

# THE BOOK OF THE MONTH

## EZRA AND NEHEMIAH<sup>1</sup>

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Everyone who takes up a commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah will wish to know what is done with the Ezra Memorabilia. Are they accepted as authentic and is Ezra to be placed before or after Nehemiah? The question of the authenticity of the Ezra Memorabilia has been rendered acute principally through the work of Professor Torrey of Yale in his *Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah* (1896) and especially in his *Ezra Studies* (1910). The latter is undoubtedly one of the most brilliant and original works upon this period in existence. In these books Professor Torrey resolves the Ezra Memorabilia into the "Chronicler's Masterpiece" and holds that it is a pure romance without any historical truth back of it. Professor Torrey has thus far not been able to carry the majority of scholars with him in this particular part of his construction, nor has he convinced Professor Batten. Our latest commentator accepts the substantial genuineness of the Memorabilia though he admits considerable editing by the Chronicler, and rejects Neh., chaps. 9 and 10, from the Memorabilia.

The present reviewer confesses that his sympathies are still with the position advocated by Professor Batten and feels that the criticisms of Professor Torrey's views (pp. 16-18, 46, 51) are for the most part pertinent. The attempt to answer Professor Torrey's argument drawn from the silence of Ben Sira (p. 51) is, however, ineffective.

If the genuineness of the Memorabilia is accepted, then the question arises whether Ezra precedes Nehemiah, as the Chronicler

obviously holds, or follows him. Since Koster's brilliant discussion of this question and decision in favor of the priority of Nehemiah's return, the current of criticism has set very decidedly in favor of this view. Here Professor Batten runs with the tide, and indeed it seems almost irresistible. But I would abstain from supporting this view by an appeal to Neh. 12:26 (p. 29); this is to push the letter of the passage beyond what is warrantable. Batten follows Bertholet in disconnecting Neh., chap. 10, from Neh., chaps. 8 and 9, and in associating it with Neh., chap. 13; but, unlike Bertholet, he denies that Neh., chap. 10, was once a part of the Memorabilia of Nehemiah. Accordingly Neh., chap. 10, has nothing to do with the so-called canonization of the Law. Professor Batten does not point out as distinctly as he should the very important bearing this has upon the orthodox critical theory of the significance of Neh., chaps. 8-10, which sees in these chapters the introduction either of the whole Law or at least of P in the form of a canon. Bertholet argued that chap. 10, which, according to him, refers only to the special matters mentioned in chap. 13, had taken the place of a section in which the congregation had adopted the *whole* Law and which once stood after chap. 9. This is a very unlikely supposition. Is it probable that a promise to assume certain incidental obligations would have taken the place of the canonization of the Law as a whole? When once chap. 10 is dislodged from its present connection and combined with chap. 13, a critical movement has begun which will

<sup>1</sup> *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. By Loring W. Batten, New York: Scribner, 1913. Pp. xv+384. \$3.00 net.

inevitably qualify very vitally the interpretation of Neh., chaps. 8-10, as a canonization of the Law. Hints in the same direction are found in Professor Batten's elimination of Ezra 7:21-24 (p. 308) with the conclusion that Ezra's connection with the Law is only "slight and incidental." But the bearing of all this on the interpretation of Neh., chaps. 8-10, as the introduction of the Priest's Code is not brought out as clearly as should be done. (Contrast the bold positions of Professor Torrey, based, to be sure, on different premises, *Ezra Studies*, pp. 196 and 262, note 14, in which not only the current critical interpretation of Neh., chaps. 8-10, is denied, but even the existence of a Priest's Code as such is called in question.)

But the reader will probably turn with even greater curiosity to the solution of the problems connected with Ezra, chaps. 1-6, than to the solution of the Ezra-Memorabilia problems. Are the Aramaic documents in Ezra, chaps. 4-6, accepted? Is a return under Cyrus accepted? What is done with Ezra, chap. 2? It is in this part of his commentary that Professor Batten's results show, as he tells us (p. 32), the greatest divergence from the conclusions of other students.

There has been an increasing tendency in recent years to attempt to solve the intricate problems of the first chapters of Ezra by means of Esdras (compare especially the work of Sir Henry Howorth and Professor Torrey again). Professor Batten takes advantage of this, with the result that he brings down the section Ezra 3:1-4:3 (4:4-6, be it observed, is separated from vss. 1-3) to the time of Darius and connects it with the arrival of Zerubbabel from Babylon in 520. Thus Ezra 3:1-4:3, a Hebrew document, becomes a duplicate of Ezra, chaps. 5 and 6, an Aramaic document. By an emendation at 3:3, according to which the surrounding peoples

are represented as being in friendly relations with the Jews at the time of the erection of the altar, and by the separation of 4:4-6 from the preceding verses, Professor Batten is able to eliminate all opposition to the temple building in the time of Darius. There was no interruption in it after it once commenced. But in the Aramaic narrative, chaps. 5 and 6, a different course of events is implied. Therefore a choice must be made between chap. 3 and chaps. 5 and 6. Professor Batten prefers the emended chap. 3 (p. 20). To the present writer this seems to be very distinctly a mistake in method, a mistake which reaches its climax when a return of Sheshbazzar is accepted in the time of Cyrus on the basis of the Hebrew document in chap. 1, while the Aramaic statement at 5:16 is rejected as worthless!

If the arguments which Professor Batten employs (pp. 38-40) to defend his theories of chap. 3 are examined, they are found to be open to grave suspicion. If I understand him, they are three in number: (1) Josephus, *Antiq.*, XI, iv, 1 and 3; (2) Esdras, chaps. 4 and 5; and (3) the emended text of Ezra 3:3. But when Professor Batten relies upon Josephus he is relying upon a broken reed. The passages cited from that writer are classic examples of harmonizing glosses of which there are many more in their immediate vicinity. Hence they cannot be used as historical evidence. Esdras, chaps. 4 and 5, undoubtedly furnishes a very interesting problem but 5:71 ff. presents a serious obstacle to the use of Esdras as evidence for the return of Zerubbabel in 520 if Esdras, chap. 5, is allowed to stand as it is. Batten's remarks on these verses (pp. 9, 116) carry no conviction. Finally the proposed emendation of Ezra 3:3, which is really a cornerstone of Batten's general historical construction of this period, is most dubious. It is based on what Batten himself admits to be, in its present form, an impossible read-

ing of LXX B. Of course this in itself is no sufficient objection, for impossible readings often hide textual truths of great value. But I cannot feel that Professor Batten has elicited a permissible emendation from this reading, for it is based on the supposition that *κατωρδωδηςαν ἐπί* can mean "favorably disposed toward" the altar. This view is in turn based on the use of the verb as the equivalent of *יָשַׁר* at Mic. 7:2; Ps. 119:128; Prov. 2:7, 9, 11. In none of these passages is the meaning "favorably disposed toward" permissible. The nearest seeming approach toward this meaning is at Ps. 119:128, but even there it cannot be allowed. Further, *יָשַׁר* itself nowhere in the Old Testament has such a meaning, not even at II Kings 10:15, the only passage where the word occurs which might conceivably be brought into comparison.

I will not deny that certain parts of chap. 3 may really describe events in 520, but I question the arguments by which

Professor Batten seeks to support his view of this very important chapter.

It is singular that Professor Batten apparently has not availed himself of the exceedingly instructive monograph of Rothstein, *Juden und Samaritaner* (1908), in his interpretation of this chapter. At certain points he would find his views corroborated, e.g., in the emendation of "second year" to "sixth year" at 3:8, though Rothstein's historical deductions from chaps. 3 and 4 are very different from Batten's.

With regard to chap. 2, Professor Batten holds that "it may be an authentic census of Israel in the latter part of the Persian period" (p. 73). It perhaps ought to be said that the treatment of the lists in Ezra and Nehemiah is not the most successful part of Professor Batten's work. The deeper problems of these lists are scarcely touched.

The commentary is written in a more sprightly and engaging style than many of the commentaries in the same series.

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## BOOK NOTICES

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### **Germany and Its Evolution in Modern Times.**

By Henri Lichtenberger. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1913. Pp. xxv+440. \$2.50.

Religious, moral, and spiritual interests are in the foreground of this excellent study. The book traces the transformation of modern Germany from a feudalistic into a capitalistic society, following out the development along the lines of economics, politics, religion, philosophy, and art. The material facts constitute the background against which the author paints a vivid picture of modern spiritual Germany. Although the book treats of many things beside religion, its general atmosphere will be very attractive to students of religion. The author holds that while scientific reason and organization have displayed the most extraordinary powers among this people, the religious spirit has not undergone any diminution among them. Modern Germany does not, as a rule, maintain

the necessity of antagonism between religion and science, but, on the contrary, endeavors passionately to reconcile them.

From the moment that the French Revolution spread its terror throughout Europe, the reaction against it turned logically to the advantage of the opposite principle—the papacy; and this to the detriment of "reformed" Catholicism and of Protestantism, both of which were hated by the ultra-conservatives. Conversions from Protestantism to Catholicism became frequent. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Prussian kingdom was forced to capitulate to the demands of the pope.

To offset the resurgence of Romanism, the new German empire was brought into being; and this political structure is dominated by Protestant influence. The *Kulturkampf* was the struggle between the papacy and the empire, in which the secular power held its own and stemmed the tide flowing toward Rome. But