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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.

ough knowledge of the same language, but even a bare smattering is of incalculable value.

Mr. Isaacs' hostility to ambiguity has frequently led him far beyond the proper function of a translation; his attempt to be modern and natural has frequently led him away from the thought of the original (as when *ἄγιοι* is translated "believers"); and it cannot be said that he has attained that "swing and balance" (p. vi) at which he has aimed and which both the original Greek and the Authorized Version possess in such generous measure. But he has at least understood, in a way by no means universal among modern readers, the great things that the Apostle was intending to say, and he has produced an unconventional and interesting book.

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J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

Here and There Among the Papyri. By GEORGE MILLIGAN, D.D. (Aberdeen), D.C.L. (Durham), Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism in the University of Glasgow. With a Frontispiece. London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1922. Pp. xvi, 180 [New York: George H. Doran Company. Price \$2.00].

In this pleasing little book, Dr. Milligan has turned aside from the extensive lexicographical labors involved in *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* to give a general popular account of the newly discovered papyri especially in their bearing upon the New Testament. It is needless to say that the task could hardly have been placed in more competent hands. Especially as a supplement to the admirable *Selections from the Greek Papyri* (by the same author), the present book will certainly serve to arouse an intelligent popular interest in the new finds.

Such interest will not really suffer on account of the comparative moderation of the author's claims. On the contrary, the rhapsodical exaggerations of Deissmann—great as the achievements of that scholar have undoubtedly been—have sometimes repelled rather than attracted the careful student. Dr. Milligan's calmer and more judicious treatment of the new materials is in reality far more effective.

It must certainly be admitted that the non-literary papyri afford very little direct aid in the interpretation of difficult New Testament passages; and the instances cited by Dr. Milligan where such aid has been detected by recent scholars will only confirm the admission. Far more important has been the light which the papyri have shed upon the history of the Greek language and the place of the New Testament within that history. Thus Dr. Milligan is able to affirm (p. 63)—we must admit that it is greatly to our surprise—that the list of words formerly designated by the lexicons as "Biblical" or "Ecclesiastical" has been reduced by the papyri from about five hundred to about fifty. Undoubtedly the new discoveries have helped to show that the New Testament is written in the living Koiné, important as it is, on the other hand, that the Semitic influence should not be ignored.

Dr. Milligan rightly avoids the exaggerations of which Deissmann is guilty in the course of his insistence upon the popular as distinguished

from the literary character of the New Testament books. "Even in the case of the least literary writings of the New Testament," our author says (p. 80), "we must beware of so emphasizing their popular character as to lose sight of the grace and beauty imparted to them in virtue of the subject-matter with which they deal and the spiritual genius of their authors." Thus also (on page 32) the overpressing by Deissmann of the distinction between "letters" and "epistles" is rightly rejected. More doubtful is Dr. Milligan's detection of similarity between the openings of the Pauline Epistles and those of the papyrus letters. Surely the differences, even in form, are far more striking than the resemblances. The papyrus letters with great constancy, begin with the formula, "So and so to so and so, greeting" (ὁ δεῖνα τῷ δεῖνι χαιρεῖν). Here, as Zahn has pointed out, the "greeting" is an infinitive (probably the object of a verb λέγει understood), whereas in Paul the greeting is given by nouns ("grace" and "peace") in the nominative case subject of an understood optative of the verb "to be." But a far more important difference is to be found in the use to which the openings are put. The openings in the papyrus letters are purely formal (like our "Dear Sir"), whereas in Paul they are varied according to the contents of the individual epistles and are made to express the deepest things that the writer had to say. By revealing anew the constancy of the form by which ancient letters were opened, the papyri have made only the more interesting the fact that Paul did not follow that form.

It is decidedly one-sided, we think, when Dr. Milligan says (p. 32) that the Pauline Epistles "were intended, in the first instance, not for publication, or for after-ages, but to meet the immediate practical needs of the Churches and individuals to whom they were in the first instance addressed." One may question, indeed, how far the future history of the Church was ever revealed to Paul, but at any rate it is a mistake to suppose that any one of the Pauline Epistles was intended simply to be read once and then thrown away like the letters which have been found on the Egyptian rubbish-heaps. On the contrary, all of the Epistles were intended for the edification of the Church of God. It should never be forgotten that the Epistles of Paul were written consciously in the plenitude of apostolic authority. Their authority, like the authority of other New Testament books, was not something merely attributed to them subsequently by the Church, but was inherent in them from the beginning.

The most interesting thing of all about the papyri is that they reveal to us with startling vividness the actual daily life of ordinary persons of New Testament times. And this aspect of them is well brought out in Dr. Milligan's admirable book.

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Life of Christ. By GIOVANNI PAPINI. Freely translated from the Italian by DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, [1923]. Pp. 416.

The enormous popularity of Papini's *Life of Christ* is one of the