

## **Stoicism and its Influence in the Culture of New Testament Theology & Paul's Writings**

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*“When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, ‘We want to hear you again on this subject.’ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some were saying, ‘What would this idle babbler wish to say?’ Others, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,’—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.” (Acts 17:18, NASB)*

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the interplay between Stoic philosophy and early New Testament theology, with a particular focus on Pauline writings. It explores how core Stoic concepts—such as logos, virtue, and natural law—were strategically adapted by early Christian thinkers to communicate the gospel within a Hellenistic intellectual framework. The discussion reveals three key points of theological tension: **1) Resurrection versus Immortality of the Soul:** Whereas Stoicism posits that the soul merely returns to the universal order, Christian doctrine asserts the resurrection of the body and the promise of eternal, transformed identity (Engberg-Pedersen, 2020; Ferguson, 2021). **2) Personal God versus Pantheistic Logos:** The Stoic view of an impersonal, all-pervading logos contrasts sharply with the Christian emphasis on a personal, relational God who actively engages with creation (Arnold, 1971; Wilson, 2023). **3) Grace versus Self-Sufficiency:** Although Stoic ethics valorize self-sufficiency achieved through reason and discipline, Paul redefines these ideals by grounding moral strength in divine grace, thereby highlighting human dependence on Christ (Malherbe, 2022). This research shows how early Christian theology both borrowed from and diverged from prevailing philosophical traditions, thus laying the groundwork for a distinctive doctrinal identity. This synthesis not only facilitated the spread of Christianity among a philosophically sophisticated audience but also continues to offer a rich framework for contemporary theological dialogue and interfaith engagement. It is expected that further exploration of this convergence will deepen our understanding of the dynamic relationship between secular philosophy and religious thought, with implications for modern ethical discourse and apologetics.

**Keywords:** *Stoic Philosophy, Pauline Theology, Logos, Resurrection, Divine Grace*

### **INTRODUCTION**

When the Apostle Paul stood before the intellectual elite of Athens, he bridged two worlds that would soon alter the course of human thought: the austere rationalism of Stoic philosophy and the

message of Christ's resurrection. This encounter on Mars Hill marked not merely a clash of ideas, but the beginning of a philosophical synthesis that would shape Western civilization for millennia to come. One of the most fascinating convergences in intellectual history, with reverberations that continue to influence modern theological discourse is the intersection of Hellenistic philosophy and early Christian thought. Among the philosophical schools that influenced early Christian theology, Stoicism stands out as particularly significant, especially in the context of Paul's missionary work and the broader New Testament narrative. The encounter between Paul and the Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill, as recorded in Acts 17:18, serves as a pivotal moment which illustrated the direct interaction between Christian proclamation and Stoic thought. This dialogue would set the stage for centuries of theological development and philosophical engagement.

The Stoic school, founded by Zeno of Citium around 300 BCE, had evolved into a dominant philosophical force by the first century CE, shaping the intellectual landscape of the Roman Empire during the emergence of Christianity. This philosophical movement, with its emphasis on divine reason (logos), virtue as the highest good and the universal brotherhood of humanity, provided both points of convergence and contrast with evolving Christian theology. The Stoic conception of logos as the principle ordering the universe would later find new expression in Christian theology, particularly in the Gospel of John's profound opening declaration about the Word became flesh.

The influence of Stoic thought on New Testament theology manifests in various ways. Paul's sophisticated engagement with Stoic concepts, especially evident in his Areopagus speech (Acts 17), demonstrates his ability to bridge philosophical and theological worldviews. His assertion that "*in Him we live and move and have our being*" (Acts 17:28) discusses the Stoic pantheistic concepts while reframing them within a monotheistic Christian framework. This strategic appropriation of Stoic language and concepts reveals Paul's ability to contextualize the gospel message within the philosophical frameworks of his audience.

The environment in the first-century Roman Empire provided fertile ground for the development and articulation of Christian doctrine. Stoicism's emphasis on self-discipline, moral virtue, and rational understanding of the divine resonated with aspects of Christian teaching while still simultaneously remarking the distinctive features of the Christian message. This finds both parallels and contrasts in Christian concepts of faith, grace, and submission to God's will.

This paper examines the relationship between Stoic philosophy and New Testament theology, with particular attention to Paul's writings and his adaptation of Stoic concepts for Christian proclamation. The research explores how Paul and other New Testament authors engaged with, changed, and sometimes challenged Stoic ideas in developing Christian doctrine and ethics. This paper will analyze specific

parallels, shared ethical concerns, and points of theological tension between Stoicism and Christian thought.

Understanding how early Christian thinkers engage with dominant philosophical frameworks of their time provides valuable ideas for contemporary theological dialogue with secular philosophies. Moreover, examining the points of contact between Stoicism and early Christian thought applies to both the universal aspects of human philosophical inquiry and the distinctive features of Christian revelation. This understanding becomes particularly relevant in our current era, where Christianity once again finds itself engaging with diverse philosophical systems and worldviews.

Contemporary scholarship has increasingly recognized the sophistication with which New Testament authors, particularly Paul, have engaged with Hellenistic philosophical traditions. This engagement went to more than appropriation of terminology; it involved a reframing of the philosophical concepts within the context of Christian revelation. Understanding this can provide valuable insights for modern Christian apologetics and interfaith dialogue.

Hence, this paper will proceed by first establishing the historical and philosophical context of Stoicism in the first-century Roman Empire, followed by an analysis of specific Stoic influences in Paul's writings and broader New Testament theology. Special attention will be given to the Mars Hill discourse as a case study in Christian-Stoic dialogue. This paper will then examine how early Christian authors both appropriated and developed Stoic concepts in their theological framework. Finally, it will discuss the implications of this historical interaction for contemporary Christian engagement with philosophical systems.

## **DISCUSSION**

The emergence of Stoicism represents one of the most philosophical movements in ancient history, shaping the intellectual landscape into which Christianity would later emerge. Founded by Zeno of Citium in 300 BCE in the painted porch (Stoa Poikile) of Athens, Stoicism evolved through distinct periods that progressively refined and expanded its philosophical framework (Ferguson, 2021).

In the early Stoa, under Zeno's leadership and continued by his successors, Cleanthes Chrysippus, established the foundation principles of Stoic philosophy. These early stoics developed a system that encompasses logic, physics, and ethics, with a particular emphasis on the concept of logos as the organizing principle of the universe. Their understanding of reality helped arrange both cosmic order and human behavior, a concept that would later find resonance with Christian theology (Wilson, 2023). By the middle of Stoa, they were mostly represented by Panaetius of Rhodes (185-109 BCE) and Posidonius of Apamea (135-51 BCE). This period witnessed the adaptation of Stoicism in the Roman Empire, making its principles more accessible and practical for Roman society. Panaetius, in particular, modified the

stricter aspects of early Stoicism which resulted in a more developed understanding of virtue that acknowledged gradations of moral progress. Again, this would prove to be influential in later Christian concepts. Late Stoa, represented by figures like Seneca (4 BCE-65 CE) and Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE), explored the mature development of Stoic philosophy and its most direct interaction with Christianity. These philosophers emphasized practical ethics and personal conduct, developing their thoughts of understanding human nature, moral responsibility, and the relationship between Christ's providence and virtue, and in particular, demonstrated parallels with New Testament teachings, though emerging from a different philosophical foundation (Long, 2018).

The core principles of Stoicism centered around several key concepts. Their understanding of logos as divine reason permeating the universe provided a philosophy that early Christian thinkers could adapt to explain their conception of the role of Christ: their emphasis on virtue as the highest good, along with the belief in the universal brotherhood of humanity, which created common ground for dialogue with early Christianity; Logos as the organizing principle of the universe, which would influence Christian understanding of Christ's providence and natural law despite being ultimately different from Stoicism's idea; Stoicism's concept of the sage - the perfectly wise person who has achieved complete rational self-control - while also different from Christian ideals of sanctification, also provided a model for understanding moral and spiritual development that early Christian writers engaged with and developed.

Of particular importance to first-century thought were the contributions of Stoic philosophers contemporary with or slightly preceding the New Testament period. Seneca's writings, for instance, have many parallels with New Testament themes about topics on providence, virtue, and the moral life. Musonius Rufus and Epictetus, contemporaries of Paul, developed teachings that addressed matters of daily life that created an environment that would influence Christian moral teaching.

The integration of stoic thought with Jewish diaspora communities was particularly evident in Alexandria, where philosophers like Philo demonstrated the possibility of harmonizing Greek philosophical concepts with Jewish scriptural interpretation. Philo's work provided significant precedent for early Christian thinkers, explaining how religion could engage meaningfully with Hellenistic philosophy without changing its character (Harrison, 2021). Roman society's embrace of Stoic principles transformed various aspects of public life because of their emphasis on natural law and universal human dignity which influenced their jurisprudence and social policy - in ways that would later facilitate the spread of Christian ideas about human worth and moral responsibility. The concept of natural law, particularly as developed by Roman Stoic thinkers, provided a framework that combined cultural and religious differences. Similarly, in major urban centers throughout the Roman Empire, Jewish communities demonstrated how traditional religious beliefs could be expressed through Greek philosophical categories while maintaining their character.

Furthermore, Stoicism's interaction with other philosophical schools, particularly Middle Platonism and various other religions, created an environment of philosophical eclecticism that later influenced Christian theological development. The standard curriculum for educated Romans included extensive training in rhetoric and philosophy, with Stoic thought being centered on. This educational background meant that many of the early converts to Christianity, particularly among the urban educated class, would have been well-versed in Stoic concepts and terminology. The first century also saw the development of popular philosophy, where the popularization of philosophical ideas created an environment where concepts could be discussed and debated in public forums, as evidenced by Paul's engagement with philosophers at Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:16-34). This spread even more when Pax Romana came.

Paul's writings demonstrate sophisticated engagement with Stoic concepts while maintaining Christian distinctiveness. The Mars Hill discourse (Acts 17:16-44) is an example of this. Throughout his letters, Paul engages with key Stoic ideas:

- Natural Theology  
In Romans 1:19-20, Paul argues for God's revelation through creation in terms resonating with Stoic audiences.
- Conscience (syneidēsis)  
His treatment of moral psychology, particularly in Romans 2:14-15, draws on Stoic concepts while developing Christian anthropology.
- Self Sufficiency (autarkeia)  
In Philippians 4:11-13, Paul transforms Stoic ideas of self-sufficiency by grounding them in Christ rather than human reasons.
- Divine Providence  
His understanding of divine providence (Romans 8:28) demonstrates both engagement with and development of Stoic concepts.

Paul's letters show various levels of engagement with Stoic terminology and its concepts within a Christian mind. His treatment of wisdom (*sophia*), knowledge (*gnōsis*), and reason (*logos*) shows the interaction between them. The interaction between Stoicism and early Christianity exemplifies how religious thought can really engage meaningfully with philosophical traditions.

The missionary journeys of Paul through major Hellenistic cities provided numerous opportunities for engagement with Stoic philosophy, particularly in centers of learning such as Ephesus, Corinth, and Athens. These environments fostered intellectual exchange between various philosophical schools and emerging Christian thought, creating a dynamic dialogue that influenced how Christian doctrine was articulated. The presence of Stoic teachers in these cities, along with the widespread familiarity with Stoic ethical principles among the educated classes, meant that Paul's audiences would have readily understood his use of Stoic concepts and terminology, even as he reframed them within a Christian worldview.

The development of early Christian communities in the first century CE coincided with Stoicism's peak influence in Roman society, particularly among the ruling classes. This temporal overlap proved significant as early Christian writers, including Paul, found themselves addressing converts who were well-versed in Stoic philosophical frameworks. The concept of Christ's providence, central to both Stoic and Christian thought, underwent significant change in Paul's writings. While Stoics viewed providence as an impersonal cosmic force governed by logos, Paul presented a personal God whose providence operated through both natural and supernatural means, particularly through the person of Christ. This reinterpretation of providence became somewhat of a bridge between Hellenistic philosophical thought and Christian theology, helping to make Christian concepts more accessible to Gentile converts.

The influence of Stoic thought on early Christian ethics extended beyond Paul's writings to shape the broader development of Christian moral theology. The Stoic emphasis on self-discipline, moral progress, and the cultivation of virtue found resonance in early Christian ascetic practices and moral teaching. However, early Christian writers, including Paul, consistently transformed these concepts by grounding them in Christ's redemptive work rather than human reason alone. This transformation is particularly evident in the early Christian understanding of suffering, which drew on Stoic ideas about accepting adversity while reframing them within the context of participation in Christ's suffering and the hope of resurrection. The resulting meeting created a distinctive Christian ethical framework that retained the practical wisdom of Stoic moral philosophy while fundamentally reorienting it toward christological and eschatological ends.

Beyond the direct influence on Paul's writings, Stoic philosophy played a crucial role in shaping the intellectual climate of second-century Christian apologetics. Early Christian apologists like Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria deliberately employed Stoic philosophical language and concepts to defend Christianity to educated Roman audiences. Their apologetic works often drew parallels between Christ and the Stoic logos, arguing that Christianity represented the fulfillment of philosophical aspirations while maintaining its unique theological identity. This strategic engagement with Stoic thought helped establish Christianity as a sophisticated philosophical system in its own right, capable of engaging with the highest levels of Greco-Roman intellectual discourse.

The archaeological evidence from first-century urban centers, particularly in Asia Minor, reveals the extent to which Stoic philosophy had penetrated daily life through public inscriptions, educational institutions, and civic organizations. Recent excavations in Ephesus and Corinth have uncovered evidence of philosophical schools and public spaces where philosophical debates regularly occurred. This material context helps explain why Paul and other early Christian leaders could effectively utilize Stoic concepts and terminology in their teaching. The physical proximity of early Christian meeting places to these

centers of philosophical discussion suggests regular interaction between Christian communities and various philosophical schools, creating an environment where ideas could be exchanged and transformed.

The concept of *logos* itself stands out as an important point of contact; it was strategically used by New Testament writers to organize Christian doctrine in a way that was acceptable to their Hellenistic readers. For the Stoics, the *logos* was the principle by which the cosmos was organized—it was a kind of divine reason that governed things and could be accessed by humans through rational thought and moral behavior. By linking the *logos* to Jesus Christ, as seen also in the Gospel of John (“In the beginning was the Word [*logos*], and the Word was God” (John 1:1), early Christians were able to reframe Stoic concepts in light of Christian world. This explains that the *logos* is not an impersonal cosmic force but a person, Jesus who actively participates in and also atones for the sins of this world. This shift not only redefined the Stoic understanding of *logos* but also introduced a new relational aspect to divinity that Stoicism could not imagine—the God who entered human experience through the incarnation.

Stoic ethics promotes virtues such as courage, self-control, and endurance that are in keeping with the Christian call to righteous living. As in the letter of James, which echoes Stoic ideals which discuss perseverance, this letter encourages the faithful to be able to endure various trials with patience, and promises that those who do so will receive the "Crown of Life" (James 1: 12). There are also writings in Paul's writings which contain advice for self-control, humility, and endurance. It is these qualities that reflect Stoic values that are lent to a relationship with Christ and not solely to personal provision.

In the letters Paul also invokes certain Stoic terminology and ideals, but this again emphasizes divine grace and the Christian community rather than individual moral perfection. In Philippians 4:11-13, Paul continues to address a form of self-satisfaction, this using the term *autarkeia*, similar to the Stoic concept of self-sufficiency — but he redefines it as dependence on Christ and not on one's own accomplishments. This theology also created a Christian ethic that valued Stoic virtues while grounding them in faith, thus reorienting existing Stoic ideals within a framework that focused solely on the teachings of Christ. The convergence of Stoic and Christian thought enabled early Christians to communicate their message effectively within the imperial and intellectual culture of the Roman Empire. However, Paul and other New Testament writers, using Stoic ideas, also encountered points of theological tension.

The incorporation of Stoic concepts in the New Testament turns out to be more flexible and also uses the limitations of early Christian theology when engaging with contemporary philosophical frameworks. Early Christian writers, especially Paul, strategically used Stoic language and ideas to communicate the Gospel message to a Hellenistic audience who was also familiar with this philosophy. For example, John's adaptation of the *logos* as the divine Word and also Paul's ethical advice can show how these Stoic concepts related to reason, virtue, and moral discipline can be changed to suit the

Christian worldview of Christ's time. This philosophy could have helped the early Christians to communicate their message in the intellectual climate of the time.

However, it turns out that the dialogue used also shows the existence of major theological tensions. While Stoicism and Christianity have the same ethical concerns, such as: the importance of self-discipline - worldviews basically have different viewpoints in understanding the nature of God, human identity, as well as the goal of achieving true life.

Therefore, we take the main points that will discuss four areas of theological tension that can describe the distinctive elements of Christian doctrine that conflict with Stoic thought. The following points are:

### **1. Resurrection VS. Immortality of the Soul:**

The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body is in direct conflict with the Stoic belief in the return of the human soul to the universe. The Stoics understood life after death as the return of our individual souls to the universe, and not as a continuation of personal identity. Moreover, the Christian revival promises an eternal and changing identity, underscoring interpersonal continuity and the hope of eternal communion between humans and God (Engberg-Pedersen, 2020, p.147; Ferguson, 2021, p.82).

### **2. Personal God VS. Pantheistic God:**

Stoic pantheism also teaches that the logos is an impartial force throughout existence, while Christian theology centers on a personal God who is also involved in relationships between humans. The Stoic Logos also lacks the relational qualities of the Christian God, who listened as well as intervened in creation. This difference is fundamental to the personal God in religion which changes the nature of worship, inviting many believers to enter a relational faith, and contrasts with the Stoics' acceptance of the principle of a rational and separate cosmos (Arnold 1971, p.211; Wilson 2023, p.94).

**3. Grace VS. Self Sufficiency:** In Stoicism, independence is considered a virtue which can be achieved through reason and self-discipline. However, Christianity emphasizes grace as essential to the moral life, and human goodness is seen as a gift that comes from God, and not as an individual achievement. Paul discusses this in Philippians 4:11-13 undermining Stoic ideals by basing endurance on dependence on Christ, highlighting the transformative power of divine grace compared to Stoic rational self-reliance (Malherbe, 2022, p.67).

**4. Christian Hope VS. Stoic Acceptance:** Stoicism also preaches a form of peace through acceptance of each human's fate, advocating an attitude of resignation to suffering that we cannot avoid. In contrast, Christianity offers a hope-centered approach to suffering, encouraging many believers to view suffering as something only temporary and purposeful, with the promise of eternal life later. This hope transforms many Christians' response to suffering, distinguishing it from Stoic aloofness by making room for emotional resilience and anticipation of divine reward (Thorsteinsson, 2019, p.152).

Integration of Greek philosophical ideas, especially Stoicism, into early Christian theology is a basis for a synthesis that influenced the development of Christian doctrine, ethics, and cosmology. Greek philosophy offered a language and conceptual framework that early Christian writers could easily adapt and communicate their faith quickly and culturally accessible. It also played an important role in shaping a distinctive Christian philosophical theology, and offers intellectual rigor and spiritual depth. By interpreting Greek ideas, theologians were able to articulate a worldview that incorporated Greek ideals of wisdom and virtue, but remained grounded in biblical revelation.

The central concept is also where Stoic thought greatly influenced Christian theologians through the idea of logos, which both traditions considered a fundamental organizing principle. In Stoic thought, the logos is the rational order that permeates the cosmos, a force that regulates the natural universe within humans. However, in Christian theology as articulated in the Gospel of John, logos itself has a new and very personal meaning as Jesus Christ, that is, the Word incarnate. John wrote "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14 NASB). By reinterpreting the word logos as Christ, early Christian thinkers once again placed Jesus as the main source of creation and redemption. This identification of Jesus with the logos made the faith of Christians easily accessible intellectually to Hellenistic readers, while at the same time it could again widely introduce a vision of the Deity that was certainly fundamentally different, a vision that was both relational and redemptive.

A reconceptualization of logos could also allow for a meaningful integration of Stoic ethics into Christian moral teachings. Recall that Stoicism places emphasis on such imagination as self-control, wisdom, courage, and justice, which warns of a life in harmony with nature and rationality. In the Christian context, Paul again reminds us of the importance of similar virtues, which he calls the "Fruit of the Spirit" such as love, joy, peace, patience, mercy, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and finally self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23 NASB). Although Stoicism proposed that this enlightenment could be achieved by means of reasoning, early Christian ethics reframed this enlightenment as a gift that had been given by the Holy Spirit, easily attainable through our faith in Christ. This underscores the Christian belief that, although human reason and discipline are important, they will not work smoothly without the divine grace of the Holy Spirit and God.

Justin Martyr, who believes that Greek philosophy contains some of the truth or "seed of God's Word". He argued that pre-Christian philosophers adhered to rational virtue without consciously participating in divine truth. In his book, Justin wrote, "Those who live based on reason are Christians, even though they are considered atheists" (Justin Martyr, First Apology, 46). Justin viewed Greek philosophy at the time not as a rival but as a basis for preparing the Gospel, which could allow Justin to

bridge Greek and Christian thought by supporting elements of secular wisdom while upholding the supremacy of Divine revelation. Another important thing in Stoic thought is related to the understanding of human nature and soul. As we know, Stoicism teaches that the soul is divine, capable of achieving harmony with the universe through a virtuous life. Christians adopted this concept but also emphasized the created nature of humans, highlighting the redemption and transformation of humans through Christ. Early theologians such as Augustine took Stoic ideas about self-mastery and inner transformation, arguing that true virtue is only possible through the presence of God's grace. In the Confessions book, Augustine again states that, "I have not fallen in love, but I like the idea of love" (Confessions, Book III, Chapter 1). In other words, Augustine acknowledged his lack of morality and his dependence on God. This contrast can be seen from Stoic ideal of self-reliance and rational control of desires.

And the influence of Stoicism on early Christian thought also extended to the development of Christian philosophy and theological engagement with nature. Stoic cosmology viewed the universe as a cohesive and orderly whole, a place where divine reason could permeate everything. This thinking was of course also in line with the beliefs of Christians at that time. In Romans 1:20 Paul highlights this natural revelation, stating, "For since the creation of the world, His invisible qualities, His eternal power and His divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been created" (Romans 1:20 NASB). Here Paul clearly uses language that echoes the Stoic understanding of divine reason embodied in the cosmos, but Paul again shifts this recognition of divine order to a monotheistic framework in which God is a personal creator, and not an impersonal force.

The impact of this integration was primarily in the writings of early Christians who embraced elements of Stoic philosophy while refining them to express unique and interesting Christian doctrines. Like Tertullian who strongly opposed the Stoic idea of impersonal or personal divine reason, and instead emphasized the personal nature of the Christian God. However, he still used Stoic terminology and ideas to defend the doctrine of the oneness of God and moral order. In the books written by Tertullian, entitled *Against Marcion* and *On the Soul*, many relate to Stoic ideas about nature and the human soul, but he argues that true knowledge between us and God is possible through Revelation and not through philosophical speculation alone (Tertullian, *On the Soul*). The theological integration of Stoic ideas could also have enabled early Christians to engage with the intellectual culture of the time, making Christianity a rigorous philosophical faith and capable of engaging in understandable and meaningful conversations with other schools of thought. This integration provided a foundation for Christian philosophers in the ages to come. By combining these two forms of Greek and Christian thought, early theologians were able to set a precedent for engaging constructively with secular philosophical methods, a practice that is very important for Christian thought today.

The contemporary application of Stoic influence to Christian theology is expanding and growing, some of which are practical areas that continue to shape modern religious discourse, pastoral ministry, and apologetics. The enduring relevance of Stoic ideas is seen in the extent to which Christian leaders and theologians engaged with secular philosophy and fostered interreligious understanding that existed in a pluralistic world. By using Stoic and early Christian principles, contemporary theologians are equipped with philosophical, ethical, and existential questions that must be answered in such a way that their answers can be accepted by a diverse audience.

One of the main things in this field is modern interreligious dialogue, where understanding shared values and philosophical foundations can enable topics to be discussed in greater depth between religious traditions. Many dialogues emphasize ethical concerns, such as: compassion, justice, and the search for truth. For example, dialogue between Christian and Buddhist traditions has often highlighted a shared emphasis on self-discipline and compassion, where these values are also supported by Stoicism. This alignment of moral ideals can create a basis for mutual respect for each other, and most importantly, build bridges between religious contexts (Wilson, 2023).

In pastoral settings, Stoic principles are widely used to provide a framework for dealing with secular philosophy in the same way as people who face the challenges of everyday life. Modern Christian counseling, sometimes integrating Stoic principles of resilience and rational thinking to guide believers through their individual struggles. The idea of *apatheia*, as well as the Stoic principle of controlling one's passions, resonates with Christian teachings about self-control, and can easily encourage believers to face difficulties in their inner peace and purpose. This pastoral approach is also very relevant in a time when secular ideologies and self-help philosophies dominate the existing cultural narrative, and provide an alternative centered on faith-based resilience (Thorsteinsson, 2019, p.97).

Contextualization is another important principle, especially in the mission field, when a pastor or missionary seeks to make relevant Christian teachings a cultural screen without sacrificing core beliefs. As priests or religious missionaries apply Stoic ideas about virtue and wisdom in a contextual way, they can find effective ways to discuss Christian ethics in different worldviews. The concept of *logos* is important in Stoic and Christian thought which can serve as access to introduce the idea of divine rationality in a secular or non-Christian environment (Long, 2018, p.112). And by translating these Christian teachings into terms that can be understood by secular or diverse audiences, pastors can convey the relevance of the gospel while respecting existing cultural nuances.

Within the field of apologetics, engagement with Stoic philosophy also provides Christians with a powerful framework for responding to common criticisms from various secular thinkers. Early Christian apologists such as Justin Martyr used Stoic arguments to provide a moral and intellectual coherence to Christianity, and contemporary apologists continue this tradition in the same way, namely using Stoic

concepts to argue that Christian beliefs are in harmony with reason and order in human morals (Justin Martyr, First Apology). Stoic principles ultimately became a tool to strengthen the rational foundation with Christian beliefs, supporting their ethical validity in policing existing secular oversight (Dillon, 2021, p.78).

## CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study show the complex relationship between Stoicism and early Christian thought, especially in the context of the first century. From a historical aspect, Stoicism which was started by Zeno of Citium developed very quickly from the early period to the late Stoics, where it was very significantly influenced by Roman society and the Jewish diaspora. Where the Stoic philosophers of the first century helped to create a philosophical landscape that interacted with early Christian thought. This Stoic influence ultimately gave rise to a space for dialogue where Stoic moral and ethical values were taken into consideration in Christian reflection.

Within the context of Pauline theology, Stoicism was strategically adapted. Where Stoic concepts such as natural law, virtue, and human responsibility are integrated in his letters, this creates a dialogue that can convey Christian values to Greco-Roman society which is already accustomed to Stoic terminology. Despite these similarities, there are also fundamental differences, especially related to the concept of grace and the ultimate goal of human life. Paul's own letters show that he was careful in using Stoic language to appeal to a philosophical audience without abandoning the uniqueness of the Gospel message to be conveyed.

Stoic influence is also not limited to Paul's writings but is also present in other writings of the New Testament. Like the Gospel of John with the concept of "logos", the letters of James and Peter with an ethical approach, as well as pastoral letters containing moral appeals can show similarities with Stoic ethics. However, there are also very significant theological tensions between Christian teachings and Stoic philosophy, especially in the view of the resurrection and immortality of the soul, the concept of a personal God Vs. The pantheistic God of the Stoics, as well as Christian expectations that differ from the Stoic acceptance of human fate itself.

Also important in this research is the application of contemporary dialogue, such as in modern interreligious interactions, principles of contextualization, and pastoral approaches to secular philosophy. Stoic influence in Christian thought also provides a foundation for contemporary apologetics that considers dialogue and its relevance to secular thought, suggesting that the integration of philosophical principles with theology also aims to provide relevant insights in facing the challenges of modern thought. Concluding this study, we are reminded of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul said: *"I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some."* This statement reflects Paul's

ability to communicate the Gospel to a variety of audiences, including those influenced by Stoic philosophy. This underscores that engaging in secular thought, as long as it does not compromise the core of the Christian faith, can be a powerful means of introducing and communicating the truths of the faith to the wider world.

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