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Jerusalem Delivered: An English Prose Version



Synopsis

Ralph Nash, in his approach to *Gerusalemme Liberata*, concluded that a close, fluent translation in prose of Tasso's epic would offer the most successful rendering of this important chivalric romance. In addition to conveying the imagery more accurately, a prose translation avoids deforming or modifying the text by forcing it into a poetic format. As a result, Nash has given the general reader and the student a fluent, accurate English version of Tasso's great narrative of the first crusade. Nash's introduction aids the reader in understanding the place of the poem in the corpus of Renaissance literature. Annotations and a glossary clarify the numerous historical, geographical, and mythological references.

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Customer Reviews

Anthony Esolen does it again to bring us a powerfully translated and edited poem, originally in Latin, now for the modern reader. This is a dark and brooding poem that was written by Torquato Tasso when he was slowly going mad. His fixation was on the subject of the first Crusade to free Jerusalem from the Moslems, which was led by Godfrey of Bouillon and the peers of France. This was a subject of Tasso's interest since he was an 18 year old boy, who published a poem about Rinaldo, one of the key figures in the current story. Tasso eventually extensively revised "Gerusalemme liberata", removing its amorous portions to publish "Gerusalemme conquistada" at age 49. The darkness of the original poem is tempered by the love stories, but it remains a violent story with a concentration on the horrors of war and of love also. For example, in the middle of the

story of an intense battle, Soliman, the powerful Turkish sultan, sees his young page cut down: "Sees how the trembling eyes so gracefully shut, and the neck falls limp, as if in sleep; so sweet the whiteness of his face, so sweet the pity his dying semblance breathes, that deep in his then-stony heart something grew soft and the spring burst through his anger: he must weep. You, Soliman weeping...who stood by while your realm was destroyed, and your eyes dry. But when he sees the enemy's sword still slick and steaming with the blood of the young lad, pity gives way to anger boiling quick and all the tears within his heart are dead"(Canto 9, #86-87). The contrast of darkness and jumping-out vividness in the story cause Esolen to refer to Tasso as a Caravaggio of poetry, an apt comparison.

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