

Friedrich Loofs.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. W. F. SLATER, M.A., DIDSBURY.

DR. SANDAY has taken as the subject of his first lectures, as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, at Oxford, 'Recent Researches into the Origin of the Apostles' Creed.' We need not remind our readers of the recent German investigation upon this subject, nor of [the widespread controversy which it has occasioned. While acknowledging the value of English work in this sphere,—particularly in the writings of Heurtley, Swainson, Swete, and Lumby,—Dr. Sanday intimates that 'the Germans have brought him nearest to the origin of the Creed.' 'The labours of Caspari, Hahn, Harnack, and Zahn in this department of inquiry are well known. If these learned and zealous explorers differ somewhat in their results, they agree to trace the beginnings of the most ancient symbol of the Church to apostolic days. Among his authorities, however, the Lady Margaret Professor declares Loofs to be 'the most attractive theologian in Germany'; and that 'if any one is likely to speak the last word on the origin of the Creed, it is Loofs.' As this name has not yet become widely known in the theological world, the readers of this journal may be interested in some account of his works.

Herr D. Friedrich Loofs is Professor of Church History in the University of Halle. It is gratifying to find that this venerable school of sacred learning has a teacher so well equipped with patristic and current theology, and yet thoroughly in sympathy with the best critical ideas. Perhaps we ought not to be surprised that this ancient fountain of Pietism can yet supply inspiration to minds saturated with the modern, scientific spirit, as is that of Professor Loofs.

His latest publication consists of three sermons on the Creed, preached before his university.¹ The first discourse begins with the remark that one half of the Sundays in the year are, in the Church calendar, called 'Trinity-Sundays.' Trinitarian doctrine was once very prominent in Church teaching, but has recently fallen into the background.

¹ 'Das Apostolikum in drei, am 1, 3, und 5 Trinitatis-sonntag 1895, im akademischen Gottesdienste zu Halle gehalten Predigten, ausgelegt von D. Friedrich Loofs, ordentlichen Professor der Kirchengeschichte am der Universität Halle.' Halle: M. Niemander, 1895.

Yet, we must either renounce the formulas, or more carefully study their significance. Are we not still baptized into 'the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost'? He goes on to show that the articles of the Creed are organically connected. If the first article asserts our trust in God as our Father, it yet refers to the later portions which exhibit the work of the Son and the Spirit. Further, he is careful to point out that faith is not a merely intellectual operation, but a spiritual experience. The child does not need a philosophic interpretation of his relation to his parent before he can trust him. 'Trust, that yields itself wholly to the hand of God, that knows itself safe as a child on his father's breast—trust, that suffers itself to be led, blind, without self-choosing, that is Faith.' 'I believe' is the first article of the Christian faith, and indeed its sum.

The connexion between the first article of the Creed and the second is found in the conditions of humanity. Can man thus 'trust' in God? Can he, when tragic sorrow is upon him, trust in God as a loving Father? Can he, when truly convinced of sin, confide in a holy Being? Surely, the work of the Son and the grace of the Spirit here become a necessity. The articles of the Creed can not be taken in complete isolation. 'True faith has neither pieces nor parts'; it is a complete whole. The first article is not enough by itself, as some think; it needs the contents of the second and third parts to make a full account of Christian faith.

In the second sermon Professor Loofs refers to Luther's explanation of Christian faith in God. The great Reformer exhibits the relation of the faith that 'Jesus Christ is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned man,' with that in God as the Creator and Preserver of all. Melancthon said that the first articles both looked to the last, which contains the clause: 'the forgiveness of sins.' But the faith of the majority of Christians cannot rest on critical grounds. They may not be able to give to all the items of the Creed the exact significance of theological science. There are portions of the Creed itself which are not original or fundamental. Such

clauses as 'Maker of heaven and earth,' and 'He descended into hell' were added to meet transitory conceptions in the minds of an early generation of Christians. 'That cannot be fundamental which may not be made clear to all Christians, old and young; it can not be fundamental, which perhaps a Paul and John did not know' (p. 21).¹ If a man believes in God as his Father and in Christ as his Redeemer, he has the root of faith from which the rest will grow. He may not understand 'eternal sonship,' and yet have faith in the Redeemer. 'All formulas which pass over the sphere of our experience are metaphorical, imperfect, and controversial' (p. 23). Yet, no Christian faith can be sufficient which does not believe in Christ as revealing to us the living God, and as the Conqueror of death.

It will be seen that the preacher emphasises the subjective side of Christian faith. The personal experience of sin and salvation is more to him than the elaboration of the most venerable or critical doctrine. We may all be glad that German defenders of the faith are learning more to rely upon the evidential value of Christian experience. The doubts raised by historical and literary criticism may be too subtle to be removed by immediate refutation on the same lines; but the appeal to the consciousness of faith is always irresistible. Professor Loofs uses it with so much appreciation that we can understand Dr. Sanday when he speaks of him as 'an attractive theologian.' He has evidently drunk deeply at the best sources of the theology of the Reformation, and can express himself with the truest spiritual power and pathos. Rationalism may withstand logic and history, but is powerless before such a testimony as the following:—'When I feel the power which goes out from the words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"; when I know that His word, "I have overcome the world," is true, notwithstanding Golgotha, then I can understand and believe the Easter-tidings, and I bow the knee, with Thomas, before Him who has risen, and say, "My Lord and my God"' (p. 24).

In the third sermon on the Holy Spirit there is much that is interesting, and some statements which might be criticised. He allows that the

Spirit works in the 'Holy Catholic Church'; but the Church is not an outward and visible organisation: it is the 'fellowship of all believers.' He regrets that the idea of the visibility of the true Church 'haunts many evangelical heads.' The kernel of the older doctrine he believes to be that it is the one God who made us, has redeemed us in Jesus Christ, and sanctifies us by His Spirit. Many 'inadequate expressions in hymn-books favour misunderstanding,' and lead to Tritheism. To those who make 'Spirit' synonymous with 'Power,' he recommends the study of Force in the light of recent science. It is better to leave the inexplicable unexplained.

But the reputation of Loofs does not rest on his *Predigten* alone, though these clearly reveal his grasp of evangelical truth, and his faculty for exposition and application.² His *Guide to the Study of the History of Dogma* shows that he is a learned and accurate adept in ecclesiastical history.³

This book is a marvel of comprehensive and condensed information. In one volume of 450 pages the genesis of Christian doctrines and ideas is carefully reviewed, and the critical statements of the leading divines of every age are quoted and considered. For lecturers and students in church history the book is a rich and convenient manual. For any who have been almost oppressed by the vast proportions of Harnack's *Dogmengeschichte*, Loofs' *Leitfaden* will bring timely and real assistance. We have not space to describe the book in detail, or to illustrate the theological system of the author. He is evidently a disciple of Harnack, but is sufficiently independent to inspire confidence. A passage in the preface to the second edition—which was intended to explain his relation to Harnack—does not appear in the third edition; because he thinks that every one knows his obligations to this distinguished teacher, and also the points of difference between them. Dr. Loofs, clearly, does not dread the result of an inquiry into the intellectual and religious developments which prepared the way for Christianity. He carefully surveys the progress of Gentile philosophy with that of Alexandrian and Rabbinical thought,

² An earlier volume of sermons was published in 1892.

³ *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte, zunächst für seine Vorlesungen*, von F. Loofs, Doctor und Professor der Theologie in Halle: dritte verbesserte Auflage. Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1893. Another important work is a monograph: *Studien über die dem Johannes von Damaskus zugeschriebenen Parallelen*, 1892.

¹ The preacher here attaches a note which shows how far he would go in meeting the modern doubters on some points. 'Dass obiger Satz sich auf das "empfangen vom heiligen Geiste, geboren von der Jungfrau Maria" bezieht, mag hier im Druck ausdrücklich bemerkt werden.'

and of all other systems which might be supposed to contribute to the formation of the doctrines of the Church. But all these together could not create the 'Personality of Jesus'; and a 'purely historical understanding of Jesus, His work, teaching, and self-consciousness, is impossible.' On some points Dr. Loofs seems disposed to yield to

critical views, though we gather that he holds the canonical authority of the books of the New Testament, and entirely rejects the Tübingen speculation. His works encourage the hope that the time has come in Germany when the best results of modern inquiry and criticism are to be used in the service of a living Christianity.

An Anonymous Poem.¹

BY THE REV. F. G. CHOLMONDELEY, M.A., LEEK-WOOTTON, WARWICK.

THE article on 'A Neglected Poem,' which appeared a while ago in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, turned back my attention to another poem of a somewhat kindred character, which is probably not so well known as it deserves to be. It is entitled 'Confessions of a Poet,' and the same sort of interest attaches to it as to the 'Confessions of St. Augustine,' in that it is the honest, fearless avowal of the writer's own inward struggles towards a full acceptance of the Christ. Claiming to be a poet, he has amply vindicated his claim to the title, though one cannot regard the little book as fortunately named; it is not the poet confessing himself we find, but a troubled soul clothing its confessions in the garb of poetry. This soul has gone into revolt for a while with Shelley; has faced the mysteries of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* with Milton; while for motto appears on the title-page a quotation from Plotinus, 'I am endeavouring to bring the God within me into harmony with the God which is in the Universe.' A few pages of preface furnish a link between the motto and the poem itself. A brief notice of its contents may prove not unacceptable, I hope.

The first stage tells of an early delight in Nature, a simple yielding to her charm, as the eye drinks in the varying phases of her beauty. But Nature has other moods; there is more to know than on the smiling surface at first appears, and

the attempt to read her riddle is disquieting. Her fair sights please, but

What avail all these
Which are as picture-books to children, grown
Past the old pleasure of the coloured form,
And hungering for the knowledge and the truth
Imperabled therein?

Thus questionings arise, perplexities, misgivings. Man finds himself confronted in Nature with contradictions such as he finds in his own being, comminglings of beauty and terror, love and hate. And hence the very sense of sympathy with Nature breeds more and more dissatisfaction and dismay, a sort of unreasonable impatience with Nature for her inability to reveal the inner secrets of her being. Man feels himself the child of Nature, yet can wring no explanation from her of the baffling problems that encompass both. Gazing upon her, he is as one beholding his natural face in a glass. It is himself over again. The frowns, the bad passions, seem only too faithfully reflected there.

These subtle discontents, aggravated by a sense of helplessness and utter imperfection, are recognised as the first stirrings of God within, believed in indeed ('for God to me was never doubt or dream'), but not yet so known as it is dimly realised that perhaps only saints can know Him. The veil seems but a thin one that is separating him at this point from the light, and there are even moments of partial uplifting when flashes of the light stream through. But it is but an intuition, a presentiment. He stands as it were at the threshold of the Promised Land, yet he must back into the wilderness and wander long, ere that threshold shall be passed and an actual entrance won.

¹ The adjective no longer applies. The author, it now appears, is the Rev. Alfred Starkey. He has quite recently reissued the poem in an expanded form, along with two other poems, and with a new Introduction prefixed, in a little volume, entitled *Religio Clerici* (Elliot Stock, 1895).