

Sennacherib's Second Expedition to the West, and the Date of his Siege of Jerusalem.

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III.

THE Scripture account of Sennacherib's operations in the West consists of three parts: *A* = 2 K 18¹³⁻¹⁶; *B* = 2 K 18¹⁷⁻¹⁹; and *C* = 2 K 19¹⁰⁻³⁷. *A* relates how, in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib went up against Judah, and captured most of its cities, whereupon Hezekiah sought safety in paying tribute, and Jerusalem thus remained unmolested by the enemy. Thanks to Assyrian records, it can be determined that the fourteenth year of Hezekiah coincides with the year 701 B.C. *A* thus describes the events of the third campaign of Sennacherib (following the arrangement of the Taylor cylinder); but this, while it has a record of terrible devastation of the lowland of Judah, knows nothing of a siege of Jerusalem, at most we hear only of measures being taken with a view to such. Sennacherib himself does not appear before Jerusalem at all, it is in Lachish that he receives the homage of Hezekiah. The narrative we have called *B* was already stylistically complete in itself when it was incorporated in 2 Kings, and yet the additions are recognizable in the present text. Hence, from the standpoint of historical research, *B* must be regarded as of less account. But even this section has nothing to say either about a siege of Jerusalem or about help from Egypt. *C* is in its present form also of later origin, and, moreover, comes from quite a different region. According to it, Sennacherib learns somewhere in S. Palestine that king Tirhakah of Kush is moving against him with an army. Surprised by this intelligence, he at once despatches messengers to Hezekiah with a demand for the surrender of Jerusalem. Hezekiah, however, receives from the mouth of Isaiah the encouraging assurance of God that Jerusalem shall not fall into the hands of the Assyrian. That very night the Assyrian camp is visited by a sudden pestilence which sweeps off 185,000 men, and Sennacherib sees himself compelled to return to Assyria, where some time afterwards he is murdered by two of his sons.

Let us examine this narrative *C* more closely. The principal incidents it describes are the action of the Egyptian king Tirhakah on behalf of the sorely pressed king of Judah, and the murder of Sennacherib. On the last point we have now precise information. We know that, besides Ašurnâdinšum and Assarhaddon, Sennacherib had several other sons, of whom one, whom Abydenos calls Nergilos, disputed Assarhaddon's right to the succession, and entered into an agreement with his full brother Ašuršumušabši, the Adrammelech of the Bible, in this matter. This Adrammelech murdered his father on the 20th of Tebet, 681 B.C., and thereby gave the signal for a destructive civil war, which Assarhaddon brought to a close only after a lengthy struggle. Now the murder of Sennacherib is recorded in *C*, and that in a somewhat loose connexion, the remark being made that the king, after the catastrophe that befell him before Jerusalem, withdrew and 'abode at Nineveh.' This sojourn in Nineveh is not indeed more precisely defined, but it justifies the assumption that between the catastrophe referred to and the death of the king we must place some years. We thus obtain the *terminus ante quem* for the incidents recorded in *C*, which we may suitably presume to have happened some years before 681 B.C.

Far more important is the mention of king Tirhakah, whose reign is now fixed at 691-665 B.C. This shows that the campaign of Sennacherib dealt with in *C* cannot have taken place till after 691. Hence the historical contents of *C* have their boundaries sharply drawn, and the incidents sketched in the latter must be placed at least ten years later than the first expedition of Sennacherib to Syria. Consequently the narrative of *C* relates to another campaign of Sennacherib to the West, which must have fallen between 691 and 681 B.C. From it we learn that Sennacherib in the course of a second expedition to the West

found himself again in Syria, and indeed before Jerusalem, which he besieged. There he heard of the advance of the Egyptian relieving force under king Tirhakah. How far onwards Tirhakah moved is not said, but the approach of the Egyptians caused Sennacherib no little perplexity, as it made the success of his siege of Jerusalem very doubtful. He determined therefore to approach Hezekiah with direct overtures for the surrender of the city. Hezekiah must have been unaware of the advance of the Egyptian relieving army, so that Sennacherib may have had good hopes regarding the issue of the negotiations. But Isaiah inspired Hezekiah with courage, and expressed the firm conviction that Sennacherib would fail in his attempt to capture the city. The unexpected actually happened. The following night the camp of the Assyrians was visited by a terrible stroke, of which no fewer than 185,000 men were the victims. This enormous figure must be taken to represent by far the greatest part of the army. The consequence was that Sennacherib, feeling that he was no match for the double enemy, hurriedly raised the siege of Jerusalem and returned with all possible speed to Assyria, where he was murdered by his sons.

Both the chronological facts and also the contents of *C* just summarized, completely exclude its identity with *A* and *B*. We have, therefore, to do in *C* with another expedition of Sennacherib which must be placed subsequent to 701 B.C. Unfortunately, the continuous cuneiform texts of the age of Sennacherib which we possess come down only to 691 B.C.; for the history of his second campaign to the West we are wholly dependent on some statements of Assarhaddon, coupled with a few scanty remains of Greek historical literature. According to Assarhaddon's statement, Sennacherib advanced pretty far into the heart of Arabia, coming from the N.-W., *i.e.* from Syria, which supports the inference that there was a second Syrian campaign of this kind subsequent to 691 B.C.

While we possess no continuous account of this second expedition of Sennacherib, the fragments of historical tradition which survive allow us to suppose that it was of considerable duration, seeing that, like the later Arabian campaign of Assurbanipal, it had its natural termination in Idumæa and Nabatæa, and at the same time threatened S. Palestine. The conflict with S.

Syria, which was not yet subdued, and which was powerfully supported from Egypt, will have had the character of a defence against encroachment on the part of Tirhakah. Hezekiah of Judah was in any case a member of the new anti-Assyrian coalition, for it is obvious from *C* that he had repudiated his former obligations towards Assyria, including of course the payment of tribute, and that his disloyalty was sought to be chastised by the great king. The siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib himself presupposes unconditionally that Hezekiah had taken part in an anti-Assyrian coalition. Now this coalition will have taken root also in Arabia, N. Syria, and Cilicia; at all events, it is to this period that we must assign the end of the N. Syrian state of Šamal, renowned through the discoveries of Zinjerli; for the year 681 B.C. the *limmu* Nabu-arki-iššiš bears the title of an Amīl of Šamal. The conflicts in N. Syria must have preceded the S. Syrian and Arabian expedition, for it could be only after the conquest of the enemy who threatened his right flank that Sennacherib was in a position to attack the centre of the coalition in S. Syria.

Now the question suggests itself in what temporal relation the siege of Jerusalem recorded in *C* stands to Sennacherib's operations in the West. It might be considered natural that Sennacherib, in approaching from Cilicia and N. Syria, meant first to crush the rebellious Hezekiah. The biblical narrative, however, knows nothing of the king's Arabian campaign, but represents him as fleeing, immediately after the sudden catastrophe, to Nineveh. The inference, accordingly, lies to hand that the Arabian expedition is to be placed before the siege of Jerusalem, a result which is confirmed by the Memphitic tradition of the priest-king Sethos. When Herodotus gives the Assyrian opponent of Sethos the title of Sanacharibos, king of the Arabians and Assyrians, this implies that Sennacherib had fought Sethos-Tirhakah as king of Arabia, *i.e.* after the Arabian campaign; but Tirhakah cannot be separated from the siege of Jerusalem. Remarkably enough, in the Memphitic tradition the deliverance of Tirhakah is attributed to a wonderful occurrence in a similar way to the deliverance of Jerusalem in *C*.

The surprising result of our investigation, then, is that the much discussed siege and deliverance of Jerusalem cannot have taken place till the second half of Sennacherib's reign. If the biblical

statement is correct, which allows to Hezekiah a reign of twenty-nine years, the second campaign of Sennacherib to the West and the closely connected siege of Jerusalem must be placed between

the year of Tirhakah's accession (691 B.C.) and that of Hezekiah's death (686 B.C.).

The detailed justification of my views I reserve for the present.

Contributions and Comments.

x The Aramaic Element in St. Mark.

It is now generally admitted that the words of Christ underwent translation from Aramaic into Greek when they were brought westwards by the first Christian evangelists. Unfortunately we have no clear knowledge of their history until they appear in the form in which we have them in our Gospels. Were there written Gospels before our primary Gospel St. Mark? If so, in what language were they written? 'The earliest Christian writing,' says Dr. Dalman,¹ 'may have been composed in Greek.' That is no doubt true; but it leaves the question open, for there is just as much probability in a 'may have been composed in Aramaic.' I exclude here the alternative of a primitive Hebrew Gospel. There is an *à priori* improbability that the Palestinian Christians would have written in Hebrew rather than in Aramaic, which none of the attempts at reconstruction of a Hebrew Gospel² seem to have been able to overcome. I set aside also, for the purpose of this paper, the much-debated 'Logia' question. Mt and Lk in re-editing Mk may have drawn from written sources; but if so, such sources as were common to them were already in a Greek dress when they used them, and therefore the possibility of reconstructing so remote a Semitic original cannot be discussed here. The purpose of this paper is to endeavour once again³ to reassert the Semitic element in St. Mark.

This Semitic element consists in part of linguistic turns and forms of expression which are common to Hebrew and Aramaic modes of

thought, but in part of such forms as are distinctively Aramaic.⁴ The conclusion which will be drawn is that the Gospel is a translation of an Aramaic original. It is necessary here to protest against a loose and slipshod use of the terms *Hebrew* and *Aramaic* in this connexion. Dalman has shown, with great clearness, that *Hebraisms* in a New Testament writer are no proof that he originally wrote in Hebrew. On the other hand, if *Aramaisms* can be detected in a writer, there are only two alternatives—either he was an Aramaic-speaking Jew writing in Greek (a language with which he was imperfectly acquainted), or his work has been preserved only in a translation. The decision must then depend upon such considerations as the relative extent of the Aramaic and Greek element. In a paper in the *Expositor* of June 1900 it was urged that the Aramaic element in St. Mark is so considerable as to make it probable that he wrote in Aramaic. In the art. 'Gospels' in the *Encycl. Bibl.* col. 1870, this paper is criticised in the following words: 'The language of Mk Hebraizes still more strongly than does that of Mt. Nevertheless the combinations of Allen do not prove that the evangelist wrote in Aramaic,—Lk also has Hebraisms,—and yet no one holds Lk's writings to be a translation of a Hebrew original.'

Such criticism entirely misses the point, and the *nevertheless* shows that the writer has no appreciation of the fundamental difference between the Hebraistic and the Aramaic element in the Gospels. Mk is not more *Hebraistic* than Mt, but more *Aramaic*. Hebraisms certainly would not suggest a Hebrew original, much less an Aramaic original. The reference to Lk has no point. He Hebraizes, therefore he may well have written in Greek, as Dalman has shown. Mk Aramaizes,

¹ *Worte Jesu*, 57.

² Resch, *Die Logia Jesu*; Abbott, *Clue*, 1900; *The Correctors of Mark*, 1901.

³ *Expositor*, June 1890.

⁴ The following have declared in favour of an original Aramaic Mark:—Blass, *Phil. of Gosp.*; Halévy, *Rev. Sem.*, April 1900; Zimmermann, *Stud. u. Krit.*, 1901, p. 420.

* Referred to by Burney, *Aramaic Origin of Faith* 1817