

A Survey of the Herodian Rulers as Seen in Josephus

In this chapter we will give a brief treatment of Herod and those of his line who ruled Palestine after him. It will be divided into four segments of similar nature but, because of the nature of the source material, of unequal length. We will treat Herod Magnus, The Tetrarches, Herod Agrippa, and Agrippa II with the purpose of surveying the life and character of each. This should serve to shed light on the historical situation in Palestine at the time of Jesus.

HEROD MAGNUS

Herod Magnus, the first of the Herods, came to the throne with Roman aid, after a brilliant, if unlikely beginning.

Herod's father, Antipater, had been forcibly converted to Judaism, along with his countrymen, by John Hyrcanus. He assisted both Hyrcanus II and Pompey well. It is a tribute to his self-serving statesmanship that he assisted both men at the same time, all the while furthering his own ends. For his service to the Roman cause, Pompey granted Antipater Roman citizenship. This dual citizenship devolved upon Antipater's sons, notably Phasaelus and Herod. These two he also initiated into the rigors and rewards of political life. In 47 B.C. Phasaelus, the elder of the two was made governor of Jerusalem and Herod was made governor of the Galilee.

Herod quickly gained the respect of the Romans by rounding up and executing Ezekias and some of his "brigand" followers. Perhaps Roman law was easier to understand than Jewish law, or perhaps easier to dispense; in any case, what pleased the Romans and Galileans, greatly displeased the Jewish authorities at Jerusalem. Despite the fact that Ezekias and his followers had caused a great deal of trouble in Galilee, and always managed to avoid being captured, the Jewish authorities insisted on their own right to try the case and the necessity of two or more witnesses before the death penalty could be imposed.

The Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin forced Hyrcanus II to call Herod to trial. Because of the inconsistent nature of Josephus' accounts, about all that is certain is that Herod was acquitted. It seems likely that Antony pulled the necessary strings to force the acquittal.

Though Herod emerged from this trial even stronger than he had been before, it is probable that he realized the necessity of surrounding himself with his own partisans and filling all offices with his own appointees.

Soon thereafter (46 B.C.) Sextus Caesar, a relative of Julius Caesar and the governor of Syria, appointed Herod governor of Coele-Syria, and perhaps of Samaria as well.

Herod then witnessed a spate of political murders. In 45 B.C. his benefactor, Sextus Caesar, was murdered by a partisan of Pompey, Bassus. In 44 B.C. it was Julius Caesar himself who fell to assassins. And in 43 B.C. Herod's own father, Antipater, was poisoned by the butler whom Malichus had paid to do the job. Antipater had once saved the life of Malichus, and this bit of double-dealing could not but have made an impression on Herod. Herod had the murderer stabbed to death. This incident was probably responsible for producing or strengthening Herod's huge distrust of others.

In 43 B.C. Herod quieted Samaria and marched on to Jerusalem and in 42 B.C. defeated Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus. Herod was now acclaimed in Jerusalem. Herod's popularity increased when he became betrothed to Mariamne, the granddaughter of Hyrcanus II, and therefore in the line of the Hasmoneans.

Despite his growing popularity, Herod still ran afoul of the Jewish leaders, who sent representatives to Mark Antony to bring charges against him and his brother Phasaelus. Apparently the Romans were happy with the rule of both men, however, for they were both made tetrarchs, Phasaelus over Judea, and Herod over Galilee.

The Parthian invasion of Palestine in 40 B.C. (calculated to replace Hyrcanus with Antigonus) and the ensuing civil wars, forced Herod first to seek Nabatean aid, and having been denied it, then to go into exile in Rome. Phasaelus and Hyrcanus, deceived by the Parthians, were taken captive, where Phasaelus died and Hyrcanus was mutilated, thereby disqualifying him from the High Priesthood.

While in exile at Rome, Herod was made king of Judea, and given a Roman army to make good the appointment. He sailed from Rome in late 39 B.C. to claim his kingdom.

The Romans occasionally set up client kings, or allowed local kings to retain their power, providing that civil order was kept, complaints were minimal, or did not involve Rome. Such kings really were kings; they ruled. But they did so by Rome's permission, and with her critically trained eye upon their administration. Rome could always over-rule such kings, or even replace them, but did so only under extreme conditions, thinking it more likely to keep the peace by observing local custom than by overthrowing it. Thus, Rome was the rule behind the ruler, the "silent partner," as it were. This is the kind of situation which Rome had created for Herod. A well administered state led by a strong king provided Rome with a buffer between her and the Parthians. The Parthians were at the time, Rome's strongest enemy, and she viewed any alliance with Parthia as treasonous.

Antigonus, knowing where Rome's sympathies lay, invited the Parthians to aid him against Herod and his Roman troops. The Parthians, longing for control of the Levant, eagerly accepted. Herod reduced Jerusalem in 37 B.C., and apparently bribed Antony to have Antigonus "removed."

About this time, Herod married Mariamne, having divorced his first wife, Doris. Though Mariamne was beautiful and Herod was deeply in love with her, the political aspects of the marriage cannot be overlooked; for by it Herod gained a degree of legitimacy, joining himself to the Hasmonean house. Furthermore, Herod needn't have divorced Doris just to marry Mariamne. That he did so showed clearly that he intended his successor to be of Hasmonean lineage.

After defeating the Parthians, being confirmed as king by Antony, and having Antigonus put out of the way, Herod destroyed, or sharply curtailed the political power of Antigonus' supporters in the Sanhedrin. Indeed, the power of the Sanhedrin itself seems to have been restricted to the religious sphere.

About 35 B.C., and after some political jockeying by Alexandra, Mariamne's mother, and Cleopatra, Antony's mistress, Herod appointed Aristobulus to the High Priesthood. But the popularity Aristobulus enjoyed with the Jews underscored the threat to Herod, who drowned the youth in the bath at his private retreat.

Herod was called to appear before Antony to give an account of his actions in the death of Aristobulus. Prior to his departure, he put Mariamne under the custodianship of his uncle and brother-in-law, Joseph, with instructions to kill her in the event of Herod's death. After clearing himself before Antony, Herod returned to Jerusalem where he heard Salome's accusation of adultery against Mariamne and Joseph (Salome's husband).

At first, upon questioning Mariamne, Herod was convinced of her innocence. However, she asked Herod about his order to have her killed, thus revealing that Joseph had betrayed his confidence. This convinced Herod of their guilt. Joseph was put to death immediately, without being allowed to defend himself. One wonders if Salome might not have had a hidden agenda. (Josephus gives inconsistent accounts of the death of Mariamne.)

The Roman Civil War that broke out in 32 B.C. placed Herod at the disposal of Antony. Owing to the wishes of Cleopatra, he was sent to battle the Nabataeans. At first successful, he was finally defeated when Cleopatra's troops treacherously joined the Nabataeans. Herod's envoys to the Nabataeans were murdered when sent to arrange a peace. Infuriated, Herod routed his enemies and went home.

After Antony was defeated by Octavian (31 B.C.), Herod no longer had Roman support. In order to curry favor with Octavian, Herod accused Hyrcanus of conspiring with the Nabataeans. Herod was confirmed, Hyrcanus executed.

Herod, in a fit of jealousy, had his wife, Mariamne, put to death. Josephus indicates in "Wars" that she was executed ca. 34 B.C., but in "Antiquities," a later work, that she was executed ca. 29 B.C. Sohemus was killed with her.

In 29 B.C. Herod had Alexandra, Mariamne's mother put to death for her attempt to seize Jerusalem's fortresses and overturn Herod's rule. Soon thereafter Herod found reason to kill also Costobarus, his sister Salome's recently divorced ex-husband, and the sons of Babbas, men kept prison for twelve years under sentence of death, which sentence had never been carried out.

In 24 B.C. he married Mariamne (II), daughter of Simon. The marriage was arranged by deposing Jesus ben Phabet from the High Priesthood and installing Simon. Simon was not of great enough dignity to be allied with Herod otherwise; yet he was important enough that he could not be ignored. Having installed him in the High Priesthood, Herod married his daughter.

Three years later, (21 B.C.) Herod Antipas was born. He was the son of Herod and Malthace, and was one of the few royal survivors of Herod's bloody reign.

These years saw Herod exercise extreme cruelty upon his family and friends because of his frequently justified, but overblown suspicions. But it was also a period of great benefaction and building activity. Among the building projects were Sebaste, Caesarea Maritime, the Herodium and numerous fortresses. His benefactions included famine relief for his subjects, a remission of one third of their taxes at one time, and of one fourth at another. The shame in all these things is that they were all inspired by his fear of the people. He expended huge sums on his own security, when in reality less building might have served him better; for he aroused the people's ire by building theaters and other Hellenistic edifices, and a temple to Caesar. Not have to built these latter buildings would have shown him not to be of the Hellenizers, yet would not have aroused such antipathy among the Hellenizers as building them did among the conservative Jews. He rebuilt the Temple of Jerusalem, taking ten years for its completion (19 B.C.--9 B.C.), partly to appease the people and partly as a memorial to himself. Yet he also, during this time, made great donations to many Hellenistic cities in Asia Minor, including the building of a temple for Apollo at Rhodes.

From 13 B.C. until his death, Herod was beset by never-ending family intrigues. Antipater III successfully supplanted Mariamne's sons, Alexander and Aristobulus in the "affections" and plans of their father. At first, it was Salome and Pheroras who conspired against the sons of Mariamne (I) out of fear and envy. They induced in Herod the belief that Mariamne's sons sought to avenge the loss of their mother upon Herod with their own hands if need be. For his part, Antipater sent letters from Rome implicating Alexander and Aristobulus in a conspiracy against him.

Herod accused them before Caesar, but Alexander exonerated them, and they were, for a time, reconciled to Herod. Pheroras then planted an evil thought in Alexander's mind concerning Herod's supposed lust for his wife. This was reported to Herod, who naturally concluded that Pheroras sought his harm. Eventually, after yet another accusation and reconciliation between Herod and Alexander, the brothers were beset on all sides by those who accused them, and they were brought to trial in Berytus, condemned, and finally executed ca. 6 B.C.

Shortly after this, Jesus was born. As calculated from a variety of sources and confirmed astronomically (the star of Bethlehem was the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation of Pisces, an event that happens only every 800 years, and was particularly bright on this occasion), Jesus was born in the winter of 5 B.C.

It is recorded (Pes 62 b and Apion 1.7) that Herod destroyed the Genealogical Records detailing the lineage of Royal and Priestly lines which had been preserved for centuries and kept in the Temple. Maybe the visit of the Magi caused this as well as the "slaughter of the innocents" recorded in Matthew's Gospel. He who said that "Herod was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him," knew well the sort of fear that Herod inspired in those around him.

Antipater, after having finally succeeded in removing his brothers from the picture, was now discovered in a plot to have Pheroras poison his father. Pheroras, however, died before the deed could be done (indeed, his wife and mother-in-law might have intercepted the poison and used it on him instead). The plot was discovered, and Antipater was lured home, tried and convicted. Even though fatally ill, and with civil unrest on all sides, Herod had Antipater executed five days before his own death.

In 4 B.C. Herod died a miserable death. Knowing the low esteem in which he was held by the Jews, and rightly fearing that there would be rejoicing at the news of his death, he conspired to have the richest and noblest of them imprisoned in a hippodrome, and upon the news of his death to have them killed, to the end that there might be a great and general mourning throughout the land. Happily, however, Herod was a less effective murderer in death than he had been during his life, and the prisoners were released.

THE TETRARCHES

The careers of the TETRARCHES were less eventful, and, with the exception of Herod Antipas, less interesting than that of Herod Magnus; their reigns were shorter, and their power had been sharply curtailed. In accordance with Herod's final will, his kingdom was carved up and assigned to those designated. As will be seen, there was no king; instead, local rule was by tetrarch, a less prestigious title, and a less powerful position. TETRARCHES were more visibly answerable to superior powers. They had not even the appearance of independence, but were appointed local rulers who were answerable to Rome's provincial rulers.

Herod's territory was divided roughly into quarters, with Archelaus receiving two quarters. This bears a striking resemblance to the Jewish laws of inheritance, but because it is not certain which of the sons was eldest, it cannot be demonstrated that this wasn't mere happenstance, or motivated by other considerations. Certainly Herod demonstrated enough inconsistency with regard to Jewish law during his lifetime that we needn't think that in the matter of his will he would observe it closely. Be that as it may, the area once ruled by Herod Magnus now was divided, and the events within the various parts became dependent upon three different men; in essence there are now three

histories which sometimes diverge, and sometimes impinge upon one another and intertwine.

According to the latest codicil in Herod's will, Archelaus was to become king over a territory which included Judea, Samaria and Idumea; his territory was confirmed, but he was not made king, receiving only the title of ethnarch until he should demonstrate to Rome that he deserved the title of king.

Archelaus wanted to be king, and began his reign by trying to curry favor with both Jews and Romans. His lack of success is a demonstration of the maxim that "if you try to please everyone, no one will like it." His relationships worsened until at last, for his failed policies and cruel mistreatment of the Jews, he was banished to Gaul in 6 A.D. His Tetrarchy was reduced to the status of a Province and administered by Coponius. Here begins that train of Roman Procurators of Judea of which the most infamous was Pilate, despite the fact that his successors were much worse rulers than he was.

Philip was given, in accordance with Herod's will, a Tetrarchy that included Batanea, Trachonitis, and their outlying areas. This area was on the east of Galilee, and was more "out-of-the-way," both geographically and politically. Hence, it was generally quieter. Little happened that was of great importance to Josephus. In 34, Herod Philip died without issue, and his Tetrarchy was attached to Syria, where it remained for three years.

On the death of his father, Herod Magnus, Antipas was appointed Tetrarch of Galilee, an area in northern Palestine separated from Jerusalem by Samaria. He immediately rebuilt and walled Sepphoris and Betharamatha, and founded Tiberius. Of the TETRARCHES, Antipas seems to have had the most eventful life.

In about 1 A.D. Aretas, the king of Arabia Petrea, gave his daughter to Antipas in marriage. It was probably a typically political alliance, but lasted for a long time.

While lodging at Rome with Herod Philip, Antipas fell in love with Philip's wife (his own niece) Herodias. He negotiated to marry her, on the condition that he divorce Aretas' daughter. Antipas' wife got wind of the plan before Antipas could tell her, and she made arrangements to flee the country and return to her father's house. This gave Aretas cause to hate Antipas, and an excuse later to wage war against him. Antipas married Herodias in 22, after the end of over twenty years of marriage to his first wife.

Herod Agrippa, living in Rome in high style, and in contact with many powerful people, ran up his personal debts to overwhelming proportions. He finally had to leave Rome. After leaving, he settled in Beersheba and soon became (at the request of his sister Herodias) a minor official in the government of his uncle, Herod Antipas. This was about the year 22. By the end of 23, however, he had left his job, and gone to Alexandria.

In 26 Antipas had John the Baptist executed. Afraid of the power of John the Baptist, lest he should lead a popular revolt against him, Antipas was at first content to keep John in prison. Though he chafed at John's rebuke for marrying his brother's wife while his brother was still alive, it was in keeping a promise rashly made that he killed John. Josephus records only John's death. The immediate occasion for it is found in Mark's Gospel.

At the request of Pontius Pilate, Jesus was sent to Antipas to be examined. Though Jesus failed to perform the long hoped for miracle before Antipas, he sent Jesus back to Pilate uncondemned, and the rift between Pilate and Antipas was healed. This occurred in 30 A.D., as dated by reference to Jewish traditions, the New Testament Documents, and computer assisted astronomical calculations. It is firmly established that Jesus was Crucified Thursday, 6 April 30 A.D.

In 36, Antipas was the logical choice to serve as mediator at talks between the Parthians and the Romans. The talks were successful, but in his zeal to inform Rome, he offended Vitellius, the governor of Syria. The next year, Aretas attacked Antipas' kingdom and inflicted severe damage. Antipas appealed to Vitellius, who was now Emperor, but Vitellius still nursed a grudge against him and availed himself of every conceivable delay.

Herodias, the wife of Antipas, was too much a controlling figure in his life. She got her way when Antipas agreed to divorce the daughter of Aretas. This resulted (37 AD – 39AD) in tremendous damage to Antipas' kingdom. She engineered a job for Herod Agrippa I by her influence with Antipas. She had her way in the matter of John the Baptist. And at last, envious of Herod Agrippa's title of king, she persuaded Antipas to go to Rome to seek such a distinction for himself. He found himself, instead of named king, banished to Lyons (or Spain?). Herodias followed Antipas into exile (39 A.D.) where he died.

HEROD AGRIPPA I

As was mentioned earlier, Agrippa had incurred considerable indebtedness in Rome. He had left Rome and settled in Beersheba. At the request of his wife, Herodias convinced Antipas to give Agrippa a "government job." He had left for Alexandria, where he was able to arrange a loan large enough to repay his debts in Rome. This he did in 36 A.D.

He had several highly placed friends in Rome, among them Caligula, who was soon to become Emperor. In about 37, Agrippa made an unfortunate remark to his friend Caligula concerning his wish that Caligula would soon become the Emperor. The remark was overheard by Caligula's chariot driver, who was later provoked into telling Tiberius. Tiberius imprisoned Agrippa, but six months later, Tiberius was killed, Caligula became Emperor, and Agrippa received from him Philip's realm and Lysanias. In addition, he received the title of king.

After Caligula banished Herod the Tetrarch, in 39, the territory he had ruled, Galilee, was added to that of Agrippa (40 A.D.).

In 41, on the advice of the Syrian Proconsul, Agrippa dissuaded Caligula from introducing Emperor worship at Jerusalem and setting up his statue in the Temple. This showed remarkable strength of character on Agrippa's part, and demonstrates just how close a bond of friendship existed between the two men; for a denial of Agrippa's request would have almost certainly meant his death.

But it was not Agrippa's star that was setting, but Caligula's; indeed, Agrippa's was still very much on the rise. Shortly after this incident his friend Caligula was assassinated, while he, Agrippa, was in Rome. He acted as negotiator between the Roman Senate and Claudius, whom of he convinced to become Emperor. Claudius added Judea and Samaria to Agrippa's realm, which then equaled that of Herod Magnus.

Herod was a zealous Jew, or at least he zealously courted the favor of the Jews. In about 42 he commenced building an extension of the wall around Jerusalem, which was supposed to be unbreachable. But at the advice of Marcus, the President of Syria, Claudius ordered Agrippa to abandon the project, which he did.

In 44 he had James, the brother of John, beheaded and put Peter in prison. Nor did the star of James set alone. For that same year, during games and lavish entertainment at Caesarea Maritime, Agrippa was accorded Divine adulation, which he accepted. He interpreted the presence of an owl as an omen of his approaching death, and died soon thereafter, eaten by worms.

In eight short years, Agrippa had seen two of his intimate friends ascent to the utmost heights of the Roman Empire, and had himself gone from a huge debtor to the king of his grandfathers whole realm, a position sought, but never gained by many of his near kinsmen. He ruled as king from 41 to 44, and then, more quickly than he rose, he fell

HEROD AGRIPPA II

Being a minor at the time of his father's death, Agrippa II was unable to assume control of his father's territory. But he used his influence at court on behalf of the Jews suffering under the procurators Cumanus (48--52) and Felix (52--60).

In 56, he received the Throne of Chalcis. In 58 he exchanged his rule over Chalcis for a territory within the old Tetrarchy of Philip. In 61 he received portions of Galilee and Perea, thus giving him territory within Judea. He also received the title of King, and exercised the power to appoint and dismiss the High Priest.

In 66 the First Roman War broke out. The rebellion came at the worst possible historical moment, and was "led" by faction leaders without a unified goal or hope. Josephus is at his vivid worst in describing the indescribable. The Jews fought among themselves, and only Roman impatience made them hasten the victory that would surely have been theirs had they but waited.

Agrippa was decidedly pro-roman in his sentiments and stance. He actively aided Vespasian and Titus in reducing Jerusalem, which fell in 70 A.D.

CONCLUSION

Some general conclusions about the Herods can be drawn, even on such a cursory examination as this one. It cannot be denied, for example, that like other rulers in ancient times, in Rome and elsewhere, the Herods frequently acted as if they were above the law. Political expediency, which was an adequate defense for almost any crime, was occasionally identical with personal expediency; for what effected the king's person effected the kingdom. In this regard, all the Herods were the same, so far as we can tell from the sources. It would be wrong to convict them alone since they only exhibited such behavior as was common to rulers then; but one cannot but wonder how many of them had infants in some small village slaughtered on the suspicion that a king had been born there. Even on the assumption that Herod wanted to preserve his kingdom for his offspring, he is culpable; for there may not be another example of a king killing so many of his own offspring. Put bluntly, Herod cared for Herod, and even when he was an old man at death's door, he insisted on slaughtering infants and his own children. Perhaps the specter of a king attempting to carry out his murderous plans even after his own death is unprecedented also.

It is often said that to judge historical figures too harshly is to read modern values back onto the subject; that Herod could not have done what is right in terms of modern thought. And such anachronistic critique is a very real possibility. However, what allows the historian to make moral judgments on historical figures, what allows him to sit in comfort and pass judgment upon his subject is not some modern ethic, but the ancient mores under which his subject lived. By such standards, Herod was still clearly guilty, despite the fact that there seem to be two standards of judgment at work in his world. Nor is it simply a case of the conflicting ethics of the Jewish and

Roman world. Were this the case, there would not have been deputations sent to Rome to complain about his treatment of his subjects. Obviously, many of his subjects thought that he was more than just a bad ruler; they thought that his rule transgressed Roman aims as well as Jewish ethical norms. That Herod (and his successors as well) could for so long escape official reprisal, is an indication of the double standard at work in the Roman Empire; Herod was a great general and “statesman.” By this is meant that Herod was able to meet both Rome’s needs and his own without a conflict of interests. It was a purely pragmatic position without reference to the will of his subjects. As was seen, even his magnificent building projects and large donations were inspired by fear rather than love, at least the way Josephus tells the story. Herod was not the first ruler to commit heinous acts, nor was he the last. What convicts him is the fact that he was unrepentant. One thinks of Alexander the Great, who, in a drunken anger, killed one of his best friends, indeed a man who had saved his own life in battle. The difference between Alexander the Great and Herod the Great is the greatness of heart. For Alexander was great enough to be human, to sorrow for his wrong, to repent, to agonize over the wrong he did. With Herod, the sources give no indication that he ever suffered any pangs of conscience, save in the case of Mariamne. And even in that case, there we are entitled to a degree of skepticism regarding the nature of Herod’s sorrow. Herod was given to harsh reactions to his slightest suspicion, or unconfirmed court gossip. In this regard, he was too easily manipulated by his sister and mother, without regard to the wife he was supposed to have loved so much.

Nor was there much indication that Herod entertained any real religious notions. He was, to be sure, a Jew; but what that means has always been dubious. It is certain that his father’s forced conversion had little or no moral effect upon him, and there is no indication that his Jewishness had any practical moral effect upon Herod either. He may have gone to Jerusalem during Passover, and he may have kept the Sabbath; he may even have believed that this was all that was required of him. But he was not concerned enough with his religion to expect with high hopes the Messiah who was awaited at the time. Indeed, he hoped to kill Him.

Ideologically, Herod was a Hellenizer. He was not an active proselytizer, as were Alexander and the Seleucids. He did not deliberately enter the debate among the Jews as to the relative merits of conservative Jewish belief and practice as opposed to those of the more liberal Hellenistic Jews. But, in carrying out, consciously or unconsciously, the later Hasmonean policies, and in his extreme pragmatism, and in his Roman sympathies at a time when Jewish nationalistic sentiment was coming to the fore in Judea, he served the purposes of Hellenism. Indeed, he manifested one of the essential characteristics of Hellenism in his syncretism. He spread far and wide his support of Roman politics, aid to Greek cities, and the establishment of Hellenistic cities in Judea. Under these circumstances, it matters little that he generally refrained from deliberately offending the Jewish sensibilities. There is, on this view, no inconsistency in Herod’s building a temple to Apollo at Rhodes, and rebuilding the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. It is exactly what one would expect of a pragmatist, and consistent with a Hellenistic perspective, even if Herod did not try to equate YHWH with Zeus.

Herod was an exceedingly selfish pragmatist. His sons, so far as we know them, exhibited the same traits. Archelaus demonstrated his father’s two faced approach to self-serving, only without the latter’s success. He genuinely wanted to be king; to that end, he attempted to gratify the Jews and prove himself worthy to the Romans. Failing both, he exhibited his cruelty to the Jews to such an extent that he was removed from office and exiled after ruling for only about ten years. Of Philip we know very little. And Antipas showed clearly that his character was cut from the same cloth as that of his father. He was self-serving; he was even more of a Roman client than his father had been; and he was prone to take bad advice from a woman, though in his case, it was his wife. He even

viewed Jesus as a side-show magician who might perform some slight-of-hand tricks for him, then sent Him back to Pilate, mocked but uncondemned, as his own perverted, political peace offering.

But if Herod's sons displayed his character strongly, it was his grandson, Agrippa I, who displayed those characteristics the most strongly of all, perhaps more strongly than Herod Magnus himself. Caught in his own bad habits and debts in his younger years when he hob-nobbed with Roman "royalty," Agrippa used every person available to his own ends. He was able to flatter his way deep into the affections of Caligula, manipulate Claudius, arrange loans with which to repay old debts, and play upon the sympathies of his wife and sister in obtaining a government post. Granted, to say this is to go a little beyond the more neutral statements found in the sources; but this look at "Agrippa-the-Taker" is supported by the evidence for "Agrippa-the-Giver"; for when he had an opportunity to do someone harm, he took it. For example, when his sister, Herodias, who gave her husband so much bad advice, was envious of Agrippa's title of king, and convinced Antipas "to go for it," Agrippa mailed a letter to Rome which contained some damaging accusations against Antipas. And soon, Agrippa had Galilee and Antipas had a room with a view somewhere in Gaul. Another example is his imprisonment of Peter and his beheading of James. Had Agrippa been a thoroughly religious Jew, one could call such behavior "religious zeal," and debate the merits of Agrippa's viewpoint. However, it is pretty clear that, like his grandfather, Herod Magnus, Agrippa was a fair weather Jew. When he was in a pagan city he was no longer Jewish. In fact, it was only shortly after Agrippa murdered James to please the Jews of Jerusalem, that he decided to let himself be accorded divine honors to please the Pagans Caesarea Maritime. The common thread running throughout the Herodian period of Palestine is that of the self-serving abuse of political power. It is highly unlikely that even his dissuasion of Caligula in the latter's desire to pollute the Jewish Temple was purely motivated; political realities dictated Agrippa's course, for he knew that things would be far from tranquil at home if he allowed this to happen. And, like his grandfather, he had the strength and resolve to further his own interests regardless of the cost.

It is only with Agrippa that we see a change in the "Herodian Character." After what appeared to be a promising beginning in Rome, defending the Jews against the politically sanctioned brigandage of the later Procurators, Agrippa II began to slide. Though given a modest kingdom to rule, he seems not to have done much more than cultivate an incestuous relationship with his sister Bernice, who also was a bedmate to Titus. And, having supported the Jews in his early years, he later supported the Romans against them. Whether this was political self-serving, or simply the result of a realistic appraisal of how far the situation had disintegrated in Jerusalem, is not known.

The Herods were great builders. Herod Magnus was a great general and benefactor as well. They all seem to have been blessed with a gift of persuasiveness, and were not above being flatterers. They were intimately acquainted with the Roman Emperors and the Jewish nobility and priestly families. But on the basis of the evidence, through all this, and throughout the decades of the family's prominence and rule, the main feature was the crafty selfishness that went well beyond mere survivalism.

A WORD ABOUT SOURCES

There is only one source which deals extensively with Herod and his successors, Josephus. Josephus has demonstrated for years to be a reliable witness to his era. Archaeologically he has been vindicated time after time. But there are minor inconsistencies in his reports, one example being his

accounts of the death of Mariamne. Such trivial inconsistencies matter little within the whole fabric of Josephus' accounts. What are a little more troublesome are the implications scholars draw from the seeming inconsistencies that exist between biblical texts and other historical narratives.

Such an inconsistency exists in the identification of Herodias' first husband. Josephus identifies him with Herod the son of Herod Magnus, while the Gospel of Matthew calls him Philip. When such inconsistencies occur, Scholars today seem bent upon discrediting the Biblical account, and vindicating the "secular" accounts. Always the cry is raised of bias. Historians have demonstrated to a degree that political and social interests, to say nothing of financial gain, have often helped a writer shape his work. Thus we don't know which of Procopius' works to believe about Justinian, his *History of the Wars of Justinian* or his *Anatidae* (the Secret History). But this is a far cry from an indictment of the Biblical texts. It may be that the Gospels display an editorial bias, but they certainly do not show a political bias. Not in the sense of favoring one party over another, or with the purpose of vindicating one segment of society as opposed to any other. The editorial bias which the various authors of the Bible extended no further than omitting material which had little or no relevance to their readers. This author is unaware of so much as a shred of evidence that any of the Biblical writers altered his report, or misrepresented the evidence in any way, for any reason. For at the very heart of the "Biblical bias" is the belief in the centrality of ethical behavior. What possible good could come from lying about one who enjoined his followers to take no oaths, but to let your "yes be yes and your no be no?" Such an account would simply not be worth the time and trouble to record.

Hence, to believe Josephus in preference to Matthew or Luke is to deliberately believe one whom it is generally acknowledged might lie under certain circumstances, rather than one whose very reason for writing is his unshakable ethical commitment to truth. It is to deliberately believe a flatterer in preference to one who willingly suffered for his philosophy, and had nothing to gain by doing so. Yet men such as Brandon and Grant do just that. Brandon (Jesus and the Zealots) attempted to set up a house of cards in a hurricane and failed; Grant (The Jews in the Roman World) merely assumes what he wants, and passes it off as if no controversy were possible. Clearly, this will not do.

Another truism that needs to be put in perspective is the notion that in the historical documents of Ancient times we are treated to a view of what kings and nobles said and did, but that the common man is almost unknown to us. Certainly it is true that most sources were written to the elite, by the elite, and for the elite. But it was not so with the Biblical accounts. There we see common men as well as kings, but we see them in the light of ethical norms; hence they stand on equal footing and are judged by a common standard. In the Biblical record, we possess historical source documents second to none in the world, and it behooves Historians to recognize the fact rather than to overthrow it.

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