

is the cope-stone rather than the corner-stone of the edifice of faith, he also, in the same connection, gives a timely caution against making prophecy do a work for which it is not designed, by endeavoring to make it sustain or support the whole super-structure of the Christian fabric. The argument from prophecy, therefore, is principally adapted and designed for the believer, and it should be presented to the unbeliever only when the historic argument for Christianity has been established.

The traditional method of regarding and of treating prophecy has been harmful to the interests of Christianity. Wiser apologetes acknowledge and regret the harm that has been done in this respect. Even Principal Fairbain condemns the habit of those who handle prophecy exclusively for apologetic purposes as a branch of Christian evidences, taking into account nothing but that which it contains of the miraculous. Hengstenberg, for instance, absurdly says that it is of no great importance to us to ascertain in what sense the prophets understood their own deliverances. To know in what sense God intended them, he considers, is enough. Such interpreters endeavor to make the argument from prophecy more imposing by multiplying the number of supposed predictions, and by explaining the meaning of individual prophecies in such a manner as to make them seem to the untutored like anticipated history, because the force of the argument, in their opinion, depends upon the fulness and clearness with which a particular event was pre-announced. This apologetic use of prophecy is preposterous, and exposes Christian evidences to ridicule and contempt. It also ignores all sensible or sober exposition of the Scriptures. The argument from prophecy has evidential value; but, if used apologetically, it must serve apologetic purposes in harmony with sound exegetic principles. Scientific exegesis in itself has nothing to do with apologetics. It is independent of both doctrine and tradition. It deals exclusively with interpretation. Apologetic writers, therefore, should avoid that use of prophecy which makes it refer exclusively to Christ, whether such reference is warranted or not by any proper principle of sacred hermeneutics.

Because of misconceiving the nature and design of Messianic prophecy, the argument from prophecy has been misdirected