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ART. I.—REVIEW OF WOODS ON INSPIRATION.

*Lectures on the Inspiration of the Scriptures, by Leonard Woods, D.D., Abbot Professor of Christian Theology in the Theological Seminary, Andover.* Published and sold by Mark Newman. Flagg & Gould, printers. pp. 152.

THIS little volume, written on a subject of great importance and no small difficulty, deserves the serious attention of theological students, and of all others who are solicitous to understand the true grounds of evidence on which our religion stands. Commonly, no distinction is made between the authenticity and the inspiration of the New Testament; whereas, the proof of the former does not necessarily involve that of the latter, and accordingly, many believe in the authenticity and divine origin of the New Testament, who utterly reject the doctrine of inspiration. They believe that the scriptures contain a true revelation from God, and consequently that somebody must have been commissioned to make known the Divine will; but they deny that the persons who wrote the books of the New Testament were under an infallible guidance in making those compositions; acknowledging that they were men of integrity, who delivered the truth according to the best of their knowledge and ability; yet subject to the usual prejudices and mistakes which are common to men.

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Thus, Dr. Priestley, in his "Institutes of the Christian Religion," in a very able manner vindicates the authenticity of the facts recorded in the gospels; but in the same work, expressly rejects every idea of plenary inspiration in the writers. And in our day, there are multitudes who profess to receive the Christian religion as substantially true, who have no belief in the inspiration of the sacred penmen. Indeed, this distinction is recognised by almost every writer in defence of revelation; for the first step in stating the external evidence always is, to establish the miraculous facts recorded in the New Testament, by testimony merely human. And until this is satisfactorily done, no argument can be raised for the truth and divine origin of the Christian religion. It is evident, therefore, that the proof of the inspiration of the writers of the New Testament is entirely a distinct thing from the evidence of authenticity. This distinction is clearly and justly expressed in a passage quoted by Dr. Woods from Dr. Knapp.

"These two positions," says Dr. Knapp, "*the contents of the sacred books or the DOCTRINES taught in them are of divine origin, and, the BOOKS THEMSELVES are given by inspiration of God,* are not the same, but need to be carefully distinguished. It does not follow from the arguments which prove the *doctrines* of the Scriptures to be divine, that the *books themselves* were written under a divine impulse. A revealed truth may be taught in any book; but it does not follow that the book itself is divine. We might be convinced of the truth and divinity of the Christian religion, from the mere genuineness of the books of the New Testament, and the credibility of the authors. The divinity of the Christian religion can therefore be conceived, independently of the inspiration of the Bible. This distinction was made as early as the time of Melancthon."

The importance of this subject is strongly exhibited by Dr. Woods in his preface.

"There is no subject, which is more intimately connected with the great controversy in Christian countries at the present day, and none which in its various bearings and consequences is more interesting to man, than that which is presented in the following Lectures. On the particular views we entertain of the inspiration of the Scriptures must depend our views of the Christian religion. For, if the Scriptures were written by men divinely inspired,—by those who enjoyed the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit; then they are truly *the word of God*, and a *perfect standard of faith and practice*. The doctrines and laws which they contain, are settled by the highest authority in the universe; and our business is, not to

sit in judgment upon these doctrines and laws, and to determine whether they are right or wrong, but to understand, believe, and obey them. As soon as we discover the sense of an inspired book, we are bound to yield it our cordial assent, not indeed because we could make out that sense by the exercise of our own unaided reason, but simply on the authority of God. Our belief, resting on such a basis, is not to be moved aside by any difficulties or objections which the wisdom of this world can suggest.

“But the moment men start from this high position, *that the Scriptures are divinely inspired*, they cease to have a sure and infallible standard for their faith, and are thrown back upon human ignorance as their guide. Not regarding the Bible as the word of God, they will feel at liberty to doubt or deny any of its decisions; and the most they will do will be to use it, as they do other books, to assist them in forming a system of religion for themselves.

“The question whether the common doctrine of inspiration is true, must therefore be acknowledged to be of vast importance. The particular decision which is adopted on this question will have a direct and sensible influence upon the degree of reverence which will be felt for the Holy Scriptures; upon the manner in which they will be perused by the common Christian, and studied and interpreted by the critic and the theologian; upon the manner in which Christianity will be exhibited by the preacher, and apprehended and received by the hearer. Every thing which pertains to the doctrines and precepts of religion, and to the belief and practice of those who embrace it, will be coloured by the particular views which are entertained of the inspiration of the Scriptures. And each of the different grades of opinion which may prevail on this subject, from the direct denial of all supernatural guidance, to the belief of a plenary inspiration, will be found to produce its appropriate effect upon those who maintain it.

“Considering, then, that the subject of inspiration is calculated to have an influence which will be so powerful, and will so extensively affect the highest interests of man and the welfare of the church; we ought surely to examine it with great seriousness and candor, and with persevering diligence. And we are under very peculiar obligations to do this at the present day, because, if I mistake not the signs of the times, this subject is likely, before long, to form the dividing line between those who adhere to the evangelical doctrines of our forefathers, and those who renounce them.”

It appears, also, from the preface, that these Lectures formed a part of Dr. Woods's regular course of instruction, at the Institution in which he is a professor; and that by special request they were published in *THE SPIRIT OF THE PILGRIMS*,

in a form somewhat abridged. And we feel grateful to the respectable author, that he has thought proper to give these fruits of his long and profound reflections, on a very interesting subject, in a distinct volume. For, although we feel constrained to dissent from some of the opinions advanced by Dr. Woods, yet upon the whole, we cannot but view this as a very able work, in which the orthodox doctrine of inspiration is maintained, and some of the most formidable objections considered and obviated. It is evident that the learned author has taken profound and comprehensive views of this difficult subject, in all its bearings; and that what he here gives to the public is not the result of superficial investigation, but, as he says himself, "is the fruit of much thought."

In the first Lecture, Dr. Woods labours to remove some common mistakes on the subject of inspiration, and to furnish the reader with some salutary cautions in regard to its proper evidence.

Two questions are, in the commencement, proposed and answered. The first is, "Can the inspiration of those who wrote the Scriptures, be proved from the miracles which they performed?" The second, "Can the inspiration of those who wrote the Bible be proved from the excellency of what it contains?" Both these questions are answered in the negative, in our opinion, with too little explanation. In regard to miracles, it is said, that they "are proofs of the divine commission of those who perform them, and of the truth and authority of what they teach, but furnish no *direct* and *certain* proof that those who perform them are under divine inspiration." There seems to be some want of perspicuity and perfect accuracy in this statement. The truth is, that miracles, separate from any annunciation or declaration, prove no doctrine whatever. God, no doubt, has often wrought miracles for other purposes, than to confirm the truth of any proposition; as, for the deliverance of his servants from danger and death. Miracles alone, therefore, do not even prove that the person performing them is commissioned of God to teach any truth, unless he makes such a declaration; and if such a person declares himself to be inspired, the miracle wrought will prove this as fully as that he is sent of God. There seems, therefore, to be no just foundation for the distinction here set up; and we are apprehensive that the rejection of miracles as a proof of inspiration will lead us into inextricable difficulties; for on this basis ultimately, must the whole

weight of the external evidence rest; and indeed, Dr. Woods afterwards declares himself, that the truth of inspiration depends on the truth of the miracles.

But we have still stronger objections to the answer given to the second question; in which, if we understand the author's meaning, the whole body of internal evidence for the truth of Christianity and the inspiration of the Scriptures, is pronounced to be "unsatisfactory and inconclusive." The reason assigned is, "because we allow great excellence to what is contained in many books, which no one supposes to be inspired. Merely writing a book which contains excellent doctrines and precepts, and which exhibits them in a very impressive manner, cannot be deemed sufficient proof of the inspiration of the writer." But we would appeal to the candour of the excellent writer, whether this is a fair statement of the case. May there not be a kind and degree of excellence, which is evidently above the ability of man, or which is manifestly superior to what could have been accomplished by writers under particular circumstances. An edifice erected by man may possess great and varied excellence; but would it be just to infer from this, that we could not fairly conclude the firmament to be the work of God and not of man? If a mere child, or a man wholly unlearned, should discover that he possessed a profound knowledge of the abstruse branches of mathematical science, we might infer that he was inspired; for although this knowledge is attainable by human industry, when the requisite talents are possessed, yet it never could have been attained in a natural way by the persons supposed. What excellence of knowledge, theological and moral, men can attain by their own unassisted efforts, is made known by the experience of the world for ages: now, if an obscure nation, little cultivated by learning, is found to possess a system of theology and morals far surpassing every thing which the most learned and polished nations were ever able to reach, why may it not be inferred, that the writers of the books containing this superhuman excellence, received their doctrine from heaven; or, in other words, were inspired? Or if a few unlettered fishermen and mechanics produce books, which, for sublimity, simplicity, purity and graphical delineation of character, are inimitable; so that every attempt to equal or surpass them in these qualities fails, why may it not be inferred that these men were inspired, from the excellency of the matter contained in their writings? Accordingly, we profess,

that we have never found a deeper conviction of the inspiration of the writers of the New Testament from any external argument, than from that which is exhibited in the little work of Soame Jenyns, on the INTERNAL EVIDENCES. But this is not all; we would respectfully ask Dr. Woods, how the great body of sincere Christians obtain their conviction that the Scriptures are inspired? It will not be said, that their unwavering persuasion of this truth is merely the prejudice of education; and it is certain, that the majority of them have no distinct ideas of the external evidences of divine revelation. Their faith must depend on the view which they have obtained of the internal excellency of the truths contained in the Scriptures. Indeed, all genuine, saving faith, whether of the learned or unlearned, in our opinion, rests exclusively on this kind of evidence. It is true, *that* excellence of the Bible which is the result of divine illumination, cannot be exhibited as an argument to others, but it may be, and is, perfectly satisfactory and conclusive to the believer himself. And even to those who have no other light than their own reason, by which to judge of the excellency of the truths of the Bible, we are persuaded, that this species of evidence comes with more force, and more frequently results in an acknowledgment of the divine origin of Christianity, than any external evidences whatever. Some of the most remarkable instances of the conversion of infidels which we have ever known, have been produced simply by reading the word of God. We believe, therefore, "that the Scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God, by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation: but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures, in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it, that they are the very word of God."\* According to our judgment, therefore, Dr. Woods has spoken unguardedly, when he says, "Thus, every argument which has been urged in proof of inspiration, merely from the sublimity, the purity, the harmony and the efficacy of the Scriptures, will be found inconclusive." Indeed, we are so far from adopting this opinion, as to be persuaded, that if the Bible could be placed in the hands of intelligent, impartial men, who were

\* Larger Catechism.

sincerely in search of truth, without the least information of its origin and history, they might fairly and confidently come to the conclusion, that the writers must have been inspired. And if the Holy Spirit should accompany the reading of the Scriptures, an unwavering conviction of their divine inspiration would be produced, as we know by the experience of every day, in regard to all those pious persons, who believe without any acquaintance with the external evidence of divine revelation.

In regard to the remainder of this Lecture, which is much the larger part, we find nothing which we do not approve; and therefore, we shall content ourselves with giving a brief analysis of its contents. The object of the writer is, to remove some common mistakes, into which we are liable to fall, and to suggest some cautions against erroneous judgments on this subject.

In the first place, it is observed, "That we are not to suppose that we can exactly understand the *manner* in which the mind is affected by inspiration of God, or *how any man knows*, that he is under infallible guidance." Next, he lays it down as a caution, "That the influence of inspiration upon the writers of Scripture, *was not confined to the revelation of new truths.*" Under this head he shows, that inspiration often serves to assist the memories of the writers to recollect what they had before known, to guide them in the selection of what is proper to be recorded, and to render them infallible in the communication of things, the knowledge of which was obtained in the common way. This remark, the writer justly considers of great importance, in judging of the inspiration of the historical books of the Old Testament.

The third caution is, "That it is no objection against the inspiration of the Scriptures, that they were written in a language completely human, and that they exhibit all the varieties in the mode of writing, which are common in other works."

The fourth is, "That it is not to be admitted as any argument against the doctrine of inspiration, that in writing the Scriptures, the sacred penmen evidently made use of their own faculties." The fifth, "That it is no objection to the inspiration of the Scriptures, that they contain many things which are, in themselves, of little value." This is a much more important consideration than at first sight it appears to be; for, nothing is more likely to create a prejudice against the doctrine of inspiration, than observing, that the Bible contains an

account of many trivial things. The same prejudice is apt to arise, in regard to the works of creation and the dispensations of Providence, and there is a close analogy between the cases. Many things in themselves are of little or no importance, but every thing, as making a part of the whole, is important; and thus, revelation would be less perfect than it is, if all events which seem trivial had been omitted. What the learned author has written on this subject is weighty, and deserves to be carefully perused. The sixth remark is, "That it is no objection to the inspiration of the Scriptures, that the real and full meaning of some passages was not known at the time they were written, or even that it remains unknown at the present time." The seventh is, that "instances of apparent disagreement among the different writers of the sacred volume, and of apparent contradiction in the same writers, are no valid objection against their inspiration." If the discrepancies are only apparent, and can be shown to be such, then the truth of the remark is self-evident, but seems to have been scarcely worthy of a distinct mention. But how shall the reader know, whether discrepancies and contradictions are real or only apparent? Until this can be ascertained, the rule here given is perfectly useless; for, while it is evident, that contradictions merely apparent prove nothing against inspiration, it is equally certain, that real contradictions would furnish the strongest evidence against the inspiration of the words in which they were found. But the true use of this caution is, to prevent hasty judgments from first appearances. There are in the Bible apparent discrepancies which can easily be reconciled by a little explanation; and there may be real contradictions in our copies, which may be owing to the mistakes of transcribers. Now, when such things are observed, there should not be a hasty conclusion that the book was not written by inspiration, but a careful and candid examination of the passages, and even when we cannot reconcile them, we should consider the circumstances under which these books have been transmitted to us, and the almost absolute certainty, that in so many ages, and in the process of such numerous transcriptions, mistakes must necessarily have occurred, and may have passed into all the copies extant.

The second Lecture in this little volume, treats a subject of great difficulty, and involves a very important principle of biblical interpretation. It relates to the manner in which citations are made from the Old Testament by the writers of the



New Testament. The objection is, "that in some instances the quotations do not agree with the original; and, that in other instances, the texts quoted are applied to subjects widely different from those to which they were originally applied." Where the quotations in the New Testament are real predictions from the Old, "there can" says our author, "be no difficulty." The real difficulty, however, is to ascertain which are predictions. If we follow the most obvious meaning of the words used, we shall conclude that all those passages cited from the Old Testament, with the formal declaration that they were *fulfilled*, in events recorded in the New Testament, are to be considered as predictions: but we are cautioned against the opinion that such words as ἵνα πληρωθῆ "that it might be fulfilled," and other phrases of the like kind, are always used to introduce a real prediction, which was then accomplished. "They are," says Dr. Woods, "often used, and with equal propriety,—I say not in the way of *accommodation*, because that word unhappily, has been employed by certain writers, to express a doctrine which I think utterly inconsistent with the character of Christ and his apostles—but to denote *a mere comparison of similar events*, to signify that the thing spoken of, answers to the words of a prophet, or that *his words may justly be applied to it*; and so may relate to what was said by an inspired writer, in describing a character which formerly appeared, or in relating an event which formerly took place, as well as to a real prediction. Accordingly, we might take a passage where it is said such a thing was done *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet*, might express the same thing as such phrases as these, the declaration of the prophet had an accomplishment in what took place; or his words may be aptly applied to it, or they very properly express it; or his observation is true in reference to the present case; or this thing is like what the prophet describes." Such passages, according to our author's theory, are cited in the way of *illustration*. And he goes on to say, that "this mode of illustrating and impressing the truth, was common at the time the New Testament was written. "It is common too at the present time, and obviously proper at all times;" and therefore, he concludes, can be no objection against the inspiration of the New Testament writers. But as this is a principle of hermeneutics of great importance, let us hear the learned professor further in its explanation and vindication.

“ Now is it not the almost universal practice of good writers, to make quotations from previous writers, for the purpose of giving a varied and more impressive illustration of what they would teach? If there is any book which is held in high repute on account of its antiquity, the name of its author, or the excellence of its contents; from such a book quotations are frequently made. And they are made, not merely to prove a doctrine which is doubted or denied, but to give additional force to truths commonly received, and to obligations commonly acknowledged. Nor can any one doubt, that quotations from such a book are well adapted to produce such an effect. By their means, the particular truths affirmed become associated with circumstances, which impart to them a new interest, and a higher authority.

“ These remarks apply with peculiar force to the writers of the New Testament with regard to their practice of quoting from the Old. All the circumstances which can ever be supposed to influence writers to quote freely from others, were combined in their case. They held the Scriptures of the Old Testament in the highest reverence. They were taught by the prophets, and by Christ himself, to regard those Scriptures as of divine authority; as the word of God; the guide of their life; the basis of all true religion. What stronger reason could they possibly have for making continual citations from their sacred books?

“ Another circumstance which must naturally have influenced them to quote abundantly from the Old Testament, was, that they had so few books besides. And this is connected with another circumstance; namely, that they were in the habit of consulting their sacred books so constantly, and with such earnest and devout attention, that they became very intimately acquainted with them. The historical facts, the doctrines, precepts, promises, threats, and the language in which all these were conveyed;—the metaphors, similes, allegories, types, and all the peculiarities of style, found in the Scriptures, were perfectly familiar to the writers of the New Testament, and were wrought, as elements, into the habits of their minds. They imbibed not only the general spirit of their sacred books, but the mode of speaking, and the very mode of thinking, there exhibited. Whenever they undertook to treat any subject, they seemed immediately to recur to passages in the Old Testament, which either treated the same subject, or would supply some useful illustration of it. In many instances, they employed the language of the Scriptures, *as their own*; it being more familiar to them, and better suited to their purpose, than any other.

“ Were the writers of the New Testament singular in this? Do not *we* proceed in the same manner? And is not the practice so familiar, that we often do it insensibly? In our letters, in

common discourse, in prayer, and in the more formal statement and vindication of divine truth, we frequently use the language of Scripture, either in the way of exact quotation, or by quoting part of a passage, or part of several passages, just as the case requires. And Christians do this very much in proportion to the reverence they feel for the Bible, and the diligence with which they study it. Just take such authors as Owen, Watts, Doddridge, John Newton, and Edwards, and see how considerable a proportion of their writings consists of partial or entire quotations from Scripture, or allusions to it."

"This practice of quoting from the Old Testament for the general purpose of illustration, is not only proper in itself, but is, as I have already hinted, perfectly conformable to *common practice*. What is more common at the present day, than to illustrate the truths and duties of religion by a familiar citation of texts from the Scriptures? We do this sometimes in a more formal, and sometimes in a less formal manner. When the case seems to require it, we quote a particular passage exactly, naming the book, chapter, and verse. In other cases, we quote the substance and general sense of a passage in a condensed form, without regard to the exact words of Scripture. And sometimes we make an intelligible allusion to a part of Scripture which is well understood, without actually quoting either the words, or the sense. Thus, we say, such a view of the subject is according to what Christ taught his disciples of the character of those who are blessed; or according to the direction he gave respecting the treatment of a brother who offends; or according to the final commission he gave his apostles; or according to Paul's account of justification by faith. Or we say, that Paul's account of the strife between the flesh and the spirit applies to the case of every believer; taking it for granted that every one recollects what that account is. It is then perfectly evident, that the liberties which the New Testament writers use, as to the manner of making quotations from the Old Testament, are by no means greater than common practice sanctions. And it is evident too, that they are liberties of the same general character with those which we think proper at the present day."

These quotations will be sufficient to show clearly, how Dr. Woods understands this matter; but to be fully possessed of his arguments and illustrations, it will be requisite to read the whole lecture, which will richly repay the time and trouble of a careful perusal. His reference to the method so much in vogue, of making citations from the classic authors, when their words can be accommodated to express in any degree our meaning happily, and serves to shed light on the subject.

But after all that has been said so ingeniously, and so plausibly, in defence of this mode of understanding the quotations from the Old Testament, we confess that we have our misgivings. We are not prepared, however, at present, to enter into a full discussion of the subject; neither would our prescribed limits admit of it. But we will remark, in passing, that if the form of quotation, mentioned above, does not signify that the writer proposed to cite a prediction, which he supposed was then fulfilled, no words can be used which would certainly convey this idea. That frequent allusion should often be made to the language of the Old Testament, or, that the very words of Scripture should sometimes be used, when the writer only intended to apply them for illustration, is not difficult to be conceived; but when the sacred writer says, "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by his prophet," or, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets," to suppose nothing more was intended, but that the words of the prophets have some correspondence with the events now recorded, is, to say the least, a construction not the most obvious and natural. Out of a thousand readers of these passages who had never heard of any difficulty, we believe, that there would not be found one who would not conclude, that the evangelist was quoting a *real prediction*, or what he considered such.

But again, if this solemn form of citation does not uniformly mean that a prophecy was referred to, which was now supposed to be fulfilled, we would respectfully ask, how we are to know when the writers of the New Testament are applying a prophecy to events then passing? Or if this form of expression can be set aside in one case, so that it shall not be considered as referring to a real prediction, why may it not in every case where it is used? The importance of this inquiry did not escape the sagacious mind of the author of these Lectures; in the appendix he has devoted several closely printed pages to an answer. But we profess, that after perusing what is here written, we still remain unsatisfied. The first method of determining whether a passage cited is a prediction, is, by the general rules of hermeneutics, as given by such men as Ernesti, Morus, Storr, Horne, &c. And we are directed "to examine the text as it stands in the Old Testament," and having by the proper rules ascertained, that the text in question was meant to be a prediction, we may then "come to the quotation in the New Testament, prepared to believe that the

writer designedly introduces it as a prediction of the event to which he applies it; not indeed, because it is introduced by any of the formulas which are used, as they equally respect all sorts of quotations; but because an examination of the original writer shows, *that he meant it as a prediction.*"

The author then proceeds to give directions how we should proceed in doubtful cases, and illustrates his rules by a reference to Psalm xvi. 10. where, although we cannot, from the words of David taken alone, ascertain whether he meant to utter a prediction or not; yet from the explanation given by Peter and Paul, (Acts xiii. 35. 37.—ii. 25. 31) it appears with undoubted evidence, that it was indeed such.

The illustration of the case here adduced is entirely satisfactory; but there are other cases of quotations, in determining the true character of which, all the rules given would be of very little use; for the difficulty is not, whether a prophecy was intended to be uttered, but concerning its fulfilment. And to illustrate our meaning, we shall refer to that most important citation from Isaiah vii. 14. which is the first instance of quotation in the New Testament. Now, when we turn to the passage as it stands in the Old Testament, we find that the writer did mean to utter a prediction; for the words were spoken by Jehovah to Ahaz, to inform him what sign he was about to give; but when we examine the context, we find that there is nothing which would lead any one to suppose that an event very remote in time was meant; much less, that the words were intended to predict the miraculous birth of the Messiah. So far from this, they seem to be limited in their fulfilment to a short period from that time. The whole passage is this, "Moreover, the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. And he said, hear ye now, O ye house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, but you will weary my God also? Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign, BEHOLD A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE, AND BEAR A SON, AND SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." Now, as we cannot learn from these words, examined alone, that they were intended to refer to the Messiah, let us turn to the quotation as

given in the New Testament. But here we have no new light; for although Matthew uses a formula in citing them which would lead us at first sight, to suppose, that he intended to apply the prediction of Isaiah to the conception and birth of Jesus Christ; yet, according to the rule of Dr. Woods, we can infer nothing from this solemn form of quotation. How, then, shall we determine whether this prediction is correctly applied, or meant to be applied by the evangelist to the important event which had then occurred; or whether he only uses the language of the prophet by way of *accommodation*; (for we must use this word to express the idea, notwithstanding Dr. Woods' objections to it) because they were suited to express the fact to which he applies them, though not meant to signify any such thing by the original writer. And not long since, while perusing the learned and orthodox work of Dr. John Pyc Smith, entitled "TESTIMONY TO THE MESSIAH," we were startled upon finding that this distinguished writer and able advocate for the ancient faith, concedes, that there is here no prophecy of the Messiah, but that the language of the Old Testament is used by the evangelist in the way of *accommodation*. And it is asserted in a late number of the SPIRIT OF THE PILGRIMS, that Professor Stuart, of Andover, only admits, "that the declaration of the Lord by the prophet, in this place, is a type or symbol of the birth of Messiah, but not a prediction of that event." We are free to confess, that this single fact has filled us with doubts respecting the validity of the modern principles of interpretation, as it relates to citations from the Old Testament.

Until very lately, we presume, no Christian author ever doubted whether these words contained a glorious and explicit prediction respecting the birth of Messiah. But according to the new canons of interpretation, Dr. Smith is correct: this important text must be given up, as proving nothing; as having no reference whatever, to the event, to which Christians from the earliest ages have been in the habit of applying it. And not only so, but on these principles numerous texts besides, which, as former commentators thought, contained predictions of Christ, must be relinquished. And we are apprehensive, that instead of finding Christ every where in the Old Testament, we shall be in danger of finding him nowhere. Even that famous prophecy, Isaiah liii. which Dr. Woods says, "cannot without violence, be understood as relating to any but the Messiah," has been by some commentators refer-

red to other objects; and by others has not been considered a prediction at all. We are, we confess, afraid of what Flatt, in his *Essay on Inspiration*, appended to this volume, calls *the new exegesis*: and although he is called orthodox, and professes to defend the orthodox doctrine of inspiration, as formerly held by the church; yet it is such a defence as actually betrays the cause; so cold and feeble is his essay, that we should have been better pleased if Dr. Woods had left it in the obscurity of its native German. Very different, however, is our opinion of the extract at the close of the Appendix, from the late work of the Rev. Daniel Wilson. This is truly excellent; and had the worthy author never written any thing besides, it would be sufficient to prove that he was a man of talents, and correct habits of thinking.

The third Lecture is occupied in the proof of the inspiration of the Old Testament, from direct assertions, and other representations in the New. On this subject there is no difficulty. The proof is abundant, and of the clearest kind.

The fourth Lecture contains the positive evidences of the inspiration of the books of the New Testament, derived from "the commission to the apostles,—from the promise of the Holy Spirit,—from the fact that the writers considered themselves inspired. Notice is taken also, of the instances in which Paul seems to disclaim inspiration: and it is shown that these passages will bear another interpretation, perfectly consistent with his being under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit, when he wrote them. The case of Mark and Luke, who, though not apostles, were writers of part of the New Testament, is considered, and reasons are assigned why they should also be admitted to be inspired men. The only objection which we feel to this whole argument for the inspiration of the New Testament, is, that it is defective, by reason of the omission of the evidence afforded by the internal excellence of the doctrines and precepts which it contains; but of this we have already expressed our opinion.

The fifth Lecture, takes a view "of the nature and extent of inspiration." The author very properly rejects the usual distinctions of inspiration into several kinds and degrees; for, although, in some cases, the writers possessed the knowledge required to be communicated previously, yet in these instances as well as when all the ideas were inspired, they were equally under an infallible guidance. Dr. Woods's definition of inspiration is, "a supernatural guidance or assistance afford-

ed to the sacred writers, that divine guidance or assistance having been such as entirely to guard them against error, and to lead them to write just what God saw to be suited to accomplish the ends of revelation." Although we do not admire the way in which the thing is expressed, yet we concur with Dr. Woods entirely in his views of the plenary nature of that inspiration by which the Scriptures was written.

His views, also, on the subject of the manner in which inspiration must affect the language, as well as the ideas of the books of Scripture, are, in our opinion, just; and as this is frequently a subject of inquiry and controversy among young theologians, we will give a pretty long extract on this point.

"Some have supposed, that the influence which inspired men had, related *exclusively to the thoughts or conceptions of their own minds*. But this supposition seems to me not accordant with what the inspired writers themselves advance on the subject. Far be it from me to attempt an explanation of the specific mode of the divine agency in the work of inspiration. But as the writers of Scripture nowhere limit the divine influence which they enjoyed, to the conceptions of their own minds; neither would I do it. And as there are some texts which, according to any fair interpretation, clearly imply that the divine guidance afforded to inspired men, had, in an important sense, a respect to their language; how can I entertain any further doubt? And I find myself still more satisfied by considering the cases, in which the apostles and other Christians were miraculously assisted to speak with *other tongues*; because, in all these cases, the agency of the Spirit related directly to the language they used. The very fact necessarily implies this. For to say that the divine Spirit assisted them to speak in a foreign language which they had not learned, and yet that the divine assistance afforded them had no respect to *language*, would be a contradiction. The remarkable instance of divine agency, now referred to, should at least prevent us from asserting in unqualified terms, that divine inspiration in the Apostles could have had no respect whatever to their language.

"The general doctrine of inspiration, understood in any proper sense, seems clearly to imply, that the divine influence which the Prophets and Apostles enjoyed, must have pertained, in some way, to the manner in which they communicated divine truth. For can we suppose that God moved his servants to write a particular doctrine or fact, and yet did not influence them to write it in a suitable manner?—that, after prompting them to communicate something of consequence, he so abandoned them, that they were liable, as every man without divine assistance is, to fall into mistakes, or



to make the communication in a manner less proper in itself, and less agreeable to the mind of God, than some other."

The learned author then proceeds to answer some plausible objections to the opinion which he advocates. The first of which is, "that the language employed by the inspired writers exhibits no marks of a divine interference, but is perfectly conformed to the genius and taste of the writers." While the fact is admitted, it is denied that it interferes with the theory advanced; for it is not pretended that the writers were in all cases furnished with words which they would not have themselves selected, but only that in making their selection, they were under such a superintendance as preserved them from employing unsuitable language. Another objection is, "That even the same doctrine is taught and the same event described in a different manner, by different writers." The fact is here also admitted, but it is shown to be perfectly consistent with the view taken of this subject. But the strongest objection is, "That the supposition of a divine influence, in this respect, is wholly unnecessary." This may justly be denied, for a truth clearly conceived in the mind may be unhappily expressed, through ignorance or inadvertence; and in that case, the truth would be imperfectly communicated, and the very end of inspiration would be partially defeated. The truth is, that we may as well concede, that the sacred penmen were capable of writing many parts of the sacred volume without any divine influence, as that they were able to clothe their ideas always in the proper language, without the aid of inspiration. It is true, they could have written, both as to ideas and language, substantially, what is found in some of their narratives; because, both the facts and the words were familiar to their minds; but in judging what was in every case proper to be said or omitted, they would have been liable to error; and in the narration of facts with which they were most intimately acquainted, through the imbecility of the human mind, they might have fallen into some mistake. And so, in the selection of their language, they would have been equally liable to error; and plenary inspiration, which extended only to the conceptions of the mind and not to the words, would fail of accomplishing the end designed.

This point is considered of so much importance by Dr. Woods, that he adduces several arguments from Scripture, in addition to his general reasons, to confirm it. The first is derived from the miraculous gift of tongues. The second,

from the fact that the inspired writers had not, in some instances, a clear understanding of the things which they spoke or wrote. And thirdly, he argues from the texts of Scripture where inspiration is expressly mentioned, in favour of the doctrine which he maintains.

In the sixth and last Lecture, the principles of the preceding are applied to some particular cases: and, we were pleased to observe, that the first instance adduced, was the book of Job; concerning the right interpretation of which, we have felt no small perplexity, for a long time.

The difficulty is not in relation to the inspiration of the writer of this book, whoever he might be; but to the discourses of Job himself, and of his friends. Now the question is, whether these sublime discourses are to be considered as all given by inspiration; or, whether any part of them are inspired. Against the first supposition, it seems to be an unanswerable objection, that God himself declares that these men were in error, in their controversy with Job; and he himself was reproved for some of his speeches, which are of such a kind that they could not have been dictated by the Holy Spirit. And if all their discourses were not inspired, but only a part, how is it possible for us to distinguish between what was spoken by inspiration of the Spirit, and what was the fruit of their own unassisted minds. But, on the other hand, if we determine that no part of these discourses were inspired, we contradict the uniform opinion of theologians, ancient and modern, who have even treated the declarations of Job and Elihu at least, as the words of inspiration; and have fully adduced texts from them, and also from the other speakers, in proof of the most important doctrines. We did hope, when we saw this example brought forward, that we should find some solution of this difficulty, by one who has so profoundly studied the whole subject. But we confess that we have been disappointed. We have, indeed, no special objection to what Dr. Woods says in relation to this book, but we are of opinion, that he has left the difficulty where he found it. "The Holy Spirit prompted the writer," says our author, "to write a sacred poem, consisting chiefly of a dialogue between Job and his three friends, and of a solemn address to Job from the Creator and Sovereign of the world. The inspired writer was enabled to frame such a dialogue, and such an address from God, as should be agreeable to nature and truth, and convey with clearness and force the most im-

portant knowledge respecting God and man." Very good; but how are we to distinguish truth from error in this important dialogue? When Job says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c." are we to consider this as an inspired prediction of the Messiah? and if so, are all Job's words to be so taken? And so of the elevated sayings of his friends.

But we shall dismiss this perplexing subject, and hasten to the conclusion of our review, already too much extended, by observing, that the remainder of this Lecture is occupied with important remarks, "on the perfection of the Bible," on "the firmness of the basis on which our belief in the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel rests;" on the regard which we ought to pay to the Bible as the standard of our faith, and the source of our religious knowledge. He teaches, "that those authors who deny the inspiration of the Bible, are to be regarded as dangerous guides in respect to the principles of religion, and are to be read and studied with great caution." Also, "that those who disbelieve the doctrines, or who despise or neglect the precepts contained in the Bible, subject themselves to a heavy charge of presumption and impiety,—and, finally, he concludes with observing, "How important is the work of explaining and inculcating the Word of God, and disseminating it through the world." On all these points we most cordially concur in the sentiments expressed by Dr. Woods; and although we have presumed to question the correctness of some of his positions, in the preceding parts of the volume, we are persuaded, that he will be the last man in the community to be offended with our freedom. The subject is far more difficult than is commonly supposed; and has been far less discussed, than its importance demands. In the general view of inspiration, we entirely agree with Dr. Woods, and have been instructed and gratified by his little volume. Indeed, we consider it as an important accession to our theological literature, and as supplying a *desideratum* to students of theology. And our prevailing reason for reviewing it in the *Biblical Repertory*, is, to bring it, as far as our influence extends, into more extensive circulation, for we have reason to think, that in this part of the country, it has, as yet, fallen into the hands of but few persons. We would, therefore, cordially recommend this little volume to the careful perusal of our readers, and especially to students of theology and young ministers; for we are persuaded, that this will become one of the most frequent grounds of controversy

with the enemies of evangelical truth. On this ground the assault has been most successfully made in Germany, and we shall soon have neology in its most abhorrent form imported into this country. Indeed, it is already here, and only needs the German literature to give it support; and let it be remembered, that the conquest over truth was there made by little and little, and, instead of conceding any part of the principles of truth, let us be determined "to contend earnestly for the whole faith."

If we might take the liberty of suggesting a hint to the reverend author, it would be, that in a second edition, which we hope will be soon called for, the work should be considerably enlarged, so as to give room for the full discussion of some points, not sufficiently examined in these Lectures.

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#### ART. II.—MANUAL LABOUR SCHOOLS.

*To the Editors of the Biblical Repertory and Theological Review.*

GENTLEMEN,

I should be gratified to have your opinion, or that of some one of your correspondents, on what are called Manual Labour Schools, in which it is proposed to give young men, in indigent circumstances, an opportunity of paying for their education, at least in part, by their own industry. Will three or four hours labour each day interfere with their progress in learning, or be injurious to their future usefulness? What is the best mode of conducting these establishments? What proportion of the expense of his education may an industrious young man be expected to defray? Especially, I should like to know, whether a young man, in a course of education for the gospel ministry, who has an opportunity of attending one of these working schools, or who is in such a situation that he may earn something, however small, ought to receive any assistance from education societies, or others, if, from pride or indolence, or any other cause, he neglects to do what he can in paying for his education? In a word, I should be pleased to have your views on the subject, generally, or on any particular branches of it.

With great respect, I have the honour to be,

A FARMER.