

COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS

In a recent issue of this JOURNAL, Vol. XXXIII (1936), pp. 617- 628, there was published a pleasantly written and well argued article on "Determinism, Fatalism, and Historical Materialism." In sections III and IV there are certain, perhaps minor, remarks, both historical and logical, which, to keep the complete article on a high level, deserve emendation. The author, on page 620, asserts that Augustine considered creation as a unique timeless act, and that the preservation of the world is identical with its creation. The author then improperly asserts that "preservation implies existence in time," and thus Augustine is convicted of inconsistency by putting God apart from time in creation and within time in preservation.

Now it may be that Augustine was not quite decided whether time was an aspect of physical motion, or a form of the human mind. But it is clear that for Augustine God is not temporal; and this is true both in the case of initial creation and also in the matter of preservation. As a further matter of fact, it would be difficult to show from such passages as *De Civ. Dei*, XII, 25, that Augustine makes any rigid identification of creation with preservation. Augustine, therefore, is a poor illustration of the type of inconsistency which the author wishes to discuss.

In the second place, in both sections III and IV, Augustine's theory is called monistic and on page 622 the theory of Calvin also is so designated. It should be pointed out that while Augustine and Calvin are monistic in the sense that there is only one ultimate cause, God; yet neither is monistic in the author's sense of the term – neither asserts that God and the world are one in substance. Nor does the author's reference to *On the Grace of Christ*, etc., chapters 45 and 52, bear out its contention. If the notion of creation has any significance at all, it points to an impassible ontological chasm between the substance of God and that of the world.

There is a third matter which might as well be included here. On page 623 the author says, "We know nothing in the nature of the supposed unique cause of all things from which the specific character of a future event can be inferred." And farther down: "... the sequence of events is unpredictable."

In so far as these expressions refer to Augustine and Calvin, they are hardly accurate. Both of these theologians very definitely believed in a written revelation, and they also believed that man was made in the image of God. These two factors, but particularly the first, provide man with no little information about the unique cause of all things. This information also includes the prediction of future events and often the reasons for the necessity of such events. Since the author has just mentioned the philosophy of history, on which subject Augustine had considerable to say, the point should not have been overlooked or passed by in silence. Neither the logic nor the history of Augustinian principles justifies the reduction of prediction to mere tautology.

The conclusion is that while the author may show inconsistencies in some forms of monism, the inclusion of Augustine and Calvin was not in line with the main argument.

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