

## **EZRA STUDIES**



# EZRA STUDIES

BY

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TO  
SIR HENRY H. HOWORTH  
D.C.L., F.R.S., K.C.I.E.  
PIONEER IN EZRA STUDIES  
THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED  
AS A TOKEN OF HIGH ESTEEM



## PREFACE

Thirteen years ago, in 1896, I published a pamphlet entitled *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah*, which appeared in Giessen as one of the Beihefte of the *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*. It presented in concise form certain conclusions which I had reached a year or two previously, in studying the so-called "Apocryphal Ezra," or First Esdras. At about the same time when I was carrying on my investigations appeared the articles of Sir Henry Howorth, in the *Academy* (see the references given on p. 16), the pamphlets of Hoonacker and Kusters,<sup>1</sup> and the more elaborate treatise of Eduard Meyer (see below). My own conclusions were formulated before I had seen any of these publications, and differed widely from each and all of them at almost every point. I found myself in agreement with Howorth, however, in his important contention that "I Esdras" represents the old Greek translation of Chron.-Ezr.-Neh.; and with Kusters in his argument (previously set forth, less completely, by Schrader and others) that the Biblical account of the return of exiles from Babylonia to Jerusalem in the time of Cyrus is untrustworthy.

The conclusions reached and stated in my pamphlet have been adopted, in general, by H. P. Smith in his *Old Testament History*, and by Kent in his *Student's Old Testament*, but in each case with little or no discussion of the questions involved. So far as I know, the booklet has never been reviewed or estimated in print, except in four brief German notices, to three of which I have occasion to refer in the present volume. It has been mentioned or quoted in a few places, generally in such a way as to show that it had not been read, but only looked at here and there. Siegfried, in the tolerably long list of monographs given in the preface to his *Commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah* (1901), does not include it. Driver, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, names it in his list of monographs, but otherwise takes no notice of it, even when discussing the questions with which it is chiefly concerned.

<sup>1</sup> Van Hoonacker, *Néhémie et Esdras* (1890); *Néhémie en l'an 20 d' Artaxerxes I et Esdras en l'an 7 d' Artaxerxes II* (1892); *Zorobabel et le second Temple* (1892); and Kusters, *Herstel van Israel in het Perzische Tijdvak* (1894), German trans. by Basedow in 1895.

## PREFACE

One or two scholars were sufficiently impressed by the book to express themselves with emphasis. Thus Klostermann, in the article "Esra und Nehemia" in Hauck's *Realencyclopädie*,<sup>2</sup> vol. v, p. 501, remarks: "Zuletzt ist zu erwähnen weniger der Kosten in der Ersetzung der Ueberlieferung durch übelberatene Phantasie überbietende Torrey, Composition and historical value of Ezra-Nehemia, Giessen 1896, als vielmehr Ed. Meyer, *Die Entstehung des Judentums*, u. s. w."<sup>2</sup> It is true that such a revolutionary treatise as mine could make no favorable impression on those who had not the time to examine it carefully, or on those who cannot be relied on to distinguish a sound argument from an unsound one. I must admit, also, that this first publication was in its plan not very well fitted to make converts. It presented the whole argument in condensed form, leaving many steps merely indicated in a few words, or covered by an assertion, where it was taken for granted that the reader could see for himself the facts and processes which had only been hinted at. But things which are self-evident to one who has himself worked through a large part of the material are often less plain to others. Moreover, an essay which flatly contradicts most of the fundamental tenets of modern Old Testament science in its field (and that a very important field) has every presumption against it, especially when it is presented by one who is unknown as an investigator in this sphere. It is only natural to decide, at the first glance, that the new conclusions cannot possibly be right, and need not be seriously considered. I believe, however, that the main arguments offered in my *Composition of Ezra-Nehemiah* are sure to be cogent for any one who has studied the material closely enough to be able to follow them through. The question of the general acceptance of the conclusions presented there and here is only a question of time.

The preceding briefer investigation seemed chiefly destructive. The author, whose principal tasks and interests are not in the Old

<sup>2</sup>Similarly, Ed. König, in the article "Ezra and Nehemiah" in the *Standard Bible Dictionary* (1909), p. 247, writes: "The trustworthiness of the documents and memoirs which have been used in the books of Ezra-Nehemiah has been demonstrated at length, especially by Eduard Meyer, *Die Entstehung des Judentums*, 1896, by whom the extreme views presented in C. C. Torrey's *Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah* are shown to be without critical foundation." Which of the two treatises was without critical foundation will be evident, I think, to those who read the successive chapters of the present volume; especially chapter vi.

## PREFACE

Testament field, had not then the opportunity to carry it out further, but hoped that some other investigator would see that what it involved was not the mere matter of a few passages, or even of a few incidents in the life of the Jewish people, but a thoroughgoing revision of the existing notions of the history of their national growth in the Persian period, their institutions, and their religious ideas. Whoever had proceeded thus far could hardly fail to perceive also how the later part of the Old Testament itself, and the story of the community in Jerusalem, had now for the first time become comprehensible and self-consistent. No such coadjutor appeared, however; hence at last the present work, every chapter of which is constructive.

This attempt to sketch the history of the Jews in the Persian period, culminating in the last chapter of the book, differs from all preceding ones in several fundamental particulars. It recognizes for the first time the extent of the Chronicler's independent handiwork. That he must be regarded as the sole author of the Ezra story, of all the book of Nehemiah after chapter 6, and of the Artaxerxes letter in Ezra 7, is here demonstrated conclusively. The nature and purpose of his work are also discovered and set forth. It is not the production of a Levitical historian of small ability and large bias (as it is usually regarded), but a great undertaking with a single very definite aim well executed, an elaborate and timely championing of the Jewish sacred institutions, especially in opposition to the Samaritans; very interesting and very important, but by no means to be used as a source for the history of Israel under Persian rule. Its author is, demonstrably, not a mere editor, but a writer possessed of a rich and vigorous imagination, which he here exercised to the full. Another important point of difference concerns the use made of the Chronicler's independent work, that is, all of his narrative which we are unable to control from other sources. It is here shown that every part of it either lies directly in the line of his main purpose or else bears other marks characteristic of his own creations; and it is accordingly left entirely out of account in portraying the course of the history. There was no return of exiles, no scribe-potentate Ezra, no law brought from Babylonia, no wholesale expulsion of Gentile wives and children. The book of Ezra-Nehemiah does not furnish us the date of the completion of the Pentateuch.

## PREFACE

But the theory here set forth marks a new departure not only in its treatment of the Chronicler, but still more in the point of view from which it estimates the later writings and writers of the Old Testament. It is customary to measure them, one and all, by the Chronicler's "Ezra," and their words are everywhere given an interpretation to correspond. It would be much fairer to take as the standard the Second Isaiah, the prophets and teachers of the restoration period, and those who wrote the best part of the Psalter, giving their utterances the broad interpretation which I have indicated, and to which they are fully entitled. These were philosophers and poets who in their conception of God and man surpassed all the other sages of the ancient world, one of their number, moreover, being incomparably the profoundest thinker and most eloquent writer in all the Old Testament; men busied with the greatest concerns of human life, not with the petty interests attributed to them by our commentators. The seed sown by their predecessors of the Hebrew monarchy did not die, nor did the plant which sprung from it dwindle and grow sickly, while the Jews remained in their land; it prospered mightily and brought forth abundantly. Jesus of Nazareth was the true child of his people, the best fruit of a sublime religious growth which in modern times has been sadly misunderstood. The story of the religion of Israel, from Deuteronomy down to the time of the Roman rule, is not a story of deterioration, but one of advance. Moreover, Judaism grew up in Judea, it was not transplanted from foreign soil. The fact of the Dispersion, as is here shown for the first time, exercised a tremendous influence all through the Persian period and thereafter, and its main effect on the Jews of the home-land was broadening and salutary. The messianic and universal interpretation of the Second Isaiah which is found in the Gospels is the only correct one. To put the whole matter in a few words: both the history of Israel after the fall of the kingdom, and the exegesis of the literature of that period, which have been written during the past generation have been built on a false foundation derived from the Chronicler's work, and need to be completely revised. To give the first sketch of such a historical reconstruction is the chief purpose of the present volume, and especially of the last chapter, which attempts to use impartially for that purpose all the trustworthy evidence which we possess.

## PREFACE

The contributions incidentally made to the science of Old Testament literature will probably also be found interesting: the proof of the fact that "First Esdras" is a rescued fragment of the old Greek translation of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah, not an apocryphal writing; the light thrown on some of the versions of these books, especially the demonstration of the true character of the much misunderstood and misused Lucianic recension, the proof that our "canonical" Greek translation is that of Theodotion, the publication for the first time of a part of the Hexaplar text of Nehemiah, and the dethronement of Codex B from the high place which it has so long held without right; the first presentation of the Story of the Three Youths in its original character and extent, with the demonstration that it was written in Aramaic; the recovery, for the "canonical" Old Testament, of the lost chapter which originally followed the first chapter of Ezra, and the attempted restoration of its Hebrew text, rendered back from the Greek; the manifold evidence given to show that among the Jews of Jerusalem in the Greek period it was commonly believed that Darius Hystaspis (supposed by them to be a Median king, and called "Darius the Mede") immediately preceded Cyrus; the conclusive proof that the Aramaic documents in Ezra all date from the Greek period; the restoration of the primitive form of the long-debated Ezra story, by the transposition of a single block of narrative belonging to a section which ever since the second century B.C. has been recognized as in some way out of place; and other less important matters. The author also hopes that some of the observations relating to text and versions may stimulate to a more serious pursuit of this branch of scientific investigation. If the historical and literary study of the Old Testament books is still in its childhood, the critical study of the Hebrew text may truly be said to be in its infancy. Textual emendation based on conjecture is usually mistaken, and that based on the evidence of versions is in most cases precarious at least; for the massoretic text is likely to be right even where it is contradicted by the other witnesses,<sup>3</sup> and the testimony of the latter

<sup>3</sup> In the vast majority of cases, the version only *seems* to contradict the Hebrew, but does not in reality. Regarding the relative excellence of the massoretic text, the writer may refer to his "Notes on the Aramaic Part of Daniel" (*Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. XV, 1909), in which some new evidence in support of our traditional Hebrew is offered.

## PREFACE

is very easily misunderstood. The writer is himself conscious of many shortcomings and foolish performances in this field, and does not suppose that the text-critical attempts made in the present volume are free from blunders. Great pains have been taken, however, to find out the character and history, not only of the texts which are being scrutinized, but also of those by the aid of which it is proposed to emend. Lack of acumen may be excused; the unpardonable sin is that of criticising without any careful attention to the materials of criticism. The way in which the best known and oftenest quoted of our modern commentators and editors hack away at a faultless Hebrew text, on the ground of Greek readings which they have not carefully examined, found in translations with whose character they do not concern themselves and of the nature and conditions of whose literary transmission they have hardly an idea, is nothing short of appalling. And yet this is what passes for "text-criticism" at the present day. A good many instances of the kind receive mention in the following pages, mostly in footnotes. The influence of this hasty and unscientific mode of procedure in dealing with the text has been working great harm in all the other branches of Old Testament study.

Most of the chapters of this book have already appeared in print, but in places where their circulation has of necessity been quite limited. They are not mere reprints, but in nearly every case have undergone revision. In the *American Journal of Semitic Languages*, published under the auspices of the University of Chicago, appeared chapters I (Oct., 1906), II (Jan., 1907), III (Apr., 1907), V (Oct., 1907), VI (Apr., 1908), VII (Jan., 1909 and Apr., 1909), and VIII (July, 1909). Chapter IV appeared in Vol. II of the *Studies in Memory of William Rainey Harper*, published at the same University early in 1908. Chapter IX appears here for the first time.

It is a pleasure to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the members of the Semitic and Old Testament Faculty of the University of Chicago and to the Manager of the University Press, for their encouragement and generous assistance, without which the volume would hardly have been written.

Attention is called to the Addenda and Corrigenda at the end of the book.

GRINDELWALD, SWITZERLAND  
September 1, 1909



## I

### PORTIONS OF FIRST ESDRAS AND NEHEMIAH IN THE SYRO-HEXAPLAR VERSION

In the years 616 and 617 A. D., Paul of Tellā made at Alexandria his Syriac translation of the old Greek version of the Old Testament. The Greek text which he translated was one of great historical importance, namely, that which constituted the "Septuagint" column in Origen's *Hexapla*. It is quite possible that the *Hexapla* itself was in existence at that time (presumably at Caesarea); but, however that may be, it is pretty certain that old manuscripts transcribed directly from the original—and some of them doubtless collated again with it, to insure the greatest possible accuracy—were to be had in Alexandria. One or more of these supposedly faithful copies formed the basis of Paul's labors. His rendering was a closely literal one, and its characteristics are now pretty well known.<sup>1</sup> Every part of the Greek is reproduced as exactly as possible, and in such a uniform and self-consistent manner as to render this translation very easily recognizable, wherever specimens of it are found.

The history of the manuscript transmission of this "Syro-Hexaplar" version is a comparatively brief one, as might have been expected. Although often copied, at least in part, it was not as generally or as carefully preserved as the Peshitto. A number of manuscripts containing longer or shorter portions of it are now known to be extant. Of these, the most important by far is the great Milan codex, published in fac-simile by Ceriani in 1874 (*Codex Syro-Hexaplaris*; published as Vol. VII of his *Monumenta sacra et profana*). This contains the translation of the second half of the Greek Bible; a twin codex containing the first half, and no doubt originally forming the first volume of this same manuscript, was in existence as late as the sixteenth century, when it was in the possession of Andreas Du Maes (Masius) of Amsterdam. As is well known, it has since then mysteriously disappeared. The Maes codex was a torso, to be sure, lacking

<sup>1</sup> See the account of this version in Swete's *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, pp. 112-14, and the literature cited on p. 116.



also that he—in agreement with the church tradition—believed it to have the right of priority over the form adopted in the Jewish canon. And Origen was certainly not ignorant of the fact, so widely ignored in modern times, that “I Esdras” is nothing else than a very respectable translation of a Hebrew-Aramaic version of the Ezra history.

The status of “Second Esdras” in the *Hexapla* and in Paul’s translation cannot be demonstrated absolutely, with the evidence now available, though a tolerable degree of certainty can be reached. No Hexaplar text of the canonical Ezra, whether Greek or Syriac, has been known; but see now below. The only such text of Nehemiah now recognized is the one which is published in the following pages. In the table of contents of the lost Maes manuscript stood simply “Ezra;”<sup>2</sup> according to recognized usage this might mean (1) the apocryphal Ezra, or (2) the canonical Ezra, or (3) both together, or (4) the combination of one or both of them with Nehemiah. It has already been shown that the apocryphal Ezra (I Esdras) stood in the Syro-Hexaplar translation, and the text printed below shows that Nehemiah was also included there. The “Ezra” of the Maes codex therefore undoubtedly stood for these two books, at least. It is unfortunate that Maes, in making his extracts for the *Peculium syrorum* (in the Antwerp Polyglot) and for the Amsterdam edition of the *Critici sacri*, should have left Chronicles and Ezra untouched, although excerpting systematically every other book contained in his manuscript!<sup>3</sup>

It is not to be doubted, finally, that the Syro-Hexaplar version—and therefore the Maes codex—contained the canonical Ezra, as the first part of “Second Esdras.” If the Greek version of our canonical book (and therefore, of course, of Chronicles and Nehemiah as well) is that of Theodotion, as there are good grounds for believing,<sup>4</sup> and as not a few eminent scholars, from Grotius (1644) onward, have contended, it nevertheless certainly was not apportioned to him, nor even in any way designated as his, in Origen’s work. No one can seriously doubt, in view of all

<sup>2</sup> See Rahlfs, in Lagarde’s *Bibliothecae syriacae quae ad philologiam sacram pertinent*, pp. 32<sup>ff</sup> sq.

<sup>3</sup> Rahlfs, *ibid.*, pp. 19 sq.

<sup>4</sup> I shall discuss this question in a subsequent chapter. See the very interesting and acute observations of Sir Henry Howorth, printed in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, May and November, 1901; June and November, 1902; and his collection of the external evidence.



I Esdr. viii, 88-92. Confession and repentance of the people, and the oath administered by Ezra.

ix, 1-10. The proclamation and the assembly.

46b-47. Ezra blesses God, and the people respond (from the account of the reading of the Law = Neh. viii, 6).

It will be seen from this table of contents that the "First Book of Ezra" here excerpted is identical, in arrangement and extent, with our First Esdras.

Then follow the extracts from the "Second Book of Ezra," all of which are taken from the book of Nehemiah. These are:

- Neh. i, 1-4a. Nehemiah hears of the distress of Jerusalem.  
 ii, 1-8. He is sent thither by Artaxerxes.  
 iv, 1-3. Sanballat and his allies conspire to attack Jerusalem.  
 10-16. The builders of the wall prepared for battle.  
 vi, 15-16. The completion of the wall.  
 vii, 73b-viii, 18. The reading of the Law.  
 ix, 1-3. Confession of the people.

This Esdras-Neh. catena I copied entire in the year 1898. I have not thought it worth while to print here the whole text of the I Esdras selections, however, since it differs but slightly from that already published, which is accessible in convenient form. I have accordingly collated it with the Lagarde text, and give the variant readings, as follows:

I Esdr. **ii**, 2 [ܐܡܪ] 3 ܐܡܪ 5 [ܐܡܪ] 6 [ܐܡܪ] 7 [ܐܡܪ] 8 [ܐܡܪ] 9 [ܐܡܪ] 10 [ܐܡܪ] 11 [ܐܡܪ] + a marginal note (original hand) 12 [ܐܡܪ] 13 [ܐܡܪ] 14 [ܐܡܪ] 15 om. 16 [ܐܡܪ] 17 [ܐܡܪ] 18 [ܐܡܪ] 19 [ܐܡܪ] 20 [ܐܡܪ] 21 [ܐܡܪ] 22 [ܐܡܪ] 23 [ܐܡܪ] 24 [ܐܡܪ] 25 [ܐܡܪ] 26 [ܐܡܪ] 27 [ܐܡܪ] 28 [ܐܡܪ] 29 [ܐܡܪ] 30 [ܐܡܪ] 31 [ܐܡܪ] 32 [ܐܡܪ] 33 [ܐܡܪ] 34 [ܐܡܪ] 35 [ܐܡܪ] 36 [ܐܡܪ] 37 [ܐܡܪ] 38 [ܐܡܪ] 39 [ܐܡܪ] 40 [ܐܡܪ] 41 [ܐܡܪ] 42 [ܐܡܪ] 43 [ܐܡܪ] 44 [ܐܡܪ] 45 [ܐܡܪ] 46 [ܐܡܪ] 47 [ܐܡܪ] 48 [ܐܡܪ] 49 [ܐܡܪ] 50 [ܐܡܪ] 51 [ܐܡܪ] 52 [ܐܡܪ] 53 [ܐܡܪ] 54 [ܐܡܪ] 55 [ܐܡܪ] 56 [ܐܡܪ] 57 [ܐܡܪ] 58 [ܐܡܪ] 59 [ܐܡܪ] 60 [ܐܡܪ] 61 [ܐܡܪ] 62 [ܐܡܪ] 63 [ܐܡܪ] 64 [ܐܡܪ] 65 [ܐܡܪ] 66 [ܐܡܪ] 67 [ܐܡܪ] 68 [ܐܡܪ] 69 [ܐܡܪ] 70 [ܐܡܪ] 71 [ܐܡܪ] 72 [ܐܡܪ] 73 [ܐܡܪ] 74 [ܐܡܪ] 75 [ܐܡܪ] 76 [ܐܡܪ] 77 [ܐܡܪ] 78 [ܐܡܪ] 79 [ܐܡܪ] 80 [ܐܡܪ] 81 [ܐܡܪ] 82 [ܐܡܪ] 83 [ܐܡܪ] 84 [ܐܡܪ] 85 [ܐܡܪ] 86 [ܐܡܪ] 87 [ܐܡܪ] 88 [ܐܡܪ] 89 [ܐܡܪ] 90 [ܐܡܪ] 91 [ܐܡܪ] 92 [ܐܡܪ] 93 [ܐܡܪ] 94 [ܐܡܪ] 95 [ܐܡܪ] 96 [ܐܡܪ] 97 [ܐܡܪ] 98 [ܐܡܪ] 99 [ܐܡܪ] 100 [ܐܡܪ]



is thus conflate, including both the Greek version selected by Origen and also the *plus* of the Hebrew. See further below, chap. iv, where some traces of the work of Aquila and Symmachus in Chron.-Ezr.-Neh. are also noticed.

The orthography and punctuation are, of course, those of the manuscript itself. The words and passages here overlined are written in red ink in the original. Notice the marks over the two words בְּשֵׁל and בְּשֵׁל, in Neh. ii, 3, indicating that they have been accidentally transposed.<sup>7</sup> At the end, after ix, 3, is the subscription: "Here end the extracts from the Ezra of the Seventy."

## FROM THE HEXAPLAR NEHEMIAH

(MS. Brit. Mus. Add. 12,168)

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<sup>7</sup>The same sign, apparently not heretofore understood, in *Josh. Styl.*, ed. Wright, 41, 10, note; where it appears that the corruption of the text had its origin in an accidental transposition.

<sup>8</sup> Evidently a mistake for  $\omega$ .









## II

### THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF "FIRST ESDRAS"

#### I. THE TWO RECENSIONS OF THE EZRA HISTORY

In the case of several of the books of the Old Testament, the Greek Bible gives us a text which differs widely from the traditional Hebrew or Aramaic. In Jeremiah there has been an extensive transposition of chapters, so that in the second half of the book the order in the Hebrew is altogether unlike that in the Greek. Which, if either, of the two represents the original order is still a matter of controversy. In Esther the Greek contains a number of rather long passages which are wanting in our Hebrew and are probably secondary, even if possibly translated from a Hebrew original. Moreover, the history of the tradition of the text is often a very complicated one. In several cases the Greek exists in two or more rival versions or recensions, as in the Books of Tobit and Judith. In the case of Daniel we have three different traditions. The oldest Greek version departs widely from our Hebrew-Aramaic text, not only in adding or subtracting brief passages here and there, but also in including the separate stories of Susanna and Bel and the Dragon. The later Greek Bible effected a sort of compromise by adopting Theodotion's translation of our massoretic Hebrew and yet retaining the added stories.

Now in the latter part of the Chronicler's history of Israel, in the section dealing with the return from the exile, the rebuilding of the temple, and the work of Ezra, almost exactly the same thing has happened as in the case of Daniel. The old Greek translation, with its transpositions, its one long interpolation, and its other minor peculiarities, was in strong disagreement with the Hebrew text which was preferred in Palestine in the second century A. D., and which soon came to hold the field as the only authoritative form of the narrative. Accordingly, a later translation, based on this massoretic Hebrew, was put into circulation in place of the older version, and soon supplanted it in every region where the Greek Bible was in use. There seems to be good reason to believe that this later translation was the work of Theodotion, whose version thus, in the case of the book Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah,

occupies a place in our modern Greek Old Testament precisely similar to that which it occupies in the case of Daniel. The discussion of this question will be reserved for another place. At all events, the old version was so effectually superseded that it very narrowly missed being lost altogether; in this fact, again, furnishing a close parallel to the history of the Daniel text.

There is to be noticed, at the outset, one important point in which the case of the rival recensions of the Ezra story differs from the other cases with which it has just been compared. In Jeremiah the transpositions, though extensive, were comparatively harmless. They brought about no serious contradiction or improbability. In Daniel and Esther the additions, though extensive, were not such as to interfere in the least with the principal narrative. They were simply joined on externally, and exercised no influence on their surroundings. But the two recensions of the narrative dealing with the restoration of the Jews and the work of Ezra could not stand thus peaceably side by side, for the one gives the lie to the other. As for the transpositions, they are effected in the middle of a connected history, with dates, successive kings, and a necessary order of events. It makes comparatively little difference whether Jer. 31 comes before or after Jer. 41, or even whether in I Kings, chap. 20 precedes or follows chap. 21; but it makes all the difference in the world whether the train of exiles described in Ezra, chap. 2, received permission to return from Cyrus or from Darius. And as for the one addition, the Story of the Three Youths, the proverbial bull in the china shop could not do more thorough and more vociferous damage. Every adjacent portion of the history is either stood on its head or else reduced to fragments.

Yet the tradition of the Greek church, with one voice, names this troublesome fragment "*First Esdras*," while the version which faithfully renders our massoretic text is only given second place. Josephus, as is well known, believed its version of the post-exilic history to be the correct one, and so, doubtless, did the most of his contemporaries, even in orthodox Jewish circles.

## II. PAST AND PRESENT THEORIES REGARDING THE "APOCRYPHAL" BOOK

"*First Esdras*," or "*Third Ezra*," or "*The Apocryphal Ezra*," or "*The Greek Ezra*," as it has been variously called, has had an interesting history. There is probably no one of all The Old

Testament writings which has been so inadequately studied, and which is so seriously misunderstood among Old Testament scholars at present. St. Jerome put the tremendous weight of his authority against it (in his Preface to Ezra and Nehemiah: *Nec quemquam moveat quod unus a nobis liber editus est, nec apocryphorum tertii et quarti somniis delectetur; quia et apud Hebraeos Esdrae Nehemiaeque sermones in unum volumen coarctantur, et quae non habentur apud illos, nec de viginti quatuor senibus sunt, procul abjicienda*), and his word was law, as usual; for the Latin church from the Middle Ages onward, and exercised a profound influence over the whole western world. The book was excluded from the Complutensian Polyglot (1514-17), and was not even admitted by the Council of Trent (1546);<sup>1</sup> in printed editions of the Vulgate it is given place in an appendix at the end of the Bible, after the New Testament. By modern scholars generally this "apocryphal book" is not regarded as a survival from the old Greek version of this portion of the Old Testament, nor even as the part of a recension which once included all of Ezra and Nehemiah; on the contrary, it is believed to be a later free compilation made with a "tendency." That is, just as the Chronicler, in his day, edited and expanded certain parts of the history of Israel into a book which should inculcate his own views, so (according to the generally accepted theory) a later and unknown writer selected that part of the history which "began" with Josiah's passover (as though this were a natural beginning!) and ended with the career of Ezra, and rewrote it, with certain significant changes and additions, according to his own purpose.

This view is altogether mistaken, but it is the only one which has any recognition at the present time. All of the modern textbooks of Introduction, commentaries, and encyclopaedia articles, whether English, German, or French, speak of the "author" of First Esdras, and of his probable "purpose" in making this com-

<sup>1</sup> It is singular that the belief should have had such wide currency, at this time, that First Esdras did not exist in Greek. Thus Lupton, in his Introduction to First Esdras (*Speaker's Commentary*), p. 5, quotes the remark prefixed to the Latin version of the book in the noted Latin Bible edited and published by Stephanus at Paris in 1557: "*Hujus libri ne Graecum quidem codicem, nedum Hebraeum nemini (quod sciam) videre contigit.*" The form of the quotation which I give is that of the original, of which I have a copy. Lupton is mistaken, however, in supposing that this note is to be attributed to the scholar Vatablus (whose name is used in an unwarranted way by the editor of this Bible); nor can it have come from Claudius Badwell, who did indeed prepare the translation of the Apocrypha for this Bible (see LeLong-Masch, *Bibl. Sacra*, II, p. 480), but only of the books which stood in the Complutensian Polyglot. The remark is to be attributed to Stephanus himself or to one of his unnamed helpers.

pilation. The question is even seriously discussed whether this "author" (1) made up his book from our canonical Greek version of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah; or (2) made use of an independent Greek version; or (3) made his own translation from the Hebrew-Aramaic original. That he made his "compilation" in Greek is taken for granted, since it is the general belief that the interpolated Story of the Three Youths, as we have it, is not a translation from a Semitic original. It is a fact that speaks volumes for the general neglect of the book, that Schürer in both the first and second editions of his *Geschichte* maintained the view that First Esdras was compiled from our canonical Greek Old Testament—though any well-equipped university student could demonstrate the contrary to a certainty by an afternoon's work on any chapter in the book.

To illustrate a little further the current view, and the treatment now given to this "apocryphon" by Old Testament scholars: The DeWette-Schrader *Einleitung* (8th ed., 1869, p. 565) bravely confessed inability to recognize the purpose of the "author" of First Esdras in compiling it, remarking: "Ein Zweck dieser characterlosen Compilation lässt sich nicht entdecken;" but the great majority are content to repeat over, each from his fellow, Bertholdt's naïve hypothesis that the writer intended to provide a history of the temple from the latter part of the regal period down to the time when the cultus had been restored. Kusters, in his *Wiederherstellung Israels in der persischen Periode* (German trans. by Basedow, pp. 124–26), unfolded a much more elaborate theory—with even less support from the document itself. Of course, the abrupt ending of the "book" (in the middle of a sentence!) has been generally noticed, though few have made any attempt to explain it. Ewald's conjecture, that the work was left unfinished by "its author," is frequently repeated, e. g., by Strack, *Einleitung*<sup>4</sup>, p. 152 ("Das Buch, welches von seinem Verfasser nicht vollendet worden zu sein scheint," etc.), and by Guthe, in Kautzsch's *Apokryphen des A. T.*, p. 2. In most textbooks of Introduction to the Old Testament First Esdras is ignored—as though it stood in no close relation to the Old Testament!—and this, too, even by those who profess to believe that it represents a Hebrew-Aramaic text differing in many respects from our massoretic recension. In Cornill's *Einleitung*<sup>5</sup>, for example, it receives not a syllable of mention. In Driver's

*Introduction* it is given a brief note at the end of the chapter on Ezra and Nehemiah. By commentators the two "books," Ezra and First Esdras, are usually kept entirely separate. If the commentaries on Chronicles and on Ezra-Nehemiah mention First Esdras at all, it is only as a *curiosum*. Bertholet, in his commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah (in Marti's *Kurzer Hand-Commentar*), does, indeed, devote a section to the Greek Ezra in his introduction, pp. xvi, xvii, but his statements regarding it are notably confused and ill-digested, while in the commentary itself he makes no serious attempt to use it. In general, his attitude toward the apocryphon is characteristic of a certain irresponsible method of dealing with sources which is far too prevalent in modern Old Testament criticism: any comparison of the Greek Esdras text, in occasional difficult passages, is a work of supererogation, of which the commentator may boast; the idea that he is in duty bound to consult it *all the time*, and to make a really critical study of it does not suggest itself.

The commentaries on First Esdras, again, have not brought us far toward an understanding of its origin and true character; as might be expected from the fact that all the commentators have believed the book to be simply a late and "historically worthless" compilation. The parallel portions of the canonical books are only occasionally consulted, and then in the most perfunctory way. In the *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zu den Apokryphen des A. T.*, by Fritzsche-Grimm—the one thoroughgoing and scholarly commentary on the Old Testament Apocrypha, but now long outgrown—the treatment of First Esdras (by Fritzsche) is below the level of the rest; chiefly, no doubt, for the reason already given. No commentary on the book that has appeared since that date (1851) is worthy of serious attention. Lupton, in Wace's *Speaker's Commentary* (1888), is very superficial; and both he and Zöckler (1891) are equal to the feat of subjecting the book to a fresh study without even finding out that it offers us a separate, extra-canonical translation from the Semitic! In the critical examination of text and versions next to nothing has been done, though this is a most promising field for investigation. The statements as to these things which now and then appear are for the most part either false or inaccurate. Fritzsche (*Comm.*, p. 9) asserted that the best text of First Esdras is to be found in the uncial B and the cursives 52 and 55, and this most misleading

statement has been industriously copied by his successors, no one taking the trouble to test the matter. In the second edition of Cornill's *Einleitung*, p. 268, one could even read that Jerome(!) was the author of the Vulgate version of our apocryphon. Nestle (*Marginalien und Materialien*, p. 29, n. 2) says that "the Lucian recension" (meaning the text printed in Lagarde's *Librorum vet. test. canonicorum pars prior graece*) furnished the basis of the Syriac translation; a theory which would seem plausible for the first nine verses of the first chapter, but from that point on is seen to be absolutely false. There has not even been made a careful comparison of the two Greek versions, the canonical and the apocryphal, as they stand in our printed Greek Bibles, to say nothing of inquiries as to their nature, history, and mutual relations. Even for the restoration of the massoretic Hebrew text of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah, no critical use of even the current Greek text of First Esdras has ever been made. A few (most recently Guthe, in the *Polychrome Bible*) have included "The Greek Ezra" in their apparatus in a more or less haphazard and superficial way, but such attempts as these can have no considerable value.

The one scholar who in recent times has defended the view that First Esdras represents a Greek translation which is older than the one contained in the corresponding books of our canonical Greek Bible is Sir Henry Howorth, who has argued the case more than once,<sup>2</sup> with much learning and acumen. This view had been held, in one form or another, by not a few scholars; among them Grotius, in his annotations, 1644; Whiston, *Essay towards Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament*, 1722; Pohlmann, "Ueber das Ansehen des apokr. iii. Buchs Esras," *Tübing. theol. Quartalschrift*, 1859, pp. 257-75; Ewald, *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, IV, 1864, p. 166; and Lagarde, *Psalterium Hieronymi*, 1874, p. 162, note. No one of these scholars, however, set forth the view so fully and vigorously as Howorth, nor do they seem to have appreciated, as he has, the great importance of this conclusion. Nevertheless, the proof which Howorth has been able to bring forward is by no means conclusive; the skeptic would not

<sup>2</sup>In the *Academy*, 1893, January 7 and 21, February 4 and 25, April 15, June 17, July 22; in the *Transactions* of the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists at London, Vol. II (1893), pp. 69-85; and (most fully, and including the substance of all the previous articles) in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, May, 1901, pp. 147-59, November, 1901, pp. 305-30, June, 1902, pp. 147-72, and November, 1902, pp. 332-56.



be compelled by it. He does, indeed, show with a formidable array of evidence that the canonical recension of Chron.-Ezr.-Neh. *might well be* much later than the First Esdras recension, but he fails to show that it *is* in fact later. His assumption (*Proceedings Soc. Bib. Arch.*, May, 1901, p. 151), that any Greek translation which closely follows the text of our present Hebrew Bible must be derived from Aquila, Symmachus, or Theodotion, will hardly be accepted by those who have carefully studied the Greek Old Testament. He assumes, in like manner, that the canonical Greek version of Chron.-Ezr.-Neh. is the work of Theodotion—as Grotius, Whiston, and Pöhlmann had conjectured before him—but without being able to bring forward any shred of evidence in favor of this opinion, beyond the fact that Theodotion's version of Daniel has found a place in our Greek Bible. The one prime necessity—if the current beliefs as to the Ezra books are to be superseded—is a well-grounded and plausible theory of the origin and mutual relations of the two recensions now existing. Such a theory has never been formulated,<sup>3</sup> and Howorth has failed to provide one. His main conclusions, touching these matters, are the following: (1) First Esdras gives us the original form of this history; that is, (a) the *order* in our apocryphon (Ezr. 4: 7-24 following Ezr. 1: 11, and Neh. 7: 73—8: 12 following Ezr. 10: 44) is the primary and correct one; and (b) the Story of the Three Youths formed a part of the history as it was compiled by its author. (Howorth makes no attempt to prove that our Greek text of the story is a translation from the Semitic, though this proof—which has never been supplied—is essential to his theory.) (2) Origen, or perhaps "his editors," made our First Esdras by cutting a piece out of the middle of the "Septuagint"<sup>4</sup> version of Chron.-Ezr.-Neh., and then editing and correcting it to some extent. (3) Our canonical Ezra-Nehemiah is the result of a thoroughgoing and arbitrary re-arrangement of the text, undertaken by the Jewish rabbis, who (a) knew nothing of Darius (II) Nothus, and (b) wished to identify Zerubbabel

<sup>3</sup> The theory which is set forth in the following pages was presented in full at the meeting of the American Oriental Society at Andover, Mass., in April, 1896, but was not printed.

<sup>4</sup> I suppose that Howorth means by "the Septuagint" that Greek translation of Chron.-Ezr.-Neh. which was the first to gain wide currency. I do not understand him to imply the belief that all—or even most—of the books of the Old Testament were translated at the same time, or by the same persons, or in any official or uniform way. Would it not be better, in the interest of clearness and accuracy, to cease altogether from using the term "Septuagint" in scientific treatises?

with Sanabassar, and (c) had various prejudices which led them to make deliberate and extensive alterations in the story of Nehemiah. These conclusions each and all present such serious difficulties that, in my opinion, even the view now generally held, with all its absurdities, would be likely to maintain its ground in the face of them.

### III. THE NATURE OF FIRST ESDRAS

The main facts regarding the true character of our "apocryphal" Ezra book may be stated briefly as follows: *It is simply a piece taken without change out of the middle of a faithful Greek translation of the Chronicler's History of Israel in the form which was generally recognized as authentic in the last century B. C. This was not, however, the original form of the History, but one which had undergone several important changes.*

As is well known, the apocryphal book and the canonical book are, in the main, merely duplicate versions. But probably many fail to realize how close the duplication is. First Esdras contains a long passage, including chaps. 3, 4, and the first six verses of chap. 5, which is not found in the canonical recension. Aside from this, however, its material contents are exactly those of the corresponding parts of Ezra-Nehemiah. Beginning with the last two chapters of II Chronicles, it then includes the whole of the book of Ezra, and continues with a portion of the Ezra narrative<sup>5</sup> which is now in our book of Nehemiah, namely, Neh. 8:1-12 and the beginning of the first clause of verse 13, where the fragment ends. In every part of all this history the two recensions generally agree with each other sentence for sentence and clause for clause. In the cases where they fail to agree the differences are due to the usual accidents of manuscript transmission, or to mistakes made by the one or the other translator. The universally accepted view, that First Esdras is a free translation, or a free working-over ("freie Bearbeitung") of the material, is mistaken. The translation is close, and the text as a whole has not been "edited," nor freely handled.

In investigating First Esdras, then, the all-important point of approach is the Story of the Three Youths, which at present stands only in this recension. We need a satisfactory theory of its origin

<sup>5</sup>As I have shown elsewhere, the passage Neh. 7:70-8:18 originally formed a part of the Chronicler's story of Ezra (following Ezra 8), and was accidentally transposed to the place where it now stands. See my *Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah*, pp. 29-34. I shall return to this subject later.

and history, and especially to know who incorporated it in this narrative, whether the Chronicler or some later hand. And this necessarily involves the further question, whether the original language of this episode—or, rather, the language in which it stood at the time when it was incorporated—was Semitic or Greek. If it never existed in Semitic form, then it certainly never was inserted by the Chronicler in his own book, nor could it ever have formed a part of any Semitic recension of these narratives of the Jewish exiles. On the other hand, if it can plausibly be maintained that the Greek text of the story, as we have it, is a translation from the Hebrew or Aramaic, then we have at hand the solution of some of the chief problems in this literary tangle.

It is fortunately possible to decide at once the question as to the Chronicler, while holding the question of the original language still in abeyance. The form of this history contained in I Esdr., chaps. 2–5, cannot possibly have been the form given it by its author. So scholars of all times have agreed, with hardly a dissenting voice, and for reasons that are conclusive. In the first place, the Artaxerxes correspondence, 2:15–25 (= Ezra 4:6–24), is palpably misplaced here. It constitutes, to be sure, a very good introduction to the Story of the Three Youths, which immediately follows, but forms in no sense the continuation of 2:1–14, where the narrative is obviously cut short in the middle. Again, the Story of the Youths is itself a disturbing element, and the disturbance this time is far more serious. The presence of this story inevitably turns the whole history upside down, bringing in contradictions and absurdities from which there is no escape. To mention only a single point: The events narrated in 5:46–70 [47–73] (notice verses 53 [55], 68 [71], and 70 [73]!) *are events of the reign of Cyrus*, even in this recension! There is no way of making them anything else, or of supposing that they were ever written in any other way. It is not easy to believe that any compiler of a serious history could make such an outrageous blunder as this. What is more, the episode of the Youths cannot be made to fit in anywhere else. Whoever tests the matter will speedily find that there is no point, before, in, or after Ezra 1–6, at which this episode is a possibility; at that, too, even if the name of the king be changed from “Darius” to some other name. Removed to any other place, it causes even greater disturbance than it makes at present.

Obviously, the story was not written for any such context as this; and it is equally obvious that the writer of this context had no thought of fitting it to contain the episode. The conclusion is certain, that the Story of the Three Youths is an interpolation, not a part of the history as it was originally composed. In view of the manifest traces of the Chronicler's hand in the extra-canonical verses just following the episode and serving to connect it with the canonical narrative (see below), the question might seem for a moment to be a legitimate one, whether the Chronicler himself may not have made the insertion, as an after-thought. But no one who gives the matter serious consideration will continue to entertain this hypothesis. The Chronicler is a writer of very considerable skill, who composed this history with a definite purpose, of which he never lost sight. He is most methodical in his literary habits, and we know him to be one who incorporated documentary sources in the way best suited to his own ends. He had himself carefully composed this most important narrative of the return (so essential to his pet theory!), writing it out, with vivid detail, in his own words (as scholars agree). It is not reasonable to suppose that he could have undone his own work and have given the lie to his own history in so stupid a manner, by squeezing in this unnecessary episode in an impossible place.<sup>6</sup> It was not by the Chronicler, then, but by a later hand, that the story was interpolated.

The important question now arises, whether the interpolation was made in the original Hebrew-Aramaic text of the history, or in the Greek translation. It is characteristic of the general neglect which First Esdras has suffered, that no one has recently undertaken to determine, by examining the evidence, in what language the Story of the Three Youths was originally written. It is generally taken for granted that the language was Greek, and one scholar after another asserts this with confidence. Fritzsche (*Handbuch*, p. 6) wrote: "Ein hebräisches Original lag nicht zu Grunde, die Sprache verräth sich durchaus als ursprünglich hellenistisch; nur der Schluss, 5:1-6, macht eine Ausnahme, und von diesem besitzen wir das Original nicht mehr." This

<sup>6</sup> If the story had been generally believed in his day, he would have known it when he composed his history. If it was not generally believed, he was under no necessity of inserting it. From our knowledge of the Chronicler, we should not expect the story to interest him especially. And finally, if he had wished to insert it in his completed book, he might easily have prepared a suitable place for it.

opinion has been adopted, as usual, by Fritzsche's successors; thus Schürer, Reuss, König, Zöckler, Lupton, Cornill ("ohne Zweifel griechisch geschrieben"), Guthe ("sicher griechisch"), Bertholet, and many others. Most of these, it should be noted, make an exception of the passage 5:1-6, which (like Fritzsche) they believe to have been translated from a Hebrew original. Howorth asserts that the story was written in a "Semitic" language (of course, his theory of the book requires this), but does not attempt to go farther. Ball, in his notes in *The Variorum Apocrypha* (1892), suggested one or two hebraisms in these chapters, but did not thereby make a Semitic original seem probable. Renan (*Hist. du peuple d'Israel*, IV, p. 180, note) said, in speaking of I Esdr., chaps. 3 and 4: "The original was certainly Hebrew."

As for the Greek in which I Esdr. 3:1-5:6 now stands, those who believe it to be more idiomatic than the ordinary "translation Greek" of the Old Testament are mistaken. It stands, in this regard, on exactly the same plane as the old Greek version of Daniel, or that of the books of the Kings, or of First Maccabees. From the beginning to the end, it shows an unbroken succession of Semitic idioms, reproduced with a faithfulness which is often very clumsy, and in several cases giving plain evidence of mis-translation. It is true that the subject-matter (namely, in the section 3:18-4:32) is unlike anything else in the Old Testament; and it is this fact, unquestionably, which misled Fritzsche into making his extraordinary remark about the language of the document. But if any student of the Greek Bible will look closely at the idiom of these two chapters, he will find it precisely the same which elsewhere results from a close rendering of a Hebrew or Aramaic original. Again, though as regards subject-matter and mode of treatment the section just named happens to stand alone in our Old Testament literature, it is by no means true that it has a "Hellenistic" sound. All those who are familiar with Semitic modes of thought and literary forms will recognize here a characteristic Semitic product.

The fact must not be overlooked, that the first six verses of chap. 5 are almost universally pronounced a translation from a Semitic original, as above noted. The fact usually *is* overlooked. Those who make the exception straightway forget it, and certainly never attempt to explain it. On what theory can this translated