

THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THEOLOGY A POSSIBLE SCIENCE.

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THERE have been in all ages speculative men whose philosophy has led them to deny the possibility of the human reason attaining to any knowledge of God. Sometimes they have built on atheistic axioms and denied the existence of divine things; sometimes they have been devout believers, and have simply said that the revelations recorded in the Old Testament, and in the New, are the only possible sources of religious knowledge.

Some of the great men of France during the last century inclined strongly to the opinion that matter, and forces inherent in it, constitute the sum total of the universe. But the fact was forced upon their attention that in all nations and tribes of men there are religious ideas, more or less distinct; and also that religious opinions easily accepted by children, cling with extreme tenacity to the adult mind; so that they themselves could with the greatest difficulty shake off the belief of their childhood. They attempted to account for these ideas by declaring them the product of the imagination, stimulated by terror at the manifestation of the destructive forces of nature. This ascription of the origin of religion to terror could have been founded upon only a very

careless survey of human nature. It is quite true that fear, or terror, frequently develops religious feeling; but it does not create religious ideas; and faith in God is frequently clearest and strongest in souls that have, through that faith, become entirely devoid of fear. This French theory is now abandoned, even by those who hold to the materialistic philosophy, and it is admitted that terror is as apt to destroy all faith as to develop it.

In the first half of the present century Auguste Comte published his system of Positive Philosophy. It has found few disciples; and the vagaries of Comte's later years, when he became, as sober English sense would declare, insane in his worship of mankind in general, and women in particular, have weakened very much the direct power of his name. Yet his writings at one time exerted a great influence; and some of the clearest English and French writers of our day owe to him, indirectly, more than they, perhaps are, themselves aware.

Comte's view of religious ideas is that they are an illusion of childhood, outgrown under proper education; and replaced, at first by metaphysical notions concerning physical causes, afterward by an entire suspension of judgment in regard to all questions concerning the origin, or causes, of phenomena. Sensible phenomena themselves are, in his philosophy, the only known, or knowable, things; and he pushes this doctrine so far as, in one direction, to make the mathematics merely an experimental science of measurement; and, in another, to forbid astronomy to meddle with the motions of the fixed stars, — because that motion is not sensible to the unaided eye. Things manifest to the senses are the only proper objects of human thought, and the only possible materials of knowledge. The sole work of science is, therefore, to group observations in such wise as to record them in the briefest possible formulæ; the accuracy of which is to be tested by seeing whether they embrace also phenomena afterwards observed.

According to Comte's pure doctrine, therefore, he and his

followers are debarred from either affirming or denying any thing concerning spiritual and religious matters. They must hold their judgment in perfect suspense on such points, with supreme and unaffected indifference. It is manifest that this is an impossible feat, considering the vital interest of the questions; it would be holding the mind in unstable equilibrium, amid strong contending forces. The positive philosophy is, therefore, a merely ideal state, in which the author of the scheme could never have remained longer than a few minutes at a time. And, in fact, we find in his first great book, in which the doctrine is expanded, that he is greatly inconsistent with his principles; instead of leaving spiritual and theological opinions to themselves, as unproved and unprovable, he, in several places, attacks them warmly, and endeavors to disprove them; that is, not only to show that a theologian cannot prove the existence of the soul, and of its Creator; but that he, Comte, can prove their non-existence. In this attempt to prove a negative, and the negative of a proposition which, according to his own doctrine, transcends the possibilities of knowledge, he makes, of course, a very sorry display of logic. His proof of the non-existence of the soul is simply this: The body perishes when food, light, and heat are furnished in excess, or too scantily; therefore the body is moved solely by material forces, and a soul is superfluous. By this argument he forsakes his positive ground, to enter the theological, and to emerge in the metaphysical. But his attempts illustrate the impossibility of his holding his mind in the attitude demanded by his philosophy — the attitude of supreme indifference. If the master thus fails, the disciple cannot hope to succeed. Every attempt, like that of the positive philosophy, to ignore theology, will end either in a dogmatic atheism, or in a return to some form of faith.

The validity of religious knowledge is, at the present day, assailed on the ground that man is a finite being, that his faculties cannot lay hold of the infinite, that his thought is necessarily limited, is possible only within narrow conditions, and that the attributes of the Infinite and Absolute Cause of

the universe must forever be unknown and unknowable. Sir William Hamilton, of Edinburgh, a devout Christian believer, has had a large influence in making these assaults possible, by furnishing some of the metaphysical weapons employed in them. In the thirty-eighth lecture of his posthumous volume on metaphysics he announces what he calls the Law of the Conditioned. His language is this: "All that is conceivable in thought lies between two extremes, which, as contradictory of each other, cannot both be true; but of which, as mutual contradictories, one must." He illustrates this by space. "It is plain," he says, "that space must either be bounded or not bounded." "But though space must be necessarily either finite or infinite, we are able to conceive the possibility neither of its finitude nor of its infinity." He afterwards says, "We have found the maximum of space incomprehensible; can we comprehend its minimum? This is equally impossible." "Let us take a portion of space however small, we can never conceive it as the smallest," and "we can as little represent to ourselves the possibility of an infinite divisibility of any extended entity." Speaking of the like puzzle concerning time, he adds: "One is necessarily true, but neither can be conceived possible." In this connection Hamilton alludes to the famous arguments of Zeno, to disprove the possibility of motion; calling them, "arguments which, at least, show that motion, however certain as a fact, cannot be conceived possible, as it involves a contradiction."

Further on, he recapitulates thus: "The sum, therefore, of what I have now stated is, that the conditioned is that which is alone conceivable or cogitable; the unconditioned that which is inconceivable or uncogitable. The conditioned, or the thinkable, lies between two extremes or poles; and these extremes or poles are each of them unconditioned, each of them inconceivable, each of them exclusive or contradictory of the other." "One of these poles is the absolute, the other the infinite, and each can be conceived as a negation of the thinkable. In other words, of the absolute and of the infinite we have no conception at all."

Sir William Hamilton maintains that this is the orthodox doctrine. "We must believe," he says, "in the infinity of God, but the Infinite God cannot by us be comprehended or conceived. We know God according to the finitude of our faculties, but we believe much that we are incompetent properly to know." Once more, he objects to those who say that although the infinite is not comprehended, it is apprehended; this he thinks is absurd, it is saying that the infinite can be known, but only known as finite.

It will be observed that this great metaphysician devoutly recognizes the existence of the Infinite God; but claims that recognition as an act of faith or belief, not of knowledge. We must believe, he says, in the infinity of God; we know him according to the finitude of our faculties; but we believe much that we are incompetent to know.

Hamilton himself, therefore, did not deduce irreligious or atheistic corollaries from his law of the conditioned; and in his strong assertion that the infinite is inconceivable and unthinkable, he could only have meant that the mind forms no concept or image of the infinite. That he did not mean to say that the existence of the infinite is inconceivable, is apparent from his own statement that we must believe in the infinity of God. His doctrine of the inconceivability of the infinite no more stood in the way of his recognition of the existence of the infinite than his assertion of the inconceivability of the possibility of motion stood in the way of his acknowledging the fact of motion. As, however, Hamilton states and expands his law, and applies it in a subsequent lecture to the doctrine of causality, the law seems to be very defective and incomplete.

Let us begin, as our author does, with space. Universal space must be either bounded or unbounded. We can form no conception of space bounded — space absolute, without space outside of it. Neither can we form any conception of space infinite, however much we expand our conception of space indefinite. But what is meant by saying that between these two poles, space absolute and space infinite, both un-

thinkable, lies space thinkable? Or, take the other extreme. We cannot conceive of an absolute minimum of space, neither can we conceive of an infinite subdivision of space. But what is meant by saying that between these two poles of an absolutely infinitesimal infinitesimal, and an infinitely infinitesimal infinitesimal, both unthinkable, lies the thinkable of space? Had Hamilton lived to revise his work, he must have modified in some way his annunciation of his law. From the examples of space and time, he seems rather to have meant: That the thinkable lies between two unthinkable extremes; that each of these extremes consists of two poles, the absolute, which is unthinkable, and the infinite or infinitesimal, also unthinkable; but that one of each of these pairs of unthinkables must be true — our choice at each extreme lies between two unthinkables.

Our distinguished author is somewhat unguarded, also, in saying that the absolute and the infinite are equally unthinkable. Take, for example, the minimum of space. The absolute minimum is unthinkable, not merely because you can form no picture or concept of it, but also because you perceive that it belongs to the nature of space to be susceptible of division. On the other hand, the result of an infinite subdivision of space is unthinkable only because we can form no picture or image of the operation. Yet the imagination can start a process of division which reason can demonstrate would accomplish the infinite subdivision. Uniform motion, for example, is constantly performing it. A locomotive, let us say, is running at the rate of twenty-two and a half miles an hour. It passes a mile-post, and is distant one mile from the next. In eighty seconds it is but half a mile distant; in forty seconds more, it is a quarter of a mile distant; in twenty seconds more, only an eighth of a mile; in ten seconds more, only twenty rods; in five seconds more, it is only ten rods from the next mile-post. Thus, the distance before the next post is continually halved, and each halving occupies but half the time of the preceding. Hence the next five seconds will accomplish the infinite subdivision

both of the space and of the time, and the infinitesimal portion of each will be zero. And here arises a new contradiction to illustrate Hamilton's main thought—the contradiction that an infinite addition of these nothings makes somethings, viz. a mile, and two minutes forty seconds.

The infinite divisibility of space, therefore, although not conceivable in the imagination as a completed picture, is conceivable as the result of a clearly conceived mode of subdivision. As regards this pair of poles, the infinite is not inconceivable in the same sense as the absolute.

Let us glance at the other pair. Absolute space—space bounded and finished, without space outside of it—is inconceivable in every sense; while infinite space is inconceivable only in the sense that it cannot be imaged; it is not inconceivable that space is infinite; the intellect, indeed, accepts its infinity from the inconceivability of space absolute. The attempted concept of the absolute in space, whether minimum or maximum is a positive shock to the imagination; its inconceivability is glaring to the mental eye. But the attempt to form a concept of the infinite and the infinitesimal gives no such shock, but only a sense of the weakness of our powers.

When Hamilton approaches the question of liberty and necessity, he introduces, apparently unconsciously, another modification of his law of the conditioned. In his statements of the law, as quoted above, he makes the law of noncontradiction supreme. Space is, he says, either bounded or not bounded; you cannot call it both. All that is conceivable lies between two contradictories, both unthinkable; one of which must be true, the other must be false. But in the matter of liberty and necessity, he affirms both of two contradictories; he therein only follows the geometers, who, in dealing with infinities and infinitesimals, frequently affirm both of two contradictories, and are led by each affirmation to correct results.

Hamilton's Law of the Conditioned, in the form given above in his own words, seems not altogether intelligible.

The subject is abstruse, and an attempt to give the wider and more accurate generalization, of which his is but a part, may be an equal failure.

We, embosomed in the infinite, are ourselves finite. Every faculty and function, corporeal, intellectual, spiritual, is limited in its sphere — bounded on all sides by the infinitely great or the infinitely small. By the ingenuity of the imagination and the skill of the intellect, we may enlarge to a certain extent the boundaries of our finitude; but we at length meet the inevitable barrier. Take the eye, as an illustration, in its range of focal adjustment; it can see distinctly, only when the given object is neither too near nor too distant. By ingenious devices we extend its range to greater distances by the telescope, and to closer examination by the microscope; but we can see that only which is within the reach of these instruments, which have limits as fixed as those of the eye. Analogous limitations hedge in each of the senses and bodily functions; and such limitations restrain also the incorporeal powers.

Take, as an illustration, the purely intellectual perception of form in space. The native powers of the mind are competent to discuss sundry finite relations of space, of distance, and direction; and out of this native power a sort of natural geometry springs by which men guide themselves in all their ordinary dealings with matter and motion. Then (by ingenious devices of the intellect and of the imagination) the notation or written language of the mathematics, in its simpler and antique forms, or in the more subtle and powerful forms of modern days, is brought to aid our investigation. We thus see more clearly the relations of finite space; but we also, through these intellectual lenses, see the indefinitely small and the indefinitely large, and learn truths which hold for the infinite and the infinitesimal. Neither the infinitely large nor the infinitely small is brought under our power of conception; but in certain cases the relations between infinites or infinitesimals are completely within the power of our reason, and the results of those relations completely

within the grasp of our imagination; as was just shown in the division of space by a uniform motion.

The general rule for proceeding in cases of the infinite or infinitesimal, may, perhaps, be thus stated. Starting with finite quantities we obtain some general formula expressing their relation; then, in that general formula, we suppose one or more of the quantities to become zero, or infinity. If this makes the formula become infinite, or of indeterminate value, the result which we have attained may be merely negative and useless. But if the formula remains determinate and finite, then our result gives us a positive knowledge of the relations of infinities or infinitesimals. We cannot begin with the infinite and reason to the finite; nor can we through the indefinite proceed from the finite to the infinite; but we can proceed from the relations of finites to the relations of infinities.

What is thus true of space, the simplest of all objects of intellectual perception, holds true, in its degree, with regard to higher objects. The infinite and the infinitesimal cannot be brought into the sphere of direct conception; but distinctly conceived relations between finites are frequently traced into the indefinite, in such a manner that we can show that the relations will still hold in the infinite; and sometimes that the result of those relations, even in the infinite, is finite and conceivable.

For this purpose peculiar canons of logic are brought into play. The ordinary syllogistic test must fail whenever we approach the infinite, in either direction, magnitude or "parvitude." The syllogism requires some relation of quantity between the subject and its predicate, but that relation is wanting when the subject is infinite. Propositions concerning the infinite require a special analysis in order to determine how much of their apparent meaning is real and trustworthy. This especial analysis for the determination of indeterminates, starts with a better meaning of the term infinite than that assigned by Hamilton. The infinite is not merely the negation of limits; it is the affirmation of extent beyond

limits. The infinite in space, for example, is not simply boundlessness, but boundless space. It is not the simple inability to assign a stopping place; it is an ability always to go further; as much further, always, as you please. This is one error of the Edinburgh master and of his disciples, they look at the negative side of infinity and forget the positive; and thus ascribe the notion to our weakness and not to our strength. Herbert Spencer, who yields far too much to the doctrine of Hamilton, nevertheless points out this error with admirable clearness. Even the closer followers of the doctrine of the conditioned betray, however, at every step in their discussion of the infinite, a dim perception that there is a positive side to infinity. It is not merely our inability to grasp the infinite, which marks the nature of our attempt to conceive it; that would indeed come from our finitude and leave us nothing to say concerning the infinite. Such may be the condition of an idiot, or of the lower animals. But when running through the indefinite, we not only see that we cannot reach the infinite; we see that we can run through the indefinite, as long as we please.

Now this is as true of spiritual things as of geometrical. Take, as an example, this very form of intellectual power, the ability to see the relations of space. If we attempt to rise from the contemplation of the merest instinctive power to move in a straight line toward a desired object, up through various grades of geometrical power, to the highest mathematician; if we then attempt to rise to the conception of cherubim, excelling, in this geometric ability, Hamilton of Dublin, as far as he excelled Hamilton of Edinburgh; we see not only that this will never bring us to the conception of that Infinite Intellect which comprehends all the movements and forms of the universe, as but a fragment of his knowledge; but also what is, one might almost say, more important, we see that we can always be extending our own knowledge of the laws of space, and always forming clearer conceptions of still higher geometrical power. This is a positive approach toward that unattainable end, the conception of infinite geo-

metrical knowledge. We can form no conception of such infinite knowledge; yet we believe in its existence, and can form a definite conception of its relation to other infinities; we can see, for example, that to such knowledge all problems not in their own nature insoluble have been solved from all eternity. And this is no negative fruit of weakness, but a positive fruit of power; a power that prophesies never-ending growth for the human mind.

Our faculties, being finite, must find their only field in the finite; and in finite results of the relations of the infinities; we can relieve ourselves of the indeterminateness of infinities, if at all, only by a peculiar analysis, starting from the positive, not the negative side of infinity. It may also happen, when infinity is in question, that two apparently contradictory and mutually exclusive propositions are both true; we can by peculiar analysis, demonstrate the truth of each, and yet be unable to conceive of the mode of their reconciliation.

As an illustration of this last point, it is easy to demonstrate that a curve bends at every point, and does not bend at any point; these mutually contradictory propositions are both true, and each is fruitful of sound results. Or we may take an example of the infinitely large; the hyperbolic spiral starts in the axis, and yet starts in the asymptote, and these two straight lines are parallel, and at any distance apart. Hamilton gives us a spiritual example; he believes in free-will in man, and in the foreknowledge of God; the mathematicians, as we have just shown, cannot consistently charge him with absurdity in so doing. Hamilton accomplishes the practical reconciliation of these apparent contradictories by remanding them both, out of the sphere of reason into the sphere of faith; just as his great leader, Kant (whose antinomies of reason probably suggested the law of the conditioned), referred the ideas of God, freedom and immortality, which he thought could not be established by pure reason, to the sphere of the practical reason.

But this distinction, which Kant and Hamilton draw, between faith and practical reason on the one hand, and

pure reason or the cognitive faculty on the other, cannot be maintained. It is in the subject-matter of our thought that the real distinction lies; not in the faculty by which we apprehend it. Moreover, the antinomies into which we run in approaching the infinite, or other walls of mystery which limit our sphere of clearer thought, are in no case so near as it at first sight appears. The same power which has approached them in one case, and won new fields for the domain of science from lands formerly supposed to be without the wall, finds them receding in all other directions before a fearless but reverent step.

In the pure mathematics these limits of the imagination are three, — the infinitely small, the infinitely large, and the imaginary, — the word imaginary, in mathematics, signifying a third unimaginable. By the skill of analysts all forms of this third unimaginable in space and time, that is in pure mathematics, are reduced to one, which may be illustrated in two ways: first, as a time which not coinciding with a given epoch, is yet neither before nor after it; secondly, as a point, which not being in a given plane, is yet on neither side of it. The metaphysician has not thus analyzed the forms of absurdity or inconceivability, in other departments of thought, but it is manifest that the infinities enter to bewilder other students than those of geometry.

Our nature is not wholly finite, we cling to the infinite in all our affections; and even reason inevitably leads us to perceive that there is an infinite. It is true that we cannot deduce the existence of the infinite by syllogistic inference from data given in our finite consciousness. Yet some of the very philosophers who, like Kant and Hamilton, have most strongly asserted the impotence of reason to demonstrate the being of God, have nevertheless clung most strongly to their faith in God. They assert the impossibility of conceiving the infinite, yet they cling to their belief in the infinity of space, the eternity of time, and an Infinite Personality as the first cause of all; a triplet of contradictions. Why this ineradicable belief? Not from the weak-

ness of our intellect, but from its power; it is because we not only see no limit to being, but see that there is no limit; that there is being beyond every limit.

The mathematicians in their dealing with the infinite have learned, not only theoretically but practically, that when infinity appears in the premises no finite conclusion can be drawn. They invariably conduct their reasoning on finites, and the relations of finites; and afterwards substituting the infinite for the finite in the results, find finite relations between the infinities. But the metaphysicians dealing with ontological problems have seldom attained this practical wisdom. From the days of Plato down to the latest philosopher of our own century, the metaphysicians of every school, religious and irreligious, have been apt to start with axioms and definitions concerning the infinite or the inconceivable, and to deduce by syllogistic reasoning important parts of their systems. This process has naturally and inevitably led to inconsistent, clashing results. Each system of metaphysics has embraced truths and falsehoods, which no man has succeeded in separating; because every man has proceeded, more or less frequently and constantly, on the wrong method, attempting to deduce finite consequences from infinite premises; arguing from the infinite, and not toward it. The example of the geometers ought by this time to have taught them that, while we can go through indefinites towards infinities, we cannot retrace our steps.

The metaphysician says that the march through indefinites can never reach the infinite. But that is an error. The march through indefinites can reach the infinite, provided the march be always at an accelerating pace. And although we cannot conceive the infinite, as such, we can conceive, and conceive correctly, the result of this attainment of the infinite, when the result is finite. Nor is it impossible that we should thus get at two finite results, each true, and yet contradictories; their infinite distance preventing us from reconciling them; in which case we must accept both, in spite of their apparent contradiction.

This is unquestionably true in mathematics, and true also in metaphysics. Philosophers frequently prove, in a perfectly satisfactory way, each of two contradictory theorems. If we should take these questions up from their finite sides, looking, as Lessing says, to the key of common sense to see what answers we ought to get to the problems, we might, by peculiar processes of investigation, remove the indeterminateness of some, explain the contradictory nature of others, and thus increase the field of certainty. Some of those questions which we did not thus settle, we might demonstrate to be in their nature insoluble; as the mathematicians have shown for the extraction of surd roots, and the squaring of the circle; or in their nature unimaginable, like time neither before nor after a given epoch; and thus we should remove them from the sphere of controversy.

Kant's distinction between the pure and the practical reason, Hamilton's between the cognitive faculties and faith, Mansel's between speculative and regulative truths, are all untenable. The two sets of our faculties and the two sets of truths, thus distinguished, are substantially one, and their separation is an uncalled for concession to that school of philosophers who would bound our knowledge by that which can be logically deduced from the testimony of the senses. Time and space lie as distinctly out of the sphere of sensation as any spiritual entities can; and if we resist Comte's definition of the mathematics (degrading them, as Cicero complained that the Romans did, to the mere art of measuring), if we show that this definition cannot account for the action of the human mind, nor explain the triumphs of either ancient or modern geometers; we may also resist Mill's definition of the mind as a congeries of the possibilities of sensation, and Spencer's as the state of consciousness, and Spinoza's as the sum of our thoughts; show that such definitions cramp and pervert both psychology and ontology; and refuse to make the smallest concession to any philosophy that would make mind a mere modification of matter. The idealistic extreme were far more rational.

The fundamental power of the mind is its power of perception ; its power of recognizing objects of thought and thinking about them. The science of logic explaining certain of the processes of thinking, does not and cannot offer any explanation of the fact of perception. What I see, I must believe that I see ; and my only power of criticism, is the power to separate clearly the perception from the related or dependent truths which I may by unconscious and rapid inference (i.e. perception of relation), have drawn from it. The objects of direct perception may be divided into five classes : the first containing time and space ; the second, the external world ; the third, our fellow men ; the fourth, our own internal sphere of consciousness ; and the fifth, the ineffable First Cause. Our perceptions of these five objects differ in clearness ; and in the fruitfulness of inferences which may be drawn from them ; but it is, so to speak, the same mental power of sight which reveals to us each of the five classes of objects, and it is the same power of seeing relations that draws its inferences from what is seen in the objects. Theology stands on a different basis from physics, because its object, or subject-matter is different, rather than because it requires the exercise of different powers of mind in its treatment.

We see space and time by the mental eye, and recognize their relations to us, and ours to them. We deduce magnificently long trains of successful argument from these perceptions ; but we find also mysteries absolutely insoluble, even in these simplest of all objects ; we are forced to confess after all our ingenuity in inventing calculuses, that we are, even in geometry, fenced in by an impenetrable wall of the unknowable. Not on that account do we consider the acquisition of geometrical knowledge impossible. But precisely the same is true concerning each one of the five great fields open to human sight, including the grandest and most sublime, that of theology.

We see that there is, ever present, a Divine Cause of all things, and cannot refuse to see it. We recognize our re-

lations to him, and his to us, and draw the most sublime and cheering inferences from them. If it is replied that he is both infinite and absolute, and cannot stand related, the answer is obvious; that objection argues from the infinite to the finite, and cannot be sound; it would be justly parodied by saying that space is indivisible and infinite, and cannot therefore stand related, and cannot furnish a basis for geometry. It is true that the mysteries of the Divine Being transcend all our powers of reason and of imagination. But this does not render all knowledge of him impossible, so long as we perceive his presence and action ever about us, and may even reverently and gratefully say we see him, ever present in our souls and in the world.

Mansel, in his admirable Bampton Lectures, states with wonderful clearness and force the impossibility of our attaining to an exhaustive knowledge of God; but he not only draws from this feebleness of our faculties the just inference that we are to approach religious reasonings with great caution and modesty; he also, in several passages, seems to deny our ability to judge at all of divine things, or to attribute any meaning whatever to the terms in which God is described as holy, just, merciful, and true. In his desire, apparently, to exalt the value of revealed religion, he, in these passages, destroys his power to accept the evidences of revealed religion. If we have no knowledge whatever of God, except through the scriptures, how can we judge whether the scriptures came from God?

Herbert Spencer quotes with approval both Hamilton's and Mansel's statements of the impossibility of man's arriving at the knowledge of divine things, but draws from the doctrine very different conclusions from theirs. As before remarked, he points out the error of supposing that the infinite is simply the not finite, the unthinkable in magnitude or finitude. He shows that we have not merely the negative notion of "without bounds"; but the positive notion of "something without bounds"; that the idea of the infinite is the result, therefore, not of weakness, but of strength. Further, he

attempts to show that the Ultimate Infinite, the Cause of the universe, although necessarily conceived as existent, is, nevertheless, in every one of its attributes, totally inconceivable and unknowable. This he declares to be the final result, both in science and religion; both come to the acknowledgement of an utterly inscrutable and unknowable origin of all things. Religion, according to him, is the feeling of awe and mystery awakened by our having the presence of the unknowable constantly pressed upon our recognition. Science is the knowledge which leads up to and defines the limits separating the knowable from the unknowable. He speaks quite sharply of those who predicate personality of the first cause, and asks whether there may not be a mode of being as much transcending intelligence and will as these transcend mechanical motion. The ultimate cause, he says, cannot be in any respect conceived by us, because it is in every respect greater than we can conceive. Therefore, he concludes, we must refrain from assigning to it any attribute whatever; because any attribute conceivable by us would degrade the ultimate cause. And this position, Spencer declares is that religious position which is most religious.

Yet this position is inconsistent with the fundamental postulates of Herbert Spencer's own philosophy; inconsistent also with the principles by which he proves, against Mansel and Hamilton, that our idea of the infinite involves a positive side, an affirmative of existence. Moreover, this doctrine of Spencer, like Comte's Positive Philosophy, asks us to hold the mind in unstable equilibrium, always believing in the existence of a being, to which indeed our attention is perpetually directed, but to which we cannot, and must not, assign any attribute whatever. Compliance with this commandment is simply impossible. I know beings only through their attributes; I recognize their being only through the recognition of their attributes; and cannot, therefore, recognize the existence of the Ultimate Cause, except by his attributes.

After reading this impossible and self-contradictory demand

of Spencer, we can bear with equanimity the pitying and condescending tone in which he informs us that our culture has probably not been sufficient to enable us to accept the great truth which he has revealed. His doctrine of the unknowable, his doctrine of the nature of the ego, and of volition, all contradict what he himself calls the universal postulate. Any belief that invariably exists in the mind, that you cannot by any effort of the imagination, even for a moment, suppose to be false, that belief is true. This is Spencer's universal postulate. And he not only admits, but strongly maintains that the existence of the ultimate cause is avouched to us by this canon. Yet he says that we must assign to this cause no attribute whatever. But this is impossible; we cannot, by any act of the imagination, even for one moment, conceive of the existence of a being, except by conceiving it with attributes; the existence is conceived only by the conception of the attributes. You cannot for one instant divest yourself of the belief that the Ultimate Cause of the universe is a cause; and that is the assigning to it of the attribute of power, of causal energy.

Moreover, it is impossible for a cultivated man, like Spencer, who has by education learned to distinguish what he sees, — it is impossible for him to behold the rational, intelligible, and beneficent order of the universe, and not attribute intelligence and benevolence to the Ultimate Cause. He deceives himself with words when he says that he can. He betrays, in many passages of his writings, his ineradicable faith that there is no vice in the constitution of things, that every thing is in the process of harmonious evolution, that all things work together for good to those who surrender the private to the universal. His very law of evolution, which his over-enthusiastic friends think the greatest utterance of human language, is an implicit announcement of the presence of thought and beneficence in every part of the universe in every geologic age. And, without reference to Spencer's law, every student of natural science acts upon a steadfast faith that the operations of nature follow a rational, intel-

ligible, order; he cannot, even momentarily, divest himself of this faith; and this is equivalent to saying that he cannot divest himself of the belief that the Ultimate Cause of nature is intelligent. When Spencer supposes that he has done so, it is simply because he has fastened on the finite side of our conceptions of intelligence; and he very properly refuses to assign the limitations, and deficiencies of human intelligence to the Infinite Creator. But his doctrine of the unknowable is an unwarranted inference from propositions concerning the infinite, doubly unwarranted; first, because it is illogically drawn; secondly, because his premises contain the infinite; and we can never reason to finite conclusions from infinite premises. Whether the eye was made for seeing, whether the rose was made to please man, these are finite questions, and no conclusion on these questions can be reached by starting from a consideration of the infinite. On the other hand, relations which hold in the finite, may, from the law of their changes as their relatives pass through the indefinite, be proved to hold in the infinite. The ultimate source of all, infinite, eternal, unbounded, may then be unknowable; while yet there are innumerable truths concerning him, accessible to man without recourse to revelation. *Τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα Αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἢ τε ἀίδιος Αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης.*

When St. Paul declares that the invisible power and divine attributes of God are clearly seen, he announces what we understand to be sound philosophy in regard to intuitions; he asserts the power of the soul to see, to recognize the presence of beings around us. Two theories concerning intuitions have, at different times, exerted a retarding influence upon philosophy. The first was that of innate ideas; the doctrine that we are born with knowledge, an error arising it is said, first from a misinterpretation of Plato, confounding perception with imagination, and making both wholly subjective phenomena; this error was warmly attacked by Locke. The second and more important theory is that of Kant's forms of thought, which has been vigorously controverted

by Herbert Spencer in his first principles of psychology. But after confuting the views of the Kantians, Spencer falls into an opposite error. His discussion relates only to the intuitions of space and time, which many transcendentalists, from a misinterpretation, it is said, of Kant, assert to be not the perception of realities outside the mind, but simply forms given by the mind to external realities revealed by experience. Spencer shows very clearly that space and time do not belong to the mind, but to the external universe; proving his thesis by metaphysical argument, and by psychological induction. But he immediately rushes into the error of Comte, concluding that space is an attribute of matter, "the relation of coexistence," and time is the "relativity of position among the states of consciousness," that is sequence of thoughts. Thus space would be confounded with extension, and time with duration; errors as mischievous as those of the transcendentalists. The empiric philosophy of the Latin race, leading them thus to confound space with extension, destroyed their interest in geometry; not a single mathematician and scarce one physicist, appears in the annals of Rome, from her foundation to her fall.

The intuitions are true acts of perception by the soul; the most satisfactory simplicity and truthfulness is given to our philosophy by thus enlarging the field of perception until it embraces all cognizable existence. This may be illustrated by this very example, the intuition of space.

To assert, with some of the transcendentalists, that space is a form of thought imposed by the mind upon the universe, is a violation of Spencer's universal postulate, a contradiction of the common sense of mankind. For we cannot even for an instant imagine the possible non-existence of space. Kant himself, whose logical canon has been, it is said, misconstrued into the denial of the objective existence of space, certainly affirms the impossibility of the mind divesting itself, even momentarily, of its faith in the objective existence of space. On the other hand, to assert with the empiricists that space is mere co-existence of the parts of the universe, that it is

mere extension in matter, is equally a contradiction of common sense, and a violation of the universal postulate. For it is impossible to think space conditional on the existence of matter. It is difficult to believe matter infinitely extended, it is impossible to believe space otherwise. And if space be merely an attribute of matter, why is it impossible to imagine space annihilated? and why do we deem the truths of geometry necessary truths?

The empiricists would explain this sense of the necessary existence of space, by the uniformity of our experience. Spencer in adopting this line of argument, contradicts his own universal postulate. Moreover, the explanation explains nothing; how can uniformity of experience generate the conception of the necessity of the thing experienced? The extension of matter is no more uniform an experience than is its existence; and yet Spencer himself, says we can conceive of annihilating matter, but not of annihilating space.

But the third doctrine concerning space is the common sense idea, that space is space; not a form of our thought, nor a form of matter, but existing independently of our thoughts, and of the presence of matter; a simple, indefinable entity in whose infinite extension the finite extensions of matter are included; in whose eternal durations, the changes of the material world find their time of manifestation. Its existence is revealed to me by inward sight, just as the existence of an outward world is revealed to me by sense perceptions. I see space, that is the reason I believe it exists, and cannot with the transcendentalists make it a law of my own mind, nor with the empiricist make it an attribute of matter. I see it, and I see in it no other attributes than that of extension in three dimensions, upon which, and upon the abstract imagination of position, derived from matter, the science of geometry is built. I see space extending indefinitely in all directions; and can see no possibility of limiting it in any direction. Its simplicity and infinity and eternity relieve me from any necessity of supposing a cause for its existence; and I am entirely at a loss to imagine its

relations to the Ultimate Cause of the material and spiritual universe; other than this, that space is a field wherein that Cause has arranged the Kosmos.

We see space, but it is because the eye has been educated to see it; by a process which is so admirably described by Spencer, that it seems strange that he does not recognize its meaning. The eye is educated to see space, as the ear is educated to hear harmony. An untutored ear frequently fails to recognize harmonies, and hears only melodies; but the same ear, after cultivation, recognizes the relations of simultaneous tones with the greatest exactness. The physicist demonstrates that this perception of harmony is the perception of a really existent external fact. Thus also the metaphysician shall demonstrate that the perception of space attained by geometrical cultivation is the perception of a really existent entity about us.

This power of inward perception reveals to us other things than the existence of space and time. The clear sight of the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, is not by vision of the outward eye; but it is real, it is a direct inward vision of the divine attributes. Without some power in the soul to see what is divine, theology would be as impossible as a knowledge of painting is to the blind, or of music to those born deaf. No instruction can lead a man to receive and accept truths, unless he has, at least, some native capacity to see those truths. Of course, a man may believe more than he clearly understands,—there is some truth in Hamilton's saying, that the horizon of our faith is much wider than the horizon of our knowledge. We may even believe that a proposition is true when we do not understand it at all; but in that case we do not strictly believe in the proposition, but only in a proposition about it. Much more may we believe that a proposition is true, when in addition to believing that it embodies truth, we understand and believe a part of the truth which it embodies. But we cannot believe in the truth which it embodies, unless we see with our own vision, however dimly and partially, both the terms and the relation.

Yet we must acknowledge that the power is sometimes claimed of seeing that which is really non-existent; and also that it is rare to find an observer who knows what he sees, even with the outward eye. The outward eye sees with a power varying greatly in different men, according to natural gift, and according to education; so that the report which men give to themselves and to others, of what they have seen, agrees or disagrees with the thing seen, according to native and acquired differences in the sense, the imagination, and the judgment of the observer. If this be so, even with matters of outward sight, it is more emphatically true concerning the inward vision of divine things. Some persons see so dimly, and others are so unwilling to see, that they say, or even think, that they do not see at all; others think that they actually see that which they only infer from various data; others, through vividness of imagination, mistake visions for vision. Thus some declare all religion unreal, and make the soul merely the movement of the brain; and others declare themselves immediately conscious of immortality, and of the presence of God. Both these assertions are at first sight improbable. If religion were altogether unreal, it would be difficult to account for the universal prevalence of religious faith. If, on the other hand, man had immediate consciousness of God and of immortality, it were difficult to account for the frequent appearance of pantheism, atheism, and secularism. What then is the golden mean of truth between these extremes?

In sense-perception we are directly conscious of ourselves as recipients of an impression from without. The consciousness of perception thus gives us two beings—self, recognized as percipient; matter, recognized as causing sensation. This sensation may be greatly varied in its form, and thus give us varied information concerning its cause. The consciousness of the simplest sensation is also complex. I see vermillion. That act gives me my own existence, my power of sight, my power of distinguishing colors, my actual exercise of the power. It also gives the existence of something out-

side my consciousness, which awakens in me this perception of a brilliant red. Nor can any man doubt any of the truths thus given; he cannot doubt his own existence, he cannot doubt his power of sight, he cannot doubt the existence of something which he sees, nor doubt its power of making him think it red. Some realistic metaphysicians have been perplexed by the modern discoveries of the tardy motion of light; but the perplexity is needless. I see vermilion, and I see it is red; that testimony of my sight is true, whatever theory of light and colors stands or falls; whether in some other light it would or would not be of a different color; whether the vermilion is ten feet distant from me, and now existent, or ten diameters of the solar system and annihilated an hour ago: The eye does not testify to sulphide of mercury, but only to something external which is red; and that something may be merely undulations in the ether.

In this simple act of sense-perception there is also an inward perception, or intuition of cause. Whenever we perceive a change, in ourselves or in the world, we are constrained to believe in a cause of that change. That constraint comes from a direct intuition of power, as an entity. The outward sense sees the hammer strike the nail, and sees the nail sink under the blow. The inner sense sees that the nail could not sink without a cause. It sees also that the moving hammer contains power as the cause of its moving. Hence the inference is natural, that the power in the hammer is the cause of the motion of the nail. The inner sense also perceives the effect of the blow upon our own feelings, and upon our own attention. It is of no importance to the present argument to decide in which direction we first see causal energy, whether in our own volition or in the power of the external world to produce sensations in us, or in the action of matter upon matter; we at all events see, by a sharper sense than outward sense, the presence in the world of power, force, or causal energy. All changes within and without we see to demand a cause, and we are led to pursue the chain of causation backward, until we reach one Original Cause, without beginning and without need of cause.

This Herbert Spencer has shown, as clearly as any writer, is the inevitable end of speculation concerning causes; we must recognize an ultimate cause which is uncaused. This is the first direct vision of divine things; the soul attains it by patient attention to the chain of causes.

Here Herbert Spencer would have us end; he pronounces the ultimate cause to be not only unknown, but unknowable. But man sees, in his first act of sense-perception, two substances in action, himself and the outward world. He recognizes these two substances by entirely different attributes, one by its power to produce, the other by its power to perceive sensations. In higher acts of perception, he discovers new points of difference between himself and matter; each acts as a cause of motion, but he alone can guide motion to fulfil plans, gratify desires, obey volitions. Hence in speculating upon the causes of phenomena, he divides the causes into intelligent and non-intelligent; and thus at a very early period in his conscious life, recognizes the existence of his fellow-men.

Furthermore, when man looks upon the outward world, he is as much impressed with the likeness of nature to art, as with the likeness of art to nature. The forms of nature, also conform to ideal, intellectual patterns; the movements of nature accomplish beautiful and beneficent results. He thus perceives that even the forces of nature are obedient to intellect and to will; a higher intellect and will than the human. Now this is a direct perception, indistinct though it may be, of a divine truth; that the spirit of man has a likeness to the Infinite Spirit which moves the universe.

Theists, Pantheists, and Positivists will, however, join in attacking this position; they will warn us from ascribing personality to God; will perhaps assert that it is as degrading to the Infinite Being to ascribe to him the highest attributes of humanity, as it would be to assign to him our lower passions. Nevertheless, Paul was right, and we see, in contemplating the world, the Divine Personality, or spiritual nature of its Author.

In the Ultimate Cause of the universe must lie the power of producing motion in all its forms, else the universe would not contain motion. It is not degrading him to say that he is the source of the physical forces which move the world. The ultimate cause must also contain the power of arranging things according to intelligible plans, else the world would not be arranged in its complex and perfect harmony. Undoubtedly the Ultimate Cause transcends in his modes of being, all our possible conceptions of intelligence and will. Nevertheless, the intelligible and beneficent order of the Kosmos shows that those modes of the Divine Being include our highest conceptions of intelligence and goodness; and this is, of course, all that we can mean by saying that God is a Spirit and a Person. Spirit and matter are the only two entities with power, —substances,—given to us in consciousness, and we necessarily liken all other substances, including the Ultimate or First Cause, to one of these; and between these we cannot but choose spirit as the cause of matter, rather than matter as the cause of spirit; thought or intelligence is the most probable cause of the wonderful order of the universe.

In the simplest act of sense-perception is revealed also to us our freedom; we can attend to, or refuse to attend to, the sensation. In the process of our experience we find arising out of our sense of freedom a sense also of right and wrong. Probing this question of moral duty, to discover an ultimate test in distinguishing right from wrong, we find revealed to our inward vision, a moral order of the spiritual universe; as profound and as beautiful as the intelligible order of physical nature. The ultimate decision of a question of right, on which men hopelessly differ, we see must lie open to the intellect which planned the whole. This is a still higher vision of divine things; we see by direct vision the existence of right and wrong; we see that the difference between them is known to the intelligent First Cause.

Once more; in our simple act of sense-perception, substance is revealed as comparatively permanent; neither the percipient self, nor the thing perceived, is created by the per-

ception, nor annihilated by its cessation. The question of our own duration, our own permanence, is thus presented, and we find a shrinking from the thought of our own annihilation. Our thoughts rise to the contemplation of the Ultimate Cause of the universe, and we see that he must have been without beginning and shall be without end. Even Spencer, while saying that we must ascribe no attributes to the Ultimate Cause, pronounces that Cause to be eternal and omnipresent. Here then are glimpses of God's eternity and man's immortality.

Finally, we contemplate a man acting against his own conviction of right; and we irresistibly feel that sooner or later the right must be avenged; that a man thus acting is violating the conditions on which alone life is possible; that the order of the universe and the progress of events cannot allow permanent prosperity to a violator of the right. This sense of condemnation for sin, this faith in a coming retribution, arises from an intuitive vision of the justice of God, and is so ineradicable, so inextinguishable, that the failure of retribution in this life, so far from shaking our faith in that justice, only strengthens our faith in a hereafter for man.

However impossible, therefore, it may be for a finite creature to comprehend the Infinite Creator, it is nevertheless clear that man has a direct vision of some of the attributes of the Creator. We see his power, as the efficient cause of all phenomena; we see his wisdom displayed in the beautiful and marvellous order of creation; we see his love in the beneficent operation of natural laws; we see his holiness, his justice, his eternity, as well as glimpses of man's immortality, when we look directly at the relations of the soul to its Creator. These all bear the essential marks of direct vision, just as truly as sense-perceptions do. No keenness of analysis ever succeeded in explaining one of them as an inference from any simpler truth. Such analysis has frequently been attempted, especially by the empiric school; but when we examine their attempts, we find they omit from analysis, the essential point to be analyzed. They resolve cause into invari-

able sequences, omitting the notion of efficiency or power, the very thing to be considered. They resolve right into expediency; evading the very point why we distinguish so emphatically between the two. But the need of causal efficiency in an Eternal Being, to produce the transitory world; the need of intelligence in the creation and guidance of this goodly frame; the presence of divine love, in the adaptation of nature to human needs; the holiness and justice ruling over human affairs; these are self-evident and necessary to the man who patiently, steadily looks at them; the very philosophers who have been led by vicious arguments from the infinite to attempt to deny them, nevertheless betray in unguarded moments their ineradicable faith in them. The self-evidence and necessity of these truths guarantees them to be truths of direct vision. In our power to see them lies the glory of our intellectual nature; in the power to see divine things; and it is the salvation of the soul, when, seeing divine truth, we seize it with the living and earnest grasp of faith. Herein lies the true distinction between reason and faith, whether in geometry or theology; reason sees and assents to truth; faith sees and consents, lays hold of the truth as a part of our own life. It is this ability to see and believe the things of God, which enables man to receive the revelation through the written and spoken word; and the higher the native ability of a man the greater the value of the revelation to him. It is in vain to give the best instruction in geometry to a student who is utterly deficient in mathematical power; but the best text-books and instruction are of most value to those who have the highest native genius, and who can appreciate their opportunities.

Thus also in theology; those whose vision of divine things is by nature clearest, and whose hearts are most nearly free from sin, are, in general, the very persons who most eagerly welcome, and most thoroughly profit by, the revelations made upon Mt. Sinai, and upon the mount of beatitudes, on the mount of transfiguration, on Calvary, and on Olivet. It is very difficult for us, brought up in the noonday of Christian

light, to decide how much we owe of our knowledge of God to the Teacher who spake as never man spake. We may err upon either side. We may overvalue our own ability, fail to recognize the light which flows from the divine word, and overrate our powers of unaided vision in discerning things that pertain to God. On the other hand, if we say that without Christ we have no knowledge of divine things, then we assert that man has no power to recognize the Christ; no test whereby to know that he came from God. But to fair-minded observers, whether believers in divine revelation or not, it is apparent that one of the strongest arguments in favor of admitting the royal claims of Jesus, is the wonderfully beautiful coincidence of every doctrine of his discourse, and every manifestation of his character, with our own conception of what is highest, most true, most worthy of the incarnate Word of God.

ARTICLE II.

GALILEE IN THE TIME OF CHRIST.

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I. INTRODUCTION.

ONE gets, in general, a very poor impression of Galilee from the allusions made to it in commentaries and sermons. The province is spoken of as having been, in the time of our Lord, one of the most "obscure" and "despised" of the Roman empire; and Nazareth has the misfortune of being represented as then an "insignificant village," whose inhabitants were "ignorant," and even "immoral." Such is, perhaps, the general impression of Galilee; but it is far enough from the truth. The writers of the Gospels invariably speak of Nazareth as a "city" (πόλις), and in no case do they call it a "village" (κώμη); and it is quite probable that its population amounted to fifteen or twenty thousand