

Per Bilde

# Collected Studies on Philo and Josephus

Edited by Eve-Marie Becker,  
Morten Hørning Jensen and Jacob Mortensen



Studia Aarhusiana Neotestamentica

Vol. 7

V&R Academic

# Studia Aarhusiana Neotestamentica (SANT)

Edited by

Eve-Marie Becker, Ole Davidsen, Jan Dochhorn,

Kasper Bro Larsen and Nils Arne Pedersen

Volume 7

Per Bilde

# Collected Studies on Philo and Josephus

Edited by  
Eve-Marie Becker, Morten Hørning Jensen  
and Jacob Mortensen

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek  
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;  
detailed bibliographic data available online: <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISSN 2364-2165

ISBN 978-3-525-54046-6

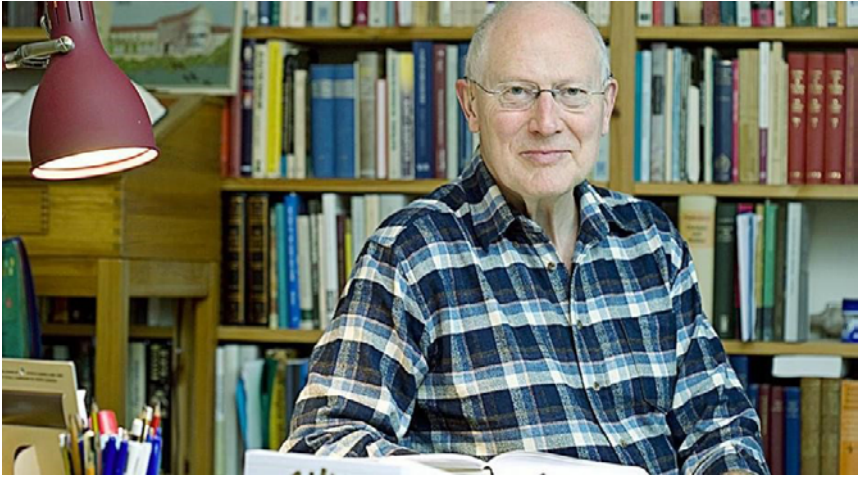
You can find alternative editions of this book and additional material on our Website: [www.v-r.de](http://www.v-r.de)

© 2016, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Theaterstraße 13, D-37073 Göttingen/  
Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht LLC, Bristol, CT, U.S.A.  
[www.v-r.de](http://www.v-r.de)

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or utilized in any form  
or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information  
storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from the publisher.  
Printed in Germany.

Typesetting by Konrad Triltsch GmbH, D-97199 Ochsenfurt  
Printed and bound by Hubert & Co GmbH & Co. KG, Robert-Bosch-Breite 6, D-37079 Göttingen

Printed on aging-resistant paper.



Per Bilde (1939–2014) (photograph: private)



## Contents

Prologue . . . . .	9
1: The Roman Emperor Gaius (Caligula)'s Attempt to Erect his Statue in the Temple of Jerusalem . . . . .	11
2: The Causes of the Jewish War According to Josephus . . . . .	35
3: Testimonium Flavianum . . . . .	55
4: The Geographical Excursus in Josephus . . . . .	89
5: Contra Apionem 1.28–56: An Essay On Josephus' View of His Own Work in the Context of the Jewish Canon . . . . .	105
6: The Essenes in Philo and Josephus . . . . .	121
7: Josephus and Jewish Apocalypticism . . . . .	151
8: Was hat Josephus über die Synagoge zu sagen? . . . . .	171
9: The Jews in Alexandria in 38–41 CE . . . . .	189
10: Philo as a Polemist and a Political Apologist: An Investigation of his Two Historical Treatises Against Flaccus and The Embassy to Gaius . . . . .	207
11: Der Konflikt zwischen Gaius Caligula und den Juden über die Aufstellung einer Kaiserstatue im Tempel von Jerusalem . . . . .	225
Bibliography . . . . .	263



---

Per Bilde's Place in Research on Josephus (Steve Mason) . . . . .	281
Messianic Figures in the Works of Josephus and their Impact on Per Bilde's Understanding of the Historical Jesus (Mogens Müller) . . . . .	303
Bibliographical References – Places of First Publication of Per Bilde's Articles . . . . .	315

## Prologue

Per Bilde (1939–2014) – Emeritus Professor Dr. theol. at Aarhus University – was in his life-time passionately interested in understanding first-century Judaism and Christian origins in their Hellenistic and Greco-Roman setting(s). Through a relentless pursuit of the sources to this period, he stood out as a giant in this field, not least, as a world-renowned expert on *Flavius Josephus*.

There are three motives for us to present this collection of articles which he published between 1978 and 2011 during his rich academic life: *First*, through a lucid and classic source-oriented approach, Per Bilde's articles are of such quality that they have enduring value. As will become clear, Bilde's work is characterized by following a razor-sharp outline in treating a research problem: He establishes the exact question at hand. Then he provides an in-depth overview of the state of research on the given question, before he establishes a catalogue of relevant sources that finally enables him to perform a thorough and well-argued discussion that in the end produces the conclusion most plausible, whatever that might be. *Second*, Per Bilde published most of his articles and books in Danish with a strong sense of commitment towards his Danish intellectual community and audience. As a consequence, much of his work did not reach wider scholarly circles. Wanting to catch up with this lacuna, Per Bilde himself began collecting some of his articles he found most relevant and began translating them. Since he did not live to see this task completed, we are happy to be able to carry out his undertaking with this collection of articles and essays which he himself had chosen – shortly before his sudden death in spring 2014. *Third*, by completing Per Bilde's undertaking, we want to show our high esteem and profound gratitude to him for his collegiality, friendship, and intellectual companionship which we have enjoyed as his colleagues at Aarhus University through the years towards the end of his career.

A few words on the arrangement of articles: The articles follow in a chronological order. The first article was published in 1978 and the last one in 2011. We have chosen to collect all bibliographical notes within a bibliography in the back of the book (pages 263 ff.) in order to get a more uniform style. Additionally, two

of the articles use original Greek letters whereas the rest have transcribed the Greek letters. In the back of the book is a list of the original publication places of each article.

Per Bilde's articles which are collected and presented here, are framed by two contributions by close colleagues of his, Mogens Müller (Copenhagen) and Steve Mason (Groningen), given on the occasion of a symposium "in memory of Per Bilde" which took place on May 28, 2015 at Aarhus. Both scholars have presented their evaluative, partly critical views on Per Bilde's impact on *Jesus* and *Josephus* research. We are grateful for their contribution which also prepares the readers of this collection for re-visiting Per Bilde's historical and philological studies on the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE world.

Finally, we extend special thanks to Trine Bilde (Professor at the Department of Bioscience at Aarhus University) for initially supporting the publication project, and Mikke Padde and stud. theol. Anna Bank Jeppesen (both Aarhus) for helping us with scanning the original articles and converting the scans to text, and thereby preparing the publication process.

In the spirit of Bilde's intellectual aspirations as researcher and teacher, we hope that this volume not only preserves the memory of a most appreciated scholar at Aarhus University, but also will be of use to current and future scholars in contextualizing and developing the inspiring field of studying two 1<sup>st</sup> century CE giants in their religious and historical surroundings: *Philo* and *Josephus*.

Eve-Marie Becker, Morten Hørning Jensen, Jacob Palle Bliddal Mortensen  
Aarhus, December 1, 2015

# 1: The Roman Emperor Gaius (Caligula)'s Attempt to Erect his Statue in the Temple of Jerusalem

## 1. Introduction

*The events.* The Roman emperor Gaius (Caligula) ruled from March 37 to January 41 AD. In the last part of his reign a serious conflict developed between the emperor and the Jews in Palestine. For some reason Gaius changed the traditional Roman policy of tolerance towards the Jews living there. He issued the order that Jerusalem's temple should be converted to a shrine for the imperial cult. A statue of Gaius was to be erected in the temple. The Roman legate in Syria, Publius Petronius, was ordered to carry out the project, if necessary by use of armed force. The Jews in Palestine, however, could not accept Gaius's plan, and they initiated a campaign against it in which, among other means, mass demonstrations were used. After negotiations between Petronius and the Jews, during which the project was delayed, it was finally cancelled sometime around the death of Gaius.

*The sources.* We are relatively well informed about these events. We have two accounts by Josephus, a shorter one in *The Jewish War* (henceforth Bell.) II, 184–203, and a longer one in *The Antiquities* (henceforth Ant.) XVIII, 261–309. The representation in Ant. is more than twice as long as that of Bell. In addition to the information in Bell., it contains e. g. a description of how King Agrippa I intervened in Rome and obtained Gaius's consent that the plan may be cancelled.

Along with Josephus, there is a parallel account in Philo's political tractate, *The Embassy to Gaius* (henceforth Leg.) 199–338. Here Philo gives a very detailed description of Gaius's project in Palestine. His version is about three times as long as Josephus's in Ant., and gives different information. Especially interesting is some supplementary material about the background for the imperial plan. While Josephus's accounts were written in the seventies and nineties AD, Philo's was written in the forties AD.

Besides these major descriptions, we have an important note in Tacitus, Hist V, 9. We are here told that the Jews took up arms against Gaius's project, but that the emperor's death prevented the imminent war. Tacitus (AD 55–120) lived and wrote a little later than Josephus (AD 37–ca. 100). We also have a note in *Megillat Ta'anit*,

which, according to S. Zeitlin and H. Lichtenstein, was composed in the middle of the first century AD.<sup>1</sup> In this list, we read of the 22nd of Schebat (which is about the end of February), that this day is a day of joy where fasting is not permitted. For, on this date, the work on the project which 'the enemy' had commanded to be placed in the temple 'was stopped'. Finally, some scholars have maintained that a few New Testament texts, like Mark 13, 14–20 and Acts 5, 34–39, allude to Gaius's project.<sup>2</sup> However, as these texts in themselves constitute problems for discussion, first and foremost about whether or not they refer to the events of AD 39–40, they will not be taken into account in the following examination.<sup>3</sup>

*The problems.* This source material raises a number of historical problems. What was the reason for Gaius's decision? What was the real content and intention of the project? How is Petronius's role more precisely to be defined? How are the various Jewish reactions to be conceived and described? Which role was played by King Agrippa? And how, exactly, was the project stopped? We also face a chronological problem because Josephus and Philo seem to presuppose different and apparently contradictory chronological frameworks. In order to tackle these questions, it is necessary primarily *to analyse the understanding and interpretations behind the various authors' representations.*

*Research.* There does not exist much research to elucidate these problems. The main contributions are given by J.P.V.D. Balsdon, H. Graetz, E. Schürer, P.J. Sijpestein, E.M. Smallwood, H. Willrich, and S. Zeitlin.<sup>4</sup> Even these are, however, mostly given in other contexts. In the numerous manuals, textbooks and encyclopedias on the New Testament and ancient Jewish history, these events are mentioned, but, almost without exception, treated superficially.<sup>5</sup> The main

1 Megillat Ta'anit is a list of festival days on which it was forbidden to fast. The text is quite short, and is printed in many different places, e.g. in Zeitlin 1918–1919, 71–102, and 1919–1920, 49–80. 237–290, pp. 237–240. Cf. Lichtenstein 1931, 257–351. Each of these days has a short explanation of why it was put on the list. And for the 22nd of Schebat it is stated: 'On the 22nd thereof was the work stopped on that, which the enemy ordered to bring into the temple. It is not permitted to grieve'. In a commentary (scholium) attached to the list, which, according to Zeitlin (1918–1919, 75) and Lichtenstein (1931, 258), derives from later Talmudic times, our note is interpreted as a statement about Gaius's attempt to desecrate the temple. As far as I am aware, all scholars accept this interpretation. Finally, it ought to be mentioned that the list itself, according to Zeitlin (1918–1919, 73), goes back to the period before AD 70, and, according to Lichtenstein (1931, 264), received its final redaction around the middle of the first century AD.

2 Thus e.g. Swain 1944, 341–349, and Brandon 1967, 88–92 and 230 ff.

3 As regards Mark 13, I have submitted this problem to an independent analysis in Bilde 1976, 105–134.

4 Balsdon 1934, 13–24 (19–24); *ibid.* 1934, 1–145; Colson 1962, XXVII–XXXI; Graetz 1877, 97–107 and 145–156 *ibid.* 317–342; Jones 1938, 191–203, Schürer 1904, 503–507; Sijpestein 1964, 87–96; Smallwood 1957, 3–17; *ibid.* 1961; *ibid.* 1976, 174–180; Willrich 1903, 85–118. 288–317 and 397–470; Zeitlin 1962 and 1967, 176–185; *ibid.* 1965–1966, 22–31.

5 There is no sense in giving a complete list here, and I shall confine myself to referring to Abel

reason for this deplorable state of affairs is probably the absence of a major monograph on the subject. In the few serious examinations it is possible to distinguish between three schools: One which gives priority to Philo's account.<sup>6</sup> One which gives the priority to Josephus.<sup>7</sup> And one which combines and harmonizes the data presented in our two main sources.<sup>8</sup>

*Disposition.* In this examination, I shall take my point of departure in the main problems of the material, as they have been formulated above. From the problems we turn to the sources, and further, through them, I shall attempt to approach the historical reality. Thus, the following six main problems will be analysed: 1) The reason for Gaius's decision and the character of the project. 2) Petronius's attitude. 3) The Jewish opposition. 4) Agrippa's intervention. 5) The cancellation of the project. 6) The chronological question. The examination of the source material and its tendencies will be carried out in connection with each problem.

## 2. The reason for Gaius's decision and the character of his project

All our three main sources open their description by mentioning the imperial order. In *Bell.*, Josephus gives as a reason for the emperor's godless proclamation of divinity (II, 184). In *Ant.*, he adds a new aspect, viz. that the project was also a punishment of the Jewish people, because the Alexandrian Jews, and especially the Alexandrian-Jewish delegation led by Philo, which was at that time in Italy to request certain rights for the Jewish community in Alexandria, had neglected to honour Gaius as a god (*Ant* XVIII, 261, cf. 257–260).<sup>9</sup>

Philo mentions three reasons for Gaius's decision. The 'main reason' was the emperor's well known claim to divinity, which the Jews could not accept. In order to impose his will upon the Jews in this matter, Gaius, according to Philo, had now decided to adopt the world's most beautiful temple as his own (*Leg* 198). The second reason was to be found in a riot in Jamnia. Here the Jewish population had a short time before destroyed an altar to the emperor that had been set up by the non-Jewish population (*Leg* 199–202). As the third reason Philo mentions the

---

1952, I, 446–447; Baron 1937, I, 219; Dubnow 1925, II, 388–399; Grant 1973, 120–132; Foerster 1968, 73 ff.; Juster 1924, I, 351–352; Safrai, *Stern* 1974, I, 354–359; Wellhausen 1895, 334–336.

6 E.g. F.H. Colson and E.M. Smallwood.

7 E.g. H. Graetz.

8 Thus J.P.V.D. Balsdon, A.H.M. Jones, E. Schürer, H. Willrich, S. Zeitlin, and most others.

9 The conflict in Alexandria took place in AD 38–41, and is well documented, first and foremost in Philo's political tractate, *Flaccus* (Henceforth *Fl.*), but also in *Leg.*, in Josephus, *Ant.* XIX, 278–291, and in Claudius's Letter of AD 41, *Pap* London 1912, which has been edited by H. Idris Bell (cf. Idris Bell 1924).

wicked advice given to Gaius by his most 'pious and wise counsellors', the Egyptian slave, Helicon, and the Ascalonitic tragic actor, Apelles (Leg 203–205).

The reasons given by Philo, however, do not fit very well. On the one hand, we read about Gaius's general hatred of the Jews, who, alone of all the nations, refuse to worship him. This is the dominant motive of the tractate as a whole. It is concentrated around the tension between the emperor and the Jewish people (Leg 115–118). Because of the Jewish refusal to worship him, Gaius hated this people and prepared 'a vast and truceless war' against them, as Philo states (Leg 119). The whole tractate is marked by the description of Gaius's enmity towards the Jews. Consequently, Leg. should be understood as the background to a lost work on the divine punitive retaliation against Gaius, the so-called *Palinode* (Leg 373). The structure of Leg. seems to be the same as that of the parallel tractate, Fl., which is dominated by the description of Flaccus's evildoings against the Jews and, as a consequence, of God's punishment of the Egyptian prefect.<sup>10</sup> The picture in Leg. of the general hatred of Gaius for the Jews, therefore, ought to be conceived as part of a *literary pattern* created by Philo.

This also applies to Philo's parenthetical allusion to the advice of Helicon and Apelles. In the course of the events, these two are both said to have been punished for their wickedness (Leg 206). These figures are designed in the same way as Flaccus, Gaius, and Capito, the imperial procurator of Jamnia who, according to Philo, was 'the instigator of the whole episode' (Leg 202). The description of the non-Jewish population of Jamnia, finally, is of the same category, just like that of the Egyptian and Greek population of Alexandria in Fl. The non-Jews of Jamnia are said to have been motivated to construct the imperial shrine, not out of respect for the emperor, but out of hatred of the Jews (Leg 201).

The uniform pictures of Capito and the non-Jews of Jamnia seem to aim at demonstrating the innocence of the Jews there. These elements, as well as the emphasis upon the instigation of Helicon and Apelles, cast doubt on the overall hatred of Gaius for the Jews as the main reason for the project. These features, as well as the unevenness in Philo's account, and the differences between the versions in Bell. and Ant., indicate that *the tradition about the reason for Gaius's project has been given several interpretations*. The most easily recognizable one is Philo's overall understanding, according to which both the events in Alexandria in AD 38 and Gaius's plan in Palestine are religio-political expressions of the emperor's general hatred of the Jewish people, the foundation of which was Gaius's insane claim to divinity. This interpretation is basically the same as that of Josephus, although this author has not elaborated it to the same extent as Philo.

---

10 The basic idea of Fl. is to demonstrate how a hostile attitude and policy towards the Jews result in disaster for the originator. Fl. 1 hints that a similar work may have been written on Sejanus.

A great number of scholars mistake this interpretation for the historical reality.<sup>11</sup> They assume that Gaius made a major change in the traditional Roman policy towards the Jews, so that the policy of tolerance and protection was replaced by one of force in order to compel the Jews to take part in the imperial cult.<sup>12</sup> There is no evidence, however, for the assumption that Gaius issued an edict ordering all inhabitants of the empire, including the Jews, to take part in the worship of the emperor. Gaius was not responsible for the serious disturbances and the persecution of the Alexandrian Jews in the year AD 38, as maintained by Philo (Leg 346). Gaius could in fact be said to have been responsible for the termination of these persecutions.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, we know, again from Philo, that Gaius did not harm the Jewish delegation from Alexandria, who when in Italy refused to obey the emperor's command to worship, but only dismissed the Jews with a joke (Leg 367). Against this background, Josephus' interpretation in Ant. of the project in Palestine as a punishment for the Alexandrian Jews' refusal to recognize Gaius's divinity appears to be similarly unrealistic.

This finding is confirmed by the Roman sources, which give no evidence of any such religio-political change under Gaius. On the basis of our main sources, Suetonius, Dio Cassius, Philo and Josephus, it can be said that Gaius certainly behaved strangely and may have had odd ideas about himself. Yet he does not seem to have taken them quite as seriously as many of his contemporaries and many scholars of later ages have done.<sup>14</sup> Gaius also seems to have willingly accepted divine honour and worship from the senate and the people. But there is no trace of his having *imposed* this on anybody.

11 Thus e.g. Fuchs 1924, 19; Juster 1924, I, 351–352; Morrison 1890, 154; Cerfaux & Tondriau 1957, 343–346.

12 E.g. Scramuzza 1933, V, 284: 'Caligula broke away from this policy of toleration which had worked well ... (and made an attempt to) force the whole nation in and outside Judaea to recognize his dignity.' Cf. 290. Likewise Grant 1973, 128.

13 According to Fl 1 Flaccus was mainly responsible for these disturbances. In Fl 20–21, we read that it was Dionysius, Isidorus, and Lampon, some Greek Alexandrian personalities. And in Fl 108 ff., we learn that the persecutions of the Alexandrian Jews were in fact terminated when Gaius deposed Flaccus.

14 One example of this can be found in Leg 349–367, where Philo is reporting on the dialogue between Gaius and the Alexandrian-Jewish embassy. Even through Philo's account it is possible to perceive the emperor's self-ironic tone, cf. e.g. his concluding remarks: 'They (the Jews) seem to me to be people unfortunate rather than wicked and to be foolish in refusing to believe that I have got the nature of a god' (Leg 367) (Colson's translation). Another example is found in Dio Cassius, Roman History, LIX, 26, 8–9: 'Once a Gaul, seeing him (Gaius) uttering oracles from a lofty platform in the guise of Jupiter, was moved to laughter, whereupon Gaius summoned him and inquired, 'What do I seem to you to be?' And the other answered (I give the exact words): 'A big humbug.' Yet the man met with no harm, for he was only a shoemaker.' The last phrase may have been added by Dio or his source of anti-Gaius tradition, which was used to picture Gaius as murdering people for such words.



Gaius's project in Palestine, accordingly, cannot adequately be explained as part of an overall change in the Roman policy of religion, including the abolition of the traditional policy of tolerance towards the Jews.

Nor can the project in Palestine rightly be interpreted as a result of a feeling of personal insult by the emperor because of the destruction of his altar in Jamnia.<sup>15</sup> There is no hint in this direction in the sources, and one should not reduce important political events to outward expressions of a sensitive soul. With this, I would also like to challenge the popular idea that Gaius's reaction can be regarded as the result of a mental disease.<sup>16</sup> This idea seems to me to be based on a misunderstanding of the sources where they speak of the emperor's *μανία*.<sup>17</sup> But rather than mental disease in the pathological sense of the word, this use of *μανία* covers the sense of *ὑβρις* in the traditional Greek meaning.

Summing up the evidence in this matter, it can be stated that in Philo and Josephus there is no trace whatever of indications that Gaius should have been mentally ill. Further, that Dio Cassius and, in particular, Suetonius write about the unstable and unintegrated personality of Gaius. Suetonius describes this as an expression of 'valitudo animi'.<sup>18</sup> But *valitudo animi*, in this context, cannot be interpreted as insanity, rather as the expression of an unusual mental condition. For had Gaius really been mad in the pathological sense of the word, then, I feel sure, this would have been emphasized strongly in our sources, because on the whole they are outspokenly critical of Gaius.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, there is no valid reason for interpreting the project in Palestine as the result of Gaius's insanity.

An adequate explanation of Gaius's reaction, in my opinion, can only be found in an analysis of what happened in Jamnia. The Jewish act here cannot be understood solely as an incidental and, perhaps, unimportant expression of their struggle with their non-Jewish neighbours. *The demolition of the imperial altar was a political act*. Seen from Rome, it was an expression of political disloyalty, an act which came close to revolt, because the imperial cult-place represented and symbolized Rome, and because participation in the imperial cult was first and foremost an act of political loyalty. A sort of parallel is found in Dio Cassius, where Vitellius is told to seal his victory over Parthia by letting the Parthian king

15 Thus e.g. Brandon 1967, 85.

16 Thus e.g. Riciotti 1948, II, 486–487; Scramuzza 1933, 290; Zeitlin 1962–1967, II, 183.

17 Cf. e.g. Leg 93 and Ant XVIII, 278. In Leg 162, self-deception rather than mental illness is meant, precisely as in Bell II, 184.

18 Suetonius 1913–1914, Gaius Caligula, particularly L,1–L1,1.

19 It is important to realize that the idea of Gaius being insane is practically absent in our oldest sources, Philo and Josephus. Therefore, and for other reasons as well, we find an obvious reticence in research on Gaius with regard to Dio Cassius's and Suetonius's words about this emperor's insanity, cf. Charlesworth 1933, 118; Balsdon 1934, 461. Charlesworth and Balsdon, like H. Willrich, have rightly emphasized the strong bias against Gaius and the principate that is present in Dio Cassius and Suetonius.

sacrifice to the images of Augustus and Gaius (LIX, 27, 2–3). A good analogy moreover, is found in the interruption in AD 66 of the sacrifices for the Roman emperor in the temple of Jerusalem, an act which is correctly interpreted by Josephus as a sign of revolt.<sup>20</sup> Neither in Jamnia nor anywhere else were the Jews forced to participate in the imperial cult. The act in Jamnia, therefore, seems to have been a sort of 'Zealotic' attack on the status quo. It touched upon the foundation of the Roman policy of tolerance: reciprocity. The precondition of the Roman protection of Jewish religion was that they themselves should limit their zeal.<sup>21</sup> This precondition was understood and accepted by Philo and Josephus.<sup>22</sup> *The action in Jamnia, therefore, has to be seen as a destruction of one of the basic preconditions for the Roman policy towards the Jews, viz. Jewish toleration and non-intervention in non-Jewish cults.* Gaius's project, therefore, may be interpreted as aiming at enforcing these preconditions. The Jewish act was understood as a break in the traditional good relations with Rome. Therefore, it was met with force. At the same time, it was seen as an attempt to change the delicate balance of the relative independence which, in religious matters, was granted the Jews by the Romans. This may be why Gaius proceeded to such radical counter-action as the desecration of the Jerusalem shrine. That this interpretation is close to the truth, may also be gathered from Leg 334, where we read about the conditions under which Gaius cancelled his project: 'For he added an injunction that if any persons in the neighbouring regions outside the capital who wished to set up altars or temples or any images in honour of him or his were prevented from so doing, Petronius was to punish the obstructors at once and send them up to him' (Colson's translation).

With these reflections, I do not pretend to have explained exhaustively the character of Gaius's project. It is still a riddle why Gaius chose to punish the Jews by erecting a statue of himself in Jerusalem's temple. It would have been possible to punish them in another way. I have only attempted to show that there were good reasons for strong Roman reaction. Further, that the project ought not to be interpreted as expression of a general abandonment of traditional Roman policies towards the Jews. Nor of Gaius's insanity or of any feeling that he had been insulted or the like. This pragmatic interpretation also corresponds better than others with the fact that Gaius later showed willingness to change his mind and

---

20 Cf. Bell II, 409–410 and 417.

21 Cf. Smallwood 1965, 232–239 and 313–319.

22 Cf. Ant IV, 207 and cAp II, 237. Likewise Philo in vita Mos II, 205 and de spec leg I, 53. In contrast to many of their 'zealous' fellow countrymen, Josephus and Philo here interpret Ex 22, 27 (LXX) as a prohibition against disturbing other people's worship. The same attitude is witnessed for Yohanan ben Zakkai, cf. Aboth de Rabbi Nathan 31. This text is discussed in Neusner 1970, 147–148.

his project, when he learned that the Jamnian act was actually not meant as revolt, and that the planned imperial action was likely to become too costly.

Philo and Josephus now both relate that Gaius sent the legate in Syria to Palestine with specific orders to enforce the erection of an imperial statue in Jerusalem. The temple was then to be consecrated to the worship of Gaius under the name of Ζεύς (Επιφανής Νέος Γάιος) (Leg 188 and 346). By this, the disobedient Jews would be forced to take part in an act expressing loyalty to Rome (Leg 203).

Josephus, Philo, and Tacitus indicate that this was a war-like project. It was a punitive action, and it is obvious that Gaius foresaw Jewish resistance. According to Bell II, 185, Petronius was ordered to kill those who resisted and to sell the rest of the people as slaves.<sup>23</sup> Petronius was therefore ordered to advance towards Palestine with a considerable army, consisting of two legions plus auxiliaries.<sup>24</sup> An idea of the strength of this force can be obtained from Bell III, 64–67, according to which Vespasian started his campaign with three legions in AD 67.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. The attitude of Petronius

The picture of Petronius in the sources appears to be clear and simple. He is portrayed as the hero who risks his own life for the sake of the Jews, and, in return for this, is rewarded by God. This picture is also found almost everywhere in the secondary literature.<sup>26</sup> It is, however, questionable whether this view can stand up to a closer analysis of the source material. According to Bell., Petronius immediately gives way to the first Jewish demonstration at Ptolemais. He then leaves the army and the statues in this non-Jewish city, and travels to Galilee, where he gathers the people and nobility together in Tiberias (II, 192–193). Here, by means of threats and persuasion, he tries to show the Jews how impossible is their wish to avoid the realization of Gaius's project (II, 193–194). In the face of their willingness to die rather than see the temple desecrated, he reveals that it is not he

23 Ant XVIII, 261 has a somewhat milder formulation.

24 According to Bell II, 186, it was three legions. This is, however, corrected in Ant. to two (XVIII, 262). And this figure corresponds to Leg 207, where Philo talks about 'half of the Euphrates army', which consisted of four legions, cf. Balsdon 1970, 89.

25 The complete Roman force around AD 40 consisted of about 25 legions, cf. Webster 1969, 113–114.

26 Thus e.g. Schürer 1904, I, 503: 'Nur schweren Herzens gehorchte der verständige Mann dem knabenhaften Verlangen'; Ricciotti 1948, II, 491: 'En ces circonstances difficiles Petrone agit avec beaucoup de prudence et d'humanité'; Smallwood 1961, 268–269: 'Petronius' handling of the whole episode, as recorded by both Philo and Josephus, reveals him as a humane and sensitive person, with considerable sympathy for Jewish feelings'. Likewise in Smallwood 1976, 180.

personally, but the emperor, who is hostile towards the Jews (II, 195). He then says how impressed he is by the demonstrations, and indicates his pity for the people (II, 198). During the next few days, Petronius is again said to have tried to persuade the Jews. But, as Josephus remarks, since the Jews remained refractory, and the tilling of the soil was endangered, Petronius at last declared his willingness to risk his own life in an attempt to persuade the emperor to recall his plan (II, 201). He then returns, blessed by the people, to Ptolemais and from there, with his army and the statues, back to Antioch. From here, Petronius reports to Gaius who, in return, sends him his death-sentence (II, 203).

In the *Ant.* version, Josephus at first seems to be following the description in *Bell.*, with some minor alterations. But in *Ant.*, Petronius's change of mind is a result of the intervention of Jewish leaders in Tiberias (XVIII, 273–276). In addition, this change is now described as total. Petronius here holds that Gaius's order is 'mad',<sup>27</sup> and his respect for Jewish piety is much more strongly formulated, particularly in his great speech to the Jews (XVIII, 279–283). Here Petronius is reported to have said: 'You are carrying out the precepts of your law, which as your heritage you see fit to defend, and serving the sovereign of all, almighty God, whose temple I should not have had the heart to see fall a prey to the insolence (ὕβρις) of imperial authority' (XVIII, 280) (Feldman's translation). Petronius is further said to express the hope that the Jews would receive the help of God in their just struggle for the law against imperial insanity (XVIII, 281). Finally, he is reported to have concluded his speech by declaring his own willingness to tolerate all kinds of danger rather than to see so many people being destroyed for such pious acts (XVIII, 282).

Petronius, then, according to *Ant.*, called upon the people to resume work in the fields. At the same time, Josephus remarks, God demonstrated that he would support Petronius in his intentions. For as soon as Petronius had ended his speech, against expectation, and after a whole year of drought, God sent a heavy shower (XVIII, 285). Both Petronius and the Jews correctly interpreted this as a sign of divine protection and approval of their intentions. Gaius was murdered before the imperial order to Petronius to commit suicide reached the legate. Thus God rescued both him and the Jewish people (XVIII, 305–307).

In this way, we can observe a marked development in the last part of the version in *Ant.* Petronius here clearly regards Gaius and his whole project as insane and godless. Likewise, the Jews, who in the first part of *Ant.* are pictured as Petronius's obstinate opponents, are here portrayed in less aggressive colours. They are now described as representatives of piety and virtue, and Petronius is told to be their ally and clearly to see God's hand in the whole course of events.

27 In *Ant.* XVIII, 277–278 and 280, the words *μανία* and *ὕβρις* are used.

In Philo's representation, Petronius's misgivings are present from the very beginning. Immediately on receiving the imperial orders, he is full of doubts (Leg 209). For he knew, Philo writes, that the Jews were a strong and numerous people that would defend themselves (Leg 209–212 and 214–218). But Petronius also hesitated because, 'by nature just and pious', he perceived the wickedness of the project (Leg 213). Consequently, he was slow to act, tried to delay the whole matter, and found a preliminary solution in ordering the work on the statue to be started (Leg 220–222). In the meantime, Petronius called in the Jewish leaders (to Antioch?) in order to try to persuade them to accept the project without resistance (Leg 222–223). However, also according to Philo, he did not succeed in this, and a big Jewish mass demonstration followed, this time in Phoenicia (!). The Jewish attitude here greatly influenced the 'by nature goodhearted and cultivated Petronius' (Leg 243). He found that the Jewish case was just and deserving of his pity. And, according to Philo, it appeared 'that he himself had some rudiments of Jewish philosophy and religion acquired either in early lessons in the past through his zeal for culture or after his appointment as governor in the countries where the Jews are very numerous in every city' (Leg 245) (Colson's translation). Accordingly, Petronius is said to have further delayed the work on the statue. Although for tactical reasons he refused to permit the Jews to send an embassy to Gaius, he promised, according to Philo, that he himself should write and ask the emperor for further postponement of the plan. This he did, and we read in Philo that in return he point Philo interrupts the description of the events in Palestine, and we are left without information about their conclusion.

Thus we have seen that in Philo Petronius's opposition to Gaius's project is presupposed from the beginning. Petronius is pictured as an important part of the counter-movement against Gaius's plan, whereas in Josephus, particularly in Bell., he plays a much more passive role. We have thus received an impression of Petronius in Philo and Josephus, but how can we reach the real, historical Roman governor? I think we have a hint in the contradiction between the slow Petronius in Philo and the quicker one in Josephus. While in Philo Petronius is slow from the beginning (Leg 213), the opposite is the case in Josephus. In Ant XVIII, 262, we hear that Petronius took over Syria and 'hurried' (ἠπείγεται) to carry out Gaius's orders. He gathered his army, and marched to Ptolemais in order to spend the winter there so that in the springtime he would be able to start the campaign 'without delay' (οὐκ ἀφεξόμενος). We get the same impression from Ant XVIII, 269, where we are told that, after the first meeting with the Jews, Petronius, gathered his friends and 'rushed' (ἠπείγεται) to Tiberias. Only then, and this occurs in Josephus as well, did Petronius begin to move at a slower speed.

This tension should be combined with the tensions in Josephus's own picture of Petronius. In Josephus's account, Petronius seems to change his character. In the beginning he is described as a loyal and dutiful imperial agent. But later, he

develops into a sort of proselyte, who defies the imperial orders and risks his own life on behalf of the provincials, an attitude that was unusual among Roman provincial governors. Can there be any doubt that, in the beginning of the versions of *Bell.* and *Ant.*, we are confronted with traces of reliable historical tradition?

Accordingly, our result seems to be the somewhat surprising one that the contemporary description by Philo is more remote from historical reality than that of the later Josephus. Philo portrays his Petronius in the same way as his Gaius, Flaccus, and his other schematic figures. By contrast, we have a less highly coloured picture in the first part of Josephus's accounts. Here we meet the imperial legate who is sent to Syria and Palestine with special orders to carry out Gaius's plan. He appears from the beginning as a loyal agent, showing both zeal and efficiency. Later, however, this figure is so to speak swallowed up by the redactional picture of the pro-Jewish and self-sacrificing hero.

#### 4. The Jewish opposition

Among scholars there is general consensus that Gaius's plan gave rise to strong opposition in Palestine. But there is no agreement about the specific character of this opposition. The majority of commentators do not pay any attention at all to the problem. The second largest group accepts Philo's and Josephus's accounts, according to which the Jewish opposition was pacifist.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, however, they admit that carrying out the project would have thrown Palestine into a general revolt, thus anticipating the first Jewish-Roman war in 66 by some 25 years. A few scholars, like S. G. F. Brandon and W. R. Farmer, assume that a violent 'Zealotic' resistance actually took place in AD 40.<sup>29</sup>

But let us turn to the sources for further elucidation. According to the version in *Bell.*, there were varied reactions among the Jews. Some reacted to the war rumours with disbelief. Others were irresolute about the possibilities of defence. And finally, when Petronius's army reached Ptolemais, the predominant reaction was fear (II, 187). A short while later, however, we see quite a different picture. On the plain around Ptolemais the Jews were organizing an orderly demonstration with the participation of women and children who were begging Petronius to be merciful as regards the laws and the people (II, 192). As a result of this demonstration, the army and the statues were left in Ptolemais.

28 Thus e.g. Baldson 1934, 137: 'By inviting martyrdom, they succeeded as they would never have triumphed by force of arms'. Similarly, Jones 1938, 197–198; Schürer 1904, I, 504; Zeitlin 1962–1967, II, 180.

29 Cf. Brandon 1967, 84–91; Farmer 1956, 61 ff.; Willrich 1903, 416, note 3.

In Tiberias, this scene was repeated in an extended version. Here the Jews explained to Petronius the demands of the law concerning images (II, 195), and they are reported to have proclaimed their desire to die for the Tora (II, 196). But when Petronius asked them whether they really preferred to fight the Romans, Josephus relates that they answered by pointing out the daily sacrifices in Jerusalem's temple for the emperor (II, 197). At the same time, however, they emphasized that Gaius would have to fight against the whole people, if he did not give up his project. In his report to the emperor, according to Josephus, Petronius also pointed out that carrying out the plan would mean the loss of both the people and the land (II, 202).

In this manner, we realize that the representation in Bell. is ambiguous, because we have here a description of a pacifist Jewish reaction side by side with hints of non-pacifist elements.

In Ant., the initial description in Bell. of the first reactions of the Jews is eliminated. And along with a number of other alterations, we have in Ant XVIII, 267–268 an element of quite another kind, of hope, incarnated in the peaceful words there reported to have been said by the Jews: 'We shall patiently endure what may be in store for us, with the assurance that for those who are determined to take the risk there is hope even of prevailing; for God will stand by us if we welcome dangers for His glory. Fortune, moreover, is wont to veer now toward one side, now toward the other in human affairs' (XVIII, 267) (Feldman's translation).

In Tiberias, according to the account in Ant., there followed new demonstrations and further negotiations. On a question from Petronius as to whether they wanted to go to war, the Jews answered plainly: 'Under no conditions', but that they preferred to be slaughtered rather than to transgress the laws. And then, Josephus writes, they lay down and exposed their necks to the Romans (XVIII, 271). These demonstrations and discussions are said to have continued for 40 days (Bell II, 200: 50 years).

First at this point, and then almost parenthetically, the information about the agricultural strike is added: 'Furthermore, they neglected their fields, and that, too, though it was time to sow the seed' (XVIII, 272) (Feldman's translation). Whereas it is not clear from the account in Bell. that this is really a strike, the version in Ant. leaves no doubt about it. It is made clear by the information about the intervention of the royal house in the person of Aristobulus (King Agrippa's brother), Helicas (King Agrippa's friend and general, cf. Ant XIX, 353) and other Jewish leaders (XVIII, 273). They point to the dangers of the strike, which might lead to 'banditry' (ληστεῖαι), and request Petronius to write to the emperor with a description of this danger (XVIII, 274). Furthermore, we are told that Petronius concluded his great speech to the people by a call to resume work (XVIII, 283). And after the speech, he is said to have repeated this in an exhortation to the

Jewish leaders (XVIII, 284). In Petronius' letter to Gaius, the strike is likewise said to play an important role (XVIII, 287). And we are informed that Gaius, at the reception of this report, interpreted this information as a sign of open revolt (XVIII, 302).

In other words, the tension observed in Bell. between conflict motives and more peaceful motives is not absent from the account in Ant. either. On the contrary. The war-like element as well as the strike motive are present in sharp contrast to the description of the peaceful demonstrations.

A war-like intention is also present in Philo's account, particularly in his description of Petronius's reflection at his reception of Gaius's orders. In Philo's outline of these reflections, the eventual Jewish resistance plays a considerable role (Leg 208–218). Otherwise, we find in Philo a rather uniform pacifist description of the Jewish opposition. At first, the Jewish leadership is said to be supplicating Petronius (in Antioch?) (Leg 222–224). Then the Jewish masses are said to be streaming from all over the country to Phoenicia (Leg 225–227). Organized in an orderly and peaceful demonstration, and led by their council of elders, they attempted to assure Petronius of their loyalty and peaceful intentions (Leg 229–232). Thereupon, the Jews, according to Philo, offered to the Romans all their property in return for a cancellation of the project (Leg 232). However, Philo writes, if they could not persuade Petronius, they would prefer to die rather than to witness the desecration of their shrine (Leg 233). More, they would act as their own executioners (Leg 234–235). They are reported to conclude by requesting Petronius to permit a Jewish embassy to be sent to Gaius (Leg 239–242). This request is said to have been refused for 'tactical' reasons. Instead, Petronius himself wrote and asked Gaius to postpone the whole project. In this letter, he is reported to have pointed out the danger that the Jews might in desperation burn the harvest and destroy the country (Leg 249). This element has, in the context of Petronius' letter, a purely tactical purpose. But it may reflect a reality different from that which Philo intends to show his readers.

Thus we are able to observe the same type of tension in Philo's account as we saw in Josephus. On the one hand, a strong emphasis on the peaceful Jewish attitude, and on the other hand, some hints at a more violent Jewish resistance. *In my opinion this tension between realistic glimpses of a dangerous situation, and a pacifist interpretation of the Jewish opposition can best be explained as an expression of a contradiction between redactional tendency and historical tradition.*

The realistic glimpses, which we meet most clearly in Josephus, probably reveal the historical circumstances under which Gaius's plan was to be carried out. We also meet this historical situation in Tacitus, Hist V, 9: 'When Gaius thereafter commanded his statue set up in the temple, they preferred to take up arms ...'. This situation corresponds to the situation pictured in Bell II, 185–187,



and in Ant XVIII, 287 and 302, and it should consequently be regarded as the historical reality.

The hints in Philo and Josephus of agricultural unrest and strikes, however, indicate that the Jews, at least in Galilee, used other means as well in their struggle against the imperial attempt to violate the temple. We have to be aware of the fact that this agricultural unrest apparently took place in Agrippa's newly gained territory. In AD 39 Herod Antipas was deposed by Gaius and exiled to Gaul, and his territories were handed over to Agrippa.<sup>30</sup> In this fact we may find an important reason for the intervention of the royal house in Tiberias, and of the king himself in Rome. An agricultural strike was a far-reaching and dangerous event. Neglect of the sowing and, consequently, absence of the harvest could lead to serious consequences like hunger, inability to pay the taxes, and increase in the number of 'bandits'. A strike was likely to increase the dissatisfied and anti-Roman, and probably also anti-Herodian forces in Galilee. This would imply a serious increase in the economic, social, and political problems in the kingdom. Accordingly, the royal government in Tiberias had several good reasons for intervening.

We have now established a picture of the *religious*, *military*, and *socioeconomic* character of the Jewish opposition against Gaius's project. There was hardly any *political* element in the opposition even though this may originally have been the case in Jamnia. For the conflict, as we know it, was concentrated in Galilee, which was under Jewish rule. The Jewish resistance was *religious* in its motivation, and this type of opposition was presumably widespread in all Jewish communities in Palestine, and outside. But the opposition was *military* in its intention. There are no traces in the sources of actual fighting. But there can be no doubt that military resistance was being prepared, and would have been undertaken if the negotiations had collapsed. Finally, the Jewish opposition was *economic* and *diplomatic* as regards the means which were actually used in the stages that our sources reveal.

## 5. Agrippa's intervention in Rome

The account in Bell. does not mention King Agrippa at all. But in Ant. and in Philo we find two widely differing descriptions of the royal intervention in Rome.

Josephus relates that Agrippa, at this time, happened to be living in Rome (Ant XVIII, 289). Further, that the king once arranged such a superb banquet for Gaius that the emperor promised to grant Agrippa whatever he desired. The king's answer was surprisingly modest. He did not want anything for himself, but only a favour for his people for whose sake he asked Gaius to countermand his project

---

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bell II, 183 and Ant XVIII, 252.

(XVIII, 297). Josephus comments that this request was dangerous for Agrippa, but that he was willing to risk his life for his people (XVIII, 298).

Surprisingly, the emperor not only granted him his request, but also praised him for his piety and virtue (XVIII, 300). Accordingly, Gaius wrote to Petronius and ordered him to stop the campaign if it had not yet been carried through.

Thus Agrippa stands, in Josephus's representation, as a pious and disinterested hero with many features resembling Josephus's portrait of Petronius.

In Philo, we read that Agrippa came to Rome only after Gaius had answered Petronius's request for a postponement of the project. And when he met the emperor, he knew nothing at all about the plan, but had to be informed about it by Gaius himself (Leg 261–265). However, even before Gaius could finish his report, Agrippa fainted, choked by the words he had heard (Leg 266–267). For two days he lay unconscious, and when he finally regained consciousness, Philo writes, he decided to *write* a supplication to the emperor (Leg 275–276). For it was the dream of his heart to rescue his unhappy people in this horrible situation (Leg 274). Philo then quotes this petition (Leg 276–329). Here Agrippa is reported to have emphasized the traditional Jewish loyalty to the imperial house (Leg 279–280 and 288–289). Likewise, the traditional Roman policy of respect and tolerance towards Jerusalem and its shrine (Leg 291–320). Finally, Agrippa is said to have offered his whole fortune, all his property, and indeed his entire kingdom in return for a cancellation of the project (Leg 327). But if this was not obtainable, he is said to have expressed his preference for death (Leg 329).

Thus Philo's picture of King Agrippa seems to have been moulded by quite a different personality from that of Josephus. In Philo, there is, in particular, a much greater distance between the king and the emperor. Confronted with this material, we have to approach it with an adequate method. It is not advisable, with scholars as A. H. M. Jones and E. M. Smallwood, just to state that Philo, as the contemporary source, must be the more reliable.<sup>31</sup> We have to judge, not from external criteria only, but also, and in particular, from an internal analysis of the texts involved. Only a little better is S. Zeitlin in his article on Agrippa's letter to Gaius.<sup>32</sup> According to Zeitlin, this letter cannot be genuine because it contains references to the 'Highest God' (Leg 278) and his providence (Leg 293), things

31 Cf. Smallwood 1961, 291: 'If a choice is to be made between Philo and Josephus, the former's prosaic version seems preferable to Josephus' story with its fairytale ring'. Likewise, in Smallwood 1976, 174. Smallwood also assumes that Philo 'almost certainly' was in contact with Agrippa in Italy, where 'he may well have helped to draft his written appeal to the Emperor' (1957, 7, corresponding with 1961, 32, and 1976, 174). Jones 1938, 202, speculates along the same lines: 'Philo, who was in Rome at the time and knew the facts, tells the more prosaic truth'. Notice how the term 'prosaic' has moved from Jones to his pupil Smallwood. It is questionable, however, how 'prosaic' Philo's account really is.

32 Zeitlin 1965–1966, 22–31, cf. 1962–1967, II, 182–185.