

passed knowledge of the subject describe the doctrine of 'The Seven Heavens.' And there are single papers of much interest besides these.

But the two most promising features of our coming volume yet remain. They are a Poetical Translation of the Song of Songs, by Canon Fox

of Waiapu, New Zealand, and a series of articles by Professor Sayce on the Monuments as they illustrate the Old Testament. Professor Sayce will commence with the first chapter of Genesis and work his way onward, giving us an article every month. The first article will appear in December or in January.

## Adolf Harnack.

BY THE REV. D. MACFADYEN, M.A., ST. IVES.

THERE is no more interesting figure in the ranks of living theologians than that of Professor Harnack. Those who have sat in his crowded lecture-room at Berlin, or visited him in his book-lined study at Wilmersdorf, remember with a pleasure which is also an inspiration his vigorous face, knitted brows, and strong, unhesitating voice. Those who know him only from his books know him as a writer who never leaves his readers in doubt as to what he means, although a German. His reputation is that of a scholar who has not hesitated to deal with the great questions of Christian history with singular boldness and success.

There is not much personal history to tell in the lives of such men. Their biography is their bibliography, and this is very much the case with Professor Harnack. The bibliography which is appended to this article marks the course of his work; the dates and places of publication indicate the years of his migration from one professorship to another. There will be an interesting story to be written some day when the history of the controversy concerning the Apostles' Creed is told. In that controversy Professor Harnack has been forced into the position of protagonist against his will. He holds a position in German Church life not unlike that which Professor Robertson Smith was compelled to take in Scotland before sentence was pronounced against him. But the last blow has not yet been struck in this war of words and pamphlets, and the story of the conflict is already too long to be told fairly in a few words. Those who wish to know the details will find one side of the question fully dealt with in the three pamphlets on the

Apostles' Creed mentioned in the bibliography<sup>1</sup> (Nos. 31, 32, 33).

Professor Adolf Harnack is the son of Theodosius Harnack, Professor of Practical Theology in the University of Dorpat. His interest in Church history is a clear case of heredity. The father was the author of several pamphlets which deal with subjects since handled by his better known son. The son must have found his way very early into the theological atmosphere, which seems now to be the one entirely natural to him. He is still under forty-five, but has already been Professor of Church History at Giessen and Marburg, and is now at Berlin. His chair is the one made famous by Neander; and he is generally acknowledged to be, as Dr. Schaff calls him, 'the ablest of Neander's successors.'

As a lecturer he is singularly successful in carrying his audience with him. When the present writer first heard him he was lecturing twice daily, but he scarcely used a note. He was lecturing on early Christian institutions and on the history of dogma,—in one lecture dealing with a mass of details and patristic quotations, and in the next dealing with the abstruse questions of the theology of the Incarnation. It was difficult to say which set of lectures was most full of interest. In one there was an orderly marshalling of facts, and in the other a clearness of exposition which made him easy to follow, even in an unfamiliar tongue. The lecturer was never monotonous in voice, and

<sup>1</sup> A translation of Professor Harnack's pamphlet, *Das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis*, by Mrs Humphry Ward, was printed in the *Nineteenth Century* in the autumn of 1893.

his face was a constant study as the light and shade of humour and earnestness played upon it. He had a curious habit of driving his points home with a smile and a touch of sarcasm. But the most abiding impression left by his lecturing, as by his writing, is that of great clearness and decision. Before lecturing he had made the subject with which he was dealing his own. In the personal channel the wind and dust of controversy had settled down, leaving a clear and almost sparkling current of even-flowing thought.

Of his theological writings, many are simply contributions to current controversies or articles in theological magazines. He is such a rapid writer that it would be difficult for most readers to follow this side of his work. The best known of his larger books, and the one on which his reputation mainly rests, is the three-volume *History of Dogma*, which has since been condensed into the convenient *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*.<sup>1</sup> This is the most thorough and masterly treatment of dogmatic history from Paul to Luther which we possess. It is a systematic attempt to trace the rise of dogma on the basis of the primitive Christian faith, to describe the main phases of its development in the Eastern and Western Churches, and then to show how it issued in the Roman Catholicism of Trent, Socinianism and rationalism, and a Protestantism which tried to return to the original Christian faith from which the development had begun.

When questioned about his theological position, Professor Harnack wisely refuses to be 'drawn'; but he professes a general agreement with Ritschl's theology. On particular points he is less reserved, and it is possible to define his attitude with tolerable accuracy by noting his assent or dissent from Ritschlian positions.

Ritschl tried to make his theology independent of metaphysics and philosophical theories. He described Christianity as an ellipse with two foci,—redemption and the kingdom of God. The historical Christ dealt with the moral transformation of individuals and the moral reformation of society, and with these it was the business of Christians still to concern themselves. Theological speculation about the objects of faith was a disease which had fastened on the real Christian religion.

<sup>1</sup> A very poor translation of this volume has been published by Hodder & Stoughton. The larger book is being translated; the first volume is already published by Williams & Norgate.

It was only to be cured by the ruthless amputation of superfluous transcendentalism. It was neither necessary nor desirable to relate the fundamental facts and convictions of faith to our other knowledge; and, if it had been desirable, it would have been impossible. The facts of faith cannot be interpreted into the terms of any other faculty. Ritschl was thoroughly sceptical as to the value and validity of human reason, and denied its trustworthiness as a means of religious knowledge.

Harnack's own views do not seem to differ much from those of Ritschl in this respect. A few months ago he wrote: 'I know only of a religion which is mystically experienced by us, and which receives its confirmation, not from the course of nature, but from conscience and history.' God, he would say, reveals Himself as the moral ideal in conscience, as Redeemer in the historical Christ, but not as truth to the intellect. The essential limitations of human intelligence invalidate its gropings after the real objects of faith. We know what Christ is to us, and what He is in history. We may not ask who He is, or how He stands related to the universe.

This scepticism as to the possibility of getting an adequate metaphysical background for the Christian faith carries with it scepticism as to the element of revelation in the best Christian thought on transcendental questions. But it is this element which has given to the history of dogma its special value in the past. It has been a process resulting in a firmer grasp upon the essential truths of religion. Now Harnack speaks of it as valuable because it offers the best means of 'emancipating the Church from dogmatic Christianity.'<sup>2</sup> This attitude inevitably colours his views of the history of dogma. He treats the growth of the Logos Christology as simply the effect of the Hellenic spirit working on gospel soil. It is not the essential basis of every intelligent conception of the Incarnation approving itself as true to the intellect of successive generations, but rather the beginning of the transformation of a vital spiritual faith into a religious philosophy by a process of gratuitous speculation: and the process ends in making the Christian religion into a system of ecclesiastical metaphysics in which its original character is lost.

These positions are thoroughly congenial to the positive spirit of our time. They will probably

<sup>2</sup> *Dogmengeschichte*, p. 5.

afford a welcome standing-ground for many thoughtful people at present, but that they can afford a permanent abiding-place for anyone is open to serious doubt. It is good to lighten the labouring ship of theology by getting rid of surplus metaphysics, but presently there will come a demand for ballast. We may and rightly do recognise that our knowledge of the objects of faith is limited, but we cannot acknowledge that it is invalid as far as it goes. There can be no permanent alliance between Kant's scepticism as to reason and faith in a spiritual God able to reveal Himself to men. It is as far from the permanent convictions and tendencies of man's mind to say that we cannot know God at all as to say that we can know Him altogether. It is with knowledge as with love and morality. God creating love in us has enabled men to love Him, and although our love is imperfect we do not judge it false and entirely unlike His. The ideal of moral character which He has created in conscience is valid as a revelation of Himself, though our approximations to it are miserably inadequate. He reveals Himself as love to the heart, as moral character to the conscience. Why not also as truth to the intellect? The ground for accepting the two first and denying the last has certainly not been made clear. Our approximations to perfect knowledge in transcendental matters are no doubt inadequate, but they are still the meeting-points of *truth* and our imperfect understanding of it. They are the graspings of the human soul at realities, and also the product in the soul of the realities grasped at. Reason is one of the organs of religious faith, and we can gain nothing and lose much by ruling it out of court. The spiritual instinct is more than reason, but it is also reason, and the whole includes the part. Faith is more than philosophy, but it must not be less, or philosophy will eventually make faith impossible. When we forsake Hegel's noble conviction that there is an essential correspondence between true religion and that 'secret of the universe which can offer no permanent resistance to the courage of human intelligence,'<sup>1</sup> our faces are set in a direction which leads to less faith instead of more. The alternatives, as they present themselves to the practical religious person, are these: either we say with Hegel, 'Just because I am rational I must be religious, I believe in the supreme reasonableness of whatever I accept as my creed'; or we fall back upon the schoolboy's interpretation

<sup>1</sup> Inaugural Address at Heidelberg.

of Augustine, 'Faith is believing what you know is not true.' The Ritschlian version of this latter alternative would be, 'My faith is independent of my reason,' but in either form it is hard to believe that in the long-run men will be satisfied to speak thus. The views of history which underrate the permanent value of Christian thought as it issues in dogma in order to reinstate Christ in His proper place in His own religion, are invaluable at present, but they can only be a stage in a progress to a more solid position in which the worship of a real Christ will not be incompatible with a thoughtful appreciation on the lines of historic thought of what Christ is Himself as well as what He is to us, and of the knowledge of God and man which is implied in the person of a son of man who is also Son of God.

Another characteristic of the Ritschlianer closely connected with that just discussed is the assertion that Christian faith is independent of the criticism of the Gospels. The work of the historical Christ is not dependent on the accuracy of the Christian histories. He produces an impression on the individual which convinces him that God in Christ is drawing him to reconciliation. The redeemed Christian has experienced a redemption which is as much a fundamental fact as any of those of which we have evidence in the Gospels, and no amount of criticism can make any difference to that fact. The work of Christ is achieved when the soul has found its God.<sup>2</sup> Criticism cannot discover anything which will radically affect this redemptive work.

This is the position which has been most carefully elaborated by Herrmann, and it is accepted by Harnack. He writes: 'I believe that the Christian religion still shines just as brightly as formerly, although its books no longer appear inerrant, its miracle narrations fall, and its old cosmology is destroyed. For the gospel—that is, the Christian religion—has only one aim: that the soul may find its God, and cleave to Him in humility and love; and it promises to those who love Jesus Christ and follow Him that they shall find God.' He does not hesitate to say that 'there is no historical proof for the resurrection.'<sup>3</sup> This licence of free criticism has been described by someone as the process of sawing off the bough on which these theologians sit. Christianity is reconciliation

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *The Outlook*, April 28, 1894, p. 741.

<sup>3</sup> *Dogmengeschichte*, i. pp. 74, 75. Referred to by Professor Orr, *Thinker*, August 1894.

to God through and in Christ. This reconciliation is produced by a certain impression which Christ makes on the soul. But how can we get this impression if the materials for constructing our conception of His personality are destroyed? Suppose His words have no relation to actual facts, His speeches are misrepresented, and the events in which He was concerned either incredible or exaggerated, how can we get any vivid impression of His character? It is true that the creative force in Christianity is the character of Christ; but how are we to feel His power upon us if we cannot trust the sources of our knowledge of Him? The old dilemma, 'Christus aut Deus aut homo non bonus,' comes back in a new form. Either the gospel story holds together and presents us with one who impresses us as greater than man, or it does not hold together and gives us a doubtful figure which may not be even good. There is no escape from this difficulty by the way which the mystic would have taken. Harnack would not say, 'The Christ I mean is the present Christ whom I know independently of the historical Christ'; for the Ritschlianer have made a consistent effort to discredit mysticism. Here again it seems as if the position of Ritschl's followers could only be a temporary one in a progress to one more consistent either on the negative or positive side. Their fearless loyalty to Christ is most valuable while the critical process is going on. Their testimony to 'the self-evidencing nature and exhaustless spiritual potency of the revelation of God in Christ'<sup>1</sup> reinforces what is most vital in the Christian faith, but it is impossible to avoid an uneasy feeling that they may undermine the very facts which are most efficient in producing in others the love and reverence which they exhibit themselves.

Meanwhile the reconstruction of Christian history is going on in their hands. We have recently had a striking addition to the history of creeds as the result of Harnack's investigations into the origin of the Apostles' Creed, and more may be expected as time goes on. In spite of all qualifications, this reconstruction is being carried on in a spirit which is essentially favourable to making clear that the history of Christ's religion is really the history of how, like an incoming tide, by intricate and twisted channels, with many restless storms and listless calms, with undercurrents making strange back-washes and rapid uncertain advances, the kingdom

of God is coming upon the earth. Christian history has perhaps never stood so good a chance as it now does of being interpreted as the unfolding of what was contained in Christ's revelation of God and man, and His conception of their proper relations. For those who cannot read the facts of ecclesiastical history without reading their own theories into them, there is everything to be gained from one who like Harnack exhibits them without having accepted a brief for any set of dogmas. He does not confound Christianity with a truth, or even with truth itself, but recognises that it is a spirit created and creative in man. In summing up the essential points of Protestantism he says 'they are these: (1) that religion is a matter of the heart and life; (2) that the Christian faith is wrought within us by God Himself, and consists in childlike confidence in Him; (3) that it is confidence because of Christ and in Christ, and hence it is also discipleship of Jesus; and (4) that it establishes direct free relationship between God and each individual soul, which admits of no priests and endures steadfastly even unto eternity.' This is the simplicity of an intellect clear and firm in grasp, and a faith tried and not found wanting.

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Orr, *Thinker*, August 1894.

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## At the Literary Table.

### THE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF EDWARD A. FREEMAN, D.C.L., LL.D. By M. R. W. STEPHENS, B.D. (*Macmillan*. 2 vols. Crown 8vo, pp. 435, 499. 17s. net.) This biography will be a great surprise to those who knew Freeman only as a celebrated historian. They had no suspicion that he had ever been what he was at first, or passed to what he finally became. A high-churchman, who would not enter the Church because he believed in the celibacy of the clergy, and unfortunately was already engaged! And then a Liberal of the Liberals, who would try to wrest a county from the Conservatives that had always been theirs by right! And we cannot tell what wrought the change.

The Dean of Winchester has given us one of the best biographies of our time, and spent abundant pains to make it faithful, yet he cannot tell us what subtle influences wrought on this gifted man's mind and made him what he was. Men did something (women did nothing at all), books did more. But the man's own gifts did the most of it. He was a self-made man.

The book is full of interest; but it is most difficult to say wherein the interest lies. A busy man will take it up, and without intending it read on and let the hours pass, and yet he cannot say what makes him read it. Of course Freeman was a great man and a good man, but he never had