STOIC AND CHRISTIAN
CONCEPTIONS OF HAPPINESS
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Introduction

With reference to the Western concept of courage, the "theologian of culture" Paul Tillich (1886-1965) once wrote that Stoicism is "the only real alternative to Christianity in the Western world."[1] Affinities between these two *Weltanschauungen* not only make a comparison between their respective views of courage possible, but the same may be done with regard to their outlooks on happiness as well. In the popular imagination at least, Christians in general and Christian "saints" in particular are stereotypically imaged as "stoical," which, according to the dictionary, refers to those marked by "austere indifference to joy, grief, pleasure, or pain."[2] Historically, this impression is neither unjustified nor wholly inaccurate, for views of Christian character have been greatly affected by interaction with the Stoic teaching throughout the centuries.[3] For example, with only minor modification, Richard Tarnas' generic description of Stoicism could seemingly be applied to Christianity as well.

> In the Stoic view, all reality was pervaded by an intelligent divine force, the logos or universal reason which ordered all things. Man could achieve genuine happiness only by attuning his life and character to this all-powerful providential wisdom. To be free was to live in conformity with God's will, and what mattered finally in life was the virtuous state of the soul, not the circumstances of the outer life. The Stoic sage, marked by

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[1] Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 9.

[2] *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, College Edition (1962), s. v. "Stoical."

[3] See, for example, Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957); Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages,* 2 vols. Studies in the History of Christian Thought 24-25 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985).

inner serenity, sternness in self-discipline, and conscientious performance of duty, was indifferent to the vagaries of external events.[4]

This apparent likeness between Stoicism and Christianity results at least in part from the central Stoic ethical doctrine that *happiness consists in virtue alone*, and is indifferent to the presence or absence of any kind of external goods (such as health, wealth, friends, honor, success, etc.). Christianity, too, would seem to teach that simple virtue apart from any concern for personal external welfare is what really counts for genuine happiness. In contrast to this Stoic and alleged "Christian" conception of happiness stands the Aristotelian tradition which argues that happiness as the end of humankind is attained only in its complete form by both virtue, which is primary, and by the possession of a sufficient supply of "external goods that are not infallibly secured by virtue, and are vulnerable to good and bad fortune. Since happiness is complete, it requires a complete life (1098 a16-20); and a complete life requires a sufficient supply of external goods in addition to virtuous action (1099 a31-3)."[5] While for Stoicism, virtue is the sufficient condition for happiness, and external goods are deemed unnecessary, the Aristotelian believes that virtue is a necessary condition for happiness, but insufficient, for an adequate supply of external goods is necessary as well.

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[4] Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Harmony Books, 1991), p. 76. Tarnas adds this to his description: "The existence of the world-governing reason had another important consequence for the Stoic. Because all human beings shared in the divine logos, all were members of a universal human community, a brotherhood of mankind that constituted the World City, or Cosmopolist, and each individual was called upon to participate actively in the affairs of the world and thereby fulfill his duty to this great community" (Ibid.).

[5] T. H. Irwin, "Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Happiness," in Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker, eds., *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 207. Citations in parentheses are to Aristotle's *Nicomachian Ethics.*

Despite the popular identity of the Stoic and Christian conceptions of happiness, in this paper I will argue that the Christian conception of happiness has, in fact, greater correspondence with the Aristotelian tradition than with the Stoic outlook. External goods, while certainly insufficient for happiness in themselves, are nevertheless presented in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as goods necessary for the temporal happiness of the Christian in this life. If I am successful in this argument, then the traditional "Stoic" (or stolid) perception of Christianity will have to give way to a nuanced "Aristotelian" or truly biblical outlook of Christian happiness, for Stoicism is, at least in principle, far more ascetic than is biblical Christianity.

Taking up the suggestion made by Alasdair MacIntyre in his acclaimed work *After Virtue*, I will employ a "method of narrativity" in seeking to understand, compare, contrast, and critique Stoic and Christian conceptions of happiness.[6] In explaining this approach, MacIntyre writes, "It is because we all live out narratives in our own lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that *the form of narrative is appropriate for*

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[6] A more "scholastic" or Aristotelian method could be deployed in debating this issue. One could set forth Aristotle's formal conditions for the highest human good (see *Nichomachean Ethics I*), and then argue that either the Christian or Stoic viewpoint best fulfills these conditions. The discussion would be similar to the way in which the post-Aristotelian "Peripatetics" argued their position overagainst Stoic attacks. As presented by Irwin, these formal conditions include the following (p. 206). (1) The highest good is the ultimate end, 'for the sake of which the other things are done' (1097 a15-24). (2) Since it is the ultimate end (*telos*) it must be complete (*teleion*) (1097 a24-b4). (3) Since it is complete, it must be self-sufficient (1097 b6-16). (4) Since it is self-sufficient, it must be incapable of increase by the addition of any other good (1097 b16-20). This method seems to be followed by St. Thomas Aquinas in his own *Treatise on Happiness* in which he discusses the following issues: (1) The ultimate end of man in general; (2) In what man's happiness consists; (3) What is happiness; (4) What is required for happiness; (5) The attainment of happiness. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Happiness.* Transl. by John A. Oesterle (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told—except in the case of fiction."[7] Perhaps by telling the Stoic and Christian stories, a better understanding of their individual ethical doctrines and practices can be ascertained, and their respective rationales for excluding or including external goods as intrinsic dimensions of their understanding of human happiness might be revealed. Methodologically, this is a move away from a scholastic, scientific, or systematic approach to an alternative narrative pattern for establishing rationality in ethics.[8] And if anyone is to be declared a "victor" in this exchange of ethical narratives, that is, if either party has the "better," "best," or "true"

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[7] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory.* Second edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 212 (emphasis added). A bit later he adds this explanation to his provocative theme: "A central thesis then begins to emerge: man is in his actions a nd practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth. But the key question for men is not about their own authorship; I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question, 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'" (p. 216).

[8] See Stanley Hauerwas and David Burrell, "From System to Story: An Alternative Pattern for Rationality in Ethics," in Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, eds. *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 158ff. At the outset of their essay, Hauerwas and Burrell write: "In the interest of securing a rational foundation for morality, contemporary ethical theory has ignored or rejected the significance of narrative for ethical reflection. It is our contention that this has been a profound mistake resulting in a distorted account of moral experience" (p. 158). They proceed to say that in their essay they will (1) try to establish the significance of narrative for ethical reflection, and (2) try to show how the convictions displayed in the Christian story have moral significance. In a footnote, they reference Alasdair MacIntyre who has pointed out that the "conflict over how morality is to be defined is itself a moral conflict. Different and rival definitions cannot be defended apart from defending different and rival sets of moral principles" and one might add for the sake of consistency, from defending different and rival sets of moral narratives. For further discussion on the narrative approach to ethical inquiry and rationality, see Paul Nelson, *Narrative and Morality: A Theological Inquiry* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1987). For a critique of this MacIntyre's narrative approach, see J. B. Schneewind, "Virtue, Narrative, and Community," *The Journal of Philosophy* 79 (November 1982): 653ff.

viewpoint, then it may be that the victory wreath will go to the party that is able to "outnarrate" the opposition by telling a more coherent, empirically comprehensive, and humanly convincing story. Approaching the Stoic and Christian ideals of happiness from a narrative perspective is facilitated by the fact that these ideals are embedded in and flow from a comprehensive and systematic view of the world which, in both cases, is relatively easy to articulate. The respective Christian and Stoic world views—each consisting of a web of interrelated ideas confirming and supporting each other—form a kind of narrative background against which and out of which their ethical views of happiness are derived. And thus what Wayne Meeks says about the role of narrative in the formation of Christian sensibilities is equally applicable to the Stoic tradition when he writes that "a particular narrative, consistent in its broad outline though wondrously variable in detail, has been at the heart of the Christian moral vision"[9] The Stoic account will be considered first.

The Stoic Conception of Happiness[10]

[9] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 189.

[10] There are, of course, many general summaries of Stoic philosophy available in histories of philosophy textbooks, and in single monographs devoted exclusively to the Stoics. For an update on studies in Stoic philosophy, see John M. Rist, "Stoicism: Some Reflections on the State of the Art" *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 supplement, (1985): 1ff. Other recent studies of note that bear on the theme of this paper include Nicholas P. White "Stoic Values" *The Monist* 73 (1990); 42ff; see also Nicholas P. White, "The Basis of Stoic Ethics," in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology.* T. H. Irwin, "Virtue, Praise and Success: Stoic Responses to Aristotle," *The Monist* 73 (1990): 59ff. Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); also Julia Annas, "The Hellenistic Version of Aristotle's Ethics," *The Monist* 73 (1990): 80ff. Finally, see Keith Campbell, "Self-Mastery and Stoic Ethics," *Philosophy* 60 (1985): 327ff.

The story of Stoic philosophy,[11] including its ethical notion that virtue is the exclusive constituent of happiness, has its genesis after the death of Aristotle and the demise of the Greek polis. Several classicists have cogently argued that the polis supplied the social context of all Greek ethical thought and of the public character of virtue and conscience, not only in Aristotle's thought but also in the whole classical tradition. As Werner Jaeger has stated, "The polis is [was] the social framework of the whole history of Greek culture."[12] Just as the nuclear family provides the social framework for the identity and virtue of its members, so the polis, which had virtually identified man and citizenship, provided the social context which established the identity and virtue of its citizens as well. And just as the break up of a nuclear family drastically disorients its members, so also the demise of the ancient Greek polis, engendered by the conquests of Alexander the Great and the resultant cultural revolution, turned the spiritual and philosophical world of the Greeks upside down. In the midst of this upheaval, Hellenistic philosophy, including Stoicism and Epicureanism, developed, both reflecting and seeking to address this tumultuous situation. As Tarnas writes,

> . . . the characteristic philosophical impulse of the Hellenistic schools arose less from the passion to comprehend the world in its mystery and magnitude, and more form the need to give human beings some stable belief system and inner peace in the face of a hostile and chaotic environment. The result of this new impulse was the emergence of philosophies more limited in scope and more prone to fatalism than their classical predecessors. Disengagement from the world [Epicureanism] or from one's own passions [Stoicism] was the principal choice, and in either case philosophy took on a more dogmatic tone.[13]

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[11] Its chief architects are Zeno, fourth century B.C.; Chryssipus, third century B.C.; Epictetus, first century A.D..; Marcus Aurelius, second century A.D.

[12] Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 1: 78. On the social context of Aristotle's thought, see Jonathan Leer, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[13] Tarnas, p. 76.

In MacIntyre's reading of this situation, the *telos* of the Greek polis provided classical Greek communities with a shared good and common vision and articulated its moral life in terms both of the virtues and of law. But with the loss of the teleology of the polis, there was no longer a shared good demanding the external exercise of the virtues. Rather, the "post-polis" ethical situation became individualized and interiorized, focusing on the human will, and advocating an adherence to moral law for its own sake, and for the good of the individual alone. The loss of a social or communal *telos* meant the loss of the development and practice of the virtues, and in their place Stoic models of thought and action appeared. In MacIntyre's perspective, the abandonment of a socio-cultural teleology triggers a tendency to substitute some form of Stoicism as a response, a type of development which took place not only in ancient Greece, but which also occurred in the loss of the Christian/Aristotelian teleology in modernity. Hence he believes that "Stoicism is not . . . only an episode in Greek and Roman culture; it sets a pattern for all those later European moralities that invoke the notion of law as central in such a way as to displace conceptions of the virtues." And for MacIntyre, this is not surprising since "the background to Stoic ethics in the eighteenth century was a doctrine of nature similar to and indebted to the metaphysics of ancient Stoicism."[14]

This mention of the Stoic doctrine of nature provides a key to unlocking the secrets of Stoic ethical doctrine, for as Charles Taylor points out, "the Stoic teachers insisted that their physics was the ground of their ethics."[15] The Stoics'

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[14] MacIntrye, pp. 169, 234.

[15] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 126. A. A. Long notes the nature of the interconnectedness of Stoic philosophy with its ethics in this comment. "In one of the analogies which the Stoics used in order to illustrate the relationship between the sub-divisions of their philosophy ethics is compared to the 'fruit of a garden' (*SVF* ii 38). It is an apposite image. Logic and natural

motto, "to live according to nature," or "to live according to the dictates of nature," was at the center of their ethical doctrine of happiness. Hence, we must discover the role played in the Stoic narrative by nature, both natural and human, in order to grasp their central ethical belief.

Stoic physics or metaphysics is clearly a pantheistic monism. Reality is one which, nevertheless, subsists as a complex of the two principles of "passive matter" and "active form" united in a structurally inseparable manner. The active principle—variously called God, Logos, or Reason—permeates, moves, and informs the whole of the passive principle which is corporeal reality. As Diogenes Laertius describes it, "According to the Stoics there are two principles in the universe, the active and the passive. The passive principle is a substance without quality, matter; the active principle is the reason in matter, that is, God. And God which is eternal is the creative craftsman of all things in the extent of matter" (*DL* 7.134)[16] Hence, for the Stoics, God and the cosmos are ultimately one: God is in all, and all is in God. Philip Hallie explains their pantheistic monism in this succinct manner.

> The physics of the Stoics was, on the whole, identical with their theology, in which the formative power that makes each thing what it is and harmonizes all things was God. The key words in the Stoic vocabulary are all basically synonymous: God, Zeus, creative fire, ether, the word (logos), reason of the world, soul of the world, law of nature, providence, destiny, and order. The Stoics were monists. There is in their physics no qualitative difference between God and the rest of the universe; God is only the most tense (cohesive) creative aspect of the universe. The stuff which he informs comes from him, is sustained by him, and differs from him only by being more relaxed and less creative. By looking at the Stoic universe, . . .

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philosophy prepare the ground for ethics...." See his *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, second edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 179.

[16] *DL* = Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*. This survey of Stoic ethics closely follows the presentation of Giovani Real, *The Systems of The Hellenistic Age: A History of Ancient Philosophy.* Edited and Translated by John R. Catan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 261ff.

> we can learn much about the Stoic concept of order, which is central to their ethics.[17]

Nature/God as the perfect being is the source of order as well as everything which has value. Thus, the value and order of everything else depends upon its relationship to nature. As Diogenes has clearly stated, "The virtue of the happy man and a well-running life consist in this: that all actions are based on the principle of harmony between his own spirit and the will and director of the universe" (*D.L.* VII. 88). That humankind might live according to nature and in harmony with the will of the universe presupposes something about humanity's own nature, and the Stoic understanding of the nature of man is crystallized in the term logos or reason. The universal *physis* (nature) and the specific *physis* of man are both logos. Reason as man's specific and unique trait distinguishes him from all other beings, especially the animals, and assigns to him a more profound ontological depth. In Seneca's words,

> What quality is best in man? It is reason; by virtue of reason he surpasses the animals, and is surpassed only by the Gods. Perfect reason is therefore the good peculiar to man; all other qualities he shares in some degree with animals and plants. . . . Hence, if everything is praiseworthy and has arrived at the end intended by its nature, when it has brought its peculiar good to perfection, and if man's peculiar good is reason, then if a man has brought his reason to perfection, he is praiseworthy and has reached the end suited to his nature (*Epist*. 76. 9).[18]

Since the nature of humanity is *logos* or reason, human teleology consists in bringing his rational nature to completion, and the key to this process of perfecting human teleology is found in the concept of *oikeiosis* . *Oikeiosis* is the term that the Stoics used to describe the tendency of all beings—plant, animal, and human—to preserve themselves, to love their own beings, to fear

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[17] Philip P. Hallie, s. v. "Stoicism," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 8: 21.

[18] *Epist*. = Seneca's *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales* (*Moral Letter to Lucilius*).

destruction, to strive toward what is agreeable, and to avoid what is harmful. In plants and animals this tendency is wholly unconscious, even though animals in their continued development obtain a particular instinct or primary impulse (*horme*) to do what is required for their preservation. In human beings this *oikeiosis* is specified and supported by the possession and use of reason. "Human beings can deliberately strive for their preservation through reason; it can steer desires and correct them if necessary."[19] This Stoic argument that human beings seek self-preservation through reason is directed against the Epicurean view that living beings ultimately strive for pleasure. According to the Stoics, pleasure is what arises when a sensitive being has received what is agreeable to its nature and is sustained. In other words, pleasure is the outcome of a being's *oikeiosis* which is the primary instinct.

Given, then, the principle of *oikeiosis*, the ultimate good of man is not pleasure, but is whatever conserves and increases his being. Evil, on the other hand, is not pain, but rather is whatever damages and diminishes his being. Of course, human beings are distinguished from all other beings in that they possess both an animal and a rational nature which is constituted by the presence of logos. Hence, what is good and evil for humanity's physical nature is different from what is good and evil for humanity's rational nature. This dualistic interpretation of humanity results in the demarcation of a hierarchy of goods according to whether they support the animal or rational side of human nature. And since it is man's rational nature that alone distinguishes him from the animals, it is the pursuit and development of his rationality as a life according to

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[19] Friedo Ricken, *Philosophy of the Ancients*, trans. by Eric Watkins (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p. 202. Similarly, Long says, "The goal of the progression is life in accordance with mature human nature, that is, a life governed by rational principles which are in complete harmony with the rationality, goals, and processes of universal nature" (p. 188).

nature which is true virtue. In fact, the Stoics posit the rigid position that the exclusively true and authentic goods are those which increase logos, and the exclusively true and authentic evils are those which oppose the rational nature. A life according to rational human nature is virtuous and therefore happy. This is the reason for the Stoic aphorism that only virtue is good and only vice is evil. As the universe itself is governed by reason, so also should man be. This is his highest good, his true virtue, and his essential happiness.

The question still remains, however, about how to understand those things necessary for the well being of the body which is also governed by the principle of *oikeiosis*. The Stoics refused to designate such external goods as either good or evil, for this kind of moral evaluation should only be applied to those items which aided or abetted humanity's distinctive rational nature. Therefore, things that might help or harm the body were considered to be morally "indifferent," the *adiaphora*. Both biologically positive things such as life, health, wealth, beauty, friends, food, and biologically harmful things such as death, disease, destruction, ugliness, poverty were to be regarded with detachment and apathy, for they neither increased or decreased rationality, virtue, and happiness. Diogenes presents this hallmark Stoic doctrine in these words.

> Of things that are, some, they say, are good, some are evil, and some neither good nor evil [the indifferents]. Goods comprise the virtues of prudence, justice, courage, temperance, and all that which is virtue or participates in virtue, while the opposites are evils, namely, folly, injustice, and all that which is a vice or participates in vice. Indifferent (neither good nor evil) are all those things which neither benefit nor harm [morally] a man, life health, pleasure, beauty, strength, wealth, good reputation, and noble birth, and their opposites, death, disease, pain, ugliness, weakness, poverty, ignominy, low birth, and the like (*DL* 7.102).

This distinction between the good, the evil, and the indifferents was the most challenging, disturbing and the most debated feature of Stoic ethics, even in its own day. What it amounts to is this: only virtue which is under human

choice and control counts for happiness whereas bodily, physical, social, political, and economic well being does not. This notion may have a Socratic genealogy in that the Athenian Gadfly himself argued that *the good person cannot suffer any harm*—this being the very dictum challenged by Aristotle's "rational intuition" that external disasters can cause the loss of a virtuous person's happiness.[20] Nonetheless, by relegating external goods to the category of the indifferent, and by declaring happiness to be in the control of the sovereign volition of the virtuous, the Stoics sought to help post-Aristotelian Greeks cope with the loss of the polis and the concomitant socio-political maelstrom which attended its demise. Reale offers this provocative explanation of the motivation for this quintessential Stoic ethical doctrine:

> *All the evils caused by the destruction of the ancient polis and all the dangers, insecurities, and adversities arising from the political and social turmoils were simply denied as evils and placed among the indifferents.* It was a very daring way to give a new sense of security to man by teaching him that goods and evils always and only come from himself and never from the outside. Hence, they were able to convince him that happiness can be completely achieved apart from external events.[21]

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[20] Irwin, *Classical Thought*, p. 174.

[21] Reale, p. 266 (emphasis his). Reale believes that this denigration of the place and importance of external, physical goods in the Stoic schema has its roots in Socratic/Platonic metaphysics which exalted the suprasensible world of the forms and seriously diminished the value of the sensible world of tangible reality. He opines that this Stoic dualistic distinction might be possible in the context of the platonic cosmology, but that "in the monistic and materialistic context of the Stoic physics there is no ontological place for such a radical distinction and therefore it is metaphysically unjustified. It is supported only be the sense of life elaborated in the Stoa through a chiefly intuitionistic way which superimposes itself surreptitiously on a monistic and materialistic cosmology" (p. 267). Later on in articulating the Christian narrative, I will suggest that it was the mixture of Platonic dualistic metaphysics with the Stoic identification of virtue with happiness over against the positive Hebraic affirmation of created reality and the contribution of external goods to human happiness that led to the stereotypical morose conception of Christian piety and happiness.

Be this as it may, the Stoics were nevertheless constrained, on the basis of their doctrine of *oikeiosis*, to recognize the "indifferents" as valuable or disvaluable in so far as they powerfully affected the physical well being of human persons. Though intrinsically amoral in nature, these indifferents were able to increase or damage life, or do neither. Hence, the things that had physical value were called and considered the "preferred indifferents" ( ) and those things that were deemed harmful were called and regarded as the "non-preferred" or rejected indifferents ( ). Stobaeus articulates these distinctions in this manner.

> Among things having value, some have much value, others little. Similarly among things having disvalue, some have much, others little. Well, then, the things having much value are called "preferred" (or promoted), the ones having much disvalue are called rejected (or demoted). When we say "preferred," we understand something indifferent in itself that we choose for reasons of preference. The same argument is used as far as the "rejected". . . . None of the goods are preferred (or promoted) since goods have already the greatest value and worth in themselves; whereas the preferred (or promoted) has the second place and therefore smaller value and worth (*Anthol*. 2.84.21).[22]

The doctrine of indifferents seems to be the Stoic response to the accusation that they believed that nothing but virtue should be pursued by a rational person, a notion that seems patently absurd. Hence, what they seek to show is how their doctrine of the identity of virtue and happiness still allows for the rational concern for external advantages, even if they do not count for happiness. If they cannot offer such an explanation, then their position is materially indistinguishable from the Cynics who completely disregarded external goods for human welfare and happiness. The doctrine of preferred indifferents does provide a rationale for the Stoics to show that these external advantages

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[22] Stobaeus was a 5th century A.D. Greek anthologist; hence his work Ανθολογιον.

can be rationally chosen as a part of the life according to nature especially when the action that is employed to secure them is appropriate ( ).[23]

Even though the preferred indifferents were matters of indifference to the Stoic conception of happiness, nonetheless, the achievement of happiness was the overall aim of human life (as it was for the majority of Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman philosophers)[24]. In short, virtue was happiness in the sense that virtue is the perfection of humanity's true rational nature. Stobaeus explains the virtue-happiness connection as follows.

> [The Stoics] say that the goal is to be happy. We do everything for this, whereas this is done for nothing. It means to live according to virtue, to live in accordance with nature, and again, according to nature, which is the same thing. Zeno defines happiness in this way: happiness is a successful course of life. Even Cleanthes in his writings uses this definition as well as Chrysippus and all their followers. They state that happiness is not different from the happy life, though they say that happiness is the aim while the goal is to have happiness, which is the equivalent of being happy. Consequently it is clear that "living according to nature" has the same value as "living nobly," "living well" as well as "goodness and nobility," "virtue and what participates in virtue." It is quite clear that what is virtue is also good and everything vice-ridden is also evil. Therefore the Stoic goal is also the same as a life in accordance with virtue (*Anthol*. 2.77.16).

The Stoics argued for this perspective over against competing notions of happiness as pleasure or as a transempirical heavenly reward. As the perfection of rational human nature, virtue is valued for its own sake—desired, sought, cultivated, and loved in and for itself—since virtue is happiness. Diogenes states, "And virtue. . . is a harmonious disposition, a choice worthy for its own sake and

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[23] Irwin, "Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions," p. 234.

[24] Wayne Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press,1986), p. 46, says: "Everyone wants to be happy. All the major schools of Hellenistic-Roman philosophy accept this premise and affirm that happiness (Greek *eudaimonia*) is the perfectly proper goal of a well-lived life. They present philosophy as a kind of therapy which will guide a serious student to that end."

not from hope or fear or any external motive. Moreover, it is in virtue that happiness consists; for virtue is the state of mind which tends to make the whole life harmonious" (*DL* 7.89).

Stoicism aggrandizes the individual who through practice and self-discipline is able to make the whole life harmonious by bestowing upon him the title of "Sage." The Stoic sage is completely self-sufficient and happy because of his virtue. For the "virtuoso," the conduct of life presents no problem. His life consists in a regular and effortless flow in harmony with human rational and ultimate metaphysical nature all of which constitutes genuine virtue. "The Stoic sage has advanced to a point where a life of courage and wisdom, justice and temperance comes easily and naturally, without struggle and without repining."[25] Thus, he is at peace, unperturbed, and imperturbable. As Gisela Striker notes, "For the Stoics, tranquility is based on the knowledge that one has all the goods one could desire, or rather, the only real good, namely virtue; and on the absence of fear, connected with the thought that one's good cannot be lost." She also points out that the final and most important reason for the Sage's imperturbability is his complete indifference to everything bodily or external, leading to freedom from emotion, or *apatheia*. She writes,

> According to the Stoics, emotions are caused or constituted by erroneous value-judgments, taking things that should be indifferent, such as health, beauty, possessions or even friends, to be goods, or their absence to be an evil. Once one has adopted the right value system, such errors will disappear, leaving one unassailable by the sort of events that tend to agitate the minds of ordinary people. Thus the wise person's mind is not just free from trouble, but imperturbable, beyond the reach of fortune's changes.[26]

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[25] Keith Campbell, "Self-mastery and Stoic Ethics," p. 327.

[26] Gisela Striker, "Happiness as Tranquility," in Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker, eds., *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 100, 101.

Thus, in one sense, as the above quotation indicates, the Stoic doctrine of happiness via virtue seems to reflect a certain kind of ancient paranoia: "I'm not going to let any external affairs or fortune's changes get to me and affect my happiness." There is also another sense in which this teaching seems to reflect a deep pride or hubris, for the Stoic is seen to be capable of and exhorted to exercise a divine-like control of the will and emotions over against the events of daily life so as to attain to the status and happiness of the gods. Such an apotheosis is indicated in Strobaeus' line that "in no way is the happiness of Zeus preferable or more beautiful or more worthwhile than the happiness of the sages (*Anthol*. 2.98.20).

In pursuit of preferred indifferents, the Stoic will undoubtedly be a good spouse, friend, employee, warrior, etc. But the question, as Irwin points out, is can he be a sympathetic one if his own happiness and feelings are unaffected by his own circumstances and the circumstances of the people he seeks to help? Can he weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice? The answer is—"unlikely," for the things about which one would sympathize are patently of no concern, that is, indifferent. Hence, in abolishing sympathy, the Stoics increase the vice they seek to overcome. The Stoic claim that virtue alone is happiness, which exempts them from irrational emotions, may in the end be an expression of unfeeling pride[27]—the very Stoic liability that John Milton enshrined in these immortal words of *Paradise Regained* (iv. 299-308).

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[27] An extreme self-centeredness at worst or agent-centeredness at best seems to accompany Stoic ethical doctrine. For instance, Michael Slote, *Goods and Virtues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. xii, refers of the "egoism of the Stoics...." and Martha Nussbaum in a related way argues how the philosophical tradition, especially that of the Platonists and the Stoics, sought to insulate the moral life over against all the misfortunes of life at too great a cost in terms of community and human wholeness. See her *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

The Stoic last in Philosophic pride,
By him call'd virtue; and his virtuous man,
Wise, perfect in himself, and all possessing
Equal to God, oft shames not to prefer,
As fearing God nor man, contempting all
Wealth, pleasure, pain, or torment, death and life,
Which when he lists, he leaves, or boasts he can,
For all his tedious talk is but vain boast,
Or subtle shifts, conviction to evade.[28]

Such then are the basic contours of the Stoic narrative which entails their concept of happiness. It is a system of thought that arose historically and socially to compensate for the loss of the once ordered world of the Greek polis and which sought to provide a means for dealing with the uncertainties of life generated by the social, cultural, and political whirlwinds of the Hellenistic age. As such, it is a system engendered by and dedicated to the overcoming of fear and insecurity. Also, it is an ethic that is deeply rooted in the metaphysics (or physics) of the system to which it belongs, for it exhorts its adherents to emulate the kind of dispassionate and stolid rationality that governs and harmonizes the affairs of the universe itself. The development and use of this capacity of reason in accordance with nature and nature's events is the hallmark of virtue. Nothing else is needed for human happiness, for a virtue-induced happiness is sufficient and complete. Though the Stoic may rationally seek those benefits that nourish

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[28] Quoted in Irwin, *Classical Thought*, p. 178. It might be profitable to compare these similar poetic lines on Stoicism from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* II:

In lazy apathy let Stoics boast
Their Virtue fixed; 'tis fixed as in a frost;
.....
The rising tempest puts in act the soul,
Parts may it ravage, but preserves the whole.
On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the card, but Passion is the gale;
Nor God alone in the still calm we find,
He mounts the storm, and walks upon the wind."

and sustain life and the well-being of the body, they are, in the final analysis, jejune—a matter of complete indifference to the one who has or lacks them. For the Stoic Sage recognizes that his happiness depends not on the fortunes and misfortunes of life, but rather on the exercise of his reason and fortitude of his own virtuous will.

Perhaps because it assuaged fear and appealed to human pride, and perhaps also because it offered a comprehensive and coherent world picture, Stoicism became "the most durably attractive philosophical system in the Classical world, both to philosophers and to the educated upper classes in general."[29] Also, because of the attractiveness of its features and because of the timelessness of many of its tenets, Stoicism was given new life time and again throughout Western history, even in the modern world, especially in the thought and writings of Spinoza, Hume, and Kant.[30]

Furthermore, some believe that the philosophy of Stoicism made its way directly into the mind and personality of the Apostle Paul and through him to the literature of the New Testament. This is a debated point. However, what is not debated is the fact that because of certain affinities (or pseudo-affinities) with the Judeo-Christian world view, prominent aspects of Stoicism, particularly its ethical doctrines, penetrated the Christian consciousness and deeply affected the theoretical development and historical practice of Christian piety. For many, the model of the Christian life that has been bequeathed to them is suffused with Stoic content and they are not aware of it. This Stoic influence seems to be especially prominent in the ethico-theological notion which claims that God and/or virtue *alone* is sufficient for happiness, in the corollary that external goods

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[29] Irwin, *Classical Thought*, p. 180.

[30] For a discussion of the influence of Stoicism on Kant and Spinoza, See A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, pp. 208-09.

or affairs are *absolutely superfluous* to the Christian's felicity, and in the emphasis on the proper exercise of the rationally (or spiritually) guided human will in response to the happenings of daily life. In other words, for Christians, happiness in God alone is a choice totally independent from exterior circumstances.[31]

Through a recital of specific aspects of the Biblical narrative, I will seek to undermine this historic and yet misleading notion, for a genuine biblico-Christian understanding of happiness and piety resembles the Aristotelian model in which the intrinsic value and contribution of external advantages to human happiness are clearly recognized and affirmed.

The Christian Conception of Happiness

Once the matter is explored in some depth, it is astonishing to recognize how much Stoicism and its corollary of asceticism have impacted the theology of the Church and the vast influence it has had upon the lives of countless Christians regardless of their ecclesiastical affiliation. The quotation on the next page, which intends to describe the details of Christian devotion and piety, is a crystal clear example of the kind of impact Stoicism has had. A *prima facie* reading of this quote will reveal several striking similarities with the central

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[31] Interestingly, one best selling Christian book authored by Dallas psychiatrists Frank B. Minirth and Paul D. Meier on the "Symptoms, Causes, and Cures of Depression" is entitled *Happiness is a Choice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983). In a seemingly Stoic manner, they seek to place the key to happiness in the control of the will of each person in such a manner that virtually nothing can shake it. Happiness is presented in an entirely "spiritual" manner seemingly unrelated to external goods or welfare (though the authors as M.D.s do advocate the taking of drugs as a possible treatment for prolonged and severe depression). In the Introduction Meier writes, "Both of us can say with a deep conviction that a majority of human beings do not have the inner peace and joy about which I am thinking. We are also convinced that all human beings are capable of having this inner joy and peace *if only they will choose it* and follow the right path to obtain it" (p. 13, emphasis added).

themes of the Stoic ethic of happiness discussed earlier in this essay. In the first paragraph the equivalent of the Stoic "Sage" is found in the persona of the "zealous man" who, because of superior spiritual dedication and achievement, is separated off from his dilettante brothers and sisters. In the second paragraph, the list of numerous external goods (e.g., life, death, health, sickness, riches, poverty, etc.) about or for which the zealous man "cares nothing at all" is appropriately compared to the Stoic concept of the "indifferents." In this context, however, these indifferents do not even seem to be preferred making the present Christian exhortation more akin to Cynicism than Stoicism.[32] Finally, the Christian equivalent to the Stoic concept that virtue alone equals happiness is presented here in the teaching that "contentment" consists *exclusively* for the "Christian sage," or "the man of one thing," in "pleasing God and advancing his glory." The quotation is from the English divine J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) who was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, and who was bishop of Liverpool for about twenty years until his death. He writes,

> Zeal in religion is a burning desire to please God, to do His will, and to advance His glory in the world in every way possible. It is a desire which no man feels by nature, . . . [but which] the Spirit puts into the heart of every believer when he is converted, ***but which some believers feel so much more strongly than others that they alone deserve to be called "zealous" men. . . .***
>
> A zealous man in religion is preeminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, wholehearted, and fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing, he lives for one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing; and that one thing is to please God. *Whether he lives, or whether he dies, whether he has health, or whether he has sickness, whether he is rich, or whether he is poor, whether he pleases man, or whether he gives offense,*

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[32] Cynics characteristically rejected all conventions, sought to live on next to nothing, renounced all possessions, and practiced a form of self-deprivation analogous to the Indian ascetics. Is this Christian? See *Oxford Classical Dictionary,* second edition, s. v. "Cynics," by Kurt von Fritz.

> *whether he is thought wise, or whether he is thought foolish, whether he gets blame, or whether he gets shame,* ***for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all.*** He burns for one thing; and that one thing is to please God, and to advance God's glory. If he is consumed in the very burning, ***he cares not for it--he is content***. He feels that, like a lamp, he is made to burn; and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him (emphasis added).[33]

While the Christian tradition would in every way support the central and supreme importance of seeking to please God and advancing His glory,[34] it would *not* do so in such a way so as to denigrate or deny the intrinsic goodness of external advantages and the importance of daily affairs and their contribution to or detraction from human and saintly happiness, the quotation above notwithstanding. Happiness in the biblical and Christian tradition is a wholistic concept. Like its Aristotelian counterpart, Christian happiness consists of both eudemonic and hedonic elements. This is to say, that as philosophical doctrines of happiness have generally fallen into either one of two possible categories or types—either the *eudemonistic* which understands happiness to consist in a certain kind of life, final end, or absolute good, etc. or the *hedonic* which emphasizes the state or feeling of pleasure and the satisfaction of subjective and bodily needs as central to felicity[35]—so it seems that the biblical story does not

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[33] It is interesting that, according to *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (2nd ed, revised, s. v. "Ryle, John Charles"), J. C. Ryle had wished to become a member of Parliament, but was frustrated in his attempt because of a lack of financial means. In other words, it was a deficiency of external goods that prevented his bid for public office. A Freudian might suggest that his taking orders in the Anglican Church and the subsequent development of his Stoicized doctrine of "Christian indifferents," which denies the value of external goods, was a way of justifying as well as repressing his failure as a politician.

[34] For example, see 1 Cor. 10:31, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," and 2 Cor. 5:9, "Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."

[35] This categorization is something of a gloss from Douglas Den Uyl and Tibor R. Machan, "Recent Work on the Concept of Happiness," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (April 1983): 115ff. The authors state that from their research on this topic they have drawn these two conclusions, that "(1) theories

force the believer to choose God alone (the eudemonic) *to the exclusion or negation of* the pleasures (the hedonic), but rather sees Christian happiness as a realistic combination of both transcendent eudemonism and earthly hedonism, in which both God, who is primary, and the external goods or "blessings" of this life which are necessary, to comprise a complete understanding of Christian happiness.

Putting the matter in the form of an equation, Christian happiness is certainly not "external goods = happiness,"[36] nor, in its Aristotelian realism, is the biblical equation simply "God = happiness"[37] (though in the eternal state this might be the case in the experience of the beatific vision). Rather, the formula seems to be: "God + external goods = complete happiness."[38] Thus, in the final

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of happiness fall roughly into two basic types, the eudaimonistic and the hedonic; (2) the major historical figures giving rise to these two types of theories are Aristotle and J. S. Mill" (p. 115). They also point out that there are obviously many variations in each category. They state, "for example, one version of the eudaimonistic theory would concern itself with achieving a unity with or knowledge of God—what might be called, following McGill, 'transcendent happiness'" (Ibid.). This is the nuance of eudaimonism that I am employing in this instance; it is a "transcendent eudaimonism." Stephen Theron develops this nuanced form of happiness in his article "Happiness and Transcendent Happiness," *Religious Studies* 21,pp. 349ff.

[36] In fact, to seek happiness in the creature or creation alone is idolatry. See the context of Rom. 1:25, "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." Also, the entire Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes (Qohelet) argues that external goods apart from God brings only frustration and misery—"vanity of vanities, futility of futilities." See Eccl. 2:25, "For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?"

[37] St. Paul comes the closest to this outlook as we shall see later. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 126, refers to this "God = happiness" view as "that theo-monistic understanding of happiness." His reason for rejecting it is that "it is not adequately biblical; so far as I can tell," he says, "*shalom* [on which see below] is more genuinely the content that the biblical writers give to the destiny appointed to us by God: our appointed destiny incorporates living in human community in the midst of nature" (Ibid.).

[38] One Christian writer who has wrestled with this issue and come to a similar conclusion is John Piper who describes himself as a Christian hedonist. In

analysis, as the Westminster Catechism says, the chief end of man would to be to glorify God and to enjoy Him and His creation forever. Unlike Stoicism, therefore, in Christianity external advantages, or the tangible blessings of life, make such a big difference that one can in no way be indifferent to them, for the happiness of authentic human beings is at stake! The biblical story reveals why this is the case. I will proceed by sketching an overview of the Christian narrative, and in the process, I will focus on two aspects of the Old Testament story that speak to this issue at hand: creation and its goodness, and the example of Job. Then I will consider portions of the teachings of Jesus and Paul in the New Testament which are germane to developing a Christian conception of happiness. All along the way I will be comparing and contrasting the Stoic and Christian narratives as they relate to this theme.

Creation. Though the narrative of an individual Christian believer typically begins with a personal religious experience and with the content of the New Testament, the Judeo-Christian tradition as a religion, system of theology, or as a totalizing metanarrative (to speak more philosophically) begins in the Old Testament with God and the primeval act of creation. Even the ancient Christian creeds in setting forth the fundamental doctrines of the faith begin at the

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his book, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1986), he lays out these five propositions that set the parameters of his "Christian hedonism." "(1) The longing to be happy is a universal human experience, and it is good, not sinful. (2) We should never try to deny or resist our longing to be happy, as though it were a bad impulse. Instead we should seek to intensify this longing and nourish it with whatever will provide the deepest and most enduring satisfaction. (3) The deepest and most enduring happiness is found only in God. (4) The happiness we find in God reaches its consummation when it is shared with others in the manifold ways of love. (5) To the extent we try to abandon the pursuit of pleasure, we fail to honor God and love people. Or, to put it positively: the pursuit of pleasure is a necessary part of all worship and virtue. That is, the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever" (p. 19).

beginning with creation. For example, the Apostles' Creed states: "I believe in the God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." Creation, therefore, is the starting point.

According to the Genesis story, the divine work of constructing the cosmos consists of multiple acts of creation in a six "day" period. Light and dark, water and sky, land and vegetation, the sun, moon and stars, fish and birds, beasts and human beings are all presented as the handiwork of God who spoke and it was done. One feature of the narrative of creation that distinguishes it from other religious and philosophical cosmologies is the absolute qualitative distinction that is made between God and the world, between Creator and creation. The material world neither emerged *ex Deo*, out of God himself as in certain versions of pantheism or as in neo-platonism; nor did it proceed *ex hulas,* out of some eternally or previously existing substance that is permeated or architected by the divine craftsman; rather creation proceeded *ex nihilo*, out of nothing which means that the cosmos is the product of God's free act whereby, in a manner independent from Himself, He brought into being out of nothing all the things that make up the world.

Certainly the crowning act of God's creative work was the making of humanity as male and female in the image and likeness of God. As a psycho-somatic unity, human beings in the totality of their material and immaterial structure constitute God's tangible image on the earth. They have been established as the divine symbol or representative on earth and charged with the task of exercising dominion and responsible stewardship as God's co-rulers or vice-regents in creation. This conception of the *imago Dei* confers on humanity a privileged ontological status, personal human dignity, as well as unique existential capacities—rational, affective, volitional, physical—to carry out their distinctive callings in the earth. The *imago Dei* also entails a theological teleology

consisting of the worship and service of God. Man's *telos* by creation is to be a worshipping being (*homo religiosus; homo adorans*) who serves God in the fundamental humanizing projects of building culture and civilization and in the development of the institution of marriage and family. The protological text, often referred to by theologians as the "creation decree," or "cultural mandate," summarizes this vocation and office of man in these familiar, but often neglected words.

> Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and *let them rule* over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; *male and female* He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth*, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (emphasis added)[39]

The creation story concludes with the detail about the provision of food for herbivorous man from the plants of the field and the fruits of the trees that were not only physically nourishing but also pleasing to the sight. When due consideration is given to the details of this aetiological narrative, the constituent elements of this story—the presence and worship of God, the vocation of culture-building, sexuality, marriage, family, food and so on—make it unmistakably clear that God intended for man to be eudaimonistically and hedonically happy, for this beatitude consisted of the presence and worship of God, and also included multiple external goods from creation's cornucopia that were necessary for the felicity of man.

The benediction of this account is appropriate: "And God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good."[40] The goodness of creation must be

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[39] Genesis 1: 26-28.
[40] Genesis 1: 31.

understood not only in the ontological sense of a sacred and sacramental world—"the essential structure of finitude is good,"[41] but also existentially, for "the good is that which is beneficial for humankind."[42] Dietrich Bonhoeffer says it best when he writes: "This blessing—*be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it*—affirms man totally in the world of the living in which he is placed. It is his total empirical existence that is blessed here, his creatureliness, his worldliness, and his earthiness."[43] The goodness of the world is rooted in the goodness of God, and the world's goods are intended for the worldly good of man, and for his happiness.

It is this very good constitution of the world which God designed and created for the *bonheur de vivre* that forms the basis and background for the celebrated Hebrew concept of *Shalom*. This term is commonly translated "peace," not in the reduced sense of a bare mental serenity, but in the comprehensive connotation of health, wholeness, integrity, soundness, well being. Xavier Léon-Dufour appropriately accents the "this-worldly" dimension of *Shalom* in setting forth a typical understanding of this pregnant biblical conception.

> Man desires peace from the very depths of his being. . . . To appreciate at its full value the reality concealed beneath this word [*Shalom*], one must sense the *earthly flavor* which subsists in the Semitic expression even in its most spiritual conception. We find it this way in the Bible right up through the last book of the NT. . . . The Hebrew world *shalom* is derived from a root which, according to its usages, designates the fact of being intact, complete. . . . Biblical peace, then, is not only the "pact" which permits a tranquil life. . . . It also indicates the well-being of daily existence, the state of the man who lives in harmony with nature, with

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[41] Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 182.

[42] John H. Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), p. 88.

[43] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: Two Biblical Studies*, trans. by John C. Fletcher (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1959), p.41.

himself, with God. Concretely, it is blessing, rest, glory, riches, salvation, life.[44]

In other words, biblical shalomic peace includes, but is a much richer concept than Stoic *ataraxia*, for it encompasses the comprehensive blessings of life in God including adequate if not abundant external goods. From the above description of creation, and on the basis of the Hebrew concept of *Shalom*, it is clear that the intention of God for the creation of man is unmitigated "human flourishing" in the richest sense of the terms.[45] I think Aristotle would agree and be delighted.

Indeed, we can go even more deeply in suggesting that not only are the benefits of creation necessary for human joy and delight, but also that in a profound and penetrating way, creation or the world is necessary for and the basis of the very act of worship. The apprehension of the world as God's creation and as an epiphany of God, and the appropriation of the gifts of creation—food and drink, bread and wine—for upholding ordinary life and transforming that life into a life in God, are necessary for and are at the center of divine worship. Life itself in all its multifaceted aspects can be worship, and to engage in the worship which is life requires the provisions and sustenance of creation. Worship itself which is to engender the renewal of life depends on the recognition of the true

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[44] Xavier Léon Dufour, s. v. "Peace," in *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, new revised edition (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 411 (emphasis added). Nicholas Wolterstorff constructs the entire argument of his book *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, which concerns the Christian responsibility for social justice and the well-being or happiness of the poor, on the Hebrew concept of Shalom. And because central to this guiding theme is the adequate provision of the physical needs or external goods for the happiness of the poor and needy, he rejects intellectualistic concepts of happiness after the manner of Thomas Aquinas who said that Christian happiness consisted exclusively in the intellectual contemplation of God.

[45] For a fine discussion on the conception of human flourishing, especially in relation to ethics of virtue, see Sarah Conly, "Flourishing and the Failure of the Ethics of Virtue," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 13 (1988): 83ff.

nature and structure of the divinely created world. In this context, secularism is the negation of worship.

In this regard, the Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann has pointed out that worship has nothing to do with turning *from this profane world to another sacred world*. Rather, *worship depends on the world*, for worship is the worshipper's response to the recognition of the ultimate meaning and structure of *this* world as God's creation, as the revelation or epiphany of God, and as the necessary basis and means of sustaining earthly life in God. Worship, therefore, neither denigrates the world nor denies its worth, but rather depends on it. Schmemann puts it like this. "It is *this world* (and not any 'other world'), it is *this life* (and not any 'other life') that were given to man to be a sacrament of the divine presence, given as communion with God, and it is only through this world, this life, by transforming them into communion with God that man was meant to be."[46] He adds these thoughts to his understanding of the place and purpose of this world in the worship of God and the life of a Christian.

> The first, basic definition of man is that he is *the priest*. He stands in the center of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God [esp. in food] and offering it to God [in his body]—and by filling the world with this eucharist [thanksgiving], he transforms his life, the one that he receives from the world, into life in God, into communion with Him. The world was created as the 'matter,' the material of one all-embracing eucharist, and man was created priest of this cosmic sacrament.[47]

Since worship itself is ontologically grounded in this world, it seems obvious that the world itself is the basis of human beatitude in a deeply spiritual way. External goods, therefore, are not only indispensable to human happiness, but are basic constituents of divine worship. In this regard, the difference

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[46] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), p. 100.

[47] Ibid., p. 15.

between the Stoic and Christian attitudes toward the external goods could hardly be more pronounced.

Charles Taylor has also pointed out the differences between the Stoic and Christian understanding of the value of external goods or the "indifferents" in their respective attitudes toward what is lost in acts of self-abnegation and ascetic renunciation. For the Stoic, nothing is lost and there is no pain because those things which are sacrificed are of no value. For the Christian, much is lost and there is great pain because of the very goodness and value of the things sacrificed. Taylor's words are so germane they are worth quoting *in extensio.*

> Christianity, particularly in its more ascetic variants, appears to be a continuation of Stoicism by other means, or (as Nietzsche sometimes says) a prolongation of Platonism. But for all the strong resemblances to Stoicism—for instance, in its universalism, its notion of providence, its exalting self-abnegation—there is a great gulf. In fact, the meaning of self-abnegation is radically different. The Stoic sage is willing to give up some "preferred" thing, e.g., health, freedom, or life, because he sees it genuinely as without value since only the whole order of events which, as it happens, includes its negation or loss, is of value. The Christian martyr, in giving up health, freedom, or life, doesn't declare them to be of no value. On the contrary, the act would lose its sense if they were not of great worth. To say that greater love hath no man that this, that a man give up his life for his friends, implies that life is a great good. The sentence would lose its point in reference to someone who renounced life from a sense of detachment; it presupposes he is giving up something.[48]

He continues to sketch of the differences between Stoicism and Christianity in this matter with these words.

> The great difference between Stoic and Christian renunciation is this: for the Stoic, what is renounced is, if rightly renounced, ipso facto not part of the good. For the Christian, what is renounced is thereby affirmed as good—both in the sense that the renunciation would lose its meaning if the thing were indifferent and in the sense that the renunciation is in furtherance of God's will, which precisely affirms the goodness of the kinds of things renounced: health, freedom, life. Paradoxically, Christian renunciation is an affirmation of the goodness of what is renounced. For

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[48] Taylor, *Sources*, p. 218.

> the Stoic, the loss of health, freedom, life does not affect the integrity of the good. On the contrary, the loss is part of a whole which is integrally good and couldn't be changed without making it less so. Stoics are drawn to images like that of a shadow [external goods] which is needed to set off the brilliance of the light [virtue]. In the Christian perspective, however, the loss is a breach in the integrity of the good. That is why Christianity requires an eschatological perspective of the restoral of that integrity, even though this has been variously understood.[49]

This last sentence in Taylor's quote is significant, for it shows that the integrity of life and the wholeness of man, which were diminished, though not entirely lost, at the fall of man into sin, must be restored in the eschaton in order that God's purposes might be fully restored, purposes that include the eschatological fulfillment of the human *telos* in a comprehensive manner.

But the biblical narrative obviously does not stop with creation but includes the accounts of the fall and redemption. As a matter of fact, the entire Judeo-Christian narrative may be viewed as the unfolding story or history of three fundamental biblical episodes, viz., creation, fall, and redemption. Shalomic wholeness intended by God for man in the formation of all things in the beginning was seriously mitigated in the deformation of all things in the fall, which in turn necessitated the reformation (or restoration) of all things in Christ through his work of redemption and establishment of new creation. The first three chapters in the book of Genesis which tell the story of creation and the fall are followed by the lengthy history or story of redemption which runs all the way from Genesis 3: 15 to the last chapter in the book of Revelation in the New Testament. Hence, the Bible, for all practical purposes, is the story of redemption with a three chapter preface. It traces cosmic history from creation to new creation, and tells how God has sought to salvage a sin-wrecked creation in order to restore it and human beings to health and wholeness once again.

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[49] Ibid.

This side of the fall, man has sought to restore his happiness, and it seems, from the perspective of the Christian world view, that in the process, he has made two fundamental mistakes. The first, and perhaps the primary one, is to seek happiness in the external goods of this world apart from and without God. This could be called the Epicurean and Utilitarian error. Augustine's early biography is characteristic of this miscalculation, for he wrote in his *Confessions*, "For it was my sin that not in Him, but in His creatures—myself and others—I sought for pleasures, sublimities, truths, and so fell headlong into sorrows, confusion, errors" (I. 18. 31). The procedure of seeking happiness exclusively in the external goods of this world—the "external goods = happiness" formula—leads to idolatry and concomitant misery in a theistically ordered universe. No amount of love for or devotion to any aspect of the finite creation will be able to satisfy the need in the human heart for the infinite God. This kind of *disordered* love culminates in a disordered life, and the unsatisfied or restless heart, as Augustine said, will remain restless until it rests in Him.[50]

The second error that overtakes many in their quest for happiness is found in the tradition of the Platonists, the Stoics, and the Manicheans, and in stoicized, platonized, and manicheanized Christians. This misjudgment is to seek happiness exclusively in some sort of angelic, detached, or hyper-spiritual manner in which happiness is exclusively found the either in the knowledge of the forms, or in the pursuit of rational virtue, or in the contemplation of truth, or in relationship with God *alone,* and so on. This is the paradigmatic Stoic formula for

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[50] For a further discussion of the Augustinian notion of disordered love and its relation to happiness, see William S. Babcock, "Cupiditas and Caritas: The Early Augustine on Love and Human Fulfillment," in Richard John Neuhaus, gen. ed., *Augustine Today*, Encounter Series vol.16 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 1ff. See also my own essay "St. Augustine's Conception of Disordered Love and its Contemporary Application."

felicity: "'Virtue' = happiness." While this approach properly regards the transcendent dimension of happiness, it also unfortunately denigrates the role and value of external goods, and also squelches the true nature and needs of man. Those Platonic, Stoic, and "Christian," sages and saints who have pursued this path have become heroes for many. On the other hand, they have also been the object of the severe criticism because of their strong tendencies toward a reductionism that takes the whole of human good and diminishes it to a part. In this case, blasphemous though it may sound, it really seems that man does not live by "God" alone, but also by bread.

Hence, if we are not to fall into either of these egregious errors, both of which maim true humanity, then we must recognize the legitimate contributors to comprehensive human happiness in the theistically designed and ordered world, for both the divine and the natural play a critical role. The Old Testament story of Job is paradigmatic in this regard.

Job. What Priam, king of Troy, is to Aristotle's apologetic for his view of happiness, so Job is to this argument regarding Christian happiness which I am seeking to advance here. Drawing on the Homeric account of the invasion of Troy by Agamemnon in which Priam's family, fortune, and friends are destroyed before his very eyes, Aristotle asks whether or not Priam underwent the deprivation of happiness in this tragic experience. Indeed, Priam's "name became almost proverbial for a man who had known the extreme of contrasting fortunes (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 11018^{a}, Juvenal, 10. 258ff.)."[51] For Aristotle, reason and intuition both taught that Priam surely suffered the demise of happiness at the loss of kith and kin, even though he did not lose his virtue. Hence, virtue by

[51] Herbert J. Rose and Charles M. Robertson, s. v. "Priam," in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, second edition.

itself is insufficient for happiness in that external goods make their necessary and proper contribution.

Aristotle's reason and intuition regarding the nature of happiness seem confirmed by divine revelation in this particular case, for Job, too, experienced the privation of his happiness in his trials and testing, despite his spiritual virtue.

Since the story is well known, the broadest overview will suffice here. After suffering a series of stunning losses, including his own family, wealth and health (external goods if there ever were any), Job is visited by his three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—who sit in silence and mourn with him for seven days before they speak. Then in three rounds of dialogues, Job's companions tell him on the basis of the time-honored doctrine of retribution that he is suffering because he has sinned. Job, nevertheless, resolutely maintains his innocence and pleads for a hearing with and demands an explanation from God for his unjustified pain. Meanwhile, a fourth advisor, Elihu, shows up at this scene of travail, and presents the apothegm that Job is suffering for the purposes of purification and character development. Job makes no response to Elihu's counsel. In the final scene, God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind at which time He gives Job a whirlwind tour of the universe to demonstrate to him its inscrutable wonders and the innumerable things that are beyond his understanding. Through this experience, Job learns to recognize God's own sovereignty and his own limited place in the immense scheme of things. God never answers Job's question regarding the reason(s) for his ordeal, but He does make it clear that in the mystery of suffering, there are purposes best left hidden and that God is present in them nevertheless. When Job repents, and prays for his first three counselors, his fortunes reversed and his property restored twofold. He died "an old man, full of days."

The very thing that the book of Job addresses is directly related to the possession of external goods and their relationship to happiness and religious virtue: is Job's spiritual devotion to God only based on the happiness which he enjoys as a result of a surplus of external advantages and material goods? Take away his possessions, liquidate the fundamental assets of his life, and see if his piety does not vanish along with his happiness. The story shows, however, that though he lost everything else—his family, fortune, and health—he never lost his spiritual virtue, for he never embraced the advice of his wife to curse God and die. "Curse God and die," she said. But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God [external goods] and not accept adversity [their removal]?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips."[52] Friedrich Jacobi speaks generously of Job's spiritual accomplishment.

> Job, maintaining his virtue, and justifying the utterance of the Creator respecting him, sits upon his heap of ashes as the glory and pride of God. God, and with Him the whole celestial host, witness the manner in which he bears his misfortune. He conquers, and his conquest is a triumph beyond the stars. Be it history, be it poetry: he who thus wrote was a divine seer.[53]

Job maintained his piety, and persevered in his theological commitment, a fact which no doubt sustained him during his time of duress. But the question still remains: was he, despite his spiritual rectitude, "happy" in any acceptable or reasonable sense of the word? Job's own testimony as it is scattered throughout the book will answer this question for us.

"Why is light given to him who suffers,
And life to the bitter of soul;
Who long for death, but there is none,
And dig for it more than for hidden treasures;

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[52] Job 2: 9-10.

[53] Friedrich H. Jacobi, *Werke*, iii. 427, quoted in F. Delitzsch, *Job*, in Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), p. vii.

Who rejoice greatly,
They exult when they find the grave?
" {Why is light given} to a man whose way is hidden,
And whom God has hedged in?
"For my groaning comes at the sight of my food,
And my cries pour out like water.
"For what I fear comes upon me,
And what I dread befalls me.
"I am not at ease, nor am I quiet,
And I am not at rest, but turmoil comes."[54]
.....
"Now my days are swifter than a runner;
They flee away, they see no good.
"They slip by like reed boats,
Like an eagle that swoops on its prey.
"Though I say, 'I will forget my complaint,
I will leave off my {sad} countenance and be cheerful,'
I am afraid of all my pains, I know that Thou wilt not acquit me.
"I am accounted wicked, Why then should I toil in vain?[55]
.....
"I loathe my own life; I will give full vent to my complaint;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
"I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me;
Let me know why Thou dost contend with me.[56]
.....
"I was at ease, but He shattered me,
And He has grasped me by the neck and shaken me to pieces;
He has also set me up as His target.
"His arrows surround me.
Without mercy He splits my kidneys open;
He pours out my gall on the ground.
"He breaks through me with breach after breach;
He runs at me like a warrior.
"I have sewed sackcloth over my skin,
And thrust my horn in the dust.
"My face is flushed from weeping,
And deep darkness is on my eyelids,
Although there is no violence in my hands,
And my prayer is pure.[57]
.....
"My spirit is broken, my days are extinguished,

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[54] Job 3: 20-26.
[55] Job 9: 25-29.
[56] Job 10: 1-2.
[57] Job 16:12-17.

The grave is {ready} for me.[58]

.....

And Job again took up his discourse and said,
"Oh that I were as in months gone by,
As in the days when God watched over me;
When His lamp shone over my head,
{And} by His light I walked through darkness;
As I was in the prime of my days,
When the friendship of God {was} over my tent;
When the Almighty was yet with me,
{And} my children were around me;
When my steps were bathed in butter,
And the rock poured out for me streams of oil![59]

"But now my soul is poured out within me;
Days of affliction have seized me.
"At night it pierces my bones within me,
And my gnawing {pains} take no rest.
"By a great force my garment is distorted;
It binds me about as the collar of my coat.
"He has cast me into the mire,
And I have become like dust and ashes.
"I cry out to Thee for help, but Thou dost not answer me;
I stand up, and Thou dost turn Thy attention against me.
"Thou hast become cruel to me;
With the might of Thy hand Thou dost persecute me.
"Thou dost lift me up to the wind {and} cause me to ride;
And Thou dost dissolve me in a storm.
"For I know that Thou wilt bring me to death
And to the house of meeting for all living.[60]

These quotations are probably overkill, but they do make a couple of important points germane to the present theme. First of all, they show that spiritual piety *alone* is apparently insufficient for happiness. Resolute faith in God is the foundation and basis for Christian happiness. But by itself in this life apart from certain necessary external goods it seems insufficient. From these texts it would seem that no one could successfully argue that during his time of testing Job was a happy man or even that he had much, if any, "joy." Job was a real

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[58] Job 17: 1.
[59] Job 29: 1-6.
[60] Job 30: 16-23.

man, felt real pain, lost real happiness, needed real relief, wanted real answers, and so on. Job wept. There was absolutely no Stoicism in his response to the loss of his substance, for these things were not indifferents, but were, in God, the essence of his life.

The second point is that in the biblical schema, the external goods and blessings of life are designed by God to make a significant and necessary contribution to human happiness as Job's case reveals. While they are certainly not the whole of happiness, far from it, nonetheless they play their necessary and God-ordained part. As a matter of fact, in the resolution of Job's dilemma when his fortune was restored, his final beatitude in life seems directly related to the restoration of those things which he had lost before. We read these concluding words in the epilogue.

> And the \Lord\ restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the \Lord\ increased all that Job had twofold. Then all his brothers, and all his sisters, and all who had known him before, came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the evil that the \Lord\ had brought on him. And each one gave him one piece of money, and each a ring of gold. And the \Lord\ blessed the latter {days} of Job more than his beginning, and he had 14,000 sheep, and 6,000 camels, and 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. And he had seven sons and three daughters. And he named the first Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. And in all the land no women were found so fair as Job's daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers. And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his grandsons, four generations. And Job died, an old man and *full of days.*[61]

Job's story would therefore seem to substantiate the very same point that Aristotle made using Priam as the example that a certain and sufficient supply of external goods are indispensable for human happiness, and that their loss diminishes felicity. This, along with the teaching about the goods and goodness of creation, the biblical concept of *Shalom*, the necessary relationship of this

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[61] Job 42: 10-17.

world to worship, and the truly sacrificial nature of Christian asceticism all combine to suggest that a proper understanding of the Christian narrative supports the view that external goods in a theistic universe are a necessary ingredient of authentic, complete human happiness.

But this is the Old Testament. Maybe New Testament teaching is considerably different regarding this matter of human happiness. An examination of selected teachings of Jesus and Paul will help to decide this question.

Jesus. According to Martin Hengel in his massive and erudite study on Judaism and Hellenism, Hellenistic philosophy and culture gained ground as an intellectual force in Jewish Palestine early and tenaciously. In his estimation, "from about the middle of the third century B.C. all Judaism must really be designated 'Hellenistic Judaism' in the strict sense." And not only this but "the greatest influence was exerted by the Stoa."[62] In light of this evidence, it is probably safe to suggest that Jesus himself would have been familiar with the

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[62] Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period,* 2 vols. trans. by John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), pp. 104, 103. Hengel also points out that some think that Stoicism was of Semitic origin, though others have given reasons for seriously doubting this suggestion. Nevertheless, here are Hengel's comments to this effect along with other statements about the extensive influence of Stoicism in this Palestine. He writes: ". . . all the philosophical schools were represented in Palestine and Phoenicia, but the preponderance of the Stoa is unmistakable. . . . It is certainly no coincidence that it was the Stoic school which exerted particular influence on this region and found most adherents. First, as J. Kaerst stressed, the Stoa was the dominant philosophy of Hellenism, and secondly, its founders Zeno of Citium in Cyprus and Chrysippus of Soloi in Cilicia were very probably Semites assimilated to Greek ways. In his great work, M. Pohlenz often refers to the influence of Semitic thought forms on the teaching edifice of the Stoa [see his *Die Stoa*, 2 vols. Göttingen, 1964; Hengel summarizes Pohlenz's evidence for the Semitic origin of the Stoa in volume 2 of his work, p. 59, note 233]. J. Bidez stressed Semitic and Syrian influence on the Stoa even more strongly; he was perhaps too one-sided in seeing it in a predominantly oriental spiritual movement [referring to his "La Cité du Soleil chez les Stoiciens," *Bull. Acad. roy Belg*., classe de lettres, 18, 1932, 244-94]" (p. 87).

substance of Stoic doctrines. But even though the gospel of John presents Jesus as the Logos incarnate, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, the one, if any, who could choose to live according to the virtue of reason and nature, nevertheless it is clear from the gospel accounts of his life and teaching that Jesus was certainly no Zeno, Chrysippus, Epictetus, or Marcus Aurelius. Though on some occasions he did reflect a kind of dispassionate Stoic temperament (particularly during his six trials before Jewish and Roman authorities), nevertheless, his personality is shaped by Jewish sensibilities and vitality. For example, Jesus was most Hebraic, and most *un-stoic,* when he angrily cleansed the temple of its money-changers,[63] when he forthrightly confronted the Pharisees and Jewish lawyers with heated rhetoric for their hypocrisy,[64] when he deeply lamented His rejection by the citizens of Jerusalem,[65] when he happily affirmed the intrinsic value of external goods such as food, drink, and friendship,[66] when he wept profusely over the death of his friend Lazarus,[67] when he intensely sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane before his crucifixion,[68] when he freely offered up prayers to God with loud crying and tears,[69] and finally, when out of a sense of utter abandonment he cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"[70] at the climax of his crucifixion. This kind of *pathos,* while never imbalanced, is what sharply distinguishes Jesus from the teaching and lifestyle of the Stoics. The manner in which Jesus experienced his passion

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[63] Matthew 21: 12-17; John 2: 14-22.

[64] Matthew 23: 1-39.
[65] Luke 13: 34-35.
[66] Matthew 9: 11; Luke 15: 2.
[67] John 11: 35.
[68] Luke 22: 39-46.
[69] Hebrews 5: 7.
[70] Matthew 27: 46.

also distances him from the Stoic ethos which was exemplified in the martyrdom of the Socrates whom the Stoics sought to emulate. In Taylor's words,

> This is, of course, what makes the death story of Jesus so different from that of Socrates, however much they have been put in parallel. Socrates tries to prove to his friends that he is losing nothing of value, that he is gaining a great good. In his last request to Crito, to pay his debt of a cock to Asclepius, he seems to imply that life is an illness of which death is the cure (Asclepius being the god of healing whom one rewards for cures). Socrates is serenely untroubled. Jesus suffers agony of soul in the garden, and is driven to despair on the cross, when he cries, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" At no point in the Passion is he serene or untroubled.[71]

These biographical moments in the life of Jesus show, if anything, that he was hardly willing to live according to the dictates of "nature," that he was a man of intense emotion and passion, and that virtue for him was far more complex than seeking to live rationally and serenely. Perhaps most importantly, and metaphysically, in his own intimacy with God, he taught that the universe is not absolutely determined by an impersonal force or logos that permeates it, but is rather created by and cared for by the heavenly "Father which art in heaven."

Two additional items deserve comment in discussing Jesus and Stoicism. First is the benevolent nature of his ministry, especially his miracles, in which he supernaturally restored a variety of external goods of which his benefactors had been deprived in a fallen world. These merciful acts of restoration were premised on the biblical ideals of Shalom and wholeness, and no doubt contributed to renewal of the well being of those who were in need. In one commentator's opinion, "Many of the healing stories simply tell how Jesus was confronted with a fellow human being in great need and was moved with pity and love to do something."[72] Thus, human destitution characterized by disease, hunger, thirst,

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[71] Taylor, *Sources*, p. 219.

[72] Hugh Silvester, "Miracles," in *Eerdmans' Handbook to Christian Belief*, Robin Keeley, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 90.

blindness, lameness, nakedness, demonic possession, and even death prompted Jesus' response so that he healed the sick, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, satisfied the thirsty, healed the blind, cured the lame, cast out the demons, stilled the storms, and even raised the dead. In performing these miraculous works, Jesus, in harmony with the overall biblical outlook, acknowledged the value of food, drink, health, friendship, clothing, sight, mobility, sanity, and the contribution of these items to human well being, and the importance of overcoming disorder. There is significant theological meaning to these deeds of power in that they not only bestowed blessing on the recipients, but also testified to and realized inchoatively what they signified, namely, the already present Messianic salvation which will find its completion in the eschatological kingdom of God. Far from the Stoic outlook of indifference, the very reason for the advent of Christ and his kingdom was to salvage a sin wrecked creation by restoring it and humanity to shalomic wholeness.

The second item of importance concerning Jesus and the Stoics is his own teaching on happiness, especially in the form of the beatitudes. Willem Vorster in his essay, "Stoics and Early Christians on Blessedness," points out that "unlike in Stoicism, in the New Testament is not used to express happiness. s and x dominate the semantic field of happiness in these [NT] writings."[73] s, typically translated "blessed" or "happy," is particularly important since it introduces the "beatitude formulas" in the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament. In light of this introductory term, the beatitudes in Scripture which convey genuine blessing and happiness have come to be known as "makarisms."

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[73] Willem S. Vorster, "Stoics and Early Christians on Blessedness," in David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, Wayne A. Meeks, eds., *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 44.

In the gospel of Matthew the beatitudes of Jesus, which are found at the beginning of his celebrated Sermon on the Mount, are set forth as the Christian program for happiness.[74] The blessing of happiness is pronounced upon those who possess certain spiritual virtues—for example, humility, gentleness, mercy, purity, etc.—in the recognition that such a condition has its present and future reward. These are the principles that govern the personality and lifestyle of the members of Jesus' new spiritual order of redemption, the kingdom of God, which is the source of human transformation, and location of genuine felicity, both now and in the future.

In the parallel passage in the gospel of Luke,[75] the beatitudes are pronounced upon those who lack external goods—the poor, hungry, weeping, hated,—in the recognition that, by virtue of their membership in the kingdom, their needs will be met in the eschaton. Those in this condition are exhorted to wait for the reversal of their lowly condition on the last day, which is a hope that brings blessedness even in the present. Their circumstance is contrasted with the woe of those who possess all things right now, but who are apparently

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[74] Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great (Matthew 5: 3-12.)

[75] Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and heap insults upon you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets (Luke 6: 20-26).

excluded from the reign of the kingdom. Such will lose their present satisfaction in the future. Its far better to be among those who lack satiety in the present as members of his kingdom, but who will receive it in the future, rather than to be in company with those who possess it now outside of the realm of blessing, and who will lose it in the future.

Three points will round out this discussion of Jesus' teaching on happiness in the beatitudes. First of all, with the coming of Christ, all goods are virtually given and happiness finds its ideal and its fulfillment in him. For he is the kingdom of God already present and he gives the supreme good, himself as the kingdom of God, the *summum bonum*. Hence, the beatitude pronounced on the spiritually virtuous (Matthew), and the physically needy (Luke) are those who participate in his kingdom and share its happiness in one form now in the present, and in a complete manner in the future. Second, the happiness pronounced in the beatitudes is comprehensive in scope, for it is concerned with the fulfillment of both the spiritual and the physical aspects of man. And whatever is lacking in their present experience will find complete fulfillment in the age to come in which wholeness will be restored, and beatitude complete. Third, the beatitudes are eschatological in nature in a realized and future sense. Human happiness, while experienced only partially now and in certain ways (realized eschatology), will find complete expression in the eschaton (future eschatology). The mourners, the meek, the merciful, the poor, the hungry, the hated can be happy *now* because they are in Christ's kingdom and experience its blessing, and because they are promised and are certain that they will find comfort, inheritance, mercy, satiety, love, etc. on the last day when God sets things right. Their present experience, plus the future triumph of God, determines true happiness for the followers of Christ.

I turn now to a cursory consideration of St. Paul and his contacts with Stoicism.

St. Paul. What was the essential orientation of St. Paul—Jewish, Hellenist, Christian? Interpreters of Paul are divided on this question. By his own admission, at least prior to his conversion experience on the road to Damascus, he identified himself as *Paulus Hebraicus*—"a Hebrew of Hebrews, and as to the [Jewish] law, a Pharisee."[76] Others have been inclined to present him as *Paulus Hellenisticus*, that is, as one thoroughly familiar with and to some significant extent influenced by the philosophic traditions of his age. That he was conversant with the content of his cultural milieu there would seem to be no doubt. Abraham Malherbe in his thorough work, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, draws what seems to be a reasonable conclusion about Paul's relationship to the intellectual traditions of his day.

> During the last hundred years, New Testament scholars have shown that many aspects of Paul's life and letters are illuminated when they are examined in the light of Greco-Roman culture. 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. This is not to argue that he was a technical philosopher; neither were his philosophical contemporaries. The philosophers with whom Paul should be compared were not metaphysicians who specialized in systematizing abstractions, but, like Paul were preachers and teachers who saw their main goal to be the reformation of the lives of people they encountered in a variety of contexts, ranging from the imperial court and the salons of the rich to the street corners.[77]

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[76] Philippians 3: 5; see also Galatians 1: 13-14.

[77] Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 68. He goes on to say that "the points of similarity between Paul and his philosophic competitors may be stressed to the point that he is viewed as a type of hellenistic philosopher" (p. 69), but he rightly believes this is going too far. Earlier in the same book, Mahlerbe shows how Paul employed his philosphic understanding and used it for specifically Christian purposes. He writes, "Paul himself used the philosophic traditions with at least as much originality as his contemporaries did. A major difference between them is that Paul is neither as schoolbookish nor self-conscious in using the traditions as

The question, of course, for present purposes is to what extent Paul was familiar with and influenced by Stoic philosophy and how did this contact affect is views of happiness. In what ways, if any, is Paul's theology and ethics under the power of Stoic notions?

That Paul encountered representatives of the Stoa and even made use of their ideas is clear. According to the book of Acts, while Paul was in Athens, "some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him."[78] More importantly is the fact that Paul quoted from the Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens in these words: "For in Him we live, move and exist, as even some of your own [Stoic] poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.'"[79] The phrase could have come from either a hymn by Cleanthes or from a poem by Aratus according to J. B. Lightfoot who also points out that Paul's "speech on the Aeropagus, addressed partly to Stoics, shows a clear appreciation of the elements of truth contained in their philosophy, and a studied coincidence with their modes of expression."[80]

Another celebrated connection is the relationship between Paul and Seneca and the correspondence which supposedly followed the latter's conversion to Christianity under Paul's influence. This correspondence, consisting of some fourteen letters, was probably forged in the fourth century either to recommend Seneca to Christian readers or to recommend Christianity

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they were. His letters, after all, are not tractates on psychogogic practice but are themselves examples of that practice. In his letters Paul does not discuss those traditions overtly. He does not engage in disputes about the proper practice, as the philosophers did; indeed, he does not even focus on the traditions in an attempt to discover what was to be appropriated or rejected. Paul has another agenda, and if the question of influence is to be addressed, it is to be done in more subtle and nuanced ways than has often been the case" (p. 8).

[78] Acts 17: 18.

[79] Acts 17: 28.

[80] J. B. Lightfoot, "Paul and Seneca," in *St. Paul's Epistle to the Phillipians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1913, 1953), p. 304.

to readers of Seneca. In any case, F. C. Grant has offered a reasonable interpretation of the nature and value of this correspondence.

> Of course it was an effort to make Seneca dependent upon Christianity for his best thoughts; just as the Alexandrines had made Plato dependent upon Moses. St. Jerome apparently credits the letters. Tertullian much earlier, had spoken of Seneca as "often our own." Lactantius, and others of the apologists, alluded to Seneca and Epictetus as *nostri* [ours]. This spurious correspondence, and the early patristic esteem . . . taken together with certain early medieval traditions, all combine to indicate the Christian appreciation of Stoicism and of the mental kinship between the Apostle to the Gentiles [Paul] and his great Stoical contemporaries.[81]

Because of these connections and many more besides, many interpreters of Paul have Stoicized him completely and argued that he, not having known the historical Jesus and possessing only a scant knowledge of his life and teaching, which itself was adapted to suit his own interests and needs, really got his ideas for his theology and ethics from Stoicism. B. W. Bacon's comments are representative of this perspective: "Some of his [Paul's] profoundest and most characteristic ideas are, to say the least, not mainly rooted in the soil of Judaism, but draw their principal nourishment from sources directly or indirectly Stoic."[82] Similarities of imagery, wording, and conceptuality between the content of Paul's letters and Stoic ideas, some superficial and some significant, have engendered comments like these and seemingly justified them.[83] However, many others believe that while there are sufficiently distinct traces of Stoic discourse in Paul, the differences separating Paul and the Stoics are many and indeed profound.

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[81] F. C. Grant, "St. Paul and Stoicism," *The Biblical World* 45 (1915), p. 268.

[82] Quoted in Grant, p. 268.

[83] J. B. Lightfoot cites the following passages in the Pauline literature which he believes correspond with texts in Seneca (pp. 289-90). Acts 17: 24-25, 27, 29; Romans 1; 23, 28, 32; 2: 21-22; 8: 24; 12: 21; 1 Corinthians 2: 11; 7: 31; 2 Corinthians 3: 17-18; 4: 7; 6: 14; 9: 7; Ephesians 5: 16, 28-29; Colossians 2: 22; 1 Timothy 2: 9; 4: 8; 5: 6; 6: 7; 2 Timothy 3: 7.

The usage of Stoic language and imagery did not in a Christian context convey the same outlook or world view. As Fairweather has pointed out, "in the moral vocabulary of the Stoics, St. Paul found ready to hand terms admirably fitted to express various phases of the Christian life, and that he did not hesitate to make use of them, any more than St. John did in appropriating the term Logos as the most convenient expression of his conception of the person of Christ. But for the Stoic and Christian the same language did not necessarily convey the same meaning."[84] In other words, the parallels between St. Paul and the Stoics are more superficial than substantive, more rhetorical (literally) than real.

If this is the case, and I think it probably is, the Apostle must be ultimately understood not so much *Paulus Hellenisticus*, and not even as *Paulus Hebraicus*, even though he retains the influence of these pervasive religious and intellectual traditions, but in the final analysis he remains *Paulus Christianus.* What, then, is Paul the Christian's view of happiness?

He himself had "learned to be content" in whatever circumstances he was in, and also had experienced and counseled others on how to find the secret of spiritual peace through prayer.[85] However, while in the Synoptic gospels and the teachings of Jesus there are many beatitudes that convey His understanding of human felicity, there are hardly any makarisms that convey this concept in Paul, in fact, only two. Yet these do have important theological significance. Paul calls the man blessed who enjoys the forgiveness of sin, and the other refers to the beatitude of those who do not doubt their ethical convictions especially in regard to questionable moral practices. His only other use of the word s (and not as a makarism) is in reference to the unmarried because they are

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[84] William Fairweather, *Jesus and the Greeks, or, Early Christianity in the Tideway of Hellenism.* Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924), p. 300.

[85] Philippians 4: 7, 12.

spared from domestic troubles and can give themselves freely to God.[86] But for the most part, Paul offers no specific doctrine of happiness. It will, I think, have to be developed in the context of his broader theological framework.

In recent decades there has been a growing consensus among Paul's interpreters that have found the point of departure to the whole of the Pauline corpus in the redemptive-historical, eschatological character of Paul's theology. What this technical phrase means is well explained by Herman Ridderbos.

> The governing motif in Paul's preaching is the saving activity of God in the advent and work, particularly in the death and resurrection, of Christ. This activity is on the one hand the fulfillment of the work of God in the history of the nation Israel, the fulfillment therefore also of the [Old Testament] Scriptures; on the other hand it reaches out to the ultimate consummation of the parousia of Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God. It is this great redemptive-historical framework within which the whole of Paul's preaching [and theology] must be understood and all of its subordinate parts receive their place and organically cohere.[87]

For Paul, the eschatological expectation of the coming of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament has been *already realized or fulfilled in part* (hence, "realized eschatology") in the coming of Christ through his death, resurrection, and ascension, and most importantly in the coming of the Holy Spirit. Paul, who has been aptly termed the "theologian of the Spirit" recognized that the presence of the kingdom of God in Jesus brought with it the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost who is the agent of the restoration and renewal of humanity and even the entire cosmos (redemption in the biblical drama is cosmic in scope). And it is the gift of the Spirit to the believer in Christ which is the key to the Pauline conception of beatitude or happiness. The Spirit as the mediator of the presence of God is concerned not only with the impartation of peace and the source of ethical

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[86] Romans 4: 7; 14: 22; 1 Corinthians 7: 40. For a discussion, see *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "Μακαριος."

[87] Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. by John Richard DeWitt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 39.

motivation and power, but most importantly is concerned with *the renewal of the whole man (body, soul, spirit) in all the functions and potentialities of his human existence as the creation, and now new creation of God.* This is the all embracing significance of Christ's cosmic redemption mediated by the Spirit which must be understood on the recognition of God as the Creator and Redeemer of heaven and earth. It is redeemed humanity's position and hope in this redemptive-historical, eschatological context that is the basis of his happiness both now and unto the ages of ages.[88] For this reason, Paul could command his readers in this manner:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice!"[89]

Conclusion

Both the Judeo-Christian and Stoic narratives, like all philosophies and religions, are deeply concerned about the happiness of the human family. They differ radically, however, in what happiness is and how to obtain it.

Here is a summary of the Christian viewpoint. In the Judeo-Christian story, happiness is a comprehensive concept that address the whole person—body, soul, and spirit—and all human needs, both material and immaterial. First of all, it is based on the intrinsic value and goodness of the entire cosmos as created by God and as necessary for the beatitude of man. It is confirmed by the example of Job, for although he possessed quintessential theological virtue in his unwavering commitment to God, nevertheless, like King Priam of Troy, Job found himself complaining bitterly about his destitute and unhappy life engendered by the extensive loss of his personal and humanizing goods. This wholistic conception of human happiness is deepened by Jesus and Paul. In life and death, and by precept and example, Jesus proved that he was no Stoic and he

[88] Adapted from Ridderbos, p. 43.
[89] Philippians 4: 4.

taught no Stoic doctrines. In his miracles and teaching, he demonstrated a constant concern for the well being of the whole of person, spiritually and physically, both now and in the future. Participation in the present and future manifestations of the kingdom of God and in its promise of wholistic restoration of the total person was the basis of human happiness. Paul's view is an extension of this. For Paul, Jesus and the presence of his kingdom in its eschatological fulfillment was the source of human felicity especially in the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins and in the transformative power of the Holy Spirit whose chief concern is the restoration and renewal of the whole human person in all of life to the glory of God. *Shalom* is truly the best term that the biblical vocabulary has to offer when it comes to capturing the nature of the Christian conception of happiness. Its reference to wholeness, soundness, and integrity as the intention of God for man points to a comprehensive human flourishing which is co-extensive with life itself. In this light, it is no wonder that St. Irenaeus said that the glory of God is a man fully alive.

The Stoic conception of happiness, on the other hand, is radically different. It focuses on the obligation to live in accordance with nature and its dictates. Nature and human nature are both governed by logos or reason such that living a life according to nature meant living a life according reason, especially in the making of rational choices. This is the whole of virtue and the key to happiness and as such it is in the perfect control of the Stoic sage. The truly virtuous Stoic, though he may desire them, was completely indifferent to the events of nature and to its external goods or pains: they contribute nothing to and can take nothing from human happiness. Virtue is happiness and the genuine Stoic sage, in the final analysis, cares for nothing else.

In comparing these two narrative accounts of happiness, I must agree with James B. Brown in concluding that Stoicism at its very best is but a "limited

human gospel."[90] While in coheres beautifully with its fundamental physical and metaphysical foundations, it simply fails to do justice to the nature and exigencies of the human condition. Its ethical reductionism of happiness to virtue is, in the end, an assault on love—love for oneself, love for God, love for others, and love for the world. It is surprising that it has had such a profound impact throughout history, especially in the City of God.

On the other hand, the Christian account of happiness is the expression of a comprehensive divine gospel, one which also fits nicely into the web of the theological beliefs which ground it. It seems to comply fully with the nature and needs of man, spiritually and materially. It exalts love in every direction and does so in a rightly ordered manner. It is surprising that it has not had a greater impact throughout history, especially in the City of Man.

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[90] James Baldwin Brown, *Stoics and Saints* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1893), p. 57.

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