

questions before us, viz. (1) Why could not God pardon sin by mere prerogative, as a father forgives a penitent child? and, if this be impossible, (2) How does the death of an Innocent Victim harmonize with the justice of God the pardon of the guilty? I shall then conclude this series by a paper discussing the question, For whom did Christ die?

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*HEROD THE TETRARCH: A STUDY OF  
CONSCIENCE.*

ONE of the fairest ways of testing the authenticity of the Gospels, just as they lie before us, is to take some one narrative recorded by more than one Evangelist, embracing a number of incidents, some of them small, and extending over a considerable period; and, having put all the details together, to see whether they make a consistent story, and, especially if we happen to know something of the case from other sources, whether the two agree together. That there should be even one case in which all these conditions meet, is hardly what we should expect. But it so happens that the narrative we have fixed on—that of Herod the Tetrarch—is recorded or referred to by all the four Evangelists; that it embraces a number of incidents; that it extends over a period of at least two years, and that Josephus expressly refers to it as a known historical fact. Let us, then, take the facts, just as we read them in the Gospels, and see if they do not speak for themselves, assuring us of the authenticity of the story and of the Gospels which tell it even in its details, many of which are of the most startling and unexpected nature.

Herod Antipas was left by his father, Herod the Great, the two provinces of Galilee and Peræa, with the title of Tetrarch. He married the daughter of Aretas, the king of

Arabia Petræa, but afterwards fell in love with Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Herod Philip, and with her he contracted an incestuary marriage—a marriage which Josephus tells us eventually cost him his crown.<sup>1</sup>

That Herod had a sense of religion is evident from several things. He had John the Baptist at his court, and for a considerable time. How he came to be there, we are not told, but we may conjecture. Herod appears to have been well brought up; for we happen to know that his foster-brother, Manaen, not only became a Christian, but was among the prophets and teachers that were in the Church of Antioch at the time when Saul and Barnabas were sent forth on first missionary journey (Acts xiii. 1). And what is more, Herod's own steward had a Christian wife, and one of a small band of female disciples, who in gratitude for cures wrought upon by our Lord, accompanied Him on one of His preaching and healing tours with the Twelve, and had the privilege of supplying their temporal wants. These things coming to the knowledge of Herod, and hints given perhaps by his steward, may have led to a desire to see the Baptist. Be this as it may, here we find the stern prophet. Nor does he spare the king. He "reproved Herod for all the evil things that he had done" (Luke iii. 19). But so far from resenting it, he "did many things"<sup>2</sup>—that is, redressed certain wrongs in his administration, and heard John gladly (Mark vi. 20). But John went beyond this. He dared to tell Herod "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark vi. 18). That Herod could stand even that, says much for his *open-*

<sup>1</sup> For, unable to endure the presence of such a woman at her court, his lawful wife, returned to her father, who never rested till he was able to raise an army enough to go to war with Herod, which at length he did, and not only defeated but utterly ruined him.

<sup>2</sup> It is to be regretted that the R.V. did not adhere to the received text, as in the A.V., but read "was perplexed." The context seems clearly in favour of the received text.

ness to conviction. In fact, he stood in awe of that man of God. Herod (says the Evangelist) feared John, "knowing that he was a righteous man and a holy."

But that infamous woman, his paramour, could not stand it. Nothing would satisfy her but that the man who would dare to lift the veil from her sin should be put to death. She "set herself against him, and desired to kill him." But Herod "kept him safe" (ver. 20). This, however, was far from easy. She would never let him alone. "How long will you stand that? How long is that hateful man to be seen at this court? If not put to death, put him in prison." To this as a compromise he seems to have yielded, but with reluctance, probably, and only for peace' sake. "Herod laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison, for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife" (Matt. xix. 3).

From this time we lose sight of the imprisoned Baptist; but when he does re-appear in the Gospels, we gather (from the intervening events recorded) that he must have lain in prison at least a full year.<sup>1</sup>

One touching incident recorded of the Baptist while he lay in prison speaks well for Herod at that time. The Baptist, it seems, had disciples of his own, who for some unknown reason, stood aloof from our Lord's more attached followers. These disciples appear to have had free access to their imprisoned master, from which we cannot but conclude that Herod, when he had to consent to order the Baptist to be imprisoned, took care that he should have liberty to see his friends.

At length the crisis came. "When a convenient day came, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, with the high captains and the chief men of Galilee,

<sup>1</sup> The prison itself was (as will appear by-and-by) doubtless the castle of Machærus, which was built at the south eastern boundary of Herod's dominions, overlooking the Dead Sea, and it would be the keep of the castle.

and when the daughter of Herodias herself<sup>1</sup> came in and danced, she pleased Herod and those that sat at meat with him." Beyond doubt, this was a plot of that vile woman, her mother. She knew what would excite the passions of men heated with wine; and the girl would be old enough to be taught by her mother how to dance lasciviously. And she appears to have learnt her lesson well. For it is hard to see how Herod could have promised the girl so preposterous a reward, and even clinch it with an oath, save that he was in his cups. "And the king said unto her, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he swore unto her, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom; and she went out, and said unto her mother (who, though not present, was close at hand, watching the success of this disgusting plot), What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in haste unto the king, and asked saying, I will that thou forthwith give me in a charger the head of John the Baptist." No doubt the "haste" with which she rushed in was her mother's eagerness to have the order issued at once, and the very words of her reply had been dictated by her mother. What was the half of his kingdom to her? The head of the man who had dared to tell the king that she had no right to be there, was more to her than the whole of the kingdom.

Poor Herod! He had long ago ceased to think of the imprisoned Baptist; but that infamous woman had not. He had yielded to her far enough when he consented to his imprisonment, but nothing would satisfy her but the head of her enemy. For this she had bided her time, and long as it had been in coming, it had come at last. "And the king was exceeding sorry." No doubt of it. But what was he

<sup>1</sup> That is her own daughter by her lawful husband—not Herod's daughter (by this incestuous marriage), according to the marginal reading of the B.V. For it is incredible that they should have lived long enough together to have a daughter of that description.

to do? Fain would he have withdrawn his promise; "but for the sake of his oath and of them that sat at meat with him, he would not reject her." As for his oath, he had some scruple in breaking the second commandment; but he could live in the perpetual breach of the seventh. And as for them that sat at meat with him, he was ashamed to be thought to have any scruples on the subject. "And straightway the king sent forth a soldier of his guard, and commanded to bring his head; and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger and gave it to the damsel, and she gave it to her mother." (The rapidity with which the order was executed shows plainly that the prison was close at hand, and could be no other than the keep of the castle, in which the supper was made—the castle, as we have said, was the castle of Machærus—with which tradition agrees.)

From that night Herod was no longer himself. His conscience smote him for doing what he had determined never to do. He had not done it wittingly; he had got himself entrapped into it; but the deed was done and could not be undone, and he was wretched. He was haunted by the ghost of the murdered Baptist. So that when the fame of Jesus was spread abroad, and news of the mighty works which He was doing reached Herod's ears, he said, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him"; or (as in the R.V.) "therefore do these powers work in him" (Matt. xiv. 1, 2).<sup>1</sup>

But Herod, though sorry for what he had done, would not long trouble himself about it—living the sinful life he was living, this was not to be expected. It was "the sorrow of the world which worketh death" (2 Cor. vii. 10). When we

<sup>1</sup> Luke says, "he desired to see him"; but that must have been after he had ceased to believe he was the Baptist; for to see the man whom he had murdered would be the last thing he would wish.

next meet with him, this is seen clearly. It was probably a year and a half after this, when our Lord was travelling through His dominions, on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. "In that hour (says Luke xiii. 31, etc.), there came certain Pharisees, saying, 'Get thee out hence, for Herod would fain kill thee.'" Word had perhaps been brought to Herod whereabouts Jesus was—not far from the spot where he had beheaded the Baptist—and guilty fears of what He might do to him. To prevent this, he might take steps to have him also put to death.

Has Herod, then, come down so low as this? The man who deeply regretted having put the servant to death, is he now prepared to put the Master Himself to death? It is even so. His conscience was now thoroughly blunted. With dignified irony and inimitable calmness, the Lord said to them, "Go, and say to that fox"—that crafty, cruel enemy of God's innocent servants—"Behold, I cast out demons, and perform cures to-day, and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Howbeit, I must go on my way to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem! Herod is laying his plans, is he, to have me put to death! He may save himself that trouble. I have my plans too. I have work to do—works of mercy to perform—to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following; and then what Herod wants to do will be done elsewhere. Jerusalem is the slaughter-house of God's messengers, and it could never be that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem!"

From this time we hear no more of Herod till just before Pilate was about to deliver up our Lord to be crucified. But he would fain have some excuse for not putting an innocent man to death, and just at that moment one seemed to have turned up. Herod happened to be in Jerusalem with his court at this time, settling some dispute

with Pilate ; and learning that Jesus belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, and therefore ought to be tried by him, he sent him to him (Luke xxiii.).

Had the last spark of religious awe not left the breast of Herod ere this time, the appearance of our Lord before him as a prisoner might have touched him. But what read we ? " Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad ; for he was of a long time desirous to see him ; for he had heard concerning him." For what purpose, then, did he want to see him ? " He hoped to see some miracles done by him." As if our Lord would display His power for the entertainment of Herod and his courtiers ! No wonder that failing in this, and proceeding to question in many words" (with no good intent, we may be sure), He answers him nothing. But " the chief priests and the scribes stood vehemently accusing Him." Herod let them speak on unmoved, apparently amusing himself with the case, though he was there as a judge. " Herod with his soldiers set Him at nought, and mocked Him ; and, arraying Him in gorgeous apparel, sent Him back to Pilate"—the mock royalty in which he arrayed Him sufficiently showing the contempt with which he regarded the prisoner and His claim to be a king.

Ah, Herod ! There was a time when, though living in sensuality, thou stoodest in awe of that man of God who reprov'd thee for the evil things thou wast doing, and heardest gladly that stern reprov'er, and didst set right many of the wrongs of thy administration. Even when he dared to denounce the life thou wast living with thy brother's wife, thou wouldst not lay a hand upon him, and only for peace' sake didst shut him up in prison. And though at length consenting unwittingly to his death, it cost thee many a pang. But in time this wore off ; all was forgotten ; and that conscience of thine became so blunted, that when word came to thee that the Baptist's Master was in thy dominions, thou tookest steps to have even Him put to

death, so reckless now hadst thou become. But it remained for Him, to whom every knee shall yet bow, to be brought before thee as His judge, to be tried as a prisoner, charged with crimes worthy of death, to show the depth of debasement to which thou hadst now sunk, and how that conscience of thine was not blunted, but "seared (branded) as with a hot iron."

Yet what is Herod but an outstanding specimen of what it is to *trifle with conscience*? When first defiled, the ground lost may be recovered by speedy repentance and watchfulness for the future. Failing this, the downward tendency begins and goes rapidly on; and, unchecked, it hastens to recklessness, till one is ready to say, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing."

But the object of this paper was not to teach this lesson, though it does it very strikingly. It was to show, by a test of authenticity the most unexceptionable, that the Gospels, just as they lie before us even in minute details, bear the stamp of their own authenticity.

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### DUHM'S ISAIAH AND THE NEW COMMENTARY TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.

**Hand-Kommentar zum Alten Testament** in Verbindung mit anderen Fachgelehrten herausgegeben von B. W. Nowack, o. Prof. der Theol. in Strassburg. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1892.—*Das Buch Jesaia*, übersetzt u. erklärt von D. Bernh. Duhm, o. Prof. der Theol. in Basel.

This is the beginning of another of those series of handbooks on the Bible, which are intended to bring, not only special students, but the public who are interested in their subject, abreast of the latest movements of exegetical science. The prospectus contains the usual reasons for the appearance of such a work—the progress of Comparative Religion, the recent discoveries in the East, the revolution within the interpretation of the Old Testament itself,