8-2003

A Comparison of Moral Transformation in Paul and Lucius Annaeus Seneca

Peggy A. Vining

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IN PAUL AND LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Paul's ideas about moral transformation in the Epistle to the Romans through a comparison and contrast with the first-century philosopher Seneca's ethics in the Epistulae Morales. The Stoicism of Seneca was the primary Greco-Roman philosophy of Paul's day and therefore is a judicious choice for examining its pagan moralism alongside Pauline ethics. The study begins with an overview of the Stoic ethical system as a framework to understand the tenets advocated by Seneca, who did not expound an ethical system in his writings (Seneca's works presuppose that the reader knows the Stoic ethical system). After a brief outline of Seneca's life and importance, his ethical teachings are then examined in light of Stoic ethical structure. The overlap of teaching between Paul and Seneca with regard to moral transformation is then addressed as the study follows the ethical argument in Romans from the letter's beginning to its end. The study concludes that Romans does contain certain Stoic overtones in its ethical argument, including use of the 'natural law and use of terminology in 1:26, 1:28, and 2:15-16. Most notably, however, is the conclusion that both Paul and Seneca have as the heart of moral transformation that reason must activate change. Paul's frequent use of cognitive language throughout the letter implies that the Christian's rational knowledge and acceptance of his or her new identity is the most important component to actualize moral transformation, and thus he echoes Seneca's views on renewed rationality providing the platform to achieve virtue. In the end, however, Paul's ethically changed

people form the community known as the church in order to present themselves as Christ

to the world, which is very different from Seneca's individualized 'wise man.'

A COMPARISON OF MORAL TRANSFORMATION

IN PAUL AND LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Peggy A Vining

August 2003

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Council of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Master of Arts

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Dec. 12, 2003

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The Problem

Although numerous writers have examined aspects of Pauline ethics, there is one

issue that they have less often considered, namely, Paul's conceptualization of how

people change morally in the Christian life. This study is not about the practical ways in

which people change, or the personal actions that lead to growth in individuals and

community; rather, this study is primarily about the foundation behind moral

transformation and the conditions under which there can be change in the Christian life.

At least half of all that Paul wrote was on ethics and correct behavior,[1] and his gospel

message is in many ways the means to this end; the dimension that faith takes on in life is

the crux of what it means to be a Christian, and a church that strives for lives of correct

behavior and inner renewal is the ultimate goal that God has for this world. Items such as

the underlying motivations for moral living and the framework of the internal ethical

process can provide new light toward understanding Paul's view of how and why people

change.

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[1] Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. by Scott J. Hafemann (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 214.

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Importance of the Study

To address this problem within Paul, this study will first investigate part of the thought-world of his first-century milieu. Recent scholarship understands that while the background of Paul's epistles is thoroughly rooted in Judaism, Greco-Roman society also highly influenced Paul; and a study of his letters should reflect knowledge of both of these environments that shaped his cultural views.[2] By the time of the Hellenistic world in which the early church composed the literature of the New Testament, scientific interest in philosophy had diminished and ethical interest among philosophers was flourishing. "There is no philosophy without virtue; there is no virtue without philosophy."[3] Since the age in which Christianity first made its appeal was also an age in which the ethical consciousness of the philosopher had been aroused, a comparison of the ethics of the pagan moralists to the ethics of Paul's writing is almost mandatory for the fullest understanding of Pauline ethics. Some may question why such a comparison would bear fruit, yet comparison of pagan philosophical writings to New Testament writings is the direction of contemporary scholarship. Abraham Malherbe, one of the foremost scholars involved in weighing the material of Pauline texts alongside Greco-Roman philosophy, spends much of his recent Anchor Bible Commentary on the Thessalonian letters devoted to both literary and doctrinal comparisons/contrasts between

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[2] Strabo tells us in his *Geography* that Paul's hometown of Tarsus even surpassed Athens in philosophical fervor; *Geography*, trans. by Horace L. Jones, LCL 223 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 14.13, 14.

[3] Seneca, *Epistulae Morales 66-92*, 9th ed., trans. by Richard Gummere, LCL 76 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 89.6. All Senecan quotes will derive from either this text, or *Epistulae Morales 1-65*, 9th ed., trans. by Richard Gummere, LCL 75 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), or *Epistulae Morales 93-124*, 9th ed., trans. by Richard Gummere, LCL 77 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Paul and non-Christian first-century authors (over seven pages of references cite Greco-Roman authors as opposed to three-and-a-half for the Old Testament).[4]

Stoicism, the primary Greco-Roman philosophy of Paul's day, is a judicious choice for examining its pagan moralism alongside Pauline ethics. Most of the great Stoic teachers were Eastern, as was Paul. Up to six or more known Stoic philosophers made their home in Paul's hometown of Tarsus (Strabo lists Antipater, Archedemus, Nestor, Athenodorus named Cordylion, and Athenodorus son of Sandon,[5] while Diogenes Laertius lists Zeno[6]), and two Stoics of the same region were Chrysippus and Aratus who hailed from nearby Soli.[7] Certainly it is possible to name instances where the ideas of Christianity and Stoicism overlap; in Paul's speech on the Aereopagus (Acts 17:28), the author of Acts depicts Paul as explicitly quoting two Stoic teachers when he mentions that he will cite from some of their own poets: he quotes from both Cleanthes and Aratus (the former, ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμεν, and the latter, τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν). Likewise, it would have undoubtedly been impossible for the Stoics to have not been influenced by Paul's Judaism that also pervaded that region of the world in their heyday. This paper will be investigating the overlap of teaching that exists between Paul and the Stoic thinker Seneca in one particular area, that of moral transformation.

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[4] See "Index of Biblical and Other Ancient References" in Abraham Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, Anchor vol. 32b (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 471-496.

[5] Strabo, *Geography*, 14.13, 14.

[6] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. by R. D. Hicks, LCL 185 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 7.35.

[7] Strabo, *Geography*, 14.8.

Method of Presentation

This study will begin by asking how the first-century Stoic and statesman, Lucius Annaeus Seneca, approaches the issue of moral transformation and will focus on the *Letters to Lucilius*, or the *Epistulae Morales*, as the primary Senecan text. Once Seneca's beliefs regarding moral change are laid out, the study will then compare and contrast these findings with Pauline ethics as found in Romans. The Epistle to the Romans is well suited as the primary Pauline text because Romans ranks as the most reasoned and well-structured of Paul's epistles and provides a good comparison with the reason-oriented style of Seneca. Also, Romans is a later Pauline letter (the last extant one?) that absorbs many points found in his earlier epistles; indeed, Paul regarded the period when he wrote Romans as the culmination of a major phase of his work (Rom 15:19, 23).[8] The *Epistulae Morales* are also the last work of Seneca's life, written shortly before his suicide in A.D. 65.[9] Seneca did write in Latin and Paul in Greek; but as Malherbe notes, this does not present much of a problem because Latin letter writing was almost exclusively indebted to Greek epistolary practice.[10]

In the second chapter, this study will give a short overview of the Stoic ethical system before proceeding to specific teachings of Seneca in his *Epistulae Morales* to give

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[8] James Dunn states that Romans is the "fullest exposition Paul had attempted of a theological, apologetic, missionary, pastoral explanation for his work." James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1988), lxii.

[9] Based on internal evidence such as mention of the great fire of Lungdunum (*Ep. Mor.* 91) in late summer or early autumn 64, the letters can be dated to between autumn 62 and late 64. D. A. Russell, "Letters to Lucilius," in *Seneca*, ed. by C. D. N. Costa (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1974), 72.

[10] Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 88.

a framework for understanding the statements of Seneca.[11] To elucidate the Stoic ethical system, the most valuable primary sources, in addition to the secondary literature, are Cicero's *De Finibus* (because, although an eclectic, he undertook explaining Stoicism to the Romans), and the quotations of Chrysippus, who best transmitted Stoicism to the ancient world.[12] Epictetus, Dio Chrysostom, and Musonius Rufus also provide significant primary material. In general, the Stoics believed that the end goal of life is happiness, which consists of being a virtuous person. To reach this point, they strove for self-mastery of their passions, vices, and emotions. They embraced a road to change called psychagogy that involved the gradual building of correct habits and constant help from those who are wiser and further along the path to wisdom. Only after this preliminary sketch of Stoicism can the portions of Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* that discuss the specifics of moral transformation be considered. Because Seneca's ethical admonitions are scattered throughout the letters in random placement, this study divides his moral counsel into five organizational areas that can be summarized as follows: 1) The conditions before change, or anthropology; 2) The impetus for change, or conditions necessary for change to occur; 3) The moment of change; 4) The theoretical basis for change, or the rationale for why people should change; and 5) The process of change and the results of this process.

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[11] Granted, there are some who question Seneca's Stoicism, mainly because he has a fondness for Epicurus, but this study agrees with Lactantius (*Div. Inst.* 1.5) who said that Seneca was the truest of the Stoics. Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, trans. by Robert Maxwell Ogilvie, *Library of Lactantius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1.5.

[12] Although Chrysippus represents the early Stoa, Engberg-Pedersen states that the late Stoa represents a return to the early Stoa and that writers such as Seneca presupposed an earlier Chrysippian framework. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2000), 46.

The third chapter of the study will compare Paul's idea of moral progress with Seneca's and will factor in the distinctives of Paul that are at variance with Seneca. Focusing on the Epistle to the Romans, particularly chapters 1:18-3:20, 6-8 and 12-15, the study will trace Paul's ethical argument in Romans in light of chapter two's analysis on Seneca's ethics. In order to understand the flow of Paul's thought, this paper will follow the ethical argument in Romans from the beginning of the Epistle to its end, all the while comparing and contrasting with Seneca's thought. Significant points for evaluation will include their views on the human condition, the process leading to moral transformation, the role of reason, the formation of community, and what constitutes a happy life. The concluding chapter will then summarize findings according to the five categories of chapter two and discern which of these conclusions illuminate Paul's ethical system.

Other Comparisons Between Paul and Seneca

It is worth noting that previous scholarship regarding Paul's and Seneca's epistles does not generally include comparisons of their ethics, let alone their philosophies of moral transformation. Many of the coincidences between the two writers can be accounted for by literary similarities, which have comprised much scholarship regarding Paul and Seneca for the last two millennia. The other reason for numerous comparisons between the two does not center on works by either writer, but focuses on an ancient text that purports to be actual correspondence between the Apostle Paul and his Stoic friend, Seneca.

The Apocryphal Letters of Paul and Seneca

Both Paul and Seneca were well-known teachers of the same first-century Roman empire; they lived at approximately the same time (Seneca lived from c.4 or 5 B.C. until A.D. 65, and Paul's dates of birth and death cannot be far from this). Seneca lived in Rome while Paul traveled frequently and spent at least some time in the capital during his life. There is, however, no historical evidence that the two ever met, or even knew of each other's writings; Seneca did not even once mention Christianity in his large corpus of work.[13] The legends involving the two men are interesting to say the least, and include Seneca as one of the members of Caesar's household addressed by Paul in the Epistle to the Philippians (4:22).[14] According to the Acts of the Apostles, Paul was also brought before Seneca's brother, Gallio, to whom the philosopher dedicates more than one work and of whom he speaks with much affection in his writings,[15] although Acts portrays Gallio as not being interested in Paul or his religion (18:14). Paul was also likely handed over to Burrus, the prefect of the Praetorian Guard and intimate friend of Seneca, upon his arrival in Rome and his appeal to Caesar, although this is no certain proof of a meeting between Paul and Seneca (and Burrus died in A.D. 62, not long after Paul's supposed arrival).[16] It is also possible that Seneca was present when Paul was finally

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[13] Paul Berry believes that Seneca's *Ep. Mor.* 108 does mention Christianity, in a roundabout manner: "The days of my youth coincided with the early part of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. Some foreign rites were at that time being inaugurated . . ." Paul Berry, *The Encounter Between Seneca and Christianity* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon, 2002), 24, 34ff.

[14] Villy Sorensen, *Seneca: The Humanist at the Court of Nero*, trans. by W. Glyn Jones (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 208.

[15] Seneca, *Naturales Quaestiones*, trans. by T. H. Corcoran, LCL 450 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 4.10-11.

[16] J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: MacMillan, 1900), 301.

brought before Nero for his hearing, as Seneca was the primary advisor to the emperor, but this is simply speculation.

Nevertheless, an alleged correspondence of at least fourteen letters between the philosopher and the missionary has been handed down to subsequent generations (fourteen letters survive, but the letters themselves allude to a vast correspondence between the two). The letters almost exclusively consist of compliments exchanged between the two men. As early as Augustine there are references to these letters ("Seneca, who lived at the same time as the Apostles and from whom there are a number of letters to the Apostle Paul . . ."),[17] and Jerome implies that a mutual correspondence between the two was very well known in his day.[18] Evidence suggests that the letters were possibly composed between 325 (when Lactantius wrote that Seneca would have surely been a Christian if he had had someone to guide him) and Jerome's statement in 329.[19] Nevertheless, numerous writers indicate the great popularity of the correspondence throughout the Middle Ages, and the church fathers of that day almost always assumed its authenticity; Peter Abelard, Philip of Harvengt, and Paschasius Radbertus all accepted Seneca as a moral authority who had influenced Paul through their correspondence.[20] Only at the Enlightenment did modern critical theory dispel the illusion that these letters were genuine; the first doubts about the authenticity of the correspondence came only in 1462 from the humanist Angelo Decembrio in his treatise,

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[17] Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. by Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 2000), 6.10, 11.

[18] Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, trans. by Walter K. Sherwin (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1973), 12.

[19] J. N. Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), 14.

[20] G. M. Ross, "Seneca's Philosophical Influence," in *Seneca*, ed. by C. D. N. Costa (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1974), 133-134; 137-138.

'De politia litteratura,' presented to Pope Pius II.[21] Although some scholars persisted in believing the authenticity of the letters (notably the nineteenth century's famous study by Amédée Fleury that proposed Seneca's conversion by Paul), Erasmus more or less laid the question to rest by denouncing them as forgeries in the prefaces to both his 1515 and 1529 editions of Seneca.[22]

Even though this correspondence, to the modern eye, is undoubtedly a fake, due to the poor quality of thought and style, the errors in chronology and history, and the whole conception of the relative positions of Stoicism and Christianity, much modern Pauline/Senecan scholarship has continued to focus on these letters. The nineteenth century's eminent scholar J. B. Lightfoot concluded that the letters may have been written either to recommend Seneca to Christians or Christianity to readers of Seneca.[23] Claude W. Barlow edited the critical edition of the correspondence in 1938, and conclusively dated it to the fourth century.[24] In the mid-twentieth century, J. N. Sevenster presented a comparison of Paul's and Seneca's ideas that included a lengthy

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[21] Marcia L. Colish, "Stoicism and the New Testament," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt; Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, ed. by Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase, II.26.1 (New York: de Gruyter, 1992), 344.

[22] Ibid., 345, 364.

[23] Lightfoot, 329-333

[24] Colish, "Stoicism and the New Testament," 368.

section on the apocryphal correspondence.[25] Less has been written in recent decades on

the letters, but early twentieth century studies abound.[26]

Literary Comparisons

The remainder of recent scholarship has centered on the canonical epistles of Paul

and the *Epistulae Morales* of Seneca. There exists a striking similarity in sentiment of

teaching between the two as well as more pointed coincidences of language and

illustration;[27] yet, there are many models and parallels for every single element in

Seneca's work in both Greek and Roman literature. Epicurus's letters to his pupils

combine philosophical doctrines with personal admonitions, and are given by a teacher

who is also a friend.[28] Almost contemporary with Seneca are the seventeen epistles of

Chion of Heraclea, a pupil of Plato, which exemplify the intimacy and authority of

personal commitment in the epistolary genre.[29] Paul clearly uses these qualities in his

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[25] Sevenster, 6-25.

[26] Other major treatments of this issue are Bruno Bauer, *Christ and the Caesars: The Origin of Christianity from Romanized Greek Culture*, trans. by Frank E. Schacht (Charleston, SC: A. Davidonis, 1998), in which Bauer suggests that Paul was not a historical figure and that Seneca was instrumental in shaping the epistles of 'Paul'; Johannes Leipoldt, "Christentum und Stoizismus," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 30 (1906), 129-165; Max Pohlenz, "Paulus und die Stoa," *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenshaft* 42 (1949), 69-104; and Abraham Malherbe, "'Seneca' on Paul as Letter Writer," in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*, ed. by B. A. Pearson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 414-421. Surprisingly, at least one modern scholar still treats the correspondence as genuine: Paul Berry, *Correspondence Between Paul and Seneca* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1999).

[27] Aubertin proposes that the coincidences in manner of teaching between the two are not valid because of the many similar teachers who came before each of them, which suggests that the forged correspondence between Paul and Seneca fueled the fire as to linking these particular two teachers together. Charles Aubertin, *Etude Critique sur les rapports supposes entre Seneque et Saint Paul* (Paris: E. Belin, 1857); as quoted in Lightfoot, 278.

[28] Phillip Mitsis, *Epicurus' Ethical Theory: The Pleasures of Invulnerability* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 52.

[29] Ingemar Düring, *Chion of Heraclea: A Novel in Letters* (New York : Arno Press, 1979), 14, 18.

teaching and exhorting of the communities to which he writes. In ancient literature, the epistolary genre was an oft-used literary medium for the representation of interior processes, so it is only natural and not particularly surprising to discover parallels between Paul's and Seneca's literary products (or, in fact, the epistolary works of any two writers of the ancient world).

The work of Deissmann distinguished between letters and epistles,[30] and his distinction suggests one difference between Paul and Seneca: Paul wrote letters that were personal and meant for specific communities and Seneca wrote epistles that were impersonal and meant for public consumption. Deissmann's categories, however, are too narrow to encompass the complexities of these two authors. Although Paul wrote his letters to real persons, they were still to be read aloud in public because they were addressed to groups of people; and, Seneca's letters may have not been written to a real man named Lucilius, but they do have a private and intimate character. Since, however, both the epistles of Paul and Seneca are examples of Greco-Roman letter writing, they inevitably share grammar and literary style. For example, the epistles both alternate between authorial singular and plural, despite that Seneca did not have a cosender (*Ep. Mor.* 74.11; 78.1, 7; 92.34), and that Paul does not appear to base the his use of authorial singular and plural on whether he had a cosender (e.g. I Cor 1:1, 4, 10, 23; 2:6-16).[31] Other literary similarities between the two authors include the use of imperatives at the beginning of a series of sentences (I Thess 5:14-15; *Ep. Mor.* 74), and a movement from philosophical/theological doctrine to moral advice.

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[30] Adolf Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East* (New York: Harper, 1923), 230.

[31] Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 86-88.

Particularly in each of their epistles, the paraenetic style has a strong presence and important function. By the first century, the paraenetic letter had become a particular type among many that were described in handbooks designed to teach letter writing.[32] Philosophers used letter writing as a way of teaching their students and being examples for them and being philosophical guides, even though the letters were filled with general information not related to any specific circumstance. Seneca used his letters to Lucilius to spiritually guide the reader through epistolary paraenesis.[33] Paraenesis can mean either a reminder of what way of life a person needs to continue in, or general exhortation and moral-philosophical advice; the lines were blurred in the ancient world.[34] Pseudo-Isocrates gives the classic text that illustrates the characteristics of the paraenetic letter, three of which are employed at various times by both Paul and Seneca: use of personal examples (*Ep. Mor.* 26.5, 52.8, 94.40-1; Philippians 3:4ff., I Cor 4:6), the call to imitate someone as a model (*Ep. Mor.* 6; I Thess 2:9, 3:7, 4:11, 4:18, Rom 15:2-4), and the theme of remembering (*Ep. Mor.* 94.21, 11.9; Gal 4:8-9).[35] The difference in Paul's and Seneca's use of paraenesis is that Seneca emphasized the common literary knowledge that what is urged in paraenesis is not new information and no extended discussion is needed (*Ep. Mor.* 24.6, 9, 11), thereby emphasizing its nature as general topoi, while Paul

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[32] Ibid., 83.

[33] Seneca writes in *Ep. Mor.* 95: "You keep asking me to explain . . . this department of philosophy called paraenetic, and we Romans call the 'preceptorial' . . . honorable conduct is to be brought about by precepts, but not by precepts alone . . . philosophy is both theoretical and practical; it contemplates and at the same time acts . . . precepts by themselves are weak and, to so speak, rootless if they be assigned to the parts and not to the whole."

[34] Stanley Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1989), 92-93.

[35] Pseudo-Isocrates, *To Demonicus*, trans. by George Norlin, LCL 209 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 9-11.

used paraenesis and its moral commonplaces to relate to a context (i.e., the churches to which he wrote and their particular situation). Although Seneca realized that his paraenetic discourse was traditional and unoriginal material, he nevertheless recognized that such general topoi are most helpful when selected and adapted to particular circumstance ("The cures for the spirit also have been discovered by the ancients; but it is our task to learn the method and time of treatment," *Ep. Mor.* 64.9). In this vein, Seneca deals with both descriptive doctrine and prescriptive paraenesis in his epistles, similar to Paul's formula used in Romans, I Thessalonians, Philemon, and Colossians.[36] Major treatments of the literary comparisons between Paul and Seneca include the aforementioned Lightfoot,[37] essays by Ferdinand Christian Baur[38] and Pierre Benoit,[39] and a full-length handling by Cancik-Lindemaier.[40]

A word must also be said about the comparisons done regarding the ideas of Paul and Seneca, which reach back to the Middle Ages but are less popular today.[41] The humanist Gasparino Barzizza wrote a biography on Seneca that enjoyed popularity

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[36] Seneca does not, however, emulate Paul's tendency to from move from doctrine to paraenesis relating to a particular situation. Seneca structured his epistles to begin with a concrete fact, sometimes an actual situation that needs counsel (i.e. death of a child in *Ep. Mor.* 99, an illness in *Ep. Mor.* 54), and sometimes a description of general daily life (i.e. a ship's arrival from Alexandria in *Ep. Mor.* 77, problems with servants in *Ep. Mor.* 50), after which he takes up a theme, usually an abstract mixture of philosophy and advice, which may or may not speak to the concrete event mentioned at the beginning of the epistle.

[37] Lightfoot, 270-328.

[38] Ferdinand Christian Baur, "Seneca und Paulus, Das Verhältins des Stoicismus zum Christentum nach den Schriften Seneca's," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 1 (1858), 161-183.

[39] Pierre Benoit, "Sénèque et Saint Paul," *Revue Biblique* 53 (1946), 7-35.

[40] Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier, *Untersuchungen zu Senecas Epistulae morales* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967).

[41] Colish states that Stoicism-New Testament questions in general are now a "weaker draw" than in the past, although they remain (usually at the literary level) an active, if small, part of contemporary scholarship. Colish, "Stoicism and the New Testament," 377.

throughout the fifteenth century where he explains Seneca's conversion by Paul and a summary of their similar ideology.[42] The fifteenth century commentator on the Pauline epistles, Lorenzo Valla, denounced the Seneca-Paul myth and carefully pointed out the contradictions between the ideas of the two men.[43] Fleury in the nineteenth century endeavored to show that Seneca borrowed much of his doctrine from the New Testament and specifically, Paul.[44] Sevenster completed the primary twentieth-century exposition of Paul's and Seneca's beliefs as he compared and contrasted the ideas of the two men within such categories as God, man, social relations, eschatology, etc. His conclusions state that "there is a profound and lasting contrast between Paul and Seneca," and that Paul uses phrases reminiscent of Seneca but makes them "instrumental to the particular purpose of his own teachings"; any resemblances are but superficial, and the two men developed their ideas completely distinct from one another.[45] Most other comparisons that include the ideas of Paul and Seneca are expositions of Paul's thought alongside general Stoic thought; these are numerous, and some bibliography is provided by Malherbe and Colish.[46]

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[42] Ibid., 343.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 364.

[45] Sevenster, 240.

[46] Abraham Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt; Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, ed. by Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase, II.26.1 (New York: de Gruyter, 1992), 267-333; Colish, "Stoicism and the New Testament," 334-379.

Concluding Statement

This study does not follow the bulk of previous scholarship and compare resemblances to literary style or investigate the apocryphal connection between Paul and Seneca. Instead, this paper is concerned exclusively with a comparison between the ideas of moral transformation as held by Paul and Seneca. There is a similarity of worldview focus between the two authors regarding moral change, possibly by consequence of Paul's philosophical studies, Seneca's knowledge of Christianity, or simply a matter of the two living in the same first-century world. For students of Christianity, however, this is one instance where Christian teaching coincides well with the pagan morality of the Hellenistic milieu into which Christianity emerged. This fact alone makes it possible that new inferences into Paul's thoughts about Christian morality and ethics could perhaps be gained by taking a closer look at one author who is very similar to the apostle in both style and teaching regarding moral transformation. The epistles of Seneca are a wise choice because they are his fullest work, his final work that culminates a lifetime of thought, and because they represent well the typical Stoic ethical teachings of the first century. Romans is likewise the fullest exposition of Paul's teachings on Christian ethics. By comparing Paul's ethical teachings in Romans to Seneca's epistles, and by factoring in the distinctives of Paul's Christian teaching as opposed to Stoic teaching, one will not only notice the similar ethical worldviews of Paul and Stoicism, but will also then understand better what Christian teaching has to offer as opposed to the general philosophical worldview of the first century. Therefore, through a method of comparing the ethical doctrine of Seneca's epistles with Pauline ethics in Romans, and by recognizing the similarities in their worldviews regarding moral transformation, this

study proposes to gain a clearer understanding about Paul's foundation for the process of

change in a Christian's life.

CHAPTER II

THE STOICS, SENECA, AND MORAL TRANSFORMATION

The Stoic Ethical System

Recovering Stoic Ethics

No single complete work survives by any of the first three heads of the Stoic

school: the 'founder,' Zeno of Citium in Cyprus (344-262 B.C.), Cleanthes (died 232

B.C.), or Chrysippus (died c. 206 B.C.);[1] the only extant complete works by Stoic

philosophers are those by writers during the Roman Empire, such as Seneca, Epictetus (c.

55-135), and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180). Although these works are

principally focused on ethics, they tend to be long on moral exhortation while giving only

clues to the theoretical basis of the moral system. Therefore, fully understanding the

framework in which Seneca offered moral exhortation is dependent on recovering the

base from which he was working. Seneca himself did not present in any writing a

systematic account of Stoic ethics; he simply commented on moral matters and gave

ethical teachings based upon the presupposition that his readers would already know the

basic Stoic ethical doctrine. So, it is necessary to turn to other Stoic writers to understand

the Stoic ethical system, the best resource available being the early Stoa and its teachings.

Why is the early Stoa (i.e., the first three heads of the school and their pupils and

associates in the late fourth and early third centuries B.C.) a good framework for

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[1] Eduard Zeller, *The Stoics, Epicureans, and Skepics*, trans. by Oswald J. Reicher (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 36-45.

understanding the teachings of Seneca, who lived in the first century? The late Stoicism of Seneca represented a return to the early Stoa, and presupposed a theoretical Chrysippian framework.[2] In von Arnim's major work, which made accessible nearly all the fragments of the ancient Stoa, he proposed that the Stoa of the Roman Empire received its doctrine from Chrysippus, and that Stoic documents of the Roman Stoa can be excavated for Chrysippian doctrine.[3] Seneca himself referred to Chrysippus fifteen times in his writings, and considered him to be one of the pillars of the Stoa (along with others; *Ep. Mor.* 22.11; 33.4), suggesting that Chrysippian influence did not overshadow but accompanied reverence for other great Stoics. Yet, according to Epictetus, Chrysippus was the author of at least one textbook in his school and was considered to be the preeminent teacher of the Stoa.[4] Seneca himself implied that Chrysippus, along with Posidonius, was the ideal guide for ethical behavior (*Ep. Mor.* 104.22). Furthermore, writers (such as Plutarch and Galen) who wanted to attack the Stoics chose Chrysippus first and foremost as their target.[5] In fact, one gets the impression that Chrysippus's books were being read by the first century more than those of the other Stoics.[6] Therefore, the ethics of the early Stoics, particularly Chrysippian ethics, are important for

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[2] Engberg-Pedersen, 46. Also, Cicero, in *De Natura Deorum*, trans. by H. Rackham, LCL 268 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), 1.38 states that Chrysippus was the most skillful interpreter of Stoic theory.

[3] Hans von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1905), 3.

[4] Epictetus, *Discourses*, trans. by W. A. Oldfather, LCL 131 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 1.10; and Epictetus, *Encheiridion*, trans. by W. A. Oldfather, LCL 218 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 49.

[5] Hans von Arnim, "Chrysippos," *Realencyclopadie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche, 1899), col. 2506; as quoted in Josiah B. Gould, *The Philosophy of Chrysippus* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 13.

[6] Gould, 14.

understanding the Stoic ethical doctrine of Seneca's day. For further detailed information about the early Stoa, treatises by other ancient authors who claimed to be explaining Stoicism to their readers are also vital: the best sources are either doxographies,[7] or other philosophers who discuss the Stoics for their own purposes.[8]

Basis of Stoic Ethics

The ultimate aim of this chapter is to focus on features that will have direct bearing upon the ethical teachings of Paul in Romans; thus, themes that emerge in this section will either come forth or underlie the arguments in the comparisons and contrasts between Seneca and Paul.[9] Stoicism arose when the political revolution by Alexander the Great stripped the Greeks of the shelter of the polis/city-state and forced individuals to find a place within an enormously expanded polity.[10] The classical city-state had pre-determined the traditions and customs of its citizens, but after Alexander, the polis (although still there) did not continue to provide the intellectual and emotional safety to its members, heightening an overall sense of human frailty among the populace.[11] All philosophy of this period sought to explain the mental and physical aspects of humankind

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[7] Sources include Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (3rd c. A.D.), and Stobaeus' *Excerpts* (5th c. A.D.).

[8] As stated in chapter one, the most important source is Cicero (1st c. B.C.). Though his own philosophical position derives from that of his teacher Philo of Larissa and the New Academy, he still has sympathy for what he sees as the high moral tone of Stoicism. In works such as *De Finibus* and *De Natura Deorum* he provides summaries, with critical discussion, of the views of the major Hellenistic schools of thought, including Stoicism. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 357-58.

[9] Hence, the details discussed in this chapter on Stoicism and Seneca are never merely elucidated for their own sake.

[10] Moses Hadas, *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958), 20.

[11] John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in An Earthen Vessel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 51.

in light of the new individuality and increased feeling of rootlessness that emerged in this overwhelmingly enlarged environment.[12] Zeno, the first Stoic, believed along with the other major philosophical schools that there were three general areas of philosophical investigation: logic, physics, and ethics. Logic contained the study of how people acquire knowledge; physics was concerned with the natural world and its makeup; and ethics focused on human behavior. This study, however, is only concerned with ethics.

The basis of Stoic ethics (and the ethical systems of most ancient philosophies) came from Aristotle's *Ethica Nicomachea* (written mid-fourth century B.C.). The way he formulated the human ethical problem became standard for the Hellenistic period and thus for the ethical teachings of Stoicism.[13] His question was, what is the final end (goal, telos) of life; what do all men desire?[14] Cicero states in *De Finibus* that the Stoics asked a similar question:

> Man . . . by exercise of intelligence and reason infers the conclusion that herein lies the chief good of man, the thing that is praiseworthy and desirable for its own sake; and that inasmuch as this consists in what the Stoics term homologia and we with your approval may call 'conformity' – inasmuch I say as in this resides that good which is the end to which all else is a means, moral conduct and moral worth itself, which alone is counted as a good, although of subsequent development, is nevertheless the sole thing that is for its own efficacy and value desirable . . .[15]

Such phrases in this passage as, "the thing that is praiseworthy and desirable for its own sake," and "that good which is the end to which all else is a means," imply that the Stoics

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[12] Zeller examines Stoicism in this regard in Eduard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, 13th ed., trans. by Leonard Palmer (New York: Dover, 1980), 225-30.

[13] Gould, 161.

[14] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. by H. Rackham, LCL 73 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), 1094a, 18-24.

[15] Cicero, *De Finibus*, trans. by H. Rackham, LCL 40 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 3.21.

are asking Aristotle's question. The answer, according to Aristotle, is that happiness

(εὐδαιμόνια) is that final good to which actions and things are to be referred for their

evaluation,[16] and Chrysippus agreed with this assessment.[17] In fact, the esteem that

philosophy enjoyed throughout antiquity was described by Theophrastus as resting in its

ability to procure genuine happiness for people.[18]

Virtue

For the Stoics, virtue or goodness is the sole cause of happiness (as Zeno said,

"virtue is self-sufficient for happiness");[19] being virtuous is synonymous with being

happy. Chrysippus also believed that virtue is sufficient for happiness and that to live in

a morally bad way is to be unhappy.[20] Happiness does not consist of enjoyment,

pleasure, or in pursuing some form of hedonism,[21] but consists of action and in pursuing

the moral good, i.e. what is useful in life.[22] A state of virtue, or happiness, is a state such

that its possessor will always do what is right, and this is only possible if he always

knows what is right; hence, the possessor of virtue and happiness is a 'wise man' (or,

sage), and is virtuous due to his wisdom. Furthermore, since the sole cause of happiness

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[16] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1095a, 18-20.

[17] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.6, 15. All Chrysippian references throughout are from Hans von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1903), or vol. 2, 1903.

[18] Cicero, *De Finibus*, 5.29.

[19] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 7.65.

[20] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.49; III.55.

[21] This was the Epicurean teaching, which the Stoics attacked for a number of reasons as cited in William L. Davidson, *The Stoic Creed* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907), 160-162.

[22] Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses*, trans. by J. W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby, LCL 358 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 3.139.

is obtainment of virtue, happiness does not depend on acquisition of anything from the external world; virtue depends entirely on the internal state of having the right mental attitude toward the external world.[23]

Seneca defines wisdom in *Ep. Mor.* 20.5 as, "Always desiring the same things, and always refusing the same things. You may be excused from adding the little provisio, that what you wish, should be right; since no man can always be satisfied with the same thing, unless it is right." Wisdom (and therefore virtue) lives in the will, in the disposition and the intentions, and not simply in one's outward actions.[24] Seneca also tells a story from Cleanthes in *De Beneficiis* 6.11:

> I sent, said he, two boys into the academy to seek Plato and to bring him to me. The one of them sought him out in all galleries and porches where he was known to walk, and ran through all other places wherein he had any hope to find him out, and at length, being weary with his way, and frustrated of his hope, returned home. The other boy stood gazing at the next juggler, or mountebank, or while he wandered up and down and played with his fellows and companions, saw Plato passing by, and found him whom he did not seek. I, said Cleanthes, will commend that boy who performed that he was commanded, to the uttermost, and will chastise that other who was more fortunate in laziness.[25]

So, "the measure of a man's worth is the worth of his aims,"[26] and it is only according to one's purpose or intention that he or she is either to be praised or to be blamed for his or her actions.[27]

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[23] Ludwig Edelstein, *The Meaning of Stoicism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 2.

[24] The Stoics developed Aristotle's understanding of happiness/εὐδαιμόνια into their own concept that emphasizes its role in practical thought and its ties to individual deliberation in the will. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis: Moral Development and Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy* (Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1990), 43.

[25] Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, trans. by John W. Basore, LCL 310 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 6.11.

[26] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. by C. R. Haines, LCL 58 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 7.3.

[27] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 4.8.

Acts and persons that are virtuous belong to a class all their own in that virtue is

an absolute term. Diogenes Laertius recounts the views of Zeno in this regard, who

distinguished between the two types of duty: the 'suitable' or 'fitting' (καθῆκον) and the

'right' (κατόρθωμα).[28] Duty as καθῆκον is applicable only to things that are indifferent,

signifying any external action in everyday life that fills a need or serves a purpose. The

'indifferent' (ἀδιάφορα) have neither positive nor negative value, and are simply to be

performed. They are neutral because they lie outside of humankind's rational control,

and are therefore not ethically relevant.[29] Duty as κατόρθωμα (*honestum, rectum,* or

officium perfectum) is duty in its purest form, which is conformity to the will

(humankind's rational facilities) and good intentions, i.e., virtue. The κατόρθωμα depend

not on the content of the act or on what was done, but only on how or why the act was

done.[30] Chrysippus relates that the ἀδιάφορα are both things such as life, health, pleasure,

beauty, strength, wealth, renown, good birth, as well as things such as death, sickness,

pain, ugliness, weakness, poverty, and low birth.[31] The former group of things, however,

are universally recognized as things that are 'good' to possess; so, even though one may

use them badly and therefore they are not good in an unqualified way, they are

nevertheless distinguished as 'things preferred' (προηγμένα).[32] Virtue, however, is the

one unqualified good; not merely the chief, but the only good. Virtue is indivisible; there

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[28] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 7.21.

[29] Marsha L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition From Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Leiden, Brill, 1990), 49.

[30] I. G. Kidd, "Moral Actions and Rules in Stoic Ethics," in *The Stoics*, ed. by John Rist (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 248.

[31] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.117.

[32] Ibid.

cannot be degrees of virtue and it carries the same absolute worth in all circumstances. When one achieves a state of virtue, one never retreats from this state and will always then be virtuous.[33] As Diogenes Laertius said, virtue is an internal disposition (διάθεσις) that may never increase nor decrease.[34] In this sense, there is nothing really good or bad in this world except character; all other things are indifferent.[35]

Since virtue is an internal state and personal disposition, the sole cause of a person's happiness, meaning his or her virtue, is completely within his or her power to obtain or to squander.[36] The 'indifferent' things of life, such as health, wealth, property, friends, the body, death, and such, are beyond people's command. In people's power, however, is the ability to make the choice for what is right and good; hence, to create virtue within themselves. As Chrysippus said, a life in accordance with virtue is the happy life that needs nothing else; not even the 'preferred' things can contribute to this ultimate joy.[37]

In attempting to describe what makes up this internal state and personal disposition, the Stoics defined the substance of virtue, as it had been for Socrates, as a

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[33] Colish, *The Stoic Tradition*, 50.

[34] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 7.89.

[35] Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 182.

[36] The Stoics also had a doctrine of fate/determinism, but Long explains that this does not detract from the self-determinism within a person to control their own impulses. Man's nature is fated in the sense that the basic capacities with which a man is born are determined by external causes; these do not change his power of assent or impulse. Within the limits of fate, a person decides his or her own future by following out the consequences of the particular adaptation given to them by nature. A. A. Long, "Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action," in *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. by A. A. Long (London: Athlone Press, 1971), 181, 193.

[37] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.39.

matter of knowledge or wisdom.[38] According to Chrysippus, the knowledge of what is

really good (virtue) and what is really bad (vice, the opposite of virtue) is specified in

definitions of individual virtues that make up the substance of virtue (ἀρετή). Chrysippus

preserved the traditional cardinal virtues;[39] for example, he deemed wisdom or prudence

as the knowledge of things to be chosen, courage of things to be endured, justice as the

knowledge of things to be assigned or distributed, and self-control as knowledge of things

with respect to which one must be steadfast.[40] From the common root of wisdom and

knowledge, these four principal virtues should proceed from a state of virtue held by a

wise/virtuous individual.[41] Seneca echoes this by explaining that the individual virtues

are each a portion of one great single virtue.[42]

Vice

The opposite of virtue is vice; Chrysippus argued that there is no virtue without

vice.[43] Just as there are no grades of virtue, but only its existence in an absolute sense, so

there are no grades of vice among the Stoics. Chrysippus taught that a man who is a

cubit below the surface of the ocean drowns just as does one who is five hundred fathoms

down; presumably, he wished to discourage any persons who rested too contentedly in

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[38] F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 41.

[39] Ibid., 43.

[40] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.295.

[41] These are the four cardinal virtues that date back to Plato. Diogenes Laertius (*Lives*, 2.92) recounted that Chrysippus held to more than four virtues, but he is referring to the numerous sub-divisions that fall under these four primary virtues.

[42] Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 66.5, 9, 13-14; 67.10; 74.12-13; 88.29-30; 90.3, 46.

[43] Chrysippus, *SVF*, II.1169f.

their state and were apt to give up further efforts toward goodness.[44] Therefore, all

imperfect people are bad people, just as all virtuous people are good people. Diogenes

Laertius relates:

> They also maintain that all sins are equal, as says Chrysippus in the fourth book of
> his ethical questions and Persaeus and Zeno. For if what is true is not more than
> true, nor what is false more than false, so also a deceit is not more than deceit, nor
> a sin than sin. For he who is a hundred stadia distant from Canopus and he who is
> only one are both equally not in Canopus; and so also he who commits a greater
> and he who commits a less sin are both equally not in the right path.[45]

Thus, a paradox exists in that there are only two classes of people, the good and the bad,

or as the Stoics called them, the 'wise' and the 'foolish.'[46] As Cicero describes, "All who

are not wise are equally miserable; all wise men are perfectly happy; all actions done

right are equal to one another; all offenses are equal."[47]

Clearly, this doctrine necessitates that the vast majority of people (if not all) are in

the class of the foolish – that human nature exists in a state of vice. As Seneca lamented

in *De Ben.* 1.10:

> For this reason our ancestors and predecessors complained, and we ourselves are
> aggrieved, and for this will our successors sigh, because good customs are
> abolished, impieties have pre-eminence, and human affairs grow worse and
> worse, and men leave no wickedness or sin unsought after . . . in a word, we may
> always boldly say thus of ourselves, that we are evil, and (unwillingly I speak it)
> we always shall be.[48]

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[44] Sandbach, 45.

[45] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 7.64, 65.

[46] Stobaeus, *Eclogae*, trans. by B. Inwood, and L. P. Gerson, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997), 2.7.11.

[47] Cicero, *De Finibus*, 4.19.

[48] Seneca, *De Ben.*, 1.10.

Thus, in the Stoic doctrine, the human race desperately needs to acquire virtue; but although the quest for a state of virtue is ultimately in vain for the average person, there *are* benefits that emerge from the quest itself. As Chrysippus taught, striving for virtue empowers people to at least see or understand the things they ought to do, and possibly will enable people to actually do them.[49]

General Anthropology

The Emotions

Why is the human condition such that people need to acquire virtue, and what conditions can lead to a process of its obtainment? With regard to the first question, Chrysippus answers that human emotions are the chief enemy of one who desires to acquire a state of virtue, and he calls for their removal. The emotions of the soul are analogous to diseases in the body, and therapeutic theories designed to control the emotions ought not to be inferior "in detailed theory and in healing power" to theories designed to heal diseases of the body.[50] Emotions distress and crush the soul, particularly with their propensity for excessive impulse.[51] Indeed, Chrysippus regards the non-virtuous, emotional person as "always on the verge of being undone,"[52] and plans for the removal of the emotions must commence only at a time when emotion is not fired up, "for when emotions are aroused, they repel reasonings and . . . thrust violently forward to

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[49] Gould, 186.

[50] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.471.

[51] Ibid., III. 462.

[52] Gould, 187.

actions contrary (to reason)."[53] Thus, growth toward virtue can only occur when one is

not suffering from heightened emotion.

Dio Chrysostom echoes this by teaching the Stoic doctrine that there are so many

things in life that can hurt a person, one needs to fortify his or her spirits (or, emotions) to

be insensible to them.[54] He proclaims that the majority of humans are mastered by

pleasure: "it is impossible to dwell with pleasure or even to dally with her for any length

of time without being completely enslaved."[55] Cicero explained the Stoic doctrine as that

the seat of the emotions lies in a person's reason, as are all impulses and activities of the

soul, and that emotion is that state whereby a person's reason acts contrary to nature by

an excess of impulse.[56] Musonius Rufus explains that our environment has corrupted our

souls, and therefore our reason; people have spent a lifetime learning the opposite of what

philosophy can teach about controlling our emotions.[57] Indeed, all human vice stems

from unchecked emotions.[58] Therefore, emotions arise from the faulty judgments of

one's reason, and they manifest both in outward vice and in unhealthy feelings and

motions of one's will. The emotions, however, are in one's power to control; all

emotions arise as a lack of self-control, which can be corrected through training and

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[53] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.390.

[54] Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses*, 16.1.

[55] Ibid., 8.12.

[56] Cicero, *Academica*, trans. by H. Rackham, LCL 268 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), 1.10, 39; *De Fin.* 3.10, 35.

[57] Musonius Rufus, *Fragments*, trans. by Cora E. Lutz, *Musonius Rufus: The Roman Socrates* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), vi.

[58] Colish, *The Stoic Tradition*, 42.

instruction.[59] Interestingly, though, the Stoics never attempted to explain how it is that

these irrational emotional impulses arise as a part of one's reason.

Reason

The Stoics accepted the traditional identification of virtue with knowledge, and

knowledge (or wisdom) is the substance of reason;[60] thus, the perfection of reason is

recognized in virtue. In this sense, virtue is essentially an intellectual performance or

achievement.[61] Since the excessive impulses of emotion stem from and thwart one's

reason, such diseased impulses should be extirpated and replaced by those that are

subordinate and obedient to reason.[62] Hence, the answer to the second question posed at

the beginning of this section (what conditions can lead to a process of obtaining virtue?):

the remedy for uncontrollable emotions lies in a change of attitude toward wrong

evaluations, or faulty judgments. Therefore, another way that the Stoics describe the

final goal of life is as the development of one's reason. Happiness consists exclusively in

the acquisition and the maintenance of intellectual goods, and in the moral and rational

operation of the will; only thus will one become a virtuous person.

A life lived in accordance with reason means not that the 'wise man' has no

emotions, but that those emotions are rationally controlled. The Stoic sage does not let

feelings influence his or her decisions or actions. Chrysippus relates that reason works

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[59] Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. by J. E. King, LCL 141 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 4.9, 22.

[60] Gould, 186.

[61] Fitzgerald, 53.

[62] Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 379.

on impulse like a craftsman,[63] and becomes a guide for the emotions in every situation.[64] In fact, one's *natural* inclination is to follow reason and act in accordance with reason as his or her guide.[65] Those who are able to submit to the government of reason as a guide are then able to master the impulses that otherwise might overpower them.

Along these lines, Musonius Rufus says: ". . . the human being is born with an inclination toward virtue . . . (there is) an innate inclination of the human soul toward goodness and nobleness, and of the presence of the seeds of virtue in each one of us."[66] If virtue only came from without, i.e. from nature, people would not possess the natural inclination to hold others to high esteem, and to expect them to be relatively free of error.[67] In this vein, we also know that virtue is a skill natural to humankind simply because everyone fancies themselves to be a good person.[68] Musonius even takes special care to include women and to declare that they too have reason, and that they also have a natural inclination toward virtue along with the capacity for acquiring it.[69]

Since a person's reason can be his or her authoritative and guiding principle toward right thought and right action, if one submits to natural inclinations in this regard, then living in accordance with reason means to live in possession of the knowledge of what is really good and really bad in this world, which constitutes moral goodness, or

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[63] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.178.

[64] Ibid., III.390.

[65] Ibid., III.462.

[66] Musonius Rufus, *Fragments*, ii.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., iii.

virtue. God placed in everyone's control the power of using their reason, which leads to serenity, self-control, and virtue.[70] The battle, however, can be difficult, inasmuch as reason is the opposite of emotion, and an individual must struggle between his or her higher and lower natures.[71] The ruling faculty of reason is for the Stoics, then, the 'diviner' part of humans, or the 'god within' ("Creative Reason – in other words, God" *Ep. Mor.* 65.12) as opposed to the passions of emotion. Indeed, nature and the world themselves are both one and many; they consist of "god" and his parts.[72] Hence, in Stoic terms, reason and virtue are also synonymous with living according to god and/or nature.

Living according to Nature

Chrysippus, like Aristotle, believed that the final end for which all things are done is a person's happiness,[73] and this end can be achieved by living "in accordance with one's experience of the things which come about by nature."[74] Diogenes Laertius expounds on this by revealing that Chrysippus knew nature to be that which is common to all things; a person's nature is a part of the nature of the universe.[75] A. A. Long states that "Stoicism was not a secular humanism . . . At the heart of the system lies a theory of natural theology . . . the Stoic idea of acquiescence to external events rests on the doctrine

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[70] Ibid, xxxviii.

[71] Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 71.

[72] Long, "Freedom," 176.

[73] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.16.

[74] Ibid., I.12.

[75] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 6.20, 21.

that everything which actually happens is providentially determined by immanent cosmic reason, identical to god."[76]

    Cicero further explains the Chrysippian teaching about the universe and nature:

> Chrysippus . . . says that divine power lies in reason, and in the soul and mind of the universe; he calls the world itself a god, and also the all-pervading world-soul, and again the guiding principle of that soul, which operates in the intellect and reason, and also the common and all-embracing nature of things . . .[77] . . . the world is an intelligent being, and indeed also a wise being . . .[78] . . . Many external things can prevent individual natures from perfecting themselves, but nothing can stand in the way of universal Nature because it holds together and maintains all natures.[79]

Chrysippus, then, taught that the word for nature, φύσις, refers to both nature in general and human nature in particular.[80] Nature as far as 'human nature,' however, does not mean the normal condition of humankind (which has already been described as being enslaved to emotions and as living contrary to reason), but 'human nature' is the condition of living in accordance with nature in general.

    Diogenes Laertius sets down the first principles of living according to nature[81] and relates that nature has created all living things and has provided them with the means of securing what is advantageous to them (i.e. virtue). Therefore, whatever accords with nature is right. Nature directs all human beings to live by sound reason; therefore, to live by sound reason is the same as living according to nature, which is the same as living

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[76] A. A. Long, "The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 71 (1970-71), 97-98.

[77] Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 1.39.

[78] Ibid., 2.36.

[79] Ibid., 2.35.

[80] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 7.89.

[81] Ibid., 7.85-88.

according to virtue. Chrysippus's use of the term nature is important because he signifies a repository of true, genuine values as opposed to values that appear for a time through custom and orthodoxy.[82] He says that what is 'just' or 'good' exists by nature and not by convention.[83] So, since the greatest good, or virtue, is a property of nature, nature thus means both a supreme providential power whose right-reasoning is manifested by the events and the structure of the world, and the 'human nature' that is the goal (i.e. virtue) that nature has designed human beings to achieve.[84] Chrysippus describes happiness as the condition of complete agreement of one's inner self, or reason, with the will of god and the universe.[85] Thus, since the universe is under the governance of reason, humankind (as a being who was designed by the universe to live by reason) can innately recognize virtue as rational and can conform to reason through a process of becoming virtuous.

Process of Becoming Virtuous

The Process

What, therefore, constitutes the process that can lead people to becoming virtuous, and what are the results of this process in a human's life? Musonius Rufus declared that there is nothing more pleasant than self-control.[86] Yet, as Seneca said, "Virtue is difficult

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[82] Gould, 164.

[83] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.308.

[84] A. A. Long and David Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 141-142.

[85] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 7.88.

[86] Musonius Rufus, *Fragments*, xxiv.

to find, it needs a director and guide; vices are learned even without a teacher."[87]

Progress, however, is merely a potential, and humans must discipline themselves toward

advancement in virtue. Luckily, Seneca also states that "even if you fall, the effort was

worthwhile."[88]

As previously noted, Diogenes Laertius said that virtue is an internal disposition

(διάθεσις) that may never increase nor decrease.[89] (The individual is responsible for his

or her διάθεσις; and although the change from an inferior one to an ideal one is

instantaneous, gradual improvement in the διάθεσις does take place over a period of

time.)[90] Humans, being endowed by nature with the impulse toward virtue, and the

equipment that is sufficient to direct human reason in the right direction, cannot,

unfortunately, rely upon nature to complete this task.[91] Rather, the achievement of virtue

calls for the most arduous efforts of every person. The Stoics, however, did stress the

importance of aiming at rather than achieving the desired result.[92]

Musonius Rufus relates that theory teaches right conduct, and that practice is the

habit of acting in accordance with theory.[93] Progress (προκοπή) toward virtue, then,

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[87] Seneca, *Naturales Quaestiones*, 3.30.

[88] Ibid, *De Vita Beata*, trans. by John W. Basore, LCL 254 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), 20.2.

[89] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 7.89.

[90] Margaret E. Ressor, "Necessity and Fate in Stoic Philosophy," in *The Stoics*, ed. John M. Rist (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 191.

[91] Chrysippus, *SVF*, I.566; Cicero, *De Legibus*, trans. by Clinton W. Keyes, LCL 213 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 1.27.

[92] A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 183.

[93] Musonius Rufus, *Fragments*, v.

consists of becoming accustomed to act according to the principles of theory. Cicero

explains the five stages in the progression/development of human nature toward virtue:

> The first appropriate function of a creature is to maintain itself in its natural
> condition. The second, that it should seize hold of the things which accord with
> Nature and banish those which are the opposite. Once this procedure of selection
> and rejection has been discovered, the next consequence is selection exercised
> appropriately; then, such selection performed continuously; finally selection
> which is absolutely consistent and in complete agreement with Nature. At this
> point for the first time that which can truly be called good begins to be present in
> a man and understood. But as soon as he has acquired the capacity for
> understanding or rather, a stock of rational concepts, and has seen the regularity
> and harmony of conduct, he values this far higher than everything for which he
> had previously felt affection, and he draws the rational conclusion that this
> constitutes the highest human good which is worthy of praise and desirable for its
> own sake. In this harmony consists the good which is the standard of all things;
> and so virtuous action and virtue itself, which is reckoned the only good thing,
> though later in origin, is the only thing to be desired through its intrinsic nature
> and worth. And none of the primary objects of natural affiliation is desirable for
> its own sake.[94]

Thus, each of the five stages traced by Cicero assigns a function to human beings that is

appropriate to them at a particular stage of development. Human nature, as so defined, is

an evolving phenomenon, and progression (προκοπή) is a growing consciousness about

how to act correctly. The goal of this progression is to live a life in accordance with

mature human nature, governed by reason, which is in complete harmony with the

rationality, goals, and processes of the universe. With the development of one's reason, a

person finds the true good rather than the good taught by custom and convention. Cicero

also reveals what the human is like at the beginning of this process: "it is love of self

which supplies the starting point."[95] Thus, as outward change occurs, there is also

change within an individual's understanding of his or her own identity, and a movement

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[94] Cicero, *De Finibus*, 3.20-21.

[95] Ibid., 3.16.

from selfishness toward the others-centered focus of right conduct in the world.[96] While

remaining a bodily individual, the person who is growing toward virtue and is ever closer

to the goals and consciousness of the universe has also acquired "a view from above."[97]

As Stoic ethics are the epitome of idealism, however, no one ever reaches this final stage.

Thus, a state of progress (προκοπή) is really the only existing state for humankind.

The focus in Stoic 'therapy' (their own word)[98] or training lies in the way that a

person views the situations of everyday life. Therapy's basis in reason consists of

ordering one's life and seeing how the many particular ends of acts are held together by

reason, and also the idea of practical deliberation about particular decisions.[99] The power

of reason introduces a good and healthy frame of mind to whoever uses it, if they use it

habitually.[100] As Sorabji notes, however, the Stoic notion of therapy does not deal with

conditions that modern-day psychoanalysis tackles; but, "if the problem is that you have

missed your plane or failed to gain promotion, it is Stoicism, not psychoanalysis, that is

more likely to help."[101] If emotions depend upon judgments, one should be able to

manage and control the emotions by using some form of cognitive therapy (i.e., rational

exercises aimed at altering the judgment that comprises or underlies the emotion).

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[96] "Man is born for deeds of kindness; and when he has done a kindly action, or otherwise served the common welfare, he has done what he was made for, and has received his quittance." Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 9.42.

[97] Ibid., 7.48, 9.30.

[98] Sorabji, 211.

[99] Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and The Stoics*, 49.

[100] Musonius Rufus, *Fragments*, xxxvi.

[101] Sorabji, 212.

Chrysippus' intellectual therapy for the one in a state of προκοπή coincides with his view of the soul as being essentially rational. As previously stated, the emotions are a state of faulty reasoning; therefore, seeking out correct judgments and rationally installing them in place of the false beliefs are sufficient to cure the soul of its ills.[102] Since a person suffering from an emotion has made a false judgment regarding the goodness or badness of a particular thing, the goal of training is retrieval from the suffering that accompanies this emotion; he or she must either be shown by another or come to a personal realization of having made a mistake. For example, Chrysippus teaches that the best comfort for a mourner is to understand that his or her belief – that to mourn is just and is an expected duty, and therefore a good thing – is false.[103] Furthermore, he advocated preventative therapy as the best medicine; Chrysippus believed that things unforeseen and unprepared for are more likely to alienate a person from his or her sound judgments.[104] A person, then, ought to be prepared in advance by dealing first with emotions in their mind as if they were really present.[105] In some instances, however, emotions are good for the novice at προκοπή such as one's initial yearning for good character. Often the novice who is progressing in virtuous character was exhorted by Epictetus to feel distress, or shame, at his or her present character, to rejoice at progress made, and to be cautious about mistakes.[106]

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[102] Nussbaum, 367.

[103] Chrysippus, *SVF*, III.486.

[104] Ibid., III.417, 482.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Adolf Bonhöffer, *Epiktet und die Stoa: Untersuchungen zur stoischen Philosophie* (Stuttgart, F. Frommann, 1968), 296, 302.

Epictetus gave many examples of training for the emotions: students are taught to question appearances until they could view almost everything not in their power as indifferent. Students are to practice asking whether what they see is subject to their wills, or not. Epictetus recounts one of his exercises in this regard:

> Go out at first light, examine whomever you see or hear, and answer as if you had been asked a question. What did you see? A beautiful man or woman? Apply the rule. Is this subject to your will or not? No: remove it. What did you see? A man grieving at the death of his child? Apply the rule. Death is not subject to your will. Move it out of the way. Did a consul meet you? Apply the rule. What sort of thing is consulship, subject to your will, or not? No: remove that too; it is not approved. Throw it away; it means nothing to you. If we did this and took exercise for this every day from dawn till dusk, I swear we'd get results. But as it is, we are caught right away gaping by every appearance and only wake up a little, if at all, in the classroom. If we then go out and see someone grieving, we say, 'He is ruined,' if a consul, 'He is happy,' if an exile, 'He is wretched,' if a pauper, 'The poor fellow has no source of food.' These, then, are the bad opinions that we must knock out, and pull ourselves together on the subject. For what is wailing and lamenting? A belief. What is misfortune? A belief. What are quarreling, dissension, reproach, accusation, impiety, foolery? They are all beliefs, nothing else, and beliefs that things not subject to our will are good or bad. Let someone transfer these beliefs to things that are subject to his will, and I guarantee that he will be steady, whatever his surrounding circumstances.[107]

Naturally, with such exercises, the student should expect many hardships in the process.[108]

Although reason and virtue only reach perfection in the 'wise man,' or sage, where his or her perfection separates him or her from the most mature of novices, this is only a theoretical difference. In practice, the distinction between the sage and the novice almost vanishes, especially where moral exhortation and modeling of virtue are concerned. Those who do not consider themselves as wise men can still point to themselves as models for those who are in adversity. Thus, the person striving for virtue

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[107] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3.3.14-19.

[108] Musonius Rufus, *Fragments*, vii.

also learns by imitation. The Stoics had certain moral heroes, certain supreme examples of moral living, whom they held up for imitation. Men such as Socrates, Hercules, Antisthenes, and Diogenes (the Cynic) were set forth as models, and the Stoic was to idealize them.[109] They were not unaware of the defects in actual persons, since no one has ever achieved the state of 'wise man,' but though these models may not have been totally flawless they were nevertheless worthy of imitation and were set forth accordingly. In addition, the Stoic was to find a model of right living in his or her own personal circumstances; those trying to progress were to keep constantly before themselves some real example known to them in life: "Nothing is better than exemplifications of virtue in the characters of those about us, suggesting themselves as copiously as possible. We should always keep them ready at hand."[110]

A philosopher would give almost constant attention to his pupil who was desiring to grow in virtue, and this care developed into a system known as psychagogy.[111] All of the exercises listed above were part of the treatment techniques that were designed to lead the learner toward moral transformation. A relationship of respect and trust existed between teacher and student; the teacher exemplified the traits and precepts he taught and provided a measure of security, and the student respected and emulated him.[112] The teacher's instruction was carefully tailored in his speech to the level of the student,

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[109] Davidson, 184.

[110] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 6.48.

[111] Psychagogy is described in detail in Abraham Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 36ff.

[112] Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 6.5ff.

adapting to the condition of the one he wished to benefit.[113] On one occasion he may

persuade or exhort, on another abuse or reproach, on yet another comfort, always

adapting his speech as a physician does his cure to the disease.[114]

The Results

Although few if any will achieve the status of 'wise man' or sage, there are still

benefits for undergoing προκοπή, such as an internal peace that produces good actions and

shapes virtuous communities. Personal results include the self-sufficiency that goes

along with acquiring virtue and happiness; this is the 'only' good in that nothing can be

added to it and nothing can be removed: it is simply a state of peace whereby its owner

will rejoice no matter what his or her circumstances, because the one growing in προκοπή

now has a perspective on whatever happens in the world that makes it fall into place for

them.[115]

The Stoics appreciated the regenerative power of a virtuous life in this world.

They made it their special endeavor to be helpful to those who wanted to learn virtue, and

so put their theoretical principles to practice.[116] They preached the necessity of a

person's attending to his or her own highest interests and of developing his or her better

self to the fullest extent. They also taught people to function as worthy members of the

community, and they enforced the duty of serving god (i.e. nature, the universe). Since

one can achieve virtue by conforming to the rules prescribed by nature and a 'god' who

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[113] Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 40.

[114] Ibid. Seneca also referred to hardened vices as diseases of the mind (*Ep. Mor.* 94.24, 31).

[115] Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 57.

[116] Davidson, 186.

governs the universe according to reason, the happy and virtuous life, then, is represented

as one in which all will behave as members of a well-governed society.[117] As Marcus

Aurelius said:

> Have done with the past altogether, commit the future to providence, and simply
> seek to direct the present hour aright into the paths of holiness and justice:
> holiness, by a loving acceptance of your apportioned lot, since Nature produced it
> for you and you for it: justice in your speech by a frank and straightforward
> truthfulness, and in your acts by a respect for law and for every man's rights.[118]

Seneca

The earliest of the Latin church fathers, Tertullian, writing about a century and a

half after the death of Seneca, speaks of this philosopher as "one of our own."[119] Two

hundred years after this, the Western father Jerome, having occasion to quote him,

likewise calls him, "our own Seneca."[120] Living midway between these two writers,

Lactantius points out several coincidences with the teaching of the gospel in the writings

of Seneca, whom nevertheless he calls, "the most determined of the Roman Stoics."[121]

Therefore, in antiquity, many learned Christians regarded Seneca as commensurate with

the church's teachings, based on his ethics, although he was not a Christian himself. At

the Council of Tours in 567, his authority is even quoted with a deference usually only

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[117] Long & Sedley, 190.

[118] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 12.1.

[119] Tertullian, *De Anima*, trans. by J. H. Waszink, CCSL 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954), 20.

[120] Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, trans. by W. H. Fremantle, *St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Ser. 2, Vol. VI (Edinburgh, 1892), 1.49.

[121] Lactantius, *Div. Inst.*, 1.5

reserved for fathers of the church.[122] In the elaborate nineteenth-century study on Paul

and Seneca done by Fleury (designed to prove that Seneca was a disciple of Paul!), the

author even recounts the modern-day practice in Seneca's native Spain where the

philosopher takes his place beside Peter and Paul in the local Easter passion plays.[123]

The reason why Jerome and his contemporaries gave such Christian tendencies to

Seneca is largely because the people of that time regarded the apocryphal correspondence

between Paul and Seneca as true. What is true, however, is that much of Seneca's ethical

philosophy mirrors the ethics of Paul. Seneca, as has been noted, was certainly a

contemporary of Paul, and he lived in the third (or Roman) and final phase of Stoicism

when theoretical questions became purely academic and philosophical interest then

centered upon ethics.[124]

Born to a wealthy family in Corduba, Spain, around 4 B.C., Lucius Annaeus

Seneca went to Rome as a young man to be educated for government and administration,

and eventually attained the quaestorship under Tiberius in c.33.[125] In later years, after

becoming a literary leader in society, Seneca was banished under Claudius for the

dubious charges of intimacy with Princess Julia, Caligula's sister.[126] After eight years on

Corsica, in A.D. 49, Tacitus writes that Agrippina, who wished him to become tutor to her

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[122] Labbaei *Concilica* v. p. 856 (Paris, 1671); as quoted in Lightfoot, 270.

[123] A. Fleury, *Saint Paul et Sénèque* (Paris, 1853); as quoted in Lightfoot, 270.

[124] Richard M. Gummere, *Seneca the Philosopher and His Modern Message* (New York: Cooper, 1963), 15.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Anna Lydia Motto, *Seneca* (New York: Twayne, 1973), 20.

young son, Nero, recalled Seneca to Rome.[127] Once Nero became emperor, Seneca

remained as his advisor, and along with Burrus created what the Emperor Trajan declared

to be the *Quinquennium Neronis*, or the five good years, the ideal epoch of Roman

history (A.D. 54-59).[128] A mere four years, later, however, Nero betrayed his mentor and

implicated him in scandal, asking for Seneca's suicide with which the philosopher

obliged in A.D. 64.[129]

Seneca's letters, 124 in number, are all addressed to his friend Lucilius. They do

not constitute a correspondence, however, since there are no letters in response, nor are

they half of a correspondence. They are a literary work, which includes the addressee's

response as an integrated part of the composition.[130] In reading the *Epistulae Morales*,

one must remember that they are the product of not only a philosopher but also a poet and

dramatist, who wrote at least eight tragedies on classical themes in Greek mythology.[131]

Thus, these letters, written in the last years of Seneca's life when he attempted to retire

from public office, are fictional insofar as they were neither sent nor received, nor

gathered by the addressee or someone else. They are a philosophical project in that they

constitute a 'communication' among friends about the various aspects of moral progress.

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[127] Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb (Franklin Center, PA: Franklin Library, 1982), 12.8

[128] Motto, *Seneca*, 28.

[129] As he died, Tacitus reports that Seneca took one last opportunity to remind his friends of the importance of a virtuous life, admonishing them: "I do not show my gratitude in a will but I grant you my best and sole possession, namely, my pattern of life." Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.61ff.

[130] Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier, "Seneca's Collection of Epistles: A Medium of Philosophical Communication," in *Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Bible and Culture: Essays In Honor of Hans Dieter Betz*, ed. by Adela Yarbro Collins (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 102.

[131] The eight tragedies that scholars now agree were written by Seneca are *Agamemnon*, *Oedipus*, *Furious Hercules*, *Medea*, *Phaedra*, *Thyestes*, *The Trojan Women*, and *The Phoenician Women*. Sorensen, 343.

<u>Stoic Ethics in Seneca's *Epistulae Morales*</u>

The Stoic ethical doctrine, from the Roman point of view, is presented better by no Latin writer than Seneca.[132] His use of the epistolary style to promulgate his ethical admonitions has much precedence in the ancient world where letter writing frequently took on the character of pastoral care.[133] The admonitions in the epistles to Lucilius display almost an urgency to raise the moral tone of humankind.[134] As stated earlier, however, he did not so much intend to expound a system as to "direct a conscience."[135] Therefore, ethical tenets in the *Epistulae Morales* will now be elucidated in light of the above discussion on the early Stoic ethical system, for as de Vogel summed up, "ancient Stoic doctrine is found again in Seneca."[136] His moral counsel will be cataloged according to the five categories set forth in chapter one, namely, 1) The conditions prior to change, or the anthropology behind his ideas; 2) The impetus for change, or conditions necessary for change to occur; 3) The moment of change; 4) The theoretical basis for change, or the rationale for why people should change; and 5) The process of change and the results of this process.

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[132] Gummere, *Seneca Epistles 1-65*, xii.

[133] Abraham Malherbe, "New Testament, Traditions and Theology of Care in," in *The Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. by Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 792.

[134] Motto, *Seneca*, 49.

[135] Anna Lydia Motto, *Guide to the Thought of Lucius Annaeus Seneca* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1970), xi.

[136] Cornelia J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy*, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 49.

Conditions Prior to Change: Anthropology

There is a fundamental anthropological dualism in Seneca; the body is the inferior, contemptible part of humankind while the soul is the divine component of each individual.[137] Beyond this, however, Seneca explains in *Ep. Mor.* 92.1 that ". . . in the soul there are certain parts which minister to us, enabling us to move and to sustain life, bestowed upon us just for the sake of the primary part of us. In this primary part there is something irrational, and something rational."[138] Humankind's internal disposition (i.e., the soul), therefore, is comprised of two divisions: reason, and a baser instinct.

The higher faculty of the soul, reason, separates humankind from the animal kingdom; this peculiar property of man (*proprium hominis*) exists within and cannot be taken away: "It is soul, and reason brought to perfection in the soul. For man is a reasoning animal" (*Ep. Mor.* 41.8). As this study has previously shown reason to be the equivalent of both nature and the divine, Seneca's statements that a person's soul is *deum in corpore humano hospitantem* (a god dwelling as a guest in a human body; *Ep. Mor.* 31.11) take on meaning. Humankind is *mixtum divini humanique*, or a mixture of the divine and the human (*Ep. Mor.* 102.22), and "divine seeds are scattered throughout our mortal bodies" even though they must be attended to and nurtured (*Ep. Mor.* 73.16). The same God/Nature that rules the universe in a rational fashion (*Ep. Mor.* 16.5; 58.27-28; 71.12-14) also exists within every human soul. Furthermore, everyone is endowed with the capacity to know God: "there is implanted in everyone an idea concerning deity, and

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[137] Sevenster, 74.

[138] Gummere relates passage this to Aristotle's *Eth. Nic.* 1.13, "It is stated that the soul has two parts, one irrational and the other possessing reason." Gummere, *Epistulae Morales 66-92*, 446.

there is no people so far beyond the reach of laws and customs that it does not believe at least in gods of some sort" (*Ep. Mor.* 117.6).

Sevenster points out that Seneca always writes with humankind as his central theme, and only of divinity in passing or in pointing out how the divine nature that resides in humankind is there to help a man or a woman actualize his or her virtue and gain happiness,[139] because the lower instinct in human souls opens up vulnerability to the emotions and to vice. In *Ep. Mor.* 90.38, Seneca implies that the first age of humankind, according to the early Stoics, was a pre-technical, pre-philosophical age where everyone automatically did what was right without the need for reflection; with the inventions of arts and agriculture, a more technical understanding of the world led people away from their natural virtuous impulses. Hence, Seneca believes that humans are born good and can only be corrupted when vices infiltrate from without: "virtue is according to nature; vice (*vitio*) is opposed to it" (*Ep. Mor.* 50.8). *Ep. Mor.* 94.55-56 further states, "you are mistaken if you suppose that our faults (*vitia*) are inborn in us; they have come from without, have been heaped upon us . . . Nature does not ally us with any vice; she produced us in health and freedom." Nature has not actually enticed humans into vice (*Ep. Mor.* 70.15), even though vice is an external force impinging upon humankind; however, everyone is still personally responsible for ridding him or herself from vice (*Ep. Mor.* 50.7).[140] Thankfully, nature has given humans the ability to stay on the right path toward virtue or to enter again upon it (*Ep. Mor.* 44.2, 3; 31.9; 116.8).

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[139] Sevenster, 67.

[140] H. B. Timothy, *The Tenets of Stoicism, Assembled and Systematized from the Works of L. Annaeus Seneca* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1973), 70.

If humans were not born in a state of *vitio*, and if *vitio* is contrary to both human and universal nature, then who/what is impinging vice upon humankind if not the nature that is the governor of the cosmos? The Stoics never address this question, but perhaps Seneca is trying to absolve nature/reason/deity from any responsibility by holding that nature had nothing to do with the creation of vice. He claims that vice comes from without so he can absolve the nature/reason/deity that is within humans. Vice, then, can be equated with evil, in the sense of an external force that is opposed to the divinity of the universe/nature. Furthermore, a state of vice can be created within a person when he or she lives according to his or her baser instincts rather than according to the soul's higher reason/nature. Sin, then, becomes the external manifestation of this internal state of vice. Sinning (*peccetur*) is extremely prevalent (*Ep. Mor.* 75.15) and sins (*peccata*) are a tremendous source of pleasure for humankind (*Ep. Mor.* 97.10-11). Humans know that sin is wrong, however, because they often choose to hide their sins (*Ep. Mor.* 97.12).

An individual's state of vice lies opposed to a state of virtue that he or she would enjoy if he or she lived according to nature/reason, who has planted the seeds of virtue within the soul's higher nature; this potential simply needs to be actualized. God has granted within us all the faculty of acquiring goodness/virtue, rather than bestowing virtue as a gift from birth, so that character may be formed through progress (*Ep. Mor.* 90.1-2). "At our birth nature made us teachable, and gave us reason, not perfect, but capable of being perfected" (*Ep. Mor.* 49.12). The good person must also walk according to the higher nature in the soul rather than the flesh, which represents the baser instincts: "Never shall this flesh drive me to feed fear, or to assume any pretense that is unworthy of a good man . . . the soul shall bring all quarrels before its own tribunal" (*Ep. Mor.*

65.22). God's providential care comes into effect when one attempts to live according to the higher nature: "God is near you, he is with you, he is within you . . . a holy spirit indwells within us, one who marks our good and bad deeds, and is our guardian" (*Ep. Mor.* 41.2). Indeed, the attainment of virtue is easy in one sense, because nature has planted its seeds within us; virtue is the one thing accessible to all people regardless of social or economic status.[141] Nevertheless, the common human condition is that people have not actualized their virtue and are bound helplessly to the emotions, which have arisen from their faulty judgments.

<p style="text-align:center">The Impetus for Change: Conditions Necessary for Change to Occur</p>

Seneca is committed to belief in the possibility of moral progress in humanity and thus outlines the conditions necessary for that development. The chief impetus leading toward moral change lies in the enactment of reason, which is present within the divine part of the human soul. Nature has created humankind free from vice (*Ep. Mor.* 22.15) and has planted the seeds of virtue within (*Ep. Mor.* 108.8) through reason (*Ep. Mor.* 31.9-11) that can bring all into subjection (*Ep. Mor.* 74.21). The human will, however, must be trained to achieve perfect reason (i.e., virtue), and the will must be receptive to change before transformation can occur.[142] A man is good if "his reason is well-ordered and right and adapted to that which his nature has willed" (*Ep. Mor.* 76.16).

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[141] Ibid., 39-40.

[142] Ibid., 13.

When a creature pursues what is most suited to its nature, this is when it will achieve harmony within. Human beings, therefore, have to be governed by their own ruling principle to be wise and virtuous and therefore happy. "Since reason alone brings man to perfection, reason alone, when perfected, makes man happy" (*Ep. Mor.* 76.16). By virtue of having a rational faculty, man can claim relationship with eternal reason, or the reason that pervades nature, which lives both in man and throughout the universe. Both humankind and all created things are governed by this universal reason; reason constitutes the pure essence of man, and so to live by reason is to live in accordance with one's internal divine nature/reason.[143] The bottom line is, a man needs to turn to himself, to the laws of nature and reason within himself, in order to enact change.

The only internal qualities or resources necessary to actualize reason and to begin moral transformation are willingness and tenacity. Seneca spends much more time on the former requirement than the latter; for instance, he explains in *Ep. Mor.* 95.56ff.:

> Conduct will not be right unless the will to act is right; for this is the source of conduct. Nor, again, can the will be right without a right attitude of mind; for this is the source of the will. Furthermore, such an attitude of mind will not be found even in the best of men unless he has learned the laws of life as a whole and has worked out a proper judgment about everything, and unless he has reduced facts to a standard of truth. Peace of mind is enjoyed only by those who have attained a fixed and unchanging standard of judgment . . .

To become good, a person must only wish for it (*Ep. Mor.* 80.4) and have a receptive will to the precepts that can guide one to right conduct (*Ep. Mor.* 95.4). "The greater part of progress is the desire to progress" (*Ep. Mor.* 71.30). Humans have complete control over the possibility of moral change (*Ep. Mor.* 93.7) and anyone who is not virtuous is lingering in a situation of their own free will: "there are a few men whom slavery holds

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[143] Sevenster, 135-146.

fast, but there are many more who hold fast to slavery" (*Ep. Mor.* 22.11). Seneca spends less time on the notion that becoming virtuous takes hard work, and more time encouraging the ease of the process since the seeds of virtue are already implanted within (*Ep. Mor.* 80.4). The will, however, must still be trained, and reason becomes perfected only through tenacity and never departing from the goal (*Ep. Mor.* 92.4), the process of which will be described below.

What, then, does one do who sincerely desires to make moral progress in his or her life? How does he or she enact the seed of virtue planted within? "At our birth, nature made us teachable . . ." (*Ep. Mor.* 39.12). This is the external condition that needs to be met before transformation can occur: the *proficiens*, or one who is making progress toward the ideal, must have advice and/or an example to follow from someone who is further along toward being wise. "This seed (of virtue) is stirred to growth by advice " (*Ep. Mor.* 94.29) says Seneca, but the "living voice and the intimacy of a common life will help you more than the written word . . . the way is short and helpful if one follows patterns" (*Ep. Mor.* 6.6). The quality of people surrounding the *proficiens* affects his or her character (*Ep. Mor* 7.7) if the one seeking growth can follow as a guide those who have reached the next stage on the road to virtue. Seneca always remains hopeful that cultivation will stir the innate seed of virtue to growth in moral character.

The Moment of Change

Seneca believes in a decisive moment when the change from vice to virtue occurs once and for all. This moment of change (i.e. acquiring virtue) is the climax of a process (*Ep. Mor.* 72.9) that finds the virtuous person in the condition of being a 'wise/good man'

(*sapiens*). "That which is settled and solid does not wander from its place" (*Ep. Mor.* 35.4) says Seneca on the wise man, who alone is worthy of admiration (*Ep. Mor.* 111.3) and who is similar to God in all, save for his mortality (*Ep. Mor.* 59.14). A state of virtue is fixed and inalterable once achieved (*Ep. Mor.* 74.19) and cannot be lost once obtained (*Ep. Mor.* 50.8-9). This greatest good, for Seneca, is akin to having complete command of yourself, and the possibility for this is open to all.[144] Qualities such as justice, integrity, courage, peace, and sound judgment fill the soul of the virtuous man.[145] His new internal state can never be destroyed by external forces or circumstances: "The Spirit that abandons external things stands on unassailable ground; it vindicates itself in its fortress; every weapon hurled against it falls short of its mark" (*Ep. Mor.* 82.5). The wise man is not distressed by the loss of children or friends (*Ep. Mor.* 74.30), is unruffled in the midst of dangers and has peace in the midst of the storm (*Ep. Mor.* 41.4), and does not complain about his difficulties (*Ep. Mor.* 71.26). This wise man, whom nothing and no one can alter, is ultimately self-made and autonomous.[146] The problem is, the good man, like the Phoenix, only appears perhaps once every five hundred years (*Ep. Mor.* 42.1). Therefore, since few if any reach this epitome, what really matters to Seneca is not the characterization of the ideal but the best way to reach it.[147] Even the Stoic philosopher himself is only a *proficiens* making progress toward the ideal.

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[144] Sorensen, 194.

[145] Timothy, 38.

[146] Carlin A. Barton, *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Bones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 118.

[147] Cancik-Lindemaier, "Seneca's Collection of Epistles," 97.

The Theoretical Basis for Change: The Rationale for Why People Should Change

While most of the rationale for why people should morally transform are reasons that apply only to the individual, Seneca also advocates various motivations that are beneficial to the community. Earlier Greek thought contained an intellectualism that assumed knowing what was right was the same as doing what was right; with the Stoicism of Seneca, there is a shift from wisdom to goodness in that he is one of the first philosophers to repeatedly encourage humanitarian actions.[148] In one striking example, Seneca encourages man to treat man with kindness because:

> We are the parts of one great body . . . Let us possess things in common; 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 (*Ep. Mor.* 95.53).

These actions are only possible through the process of seeking virtue; justice and fairness are the ideal of nature, and humankind lives this out by being ready to help one another at all times (*Ep. Mor.* 95.52). We are called to have sympathy for all peoples (*Ep. Mor.* 5.4) and to rejoice with those who rejoice while sympathizing with those who need sympathy (*Ep. Mor.* 103.3). We are actually imitating the goodness of God (*Ep. Mor.* 95.50; 115.5) when we follow the call to aid our fellow human beings (*Ep. Mor.* 48.7-9). Philosophy (i.e., virtue) has taught us to love humans and to live in community (*Ep. Mor.* 90.3); this ideal was spoiled, however, by the vice of humanity. Seneca now reminds that there is an obligation to live for others rather than for ourselves (*Ep. Mor.* 48.2) and insists repeatedly on a commitment to love, mercy, and forgiveness.[149]

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[148] M. L. Clarke, *The Roman Mind: Studies in the History of Thought from Cicero to Marcus Aurelius* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), 124.

[149] Motto, *Seneca*, 56.

Throughout Seneca's writings, he acknowledges the community's foundation based upon the Greco-Roman concept of honor and shame. "Honor" is a claim to worth on the part of an individual, family, or group accompanied by the public recognition of, and respect for, that worth.[150] Honor, however, was considered to be a limited good; there was only so much honor available in society and no more honor could be created.[151] The only way to increase honor, therefore, was to take honor from someone else. Seneca discussed the notion of honor and shame with regard to gift giving or favor bestowing; an obligation of reciprocity engages the giver and the receiver, and either one who breaks this commitment engages in a serious offense within the community.[152] Seneca, however, goes against convention as he states:

> The good man will be easy-going in striking a balance; he will allow too much to be set against his credit . . . the side towards which he will lean, the tendency which he will exhibit, is the desire to be under obligation for the favour, and the desire to make return therefore . . . There is not a man who, when he has benefited his neighbor, has not benefited himself . . . I shall strive in the utmost calmness of spirit toward the purpose which honor demands, in the very midst of disgrace (*Ep. Mor.* 81.17-21).

Therefore, for the sake of others, a good individual should not lament the loss of personal honor, even though society at large calls for human beings to seek their own honor exclusively.

More often, however, Seneca lists individual incentives for acquiring virtue; namely, personal happiness and relief from adversity. The happy life consists of peace of mind and lasting tranquility (*Ep. Mor.* 92.3), and encompasses all of the benefits of the

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[150] John H. Elliot, "Disgraced Yet Graced: The Gospel According to 1 Peter in the Key of Honor and Shame," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 25 (1995), 168.

[151] Walter F. Taylor, "Obligation: Paul's Foundation for Ethics," *Josephinium Journal of Theology* 51 (Wint-Spr 1998), 6.

[152] Ibid., 8-9.

wise man (see previous section). The one who seeks reason will also be armed against the greatest hardships (*Ep. Mor.* 74.21) and cannot be harmed by any pain (*Ep. Mor.* 85.37).

Seneca writes much on the proper use of time in relation to ethics; humankind needs to use time properly because this precious commodity needs to be utilized correctly in order for humans to live well and to progress toward virtue.[153] While not necessarily concerned with the afterlife,[154] Seneca's rationale with regard to time deals with the brevity of life and our urgent need to employ time wisely and carefully to build our characters and communities.[155] "There is no life that is not brief . . . life is like a play – it does not matter how long it is but how well it is performed" (*Ep. Mor.* 77.20). Seneca often explored the crisis of the elderly who have come to the realization of a wasted life, and thus warns his reader that the fear of squandered time is a healthy motivation for right living.[156]

The Process of Change and the Results of This Process

Since "wisdom comes haphazard to no man" and "virtue will not fall upon you by chance" (*Ep. Mor.* 76.6), there is necessarily a process of moral transformation. Virtue needs a "shock" to enact its viability (*Ep. Mor.* 94.29) and only a trained mind can make

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[153] Anna Lydia Motto and John R. Clark, *Essays on Seneca*, Studien zur klassichen Philologie 79 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993), 41.

[154] Seneca apparently was unsure on his views of the afterlife; he counseled at various times that the soul as is lives on, that death equals nothingness, and that the spirit will reappear in another body. Motto, *Seneca*, 70-71.

[155] Motto and Clark, *Essays*, 43.

[156] Ibid., 51.

reasonable judgments about the world. Within this process, there are stages of progress toward becoming a wise man; life is a journey (*Ep. Mor.* 44.7; 99.7) and scarcely will a lifetime suffice to bring vice into subjection through the three stages of growing wisdom (*Ep. Mor.* 75.8-14).[157] Only through a gradual progress, then, will a human being attain moral victory and achieve goodness and happiness.[158]

Seneca thus presents humankind with the tools and principles that will serve as a rule of life, the first being a diligence in self-examination. Seneca advises Lucilius to examine himself (*Ep. Mor.* 16.2; 68.6-7) and to look back over his life (*Ep. Mor.* 83.2) in an effort to both exercise the mind and to stir the conscience into being. Lucilius is also encouraged to make use of examples by spending time studying wise men,[159] and by emulating living examples in which the tutelage will be adapted to the particular needs of the student (*Ep. Mor.* 25.1-2). Seneca in essence has even more in mind than epitomizing moral virtues for his friend as he places himself at the center of his teaching; he is equally as interested in forming a relationship with his protégé as he is in modeling virtue for him (Ep. Mor. 11.8-10).[160] In practice, the gulf between the *sapiens* and the *proficiens* essentially evaporates as those (such as Seneca) who are not full-fledged wise men still point to themselves as examples for others to emulate.[161] Seneca does not describe the

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[157] The stages are: those who are rid of many vices but not all, those who have suppressed the greatest passions but not all, and those who are rid of both passions and vices but do not yet have the full assurance to put their wisdom into practice. *Ep. Mor.* 75.8-14.

[158] Motto, *Seneca*, 54.

[159] Timothy, 31.

[160] Abraham Malherbe, "Paul: Hellenistic Philosopher or Christian Pastor?" in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 69.

[161] Fitzgerald, 59.

practical exercises involved in the learning of virtue as do other Stoics, but one can assume that he presupposed this part of the system.

Virtue, then, requires constant training (*Ep. Mor.* 66.2) that can be the equivalent of torture (*Ep. Mor.* 78.16). This training proceeds toward a victory for reason over the emotions, and Seneca presents virtue as the prize to be won (*Ep. Mor.* 78.16). Since vice is a persistent perversion of the faculty of judgment, a combination of constant willingness/intention and hard training serves to teach the knowledge of things both good and evil.[162] The conscience slowly rights itself and listens to its divine part more than its lower part,[163] and a person is gradually released from false ideas about right and wrong (*Ep. Mor.* 94.13). As reason and emotion battle in the soul for mastery, the human being becomes free to suspend his or her irrational judgments, and he or she is more able to amend the judgment that calls for an emotional reaction to a given situation.[164] In part, this can be achieved by staying calm and avoiding past sources of strong emotion (*Ep. Mor.* 69.2-4). Once this perverted judgment is arighted, reason will largely replace the impulse of emotion; the wise man, however, has the freedom to feel emotion at will if he so chooses.[165]

During the training period, the *proficiens* will utilize the hardships of daily life; "calamity is the beginning of happiness" says Seneca (*Ep. Mor.* 110.3). The decisive

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[162] Sorensen, 191.

[163] Sevenster, 91.

[164] This theory of the emotions provides the necessary motivation because if the emotions are thought of as physical reactions or involuntary contradictions, in the absence of drug therapy the situation would have seemed hopeless. If the emotions, however, are irrational judgments and humans are free to suspend judgment, then perhaps progress can be made. Sorabji, 160.

[165] Timothy, 65.

thing is not what a person endures but how he or she endures.[166] Seneca stresses that the trainee should not be surprised by hardships: "Let us think of everything that can happen as something which will happen" (*Ep. Mor.* 24.15); "Nothing ought to be unexpected by us" (*Ep. Mor.* 91.4). Affirming that hardships are the lot of life and anticipating their arrival is one way to begin to vanquish them.[167] Seneca further insists that the very will of God is manifested in hardships: "When all seems difficult and laborious, I have trained myself not simply to obey God but even to agree with the divine will (*Ep. Mor.* 96.2).[168] A certain attitude must also be presented to the community by the trainee; *Ep. Mor.* 5.3 encourages Lucilius to maintain a higher standard than society but not a contrary one, because it will frighten and repel the very persons they are trying to improve. "Inwardly we ought to be different in all respects, but our exterior should conform to society" (*Ep. Mor.* 5.2).

The results of this training period will be that the entire personality is now in harmony with itself.[169] Word and deed will correspond as the wise man's conscience is able to discern right from wrong, and his emotion will be brought under control enabling him to live out what he now knows as good. The human being has achieved independence from the whims of chance and has become wise, and free and happy (*Ep. Mor.* 59.16). He or she will be free to consistently follow the precepts that govern duty and good behavior (*Ep. Mor.* 94.33-34) and his or her conduct will be regulated by

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[166] Sorensen, 199.

[167] Malherbe, "New Testament, Traditions and Theology of Care in," 790.

[168] Roman Garrison, *Why Are You Silent, Lord?*, The Biblical Seminar 68 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 61.

[169] Sorensen, 191.

doctrine (*Ep. Mor.* 95.34). The ultimate prize, however, is contentment with oneself (*Ep. Mor.* 72.7); the wise man will obtain the strong character of one who has lived according to reason and nature and has acquired the definitive inner peace and happiness.

CHAPTER III

COMPARING SENECA'S ETHICS IN *EPISTULAE MORALES*

TO THOSE OF PAUL IN ROMANS

Introduction to Romans

Before this study can make a comparison between the ethics of moral

transformation of Paul in Romans and of Seneca in *Epistulae Morales*, a closer

examination of Romans as an ethical treatise must commence. Presumably written from

Corinth during the winter of 57-58 before his final journey to Jerusalem,[1] Romans is

Paul's most detailed and systematic discussion of a number of topics: justification by

faith apart from the Law, the role of Israel, and the moral and ethical demands that are an

integral part of a life of faith. Many scholars have taken these factors to mean that

Romans is something of a compendium of Paul's theology, and even a theological last

will and testament.[2] Certainly, there is reason to filter studies in Paul's theology through

the deep and textured arguments he presents in Romans. There has been, however, an

ongoing debate concerning the nature and genre of this epistle – what sort of writing is

Romans?[3] The answer to this question is important in orienting oneself to the ethical

doctrine of the book.

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[1] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 87.

[2] Such as G. Bornkamm, "The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament," in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl Donfried (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1991), 16-28.

[3] This debate is chronicled in the aforementioned *The Romans Debate*.

The debate centers around two main possibilities for Paul's writing to the church at Rome, which he had never before visited at the time of the letter's composition:[4] either Paul is writing in response to a particular situation in the Roman church, or he is writing because of circumstances in his own life. Paul relates that he has now completed his work in the eastern Mediterranean basin and hopes to establish a new mission field in Spain (Rom 15:19-24). Some have argued that Paul at this turning point in his work took the opportunity to summarize his teachings on the Law, faith, justification, Israel, and the moral life, either for unknown personal reasons, or as a plea for obtaining money at Rome when he visited there on his way to Spain.[5] If this is true, and Paul employs Romans as an occasion to lay out his gospel in a systematic fashion, then his moral exhortation (the primary section being 12:1—15:13) is a general paraenesis, or an ethical statement made in light of his gospel. If, however, Paul writes to Rome in response to a concrete situation in the life of the Roman church, then his moral exhortation must be read with those circumstances in mind, and his exhortation is the expression of his gospel written for a specific situation.

Although scholars will continue to debate the issue, this study proposes that Paul is writing to Rome, as in his other letters, an occasional writing that responds to a real situation. This situation, however, requires Paul to compose something akin to an 'essay-

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[4] According to the following articles in Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, the Roman church consisted not of one church but of several house churches (presumably, not all of whom understood the faith in the manner of Paul): A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Purpose and Occasion of Romans Again," 195-202; F. Watson, "The Two Roman Congregations: Romans 14:1-15:13," 203-215; and P. Lampe, "The Roman Christians of Romans 16," 216-230. Concerning the origins of the Roman church, see Jürgen Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 333-340.

[5] See G. Klein, "Paul's Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl Donfried, 29-43.

letter' in which he presents important aspects of his gospel.[6] Paul's moral exhortation, then, in light of a real situation where he intends to tell his readers how to behave, explains the ethical demands of the "obedience of faith" (1:5) required by the gospel. The traditional approach to the primary paraenetic section in Romans, 12:1—15:13, asserts that these chapters have little or no relation to the previous material in the epistle; instead, scholars have long located them outside of the argument Paul makes in chapters 1-11. 12:1—15:13 begin the heart of Paul's ethical teaching to the Romans, which many believe to be general ethical topoi that could stand alone without the previous chapters; Luther suggests this by stating that 'the apostle is about to teach a Christian ethic' when he reaches chapter 12.[7] More recently, some commentators continue to divorce the cohesiveness of Romans by regarding chapters 12:1—15:13 as either a separate unit that details the ethical life of a Christian,[8] or as an appendix that relates to the previous chapters as an afterthought to Paul's doctrine.[9] Perhaps closer to the truth are those who consider 12:1—15:13 as not only part of a tightly knit argument that runs throughout Romans,[10] but even as part of the core point that Paul has been advancing towards in the earlier chapters.[11] Understood in this way, the entire book of Romans sketches the broad

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[6] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 69.

[7] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. XV (London: SCM Press, 1961), 320.

[8] Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 98-106.

[9] Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1949), 411-413.

[10] C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 230; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 595; James Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1988), 705; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 361; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 324.

[11] Stuhlmacher, 185-186.

contours of a Pauline ethic as the natural culmination of the gospel presented in chapters

1-8, and presents this teaching in light of a particular state of affairs concerning the

church at Rome.[12]

The Situation at Rome

Any description of the situation in the Roman churches c. 57-58 essentially must

remain at the level of hypothesis, and is prone to continuing revision and correction. A

plausible background, however, for the concrete problem addressed by Paul in this epistle

can be constructed. A. J. M. Wedderburn states that the Roman church had evolved into

a type of Christianity called "Judaizing," or,

> a form of Christianity which treats Christianity as simply part of Judaism and,
> more important, requires of all its adherents, whether they are Jews or not, that
> they observe the Jewish Law as the Jewish Law either in whole or in part.[13]

This implies, therefore, that those who embraced a Judaizing Christianity, whether Jew or

Gentile, lived by the patterns of thought and behavior of Judaism. This is supported by

Paul's concern directed toward the division of believers into the weak and the strong in

14:1—15:3.[14] Furthermore, Paul's gospel would be confusing to this type of Christian,

particularly because he did not require others to accept circumcision and the Law. This is

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[12] Hans Dieter Betz argues that in dealing with criticism, "Paul subjected his entire theology to substantial revision and expansion" in "The Foundations of Christian Ethics According to Romans 12:1-2," in *Witness and Existence: Essays in Honor of Schubert M. Ogden*, ed. P. E. Devenish and G. L. Goodwin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 61. Paul, therefore, presents his developed theology in Romans, especially with regard to ethics.

[13] A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons For Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 50.

[14] Wedderburn quotes the ancient commentator Ambrose of Milan, or Ambrosiaster, who stated in the fourth century: "It is established that there were Jews living in Rome in the times of the apostles, and that those Jews who had believed [in Christ] passed on to the Romans the tradition that they ought to profess Christ but keep the Law . . ." Ibid., 51. Although interesting, this quotation is too late to provide strong evidence in itself.

not to say that Paul did not adapt his new allegiance to Christ to his Jewish framework; in no way did he simply stop being a Jew to become a Christian as many mistakenly believe today – Paul still wrote and taught within his Jewish worldview because he was believing in the same God and was following this same God's story to completion. The story of Israel and her God was continuing and going in a different direction, and Paul undertook to redefine the main symbols and teaching of Judaism and show how they had changed in light of the coming of Christ. Particularly in Romans, Paul's argument contains the element of redefining the relation between Jew and Gentile, effectively placing them on the same playing field; no one has any special privileges and God calls them all to live together as a body in community. Naturally, this involves redrawing the lines of demarcation that make up the people of God, and James Dunn helpfully notes that the new boundary markers are faith in Christ rather than works of the Law, circumcision of the heart rather than physical circumcision, and the line of the covenant emerging through election and not through ethnic criteria.[15] The Law, however, had also been the *ethical* boundary of Judaism (10:5), and so Paul also has to redefine the ways in which the people of God are now to live their lives.

There were clearly some at Rome who practiced the Christianity of Paul, as evidenced by Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:3; I Cor 16:19; Acts 18). Such believers, if Gentiles, did not undergo circumcision and no longer adhered to the dietary prescriptions of the Law. Thus, it is plausible to envision two Christian groups at Rome: believers who aligned themselves with Judaistic practices and those who did not. As Watson deduces, however, this is not to assume that there were two churches or two congregations at

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[15] Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 716.

Rome.[16] The Roman church probably consisted of a number of house churches (16:5), some of which were probably associated with various synagogues. The result was a tension between believers (be they Jewish or Gentile) who lived a Jewish way of life and those who did not. The former is likely the "weak" of 14:1—15:13 and the latter is likely the "strong."[17]

If Paul was aware of these tensions and of the misgivings that those Christians who observed Jewish customs had about him and his gospel, then he likely wrote a letter to Rome given his desire to visit there on his way to evangelize the West. Paul may have wanted the Roman church to help fund his mission, or perhaps to even send him as their delegate to Spain.[18] In any case, since he planned to visit them soon after the completion of the letter, one can assume that Paul desired to respond to the objections of those Christians who continued to live a Jewish way of life. Thus, the whole of Romans would be addressed to a concrete situation, and not simply 12:1—15:13. Paul must first explain what he teaches about the Law and Israel, and defend the charge that his gospel encourages antinomianism, before he can use his moral exhortation to tell them how to live in light of his interpretation of the true gospel of Christ.

Paul's Ethics in Romans Compared and Contrasted With Seneca

This study will now illustrate the similarity of moral teaching between Paul's Epistle to the Romans and Seneca's *Epistulae Morales*, as well as the points where their

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[16] Watson, 203-215.

[17] Tensions likely began with Claudius's expulsion of the Jews (and Jewish Christians) from Rome in A.D. 49 (see Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. by Robert Graves (London: Penguin, 1957), 5.25), and when the Jewish Christians returned, they had found a more assertive Gentile Christianity.

[18] See Jeremy Moiser, "Rethinking Romans 12-15," *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990), 573.

semblance diverges. As Malherbe states: "There can no longer be any doubt that Paul

was thoroughly familiar with the teaching, methods of operation, and style of

argumentation of the philosophers of the period, all of which he adapted and adopted to

his own purposes."[19] Whether or not Paul adapted elements from the Greco-Roman

philosophical moral tradition, or from Seneca himself, some parallels certainly present

themselves when examining their ethical admonitions. In comparing Paul's view of

moral transformation to Seneca's, this study will follow the ethical argument that runs

through Romans by surveying the flow of thought in the letter as it leads up to the

primary ethical section in 12:1—15:13. The discourse of 12:1 begins with an οὖν, and

since there were no chapter dividers in the first century, Paul is very likely about to give

information that refers back to all that has come before.[20] As Fitzmyer notes, "this

hortatory part of Romans (12:1—15:13) is also an expression of God's uprightness, but

now in terms of concrete conduct."[21]

Romans 1:1—5:21

At the beginning of Romans, there are immediate indications that Paul is leading

toward the primary paraenetic/ethical section of the book and that 12:1 begins the

material that is the very crux of this epistle. As early as 1:5, during the greeting, Paul

declares his purpose "to bring about the *obedience* of faith" among all the Gentiles. After

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[19] Malherbe, "Paul: Hellenistic Philosopher or Christian Pastor?" 68.

[20] cf. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. from the 6th German ed. by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 427; Cranfield, 595-596; Dodd, 196; and Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 176. Contra Barrett, *Commentary*, 230, who believes that 12:1 only refers back to the material in chapters 9-11.

[21] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 637.

a prayer of thanksgiving for his Roman readers, Paul reveals the thesis statement of the epistle in 1:16-17: the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, and *the one who is righteous will live by faith.*[22] As opposed to some modern readings of this verse, which interpret Paul as saying "the one who is made righteous by faith will live," Paul opens his letter by implying that he will discuss the power of salvation for both Jews and Greeks, and then discuss how the righteousness of God is revealed in this gospel from faith (the faith that gains salvation) *to* faith (the faith that will be needed to live the new life, i.e. perhaps the obedience of faith from 1:5). 1:17, then, reveals that faith is not only a conviction, but also a way of living rather than a once and for all declaration.

After the thesis statement, 1:18-2:11 comprises the first part of the epistle and declares all humans to be sinners while leading up to the declaration, "For there is no partiality with God." In this initial section, Paul reveals his understanding of sin's nature, origin, and unfortunate results, which is similar in some ways to Seneca's take on the human condition. The sinful state of humanity includes both Gentiles (1:18-32) and Jews (2:1-29), but the guilt of the Gentiles cannot be based, like that of the Jews, upon observance of the Mosaic Law (2:13).[23] Instead, Paul convicts the Gentiles on the basis

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[22] Paul quotes here from Hab 2:4 where the prophet is talking about how to live life, and is contrasting the righteous with the proud – and as will become more evident, a primary emphasis of Paul is to take away all pride and boasting from the church. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 44-45.

[23] An argument can be made that 1:18-32 speaks about all people and not just Gentiles, because the allusions from Genesis 3 here indicate that Paul speaks about all who are descended from Adam. Morna Hooker, "Adam in Romans 1," *New Testament Studies* 6 (1959-60), 297-306. Adam possessed the knowledge of God plainly revealed to him (1:19, 21), and had access to the truth of God before sin darkened his faculties (1:25); yet, he did not honor God as God (1:21), he did not acknowledge God (1:28), and he exchanged the truth of God for a lie (1:25). 2 Baruch 48:46 appears to link the people of Romans 1 with Adam in an explicit way: "For you commanded the dust one day to produce Adam; and you knew the number of those who are born from him and how they sinned before you, those who existed and did not recognize you are their creator."

of breaking the law God had given to them, namely, that of using their reason to know God. Paul traces sin's beginning to the human will (1:23, 28); the nature of sin is confusion, and humans did not notice what was evident about God (1:19). For Seneca, the origins of sin are similar to Paul's ideas, because neither recognizes sin as an inborn personal defect, but the philosopher places greater emphasis on sin as a state brought upon by the external force of vice in the world (*Ep. Mor.* 94.55-56). While Paul also acknowledges sin as a cosmic force later in Romans (3:9; 7:7-25), he begins his discussion of the human condition in chapter 1 with the assertion that sin is human willful disobedience. At this point in his argument, he simply asserts humankind's inclination to sin as a fact because he is concerned with proving that each is responsible for his or her own sin. In chapter 5, Paul will further discuss the sin of every individual as stemming from the sin of Adam, the first man.[24] Seneca, however, cannot afford to stress humankind's internal sinful condition over the external power of sin, because all Stoic moral transformation must be worked from within each individual (and there is no source of outside divine help, as with Paul).

In Romans 1, humans think they are wise, but they are not (1:22); they think they know God (1:21), but they do not. Paul claims that "what can be known about God is evident" to humans (1:19), and Dunn states that this reflects the common ancient belief that there was direct continuity between human rationality and the rationality of the cosmos.[25] This sounds much like Seneca's natural theology, that God is revealed through

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[24] If the text explicitly mentioned Adam here in chapter 1, his presence might introduce the danger of misreading Paul as holding Adam responsible for everyone's sin – and if so, guilt could be laid on Adam rather than on individuals.

[25] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 57.

the cosmos to humankind as a whole (*Ep. Mor.* 90.34). Paul argues that through the rational power of the mind (νοούμενα), there is a way that all human beings can know God (1:20).[26] Seneca would agree, but would also assert that this is only so because every person was born with a part of the divine in their souls, the rational part (*Ep. Mor.* 41.8). Paul simply believes that God planted rationality within every person, but not that every person was born with the divine already within. Both, however, agree that there is an invisible realm of reality that can only be known through the rational power of the mind.[27] Both Paul and Seneca refer to a previous time when the intellect of humankind was intact and functioned correctly. Paul's renewal of the mind in 12:1 seems to assume that rationality will return the intellect to what it once was, originally intact (1:20), before being rendered ineffective as a consequence of God's wrath (1:28).[28] Seneca likewise describes a time when everyone automatically did what was right by virtue of their reason without the need for reflection (*Ep. Mor.* 90.38).

So for Paul, as for Seneca, the result of humankind's turning from the knowledge that they knew to be correct leads to a perversion of nature.[29] Paul clearly says that the human mind is capable of attaining some knowledge of God prior to the revelation given in Christ. The perversion of this law of nature, however, led to the evil practices of 1:26-27, which are called παρὰ φύσιν, casting the argument in technical Stoic terms (for

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[26] The 2nd edition of BAGD states that νοέω refers to "rational reflection" in this verse. Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 540.

[27] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 58.

[28] Betz, 64.

[29] Against Paul having a natural theology are Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 39-41, Nygren, 106-107, and Barrett, *Commentary*, 35.

Seneca, *contra naturam*, *Ep. Mor.* 122.5). Paul further names these "against nature"

deeds in 1:28 as τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα, literally "the things that are not fitting/acceptable";

this phrase recalls the Stoic notion of two types of duty, the 'suitable' or 'fitting'

(καθῆκον, or for Seneca, *officia*, *Ep. Mor.* 94.33) and the 'right' (κατόρθωμα). Some

argue that because the Stoic technical term for 'the fitting' is actually παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον

that Paul has no undercurrent of Stoic thought here,[30] but others claim that the variance in

the phrases comes simply because Paul is not an expert in Stoicism.[31] The latter view is

more likely, because the use of τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα does give credence amidst the rest of the

Stoic undertones in chapter one that Paul here refers to the Stoic theory of natural law;

but his use of the phrase is not in keeping with its technical Stoic meaning, suggesting his

confusion with the intricacies of moral philosophy (παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον are "indifferent"

things to the Stoics, common things of life that have no ethical relevance because they are

outside of the realm of human rationality; this is not in keeping with Paul's argument that

the τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα are evil deeds that rational humans chose to engage in against God).

For both authors, humankind's corrupted faculty of reason led to a deteriorated

life (Rom 1:21-22, 28; *Ep. Mor.* 90.24) and false wisdom (Rom 1:22; *Ep. Mor.* 90.27-

31).[32] Seneca's assertion that "they even love their own ills . . . the height of unhappiness

is reached when men are not only attracted, but even pleased, by shameful things" (*Ep.

Mor.* 39.6) sounds much like Paul's "although they have known the just decree of God,

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[30] Rudolf Schnackenberg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 304.

[31] John W. Martens, "Romans 2.14-16: A Stoic Reading," *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994), 57.

[32] 1:22 is likely an allusion to Stoic thought; "claiming to be wise, they became fools" (the idea is implicit in the *Epistulae Morales* but the juxtaposition of terms is not used). The Stoics divided humankind into the wise and the foolish, and there was no intermediary state – there was simply the immediate jump from one state to the other.

that those who practice such things deserve death, they not only do the same but approve

of those who practice them" (Rom 1:32). Both authors are saying that humankind has

fallen victim to the passions, ἐπιθυμία (which Seneca would term the "emotions"). For

Paul, however, God has actually abandoned the sinner (vv. 24, 26, 28) to a number of

specific transgressions, solidifying a breach in the God-human relationship. Paul states

that the Gentiles placed the glory of the creator in the things created by him (1:25), into

images of birds, beasts, and reptiles (1:23); with a certain element of self-centeredness,

they understood God in their own image or even below.[33] This self-sufficient orientation

is branded as idolatry and Paul locates it at the heart of all moral wrong (1:21-25). The

god in the shape of mortal man in 1:23 recalls Seneca's description of the wise man, who

was considered to be equal to the gods; his soul is proper for the gods (*Ep. Mor.* 92.3)

and he is happy as a god (*Ep. Mor.* 73.14).[34] Like Seneca, the ancient world in general

considered the epitome of growth to be achieving likeness to God,[35] and Paul here might

be playing off of that notion as he describes the Gentiles who think they are wise and

who have subsequently created a 'god' idol in their own image. Stowers claims that Paul

here is explaining that God has punished the Gentiles by afflicting them with a loss of

self-mastery (due to the type of things they are handed over to);[36] certainly, given the

Stoic undertones in this chapter, it is possible that Paul is playing off of the philosophical

desire to strive for virtue. In any case, Seneca's view of the human condition accords

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[33] Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 209.

[34] Martens, 58.

[35] J. Ann Jervis, "Becoming Like God Through Christ: Discipleship in Romans," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. by Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 144.

[36] Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 94.

with Paul insofar that humankind's ability to pursue virtue has been compromised by minds that have become distorted by the baser instinct in the soul, and that their God-given reason has become irrational and unable to judge right from wrong.

The difference, however, between Seneca and Paul is that the moral problem for Paul is not rooted in an error of judgment but in disobedience (although later chapters will confirm that the solution lies in correcting an error of reason). The problem of idolatry is not in the mind, but in the will.[37] The Gentiles defiantly fail to acknowledge God as creator (1:19-21) and turn to idols (1:22, 23, 25) even though they know by nature the things they should do (1:26-27). The various offenses that God has given the Gentiles over to due to their disobedience (homosexuality in 1:26-27 and various antisocial behaviors in 1:28-31) shows that God has allowed the Gentiles to be enslaved to their own passions and inability to control the emotions, particularly desire. For Seneca, the average human being is also enslaved to the emotions, but this is because the emotions emerge from a state of faulty reasoning and judgmental error (*Ep. Mor.* 31.9-11; 74.21). Clearly, however, Paul is also asserting that the Gentiles lie in a state of faulty reasoning, becoming "futile in their thinking" as a result of not honoring God (1:21).

Giving credence to the theory that the whole of Romans is designed to lead to the paraenesis of 12:1—15:13 is that the situation of chapter 1 turns out to be a mirror image of chapter 12, the exact opposite of the life in Christ described in 12-13; chapter 12 is what the situation of chapter 1 *should* be like. In 1:28, Paul says that God has given over the unbelieving Gentiles to an understanding that is incapable of perceiving the will of God. Those who are transformed by the renewing of their minds (ἀνακαίνωσις τοῦ νοός,

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[37] Johnson, 33.

12:1) are restored from the depraved mind (ἀδόκιμος νοῦς) of 1:28 that placed them at the

mercy of the desires of their hearts (1:24). Only the spiritually renewed mind can have

the ability to test and approve the will of God that sets free from wrongful desires. In

12:1-2, Paul calls the readers to present their bodies rather than to degrade them (1:24),

and no longer to worship (λατρεύειν) the creature (1:25) but to offer rational worship

(λογικὴ λατρεία) to God. The worship of sacrifice that is in the spirit reverses the pattern

of idolatry. The ἀδόκιμος νοῦς leads to disobedience (1:29-31) and the ἀνακαίνωσις τοῦ

νοός leads to fruitful obedience (12:9-21) and the discernment of God's will (12:2); as

one reads the fruits of 12:9-21, they resemble a virtue list that is the exact opposite of the

vice list in 1:28-31.

In 2:1-11, Paul goes on to subvert those who judge anyone for the deeds

mentioned in 1:18-32.[38] A vital realization here is that Paul is speaking about all people;

this section begins to place everyone on the same playing field as equal in the sight of

God. This theme will recur again and again before 12:1, because there will be no chance

of living in community and living by faith if Paul cannot establish everyone as equal;

humility and equality are fundamental principles needed to create both community and

ethics. In 2:6, Paul makes the interesting assertion that God will repay everyone for their

deeds; those who patiently do good (2:7) will reap eternal life. At first glance, this may

seem to oppose Paul's gospel of salvation by grace, but instead this reinforces that for

Paul there is no grace without the good works that are spurred on as a response to the

mercies of God. Paul demands good deeds in 2:6-7, stemming from the obedience of

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[38] Stowers believes that 2:1 does not change to the second person as a turn from Jewish polemic against the Gentiles to Paul's address of the Jew directly; rather, the abruptness of the change is typical in diatribe and serves for 2:1ff. to heighten the indictment of all men in 1:18-32. Stanley K. Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans*, SBLDS 57 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 103-110.

faith (1:5, 17) and in chapters 12-13 he will spell out exactly what these are. The primary difference between 2:1-11 and chapter 12, however, is that empowerment has entered the picture in the latter;[39] Paul has not made such a statement as 2:6-7 without explaining in depth as his letter goes on.

In 2:12-3:20, which completes the first major section of the letter (1:18-3:20), Paul continues toward placing Jews and Gentiles on the same level of need, and he explains that being a person of God is a matter of the heart and not of external deeds (2:29);[40] yet even so, 2:13 continues the call for virtuous works put forward in 2:6-7 as Paul admonishes that the doers of the Law rather than the hearers will be justified. Tension arises in Paul's argument in 2:14-16 when, amidst the discussion about the Jew who boasts in the Law even while not being able to keep the Law, Paul presents the surprising assertion that there are in fact Gentiles who keep the Law instinctively and are therefore a law unto themselves. Commentators have long held that Paul is holding here the possibility of Gentiles keeping the law of nature (that these Gentiles do exist) similar to the manner in which Jews are given moral assistance from possession of the Mosaic Law.[41] These Gentiles would have their conscience as their natural guide (2:15) and in fact would be acquitted on God's day of judgment (2:16). As Martens asks, however, if the Mosaic Law cannot lead Jews to righteousness, how can nature (φύσις) lead the Gentiles to the same?[42] The argument does not exactly cohere with Paul's indictment of

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[39] Johnson, 177.

[40] The statement from 2:6 that God will repay everyone according to his or her deeds does not hinder this in light of the argument of the book as a whole; the person in Christ is still expected to choose to enslave himself or herself to the Spirit rather than to sin.

[41] Byrne, *Romans*, 93; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 98; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 309; Stuhlmacher, 43.

[42] Martens, 61.

the Gentiles in chapter one on the basis that they have not followed natural law. If Paul is still using Stoic terminology when he uses φύσις here, as he was in chapter 1, then Martens likely has the key to interpreting this passage. Seneca explained that the wise man is the only one who ever performed virtue and lived according to nature, yet there have been few if any men who have been able to actualize their virtue to this degree (*Ep. Mor.* 42.1); most (if not all) are simply somewhere on the road toward progress. Paul, whose argument contains Stoic overtones, knows that the existence of the wise man is theoretically possible but hardly likely; hence, he does not know any Gentiles who keep the law of nature.[43] No one, then, is a doer of God's Law.

In the midst of this argument, Paul continues to use cognitive language (i.e., talk of the human faculty of reason), namely that of συνειδήσεως in 2:15. He writes of the conscience in two other places in Romans (9:1, 13:5). For Paul, the conscience appears to be the place where individuals conduct self-examination and judge their actions,[44] and this is true also for Seneca (*Ep. Mor.* 43.5; 97.15-16). Thus, self-recognition takes place through the faculty of reflection by the conscience. Both Paul and Seneca assert that there are universal standards of right and wrong, and that a healthy conscience discerns these; although for Paul, the conscience is subject to God's will and commandment (13:5). This use of cognitive language adds to the talk of rationality in chapter one as Paul builds a case toward how to morally transform in Romans 6 and 12:1-2, the most important component of which will involve a new self-recognition for the believer.

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[43] Ibid., 66.

[44] Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, trans. by David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 195.

Romans 2:18 particularly looks forward to 12:2; here Paul addresses a Jew who holds false confidence that he knows God's will because he is instructed in the Law. By 12:2, the objective will still be to determine the will of God, but no longer will this be a matter of observing the statutes of the Law; it will be a process of discernment. This will be a life based on internal transformation rather than external rules, and there is even an emphasis on the *process* of discernment rather than on any specific decision made.[45]

An important juncture in the epistle arrives in 3:8: Paul reveals that some have slandered him and misinterpreted his gospel of grace by charging him with the sentiment, "let us do evil so that good may come." Though Paul will answer this charge throughout the letter, chapters 12-13 are the ultimate answer to the allegation as Paul explains that his gospel is one of obedience. By 3:21-26, Paul has removed all distinctions between persons, and explicitly states that justification is the grace of God, offered as a gift to all who have faith through redemption in Christ Jesus. Paul's description here of God's intervention in the human problem is very different from Seneca's view of divine involvement in individual lives. For Seneca, the divine lies within the human soul from birth, waiting to be actualized by willpower and desire to change; for Paul, the universal problem of sin is matched by a divine gift of righteousness, God's verdict of acquittal, on a similarly universal scope.[46] So, because all are offered God's gift, boasting is excluded (3:27) as is being justified by works of the Law (3:28), although the Law is *not* overthrown but is still upheld (3:31). Paul wants to ensure that even amidst his teaching on justification by faith, and his reaffirmation of the revelation of the righteousness of

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[45] Johnson, 180.

[46] Byrne, *Romans*, 125.

God throughout 3:21-4:25, that his readers still regard the Law as the basis for an ethical guideline, so that those with transformed minds will have a system of checks and balances as they discern the will of God. An interesting possible allusion to 12:1 comes in 3:25, which states that God put forward Christ Jesus as an expiation, or sacrifice of atonement, by his blood. Paul is presenting Christ's death as a sacrifice, and in 12:1 will use this sacrificial imagery again to begin his discussion of Christian obedience (perhaps similar to Christ's obedience as a sacrifice).

More references to boasting appear in the next few chapters (4:2; 5:2, 3, 11) as Paul begins speaking directly to the church in Romans 5—8. In chapter 4, Paul offers a specific example of justification by faith with the faith of Abraham, who was alive before Moses received the Law; hence, identification with God through faith predates the Law and includes all people. Paul's use of Abraham as an example who proves that all people can receive justification by faith corrects the dire situation that Adam's sin (discussed in 5:12) brought into the world and influenced all people to sin.

The content of chapter 5 transitions from the portrait of the human condition and God's intervention in chs. 1—4 and leads toward the more ethical material that begins in chapter 6; 5:1-11 declares the peace that the Christian now has with God after being justified by faith, and 5:12-21 makes clear that the obedience of Christ has undone the sin of Adam. Indeed, after God handed over sinful humanity to degrading behavior in chapter 1, 5:6-11 now reveals that God has reestablished the grounds of human relationship with himself. Human action apparently can do nothing to establish or to actualize relationship with God, but can only maintain this ascribed status, which Paul

discusses in chapters 6—8.[47] In 5:12-21, Paul returns briefly to the explanation of the human condition as he once again discusses the character of sin. Sin itself is an enslaving force in Romans and not an inborn personal defect (3:9; 7:7-25),[48] the first man Adam brought sin into the world and one of the consequences of his sin was death; thereafter, every person has sinned and consequently died (5:12).[49] Seneca also believes that humans are born without sin and only fall into a state of sin when vices infiltrate from without. This state of sin keeps human beings from mastering their emotions and achieving happiness, which is also true for Paul, but Paul adds the dimension that not only did sin itself engender the process of physical death, but that remaining in one's state of sin will lead to an eternal death without God (6:23).

Chapter 5 also contains various allusions to chs. 12-13 as 5:19 hints again at the charges of antinomianism against Paul when he declares that "by the one man's

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[47] William M. Longsworth, "Ethics in Paul: The Shape of Christian Life and a Method of Moral Reasoning," in *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*. (Dallas: The Society Of Christian Ethics, 1981), 34.

[48] Vincent P. Branick, "Apocalyptic Paul?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47 (1985), 667.

[49] Paul does not speculate in 5:12 on the origin of sin or on what initially caused Adam to sin because he discusses sin's origin in chapters 1 and 2 when asserting the universal sinfulness and guilt of all people: sin in some sense originates through the self-will of individuals. For this reason, 5:12 contains no doctrine of hereditary sin. If Paul were interested in establishing hereditary sin, he surely would have mentioned Adam in chapter 1. Instead, chapter 1 asserted individual responsibility for sin at the stage in his argument when he wanted to elucidate the plight of humankind without the gospel. Paul again attests to individual guilt in 5:12d ("because all sinned"; see end of this paragraph); yet, he also mentions in v. 12 that sin came through Adam. He is able now to mention Adam because he is past the point in his argument that requires an emphasis on individual guilt in order to establish individual need for justification. Wedderburn explains that Paul insists on Adam's guilt in affecting people because he wants to further insist on the universality of sin: all people are in its clutches, from the first of human history. A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Studia Biblica 1978, vol. III: Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors*, JSNT 3, ed. by E. A. Livingston (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 423. With regard to the translation of 5:12d as "because all sinned," Fitzmyer notes that virtually all commentators now, regardless of how they translate ἐφ' ᾧ, believe that its intent is to ascribe the fact of human death to the consequence of individual human sin. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Consecutive Meaning of ΕΦ Ω in Romans 5:12," *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993), 322.

obedience, many will be made righteous."[50] The fate of the one affects the fate of the

many and those in Christ are now going to suffer the same fate as he – their lives will be

sacrificed (12:1) but they nevertheless have the hope of resurrection (5:10). Paul's talk of

'hope' here in 5:1-11 also anticipates the eschatological hope in 13:11-14 that he will

there use as a motivation for right living.[51]

Romans 6:1—8:39

Chapters 6-8 are the real beginning of Paul's ethics in Romans as he now

addresses the issue of the human response to the righteousness of God. As Schlatter

notes, 6-8 tell us what to do to prepare our bodies for the coming sacrifice in 12:1.[52]

Chapter 6 even contains three imperatives of παρίστημι just as in 12:1 where Paul will

use this word to call for sacrifice. In 6:1, Paul begins by again mentioning the allegations

of antinomianism that are against him when he asks "should we continue in sin so that

grace may abound," reminding that his defense is not complete. Chapter 6 goes on to

direct the Christian not to enslave himself or herself to sin because Christ has already

died to sin, and the Christian has identified with this death through baptism;[53] the baptism

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[50] Calvin Roetzel, "Sacrifice in Romans 12-15," *Word & World* 6 no. 4 (Fall 1986): 413-14.

[51] J. Christiaan Beker, "The Promise of Paul's Apocalyptic for Our Times," in *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck*, ed. by Abraham Malherbe and Wayne Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 155.

[52] Adolf Schlatter, *Romans and the Righteousness of God*, trans. by Siegfried S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 228.

[53] Moxnes even believes that the renewal of the mind represents such a dramatic change, and motifs and vocabulary are so similar between chapters 12 and 6, that the sacrifice of 12:1 refers to baptism and that chapter 12 is actually relating the consequences of baptism. I think this may dismiss the element that 'spiritual worship' sounds like a daily activity of sacrifice. Halvor Moxnes, "The Quest for Honor and the Unity of the Community in Romans 12 and in the Orations of Dio Chrysostom," in *Paul and His Hellenistic Context*, ed. by Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 217.

of 6:1-4 begins the discussion of the Christian residing in the new aeon of 12:1-2.[54] In

chapter 7, the Christian will find out that the Law cannot help with this task, but chapter 8

will advise that when the Christian lives according to the Spirit, he or she receives life

and peace (8:6).

Death is the metaphor in chapter 6 that Paul uses as motivation for the

transformed life; in 6:2, he declares that we have died to sin, and derives this reflection

from the experience of baptism, which is "understood as a vicarious ritual experience of

the death . . . of Christ."[55] Somehow, Christians have experienced in baptism a liberation

from the bondage of sin (6:7).[56] What does this mean?[57] The answer will not be fully

clear until chapter 12. Verse 6:4b refers to the new aeon (ἡμεῖς ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς

περιπατήσωμεν) and makes it clear that with baptism the *conditions* have been created

that the believer may walk in newness of life, but this situation is by no means yet

guaranteed, or enacted ("if we have died with Christ, we *believe* that we *shall* also live

with him," 6:8). This tension, known as "already-not yet" in Paul's ethics, is manifest in

the very flow of the argument: 5:1-5 has triumphantly declared peace with God and

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[54] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 637.

[55] David E. Aune, "Human Nature and Ethics in Hellenistic Philosophical Traditions and Paul: Some Issues and Problems," in *Paul and His Hellenistic Context*, ed. by Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 311.

[56] Murphy-O'Connor states that because we are no longer enslaved to sin, yet sin still exists, this simply means that Christians now live in an environment that has an authentic orientation; the pressure to sin is not there because they are not with sinners. The believer is inspired and encouraged by surrounding examples in the community. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Becoming Human Together* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1977), 170. Whether or not Paul intended this assertion when he claimed that we have died to sin, reality and human experience have shown that temptation to sin may be lessened in a supportive environment, but certainly not eradicated.

[57] It cannot mean that Christians are immune from temptation, because "the man who believes himself immune from temptation knows that he is no longer responsible [for his actions]." Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 3.

justification for the one who has faith, yet 6:5 makes clear that even though the baptized

believer has shared in Christ's death, there is a process of salvation to be worked through

before he or she can participate in Christ's resurrection.[58] Human life in its entirety is

essentially a process of this salvation. The indicatives in 6:1-11 may suggest that sin will

no longer master the believer (6:14), but the use of imperatives in 6:12-23 to repeatedly

exhort believers not to hand themselves over to sin indicate that they are still held by the

passions described in 1:18-32 (cf. 6:17-19).[59]

Thankfully, although God handed them over to their desires/emotions (1:24), God

now hands them over to a type of teaching that frees them from this bondage (6:17).[60]

Paul's frequent use of cognitive language throughout chapters 6—8 to explain this

teaching provides the comparison between this section of Romans and Seneca's view of

moral transformation. We recall that Seneca's view of overcoming the passions/emotions

depends on an argument from cognition: the faculty of reason must be enacted so that the

seed of virtue in the soul can grow, which happens first through a new mind orientation.

The *proficiens* must have above all a willingness to pursue virtue; he or she must

mentally place himself or herself in a position where the realization commences that only

through tenacity and hard work can the seed of virtue prosper. Once the new mindset is

fixed, then there are various exercises to perform, and human examples to emulate, and

nurturing advice and friendship to be had from someone who is farther along the path.

All through this (lifelong) training period, the most important component is simply not to

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[58] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 470-471.

[59] Ibid., 471.

[60] Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 256.

give up (*Ep. Mor.* 71.30). Paul, particularly in chapter 6, uses cognitive language that calls for a reversal of the situation of chapter 1 ("they became futile in their thinking"; 1:21) and chapter 2 (those Jews who have all knowledge from the Law are unable to teach themselves; 2:17-21). Paul says that *knowing* (γινώσκοντες; 6:6) our old self was crucified . . . we *believe* (πιστεύομεν; 6:8) we will live with him, *knowing* (εἰδότες; 6:9) that Christ being raised from the dead will never again die . . . [so] *think/consider* (λογίζεσθε; 6:11) yourselves dead to sin but alive to God.

Paul asks believers, then, to *imagine* making a break from the fleshly life and living obedient to God; 6:11 in particular presents the cognitive element of baptism with its admonition to *think* of yourself as dead to sin and therefore come to see yourself as a "Christ person."[61] Christ is not a model in chapter 6 for ethical behavior (although he will be presented as such in chapter 15), but Christ's death is portrayed as a voluntary forfeiture of a whole way of life that was replaced with life on a new plane; his life was lifted up and constituted without the old liabilities.[62] Baptism identifies with his death and engenders self-identification, or how one sees oneself. Since new conditions have been brought about by Christ's death, this signals that God has brought a new creation into being (6:4; cf. 2 Cor 5:17), to be fully realized at the bodily resurrection (8:18-23); the Christian's self-identity must always be determined by this.[63] The Christian must decide to take part rationally in the new conditions that were made possible at baptism, knowing that the new self will not be fully attained until the eschatological resurrection

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[61] Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 229.

[62] Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 257.

[63] Eduard Lohse, *Theological Ethics of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991), 107.

(6:5). In this life, however, only the possibility of wholeness exists for the baptized

Christian, and he or she is required to leave behind the self-deception of the human

condition (1:21, 22, 28) and grasp the basic perspective that he or she belongs now to

Christ.[64] Both Paul and Seneca, then, require a new perception where moral

transformation is enacted by thinking of oneself differently. Seneca always takes

opportunity to express that both willingness and persistence are required components of

this new cognition; Paul may not explicitly say the same, but suggests his agreement by

reminding his readers over and over to think in a new way (cf. "on some points I have

written to you rather boldly by way of reminder"; 15:15).

Change is not only cognitive, though, because with their admonition to "present

your bodies as instruments of righteousness," Romans 6:19, 22 point forward to 12:1 and

reveal that there is a relationship between sacrifice and behavior. Moral responsibility is

realized in bodily existence and confirmed with deeds (6:12-13) as also in Seneca (*Ep.*

Mor. 90.3). Paul's use of the ethical imperative παρίστημι throughout chapter 6

(including twice in 6:13, and once in 6:16, 19) implies that the believer should

acknowledge God by submissive and obedient actions.[65] These imperatives that are

placed within the discussion of the new life do, however, show that ethical obedience is

only a possibility and must be enacted. And this enactment begins only through the

rational power of the mind; right deeds stem from right thinking.

Romans 7 begins with the analogy from marriage in 7:1-6, which is designed to

make the point again that the Christian is called to present himself or herself to God in

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[64] Dan O. Via, Jr., *Self-Deception and Wholeness in Paul and Matthew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 52.

[65] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 337.

obedience, and to participate in the new aeon of 12:1-2. Freedom from the old (former husband, the Law on monogamy) involves the responsibility to effect a new relationship, and to belong to another (Jesus Christ, 7:4ff.).[66] The rest of the chapter then presents a portrait of the unempowered person under the Law, and Paul goes on to reveal that empowerment for ethics comes from the Spirit rather than the Law (8:1-8). Subduing the passions can now be achieved through obedience without a Law-centered regimen of practices.[67] Once again, Paul represents with 7:22ff. ("the Law of my mind") the cognitive state of affairs parallel to 1:28 ("the depraved mind") that he will overturn in 12:1 and issue a call for believers to yield to Christ in thinking. The law, then, contributes to the self-deception that is the human condition. Stowers has shown that statements in 7:15 and 19 particularly echo the lack of self-mastery of the person under the Law:

> I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate (7:15).
> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do (7:19).

The speaker, as someone enslaved to sin and the passions who is unable to choose the good, is analogous to the ancient tradition of the person who has weakness of will due to a lack of self-mastery, or being able to achieve virtue.[68] Seneca's play *Medea* (based on the original by Euripides) parallels the situation of the person under the Law as Medea reflects that she has no control over her emotions; her will to do good has been overcome by anger, and then abruptly changes to sorrow and then joy:

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[66] Furnish, 105.

[67] Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 257.

[68] Ibid., 261.

> Why does thou delay now, O soul? Why hesitate, though thou canst do it? Now has my wrath died within me. I am sorry for my act, ashamed. What, wretched woman, have I done – wretched, say I? Though I repent, yet have I done it! Great joy steals on me against my will, and lo, it is increasing.[69]

For Seneca, this weakness of will that kept one from becoming wise stemmed from ignorance and false beliefs, which were a result of debased reason (*Ep. Mor.* 76.16). The emotions are engendered by false beliefs; once reason is perfected, the person is harmonized and has no strong emotions that cannot be controlled. In Romans 7, Paul is characterizing those who try to live under the Law by a set regimen of practices, and who are unable to achieve this. The Law does not give the necessary ingredient to release bondage from the passions. The difference between this person and the people of chapter one is that now, he or she has correct perception about right and wrong; the Law reveals that the passions are sin, but these passions are still a fundamental aspect of human character. What he or she does not have, however, is the correct perception about his or her new self-identity.

The problem of chapter 7 is one of inability to do correct action in the face of correct perception of what is right.[70] Since the believer cannot act, God acted through Christ. 7:7-25 is also more evidence that the believer lives in an already-not yet tension, partially in the new creation effected at baptism and partially in the realm of being enslaved to the passions.[71] This believer, although perceiving the good, does not yet have

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[69] Seneca, *Tragedies*, trans. by Frank J. Miller, LCL 62 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917), 310.

[70] Gerald L. Borchert, "Romans, Pastoral Counseling, and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Review and Expositor* 83 (Winter 1986), 86.

[71] Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 474.

all the tools necessary to think of himself or herself differently and to be able to affect change, but this means is given in chapter 8.

Chapter 8 is, for Paul, the solution to the problem of the human condition. The human reason that was thwarted in chapters 1 and 7 will be restored in 12:1; but first the depraved mind of 1:28 and the law of the mind in 7:23 must be set free from the law of sin (7:23) by the Spirit (8:2). Without the Spirit, a believer cannot live out and fulfill the just requirement of the Law (8:4), which still constitutes a grounding for ethics. As Byrne states, 8:1-13 again spells out the ethical possibility for the believer; there is now the opportunity to live according to the Spirit, but as 8:5-11 makes clear, the possibility also still exists to live according to the flesh.[72]

Paul presents the solution to the human inability to live free from sin as the gift of the Spirit, which came about by God's action in Christ. The Spirit is, in fact, a force that counters the cosmic force of sin and enables human beings to live in accordance with the requirements of the Law (8:9-11).[73] Seneca believes that humans come to a true understanding of themselves by means of the 'spirit,' or the divine part of the soul. He even characterizes this spirit as our 'guardian' who marks our good and bad deeds (*Ep. Mor.* 41.1), much in the same language as Paul (8:5). Once the *proficiens* actualizes this divinity, in which lies the seed of virtue, he or she is set upon a path toward moral transformation and wisdom. Paul also defines the Spirit as bringing self-understanding; people learn about themselves through divine enlightenment.[74] The difference in Paul's

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[72] Byrne, *Romans*, 238.

[73] Brendan Byrne, "Interpreting Romans Theologically in a Post-'New Perspective' Perspective," *Harvard Theological Review* 94 no.3 (Jl 2001), 233.

[74] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 14.

and Seneca's ideas of 'spirit' and self-understanding, however, are distinct: Seneca believes that humans can understand the way to happiness through their internal divine spirit, but the Spirit for Paul is an external power that can continually keep the Christian grounded in his or her new identity.

Using more cognitive language in chapter 8, Paul says that those who live according to the flesh *set their minds* (φρονοῦσιν; 8:5) on concerns of the flesh, and those who live according to the Spirit *set their minds* (φρονοῦσιν; 8:5) on concerns of the Spirit; for to *set the mind* (τὸ φρόνημα; 8:6) on the flesh is death, but to *set the mind* (τὸ φρόνημα; 8:6) on the Spirit is life and peace. Again, change is not an automatic transformation, but cognition appears to actualize behavior. The Spirit will set the Christian free (8:3), but only after the Christian has "set the mind" on doing what is right, i.e., the things of the Spirit. Cognition somehow allows the believer to identify with the Spirit of Christ. So, 8:5-6 appeals to the Christian to *think* of himself or herself in the Spirit; people with that self-understanding have been removed from the constant risk of sin. This is still only a conditional situation, however, because 8:9 reveals that "you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, *if* the Spirit of God dwells in you." The εἴπερ is conditional here because Paul proceeds in the next verse with another conditional εἰ ("but if Christ is in you . . . the Spirit is life," 8:10).[75] Chapter 8 may describe the nature of the believer's ascribed status, but then exhorts him or her to maintain it. The goal of the Christian is a process (8:11) of making alive aspects that were dead to sin, and the gift of the Spirit is the beginning of this process. In the Spirit, the Christian is still responsible

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[75] Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 251. Also Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 428; Johnson, 245; Stuhlmacher, 116.

for the just requirement of the Law (8:4), but the obedience and service required by the Spirit are not so much a motivation to keep the Law but an orientation, a guiding principle for behavior (which will be confirmed in chapter 12).[76] The Christian does not have to learn this new orientation under his or her own power, however, as the *proficiens* does, because the believer can now rely on the power of the Spirit that resides within.

Romans 9:1—11:36

Chapters 9-11 begin to speak to those who are not in the church and discuss ethnic Israel's place in God's redemption because she did not accept the justification outlined in chapters 1-8. Here, Paul takes one more opportunity, this time stated directly to Gentiles, that there are no special privileges and no grounds for boasting, lest the Gentiles glory because they have accepted God in Christ while Israel has not (11:18-25). Because Gentile believers are now enjoying the former status that Israel enjoyed as God's people, they need to be kept from the boasting and arrogance that Paul sees as characteristic of sin, and that hinders community from forming.

At several points throughout Romans, Paul has revealed that he is stung by the charge that his gospel of grace undermines moral behavior. His statements of the allegations against his doctrine in 3:8 and 6:1 demonstrate that at more than one point in the letter, Paul is defending his teachings. In many ways, chapters 6-8 are a sustained rebuttal to the charges against Paul, as he describes the process from baptism, to the necessity of choosing between sin and righteousness, to the inability of doing this under the Law, to the empowerment for ethics by the Spirit (and, of course, Paul had to first reveal what righteousness *is* in chapters 1-5 to be able to even start his argument of

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[76] Schrage, 178.

chapter 6). Yet, although the Law cannot help a believer make the choice to live correctly, its requirements still are in effect as an ethical guideline (3:31, 8:4). Then, directly before chapter 12, Paul juxtaposes disobedience with grace in 11:30-32, preparing the reader for the powerful statement in 12:1: "for God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all . . . I appeal to you, therefore, brothers [and sisters], by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (11:32; 12:1).

Therefore, the "all" of 11:32 represents what Paul has been advocating since 2:1, that there is no longer any respect of persons nor any special privileges for anyone; indeed, the "respect of persons" sentiment no longer only means the Jewish ethnic group, but all people. All are then called to leave their imprisonment of disobedience by responding to the mercies of God and in essence becoming a new Israel. They are to present their whole selves, every aspect of their lives, as an offering to God in a daily experience of worship. They are to do this by faith, the faith of obedience from 1:5 and 17; and they not only become the victim of sacrifice as did Christ (3:25, 6:3), but also the patron of the sacrifice who enjoys the benefits of connection with God. Creating this intimate bond with God then allows them to discern his will about what things are good, acceptable, and perfect.

<div align="center">Romans 12:1—15:13</div>

Paul now "grounds his moral imperative in the indicative of salvation" by admonishing the Romans to live ethical lives because God has acted on their behalf

through his saving justice.[77] The apostle claims in 12:1 that the people of God must now

present their own bodies as living sacrifices in lieu of the previous sacrificial system.

Judaism asserts the concept of human moral actions being comparable to or a substitute

for the animal and produce sacrifices in the temple, which paved the way for Paul's

teaching.[78] Paul, however, preached his gospel message while the daily offerings

continued unabated in the Temple as the central act of worship among the Jews – in fact,

we have no reason to believe that Paul repudiated these offerings.[79] The ancients who

first heard this text knew that the sacrifice functions to place the patron in contact with

the world beyond; a nexus forms between two worlds and the human has union with the

divine.[80] Paul calls upon and reappropriates these images, urging the church to not only

be the patron involved in sacrifice, but also to be the victim; the Christian now will reach

union with God by surrendering his or her life as a gift upon the altar of daily living.[81]

The Christian's central act of worship, the living sacrifice, is now an inner attitude of

surrender from which external actions will stem. Seneca's view of sacrifice as worship

has some similarity to Paul's view; according to the philosopher, humankind has no need

of prayer or worship because God dwells in human hearts (*Ep. Mor.* 41.1), in the rational

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[77] Frank Matera, *New Testament Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996), 192. The term 'indicative' refers to the believer's new life as a work of God, whereas 'imperative' refers to Paul's references to the Christian life as one that needs to be continually manifested and worked out in an ethical fashion. Michael Parsons, "Being Precedes Act: Indicative and Imperative in Paul's Writing," in *Understanding Paul's Ethics*, ed. by Brian S. Rosner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 217.

[78] Johnson, 178.

[79] Roetzel, 415.

[80] For discussion of this concept, read Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

[81] Surrendering your "bodies" is the same thing as surrendering the whole self and entire person. Cranfield, 598-599 and D. Edmond Hiebert, "Presentation and Transformation: An Exposition of Romans 12:1-2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 (July-Sep 1994), 309-324.

part of the soul, and therefore has no need of "slaughtering fattened bulls, or in hanging up offerings of gold or silver, or in pouring coins into a temple treasury" (*Ep. Mor.* 115.5). Worship of God consists of rationally knowing and trying to imitate divine virtue (*Ep. Mor.* 115.5). The difference, of course, is that the Christian worships the supreme being and creator of the universe, while the *proficiens* pays homage to his or her internal 'god' by enacting the divine seed of reason in the soul.

The basis for the Christian's sacrifice in chapter 12 is none other than "the mercies of God" (12:1a). Most commentators regard these 'mercies' to refer either to the epistle as a whole,[82] or particularly to chapters 9—11.[83] Barrett is likely on the right track when he declares of 12:1a, "Because God is what he is, and has done what he has done, certain things follow; or rather ought to follow"; the Christian's sacrifice is motivated by the universal grace of God that has overturned the universal sinfulness of humankind.[84] Paul also regards the mercies of 12:1 to be the same mercies of the God of the Jews (as in 2 Samuel 24:14 and I Chron 21:13, Isa 63:15, Hos 2:19, etc.) and so while Paul is calling for the church to remember the merciful actions of God, the merciful actions that God performed for his people Israel lie in the shadows.[85] Now, however, the righteous and merciful action of God in Christ has laid the foundation for the people of God to lay down their lives as both the victims and the beneficiaries in the sacrifice of

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[82] Cranfield, 596; Furnish, 102; Horace E. Stoessel, "Notes on Rom 12:1-2: The Renewal of the Mind and Internalizing the Truth," *Interpretation* 17 no.2 (1963), 162.

[83] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 639. Some assert that the 'mercies' only refer to 11:30-32; Byrne, *Romans*, 362; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 709.

[84] C. K. Barrett, *Reading Through Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 65.

[85] The plural form 'mercies' suggests these Hebrew overtones; οἰκτιρμοί is often found in the LXX. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 639.

daily worship. Just as God called the Israelites in Exodus 19:3-6 (cf. Deut 10:14-22) to be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation as response to his actions in releasing them from Egypt, Paul in much the same way calls the church to present herself as a sacrifice in response to the mercies of God; only then will the church come together as the new Israel.

The presentation of the believer's body as a living sacrifice is characterized as τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν. While many commentators do translate this phrase as "your spiritual worship,"[86] a more likely translation along the lines of Paul's Stoic overtones throughout Romans is either "your logical/rational worship," or possibly, "your logical/rational service." That the first term, λογικήν, should be read as 'logical' or 'rational' is all but guaranteed by the cognitive language used by Paul throughout the epistle, and this is further confirmed by the use of νοὺς in 12:2.[87] The sacrifice that creates transformation in the believer is only possible τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός (12:2), because the moral life requires a new, rational, way of thinking that derives from a renewed mind. Paul is once again using logical categories of understanding, and his main concern is where the believer envisions himself or herself belonging.[88] Because Paul speaks of turning the mind in a direction toward a logos-type worship, similar to Seneca's descriptions of worship as a rational faculty, this gives credence to the notion that Paul is

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[86] Johnson, 178; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 328.

[87] Further evidence that λογικήν refers to rational (rather than spiritual) worship derives from Philo, where the word is often used as an adjective qualifying πνεῦμα. In Philo's context, then, the word must translate as 'rational.' Evans suggests that unless there is a strong reason to the contrary, this lone use of λογικήν by Paul should be translated along the lines of Philo's philosophy. C. Evans, "Romans 12:1-2; The True Worship," in *Dimensions de la Vie Chrétienne*, ed. by C. K. Barrett (Rome, 1979), 19; as quoted in Parsons, 237.

[88] Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 262.

still speaking from Stoic overtones. Indeed, Paul has used the intellectual aspect of the transformed life (rather than talk of the Spirit) to provide transition into his section on right conduct (12:3—15:13)[89] Obviously, the rational power of the mind must be the human ingredient used to actualize the work of the Spirit in a Christian's life; rather than the famous phrase "be what you already are" that is so often used to describe Paul's ethics, a better understanding of Paul's moral transformation in Romans would be to "see what you already are."[90]

The second term in the phrase λογικὴν λατρείαν could either translate as 'service' and refer back to the admonition to 'present' your bodies, emphasizing the action involved in yielding the whole self to God's service, or translate as 'worship,' referring back to the 'sacrifice' and the notion that the new type of sacrifice is an internal surrender of the mind. Whether worship or service, this λατρείαν is offered by those who are turning the νοῦς in the direction of a rationally-based action. Not only does the believer have a new understanding of his or her situation and to whom he or she belongs, but 'renewal' apparently comprises the faculties of perception, understanding, judging, and determining. The renewed mind is necessary so that the Christian can discern God's will (12:2), which will be spelled out as an action in community in 12:3—15:13. Therefore, as an individual, the believer's rational reflection will determine his or her new self-identity; and in community, rational reflection will awaken the ability for his or

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[89] Moxnes, 217.

[90] An understanding such as this is often used in psychology and clinical therapy. For example, if a person has endured a loveless or perhaps an abused childhood, he or she may continue to see himself or herself as unlovable or as a victim long into adulthood, even in the presence of a successful career and family life. Such a person must be encouraged to see that he or she is a different person now with a new set of circumstances, and that the old feelings do not coincide with the facts of his or her present life situation. This is not to say in any way that Paul had a twenty-first century mindset or knew of the psychology of today, but it simply shows that there are no new solutions under the sun.

her reason to weigh critically and to examine. The abruptness of Paul's talk about the mind's transformation recalls Seneca's teaching about the sudden transformation of the *proficiens* into the wise man (*Ep. Mor.* 6.1-2; 94.48). The difference in their beliefs, of course, is that for Seneca, this transformation is the end of the long journey toward virtue, while Paul presents the mind's metamorphosis as the beginning of the person's path toward ultimate salvation (8:23). The initial presentation of the Christian, however sudden, must be renewed on a regular basis; the present imperative of both συσχηματίζεσθε ("be conformed") and μεταμορφοῦσθε ("be transformed") suggests that the process of change requires a commitment of obedience and an ongoing responsibility to create moral transformation.[91] Believers must offer themselves daily in a whole person commitment.

The transformation of the self that Paul has discussed cognitively is now made practical in 12:3—13:7 with one's reorientation made manifest in a change from self-centeredness toward concern for others. Since all are instilled with humility rather than the arrogance of sin, conditions are created whereby community can form (12:3). A community of like-minded people develops; once the bounds for human boasting are gone, all are able to appreciate the talents and achievements of others, recognizing them as gifts from God that were given to help the community grow.[92] Paul reappropriates the

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[91] David Peterson, "Worship and Ethics in Romans 12," *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.2 (1993), 282.

[92] Longsworth, 40.

body imagery of both the first man, Adam,[93] and of the Greek polis[94] by depicting the church as the body of Christ; a single body with many constituent parts that do not all have the same function. Christ is present in the world in a bodily manner through the people of God, who are now the church instead of Israel. The church becomes the earthly sphere of power for the exalted Christ,[95] and Paul calls her to work together in unity. The objective of this new community is to be able to discern the will of God (12:2) as it becomes clear that in 12:1-2 Paul was not only speaking to individuals but also to this body of Christ. This body must be motivated by constant inward renewal (12:2) in order to be able to discern God's will, must be made up of people who consider themselves equal to one another (12:3-5), and must execute a variety of functions in its unity, as given in 12:6-21.

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[93] Legend about Adam, the first man created by Yahweh, held a primary place in Jewish oral and written tradition. Paul, as a Pharisee and as a possible student of Gamaliel in Jerusalem, was certainly familiar with the Adamic themes woven throughout Jewish literature, one of which was the fanciful and often bizarre speculation about Adam's body. Later Rabbinic literature (that presumably recorded longstanding oral tradition) depicted Adam as physically containing the whole world in a most literal way; God created Adam using soil from each country of the earth: "Adam's trunk came from Babylon, his head from Eretz Israel, his limbs from other lands, and his private parts according to R. Aha from Akra di Agma" (*Pirke de Rabbi Eliezar*, XI.38a-b). The reason for such legend was to relate that all people are one in Adam: "Therefore but a single man was created in the world to teach that if any man has caused a single soul to perish, Scripture imputes it to him as though he had caused a whole world to perish (Mishnah *Sanhedrin* IV.5, Danby)." So, in Jewish thought, the people of God, and often all people, came forth from the one man Adam, and Adam's body is regarded to be as large as all humanity. In Romans, Paul has scattered a number of indirect references about Adam (including allusions to Genesis in 1:18-32, the glory of God in 3:23, and perhaps the "I" in chapter 7), the most prominent being the Adam-Christ typology emerging in 5:12-21. Since Paul perceives Christ as the new Adam in 5:12-21, it seems natural that he as a Jew would perceive the new people of God as represented before God in Jesus in much the same way that ethnic Israel was in Adam. The church is now the 'Israel of God' (Gal 6:16), the new Israel, and since the people of God are not limited anymore to just ethnic Israel, Christ's body is large enough to contain the world in the same way as was Adam's.

[94] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 646, notes that the phrase "one body" also likely refers to the body politic in the same fashion that it does in I Cor 12:12-31.

[95] Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 336.

Seneca also likens humankind to a great body that possesses all things in common as a motivation for treating others with kindness (*Ep. Mor.* 95.53). Philosophy teaches all humans how to love each other and how to live in community (*Ep. Mor.* 90.3). For Paul, a number of character traits and good works are representative of the community (12:9-21; foreseen in 5:1,23; 6:4-19; 8:31-39), including admonitions to live at peace with those who are not a part of the community (12:14, 17-21; 13:1-7). Seneca's values in this regard are very similar, as he continually encourages humanitarian actions and reminds that there is an obligation to live for others rather than for ourselves (*Ep. Mor.* 48.2). The goal of both the philosopher and the apostle is to create a community of people who live together in peace while exemplifying the values of love. Paul, however, emphasizes the community much more than does Seneca, because he is interested in presenting Christ to the world in a bodily manner; the love of Christ is embodied in the obedience of Christians who perform the actions of 12:3—13:7.[96] Seneca's ethics and his pursuit of happiness are much more individually oriented, and have the by-product of forming community and attending to the needs of others; but for Paul, ethics are more about first adapting to the needs of others, and the by-product is that Christians will find their happiness in the midst of that.

The Stoic overtones in Romans also suggest that in 12:3—15:13 Paul is playing off of another philosophical idea from the ancient world, that of the honor-shame culture. We recall that Seneca discusses honor and shame with regard to the bestowal and receiving of gifts, and he advocates that in the very midst of disgrace, the dishonored person should turn from the conventions of society and seek first the benefit of honor for his or her neighbor (*Ep. Mor.* 81.17-21). Paul, who lived in the same first-century

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[96] Stuhlmacher, 191

culture as Seneca and knew the importance of honor as gaining respect for an individual

or family, also speaks in terms of yielding honor to others. This is most evident in his

admonition of 12:16 to "associate with the lowly"; ταπεινός is the word for someone who

lacks honor.[97] Seneca may say that one should not lament the loss of honor for the sake

of others, but Paul goes even a step beyond this by actively encouraging the church to

lose her honor in order to remove individual grounds for boasting (15:1-3). The

obligation of reciprocity that existed in the act of gift giving now means for Paul that the

body of Christ is obligated to respond to the mercies of God that were outlined in

chapters 1—11; this is manifested by the Christian's obligation to now seek the honor of

all people by the sheer fact that Christ died for all.[98] Honor is given to God by bestowing

honor on the loved ones of God.

Both Seneca and Paul realize that even while the heart is being transformed, there

are rules and precepts that must be kept at the forefront of the community by continual

reminder. Although empowered by the Spirit through a daily surrender of the innate

disobedience that is the human condition, Paul's community still relies on the Law and its

instruction as the basis for an ethical guideline to halt any slide into confusion about what

constitutes right living (13:8-10; and foreseen in 3:31; 8:4). Indeed, when making

decisions, the first place the community should turn its new rational reflection is toward

the traditional ethical instruction of the Law.[99] For Seneca, even though the seed of

virtue is planted within, virtue's growth must be guided by universal precepts of right and

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[97] Taylor, 15.

[98] Ibid., 17.

[99] Eduard Lohse, "The Church in Everyday Life: Considerations of the Theological Basis of Ethics in the New Testament," in *Understanding Paul's Ethics*, ed. by Brian S. Rosner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 260.

wrong (*Ep. Mor.* 94.33-34; 95.4). The ethical road for the Christian, however, is not quite as stringent as for the *proficiens*. Seneca appears to advocate that a strict adherence to the precepts is necessary, but for Paul, the Spirit leads the Christian with the Law as only a guiding principle; in some matters, the decision of one believer can be different than another, and they both stand or fall before the Lord (14:4).[100]

Paul concludes chapter 13 with a final motivation for moral transformation, as the community keeps at the forefront of her mind the glorious future that awaits her at the resurrection (5:10; 8:18-23; 13:11-14) and remembers that the charge to "live honorably" will gain the benefits that will last for eternity. Seneca has nothing like this in his ethics; the most he can promise his readers is that if they use their brief time in this life wisely, they will enjoy more years of virtuous characters and communities before their death.

In the final part of Paul's exhortation, he finally leaves generalities behind and addresses the specific situation in the Roman church, the circumstance of the 'weak' (those who only eat vegetables and observe certain days) and the 'strong' (those who eat anything and view all days the same). The underlying issue involves how the community can regulate itself when its members are at variance over issues that are not essential to faith and salvation. Paul gives counsel based on the moral teaching throughout the epistle and encourages both parties not to despise or to judge each other (14:1-12), the strong not to become a stumbling block to the weak (14:13-23) or to please themselves (15:1-6), and for both parties to welcome each other as Christ welcomed them (15:7-13).[101] One final difference between Paul and Seneca surfaces in these final chapters

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[100] Willi Marxsen, *New Testament Foundations for Christian Ethics*, trans. by O. C. Dean, Jr. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 218.

[101] Matera, 203.

regarding imitation as a tool for transformation. Seneca believes that no one can change without positive examples of virtue as a guide, and a teacher would exemplify the precepts that he taught while adapting to the needs of his particular trainees (*Ep. Mor.* 6.5ff.). For Paul, however, imitating a virtuous life may be instigated by human examples, but this is ultimately an imitation of Christ (15:1-3). After suffering abuse and misunderstanding to the point that they ended his own life, Christ's actions are a model for the Christian who is called to control his or her conduct in accordance with what is best for others. Perhaps Christ's example also extends to the believer not only living out his actions, but also internalizing his mindset of submission; Christians must rationally view themselves as being 'in Christ' before they are able to submit their bodies as a daily sacrifice for God. Paul ends the paraenetic section of Romans with a brief prayer wish where he asks that God grant them to live in harmony so that they may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (15:5). The ultimate purpose, then, of living the moral life is to give praise to God; and the ultimate expression of this praise comes when the community can extol God with one harmonious voice.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Upon examining Paul's ethical exhortation in Romans alongside Seneca's moral teaching in the *Epistulae Morales*, some conclusions can be drawn concerning Paul's framework of the internal process that leads toward ethical living. After tracing the flow of Paul's argument in the Epistle to the Romans, and asserting that the very heart of the letter is rooted in ethical admonition, this study can now present its findings concerning both the similarities and the distinctives of moral transformation in Romans and in the *Epistulae Morales*. To organize the inferences made from this comparison, deductions will be organized within the same five categories used to summarize the ethical teaching of Seneca: 1) The conditions before change, or anthropology; 2) The impetus for change, or conditions necessary for change to occur; 3) The moment of change; 4) The theoretical basis for change, or the rationale for why people should change; and 5) The process of change and the results of this process.

Conditions Prior to Change: Anthropology

Paul's understanding of the human condition shares some commonalities with Seneca. Both authors agree that there is a 'natural law,' or a way that humankind can use rational power to know an invisible divine reality. Seneca believes that people have failed to observe this natural law by not actualizing the divine seed of virtue in their souls

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that can lead to happiness and wisdom. Paul, on the other hand, asserts that mankind disobeyed the natural law by not giving glory or thanks to God, the supreme being and creator of the universe. Both men assert that disobedience to the natural law led to self-deception and faulty reasoning that keeps people from actualizing wise decisions and good behavior. For Paul, this in turn caused God to hand them over to dishonorable passions and antisocial behavior; for Seneca, enslavement to the passions is the inevitable consequence of the corrupted faculty of reason. For these reasons, both Paul and Seneca say that the human condition is that mankind lives in a fallen state; everyone will fall under the cosmic force of sin/vice, and consequently people's minds become distorted by the sinful nature so that they cannot always know and do what is right. Thus, by nature, people are slaves to sin. Although universal precepts of right and wrong do exist, no one performs the good (even when God's Law has made right and wrong clearly evident). There is a need on the part of all humans for harmonization, as opposed to self-deception, so that right reason can bring everyone to right actions.

The Impetus for Change: Conditions Necessary for Change to Occur

For Seneca's "seed of virtue" in the soul to be activated, the human being must dig within his or her own resources and find the willingness and the resolve to work for change. He or she must also keep at the forefront the advice and example of those who are farther along the path toward wisdom. Paul accepts these elements as conditions that are necessary for change, but he adds some vital ingredients to the mix. The person who desires change must first realize that all humans are on the same level of need, and are sufferers of the same human condition. Consequently, he or she must realize that all

people are in need of the action that God enacted through Christ, which is the basis for a transformed community. God's work in Christ is the component that is vastly different from anything of Seneca's; by the grace of God, justification has been offered to all people through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God has, in fact, reestablished the grounds of human relationship with himself by bringing a new creation into being, evident by the new conditions that were brought about with Christ's death. Humans must now accept these new conditions and realize that they have an obligation to respond to the mercies of God. Paul also believes, along with Seneca, in the need for continual exhortation as a condition necessary for change. The fact that Paul exhorts repeatedly throughout Romans assumes that he knows Christians are tempted repeatedly; paraenesis is never a unique event.[1]

The Moment of Change

Both Paul and Seneca believe in a decisive moment when change occurs once and for all. Seneca, however, believes that this moment of change (i.e. becoming a virtuous person) is the climax of a process; and for Paul, the moment of decisive change comes at the beginning of the process of salvation at the moment of baptism and the receiving of the Spirit. For Seneca, a person becomes virtuous when rational thinking is restored; no one, though, ever fully achieves this, and so the *proficiens* is always on the path to a new self-identity. For Paul, the baptized Christian already has a new self-identity, but he or she is still continually on the path toward ethical living.

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[1] Schrage, 170.

<u>The Theoretical Basis for Change: The Rationale for Why People Should Change</u>

Seneca and Paul each share a desire for a virtuous community as a primary motivation for moral transformation, though Seneca stresses the development of the individual while Paul places greater emphasis on the formation of the church. While living by Seneca's virtue means treating others with kindness and oftentimes placing their needs above your own, which in turn creates community, Paul's transformed life involves a community that not only does the same, but also presents themselves to the world as the living embodiment of God's grace. Both men realize that a renewed mind is essential to forming unity by cultivating the rational ability to follow universal precepts of right and wrong, but Paul also advocates the church's use of her new rational reflection to work together in discerning the will of God in all circumstances.

Seneca laments often that time is short in this life and the end is near and so people must concentrate on what is important, building self for the sake of community; in a similar manner, Paul uses eschatology as the basis for doing what is important now, building self for the sake of community. Paul, however, promises a future of bodily resurrection while Seneca vaguely advocates that souls of the dead either rejoin the universe in some manner, or cease to exist. In building a community, Seneca recognizes that the foundation is based upon the Greco-Roman concept of honor and shame, yet he says that one should not lament the loss of honor for the sake of others. Paul seems to speak in terms of honor and shame, yet he goes a step beyond Seneca by encouraging church members to actively seek to lose honor in order to remove their grounds for boasting.

The Process of Change and the Results of This Process

Both Paul and Seneca advocate that change occurs only when underlined by an active inner human discipline; they both also believe that humans who are further along than the growing person can help them change. The difference lies in their emphases: Seneca has a primary role for the psychagogue, even as acknowledging that the growing person must recognize the moral principles of the divine, whereas Paul has the divine Holy Spirit play the primary role even as the grower must still have human examples of psychagogic help. Paul also differs from Seneca in that the foundation of a whole-person commitment is worship of God; imitation, while instigated by human examples, is ultimately an imitation of Christ.

Both men teach as the very heart of their ethical admonition that reason must be restored and/or activated in order to procure change. To restore the faulty of reason, Seneca's *proficiens* can utilize various mental exercises to change thinking and awaken the seed of virtue through rationality. Paul, however, binds the believer's very self-identity with the restoration of reason. The baptized Christian must imagine and must think of himself or herself as part of the new aeon instigated at Christ's death. In Romans, cognition makes possible a new self-image which in turn actualizes behavior. Paul does not detail any disciplines that would be helpful for this sort of task, but the ongoing nature of the believer's presentation of the sacrifice of his or her life means that there is continual work involved. A constant inner attitude of surrender and acceptance of his or her new situation in Christ is necessary. The continual nature of Paul's moral transformation also means that the ethical life is only presented as a possibility for the Christian; the definitive moment of change occurs at the beginning of the process with

baptism and the procurement of the Spirit, and the ultimate goal is not attainable until after death. Therefore, the believer must keep working diligently at thinking, and consequently acting, differently all through this life.

The results of these underlying principles for transformation are remarkably similar for both Paul and Seneca: the ongoing fruit of change within individuals is an internal peace that produces actions of humility, kindness, and mercy that go on to shape virtuous/Christlike communities. Paul's results are a bit more complex, as the individual uses a renewed rational reflection to continually imagine his or her new identity even while the church uses communal rationality to determine God's will in every moral situation. Ultimately, though, God is honored when his people are morally transformed and living out the just requirements of his Law; therefore, the primary result of Paul's ethics is to praise the God who has intervened in the hopeless human condition with a workable solution.

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