

fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy in this and the other cases is the same, while it is impossible to think that the Holy Spirit would either purposely misquote or lapse into involuntary misquotation. In Matt. 21 : 5-7, the supposed fulfilment of the prophecy is founded upon a literary error into which a writer acquainted with Hebrew literature could hardly have fallen. The "ass," and the "colt, the foal of an ass," are in the Hebrew not two things, but two expressions for the same thing, and we have before us not only a misconstruction, but, as it is hardly possible that Jesus could have ridden at once upon the ass and upon the foal, a probable adaptation of the history to the fulfilment of the supposed prophecy. The same may be said with regard to the alleged fulfilment of the Scripture in John 19 : 24, where the words of the Psalm, "They parted my garment among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots," are taken as denoting two actions, when they are a double expression, after the manner of Hebrew poetry, for one. "I called my son out of Egypt," as it stands in Hosea 11 : 1, can by no ingenuity be referred to anything but the Exodus, not to mention the strong suspicion which here again is raised of a story framed to correspond with the supposed prophecy. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," in Isaiah 7 : 14, is evidently a sign given by the prophet in relation to a crisis of contemporary history, and has plainly not the remotest connection with the immaculate conception of Jesus. Messianic predictions, such as "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be," not only were not fulfilled but were contradicted by the history of Jesus, who was not a temporal ruler or deliverer, and was therefore not recognized as the Messiah by the Jews. None, in short, of the so-called prophecies will be found to be more than applications, and many of them as applications are far-fetched. This is true even of the most remarkable of the number, the description of the oppressed and sorrowing servant of Jehovah in Isaiah 53 : 3, the author of which cannot be said to have distinctly foretold anything in the history of Jesus, even if we take Jesus to have been so pre-eminently a man of sorrows, a point on which a word will be presently said. In no single case can Jesus, or any event of his life, be said to have been present to the mental eye of the prophet. In fact, divines of the more rationalistic school are retiring from the ground of miraculous prophecy to that of ethical application, a movement parallel to that which they are performing in the case of the miracles by substituting natural causes, as far as they can, for divine interruption of the course of nature. But applications, even if they are apposite, are not prophecies. A similar set might probably be framed for almost any marked character of history in a nation possessed of an ancient literature. On this question, as on that of miracles, orthodoxy retreats, covering its movement with language which, while it renounces inspiration, clings without any definite reason to the belief in something which is not human but divin.

(to be concluded.)

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