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Messianic Prophecy.

BY B. F. C. ATKINSON, Ph.D.

MISUNDERSTANDING of Old Testament prophecy and divergence of view with regard to its interpretation are at present a source of weakness among Evangelical Christians. The reason for the confusion, which has not been decreased by the bitter polemical spirit in which opposing views have often been treated, lies in neglect of the inspired commentary provided by the New Testament upon the Old. The treatment of Old Testament prophecy by the New Testament is the continuation in writing of the message of the primitive church, which in apostolic times was already pointing out that in Christ and the Christian church lay the key to the meaning of the predictive messages of the prophets. This is clear from the recorded speeches of the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii) and of Stephen the first martyr (Acts vii). One of the strongest arguments of the early church in its conflict with Judaism lay in this fact of the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy in Christ and the church, and the same line of argument was used with Gentiles as the church increased in the Roman empire. In fact the early church found a great source of strength in the correspondence between prophecy in the Old Testament and fulfilment in the New.

There are three passages in the New Testament which provide a key to the general message of Old Testament prophecy. The first is to be found in the apostle Peter's speech in the Temple after the cure of the lame man. "All the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days" (Acts iii. 24). The same apostle in his first epistle explains that the theme of Old Testament prophecy was the salvation proclaimed in the Gospel, but that the prophets could not fully understand the message which was delivered to them. Prophecy can only be properly understood in the light of the Christian revelation (I Pet. i. 10-12). The apostle Paul, as is to be expected, agrees with this view and tells King Agrippa that the subject of his preaching, which concerned the salvation offered both to Jew and Gentile as a result of Christ's resurrection, was only what Moses and the prophets had predicted (Acts xxvi. 22, 23).

The New Testament everywhere teaches that the Christian church is the New Israel in which the Old Testament prophecies find their fulfilment, that it supersedes and takes the place of Old Testament Israel, whose life and nationhood were but temporary shadows of the eternal substance to come. The New Testament knows of no future for Jews as such. It calls upon them as individuals to enter the Christian church by conversion and regeneration and declares that in that church "there is neither Jew nor Greek." This truth appears in the message of John the Baptist at the beginning of the New Testament. "Say not among yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." Descent from Abraham means and matters nothing in the new dis-

penetration that is coming in (Matt. iii). In an important passage our Lord Himself is recorded as telling the Jews that the kingdom of God is taken from them and given "to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This righteous nation that supersedes the Jews is the Christian church, as is clear from 1 Pet. ii. 9, but even if the apostle had not directly said so, it should be plain to all who understand the elementary facts of the Gospel that only those who are regenerate are capable of bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom of heaven, so that the nation in question can only be the whole company of regenerate people (Matt. xxi. 43).

In the Acts of the Apostles we find the Gentiles admitted to the Christian church on an exact equality with the Jews, and we read of the conversion and appointment of an apostle to be their minister in a special sense. This same apostle Paul tells us the same about the relationship of the Jews to Christ as John the Baptist and the Lord Himself. He says that one who is a Jew only outwardly has no right even to the name of Jew (Rom. ii. 28, 29), and he couples with this the assertion that the Christian church constitutes the true circumcision, that is to say, the people in true covenant relationship with God (Phil. iii. 3). What can these statements possibly mean but that the Christian church has superseded the Jewish nation as the people of God? It is true that the apostle leaves one privilege to the Jews, the opportunity to hear the Gospel first, but this is not a spiritual privilege but one of opportunity. The advantage which he claims for the Jew is likewise an advantage of opportunity (Rom. iii. 2), as he goes on to explain. It consisted in the possession of the Scriptures. Almost in the same breath he denies that the Jew has any spiritual advantage (Rom. iii. 9). Jew and Gentile are alike sinners and must come to God by the same road of repentance and faith.

Three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans are devoted by the apostle to a discourse on the relationship of Old Testament Israel to the Gospel (Rom. ix-xi). In the course of this he emphatically declares that natural descent does not involve membership in the Israel of God (Rom. ix. 6). He develops the conception of the believing remnant taught by the Old Testament prophets and shows by quotation from the Old Testament that the true Israel has always been identical with such a remnant. He asserts that the same is true in his own day and shows that the "all Israel" of prophecy refers to the same remnant to which Gentiles are now joined. The salvation predicted by the prophets consists of conversion to God through the Gospel, which the apostle illustrates by the vivid figure of being grafted into an olive tree (Rom. xi. 23). The remnant of Israel, augmented by Gentiles, becomes of course the Christian church. In this church, the apostle teaches us, there is no distinction of race, class, sex, or religious privilege. When he becomes a Christian the Jew is no more a Jew nor the Greek a Greek. He is a new creation in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 28, vi. 15, Col. iii. 11). In the whole New Testament from beginning to end there is not so much as a hint of any future for the Jewish nation apart from the conversion of its individual members to Christ. The most we can find is the apostle's statement that if the Jews were to be converted in a body, great blessing would ensue (Rom. xi. 15). This passage is sometimes read as a prediction that such a mass conversion

will take place, but the apostle does not say so. In accordance with the principles of the offer of salvation to all men through the Gospel the matter, as we should expect, is left open.

If the New Testament knows nothing of a national future for the Jews, does not Old Testament prophecy lead us to expect a national restoration to earthly privilege? We have already pointed to the general interpretation of Old Testament prophecy given us in the New Testament. We will now turn to some quotations of specific prophecies in order to see how the Lord and the apostles interpret them. At this point we meet with a strange situation prevalent among Evangelicals to-day. All are at one upon the meaning of the predictions of the Lord's incarnation and death (such, for example, as Isa. vii. 14, Mic. v. 2, Isa. xlii. 1-4, liii), and all condemn the Jews for their failure to see the fulfilment of these prophecies in the events of the Lord's life on earth. All realise that the Jews were mistaken in expecting a national and earthly fulfilment of Messianic prophecy. In fact the Jews are condemned for blindly holding to a Jewish interpretation of those prophecies to which Christ alone holds the key. Yet when we pass on from the predictions of the incarnation and death to those of the spiritual triumphs that have followed them, we find the literal earthly Jewish interpretation widely held by Evangelicals to-day, who are thus led to look away from the Gospel to some strange future period of their imagining when they expect the retrograde restoration of the privileges and disabilities of Old Testament times. Let us fully admit that such doctrines are held and taught out of a mistaken sense that literalness of interpretation is a necessity of full honour to the Word of God. Our purpose here is to show that they arise from neglect of the inspired commentary upon the prophets provided by the New Testament. They interpret the New Testament by the standard of the Old instead of the Old Testament in the light of the New.

Quotations are so numerous that the limits of this essay only allow of examination of the most prominent. The first three and the sixth beatitudes import the Gospel into the following passages: Isa. lvii. 15, lxi. 3, Ps. xxxiv. 4, xxxvii. 11, li. 10, lxxiii. 1 and cxxvi. 5. The quotation from the thirty-seventh Psalm is worth a moment's study. The blessings promised in the beatitudes are quite obviously blessings of a spiritual character obtained by the Gospel. The third can be no exception. This shows us that the expression in Ps. xxxvii. 11, quoted in Matt. v. 5, cannot refer to the present earth. It is a blessing promised to the regenerate, and the earth to which it refers is the "new earth", as is made clear from II Pet. iii. 13. Incidentally it may be remembered that both in Hebrew and Greek the word meaning "earth" also means "land" and is often so translated. Thus Old Testament promises of future glory in connection with "the land" find their fulfilment in the new earth, which means in the world to come. In commenting upon the faith of the centurion and predicting blessing to the Gentiles (Matt. viii. 11) the Lord quotes four Old Testament promises, Isa. xlix. 12, lix. 19, Mal. i. 11, Ps. cvii. 3, thus interpreting each of them of the ingathering of souls into the church by the Gospel and the final assembly in heaven. This interpretation provides the key to the passages in whose context the

verses respectively occur and proves them to be predictions of the Christian church, not of the Jewish nation.

The great promises made to Abraham, which are so often interpreted to-day by Evangelicals in a Judaistic sense, are explained by both the apostles Peter and Paul as referring to the blessings of the Gospel. The former quotes them at the conclusion of his speech in the temple precincts after the cure of the lame man, and states definitely that the blessing promised through Abraham and his seed to all families of the earth consists of conversion and that the promise is fulfilled through the Gospel (Acts iii. 25, 26). The latter similarly explains the promises as fulfilled in the justification of the Gentiles by faith, and declares that the seed referred to in the promise is Christ (Gal. iii. 8, 16). He also states that the promise to Abraham that he should be the father of many nations is fulfilled in the call of the Gentiles through the Gospel (Rom. iv. 16, 17). In Acts xv. 14-18 we have the quotation in full of Amos ix. 11, 12 and a valuable interpretation of it. These verses constitute the only prediction of future blessing in the book of Amos, which otherwise consists of unrelieved denunciation. They are explained as having their fulfilment in the salvation of the Gentiles through the Gospel, which had at that time begun. The apostle Peter (1 Pet. ii. 6) and the Epistle to the Hebrews (xii. 22) implicitly identify the Zion of the prophets with the Christian church, while the former and the apostle Paul explain the promise of mercy for a people formerly not the Lord's, of the call of the Christian church composed of both Jews and Gentiles (1 Pet. ii. 10, Rom. ix. 24-26). This last is a most important and interesting comment. That Isa. lii. refers to the Christian church and the Gospel is clear from its quotation in Rom. x. 15, xv. 21 and Eph. vi. 15. In fact a large number of quotations and allusions from the second part of Isaiah (xl.-lxvi.) prove beyond a doubt to the unbiased student that these chapters are concerned throughout with Christ and His church. The eleventh chapter of Isaiah, which is sometimes referred with assurance to a future millennium, is several times quoted in the New Testament and interpreted exclusively of the Christian church and the Gospel (see Eph. vi. 17, II Thes. ii. 8, Eph. vi. 14, Rom. xv. 12 and five quotations in the Apocalypse). In addition to Isa. xi. 10 the apostle Paul interprets Deut. xxxii. 43 and Pss. xviii. and cxvii. as predictions of the Gospel (Rom. xv. 9-12). The most quoted Old Testament passage is Ps. cx. and it is made clear by the apostle in I Cor. xv. that Christ is reigning *now* at the right hand of God till His enemies are destroyed. The destruction of death, the last enemy, is to take place, the apostle tells us, at the resurrection of believers on the return of the Lord.

A key passage for the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy is to be found in Gal. iv. 24-29. Here the apostle Paul not only quotes Isa. liv. 1 and explains it to refer to the Christian church, but also states that the Jerusalem of whose glorious future Isaiah and other prophets speak is the heavenly Jerusalem or Christian church and not Jerusalem in Palestine. The latter, says the apostle, is in the bonds of carnality and unbelief and will be "cast out" to make way for the true heirs. No language could express more clearly the supersession of Judaism by Christianity, or that the latter was the

true subject of Old Testament prophecy. In the same epistle the apostle explains the true meaning of the Israel of prophecy, when he refers to the Christian church as "the Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16). We thus find all three terms, Zion, Jerusalem and Israel, explained in the New Testament as referring to the Christian church.

We find in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as we should expect, a considerable amount of interpretation of the Old Testament. Thus the second part of Ps. xxii, which describes the triumphant consequences of the crucifixion, is explained as referring to the Christian church and the Gospel (Heb. ii. 12). The "rest" reserved for the people of God which is spoken of in the ninety-fifth Psalm is explained as fulfilled in the effects of the Gospel, of which the occupation of Palestine under Joshua was nothing but a shadow which could not correspond to the promise (Heb. iii. 7-iv. 11). The final promise made to Abraham, confirmed by God with an oath, is interpreted as having its fulfilment in the assurance of the Christian believer, for which it constitutes one of the pillars (Heb. vi. 13-20). According to the same epistle the Gospel is the fulfilment of the great promise of a new covenant made through the prophet Jeremiah, whose words, previously echoed in the course of the account in the Gospels of the institution of the Lord's Supper, are here quoted *in extenso* (Heb. vii. 7-13). This fact throws an interesting light on the interpretation of the terms "Israel" and "Judah" as used by the prophets. The New Testament scatters the pretensions of a literal interpretation to the winds. The Israel of God is the Christian church. The people of Judah, the true Jews (see Rom. ii. 28,29), are the same. The meaning of "Judah" is "praise", and the true Jews are described in Eph. i. 6, 12, 14.

These are only the most prominent of the passages in which the New Testament interprets the Old. There are hundreds of quotations and allusions throughout the New Testament which without exception confirm the key passages. The writers one and all declare that in Christ Jesus and in His Gospel the fulfilment of what the prophets looked for has come. It is true that the old order at present continues side by side with the new. But the day is coming, known to the Father alone, in which eternity will break into time, the old order will be engulfed and the blessings which are now enjoyed by Christian believers in their hearts by faith will become eternally outward and actual. Faith will be exchanged for sight. That is the day of the *manifestation* of Christ, when we also shall be manifested with Him in glory.

In spite of this clear, consistent interpretation of messianic prophecy provided for us in the New Testament and held by the church universal from apostolic times until the nineteenth century, as attested by all commentators, two other interpretations of Old Testament prophecy have appeared among Evangelical Christians during the last hundred years. These interpretations are opposed to each other in principle, but have this in common, that they literalise the message of the prophets and understand its fulfilment to be in this world among an earthly people of God in flesh and blood. These views are held in face of the clear statements of our Lord that "the flesh profiteth nothing", that His kingdom is not of this world, and of the apostle

Paul that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." We need not linger over the first of these views, the fantastic British-Israel theory. I have no doubt that if those men and women who advocate this view were able to go with unblinded eyes straight to the Bible without having first fed their minds with "British-Israel" literature and read these theories into the prophecies, they would see how contrary to Scripture this view is. The view is certainly contrary to science and history and, at any rate as it is expressed in certain of the publications of its exponents, it is contrary to common sense. More serious still, it is contrary in some respects to the principles of the Gospel and to the moral bases of God's dealing with men, for it involves the arbitrary favouring by God of a single nation among those in the world which He makes into a *Herrenvolk* without regard to faith, justification or conversion. The theory breaks to pieces upon the single statement, "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free." This strange arbitrary "blessing", conceived of as operating towards one single nation, must therefore in view of the apostle's statement be *out of Christ*. But there is no need to prove to the humblest Christian believer that *there exists no blessing out of Christ*, which fact is the core of the message of the whole Bible. It is tragic to think that earnest men and women, among them intelligent Bible students, should so misread God's purpose, and should occupy their minds with carnal glories that nourish national pride when the service of the Gospel among perishing men of every race calls for the exertion of the utmost that heart, mind and strength can give. "God is no respecter of persons."*

The second of the two theories which I have mentioned as widely held among Evangelicals to-day is what I have called the judaising interpretation. Speaking generally it looks for the fulfilment of Old Testament promises to Zion, Jerusalem and Israel not to the Gospel and the Christian church, as the New Testament interprets them, but to a future period of a thousand years known as the millennium imagined as to take place after the second coming of the Lord. The basis upon which the views known as pre-millennial are made to rest is found in the opening verses of the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation in which a reign of the saints with Christ during a period of a thousand years following upon the "first resurrection" is described. The interpretation of this mysterious passage has divided the church from earliest times. The early chiliasts, who seem to have disappeared after the fourth century, held pre-millennial views, but they differed in essential respects from the millennialians of to-day. The millennium of the early chiliasts was a Christian one, that of the

*There are four books which provide answers to this strange theory: Brayne (A.H.): *Were the ten Tribes of Israel ever lost?* (1917). This is very short, but quite convincing so far as it goes. I should say it was the best of the four; Procter (W.C.): *Is "British-Israel Truth" Scriptural Truth?* (1922). This is hard going with an abundance of references which repay looking up but rather dull and written from the Judaistic point of view; Goudge (H.L.): *The British Israel Theory* (2nd Ed. 1934), written from a critical point of view, but it deals well with the absurdities of the theory, which the author alas! seems inclined to regard as typical of the viewpoint of those who hold the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible; Frost (B.): section on B.I. in *Some modern Substitutes for Christianity* (1942), written from the Anglo-Catholic standpoint, humiliating to Evangelicals to read. It only speaks the truth about B.-I.

modern millennarians is Jewish at least as much as Christian. It involves the restoration to national privilege of the Jews and on that account is open to some of the same objections which we have advanced against British-Israelism. Such a view is retrogressive. To suppose the restoration of any Old Testament conditions implies a misunderstanding of the fundamentality and finality of the Gospel. Some modern millennarians expect the re-erection of a material temple at Jerusalem in Palestine and even the re-institution of some of the sacrifices of the Mosaic law. They appeal in support of this view to the last nine chapters of the book of Ezekiel, which they interpret in the literal judaistic sense instead of in the Christian. They also imagine our Lord Jesus Christ in the place of an earthly ruler. To base these views upon the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse is to lay upon its opening verses a very much greater weight than they can support. Those verses say nothing of Jerusalem, Palestine, or Israel, nor even of the earth. The reign may be in heaven. The passage does however provide an opportunity for the location in future time of Judaistic speculations, and in order to find room for the grand Jewish restoration in comparison with which the Christian Gospel and church are but an interlude simply filling a gap till it is time to turn to the Jews, the fulfilment of prophecy after prophecy of the Old Testament is placed in this future millennium in spite of the clear consistent and continuous New Testament explanations to the contrary. The view of the early chiliasts, though open to difficulties, is arguable. That of the modern judaisers has no thread of Scriptural support. From the fourth to the nineteenth centuries the church universal held the post-millennial view, which regards the passage in Rev. xx. as a prediction of a thousand-year triumph of the Gospel previous to the return of the Lord. We are not here concerned with this view, except to say that it too is open to grave difficulties. The meaning of the prophecy in Rev. xx. is not likely to be known before its fulfilment.

In the fertile brain of John Nelson Darby, who in addition to some excellent Scriptural views left a fatal legacy of speculations to his followers, the Jewish restoration so overshadowed the Gospel and the Christian church that it over-ran the bounds of the millennium prepared for it and extended backwards to a period before the second advent of the Lord, which was regarded as preceding the millennium. Throughout the nineteenth century the fashion among certain Evangelical Christians of interpreting Old Testament prophecy in the literal and Jewish sense led to a maze of fanciful speculation and produced a literature which culminated in the decade between 1880 and 1890, since when little new has been said, though these views retain their force among many Evangelicals. Thus the Lord's second advent was quite unwarrantably divided into two separate stages, the first of which was to be secret and intended for the removal from the world of the true Christian church. This view gave rise to the expression "secret rapture", which is a very unscriptural term, seeing that the apostle Paul distinctly tells us that it is when Christ *appears* (or is *manifested*) that we shall *appear* with Him in glory (Col. iii. 4). It also gave rise to sensational speculations which were even embodied in works of fiction that described the effect upon the world of the

instantaneous disappearance of all Christian people. Imagination however did not stop at this point. Certain fanciful minds went on to conceive the idea of "select rapture", which means that only some Christian people will be removed by the "secret rapture" and others left on earth till the end. This is still taught in defiance of the apostle's statement that "we shall *all* be changed *in a moment*" (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52). Controversy still continues between the exponents of these two views.

Advocates of the "secret rapture" have generally taught that the second or final stage of the second advent is referred to by our Lord in His apocalyptic discourse (Matt. xxiv, Mk. xiii, Lk. xxi) and the first or "secret" stage by the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. xv, and 1 Thess. iv. This leads to some strange conclusions. The passage in Rev. xx already referred to which speaks of the "first resurrection" is of course placed by these interpreters with the events predicted in Matt. xxiv, not with those in 1 Cor. xv. But if the resurrection foretold by the apostle in 1 Cor. xv and 1 Thess. iv precedes that of Rev. xx, we find our friends teaching the existence of a resurrection *before the first*. Not only so. In Matt. xxiv the Lord speaks of "the loud sound of a trumpet." In 1 Cor. xv the apostle states that certain events are to take place at "the last trump." If therefore the events of Matt. xxiv follow those of 1 Cor. xv we find our friends believing in a trumpet *subsequent to the last*. The truth is of course that any unbiased mind going straight to the Scripture can see that the Lord and the apostle are referring to exactly the same thing. One says that the world will see the Son of man, the other that the Lord Himself will descend from heaven. One says that the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, the other that we shall be caught up in clouds. One says that the angels will be sent, the other speaks of the voice of the archangel. One speaks of the great sound of a trumpet, the other of the last trump or trumpet of God. One speaks of gathering together the elect, the other says that we shall be caught up together with the risen dead to meet the Lord in the air. There is not an item in the one passage that does not appear in the other.

The fictitious future period that is imagined as intervening between the supposed two stages of the Lord's return is a happy hunting-ground for "students of prophecy", that is to say, experts in prophetic speculation. As in other subjects these experts do not agree. The length of this period is dogmatically stated in differing terms. Most, however, are in general agreement in the supposition that the major part of the book of Revelation predicts this time. It is to be a period of super-apocalyptic horror, round which the morbid imagination can play to its heart's content. The world is to be in the grip of the great futurist bogey man, a kind of super-Hitler—whose identity with Benito Mussolini was firmly expected some years ago by leading speculators—and his despotism will cause "the great tribulation", a term carefully explained to be the meaning definitely required by the original language of Rev. vii. 14, but usually so explained by those who are not acquainted personally with that original language, or, being partially so, have never looked up the original language of Luke viii. 8. The truth about the tribulation

is of course that it extends throughout the Christian age for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus." Our Lord Himself told us, "In the world ye shall have tribulation", and His words are echoed as usual by His faithful apostle, who said, "Ye must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." There are certain marvellous features about the fictitious concentrated futurist tribulation. It has converted persons attached to it, who are known in the jargon of the prophetic manuals as "tribulation saints." They are identified with the redeemed company described in the second part of the seventh chapter of Revelation. Their numbers are immense and they are all converted in the space of a few months or years. This is the more extraordinary as one of the dogmas agreed upon by most of their sponsors is that the Holy Spirit will have left the world before the conversion of any of them. Miracles of grace are thus to be accomplished in the face of an unrestrained devil, and in the absence of the Holy Spirit, which appear far to exceed anything that the Gospel will have effected during the Christian age. Perhaps the converts' religion will be one that it is easier to be converted to, for it appears to be a sort of compromise between Judaism and Christianity. To pass through this tribulation is regarded by futurists with horror, whether or not they expect to escape it, as most of them do. This seems to be a different spirit from that of the apostle, who told the Philippian Christians that they had been granted the extra privilege of suffering on Christ's behalf (Phil. i. 29). These absurdities should surely have made sensible, God-fearing men pause before now.

During the last thirty or forty years some at least of these speculations have been gathered into a kind of system known by its advocates as "dispensationalism." The Scripture knows of two dispensations, that of law in the Old Testament and of grace in the New. Our friends' main occupation has been to add to this number by imagining a retrogression in one or more stages to the Mosaic law and Jewish privileges in the future. An extreme school of this kind was founded by the late Dr. E. W. Bullinger, and its teaching has the practical effect in true Marcionite style of rejecting almost all the Bible as irrelevant. Only the "prison epistles", that is to say, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and with some doubt the Pastorals, are left for Christians to-day. The apostle Paul seems to have been an elect member of at least two different Christian churches at various times of his life in succession. The kingdom of God according to our friends has nothing to do with the Christian church and "the Gospel of the kingdom" is a different Gospel from "the Gospel of the grace of God." In fact our extremist friends recognise several Gospels in apparently unconscious defiance of the apostle Paul's words in Gal. i. 6-9. The Bible is made into a kind of mixture of a crossword puzzle and a legal document intelligible only to the elect, and both the approach to it and the treatment of it are wrongly conceived.

My own experience teaches me that such views are sometimes due to the practice on the part of younger and immature Christians of reading the books of these teachers before they know their Bibles properly, and of grafting the theories thus imbibed upon the Scriptures. I myself did this. It is of the utmost importance to read both sides to a question. This I never did. The "dispensational" scheme

seemed to me logical and its speculations appealed both to my active mind and my ready imagination. I felt satisfied with it and did not care to read the other side. Later I came to study my Bible for myself, and in the light of this first-hand study the whole scheme with its neatly-labelled pigeon-holes vanished into thin air. There is to-day a quite startling reaction in theological thinking towards conservatism. Much of this is being diverted in Anglo-Catholic directions, because Evangelicals are playing with these theories instead of occupying themselves with the Catholic Evangelical faith. I make in all love and humility an earnest appeal for the re-examination by Evangelical Christians of the relevance and importance of these questions. With souls perishing around us we occupy hours in talking of tribulations and millenniums in a speculative future to come, and in face of deadly rationalist forces threatening to engulf the Christian faith we go round with our neatly-folded plans of the future decked with gold and other colours, which we pin to a blackboard in order to demonstrate their superiority in some speculative detail over those of others. In certain circles horrible tests of orthodoxy and heterodoxy arise from these fancies and others are condemned as "not sound on the rapture." What will the Lord say to these things? If I urge a re-examination of these questions, I urge more strongly a thorough examination of quotations from the Old Testament as they appear in the New, and a thorough mastery of the New Testament interpretation of them and comment upon them. Till we have done this, I believe none of us should presume to teach these matters to others or even to close his mind upon any particular theory of the fulfilment of prophecy.