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THE OLD TESTAMENT

A NEW TRANSLATION

BY

JAMES MOFFATT, D.D., LITT., M.A. (OXON.)

BY PARKE P. FLOURNOY,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

This translation of the Old Testament is "new," and remarkable also, in many respects. It is a work displaying the marvellous energy, ingenuity, and learning of the translator.

Dr. Moffatt was the Jowett Lecturer, London, 1907, Yates Professor of Greek and New Testament Exegesis, Mansfield College, Oxford, 1911-15, and has been Professor of Church History in U. F. College, Glasgow, since 1915, and Editor of *The Expositor* since the death of its renowned founder W. R. Nicoll.

No one is likely to read this version without interest, and a desire to see what will come next, for it has remarkable peculiarities. With some of these, the public has already been made familiar, seeing Jehovah named The Eternal, Noah's Ark, a "barge," covenant, a "compact," etc., etc.

With these, and other features of the work, I do not propose to deal, but wish to draw attention to Dr. Moffatt's treatment of one passage, which has been, for ages past, considered of great importance, and is of unspeakable comfort to millions. This passage is Isaiah 52:13-53: all generally spoken of as "the 53rd chapter of Isaiah."

The peculiarity here is the insertion of "Israel" after the word "servant" in verse 13 of the 52nd chapter, and the 2nd verse of the 53rd, making the former to read: "Behold my Servant Israel yet shall rise, he shall be raised on high"; and the latter, "Why, Israel of old grew like a sapling, etc." Dr. Moffatt goes through the 53rd chapter, taking the liberty of transposing verses, as well as translating them.

The effect of the insertion of the word "Israel" in these two verses just named, is to make the whole passage

(which has been precious to Christians of all times and countries; and has given Isaiah the appellation "the evangelical prophet" of the Old Testament), a prophecy, not of Christ, but of *Israel*, as the Saviour, promised in God's word, from Genesis to Malachi. The redemptive sufferings and death of our Lord are the foundation of Christian faith and hope of salvation from sin and ruin. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently . . . searching what or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow . . . which things the angels desire to look into."

There is absolutely no textual evidence for the existence of the word "Israel" in verse 13 of Isaiah 52nd chapter, or verse 2 of the 53rd chapter. Having carefully examined the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint—a translation of a Hebrew text, ages older than any other now known; Jerome's Latin version of the Old Testament, used by the Roman Church since the 4th century, and the Douay version of the same, I find no trace of the word "Israel" in these two verses. Yet Dr. Moffatt puts it into both.

When we turn to his reverent and grateful dedication of this work; at these two insertions of the word "Israel"; our surprise is great.

This dedication reads:

"To
The Very Rev.
Sir George Adam Smith
From whom I learned Hebrew
And more than Hebrew"

When we come to see what George Adam Smith, himself, says, our surprise is greater still. In his "The Book of Isaiah, Vol. II, pp. 262-267, we see that he has been discussing the use of this name, "The Servant of Jehovah," used in previous chapters of Isaiah, and finds it to be a "personification" first of Israel as a whole, then of the faithful in Israel, then of a prophet, then, of "*that Prophet*" promised through Moses (Deut. 18:15, and Acts 3:22).

He concludes the discussion thus:

(*Ibid.*, p. 267):

"In Ch. 50, the Servant is no longer called Israel, and is represented, not as one part of the nation over against the mass of it, as if he were one individual over against other individuals; that, in fine, the Personification of Ch. 49 has become much more difficult to distinguish from an actual Person."

He then goes on to say:

"This brings us to the culminating passage Ch. LII-LIII. Is the Servant still a personification, or at last a Person?"

"It may relieve the air of that electricity which is apt to charge it at the discussion of so classic a passage as this, and secure us calm weather in which to examine exegetical details, if we at once assert, what none but prejudiced Jews have ever denied, that this great prophecy, known as the Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah, was fulfilled in One Person, Jesus of Nazareth and achieved in all its details by Him alone. . . . We are by no means compelled to adopt the impersonal view of Ch. LIII." This he emphasizes on page 269.

In the eighth chapter of Acts there is an interesting narrative bearing upon this question. Philip, the deacon, had been led to cease "serving tables," and called of God to do the work of an evangelist. After his work in Samaria, he was directed to "go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza." There he finds an eminent man, the treasurer of queen Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, who had gone up to Jerusalem to worship, and was going back to Africa. He, sitting in his chariot, reading this very passage in Isaiah, was puzzled: and asked Philip to take a seat by him and explain it to him. He could not determine who this person was, whose great sufferings were so graphically depicted, with the glory that should follow. He was answered:

Philip "preached unto him *Jesus*."

Suppose Philip had told him that this suffering Servant of Jehovah was Israel, as Dr. Moffatt tells us. Would

the reader of this passage in Isaiah have gone on his way rejoicing? As Plato said long ago—Πολυμαθία οὐ διδάσκει (much learning does not teach).

Every thoughtful reader will see that this is not a matter of mere curiosity, or of merely academic interest. On the other hand, it is a matter of life and death—*eternal* life and death.

The question for each one of us is, "Shall I accept with all my heart, the Redeemer here presented by Isaiah, who brings to us God's message of good tidings, or follow this translator, who follows Ewald, Wellhausen and others who, whether they intend it or not, put poison into the life-giving stream at its source?"