

The Title 'King of Persia.'

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THE title 'king of Persia' occurs frequently in certain parts of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and not at all in others. This fact long ago suggested certain inferences. In the interval an immense amount of new material, consisting of actual documents of the Persian period, has become available for determining the use that was made of this title. I very briefly indicated the nature of some of this material, and its bearing on the literary criticism of Ezra, in my *Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 98: but the scope of my book was too limited to admit of a full treatment of what, in relation to my whole subject, was but a detail, though an important one. Unfortunately the English Commentaries on Ezra treat the point with even greater brevity, and also, as it appears to me, misleadingly. On the other hand, it is excellently treated by Dr. Driver in notes of increasing fulness in successive editions of his *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*: see ed. 9, pp. 546, 554, and Addenda, pp. xxxviii f. But since, in spite of this, the matter still seems to be imperfectly understood, there may be some use and convenience in a fresh and fuller presentation, in which the more important passages from the inscriptions can be cited and some other points can be more fully considered.

The fuller and more important a commentary is, the greater is the call, if need be, to correct and to supplement it. If, therefore, I select a note from Dr. Batten's recently published commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah in illustration of what I have just said with reference to commentaries on these books, it will be readily understood that I am passing no adverse judgment on the value of that work as a whole. I cite it because in it, as the fullest and most recent commentary, the student would look for an adequate presentation of the evidence on this point and a clear indication of its significance; and unfortunately he will find neither of these things. On the occurrence of the title in Ezra 1¹ Dr. Batten writes, 'The great Persian empire did not reach its full height of power until the time of Darius, and this title, therefore, has

been regarded as a mark of the Chronicler's hand. The contention is invalid, for in an inscription of Nabonidus, 546 B.C., the same title is employed.' Now this note refers to but a single point in the evidence and fails to place even that in its right setting; moreover, it suggests that a question at issue is whether Cyrus could have been styled 'king of Persia' so early as 539 B.C., whereas the only actually relevant question is whether he could have styled himself, or been styled by his subjects, only king of Persia so late as any month in 539 after that in which he entered Babylon.

I propose first to sketch the history of the title 'king of Persia' as applied to Cyrus and his successors, and then to discuss the arguments derived from the use of this title in Ezra and Nehemiah—first the facts, then the inferences from them. In order to appreciate the use of the title 'king of Persia' it will be necessary to refer to other titles, but it lies beyond my present purpose to discuss the use of these other titles, whether in Ezra and Nehemiah or in other documents, more fully than is necessary to appreciate the use of the title 'king of Persia.'

I.

Cyrus sprang from a royal family whose reigning members had for generations borne the titles 'the great king, king of (the city of) Anshan,' and the earliest title borne by Cyrus himself was king of Anshan. I will cite the passages from the inscriptions on which these two statements rest; the first contains also the group of titles by which Cyrus styles himself after the capture of Babylon in 539 B.C. In what is known as the Cylinder Inscription of Cyrus, written some time after the capture of Babylon which it records, Cyrus describes himself as follows: 'I am Cyrus, king of the world, the great king, the powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world, son of Cambyses, the great king, king of the city of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, the great king, king of the city of Anshan; great-grandson of Teispes, the great king, king of

the city of Anshan.¹ Earlier in the same inscription Cyrus refers to the time when he was himself, like his predecessors, merely king of Anshan: the Babylonian god Marduk, angry at the pass to which Nabonidus had brought Babylon, looked about through all lands for a righteous prince till he found Cyrus: 'Cyrus, king of Anshan, he called by name, to lordship over the whole world he appointed him,' first giving him the victory over the Umman-manda, and then over Babylon, and, therewith, over 'the four quarters of the world.'

From other inscriptions we learn that in the interval between being merely king of Anshan and becoming king of Babylon with all that the latter title implied, Cyrus became 'king of Persia.' Thus Nabonidus in the Abu-Habba Cylinder Inscription (i. 29), in his account of the 3rd year of his reign (= 553 B.C.), speaks of Cyrus, king of Anshan, and so in the chronicle that contains the account of the reign of Nabonidus and of the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, we read, in a passage referring to a date earlier than the 7th year, that Nabonidus '[col]lected troops and marched against Cyrus, king of Anshan'; but further on in the same inscription the record of the 9th year (= 546 B.C.) runs, 'In Nisan Cyrus, king of Persia, mustered his troops.'²

We thus see that (1) 'king of Anshan,' (2) 'king of Persia,' (3) 'king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world' are three titles or groups of titles borne by Cyrus at successive periods of his career, the first down to at least as late as 553, the second at least as early as 546, the third in and after 539. Cyrus did not, of course, cease to be king of Anshan when he became king of Persia, nor to be king of Persia when he became king of Babylon and heir to the great titles which had been associated with the kingdom of Babylon: he *might*, therefore, even after the conquest of Babylon, in a solemn recital of his titles, have included *along with other titles* that of king of Persia; as a matter of fact, in his still existing recitals he does not do so; in these at least he was content that the greater titles should imply the less comprehensive.

After the conquest of Babylon neither Cyrus nor any of his successors ever describes himself by the title 'king of Persia' *alone*; and of these

¹ Lines 20, 21 (translation by R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, p. 382).

² *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, iii. p. 129 f.

kings it is Darius I. alone who so describes himself even in combination with other titles. With Cambyses (529-522 B.C.) the direct line of Cyrus and of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, who had been kings of Anshan before him, came to an end. Darius, who succeeded Cambyses, was descended from Teispes, the great-grandfather of Cyrus, but through a son of Teispes named Ariamnes, not as Cyrus through Teispes' son Cyrus. This is stated clearly enough in the Behistun inscription, the opening sentences of which it will be convenient for several reasons to quote here:—

'I am Darius, the great king, the king of kings, the king of Persia, the king of the provinces, the son of Hystaspes, the grandson of Arsames, the Achæmenian.

'(Thus) saith Darius, the king: My father is Hystaspes; the father of Hystaspes was Arsames; the father of Arsames was Ariyarnnes; the father of Ariyarnnes was [Teispes]; the father of Teispes was Achæmenes.

'[Thus] saith Darius, the king: On that account are we called Achæmenians; from antiquity are we descended; from antiquity hath our race been kings.

'[Thus] saith Darius, the king: Eight of my race were kings before (me); I am the ninth. In two lines have we been kings.

'[Thus] saith Darius, the king: By the grace of Auramazda am I king; Auramazda hath granted me the kingdom.

'[Thus] saith Darius, the king: These are the provinces which are subject to me, and by the grace of Auramazda became I king of them:— Persia, Susiana, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, the (Islands) of the Sea, Sparda, Ionia, [Media], Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia, Maka: twenty-three lands in all.'³

In a smaller inscription also, Darius describes himself in similar terms: 'I am Darius, the great king, king of kings, king in Persia, king of lands.'⁴

The *occasional* use by Darius of the title 'king of Persia' (though only in combination with other titles) as contrasted with the entire avoidance of

³ Sections 1-6 (translation by L. W. King and R. C. Thompson).

⁴ F. H. Weissbach, *Die Keilinschriften der Achæmeniden*, p. 75.

this title by Cyrus (after the conquest of Babylon) and all other successors of his goes along with (apparently) a special attachment on the part of Darius to the country of the origin of his race; for in other ways also Darius gives prominence to Persia in his inscriptions: e.g. in the paragraph already cited from the Behistun inscription, Persia is named first of his twenty-three lands; he frequently uses, as an abbreviated mode of reference to his whole dominion, the phrase, 'Persia, Media, and the other provinces': and he ascribes his power, not as Cyrus to the Babylonian Marduk, but to the Persian Auramazda.

Turning now from the royal inscriptions to the private or official documents, numbering many hundreds, which refer to the kings, for the most part in a clause defining the date of the document, we find that in one particular group of these the title 'king of Persia' occurs once alone, and that 'the king of Persia and Media' occurs once alone, and nine times combined with other titles.

We have to deal principally with two classes of documents—cuneiform tablets and Aramaic papyri: the papyri being concerned with Jewish subjects of Cyrus' successors may be considered separately.

As in the royal inscriptions Darius by his occasional use of the title 'king of Persia' (in combination with other titles) stands apart, so, in the documents we now have to consider, does Xerxes; he alone in these documents is ever described as 'king of Persia.' Cyrus is described as 'king of Babylon, king of the lands' upwards of 250 times, as 'king of the lands' and 'king of Babylon and the lands' about 25 times each: 'Cambyses, king of Babylon, king of the lands' is a style that occurs upwards of 290 times; Darius I. is termed 'king of Babylon, king of the lands' upwards of 350 times, and as 'king of Babylon and the lands' upwards of 130 times; but never once in these documents is Cyrus or Cambyses or Darius I. described as 'king of Persia.'¹

¹ These and other data were collected by Professor R. L. Wilson with great diligence, and published in a series of articles entitled 'Royal Titles in Antiquity' (*Princeton Review*, ii. 257-282, 465-497, 618-664; iii. 55-80, 238-267, 422-440, 558-572). But Professor Wilson's diligence is more admirable than his judgment; and the articles entirely fail in their object of proving Dr. Driver's arguments invalid, and this because Professor Wilson either fails to understand, or misrepresents, Dr. Driver. For example, he writes (iii. p. 566): 'No argument then is needed to show that Dr.

Fuller data are now available for Xerxes' titles in these documents than were included in Prof. Wilson's articles cited in the footnote. In the *Zeitschrift für die deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. lxii. (1908) pp. 642 f., Weissbach collected 35 references to Xerxes. These may be classified according to the title attached to his name as follows:—

Without title	5
King of Persia	1
King of Persia and Media	1
King of Persia and Media, king of Babylon and the lands	7
King of Persia, Media, Babylon, and the lands	1
King of Persia, Media and the lands	1
King of the lands	8
King of Babylon, king of the lands	4
King of Babylon and the lands	7

Total 35

But these titles are not evenly distributed over Xerxes' reign; from this point of view they are thus described by Weissbach: The usual Achæmenian title, 'king of Babylon, king of the lands,' is from 20. v. 1 (*i.e.* the 20th day of the 5th month of the first year of Xerxes' reign = 484 B.C.), replaced by 'king of Persia and Media,' to which, however, shortly afterwards (first on 30. viii. 1) the earlier title is added. This full form prevails down to at least the 8th year of the reign: from the 10th year onwards it is replaced by the simple 'king of the lands' which had already been used as an alternative style (*fakultativ . . . verwendet wird*) by his predecessors, and was exclusively used by his successors.

Driver is absolutely wrong when he states that after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, the standing official title of the Achæmenidæ was not "king of Persia," but "king of Babylon." Professor Wilson's method of controversy resembles that of the atheist who undertakes to prove from the Bible itself the non-existence of God: Dr. Driver is responsible for the statement attributed to him by Professor Wilson, in precisely the same way that the Psalmist is responsible for the statement that 'there is no God': the Psalmist undoubtedly uses these words, but his sentence begins with the words 'The fool hath said in his heart'; and so Dr. Driver certainly writes of the Achæmenidæ that after the conquest of Babylon 'their standing official title is not "king of Persia," but "king of Babylon";' but his sentence concludes with the words 'or, more commonly, "the king," "the great king," "king of kings," "king of the lands," etc. (often in combinations).' The very data adduced by Professor Wilson to convict Dr. Driver of falsehood for using words which Professor Wilson has isolated, but Dr. Driver had not, are evidence of the absolute truth of Dr. Driver's words in the sense defined by the conclusion of his sentence.

And it may be added that 'the king' frequently occurs unattached to a name (which can be inferred from the context)—chiefly in Ezr 4-7 (some 20 times) and in Neh 2.

These various titles and modes of reference do not occur haphazard. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah consist of three elements :

1. Documents, consisting of what are or purport to be royal decrees, records in the royal archives, or letters to or from the Persian court: Ezr 1²⁻⁴ and (in Aramaic) Ezr 4^{11-16, 17b-22} 5⁷⁻¹⁷ 6³⁻¹² 7¹²⁻²⁶.

2. Memoirs written in Hebrew, and in the first person by, or at least purporting to be by, (a) Ezra, Ezr 7²⁷⁻⁹ 15, (b) Nehemiah, Neh 1-7⁷³ 13⁴⁻³¹.

3. The remainder of the book—all in Hebrew, except Ezr 4^{8-11a, 17a, 23f.} 5^{1-7a} 6^{1f. 13-18}, which is in Aramaic.

The title 'king of Persia' attached to a king's name¹ never occurs in the Memoirs, and never, apart from the almost certainly intrusive clause in 6¹⁴, in the Aramaic documents. It is confined to the decree in Hebrew (Ezr 1²⁻⁴), and those parts of the book which do not fall under the headings, documents or memoirs. On the other hand, the Aramaic documents and the memoirs refer to the king by his name only, or by the title 'king' only, or by his name followed by the title king: moreover, these descriptions occur once each, 'Artaxerxes, king of kings,' 'Cyrus, king of Babylon,' and 'Artaxerxes, king of Babylon'; but in the Hebrew remainder of the book none of these titles or modes of reference occur, though 'the king Cyrus' and 'the king Artaxerxes,' which occur once each, differ merely in order from 'Cyrus, the king.'

Now what is the significance of these *facts*, and more especially (for the minuter examination of the other titles lies beyond our present purpose) of the fact that the title 'the king of Persia' occurs with frequency in certain parts of the book, and not at all in others?

The memoirs and documents, which, with the exception of Ezr 1²⁻⁴, avoid the title 'king of Persia,' if and in so far as they are genuine, were certainly written during the existence of the Persian Empire. But was the work which incorporates these memoirs and documents, and still uses the title 'king of Persia,' written within the same period?

¹ But the plural 'kings of Persia' occurs unattached in Ezr 9⁸.

Or was it written after the Persian dominion had in 332 B.C. yielded place to the Greek dominion of Alexander, which was subsequently divided among his Greek successors, especially the Seleucids and the Ptolemies? In other words, was it written after, as the author of 1 Maccabees puts it, Alexander 'had smitten Darius [III.], the king of the Persians and Medes,' and 'reigning in his stead' established 'the kingdom of the Greeks' (1 Mac 1¹⁻¹⁰)? On general grounds and on the ground of the Biblical usage outside, as well as within, Ezra-Nehemiah, Ewald long ago argued that 'the way in which Cyrus and his successors are constantly mentioned as Persian kings proves that the Greek rule had already begun,'² when the narrative that employs the title 'king of Persia' was composed. Ewald's argument was weighty, for it rested, not, as some allusions to it might lead an unsuspecting reader to suppose, on any assumption that the title was unknown before the days of the Greek dominion, or that it could not under certain circumstances have been used during the Persian dominion, but (1) on the consideration that it would be unnecessary and unnatural for a Persian subject, in the course of a simple narrative of events, constantly to attach this title to the names of sovereigns of the still existing dynasty; and (2) on the observation that the Persian subject Nehemiah in his memoirs and the Persian subjects Haggai and Zechariah in their prophecies, constantly refer to the Persian king by name only, or by the title king only, or by name and the title king, but never employ the title 'king of Persia.'

But archæology has added weight to the argument and goes far to vindicate, if it needed vindicating, Ewald's critical judgment. For (1) there has come to light much fresh evidence that Jewish subjects of the Persian kings, though they regularly referred to those kings by name only, or by the king's name followed simply by the title 'the king,' did not employ the title 'king of Persia'; thus, as was pointed out in the earlier part of this article, the dates in the Aramaic papyri of Egyptian Jews are given regularly in a form exactly corresponding to those in, *e.g.*, Hag 1¹ ('in the second year of Darius the king'), Zec 7¹, Neh 2¹, and never in the form found in Ezr 1¹ ('the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia'). Again, in Sachau's papyrus No. 1 we read, 'And already in the days of the kings of Egypt had our fathers built this temple . . . and when

² Ewald, *History of Israel*, i. 173.

Cambyses entered Egypt,' where Cambyses, a king of the still existing Persian dynasty, is not distinguished as 'the Persian' or 'the king of Persia,' even though he is here contrasted with the extinct line of the kings of Egypt. And (2) among a vast quantity of documents executed by and for Persian subjects, no single instance of Cyrus (after 539 B.C.), Darius, or Artaxerxes being described as 'king of Persia' has been discovered, though each of these kings is so described in the parts of Ezra-Nehemiah in question. Xerxes, who is not so described in Ezra-Nehemiah, is in a single document entitled 'king of Persia' only.

So far the usage in the narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah. The occurrence of the title in Ezr 1² in what purports to be a royal decree requires special consideration. Here the archaeological evidence which has accumulated seems to speak even more decisively. We have seen that the author of parts of Ezra-Nehemiah uses the title 'king of Persia' with frequency; its presence in the 'decree' (Ezr 1²) would therefore be immediately explained, if the decree, instead of being an exact copy of an actual decree of Cyrus, was a free composition of the Hebrew author, or an editorial modification of an actual decree; in either of these cases the use of the title in Ezr 1² would be merely another instance of a favourite usage of the Hebrew writer. But are we precluded by the occurrence of the title from the alternative view that the decree in Ezr 1²⁻⁴ is a genuine document—an exact reproduction or an exact translation of a decree of Cyrus issued in the year 538 B.C.? The facts to be borne in mind are these:—

1. In the Nabonidus-Cyrus Chronicle the record of the year 546 refers to Cyrus as 'king of Persia': this is the only known contemporary attribution of this title to Cyrus; but in 546 Nabonidus was still, and Cyrus was not yet, 'king of Babylon, king of lands.'

2. Many documents written by Cyrus himself or his subjects between the capture of Babylon in 539 and the death of Cyrus in 529 exist; and these contain many references to Cyrus, but they never describe Cyrus as king of Persia (except as just indicated under 1).

3. Cyrus, after his conquest of Babylon, actually calls himself, or is by his subjects called (and that in a great number of documents), 'king of Babylon' or 'king of the lands,' or by both these titles together, or 'king of Babylon and of the lands,' or,

as in the Cyrus Cylinder (as cited above), by a longer string of titles.

4. Evidence exists that the title 'king of the lands' was used of Cyrus as early as *within three weeks* of his entry into Babylon; the Nabonidus-Cyrus Chronicle relates that 'on the 3rd day of Marcheshvan Cyrus entered Babylon': and a contract tablet drawn up on the 24th day of the same month is dated '24 Marcheshvan of the year of the beginning of the reign of Cyrus, king of the lands.'¹ Another tablet is dated '26 Addar of the year of the beginning of the reign of Cyrus, king of the lands,' and yet another, though the day and month are uncertain, is dated from 'the year of the beginning of the reign of Cyrus, king of Babylon and the lands.'²

5. 'From the month Kislev to the month Addar, the gods of Akkad, whom Nabonidus had carried off to Babylon, returned to their cities' (Nabonidus-Cyrus Chronicle—reverse i. 21). The month Kislev in the Babylonian calendar immediately follows Marcheshvan: the particular month referred to in the quotation is the month following Cyrus' entry into Babylon.

From these facts certain inferences may reasonably be drawn; although (as it appears to the present writer at least) there is no sufficient reason to doubt that Cyrus gave permission to the Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to Palestine, and rebuild Yahweh's temple, yet it is altogether improbable that he gave such permission before, or even within three weeks of, his entry into Babylon: such permission may reasonably be connected with the policy summed up in the words of the inscription just cited (fact No. 5); but previous to the initiation of this policy in the month Kislev, Cyrus had already, in the previous month (fact 3), assumed the title 'king of lands.' In 546, and probably enough down to the time of his occupation of Babylon in the autumn of 539, Cyrus not only was actually, but was also styled, 'king of Persia': but during those years he had no power to give

¹ The beginning of the reign (*ris šarruti*) is a technical term for the months that precede the 1st of Nisan after the king's accession. The 'beginning of the reign of Cyrus' includes the months from Marcheshvan (approximately November) 539 to Addar (approximately March) 538. The first year of Cyrus began with 1st Nisan (=April) 538.

² All three tablets will be found in *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, iv. pp. 259, 261, 265; there also will be found examples of contracts of each of the full years of Cyrus' reign down to his ninth and last.

permission to Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to Palestine; in 539, at the same time that he acquired this power, he became 'king of Babylon, king of the lands,' and ceased to be only or even primarily 'king of Persia'; and the title 'king of Persia' ceased to be an adequate title. It is possible, indeed, that after 539 the title 'king of Persia' was still occasionally *included* in a long list of titles, and possible, too, that such a list may yet be discovered. What archæology, however, has rendered in the highest degree improbable is that, after 539, Cyrus ever styled himself *merely* 'king of Persia': it follows that it is in the highest degree improbable that Cyrus either in the first year of his reign (Ezr 1¹), or in any subsequent year, or in the months that preceded the beginning of his first year, issued a decree in the exact terms of Ezr 1²⁻⁴; whether these verses are an editorial modification of an actual decree, or a free composition of the writer based on the fact or supposition that Cyrus released the Jews, is not to be determined by the single question of the royal title, and there-

fore lies beyond the scope of the present discussion.

The main conclusions to be drawn then are two:—

1. The author of the narrative that makes frequent use of the title 'the king of Persia,' and who is commonly called 'the Chronicler,' lived after the fall of the Persian Empire (332 B.C.).

2. The 'decree' in Ezr 1²⁻⁴ is not an exact reproduction or translation of an actual decree of Cyrus.

But if the tendency of the Chronicler to use the title 'king of Persia' is thus marked, the consistent absence of the title from other parts of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is an important indication that those parts of the book are *not* the work of the Chronicler: and this has some bearing on the important question whether the Aramaic documents, or Hebrew memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, are what they purport to be. But once again the determination of those questions must rest on a wider range of considerations and cannot be further discussed here.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF HEBREWS.

HEBREWS II. 18.

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

THE earliest drift of doubt in reference to the Person of Christ was in the direction of a denial of His humanity. This bright, fair vision of the evangelists was only a vision. The Christ of the Gospels was too good to be a man. The opposite extreme succeeded to it. His Divinity was then questioned, and, the story of His life being accepted, it was affirmed that He was too intensely human to have been Divine. In the verse before us the writer is dealing with the first of these errors. He pictured Christ as a faithful and merciful high priest. Then was it not essential that He should be human as well as Divine; man as well as God? The priest must be one chosen from among men.

Not in majesty supernal, sitting easy on a throne;

Dealing sorrow out to others, with no sorrows of his own.

No; but 'in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' This is the line of thought pursued from the fourteenth verse on to our text; a line of thought which we venture to sum up in the assertion that the temptation of Christ was essential to His rendering that sympathy and succour which we so sorely need. You will notice that this last verse falls naturally into two divisions: first, Christ tempted; second, Christ the Succour of the tempted.

I.

CHRIST TEMPTED.

'He himself hath suffered being tempted.'

I. In itself, as God intended and made it, human nature is a holy thing—perfectly, immaculately pure. We know it only as tainted and corrupted with strong inclinations to moral evil—selfish, sensuous, disobedient. Even if we were not taught that this is a fallen, a disordered, a diseased condition, we should naturally so conclude. It would be a moral incongruity to