

Immutable Being, and therefore as to the necessity of an eternal creation—speculations which forget the difference between the Infinite and the finite, a difference which is to us at once conceivable and inconceivable—are utterly unknown in Scripture.

THEORIES CONTRADICTING THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION.

Error

It is at this point that we are met by those hypotheses which flatly contradict the doctrine thus laid down as Scriptural, and as alone consistent with the true notion of God and His universe. These have been alluded to in their relation to the doctrine of God Himself; but briefly, as the present is their proper place. It may be boldly asserted that Pantheism and Materialism, with a third class of intermediate theories that are composed of elements derived from both, owe their origin not to an anti-Theistic sentiment, but to the difficulty of accepting God as the Creator, primarily and absolutely, of anything that is not God. What is here said about them will be confined to a brief consideration of their bearing on the subject of creation.

PANTHEISM.

**Pan-
theism.**

Many definitions may be given of this system of thought, which has had the longest, the most diversified, and the most persistent sway in the annals of human error. But no definition does justice to it which forgets that it is a theory of the universe making God supreme in it without being its Creator: identifying, in fact, God with the universe, or the universe with God: τὸ πᾶν Θεὸς ἔστι. But there are two kinds of Pantheism, which are not perhaps distinguished as they should be in reviews of its history. All Pantheism is not the same Pantheism.

1. It cannot be said of the ancient Indian philosophies that they made God and the universe one. What to the Hindoo in every age—as long before the Christian era as since—has been the Supreme God, or the abstract Brahm without predicate, exists without a necessary finite created system. This eternal, infinite, immutable Being is sublimely above all creaturely nature. When the repose of incalculable ages is broken, He or It comes as to the creature into existence, is developed to creaturely thought in mani-

**Hindoo
Pan-
theism.**

fold forms for long ages, and then withdraws into Himself or Himself the whole panorama of phenomenal being to be remembered in their forms no more. Now in this wonderful system of thought the essential idea of creation cannot be concealed or suppressed. The Hindoo Trinity itself, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, is only a representative personification of the Supreme in acts which are not far wide of the Scriptural ideas of creation, preservation, and destruction, at least as far as the two former are concerned; all the phenomena of the universe, on the way to nothing, are surely supposed to be brought into separate existence that the Infinite may appear in them before they go hence; and that separate existence, as separate, they lose when they cease to be. It is true that the entire system may be called, in modern language, pantheistic. But there is a vast difference between its view of the supremacy of the Original of all things which He again withdraws from being and the pure Pantheism that identifies and makes one whole God and the universe.

Greek
Philosophy.

2. No form of ancient Greek philosophy was Pantheistic in the fullest and deepest sense of the word. From Thales through Plato down to the last of the Stoics the philosophers were occupied with the origin of things. Some denied creation, but they denied also God: such were the earliest of the Ionic school, who strove to find the unity of all phenomena, whether in water, or in air, or in fire; but whatever they called the soul of the world, animating and controlling the endless flux of things, it was not the god of Pantheism. Their system was Materialism in disguise. Others, as those whose names are the glory of the Socratic school, laid too much stress on the supremacy of the all-controlling mind to be counted Pantheists: moreover, they were always haunted by the notion of an eternal *ἕλη*, or matter, as it were something mediatory between matter, as we know it, and pure spiritual being. What they called the Soul of the World, the active principle, namely, which frames and forms and fashions all things, could never be detached from the Stoic conception of matter, and so far their system might be called Pantheistic. But their *Natura naturans*, or *ἡ φύσις τεχνική*, was, by the term, an operative mind, as Cicero says: "*Natura, non artificiosa solum, sed plane ARTIFEX ab eodem Zenone dicitur; consultrix, et provida utilitatum oppor-*

De Nat.
Deor.

tunitatunque omnium. Censet enim artis maxime proprium est creare et gignere, quodque in operibus nostrarum artium manus efficit, id multo artificiosius naturam efficere." The Natura naturata, or living *Kóσμος*, was indeed identified with the former, and nature became god. This theory of the universe has been called **HYLOZOISM**, and has played a conspicuous part in every age. It is really the theory of that class of modern materialists who yield to the evidence of purpose in nature, though only as **IMMANENT DESIGN**, which is a contradiction in thought, or a refuge from the conception of an external Designer that has no meaning. But design in any form is foreign to the strict notion of Pantheism.

**Hylo-
zoism.**

3. Pure Pantheism, as an account of the existence of the universe, assumed its final and only consistent development in Christian times, and in a philosophy that has been in avowed opposition to Christianity from the beginning.

**Modern
Panthe-
ism.**

(1.) Its new foundations were laid in Neo-Platonism, an eclectic system which strove to combine all that had been taught in previous schools of philosophy concerning the relation of being to phenomena. It pronounced more boldly than it had ever been pronounced before, that one only indescribable Being exists Who reveals Himself in all things, in the soul of the world, in the universal reason, and in the spirit of man: all seemingly independent things being only transient phenomena, and all personalities being destined for reabsorption into God. While the Fathers of the Christian Church were establishing against early heresy the doctrine of the Trinity, the Second Person being the Firstbegotten before every creature, and the *Ἀρχή*, or source of the creation brought into existence by the energy of the Third Person, Plotinus and Porphyry and Proclus were establishing another trinity: the One absolute, its manifestation in the universe, and its thinking itself in universal reason. Their ideas found their best expositor in John Scotus Erigena, the idealistic Pantheist of the ninth century. His book "*De Divisione Naturæ*" was the first manifesto of the modern system. It makes God "that which neither creates nor is created." "With God being, thought, and creating are identical." "In God it is one and the same thing to know what He makes before it is made, and to make what He knows. Therefore to know and to do is one in Him." "Man is

**Neo-Pla-
tonism.**

**Scotus
Erig. De
Div. Nat**

a certain intellectual notion in the Divine mind eternally created. This is his most approved and most true definition : and it is not so only of man, but of all things which, in the Divine wisdom, were made. The entire visible and invisible creature is a Theophany : it may be called, that is, a Divine apparition." According to this conception the thought must not linger on the existence of anything apart from God ; for while we think of it it has changed, and of it at any moment existence cannot be predicated. The spirit of man is on the same phenomenal way to its home. The tendency of this system, as of Pantheism in every form, is to abolish sin and responsibility. But that tendency took two directions. In the one it degenerated into the worst mystical antinomianism of the Middle Ages. In the other it was counteracted by better principles ; and, with strange inconsistency, the men whose theory made their soul only a spark on its way to a necessary extinction in God were absorbed in the most strenuous endeavours by perfect self-renunciation to bring themselves into a most blessed union with their Maker. But we have here to do only with theories of creation.

Spinoza

(2.) Spinoza, in the seventeenth century, carried the wavering dialectics of his predecessors to their legitimate conclusion. He made the principle of Descartes, that the consciousness of our existence is the first and only certainty, his starting-point. But, whereas the founder of Cartesianism argued to the real existence of a universe and a God, the founder of modern Pantheism argued in the opposite direction. He fell back upon the assured consciousness of one only substance, besides which there could be nothing. That substance may have attributes and modes ; but the attributes and modes of that infinite substance, including the entire universe of mind and extension, are not reality but phenomena. Of these phenomena, including ourselves, we may predicate attributes ; but not of the infinite All. According to the favourite adage of the system, which is a profound untruth, "Omnis determinatio est negatio ;" and to speak of the Infinite as being this or that, is to make Him less, or It less, than infinite. To assert that God creates or is a Creator, is to deny Him His Deity : in diametrical opposition to St. Paul's testimony that phenomenal things from the creation of the world declare His eternal power and Godhead. What is

the Christian teaching—and in the Christian teaching alone—is creation, is in Pantheism an eternal and necessary evolution of the One Sum of things: everything and every person is but a mode of the existence of Being absolute; everything in its manifestation, and every person in his act, is determined by the necessity of the Divine nature, if such a term may be used at all. “Without the world no God; and no God without the world.” Spinoza’s mathematically systematised Pantheism has been idealised in the philosophy of Germany, the keynote of which is that the Infinite is for ever coming to consciousness in the finite, the absolute which in itself is nothing coming to true objective existence in the creature, by an eternal movement which the thinking mind of man requires for the explanation of all being, and in which it finds rest. God is not Himself personal, but He is the sum of all personalities. This system strives to make itself Christian by terming Christ the mediator or reconciler of the Infinite and the finite in Whom God is the universe and the universe is God: the synthesis of all possible opposites.

(3.) With the endless evolutions of modern Pantheistic thought we have not to do. Suffice that it proves one thing most clearly, that the Christian doctrine of creation lies at the basis of all religion. Although the derivation of the word from *Religare*, to bind to, or to restrain from, be etymologically insecure, that idea is nevertheless rooted in it; and the terms *Lex*, or law, and *Obligation* are not far off. But Pantheism knows no bond between Creator and creature, because these terms are gone. Sin is no longer sin: freedom has eternally vanished from the whole economy of things. Immortality is the loss of what seemed personality, and absorption into the abyss of being, without that consciousness of absorption and rest which was the blissful dream of the best mystics, whether in the East or in the West. The universe is not the sphere in which a Creator moves, but the form in which He, by an eternal necessity, evolves Himself. The world of man cannot be the domain of Providence or redemption in which a personal God holds fellowship with His creatures. There are no creatures, nor is God He; for all the terms of personality ought to disappear, if they do not, from the system. Man is part of God’s existence—if we may return to the name God,—but God is equally part of

Conclu-
sions.

Spin.
Ethices,
Part II.

Idem. iv.
Prop. xx.

man's existence. There is no pre-eminence on His part, nor is there inferiority in His creature, if we may call man such. Spinoza says: "Hence it follows that the human mind is part of the infinite intelligence of God: and, forsooth, when we say that the mind of man perceives this or that, we only say no more than that God, not as He is infinite but as far as He is unfolded by the nature of man, or as far as He constitutes the essence of the human mind, has this or that idea." "Accordingly in the human mind there is no absolute or free will. The mind is a sure and determined method of thinking, and therefore cannot possibly be the free cause of its own actions." The only sin the system allows is imperfection on its way to perfectness: it is the loss of that which is the only good, that is, of being. In the evolution of God there is a struggle, and the transient survival of the fittest. "By how much the more anyone can preserve his share of being the greater is the virtue with which he is endowed; conversely, so far as anyone neglects to conserve his being he is impotent." Spinoza, like many other devout Pantheists, had exalted notions of the deification of man in God as His transient representative in the process of His eternal incarnation. But at the point of his highest elevation into union with the Deity, finite man is in this system lost in the infinite. There is no Christian glorification of the creature in God, but only reabsorption into the source whence his fleeting personality came. This is pure Pantheism, creationless, and therefore without a Creator. Man has no distinct existence for ever, because he and his home, and all that is his, must be drawn back again into the ocean that other similar waves of existence may follow. Ancient Hinduism went near to this; but it may be doubted whether it ever went so far. "I am Brahman," was the language that expressed in it the highest consummation of unity with Real Being; but still the I remained. Pantheism proper has no I, either for God or for man.

Systems
not
directly
Pan-
theistic.

SUB-PANTHEISTIC SYSTEMS.

It cannot be said that all the errors of mankind as to the created universe in its relation to the Creator may be summed up as Pantheism and Materialism. These are the extreme poles, but