

The Princeton Theological Review

OCTOBER, 1923

IS GOD ALMIGHTY?

III. OMNIPOTENCE AND PHILOSOPHY¹

“God either wishes to take away evils and is not able; or he is able and not willing; or he is neither willing nor able; or he is both willing and able. If he is willing and not able he is feeble, which does not belong to the nature of God. If he is able and not willing he is envious, which is equally foreign to God. If he is neither willing nor able he is both envious and feeble, and so is not God. If he is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, whence are the evils? or why does he not take them away?” It is in this way that Epicurus, according to Lactantius, *De Ira Dei*, xiii, formulated the problem of evil. A similar dilemma, stated in more up-to-date fashion by a soldier in the trenches who writes from “Somewhere in Hell,” is thus set forth in a letter to an American preacher in London: “The luck is all on your side; you still believe in things. Good for you. It is topping, if one can do it. But war is such a devil’s nursery. I got knocked over, but I am up and at it again. I’m tough. They started toughening me the first day. My bayonet instructor was an ex-pug, just the man to develop one’s innate chivalry. They hung out the bunting and gave me a big send-off, when we came out here to scatter the Hun’s guts. Forgive me writing so. I know you will forgive me, but who will forgive God? Not I—not I! This war makes me hate God. I don’t know whether he is the God of battle and enjoys the show, as he

¹ Previous articles have discussed the Biblical Data and Omnipotence and Religious Experience. See this REVIEW, October, 1922, and April, 1923.

our author advocates; for it involved not merely a new use of old materials but a new birth. Certainly regenerated men should never placidly acquiesce in evil economic conditions, even in this present evil world, and they should use every legitimate means to improve those conditions. But the really essential weapon in their warfare is the gospel of the Cross of Christ from which Professor Dickey, with the whole of modern naturalistic liberalism, has apparently turned away.

Princeton.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

The Acts of the Apostles. In the Revised Version. With Introduction and Commentary. By A. W. F. BLUNT, B.D., Vicar of St. Werburgh's, Derby; Hon. Canon of Southwell; Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Southwell; formerly Fellow and Classical Lecturer of Exeter College, Oxford. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press. Printed in England 1922. [New York: Oxford University Press, American Branch.] Pp. 272. Price, \$1.50.

In this volume in *The Clarendon Bible*, of which the general editors are the Bishops of Newcastle and Ripon, the author accepts the Lucan authorship of the Book of Acts and then proceeds to reject the things that would give that conservative critical conclusion real value. In combining acceptance of Lucan authorship with rejection of the supernatural content of the book, Mr. Blunt allies himself with Harnack and others, but the position is an altogether untenable one. Our author, in his extreme dislike of definite assertions, will not indeed say that he rejects all the miracles in the Lucan narrative; and at one place he even pronounces it "not unreasonable to suppose that the occurrence of such a miracle [as the moral miracle of Jesus' sinlessness] would be accompanied by the occurrence of miracles in the physical sphere as well" (pp. 35 f). But practically very little is made of this possibility. The miracles, where the historical basis of the accounts is accepted, are rationalized away in the manner which has been strangely revived (despite the deathblow which Strauss had been supposed to have dealt to the rationalizing method) by Harnack and C. C. Torrey. Certainly Mr. Blunt does not face with any seriousness the question how a companion of Paul, who came into direct contact with the Jerusalem Church, could have been so egregiously mistaken about the way in which that Church came into being. At times one is led to hope that Mr. Blunt may be inclined to solve this problem in the way of an acceptance of the supernaturalism of Acts at least so far as the origin of the Church is concerned; he does find it "difficult to believe" that the change in the disciples between Good Friday and Pentecost "could have resulted from anything less than a concrete fact producing the new conviction" (p. 132). But the implications of this somewhat cryptic affirmation become nowhere apparent.

The question of miracle can be treated in this cavalier manner because Mr. Blunt believes it to be unimportant for Christian faith; what is really important, he thinks, is "the moral wonder of Christ's Personality" (p. 37). But here our author parts company with the whole of apostolic Christianity; for the thing that was important for apostolic Christianity

was not merely what Christ was but what Christ did, and the account of what Christ did was what constituted the "gospel." It involves a radical offence against historical method to use the language of modern agnosticism in describing the Apostolic Age. Whatever may be true of the modern Church, the primitive Christians certainly did not regard "theology" as a mere changing "interpretation" of an inner "experience;" on the contrary, they regarded experience itself as the result of the saving supernatural facts which theology sets forth.

In treating the relation between Acts and the Pauline Epistles, Mr. Blunt makes some judicious observations; his acceptance of the Lucan authorship of Luke-Acts is an interesting testimony to the weight of literary evidence; and the arguments by which he is led to accept the early date of Galatians and the identification of Gal. ii. 1-10 with the "Famine Visit" are certainly worthy of consideration. But he errs in not considering what the theory of Lucan authorship really involves. Thus he can even look with favor upon the theory of Bousset (apparently known through the medium of Lake and Jackson's work) that the title "Lord" was not applied to Jesus in the Jerusalem Church (p. 169); yet apparently he has not the slightest inkling of the stupendous consequences of this radical view. The reader finds here only an instance, though an extreme instance, of that slurring over of important historical questions which is characteristic not only of Mr. Blunt but of the whole school to which he belongs. In the evil days upon which the New Testament scholarship has now fallen, one can almost long for the Hegelianism of Baur and his associates. Hegelianism was a grievous error, but unlike modern pragmatism it was not an error that discouraged intellectual life.

Princeton.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. A Study in Translations and an Interpretation. By WILFRED H. ISAACS, M.A., Rector of Hemingby. Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press [American Branch, 35 West 32nd Street, New York], 1921. Pp. viii, 87.

Mr. Isaacs has given us an interesting book. And the most interesting part is the brief preface on "Translation and Translators." The preface contains some things that are true and some things that are quite untrue, but it is at least thought-provoking throughout.

"As the merit of interpretation [the author has defined the word in a very unusual way] consists in fidelity to the matter of the speaker and accommodation to the style of the audience, so the merit of translation lies in fidelity to the matter of the author and accommodation to the style of the reader." In application of this principle Mr. Isaacs has produced a translation of 2 Corinthians which, whatever its faults, is not wanting in originality. But is the principle correct? Should a translation be accommodated to the style of the reader? If that be true it is certainly matter for profound regret; for taken strictly the principle would mean that a translation of a work of genius must not preserve any of the grandeur of style found in the original but must be written in the style of ordinary people of the present day. There is evidence that Mr. Isaacs does not