

Correspondence.

BIRKS AND ELLIOTT ON PROPHECY.

To the Editor of the CHURCHMAN.

SIR,—My father would have been extremely sorry that any difference between himself and Mr. Elliott should have been adduced, as it is by Mr. Garbett [review of Mr. Guinness's "Romanism and the Reformation"] in your December number, as a proof of such dissension among historical interpreters as might warrant a general distrust of their principles of interpretation.

Those who wish to know how far the *rapprochement* to Mr. Elliott, which my father admitted, had at one time extended, may consult my father's "Outlines of Unfulfilled Prophecy" (published in 1854, *i.e.*, six years after his "Mystery of Providence," and two years after the 8th edition of my grandfather Bickersteth's "Practical Guide," but eight years before the 5th edition of the "Horæ Apocalypticæ"), and may turn to pp. 257-260, where they will find my father entertaining Mr. Elliott's view of the vision of the 6th seal as referring to the overthrow of heathendom in time of Constantine.

At first, and at the last, my father's views were somewhat widely different from Mr. Elliott's; but to say that they differed from first to last completely is to make an assertion in direct contradiction to Mr. Elliott, and not directly warranted by my father. Such an assertion should not be made the occasion of distrusting both my father and Mr. Elliott on points on which they certainly were both, from first to last, at one.

That the Book of Daniel is authentic, and that the five visions there each and all reach from the Seer's own time to the end of the world, and that of the Apocalypse the like is true; that the ten-horned beast both in Daniel and the Apocalypse denotes the Roman Empire, and that the little horn of it in Daniel denotes the Papacy; and again, that a day *may* symbolize a year—a point that might be proved even by one scriptural instance; that "a time, times and half a time" will be equivalent to 1260 year-days, or to 42 "months" of years, if a time denote a period of 360 years: these are points on which the Protestant historic school agree. No differences between my father and Mr. Elliott affected their agreement in these fundamental principles.

To enrich the historic scheme by the adoption into it, where this is possible, of elements of truth from other systems, is not the same thing quite as to disparage it and them as alike dubious and uncertain.

One word more. Only those who perceive the Papacy to be both blasphemous and cruel *can* recognise the Papacy as that which is predicted in the prophecy as a blasphemous and cruel thing. Only for such, therefore, if the Papacy be the thing intended, can the teaching of the prophecy respecting it be meant; and it must be meant to teach them something more than what its teaching presupposes that they already know. This further teaching is not therefore superfluous. But those who do not see the Papacy to be blasphemous and cruel may yet have much piety and a good deal of learning, though statements of fact that lack novelty to Mr. Garbett might be quite new to them.

Yours faithfully,
E. B. BIRKS.

Trinity College, Cambridge,
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