

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.

beautiful English style—may not be at fault in detail. For example, it is a little difficult to understand the account of the agony in the garden. In view of the author's belief in the sinlessness of Jesus approved by temptation, and even in view of the sequel in the very same passage, it is astonishing to read (pp. 303 f.) that "the prayer [of Jesus] to the Father was at the instigation of Satan, was a beginning of cowardice," and then to read immediately below that "all that faith and revelation tell us of His divinity rises up against the idea that He can ever have been subjected to temptation." Should the words "have been subjected" in the last quotation not be changed to "have succumbed"? The translator admits in the "Translator's Note" at the beginning that certain paragraphs and even chapters of the book have been omitted. If these omissions are to blame for the strange and disturbing exclusion of the early Judaean ministry and of the Johannine discourses of Jesus, then they are inexcusable.

At any rate, if the reader's enjoyment and profit is not to be spoiled, the fundamental character of the book must always be borne in mind. This is a book to be read rapidly as a whole, not to be studied in detail. At times the momentum of the author's eloquence seems almost to have carried him beyond what he can possibly mean. At other times the invectives against wealth, bankers, and money as a medium of exchange would have to be considerably pruned before they could be made to accord with Jesus' real teaching and example. But we must remember the character of the book. It is not a studied product of minute research, but the first expression given by a sincere convert to his new and overpowering conviction. As such it deserves perhaps its immense popularity. The Lord Jesus has here received His tribute of homage from one whom He has transformed. And above all one should note that it is the real Jesus who here appears. Papini is an artist, but his motive is not primarily artistic; he is interested in sober fact. Despite his impatience of the niceties of detailed criticism, he is interested in the intellectual defence of the faith. And his book possesses some apologetic value. The most important single argument for Christianity will always be the Gospel picture of Jesus. That picture has made its due impression upon the mind of Papini. Jesus Himself has here converted a man whom He has chosen for His own. Only, it should be noted that the Jesus who has thus put forth His saving and illuminating power in the life of Papini is not the pitiful reduced Jesus of modern reconstruction but the divine Saviour presented in the Word of God.

Princeton.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

The Apostolic Age. A Study of the Early Church and Its Achievements. By WILLIAM BANCROFT HILL, D.D., Frederick Weyerhaeuser Professor of Biblical Literature in Vassar College. New York, Chicago, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, [1922]. Pp. 382. Price \$2.00.

Dr. Hill's interesting book is cast chiefly in the form of a continuous narrative of the events of the Apostolic Age. This narrative method has

the advantage of making the book readable, but it also renders difficult at times the clear distinction between what is directly attested by the sources and what is due to inference or supposition. The present author has not altogether escaped the danger. For example, when (on p. 131) it is said that Paul "unlike Barnabas" had the benediction of the Antioch Church when he went forth on his second missionary journey, the "unlike Barnabas" represents merely an inference of Dr. Hill from the silence of Acts. We are interested in that inference and can rate it at its proper value because we happen to be familiar with the Lucan narrative; but many readers of the book will, we fear, receive the erroneous impression that the assertion is based directly upon something in the text of Acts. Similar objections suggest themselves elsewhere in the book, and at times with regard to rather important matters. Nevertheless, as compared with other recent accounts of Apostolic History—for example, the book of David Smith on the Life and Letters of St. Paul—Dr. Hill's narrative is characterized by sobriety and restraint.

Critical questions are discussed only with great brevity. The Book of Acts and the Gospel according to Luke, according to Dr. Hill, were written by Luke the companion of Paul; all thirteen of the Pauline Epistles (with some little hesitation as regards the Pastoral Epistles) are pronounced genuine; the five Johannine writings (with hesitation in some cases) are attributed to the Apostle John; the Marcan authorship of the Second Gospel is accepted and the Matthaean authorship of the First Gospel rejected (though the date is kept early); the genuineness of First Peter is accepted, while Second Peter is thought to embody parts of a genuine letter of the Apostle; in the case of James and Jude the traditional view of authorship is at least not definitely denied. These comparatively conservative views as to date and authorship of the New Testament books do not prevent our author from rejecting the historicity of the books here and there, though the main outlines of the New Testament narrative and the overwhelming majority of the details are accepted as correct. With regard to the authority of the New Testament as such, the common subjective view is held: "The right of any book to a place in the New Testament depends not upon who wrote it, but upon what it contains" (p. 313). Here we are obliged to differ most emphatically; for the true test of canonicity, we believe, is apostolicity, the New Testament books being written in the plenitude of an apostolic authority conferred by Jesus and exercised by the power of the Holy Spirit. Particularly hard do we find it to be so indifferent as our author is to the religious importance of hypotheses of pseudonymity in connection with New Testament books.

One of the most serious errors in the book appears, we think, in connection with the treatment of what is perhaps the central problem of apostolic history—the problem of Paul's relation to the Jerusalem Church. Here Dr. Hill has allowed a considerable amount of the old Tübingen leaven to remain. The Tübingen inferences as to thoroughgoing untrustworthiness of Acts are indeed emphatically rejected, but here and there the relation between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles is rep-

resented too much as a mere agreement to disagree. Thus it is supposed that the pillars of the Jerusalem Church at the meeting described in Gal. ii. 1-10 at first wanted Titus to be circumcized (p. 95); the division of labor mentioned in Gal. ii. 9 is interpreted in an exclusive way, to mean that Paul and Barnabas must "refrain from work in Palestine" (p. 97); and it is thought to be "hard to believe that either James or the elders [at the time of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem] had any real sympathy with Paul and his work"—indeed our author suspects that the majority of the Christians in Jerusalem were "by no means sorry that Paul was in bonds as a malefactor" (p. 220). There is nothing in the Epistles of Paul which can really justify such views; in particular, Dr. Hill has failed to do justice to the "right hand of fellowship" which according to Gal. ii. 9 the pillars of the Jerusalem Church gave to Paul.

Certain other misinterpretations of the Epistle to the Galatians are closely connected with this. In the first place the nature of the Judaizers' demands both before the Apostolic Council and in Galatia is misunderstood. Dr. Hill thinks that after the earlier meeting and the decision in the case of Titus (Gal. ii. 1-10 is identified not with the Apostolic Council but with the "Famine Visit" of Acts xi. 30; xii. 25), the demand of the keeping of the Law as necessary to salvation could not again be taken up, and all that the Judaizers at Antioch and Jerusalem and in Galatia did was to represent the keeping of the Law as necessary to the communion of the Jewish with the Gentile believers and to attainment of the highest stage of the Christian life. Of course this view is in direct contradiction to Acts xv. 1, in accordance with which verse the Judaizers at Antioch said, "Except ye be circumcized in accordance with the custom of Moses ye cannot be saved" (Dr. Hill euphemistically speaks of Luke's summary here as being possibly "incomplete"); and it is also really in contradiction to the Epistle to the Galatians. What is discussed in that Epistle is clearly not the way to any second stage of the Christian life, but the way of salvation.

This misconception is intimately connected with one that is even more important. Dr. Hill seems to think that Paul's opposition to Peter at Antioch and to the Judaizers in Galatia was due primarily to a zeal for Christian unity. It was the Judaizers' intolerance, Dr. Hill supposes (p. 263), which made Paul seem intolerant of them; the Judaizer of today is "the man who stirs up trouble by insisting that all Christians shall adopt his own precious forms and observances" (p. 165). Could there be any clearer misplacing of emphasis? Dr. Hill thinks that Paul opposed Peter at Antioch in the interests of Church unity; but to make out his case he has to reject what Paul tells us about the matter and substitute something entirely different of his own (pp. 123, 124). "Paul's account of what he said to Peter (Gal. 2: 14 f.)," Dr. Hill argues, "ends we know not just where, because he passes without a break to a full discussion of justification by faith; nor does he give all that he said, since his main purpose in relating the incident is to show the Galatians his full and independent apostleship. Undoubtedly he began by insisting that in no way must the body of Christ be divided . . ."

But surely all this represents only what Dr. Hill would have said; it does not represent what Paul actually said. No matter whether or no Paul tells us all that he said, he tells us enough to enable us to see what his motive in the controversy was. "But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel"—surely that settles the matter. Paul's zeal was not primarily for Church unity; it was for "the truth of the gospel." His opposition to the Judaizers arose not because they divided the Church, but because they obscured the fact that the grace of God operating through the Cross is all-sufficient for salvation. And the true Judaizers of today are not the men who stir up trouble by insisting that all Christians shall adopt their "own precious forms and observances" (the ceremonial character of the Judaizers' demands appears indeed in the Epistle, but is quite subordinate); the true Judaizers are rather the men who think that by "making Christ master" in their lives they can be accepted by God and that the atoning death of the Lord is unnecessary. These are the ones who today make the Cross of Christ of no effect. Unlike modern naturalistic liberalism, but like the other apostles of Jesus, Paul was interested not in the truth of the gospel for the sake of the unity of the Church but in the unity of the Church for the sake of the truth of the gospel. We are quite at one with Dr. Hill in desiring Christian unity. But the most urgent step toward Christian unity, we believe, is the removal from the teaching ministry of the Church of those "false brethren privily brought in" who are using their vantage ground as teachers to combat the gospel which they are pledged to proclaim. The true Christian unity can be found not in a common agnosticism, but in a common devotion to the truth of the Christian message.

The Christian message, we rejoice to believe, is accepted by Dr. Hill. The outstanding feature of this author's book is that he accepts the supernaturalism of the New Testament; he believes that the lofty Christology of the Fourth Gospel is no mere development from speculations of Paul but an account of the real historic Christ upon whom Paul's teaching is based. It takes courage in these days for a professor in Vassar College to express his adherence to so unpopular an opinion, and we desire to express our high admiration for the courage thus displayed. The present book must not be confused for a moment with the mass of popular literature intended to explain the origin of Christianity without reference to any entrance of the creative power of God. Dr. Hill, in accepting the supernatural, has placed a great gulf between himself and the naturalistic modernism of the day. Our only desire is that his own consciousness of the gulf might become yet clearer than it is, and that he might be led to detect more fully the far-reaching implications of his stupendous conviction.

Princeton.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

Student's History of the Hebrews. By LAURA A. KNOTT. New York: The Abingdon Press. 8vo., pp. 413.

This book belongs to the Abingdon "Religious Education Texts" of