

Quotes: Pathways For The Gospel

Many in every period of life, on every level of society, of both sexes in towns and villages scattered about the countryside.

Neill p.31 Pliny, *Epistles*

We know a great deal more about Paul than we know about anyone else. He tends to dominate the scene, and we are inclined to think of him as the typical missionary. In point of fact the picture is far more complex than that. We have to think of a great many full-time missionaries moving rapidly in many directions, and also of that mass of unprofessional missionaries through whose witness churches were coming into being all over the place, unorganized, independent, yet acutely aware of their status as the new Israel and of their fellowship with all other believers in the world.

Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions, The Pelican History Of The Church Volume 6*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1964 p.29

Pax Romana

For "righteousness arose in his days and abundance of peace" began with his birth; God was preparing the nations for his teaching, that they might be under one Roman emperor so that the unfriendly attitude of the nations to one another, caused by the existence of a large number of kingdoms, might not make it more difficult for Jesus's apostles to do what he commanded them when he said, "Go and teach all nations". It is quite clear that Jesus was born under the reign of Augustus, the one who reduced to uniformity, so to speak, the many kingdoms on earth so that he had a single empire. It would have hindered Jesus's teaching from being spread through the whole world if there had been many kingdoms, not only for the reasons just stated, but also because men everywhere would have been compelled to do military service and fight in defense of their own land. This used to happen before the times of Augustus. Accordingly, how could this teaching, which preaches peace and does not even allow men to take vengeance on their enemies, have had any success unless the international situation had everywhere been changed and a milder spirit prevailed at the advent of Jesus?

Green ch.1 n.2 Origen, *Contra Celsum*

It was since the pacification of the universe and the restoration of the Republic, that, at length, happy and quiet times came our way.

Green ch.1 n.8 *Grave Inscription*

Where the Romans went, there they built roads; paved, well-engineered, running undeviatingly forward over hill and dale. Later, when the Roman order had collapsed and the roads were neglected, a great part of mankind lived in isolated villages, which during the long northern winters were cut off from every sort of communication with their kind. But in the Romans days it was not so; travel was safer and more rapid than at any later time till the nineteenth century.

Neill p.26

Greek Language

The Roman Empire had accepted Greek both as the language of trade and as the medium of familiar intercourse between all educated men. One who knew Greek could go anywhere and find friends to whom he could talk; when the Churches of Lyons and Vienne in the south of France about A.D. 177 wished to communicate to the rest of the Christian world tidings of the terrible persecution which they had suffered, it was in Greek that they set forth the tale. Not only so. The conquests of Alexander in the fourth century B.C. had spread Greek civilization and the Greek language far into the heart of Asia. A Greek kingdom maintained itself for more than two centuries on the Indian frontier, indeed for a time in India itself, with notable effects on Indian art.

(For centuries after his death the Bhudda was never depicted in art, his place being taken by the symbolic wheel. It was only under the influence of the Graeco-Indian tradition that the pictorial representation of the Bhudda, so familiar in all Bhuddist countries and beyond, began to take shape.)

Neill p.27 & n.1

Greek Thought

Attack on polytheism, anthropomorphism and immorality

The worst of all faults, especially if the story is ugly and immoral as well as false - misrepresenting the nature of gods such stories are not fit to be repeated nor yet any tales of warfare and intrigues and battles of gods against gods, which are equally untrue If our commonwealth is to be well-ordered, we must fight to the last against any member of it being suffered to speak of the divine, which is good, being responsible for evil Surely the state of the divine nature must be perfect in every way, and would therefore be the last thing to suffer transformations from any outside cause The poets must not tell us that 'the gods go to and fro among the cities of men, disguised as strangers of all sorts from far countries' they would be blaspheming the gods They do not transform themselves by magic or mislead us by illusions and lies.

Plato, *Republic* 377-382

Superstition, it is scarcely necessary to say, seems to be a kind of cowardice in relationship to the divine. The superstitious man is one who will not set out for the day before he has washed his hands and sprinkled himself at three springs, and put in his mouth a little bayleaf gathered near a temple If owls hoot when he is taking a walk, he is much disturbed and goes along saying, "Athena defend me!" Whenever he sees anything in his sleep, off he goes to the diviners or the soothsayers or the interpreters of dreams, to ask which of the gods or the goddesses he should appeal to.

Theophrastus, *Characters* XVI, Frederick C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions*, New York, The Liberal Arts Press, 1953 p.72

Is the eye of Dike [Justice] blind like a mole's? And does Phaethon see badly with his single eye? And is the vision of impartial Themis distorted? How can they be looked upon as gods if they possess neither sight nor hearing?

Cercidas, *Oxyrhynchus Fragment*, Grant p.78

It has well been said of the Greeks that it was not that men became so depraved that they abandoned their gods, but rather that the gods became so depraved that they were abandoned by men.

Green ch.1

Move toward monotheism

"Then he will know how far my power tops all the other gods'
Come, try me, immortals, so all of you can learn.
Hang a great golden cable down from the heavens,
lay hold of it, all you gods, all goddesses too:
you can never drag me down from sky to earth,
not Zeus, the highest, mightiest king of kings,
not even if you worked yourselves to death.
But whenever I'd set my mind to drag you up,
in deadly earnest, I'd hoist you all with ease,
you and the earth, you and the sea, all together,
then loop that golden cable round a horn of Olympus,
bind it fast and leave the whole world dangling in mid-air-
that is how far I tower over the gods, I tower over men."

Homer, *Iliad*, Book 8 19-31

Zeus, great nameless all in all,
if that name will gain his favor,
I will call him Zeus.
I have no words to do him justice,
weighing all in the balance,
all I have is Zeus.

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 161-166

There are many gods according to custom, but only one according to nature
There is one God, the greatest among gods and men, unlike mortals in appearance,
unlike in thought.

Xenophanes, *Fragments* 23, Green ch.1

In the world of knowledge, the last thing to be perceived and only with great
difficulty is the essential Form of Goodness. Once it is perceived, the conclusion
must follow that, for all things, this is the cause of whatever is right and good.....
Without having had a vision of this Form no one can act with wisdom, either in
this life or in matters of state.

Plato, *Republic* VII 517

It is impossible for evil to be stationed in heaven; its territory is necessarily mortal
nature - it patrols this earthly realm. That is why one should try to escape as quickly
as possible from here to there. The escape-route is assimilation to God, in so far as
this is possible, and this assimilation is combined with moral respect for God and
man..... It is utterly and completely impossible for God to be immoral and not to be
the acme of morality; and the only way any of us, for our part, can approximate to
God is to become as moral as possible.

Plato, *Theatetus* 176

Most glorious of immortals, Zeus
 The many-named, almighty evermore,
 Nature's great Sovereign, ruling all by law-
 Hail to thee! On thee 'tis meet and right
 That mortals everywhere should call.
 From thee was our begetting; ours alone
 Of all that live and move upon the earth
 The lot to bear God's likeness.
 Thee will I ever chant, thy power praise!

Stobaeus, *Eclogae* L 1. 12, *Hymn to Zeus*, Grant p.152

First of all believe that God is a being incorruptible [i.e., immortal and unchangeable] and blessed, just as in the common idea of God which is engraved on the mind, and do not assign to him anything contrary to his incorruption or unsuited to his blessedness, and believe about him whatever safeguards his blessedness and incorruption.

Epicurus, *Letter To Menocoeus* 123, Grant p.157

The state religion

The state cultus and the worship of the Roman emperor belong properly to the history of Roman religion, but the immense influence of this cultus upon popular religious ideas, especially in the East, must not be overlooked. The emperor was the representative, almost the incarnation, of the *genius* or presiding spirit of his own - the Augustan - house, his ancestry, his line; and as *princeps* he represented Rome itself. He was the guardian of the state and the defender of the peace, the protector of civil order. Prosperity and peace depended as much upon him, in imperial Rome, as ever it had in Egypt upon the Pharaoh, or among the barbarians upon the health, vigor, and self-defensive abilities of their kings. The emperor was the *Soter* of the State, i.e., of the world empire - not merely its rescuer, but its preserver. The religious implications of this term throughout Hellenistic history, from the days of Alexander's "Successors" to the latest Roman emperors, is obvious. Equally important was the cultus offered the emperor - as the early Christians soon discovered. One might almost describe Roman imperialism, on its religious side, as a negative, secular, diabolically perverted Catholic Church. The historical justification for this comparison would be the fact that more than one external feature of later Catholicism was derived from imperial Rome.

Grant, *Introduction*, p.xxiv-xxxv

The mystery religions - the problem of guilt

For every wrong done to any man sinners had in due course paid the penalty ten times over Thus all who have been guilty of bringing many to death or slavery by betraying their country or their comrades in arms, or have taken part in any other iniquity, suffer tenfold torments for each crime The wages earned by honoring the gods and parents, or by dishonoring them and by doing murder, were even greater.

Plato, *Republic* 614

- And there you will see them all.
Every mortal who outraged god or guest or loving parent:
each receives the pain his pains exact.

- A mighty god is Hades. There
at the last reckoning underneath the earth
he scans all, he squares all men's accounts
and graves them on the tablets of his mind.

Hold out your hands, if they are clean
no fury of ours will stalk you,
you will go through life unscathed.
But show us the guilty - one like this
who hides his reeking hands,
and up from the outraged dead we rise,
witness bound to avenge their blood
we rise in flames against him to the end!

Aeschylus, The Eumenides 267-273, 313-320

First, they promised to deal with guilt. It is a mistake to suppose that a sense of sin was unusual in the ancient world. Quite the reverse. From the time of *The Oresteia* of Aeschylus in the fifth century B.C., and even earlier, Greek thought had had deeply impressed upon it the thought that wrongdoing must be punished, that guilt must be expiated, that men are responsible for their actions. In the first century this sense of the link between wrongdoing and punishment was heightened by the civil wars; manifestly, men concluded, this must be punishment for the religious negligence and unworthy lives of the citizens. On the State level Augustus sought to rectify this by staging a religious revival; on the literary level sensitive writers like Virgil and Seneca evidenced a real sense of sin; whilst the man in the street, wanting something that applied more personally to himself, joined one of the mystery religions. It does not take much imagination to conjure up a picture of the lasting effect of the initiation ceremony into the Cybele cult, for instance, must have produced. Here the initiate was placed under a grill, above which the throat of a bull or a ram was cut. He was drenched in the blood, symbolizing both the piacular and the energizing power of the animal, and emerged crying out that he was born again for eternity, *renatus in aeternam*.

Green, ch.1

The problem of Fate

Fate has decreed as a law for each person the unalterable consequences of his horoscope, controlled by many causes of good and evil; and their results are watched over by two self-begotten deities who are her ministers, Hope [Elpis] and Chance [Tyche]; these rule over life, and both by deception and compulsion see to it that everyone obeys the law..... But whoever takes the trouble to learn about the future [i.e., the forecasts of astrology] and to know the truth will possess his soul in freedom from this servitude, disregarding Chance and assigning no importance to Hope, not fearing death and living without distraction, having disciplined his soul to courage, and neither rejoicing over good fortune nor depressed by misfortune, but giving himself contentedly to the present. since he does not long for things beyond his reach, he bears what is decreed for him with self-discipline and, renouncing both pleasure and penalties, becomes a good soldier of Fate.

For it is impossible by means of prayer or sacrifice to overcome the destiny fixed from the beginning and create for oneself another in accordance with his own wishes. Whatever is in store for us takes place apart from any prayers of ours; whatever is not decreed for us will not take place even if we pray. Like players on the stage, who change their masks as the poet's drama requires and calmly take the parts, now of kings, now of robbers, now of peasants, common folk, or gods, so we too must don the masks and play as Fate requires of us, and accept the parts which time's conjunctions bring about, even when they do not suit us. If anyone refuses, "he does badly, but he must nevertheless submit" [quoting Cleanthes, *Fragment 527*].

Vettius Valens, *Anthologies V. 9. 2*, Grant p.60

The attractiveness of Judaism - God can be known

But the Father and Maker of all this universe is past finding out; and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible.

Plato, *Timaeus 28 C*

λογος

We have been taught that Christ is the first-born of God, and we have declared above that He is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably **μετα λογου** are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them; and among the barbarians, Abraham, and Ananias, and Azarias, and Misael, and Elias.

Justin Martyr, First Apology

For whatever either lawgivers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated by finding and contemplating some part of the Word. But since they did not know the whole of the word, which is Christ, they often contradicted themselves.

Justin Martyr, Second Apology

I confess that I both boast and with all my strength strive to be found a Christian; not because the teachings of Plato are different from those of Christ, but because they are not in all respects similar, as neither are those of the others, Stoics, and poets, and historians For each man spoke well in proportion to the share he had of the spermatic word, seeing what was related to it Whatever things were rightly said among all men, are the property of us Christians For all the writers were able to see realities darkly through the sowing of the implanted word that was in them.

Justin, Second Apology

The barbarian and Hellenic philosophy has torn off a fragment of eternal truth not from the mythology of Dionysius, but from the theology of the ever-living Word.

Clement of Alexandria, Stromata I xiii

The same God that furnished both the Covenants was the giver of Greek philosophy to the Greeks, by which the Almighty is glorified among the Greeks

Accordingly, then, from the Hellenic training, and also from that of the Law, are gathered into the one race of the sacred people those who accept faith: not that the three peoples are separated by time but trained in different covenants of the one Lord, by the Word of the one Lord.

Clement of Alexandria, Stromata VI v

It is the transcendent and lasting order in which eternal flux occurs, binding the individual to the whole. It is the cosmic law which is comprehended by the **λογος** which grows in the soul.

Heraclitus

δευτερος ο θεου λογος - 'second is the Word of God'

ο του αρχιτεκτονου λογισμος - 'the reasoning faculty (of God)' or 'the rational plan (of God)'

μιμημα θειας εικονος - '(this world is) a copy of the divine image'

'(this) divine image' is **η αρχητυρος σφραγις** - 'the archetypal seal'

προτογονον υιον - 'the firstborn son'

Philo on the **λογος**

Addendum on Roman Roads:

The Romans were the first to build their roads scientifically. They built their roads straight across lakes, marshes, mountains and ravines. From great cities the roads radiated out to every corner of a country or province. At the height of the Empire there were about 53,000 miles of road connecting Rome to every corner of its' vast domains, from Hadrian's wall in northern Britain to the Sahara desert in southern Egypt and Cyrene, from Morocco in northwest Africa and from the west coast of Spain to the Euphrates river in the far east.

Construction: A trench about 40 ft. wide was excavated with ditches along each side. The following layers were then placed on this bed.

1. A layer of sand and mortar.
2. A layer of large flat stones 10 - 24 inches in thickness.
3. A course of smaller stones mixed with lime about 9 inches thick.
4. A layer of coarse sand and small gravel mixed with hot lime about one foot thick.
5. On top a wearing surface of flint-like lava about 6 inches deep.

The total thickness varied from 3 to 5 feet.

One famous example of a Roman Road is the Appian Way which crossed Italy from Rome to the east and south a total distance of 410 miles. The Appian Way was 35 feet wide. Its two-way central lane was 15 1/2 feet wide, crowned for water run-off. This central lane was flanked by curbs 2 feet wide and 18 inches high on each side, and outside these curbs on each side was a one-way side lane 7 3/4 feet wide. This is the road the apostle Paul would have been taken along under guard to Rome.

Many of these roads were kept in constant use up until 1800, though they were not properly maintained for many centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire. Some of them are still in use to the present day.

Information primarily from Encyclopedia Britannica

