

# The Princeton Theological Review

OCTOBER, 1923

---

## IS GOD ALMIGHTY?

### III. OMNIPOTENCE AND PHILOSOPHY<sup>1</sup>

“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

---

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

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

intend his words to be taken in exactly this way; yet in general it may be said that his translation has adhered to his principle only too well, and in consequence it has lost the spirit of the glorious original of 2 Corinthians. Our translator is inclined to be severe on "Jacobean English," and believes that in translating one should break away altogether from "the Greek arrangement of clause and sentence," since "language which is hobbled by the exigencies of translation is necessarily halting, sticky, unnatural." But the strange thing is that the "Jacobean" translation commonly known as the King James Version, though it is content to follow the construction of the original far more closely than Mr. Isaacs' version and reproduces the thought of the Apostle with admirable correctness, can hardly be called halting, sticky or unnatural.

Our translator says of James Moffatt that he "subordinates considerations of euphony, dignity and, not infrequently, accuracy to a colloquialism far in excess of anything that can with confidence be predicated of Paul." The criticism is no doubt eminently just. But the truth is that Mr. Isaacs is himself not altogether free from faults similar to those which he blames in Moffatt.

Mr. Isaacs' independence is shown not only in the completeness of his breach with "Jacobean English," but also in the severe way in which he treats the most ancient New Testament manuscripts. He quotes (p. 40) with one-sided approval a principle of Godet to the effect that "the truth of a reading cannot be established from the external authorities which favour it . . . it is only by discovering the writer's thought by means of the context, that we can put our finger with certainty on the terms by which he really expressed it." Thus it is not so surprising as it would otherwise have been to find him saying (on p. 63): "The superior MSS., happily unknown to the translators of 1611, have [with regard to the last word in 2 Cor. viii. 19] wrought havoc among their modern devotees."

In such matters independence of thought, to be useful, must be better disciplined than it is in Mr. Isaacs. But in connection with many individual questions of interpretation, the independence of our translator is helpful and stimulating. Thus in 2 Cor. xi. 4 (a famous crux of interpretation), Mr. Isaacs has followed the translation of Way, in opposition to the overwhelming weight of exegetical opinion, in supplying the first person singular and not the third person plural to complete the meaning of the verb in the apodosis. This rendering alone does clear justice to the connection with the following verse, and certainly cannot be lightly rejected. Compare the similar suggestion by the present writer in *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, 1921, pp. 131-135.

Mr. Isaacs' translation does not make other translations superfluous. So much is freely admitted and insisted upon by the author himself (p.viii). But what is still more valuable than a comparison of translations is the study of the original, and when Mr. Isaacs speaks with depreciation of those who "waste much time in acquiring a useless smattering of the original language," we desire to enter an emphatic protest. A smattering of New Testament Greek is certainly not so useful as a thor-

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.

Princeton.

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