

THE GREEK INFLUENCE on EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Instructor: Norman Austin
Professor Emeritus of Classics

READINGS: No required readings. Suggested readings: Act of the Apostles;
Gospel of Mark; Alain Badiou, *St Paul*; Plutarch, *Alexander*; Homer,
Iliad; Sophocles, *Ajax*

SYLLABUS

- WEEK 1 Introduction, Survey of the seminar, Objectives; Hebrew foundation:
Law, the Covenant; Consciousness and rise of religion
- WEEK 2 The Tragic Hero: Homer's Achilles, the *Odyssey*; Sophocles' *Ajax*;
Transgression; Sacrifice; Socrates as Martyr
- WEEK 3 The Image
Jahweh: no attributes. The Image in Greek Art, Early Christian Art,
Dura Europos, Roman Catacombs, Renaissance, Donatello and
Sculpture; Gothic cathedrals, stained glass windows;
San Xavier del Bac; Hebraism v Hellenism; Image as Epiphany
- WEEK 4 Alexander the Great (conquests 333-323 BCE).
Hellenization of the Mediterranean: Alexandria, Pergamum
Athens as university town
The common language: Greek *koine*
Diogenes the Cosmopolitan
Hellenist v. Hellene; Plato's *Meno*
- WEEK 5 Romanization of the Mediterranean: Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar
Roman *imperium*
- WEEK 6 The Jesus Story: Composition of the Gospels, fusion of the Jesus story
with Old Testament Jewish tradition (kings and prophets)
- WEEK 7 St Paul: the Damascus Road
St Paul as Greek, Roman, Hebrew; Study with Rabbi Gamaliel
Peter & Cornelius in the Book of Acts, the Vision & Agamemnon's
Dream in *Iliad 2*.
- WEEK 8 St Paul and Apostles as Evangelists: Hebrew v Greek; Law v. Sophia;
the Logos; Apostles Peter and James v Paul

WEEK 9 Development and diffusion of early Christianity. Orthodoxy v. Heterodoxy; Gnostics; Roman Imperialism (the divinity of the Emperor); Clement I of Rome, and Paideia

WEEK 10 Constantine: Milvia Bridge, Rome; Constantine re-creates Rome in Constantinople; Council of Nicaea; the Nicene Creed (opposition to Gnostics): the Christological conundrum: the Nature of God and the Nature of Jesus, and relations between the two. The Holy Spirit; the Trinity; Platonism; the development of a Creed ("symbol" in Greek).