

CRITICISM OF RECENT PANTHEISTIC EVOLUTION.

WE need not wonder at the bold assurance with which pantheistic evolution steps forth in our days. Pretending to be the noblest form of monism, pantheism has always assumed high airs. It constantly presumed to profess the most elevated views in science, morals, and religion. But its boldness has not been so great, as the criticism which it encountered has been severe. Since the rise of Christianity pantheism has been frequently examined, and always condemned, not merely as an unsatisfactory, but as a monstrous doctrine which, by combining contradictory attributes in God, perverted the very conception of the Godhead into an absurdity.

I.

The newly-advanced theories of pantheistic evolution cannot evade this general verdict. In accordance with the principles of pantheism, pantheistic evolution assumes the self-existent being as infinite, spiritual, eternal, unchangeable, and at the same time characterizes it as finite, imperfect, material, and subject to endless changes. For, if the Deity is the immanent ground of all existence, if it develops from itself all beings as its own determinations or modes of its activity, if, in a word, it is all in all, then, indeed, we must predicate of God all the phenomena we experience and all the qualities we perceive in this visible universe. The inertia of matter, the attraction and repulsion of material forces with all the effects that result from them, vegetation and sensation, growth and decay, the life and the death of organic bodies, the folly as well as the wisdom, the vices no less than the virtues of men, the imperfection and the excellence of all things alike are His attributes or His actions. It is He that lives in the plant, feels in the brute and thinks in man; He that displays His perfection and power in them as their force, their life, their very reality. Plainly, the Deity, which we must necessarily conceive as self-existent, is thus presented at once as infinite and finite, as most perfect and imperfect, as most wise and foolish, as most holy and vicious, as essentially active and inert, as purely spiritual and grossly material. Is not such a conception a veritable caricature of the Godhead?

While thus open to all the objections raised against pantheism, the theories in question involve moreover all the incongruities

which, in a former article, of this REVIEW,¹ we have shown to be intrinsic to the general idea of evolution. For, in accordance with them, the self-existent being is self-evolving. Though admitted to be infinite, it is supposed to grow and develop constantly to ever greater perfection. This is apparent from its relationship to nature. The ever-changing universe is not merely an external manifestation of God or an effect produced outside of Him. No, it is his own being, his own life, his own power and activity. Growing by an ever-continuous differentiation to the fulness of beauty and perfection, the world is nothing less than the Deity unfolding its own being by immanent operation. Evolution is thus carried into God himself by the latest pantheistic theories, and such evolution as consists in transition from the indeterminate to the determinate. For, by virtue of it, God becomes actually what he was before only potentially, or, to speak in more accurate terms, what he was not before. Primarily not organized, he gradually assumes an organism, at first only a germ of divine life. He unfolds and attains to the plenitude of vital activity; devoid of order and beauty, he clothes himself by succeeding changes with these glorious attributes.

But if a process of evolution is going on in God, he must be conceived as determinate and indeterminate at the same time. Were he not indeterminate, why should he gradually acquire determinateness? According to pantheistic views he may not be so utterly indeterminate as matter or abstract being is; still indeterminateness must be in his nature, at least to such an extent as is to be removed from him by evolution from all eternity. But at the same time he is also fully determinate by virtue of his very essence. He is self-existent, he is essentially the infinite spirit. The modern pantheists themselves conceive him as such. But infinity as well as self-existence imply full and absolute determinateness.

To enhance the absurdity, both these contradictory attributes are repugnant to evolution. If God is fully determinate by his own essence, a gradual transition from indeterminateness to determinateness is out of question. If he is indeterminate, he cannot determine himself by his own activity. The reason is plain. The determinations to be effected cannot, as to their perfection, be pre-contained in his nature; for then he could not be conceived as originally indeterminate. But if not pre-contained in his nature, they cannot possibly be evolved out of it, or be brought into being by its operation; for effluences from an empty source or effects without a sufficient cause are impossibilities.

We see, then, pantheistic evolutionists have given us promises

¹ *The Idea of Evolution*, 1893, pp. 762-779.

which are as void as they are high-sounding. They do not meet the objections raised against evolution from a metaphysical point of view, but, reasserting all the absurdities implied in this idea, they entangle themselves in addition in all the numberless self-contradictions which are peculiar to pantheism. As a combination of errors, their theory renders monistic evolution doubly absurd instead of solving its difficulties. But let us enter into details. Do they establish the doctrine of evolution? Do they account for the unity, order and beauty of the world and at the same time for the supreme perfection of the Godhead?

II.

Pantheism is absolutely incompetent to explain the process of evolution, to prove either its starting point or its final result, either its laws or its different stages. It starts with a being which is not known to us immediately or by intuition, but is represented in our mind by notions derived from the finite world we experience; it proceeds from a principle into which we have no direct insight, whose existence we infer from the effects which reason compels us to attribute to it. In a word, it begins with the cause, which, though first in the order of being, is last in the order of cognition. Hence, the explanation which it offers is a process from the unknown to the known.

But, though we form our first idea of the Godhead by ascending from the visible objects around us, what stands in the way of descending from God again to the consideration of the finite world as soon as the conception of the divinity has been sufficiently developed? And might not the course of thought possibly lead to a world that originates from the Supreme Being by a process of evolution? Let us see what idea we have formed of God through the aid of experimental knowledge. We conceive Him as the self-existent, the first cause, the infinite spirit. But if God is essentially the fulness of all being, any necessity whatever of producing the world is repugnant to Him. We cannot possibly conceive Him necessitated to produce it outside of Himself. There is absolutely no reason which requires such transitive activity on His part; no reason extrinsic to him, because there is nothing outside of his nature that is independent of Him and antecedent to His operation; no reason intrinsic to Him, for, being essentially infinite He cannot become more perfect by the effects He brings into existence. Nor can it be necessary for God to produce vital effects within His own being, in order to reduce His infinity from potentiality into actuality. This is the view taken by pantheistic evolutionists. By evolving the world from Himself, God, as they imagine, evolves Himself and reaches the climax of perfection as a

germ attains to its specific size and shape by developing organs and members. Is this position less untenable? The answer is as plain as daylight. If the Supreme Being is by virtue of its essence infinite in all perfections, it cannot grow by the exercise of immanent activity. The very supposition of a possible growth is a palpable denial of infinity. And if all evolution is in evident contradiction to the self-existent, infinitely perfect being, how will our pantheistic evolutionists be able to show that it had to evolve itself by the gradual process of development which they assume to have taken place in this visible universe? They have nothing to stand on; the very ground is taken from under their feet.

To consider pantheistic evolution from another point of view, Is the world into which God should evolve finite or infinite? Does it contain all things that are possible, or only some of them? Dr. Martineau is of the opinion that it is finite, and that God passes from the indeterminate to the determinate by defining which out of all the possibilities are to be realized. No view more inconsistent with evolutionary principles could be espoused. A finite world cannot render the First Cause infinitely perfect. Nor can it reasonably be maintained that God, in the process of self-evolution, determines on the realization of only some possibilities. For the determination must be conceived either as free or as necessary.

It cannot be free; for in that case the evolutionists would, consistently with their principles, have to regard the world as the work of an arbitrary will. But this is an assumption utterly abhorred by them. Nor can it be a necessary act of God. Such a necessity is altogether inconceivable. For, on the one hand, all possible things, considered in themselves, are equally fit to be brought into being, and, on the other hand, the Infinite Being is competent to give existence to all alike and to every possible combination of them. But if all possible things are equally fit to exist, and if God is not only competent to actualize them all, but is also supposed to produce them with the absolute necessity of His nature, then there is no reason whatever why He should bring into being only some of them. We are rather driven to conclude that He must produce all without exception.

Consistently, therefore, the world must be admitted by pantheists to be infinite; that is, to possess all possible perfections and to include all possible beings. Such is, in fact, the view which Prof. Schurman holds. But the world is not and cannot be infinite. Every element, every mineral, every plant and animal, every living being, every realm and province of it is essentially limited, not merely in one, but in all respects, and, therefore, also the whole made of them is limited; for deficiencies intrinsic to parts are also intrinsic to the whole. Nor is this denied by the evolutionists.

Otherwise, how could they maintain that the universe is incessantly developing to ever greater perfection? Possibility of growth involves potentiality, and potentiality implies absence of perfection which is yet to be reached.

However, though they admit the world to be finite at every particular moment of its existence, the pantheists regard it as infinite in the whole course of its successive evolution. If, so they reason, there is within the universe an active principle sufficient to bring forth new forms in endless succession, we are compelled to conceive as unlimited both the power which is unlimited in productiveness and the series of successive forms which proceed from it in perpetual development. Let us see whether infinity can thus be established. Does the all-productive power pre-contain all the forms to be successively brought into being? Should it contain them, it must, indeed, be actually infinite. But in this case it does not admit of evolution. Should it not contain them, it must be insufficient to give them existence; for a cause is equal to certain effects only in so far as it pre-contains their perfection. As to the forms which are produced, it is granted that each of them taken singly is finite. From this concession two conclusions must necessarily be drawn. First, the whole series of the forms successively produced must be finite, because the infinite cannot rise from finite parts—least of all, if these parts do not even co-exist. Secondly, it is impossible to assign a reason for any particular form of the whole series; for if, as was said, all of them are equally possible, the omnipotent power of God is not only competent to produce them alike, but, being supposed to act with absolute necessity, is equally determined in regard to each and all of them. There is, therefore, no conceivable reason why the first form of cosmic existence should be the lowest or the highest on the grade of being, the nearest or the farthest from the Deity; no reason why it should be of this kind rather than of another; why the activity peculiar to it should be directed toward this rather than that end; why the law implanted in it should imply one order rather than the other of the phenomena to be produced. Nor is there, consequently, any reason why the course of evolution should ascend from lower to higher, rather than descend from higher to lower forms of existence; why it should take the direction which it is now believed to have taken rather than any other that may be imagined; why it should proceed in the stages now distinguished by scientists, and not in any other of the indefinite number of those which we must necessarily admit as possible. Hence, pantheistic evolution is, in its every phase and moment, an arbitrary assumption, not based on any ground whatever.

The truth of this conclusion is amply confirmed by the multi-

plidity and contrariety of pantheistic systems. We see in the course of ages, and especially in our days, one theory arise after the other, and each of them disappear again after an ephemeral existence, wafted away by the breath of scientific opinion like a strangely-formed cloud. In this numberless multitude of views and interpretations there is no agreement, but only strife and opposition, each one conflicting with all the others. For while the one derives matter from spirit and the lower from the higher forms, the other affirms that spirit springs from matter and the perfect from the imperfect ; while, according to some, the universe is co-extensive with the Deity, God, according to others, transcends the world at the same time that He is immanent in it. Finite beings are looked upon now as modes of the divine activity, and then as emanations from the divine substance. There are such as maintain that the universe issues from the divine intellect, and there are others who believe it to be the operation of the divine will. Again, there are those who represent God as personal intelligence, and those who conceive Him as working and evolving with blind necessity. Pantheism is nowhere and never the same ; it always changes and undergoes ever new transformations. But such is not the nature of truth, which is the same at all times and never contradicts itself. Such is not the theory which interprets phenomena by their proper laws and traces them back to their real causes, proximate and remote. Such is not true philosophy, which, proceeding by careful inquiry and, resting its positions on solid reasons, affords insight and generates unshaken conviction in the mind. It is falsehood that is never consistent with itself, and lawless fancy that produces disconnected fictions unfit to exist and to satisfy the intellect longing for truth.

Error and mistake are infinite,
But truth hath but one way to be i' th' right.

III.

Pantheism, therefore, does not interpret evolution ; nor is it, furthermore, an explanation of unity. A strange censure. For does not the pantheistic theory reduce all things to absolute oneness, teaching, as it does, that God is all and all is God ? This would, indeed, be a most perfect unity if it were real. But it is not the kind of unity which we perceive in this visible universe. Were all things identified in being, as the pantheistic theory assumes, we should be forced to conceive as indistinct the different realms and components of nature ; things that live and things that are devoid of life ; things of a lower, and things of a higher degree of perfection ; things that move and act and such as are moved and acted upon ; beings

distant in time and place, mutually dependent on, or exclusive of, one another. All this is absolutely impossible. A distinction in being is real and undeniable in nature. There is a distinction between birth and death, between coming into existence and going out of it, between perfection of a lower and perfection of a higher grade; a distinction between dependence and independence, between mere mechanism and wonderful organization; a distinction between the absence of life and the perfection of life, between inability of perception and highly-developed intellection. Nay, there is not merely a distinction between the attributes enumerated, but also an opposition, and one so utterly irreconcilable that they can impossibly co-exist in the same subject. Consequently there is a distinction also among the things in which they are found; that is, among the numberless parts which constitute the universe, and, nominally, a distinction between those that have self-consciousness and those that are devoid of it, and a distinction among the different self-conscious subjects, because they exclude one another from the sphere of their own existence. So certain is our conviction concerning the reality of these distinctions, that we base our whole external activity on them. The laws which the scientists have ascertained in the physical world show the same distinctions with no less clearness, and the laws which rulers have enacted for man and for society presuppose them, and would, without this supposition, be palpable absurdities.

Clearly, the pantheistic theory does not explain that unity which, in reality, exists in nature, a unity in a variety of things distinct from one another. Instead of doing so, it has substituted a unity of quite a different kind. And what makes the case still worse, the unity it substituted is the plainest impossibility. The infinite and the finite; the perfect and the imperfect; the simple and the compound; the active and the passive; the cause and the effect—cannot be identical. To deny this, would make it necessary to maintain that to be and not to be are identical. Yet, the pantheistic doctrine amounts to this very assertion. If God is all and all is God, then, indeed, He is infinite, perfection, life and beauty itself; and, at the same time, evolving in all the forms of cosmic existence. He is finite and imperfect; whilst absolutely simple, He is composed and manifold; whilst living and intelligent, in some parts of the world, He is lifeless and without perception in others; whilst improduced and self-existent, He is continually produced; whilst He is the First Cause, He is, simultaneously, a series of effects issuing from Himself. In short, the self-existent cause, reduced to absolute oneness with the finite world, is the aggregate of all possible contradictions and absurdities, which cannot be admitted as real existence without the complete stultification of

reason. We must, therefore, undoubtedly conclude that pantheism is just as little an interpretation of cosmic unity as it is an explanation of universal evolution. But we must proceed still further.

IV.

Instead of building up the order of the universe, it leads consistently to destruction. Let us examine for a moment the ultimate source from which pantheists derive all being and all perfection. Though self-existent, it is imperfect and undeveloped, not actually perfect but only tending to become so by further evolution. Its progress is extremely slow, however. Having striven for development from all eternity, it has, thus far, attained only a low degree of perfection. Evidently, it has failed in most cases, and but seldom succeeded. And so it will perpetually continue, without ever attaining to consummation. When the universe, which is its evolved form of existence, has developed to a high degree, catastrophes, as many pantheists tell us, will dissolve it again into its primary elements, or turn it back to a second chaos. Thus, evolution will be followed by revolution, and integration by dissolution, for all eternity. The self-evolving deity of pantheists may very well be likened to Sisyphus, who is always heaving the stone up hill only to see it roll back into the valley.

Moreover, if God is all, He is not distinct from matter. It is true, modern philosophers have attempted to elevate matter, and, as they say, to free it from its opprobrium. But they are undertaking an impossible task. They cannot succeed in lifting it above the lowest degree of being, or in ridding it from certain properties intrinsic to it. Brute matter will ever be inert, and act only according to mechanical laws; organic matter will always remain subject to decay, disease, and death. If, therefore, God is matter, or, if matter is a mode of His activity, He is heavy and motionless in the stone; He is tossed to and fro in the waves of the ocean; He is hammered in the iron on the anvil; He rages in the fire that destroys cities, and in the rivers which ruin the country by inundation; He withers in the plants and trees; He constantly pines, is tortured, and dies, in millions of animals; He suffers hunger in the wolf, is bloodthirsty in the tiger, and cruel in the hyena.

God reaches the highest perfection in man, for human nature is the crown of the universe. Therefore, all the properties peculiar to mankind, and all the deeds that history records, must be regarded as His own and attributed to Him; all ignorance and stupidity, all wickedness and immorality, all vices and errors which have ever tarnished the human race. And, mark it well; all this belongs to Him in the ultimate period of evolution, when He approaches the climax of perfection.

Let it not be said that these are merely some accidental shortcomings, covered by most astonishing excellencies. The very stultification of reason, human and divine, is the necessary outcome of the pantheistic theory. For, how do pantheists uphold the absolute oneness of all being against the undeniable fact that we most distinctly perceive real and essential differences between the objects of our experience? They tell us that our perceptions are, and must remain, illusive, until corrected by their higher philosophy. But this illusion, if clear and distinct perception can be so called, is universal, since we find it in all ages, and among all nations. It is altogether necessary and inevitable; for we cannot possibly look at things in another light, nor can we seriously convince ourselves by any kind of philosophical reflection that the things we know and daily experience, are identical notwithstanding their difference and opposition. Nor do we, the unenlightened and unadvanced, alone think so. Pantheists, themselves, act constantly on the conviction that there is a real distinction between person and person, between one thing and another, and have never as yet been induced by any means to conform their life to a different view. Whence is this illusion? Since it is universal and necessary, it must undoubtedly be traced back to an equally universal and necessary cause. Such a cause can be no other than human nature. It is this, and this alone, that is common to all men, and necessarily produces uniformity of action in them. Thus we arrive at the conclusion that reason is naturally illusive in man; and since it is the same in all beings, in the infinite as well as in the finite, we must further infer that it is illusive also in God. Most consistent, therefore, is the saying of R. W. Emerson: "Every man is a god playing the fool."¹ But, he should have added, that in an immense number of men, god is playing also the rascal, and that the entire universe is a god, leading a low, wretched, and miserable existence.

The consequences of such a conception of the First Cause are by no means immaterial. Pantheists are, generally, optimists, picturing to themselves a golden age, near at hand, resplendent in the brightness of universal enlightenment and elevated morality. But, in truth, the pessimism of E. von Hartmann is much more consistent with pantheistic principles—rather, is its only logical outcome. It is universally admitted that philosophical systems which deny or undermine the trustworthiness of human reason, must land us in the extinction of all knowledge as well as the destruction of society. If this be the case, to what extremities must not that philosophy lead which so undoes our reason as even to

¹ *Essays*, p. 31.

stultify Supreme Reason, the immanent intellect, thinking in every mind and ruling the entire universe.

Other considerations render the outlook no less gloomy. If the source of all being, the highest and most perfect principiant, which is to develop all existence from itself, is so utterly slow, subject to so many reverses, so inert in matter, so low in animal life, so stupid, self-deceiving, and wicked, when it approaches the height of its perfection in man, then, indeed, we have reason to fear the worst, in spite of better qualities which it otherwise manifests. Instead of producing by self-evolution a paradise of universal happiness, of supreme enlightenment and righteousness, of perfect order and beauty, the deity described by pantheists will, to all appearances, in future ages pass, as it did thus far, from catastrophe to catastrophe, from chaos to chaos, with intervals of very limited prosperity.

V.

Still it might be objected that if such like absurdities may be charged to the ancient systems of pantheism, they do not bear with the same weight on the theories devised by such modern thinkers as H. Lotze, Dr. Martineau, or Prof. Schurman. Their philosophy is, we hear it said, like pure gold, cleared from the dross of crude thought. Let us pass it in review, and see whether it is proof against similar objections.

In most of them God is represented as the world-soul, though not as if He and the visible world were two different components of one whole; the one a bodily substance, the other a divine spirit, each with its own distinct though incomplete reality, yet so united as to complete each other in one perfect nature. Nothing could be more inconsistent with monism than such a view, which, instead of deriving all being from one source, falls back to two primordial principiants, each of which is independent of the other as to its origin. In fact no theory, whether ancient or modern, has advanced a dualism of this kind under the garb of monism. In every case when a divine world-soul was admitted, God and the material universe were identified in being. In antiquity, Heraclitus, and, after him, the Stoics, brought God down to the level of matter; for they regarded the Deity as the ethereal all-penetrating fire, and looked on the world as formed of ether by condensation. In our days pantheists have lifted matter up to God by maintaining that it was but a mode of His activity.

Now, are any of the absurdities involved in pantheistic evolution avoided by this latest conception of the world-soul? Certainly the universal Deity is not thus cleared from incongruous attributes. In no other way could limitedness, liability to failure, inertness,

decay and death, low desires and immoderate passions, ignorance and error, vice and corruption, be more expressly denoted as traits and qualities proper to God, than by asserting that this entire universe, without any substantial reality in itself, is but a mode of divine activity. Nor is this new theory an interpretation of the universe. Evolution is not explained. For there is no reason advanced, as indeed it is impossible to advance any, why the divine essence, slowly emerging from indeterminateness, should assume just that activity which presents itself as the actual universe. Neither is cosmic unity accounted for. We are merely told that things which we cannot but regard as essentially distinct, are in reality not distinct, or are bidden to identify them not only as one being, but as one and the self-same operation differently modified under different aspects. But we are nowhere taught how such identity may be mentally represented. Nor is the nature of the universe and its component parts explained. Instead of being cleared up, it is wrapped in still greater darkness. The objects which we perceive are, according to these new philosophers, only phenomenal; we call them bodies, plants, animals, but there are no substantial realities underlying them. For while there are no beings individually existing and endowed with their own peculiar qualities and powers, there is only one substance, one reality, lying far behind the perceived appearances, invisible and imperceptible in itself, though sending forth fleeting phenomena in uninterrupted succession. Should we complain of the impossibility in which we find ourselves to espouse these views, again our difficulties are not solved. The only answer given to us is, that, though God thinks in us, we labor under illusions, and shall necessarily labor under them until we learn by transcendental wisdom to combine contradictions into being.

Emanation is no expedient to unriddle the perplexities of pantheistic teaching. It leaves the conception of the Deity full of self-contradictions. True, its advocates speak of God in terms which are apt to ravish us with admiration. They predicate of Him eternity and infinity and pure spirituality and supreme wisdom; in a word, all the attributes peculiar to the self-existent Being. At once, however, another view is presented to us. God must be conceived as simple, but, lo, He suddenly separates into parts; how could He otherwise emit from Himself the universe containing all the different bodies and especially the souls of men? He is infinitely perfect, but His component parts, on issuing from Him, are finite, imperfect, liable to lowness, ignorance, passions, and loathsome vices. He is essentially actual, nay, actuality itself, but He manifests Himself as essentially potential, for He progresses to ever greater determinateness, growing in perfection as a germ in-

creases by the emission of new cells. And what is still more perplexing, though simplicity is an essential attribute of God, He becomes more perfect by ever-increasing multiplicity. The farther we proceed in analyzing the conception of pantheistic emanation, the more numerous and the more startling grow the self-contradictions that are disclosed to our view.

But perhaps the theory in question may give a better account of unity, for it distinguishes the world from God, and one finite being from the other, so as not to identify what evidently cannot be identified, and yet merges all things in the one divine being from which they all issue and to which they all return. But if this distinction is admitted, dualism is re-established. It matters little how the universe has been brought into existence by God, whether by creation or by emanation, when once outside of Him, it is separated from Him by that immense abyss which exists between the finite and the infinite. There is, with any consistency in the doctrine of emanation, no longer oneness, but diversity of being. The evident consequence is, that evolution is rendered incongruous. For it is presumed to take place either in the finite things of this universe after they have emanated from God, or in God Himself by the very act of emanation. In the former supposition it is no longer one immanent, supreme, and universal principle that develops all from itself by its own activity, but many particular causes or agents that grow and extend by their inherent power. In the latter supposition evolution ceases to be a process from imperfection to perfection, a growth in being; it partakes of the nature of deterioration. Simplicity and unity are perfections of the highest order not only according to theists, but in accordance also with monistic views, to which any appearance of dualism is utterly repugnant; and in accordance with the theory of emanation in particular, which assumes that God is a spirit, the Father of spirits. But by emitting the world, an aggregate of things distinct from Himself and from one another, He evidently passes from unity to multiplicity, from simplicity to manifoldness. He becomes imperfect and decays, instead of developing and taking up higher forms.

Some have tried to prove that emanation is a real development by comparing it to the diffusion of bodies or to the division by which germs increase. Not to mention the evident truth that diffusion of any sort is incompatible with the nature of spirits on account of their simplicity, even bodies lose in unity and intensity of strength by expanding. And as to the growth of germs by division, it is to be borne in mind that this process presupposes new material introduced into the cleaving cell and perfectly assimilated with it. There is, consequently, first an increase from with-

out, and only then an increase or growth from within. But no increase from without is possible in God, for there is absolutely nothing the being and existence of which is not derived from Him. Emanation, therefore, is a process essentially different from organic growth. If at all conceivable, it can be thought of only as a diffusion of the Deity with the dissolution of its unity, and hence as a transition from a higher to a lower stage of perfection.

VI.

Are other recent attempts more successful in extricating emanative evolution from the many difficulties that beset it? While admitting that the material world is only a mode of divine activity without any existence of its own, Professor Schurman undertakes to advance proofs that the soul of man exists not only in God, but also for itself, and that therefore, being not only a function, but a part of the divinity, it has its own free activity and is a second cause. Plainly an ingenious device to hold the diversity of intelligent beings as established by consciousness, and yet to maintain the absolute oneness of all being; to remove from the Deity all the imperfections found in man, and yet to regard the universe as the evolution of divine nature. Before accepting his solution of the difficulties intrinsic to pantheism as satisfactory, we must ask the learned Professor to throw more light on some points of his theory, which seem to border on open self-contradiction. As he says in one place,¹ modern science has shown that we can draw no lines between cogitative and incogitative beings, and that matter consists of elements which we can scarcely distinguish from souls. But soon after he tells us in plain words that soul and matter do not stand on the same plane of reality or unreality, nay that the difference between self and self-less stuff is the greatest we know and can imagine. He is even able to mark out the difference in exact scientific terms.² Furthermore, as a genuine pantheist, he maintains the identity of all being, believes in the existence of one all-embracing reality outside of which there is nothing, of one absolute being, "of which so-called things are merely states or modifications, parts or functions," and conceives as impossible "a multiplicity of originally self-subsisting things."

The reason alleged for this position is that if things were not identical with one single and real being as infinite as the universe, they could not act or exercise an influence on one another.³ At the same time, however, the human soul exists also apart from and outside of the divine being; it exists in itself and is a second cause, a free agent initiating its own activity and hence undoubtedly, ex-

¹ *Belief in God*, p. 160.

² *Ibid.*, p. 227.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

ercising of itself an influence on other finite spirits, so that God is not accountable for its acts.

This is not the only perplexing statement; others more perplexing are to follow. Spiritual beings exist apart from the Divine Being and out of it, but at the same time they are also in it and are identical with it; they are independent of God, at least to a certain extent, but this greater independence is the result of their greater dependence upon God.¹ These several propositions may fitly be reduced to the following: Since nothing can be and exist apart from God and act of itself and independently of Him, and since nevertheless the human soul whilst it is in Him, is also apart from Him, and whilst it exists and acts in Him and dependently on Him, has at the same time an independent existence and activity of its own; it must be philosophically true that one and the self-same thing can at once exist and not exist, act and not act; and it is the special privilege of finite spirits thus simultaneously to be and not to be, to have and not to have existence, to be endowed and not to be endowed with independence and activity.

Professor Schurman is not unconscious of the perplexities involved in his statements. He confesses: "How beings can be self contained persons and at the same time elements of the Divine life, we can never perhaps precisely understand."² But the difficulty of understanding these two conflicting propositions is for him less than that of conceiving how things distinct in being can act on one another, and much less than that of comprehending the usual theism, which he finds altogether *unthinkable*.³ On grounds of this kind he espouses pantheism as a necessary postulate of reason and regards the objections raised against it as merely tending to make it a terminological bugbear.⁴

After all, then, the President of Cornell University confessedly does not advance a real explanation of pantheistic evolution, but only chooses of two positions which transcend his comprehension, the one which he regards as less repugnant to reason or less unaccountable. We must, of course, leave to him the position in which he pleases to find acquiescence. But for the ordinary mind, the mind which follows the plain and self-evident maxims of reason, there is no greater absurdity than the denial of the principle of contradiction which affirms that nothing can exist and not exist at the same time, and no system more unreasonable than that which, asserting man to be what his own consciousness clearly denies, makes him a personified self-contradiction, and which, refusing to trace the finite and the contingent back to the infinite as

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 225-228.

² *Ibid.*, p. 172.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

a supra-mundane cause, perverts the Supreme Being into a jumble of incongruities.

VII.

One point of discussion still remains—the new departure taken by some Protestant theologians for the purpose of disentangling emanative evolution from its difficulties. Denying creation out of nothing, they regard the world as having emanated, not from the nature, but from the will, of God. Emanation, if so conceived, is in their opinion not pantheism, but enlightened theism, which so explains divine nature as to reduce it to harmony with the new dogma of evolution. The theory, in order not to part with a personal Deity, seems to suppose that the divine will gives issue to the world, not with necessity, but with freedom. For were emanation admitted to be necessary, as it is in other systems, there seems to be no reason for repudiating pantheism. If this is in reality their supposition, it is an utterly inconsistent one. The intelligence that produces the world by a free act of the will must be conceived as completely developed. It must not only have self-consciousness, but also full knowledge of the entire universe, as well as of its every part, its every law, its phenomena, its order and harmony. For, undoubtedly, it could not bring such wonderful effects into being, before having formed a perfect mental representation of them. A mind so rich in ideas, so wide and so comprehensive, and inventive of so great schemes is certainly not unevolved; a power competent to carry into being the grandest conceptions is not merely inceptive; and a nature endowed with such an intellect, replete with all reality, all beauty and force is not in a rudimentary condition. The world, therefore, if an effluence of free will, does not constitute, but presupposes the evolution of the Deity. And it is much less such evolution as modern philosophy wants. Evolution, according to its recent conception, is a necessary process. We hear it repeated from all sides that there is no creation by arbitrary will, but creation only by law. It is thought that a steady and regular order, which renders science possible, cannot be established unless necessary laws control the origin and formation of the world, the interdependence of its parts, the sequence of its phenomena and the succession of its stages and periods. But let the world be an emanation from free will, then there is no longer necessity, then things come into existence, grow and combine by an act which evolutionists term arbitrary. Then the force that works everywhere, in brute matter, plants and animals; the force that exercises attraction and repulsion, that builds up organisms from atoms, germs, and protoplasms, forms the heavenly bodies from primordial elements and moulds them in their

orbits, is will power subject to no law. In this assumption not only creation, but the entire course of nature becomes for the evolutionist arbitrary.

Emanation, therefore, from the free will of God is incompatible with the modern idea of evolution. It is, moreover, inconsistent with the denial of pantheism. To decide whether a given theory is theistic or pantheistic, we have above all to take into consideration what it teaches of creation. If it maintains that God created the world out of nothing according to His wisdom, and that finite and produced things are distinct in being from Him who is self-existent and infinite, it is plainly theistic. If, on the contrary, it does away with creation out of nothing, and if, accordingly, it takes the things that make up the universe for belongings, parts or modes of the divine nature, for the divine reality coming into external appearance, it is unmistakably pantheistic. For according to such a theory there is no other than Divine Being, no other than the divine nature entire in God, but divided in the things that appear to us, no other existence than that of God who is all in all. Now the new evolutionary theology looks on creation out of nothing as an obsolete idea which in the light of modern science must henceforward be discarded, and ignores, for the sake of complete unity, any reality that does not emanate from the eternal all-embracing Deity in such a manner as to share its very nature. This new theology is pantheistic as truly as Neoplatonism or as Brahminical philosophy was.

VIII.

To sum up our discussion, every attempt to uphold the evolutionary theory by a pantheistic interpretation has proved a signal failure. Pantheism itself is a confusion of self-contradictory tenets. It is such in whatever form it is presented, whether the world be regarded as the body animated by God, or as a mode of divine activity, or as an emanation from the divine nature or the divine will; and it remains such whatever method is adopted to set it forth and whatever reasons are advanced to render it acceptable. To extricate it from its self-contradictions is as impossible as to clear falsehood of untruth.

If pantheism is an absurdity, nay, the most startling of all absurdities that have ever been begotten by the erring mind of man, it stands to reason that it cannot redeem the idea of evolution from the charge of intrinsic contradiction, if by evolution is meant the transition of the one absolute, self-existing being from indeterminateness to determinateness by its own immanent activity. On the contrary, we must expect that it should only add new inconsistencies to previous incongruities. So, in fact, it has been shown to

do. It not only fails to account for cosmic unity or to establish the fact of universal evolution, but has in the attempt to account for the one and to establish the other, been spun out into doctrinal systems which embody the most bewildering absurdities.

Pantheistic evolution, therefore, does not fulfil the hopes that have so fondly been based on it. It does not support the reality of the universe, but reduces finite beings to mere appearances, to mere modes of activity. It does not exalt, but stultifies human reason. It does not evince the greatness of God, but confounds Him with the vilest things, and attributes the lowest qualities to Him. Heaping contradictions on contradictions, it becomes destructive in its tendency. Instead of terminating in harmonious beauty and universal perfection, it terminates in the darkness and confusion of pessimism.

To say that evolution of all from God can be reconciled with theism or improves the theistic doctrine is the plainest untruth. The system which holds that God is all, because He develops into the universe, denies a personal Deity, and thereby diametrically opposes itself to theism; nay more, if it completely merges God in the world so as to eliminate His transcendency, it is, though not in terms, yet in reality, atheistical.

To go still farther and to avouch that pantheistic evolution is not only compatible with Christian views, but enlightens Christianity by reconciling it with reason, is far more than the height of absurdity. Many a reader will find it impossible to understand what meaning may be conveyed by such a term as pantheistic Christianity. And if, indeed, he has but the slightest idea of Christian religion, this impossibility to understand is pardonable. Prof. Schurman has, however, come to clear up this puzzling conception by his recent speculation. We are informed by him that the events, and especially the miracles related in the Gospel, are not real facts, but symbols of metaphysical truths, which the enlightened mind must decipher. Modern philosophy, we are further told, has successfully commenced to perform his task, and is now resetting the religion of Christ in the framework of contemporary knowledge.¹ By doing so it is fatal only to those Christian confessions which have been based on antiquated psychology, anthropology, cosmology, and history. It sets aside only decrepit belief, and what it destroys it replaces with truths discovered by cultivated reason. Understood in this purer light and cleared from inherited misrepresentations, Christianity embraces the following dogmas as its basis. Christ is God-man as we all are, only in a higher degree or a pre-eminent sense; for all men are sons of God in whom

¹ *Belief in God*, p. 261.

they live. He is the Saviour of mankind only inasmuch as He is the standard-bearer of civilization and as he exercises a vitalizing power by His gracious personality.¹ He is the regenerator of man, not by resuscitating him from spiritual death and restoring him to spiritual life, but by bringing him to the consciousness of being one with God, because the new birth of the soul consists in the recognition and appropriation of our union with the Deity.² There is no sin from which we need be redeemed as from a guilt, sin being a necessary moment in divine evolution.³ Nor is there any punishment which we have to fear in the life to come, since God is only love, the Father of spirits, who cannot resort to punishment for the education of His children. Eternal bliss in God has not to be deserved as a reward; for, as all are one with God by their nature, the ground of their communion with Him can never be broken.⁴

This language is clear enough, so clear, indeed, as to make all refutation unnecessary. It expresses the tenets of a philosophy which is the complete extermination of Christian belief, because it leaves intact none of the dogmas embodied in historical Christianity through all the centuries from the time of its foundation down to our days, and is an extermination of it as base and treacherous as the crime of the hidden assassin, because it assumes the name and the appearance of the religion which it attempts to extinguish by misrepresentations.

JOHN J. MING, S.J.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

² *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 255-260.