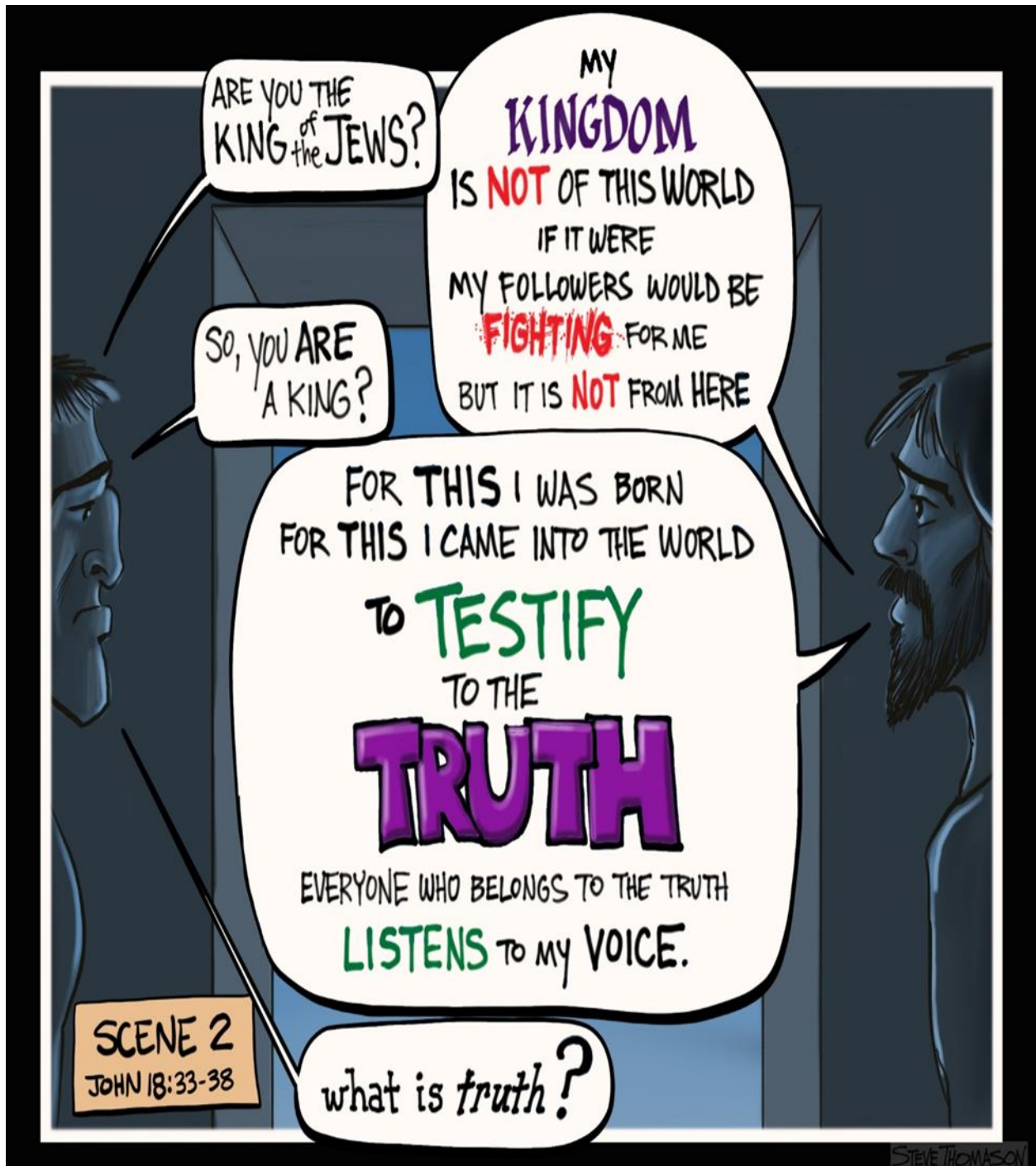


CHRIST TO CONSTANTINE & SENECA TO AURELIUS  
THE INFANT CHURCH VERSUS ROME'S STOICS

by David Lee Burris

PAST & FUTURE: JEWS ANSWER! WITH GENTILE QUESTION?



**We can gather related reliable information of insight beyond the administrative mindset of the Roman Governor – the human mind deeper at work in asking Pontius Pilates’s last and unanswered categorically rhetorical question of Jesus – “What Is Truth?”**

**One of Pilate’s friends of personal correspondence was Lucius Seneca – who was also - at that time - the boyhood tutor of future Emperor Nero. Lucius Seneca -- simply known as Seneca – was considered the most famous of the Stoics. As a Stoic tutor – his teaching on truth is noteworthy.**

**Pythagoras in the Sixth Century B.C. said: “Truth is so great a perfection that if God would render Himself visible to men, He would choose light for His body & truth for His soul.” Allen Plant in his scholarly paper *Stoic Distinction Between Truth & The True* states: “What the difference amounts to is that truth is to be corporeal whereas the true incorporeal.”**

**Bombshell to Pilate – the answer to your question – is standing before your face – Jesus Christ, the Son of Man - as claimed in John 14: 6 - the physical embodiment of absolute truth. Pilate’s answer was in Jesus silence.**

**What is of even more background significance to this final question is how it reveals the position taken by Pilate in his correspondence exchange with Seneca. In the philosophical debates of this period – the only ones framing their position with – “What is Truth?” – were the Epicureans. The followers of Epicurus were moral truth relativists equivalent to those today considered proponents of a Situation Ethic; Classic and modern practitioners of both theories have been accused of a de facto amorality. In other words – Pilate was not only a pragmatist – worried about maintaining position - but a moral relativist from whom the facts were extremely flexible.**

**To sum his situation – Governor Pilate was feeling increasingly “boxed in” and would attempt an administrative “triangulated” solution to contain the crisis – a non-violent escape. This was not to be because although he was looking for a bloodless way out – Jesus was not. In this contest of the wills – Pilate would lose. (Matthew 26: 53 - & - John 19: 11)**

***Summum Bonum*, was an expression used by Cicero, first among ancient Rome's great orators, is Latin for "the highest good." To the Stoics, this was what they defined as Virtue. Their aim was to strive towards having a virtuous life.**



## COMPARISONS OF STOIC & CHRISTIAN MORALITIES

Ancient Christian authors often show awareness of the affinity between Christianity and Stoicism, particularly in terms of morality or ethics. Sometimes we see this awareness hinted at indirectly. Other times we see it expressed quite openly. The latter is the case, for instance, when Stoic philosophers, like Musonius Rufus, are expressly praised in writing by such learned authors as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. What these Christians appear to have admired the most with the Stoic teacher was his morality and his moral integrity. Origen, for example, could describe Musonius as **παράδειγμα του ἀρίστου βίου** ('a model of the highest form of life'). Similarly, he observed that while Plato was an aid to the intellectual few, the Stoic Epictetus was accessible to all who sought moral improvement. Another prominent Stoic, the *younger* Seneca, was held in high esteem by Christians—so much that he soon became subject to a quite unsubtle Christianization. Thus, around 200 CE Tertullian evidently considered Seneca's Stoicism so closely related to Christianity that he referred to him as *Seneca saepe noster* (literally 'often our Seneca'). Approximately two centuries later Jerome found it fully appropriate to skip the word *saepe* and simply call him *noster Seneca* ('our Seneca'). The fact that an anonymous 4th century Christian author devoted himself to the composition of a fictitious correspondence of fourteen letters between Paul and Seneca, the *Epistulae Senecae et Pauli*, only confirms how fundamentally close the two systems of thought were considered to be in antiquity. **It was really not until the early nineteenth century that a basically different picture began to emerge.**

At that time two theologians published dissertations in which they sought to contrast Christian and Stoic ethics, to the unequivocal disadvantage of the latter. Both authors acknowledge that there are some parallels between the two bodies of thought, but quickly move on to their dissimilarities, on which they lavish sustained attention.

Christianity offers a teaching and way of life more profound and inspiring than any philosophy that might be constructed on the basis of reason alone. The content of Christian ethics and its source in divine revelation guarantee its superiority over Stoic ethics. Christianity by nature possesses a deeper reservoir of human warmth and social consciousness than paganism. At the same time, the old myth that Seneca had been converted to Christianity by Paul still had proponents, some of whom argued forcefully for the authenticity of the epistolary correspondence between Paul and Seneca. This brief history of interpretation indicates, if anything, the close relationship between the two systems of thought. **It also illustrates how far, from a historically critical point of view, the attempts to explain that relationship have been taken, mainly in order to argue for and defend the idea of the novelty and uniqueness of Christian moral teaching.**

The Stoics, together with other Roman philosophers, were egocentric, even in their making of theory, unlike Christians, whose morality was in every respect other-regarding.

## THE APPROACH: FOCUSING ON FIRST-CENTURY ROME

What, then, is the purpose of this work? The primary purpose is threefold: first, to give a useful overview of moral teaching in Roman Stoicism as it presents itself in the writings and lectures of Seneca, Musonius, and Epictetus; second, to give a corresponding overview of moral teaching in Christianity as it presents itself in the three texts of Romans, 1 Peter, and 1 Clement; and, finally, to compare similarities and differences between the two sets of moral teachings.

## INTRODUCTION: A NOBLE PHILOSOPHER & POLITICIAN

**Lucius Annaeus Seneca.** The younger Seneca was the second in a row of three brothers, but his elder brother, Lucius Annaeus Novatus or L. Junius Gallio Annaeanus (Gallio), as he was called after his adoption by the senator Lucius Junius Gallio, was the very same Novatus/Gallio whom the apostle Paul is said to have met in the city of Corinth when the former served as proconsul of the province of Achaëa (in 51-52 CE). Trained (mainly) in rhetoric, Seneca eventually entered into politics and the Senate, and gained quaestorship in his late thirties.

According to Dio Cassius, Seneca was at this time ‘superior in wisdom ( $\sigma\omicron\phi\iota\alpha$ ) to all the Romans of his day and to many others as well’. Subsequent to the death of emperor Gaius (Caligula) in 41 CE, however, he was banished from Rome by Gaius’ successor, Claudius, and sent to the island of Corsica where he dwelt in exile for no less than eight years. But in the year 49 CE Seneca was recalled from exile through the influence of Claudius’ fourth wife, Agrippina, who intended him to serve as a tutor of her son, Nero. A year later, she also secured Seneca’s election to the praetorship.

When Nero acceded to the principate in 54 CE Seneca became counsellor to the young emperor. Tacitus observes that Seneca and his associate, **pretorian prefect** Sextus Africianus **Burrus**, were ‘guardians of the imperial youth, and—a rare occurrence where power is held in partnership and both in agreement—they exercised equal influence by contrasted methods’ (*hi rectores imperatoriae iuventae et, rarum in societate potentiae, concordēs, diversa arte ex aequo pollebant*). Seneca’s role and influence as counsellor was in part a moral one. Tacitus, who refers to him as Nero’s *amicus* and *magister*, explains thus: **‘Burrus, with his soldierly interests and austerity, and Seneca, with his lessons in eloquence and his self-respecting courtliness (praeceptis eloquentiae et comitate honesta), aided each other to ensure that the sovereign’s years of temptation should, if he were scornful of virtue, be restrained within the bounds of permissible indulgence.** Apparently Seneca was largely successful in this respect, for scholars widely agree that ‘the good period’ of Nero’s reign (the quinquennium Neronis) was precisely when the young emperor was still under the personal influence of Seneca and Burrus, especially that of the former. However, after the deaths of Agrippina in 59 CE and, especially, of Burrus in 62 CE, Seneca’s power and influence with the emperor waned and, **without the latter’s approval, he gradually withdrew** from court.

As a friend of the conspirator C. Calpurnius Piso, Seneca was accused of participation in a conspiracy against Nero in 65 CE and was forced to commit suicide. Seneca’s life was in many respects marked by opposites. At one point, his influence with Nero was so great he was certainly among the most powerful persons in Rome.





### Nero’s Tutor - Luccius Seneca – “On Providence”

- ❖ **MIDDLE STOICS SUSPICIOUS OF WEALTH AS IT LEADS TO VICES**
- ❖ **EXTERNAL GOODS CAN DRAIN VIRTUES IF GIVEN PREFERENCE**
- *“Flee luxury, flee enfeebling good fortune, from which men’s minds grow sodden!”*
- *“While all excesses are hurtful, the most dangerous is unlimited good fortune.” {Prov. 4.9 – 10}*



Nero's Tutor - Luccius Seneca – "On Providence"

- ❖ **MIDDLE STOICS PROFESSED A PERSONALISTIC & BENEVOLENT FATHER-FIGURE VIEW OF GOD**
- ❖ **IN DEFENSE OF THIS POSITION SENECA RESPONDS TO THE PERENNIAL QUESTION AS TO WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD MEN WHO ARE SUBJECT TO BENEVOLENT PROVIDENCE!**

Nero's Tutor - Luccius Seneca – "On Providence"

- *(God) "does not make a spoiled pet out of a good man; he tests him, hardens him, and fits him for his service."*
  1. *Compares To Athletic Training*
  2. *Contrasts To Mother's Nurture*
  3. *Correlates With Self-Discovery*

**\* PROPER PERFORMANCE OF PIETY**  
**Conformity Of The Inferior Personal Will**  
**With The Better Purpose Of The Divine!**



Being of the equestrian Annaei family, Seneca would hardly have experienced anything close to real poverty. In fact, at the height of his political power, Seneca was probably among the wealthiest individuals in Rome. On the other hand, from his youth he suffered from a different kind of poverty, poor physical health caused by various kinds of illnesses. This poor state of health greatly affected his life, even constituting an impetus for his interest in and preference for philosophy. It is an aspect of Seneca's life that is scarcely considered in later reflections on his person, well reflected though it is in his writings. When afflicted by the thought of ending his life because of illness, it was above all his philosophical studies that kept Seneca alive: 'My studies were my salvation. I place it to the credit of philosophy that I recovered and regained my strength. I owe my life to philosophy.'

By a peculiar fusion of the tutor and counsellor Seneca with the student and emperor Nero, who is best remembered for his bad morality. Here it seems to matter little our sources suggest that the emperor's 'good period' was in fact precisely when he was under Seneca's influence. The stereotyped image of Seneca as a pretentious hypocrite is amazingly widespread. To be sure, Seneca himself does imply that there were those in his lifetime who accused him of some kind of hypocrisy, of talking one way and living another. Not only was he prominent, powerful, and moneyed, he also served as tutor and counsellor of the horribly vicious Nero. Both Juvenal and Martial are referring to Seneca's generosity towards his friends and clients, not some beggars in the streets.

A word of praise for giving to the truly poor is hardly what we should anticipate in this context. Nor should we expect Seneca himself to have had any real experience of poverty, or, for that matter, to have been even conscious of that 'lack' of experience when he praised the virtuous life of poverty in his moral writings. But that does not in itself make him a selfish hypocrite. Tacitus tells of Seneca's wish to retire from Nero's service in 62 CE and return his riches to the emperor, and Suetonius seconds this with the words that 'the old man often pleaded to be allowed to retire and offered to give up his estates'. **The wish was not granted.**

Perhaps because, in the end, nobody likes a moralist, least of all a rich one. And yet we must be aware that 'hypocrisy is a convenient charge to hurl at an enemy in any age ... As long as people profess moral principles, with whatever degree of seriousness, their enemies will quote their words against their deeds.' As Seneca says himself in *De Vita Beata*, 'the same reproach ... has been made against Plato, against Epicurus, against Zeno; for all these told, not how they themselves were living, but how they ought to live'. . . 'It is of virtue, not of myself, that I am speaking, and my quarrel is against all vices, more especially against my own. When I shall be able, I shall live as I ought.' It is important to have in mind that Seneca always aimed to be but never claimed to be a 'wise man'.

Against the stock charge that philosophers do not practise what they preach Seneca replies: 'Yet they do practise much that they preach, much that their virtuous minds conceive.... But if you are a man (*vir*), look to those who are attempting great things (*magna conantis*), even though they fall.' **It is the will and effort that counts.**

*'I do not live one way and talk another, but I talk one way and you hear another—only the sound of my words reaches your ears, what they mean you do not inquire.'*

### MORAL TEACHING IN SENECA: LOVING EACH AND ALL

Seneca expresses well the Stoic belief that morality is rooted in the proper order of Nature itself. As God determined and designed it, it is simply in the nature of each and every human being to love his or her neighbor: 'Nature begot me loving all people' (*natura me amantem omnium genuit*), Seneca declares. According to him and his fellow Stoics, humans received from the very beginning and continue to receive a part of the Reason (ratio, λόγος) that pervades the world. The result is a common reason shared by all. **And not only is it a common reason but a divine common reason.**

There is thus an unbreakable bond between all human beings, devised by the divine Nature itself, which means that 'there is no such thing as good or bad fortune for the individual; we live in common (*in commune vivitur*). And no one can live happily who has regard to himself alone and who transforms everything into a question of his own utility.' Instead, one must live for one's neighbor, if one would live for oneself (*alteri vivas oportet, si vis tibi vivere*). Hence it can never be right to correct wrongdoing by doing wrong (*non oportet peccata corrigere peccantem*). 'How much more human (humanius) to manifest toward wrong-doers (peccantibus) a kind and fatherly spirit (*mitem et patrium animum*), not hunting them down but calling them back!' he exclaims. For 'human life is founded on concord (concordia), not by terror (terrore), but by mutual love (mutuo amore)'.

Every wrongdoing is to be treated with its opposite. In other words, instead of avenging an injury it is by far better to heal one, and it is by far better to treat unkindness with kindness than to match fault with fault. Even enemies should be met with benevolence and care, according to Seneca.

He recommends bearing in mind the following maxim: 'You must expect to be treated by others as you yourself have treated them' (*ab alio expectes, alteri quod feceris*).

Obviously, Seneca's point with the maxim is to urge one to treat other people well. But is its underlying motive 'sincere', or is it de facto 'egocentric'? That is, is this a good precept to follow (just) for one's own sake or (also) for the sake of others (is it what some might call a 'passive golden rule')? In one of his letters to Lucilius, Seneca emphasizes there is a reciprocal relationship between these two facets and ways of benefiting, for when one does good to the other one does good to oneself: 'There is not a man who, when he has benefited his neighbor, has not benefited himself' (*nemo non, cum alteri prodest, sibi profuit*). By this he does not mean that the actual goal of doing good to others is to eventually benefit oneself. It isn't for some (material) recompense that one does good to other people. In Seneca's own words: 'I do not mean for the reason that he whom you have aided will desire to aid you, or that he whom you have defended will desire to protect you, or that an example of good conduct returns in a circle to benefit the doer.' His message is rather that 'the reward for all the virtues lies in the virtues themselves'. The wages of every good deed is, in other words, simply to have done it (*recte facti fecisse merces est*).

This is of course wholly in line with the Stoic teaching of virtue as the highest good—indeed the only good, since only what has moral worth is good, according to the Stoics. The good is everyone's end (τέλος). To live as a Stoic, then, that is, 'in agreement with Nature', is to have virtue constantly as the ultimate goal. 'Life in accordance with Nature' and 'virtuous acts' amount to the very same thing in Stoicism. According to Seneca, specific virtues include, of course, the four cardinal ones, but in moral terms those of a more subordinate type are imperative as well, like *humanitas* and *clementia*, both which correspond closely to the Greek φιλανθρωπία (philanthrōpía).

But in order to be able to exercise virtue one needs training in philosophy, for without proper training every human being is in danger of remaining self-centered and indifferent to other people. It is moral education that makes the person conscious of being in the world and thus of kinship with other people. For Seneca, it is indeed a primary purpose of philosophy to lead one to and on the virtuous path of unity and mutual care. Philosophy properly comprehended leads one to the virtue of an 'all-embracing love of the human race even as of oneself' (*humani generis comprehendens ut sui amor*). We have here an echo of the theory of oikeiōsis (οἰκείωσις) or 'appropriation', which lies at the heart of Stoic ethics. In simplified terms, the theory teaches that human beings are born with an inclination to preserve and take care of that which 'belongs' to themselves, the Greek root οἰκ- basically connotes ownership or belonging to someone or something. This instinctive inclination aims, first, at the individual's own well-being and self-sustaining, but also at his or her concern for humanity as a whole—the so-called 'social oikeiōsis'.

The theory is fundamentally community-oriented, and in it distinction between self-interest and altruism is overcome. It holds that human beings are naturally 'programmed' to show affection for other people as well as themselves. It lies in their very nature to be friendly and philanthropic, and to live in organized societies. Philosophical training, on the other hand, is essential. It is moral instruction, learning of *oikeiōsis*, that calls each individual to an awareness of one's own identity and nature as a rational human being, and thus to proper conduct.

For Seneca, this [social] aspect is of no less weight than the first. It is rather the other side of the same coin, as is shown by the ideal Stoic sage himself whose good is said to be 'a common good' (*commune bonum est sapientis*) and who 'considers nothing more truly his own than that which he shares in partnership with all mankind (*cum humano genere consortium est*).' In other words, 'the Stoic concept *οἰκειώσις* connected the Stoic concern to live according to nature or virtue and the obligation to take care of one's fellow human beings by making the person's identity as part of universal humanity the starting point for social ethics'.

Seneca himself provides an excellent summary of the basic thought behind social *oikeiōsis* in an answer to the question, 'How to define a formula for appropriate behavior: I can lay down for mankind a rule, in short compass, for our duties in human relationships (*humani officii*): all that you behold, that which comprises both god and man, is one—we are the parts of one great body (*membra sumus corporis magni*). Nature created us from the same source and to the same end.



She engendered in us mutual love (*amorem mutuuum*), and made us prone to friendships (*sociabiles*). She established fairness and justice (*aequum iustumque*); according to her ruling, **it is more wretched to commit than to suffer injury**. Through her orders, let our hands be ready for all that needs to be helped. Let this verse be in your heart and on your lips: ‘I am a man; and nothing in man’s lot do I deem foreign to me’ (*homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*). Let us possess things in common (*in commune*); for birth is ours in common.

Our relations with one another are like a stone arch, which would collapse if the stones did not mutually support each other, and which is upheld in this very way. Seneca uses here a widely known metaphor to describe the (actual) position of each and every person in the world, and his or her (proper) relation to fellow human beings, namely, *membra sumus corporis magni*.

### **The ‘body’ metaphor is of great interest for the present study.**

Highly favored by the Stoics, it was of course well fit for its purpose because it made use of such a universally familiar and corporeal phenomenon as the body. After all, ‘no animal is at loss how to use its body’. The metaphor in Seneca’s use above illustrates how each and every individual is naturally related simply through being an integral part of the world itself.

There is an invisible but indissoluble interrelation between all human beings, a fundamental, original unity of mankind, the essence of which no one can annul. The ‘body’ metaphor *topos* in Graeco-Roman antiquity, was frequently used to encourage mutual love, care, and obligation in human relations.

The body metaphor was utilized in philosophical discourse on relationship between the whole and its parts. Also, often it underlined that each and every member of a family, or an organized community, had some specific function in the whole. It demonstrated logically that the whole is made of and dependent upon different parts, and that all these parts are necessary, if different positioned, in order for the whole to function properly. Seneca paints this portrait in one of his philosophical writings: *What if the hands should desire to harm the feet, or the eyes the hands?* It is noteworthy that, in this text, Seneca's primary attention is paid, not to the individual member's obligation towards the whole, but vice versa, to society's responsibility towards the individual. His purpose with the metaphor in the passage is to argue that it is always wrong to injure (nocere) another human being. For Seneca, then, and already before him in Cicero's presentation of Stoicism to the Romans, the 'body' metaphor was a key argument in his call for unity and universal humanity.

The associative potentials of the 'body' as an object known to everyone made it a powerful means to illustrate not only the position of human beings in the world and in relation to the divine, but also their relation to one another.

The 'community of reason' was taken by the Roman Stoics beyond the bond among 'wise men' to embrace all those who partake of divine reason. As we have already seen, Roman Stoic philosophy was anything but self-centered: 'In its relation with fellow human beings, not all of whom endorse the same philosophical ideal, the Stoic self has, contrary to common opinion, a profoundly altruistic outlook.'

Strong support for this assessment comes when in one of his letters Seneca observes that while the (ideal) sage does indeed need friends and friendship like everyone else, he does not make friends in order, for instance, to have someone at his side when he is ill, or to have someone to help him when he is in prison or in want. Rather, he enters into a friendship so ‘that he may have someone by whose sick-bed he himself may sit, someone a prisoner in hostile hands whom he himself may set free’. The purpose of making a friend is in Seneca’s opinion ‘to have someone for whom I may die, whom I may follow into exile, against whose death I may stake my own life, and pay the pledge, too’. Instead of the commonly alleged ‘self-centered’ philosophy, we see here a decidedly altruistic one. That is also why Seneca can claim: I am aware that among the ill-informed the Stoic school is unpopular on the ground that it is excessively harsh . . . But the fact is, no school is more kindly and gentle (*benignior leniorque*), none more full of love to man (*amantior hominum*) and more concerned for the common good (*communis boni attentior*), so that it is its avowed object to be of service and assistance, and to regard not merely self-interest, but the interest of each and all (*universis singulisque*). In their adaptation of an originally Greek philosophical ideal, the Roman Stoics applied it to their own society and everyday life in a way that reveals a distinctive pattern of underlining social responsibility. Characteristic of this Roman development of Stoicism was not only its call for priority of ethics over logic, but also the strong emphasis on practical application of the former—ethics in action. Seneca refers approvingly to the opinion of Demetrius the Cynic that a few philosophical maxims put into practice are worth more than piles of knowledge never used.

This is not to say that Seneca wished to derogate the value of (theoretical) knowledge. There is little doubt that he adhered to the Stoic doctrine of knowledge as prerequisite. Rather, he sometimes downplays the role of the theoretical in order to underline the practical - to stress that 'philosophy teaches us to act, not to speak' (*facere docet philosophia, non dicere*).

Due to common origin, 'the human race have certain rights in common' (*aliquod esse commune ius generis humani*). Should one, then, stretch forth the hand to the shipwrecked sailor, or point out the way to the wanderer, or share a crust with the starving? Yes, says Seneca. **Should one care as much for one's neighbor as for oneself? Yes, says Seneca.**

Social effects of the Stoic tenet are inevitable. We all spring from the same source (*principia*), have the same origin (*origo*); no man is more noble than another (*nemo altero nobilior*) except in so far as the nature of one man is more upright and more capable of good actions. **Those who display ancestral busts in their halls, and place in the entrance of their houses the names of their family, arranged in long row and entwined in the multiple ramifications of a genealogical tree—are these not notable rather than noble (*non noti magis quam nobiles sunt*)? Heaven is the one parent of us all (*unus omnium parens mundus est*), whether from his earliest origin each one arrives at his present degree by illustrious or obscure ancestors line.**

Elsewhere Seneca expresses his opinion that if there is any good in philosophy, it's its indifference to pedigree: **'Philosophy neither rejects nor selects anyone; its light shines for all', he says, and then explains that virtuous individuals like Socrates and Plato were certainly no aristocrats.'**

One may leap to heaven from the very slums (*subsilire in caelum ex angulo licet*).<sup>7</sup> We can easily imagine how shocking this statement may have sounded to Romans, particularly the noble ones, because of the enormous importance given to the ancestral tradition and lines of nobility in Roman society. Instead, as a ‘naked human being’, he sees another kind of nobility belonging to himself—and to the rest of mankind: Do not despise any man, even if he belongs with those whose had too little favor from Fortune. Leap over obscure names in your pedigree; great nobility awaits you at its source (*expectat vos in summo magna nobilitas*). The source, of course, is none other than the divine.

**The Stoic doctrine of universal humanity has, in other words, theology and/or cosmology as its very point of departure. It is precisely because of its understanding of human relationship with the divine that Seneca can claim with confidence that it is the ‘avowed object’ (*propositum*) of Stoicism ‘to regard the interest of each and all’ (*universis singulisque consulere*).**

Thorsteinsson, Runar M. (2010-07-26T23:58:59.000). Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality. Oxford University Press - A. Kindle Edition.



# The Similarities Between Stoicism and Christianity

## Contentment

In both Stoicism and Christianity, you can find teachings that reflect the idea that our level of contentment has to do with our own mindset, not with external events.

“It is the attitude [not the circumstance] that must be appraised: we must investigate whether the rich man can be content if he falls into poverty and whether the poor man can be content if he falls into riches.”

– Seneca



StoicQuotes.com

*“I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” — Apostle Paul*

In this quote from Paul, we find him proposing a very Stoic mindset indeed. Over and over again in Stoic texts, we find the ancient philosophers discussing that it isn't our wealth, status, or luck that influences whether we are happy, it is about our ability to control our mind and draw power from our inner resources.

*“It is the attitude [not the circumstance] that must be appraised: we must investigate whether the rich man can be content if he falls into poverty and whether the poor man can be content if he falls into riches.” — Seneca*

Seneca has same idea as Paul above. Our attitude is what leaves us feeling like we are rich or poor. It is surprisingly just as easy for a wealthy man to be stressed and unhappy as it is for someone that is in the depths of poverty.



## The Golden Rule

We all heard it a million times in childhood— treat others the way you want to be treated. This idea wasn't born in kindergarten classrooms, though, but reaches back thousands of years in the history of western philosophy.

“Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness.”

— Seneca



StoicQuotes.com

*“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” — Jesus*

In the Ten Commandments, we are instructed to never “bear false witness against” our neighbor. Jesus takes things to a whole new level, telling his followers that we should literally love our neighbors in the same way that we love ourselves. This is a lofty proposition and one that you could spend the rest of your life thinking about.

*“Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness.” — Seneca*

Though Stoicism has a reputation as being emotionless and cold, there are many calls for compassion from the great Stoic philosophers. Here, Seneca proposes that the opportunity to treat others well is everyone around us and that we always have a choice when it comes to how we interact with others.

In the same way that we can control the way we see situations, we can control whether we treat others with kindness or with cruelty.

The Stoics believed that we are all in this together— everyone and everything is interconnected. We have a duty in being alive to live virtuously, and our actions are inherently entangled with everyone else in existence.

## Mortality

A major theme in the works of the great Stoics is that of death. They frequently discuss the fact that it is not death, but rather the fear of death, that is problematic. After all, we will all die, and it is therefore a natural process of the Universe that we must work to accept.

“You could leave life right now. Let that determine what you do and say and think.”

— Marcus Aurelius



StoicQuotes.com

Of course, death plays a big role in Christianity as well. The birth of Jesus, in the eyes of Christians, is a truly remarkable story, but not one that outshines the story of his death and resurrection. Through belief in Christ, Christians are promised eternal life and salvation.

*“You could leave life right now. Let that determine what you do and say and think.” — Marcus Aurelius*

Marcus Aurelius discussed death at great length in *Meditations*. Remembering that you will die can have a tremendous impact on how you act and live. When we lose sight of the fact that we will die someday, it's easy to waste time, abandon virtue, and distract ourselves with earthly pleasures.

## Getting Revenge

When someone wrongs you, you might find that every fiber of your being stands up straight and screams for revenge. In both Christianity and Stoicism, though, there are calls to not stoop to the level of the offender.

“It is a petty and sorry person who will bite back when he is bitten.”

— Seneca



StoicQuotes.com

*“If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” — Jesus*

Are you taking the higher road when you don't give your enemy the satisfaction of getting a rise out of you, or are you being weak? In the teachings of Jesus, we find the famous advice to “turn the other cheek” when someone strikes you.

*“It is a petty and sorry person who will bite back when he is bitten.” — Seneca*

Seneca makes a similar point here, expressing that getting revenge is actually the action of a “petty and sorry” person.

*“The best revenge is to be unlike him who performed the injury.” — Marcus Aurelius*

Marcus Aurelius also makes this point, that the best way of being and the virtuous path to walk is to not be like your enemy.

## Anxiety

Anxiety isn't new – it's really a tale as old as time. Both Christian literature and Stoic texts talk about anxiety and how to deal with it.

*“And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?”  
— Jesus, Matthew 6:27*

Jesus begins this statement by asking his listeners to “look at the birds of the air” and realize that they are fed despite the fact that they don’t “sow or reap or gather into barns.” As is common in the teachings of Jesus, he continues using agricultural metaphors to help his followers understand his message.

It’s really remarkable, when you think about it, that these illustrations are still so powerful thousands of years after they were first spoken. There is so much truth in this quote— burning your energy by being anxious about something won’t get you anything, and, in fact, is simply wasting precious hours of your earthly life.

*“It’s ruinous for the soul to be anxious about the future and miserable in advance of misery, engulfed by anxiety that the things it desires might remain its own until the very end. For such a soul will never be at rest— by longing for things to come it will lose the ability to enjoy present things.” — Seneca*

Anxiety is considered an unpleasant emotional state by the Stoics. We can spend our whole lives miserable because our minds are focused on potential fears of the future. It doesn’t have to be that way. If we can learn to accept what is real, stop desiring things we don’t have, and take control over the things we can, we are able to be fully present in the moment and enjoy our experiences while alive.

## Discipline

Both Christianity and Stoicism recognize the importance of discipline and the fact that— while it might not feel this way at the time— discipline actually produces the greatest good and sense of peace in the long run. While short-term pleasures might seem like what you want, they actually lead to despair quite quickly.

*“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” — Hebrews 12:11*

It can feel incredibly painful to give up something you want right now in order to reach a goal or accomplish something greater down the road. If you are willing to let yourself try, though, you’ll find that your life improves greatly and you can find much deeper happiness and satisfaction in your existence.

*“If you accomplish something good with hard work, the labor passes quickly, but the good endures; if you do something shameful in pursuit of pleasure, the pleasure passes quickly, but the shame endures.” — Musonius Rufus*



## Love

It would be easy to write a whole book on the topic of love and how it is discussed in Christianity and Stoicism. In brief, though, one similarity between the two is the call to love other people sincerely. I think it's easy to think of love as a sentimental concept, but if you are able to push all of our cultural notions about it aside, love is something with exponential and infinite depth.

*"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly." — Peter 4:8*

*"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." — John 15:9*

It's not easy to love the people around us. They are selfish, they lie, they are thoughtless, and they betray us. In Christianity, we find calls to earnestly love one another despite how hard it might be.

*"To be free of passion and yet full of love." — Marcus Aurelius*

Aurelius makes a very important distinction. He wants to be "free of passion," i.e., the crazy storm that can overtake you when you're compelled by lust, fear, anger, etc., but "full of love." You aren't turning off your emotions and your engagement with the world, you're working to control the lesser emotional experiences to tap into those that are deeper, more real, and produce the greater good.

## Anger

Anger can arise for a lot of different reasons, and each person has their own set of issues that get the fire of rage burning inside them.

"There is no more stupefying thing than anger, nothing more bent on its own strength. If successful, none more arrogant, if foiled, none more insane."

— Seneca



The complicated thing about anger is that it's possible that you are righteous in your anger. It's possible that you are, from every reasonable perspective, completely justified in your anger.

On top of that, releasing your anger can feel so good. When you're angry, you have an incredible amount of energy coursing through you. When you externalize this anger, it leaves your body and, in some cases, you feel a sense of peace.

However, **both Stoicism and Christianity warn us against being quick to anger** and reminds us of the pitfalls of letting our anger control us.

*“Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.”*  
— Ecclesiastes 7:9

*“There is no more stupefying thing than anger, nothing more bent on its own strength. If successful, none more arrogant, if foiled, none more insane.”* — Seneca

Even though unloading our anger on others can feel like a release in the short term, anger isn't something that we aren't fully in control of. Seneca reminds us of the negative implications of anger whether it gets us what we want or not.

## The Present Moment

Both Stoicism and Christianity urge us to stop wading in the muck of the past and fretting about what will come tomorrow. Life, after all, only happens in each fleeting moment.

*“Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”* – Matthew 6:34

It's so easy to spend your entire life thinking about everything but the present. While planning for the future is certainly something that can benefit you, it isn't beneficial to be so focused on future outcomes that you forget to be alive today.

There is something so poignant in this advice – each day has enough trouble of its own. What if we did focus our attention in the present rather than being so concerned with everything but the present? We might just find that things work out better and that we are better able to achieve, in the words of Zeno of Citium, a smooth flow of life.

*“Don't fill your mind with all the bad things that might still happen. Stay focused on the present situation.”* – Marcus Aurelius

You can spend your whole life putting your energy towards things that will never come to fruition, which points to a tremendous and unaffordable opportunity cost.



## Your Enemies

Loving enemies is perhaps one of the most difficult things to do. Remembering that the person who has wronged us is a human and, in Christian eyes, a child of God, can be one of the hardest accomplishments to achieve.

*“But If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.” — Romans 12:20*

This quote from Romans speaks to the reality that treating your enemy with compassion is actually the best form of revenge. It gets tremendously more difficult to hate your enemies when they are treating you with respect and kindness.

*“Kindness is invincible, but only when it’s sincere, with no hypocrisy or faking. For what can even the most malicious person do if you keep showing kindness and, if given the chance, you gently point out where they went wrong—right as they are trying to harm you?” — Marcus Aurelius*

Aurelius proposes that continuously showing kindness in the face of maliciousness is the proper way to be. However, kindness can easily become fake or hypocritical, and sincere kindness is hard to come by.

## **The Differences Between Stoicism and Christianity**

Stoicism is simpler than Christianity in that it’s a practical philosophy rather than a world religion. While Stoicism has had a major impact on western thought and history, the impact of Christianity on western civilization and the world at large is practically unparalleled.

### Jesus Christ

Perhaps the biggest elephant in the room when comparing Stoicism and Christianity is Jesus himself. Christianity is centered around the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Stoicism, of course, doesn’t have anything to do with this narrative. In fact, Stoicism is not centered around any one figure at all.

It's also worth noting that while the Greek concept of *logos* is both important in Stoicism and Christianity, **Jesus is considered to be the *Logos* made flesh**, according to St. John.

## Grace

Epictetus once wrote “Zeus says: ‘If you want any good, get it from yourself.’” Here you can see self-reliance proposed in Stoic thought. In Christianity, there is major focus on external assistance from God and belief in grace and its power to transform people. Christians ultimately believe that there is a power greater than them in God.

## Satan and Evil

In Stoicism, the only evil is vice and the only good is virtue. All else that we usually think of as good or evil is actually indifferent, though they do parse out the preferred indifferents from those less desirable.

## The Afterlife

The afterlife is discussed in both Christianity and Stoicism, but the concept of what happens after we die is much more certain in the former than in the latter.

**Most, but not all, Christians believe that there is divine judgment at the end of life and an individual is given either eternal life or eternal damnation.**

On top of what happens to people when they die, **Christians also largely believe that the second coming of Christ will happen at the end of time.**

**The Stoics, on the other hand, seem to have differing opinions about what happens after you die.** Stoicism was certainly not an atheistic worldview, but different philosophers deal with the afterlife very differently. In general, the focus of Stoicism is more on making the best use of the time we have now rather than focusing on identifying what happens after we die.

– *Internet Search*

# What Are The Similar Lessons Taught In Both Stoicism & Christianity?

Below is the intersection between Stoicism and Christianity:

## **1. The Importance Of Living A Virtuous Life**

Both Stoicism and Christianity emphasize the importance of living a virtuous life. This means living in accordance with our true nature and acting in ways that are helpful and beneficial to others.

## **2. The Need To Be Patient And Persevere**

Both philosophies teach that we will face difficulties and setbacks in life, but we need to be patient and strive in order to overcome.

## **3. The Importance Of Using Our Reason**

Both Stoicism and Christianity emphasize the importance of using our reason to guide our actions. We should not be controlled by our emotions but instead, use our reason to make decisions that are in our best interests.

## **4. The Importance Of Self-Control**

**Both philosophies teach that we must exercise self-control to live a virtuous life. This means controlling our emotions and desires and instead acting in ways that are reasonable and beneficial.**

## **5. Importance Of Living In The Present**

**Both Stoicism and Christianity emphasize the importance of living in the present moment. We should not dwell on the past or worry about the future but instead focus on the present.**

## **6. The Importance Of Having Faith**

**Both philosophies teach that faith is essential. For Christians, faith is believing in God even when we cannot see Him. For Stoics, faith is trusting in our ability to reason & live a virtuous life when tough.**

## **7. The Importance Of Love**

**Both Stoicism and Christianity emphasize the importance of love. Christianity teaches that we should love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. On the other hand, Stoicism teaches that we should love all of humanity and work for the common good.**

**The grounds for ethical principles. In Christianity, love of neighbor (as yourself) is presented as grounded in the love of God or as in following Jesus.**

**Are Stoic ethical principles also described as grounded in the nature of the universe (the cosmos) or in the divinity in-built into nature? Sometimes, they are presented in this way, for instance in a famous passage ascribed to Chrysippus, in which virtue and virtue-based happiness are presented as ‘harmonizing’ yourself with the will of Zeus or the order in-built in the nature of the universe (Diogenes Laertius 7.88).**

**However, elsewhere ethical principles (achieving virtue and happiness) are presented as the realization of human nature, conceived as rational and sociable, without reference to cosmic nature (for instance, in Arius Didymus’ summary of Stoic ethics).**

**The theory of appropriation, again, implies that the capacity and wish to develop the virtues and progress towards happiness are in-built in all human beings and form the natural framework for a normal human life.**

**Here, then, is a rather profound difference from Christianity. Whereas in Christianity, love or worship of God is seen as the foundation of ethics, in Stoicism, ‘harmonization’ with universal nature is only one of a number of ways of thinking about the grounding of ethics, and these different ways are seen as being compatible and coordinate with each other. So, the similarities between Christianity and Stoicism on ethical principles co-exist with significant differences in the way these principles are seen as grounded.**

**– Christopher Gill**

**The Stoics did not deny the spiritual realm, and some saw the reality of a single God. Aided by reason but lacking in divine revelation, they had varied conceptions of God that captured pieces and parts of the truths of His nature. God was considered a spiritual and active principle that gives shape and meaning to a primary passive principle of undifferentiated matter. The ancient Greeks, you see, had a conception of an eternal universe and perceived God as a First Cause in terms of changing matter, rather than bringing the universe into existence *ex nihilo*— that is, out of nothing.**

**The Stoics had rather vague and sometimes conflicting understandings of God as the shaper of the cosmos or universe (which was believed to periodically perish in cataclysmic fire and then begin anew); as the “soul” of the universe; or as the universe itself. Some held, therefore, a rather pantheistic view that everything is God, or a part of God. Some saw Him as synonymous with Nature or with Fate. Others at times, especially Epictetus, did see God as a personal, father-like figure interested in our existence. Regardless of their rather varying and rather murky concepts of God, the Stoics acknowledged him based on reason alone. They also deduced from his existence our need to live lives of virtue and self-control, and they developed very effective techniques to help us achieve this. *— Kevin Vost***



**First, for the Stoics, what might be called the “God of the Stoics” was not a personal being concerned with human welfare as such, but a powerful “divine fire” of sorts, working through physical and material modes of operation. Nonetheless, this force or power is rational in its essential nature and immortal. In this account, the defining feature of the creative power of the universe is its inexhaustibility and its rationality.**

**Stoicism offers the obvious proofs for this—consider only the lawfulness of the cosmos itself. In Stoic teaching, particularly later Stoic teaching, knowledge of this kind of divine influence is one of the very preconceptions that a rational being has.**

**What the Stoics were getting at with the concept of a divine being as part of our very intuitive resources—that belief in such a being as built in—is that a rational being, recognizing the orderliness and lawfulness of the cosmos, must match that up, without further deliberation, with the notion of some rational agency behind it. You could not get anything of this sort accidentally.**

## **Stoicism: A Rational Plan for the Cosmos?**

**This is an intuitive conception, natural to the ordinary percipient, who is already a rational being. Such a being, seeing the world and the heavens, immediately understands that the world didn’t spring from nothing. Again, one need only consult the intuitive resources present in all human beings to ground a belief in a rational plan for the cosmos.**

**For the cosmos to remain lawfully ordered, there must be the constant participation of the Logos itself—so there is an immediate presence of the divine agency in the cosmos, which is to say that the God of the Stoics, though not the personal God of Christianity and Judaism, isn't remote from the affairs of the world but integral to those affairs. The events of the physical and natural world are dynamic, and these must record, again, the constant participation of the divine fire, the Logos, the creative force. There's the Stoic bridge to Christianity.**

**Let's put these notions together, and if we do so, we reach the possibility of a physically present and knowable God. We get something not unlike the God of the Hebrews, having a rational plan & order of things, being present in the world, revealing himself through his works and working on matter, on the physics of reality, in a divine way to realize divine purposes.**

## **The Reconciling Of Competing Views**

**We have a bind: A Stoic philosophical authority for a rational plan, something that is active and present in the world, something that makes the world conform to the scheme, but, at the same time, not something revealed directly to human intelligence - a problem.**

**How are we to reconcile the competing views? It is not a compromise solution but a radically new idea—namely that of God becoming incarnated in the form of a human being who will teach lessons and serve as a living example for a distracted human race, to be redeemed through his sacrifice.**

**Here is God made man, which is to say, the immaterial incarnating of itself materially to realize or to further guarantee what on a Stoic account might be regarded as the Logos.**

**Again, the “God of the Stoics,” this “divine fire,” isn’t knowable as such. The reconciliation with the Hebrew account is: “God made man.” How does the creative fire order and organize things?**

**It does so *nomologically*. In other words, how the cosmos obeys the precepts that are central to Stoicism is by law, by natural and physical law. Things behave the way they do because they are regulated by nomic principles; *nomos* in Greek is “law.” – *Daniel Robinson***

## EARLY CHRISTIANITY'S ENCOUNTERS WITH STOICISM

With the rise of Stoicism came the decline of Cynicism, in part because Stoicism's departure from Cynic antagonism made it more appealing to a wider audience. However, the transition was gradual, as early Christians gravitated toward asceticism and poverty. Maximus of Alexandria, for example, was called both a Cynic and a Christian for his asceticism.

While the early Christians appreciated the Cynic ideal in much the same way that Epictetus and later Stoics did, these Christians were, like Zeno, repulsed by the Cynics "shameless" lifestyle. Stoic followers, their linked heritage was nonetheless known throughout the ancient world. Laertius's overview of the Cynics and Stoics ends with Zeno and his students, known colloquially as the "Early Stoa." These early Stoa preached physical, ethical and logical doctrines, much of which were thought by Cynics, such as Diogenes, to be highly impractical and, as such, a waste of time and effort. The three doctrines are necessarily connected, and include rhetoric and dialectic.

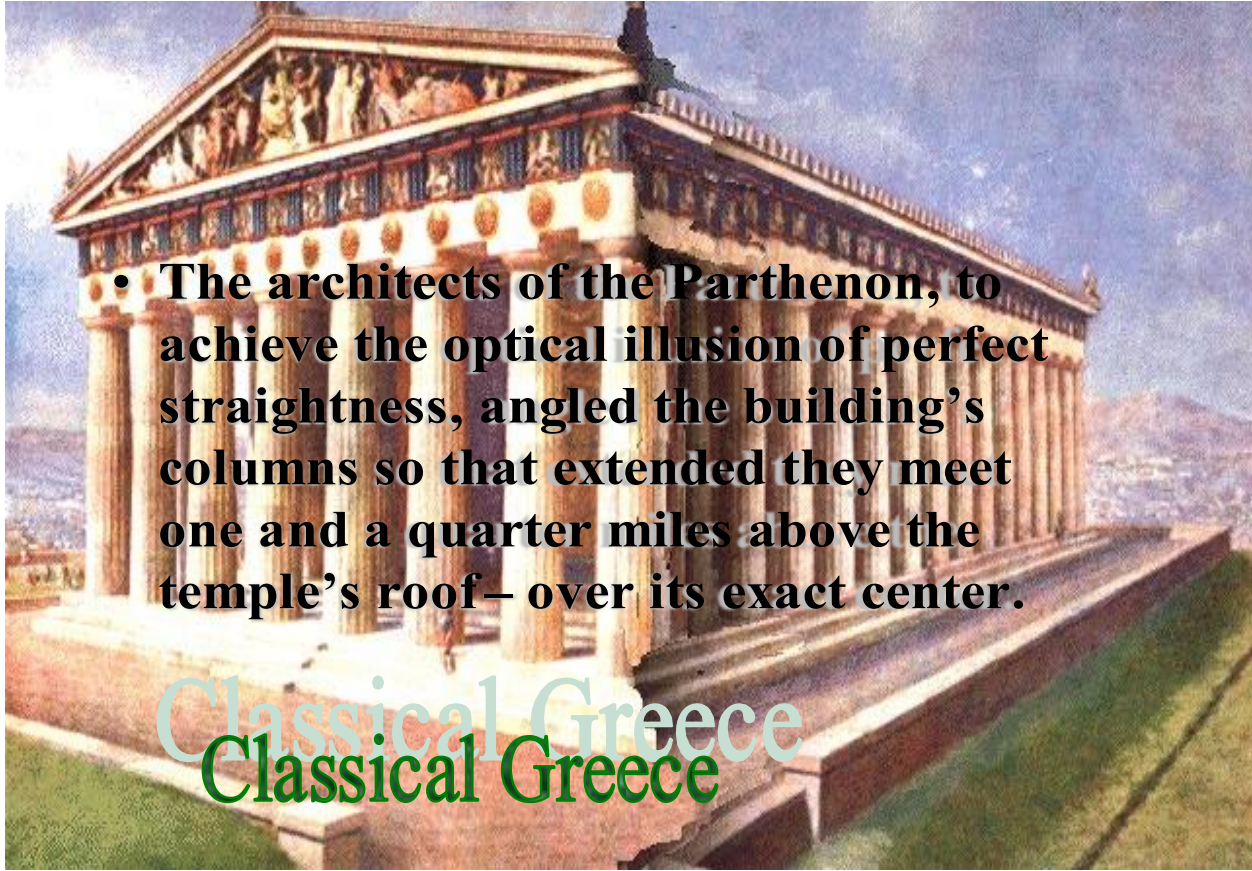
Reason reigns supreme for the Stoic: As Laertius writes, "All things, they say, are discerned by means of logical study. The ethical life—that is, the virtuous life—is lived in accordance with nature. This nature is none other than the law common to all things, also called reason. The early Stoa were content identifying this common law as the ruler and lord of all, Zeus. It is for this reason that even Epictetus, himself a late Stoa, identified the ideal Cynics—and Stoics—as divine messengers of Zeus. Happiness, for these messengers, resulted from virtue alone, bringing harmony to the individual and the universe. As opposed to Cynic shamelessness, Stoics practiced a sort of indifference characterized by preference and rejection.

For example, some Stoics possessed material wealth but did not necessarily prescribe to any sort of materialism: The Stoic owns his possessions and is, as a result, not owned by them and owes nothing to them. By the Roman era, Stoic philosophy had flourished both in and beyond Athens, and the works of the late Stoa are the only ones that survive intact. The period is typically **thought to have begun with Lucius Annaeus Seneca, born around the time of Christ and ended with Emperor Marcus Aurelius in the third century.**

For the Stoic, logical and argumentative structures are no less important than familial or governmental establishments.

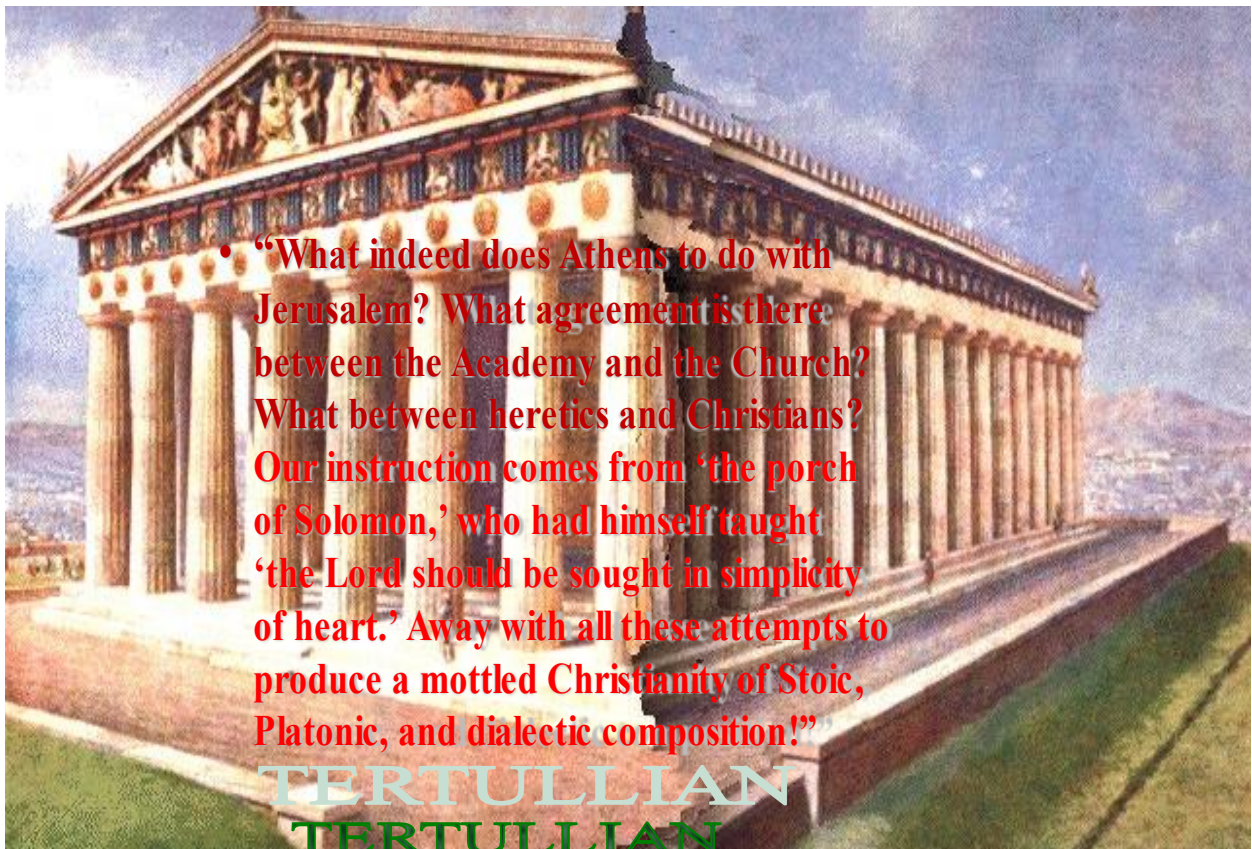
**The Enchiridion.** It is at this time that the early Christians begin composing and compiling their New Testament, specifically St. Paul's epistles; the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke; and the companion history to Luke, known as the Acts of the Apostles. In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul makes his way through Thessalonica and Beroea, spreading the gospel like wildfire before making his way to Athens. While Athens may have been less politically significant than Rome at this point in history, it remained an important cultural center for Greek thought. It is there, on the Royal Porch, that Paul encounters Stoicism head-on. While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he grew exasperated at the sight of the city full of idols. So, he debated in the synagogue with the Jews and with the worshipers, and daily in the public square with whoever happened to be there. Even some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers engaged him in discussion. Some asked, "What is this scavenger trying to say?" Others said, "He sounds like a promoter of foreign deities," because he was preaching about "Jesus" and "resurrection."





- **The architects of the Parthenon, to achieve the optical illusion of perfect straightness, angled the building's columns so that extended they meet one and a quarter miles above the temple's roof – over its exact center.**

Classical Greece  
Classical Greece



- **“What indeed does Athens to do with Jerusalem? What agreement is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from ‘the porch of Solomon,’ who had himself taught ‘the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart.’ Away with all these attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition!”**

TERTULLIAN  
TERTULLIAN



## In Athens Paul Preaches Of Another Hill

- Acts 17: 17 In The Marketplace Paul Preaches Both Jesus & His Resurrection
- Acts 17: 18 Epicurean Materialists & The Stoic Practitioners (v 21) Wanted Paul For Themselves So They Brought Him To Mar's Hill.
- Mar's Hill Was A Place For Honoring The City Gods Through Prayers & Sacrifice Although Neither Of These Groups Were Really Religious.
- Gods Not Moral Beings Nor Demand Men To Be
- Both Groups Had Accommodated These Practice Based Official Religions So As To Remain Public.
- Oral Societies Considered The Written Word Disguise & Not Elastic Enough To Reveal Depth - Deep Truth Was To Be Discovered From Questioning An Original Source At A Forum.
- Writings Were Either Transcripts Of These Deliberative Dialogues Or Doctrinal Defenses Using This Stylistic Form.
- Following From Verse 22 Is An Actual Record.

## In Athens Paul Preaches Of Another Hill

- Paul Probably Had A Mixed Audience Of Pagans & Philosophers Who Both Soon Thought He Was An Ancient Atheist As Antiquity Defined It.
- This Would Be The Concern Of The Pagan Religionists Who Feared Offending The Designated Deities That Protect The City.
- This Would Be To The Delight Of The Cognitive Elite Of Philosophical Thinkers.
- Paul Proceeded - Like Socrates - To Show Himself Only Really Religious Person There.
- Paul Exposed The Practice Based Ritual Religions Of The Pagans As Belief Systems Without Substance.
- Paul Then Told - In Meta-Narrative Style - The Story Of - "The Meaning Of Life" - To The Philosophers.
- God Create All Out Of Chaos Not Nothing!

<b>Areopagites' assumptions</b>	<b>Acts 17</b>	<b>Apostle's assumptions</b>
<i>Being Religious Is Enough</i>	<b>: 22</b>	This Is Totally Insufficient
<i>God Unknowable By Men</i>	<b>: 23</b>	Our God Is Very Knowable
<i>God In Temples Domestic</i>	<b>: 24</b>	God Created The Cosmos
<i>Worship Offering Transact</i>	<b>: 25</b>	God Gives & Needs Not
<i>Peoples Made Differently</i>	<b>: 26</b>	All Men Made From Adam
<i>When Where We Live Fate</i>	<b>: 26</b>	Space Place Is By Design
<i>God Afar &amp; Man Reaches</i>	<b>: 27</b>	Seekers Finding God Near
<i>God Afar &amp; Man Reaches</i>	<b>: 28</b>	He Sustains His Creation
<i>Humans Childs Of Nature</i>	<b>: 29</b>	We God's Own Offspring
<i>God Seen Carved In Stone</i>	<b>: 29</b>	God's Image Viewed In Us
<i>Ignorance Excuse For Sin</i>	<b>: 30</b>	God Not Now Winking At
<i>Deity Is Morally Indifferent</i>	<b>: 31</b>	He Involves Himself Deep

They took him and led him to Areopagus and said, “May we learn what this new teaching is that you speak of? For you bring some strange notions to our ears; we should like to know what these things mean.” Now all the Athenians as well as the foreigners residing there used their time for nothing else but telling or hearing something new. After preaching the Good News to the Athenians, Paul wins a few new followers and leaves them.

However, he does not leave the Athenians unaffected by them - evidenced by the plurality of parallels between Pauline and Stoic thought. Paul’s thoughts on sin and death in his Roman letter especially echo those of his contemporary, Epictetus in the *Enchiridion*. By looking more closely at these passages, one can discover connections between Paul and Epictetus.

First, this is Paul’s reflection on sin and death: Did the good, then, become death for me? Of course not! We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal. What I do, I don’t understand. For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I concur that the law is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh. So, then, I discover the principle that when I want to do right, evil is at hand. For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self, but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, I myself, with my mind, serve the law of God but, with my flesh, the law of sin.

And this is Epictetus: Men are disturbed, not by things, but by the principles and notions which they form concerning things. An uneducated person will lay the fault of his own bad condition upon others. Someone just starting instruction will lay the fault on himself. Some who is perfectly instructed will place blame neither on others nor on himself.

The subtlety lies in the language here: The Greek νόμος (“law”) can also be translated as “custom,” “system,” or — most importantly—“principle.” While the just, law-abiding man knows what is right and wrong, the wise man knows what is best: That is to say, what will improve him and his, which can only be — for Paul at least — the grace of God.

Paul elaborates upon this difference as follows: Far from improving the sinner, law encourages sin to expose itself in transgressions or violations of specific commandments. Thus, persons who don't experience the justifying grace of God, and Christians who revert to dependence on law as the criterion for their relationship with God, will recognize a rift between their reasoned desire for the goodness of the law and their actual performance that is contrary to the law. Unable to free themselves from the slavery of sin and the power of death, they can only be rescued from defeat in the conflict by the power of God's grace working through Jesus Christ. Prior to this passage in Romans, Paul suggests that man necessarily finds himself in a slave-master relationship either with God or with sin. Through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, a person of faith finds that the bonds of sin are broken and binds himself or herself to God. While sin bound humanity to death, Paul explains, God binds humanity to life everlasting.

Christians— Paul included—therefore turned or returned to the law, but found that, in light of Jesus' teachings, the law was more or less antiquated: "But now we are released from the law, dead to what held us captive, so that we may serve in the newness of the spirit and not under the obsolete letter."

It is the letter of the law, after all, that taught man what sin was, as Paul says: "I did not know sin except through the law, and I did not know what it is to covet except that the law said, 'You shall not covet'." Now, Paul is not suggesting that laws and principles are evil. After all, God is good, and God's law must therefore also be good. The letter of the law—the fine print, if you will—can obscure the spirit of the law, even going so far as to seemingly inspire the very act the law forbids.

Without Jesus to save and deliver him from the bondage of sin, Paul asserts that he would be powerless, and his struggle is every human being's struggle.

While it might initially appear that Epictetus disagrees on this point, this need not be the case. Indeed, Epictetus makes no mention of salvation in this passage, and appears to need no saving. Rationalist philosophers would say that reason alone is sufficient deliverance from death's terrors. Thus, Epictetus instead speaks of instruction. The sage—one perfectly instructed, as Epictetus writes—blames neither others nor himself.

Death did not appear horrible Socrates, as Epictetus points out, or to Paul, as he himself writes: **Paul can, in more ways than this one, be understood as a sort of Christian Socrates, speaking to the Athenians on the Royal Porch as Socrates had been known to do.**



The Athenians misunderstand Paul from the outset of his speech, as it is written, in the same way that Socrates was misunderstood. Epictetus simply remarks what Paul implies: Death has no sting. Both Paul and Epictetus—students-of-sorts of Jesus and Socrates, respectively—go on to serve as excellent teachers for early Christians, despite theological and philosophical differences. That these writings followed Paul's epistles and the Gospels is no accident, and it seems possible that Epictetus was aware of, and read, the Christian New Testament, most especially Paul's epistles.

**While the worldview of the Stoic differs radically from the Christian, both the moral teaching of the pagan philosopher and of the follower of Christ is often very much the same. Both attach the highest importance to religious faith and moral sentiment; both hold virtue is the chief good; both emphasize the principle of liberty, and draw from it that of free personality; both declare that man holds his earthly possessions as steward of the divine owner, to whom he's responsible for usage made of them.**

## In Matters of Faith: Christianity vs. Stoicism

The fundamental similarities and differences between Stoicism & Christianity are clear. Christianity has proven to be the more simplistic faith-system, and this partially accounts for its relative success. As we observed, the logic and physics of Christian thought is grounded in incontestable Biblical and church doctrine; we, as humans, are not expected to understand the complex world God has created. Perhaps put best in *Paradiso* - "mindless is it that human minds can ever understand the infinite" (111). Essentially, God is infallible and any mystery surrounding understanding of his nature can be traced back to an error in human logic. This leaves little room for controversy, but much room for an ecumenical standard. In this way, there could be universal order in the faith-system. On the contrary, the stoic follower must be wise, otherwise he can't achieve happiness. In this way, Christianity appeals to a larger mass of people. Christian ethics is simple to adhere to. In contrast, to be a stoic you must commit yourself to an ascetic lifestyle. Thus, Christianity is the lesser lonely faith-system. **In the case of Christianity, its practitioners are putting their faith in something outside of their selves; and, are actually opening himself or herself up. In comparison, the stoic puts faith in himself. Unlike Christianity, this is not an attempt to open up the self, but rather to firm it up, and to consequently, train it to be independent and alone.**

Christianity offered mankind an external deliverer from sin while stoicism offered man an internal battle against himself. It should come as no surprise it's that Christianity prevailed.

– Kevin Miller

**The Stoicism period is typically thought to have begun with Lucius Annaeus Seneca, born around the time of Christ and ends with Emperor Marcus Aurelius in the 3rd century.**

## **The Fourth Persecution, Under Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (162)**

Marcus Aurelius, although in the study of philosophy and in civil government commendable, toward the Christians fierce; by whom moved the 4th persecution.

The cruelties used in this persecution were such that many of the spectators shuddered with horror at the sight, and were astonished at the intrepidity of the sufferers. Some of the martyrs were obliged to pass, with their already wounded feet, over thorns, nails upon their points, others were scourged until their sinews and their veins lay bare, and after suffering the most excruciating tortures that could be devised, they were destroyed by the most terrible deaths.

Polycarp, the venerable bishop of Smyrna, hearing that persons were seeking for him, escaped, but was discovered by a child. After feasting the guards who apprehended him, he desired an hour in prayer, which being allowed, he prayed with such fervency, that his guards repented they had been instrumental in taking him. He was carried before the proconsul & condemned.



of people, events  
life and faith from  
**The Church Across The Ages**

### Polycarp's Powerful Witness!

- o “Polycarp was a personal disciple of the Apostle John. As an old man, he was the bishop of the Church at Smyrna in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Persecution against the Christians broke out there and believers were being fed to the wild beasts in the arena. The crowd began to call for the Christians’ leader, Polycarp. So the authorities sent out a search party to bring him in. They tortured two slave boys to reveal where Polycarp was being hidden.
- o It was a Friday afternoon, Polycarp was resting upstairs in a country home. They came in like a posse, fully armed as if they were arresting a dangerous criminal. Polycarp’s friends wanted to sneak him out, but he refused, saying, ‘God’s will be done.’”



of people, events  
life and faith from  
**The Church Across The Ages**

### Polycarp's Powerful Witness!

- o “In one of the most touching instances of Christian grace imaginable, Polycarp welcomed his captors as if they were friends, talked with them and ordered that food and drink be served to them. Then Polycarp made one request: one hour to pray before they took him away. The officers over - -hearing his prayers (that went on for two hours) began to have second thoughts. What were they doing arresting an old man like this?
- o Despite the cries of the crowd, the Roman authorities saw the senselessness of making this aged man a martyr. So when Polycarp was brought into the arena, the pro -consul pled with him: ‘Curse Christ and I will release you.’”





of people, events  
life and faith from  
**The Church Across The Ages**

**Polycarp's Powerful Witness!**

- o “Despite the cries of the crowd, the Roman authorities saw the senselessness of making this aged man a martyr. So when Polycarp was brought into the arena, the pro-consul pled with him: **‘Curse Christ and I will release you.’**
- o **Reply:** **Eighty-six years I have served Him. He never done me wrong! How then can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?”**



of people, events  
life and faith from  
**The Church Across The Ages**

- o “The proconsul reached for an acceptable way out: **‘Then do this, old man. Just swear by the genius of the emperor & that will be sufficient.’** (The ‘genius’ was the ‘spirit’ of the emperor. To do this would be recognition of the pagan religion.)
- o **Reply:** **‘If you imagine for a moment that I would do that, then I think you pretend that you don’t know who I am. Hear it plainly. I am a Christian!’**
- o The Proconsul Threatened Him With Wild Beasts
- o **Reply:** **‘Bring them forth... I would change my mind if it meant going from the worse to the better, but not to change from the right to the wrong.’”**



of people, events  
life and faith from  
**The Church Across The Ages**

- o “The proconsul’s patience was gone:
- o ‘I Will Have You Burned Alive!’
- o *Reply:* ‘You threaten fire that burns for an hour and is over. But the judgment on the ungodly is forever!’
- o The fire was prepared. Polycarp lifted his eyes to heaven & prayed:  
‘Father, I bless you that you have deemed me worthy of this day and hour, that I might take a portion of the martyrs in the cup of Christ... Among these may I today be welcome before thy face as a rich and acceptable sacrifice.’”



of people, events  
life and faith from  
**The Church Across The Ages**

### Polycarp's Powerful Witness!

- o “As the fire engulfed him, the believers noted that it smelled not so much like flesh burning as a loaf baking. He was finished off with the stab of a dagger. His followers gathered his remains like precious jewels & buried them on Feb 22, a day set aside to be remembered.”

Justin, the celebrated philosopher, fell a martyr in this persecution. He was a native of Neapolis, in Samaria, and was born A.D. 103. Justin was a great lover of truth, and a universal scholar; he investigated the Stoic philosophy, and attempted the Pythagorean; but the behavior of its professors disgusting him, he applied to the Platonic. About the year 133, when he was thirty years of age, he became a convert to Christianity, and then, for the first time, perceived the real nature of truth.

He wrote an elegant Gentile epistle and employed his talents in convincing Jews of the truth of the Christian rites; spending a great deal of time in travelling, until he took up his abode in Rome, and fixed his habitation upon the Viminal mount. He kept a public school, taught many who afterward became great men, and wrote a treatise to confuse heresies of all kinds. As the pagans began to treat Christians with great severity, Justin wrote his first apology in their favor. **This piece displays great learning and genius, and occasioned the emperor to publish an edict in favor of the Christians.**

Soon after, he entered into frequent contests with Crescens, a celebrated cynic philosopher; and with his arguments so powerful, yet disgusting to the cynic, that he resolved and accomplished his destruction.

Some of the content of Justin's second apology gave Crescens the opportunity to prejudice the emperor against the writer; upon which he was apprehended, scourged and then beheaded.





of people, events  
life and faith from  
**The Church Across The Ages**

**Justin Martyr: The 1st Christian Philosopher**

- o Around the year 132 while walking by the sea, quietly contemplating Platonic Philosophy of which he was a teacher, Flavius Justinus met an old man. The man's name has been lost to history but his good witness has been a blessing down to this day. The man talked with Justin and patiently made him aware of weaknesses in Plato's thinking Justin had not seen before. He told him of prophets more ancient than Greek philosophers who told the truth about God & foretold the coming of Christ.
- o Justin now taught that any truth in the Greek or pagan philosophies was the Word or "Logos" reaching out to sinful humanity. Moses and the Old Testament writings were older than the Greek philosophies, and any truth the Greeks had was borrowed from the Jewish prophets.



of people, events  
life and faith from  
**The Church Across The Ages**

**Justin Martyr: The 1st Christian Philosopher**

- o "Justin ardently defended the Christian faith against pagans, Jews, and erring Christians. He taught in Rome at the house of Matinus on the Via Tiburtine & wrote works which equipped Christians for generations to come. His Apology, written about 150 & addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius, was an appeal for justice and liberty on behalf of the Christians. Christianity was a persecuted minority in that day, and his Apology showed the reasonableness of Christian truth. After refuting baseless accusations against the Christians, Justin contrasted the moral power of Christ's teaching with the irrational fables of paganism. Justin publicly debated heretic Marcion and the Cynic Crescens. Crescens engaged in a plot with the Roman Prefect Rusticus to require of Justin a sacrifice to the Roman gods. Justin's refusal and strong witness in death earned him the title 'Martyr.'"

# Justin Martyr's Apologetics

Truth Revealed to Greek Philosophers

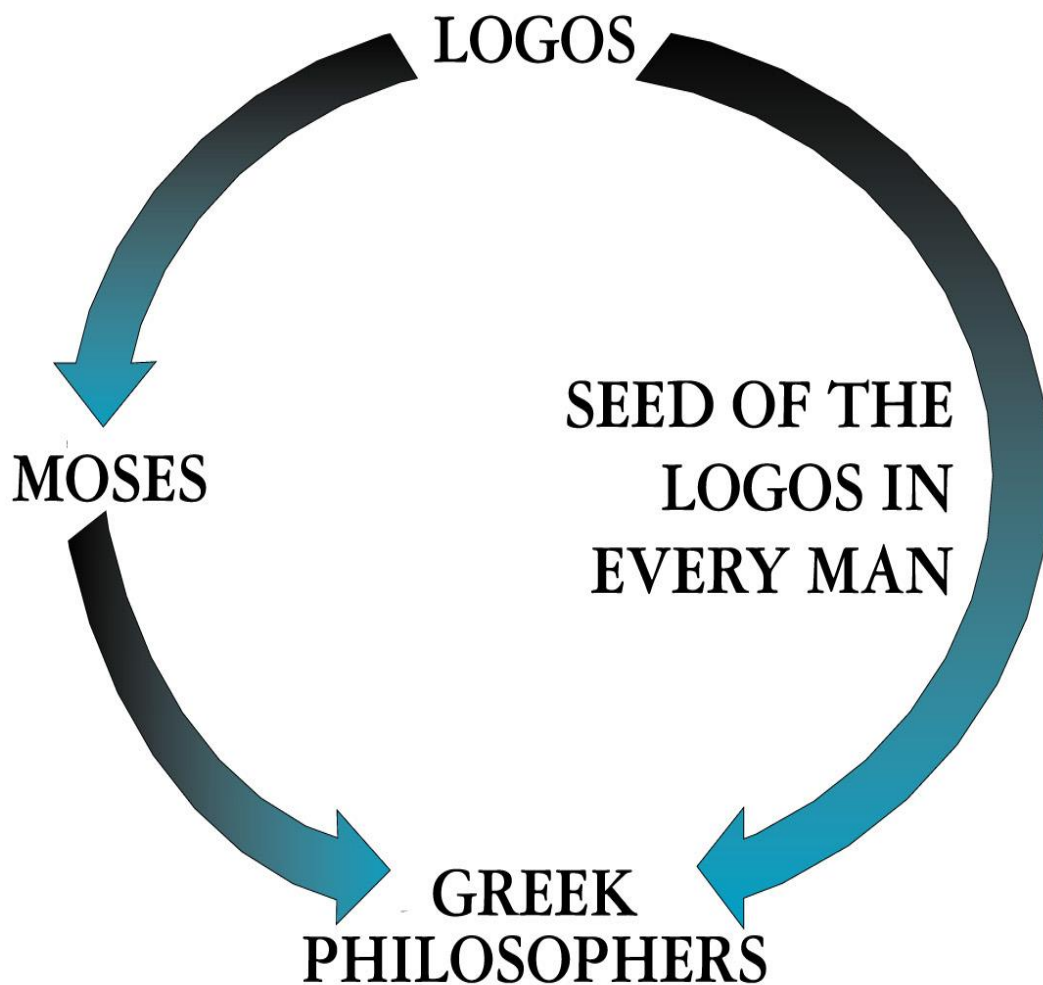
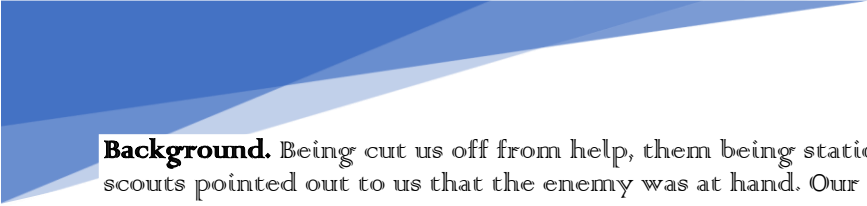


Chart 33



Some of the restless northern nations having risen in arms against Rome, the emperor marched to encounter them. He was, however, drawn into an ambuscade, and dreaded the loss of his whole army. Enveloped with mountains, surrounded by enemies, and perishing with thirst, the pagan deities were invoked in vain; when the men that belonged to the militia, or ***Thundering Legion***, **who were all Christians**, were commanded to call upon their God. Miraculous deliverance immediately ensued; a prodigious quantity of rain fell, which, being caught by the men, and filling their dykes, afforded a sudden and astonishing relief. It appears that the storm which flashed in the face of the enemy so intimidated them, part deserted to the Roman army; the rest defeated, and the revolted provinces entirely recovered.

**This affair occasioned the persecution to subside for some time, at least in those parts immediately under emperor's inspection.**



**Background.** Being cut us off from help, them being stationed 9 miles off. Then the scouts pointed out to us that the enemy was at hand. Our general, Pompeianus showed us that a mixed multitude of 977,000 men was closing in on us, which we all could see. I was cut off by this vast host, and I had with me only a battalion composed of the first, tenth, double, and marine legions. I examined my own position and my army, considered the vast mass of the barbarian enemy, and I quickly betook myself to prayer to the gods of my country. They disregarded me. So, **I summoned those among us who go by the name of Christians. After some inquiry, I determined that there was a great number and vast host of them. When they appeared before me, I raged against them. This was not appropriate, for afterwards I learned their power.**

**The Christians Go to Battle.** They began the battle not by preparing weapons or bugles. Such preparation is hateful to them because of the God they carry around in their conscience. We call them atheists, but it seems that they have a God as their ruling power in their conscience. I say this because they threw themselves on the ground and prayed not only for me, but for the whole army as it stood, so that they might be delivered from the present thirst and famine. For five days we had gotten no water because there was none. We were in the heart of Germany and in the enemy's territory. **As soon as they threw themselves on the ground and began praying to God—a God of whom I am ignorant—water poured from heaven. On us it was most refreshing and cool, but upon the enemies of Rome it was a withering hail. We also immediately recognized the presence of a God after their prayer, a God unconquerable and indestructible.**

**Marcus Aurelius Honors the Christians.** Because of this, then, let us pardon such as are Christians, lest they pray for and obtain such a weapon against us! And I counsel that no such person be accused by our courts only on the ground of being a Christian. If anyone is found laying to the charge of a Christian that he is a Christian, I desire that it be made clear that he who is accused is a Christian. If he acknowledges that he is one and is accused of nothing else, then whoever arraigns him should be burned alive. I also desire that whoever is entrusted with the government of the province shall not compel the Christian, who confesses and certifies such a matter, to retract. **These things should be confirmed by a decree of the Senate. I command that this my edict be published in the Forum of Trajan in order that it may be read. The prefect Vitrasius Pollio will also see that it is transmitted to all the provinces round about.**



## **According to Edward Gibbon in his Classic History of Imperial Rome:**

*"If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus," writes Gibbon. "The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue & wisdom. The Roman armies were restrained by the firm but gentle hand of four successive emperors, whose characters and authority commanded involuntary respect."*



## Massacring Christians: A stain on the legacy of Marcus Aurelius as Rome's 'enlightened emperor'

History remembers the famed 'philosopher-king' as a wise and just ruler, but one of the most brutal and well-documented acts of imperial atrocity took place under his reign: the torture and persecution of the martyrs of Lyon, devoured by wild beasts in AD 177.



**Statue of Marcus Aurelius**



More than any Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius (121-180) evokes the archetype of a wise and virtuous ruler – skilled in the art of fair judgment, a serious and sensible politician, a man who went to war courageously but reluctantly, and always for the good of the Empire. Aurelius' writings on stoic philosophy, collected in the book *Meditations*, is still printed and sold today. But the life of kings and saints is not often as rosy as popular history remembers. Under the reign of Marcus Aurelius, one of the most brutal and well-documented campaigns of state terror & religious minority persecution was carried out against the empire's Christian subjects: the famous martyrs of Lyon, who were tortured and devoured by wild beasts in 177, to the delight of pagan audiences that never tired of calling for blood.

Marcus' own life (121–80) spanned almost three-quarters of the empire epoch [historians rate most peaceful] while his reign (161– 80) occupied its last 19 years.



**Statue of Marcus Aurelius on horseback, Capitoline Hill, Rome**

As wise as he was, Marcus Aurelius lived during violent times, and his life and his reign were marked by constant war. The emperor very early was tasked with defending the borders of the Empire from barbarian attacks. It was also a time when the Christian population faced intense persecution and lived in fear of being tortured and torn to pieces by wild beasts.

After a brief period of relative tranquility following Nero's campaign of anti-Christian terror, those accused of professing the faith confronted yet another period of persecution – not so much an organized campaign as a haphazard atmosphere of violence that ebbed and flowed depending on who was in power, or how intense the citizen denunciations were. In his biography, Birley recounts how hatred toward Christians was very widespread at the time, noting that even Rome's most esteemed intellectuals – men like Tacitus and Pliny, scholars who we continue to read and admire for centuries – “regarded Christians as pernicious and deserving death.”





### Roman Persecution Causation: Sociological

- “The Christian ethic lived out became itself a criticism of pagan life. Meals at heathen feasts and social parties began with a liquid offering and a prayer to the pagan gods. As such, serious Christians would not participate in them. By such actions, the early Christians were frequently labeled as being unsociable, prudish, non-tolerant, boorish, and the like.” - Darkness To Light; Vol. V, Issue 22

**Roman Cliché – “Conspicuous By Their Absence”**

### Roman Persecution Causation: Polity/Economy

- “There was a balance of power Rome insisted upon holding when questions of loyalty to the imperial authorities were concerned. With a unifying political force of ‘Caesar worship’ having become the ‘keystone’ of imperial policy, several accusations were brought on Christians. They were looked upon as being unpatriotic and potential sources of chaos to an already faltering political & economic system.” – Darkness To Light; Vol V, Issue 22

## Roman Persecution Causation: Value System

- “Francis Schaeffer additionally presents a philosophical pre-suppositional perspective. He views the antagonism as key to the whole consideration. The worldview expressed by the official Roman elite was a combination of ideas from many sources. The only ‘absolute’ clearly distinguishable concerned the support of the city-state. All values had meaning only in reference to the *polis*. Christians were thus not killed because they worshipped Jesus, but because they would not worship Jesus and Caesar. As such, they were considered rebels.”  
- Darkness To Light; Volume V, Issue 22

## Historically Counterproductive: Herodotus

- Herodotus composed his *Histories* to explain the ways of the gods to men, seeking to understand thru history & its moral dimensions why nations rise and fall. He found his explanation in the concept of *hybris*, the outrageous abuse of power that leads nations and individuals to disaster!

Cicero Oration – “O tempora! O mores!” = “Oh, the times, oh, the customs!”



## Pax Romana Ends & Christians Scapegoated



I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.

1 Corinthians 9:22

### Tertullian 196 AD: Pagans Backlash

“The Christians are to blame for every disaster and every misfortune that befalls the people. If the Tiber rises to the walls, if the Nile fails to rise and flood the fields, if the sky withholds its rain, if there is earthquake or famine or plague, straightway the cry arises:  
**The Christians To The Lions!**”

Marcus Aurelius was not an especially ferocious emperor vis-à-vis practitioners of what, at the time, was generally considered to be a strange new cult. There is no evidence that Marcus Aurelius made any changes to the same policy towards Christians practiced by his predecessors, which consisted in periodic punishments meted out in response to citizen complaints. There was certainly no campaign of religious 'persecution.' There are no legislative documents pertaining to Christians from the time when Marcus was emperor. What little we know about his attitude toward Christians comes only from the apologetic literature of the period and their accounts of martyrdom.

But it was under Marcus Aurelius' watch that the martyrs of modern Lyon were condemned to suffer horrific deaths. Of the several accounts we have of Christian martyrdom under the rule of Marcus Aurelius, the account of the Lyon martyrs is the most extensive. "The documentation has a very special format – a letter from the Christians of Gaul to the Christians of Asia Minor, which details the facts of the event, and in particular, the methods of torture. The document lists the names of the martyrs, **most notably an enslaved woman named Blandina**, who, the account claims, showed great fortitude of spirit. The Roman citizens were beheaded while the non-citizens were thrown to the beasts before a large audience in the amphitheater. The document circulated during antiquity, and had a significant impact on the Christian community. The account is still quite chilling to read."







## **@Martyrdom of “Saint” Blandina**

Researcher Douglas Boin, a professor of ancient history at Saint Luis University and the author of *Coming Out Christian in the Roman World: How the Followers of Jesus Made a Place in the Caesar’s Empire*, has a similar perspective: “Punishments were most likely no more lethal or cruel under the Emperor Marcus Aurelius than during other times in Roman history, for other criminals,” he says.

“Rome’s treatment of criminals, including slaves and non-citizens, was always brutal and savage, with a standard menu of sadistic punishments – whippings, being burnt alive, being nailed to the cross and the like – which were used to deter insurrections, slave revolts and other outbreaks of rebellion,” Boin says. “Christians that were arrested in Lyon would have been subjected to some or all of these tortures, especially if they did not enjoy the rights of being a Roman citizen, and sources indicate that many did not. For criminals condemned by the Roman Empire, being thrown to the beasts was always a very real possibility. **So yes, it’s true: the emperor who became famous for his reflections on how to be a just and even-handed ruler presided over an empire whose citizens delighted in the blood shows of the amphitheater.**”

In the case of Blandina, she managed to fend off the animals with the power of spirit – though she, too, was ultimately torn to pieces by a wild bull. Such stories helped consecrate the mythology of a religion still in its formative stage. “For the Romans, what happened at Lyon was a glorious spectacle; for the Christians, it was martyrdom,” says Boin. **“The role of the so-called ‘enlightened emperor’ remains unclear.”**



## The 2nd Book of Marcus Aurelius Meditations

**Marcus Aurelius expressed his belief that the way to meaning in our lives lies in our first understanding that we have a soul, and that our soul partakes of the essence of God, our soul shares in essence that fate, through God, has decreed for each one of us, for each of us individually has a separate destiny.**

**The Stoic philosophical school had played a major role in the concept of God. The Stoics taught a noble idea: God is the universe. And in the words of the Stoic poet and philosopher Cleanthes, 'God is all-good, all-beneficent, all-knowing. God is perfection, and that God has decreed for the universe all the stars that move, every creature in that universe. He has given to each individual a soul, and decreed for that soul a fate.'**

**It is a monotheistic idea. An idea that paved the way for the ultimate triumph of Christianity.**

tain them from eternity? But how does the earth contain the bodies of those who have been buried from time so remote? For as here the mutation of these bodies after a certain continuance, whatever it may be, and their dissolution make room for other dead bodies; so the souls which are removed into the air after subsisting for some time are transmuted and diffused, and assume a fiery nature by being received into the seminal intelligence of the universe, and in this way make room for the fresh souls which come to dwell there. And this is the answer which a man might give on the hypothesis of souls continuing to exist. But we must not only think of the number of bodies which are thus buried, but also of the number of animals which are daily eaten by us and the other animals. For what a number is consumed, and thus in a manner buried in the bodies of those who feed on them? And nevertheless this earth receives them by reason of the changes [of these bodies] into blood, and the transformations into the aerial, or the fiery element.

What is the investigation into the truth in this matter? The division into that which is material and that which is the cause of form [the formal] (vii. 29).

22. Do not be whirled about, but in every movement have respect to justice, and on the occasion of every impression maintain the faculty of comprehension [or understanding].

23. Everything harmonizes with me, which is harmonious to thee, O Universe. Nothing for me is too early nor too late, which is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature: from thee are all things, in thee are all things,



18. How strangely men act. They will not praise those who are living at the same time and living with themselves; but to be themselves praised by posterity, by those whom they have never seen or ever will see, this they set much value on. But this is very much the same as if thou shouldst be grieved because those who have lived before thee did not praise thee.

19. If a thing is difficult to be accomplished by thyself, do not think that it is impossible for man; but if anything is possible for man and conformable to his nature, think that this can be attained by thyself too.

20. In the gymnastic exercises suppose that a man has torn thee with his nails, and by dashing against thy head has inflicted a wound. Well, we neither show any signs of vexation, nor are we offended, nor do we suspect him afterward as a treacherous fellow; and yet we are on our guard against him, not however as an enemy, nor yet with suspicion, but we quietly get out of his way. Something like this let thy behavior be in all the other parts of life; let us overlook many things in those who are like antagonists in the gymnasium. For it is in our power, as I said, to get out of the way, and to have no suspicion nor hatred.

21. If any man is able to convince me and show me that I do not think or act right, I will gladly change; for I seek the truth by which no man was every injured. But he is injured who abides in his error and ignorance.

22. I do my duty: other things trouble me not; for they are either things without life, or things without reason, or things that have rambled and know not the way.

23. As to the animals which have no reason, and

generally all things and objects, do thou; since thou hast reason and they have none, make use of them with a generous and liberal spirit. But toward human beings, as they have reason, behave in a social spirit. And on all occasions call on the gods, and do not perplex thyself about the length of time in which thou shalt do this; for even three hours so spent are sufficient.

24. Alexander the Macedonian and his groom by death were brought to the same state; for either they were received among the same seminal principles of the universe, or they were alike dispersed among the atoms.

25. Consider how many things in the same indivisible time take place in each of us, things which concern the body and things which concern the soul; and so thou wilt not wonder if many more things, or rather all things which come into existence in that which is the one and all, which we call Cosmos, exist in it at the same time.

26. If any man should propose to thee the question, how the name Antoninus is written, wouldst thou with a straining of the voice utter each letter? What then if they grow angry, wilt thou be angry too? Wilt thou not go on with composure and number every letter? Just so then in this life also remember that every duty is made up of certain parts. These it is thy duty to observe and without being disturbed or showing anger toward those who are angry with thee to go on thy way and finish that which is set before thee.

27. How cruel it is not to allow men to strive after the things which appear to them to be suitable to their



42. We are all working together to one end, some with knowledge and design, and others without knowing what they do; as men also when they are asleep, of whom it is Heraclitus, I think, who says that they are laborers and co-operators in the things which take place in the universe. But men co-operate after different fashions: and even those co operate abundantly, who find fault with what happens and those who try to oppose it and to hinder it; for the universe had need even of such men as these. It remains then for thee to understand among what kind of workmen thou placest thyself; for he who rules all things will certainly make a right use of thee, and he will receive thee among some part of the co-operators and of those whose labors conduce to one end. But be not thou such a part as the mean and ridiculous verse in the play, which Chrysippus speaks of.\*

43. Does the sun undertake to do the work of the rain, or Æsculapius the work of the Fruit-bearer [the earth]? And how is it with respect to each of the stars, are they not different, and yet they work together to the same end?

44. If the gods have determined about me and about the things which must happen to me, they have determined well, for it is not easy even to imagine a deity without forethought; and as to doing me harm, why should they have any desire toward that? for what advantage would result to them from this or to the whole, which is the special object of their providence? But if they have not determined about me individually, they have certainly determined about the whole at least, and the things which happen by way

---

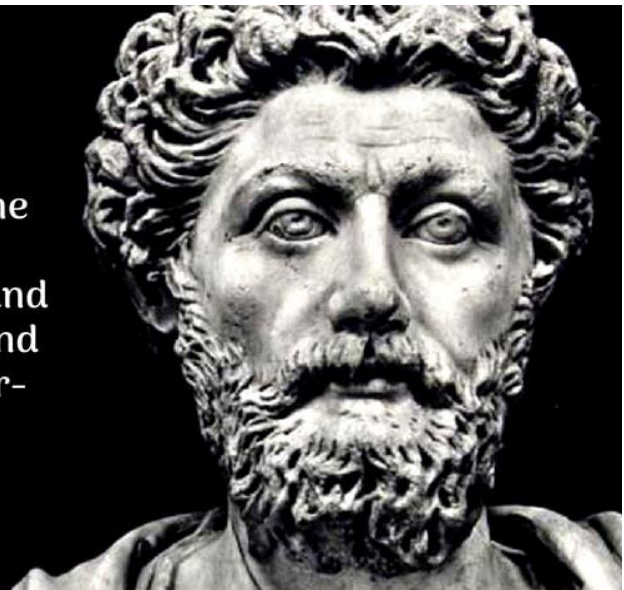
\*Plutarch, *adversus Stoicos*, c. 14.

“

And, to say all in a word,  
everything which belongs to the  
body is a stream, and what  
belongs to the soul is a dream and  
vapour, and life is a warfare and  
a stranger's sojourn, and after-  
fame is oblivion.

Marcus Aurelius  
(MEDITATIONS, 167 ACE)

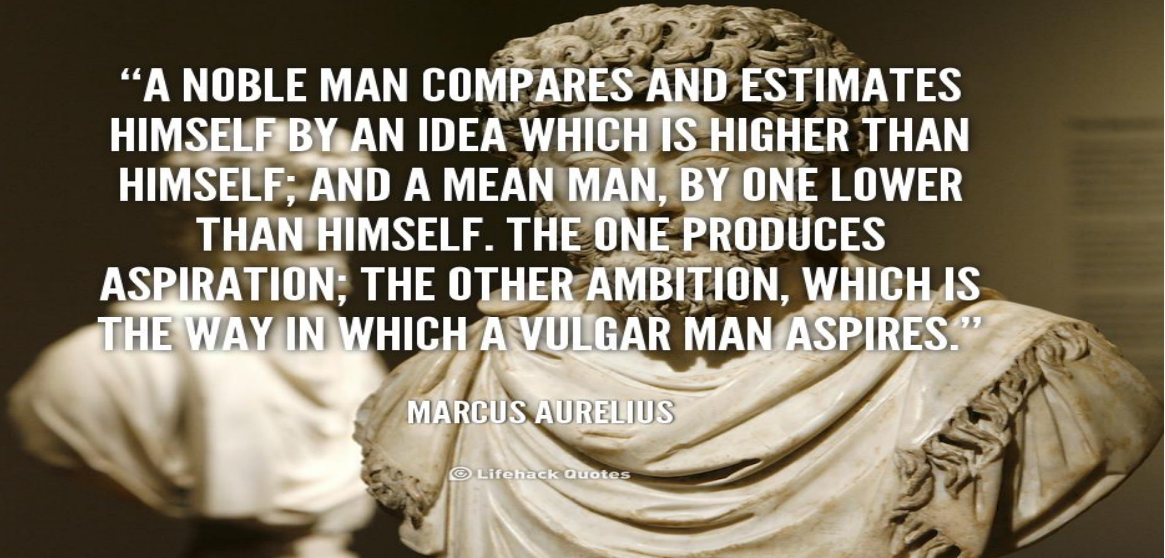
IPERCEPTIVE.COM



**“A NOBLE MAN COMPARES AND ESTIMATES  
HIMSELF BY AN IDEA WHICH IS HIGHER THAN  
HIMSELF; AND A MEAN MAN, BY ONE LOWER  
THAN HIMSELF. THE ONE PRODUCES  
ASPIRATION; THE OTHER AMBITION, WHICH IS  
THE WAY IN WHICH A VULGAR MAN ASPIRES.”**

MARCUS AURELIUS

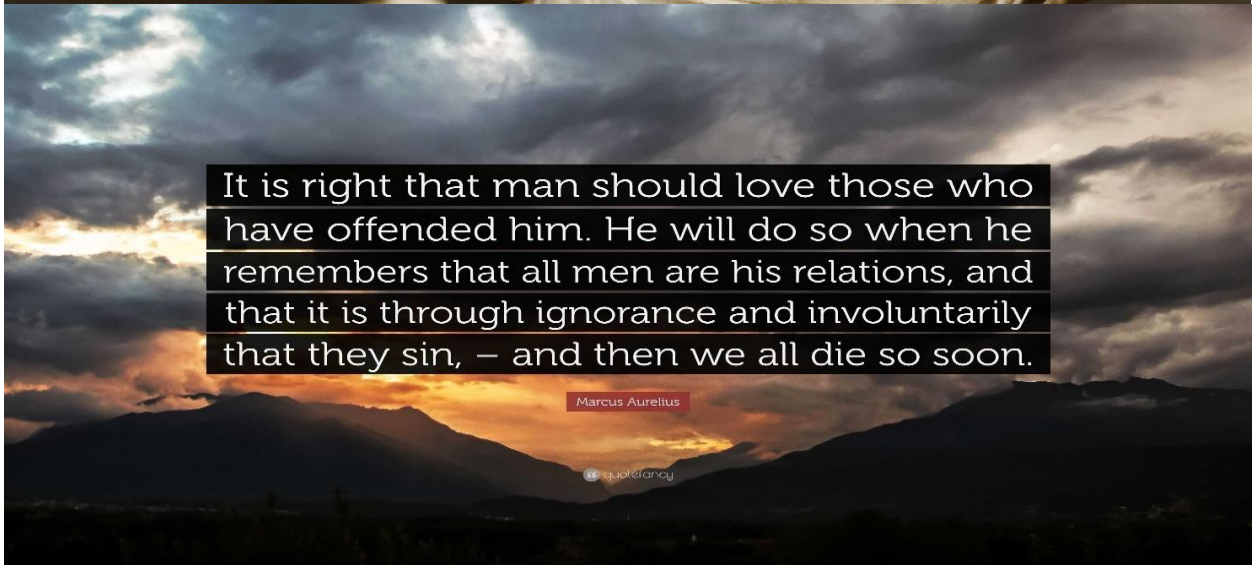
© Lifehack Quotes



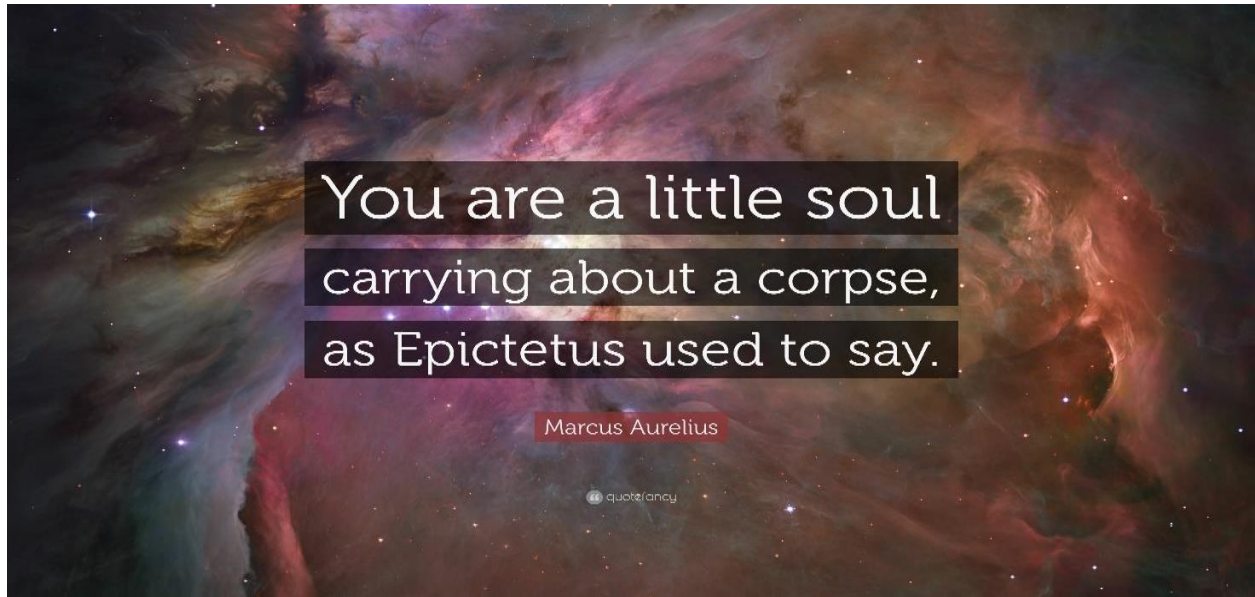
It is right that man should love those who  
have offended him. He will do so when he  
remembers that all men are his relations, and  
that it is through ignorance and involuntarily  
that they sin, – and then we all die so soon.

Marcus Aurelius

quoteofandy



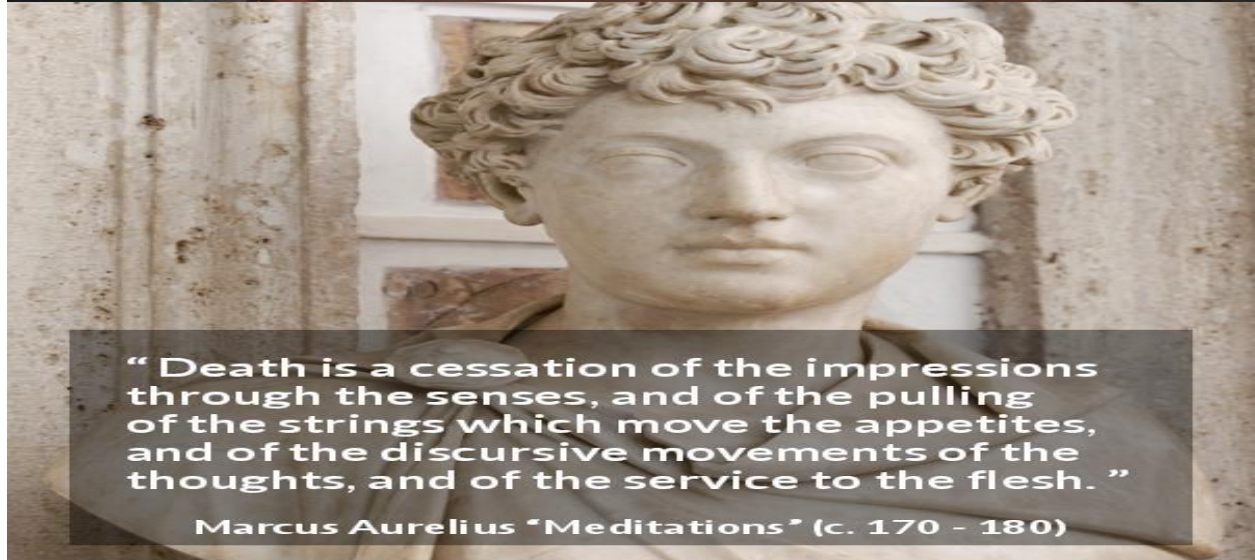




You are a little soul  
carrying about a corpse,  
as Epictetus used to say.

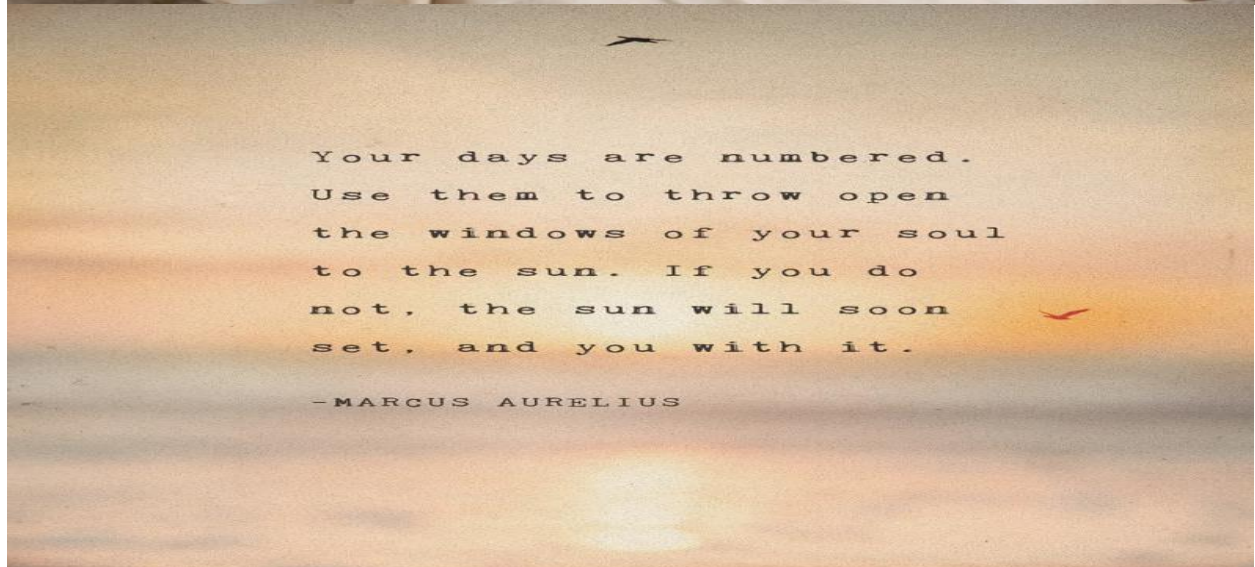
Marcus Aurelius

quote fancy



“Death is a cessation of the impressions through the senses, and of the pulling of the strings which move the appetites, and of the discursive movements of the thoughts, and of the service to the flesh.”

Marcus Aurelius “Meditations” (c. 170 - 180)

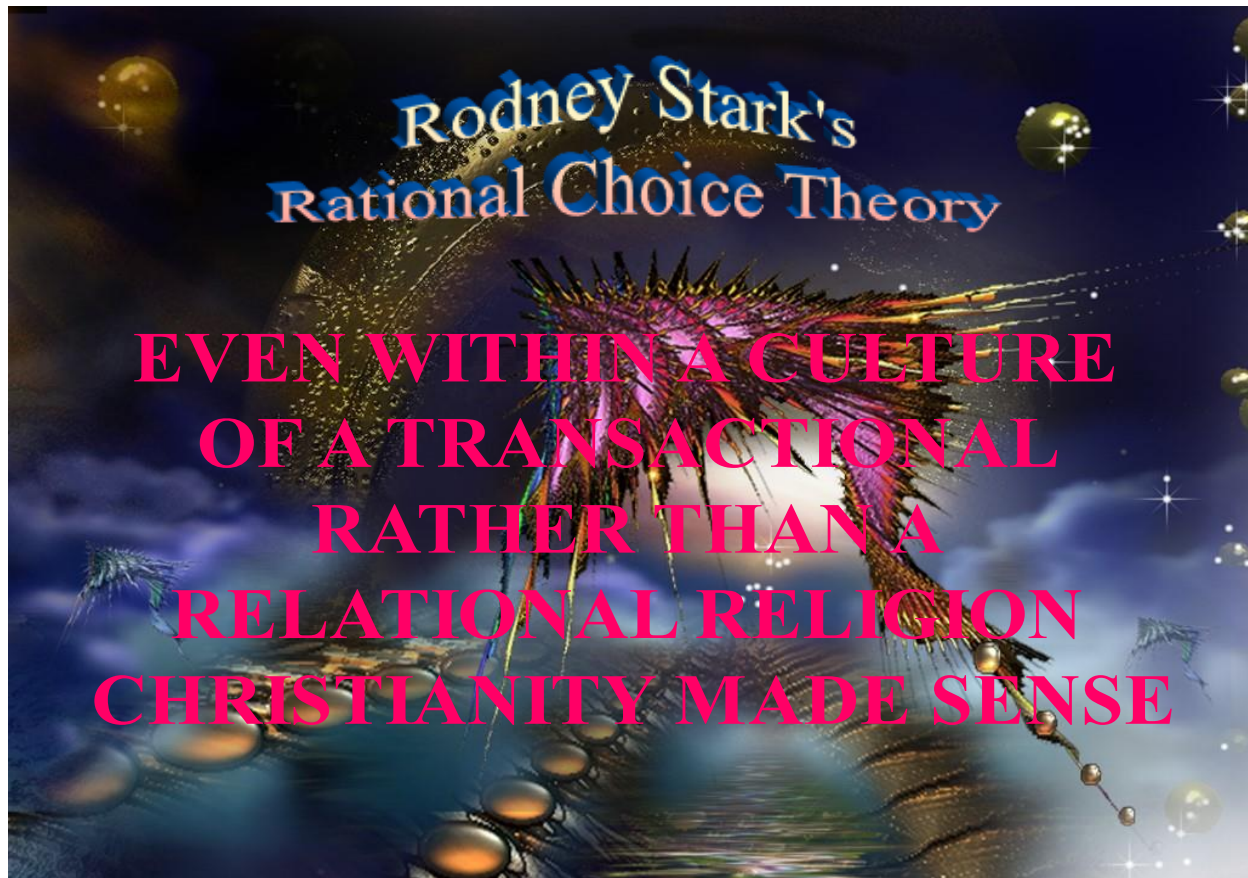


Your days are numbered.  
Use them to throw open  
the windows of your soul  
to the sun. If you do  
not, the sun will soon  
set, and you with it.

-MARCUS AURELIUS

**MARCUS AURELIUS WAS  
NEITHER ON THE RIGHT  
OR THE WRONG SIDE OF  
HISTORY – HE WAS ON  
THE RAZOR’S EDGE & AT  
THE INFLECTION POINT!  
WHAT STOICISM LACKED  
CHRISTIANITY OFFERED –  
SALVATION COMPLETION  
& ETERNAL AFTERLIFE!**





## Rodney Stark's Rational Choice Theory

**EVEN WITHIN A CULTURE  
OF A TRANSACTIONAL  
RATHER THAN A  
RELATIONAL RELIGION  
CHRISTIANITY MADE SENSE**

**Gibbon, in the 15th chapter of his "History,"  
cites 5 causes of rapid growth:**

- ✓ **THE INTOLERANT BUT ENLARGED RELIGIOUS ZEAL OF THE CHRISTIANS INHERITED FROM THE JEWS.**
- ✓ **THE DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL, CONCERNING WHICH THE ANCIENT PHILOSOPHERS HAD BUT VAGUE CONCEPT.**
- ✓ **THE MIRACULOUS POWERS ATTRIBUTED TO THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.**
- ✓ **THE PURER BUT AUSTERE MORALITY OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.**
- ✓ **THE UNITY AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH, WHICH GRADUALLY FORMED A GROWING COMMONWEALTH IN THE EMPIRE'S HEART!**



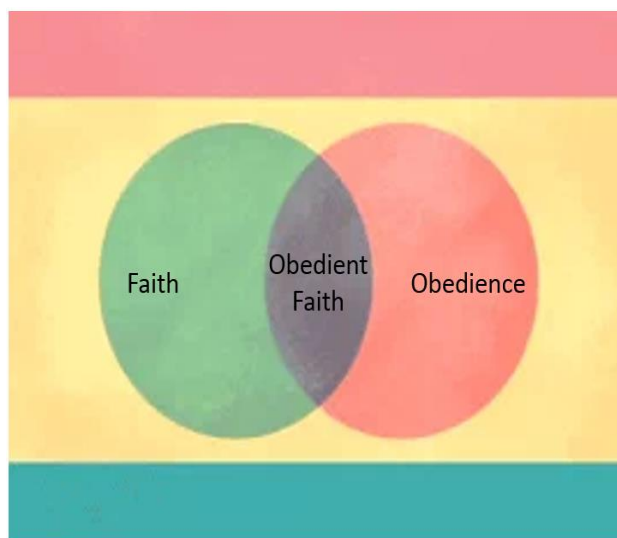
✓ **“Rational choice theory also differentiates among religions by actually paying attention to their specific teachings. Again, using Christianity in late Roman antiquity as the example, Stark points out that you can understand the failure of paganism in part by looking at what pagans believed about their gods. Roman gods did not govern the whole universe, just a portion of it. Roman gods didn’t love anybody – i.e. *Olympianism*. Roman gods had to be given sacrifices and offerings to bribe them into doing anything at all, and there was absolutely no reason to think that they wouldn’t abscond with the bribe and take off, failing to grant your wish.”**

✓ **“Christianity, on the other hand, taught that there was one God who was the father of all people and who commanded people to love one another. This had a very concrete result when plagues swept through the Roman Empire. The pagans, having no ideological reason to care about anybody outside of their own family, did not help anyone. The Christians, on the other hand, precisely because they believed that God was the father of everyone & commanded us to take care of each other, went into the homes of sick people risking their own lives, to bring them clean water and food and to nurse them back to health. Anyone observing the religious scene in late Roman antiquity could see that the Christians were surviving at much higher rates than the pagans. It’s no wonder that they made the perfectly rational choice to pay the price for Christianity.”**

## AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

# Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



*O That Will Be Glory*

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

*I an* Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

*When by His grace I shall look on His face, e*

*That will be glory, be glory for me. me.*

