MISCELLANEA

NOTES AND COMMENTS

WE intend to publish next month an article from a well-known pen, which, though written almost entirely before the recent discussion on the Creation and Fall arose, yet has a close bearing upon it. To our mind the central issue of the controversy is not the scientific or historical accuracy of Genesis, but the question of the way in which people should think of the Bible. The view of those who would simply discard those parts of Holy Scripture which seem on the surface to conflict with modern knowledge seems to us frankly intolerable; for it implies that the Bible purports in all its parts to give us knowledge of the same kind as is arrived at by modern methods of research. That is an assumption which has no warrant beyond a certain amount of popular sentiment and tradition. The first fact to grasp is that the Bible—and the whole Bible—is the sacred literature of the Christian community, and is to be interpreted by reference to the mind and purpose of that community. The fundamental question to be asked, therefore, about any part of it is not, “Is this in agreement with the scientific textbooks?” but, “What are we, educated as we are in contemporary knowledge, to make of these chapters, or of those?” And the answers will be various: there are hymns and prayers, prophecies and exhortations, history and folklore, narrative and parable. The task of assigning the different parts of the Bible to their respective categories is one for students and scholars in the first instance, and in the next for clergy, parents, and teachers: it is what is meant, or at least covered, by St. Paul’s phrase “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. ii. 15). Such discrimination involves no danger to “the unity of truth,” which is to be found in the unity of the One Spirit who reveals truth in many modes, rather than in any uniformity of epistemological method. If we may not distinguish history from parable, and value the second as much as the first, then the Good Samaritan will have to go the way of Adam and Eve. No doubt the simple alternative of the Bible or Science saves a good deal of trouble and thought; but we must insist that “spiritual things are spiritually discerned,” and that those truths which it most concerns men to know about their destiny, and present condition are to be found in the Scriptures rightly read, and found in the form best adapted under the circumstances to embody them.

CORRESPONDENCE

DICTIONARY OF LATER LATIN

SIR,

Having been honoured by the request of the S.P.C.K. to undertake the production of a Dictionary of Later Latin, covering the period from Suetonius to Bede, I should be very grateful for offers of assistance in reading and excerpting from any of your readers who may be interested in the study of late Latin, especially of the Fathers.

Yours faithfully,

(REV.) J. H. BAXTER.

KING’S COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.

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