

will continue to inspire them with a similar devotion and loyalty. His enthusiasm for every aspect of Dominican work within the Province and throughout the Order will live on in their minds, and his own great-souled example of apostolic ardour will move them to a greater and still greater generosity and unselfishness in furthering the common purpose of that Order and of the Church. His vision and his indomitable optimism will be remembered when they are perchance disheartened by the magnitude of the tasks that lie ahead. But it is not in his Order alone that he will be remembered. For all who knew him the memory of Father Hugh will be the memory of a great-hearted priest, a dauntless missionary, a spiritual father and an inspired leader; and to this memory the brethren of his religious family will add the most precious and most fruitful memory of all, his love of the brotherhood.

Accedet homo ad cor altum, et exaltabitur Deus. A man shall come to a deep heart, and God shall be exalted. Let this be his epitaph.

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ORIGEN¹

IT is regrettable that Dr Inge did not preface his Lecture with the following passage from Origen:

'After we had come to believe that Christ was the Son of God, and had ceased to look for the truth among those who claimed that their erroneous doctrines were true, we were convinced that we had to learn that truth from Christ himself. For many think that their opinions are those of Christ and yet they differ from their predecessors. But since the teachings of the Church, transmitted in orderly succession from the Apostles and remaining in the Church to the present day, are still preserved, it is clear that that alone is to be accepted as the truth which in no way differs from Ecclesiastical and Apostolic tradition'.²

The Lecture itself is very brief—some twenty-three pages. I have read it four times and each time I have found myself wondering what the audience gathered from it. Personally I was deeply disappointed. For like St Jerome I have read all Origen's extant works (*Ep.* lxxxiv. 4), and, like the Hermit of Bethlehem, found them hard to understand.

Confining himself to Origen's *De Principiis* as presenting an epitome of the great Alexandrian's theological teachings which, Dr

¹ *Origen*. By the Very Rev. Dr W. R. Inge, K.C.V.O., Fellow of the Academy. Annual Lecture on a Master Mind. Henrietta Hertz Trust of the British Academy. 1946. 2/. (Vol. XXXII of the Proceedings of the British Academy.)

² Origen's Preface to the *De Principiis*. Rufinus's version.

Inge says, mainly centre round his ideas on the Logos doctrine, he gives a series of categoric statements as, presumably, representing Origen's mind. Unfortunately he gives no references, leaving the irritated audience or reader to unearth them for himself—if he can. If the reader endeavours to unravel the tangle and verify the statements I think he will get a shock. For I would venture to say that there is hardly any statement made here on tenets attributed to Origen of which the opposite could not be substantiated from Origen's own writings.

Before going further I should like to know on what grounds the lecturer pins his faith to the text of the *De Principiis* as it has come down to us. For that text has a curious history. Written of course in Greek, Jerome translated it, but his version seems to have been lost at an early stage (*Ep.* cxxiv, 1). Rufinus then translated it in A.D. 398. But he explicitly says that he has not translated 'what appeared contrary to Origen's other opinions', such passages he regards as 'interpolated and forged'.³ Moreover Rufinus was dishonest in his renderings through his anxiety to make Origen perfectly orthodox.⁴ Though the Greek has for the most part perished it has survived in Book III. i and Book IV. lxxiv. Jerome was justifiably indignant at this 'bowdlerising' of Origen's text and himself retranslated the whole, but his fresh version has perished.⁵ It remains, then, that for the *De Principiis* we depend on a version from which sections regarded by Rufinus as unsound have been removed by him.

Denis of Alexandria wrote to Theophilus of Lydda congratulating him on his refutation of Origen: 'Continue then to attack Origen's figments so that simple souls may not be misled by his learning and his sophistical arguments, which thus give occasion to schism in the Church'.⁶ Ten years later St Jerome wrote to Avitus telling him how at the request of Pammachius (*Ep.* cxxxiv, 1) he had translated the *De Principiis* for him but warning him that in reading it he would discover that he was 'walking in the midst of snakes and scorpions': he then indicates the various errors into which the great Alexandrian had fallen (*Ibid.* 2-14). Pammachius, he says, was horrified and promptly put the whole under lock and key. But a false friend induced him to lend him the MS. which he at once hastily copied and,

³ Preface to *De Principiis*, Bk. III.

⁴ *De Principiis*, III. vi. 3 and 9.

⁵ Fragments however are given by Jerome, *Ep.* cxxiv. Crombie, who translated the *De Principiis* for the edition of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, gives long extracts from this same Epistle. Two of these I can identify, the rest evade me. But since he twice cites §94 whereas there are only 15§§ in Migne's edition, he would seem to have had an edition of it unknown to me.

⁶ *Ep.* xciv, A.D. 400, translated by St Jerome.

what was worse, gave to others who copied it even more carelessly with deplorable results. Jerome therefore sent Avitus his own original translation which he had kept by him.⁷

Regarding the Church, Dr Inge tells us, almost as though quoting Origen, that 'We must seek salvation . . . not by subjecting ourselves to the weak and beggarly elements of outworn authority, but by the Platonic act of faith that the fully real is fully knowable, though not fully known' (p. 7). Yet how often Origen insists on Church authority! Men, he says, who depart from the Church's decisions are 'Samaritans' (Tom. xii, 13 in *Joann*); she is 'the pillar of truth' (Hom. iii on the *Canticle of Canticles*); Church-life can only be regarded as a miracle (I. on *Galatians*, ed. Delarne iv, 183), to belong to the Church is our glory (*Contra Celsum* vii, 16. P.G. xi. 1539); our faith in the resurrection depends on the Church (*Ibid.* v, 22 and 61), and he dwells upon the unity prevailing among her teachers (Tom. x. 7, on *Tomans*. P.G. xiv, 1261-3).

As to his Christology, 'Origen', we are told, 'maintains that God must from the beginning place himself in a state of such (contingent) creations. Hence the production of the Logos, a Person distinct and derived, God, but not the Godhead, *theos*, not '*o theos* (p. 7). Yet when arguing against Celsus Origen writes quite definitely '*o theos Iesus* (*Contra Celsum*, vi, 66. cf. v. 62). His insistence on the Godhead of Christ is most remarkable: 'How could anyone fail to believe that, according to the promise, he was God who appeared in human form for the benefit of our race?'⁸ Indeed I am driven to ask whether Dr Inge is really familiar with the *Contra Celsum*, perhaps the greatest of all the early apologetic works; certainly I can discover no trace of it here.

Origen's faith is summed up: *Nisi credideritis non intelligetis*. But Dr Inge writes: 'The ruling principle of Origen's whole life was: "There is nothing firm except science of knowledge".' This is perhaps true if 'knowledge' embraces 'faith'. But taking the statement thus baldly set out, would anyone unacquainted with Origen's works as a whole expect to find him saying that he has small sympathy with a faith which can be upset by anybody's arguments,⁹ or that faith without enquiry is necessary for busy people? Would he expect to find Origen at the age of 70 enduring the rack for two whole days and lingering for two more years a bruised and broken body rather than deny his Christian faith?

⁷ *Ibid.* 1. cf. G. Bardy, *Recherches sur l'histoire du Text et des Versions Latines du Des Principes d'Origène*, 1924.

⁸ *Ibid.* vii. 40, viii. 12, in fact *passim*.

⁹ Eusebius, *H.E.* vi, 39.

Idle, of course, to deny that Origen ventilated views now rejected. But to 'ventilate' views is not the same thing as to 'teach' them. Nor are 'erroneous' notions necessarily 'heresies': 'Learned men', wrote Origen, 'must explore the faith; the unlearned must needs rest in the Word of God: "Himself has said it".' Now Origen was essentially one of the 'explorers'. Dying in A.D. 254, or some 70 years before the First Council, 325, he was many years ahead of his time. He feels his way, never dogmatizes; he suggests ideas, proposes difficulties and their solutions. How often in his *De Principiis* does he use such expressions as 'I am of opinion, then'—of the working of the Father and the Son in us (I. iii); of the final consummation, 'We think indeed . . .' (I. vi. 1); the ultimate salvation of the evil spirits he leaves as an open question (*ibid.* 3). When he comes to discuss 'incorporeal and corporeal beings' (I. vii), he says that with the exception of Bks. I. i-vi 'where we treated to the best of our ability' of the Holy Trinity, 'we have discussed the nature of rational beings more by way of intelligent inference than strict dogmatic definition'. But even when he proceeds to deal with them 'according to our dogmatic belief, that is in agreement with the Creed of the Church', such phrases as 'we think, then . . .' occur frequently, and 'according to our view' (I. vii, 1-4).

Yet we are repeatedly told that Origen 'held this or that', 'taught this or that', whereas he is merely suggesting a possible view.¹⁰ No man capable of penning the passage from the *Principiis* quoted at the outset could ever have been a 'formal' heretic.

Here are some more categorical statements which baffle the reader: 'The earliest Christian apologetic rested largely on supposed fulfilment of prophecy' (p. 4); In the sixteenth century Buddha was canonized as a Christian saint' (p. 6, quoting from Prof. Radhakrishnan); Origen sees clearly, what many modern writers have failed to see, that there can be no single purpose in the universe. An eternal purpose is eternally frustrate' (p. 18). How a scholar like Dr Inge can repeat in a public lecture the old canard: 'Tertullian and Thomas Aquinas gloat over the torments of the damned' (p. 13) is a mystery almost as profound as the eternity of Hell!

After stating that Origen 'held that the sufferings of hell are not physical but mental', Dr Inge asks: 'Is the eternity of hell really believed, and was it ever believed wholeheartedly?' We might answer with the lecturer, 'probably Christ could not dispense with the current eschatology, which he *seems* to accept. In one place he *seems* to admit that the future has not been revealed to him' (p. 13, italics

¹⁰ See *Revue Biblique*, July, 1921; Rufinus, *Peroralis*, P.G. xiv. 1293; Cassiodorus, *Instituta*, P.L. lxx. 1111.

mine). The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is treated in the same way: 'Do we believe in the resurrection of the flesh, the standing up of the corpses? St Paul did not: "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God". Neither did Origen' (p. 15). What an argument! And what about I *Cor.* xv? But Dr Inge continues: 'We may reject a doctrine on the ground that it is morally impossible', and he asserts with supreme confidence that 'Immense mischief has been and still is done by those who regard the most barbarous parts of the Hebrew Scriptures as invested with sacred authority' (p. 10), a statement which can only mean that parts at least of the Old Testament are not to be regarded as the Word of God; in other words, that we may reject any doctrine we dislike. Did Marcion or Luther go as far as this? Once more: 'Evil is not eternal: all must at last return to their original perfection. . . . Logically the devil also must be saved at last . . . (that) follows necessarily from Origen's principles' (p. 12).

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