Flesherton Advance.

"TRUTH BEFORE FAVOR."—"PRINCIPLES, NOT MEN."

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THE ADVANCE.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

[The Editor does not necessarily endorse the opinions expressed by correspondents.]

"What is Arminianism?"

To the Editor of The Advance.

DEAR SIR,—It is painful to read "Beta's" letter in your issue of the 17th January; how any one bearing the name of Christian can indulge so much in "Slang" is to say the least of it—a pity. But the Leopard cannot change his spots, neither can "Beta" change his nature. The columns of the ADVANCE almost from its first number testify abundantly to this fact, and all who read his answer to what I am about to write, will see him bear out unmistakeably his most unenviable reputation. Before proceeding to more important matters, I will notice a few of "Beta's" shuffling insinuations and misrepresentations.

First, he finds fault with my quotations from Milton, he does not even try to disprove one word of them, this he knows he cannot do, but goes on to tell us what Channing said about Milton. Surely Milton is able to speak for himself. It is the same old story. Beta prefers the "Fathers" to the Bible, and Channings remarks about Milton, in preference to what Milton himself says.

I referred to Milton simply because he is one of Dr. Wheden's Chosen Arminians, and gave you Milton's opinion of the Fathers, just because more stress is laid upon what the "Father's" are reported to have said, than what Paul, or Peter, or John has said. In his fifth paragraph, "Beta" is really fiendish, he would like to make me say that Methodists do not take the Bible as their guide, and thus be the means of causing enmity between the Methodist and Presbyterian bodies. Now, Sir, none knows better than he, that I have never written one line in this direction, but have always been very anxious that that friendly feeling which has so long existed between us should continue unabated, and if Beta had been what he professes to be, the pamphlets complained of would never have been posted as they were.

In another paragraph, Beta says I charge him "with the act" of mailing these pamphlets, "gets into a passion," &c., "B's effort is tremendous to make Beta responsible for this discussion, which is unreasonable. If he received a pamphlet in common with others—Methodists included as I am informed," &c. In answer, of course it was Beta who mailed the pamphlets, and we feel assured there is not another man in Flesherton would have done so but himself. "Gets into a passion." I will here tell the public (for Beta knows it already) that NOTHING WHICH HE CAN SAY OR DO WILL PUT ME IN THE LEAST ABOUT. I repeat, Beta knows this. "Methodists included." Beta knows just as well as he knows anything, that this is a barefaced falsehood. I challenge him to name one of our Methodist friends who got one of Dr. Whedon's pamphlets through the Flesherton post-office at the time those were mailed to the Presbyterians. If Beta wishes anything plainer than this, let him say so. Beta also says I called him a hypocrite. Answer, I DID NOT. But surely if I did his letter would justify me in doing so. I simply quoted a saying of our Saviour and said he might take as much of the passage as suited him. In all our quotations, whether from Scripture or otherwise, Beta cannot point to a single misquotation; but the only passage to which he gives reference, has a very important omission in it. Indeed it might be said the key stone is left out. In referring to the oft quoted text, John 3c. 16v. Beta says I "doctor it" (how natural the expression) by placing along side a Scripture without its context. This is it: "No man can come unto me except the Father which has sent me draw him." The context reads: "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be ALL taught of God, every man that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, COMETH unto me." John 6c. 45v. The verse reads thus: "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God, every man, THEREFORE, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." The word "therefore" is kept out by Beta—why he kept it out is best known to himself, but its importance is apparent. Let Beta turn to the passages in the prophets referred to, and he will see that it is God's "own people" that he so teaches and every one who listens to his teachings and learns by it cometh to Christ. We read in the context that some were offended at our Savior's sayings, even as Beta is now, and at the 64th verse, Christ says: "But there are some of you that believe not; for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him, and he said (65v.) therefore said I unto you that no man CAN COME UNTO ME, EXCEPT IT WERE GIVEN UNTO HIM OF MY FATHER." Gentle reader—read for yourselves, please, and you will find a beautiful harmony in the complete sovereignty of God. Beta says the term "drawing with B means force, compulsion, logging chain fashion," &c. Nothing of the sort; such ravings emanate from a mind thoroughly depraved and ill at ease with itself.

In referring to the Fathers, I do not mean to insinuate that there were no Arminians in existence in the early days of Christianity. We will find them before the Fathers. The very same objections were made in APOSTOLIC TIMES to the DOCTRINES OF GRACE, as taught by the inspired Paul. In the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the doctrine of sovereign distinguishing grace, is discussed professedly and at length. The Apostle boldly announces the language of God to be—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." He then asks: "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." Still the Apostle is aware that a blind caviller, like Beta, may continue to object; he therefore adds:—"Thou wilt say, then, unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" The very language and scope of this objection show that the Apostle meant that his doctrine should be understood in a Calvinistic sense, for upon any other ground the objection would be irrelevant. How does he reply to it. Does he retreat or disavow that view of the subject on which the cavil is evidently founded? Not at all; he attempts no mitigation or softening. His reply is: "Nay, but O, man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? 'Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour. What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory." Here the Apostle has anticipated the whole force of the Arminian objection. It cannot be pushed further than he has carried it in a single sentence. No addition has ever been made to its force by the most ingenuous gainsayer. Yet the Apostle answers it, not by an attempt to explain, to bring down to human comprehension, or to show that his statements had been misconstrued. Nothing like it. He resolves the whole into the supremacy, the sovereignty and the incomprehensibleness of God and His counsels, and calls upon all to yield to this great and all governing principle; closing, as he does in another place, when on the same subject, with that memorable exclamation: "O, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out."

Beta says that I agree with Dr. McLaren and sneers because I said the doctrines of the Presbyterian church are dear to the heart of every true Presbyterian. In answer,—If I agree with Dr. McLaren, it is not because that gentleman has taught me, FOR I NEVER SAW EITHER HIM OR HIS LECTURE, and never made the slightest reference to it. I honestly believe that the doctrines of the Methodist Church are dear to the heart of every true Methodist, and I give them credit for it, and claim the same right to judge for myself which I gladly accede to them; and further, I feel confident that there is not a true Methodist in Flesherton who will not at once allow the privilege I claim, Beta, and HE only excepted. He and he only claims the right to dictate, and that, too, in matters where he is a miserably poor judge. If his attempted caricature of the "logging chain" is not coarse, unchristian, yea almost a blasphemous exhibition, I confess myself no judge of what is right or what is wrong.

Beta shuffles out of the prophecies very clumsily, but we can afford to let him and his school-boy go, and all the events predicted through the prophets have already been fulfilled or will be so in His own good time, and just as He decreed and foreordained in his eternal counsels it should be, notwithstanding Beta's cavils.

Beta is greatly tickled over the idea of the Rev. Dr. Whedon being called Calvinistic because he admits that "God plans all possible futurities," just what Presbyterians have always believed. It is easy, and in the estimation of the superficial and unreflecting, it is conclusive, to object, that Calvinism has a tendency to cut the nerves of all spiritual exertion; that if we are elected, we shall be saved, do what we WILL, and if not elected, we shall be lost, do what he CAN; but is it not perfectly evident that the objection lies with quite as much force against the Arminian hypothesis? Arminians grant that all men will not be actually saved; that the salvation or perdition of each individual is distinctly foreknown by God; and that the event will certainly happen as He foresees that it will. May not a caviller then say, with quite as much appearance of justice in this case as in the other: "the result as to my salvation is known and certain. If I am to be saved, no anxiety about it is necessary; and if I am to perish, all anxiety about it would be useless." But would Arminians consider this objection as valid against their creed? Probably not; yet it is just as valid against THEIRS as against OURS. The truth is Arminians by resorting to their schemes, do not really get rid of one particle of the difficulty which they allege against the Calvinistic System, they only place IT ONE STEP FURTHER BACK but must meet it in unimpared strength after all. If there be a God, who is endowed with perfect foreknowledge, and who is, and always has been, acting upon a PLAN, of which he knows the end from the beginning;—and there is such a being, or there is no God,—then all the difficulty which lies against the doctrine of Sovereign unconditional predetermination, lies equally and in all its unmitigated force, against the doctrine of foreknowledge, and certain futurities.

Without pretending to go over all the points of Calvinism in detail, let it suffice to say, that the system which Presbyterians prefer to receive, is of the following character and amount:—

That the Gospel finds all men by nature dead in trespasses and Sins, destitute alike of the image and favor of God, and incapable of regaining either, in virtue of any strength or resources within themselves; that the plan of man's recovery from this state of rebellion, depravity, and ruin, is from beginning to end, a system of mere unmerited grace; that it was the wonderful unprompted grace; or undeserved love of God, which, in the eternal counsels of peace, contemplating man as fallen, devised a stupendous plan of redemption from the guilt and power of sin; that in these eternal counsels and purposes he regarded the whole human race as equally fallen, and as equally undeserving on account of their sins; that, moreover, in his sovereign mercy, he resolved to save a portion of them; that he was prompted to this choice, not by any foresight of faith and obedience on the part of the elect, because their faith and obedience are his own Sovereign gift; but by the mere good pleasure of his will, that they might be to the praise of the glory of his grace; that God was under no obligation to provide deliverance for any of our race; that he might justly have left us all to perish in our iniquity, as he did the fallen angels, to whom he was, surely, guilty of no injustice; that he was placed, however, in the exercise of amazing mercy, to provide a place of pardon, and of restoration to life and blessedness; that he gave his only begotten Son, that who soever believeth in Him might not perish, but obtain everlasting life. We believe further, that not only the providing of this Saviour, but the disposition, in each individual, to accept of him, is all of grace, that is the free, unmerited gift of God.

We have no doubt that all mankind, left to themselves, would reject this great Salvation, and that it is discriminating, and all-conquering grace which inclines any to receive it. We are persuaded further, that as Salvation is all of Grace, and as it is evident from Scripture and from daily observation, that all men are not believers, and, of course, that all are not Saved, so it was not God's original intention to Save all; for it is granted that he does not actually Save all; and that which he now does, if he be such a God as the Bible represents him, he always intended to do. We believe that known unto God are all his works and ways from the beginning; and that all the dispensations of his grace, as well as of his providence, and among the rest, the effectual calling and Salvation of every believer, entered into his plan from all eternity. Yet so (as our confession of faith declares) as that thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away but rather established."

We will now turn our attention for a little to "Betas" creed; it was not our intention to have gone into the Doctrines of Arminians at all, but as Beta is so amused because we said Dr. Whedon was somewhat Calvinistic we will come a little nearer home, and tell Beta that he also argues (if argument it can be called) on Calvinistic principles. This I dare say is new to Beta for I solemnly believe that he is totally ignorant of both Calvinism and Arminianism. Beta says Arminianism is "justification by Faith" "By the Grace of God," or to put it in the words of the Apostle Paul "By Grace are ye Saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Before proceeding further, it is proper to state the sense in which we use the word GRACE. It means favor—that to which the receiver has no claim, and the performer is not bound.

There can be no claim to an act of Grace on the one hand, nor can there be any obligation to perform it on the other. It enters necessarily and essentially into the idea that it might be withheld and no wrong done, otherwise it is not Grace. When we say, therefore, that Salvation is "by Grace" we mean that man has no claim to divine favour; that God is under no obligation to bestow it, and that without this favour man could not obtain eternal life. If the former has a claim, or if the latter is bound, then Grace is out of the question. That which we may demand, and He must give, is not grace, but justice.

The correctness of this statement will hardly be denied, and yet we affirm that the avowed principles of Arminianism entirely subvert this idea of grace. According to this system man in his fallen state had a claim to divine favor; God was bound to provide Salvation for him, and give him a measure of Grace, (if we can conceive of the term as applying to what God was bound to give) or He could not hold him responsible as an accountable being. Let us look at the proofs.

The first is taken from a volume of "Doctrinal Tracts" issued in their present form "By order of the General Conference." To show the estimate in which these tracts are held, it may be stated that most of them were formerly bound with the "Form of

(Concluded on 8th Page.)

J. W. BATES,

Furniture Dealer and Undertaker.

FLESHERTON, ONT.

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