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ARTICLE I.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF DR. BLEDSOE.

The Sufferings and Salvation of Infants, and Reviewers Reviewed, being Dr. BLEDSOE'S rejoinder to the strictures of the SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW on his *Theodicy*. Southern Review, January, 1871.

History of Infant Baptism. Southern Review, April, 1874.

The Southern Review and Infant Baptism. Southern Review, July, 1874.

The Suffering and Salvation of Infants. Southern Review, January, 1875.

Infant Baptism and Salvation in the Calvinistic System. By C. P. KRAUTH, D. D.

Our Critics. Southern Review, October, 1875.

The Perseverance of the Elect. Southern Review, Jan., 1876.

We have a long score to settle with Dr. Bledsoe. Something more than twenty years have elapsed since we noticed, in two *critiques*, his great work, then newly published, "the *Theodicy*." This dogmatic and spirited book, as we then showed, has for its key-note the Pelagian doctrine, that, in consequence of the self-determination of the rational will, omnipotence itself cannot efficaciously control a soul without destroying its freedom. And the great "theodicy" or vindication of Dr. Bledsoe, for God's admission of sin into his universe is, that *he could not help it*. These strictures Dr. Bledsoe resents in his Review of January,

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ARTICLE II.

THE MODERN DOCTRINE OF THE UNKNOWNABLE.

First Principles of a New System of Philosophy. By HERBERT SPENCER. Second Edition. Appleton & Co. 1871.

An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, and of the Principal Questions Discussed in his Writings. By JOHN STUART MILL. Third Edition. London: Longmans, Green, Reade & Dyer. 1867.

The Philosophy of the Infinite. By JAMES CALDERWOOD, D. D. *The Province of Reason.* By JOHN YOUNG, LL.D. Edinburgh and New York: Carter & Bros. 1860.

An Examination of Mr. J. S. Mill's Philosophy: being a Defence of Fundamental Truth. By JAMES MCCOSH, D. D., LL.D.

Systematic Theology. By CHARLES HODGE, D. D. Vol. I. Ch. Scribner & Co. 1872.

Essays in Philosophy and Theology. By JAMES MARTINEAU. Boston: 1868.

The Human Intellect. By NOAH PORTER, LL.D. Ninth Edition.

Recent British Philosophy: a Review, with Criticisms, including some Comments on Mr. Mill's Answer to Sir William Hamilton. By DAVID MASSON. London and Cambridge: Macmillan & Co. 1865.

In a recent number of this REVIEW, the attention of our readers was called to the metaphysical postulate of Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his "First Principles;" and the endeavor was made to shake the confidence of those who have accepted the "New System of Philosophy" in its teachings regarding the Unknowable. We attempted there to show that even if that postulate be granted, the results claimed by Mr. Spencer do not necessarily follow; and further, that, to say the least, the justice of that postulate may be reasonably questioned. The postulate involved we proved to be the same with the conclusion of the late Dean Mansel, in his "Limits of Religious Thought." We have in view in the present article, to give a careful examination to the doctrine of that treatise, with a view to showing that the premises of Mr. Spencer's argument in "First Principles" are without

foundation in truth; and now proceed at once to arraign the theory of the Unconditioned, advocated in the Dean's "Bampton Lectures," as being opposed alike to sound principles of logic, sound principles of psychology, and sound principles of metaphysics.

I. The Hamiltonian view of the Unconditioned (as expounded by Mansel,) involves fatal errors of logic. These may be conveniently arranged under three heads: Sophisms arising from ambiguous terms; sophisms arising from inaccurate definitions; and sophisms arising out of suicidal reasonings. Let us consider these in the order stated. We have, then,

1. Sophisms growing out of the illicit use of ambiguous terms. It need not be pointed out, that of the many sources of fallacy, this is one of the most common as well as one or the most fruitful. It only remains to give a few examples.

(1.) And the first that we shall indicate is in the peculiar use that is made of the word "relative," in the expression "the relativity of knowledge." It would be carrying coals to Newcastle, to undertake the proof that the whole theory of the Unconditioned now under examination, is dependent on Sir W. Hamilton's somewhat obscure doctrine of "the relativity of human knowledge." But this expression, "the relativity of our knowledge," is capable of being understood in any one of a plurality of different meanings; and (as Mr. Mill has shown conclusively,*) Hamilton and Mansel pass from one to another of these distinct senses in a manner that is very confusing and certainly illegitimate. When the relativity of all our knowledge is affirmed, one or other of four things is meant. It is meant that we cannot know the "inmost nature or essence" of the object said to be known, but only certain impressions which that object produces on our senses [or minds]. In other words, it is meant that we cannot know the nature or even the existence of a world of Noumena, but only of a world of Phenomena.† This is the doctrine of relativity accepted by Mill and the extreme Positivists. Or

*Ex. Ham., Chaps. III., IV., VI., VII. *et passim*.

†An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy. London, 1867, p. 14.

it is meant that we cannot know the object as it exists in itself as contradistinguished from its properties ; although we may know its existence, and something, too, of its nature, through its properties. This sense of the phrase, "relativity of our knowledge," is discounted by Mill,* but is a sense in which the phrase is often used by Hamilton, Thornwell, and others, and is the only important sense in which the doctrine stands true. The two remaining senses of the expression are justly set aside by Mill as trivialities ; though Dr. McCosh has judged them worthy of a restatement.† They are these : "Either that we can only know what we have the power of knowing ; or else that all our knowledge is relative to us, inasmuch as we know it."‡ There is indeed a fifth sense the words might seem to bear, viz., that we know things partly as they are in themselves, (considered irrespectively of our knowledge of them,) and partly as they are reported to us through the medium of our knowing powers. On this view, "our absolute knowledge may be vitiated by the presence of a relative element."§ But as Mill well says, one holding this opinion could not consistently assert that *all* our knowledge is relative ; but only that we are liable to mistake our relative for our absolute knowledge.||

Sir W. Hamilton's serene and formidable critic goes on to argue that the doctrine of the "Relativity of Human Knowledge," though true in one or two senses of the expression, and though employed by Sir William in more than one and in true senses of the expression, is nevertheless ordinarily employed by him in a sense which makes the doctrine a false one. and that the employment of the expression in this false sense is essential to Hamilton's argument against Cousin to establish the unthinkableness of the Unconditioned ;¶ but that Sir William was himself probably mistaken in thinking that he himself held this false doctrine ; or he had perhaps abandoned it by the time that he came to write his Dissertations.** Mill points out the seemingly irreconcilable positions of Sir W. Hamilton, as to perception and as to rela-

*Ibid., *ubi supra*.

†Laws of Fundamental Thought, Chap. X.

‡Examination of Hamilton, p. 15. §Ib., p. 16. ¶Ib., *ubi sup*.

¶Ibid., p. 6.

** Ibid., p. 29.

tivity, and thus hits the blot exactly. "He affirms without reservation," says Mill, "that certain attributes (extension, figure, etc.) are known to us as they really exist out of ourselves; and also that our knowledge is relative to us. And these two assertions are only reconcilable [*sic*], if relativity to us is understood in the altogether trivial sense, that we know them only so far as our faculties permit." (*Ibid.*, p. 29.) Mill hence concludes that Sir W. Hamilton himself really repudiated the doctrine he imagined himself to have espoused—"repudiated it in every sense which makes it otherwise than a barren truism." (*Ib.*, p. 29.) Mill then gives some of Hamilton's own definitions of relativity. "You will be able, I hope, to understand what is meant by the proposition that all our knowledge is only relative. It is relative, 1st. Because existence is not cognisable absolutely in itself, but only in special modes. 2d. Because these modes can be known only if they stand in a certain relation to our faculties."* Now, says Mill, "whoever can find anything more in these two statements, than that we do not know all about a thing, but only so much of it as we are capable of knowing, is either more ingenious or more fortunate than myself."

(2.) A similar and equally perilous ambiguity is found in the words "conditioned," "unconditioned," "infinite," and "absolute."

It was reserved for President Porter, of Yale College, in his very able work on the Human Intellect,† to submit to a patient, and, as it would appear, exhaustive, analysis the various terms that occur so often in this discussion, and to give a judicious and comprehensive statement of what seems to many to be the exact truth, so far as known, on the whole subject under investigation. This author clearly establishes the point, that the words *limited* and *conditioned* are not always synonymous. The first of these terms is plain enough; the second is ambiguous. As properly

* Lectures. p. 148.

† Human Intellect, ninth edition, Chap. VIII., pp. 645-662. It is due to Dr. Porter to say, that what is stated above, respecting the equivocal words employed in this discussion, is little more than an abstract of that valuable chapter.

used, the word *conditioned* denotes that which *depends* on something other than itself for what it is and does. The universe is said to be conditioned, in that it is dependent on certain causes, laws, and ends. The finite is that which has bounds or limits; and these limits are also *conditions* of its existence, or of the mental act by which the mind conceives it. The unlimited, the infinite, the unconditioned, the absolute, are all, strictly speaking, negative terms. The *infinite* is the unbounded. The primary application of the term (as of its positive correlate) is to spacial *quantity*, and then to duration and number; the secondary to the exercise of *power* by material and spiritual agents. The infinite is the not-finite, and the term has as many possible senses as the term finite has. The un-conditioned, in like manner, is the not-conditioned, and the term again has as many possible senses as the term conditioned has. In its primary use, the word conditioned properly denotes *necessary dependence*; in its secondary use, spacial or temporal or numerical limitation. The process is thus the reverse of the process in the case of the finite. The *finite* proceeds from a signification of *quantity* to one of *quality*; whereas, the conditioned proceeds from a signification of *quality* to one of *quantity*. This important fact, and the still more important distinction which it involves, are both overlooked by Sir William Hamilton, as well as by those who accept his position as to the relation of the human mind to the infinite and absolute.

It is essential to observe here, (as is done by Dr. Porter.)* that there is a special sense in which the terms *conditioned* and *unconditioned* are employed by Hamilton and Mansel, and one which enlarges the range of their signification. With them the conditioned is equivalent to the *related*, and the unconditioned to the *unrelated*.

The word *absolute*, once more, means *freed-from*, *released from*, *cut off*, and then *finished* or *completed*, and thus *perfect*. The adjective and corresponding adverb are applied to any thought or thing regarded simply in itself; that is to say, without reference to any of its relations. The transition is easy from

*Ibid., p. 649.

this to the sense of *complete within or by itself*. The term is next applied to that which is thus complete, so far as regards the relations of *dependence*. In this meaning it is equivalent to the word *independent*, and nearly so to the word unconditioned, in its *primary* sense. It is next employed in a sense involving severance from all relations whatever, as denoting the *unrelated*, that which does not admit of any relations. This is the sense in which it is used, and unwarrantably and sophistically used, by Mansel. Then it comes to be applied to objects of *quantity*, to the complete or finished sum-total of existence, whether limited or not in extent and duration. Thus Hegel, by the term *absolute*, means the totality of being, after the travelling *Begriff* (or Idea) has found its complete development and finished expression in the conscious *spirit* of humanity.

Dr. Porter, following Professor Calderwood and Dr. Young, then proceeds to point out that the three equivocal terms are liable to further ambiguity, owing to the uncertainty which may exist as to whether they are used in an abstract or a concrete sense.*

It is now many years since one of the younger pupils of Sir William Hamilton, Professor Calderwood of Edinburgh, undertook to bring out an elaborate rejoinder to the great master; which he did in his "Philosophy of the Infinite," a work remarkable for its clearness, its acuteness, its fulness, and its independence. Perhaps the most interesting part of the book is the Appendix, where he gives the now famous letter which he received from Sir William himself, in criticism of the first edition, together with his own respectful but decided and often cogent replies; and where he convicts Hamilton of logical inconsistency on a comparison of his theory of Perception on the one hand, and his doctrine of Relativity and his classification of the mental powers, on the other.

Soon after the appearance of Professor Calderwood's treatise, and when it began to be criticised by Dean Mansel and others, Dr. John Young of Edinburgh, the author of "The Christ of History,"

**Cf.* Mill Ex. Ham., p. 112. It is perhaps too much to say of Hamilton, or even of Mansel, that he ever consciously regarded the absolute as—the unrelated. Yet the Bampton argument requires it.

came to the rescue, both of Sir William Hamilton and of Dr. Calderwood, in a richly-freighted little volume, entitled "The Province of Reason." So far as Sir William is concerned, the new champion contended that the strictures of the Edinburgh Professor do not apply. So far as Professor Calderwood's book has to deal with the Bampton Lecturer,* Dr. Young is wholly and cordially on the same side. After a brilliant résumé of the Continental philosophy, from Kant to Hegel, the author of "The Province of Reason" recapitulates with a bold but accurate hand the main positions taken in "The Philosophy of the Infinite," and proceeds to advance certain positions of his own, often very similar to those of his predecessor, but now and then quite unique. One of the most striking of the many good points that he makes against Dean Mansel, and one that has attracted the notice and admiration of Professor Calderwood, is where he convicts the Bampton Lecturer of confounding a *qualitative* with a *quantitative* infinite.† The entire argument of Dr. Young is concentrated, vivid, enthusiastic; but at times his doctrine is loose or his statements are unguarded. This is seldom the case, however, in the critical, but only in the constructive portion of the treatise. We think he is unjust to the eminent lecturer in denying that in his book Dean Mansel allows to faith what he is unwilling to accord to knowledge. The position of Hamilton and of Mansel is one and the same as to our *belief* in the infinite and absolute as a reality. With this exception, the ground taken by the two critics of the Bampton Lecturer we regard as unassailable. No matter what may or may not have been correctly argued by the two disciples of Kant concerning these vague abstractions, "the absolute," "the infinite," "the unconditioned," their sharp-eyed critics have, in our judgment, made good their point, that the knowledge of an absolute and infinite *God* is not inconceivable.

Besides the confusion of a "qualitative" with a "quantitative" "infinite," which was pointed out by Dr. Young and Dr. Calder-

*In his first edition Calderwood only discussed Hamilton. In the second, he also discusses Mansel.

†Prov. Reason, p. 72., *et seq.*

wood, and has more recently been animadverted upon by President Porter, there is also apparent throughout Dean Mansel's argument, as we have already seen, the confusion of an infinite (absolute) *being* with an infinite (absolute) *abstraction*. From this there results a fallacy which, in its consequence, is fatal to his whole undertaking. Sir William Hamilton's cool-headed reviewer, Mr. Mill, maintains that when we speak of the "absolute" and the "infinite" as unthinkable, we must mean (in order to avoid self-contradiction) "absolute existence" and "infinite being;" and that there is here a *positive* element in our conception—inasmuch as we still think of existence or being as *something* which absoluteness or infinitude is predicated.* But the learned Dean, as we have had occasion to notice, argues indifferently from one of these meanings to the other, and therefore of course in the most inconsequent manner. We can heartily adopt, in the main, the language in which Mill sums up the amount of what Hamilton has accomplished in his celebrated essay in the *Edinburgh Review*: "Our author has merely proved the uncognoscibility of a being which is *nothing but* infinite, or *nothing but* absolute: and since nobody supposes that there is such a being, but only beings which are something positive carried to the infinite, or to the absolute, to have established this point cannot be regarded as any great achievement."†

A large part of the reasoning of Dean Mansel and his school goes upon the assumption that the Absolute is the same with the wholly unrevealed. This fallacy has been distinctly pointed out by several of the critics of Sir William Hamilton.‡ It is nothing but the old sophism of Spinoza, which was expressed by him in the formula, "*Omnis determinatio est negatio.*" What is essential to the conception or to the real existence of the Abso-

*This, it will be remembered, is precisely the point made by Spencer himself in his "Qualification" of the general approval he had given to Mansel's argument.

†Exam. Ham., pp. 69 and 70. Cf. the admirable discussion on pp. 119, 120, etc.

‡*E. g.*, Hodge's *Theology*, Vol. I., p. 358; Cf. *Province of Reason*, p. 150; and *Phil. Inf.*, p. 177.

lute, is, however, not the exclusion of *all*, but only of some, relations, viz., *the relations of dependent being or origination*.^{*} It is not true that the Absolute, whether considered as a concept or an entity, is devoid of *interior* relations. This point is strongly asserted [in opposition to the Scotch and English School of Ne-science,] by the author of the "Province of Reason," and is again urged by the Yale President. The Absolute is thus not a something *entirely one and simple*. Upon the opposite view there is, again, no escape from the logic of Spinoza. It is equally untrue that the Absolute is without *exterior* relations. It is self-evident that, on Hamiltonian principles, the Absolute is related to the human faculty of believing. Further than this, it is certain [as Mr. Martineau has suggested,] that everything in the universe of being *exists in relation*; and this is especially true of the infinite, as having a greater multitude of points of contact with the finite than any finite object can have with another.

Intimately connected with the fallacy just exposed, and indeed logically bound up with it, is the one which receives its most naked form in the statement that the Absolute (Infinite) is the sum-total of existence. It is amazing to find such a thinker as the late Dean Mansel arguing as if, having proved something to be true of the Absolute in this sense, he had *eo ipso* proved it of the Absolute Jehovah. This confusion of thought pervades the whole fabric of the Dean's argument. That argument relies on the notion that the Absolute is the sum of all being. This notion is an utterly false one. This is the grand blunder of the German Idealists. To identify the Absolute with the aggregate of what exists, were to confound the cause with the effect. The *absurdum* of Spinoza is thus unavoidably reached, viz., that there is but one being or substance in the universe, and that this being or substance and the universe are one and the same. The fact is that, according to a sagacious thinker,^{*} the terms *unconditioned* and *infinite*, though often used in that way, do not, in strict propriety of speech, apply to quantity at all; space and time being not themselves quantities, but the conditions of quantity.

^{*} Porter's Human Intellect, p. 653.

†Porter, p 654. Cf. Prov. Reas., p. 70. See also p. 75.

Dr. John Young has finely shown that what may be true of *the* infinite and *the* absolute (the τὸ πᾶν of the philosophers) in the sense of *the All*, need not be true, and in point of fact is not true, of *an* infinite or *an* absolute, viz., of *the One*. We do not remember, however, that he has distinctly referred to the fact, which has been much dwelt on by others, that there is a sense in which the phrase "*the Absolute*" also expresses an important truth. The Absolute, in this sense, is not a mere idea or abstraction on the one hand, or the sum or aggregate of being on the other; but defines the Supreme Being, the being of absolute perfections. This meaning of the phrase is fully recognised in the "*Limits of Religious Thought*," but is viciously confounded with the others. The confusion of the Absolute (or the infinite) with the sum of all being, (the τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ πᾶν of the ancients,) leads inevitably to the vortex of idealistic Pantheism. Dr. Hodge (following Calderwood) has ably shown from their etymology and usage, and from the nature of the case, that the terms infinite and absolute have another meaning, which is their only proper one when they are made to stand for God; and wonder and displeasure are intimated at seeing the first principles of religion and morality thus sacrificed, "out of deference to the assumption that the Absolute must be unrelated."*

(3.) The argument of the Bampton lecturer confounds "*negative thinking*" with the "*thinking of a negative*." It is in proof (and is conceded both by Mill and Spencer) that there must be, and there *is*, something *positive* in our concept of the Absolute or the Infinite. We may, however, view the matter either positively or negatively. We may say that a triangle is *not* a circle, or we may say that a triangle is a figure having three angles. Precisely so we may, if we please, say that the Infinite is *not* the finite; or we may say that the Infinite *is* that which is all-perfect. Our *negative thinking* about the triangle does not make

*Hodge's Theology, I., p. 358. It is but fair to say, however, that both Hamilton and Mansel disclaim this meaning of the term; but as Mill shows, (Exam. Ham., p. 109,) the argument of Mansel at least requires it; and Calderwood asserts the same of Hamilton's "Unconditioned."

the triangle itself a negative thing: its characteristic properties are as strictly positive as the characteristic properties of the square or the ellipse. In like manner, when we think the negative of the Absolute, we do not think out of being the Absolute itself as a positive entity. It is surely most sophistical ground for any one to take, that because one can and does think the negative of A, (viz. B,) that B is of necessity *nothing more than* the negative of A, and that it can have no positive character of its own. When we think the negative of *something*, (generically considered,) we think of that which is *nothing* and *only* nothing. But it is different when we think the negative of a *particular* something. *Exempli gratia*: when we think the negative of the objective world, it is no mere negation that we think; it may very well be, and commonly is, the entire subjective world; and so *vice versa*. When, therefore, we think the NOT-*me*, it is a very positive thing indeed which we think, viz., the outer world of substantial being. The author of the "Human Intellect" argues cogently, that a negative *term* does not necessarily imply a negative *concept*, much less a negative *thing*.* The negative involved in the term simply denies that one thing or concept is identical with some other thing or concept. He might have appropriately illustrated it from the use of the term *non-ego*, to denote the objective world. The objective world is not a negative thing, and its concept is not a negative concept.† Neither are the concepts in question the products of what is called "negative thinking;" that is to say, the result of a fruitless attempt to think positively.

(4.) There is a strange confusion of thought in the use that is made by Hamilton, Mansel, Spencer, and to some extent Mill, of the terms "think," "know," "imagine," "conceive," "comprehend," and the phrases, "mentally image" and "represent in

* Porter (p. 654, note,) holds that Locke gives some countenance to the view opposed in the text; (Essay, B. II., c. xvii., §§ 13, 16, 18; Cf. Leibnitz, Nouv. Ess., B. II., c. xvii. :) but that he does not push it to the extreme, as Hamilton does. As to Locke's view, however, consult McCosh's "Intuitions," pp. 217 and 218, where this point is considered in a footnote.

† Cf. Prov. Reas., p. 280 *et seq.*; also, Mill.

thought." We have already adverted to this point in what we had to say on another part of the subject. This fallacy is happily exposed by Dr. Calderwood, and also by the venerable Professor of Theology at Princeton. To *know* an object, according to the writers of the entire Hamiltonian school, is to "form a mental image of" that object. To *conceive* is to picture with the mind. Dr. Hodge does not deny that this is the proper sense of the word *conceive*; though he might have said that this sense of the term is confined to the extreme school of Nominalists. The Conceptualists, headed by Reid, repudiate this definition of the term, and point out the fallacy that lies in the assumption of its propriety.* But waiving this, the Princeton critic contents himself with showing that to "*know*" and to "represent in thought" by a "mental image," are not necessarily the same. Knowledge he declares to be the apperception of truth. "Whatever the mind perceives, whether intuitively or

* "I believe every man will find in himself what this ingenious author [Berkeley] found—that he cannot imagine a man without color, or stature, or shape. Imagination, as we have before observed, properly signifies a conception of the appearance an object would make to the eye if actually seen. A universal is not an object of any external sense, and therefore cannot be *imagined*; but it may be distinctly *conceived*."

"When Mr. Pope says,

"The proper study of mankind is *man*,"

I conceive his meaning distinctly, though I neither imagine a black or a white, a crooked or a straight man. The distinction between conception and imagination is real, though it be too often overlooked, and the words taken to be synonymous. I can conceive a thing that is impossible, but I cannot distinctly imagine a thing that is impossible. I can conceive a proposition or a demonstration, but I cannot imagine either. I can conceive understanding and will, virtue and vice, and other attributes of mind; but I cannot imagine them. In like manner, I can distinctly conceive universals, but I cannot imagine them."—*Reid's Essays on the Intell. Powers*, p. 326, *Walker's Ed.*, Boston, 1855.

Compare with this the elaborate discussion in the "Philosophy of the Infinite" and "Fundamental Truth." See, also, Hamilton's valuable note on p. 330, where he shows that the whole controversy between the Nominalists and the Conceptualists is founded on the ambiguity of the terms they employ, and admits that "with us, *idea*, *notion*, *conception*," etc., are often "confounded."

discursively, to be true, that it knows." (Theology, p. 360.) This process does not always take place through the medium of a representative image. I know that my next door neighbor has a soul. How do I know it? I can certainly form no ideal *picture* of it that corresponds at all with the reality. In the same way, in order to be able to know *that* God is, and, to some extent, also *what* God is, it is by no means required that I shall be able to form in my mind a visual similitude of the divine Being. The terms and phrases in question are by Mansel and Spencer employed convertibly, or else are but slightly and inaccurately distinguished from one another.* The entire argument for human nescience *quoad* the Unconditioned, is incompatible with the sober conceptualism of the school of Reid. And even granting, with the extreme Nominalists, that every concept is a product of the imaging faculty, that argument still demands, if not that conception and knowledge are the same, certainly that knowledge and comprehension are the same, and that there is no knowledge that is not perfect in degree. In point of fact, all these terms are, for the most part, used interchangeably by these writers. According to this, we must know all our acquaintances equally well, and know them all "even as they are known" by their Creator.†

* See Mill, *Exam. Ham.*, p. 83, for Hamilton's sophistical use of the word "conceive." Cf. McCosh, "Intuitions," p. 218. Ambiguity is sometimes occasioned by Hamilton's constant use of the term "conception," in cases where later writers employ the term "concept." Mr. Spencer's reasoning on the 73d page, and elsewhere, deserves a moment's notice, by which he labors to show that since all explanation consists in a reference of the facts to be explained to larger classes, a class must ultimately be reached than which there is no larger. This ultimate class must therefore be "inexplicable," "unaccountable," "incomprehensible." In reply we have merely to say (passing over the circumstance that all this is borrowed from Comte), as Mill says to Mansel in connexion with another matter, *Quis dubitavit?* That which is "inexplicable" is not necessarily "inconceivable," or incogitable, or "wholly inscrutable;" or if so, only so on the Hamiltonian principles already examined and refuted.

† Young's *Prov. Reas.*, 294. McCosh's *Laws Fund. Truth*, p. 383. Porter, *Human Intell.*, p. 656.

2. We shall next call attention to sophisms growing out of false, perverse, and even contradictory definitions. Several of these have already been brought under notice where reference has just been made to certain ambiguities of language; and stress has been laid on certain erroneous definitions of such terms as "absolute," "unconditioned," "conceive," "think," and "know."

(1) The fallacy involved in the definition of the Absolute and Infinite is fundamental. These definitions of course determine everything, and may be shown to lead to a multitude of contradictions and absurdities. The very fact that they do so is proof enough that they are erroneous. They are, furthermore, in themselves without reasonable basis. "They are," as a judicious writer well says, "founded on purely speculative *a priori* grounds;" and are thus destitute of all authority: nay, they are absurd. "For if, as these philosophers say, the Absolute and Infinite cannot be known, how can they be defined?"*

It may be well just here to expose the inaccuracy of Hamilton's novel and private distinction *between* the Absolute and the Infinite; † as though there were not a self-contradiction involved in speaking of the "*un-conditionally limited*." ‡ In making this distinction, Hamilton has not been followed by many of his own disciples, and not even by Dean Mansel.

(2) Another definition, that is almost or quite peculiar to Sir William Hamilton himself, is the one he gives of "*Causality*," in his memorable replication to Cousin. The famous argument of the Scotch philosopher about the positive and negative poles of thought, is carefully restated by the author of "*The Human Intellect*," and proved to be fallacious. § Both Hamilton and Mansel concede that the Absolute is truly *believed* to exist, and after all refinements, this means, to all intents and purposes, that

*Hodge's System. Theol., Vol. I., p. 358. See, however, Porter's Human Intell., p. 658. The *ad hominem* argument would remain.

† See Hamilton, Discussions, p. 584, *et seq.* This exposure is admirably made by Calderwood, Phil. Inf., chap. iv.; and again by Dr. Young, in the Prov. Reas.

‡ See Discussions, "Philosophy of the Unconditioned."

§ This is beautifully done also by McCosh, in an exceptionally clear and striking foot-note. See "Intuitions," p. 219.

they are *known* to exist. The so-called negative thinking must be regarded as only a *particular mode* of knowing or believing, which is *not* identical with another particular mode of knowing or believing.*

After accepting Hamilton's argument as valid against the German Absolutists, and fully admitting that all our knowledge is relative, Mr. James Martineau† subjects to a searching and, we think, crushing pressure of analysis, Sir William's ingenious but whimsical attempt to resolve the judgment of causality into "a mental impotency;" and then proceeds to vindicate the truth of our ontological conclusions from the sweeping overthrow intended for them by the Scotch philosopher. As to the first point, the essayist shows beyond the power of successful rejoinder, that our notion of a *cause* is by no means the notion of the phenomenon itself as præexistent, and that the suggestion that it is, comes with small grace from the life-long antagonist of Brown; that our concept of *creation* is by no means the pantheistic one of metamorphosis: that our judgment of causality is far from tantamount to a denial of origination, and consequently presents no contradiction to the doctrine of freewill, being in fact the corollary of that doctrine; that the contradictory poles of which Hamilton says so much, are contradictory only in his own fancy;‡ that the concept of the infinite need be no more a negative one than that of the finite, the relation between them being strictly convertible; that the two are not alike "conceivable" in the sense of *presentable in imagination*, but are alike *cogitable*, and alike objects of assured certainty. The proofs brought forward by Hamilton to sustain his position, are deficient and invalid, and the conclusion to which he comes is intrinsically absurd. Sir William Hamilton declares a first cause to be inconceivable, and the very notion of causality to be a mental impotence. We ask, *why* is it that causation is inconceivable? The answer given us supposes

* See McCosh, *Method Div. Gov.*, pp. 529-30, *et seq.*, for a close refutation of Hamilton's whole theory of the Infinite.

† *Essays, Philosophical and Theological*, by James Martineau. Boston: 1868. Vol. II., pp. 268-290.

‡ *Cf.* a shrewd criticism in *Mill Ex. Ham.*, p. 103.

something to be inconceivable, which, however, is *not* causation, (except in the erroneous judgment of Hamilton,) but its very contradictory.

Again: The two "poles of thought" of which Hamilton makes so much, do not involve us in the contradiction *here*, which the author of the Dissertations tries to make out. One of the seeming contradictories is really *incogitable*; but the other is only *unrepresentable* and *incomprehensible*. The fallacy thus involved in Hamilton's critique is the same which was noticed under 1 (4) on pp. 672-674*.

3. Under a third head we throw sophisms, whether concealed or apparent—whether found in the premises or the reasoning—which must be admitted on all hands to exist wherever the conclusion is absurd; and especially where (as here) the logical issues branch out into numberless contradictions. The refutation under this head is of the nature of a *reductio ad absurdum*. It was a saying of John Randolph of Roanoke, that when he met with a conclusion that was false, he never cared to examine the argument which led to it; for he knew that there was error either in the premises or the reasoning, and he did not care which. It can be triumphantly shown that this is exactly the predicament with the argument of the Bampton Lecturer. The conclusions to which that argument conducts us are notoriously false. It matters little therefore whether fallacy be detected in the original propositions or in the ratiocination; that argument must be worthless. From his own definitions of the Infinite and Absolute, the distinguished lecturer, in "The Limits of Religious Thought," is at great pains to make clear the point that the most contradictory conclusions inevitably follow. His object in doing so was simply to invalidate our supposed knowledge of the

* Dr. McCosh appears to have been the first to draw attention sharply to this distinction, unless indeed he was anticipated by Professor Calderwood. Sir William Hamilton's theory of Causality has been widely censured even by his own warm admirers. See, for instance, McCosh's *Div. Gov.*, p. 530, and Thornwell's *Works*, Vol. III., c. iii., p. 93, where will be found an adequate statement of the true doctrine on this subject. Cf. the fine critique of Martineau, p. 270.

unconditioned; but like the creator of Frankenstein, he has accomplished more than he intended. The answer to all this part of the Dean's book is obvious. If his definitions be true, (conceding the propriety of his reasonings,) the contradictions he points out must and do exist. But the contradictions in question do not and cannot exist. Therefore his definitions are false, and the argument that he has based on them is nugatory. From these definitions it follows that the Absolute and Infinite are terms equivalent to the word God, and yet may stand for the Sum of *all* being. It equally follows from the definitions, that the Infinite or Absolute cannot be either the object or the subject of knowledge, or in any sense conscious, or in any sense cause.* The only theory on which several of these statements can be mutually reconciled, is that of thorough-going Pantheism. The only theory on which several other of these statements can be mutually reconciled, is that of blank Atheism. There are other deductions not here stated, together with certain *admissions* of the Dean, which are only compatible with Theism. The mutual reconciliation of *all* the Dean's statements is by his own confession wholly impracticable. The conclusion to which the argument, in certain directions, unavoidably leads, is thus shown to be the very same Pantheistic Atheism which it was invented to oppose. But this is not the end. There are yet deeper circles in this pit of Tartarean darkness. Viewing the argument as a whole, and following it to the utmost possible lengths, it is found to issue on the verge of a labyrinth of sad and hopeless perplexities; and passing on, to plunge into the eternal void of stark and utter Pyrrhonism. The arms forged in the interests of a high religious Faith, have thus been found serviceable only to the black uses of universal, soul-destroying Doubt.

There are other contradictions which might be mentioned, that just as surely conduct the reasonable mind, by easy stages and a sharp incline, to the gulf of a scepticism as dark and absolute

* See Hodge's Systematic Theology, chap. iv. Dr. Hodge includes Sir William Hamilton (against whom he is mainly contending,) as well as Mansel, in his condemnation.

as that which has been attributed to Gorgias the Sophist. If the necessary laws of thought and moral consciousness are deceptive and not to be depended on, there is manifestly no other result possible. There is one point especially that deserves marked emphasis. The glory of Sir William Hamilton, as a psychologist, has been said to be the vindication of the authority of consciousness. But if this grand witness has been convicted of perjury in certain of its most solemn averments, then, on the principle, *falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*, its whole testimony must be rejected: and to deny the veracity of consciousness, is not only to upset the Hamiltonian psychology, but to scatter to the winds every shred of human credence, every ray of divine promise, every gleam of Christian hope.

We close this branch of the subject by presenting the following striking summary from the pen of Dr. Charles Hodge. "The theory of Hamilton and Mansel, as to the knowledge of God, is suicidal. It is inconsistent with the veracity of consciousness, which is the fundamental principle of their philosophy. The theory is an incongruous combination of sceptical principles with orthodox faith, the anti-Theistic principles of Kant with Theism. One or the other must be given up. We cannot believe in a personal God, if an infinite person be a contradiction and absurdity."* "What, then," he had already asked in another connexion, "is the result of the whole matter? [that is, of the doctrine of the Unthinkable, as set forth in the critique of Sir William Hamilton's.] It is that . . . the Absolute, from the nature and the necessary limits of human thought, is unknowable, and consequently that the stupendous systems of pantheistic Atheism which had been erected on the contrary assumption, must fall to the ground. These systems have indeed fallen by their own weight." . . . "Unhappily, however, Hamilton, † like Samson, is involved in the ruin which he created. In overthrowing Pantheism, he overthrows Theism. All that he says of

* Theology, I., p. 363. The relation of Hamilton to Kant is ably treated by Dr. Young in the Province of Reason; and by Mr. Martineau in Essays, p. 286.

† We here put in the gloss, "as interpreted by Dean Mansel."

the Absolute, he affirms to be true of God. All the contradictions which attend the assumption of an absolute and infinite being as the ground of philosophy, he says attend the assumption of an infinite God."*

II. After what has been said, it does not need to be repeated that the theory advocated in "The Limits of Religious Thought," necessarily postulates a false scheme of psychology. What Darwin calls "the law of heredity," is of wider application than even Darwin has insinuated. It is true everywhere, that like begets like. As truth is the progenitor of truth, so error propagates error. These remarks find illustration ready to our hand. The sophisms in the terms and phrases made use of by the Bampton Lecturer, stand in a strictly parental relation to the sophisms in his definitions; and these again (where not the very same,) own a natural kindred to the sophisms presupposed by the issue of his self-destructive reasonings.† The surrender of the Hamiltonian psychology is, as we have just seen, one of the inevitable consequences from those reasonings. It is equally true, as has been already implied, but may now be more distinctly asserted, and asserted, too, on new grounds, that the argument of Dean Mansel carries with it the necessary abandonment of the only psychological system that can give a just account of the psychological phenomena.

1. Granting, for the argument's sake, that Mansel's theory of Consciousness is consistent with itself, it is not consistent with the facts, and is consequently false. We need not dwell on this. The proof is not far to seek. Whatever arguments go to prove the authority of Consciousness, are good to prove the total authority of Consciousness, and therefore good to prove its authority in its averments touching the Unconditioned.

2. We proceed, therefore, to make another point, which is this, viz., that both Hamilton and Mansel are at fault, at once as to the nature of cognition, and as to the dividing bounds they assign to the cognitive and moral faculties.

* Theology, p. 349.

† Hobbes has some interesting remarks on the propagating force of bad definitions.

(1.) Attention has been previously directed to the questionable view entertained by Hamilton and Mansel, as to what is involved in every act of conception; and it has been observed that this view is entertained by no one who does not belong to "the extreme left," to wit, the most advanced and radical thinkers among the advocates of Nominalism. If this view of what is necessary to the production of a concept is erroneous, (and we are satisfied that it is,) the error is a grave error in psychology. This, however, we concede to be a moot case; nor is the question about concepts quite so fundamental as the one about cognitions. According to the reasoning of Hamilton, (we have not forgotten it,) the Unthinkable, or the inconceivable, is exactly the same with the unimaginable. To think and to image are thus regarded as identical processes. Let us apply this criterion to our notion of a centaur or a hippogriff. There is, as we have seen, great ambiguity in the use of the word conceive. Sometimes it means to imagine; sometimes to judge to be possible; sometimes (and this is the strict sense) to form a notion of anything. Can I conceive, *i. e.*, judge it to be possible, that such a creature exists as the centaur? * Not unless I can accept the truth of the impossible and contradictory. Yet I can form a *mental image* of a centaur. If all that is meant by saying that I conceive of the centaur is that I can and do draw a picture of him on the mental tablets, then the thing said may be regarded as correct. † It would be indeed hard to think of a centaur without the aid of a material

* Thus Hamilton himself says: "There is only one conceivable alternative." See *Lectures on Metaph.*, II., p. 319. There were other *imaginable* alternatives in this particular case, for it might be *imagined* that an absurd alternative offered itself, and even that it was chosen. What is meant is, that there was only one alternative that a sane mind could choose. Hamilton employs the term "conceive" in still another and an erroneous sense, *viz.*, as the equivalent of "comprehend," or "construe in thought." See Mill, *Ex. Ham.*, chap. vi., for an able discussion of the whole subject. For a good vindication of our *real* though *inadequate* conceptions, both of the infinite and the finite, *v. ibid.*, p. 100.

† See McCosh, "Laws of Fundamental Thought," chap. xi., for a detailed and excellent exposure of this fallacy. *Cf.* *Prov. of Reason*, pp. 143 and 167, and Martineau's *Essays*, p. 283.

or mental picture of that fabulous being. Yet the notion of a centaur is not identical with the mental image. To form that notion is to conceive of a centaur. The solution, as we have before seen, is in the equivocal nature of the term. Now apply the criterion to the notion of a triangle. Plainly, (notwithstanding Locke,*) no man can form a notion of a triangle that is at the same moment of thought neither right-angled nor acute or obtuse; and also at one and the same moment of thought neither equilateral nor isosceles or scalene, and yet all of these at once. If conception and image-making are one and the same, it follows that the extremest Nominalism is right. But can I not form a notion of hardness, of beauty, or of virtue? And do I frame a mental image of these? We give this question pause. The grand hitch remains. Dr. C. Hodge has tacitly given up this point, and yet undermined the Hamiltonian psychology as to the nature and scope of the *cognitive* process.

The whole controversy turns upon one hinge. What is knowledge? What is the proper import of the words "I know?" Plainly it does not mean that I know all about the object of cognition. In this sense we know nothing. The domain of the Unknowable would, on this view, be coextensive with the universe of being. Because we cannot comprehend a thing, therefore, it by no means follows that we cannot know it.† We can comprehend nothing, in the fullest sense; that is, there is no object of cognition that we can know in all its relations. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but *canst not tell* whence it cometh and whither it goeth." Our knowledge may be valid, and thus perfect in quality, and yet not complete, and therefore not be perfect in extent.‡ Our faculties may be veracious, and yet their information be limited. I know my butcher and my baker, and I know them truly; but I do not know them well. The intelligence we receive by the oceanic cable may be

* *Essay on the Human Understanding*, B. iv., chap. vii., § 9, p. 441, London, 1841.

† This point is well argued in Mill's *Ex. Ham.*, ch. vii., p. 120.

‡ *Cf. Prov. Reas.*, p. 177, and *Laws Fund. Thought*, p. 247.

as accurate, though it is not so full, as that which comes afterwards by the oceanic mail.

The fact, then, that we cannot know the Unconditioned comprehensively and absolutely, is no reason why we may not be able to know it partially. Professor Calderwood has made it clear in his comments on Sir William Hamilton's letter, that a partial knowledge of the Infinite does not imply that the Infinite has parts.* The Infinite cannot be known exhaustively. But as has often been well said,† neither can the finite be known exhaustively. The finite universe is not likely to be mastered by the finite mind. To our limited intelligence the world is practically limitless. A drop of water is *infinite* to us. The Yale Professor makes an admirable point just here. There is, he says, an unfathomable mystery common to the finite and the infinite. It is that of *self-existence*. The difficulty is not lessened but increased by diffusing it among a multitude of integers.‡ It is indeed this unavoidable fact of self-existence that constitutes the real mystery that is involved in the Absolute and Unconditioned. But a self-existent *person* is no greater mystery than a self-existent *thing*. The astute President next undertakes the proof that the Absolute is a *thinking agent*. It surely ought to be admitted even by those who, with Mr. Spencer, regard the nature of the Absolute being as wholly inscrutable, that the Absolute *may* be a thinking agent. Dr. Porter, with theologians in all ages, considers the finite universe as an expression of that agent's thought. It may be added to what he says, that the finite universe is equally an expression of His creative will. There is nothing, then, (he concludes,) in the nature of the object sought to be known, or in the nature and limits of the knowing mind, that should deter us from receiving the truth of the proposition that it is competent to the human intellect to arrive at a true and positive knowledge of the infinite and absolute being, and a knowledge of him *as* infinite and *as* absolute. It is indeed undeniable that the conception we form of the Absolute is not an

* Philosophy of the Infinite, p. 221.

† See Human Intellect, p. 660.

‡ Ibid., p. 661.

image.* It is not a product of the imaginative faculty. It is, however, a cognition. The *antinomies* of Kant and *essential contradictions* of Hamilton, that are supposed to beset the inquirer on this subject, and that occupy so much of the "Limits of Religious Thought," are all invented by the mind itself, in the effort to *illustrate* the infinite from the finite.

(2.) Sir William Hamilton and his school are also astray in the view they take as to the nature of *faith* or *belief*, and its relation to the cognitive faculty. Hamilton's two positions are scrutinised by Dr. Hodge, by which he endeavors to save his theology from the logical effects of his surrender of ontology, viz., first, that God, though not an object of knowledge, is an object of faith; and second, that of regulative knowledge. Neither of these positions, it is argued, can be maintained. Not the first, because the Unthinkable or Impossible cannot be an object of faith; and because knowledge is essential to faith. Not the second, because this doctrine of regulative knowledge is self-contradictory; because it is powerless to effect its ostensible object; because it is derogatory to God, and because it is subversive of the authority of the Scriptures.†

In "The Philosophy of the Infinite," the two domains of knowledge and faith are carefully discriminated, and yet shown to be to a large extent mutually dependent; though the author holds with Hamilton, that they are not exactly coextensive, and that the sphere of faith is wider than that of knowledge. In reply to the letter from the great philosopher, he however contends that the knowledge of a negative is not necessarily itself a negation; that a partial knowledge of the infinite does not necessarily imply that the infinite has parts; that much of Hamilton's reasoning is due to a materialistic or purely mathematical notion of the infinite; and that the infinite and absolute are both positive and negative concepts, and also are positive realities.‡

The author of "The Human Intellect" additionally shows that

* *Ibid.*, pp. 656-58. Porter here pursues the same general line of refutation that is marked out by McCosh and Martineau.

† *Theol.*, chap. iv., p. 358.

‡ *Philosophy Inf.*, Append.

the intellectual apprehension of the Absolute is true *knowledge*, as opposed to *faith* or *feeling*. In Porter's system, our primary *beliefs* are themselves *cognitions*. Hamilton is evidently puzzled to know what to do with this thing of human credence. He is certainly at fault in his whole treatment of *faith*, and leaves no room for such a faculty in his psychological classification; unless indeed he may be thought to have done so in treating of our primary beliefs under the head of the cognitive powers. This is clearly the head under which they belong. The term *faith* is another that is very ambiguous. Henry Rogers's distinctions between "Reason and Faith" are justly drawn.* *Faith*, however, is a reasonable thing, and there is an important sense in which all the "intelligent" acts of the soul are acts of the reason.† *A priori* or intuitive knowledge is not the same with discursive, but still it is knowledge; it is knowledge in its highest form. To allege the contrary is to undermine the foundations of all science.

III. The theory of the Bampton Lectures involves a false and ruinous metaphysic. This is the obvious conclusion from the foregoing arguments, as well as from others that have not yet been mentioned. The term metaphysics is one of the most equivocal in the language. We employ it here in the sense given it by Mr. James Martineau. According to this high authority, the aim of metaphysics is "to ascertain whether they [*i. e.*, the primary notions, substance, cause, etc.] be, as we imagine, also *real*, belong to existence as well as thought. Here, therefore, we have a science which is not exclusively either *notional* or *real*, but occupies the transition space from the one character to the other. It endeavors to settle accounts with reality on behalf of the ideal objects given to us by our reason, and determine whether they have an existence independent of our faculties. Should they prove to be only the mocking image of those faculties themselves, then the only result of metaphysic research is to dissipate its own

* Cf. the chapter on this head in the Province of Reason.

† Hamilton in one place says of the mind, that its highest dignity is as the mean "through which . . . our unassisted *reason* can ascend to the knowledge of God." We have italicised the word.

objects ; it springs into life for no other purpose than to commit suicide, and consign all its affairs, by process of relapse, back into the hands of logic. But should they, on the other hand, legitimate their claim to be regarded as objects, and obtain a footing on the ground of positive existence, they forthwith become the concern of *ontology*, which endeavors to evolve true propositions respecting God, the soul, and nature, as *a priori* objects of knowledge, and whether by deduction, intuition, or dialectic, to reach the essence of their necessary being. It is therefore a *real science* ; accessible, however, only from the *notional territory* of logic, and contingently on some means of transport being found ; a divine Elysian land, longed for by shades of thought on the hither side of Styx, and destined to be touched perhaps, provided the metaphysic boat of passage does not leak."*

The careful reader will not fail to have noticed that the question now propounded has already been definitively answered. This was inevitable. Psychology and metaphysics (in the sense just adopted) are so intimately connected, that in the treatment of either one of them the two subjects cannot be wholly sundered. Yet the two subjects are in themselves entirely distinct. It is one thing to inquire into the powers of the human mind : it is quite another thing to interrogate the oracle as to the existence or non-existence of a *mundus transcendentalis*. Two things may be different, and yet be united, and be so united as still to remain different even after the union between them has been effected. The soul and the body are united in man ; but it will hardly be pretended that the soul and body in man are identical substances. It is nevertheless quite impossible, under present conditions, to consider the soul without also to some extent considering the body, or to consider the body without also to some extent considering the soul. So in the case before us. The topic of the mental phenomena and laws is intrinsically distinct from the topic of ontological existence or non-existence : yet these two topics cannot long be considered apart. The reason for this is obvious. One grand department of mental activity

*Essays, pp. 238, 239.

comprises those operations which are classed as the cognitive. But what is cognition? It is the process of KNOWING. And what is it to *know* anything? Manifestly it is to be convinced on good grounds of the fact that it exists, and that it possesses certain qualities and relations. Now it is evident that this process cannot be justified or vindicated from the charge of delusiveness, unless there be correspondence betwixt the facts and the mental judgment. That mental judgment is one which affirms not merely the phenomenal but the substantial reality of the object known. The vindication, therefore, of the mind's power to *know* supersensual realities, necessarily involves a determination of the question whether or not there *be* a world of supersensual realities to know. And similarly, the vindication of a domain of ultra-phenomenal being necessarily involves the true doctrine as regards the nature and scope of the cognitive faculties. In considering the psychological question, Can the human mind *know* the Absolute, *i. e.*, know the Absolute Being, God, we have unavoidably been considering also the metaphysical question, Does there *exist* such a being as the Absolute—as God? If there is such a being as the Theist's and the Christian's God, then self-evidently we must hold to the doctrine of a transcendental world. Those, again, who acknowledge the existence of a world lying beyond the sphere of the phenomenal, usually find no difficulty of reaching the conclusion of the existence of a supreme being who possesses attributes which may be definitely recognised. Both Hamilton and Mansel, as we have seen, are assured of the existence of such a being; but it is on the authority of *faith*, not that of *reason*. This is, at all events, the attitude of the Bampton Lecturer. The distinction they draw between knowledge and belief, we have ascertained to be without foundation. If God cannot be known, his existence cannot be credited by the mind. The logical result is the metaphysic of Auguste Comte. Even granting the distinctions, the corollary is a metaphysic that closes the door of all ontological inquiry in the limited sense of the term. Are we prepared to accept a conclusion so sweeping? Of the two rival schemes of metaphysics, are we ready to take that one which blots out all knowledge of

the unseen world? To this question, as we have previously argued, the reply must be peremptorily in the negative. In our investigation of the mental powers, we have not only shown that there is nothing in the nature of those powers, or in the limits which have been set to their exercise, to *prevent* a knowledge of the Infinite, but also that in a legitimate use of the cognitive faculty, man *can* and *does* arrive at a knowledge of the Infinite. The stress has hitherto been laid chiefly upon the *process* of *knowing*, rather than upon the *object known*. It now behoves us to resume the inquiry from the metaphysical point of view. But though the result aimed at in this inquiry is a proposition, or series of propositions, in metaphysics, the method by which alone we may hope to reach that result is, as before, in large part psychological. It is, in short, but a continuation of the foregoing discussion, though it is important to repeat that the discussion is now carried on with an ulterior object held plainly in view.

We are thus once more face to face with the grand riddle, Can the finite mind know or think the infinite? Can the mind, conditioned as ours is, form a positive and true conception of the Unconditioned? Can the relative processes called thought and knowledge, lead up to the Absolute?

These questions are stated almost in the words of Porter. They are all elaborately considered by Professor Calderwood and the other critics of Sir W. Hamilton, whose works are mentioned at the head of this article. Before going into the discussion, the author of "The Philosophy of the Infinite" repeats Hamilton's well-known statement of the different opinions which may be entertained about the Unconditioned, regarded as an immediate object of knowledge and thought. These are four: that of Hamilton himself, that of Kant, that of Schelling, and that of Cousin. Hamilton's opinion is that the Unconditioned is incognisable and inconceivable, its very notion being the mere negative of the conditioned, which last alone can be positively known or conceived. Kant's view is also that the unconditioned is not an object of knowledge, but that its notion is a regulative principle of the mind, and thus more than a mere negation of the

condition. Schelling's theory in that the Unconditioned is cognisable, but not conceivable; that it can only be known by a sinking back out of consciousness and reflection (which are confined to the relative and different) into identity with the Absolute. Cousin holds that the Unconditioned "is cognisable and conceivable by consciousness and reflection, under relation, difference, and plurality." Each one of these schemes is disposed of separately by the Edinburgh critic, the view of Hamilton being reserved for the last, and being subjected to an extended and most searching examination. No essential difference is perceived by Dr. Calderwood betwixt the tenets on this subject of Hamilton and Mansel. What is implied or casually asserted by the one, is continually reiterated and fully developed by the other. Hamilton's main object was, indeed, to overthrow the continental Absolutists rather than to discuss the question in its didactic theological bearings. In the main body of Calderwood's work, the school of Paley are berated for restricting the teleological argument so much to the field of physical nature, whilst Hamilton is still more severely judged for rejecting all evidence for the being of a God that is not based on the phenomena of mind. Dr. Calderwood himself views the world of matter and mind as an organic whole; discounts all evidence from ratiocination, whether inductive or deductive, and accredits our conviction of absolute existence solely on the ground that it is one of our primary beliefs.

The argument of "The Philosophy of the Infinite" seems to have been not without influence on the thinking of the Yale President. Indeed, the American writer treads close upon the footsteps of the Scotch critic of Hamilton in holding that the Absolute, though knowable, is not the product of any sort of reasoning, whether inductive or deductive, and that it is not susceptible of logical definition. (P. 662.) We do not demonstrate that God exists, but simply that *every man must assume that he exists*. And this because these processes severally involve the assumption of the Absolute as their ultimate condition. The unconditioned and absolute cannot be called a *summum genus*, embracing all forms of the conditioned and finite. The relations

subsisting betwixt the absolute and finite are not generic, any more than the relations of space and time to extended and enduring objects are generic. The infinite does not fall under the categories, which themselves demand the infinite as their postulate. On this particular question, as to whether the reality of the Absolute can be *proved* by apodictic logic, we reserve our judgment. It has been abundantly shown that it can be *known*. It can be known (as Porter well says, p. 659,) as the correlate of the finite, and as necessary to explain it. It cannot only be known respecting the Absolute *an sit*, but *quid sit*.* It is indeed impossible to know *that* it is, without also knowing in some degree *what* it is. If the supposition of the Absolute is required to explain the finite, the relations betwixt them must be real and known as such. "They must also be capable of expression in language." It is sophistical to assert that relation always involves limitation. Mr. Spencer commits this error throughout his volumes. Yet, as we saw reason to infer, he is inconsistent. Even the "indefinite consciousness" that the Infinite exists, which he admits, must evidently involve some knowledge of its relations.†

We now call to the witness-stand no less a personage than Mr. John Stuart Mill, an *expert* in this whole matter, and a critic who will not be suspected of any unfriendliness towards Mr. Herbert Spencer, and certainly not towards the broadest doctrine of Relativity. Mill (though, as it now appears, himself a dubitative Atheist,) has done yeoman service to theology in establishing the position that if anything may be shown to exist, and may to some extent be known, God may be shown to exist, and may to some extent be known. This is the clear doctrine of the first chapter of Romans ‡ The very word is *γνωστόν*. Mill holds that, if ever sustained at all, Theism and Theology will have to

* The doctrine of Spencer, that we can know the *fact* of the existence of the Infinite, but nothing as to its nature, is at least as old as Hobbes. This is precisely the view of Kant and Brown as to the nature and existence of an external world.

† See *Human Intellect*, p. 656. *Cf.* *Phil. Inf.*, p. 264.

‡ *Romans* i. 19, 20, 21.

be sustained by the *a posteriori* argument; *i. e.*, by Paley's method and that of the Bridgewater treatises; in other words, must be based upon rational inferences from the facts that come within our observation according to the ordinary principles of reasoning. In other language, if Mr. Mill had believed in substantial existence at all, he would have been convinced by Bridgewater treatises, possessing a certain degree of force, of the existence of a God.* This is a considerable admission. He concedes the propriety and conclusiveness of the cosmological and teleological argument for the being of a God, only asking for *sufficiency* of this kind of proof; and a sufficiency is at hand. On this point Mill would be immeasurably nearer the truth than Mr. Herbert Spencer, were it not for the former's peculiar doctrine of idealistic Sensationalism and virtual Nihilism,† which Nihilism, however, he professed to hold only tentatively and dubitatively, so far as *mind* is concerned. His language on this point is remarkable, and has been much neglected by some who have attempted to expound his system.‡ But once convinced of the error of this Nihilistic theory, Mill (if he stood to his own words) would have become a respectful and inquisitive student and an acknowledged adherent of natural theology.

The subject is presented in a variety of other lights, and with great learning and cogency, by Dr. McCosh.

One of the ablest replies to Sir William Hamilton and Dean Mansel is also the one contained in the fourth chapter of Dr. Charles Hodge's Systematic Theology. The topic of that chapter is "the knowledge of God," and the first thesis maintained is that "God can be known." The method is a dilatory but exhaustive one. The author first states the question, then defines

* This point is well brought out in Masson's "Recent British Philosophy."

† Mr. Masson calls Mill's system "Empirical Cogitationism," and sometimes "Empirical Idealism." See Recent British Philosophy, p. 405, etc. And for an exhibition of Mill's *quasi* Nihilism, *ibid.*, p. 410, and on all parts of the subject the thorough-going discussion of Dr. McCosh, in his "Laws of Fundamental Thought."

‡ Mill's Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, p. 242.

in what sense God is and is not inconceivable, and admits that he is incomprehensible, and that our knowledge of him is partial. The manner in which this knowledge is arrived at is then indicated, and justified from our moral and religious nature, from the actual revelation of God in his works, from the Scriptures, and from his manifestation in Christ. The second thesis is then maintained, that God cannot be fully known. Under this head, the argument of Sir William Hamilton is stated, carefully examined, and articulately impugned. It is shown that Hamilton dislodges the false psychology of Schelling, of Hegel, of Cousin; but by a process which, according to this critic, leads back inevitably to the same Pantheistic absurdity, and then forward to the extremist confines of Atheism and Pyrrhonism. This judgment, as we have seen, is not to be avoided, if the view of Hamilton be the same with that of Mansel.

By Mr. James Martineau it is further contended that, since all our knowledge is relative, our knowledge of the Infinite and Absolute may be relative, without losing the character of knowledge. To say that we know an object relatively, is still to say that we know it, and not to say that we do not know it. We know everything in relation, and not, as the Germans hold with regard to a part of our knowledge, in the absence of all relation. Everything (as we have had occasion to say before) *exists* in relation; and this is especially true of the Infinite. To know it any other way, therefore, would be to *mis*-know it. Our subjective impressions may and do correspond with the outward reality. Our knowledge is thus, in this sense, a knowledge of *things in themselves*. To assert the contrary is to prostrate Hamilton's own most cherished doctrines as to perception and consciousness, and leads directly not only to ontological but universal scepticism. Mr. Martineau craves no better statement of the truth than in Hamilton's own argument from the data furnished by our moral nature for the being of a God. If we "*must recognise a God from our own minds,*" (Discussions, p. 798,) we have surely discovered a "passage from psychology to ontology," and Hamilton treads the bridge he denies to Cousin.

We have now reached the conclusion of the whole matter.

The premises of "First Principles," in so far as the argument of that work relates to the Unknowable, can be justified only on grounds which require the sacrifice of every principle of human reason and every dictate of supernatural revelation. They are at war (as we have seen) with the sciences of logic, of psychology, of metaphysics, ontology, theology. Those who would accept those premises in the full extent of their destructive sweep, must make up their minds to bid adieu to the noblest lessons of philosophy as well as to the cheering assurances of inspired Scripture. If this doctrine of Nescience be the sound one, then the light which has hitherto brightened the course of history, and which affords us our only glimpses of the future, is turned into darkness, a pall has descended upon the universe, and the voices of wisdom [whether of man or God] are hushed in silence or echoed back to us in mocking laughter.

We look upon the specious argument of Dean Mansel as having been fairly exploded, and hold that with it has been also exploded so much of Mr. Herbert Spencer's system as depends on the validity of that argument. But it is in proof that the whole weight of Mr. Herbert Spencer's chain of reasoning hangs upon that argument; and, so far as we are apprised, this is the only reasoning that has ever been attempted in the way of a metaphysical defence of the extreme doctrine of nescience. If this be so, the Positivist doctrine of the Unknowable, in all its forms, whether as advanced by Comte or Spencer, or by any of the so-called Positive school, has nothing left on which it can logically stand. The authority of our intuitions establishes the law of causation and forbids the limitation of our knowledge to observational experience. That authority is flatly rejected by this school; but there is then no escape from the infinite series of the Pyrrhonist and all the horrors of utter scepticism. The denial of all true causal efficiency, as well as of final causes, will not avail. Common sense demands a true efficient and a *raison d'être* for every change; and without them all philosophy and all science are confusion. The doctrine of Hume and Brown, which resolves causation into mere antecedence, is triumphantly

confuted by Sir William Hamilton,* as it had been confuted the year before in the *Princeton Repertory*, by the then Senior Professor of Theology in Princeton Seminary.† The doctrine of final causes is well sustained in President McCosh's Lectures on Positivism. The Pantheist's blunder in confounding *cause* and *substance*, is exposed by Dr. Thornwell,‡ Dr. Christlieb, and very recently by Dr. R. L. Dabney;§ and the whole doctrine of causes established on the ground of the original law of causation, as a primitive and fundamental law of thought and existence.¶

But this denial of all true causation is not merely an untenable shift for those who would avoid the consequences of the exposure of their analytic and synthetic proofs of the great Unknowable; it is the inevitable corollary of those attempted proofs. For, on the one hand, under the imperative demands of the law of causality, we rise, through efficient causes, unavoidably to a knowledge of the great First Cause; whilst, on the other hand, the hopeless surrender of final and efficient causes, involving as it manifestly does the repudiation of that divinely constituted law which is their guaranty, must also involve the inference that the great First Cause is inscrutable, which *ultima causa* would otherwise, under the guidance and sanction of that law, become the object of knowledge.

We have here made an advance beyond the conclusion which merely negatives Mr. Spencer's negation, and have asserted and established the affirmative of the proposition Mr. Spencer has denied. The modern doctrine of the Unknowable, therefore, is not only "not proven," but decisively *dis*-proved; and it is shown

* *Edinburgh Review*, 1830.

† *Princeton Review*, 1829, p. 326. See also Life of Dr. A. Alexander, 1854, p. 449.

‡ Thornwell's Works, Vol. III. p. 147.

§ See "The Sensualistic Philosophy of the Nineteenth Century Considered." This exceedingly able work appeared after the greater part of the present article had been committed to writing. It might have been appealed to in support of nearly every position we have taken; but the argument in this essay is wholly independent of the argument in that book. Dr. Dabney's work deals Mansel very heavy blows.

¶ See Thornwell's Works, Vol. I., p. 57, etc.

to be not only possible, but certain, that God may be known by his intelligent creatures.

This is but a meagre outline of the scope of an argument which would require for its proper exhibition the limits of another article. Our purpose in the present article has been the simple one of showing how vain and how profane is the effort that has been made in these our days to erect "an altar to the *unknown* God." The result of the whole is, that whatever may be true of the "Absolute" and the "Infinite" of the philosophers, our conception of God, of Jehovah, of the Infinite *One*, though it is very inadequate, is also to some extent direct and positive, and is a true conception. We *can* form a conception of the great First Cause; a poor one indeed, but yet a very precious, and one around and upon which we may safely build the solid fabric of evidence to establish or confirm the *existence* and *attributes* of such a being.

That we do not and cannot know God perfectly, is (as was admirably pointed out by the Positive astronomer, Mr. Richard A. Proctor, of the Royal Society, in one of his recent lectures in this country,) one of the fundamental teachings of the Bible itself. "Who," indeed, "*can* find out the Almighty *unto* perfection?" "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it." But if we cannot *comprehend*, we can *apprehend*. We may know the meaning of the proposition that "there is a God," and we may assent to it. Nay, we must assent to it. We may also know much about God; and, by the gift of his Spirit, may "know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God."

How dreary is the alternative! The systems of unbelief have been exposed in all their utter worthlessness, and there is nothing left in their stead. On this point Dr. Theodore Christlieb asks, in his most attractive address before the Evangelical Alliance: "And what is the present condition of philosophy? Since the systems of 'Absolute Idealism' have broken down, and the reaction against them has led men into the slough of Materialism, philosophy is at a loss. The one party loudly cries that we must return to the old leader, *Kant*; others wearily labor to arouse

some interest by means of historical representations of past systems, by excursions into the history of literature, or into the natural scientific research of the day. Others, however—and these it is who most attract the world's attention—draw from all that has gone before, an awful conclusion, and before the astonished world hoist the flag—or rather let me say, the distress-signal—of the most extreme *Pessimism*. Schopenhauer sees in all existence nothing but misery and suffering, and can find true happiness only in self-dissolution into an absolutely empty *Nothing*, the *Nirvana* of the Buddhists. And Edward von Hartmann, who, in his rapidly-sold book on the 'Philosophy of the Unconscious,' (a book of which I shall certainly not deny that it has some real merits,) exhibits to us the workings of this great 'Unconscious' in the corporeal and spiritual world, declares it to be a mistake that the world should ever have sprung into existence at all, and even an inexcusable crime, if it had been created by a self-conscious God. All hope of happiness in this or in another stage of the world's history is, according to Hartmann, a pure illusion; before us stands the senile age of mankind, in which, after all hope has died away, our race 'finally abandons all claim to positive happiness, and only yearns for absolute painlessness; for the *Nothing, Nirvana.*' '*

* *The Best Methods of Counteracting Infidelity*, by Theodore Christlieb, Ph.D., D. D. Harper & Bros., 1874. P. 41.