§v.] SYSTEMS OF INTERPRETATION. [intropuctioy.   
   
   
 13. c. Our attention now passes to the Futurist school, consisting of   
 those who throw forward the whole book, or by far the greater part of   
 it, into the times of the great second Advent, denying altogether its   
 historical significance.   
 14. Of these writers, some, who have been called the extreme   
 futurists’, deny even the past existence of the seven Asiatic churches,   
 and hold that we are to look for them yet to arise in the last days: but   
 the majority accept them as historical facts, and begin the events of the   
 last days with the prophetic imagery in chap. iv. Some indeed expound   
 the earlier seals of events already past, and then in the later ones pass at   
 once onward to the times of antichrist.   
 15. The founder of this system in modern times (the Apostolic Fathers   
 ean hardly with fairness be cited for it, seeing that for them all was   
 future) appears to have been the Jesuit Ribera, about a.p. 1580% It   
 has of late had some able advocates in this country. To it belong the   
 respected names of Dr. Maitland, Dr. Todd, Mr. Burgh, Isaac Williams,   
 and others.   
 16. I need hardly say that I cannot regard this scheme of interpreta-   
 tion with approval. To argue against it here, would be only to antici-   
 pate the Commentary. It seems to me indisputable that the book does   
 speak of things past, present, and future : that some of its prophecies   
 are already fulfilled, some are now fulfilling, and others await their fulfil-   
 ment in the yet unknown future: but to class all together and postpone   
 them to the last age of the world, seems to me very like shrinking   
 from the labours which the Holy Spirit meant us, and invites us, to   
 undertake.   
 17. In the exposition of the Apocalypse attempted in this volume, I   
 have endeavoured simply to follow the guidance of the sacred text,   
 according to its own requirements and the analogies of Scripture. I am   
 not conscious of having any where forced the meaning to suit my own   
 prepossession: but I have in each case examined, whither the text itself   
 and the rest of Scripture seemed to send me for guidance. If a definite   
 meaning seemed to be pointed at in such guidance, I have upheld that   
 meaning, to whatever school of interpretation I might seem thereby for   
 the time to belong. If no such definite meaning seemed to be indicated,   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 re-assertion of the system which they uphold, In preparing the last edition of this   
 portion of my Greek Testament, I began by inserting in the notes claborate answers   
 to them: but I found that thus my pages became burdened with matter merely   
 controversial, and moreover that I could not continue this course consistently with   
 the unfeigned respect, which I felt and wished to shew towards Mr. Elliott: the   
 spirit of his book, which I forbear here from characterizing, rendering this wholly   
 impossible.   
 7 e.g. the author of “The Jewish Missionary,” and “The Sealed Book.””   
 8 Elliott, iv. pp. 465 ff.   
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