

## Reading Can Give Us An Advantage

**Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.  
(1 Timothy 4:13)**

Obviously, Paul is exhorting Timothy to read the divine Scriptures, as should be the practice of every good minister of the gospel. But we should also consider reading good informative books as a daily practice. For example, a theologian should be well-read in general (history, economics, classic literature, and the social-political) and in particular (philosophy, the varied branches of theology, comparative theology, and world religions). Of course, most of this is antithesis-type literature. This endeavor will help us to become knowledgeable about so many things. The Apostle Paul, a theologian and well-studied man, probably used this discipline to his great advantage.

Paul was familiar with pagan poetry. In Paul's address to the Athenians on Mar's Hill, he says, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" - Acts 17:28.

**Adam Clarke's opinion (including the poem dedicated to Jove, otherwise known as Jupiter) is as follows:**

*"As certain also of your own poets - Probably he means not only Aratus, in whose poem, entitled Phaenomena, the words quoted by St. Paul are to be found literatim, του γαρ και γενοσ εσμεν; but also Cleanthus, in whose Hymn to Jupiter the same words (Εκ σου γαρ γενοσ εσμεν) occur. But the sentiment is found in several others, being very common among the more enlightened philosophers. By saying your own poets, he does not mean poets born at Athens, but merely Grecian poets, Aratus and Cleanthus being chief.*

**We are also his offspring** - Του γαρ και γενοσ εσμεν *The Phaenomena of Aratus, in which these words are found, begins thus:*

*With Jove we must begin; nor from him rove;*

*Him always praise, for all is full of Jove!*

*He fills all places where mankind resort,*

*The wide-spread sea, with every shelt'ring port.*

*Jove's presence fills all space, upholds this ball;*

*All need his aid; his power sustains us all.*

*For we his offspring are; and he in love*

*Points out to man his labor from above:*

*Where signs unerring show when best the soil,*

*By well-timed culture, shall repay our toil, etc., etc.*

*Aratus was a Cilician, one of St. Paul's own countrymen, and with his writings St. Paul was undoubtedly well acquainted, though he had flourished about 300 years before that time."*

Paul's ability to reach the Athenians was not due only to his love for souls but also because he had prepared himself by knowing the beliefs and ideas of those outside his religion. Because of this, Paul was able to reach them halfway. Their poets were not completely wrong, as C.S. Lewis would say. It is not in Jupiter but in God that we live and move and have our being. We are not the offspring of Jove but the offspring of the God of the Bible. Paul boldly declares:

"For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you" - Acts 17:23.

This type of knowledge, where we know the beliefs of others that we disagree with, could also give us an advantage. It worked for the Apostle Paul, and it benefited the Athenians. And I believe his knowledge derived quite possibly through reading helped many others whom he had to meet halfway so that he could declare to them the truth.

Carol Zaleski, co-author of the book *The Fellowship: The Literary Lives of the Inklings*, says, "C.S. Lewis used to say that we read because we seek an 'enlargement of our being.'"

God help us to give attendance to reading.

DSG

*ecclesiasticalresearches.com*