

Stoicism and christianity



Knowledge can be attained through reason, morals of right verses wrong, and controls of divine powers: these traits, for which Stoic philosophies and Christians see virtuous spirits traveling the earth searching for answers of certainty through truth from fallacy. In Seneca's " Letters from a Stoic" and " The Gospel to Mark and The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians allows for contextualization and interpretation: further more, today we can analyze their beliefs by comparing and contrasting the two texts over the natural order of nature and equality amongst men.

They both have similarities and dissimilarities of inspired passions from inferior emotions; the same goes for spiritual freedoms in the external world. For centuries some Christian priests were attracted to the teachings of Stoicism; understandably for most, the term of logos or the use of rational thinking could draw spiritual righteousness in the Christian faith.

The Stoic philosophy manufactured parts of the development of Christianity can be read through the passionate writings of Mark and Paul. A distinctive characteristic of Stoicism is all people are manifestations of one universal spirit and should live in brotherly love and readily help one another. Before the rise of Christianity, Stoicism advocated brotherhood of humanity and the natural equality amongst all human beings. In the Bible's " The Gospel to Mark", Jesus is represented as a man of good integrity, and truly lived a life by loving thy neighbor. In Mark, a story of a blind man calling out for " Jesus Son of David have mercy on me" and Jesus asked " What do you want Me to do for you", the blind man said " Rabboni, I want to regain my sight." (Mark 10: 51).

Jesus said to the blind man “ Go your faith has made you well” and immediately the blind man regained his sight (Mark 10: 52). Stoic pagan philosopher would respect the Christian faith and the way Mark wrote about Jesus brotherly love for other human beings. In the Gospels, Jesus was Mark’s way of representation of the Stoic practice of moral brotherhood between human beings, and primarily the citizens’ responsibility for his/her own commonwealth.

But one would say Stoic philosophers would debate the role of Jesus through the eyes of Mark, hence Stoics believe in the natural order of things and all men should live equally. Stoics would question the divinity of Jesus and his control of spiritual power.

Stoics would want answers from the writings of Mark, and question how could Christians put of they’re faith into one man (in this case Jesus) and how could a normal man of nature be able have powers to heal the sick, turn wine into water, and come back from the dead? Even though Stoics would have some problems with stories of Mark, they would respect the fact that Jesus never flaunted his powers, and never did in spite of others or in revenge. For the most part Stoicism and Christianity alike, have similar and dissimilar passions of inferior emotions. Paul had a passion to correct the flawed views of the Corinthian church.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, urging uniformity of the Christian faith. In the Corinth communities, Stoic pagan philosophies were often put into practice, but after Paul explored the conflicts within the church he saw divisions in the Christian doctrine. Paul wrote, “ that ye all speak the same

thing and that there be no divisions among you,” (Paul, 1: 10), this is defiantly a similarity of the Stoic belief that all men are equal. In Paul’s letters he discusses the immorality in Corinthians’ by a divisions of faith creating hostility among brothers causing immoral brotherhood, and they resolved personal disputes wrongfully.

Stoics find an essential virtue of righteousness in life is his respect for the brother next to him, a person most allow forgiveness for immorality and have no pre-existing judgments among brothers. However, Stoics might feel indifferent about some of the judgments made by Paul and his letters. Paul writes “ not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater...”(5: 11) it continues with “ those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.”(Corinthians, 5: 13). T

his belief of judging an immoral man is something not associated with Stoicism and is a dissimilar inferior emotion. Stoics see every man has the potential to commit sins, and one should not judge, for he is just as likely to commit a sin as his brother next to him. After analyzing Stoicism and Christianity through the text of Paul, Mark, and Seneca’s Letters from a Stoic, a certain type of person can have some sort of attractiveness to either faith. A person who is loving, caring, and open hearted to others would be the type who would be attractive to Stoic and Christian beliefs. Others might be attracted to Seneca’s letters and the Stoic philosophies of which the universe is governed for the best by rational destiny, life is in accordance to nature, and citizens must uphold a duty to the state.

Even though Stoic philosophies are strongly related to the Christian faith there are some that might not believe with some of Seneca's beliefs, not everyone accepts and sees a positive effect with human suffering.

Nevertheless, Seneca's philosophies have importance in studying and learning, a characteristic consisted with most scholars; as a result of this appealing factor some Christian priest agreed with some of the morality trait and cemented Stoic ideologies throughout the Christian faith. Seneca writes in regards to believing in God, " There is no need to raise your hands to heaven..." he continues with " God is near you, is with you, is inside you."

" There resides within us a divine spirit." Seneca finishes with " No man, indeed, is good without God." " He it is that prompts us to noble and exalted endeavours." (Seneca, XLI: pg. 86). For Seneca a man does not have to bow down to his knees to pray to God, for He is within us. We are moral or noble if we allow the faith that God is going to guard and watch over us, saving us from evil doings.

Christians for the most part must accept God as the Lord and Savior to be saved by Him. By accepting Him, Christians are placing his love inside themselves to watch over them and their blessings that He provides for them. This principle is the basic development of the Christian faith and Stoic philosophies paved the way with the thought that faith is inside the person. Everyone seeks after morality, and living a virtuous life is something else that people search through faith.

To better understand Christianity studying the Stoic philosophy is a way to benefit from the ideologies presented in the Seneca's Letters from a Stoic.

The stories told in Mark and Paul show great examples of human equality and brotherly love, both are Stoics way of life. Characteristics of Stoicism and Christianity appeal to a wide range of people. People, who accept others for who they are, apply the Stoic and Christian belief. Stoic way of life help prompted the viewpoints of the Christian religion and thus stories of divine spirituality continued throughout history.