

**THE WISDOM BOOKS (JOB,
PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES),
ALSO LAMENTATIONS AND
SONG OF SONGS, IN MODERN
SPEECH AND RHYTHMICAL FORM**

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The Wisdom Books (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes), also Lamentations and Song of Songs, in modern speech and rhythmical form by John Edgar McFadyen

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JOHN EDGAR MCFADYEN

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(JOB, PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES)

ALSO

LAMENTATIONS

AND

THE SONG OF SONGS

IN MODERN SPEECH

AND RHYTHMICAL FORM

BY

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WITH FOUNDATIONS," ETC.

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REV. JOHN NEIL, D.D.

MINISTER OF WESTMINSTER CHURCH, TORONTO ;
MODERATOR OF THE FORTY-THIRD GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN
CANADA (1917-18)

MY FRIEND AND FORMER PASTOR
THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED
WITH VERY CORDIAL REGARD

PREFACE

THE generous reception accorded to *The Psalms in Modern Speech and Rhythmical Form* leads me to hope that the translation of other parts of the Old Testament, executed along similar lines, may be not unwelcome. This volume and its predecessor together comprise all the specifically poetical books of the Old Testament—that is, all the poetry that lies outside the prophetic literature and the sporadic poems or fragments of poems embedded in the historical books. In this volume, as in the other, I have endeavoured to let the writers speak to us in the language of to-day, and also with something of the music which haunts their words in their original form. Perhaps no translation of a poem can ever do it adequate justice; but even approximate justice is impossible where cadence and rhythm and all that make it a poem are deliberately ignored. For while thought is as essential to poetry as to prose, these things are of its essence too.

Two impressions rise upon the mind from this conspectus of Hebrew poetry. One is that of its astonishing range and variety. Here, if anywhere, we come upon the humanism of the Bible; and here, if anywhere, Hebrew literature challenges comparison with the literatures of other peoples. These books breathe the spirit of the great world. The pessimism of Ecclesiastes is the voice of the weary souls of a hundred lands. The Book of Job, with its intense dramatic quality and its

Preface

fierce and resolute wrestlings with the problems that still baffle the minds of men ; the love-poetry of the Song of Songs, fragrant with the breath of spring, touched with a passionate appreciation of nature in her every mood, athrill from end to end with the love of man for maid and maid for man : these and other things in this collection are not of yesterday only, but for to-day and for ever.

The other impression is that of the distance that separates the Old Testament from the New. The challenges of Job, the utilitarianism of Proverbs, the scepticism of Ecclesiastes, the romanticism of the Song, the melancholy of Lamentations, are all equally inconceivable on the pages of the New Testament ; and they help us to feel very vividly the difference that Jesus made.

The notes in this volume are more numerous than in the other, because the text of these books is very frequently difficult to the point of desperation, and it is no part of an interpreter's business to create the impression of certainty, where the evidence is inadequate, ambiguous or baffling. But I have reduced the notes to the barest minimum, giving only such as justify the translation, explain allusions, or briefly elucidate obscurities : they are in no sense a substitute for exegesis. Commentaries will always be necessary, but too often they shadow the text instead of illumining it. The ideal commentary would be a perfect translation : for then, without intervening explanation, the ancient writer would make his own immediate impression, and speak home to the hearts of his readers as a man speaks to his friend.

JOHN E. MCFADYEN.

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