

*SOME RECENT OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE.*

THE substantially identical reprint in 1895 of *The Prophets of Israel*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1882, illustrates the irreparable loss we have sustained through the death of Prof. Robertson Smith. Had he lived, this volume would no doubt have been enriched by the fruits of subsequent research in the same way as the new edition of *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*. As it is, "with a few trifling exceptions, about which no well-informed editor could have the least doubt, the form of the Lectures remains unaltered"; as to the notes, "to a large extent the additions consist of references to recent works." The more important supplements are on Amos v. 26 (Sakkuth and Kaiwan), p. 402, and Dr. Cheyne's rejection of the current identification of "So, king of Egypt" (2 Kings xvii. 4) with Shabaka, p. 428. In an introduction of fifty-two pages, Dr. Cheyne indicates the differences between the critical position of *The Prophets of Israel* and that now held by the critical school of which Dr. Cheyne is the chief English representative,—Dr. Driver may not be wholly identified with it. To these critical differences we shall return in considering another work. Dr. Cheyne considers that in a revised edition Prof. Robertson Smith would have assigned to editors many passages which *The Prophets of Israel* treats as the genuine work of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. This is probably true. Often the work of 1882 seems to accept disputed passages as part of the original text rather by an otiose assent than by a deliberate judgment; and the

<sup>1</sup> *The Prophets of Israel to the Close of the Eighth Century B.C.*, by the late W. Robertson Smith, M.A., LL.D., Professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge. New Edition, with Introduction and Additional Notes by Rev. T. K. Cheyne, M.A., D.D., Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford, Canon of Rochester. London, A. & C. Black, 1895, pp. lviii. 446. 10s. 6d.

whole trend of the author's critical movement was towards more advanced positions.

Dr. G. A. Smith's new work<sup>1</sup> more than sustains the great reputation he attained by his exposition of Isaiah. We need not say that he has fully utilised the results and suggestions of recent research, especially with regard to the criticism of Amos, Hosea and Micah. Scholars will be grateful for the contributions which this volume makes to the discussion of such topics, but we venture to suggest that these discussions should have been strictly confined to the notes. Dr. Smith himself seems to have had misgivings on the subject, and a highly technical paragraph, occupying pp. 358, 359, is printed in small type, presumably that it may be skipped without difficulty. There is urgent need that immense spiritual value of the principles and results of modern Biblical scholarship should be brought home to average Christians; this volume is peculiarly fitted to minister to that end, so that we grudge any concessions to the tastes of scholars that may repel those who are not experts. The exposition proper is in Dr. Smith's usual lucid and forcible style. The characteristics of each prophet stand out in bold relief, and are not obscured by any attempt to treat each minor point in detail. A complete translation is given to each book, and often the prophet is simply left to speak for himself—see for instance pp. 417, 418 on Micah v. 5-15 and pp. 426-429 on Micah vi. 9-vii. 6. The translation for the most part is exceeding vigorous and idiomatic, but occasionally Dr. Smith uses a kind of Hebrew in English words, which we believe, from its prevalence in similar translations, is supposed to illustrate and commend Hebrew language and ideas to the English reader. Surely

<sup>1</sup> *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, by George Adam Smith, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis, Free Church College, Glasgow. Vol. I.—Amos, Hosea and Micah, with an Introduction and a Sketch of Prophecy in Early Israel. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896, pp. xviii. 440. 7s. 6d.

such a master of style and expression is not reduced to phrases like "hunt up to know the Lord," p. 344, "I will pass upon her neck," p. 345. Probably these are oversights and may be classed with the spellings Amaleq, Aharon, Qir (p. 142, elsewhere Kir), the citations of chapter and verse according to the Hebrew instead of the E.V., on p. 368, and the sentence about "ethical movements" on p. 158, where there seems to be some curious misprint. On the other hand, the translation "leal love" for *hesed*, E.V. "mercy," is used constantly; a mere Southron cannot pronounce on the sense of this phrase, but it has an awkward sound. Another feature of the translation is specially valuable; where the existing Hebrew text is unintelligible, the reader is made aware of the fact by a blank in the translation. This is a great improvement upon the practice of giving an ingenious but unsound translation in the text, with a statement in a note that the passage is obscure. Similarly on Hosea xii. 12-24 Dr. Smith writes frankly: "I cannot trace the argument here." Such caution materially increases the reader's confidence in the author's candour and judgment. Turning from these details to another main feature, the prophetic teaching is applied to modern times with great aptness and force.

We may now pass to the different sections of the book. The sketch of early prophecy includes a very striking rehabilitation of the ecstatic prophecy. Speaking of the authority of these prophets, Dr. Smith writes, p. 16: "Where such opportunities were present, can we imagine the Spirit of God to have been absent—the Spirit who seeks men more than they seek Him, and as He condescends to use their poor language for religion must also have stooped to the picture-language, to the rude instruments, symbols and sacraments, of their faith?" This sentence is worth pondering; it represents an important tendency of current thought. Dr. Smith also expresses a feeling that

makes many students dubious as to recent critical conclusions, when he says, p. x., that one of the defects of previous criticism is "the depreciation of the spiritual insight and foresight of pre-exilic writers."

In the case of *Amos*, and, indeed, also of *Hosea* and *Micah*, the prophet's personal character and history are sketched with great ability and sobriety. The author makes free use of his recent researches in sacred geography. As to *Amos*' message, the morality in which he was so intensely interested, was one already recognised by the conscience of Israel, p. 99; but "Amos denied that Jehovah was bound to save His people, he affirmed that ritual and sacrifice were no part of the service He demands from men. This is the measure of originality in our prophet," p. 103. On these two main themes accordingly Dr. Smith chiefly dwells. Upon the former he bases, pp. 153-155, a most impressive warning—too long to quote and not admitting of abbreviation—that the moral and social iniquities of Christian civilisation may lead to its being overthrown like that of Israel. He speaks of Israel in the time of *Amos* as a vigorous community, wealthy, cultured and honestly religious, in settled peace and growing power; and points out that this prosperity was the immediate antecedent of ruin. The treatment of *Amos*' denunciation of ritual is fairly summarised in his own words, p. 159, "In chap. ii. *Amos* contrasted the popular conception of religion as worship with God's conception of it as history."

Dr. Smith holds that *Hosea* actually had an adulterous wife, but that *Hosea* i. 2, "Jehovah said to *Hosea*, Go, take thee a wife of harlotry," etc., is an expression of the fact that "*Hosea* . . . pushed back his own knowledge of God's purpose to the date when that purpose began actually to be fulfilled, the day of his betrothal. This, though he was all unconscious of its fatal future, had been to *Hosea* the beginning of the word of the Lord. On

that uncertain voyage he had sailed with sealed orders," pp. 238 f. We may also note the views held on other interesting details. The well-known passage (vi. 1-3), "Come let us return unto the Lord, for He hath torn, and He will heal us," etc., is the mere expression of a "too facile repentance," which God receives "with incredulity, with impatience," pp. 263-265. We suppose that, in spite of R.V., the rabbinical translation of *qeceph*, which gave us the striking comparison of the Israelite king to foam upon the water, must be abandoned. Dr. Smith gives us *chip*, which is certainly more graceful than R.V.Mg. *twigs*, but still leaves much to be desired. x. 14 is understood as a threat: "From the hands of Sheol shall I deliver them? From death shall I redeem them? Nay, let death and Sheol have their way. 'Where are thy plagues, O death? Where thy destruction, Sheol?' Here with them. 'Compassion is hid from mine eyes.'" Dr. Smith expounds with special care, as the main teaching of Hosea, the prophet's insistence upon knowledge or experience of God as an essential feature of religion; his setting forth of the Fatherhood and Humanity of God, and his analysis of Repentance. Of the last he writes, "Between him and ourselves almost no teacher has increased the insight with which it has been examined, or the passion with which it ought to be enforced," p. 333. These words are carefully weighed and can doubtless be justified, but they might be taken to mean that Hosea's treatment of repentance was exhaustive, and has not been materially supplemented. Here, as elsewhere, the impression may be made on some readers that our author's applications of prophetic principles were present to the minds of the prophets. This impression would often be mistaken; nevertheless such applications are perfectly legitimate. Inspired utterances necessarily carry with them consequences far beyond the speaker's original meaning, so that in applying ancient

revelation to modern needs, Dr. Smith is entirely justified in attempting something more than a mere reconstruction of the spiritual consciousness of Hebrew seers. For instance, if the reader strictly limits the connotation of the term by the context, the word "evangelical," p. 339, may well be applied to Hosea's preaching, because it insists on the Divine love as a ground of repentance. The exposition of this subject is singularly strong and beautiful, and often very representative of current thought; e.g., "The love of God has the same weakness which we have seen in the love of man. It, too, may fail to redeem; it, too, has stood defeated on some of the highest moral battle-fields of life. God Himself has suffered anguish and rejection from sinful men," p. 351. We have travelled far since the time when Patripassianism was a deadly heresy.

In the last division of the book, we have an eloquent exposition of *Micah's* mission and message as the prophet of the poor; this is the keynote of the whole division and not merely of the chapter which bears that title.

We will now briefly notice the critical views of this volume and compare them with those of Dr. Cheyne in his introduction to the *Prophets of Israel*. First, however, we note that (p. 8) Obadiah, in its present form, is exilic; Joel is of uncertain date, but the great probability is that it is late. Hence Joel and Obadiah, with Jonah, are left for subsequent volumes. With regard to Amos, Hosea and Micah, Dr. Smith recognises that there are later additions. He discusses disputed passages with great fairness and moderation, and fully recognises that decisions on such points are often probable rather than certain. On p. 61, Dr. Smith gives a list of suspected passages in Amos: (1) References to Judah—ii. 4, 5; vi. 1 *in Zion*; ix. 11, 12. Of these ii. 4, 5 was defended by Robertson Smith, but is rejected by Dr. Smith and Dr. Cheyne. (2) The three

Outbreaks of Praise—iv. 13; v. 8, 9; ix. 5, 6. These also were defended by Robertson Smith and are rejected by Dr. Cheyne. Dr. G. A. Smith thinks the evidence is not decisive either way. (3) The Final Hope—ix. 8–15, this is accepted without discussion by Robertson Smith, but is rejected by Dr. G. A. Smith, and still more unhesitatingly by Dr. Cheyne. (4) Clauses alleged to reflect a later stage of history—i. 9–12; v. 1, 2, 15; vi. 2, 14. Dr. G. A. Smith is mostly uncertain about these passages; they are not referred to by Dr. Cheyne. (5) Suspected for Incompatibility, viii. 11–13. Dr. Smith accepts verses 11, 12, and decisively rejects 13; Dr. Cheyne accepts the latter and rejects the former. To Dr. Smith's list we must now add i. 2 and v. 26, which are also rejected by Dr. Cheyne. The disputed passages—mostly phrases and single verses—in Hosea are too numerous to be all noticed. We will follow Dr. Cheyne in noticing eight, all of which he regards as later additions. Six are references to Judah; both critics agree in rejecting i. 7, iv. 15, viii. 14; Dr. Smith is doubtful about vi. 11–vii. 1, and i. 10–ii. 1, and is inclined to accept the phrase "David their king" in iii. 5. He accepts v. 15–vi. 4—"genuine" in his statement of Dr. Cheyne's views, in note to p. 264, must mean genuine prayer, not genuine composition of Hosea—and the prophecy of restoration in xiv.

"With regard to the Book of Micah," says Dr. Cheyne, "it is becoming more and more doubtful whether more than two or three fragments of the heterogeneous collection of fragments in chaps. iv.–vii. can have come from that prophet," p. xxiii. Dr. G. A. Smith directly challenges this statement, and shows that a considerable body of critical opinion still maintains the substantial integrity of the Book of Micah, which he himself also accepts. He does not, however, deny the presence of interpolations in the text, *e.g.*, apparently, iv. 1–5 (=Isaiah ii. 2–5), and

more decisively, iv. 6, 7; and vii. 7-20 "is a cento of several fragments from periods far apart in the history of Israel." But interesting as this work is to the critic, we must emphatically reiterate that it will delight and edify every reader who can understand and appreciate straightforward English. When Dr. G. A. Smith expounded Isaiah, the prophet secured an audience for the exposition, now the expositor has to obtain a hearing for the prophets.

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