# *MR. GEORGE ADAM SMITH'S "BOOK OF ISAIAH."*[1]

## VOL. I. ISAIAH I.–XXXIX.

WITHOUT having the honour to know the author and whether he is old or young, I can say of his book, that it is both old and young. It is like an amalgam, in which the old faith like the silver gives it stability, and in which the modern science, like the alloy, gives it mobility.

His standpoint in almost all critical questions on Isaiah is on the side of the modern critic, and his principal leaders are not unjustly the great Old Testament scholars Cheyne and Driver. He follows the former even in the doubt which he expresses regarding the authenticity of the prophecy xxxix. 5–7. And why? "Because"—as he says, p. 202—"we cannot reconcile what Isaiah says of a Babylonian captivity with his intimation of the immediate destruction of Babylon, which has come down to us in chap. xxi. 1–10." But if the earlier prophecy regarding Babylon (xiii. 2 to xiv. 23) be not by the old Isaiah, neither can the shorter prophecy in chap. xxi. be his work. In the second prophecy, as also in the first, the Medes are named as the conquerors of Babylon. These Medes along with the Elamites are said to have formed a contingent of Sargon's army—a thing historically impossible. The Medes and Elamites were the allies of the Babylonian Merodach, and not of the Assyrian Sargon. The doubt expressed concerning the prophecy xxxix. 5–7 rests on a *circulus vitiosus*.

The author pays tribute to the modern denying propensity also, in affirming, p. 140, "that it is inconceivable that if Isaiah, the prophet of the unity of God, had at any time a

[1] *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. i. By Rev. George Adam Smith, M.A. ("The Expositor's Bible." Edited by Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A.) Hodder and Stoughton.

second Divine Person in his hope, he should afterwards have remained so silent about Him." Nevertheless, it is quite impossible that the name *El gibbor* (Mighty God) as name of the Messiah in chap. ix. 5 can have any other meaning than in chap. x. 21. But are we compelled to believe that Isaiah had the same clearly defined idea of God which is expressed in the trinitarian creed? The name, Mighty God, denotes the indwelling of God in the second David, just as He was present in His Angel; and accordingly the prophet of the unity of God (but not in a Mohammadan sense) says in chap. x. 21 that Israel shall be converted to *God in Christ.*

But I have undertaken this review, not to blame, but to praise. I esteem it highly that this modern commentator is not ashamed to confess in his book (p. 136) that "we firmly hold that Jesus Christ was God." And that he should conclude his book with an ardent prayer to God (p. 452) is like a miracle in our times. The whole tone of his work shows that the word of prophecy is valued by him as the word of God. It is a grand practical commentary on the first half of the book of Isaiah, resting on accurate scientific inquiry. The author is not content with drawing from the prophetic sermons merely moral truisms; but he draws thence deep and sublime meditations on the duties and course of social and political life. His chief thought, in which we sympathise, is, that the aim of the history of man is his redemption, and by it the doing away also of the curse of conflict and distrust between man and his fellow creatures. The parts of the book which speak of the redemption of the natural world (pp. 188–194, 419) are among the most beautiful. The whole is written in a magnificent style, and interwoven with striking illustrations from ancient and modern literature.

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