

VI. Of Divine Philosophy

(1) This science being therefore first placed as a common parent like unto Berecynthia, which had so much heavenly issue, *omnes cœlicolas, omnes supera alta tenetes*; we may return to the former distribution of the three philosophies—divine, natural, and human. And as concerning divine philosophy or natural theology, it is that knowledge or rudiment of knowledge concerning God which may be obtained by the contemplation of His creatures; which knowledge may be truly termed divine in respect of the object, and natural in respect of the light. The bounds of this knowledge are, that it sufficeth to convince atheism, but not to inform religion; and therefore there was never miracle wrought by God to convert an atheist, because the light of nature might have led him to confess a God; but miracles have been wrought to convert idolaters and the superstitious, because no light of nature extendeth to declare the will and true worship of God. For as all works do show forth the power and skill of the workman, and not his image, so it is of the works of God, which do show the omnipotency and wisdom of the Maker, but not His image. And therefore therein the heathen opinion differeth from the sacred truth: for they supposed the world to be the image of God, and man to be an extract or compendious image of the world; but the Scriptures never vouchsafe to attribute to the world that honour, as to be the image of God, but only *the work of His hands*; neither do they speak of any other image of God but man. Wherefore by the contemplation of nature to induce and enforce the acknowledgment of God, and to demonstrate His power, providence, and goodness, is an excellent argument, and hath been excellently handled by divers, but on the other side, out of the contemplation of nature, or ground of human knowledges, to induce any verity or persuasion concerning the points of faith, is in my judgment not safe; *Da fidei quæ fidei sunt*. For the heathen themselves conclude as much in that excellent and divine fable of the golden chain, “That men and gods were not able to draw Jupiter down to the earth; but, contrariwise, Jupiter was able to draw them up to heaven.” So as we ought not to attempt to draw down or submit the mysteries of God to our reason, but contrariwise to raise and advance our reason to the divine truth. So as in this part of knowledge, touching divine philosophy, I am so far from noting any deficiency, as I rather note an excess; whereunto I have digressed because of the extreme prejudice which both religion and philosophy hath received and may receive by being commixed together; as that which undoubtedly will make an heretical religion, and an imaginary and fabulous philosophy.

(2) Otherwise it is of the nature of angels and spirits, which is an appendix of theology, both divine and natural, and is neither inscrutable nor interdicted. For although the Scripture saith, “Let no man deceive you in sublime discourse touching the worship of angels, pressing into that he knoweth not,” &c., yet notwithstanding if you observe well that precept, it may appear thereby that there be two things only forbidden—adoration of them, and opinion fantastical of them, either to extol them further than appertaineth to the degree of a creature, or to extol a man’s knowledge of them further than he hath ground. But the sober and grounded inquiry, which may arise out of the passages of Holy Scriptures, or out of the gradations of nature, is not restrained. So of degenerate and revolted spirits, the conversing with them or the employment of them is prohibited, much more any veneration towards them; but the contemplation or science of their nature, their power, their illusions, either by Scripture or reason, is a part of spiritual wisdom. For so the apostle saith, “We are not ignorant of his stratagems.” And it is no more unlawful to inquire the nature of evil spirits, than to inquire the force of poisons in nature, or the nature of sin and vice in morality. But this part touching angels and spirits I cannot note as deficient, for many have occupied themselves in it; I may rather challenge it, in many of the writers thereof, as fabulous and fantastical.

Revision #1

Created 13 August 2019 15:59:04 by Textpedia

Updated 13 August 2019 15:59:32 by Textpedia