

**THE FIRST AND
SECOND
BOOKS OF ESDRAS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649004683

The first and second books of Esdras by Archibald Duff

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ARCHIBALD DUFF

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THE ✧ TEMPLE
✧ BIBLE ✧

*The frontispiece is reproduced from a photograph by
MR HOLLYER of SIR E. BURNE-JONES' picture, 'Uriel.'*

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THE FIRST &
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ESDRAS



EDITED BY
ARCHIBALD DUFF
D.D. L.L.D.

LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO.: MCMIII.
PHILADELPHIA: J. B. LIPPINCOTT CO.

Introduction

OF CANONICAL AND NON-CANONICAL BOOKS

(i.) He who takes up this booklet and sees it styled 'Apocryphal' will doubtless wonder why one dubs it with so sinister a name. For this says just about the same as 'furtive,' 'disguised,' not to say 'thievish' or 'sneaking.' But, alas, we have all been taught to feel a little qualm when we buy a Bible that contains the Apocrypha, lest we be entering among bad companions, or at least are encouraging booksellers in bringing too near to very precious pages some others that are verily profane.

Yet, let us pause to reflect what 'Canonical' means to us, and while our Creeds and our Greek warn us that 'the Canon is our Rule of Faith and Practice,' very few do look to canonical books to find either. Neither one sort of men among us nor another studies Leviticus for such ends, although, verily, it was meant as a stern rule of both Faith and Practice in its time; and even Romans has scarcely ever been counted as practically canonical in such sense. The words 'Canonical' and 'Apocryphal' have practically been always and purely esthetic distinctions.

(ii.) Serious it is, however, to find that by calling Esdras I. and II. uncanonical and apocryphal, we have accustomed ourselves to think little or lightly, or even not at all, of a great part

of the life of our Lord Jesus. Herein we have really hurt Him and our own souls. This present little volume hopes to heal these wounds somewhat.

For consider how a knowledge of Jesus and of His Words and Love and Death depends on a knowledge of the people who lived round about Him, and on a knowledge of the nationality He shared with them. To know Jesus depends on knowing the Jew, despised though he has been. Therein the Jew has been singularly like Jesus, writ large, for each has been, and is, a marvellous microcosm, ay, and macrocosm of real life; each has been 'rejected of men,' and each also 'sees his seed and prolongs his days.' That grows plain to the reader of Esdras I. and II.

For who shall know the Jewish nationality who does not feel the fight of the books of Maccabees? Who shall understand the Lord's yearning to convince or to condemn, to soothe or smite the Pharisee dissenter if he does not feel the wail of the Psalms of Solomon? Who shall see the justice of Jesus towards a Nicodemus if he have not sat with Jesus among the thinkers and writers and readers of 'Wisdom'? Or who shall sit beneath the Cross and drop hot tears on that pitiful spot realising that the Paschal Lamb of God feeds his soul, if he turns careless away from the hunger to eat the Passover that moves in every word of Esdras I.? As for Esdras II., read his agony and his faith, and understand why Jesus said, 'Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.'

(iii.) These two little pamphlets might well be called canonical and normative for him who would preach Christ. For to know them and their origin and their doctrine and their significance is to know the souls whom Jesus tried to heal and help, and to

whose hunger for a 'Christ' and for a 'Saviour' He cried, 'Come unto Me.' It was to their agony over inborn sin and to their longing for a new heaven and a new earth that Paul and John preached. Here in Esdras I. and II. is canon for a teacher of Christianity.

OF THE CHRISTIAN'S NEED FOR ESDRAS I. AND II.

(i.) Let us condescend to a few particulars. Of late a true and fine instinct has said that we to-day must know more of the 'Historical Christ.' We feel that we must see and touch the Jesus of actual events in Nazareth, and as He lived in that first century. We think that if we should see Him and come to Him we should find true rest, and more rest, for our souls. Good; come near and look.

We shall find Him, a young man, sitting often amid a dervish-like company. For twenty years one of such a company was surely Joseph, and Mary was never far from his side. You may almost hear one of these same dervishes reciting aloud paragraphs of Esdras I. Perhaps it is his own soul's writing. The booklet is the breath of Jesus's environment.

(ii) Recall that strong yet sacred sentence in John i. that makes us tremble still, and always makes us glad :—

'The Word became Flesh.'

The utterance of God in and through flesh, and men, and the human race goes on ever, as surely as God ever lives and must speak forever. But knowing all that, we still seek something more, something more pointedly defined. 'We would see Jesus!' And we would see how *He became*. We would know