

BLACKFRIARS

other hand let us note some noble and courageous declarations; such as those on p. 294 regarding a possible conflict of Church and State.

It is an easy and agreeable book to read; but it savours of an amiable and erudite conversation rather than of the hard work of a mind which has really faced problems.

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ORIGEN ON FIRST PRINCIPLES. By G. W. Butterworth. (S.P.C.K.; 12/6.)

The significance of the treatise *On the First Principles* as a source for patristic thought has become increasingly apparent and it has long been recognized that our knowledge of its content is quite inadequate. For the Greek text survives only in isolated fragments, and the Latin version by Rufinus of Aquileia is confessedly a redaction. A new stage in Origenist study was reached in 1913 with the publication of the Koetschau critical edition. It was the task of Dr. Koetschau to collate the Rufinus version with the Greek fragments he had so laboriously garnered; it is the achievement of Dr. Butterworth in the present volume that he has rendered Dr. Koetschau's researches accessible to a general public. Both the fragments and the redaction are translated into a supple English and when possible placed in parallel, and they are preceded by a clear account of our knowledge of Origen and of the dispute between Rufinus and Jerome.

Yet two points may be raised. Textually considered, the Koetschau edition can in no sense be regarded as definitive. The criticisms of it raised by M. Gustave Bardy in 1923 have not yet been satisfactorily answered. The forty-three Greek fragments used in collation, though of the most diverse value, may all represent Greek redaction, not Greek original; the anathemas of the Constantinople Synod would seem to have been directed primarily against fifth-century Origenism; Mennas was at least as intent to show Origen heretical as Rufinus to show him Catholic; even the *Philocalia* may have passed through the strainer of Cappadocian thought.

Again, in the introduction the complexity of Origenist problems might seem to be unduly simplified. Origen's intentions and ideal would seem to be assessed by the penultimate standards of modern scholarship and religious feeling. It is questionable whether such standards have any relevance. Perhaps it is a better clue to Origen's speculation that he was the first among the Greek Fathers to have lived and thought on a Byzantine plane where concepts were no longer representational but evocative and the part could be only considered as a relation to the whole.

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