

## NOTES

I. UNIT TWO – “Myth, Mystery, and *Misunderstanding*” – part 2

## A. An Irrelevant Book or an Ignorant Readership?

*“Fear not little flock’: this seems apt for those pious watercolor people so long ago, those blameless and endearing shepherds and fishermen, in colorful native garb, whose lives seems pure, because they are not our lives. They were rustics, silent and sunlit, outdoors, whom we sentimentalize and ignore. They are not in our world. They had some nascent sort of money, but not the kind to take seriously. They got their miracles, perhaps, but they died anyway, long ago, and so did their children. Salvation is obviously for them, and so is God, for they are, like the very young and the very old in our world, peripheral. Religion is for outcasts and victims; Jesus made that clear. Religion suits primitives. They have time to work up their touching faith in unverifiable promises, and they might as well, having bugger-all else.*

*Our lives are complex. There are many things we must consider before we go considering any lilies. There are many things we must fear. We are in charge; we are running things in a world we made; we are nobody’s little flock.”*

(from “The Book of Luke” in *The Annie Dillard Reader*. page 272)

1. The “\_\_\_\_\_” of the Bible is more a product of our own ignorance than any insufficiency of scripture.
2. “Relevancy” is really a measure of “*how closely connected or appropriate something is to the matter at hand.*”
3. In order to make a judgment on the “relevancy” of the Bible, I need to be adequately informed about the *ancient past* (the cultural context of composition), *and* the \_\_\_\_\_ (cultural context of application).
4. Two vital questions:
  - a. What was the cultural context that \_\_\_\_\_ our “New Testament”?
  - b. What similarity, if any, is there with the \_\_\_\_\_ we find ourselves immersed in?

B. Jesus Might Have Been Born in a Manger...The *Church* Wasn’t!

1. “The Way” (Acts 24:14) emerged in the center of a \_\_\_\_\_ of three global cultures:
  - a. **Greek:** The influence of \_\_\_\_\_ was everywhere in the known world in the form of architecture, language and thought.
  - b. **Roman:** The evidence of Rome’s \_\_\_\_\_ might was everywhere present in the form of prefects, praetoria and proconsuls.
  - c. **Jewish:** There were Jewish \_\_\_\_\_ throughout the known world, with special concentrations in N. Africa, Egypt, Syria and Rome.
2. Judaism had more in common with “The Way” than it did with \_\_\_\_\_ or Rome.
  - a. “The Way” was, after all, \_\_\_\_\_ in origin, nature and purpose.
  - b. “The Way” and Judaism were the only \_\_\_\_\_ religions in a polytheistic and pluralistic world.
  - c. While Judaism *opposed* “The Way,” it was not its “\_\_\_\_\_” in the same sense Athens and Rome were.

C. The World of Our New Testament — “*What Goes Around Comes Around*”

*“The notion that all people are equal is utterly alien to the ancient Roman mind.” [Garrett Fagan, University of Pennsylvania]*

1. Roman culture’s one key value: \_\_\_\_\_ (see “Roman Social Structure” on page A-3)
  - a. Status & Image
    - (1) “*You are who you \_\_\_\_\_ to be.*” (clothing, seating, affiliations)
    - (2) The Roman toga could only be worn by \_\_\_\_\_.
    - (3) \_\_\_\_\_ order, by law, wore a toga with broad purple stripe, sat in front rows at public spectacles and monopolized the religious offices.
    - (4) The *minimum* requirement for \_\_\_\_\_ into the Senatorial order was one million sesterces (500,000 denarii; 685 years of work for a day laborer!)
  - b. Status and Association
    - (1) “*You are who you appear \_\_\_\_\_.*”
    - (2) Clients and patrons – the transfer of \_\_\_\_\_ by association.
      - (a) Status verified by the \_\_\_\_\_ and “quality” of your clients.
      - (b) \_\_\_\_\_ arrangements in Rome reflected this philosophy (integration versus segregation).
  - c. Status and Leisure
    - (1) “*You are what you \_\_\_\_\_.*”
    - (2) Cicero spoke of, “...*craftsmen, petty shopkeepers, and all that filth of the cities.*” [Pro Flacco, 18]
    - (3) Consider this graffiti from ancient Rome:
 

*“I hate poor people. If anyone wants something for nothing, he’s a fool. Let him pay up and he’ll get it.”*

*“Baths, wine, and love-making destroy our bodies, yet love-making, wine, and baths make life worth living.”*
    - (4) Slavery in Roman culture was an issue of status, *not* \_\_\_\_\_.
    - (5) Status categories even among slaves prevented a “slave \_\_\_\_\_” from emerging (e.g. there were only 2 slave uprisings in Roman history; one was Spartacus in 75 BC).
    - (6) Having the \_\_\_\_\_ to enjoy leisure activities and/or the \_\_\_\_\_ to provide entertainment facilities and activities for the populace were signs of status.
 

*“Among ancient peoples, the Romans were the first to develop a genuine culture of public leisure and mass entertainment. The provision of “conveniences” (Latin, *commoda*) for the enjoyment of the masses was both seen and presented as a cardinal benefit of the central imperial and local regional administrations.” [Garrett Fagan]*
  - d. Status and Entitlement
    - (1) Upper classes (recognizable by name and appearance) got the best seats at spectacles, larger portions of state allotments, finer food at banquets, smaller \_\_\_\_\_, and impunity from \_\_\_\_\_ by lower classes.

- (2) Even the expansive aqueduct system brought water into the cities for entertainment and leisure (e.g. public baths), running for miles above the heads of the \_\_\_\_\_ in the fields (at least for 30 of the 260 miles).
2. Greek Culture's Key Value: *anthropos* (esp. *andrēs*!)
- a. THEOLOGY: "So man created god in his own likeness."
- (1) Greek mythology is a *non*-\_\_\_\_\_ religious system.
  - (2) Greek mythology has no "sacred texts," and therefore no "\_\_\_\_\_, " only an exalted *anthropology*.
  - (3) There are no creeds, therefore no "\_\_\_\_\_." (Inquisitions or Fatwas either!)
  - (4) The gods and the myths surrounding them could, and did evolve to serve the \_\_\_\_\_ of the people.
  - (5) "\_\_\_\_\_ and interesting" had precedence over "absolute and true" (cf. Acts 17: 21).
- b. RELIGION: No First Amendment Needed
- (1) Greeks made a distinction between \_\_\_\_\_ (public) and faith (private).
  - (2) Because of the Greek emphases on the *polis*, (city) and *isonomia* (equal before the law), "\_\_\_\_\_ " was always employed for the social good.
  - (3) But, Greek religion was very anthropocentric rather than theocentric.
    - (a) The focal point of Greek religious architecture was the \_\_\_\_\_ (*bomos*), not the temple (*naon*).
    - (b) Where the \_\_\_\_\_ were performed was more important than where the "god/goddess" \_\_\_\_\_ (*agalma*).
    - (c) Greek religious sacrifices were community-wide festivals and \_\_\_\_\_ often built around the agricultural and astronomical cycles.
- c. HOMOSEXUALITY: More than men in tights
- (1) During the Classical Period (prior to Alexander), homosexuality and \_\_\_\_\_ were synonymous, as were boyishness and femininity.
  - (2) The naked \_\_\_\_\_ body was the subject of nearly all Greek sculpture during this period. (Female statues were typically clothed.).
  - (3) Part of a boy's journey to \_\_\_\_\_ included being the *eronomos* (beloved) of an older Greek man, the *erastēs* (lover).
  - (4) Boys were courted \_\_\_\_\_ and upon family approval, entered into a homosexual "mentorship" for a season.
  - (5) The normative nature of pederasty (*pais + erastēs*) was tied to many \_\_\_\_\_ behaviors: nudity in art and athletics, delayed marriage for aristocratic men, *symposia*, and the seclusion of women.
  - (6) This behavior was characteristic of the \_\_\_\_\_ elite, intellectual, leisure class.

- d. WOMEN: *“Be still and know that I am a god!”*
- (1) During the Classical Period and beyond, women were viewed with suspicion, even as \_\_\_\_\_!
  - (2) In *The Myth of Pandora* (800 BC), the creation of woman is the \_\_\_\_\_ to men for stealing fire from the gods!
  - (3) Another writer in 500 BC compared women to various animals, such as the mare, the bitch, the sow, and the vixen.
  - (4) Pericles’ closing comment of his funeral oration after the First Peloponnesian War (c. 444 BC) is very revealing:
 

*“The living have envy to contend with, while those who are no longer in our path are honored with a good will into which revalry does not enter. On the other hand, if I must say anything on the subject of female excellence to those of you who will now be in widowhood, it will be all comprised in this brief exhortation. Great will be your glory in not falling short of your natural character; and greatest will be hers who is least talked of among men whether for good or for bad.”*
  - (5) Citizen wives slept in upstairs back bedrooms away from the *andron*, the “\_\_\_\_\_” on the ground floor near the front.
  - (6) A female slave was one of life’s five “\_\_\_\_\_” (along with a house, a wife, an ox and a plow).
  - (7) The “\_\_\_\_\_” Greek wife stayed in the house, bore and raised children, avoided the public and was neither praised nor slandered by men.
  - (8) Self-assertion and autonomy among women in Greek culture was reserved for the realm of the \_\_\_\_\_ and priestess.
- e. WORTH: *“You are what you know.”*
- (1) \_\_\_\_\_ *flourished* in the Greek democracy!
    - (a) *Not* owning a slave was evidence of extreme destitution.
    - (b) Greek democracy was built on participation in civic life by the greatest number of citizens possible.
    - (c) To play the “role” of a \_\_\_\_\_ demanded time (away from work).
    - (d) This \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. freedom from work) was known as *scholē*.
    - (e) The existence of a world of free citizen men depended upon a world of \_\_\_\_\_ (to do the work).
  - (2) Aristotle: *“I think, therefore I am (not a slave!)”* [340 BC]
    - (a) Aristotle taught that slavery was “\_\_\_\_\_,” and therefore morally good.
      - i) The universe exists in a \_\_\_\_\_ between “dominant” and “subordinate.”
      - ii) The weaker *should* \_\_\_\_\_ the stronger (e.g. men vs. women).
      - iii) The better each \_\_\_\_\_ is, the better the purpose served (i.e. an excellent slave serving an excellent aristocrat is better than a poor slave serving an excellent aristocrat).

- iv) \_\_\_\_\_ is the ultimate application of this principle because humans have the most dignity.
  - v) According to Aristotle, the *final* “\_\_\_\_\_” that a man belongs as a slave is that he *is a slave!*
- (3) Schoolwork: The luxury of those with no \_\_\_\_\_!
- (a) Superiority was measured \_\_\_\_\_ by how much one *had* to work.
  - (b) The pursuit of culture (art, philosophy, poetry, politics, music) became incompatible with \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (c) “Low culture” was that done \_\_\_\_\_ the working class (crafts, pottery, dancing, etc.).
  - (d) “High culture” was \_\_\_\_\_ and enjoyed by those with *scholē* (excessive time away from labor).
  - (e) Eventually, *scholē* came to refer to the *activities* one did during leisure time, then it came to mean the \_\_\_\_\_ where these activities were pursued: “\_\_\_\_\_.”
3. Jewish Culture’s Key Value: *hagios* (see chart on page A-4)
- a. The very nature of \_\_\_\_\_ put Jews at odds with the rest of the world.
    - (1) iconography was \_\_\_\_\_.
    - (2) a \_\_\_\_\_ shrine, altar, and priesthood
    - (3) all-\_\_\_\_\_ priesthood
    - (4) a single sacred \_\_\_\_\_.
    - (5) exclusivity rather than \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. For the Jew, there were two kinds of people in the world: “us” (Jew) and “them” (Gentile). [Jn 4:9]
  - c. Being marginalized was considered “\_\_\_\_\_” of holiness and election.
  - d. Being aloof from \_\_\_\_\_, especially it’s participants and products was seen as a moral good (Lk 18:9-12).
  - e. Associating only with \_\_\_\_\_ was seen as a moral good.
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ was the produce of specific *non-behaviors* as well as behaviors (Lk 19:1-7; 18:9-12).
    - (1) Where they *didn’t go*:
      - (a) gymnasiums
      - (b) bath houses
      - (c) theaters
      - (d) pagan temples/markets
      - (e) gentile dwellings/businesses
    - (2) What they *didn’t do*:
      - (a) eat non-kosher food
      - (b) work on the sabbath

D. Revisiting the Question of Relevance

1. **Question:** The a world characterized by pluralism, polytheism, paganism, power, pleasure, play, philosophy and Pharisaism have anything in common with the world in which you find yourself?
2. Do these statements sound familiar?
  - a. *"You are who you know."*
  - b. *"You are what you do."*
  - c. *"You are what you don't do and who you don't know."*