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I. COMPLAINT* AGAINST THE ACTION OF THE SYNOD OF SOUTH CAROLINA IN ADDRESSING AN OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION TO THE CIVIL COMMONWEALTH.

TO THE VENERABLE,

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE UNITED STATES :

We, the undersigned Ministers and Elders of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and members of the Synod of South Carolina, submitting to its authority, hereby present to your venerable body this our Complaint against the action of said Synod of South Carolina taken at its meeting at Darlington, S. C., on Monday, November 1st, 1897, in the matter of a petition to an official representative of the United States, touching certain civil affairs which concern the commonwealth.

*This Complaint as here given appears in an amended form. The nature of the subject, the time limit imposed by the Constitution, and the circumstances in which the writer found himself, combined to render it impossible for him to put the first draft of the Complaint in such form as was desirable.

The writer ought to add that he found it impossible to confer with the individuals who authorized him to sign their names to this paper as co-complainants, or even to submit to them for their formal approval the Complaint as drafted by himself. (Rev. W. T. Hall, D. D., is the single exception. To him the writer is indebted for valuable and valued advice and suggestions.) He has reason to believe, however, that on all material points he has faithfully represented the mind of his co-complainants.

W. M. MCP.

VII. CRITICISMS AND REVIEWS.

FOSTER'S GOD : NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES.

GOD : NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES. *By Randolph S. Foster, D. D., LL. D., Bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church.* New York : Eaton & Mains ; Cincinnati : Curts & Jennings. 1897. Pp. 280. \$3.00

This bishop, amid multiform and manifold executive duties, has found the time to be a prolific author. On the page opposite the title-page is a list of twelve volumes from his pen. The one under review is the fifth in a series of "Studies in Theology," *Prolegomena, Theism, The Supernatural Book, Creation*, standing before it in the series.

The bishop's writing is prevailingly high wrought. He is fond of adjectives of the purplest hue, and of words of swelling sound and original coinage. This particular volume is, however, of soberer style and in better form than some of his publications. It abounds in long quotations from familiar standards in theology, suggesting sometimes that the author may have been too busy to think for himself ; yet, on the whole, the work is well done, and is very entertaining.

The topics discussed are the Spirituality, Unity, Eternity, Absoluteness, Personality, Morality, Attributes, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, Goodness, Justice and Truth of God.

All these topics have been treated from an Arminian point of view. The two most interesting to a Calvinist, for polemical reasons, and the two ablest discussions in the book, are those on the "Freedom of God" and the "Omniscience of God." For these reasons these two are selected for particular notice.

Is God free? This Arminian answers :

"If we suppose him to have a moral nature at all he must be free, and if free, must have ability to the alternative of acting according to the dictates of his eternal attributes, or adversely—must be able to renounce himself or revolutionize his own eternal perfections. That he remains loyal to himself must be a free self-determination, else God himself and the universe are bound in mere fate" (p. 52).

God is a moral being ; if so, he is free ; if free, he has the power to renounce himself—to act adversely to his eternal perfections. This is the bishop's premise, boldly, even recklessly, announced. It is likewise the premise of the theological system which he holds.

1. It follows from this premise that God is a voluntary, not a necessary, being. "That he remains loyal to himself must be a free self-determination, else God himself and the universe are bound up in mere fate." But the bishop has elsewhere said he is a "necessary" being. Then how can his very

existence be contingent upon his own will? He is a Fate, and not a God, according to our author, unless he has the power of suicide.

2. It follows from the bishop's premise that God is not an immutable being. Because free, he has the power to "revolutionize his eternal perfections." Our author thinks that God *will* not thus reconstruct himself, that he certainly will remain loyal to himself; but he holds that, being free, he certainly has the power to will every attribute into its opposite. He will not change himself into a demon, but he can do it. His character is not necessary, but voluntary.

3. The bishop's premise makes it possible for God to be a heartless fool. He says the "law of the soul" is (1) to know, (2) then to feel, and (3) then to act. The resultant of knowing and feeling is called "motive." Now he says, if "motives determine the man," he is "necessitated," and not free. When, therefore, a man acts according to his knowledge and feeling, he is not free. To be free, then, would necessitate his acting foolishly, and heartlessly. But God is free; therefore, he is without motives for his actions; for if he should happen to have motives, he would not be free, and not being free, he would not be moral. But our author says, "There could be no creative volition without a motive. There could be no motive without a sensibility to be moved" (p. 54). Again he says, "He cannot act at all volitionally without motives drawn from the logically antecedent, but really coincident, actions of these perfections; though being free, he has the power to act adversely thereto." If motives cause volitions, they are not free; but God cannot act volitionally without motives. He is free, therefore motives do not control him; he acts, therefore motives do control him.

4. The bishop's doctrine leaves us without any guarantee that God will be loyal to himself. He can renounce himself, and he can be faithless to every promise, because he is free. Will he be loyal, or will he renounce his word? The bishop answers, "His will immutably follows the dictates of his infinite wisdom and love." But he has the power to act to the very contrary of wisdom and love. What assures us that the will will immutably follow the dictates of wisdom and love? The bishop again answers, "I am the Lord, I change not." But he can change by an act of will from wisdom to folly and from love to hate. What insures his word?

5. The bishop is against the Scriptures. They say, "God cannot lie." Then the bishop says, He is not free; and if he is not free, he is not moral. The bishop's doctrine is, God will not lie; but to say, He cannot, is to deny the power to the contrary; and to deny the power to the contrary is to deny freedom. "When the power does not exist, no difference from what cause, the choice or action of the will comes under the law of necessity, and the act ceases to have ethical significance" (p. 63). But Paul said to Timothy, "He (God) cannot deny himself." The power of self-contradiction "does not exist;" therefore, our author must reason, self-consistency and self-loyalty come under the "law of necessity," and consequently God is not free, and his character is without "ethical significance."

These remarks feebly suggest some of the disastrous consequences which must follow from the attempt to apply the philosophy of Indeterminism to

God. The result is a portrayal of the Deity as a Being able to stand but liable to fall.

Bishop Foster believes in the omniscience of God and in his prescience of the free acts of men. Adam Clarke before him held that God, with respect to this class of events, was voluntarily ignorant. Dr. McCabe, a contemporary and an Arminian of Arminians, holds that God's prescience of free acts is impossible. Our author, however, thinks that God does foreknow the free acts of men, but if he were compelled to elect between contingency and prescience he would not hesitate to deny the divine foreknowledge. But he does not believe that he is in such a dilemma.

Events may be classified, (1) as *necessitated*, or those which must come to pass, (2) as *certain*, or those which will come to pass, and (3) as *contingent*, or those which may come to pass. *Must, may, will*—these are the auxiliaries of the verbs of eventuation. "Difficulties embarrassing the idea of prescience, it thus appears, all relate to contingent, that is, non-necessitated, events" (p. 176).

Our author finds his solution in the nature of the divine knowledge. It is intuitive, never discursive; immediate, not inferential. God is omnipresent, occupying every point in space and every moment of duration, Wherever he is, he must see. All the contents of space and duration are held in steady gaze. There is no past, nor future; all is present time with him. From eternity the free acts of men have been open and naked to his eye. No event can travel so far back into the past as to get out of the range of his vision, and no event can lie so far out in the future as to be out of his sight. Wherever he is he must know, and he is everywhere; and whenever he is he must see, and he inhabits eternity. "Suppose an eye could be so adjusted as to see all the time the events of a thousand years" (p. 190). To such a beholder the contents of the thousand years would always be present,—present before they had happened, present after they had happened. They would be future or past with respect to being, but they would be only present with respect to knowledge. God's eye is so adjusted as to take in the contents, not of a thousand years, but of eternity. They are future to cause, they are present to cognition. They are not yet for volition; they are for intelligence. Foreknowledge is cognitive, not causative. Prescience belongs to the vocabulary of the understanding, not to that of the will.

Somewhere in space, and at some moment in time, lies a free act, say, the first sin of Adam. From all eternity the omnipresent God has been at that precise spot, and at that exact moment, with his consciousness. That event, the sin of Adam, has never been out of his presence or sight. Adam's will caused it; God's eye saw it. Because God's knowledge is infinitely presentative, therefore he knows the free acts of men without at the same time causing them.

Now read this inferential paragraph which would delight the heart of Dr. Hodge:

"Still, it is said, what he knows will be will be, and we have no power to prevent it, and there is no use concerning ourselves about it. The first part of the statement is true; the remaining parts are not true. What he knows

will be will be. That is indisputable. That we have no power to prevent it is not true. It will be because we will have it, not because we have no power to have it otherwise. Therefore, there is reason why we should concern ourselves about it. If we cause the 'will be' to be evil, when we have the power to make it good; if we make it evil, when we are able to make it good, and when we know that we ought to make it good, we shall find, when too late to remedy the mistake, that there was great reason to concern ourselves about it. We shall find that it is not God, or certainty, or prescience, or fate that causes what will be to be, but we ourselves. For no one but ourselves can be responsible. The only relation that God has to it is that he so made us as to make it possible, and that he did not interfere to prevent it. That is his responsibility" (p. 193).

Are free acts certain? Our bishop answers, Certainly. Then are they necessitated? He rightly answers, No.

"But then, it is said, the knowledge of it necessitates it; it must now be. Why must it now be? Because of the prescience of it? It has no connection with it to make it necessary. It does not at all affect the question of its existence. It is simple cognition. That which exact truth warrants us in saying is: It will be; it might have been otherwise" (p. 215).

"Yes, but if an event or act of one mind is foreseen by another mind, it must necessarily come to pass. We answer: No, that does not follow. It follows that it will certainly come to pass, but that is not the same as saying that it must necessarily come to pass. It may come to pass freely, and be just as certain as if it came to pass necessarily; and in that case, if the foreknowledge were perfect, it would embrace precisely this state of facts. The event will certainly come to pass freely, and not necessarily. Being free, it might not have come to pass, and prescience would then be precisely the opposite to what it is—would be that the event will not come to pass. If the event is a necessary event, the prescience would be the event will certainly come to pass, and necessarily. But in either case the knowledge would have no influence whatever on its contingency or necessity. The sources of contingency or necessity are wholly independent of the fact of knowledge. Knowledge simply sees what is—causes nothing. Place an eye up in heaven, and let it look down upon the earth, and it, if open, will behold what is going on among men; but the transaction will go on all the same if it be shut; its being open or shut causes nothing. It is precisely so of the omniscient eye of God. What is free it sees as free; what is necessary, as necessary" (p. 218).

But this really fine argument ought to be read. Its main point is that foreknowledge is not causative, but cognitive. He reasons ably against necessitarianism on the one hand and contingency on the other, and for the Calvinistic doctrine of Certainty. But throughout the book, he makes the customary Arminian blunder of first classifying Calvinism as necessitarian, and then proceeds to batter away at the two indiscriminately. Dr. McCabe sees the issue, and teaches the nescience of God as to free acts. If the free act is certain, it will come to pass; if it will come to pass, there are no contingencies to God; the contents of time lie mapped in his plan and purpose.

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