

**A HISTORY OF THE NEW
TESTAMENT TIMES.
THE TIME OF JESUS.
VOL. II; PP. 1-267**

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DR. A. HAUSRATH

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A HISTORY
OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT TIMES.

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THE TIME OF JESUS.
VOL. II.

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Fifty Division.

HEROD.

[*Continued.*]

HEROD.

10. THE AUGUSTAN AGE IN JUDÆA.

THE great changes in the organization of the empire which Augustus undertook upon his return to Rome in the autumn of the year 29 B.C., did not at first affect Judæa, since this country retained its sovereignty. The more did the people feel the greater activity in trade and commerce, which soon showed itself under the protection of monarchy. In the East, the industries of the Hellenists especially received a fresh impulse, but the mercantile Jews also honoured in Augustus the patron of their business. Streets and public buildings became the chief objects of attention to the administration; and as Augustus himself, for the purpose, laid most serious contributions upon the public treasury, so also did he demand from his friends and connections similar exertions for this end. Among the rulers who courted the favour of Rome, a genuine rivalry sprang up to attract attention by erecting buildings, laying out roads, improving streets, making aqueducts and canals, enlarging harbours, and similar works of public utility, which was the more profitable since the chief minister of state, Agrippa, almost surpassed his master and friend in this passion for building.

A further merit of this new era was its cultivation of poetry and art. Since it was not possible for oratory to exercise its noblest task in the Forum, all talent embraced the literary career. The rostra having been deserted, there followed the age of the

ode, the epic, the elegy, the lyric, and especially the stage. The theatres, the circus, the prize games of the chariot-races and singing were everywhere cultivated in order to make the people forget public life. Here, too, the ambition of the lesser princes urged them to keep up with their master.

Herod took hold of this tendency of the day as zealously as though attention to the public welfare and cultivation of the fine arts had always been his chief delight. And yet nothing was really farther from his nature. It was not owing to Hellenic inclinations, but because he was a son of Edom, that he was ever a stranger to the Jews; yet he did not therefore, with his untamed savagery of temperament, approach any the nearer to Western civilization. His personal inclinations were far more those of an Oriental despot, than of a statesman earnestly desirous of advancing the work of civilization. We should look in vain for any manifestations of such a tendency in Herod during the time of Antonius. He had caroused with Antonius,¹ zealously guarded his harem, drilled soldiers and extorted money; but of any interest in art during the whole of the first half of his reign, not a trace is to be found. Here, however, he coincided with the feelings of his people. The Semite is a man without any sense for art, otherwise his laws would never have forbidden him to make images and symbols. He can live without painting a picture, or carving a statue, or stamping a coin, and want of taste is one of the characteristics of the Semitic peculiarity.² But since the times demanded it, the shrewd Jewish king affected a taste for such works of peace also, and the first proof of it was his taking part in that servile display in which the Oriental kings combined, to complete the temple of the Olympian Jupiter at Athens at their own expense, and dedicate it to Augustus.³ But he soon paraded the colours of the new times in Palestine itself.

The indiscreet and overbearing manner in which he violated the most pious feelings of the Rabbis in doing this, displays

¹ Antiq. xv. 3, 8.

² Compare Hepworth Dixon's "The Holy Land," II. p. 41.

³ Sueton. Octav. 60; Bell. Jud. i. 21, 11.