

MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

DR. Workman's paper on this subject in the October number of the *Canadian Methodist Quarterly Review*, has attracted so much attention and has given rise to so much discussion, as to demand at least a brief reference in these pages. With much that that paper contains every one must agree. It expresses many very important truths admirably phrased, and its spirit is reverent and devout. We think unquestionably that the so-called grammatico-historical method of the critical study of the text is the correct one. The scholarly ability which is so conspicuously manifested in the author's able volume on "The Text of Jeremiah," is also apparent in this essay. Nevertheless, the arguments adduced as to the exclusion of Messianic prophecy in its predictive sense from the Old Testament fail to carry conviction to our mind, and we think are, in large degree, erroneous and misleading. Even had we the critical ability, we cannot, of course, in the time and space at our command attempt a formal refutation of this elaborate essay of seventy pages. That would require at least equal space, and much more time than, under the pressure of many engagements, we can command, and much more critical learning than we possess. We cannot but feel it our duty, however, to record our dissent from many of the conclusions at which Prof. Workman has arrived.

Of course, the apologetic use of prophecy has been abused, and the recognition of types and allegories and adumbrations by ingenious theorizing minds have done much harm to the sober exposition of the Scriptures, yet we deem of vital importance the recognition of Messianic prediction in the Old Testament. The doctrine of Messianic atonement, runs, like the scarlet thread through priest's garment, through the warp and woof of the whole tissue of Scripture. The deletion of this seems to us to almost eviscerate the

Old Testament of its very life and spirit.

Prof. Workman seems to us unduly to minify the predictive element in prophesy. On page 417 he says: "In certain cases, doubtless, the prediction might have been suggested by the existing circumstances to a person of great natural sagacity. Owing to their prophetic insight the prophets by their spiritual training might rightly become skilful readers of the signs of the times, as many reverent writers on the subject have suggested." This is, in some cases, possibly true; but it cannot, in our judgment, account for the numerous, minute and circumstantial predictions uttered hundred of years before the time of our Lord which were so manifestly fulfilled in His life and death.

We are not quite sure that we fully understand Prof. Workman's statement that "the essential contents of Messianic prophecy are of an ideal nature, somewhat in the same way that unrealized experience, exceeds realized experience,"—p. 425—and that "there is no passage in which the future Messiah stood objectively before the writer's mind, or in which the prophet made particular and personal reference to the historic Christ"—p. 448.

The distinction between the ideal and real, between the personal and official, between the objective and the subjective, seems in this connection too subtle for ready apprehension. We do not see that Dr. Workman is warranted in making this assertion, or that he can positively assert how far the conception was objective or subjective in the mind of the prophet. When Isaiah 740 years before Christ said in chapter vii., "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," and in chapter ix. exclaims, "Unto us a child is born," and extolled in lofty verse His power as "the mighty God, the everlasting Father,