

ROMAN EXPANSION - WHY DID IT SUCCEED?

Plutarch: On The Fortune Of The Romans

Personified } Fortune = Good Luck
as a }
Divine Force } Virtue = Personal Qualities - Nature Ability

Virtue and Fortune, who have often engaged in many great contests, are now engaging each other in the present contest, which is the greatest of all; for in this they are striving for a decision regarding the hegemony of Rome, to determine whose work it is and which of them created such a mighty power...

...I believe myself to be right in suspecting that, even if Fortune and Virtue are engaged in a direct and continual strife and discord with each other, yet, at least for such a welding together of dominion and power, it is likely that they suspended hostilities and joined forces; and by joining forces they cooperated in completing this most beautiful of human works...

...Time lay the foundation for the Roman State and, with the help of God, so combine and join together Fortune and Virtue that, by taking the peculiar qualities of each, he might construct for all mankind a Hearth, in truth both holy and beneficent, a steadfast cable, a principle abiding forever, "an anchorage from the swell and drift," as Democritus says, amid the shifting conditions of human affairs...

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...Yet the smooth flow of events and the impelling swiftness of Rome's progress to so high a pinnacle of power and expansion demonstrates to all who reason aright that the progress of Rome's sovereignty was not brought about by the handiwork and urging of human beings, but was speeded on its way by divine escort and the fair wind of Fortune. Trophy upon trophy arises, triumph meets triumph, and the first blood, while still warm on their arms, is overtaken and washed away by a second flood. They count their victories, not by the multitude of corpses and spoils, but by captive kingdoms, by nations enslaved, by islands and continents added to their mighty realm. In one battle Philip lost Macedonia, with one stroke Antiochus was forced to withdraw from Asia, by one defeat the Carthaginians lost Africa. One man in the swift onset of one campaign added to the Roman dominion Armenia, Pontus, the Euxine, Syria, Arabia, the Albanians, the Iberians, and all the territory to the Caucasus and the Hyrcanians; thrice did the Ocean which encircles the inhabited world see him victorious, for in Africa he drove back the Numidians to the strands of the southern sea; even as far as the Atlantic Ocean, he subdued Iberia, which had joined in the distemper of Sertorius; the kings of the Albanians were pursued until he brought them to a halt near the Caspian Sea. All these successes he won through enjoying the Fortune of the Roman commonwealth; then he was overthrown by his own fate.

But the great Guardian Spirit of Rome sent a favouring breeze, not for one day, nor at its height for a brief time only, like the Macedonian, nor but a land breeze, like the Spartan, nor but a sea

breeze, like the Athenian, nor late to rise, like the Persian, nor quick to cease, like the Carthaginian; but this Spirit, from its first creation, grew in maturity, in might, and in polity together with the City, and remained constant to it on land and on sea, in war and in peace, against foreigners, against Greeks. This it was that dissipated and exhausted in the confines of Italy, like a mountain torrent, Hannibal the Carthaginian, since no fresh aid flowed to him from home because of jealousy and political enmities. This it was that separated and kept apart by great intervals of space and time the armies of the Cimbri and of the Teutons, that Marius might avail to fight each of them in turn, and that three hundred thousand men of irresistible and invincible arms might not simultaneously invade and overwhelm Italy. Through the agency of this Spirit Antiochus was fully occupied while war was being waged against Philip, and Philip had been vanquished and was falling when Antiochus was making his venture; the Sarmatian and Bastarnian wars restrained Mithridates during the time when the Marsian war was blazing up against Rome; suspicion and jealousy kept Tigranes from Mithridates while Mithridates was brilliantly successful, but he joined himself to Mithridates only to perish with him in defeat.

This spectacle exhibits the might of Fortune and the ease with which, whenever she busies herself and takes command, she provides from unexpected sources against all emergencies by implanting intelligence in the unreasoning and senseless, and prowess and daring in the craven. For who would not, truly, be struck with astonishment and amazement when he has come to learn and has embraced in his consideration the former dejection of the city and her present prosperity, and has looked upon the splendour of her temples, the richness of her votive offerings, the rivalry of her arts and crafts, the ambitious efforts of subject cities, the crowns of dependent kings, and all things which the earth contributes and the sea and islands, continents, rivers, trees, living creatures, plains, mountains, mines, the first-fruits of everything, vying for beauty in the aspect and grace that adorns this place? And then comes the thought: how near did all this come to not being created and to not existing at all!

Excerpts from Plutarch:
"On the Fortune of the Romans,"
MORALIA, Vol. IV

Vergil: The Aeneid

Upon her
Smiling with that regard, wherewith he clears
Tempestuous skies, the Sire of men and gods
His daughter's lips touched, and bespake her thus:
"Truce, Cytherea, to thy fears, and know
Unshaken stand thy children's destinies:
Lavinium's city and predestined walls
Thou shalt behold, and in thine arms up-bear
High souled Aeneas to the stars of heaven;

Rome was not over Juno's power's because of Fate - God's bound by fate
Fate had decreed Rome would be great for the sake of do
... t ... more men

Nor hath my purpose warped me. This thy son--
 For I, to ease thy gnawing care, will speak,
 From late's dark roll her inmost secrets wring--
 Shall wage a mighty war in Italy,
 Crush the proud folk, and for his warriors found
 A city and a system, till the third
 Summer hath seen him lord in Latium,
 Three winters o'er the vanquished Rutules sped.
 But young Ascanius, newly now surnamed
 Iulus--Iulus was he while enthroned
 Stood Ilium's State--shall compass in his reign
 Thirty great cycles with revolving months,
 And from Lavinium shift his empire's seat,
 And Alba Longa's ramparts rear with power:
 Here now shall reign full thrice a hundred years
 Great Hector's line, till Ilia, royal maid
 And priestess, shall twin offspring bear to Mars,
 Their sire; then glorying in the tawny hide
 Of the she-wolf, his nurse, shall Romulus
 Take up the nation, build the war-god's town,
 And call them Romans after his own name.
 For these nor goals of power, nor times I fix--
 Grant them a boundless sway. Fierce Juno too,
 Who now with terror scares earth, sea, and heaven,
 Shall turn to kinder counsels, and with me
 Cherish the Romans, masters of the world,
 The toga'd nation. So hath heaven decreed.
 Others the breathing brass shall softlier mould,
 I doubt not, draw the lineaments of life
 From marble, at the bar plead better, trace
 With rod the courses of the sky, or tell
 The rise of stars: remember, Roman, thou,
 To rule the nations as their master: these
 Thine arts shall be, to engraft the law of peace,
 Forbear the conquered, and war down the proud."

*Commission:
 To provide good
 gov't for people
 conquered*

Excerpts from Vergil:
THE AENEID, Books I and VI

Augustine: The City Of God

*Bishop of Catholic Church in N. Africa
 tried to explain success of Rome*

The cause, then, of the greatness of the Roman empire is neither fortuitous nor fatal, according to the judgment or opinion of those who call those things fortuitous which either have no causes, or such causes as do not proceed from some intelligible order, and those things fatal which happen independently of the will of God and man, by the necessity of a certain order...

...But those who are of opinion that, apart from the will of God, the stars determine what we shall do, or what good things we shall possess, or what evils we shall suffer, must be refused a hearing by all, not only by those who hold the true religion, but by those who wish

Greatness - from causes of intelligible order - not by will of God and man

to be the worshippers of any gods whatsoever, even false gods. For what does this opinion really amount to but this, that no god whatever is to be worshipped or prayed to?...

...They, however, who make the position of the stars depend on the divine will, and in a manner decree what character each man shall have, and what good or evil shall happen to him, if they think that these same stars have that power conferred upon them by the supreme power of God, in order that they may determine these things according to their will...

...What judgment, then, is left to God concerning the deeds of men, who is Lord both of the stars and of men, when to these deeds a celestial necessity is attributed? Or, if they do not say that the stars, though they have indeed received a certain power from God, who is supreme, determine those things according to their own discretion, but simply that His commands are fulfilled by them instrumentally in the application and enforcing of such necessities, are we thus to think concerning God even what it seemed unworthy that we should think concerning the will of the stars? But, if the stars are said rather to signify these things than to effect them so that that position of the stars is, as it were, a kind of speech predicting, not causing future things...

...how comes it that they have never been able to assign any cause why, in the life of twins, in their actions, in the events which befall them, in their professions, arts, honours, and other things pertaining to human life, also in their very death, there is often so great a difference that, as far as these things are concerned, many entire strangers are more like them than they are like each other, though separated at birth by the smallest interval of time, but at conception generated by the same act of copulation, and at the same moment?

Next let us ask, if they please, out of so great a crowd of gods which the Romans worship, whom in especial, or what gods they believe to have extended and preserved that empire...

...They have not even thought that the charge of their lands should be committed to any one god: but they have entrusted their farms to Rusina; the ridges of the mountains to Jugatinus; over the downs they have set the goddess Collatina; over the valleys, Vallonia. Nor could they even find one Segetia so competent, that they could commend to her care all their corn crops at once; but so long as their seed-corn was still under the ground, they would have the goddess Sein set over it; then, whenever it was above ground and formed straw, they set over it the goddess Segetia; and when the grain was collected and stored, they set over it the goddess Tutilina, that it might be kept safe...

...it may be understood they dare by no means say that the Roman empire has been established, increased, and preserved by their deities, who had all their own functions assigned to them in such a way that no general oversight was entrusted to any one of them. When, therefore, could Segetia take care of the empire, who was not allowed to take care of the corn and the trees?

Excerpts from Augustine:
THE CITY OF GOD
Book V, Chapter 1
Book IV, Chapter 8

Polybius: The Roman Constitution

Propagandist for Rome - Prisoner

The result of this power of the several estates for mutual help or harm is a union sufficiently firm for all emergencies, and a constitution than which it is impossible to find a better. For whenever any danger from without compels them to unite and work together, the strength which is developed by the State is so extraordinary that everything required is unfailingly carried out by the eager rivalry shown by all classes to devote their whole minds to the need of the hour, and to secure that any determination come to should not fail for want of promptitude; while each individual works, privately and publicly alike, for the accomplishment of the business in hand. Accordingly, the peculiar constitution of the State makes it irresistible, and certain of obtaining whatever it determines to attempt. Nay, even when these external alarms are past, and the people are enjoying their good fortune and the fruits of their victories, and, as usually happens, growing corrupted by flattery and idleness, show a tendency to violence and arrogance--it is in these circumstances more than ever that the constitution is seen to possess within itself the power of correcting abuses. For when any one of the three classes becomes puffed up, and manifests an inclination to be contentious and unduly encroaching, the mutual interdependence of all the three and the possibility of the pretensions of one being checked and thwarted by the others, must plainly check this tendency; and so the proper equilibrium is maintained by the impulsiveness of the one part being checked by its fear of the other...

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...One example will be sufficient of the pains taken by the Roman state to turn out men ready to endure anything to win a reputation in their country for valor.

Whenever one of their illustrious men dies, in the course of his funeral, the body with all its paraphernalia is carried into the forum to the Rostra, as a raised platform there is called, and sometimes is propped upright upon it so as to be conspicuous or, more rarely, is laid upon it. Then with all the people standing round, his son, if he has left one of full age and he is there, or failing him one of his relations, mounts the Rostra and delivers a speech concerning the virtues of the deceased and the successful exploits performed by him during his lifetime. By these means the people are reminded of what has been done, and made to see it with their own eyes (not only such as were engaged in the actual transactions, but also those who were not) and their sympathies are so deeply moved that the loss appears not to be confined to the actual mourners but to be a public one affecting the whole people. After the burial and all the usual ceremonies have been performed, they place the likeness of the deceased in the most conspicuous spot in his house, surrounded by a wooden canopy or shrine. This likeness consists of a mask made to represent the deceased with extraordinary fidelity both in shape and color. These likenesses they display at public sacrifices adorned with much care. And when any illustrious member of the family dies, they carry these masks to the funeral, putting them on men whom they thought as like the originals as possible in height and other personal peculiarities. And these

substitutes assume clothes according to the rank of the person represented: if he was a consul or praetor, a toga with purple stripes, if a censor, wholly purple; if he had also celebrated a triumph or performed any exploit of that kind, a toga embroidered with gold. These representatives also ride themselves in chariots, while the fasces and axes and all the other customary insignia of the particular offices lead the way according to the dignity of the rank in the state enjoyed by the deceased in his lifetime; and on arriving at the Rostra they all take their seats on ivory chairs in their order. There could not easily be a more inspiring spectacle than this for a young man of noble ambitions and virtuous aspirations. For can we conceive anyone to be unmoved at the sight of all these likenesses collected together of the men who have earned glory, all as it were living and breathing? Or what could be a more glorious spectacle?

Besides, the speaker over the body about to be buried, after having finished the panegyric of this particular person, starts upon the others whose representatives are present, beginning with the most ancient, and recounts the successes and achievements of each. By this means the glorious memory of brave men is continually renewed; the fame of those who have performed any noble deed is never allowed to die; and the renown of those who have done good service to their country becomes a matter of common knowledge to the multitude, and part of the heritage of posterity. But the chief benefit of the ceremony is that it inspires young men to shrink from no exertion for the general welfare, in the hope of obtaining the glory which awaits the brave. And what I say is confirmed by this fact. Many Romans have volunteered to decide a whole battle by single combat; not a few have deliberately accepted certain death, some in time of war to secure the safety of the rest, some in time of peace to preserve the safety of the commonwealth. There have also been instances of men in office putting their own sons to death, in defiance of every custom and law, because they rated the interests of their country higher than those of natural ties even with their nearest and dearest.

Again the Roman customs and principles regarding money transactions are better than those of the Carthaginians. In the view of the latter, nothing is disgraceful that makes for gain; with the former, nothing is more disgraceful than to receive bribes and to make profit by improper means. For they regard wealth obtained from unlawful transactions to be as much a subject of reproach as a fair profit from the most unquestioned source is of commendation. A proof of the fact is this. The Carthaginians obtain office by open bribery, but among Romans the penalty for this is death. With such a radical difference, therefore, between the rewards offered to virtue among the two peoples, it is natural that the ways adopted for obtaining them should be different also.

But the most important difference for the better which the Roman commonwealth appears to me to display is in their religious beliefs. For I conceive that what in other nations is looked upon as a reproach, I mean a scrupulous fear of the gods, is the very thing which keeps the Roman commonwealth together. To such an extraordinary height is this carried among them, both in private and in public business, that

nothing could exceed it. Many people might think this unaccountable; but in my opinion their object is to use it as a check upon the common people. If it were possible to form a state wholly of philosophers, such a custom would perhaps be unnecessary. But seeing that every multitude is fickle and full of lawless desires, unreasoning anger, and violent passion, the only resource is to keep them in check by mysterious terrors and scenic effects of this sort. Wherefore, to my mind, the ancients were not acting without purpose or at random when they brought in among the vulgar those opinions about the gods, and the belief in the punishments in Hades: much rather do I think that men nowadays are acting rashly and foolishly in rejecting them. This is the reason why, apart from anything else, Greek statesmen, if entrusted with a single talent, though protected by ten accountants, yet cannot be induced to keep faith; whereas among the Romans, in their magistracies and embassies, men have the handling of a great amount of money, and yet from pure respect to their oath keep their faith intact. And, again, in other nations it is a rare thing to find a man who keeps his hands out of the public purse and is entirely pure in such matters. But among the Romans it is a rare thing to detect a man in the act of committing such a crime.

Excerpts from Polybius:
Histories, Book VI

Augustine: The City of God

The ancient and primitive Romans, therefore, though their history shows us that, like all the other nations, with the sole exception of the Hebrews, they worshipped false gods, and sacrificed victims, not to God, but to demons, have nevertheless this commendation bestowed on them by their historian, that they were "greedy of praise, prodigal of wealth, desirous of great glory, and content with a moderate fortune." Glory they most ardently loved: for it they wished to live, for it they did not hesitate to die. Every other desire was repressed by the strength of their passion for that one thing.

Wherefore, when the kingdoms of the East had been illustrious for a long time, it pleased God that there should also arise a Western empire, which though latter in time, should be more illustrious in extent and greatness. And, in order that it might overcome the grievous evils which existed among other nations, He purposely granted it to such men as for the sake of honour, and praise, and glory, consulted well for their country in whose glory they sought their own, and whose safety they did not hesitate to prefer to their own suppressing the desire of wealth and many other vices for this one vice, namely the love of praise.

Nevertheless, they who restrain baser lusts, not by the power of the Holy Spirit obtained by the faith of piety, or by the love of intelligible beauty, but by desire of human praise, or, at all events, restrain them better by the love of such praise, are not indeed yet holy, but only less base.

Now, therefore, with regard to those to whom God did not purpose to give eternal life with His holy angels in His own celestial city,

if He had also withheld from them the terrestrial glory of that most excellent empire, a reward would not have been rendered to their good arts -- that is, their virtues -- by which they sought to attain so great glory. For as to those who seem to do some good that they may receive glory from men, the Lord also says, "Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward." So also these despised their own private affairs for the sake of the republic, and for its treasury resisted avarice, consulted for the good of their country with a spirit of freedom, addicted neither to what their laws pronounced to be crime nor to lust. By all these acts, as by the true way, they pressed forward to honours, power, and glory; they were honoured among almost all nations; they imposed the laws of their empire upon many nations; and at this day, both in literature and history, they are glorious among almost all nations. There is no reason why they should complain against the justice of the supreme and true God -- "they have received their reward."

Excerpts from Augustine:
The City of God, Book V
Chapters 12, 13 and 15