

MISCELLANEOUS.

PROFESSOR HARNACK ON THE EMPEROR'S ATTITUDE TOWARD "BABEL AND BIBLE."

The Emperor has spoken, in order to express his position without ambiguity in an historico-theological dispute. This is something new, but in view of all the circumstances the Emperor's decision is quite easily explained. The opinion was likely to become widespread, had indeed become widespread, that the Emperor occupied the same theological standpoint as Dr. Delitzsch. Not wishing to permit this misunderstanding to continue the Emperor wrote as the public has read.

From the point of view of scholars there was, indeed, no real controversy. It has long been known that a portion of the myths and legends of the Old Testament, together with important elements of ancient Israelitish civilisation, had their origin in Babylon. It was equally beyond question that this fact is fatal to the current notion of the inspiration of the Old Testament. For the refutation of this belief there was no need of reference to Babylon: a hundred other observed facts had contributed to destroy it.

But the knowledge of these facts had not become common property. However, the theologians cannot be held to blame for this. They had done their duty toward spreading the information in books and pamphlets and lectures. Our German literature points with pride to a work of such eminence as Wellhausen's *History of Israel*; it appeals to all educated people and is classic in form and content. And beside it stand a half dozen other excellent works, each of which gives full and accessible information regarding Old Testament literature and history. But Church and School have been in league to suppress this knowledge by excluding it from their domain. And indeed they are not alone to blame. Indolence and fear have done their share.

To Delitzsch's lectures is due the credit for the fact that we now hear preached from the house-tops what before was but like a voice in the wilderness. "Credit," indeed, is scarcely the word; it is due to the force of circumstances. But we do not need to weigh the individual credit for the result; we hail with gratitude the fact that Delitzsch has given wide currency to a more correct view of the Old Testament.

But has he in fact done this? Unquestionably he has removed a great error: the belief that the materials of the Old Testament are all original. But how little does the material amount to in the history of religion and of the spirit! If to-day some one should go before the public and announce to it: "Gentlemen, I come to relieve you from a great error; you have hitherto believed that Goethe's *Faust*

was an original work, while in fact it is only a recent, secondary product; for the entire material of it is found in a popular legend of the sixteenth century,"—what would be the reply to him? He would be laughed to scorn, and Delitzsch would join in the laugh.

Without doubt he is very far from trying to determine the value of the Old Testament religion on the ground of its dependence upon Babylon, but in my opinion he has not done enough to prevent the establishment of a false conception of the matter in his hearers and readers. This public is very far from conceding to the prophets and the psalmists what it concedes without hesitation to a Goethe. Furthermore, for the very reason that there has prevailed hitherto a notion of the supernatural character of the Old Testament, the pendulum of opinion, following a familiar psychological law, now swings to the opposite extreme. To-day it is the talk of the streets that "the Old Testament no longer amounts to much."

At this point the Emperor enters the arena with his letter. But meantime the chasm had become deeper. As the result of an interview the monarch had become convinced that Professor Delitzsch did not hold the orthodox belief regarding the divinity of Christ, and that the examination of the Old Testament among other reasons prevented his holding this belief. In the face of this negative conviction the Emperor wished to leave no doubt regarding his own positive conviction.

We must thank him for the way in which he did this. It is true, the reproof which Delitzsch has received cannot fail to be painful to him, and he must feel deeply his being excluded from the domain of theology upon which the Emperor himself now enters. But that was surely not the intention; the Emperor means to say, and he is right in so saying, that Delitzsch's authority as an Assyriologist does not also extend to his theological doctrines. Beyond this he concedes absolute freedom to the convictions of the scholar.

Absolute freedom,—this sentiment shines forth from the Emperor's utterances with pleasing and inspiring effect. He has no thought of issuing a peremptory decree; the whole letter is permeated with the spirit of freedom. He knows very well that commands are out of place in connection with these delicate and sacred matters, and he knows that theology cannot pass by these questions, but that they must be treated most seriously, with liberty and courage. He leaves them to theological science.

But still more pleasing is the effect of the positiveness, the frankness and warmth with which the Emperor himself takes his stand in these matters. What he has written is from the depth of his heart; he utters it just as he thinks and feels it, and he has written it down like one who is trying to take account of his own mind, with all the minute marks of individual feeling and individual experience. He feels his soul bound to Christ, and he is not willing to speak of religion without praising him and confessing his allegiance to him.

The Emperor's utterance professes to be a personal confession of faith, and as such it deserves respect. But it would certainly not be in accordance with the spirit of the imperial author if we were to give no other response than silence. In the Evangelical Church the ultimate and supreme questions are always open to discussion, and each generation must work out the answers anew. Our spiritual life also depends upon crises and finds its very vitality in them. How should we be silent when the profoundest and most solemn questions challenge us in this form?

All Evangelical Christians will frankly and joyfully agree with the final sentence of the Emperor's letter: "Religion was never the result of science, but an overflow of the heart and being of man from his intercourse with God." Theology

subscribes to this proposition ; it knows right well that it does not work creatively but merely tries to follow reverently in thought something that already is.

Not less will be the general accord with the Emperor's conviction that religion must have forms, so that we may explain ourselves and give mutual instruction, but that these forms cannot be imperishable. I think that even Professor Delitzsch has attained the capital feature of his purposes in the concession that the customary forms of the current school traditions regarding the Old Testament are in urgent need of change.

But questions and disputes will arise chiefly in connection with two convictions expressed by his majesty : the theory of a twofold revelation, and the divinity of Christ. And the two are closely connected.

The difference between faith and science in connection with religion becomes clear immediately on the mention of the word "revelation." Science in the strictest sense cannot admit the notion at all, finding it too transcendental. On the other hand, faith cannot permit itself to be deprived of revelation. But in the course of development there has been an approach between the two sides. Aside from the reverent contemplation of the universe the evangelical faith has ceased to recognise revelation through any mediums but persons. The whole lower series of alleged revelations has been put aside. There are no revelations by means of things. The Emperor's letter also took this ground : the revelations of God in his humanity are persons, especially great persons. Now in so far as great personages have their mystery even for science in their individuality and power, in so far harmony is established between faith and science. But the recognition by me and others of these personages as revelations of God is an act of subjective experience which no science can either create or prevent.

But upon this common ground the Emperor's letter distinguishes two sorts of revelation : a general one, and a peculiarly religious one. There is a great element of strength in this distinction, for it brings out vigorously the fact that there is no more serious concern for man than his relation to God, and that everything is dependent on this relationship. But on the other hand, the thinking mind cannot possibly repose in the assumption of two revelations running as it were parallel with each other, and the imperial letter has given utterance to this observation by putting Abraham into both categories. Accordingly there cannot be two revelations—for religion, moral force, and knowledge stand in most intimate union—but one revelation, the bearers of which were, and still are, very different in nature and greatness, calling and function. If Jesus Christ loses nothing of his individuality and uniqueness when he is placed in the series with Moses, Isaiah, and the psalmists, neither does he suffer by the comparison when we see him in the line with Socrates and Plato and the others who are mentioned in the Emperor's letter. The religious conception of history must in the last analysis be one and the same : it must be mankind led forth by God out of the state of primitive nature, out of error and sin, and saved and brought into the estate of children of God. Here, however, we make reservation of the fact that the divine history finds its specific line in ancient times in Israel.

The Christian Church must reject every estimate of Christ which ignores the difference between him and other masters. He himself, his disciples and the history of the world have spoken so distinctly on this point that there should be no room for doubt, and he still speaks to us in his word as distinctly as to his disciples of old. But it may and must be questioned whether the inflexible formula "divinity of Christ" is the correct one. He himself never used it, but chose other desig-

nations, and it is at least very doubtful whether any of his disciples ever uttered it. And the early Church, too, did not speak directly of the divinity of Christ, but always of his divinity and humanity. "God-man," therefore, is the only correct formula even in the intent of the ancient dogma. In this phrase we have almost restored the mystery which according to the will of Christ himself was to remain in this matter. He made no secret of the fact that he was the Lord and Savior, and his disciples were expected to observe and experience the fact in his words and deeds. But how his relation to the Father arose he withheld from us and kept to himself. In my historical opinion, therefore, and according to my feeling in the matter, even the formula "man and God" (God-man-hood) is not beyond criticism, inasmuch as it has already begun to intrude upon a mystery into which we are not permitted to look.

But the formula may be allowed to stand because at bottom it does not pretend to explain anything, but only protects the extraordinary from profanation, just as does the expression "Son of God." The Pauline expression "God was in Christ" seems to me to be the last word that we are permitted to speak in this matter, now that we have liberated ourselves slowly and painfully from the erroneous notion of ancient philosophers that we can penetrate the mysteries of God and Nature, humanity and history.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments;" "In this shall every one recognise that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another,"—it is more important to meditate upon these words and try to live up to them than to put the incomprehensible and the venerable into formulas. The time is coming and even now is near when Evangelical Christians will join hands sincerely in the confession of Jesus Christ as their master and in the determination to follow his words, and our Catholic brethren will then be obliged to join with us to the same end. The burden of a long history of misunderstandings, of formulas that bristle like swords, of tears and blood, weighs upon us, but in it there is also preserved to us a precious inheritance. The two seem to be united inextricably, but nevertheless they are gradually separating, although the "Let there be light" has not yet been spoken across this chaos. Frankness and courage, honesty with ourselves, freedom and love—these are the levers which will lift the burden. And the Emperor's letter also is intended to aid in this lofty undertaking.

POPE LEO XIII. ON ONE OF THE HIGHER CRITICS.

Leo XIII. is perhaps the most liberal Pope that ever sat on the chair of St. Peter. What he thinks of Higher Criticism may be gathered from his attitude toward Renan, of which the following anecdote is reported, which may be true, and if not true may be considered *ben trivato* because characteristic of the Pontiff's attitude toward scholars of Renan's stamp. When told of Renan's death Pope Leo XIII. asked: "How did he die?" "Impenitent," was the reply. Leo XIII. reflected a moment and then remarked very quietly: "That is better." The prelate having expressed some surprise, the Pope went on to explain that Renan had proved by his end that his doubt was sincere. He would be judged by his sincerity, which, if it was thorough, might absolve him. A few moments afterward he observed that Renan had done more good than harm to the Church. He had aroused the theologians from their torpor. He had embodied the doubts of modern thought. He had marshaled its forces. The Church had been surprised; but could they believe that all this was not designed by Providence? And they might hope that particular indulgence would be shown to one who was the instrument of God's wrath.