

Historicism:

In the following pages, numerous quotations from distinguished authors and church scholars will be found. Because of their schooling and/or unique positions in history, they have earned the right to speak with authority on this subject. Historicism is a viewpoint that dates back to the earliest centuries of the Church but seems to be almost forgotten today among the opposing schools of prophetic interpretation. There is a plethora of material espousing Futurism, an abundance of books promoting Preterism, but scant mention of Historicism today.

In 1887, Dr. H. Grattan Guinness, DD., F.R.A.S., English scholar, preacher, writer and lecturer, wrote *Romanism and the Reformation – From the Standpoint of Prophecy*. In this book, which was reprinted in 1967, he devoted three chapters to the overview of those who interpret prophecy: Pre-Reformation Interpreters, Interpreters of the Reformation and Post-Reformation Interpreters. He quotes from scores of writers, preachers and historians who were of the Historicist school of thought. Excerpts from his works bear repeating within these pages. Following are quotations from Lecture V, pages 112-114 of the above-mentioned book:

With many varieties as to detail we find there have existed, and still exist, two great opposite schools of interpretation, the Papal and the Protestant, or the futurist and the historical. The latter regards the prophecies of Daniel, Paul and John as fully and faithfully setting forth the entire course of Christian history; the former as dealing chiefly with a future fragment of time as its close.

It is held by many that the historic school of interpretation is represented only by a small modern section of the Church. We shall show that it has existed from the beginning, and includes the larger part of the greatest and best teachers of the Church for 1800 years. We shall show that the Fathers of the Church belonged to it; that the most learned mediaeval commentators belonged to it, that the confessors, reformers and martyrs belonged to it, that it has included a vast multitude of erudite expositors of later times. We shall show that all these have held to the central truth that prophecy faithfully mirrors the Church's history as a whole, and not merely a commencing or closing fragment of that history. . .

Referring to the Pre-Reformation Interpreters, Dr. Guinness states the following on pages 123-124 of the aforementioned book:

It should be noted that none of the Fathers held the futurist gap theory, the theory that the book of Revelation overleaps nearly eighteen centuries of Christian history, plunging at once into the distant future, and devoting itself entirely to predicting the events of the last few years of this dispensation. As to the subject of antichrist, there was a universal agreement among them concerning the general idea of the prophecy, while there were differences as to details, these differences arising chiefly from the notion that the antichrist would be in some way Jewish as well as Roman. It is true they thought that the antichrist would be an individual man. Their early position sufficiently accounts for this. They had no conception and could have no conception of the true nature and length of the tremendous apostasy which was to set in upon the Christian Church. They were not prophets, and could not foresee that the Church was to remain nineteen centuries in the wilderness, and to pass through prolonged and bitter persecution under the succession of nominally Christian but apostate rulers, filling the place of the ancient Caesars and emulating their antichristian deeds.