fails to reach it; according as he gains heaven or loses it. The serious occupation of his life, the work by which he must earn the wages of heaven is not science but religion. If a hobby means more to the success of a man than his life's work, then we can say that science is superior in its results to religion.

Coming now to the subject matter of science and religion we can be more brief for the truth is even more evident. In importance the material of the two stand in the same relation as the trifles of life and life's real earnest work; in nobility there is the difference between them like that between God and His creatures; in durability they differ as do time and eternity. Religion deals with man and his last end, science with man's surroundings. Religion speaks of God, His nature, His relation to us, our way to Him; science talks only of the creatures God has made to serve man. Science deals with the material universe that certainly had a beginning and will certainly have an end; religion with the immortal invisible King of ages.

Many recognized scientists discount the superiority of religion because religion deals with mysteries. They cannot see how man can reasonably or scientifically accept truths which he could never discover of himself, and even after discovery, cannot fully understand. To these men mysteries are the stone wall shutting religion off forever from the domain of scientists. It is a current idea, strongly entrenched in the mind of today; nor is this

surprising. It is a product of the frame of mind that labors under the hallucination that man is sufficient to himself, that the accomplishments of the human mind are the last word in perfection. Just as a little thought is sufficient to reveal the unhappy mistakes of this frame of mind in general, so a little thought will show the unreasonableness of this objection to mysteries.

The depth and extent of all knowledge depends chiefly on two sources: the thing known and the capacity of the mind. For instance, if I start out to learn the life history of an infant and I discover that it was born at nine o'clock and died one minute later, I have exhausted the "knowability" of that particular fact of history. I may ponder over these two facts from now until doomsday and not learn a thing more of the personal achievements of the individual, because there is nothing more to be known; my knowledge is limited by the thing known. This same truth is brought out very clearly in our studies of the things about us: the simpler inorganic substances and the simple plants, we know quite completely; but as we go up the scale of complexity our knowledge comes further and further from exhausting its subject. Finally we come to the most complex of all, man, and we discover that we have ever something new to learn.

On the other side is the capacity of our mind. No one will question the fact that one man has a greater capacity for knowledge than another; the fact is brought out every day in our colleges and still more strongly in professional circles. What one man will thoroughly understand and completely grasp, another could never master; it is like the eye and the things we see. Some people see much farther and more clearly than others, though the things seen do not differ in the slightest. The eagle can look straight into the sun with a clear vision; the owl can not even see the sun, though it is decidedly visible. So that when we say we know or understand a thing we mean that the capacity of our mind is equal or superior to the "knowability" of that particular object.

Bringing all these age-old truths to bear on the subject of mysteries the atmosphere clears at once. The subject of mysteries is God, Who by His very nature is without limits. Hence the "knowability" of God cannot be exhausted, it extends beyond all bounds and can be encircled only by a mind with a capacity as great. There are very sharp differences in the capacities of

different men. Will we be so rash as to maintain that the greatest of these minds of men is the acme of perfection, the perfect mind capable of understanding all things and comprehending the infinite? If we do, we are refuted by the great mind itself, as the keenest intellects have been the first to acknowledge their limitations; surely they should know more about it than ordinary men like ourselves. Why the difficulty about mysteries? On one side we have an object that cannot be exhausted; on the other a mind with very definite limitations. Is it surprising to discover that this limited mind does not completely absorb and comprehend this infinite object? On the contrary it is at once apparent that the doubts of the truths of religion come not from the object, but from the weakness of our minds; we are the owls blinking in the brightness of the sun, unable to see the most manifest thing before us.

And so vanishes the alleged superiority of science. It has been shown to be inferior to religion in starting point, method, results and subject matter and the two great objections to religion—authority and mysteries—have been shown to be valueless. Shall we continue to hear of the superiority of science and the inferiority of religion? No doubt, but will any one dare to clothe this falsehood in scientific robes?

