

## JESUS: IMAGES AND EXPERIENCE

Pelikan,

**JESUS Through the centuries.** Jaroslav Pelikan. Yale University Press. New Haven, CT. 1985

### INTRODUCTION

#### The God, the Truth, and the Beautiful

The nature and the purpose of this book: not a life of Jesus, nor a history of Christianity, nor even a history of theological doctrine about Jesus, but a series of images portraying his place in the history of culture.

Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries. It is from his birth that most of the human race dates its calendars, it is by his name that millions curse and in his name that millions pray. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings” (Heb. 13:8-9). The “same” was taken to mean that Jesus Christ was, in his eternal being,” the image of the unchangeable God, and therefore likewise unchangeable” (Pelikan p. 1).

Pelikan suggest to substitute for the first-century formula “the same yesterday and today and forever” the twenty-century words of Albert-Schweitzer who said: “Each successive epoch found its own thoughts in Jesus, which was indeed, the only way in which it could make him live”; for, typically, one “created him in accordance with one’s own character.” There is no historical task which so reveals someone’s true self as the writing of a *life of Jesus*” (Pelikan p. 2). 그렇다면우리현세대는 어떤 예수를 그리고 믿고 있을까?

Pelikan claims that this book presents a history of such images of Jesus, as these have appeared from the first century to the twentieth. Precisely because, in Schweitzer’s words, it has been characteristic of each age of history to depict Jesus in accordance with its own character, it will be an important part of our task to set these images into their historical context. For each age, the life and teachings of Jesus represented an answer ( or, more often, *the* answer) to the most fundamental question of human existence and of human destiny, and it was to the figure of Jesus as set forth in the Gospels that those questions were address (Pelikan p. 2).

The history of the images of Jesus illustrates the continuities and the discontinuities of the past two millennia. Arthur O. Lovejoy claims there is only discontinuity; he claims there is nothing in common except the name, the reverence for a certain person, the person of Jesus Christ. He further said, his “nature and teaching have been most variously conceived. One consequence of he discontinuity is the great variety and unevenness in the concept and terms that have been used to describe this meaning (Pelikan p. 4).

Some of the images (of Jesus) are quite clear and simple and others rather subtle and difficult to grasp. In a favorite metaphor of the church fathers, the Gospels are a river in which an elephant can drown and a gnat can swim. However, whatever blurring of his image the welter of portraits of Jesus may create for the eyes of a faith that wants to affirm him as “the same yesterday and today and forever,” that very variety is a treasure trove for the history of culture, because of the way it combines continuity and discontinuity (Pelikan p. 5).

The most inclusive conceptual framework for this range of images is provided by the classical triad of the Beautiful, the True, and the Good, which had itself played a significant role in the history of Christian thought. Corresponding to that classical triad is the biblical triad of Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). This formula from the gospel of John became the motif for a striking image of Jesus in the Archiepiscopal Chapel at Ravenna: “EGO SUM VIA VERITAS ET VITA.” The Ravenna mosaic, therefore, summarized Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and at the same time it epitomized Christ as the Beautiful, the True, and the Good (Pelikan p. 7).

Adolf von Harnack’s book “What is Christianity?” opens with following words that can, Pelikan claims, form the conclusion of this introduction: “the great English philosopher, John Stuart Mill, once commented that ‘mankind can hardly be too often reminded that there was once a man named Socrates.’ That is correct; but it is even more important to remind mankind that a man named Jesus Christ once stood in their midst” (Pelikan p. 7).

## 1. THE RABBI (P. 9)

Jesus as teacher and prophet in the setting of first-century Judaism. The Jewishness of New Testament in relation to the tradition of Israel.

Pelikan claims that the first attempts to understand and interpret Jesus' message took place within the context of Judaism, and it is likewise there that any attempt to understand his place in the history of human culture must begin (Pelikan p. 11). He uses the language Jesus spoke to prove his Jewishness:

Although the New Testament was written in Greek, the language that Jesus and his disciples spoke was Aramaic, a Semitic tongue related to Hebrew. For the use of Hebrew was this time largely restricted to worship and scholarship, while the spoken tongue among Palestinian Jews was Aramaic, and in many instances Greek in addition. There are Aramaic words and phrases, transliterated into Greek, scattered throughout the Gospels and the other books of the early Christian community (Pelikan p. 11).

There are, among these Aramaic words that appear in the New Testament, at least four titles for Jesus, which can provide a convenient set of labels for our consideration of the Jewish idiom and Jewish framework of reference in which the earliest followers of Jesus spoke about him: Jesus as *rabbi* or teacher; Jesus as *amen* or prophet; Jesus as *messias* or Christ; and Jesus as *mar* or Lord. The most neutral and least controversial of these titles is probably *rabbi*, together with the related *rabbouni*. It was as a *rabbi* that Jesus was known and addressed by his immediate followers and by others (Pelikan p. 11).

A good illustration of characteristics as a *rabbi* is in the story of Gospel of Luke 4:16-30. "He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and he went to the synagogue, as his custom, on the Sabbath day. And he stood up to read from Is. 61: "Following the customary rabbinical pattern, he took up a scroll of the Hebrew Bible, and read it and then commented on it. He did more than a *rabbi* usually do and proceeded to declare "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." The crowd was enraged. Behind the many such scenes of confrontation between Jesus as *rabbi* and the representatives of the rabbinical tradition, the affinities are nevertheless clearly discernible in the very forms in which his teaching appear in the Gospels (Pelikan p. 12).

The most typical form of teachings of Jesus was the parable. The word "parable" (*parabole* in Greek) was taken from the Septuagint, where it had been used by the Jewish scholars who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek. Thus here, too, the evangelists' account of Jesus as a teller of parables makes sense only in the setting of his Jewish background (Pelikan p 13).

Pelikan illustrate another title for Jesus as **prophet** in the story of Palm Sunday, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee" (Matt. 21:11). Probably the most intriguing version of this designation is in Aramaic: "The words of the *Amen*, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation" (Rev. 3:14). Ever since the Hebrew Bible, the word *Amen* had been the formula of affirmation to conclude a prayer. The word *Amen* is used some seventy-five times throughout the Gospels, but exclusively in

the saying of Jesus, to introduce an authoritative pronouncement. As the one who had the authority to make such pronouncements, Jesus was a prophet. The word *prophet* not only *foretells* but *tells forth*, as the one who is authorized to speak on behalf of Another. That is the basis of the title in the Book of Revelation, “the Amen, the faithful and true witness” (Pelikan p 14-15).

In confirmation of the special status of Jesus as not only rabbi but also prophet, the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount reads: “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowd were astonished at his teaching, for he taught as one who had authority, and not as their scribes ((Pelikan p 15).

In his healing the sick and raising the dead he was cited as rabbi-prophet. The identification of Jesus as prophet was a means both of affirming his continuity with the prophets of Israel and of asserting his superiority to them as *the* prophet whose coming they had predicted and to whose authority they had been prepared to yield. “He will raise up prophet among you” (Deut. 18:15-22). Clement of Alexandria around the year 200, the promise of the prophet to come is taken as a reference to Jesus, who had the same name as Joshua (Pelikan p 16).

For the rabbi and the prophet both yielded to two other categories, each of them likewise expressed in an Aramaic word and then in its Greek translation: *Messias*, the Aramaic form of “**Messiah**”, translated into Greek as *ho Christos*, “the Anointed One; and *Marana*, “our Lord,” in the liturgical formula, *Maranatha*, “Our Lord, come!” translated into Greek as *ho kyrios* and quoted by the apostle Paul and in a very early liturgical prayer. The future belonged to the titles “Christ” and “Lord” as names for Jesus, and to the identification of him as the Son of God and the second person of the Trinity (Pelikan p 17).

To the Christian disciples of the first century the conception of Jesus as a rabbi was self evident, to the Christian disciples of the second century it was embarrassing, to the Christian disciples of the third century and beyond it was obscure (Pelikan p 17).

The beginnings of the transformation, the “de-Judaization of Christianity, are visible with the New Testament. Apostle Paul turned to the **Gentiles** (Acts 13:46). With the sack of Jerusalem by the Roman armies under Titus and the destruction of the temple in the year 70 C.E., the Christian movement increasingly became Gentile rather than Jewish in its constituency and in its outlook (Pelikan p 17).

While it appears that the apostle Paul is chiefly responsible for the de-Judaization, for Paul, it was necessary that Jesus be a Jew. For only through the Jewishness of Jesus could the covenant of God with Israel, the gracious gift of God and his irrevocable calling, become available to all people in the whole world, also to the Gentiles, who thus “were grafted in their place to share the riches of the olive tree,” the people of Israel (Rom. 11:17) (Pelikan p 19). But no one can consider the topic of Jesus as Rabbi and ignore the subsequent history of the relation between the synagogue and the church, between the people to whom Jesus belonged and the people who belonged to Jesus (Pelikan p 19)

## 2. THE TURNING POINT OF HISTORY

The significance of Christ for human history. Apocalypse, prophecy, and ethics in the first and second centuries. The implications of the life of Jesus for biography and historiography.

The contemporaries of Jesus knew him as a rabbi, but this was a rabbi whose ministry teaching and preaching had its central content “the gospel of God: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). Many of his early followers also described him as a prophet confessing that God spoke to them by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power (Heb.1:1-3) (Pelikan p. 21).

Calling itself the new Israel and the true Israel, the church appropriated the schema of historical meaning that had arisen in the interpretation of the **redemption** of Israel accomplished by the exodus from Egypt, and adapted this schema to the **redemption** of humanity accomplished by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Pelikan p. 22).

Jesus himself called himself “the first and the last,” that is, the Lord of history (Pelikan p. 22). From the contemporary Jewish sources that the proclamation of Jesus himself about the kingdom of God, as well as such proclamation of his followers about him, resounded with the accents of Jewish **apocalypticism** (Pelikan p. 24).

In the message of Jesus the call for repentance and the summons to the **ethical change** too as its ground the promise of the Parousia: that coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of glory would soon put an end to human history and would usher in the new order of the kingdom of God. Specifically, the moral teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, such as the command came as announcement of what his followers were to do in the brief interim between his earthly ministry and the end of history (Pelikan p. 24).

The Son of Man did not come. It is suggested that “the whole history of ‘Christianity’ down to the present day, the real inner history of it, is based on the delay of Parousia, the abandonment of eschatology” (Pelikan p. 24). Twentieth-century scholars have sought to identify a crisis brought on by the disappointment as the major trauma of the early Christians centuries and the source for the rise of the institutional church and of the dogma about the person of Jesus (Pelikan p. 25). However, this hypothesis of a trauma caused by the “delay of the Parousia” finds very little corroboration in the source of the second and third centuries themselves. What those sources disclose is the combination of an intense apocalyptic expectation and of a willingness to live with the prospect of a continuance of human history –both of these finding expression in an increasing emphasis on the centrality of Jesus (Pelikan p. 25).

The North African thinker Tertullian may serve as an illustration of such a combination at the end of the second century: Tertullian urged his fellow believers to wait for the greater day when the victorious Christ would return in triumphal procession like a Roman conqueror. Yet this same Tertullian could declare, in response to the

charge of treason against the Roman Emperor: “We also pray for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, *for the delay of the final consummation.*” Such statements about the Roman emperors were in some sense a preparation for the rise, in the fourth century, of the notion of a Christian Roman emperor, reigning in the name and power of Jesus Christ; (Pelikan p. 25). Tertullian is likewise remembered as a major figure in the history of the development of the dogmas of the Trinity (Pelikan p. 26).

The new interpretation of the historical process began with the history of Israel, whose principal goal was now taken to be the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That made itself evident in the interpretation of the *prophetic* tradition of the Jewish Scripture. Describing the exodus of the children of Israel from captivity, the prophet Hosea had said, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son” (Hos. 11:1); but in the hands of the Christian evangelist, these words became a prediction of the flight to Egypt by the Holy Family to escape the murderous plot of King Herod (Matt. 2:15). Ps. 96 declared, “The Lord reigns “ but Christian philosophers and poets added to the text an explicit reference to the cross of Christ, so that it is now became “The Lord reigns *from the tree.*” The prophets of Israel had found their aim, and their end, in Jesus The *kingdom* of Israel became the kingdom of God (Pelikan p. 26). David as king had looked beyond himself and his own kingdom to the kingship of Jesus Christ, declaring in Ps. 45, which had been addressed to Christ as king:... “Therefore your God has anointed you (has made you Christ) with the oil of gladness above your fellows (Ps. 45: 6-7). (Pelikan p. 26). 27).

The history of the changes and successive forms of the *priesthood* of Israel also made sense when viewed from the perspective of Jesus as its turning point. The Levitical priesthood of Aaron had been temporary, nothing more than a shadow, whose substance had now at least appeared in the true high priest, Jesus Christ; for “he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever” ( Heb. 7:24) (Pelikan p. 27).

Thus the entire history of Israel had reached its turning point in Jesus as prophet, as priest, and as king. After the same manner, he was identified as the turning point in the entire history of all the nations of the world. Although this was a leitmotiv of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, the most massive and most influential monument of that identification was what the author himself called in his preface his “great and arduous task,” Augustine’s *City of God*. For this task of locating Jesus within world history, as indeed for the entire enterprise of interpreting the person and message of Jesus to the Gentile world, the New Testament offered far less explicit guidance than it did within the history of Israel (Pelikan p. 28).

Two Greek Christian authors from the century before Augustine, Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius of Alexandria, may serve as documentation for this new historiography, inspired by the person of Jesus Christ. That they happened to be on opposing sides of the great debate of the fourth century touching the relation of the person of Jesus Christ to the Godhead makes their common contribution to historiography all the more noteworthy (Pelikan p. 30). **Read the last few pages in this section and add.**

### 3. THE LIGHT OF THE GENTILES

Reinhold Niebuhr has divided human cultures into those “where a Christ is expected” and those “where a Christ not expected.” But the disciples of Jesus, during the first three or four centuries, carried out their mission on the growing assumption that there was no culture “where a Christ was not expected” and “all of humanity may be converted and win their way to God, through Jesus” (Pelikan p. 34).

In addressing the message of that common hope to the Gentile world, they sought to discover in Greco-Roman culture the questions to which that common name of Jesus Christ was the answer ; “ a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to my people Israel” (Pelikan p. 34).

There were several methods for interpreting Jesus as the light for revelation to the Gentiles; 1) non-Jewish prophecies of a Christ; 2) Gentile anticipations of the doctrine about Jesus; and 3) pagan foreshadowings of the redemption achieved by his death (Pelikan p. 35). Thus the messianic hope and messianic prophecy were not the exclusive possession of Israel. In other nations there were those to whom this mystery was revealed and proclaimed it, according to Augustine. For example, Job, Jethro the father-in-law of Moses, and Balaam.

The Roman poet Vergil in the fourth of his *Eclogues* predicted the breaking in of a “new order of the ages” and “a new human race is descending from the heights of heaven.” What would bring about this change would be “the birth of a child (*nascenti puero*. His birth would achieve a transformation of human nature. These nonbiblical words were picked up by early Christians as evidence for a messianic hope also outside the boundaries of the people of Israel (Pelikan p. 36).

Another one was Greco-Roman prophetess Cuma, the Cumean Sibyl who prophesied oracles on coming of Christ to judge at the end of the world, whom Christians were quoting. Pagans, Jewish, and Christian tampered with the new collections of oracles. (Pelikan p. 37).

A second method for portraying Jesus as the light of the Gentiles was to find in Gentile thought anticipations of the Christian doctrines about him. For example, Clement of Alexandria at the end of the second century.

A third technique for identifying Jesus as the light of the Gentiles was to look in classical history and literature for persons and events that could be interpreted as “types” and prefigurings of Jesus and of redemption through him (Origen of Alexandria).

In using the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish tradition to explain the meaning of Jesus, Christians had applied all three of these methods – foreshadowing of the cross, anticipation of doctrine, and prophecies of the coming of Christ – to their interpretation of Moses. His description of the binding and sacrifice of Isaac became one of the most pervasive figures of redemption: God, like Abraham, had willingly offered his own first-born Son as a sacrifice.

Pelikan further claims that Socrates performed a function similar to that of Moses when they addressed the message of Jesus to the Gentiles. He himself was a forerunner of Christ. He was a “Christ before Christ,” and like Christ he was put to death by the enemies – he was accused of the same crime as Jesus was. Socrates denounced the polytheism and devil-worship of the Greeks.

As Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, had said to the Greeks about “the Unknown God,” so the successors of Paul went on to say to the Greeks and to all the Gentiles about “the Unknown Jesus.”

#### 4. THE KING OF KINGS

The Lordship of Caesar versus the lordship of Christ in the Roman Empire of the second centuries. The triumph of Constantine as Caesar and as Christians; the rise of the “Christian Empire” in the fourth century.

**The image of Jesus as King and Lord repeatedly came into conflict with the sovereignty of Caesar as king and lord.**

##### **The demand of emperors:**

Caesar claimed to be supreme King. The representatives of Caesar asked Polycarp “what harm is there in saying ‘Caesar is Lord (*Kyrios Kaisar*)’, and offering incense and saving your life” (Pelikan p. 48).

##### **The position of Christians:**

Polycarp replied “For eighty six years I have been the servant of Jesus Christ, and he never did me any injury. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?” (Pelikan p. 48). Ignatius too told the emperor Trajan, “I have Christ the King of heaven within me, ..May I now enjoy his kingdom” (Pelikan p. 48).

Christians told Roman emperor that they were not speaking about a political kingdom at all, but about a kingdom “that is with God.” For if it had been a this-worldly and a political kingdom, they would not have hesitated to make the political compromises necessary to buy their safety by denying Christ. Rather, Jesus Christ was “the King of glory,” who made an ultimate claim upon human life. In response to that ultimate claim, “we render worship to God alone, but in other things we gladly serve you, acknowledging you as kings and rulers” (Pelikan p. 48) “We pray for security to the empire, for protection to the imperial house.” What they refused to do was to treat the emperor as divine, to say “*Kyrios Kaisar*” (Pelikan p. 49).

Christians did not look upon Jesus as the leader of a political revolution “from below” that would mean the end of the empire and its replacement by another political system. However, while they prayed for the delay of the end of the world and for the health of the empire, they were all awaiting the second coming of Christ, which would “from above” bring the end of the world and therefore of the empire (Pelikan p. 49).

##### **Persecution**

So even the “best emperors, the best morally and the best politically, like Marcus Aurelius and Diocletian, who also instituted some of the fiercest persecutions of the Christians. Because Jesus was King, Christians could be provisionally loyal to Caesar; but because Jesus was King, they could not give Caesar the measure of loyalty that the best Caesars demanded, and perhaps even needed, for the Roman empire to be “the empire that will never end” (Pelikan p. 50).

##### **Christian emperor: Christendom**



In the fourth century, the emperor Constantine became a Christian, declaring his allegiance to Jesus Christ and adopting the cross as his official military and personal emblem (Pelikan p. 50).

According to the historian Eusebius, Constantine's victory in wars by using the sign of the cross as a safeguard against every adverse and hostile power led to develop the Christian empire. Constantine ordered "a trophy of the Savior's sign of the cross" to be placed in the hands of his own statue, which was to be erected in Rome to celebrate the victory, with the following inscription in Latin: (Pelikan p. 52) write it in later.

"As a thank offering to his Savior for the victories he had obtained over every foe," he convoked (소집하다) the first ecumenical council of the church at a city named for *Nike* (Victory), Nicea in Bithynia, for the purpose of restoring concord (화합, 일치) to church and empire. The Council of Nicea declared that Jesus is the Son of God who was "begotten not created, one in being (*homoousios*) with the Father." That dogmatic formula was, according to Eusebius, the result of a direct personal intervention of Constantine himself (Pelikan p. 52).

Once the Council of Nicea had accepted these formulas, they became the law not only for the church but for the empire. The foundation of this legislation was the affirmation of the Nicene Creed that Jesus Christ as Lord and Son of God was one in being with the Father, and that "of his kingship there will be no end." Only those who conformed to that "apostolic discipline" of the Nicene Creed, as the *theodosian Code* of the Roman law, would have the right to hold political office within the Christian empire, As a result of the events of the fourth century, it was necessary, for the next thousand years and more, to accept Christ as the eternal King if one wanted to be a temporal king (Pelikan p. 53).

Constantine the emperor entertained the bishops of the church at a banquet during the Council of Nicea. At the Lord's supper, Christ was the host and the communicants were the guest, thus foreshadowing the eternal kingdom of Christ. But at the Constantine's banquet the kingdom of Christ was foreshadowed when the divinely ordained emperor was the host and the bishops were the guests. The emperors-not only Constantine—"had God, the universal King, and the Son of God, the Savior of all, as their Guide and Ally .. against haters of God." The authority that God gave Jesus, who then gave to his disciples (Matt. 28:18) was now transmitted to the emperor, beginning with Constantine;

for Christ the King had elected to exercise his sovereignty over the world through the emperor, to whom he had appeared in visions. The emperor was "crowned by God (*theostphes*)."

As early as 454, the patriarch of Constantinople performed the ritual of coronation (대관식) for the emperor Leo 1. The emperor Justinian was the Melchizedek, king and priest at the same time (Pelikan p. 54).

The dedication of the rebuilt city of Byzantium as Constantinople, often called New Rome, on 11 May 330 was the result of Constantine's resolve to reunite his empire and of his wish to establish a truly Christian capital to replace the pagan capital of Old Rome (Pelikan p. 55). From God to Christ, from Christ to the apostle Peter, from Peter to emperors and kings

#### **5. THE COSMIC CHRIST**

Christ the Logos as the mind, reason, and word of God and as the meaning of the universe in the Christianized Platonic philosophy of the third and fourth centuries.

#### **6. THE SON OF MAN**

The incarnate Son of God as the revelation both of the promise of human life and of the power of evil, according to the Christian psychology and anthropology worked out above all by Augustine in the fifth century.

#### **7. THE TRUE IMAGE**

#### **8. CHRIST CRUCIFIED**

#### **9. THE MONK WHO RULES THE WORLD**

#### **10. THE BRIDEGROOM OF THE SOUL**

#### **11. THE DIVINE AND HUMAN MODEL**

#### **12. THE UNIVERSAL MAN**

#### **13. THE MIRROR OF ETERNAL**

#### **14. THE PRINCE OF PEACE**

#### **15. THE TEACHER OF COMMON SENSE**

#### **16. THE POET OF THE SPIRIT**

#### **17. THE LIBERATOR**

#### **18. THE MAN WHO BELONGS TO THE WORLD**