

STOICISM  
IN  
EARLY  
CHRISTIANITY

*Edited by*  
Tuomas Rasimus,  
Troels Engberg-Pedersen,  
*and* Ismo Dunderberg

  
**Baker Academic**  
*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

© 2010 by Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg

Published by Baker Academic  
a division of Baker Publishing Group  
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287  
www.bakeracademic.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Stoicism in early Christianity / edited by Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-0-8010-3951-5 (alk. paper)

1. Stoics. 2. Philosophy and religion—Rome. 3. Church history—Primitive and early church, ca. 30–600. 4. Bible. N.T.—Philosophy. I. Rasimus, Tuomas. II. Engberg-Pedersen, Troels. III. Dunderberg, Ismo.

BR128.A2.S76 2010

261.2—dc22

2010021683

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In keeping with biblical principles of creation stewardship, Baker Publishing Group advocates the responsible use of our natural resources. As a member of the Green Press Initiative, our company uses recycled paper when possible. The text paper of this book is comprised of 30% post-consumer waste.



# CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Abbreviations	ix
1. Setting the Scene: Stoicism and Platonism in the Transitional Period in Ancient Philosophy <i>Troels Engberg-Pedersen</i>	1
2. Stoicism as a Key to Pauline Ethics in Romans <i>Runar M. Thorsteinsson</i>	15
3. Stoic Law in Paul? <i>Niko Huttunen</i>	39
4. Jesus the Teacher and Stoic Ethics in the Gospel of Matthew <i>Stanley K. Stowers</i>	59
5. An “Emotional” Jesus and Stoic Tradition <i>Harold W. Attridge</i>	77
6. The Emotional Jesus: Anti-Stoicism in the Fourth Gospel? <i>Gitte Buch-Hansen</i>	93
7. Stoic Physics, the Universal Conflagration, and the Eschatological Destruction of the “Ignorant and Unstable” in 2 Peter <i>J. Albert Harrill</i>	115
8. The Stoics and the Early Christians on the Treatment of Slaves <i>John T. Fitzgerald</i>	141
9. Facing the Beast: Justin, Christian Martyrdom, and Freedom of the Will <i>Nicola Denzey</i>	176

10. A Stoic Reading of the <i>Gospel of Mary</i> : The Meaning of “Matter” and “Nature” in <i>Gospel of Mary</i> 7.1–8.11 <i>Esther de Boer</i>	199
11. Stoic Traditions in the School of Valentinus <i>Ismo Dunderberg</i>	220
12. Critical Reception of the Stoic Theory of Passions in the <i>Apocryphon of John</i> <i>Takashi Onuki</i>	239
13. Stoic Ingredients in the Neoplatonic <i>Being-Life-Mind</i> Triad: An Original Second-Century Gnostic Innovation? <i>Tuomas Rasimus</i>	257
Index of Modern Authors	275
Index of Subjects	281
Index of Ancient Sources	288

## PREFACE

What was the earliest Christian interaction with Greco-Roman philosophy like? And how early did it begin? The story has often been told of the engagement with Middle Platonism of the Greek and Latin church fathers up until Origen. Over the last few decades, however, attempts have been made to take the role of philosophy in early Christianity further back into the first century. Here the potential role of Stoicism has also been variously explored. Faced with this new scholarly situation, the three editors of this volume decided that the time was ripe for an investigation into the earliest Christianity and its relationship to Stoicism.

The volume that has come out of this venture is exploratory in nature. In no way did we attempt to cover the whole field. The possible interaction of Stoicism and Platonism in early Christian texts is also not a primary concern in this volume. However, we wanted the volume to address the following question head-on: To what extent are distinctly Stoic ideas useful for illuminating the meaning of Christian texts from the first and second centuries? We suggest that early Christians—the authors of New Testament writings, those of noncanonical early Christian writings, and some early apologists—adopted philosophical ideas in the first and second centuries, and that it was specifically Stoicism that influenced their views, often to a degree greater than Middle Platonism. In this way, an entirely new light can be thrown on the relationship between philosophy and religion at the birth of Christianity.

The essays are arranged in a roughly chronological order. After an introductory chapter by Troels Engberg-Pedersen that sets the scene, there is, first, a series of essays on New Testament authors and Stoicism by Runar M. Thorsteinsson (Romans), Niko Huttunen (Paul and the law), Stanley K. Stowers (Gospel of Matthew), Harold W. Attridge (Gospel of John), Gitte Buch-Hansen (Gospel of John), and J. Albert Harrill (2 Peter). Then follow essays by John T. Fitzgerald (Christians and Stoics on slavery) and Nicola Denzey (Stoics, Justin, and martyrdom). Finally, the presence of Stoic ideas in other early Christian evidence from the second century is explored by Esther de Boer (*Gospel of Mary*), Ismo Dunderberg (Valentinianism), Takashi Onuki (*Apocryphon of John*), and Tuomas Rasimus (Sethianism and Stoicizing Platonism).

It remains to thank everybody involved in bringing off this project, which began during conversations at the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting in

Washington, D.C., in November 2006. In particular, we would like to thank each of the contributors, who not only accepted our invitation to participate but also delivered what we were after. We would also like to thank Hendrickson Publishers, which has been uncommonly forthcoming in the preparation of this project. Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to Margot Stout Whiting, who has helped improve the English of several non-English-speaking contributors. It is our hope that this volume will help to strengthen a field of study where so much more remains to be done.

Just before the publication of this volume, the editors heard of Esther de Boer's premature and tragic death on July 6, 2010. We are grateful to be able to publish her essay here in her memory.

Tuomas Rasimus  
Troels Engberg-Pedersen  
Ismo Dunderberg

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De migratione Abrahami (On the Migration of Abraham)</i>
<i>Abst.</i>	<i>De abstinentia (On Abstinence)</i>
<i>Acad. post.</i>	<i>Academica posteriora (The Later Academics)</i>
<i>Adv. Ar.</i>	<i>Adversus Arium (Against Arius)</i>
<i>Adv. haer.</i>	<i>Adversus haereses (Against Heresies)</i>
<i>Aet.</i>	<i>De aeternitate mundi (On the Eternity of the World)</i>
<i>Agr.</i>	<i>De agricultura (De re rustica) (Agriculture)</i>
<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Annales (Annals)</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.</i> Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972–
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquitates judaicae (Jewish Antiquities)</i>
<i>Anth.</i>	<i>Anthologium (Anthology)</i>
<i>Ap. John</i>	<i>The Apocryphon of John</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apologia (Apology)</i>
<i>1 Apol.</i>	<i>Apologia i (First Apology)</i>
<i>2 Apol.</i>	<i>Apologia ii (Second Apology)</i>
<i>ASV</i>	<i>American Standard Version</i>
<i>BDAG</i>	<i>Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</i> 3d ed. Chicago, 1999
<i>Bell. civ.</i>	<i>Bellum civile (Civil War)</i>
<i>Ben.</i>	<i>De beneficiis (On Favors)</i>
<i>BG</i>	<i>Berolinensis Gnosticus (= Berlin Codex 8502)</i>
<i>BGU</i>	<i>Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden.</i> 15 vols. Berlin, 1895–1983
<i>Carn. Chr.</i>	<i>De carne Christi (The Flesh of Christ)</i>
<i>Cat. Maj.</i>	<i>Cato Major (Cato the Elder)</i>
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum: Series latina.</i> Turnhout, 1953–
<i>Cels.</i>	<i>Contra Celsum (Against Celsus)</i>
<i>Char.</i>	<i>Characteres (Characters)</i>
<i>Cher.</i>	<i>De cherubim (On the Cherubim)</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum latinarum.</i> Leipzig and Berlin, 1893–

<i>Civ.</i>	<i>De civitate Dei (The City of God)</i>
<i>Claud.</i>	<i>Divus Claudius (The Deified Claudius)</i>
<i>CLE</i>	<i>Carmina latina epigraphica</i> . F. Bücheler and E. Lommatzsch, eds. 3 vols. Leipzig, 1895–1926
<i>Clem.</i>	<i>De clementia (On Clemency)</i>
<i>Cohib. ira</i>	<i>De cohibenda ira (On the Control of the Anger)</i>
<i>Comm. not.</i>	<i>De communibus notitiis contra Stoicos (On Common Conceptions)</i>
<i>Comm. Phlm.</i>	<i>Commentariorum in epistulam ad Philemonem liber (Commentary on Philemon)</i>
<i>Comm. 1 Tim.</i>	<i>Commentariorum in epistulam i ad Timotheum liber (Commentary on 1 Timothy)</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>De confusione linguarum (On the Confusion of Tongues)</i>
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>De congressu eruditionis gratia (On the Preliminary Studies)</i>
<i>Const.</i>	<i>De Constantia sapientiis (On Constancy)</i>
<i>Cont.</i>	<i>Controversiae (Controversies)</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum</i>
<i>Deipn.</i>	<i>Deipnosophistae (Philosophers at Dinner)</i>
<i>De mens.</i>	<i>De mensibus (On the Months)</i>
<i>De princ.</i>	<i>De principiis (On the First Principles)</i>
<i>Deus</i>	<i>Quod Deus sit immutabilis (That God Is Unchangeable)</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogus cum Tryphone (Dialogue with Trypho)</i>
<i>Diss.</i>	<i>Dissertationes (Discourses)</i>
<i>Ebr.</i>	<i>De ebrietate (On Drunkenness)</i>
<i>El. theol.</i>	<i>Elementa theologiae (Elements of Theology)</i>
<i>Ench.</i>	<i>Encheiridion (Manual)</i>
<i>Enn.</i>	<i>Ennead</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae morales (Moral Epistles)</i>
<i>Epict. diss.</i>	<i>Epicteti dissertationes (Discourses of Epictetus)</i>
<i>ET</i>	<i>English translation</i>
<i>Eth. nic.</i>	<i>Ethica nichomachea (Nicomachean Ethics)</i>
<i>Exc. Theod.</i>	<i>Excerpta ex Theodoto (Excerpts from Theodotus)</i>
<i>Ex. mart.</i>	<i>Exhortatio ad martyrium (Exhortation to Martyrdom)</i>
<i>Fat.</i>	<i>De fato (On Fate)</i>
<i>Fin.</i>	<i>De finibus (On Ends)</i>
<i>Fuga</i>	<i>De fuga et inventione (On Flight and Finding)</i>
<i>GCS</i>	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte</i> . Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897–
<i>Gen. corr.</i>	<i>De generatione et corruptione (Generation and Corruption)</i>
<i>Gos. Mary</i>	<i>The Gospel of Mary</i>
<i>Gos. Phil.</i>	<i>The Gospel of Philip</i>
<i>Gos. Truth</i>	<i>The Gospel of Truth</i>
<i>Helv.</i>	<i>Ad Helviam (To Helvia)</i>
<i>Herc. fur.</i>	<i>Hercules furens (The Madness of Hercules)</i>
<i>Herc. Ot.</i>	<i>Hercules Oetaeus (Hercules on Mount Oeta)</i>

<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica (Ecclesiastical History)</i>
<i>Hist. phil.</i>	<i>Historia philosophiae (History of Philosophy)</i>
<i>Hist. Rom.</i>	<i>Historia Romana (Roman History)</i>
<i>Hom.</i>	<i>Pseudo-Clementine Homilies</i>
<i>Hom. 1 Cor.</i>	<i>Homiliae in epistulam i ad Corinthios (Homilies on First Corinthians)</i>
<i>In Ar. Phys.</i>	<i>In Aristotelis physica paraphrasis (On Aristotle's Physics)</i>
<i>In categ.</i>	<i>In Aristotelis categorias commentarium (Commentary on Aristotle's Categories)</i>
<i>In Metaph.</i>	<i>In Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria (Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics)</i>
<i>Interpr. Know.</i>	<i>Interpretation of Knowledge</i>
<i>In Tim.</i>	<i>In Platonis Timaeum commentaria (Commentary on Plato's Timaeus)</i>
<i>Ira</i>	<i>De ira (On Anger)</i>
<i>L.A.E.</i>	<i>Life of Adam and Eve</i>
<i>Laps.</i>	<i>De lapsis (The Lapsed)</i>
<i>LCL</i>	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>De legibus (On Laws)</i>
<i>Leg. all.</i>	<i>Legum allegoriae (Allegorical Interpretation)</i>
<i>L-S</i>	<i>Long, A. A., and D. N. Sedley. The Hellenistic Philosophers. 2 vols. Cambridge, 1987</i>
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, and H. S. Jones. A Greek-English Lexicon. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996</i>
<i>LXX</i>	<i>Septuagint</i>
<i>Mand.</i>	<i>Mandate</i>
<i>Marc.</i>	<i>Ad Marciam de consolatione (On Consolation to Marcia)</i>
<i>Mart.</i>	<i>Ad martyras (To the Martyrs)</i>
<i>Mart. Pol.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
<i>Math.</i>	<i>Adversus mathematicos (Against the Mathematicians)</i>
<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Memorabilia (Recollections)</i>
<i>Metam.</i>	<i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>Mixt.</i>	<i>De mixtione (On Mixture)</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	<i>Moralia (Morals)</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	<i>De vita Mosis (On the Life of Moses)</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Masoretic Text</i>
<i>Mur.</i>	<i>Pro Murena (For Lucius Murena)</i>
<i>Nat.</i>	<i>Naturales quaestiones (Natural Questions)</i>
<i>Nat. d.</i>	<i>De natura deorum (The Nature of the Gods)</i>
<i>Nat. hist.</i>	<i>Naturalis historia (Natural History)</i>
<i>Nat. hom.</i>	<i>De natura hominis (On the Nature of Man)</i>
<i>NHC</i>	<i>Nag Hammadi Codex</i>
<i>NIV</i>	<i>New International Version</i>
<i>NJPS</i>	<i>Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text</i>

<i>Noct. att.</i>	<i>Noctes atticae (Attic Nights)</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Octavius</i>
<i>Oec.</i>	<i>Oeconomicus (The Economist)</i>
<i>Off.</i>	<i>De officiis (On Duties)</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	<i>De opificio mundi (On the Creation of the World)</i>
<i>Otio</i>	<i>De otio (On Leisure)</i>
<i>OTP</i>	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York, 1983
<i>Pan.</i>	<i>Panarion (Medicine Chest)</i>
<i>Perpetua</i>	<i>Passion of Perpetua</i>
PG	Patrologia graeca [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886
<i>Phaedr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Philops.</i>	<i>Philopseudes (The Lover of Lies)</i>
<i>PHP</i>	<i>De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis (On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato)</i>
<i>Plant.</i>	<i>De plantatione (On Planting)</i>
<i>Plat. Theol.</i>	<i>Theologia Platonica (Platonic Theology)</i>
P.Lond.	Greek Papyri in the London Museum
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politica (Politics)</i>
<i>Polyb.</i>	<i>Ad Polybium de consolatione (To Polybius on Consolation)</i>
P.Oxy.	Oxyrhynchus Papyri
<i>Praep. ev.</i>	<i>Praeparatio evangelica (Preparation for the Gospel)</i>
<i>Princ.</i>	<i>De principiis (First Principles)</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>De providentia (On Providence)</i>
P.Ryl.	Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library
<i>Pyrr.</i>	<i>Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes (Outlines of Pyrrhonism)</i>
<i>Pyrrh.</i>	<i>Pyrrhus (Life of Pyrrhus)</i>
QE	<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum (Questions and Answers on Exodus)</i>
QG	<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin (Questions and Answers on Genesis)</i>
<i>Rec.</i>	<i>Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions</i>
<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Refutatio omnium haeresium (Refutation of All Heresies)</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Resp.</i>	<i>De republica (On the State)</i>
<i>Saty.</i>	<i>Satyricon</i>
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf. 1943–
<i>Sent.</i>	<i>Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes (Sentences)</i>
<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	<i>De somniis (On Dreams)</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus (On the Special Laws)</i>
<i>Spect.</i>	<i>De spectaculis (The Shows)</i>
<i>Steles Seth</i>	<i>The Three Steles of Seth</i>

<i>Stoic. rep.</i>	<i>De Stoicorum repugnantiis (On Stoic Self-contradictions)</i>
<i>Strom.</i>	<i>Stromata (Miscellanies)</i>
<i>SVF</i>	<i>Stoicorum veterum fragmenta</i> . H. von Arnim. 4 vols. Leipzig, 1903–1924
<i>T. Dan</i>	<i>Testament of Dan</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>
<i>T. Job</i>	<i>Testament of Job</i>
<i>TNIV</i>	Today's New International Version
<i>Tranq.</i>	<i>De tranquillitate animi (On the Tranquility of Mind)</i>
<i>Tri. Trac.</i>	<i>The Tripartite Tractate</i>
<i>Tusc.</i>	<i>Tusculanae disputationes (Tusculan Disputations)</i>
<i>Virt.</i>	<i>De virtutibus (On Virtues)</i>
<i>Virt. mor.</i>	<i>De virtute morali (On Moral Virtue)</i>
<i>Vit. auct.</i>	<i>Vitarum auctio (Philosophies for Sale)</i>
<i>Vit. beat.</i>	<i>De vita beata (On the Happy Life)</i>
<i>Vit. phil.</i>	<i>Vitae philosophorum (Lives of Eminent Philosophers)</i>
<i>Vit. Plot.</i>	<i>Vita Plotini (Life of Plotinus)</i>
<i>W-H</i>	Wachsmuth, C. and O. Hense. 1974–1975. <i>Ioannis Stobaei: Anthologium</i> . 3d ed. 5 vols. Berlin: Weidmann



# SETTING THE SCENE: STOICISM AND PLATONISM IN THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

Troels Engberg-Pedersen  
University of Copenhagen

The centuries immediately following the end of the Hellenistic age remain a murky area in the history of philosophy. While a great deal of work has been done in recent years to rehabilitate Hellenistic thought itself from the generally negative assessment of the nineteenth century, the thesis that later philosophy traces a decline into “eclecticism” . . . retains a programmatic hold over studies of the period. Three centuries of intellectual activity are held to mark out a kind of philosophical no man’s land between the earlier systems from which they are taken to derive their material, and the glories of “Neoplatonism” to which they look forward.

Thus George Boys-Stones began his intriguing book from 2001, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy*, subtitled *A Study of Its Development from the Stoics to Origen*.<sup>1</sup> The period that he identified in this way was roughly 100 B.C.E.–200 C.E. This was also the period in which Greco-Roman philosophy began to make a serious impact on Jewish and early Christian thinking, as is documented by the essays in this book. In this introductory essay I will present some of the main features of this period, focusing on the interaction between the various philosophical schools and trying to understand the precise character of that interaction. Since at the beginning of the period Stoicism was the leading philosophical school but had been displaced as such at the end of the period by Platonism, I will also focus on trying to understand the development that resulted in this change. Traditionally, the period has been studied—at least by scholars interested in Platonism and its impact on Jewish and early Christian thinking—under the rubric “Middle Platonism.”<sup>2</sup> Scholars have identified two forms of Stoicism in it: so-called Middle Stoicism for the hundred years running approximately from 150 B.C.E. to 50 B.C.E. and so-called Late

---

<sup>1</sup>Boys-Stones 2001, v.

<sup>2</sup>The classic treatment is Dillon 1996b.

Stoicism or Neostoicism for the two first centuries C.E.<sup>3</sup> However, for the purposes of understanding both the interaction between Stoicism and Platonism (and in principle other philosophies) in the whole period and also the relationship of either with early Jewish and Christian thought, it is preferable to identify the period, as is proposed here, as the “Transitional Period” of ancient philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

## 1. Basic Changes During the Transitional Period

A number of momentous events directly relevant to the development of philosophy took place during the Transitional Period in the political and more broadly cultural fields of the ancient world.<sup>5</sup> While philosophy previously had been something of a Greek specialty focused on Athens, the Romans now began to make their presence felt. In Greece itself, the first representative of Middle Stoicism, Panaetius of Rhodes (ca. 185–109 B.C.E.), who had stayed in Rome in the 140s, maintained close contacts with high-level Romans when he became head of the Stoic school in Athens from 129 until his death. Even more importantly, as a result of the so-called First Mithradatic War (89–85), in which Athens had sided with King Mithradates of Pontus in Asia Minor against the Romans, the four schools of philosophy that had been operating in Athens since the beginning of the Hellenistic period were closed down by the Romans after Sulla had captured the city in the year 86. Philosophy now became homeless and had to go into exile. Even before that, however, the second main representative of Middle Stoicism, Posidonius of Apamea (ca. 135–51), who had studied with Panaetius at Athens, founded his own school of Stoicism in Rhodes. Posidonius, too, had close contacts with high-level Romans. In short, Athens was no longer *the* center of philosophy.

In Rome itself, the new superpower made itself felt in several ways in relation to philosophy. Around 50 B.C.E., Cicero wrote philosophical treatises on the main topics in philosophy—epistemology, physics and theology, ethics—in which he set forth the main positions adopted by the three schools that were recognized as the most important ones at the end of the Hellenistic period: Stoicism, Epicureanism, and the skeptical “New Academy” (which had developed the nondogmatic side of Plato’s philosophy), though also with some input from the Peripatetic school derived from Aristotle.<sup>6</sup> Two editorial undertakings had immense influence on the further development of philosophy. Sometime around the mid-first century B.C.E. in Rome, Andronicus of Rhodes produced an edition of Aristotle’s works,

<sup>3</sup>For excellent overviews, see Sedley 2003 and Gill 2003, respectively.

<sup>4</sup>Compare at least the title of Berchman 1984, *From Philo to Origen: Middle Platonism in Transition*.

<sup>5</sup>Since it is not my aim in what follows to discuss each individual person or event that is mentioned, I have refrained from giving detailed references for the underlying evidence. Many of those references may be found in, for instance, André 1987; Gill 2003; Sedley 2003.

<sup>6</sup>The most important among these treatises are *Academica* (epistemology), *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* (ethics), *Tusculan Disputations* (moral psychology), and *De Natura Deorum* (ontology and theology).

including the so-called esoteric ones, which are those that have come down to us and that were to make a huge impact on philosophizing in the centuries to come. About seventy-five years later, the court astrologer of the emperor Tiberius in Rome, Tiberius Claudius Thrasyllus (who notably came from Alexandria), produced what was probably a new edition of Plato's writings, in which he apparently introduced the division of the dialogues into tetralogies that is still in use.

Back in the first century B.C.E., Alexandria in Egypt had come into its own as a place where dogmatic, nonskeptical Platonism began to develop into Middle Platonism. Eudorus of Alexandria, who flourished around 25 B.C.E., "seems to have turned the very Stoicized Platonism of [the dogmatic apostate from the nondogmatic Platonic New Academy] Antiochus of Ascalon in a more transcendental direction, under the influence of Neopythagoreanism."<sup>7</sup> This statement made by an authority on Middle Platonism, John Dillon, points to our theme: the relationship between Stoicism in the Transitional Period and a newly conceived Platonism, which eventually led to the final victory of Platonism over Stoicism both in Neoplatonism (third century) and in Christian thought that is contemporary with Neoplatonism. Witnesses to this victory are two more, later and Christian Alexandrians: Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215 C.E.) and the great Origen (184/185–254/255 C.E.). But into this development we should also fit yet another Alexandrian (on whom Clement drew heavily): the Jewish Platonist Philo of Alexandria, back around the birth of Christ (ca. 20 B.C.E.–45 C.E.), who played an important, if somewhat enigmatic, role in the development of Middle Platonism.<sup>8</sup> Dillon's comment also points to the elusive role played at the beginning of this whole development by the "new Academician turned Stoic" Antiochus of Ascalon (ca. 130–69/68 B.C.E.), who had studied in Athens with the last representative of the New Academy, Philo of Larissa (159/158–84/83 B.C.E.), had then founded his own school in the same city, but also maintained extensive contacts with high-level Romans in whose company he even visited Alexandria. We will come back later to Antiochus, who is a characteristic representative at an early stage of the change in the relationship between Stoicism and Platonism that we will consider.

What we have, then, is a move away from Athens as the philosophical center to Rhodes, Alexandria, and Rome; a summary by Cicero in Rome around 50 B.C.E. of Hellenistic philosophy as it more or less appeared before the developments that inaugurated the Transitional Period (though Cicero does make relatively much of the novelties introduced by Antiochus of Ascalon);<sup>9</sup> developments in Alexandria throughout the first century B.C.E. that contributed to creating the form of Platonism known by modern scholars as Middle Platonism (and here we may specifically note the extensive amount of Platonism to be found in the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria); and finally, the fact of major editorial undertakings in Rome of the writings of Aristo-

---

<sup>7</sup>Dillon 1996a.

<sup>8</sup>John Dillon's perceptive discussion of Philo (Dillon 1996b, 139–83) shows the extent to which Philo was influenced by Alexandrian Platonism. His influence on later Platonists seems to have been negligible, however, until one reaches the Christian Clement of Alexandria.

<sup>9</sup>This comes out very clearly in the excellent overview of Antiochus in Dillon 1996b, 52–106.

tle and of Plato. Even as described in these broadly cultural terms, philosophy looked very different in the first century B.C.E. compared to previous centuries.

The changes in the social practices of doing philosophy that took place during the first century B.C.E. and were quite often in one way or another connected with the presence of the Romans laid the ground for a period that runs to the end of the second century C.E. During this period, the development in philosophy gradually changed the overall philosophical landscape rather drastically. Both Epicureanism and Stoicism were still around during the whole period, the latter in the form of Late Stoicism or Neostoicism as represented by, among others, the Roman philosopher and statesman Seneca (ca. 1–65 C.E.); the Roman knight (who wrote in Greek) Musonius Rufus (ca. 30–100); the Roman (but originally Greek) slave (who also taught in Greek) Epictetus (ca. 50–120); and finally the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180), who also wrote in Greek. But alongside these two schools, Aristotelianism (the Peripatetics) came into its own as a very important intellectual presence in philosophy, as is witnessed by the extensive amount of commentaries that began to be written on Aristotle's texts—for instance, by the great Alexander of Aphrodisias (ca. 200 C.E.). Similarly, Platonism in the new form that it had achieved during the first century B.C.E. eventually became *the* reigning type of philosophy, which would then also, from the latter half of the second century onwards, exercise a profound influence on Christian theologians such as the Christian Alexandrians noted earlier. This is the period of a number of main representatives of Middle Platonism: Plutarch (ca. 50–120) and a number of figures from the second century C.E. such as Albinus (ca. 150), Alcinous (second century), Apuleius (ca. 125–170), Atticus (ca. 150–200), and Numenius (second century). At a specific point in time at the end of the Transitional Period, in 178 C.E., the emperor Marcus Aurelius sealed the intervening development by setting up four new chairs of philosophy in Athens, which thereby reasserted—if not in actual fact, at least in appearance—the role it had had until the Romans closed the schools in 86 B.C.E. Where Cicero had focused on three philosophies—Epicureanism, Stoicism, and the skeptical New Academy (though also with some input from specifically Aristotelian philosophy)—Marcus Aurelius now installed chairs for the four philosophies that were henceforth to be *the* four philosophies of the ancient world: Epicureanism, Stoicism, Aristotelianism, and dogmatic Platonism. However, and most importantly, by this time both Epicureanism and Stoicism were for all intents and purposes basically extinct, only to be rediscovered at a far later period in the history of European thought, after the Renaissance. The two philosophies that were alive and influential were Aristotelianism and Platonism, with the latter being the leading force.

## 2. The Problem

With this brief overview in place, we may raise the question of a deeper understanding of some of the changes noted above. One thing particularly striking about the Transitional Period is that almost all philosophers within the period to some degree adopted ideas from philosophies other than their own. In the con-

text of the present book and the overall change from Stoicism to Platonism as the leading force, we will focus particularly on these two schools. What we find is that many philosophers who were basically Stoics, and who saw themselves as such, also drew on ideas that had a specifically Platonic pedigree. Conversely, many philosophers who were basically Platonists, and who saw themselves as such, also drew on ideas that had a specifically Stoic pedigree. Traditionally, as Boys-Stones noted in the quotation with which we began, this phenomenon has been identified as a matter of “eclecticism.” More recently, however, this category has been called seriously into question.<sup>10</sup> As John Dillon concludes his analysis of the phenomenon, “*Eclecticism* has for too long been used as a term of contempt in the area of later Greek philosophy. As such, let us have done with it.”<sup>11</sup> But then, how should we understand the fact itself of the existence of various types of blending of philosophies in our period? For of course, the fact itself does not go away by calling into question our way of categorizing it.

This question becomes even more serious when one notes that the very same philosophers who in this or the other area engaged in a blending exercise also quite often had very strong opinions about the inadequacy of the philosophy as a whole from which they nevertheless drew certain ideas. At least, while there is a certain openness toward input from Plato, as we will see, in certain Stoics during our period (beginning with Panaetius and extending from him over Posidonius and Seneca to Marcus Aurelius), the Platonists, on their side, wrote explicitly against Stoicism while also adopting Stoic ideas in a number of places. How is that apparent paradox to be understood and explained? Can we find a way of understanding the character of philosophy itself in our period that will also explain and dissolve the paradox?

Before addressing this question, we should note that the question is directly relevant to the issue being discussed in the present book. It is well known, and we have already noted the fact, that from a certain point in time onward, namely, toward the end of the second century C.E., the kind of philosophy that influenced Christian thought was basically that of Platonism. Before that, however, the situation was far less clear-cut. In early Christian texts from the New Testament and well into the second century, one may in fact find traces of Platonism. But one may also find traces of Stoicism. Indeed, some (including the writer of these pages) have argued that at least in the thought of the apostle Paul the Stoic component is far more extensive than normally admitted.<sup>12</sup> But then, since no early Christian writer was either a Platonist or a Stoic per se (rather, they had their own worldview, focused on Christ), how should one understand this adoption of either Platonic or Stoic ideas? And indeed, how may one and the same Christian writer adopt both Platonic and Stoic ideas if that is in fact the case? In order to answer these questions we must obtain a better grasp of the interaction between Platonism and Stoicism during our period in philosophy proper, outside the Christian context.

---

<sup>10</sup>The classic discussion is Dillon and Long 1988.

<sup>11</sup>Dillon 1988, 125.

<sup>12</sup>See Engberg-Pedersen 2000.

### 3. Attempts at a Solution

Important steps have been taken in recent scholarship to find a solution to the apparent paradox of the copresence of, for instance, Platonism and Stoicism in philosophers who saw themselves as belonging to one of the two schools only and were even highly critical of the school from which they did incorporate certain ideas.

In his excellent overview of “Les écoles philosophiques aux deux premiers siècles de l’Empire,” Jean-Marie André spoke of a “cultural integration” of the philosophical schools into society in the way their dogmatic positions had become part of “the encyclopedia of antiquity.”<sup>13</sup> That explains Marcus Aurelius’s installation of the four chairs of philosophy at the end of our period, but hardly the blending exercise that also took place throughout the period. More recently, in an epilogue to the *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Michael Frede focused, in a manner that I have basically adopted above, on the change in the role of Athens at the beginning of our period, which saw what David Sedley has also called “the great philosophical exodus from Athens” around 86 B.C.E.<sup>14</sup> When the Athenian schools went out of existence, says Frede, there was no longer any “scholarch to define the philosophical position of the school. It was no longer relatively clear what the position of a school was on a particular question at a particular time.”<sup>15</sup> “This vagueness and indefiniteness about what it is to belong to a certain school must have reinforced greatly the process by which the founders of a school turned into *authorities* and their writings became *authoritative texts* that to some extent defined the school.”<sup>16</sup> The importance of Frede’s emphasis on the turn toward “authoritative texts” as a characteristic feature of our period can hardly be overstated. But again, while it certainly adds to one’s understanding of the ossification of the four philosophical schools with their four authoritative founding fathers, the turn does not, of course, explain the blending exercise that gave rise to the old characterization of our period as one of eclecticism.

In a more recent study, David Sedley, who has long been working on the character of philosophy itself in the Hellenistic period, has developed Frede’s picture further by speaking of a “new pattern of philosophical teaching” arising from the demise of the Athenian schools, a pattern that involved “the scholarly study of school texts” as a way of “recovering, understanding, and living the wisdom of the ancients.”<sup>17</sup> But Sedley also suggests a way of understanding the other side of the paradox in his remarks about the main representatives of Middle Stoicism, Panætius and Posidonius. Although these two philosophers, Sedley argues, belonged “firmly within the main current of Stoic debate” (i.e., they were Stoics), they also “made regular use of early Peripatetic as well as Platonist writings,”<sup>18</sup> thereby bring-

---

<sup>13</sup> André 1987, 75.

<sup>14</sup> Sedley 2003, 27.

<sup>15</sup> Frede 2005, 792.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 793 (my italics).

<sup>17</sup> Sedley 2003, 29. Sedley’s earlier work that I hinted at is Sedley 1989.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

ing about a “pooling of philosophical resources among what could be seen as three branches of the Platonist tradition: early Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism.”<sup>19</sup> Sedley also speaks of this strategy as being one of “syncretism,” but what he actually shows is that such syncretism should be understood not as an act of blending or bringing ideas together in a great melting pot, but in a rather more specific manner as a strategy of “reclaiming” or “absorbing” ideas from a philosophy other than one’s own into one’s own philosophy. The syncretism does not erase the differences between any two philosophies. Nor does it in any way imply that a given philosopher is no longer either a Stoic or a Platonist (or again, a Christian). On the contrary, it is precisely while being either this or that that one may also “reclaim” or “absorb” foreign ideas into one’s own philosophy.

If Panaetius and Posidonius are in this way an example of Stoics who also “syncretized” certain Platonic ideas into their own Stoicism, Sedley shows how Posidonius’s contemporary Antiochus of Ascalon, whom I mentioned earlier, fits the opposite bill of being a Platonist who incorporated a huge amount of Stoicism into what he himself took to be the authentic form of Platonism. Antiochus’s case is intriguing in a number of ways.<sup>20</sup> His position constituted a break with the skeptical New Academy of his teacher Philo of Larissa, a break that Antiochus marked by speaking of his own position as articulating that of the “Old Academy.” In itself, that move is perhaps not so surprising, since epistemological and ontological skepticism surely does not cover everything to be found in Plato. What is more surprising is that, apparently, Antiochus took over from the Stoics a number of ideas in physics that the Stoics themselves had articulated in direct opposition to Aristotelianism and Platonism. When Antiochus insisted, on the basis of his contention that “the doctrines of the Stoics were present already in Plato,”<sup>21</sup> that talk of an immaterial substance (like the Platonic ideas) was “unintelligible,” and that he saw “no possibility . . . of anything immaterial, transcendent or external to the material universe,”<sup>22</sup> then certainly he was taking up a basically Stoic position. But how he could also claim that this particular Stoic doctrine was already present in Plato remains a mystery.

It is a very instructive mystery, however. For it shows how far it was apparently possible to go in the direction of reclaiming alien material for one’s own philosophy as long as one was able to convince oneself that one remained loyal to the founder of that philosophy—in the present case, Plato.

We should conclude that the paradox identified here—philosophers who both emphasized the differences between the various main types of philosophy and also produced philosophies of their own that look like an amalgam of several types—can be resolved when one sees the whole set of operations as part of a strategy of creating a philosophical identity of one’s own. That identity was defined by the founding father with whom one identified. But it also allowed one to bring in

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>20</sup>A probing account is Barnes 1989.

<sup>21</sup>The quotation is from Sextus Empiricus. See Dillon 1996b, 59n3.

<sup>22</sup>The quotation is from Cicero, *De Finibus*. See Dillon 1996b, 84.

extraneous ideas that might fill in gaps in the thought of the founding father or develop it further in any direction that seemed called for, as long as one might claim (rightly or wrongly) that those ideas in fact belonged to the founding father himself. This is the operation of “reclaiming” or “absorbing” extraneous ideas into the thought system of one’s own preferred philosophy as defined by its relation to its postulated founding father. Instead of speaking of “eclecticism” (as if philosophers just picked up a little from here and there as they saw fit and with no systematic concerns), and instead of speaking of “syncretism” (as if philosophers sought to meld together different philosophies into a single blend), we should speak of the underlying philosophical strategy during the Transitional Period as being one of “absorption” into one’s own preferred philosophy of alien ideas that one claimed to be actually one’s own. This was true of the Stoics Panaetius and Posidonius at the beginning of the period and of the Platonist Antiochus of Ascalon at the same time. And it remained true throughout the period. Seneca, the Stoic, was not averse to absorbing Platonic ideas into his Stoicism.<sup>23</sup> Epictetus, the Stoic, made an Aristotelian concept, *prohairesis*, the fulcrum of his Stoicism.<sup>24</sup> Plutarch, although an avowed Platonist and anti-Stoic, absorbed a number of Stoic ideas that he saw as actually belonging to his own Platonism.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. Implications

The proposed solution to the initial paradox has an important implication for the proper way of understanding the mix of philosophies to be found in almost all philosophers of the Transitional Period. This implication also shows why it was not in fact quite wrong to speak of “eclecticism” and “syncretism” in the first place. We may give two examples of the implication that pertain directly to the role of Greco-Roman philosophy within early Jewish and early Christian thought.

The implication I have in mind is this: If the proposed solution given above is on the right track, then it becomes understandable why a philosopher who considers himself a Stoic may absorb into his own thinking elements from Platonic thought without necessarily understanding those elements in the exact Platonic way; conversely, a Platonist may absorb into his own thinking elements from Stoicism without necessarily understanding those elements in the exact Stoic way. For what mattered most was the underlying, basic allegiance. If that was to Stoicism, then elements that might be taken over from Platonism might well be reinterpreted in accordance with one’s basic allegiance, and vice versa. In short, elements from alien philosophies that were absorbed into one’s own need not be understood in exactly the way they were understood as part of the philosophy from which they were taken.

This, I would argue, is what we find in the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria and in the Christian apostle Paul of Tarsus. Philo was a Platonist but also,

---

<sup>23</sup>For this, see below.

<sup>24</sup>On Epictetus, Long 2002 is already a classic.

<sup>25</sup>The classic treatment is Babut 1969.

of course, a Jew. However, in his account of the so-called sublunar world (and also in many other places) he also took over (“absorbed”) Stoic ideas into his own philosophy. For instance, the central Stoic notion of the material πνεῦμα (“spirit”) that pervades everything in the world and holds it together and directs it underlies much of Philo’s description of the sublunar world. To a certain extent, Philo was also able to take over the specifically Stoic claim that the πνεῦμα was in fact a material entity.<sup>26</sup> In spite of this, however, Philo stayed with the basic worldview that he had adopted from Plato, to the effect that the material world was only one half of the cosmos, with the other half consisting of what was immaterial and accessible only through thought. Seen from a Stoic point of view, however, such a combination was meaningless.<sup>27</sup> But Philo probably did not care, precisely because his basic perspective was and remained that of a Platonist.

The converse situation is to be found, I believe, in Paul’s thought. I have argued elsewhere that his account of the resurrection in 1 Cor 15 presupposes a basically Stoic understanding of the πνεῦμα that will eventually transform human bodies of flesh and blood into “pneumatic bodies”—that is, into material bodies that are now made up by πνεῦμα instead of flesh and blood.<sup>28</sup> On such an understanding, Paul, whose general worldview was evidently very different from a Stoic one because it was focused on Christ, nevertheless had “absorbed” a great deal of the fundamental Stoic worldview into his own. Apparently, it helped him to articulate something that he needed to articulate as part of his own “philosophy.”

However, in 2 Cor 4:16–5:5 Paul also speaks of the relationship between the human presence on earth and in heaven in terms that appear to have strongly Platonic connotations—for instance, when he contrasts “what can be seen” with “what cannot be seen” (4:18). I have argued, though, that he in fact maintains the basically Stoic picture throughout this passage, but also that one can understand the rhetorical purpose of bringing in a bit of “Platonism.”<sup>29</sup> Here, then (if I am right), it is the basically Stoic material perspective that stays in place. The absorption of a bit of “Platonism,” which would in itself trade on the difference between the material world and an immaterial one, does not take over the full Platonic meaning of the incorporated material.

In the light of these two examples, one can easily understand why scholars have spoken of “eclecticism” and “syncretism.” If looked at in the abstract or from the perspective of philosophical systems as independent, abstract entities, one does find signs that something has been “chosen” here, something else there, or that ideas from different systems have to some extent “grown together” in a given philosopher. I have argued here for a better understanding, however, which

---

<sup>26</sup>The classic treatment of Philo on the πνεῦμα is Leisegang 1919.

<sup>27</sup>“Plato and his successors had tended to assign ontological primacy to the intelligible over the sensible. In making corporeality the hallmark of existence . . . the Stoics are in a way reverting to popular ontology. The philosophical grounds for this reversion . . . are extremely powerful” (Long and Sedley 1987, 1:163).

<sup>28</sup>See Engberg-Pedersen 2009; 2010, ch. 1.

<sup>29</sup>See Engberg-Pedersen 2010, ch. 2.

emphasizes the individual identity of the given thinker and his allegiance to this or the other authority in the past as what defines his own position. As part of that position, there is plenty of room for reclaiming or absorbing ideas from other systems into one's own. Still, it is the preferred position that governs how much of the alien position is incorporated into one's own. Understood in this way, the practice of the thinkers that constitute the Transitional Period in ancient philosophy reflects genuine creativity rather than the opposite: an attempt to incorporate the best from other philosophies into one's own.

## 5. From Stoicism to Platonism

The picture that I have developed of the exact character of the interaction of different philosophies—in particular, Stoicism and Platonism—during the Transitional Period only constitutes one half of what needs to be said here about the period. The other half concerns the change in what constituted the reigning philosophy during the period. To begin with, it was Stoicism. At the end, it was Platonism. How is that change to be understood and explained? And how does it impinge on the interaction of early Jewish and early Christian writings with Greco-Roman philosophy?

The facts themselves are not so controversial. The Middle Stoics Panaetius and Posidonius had remained Stoics while also opening up, to a greater or lesser degree, to incorporating ideas derived from Plato into their own Stoic position. Antiochus of Ascalon, on the other side of the divide, had developed his own Platonic position in a dogmatic direction by bringing in substantial parts of Stoicism that fitted his dogmatic intentions. Both positions show that at the beginning of the Transitional Period it was Stoicism that had the upper hand.

If we then move forward in time to Neostoicism, what we find is basically an attitude comparable to that of Panaetius and Posidonius. In Seneca's writings, for instance, there is a certain interest in Platonic ideas. In two of his letters he discusses basic Platonic ontological categories (*Ep.* 58) and compares the Stoic with the Platonic and Aristotelian understanding of causality or cause (*Ep.* 65). However, Seneca's attitude toward these alien ideas probably is conciliatory rather than negative.<sup>30</sup> In another letter, Seneca recounts a lovely dream he has had of life after death, when he will have left behind the "heavy and earthly prison" in which he is at present detained (*Ep.* 102.22). Throughout his description Seneca conveys an atmosphere that seems genuinely "Platonizing." Apparently, however, Seneca did not see any strong contrast here with his self-professed Stoicism.

Similarly, although Epictetus appears to have had little interest in ideas derived from a Platonizing metaphysics, his attitude toward the human body, that worthless "flesh" (σάρκιδιον), fits a Platonizing sensibility well. In addition, he clearly drew on Plato's account of Socrates, who was a main paradigm of true

---

<sup>30</sup>This is argued in Sedley 2005. In an unpublished article, George Boys-Stones has argued for the contrary view.

wisdom for Epictetus.<sup>31</sup> Finally, Marcus Aurelius shows an openness to a Platonizing sensibility with regard to the human body that he probably had learned directly from Epictetus. Neither philosopher, however, betrayed his fundamental allegiance to Stoicism.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, we find in both Middle- and Neostoicism an openness to certain sides of Platonism that these philosophers felt able to absorb into their own Stoicism without compromising their own philosophy, but admittedly also without taking those Platonic ideas in the full and exact Platonic way. In this, all of them fit easily into the picture developed above of “absorption of what is alien.” Also, if I am right that in certain respects the worldview of the apostle Paul was basically a Stoic one, then his use of Platonic-sounding ideas in 2 Cor 4–5 fits very easily into the same picture. In addition, we may note that none of the Middle- or Neostoics went directly out of their way to attack the alien philosophy from which they did take over certain ideas.

The situation is quite different when we look at the Platonists in the same period. They did take over ideas from Stoicism, but they also attacked Stoicism on a number of points. From this side a war was being waged about which philosophy should be the reigning one. By noting some of the specific points in Stoicism that the Platonists would regularly attack, we may perhaps also come to understand better the driving force behind the overall change from Stoicism to Platonism during the period.

A good example is another Jewish, quasi-philosophical writing (in addition, i.e., to Philo of Alexandria), *Wisdom of Solomon*, which has much to say about what was at stake.<sup>33</sup> This treatise, which may be dated around 30 B.C.E. and located in Alexandria, starts out describing its main theme, Lady Wisdom herself, in terms that derive from the Stoic doctrine of the *πνεῦμα*. Gradually, however, more Platonizing terms begin to creep in. And eventually it is (almost) explicitly stated that this is because a Stoicizing account cannot do justice to the character of God that this Jewish writer favors. This suggests, as was already indicated in the quotation above from John Dillon on one of the founders of Middle Platonism, Eudorus of Alexandria, that one point of contention of the Platonists vis-à-vis the Stoics was the Stoic material conception of God. Or to put it in more positive terms, the Platonists were after some form of “transcendence” in the picture of God that they did not find clearly enough in Stoicism. Here, Platonism, with its distinction between material and immaterial parts of the world, did much better.

Exactly the same move can be found in the other Alexandrian Jew, Philo. Moreover, just as the author of *Wisdom of Solomon* had done, Philo went out of his way explicitly to attack the Stoics for their materialistic conception of God.<sup>34</sup>

That, then, was one point of attack in the war against Stoicism waged by Platonists: the materialist understanding of God, which did not fit their sense of

---

<sup>31</sup>This is a main point in Long 2002.

<sup>32</sup>On Marcus Aurelius, see Engberg-Pedersen 1998; Gill 2007.

<sup>33</sup>See the analysis in Engberg-Pedersen 2010, ch. 1.

<sup>34</sup>See *ibid.*

God's "transcendence." However, was that not just a Jewish specialty? Did other, non-Jewish (and non-Christian) thinkers have the same complaint? They did. Plutarch is a case in point. In Plutarch, too, a sense of the "transcendence" of the divine is very strong.<sup>35</sup>

Plutarch also provides evidence of another Platonist complaint against the Stoics, which turns on the issue of freedom and determinism. The Stoics were famous for being determinists. They also strove valiantly to retain enough freedom in the field of human action for the traditional moral system to make sense. The Platonists, however, were unimpressed, and here, too, they felt that the fundamental dualism of Platonism was better able to account for human freedom than the monistic materialism of the Stoics.

One could go on like this. Moreover, one *should* go on in this way were one to articulate a full and comprehensive understanding of why Stoicism lost out in the battle waged against it by Platonists (and Aristotelians, too).<sup>36</sup> What one would then gain is a sense of the fundamental philosophical issues that were at stake in the development of philosophy from the beginning of the Transitional Period to its end, no matter whether one would also end up being more convinced by the Stoics or by their attackers.

That whole project cannot be properly engaged in here. What matters for the profile of the present book is rather the point that for a considerable part of the Transitional Period—say, up until the time of Plutarch—it was Stoicism rather than Platonism that was the reigning Greco-Roman philosophy, a fact that also accounts for all the attacks on Stoicism found throughout the period. This point is of rather great importance when one considers the earliest Christian writings from the two first centuries C.E. For it means that if a Christian writer felt the need to articulate and buttress his own message in philosophical terms, then for the author of the earliest among such Christian writings it would be more natural to look to Stoicism as the best vehicle. By contrast, for an author of later Christian writings, though still pre-200 C.E., it would gradually become more and more natural to look to Platonism for input to help articulate one's own message. Still, even then, as we saw, there would be ample room for "absorbing" Stoic ideas into one's basically Platonic framework.

## 6. Conclusion

This sets the scene for the essays contained in this book. We have seen that within the field of Greco-Roman philosophy itself the Transitional Period was characterized by a flexible relationship between the different schools that allowed philosophers to have an identity of their own, as defined by their allegiance to an authoritative founding father, at the same time as it also made it possible for them to absorb alien material from other philosophies into their own. We have also

---

<sup>35</sup> See the discussion in Dillon 1996b, 199–225.

<sup>36</sup> An excellent example of this is Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato*.

seen that the same pattern immediately fits the way in which Jewish or Christian writers (themselves of a more or less philosophical bent) might make use of material drawn from Greco-Roman philosophy. In addition, we have seen that within this comprehensive pattern there was an actual, though only gradually developing, change from a stage when the reigning philosophy was Stoicism to a stage when Platonism had conquered that position. It is within this subtle and flexible picture of philosophy in the Transitional Period as a whole that the explorations presented in the essays of this book should be seen. They address the potential role of Stoicism in Christian writings that belong both to the earlier period of the New Testament and also to the later period of the second century. It seems fair to say, in light of the overall picture of the whole period presented here, that this issue has been unduly neglected for far too long.

## Bibliography

- André, J.-M. 1987. "Les écoles philosophiques aux deux premiers siècles de l'Empire." *ANRW* 36.1:5–77. Part 2, *Principat*, 36.1. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Babut, D. 1969. *Plutarque et le stoïcisme*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Barnes, J. 1989. "Antiochus of Ascalon." Pages 51–96 in *Philosophia Togata: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society*. Edited by M. Griffin and J. Barnes. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Berchman, R. M. 1984. *From Philo to Origen: Middle Platonism in Transition*. Brown Judaic Studies 69. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press.
- Boys-Stones, G. R. 2001. *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dillon, J. M. 1988. "'Orthodoxy' and 'Eclecticism': Middle Platonists and Neo-Pythagoreans." Pages 103–25 in *The Question of "Eclecticism": Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*. Edited by J. M. Dillon and A. A. Long. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1996a. "Eudorus." Page 565 in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Edited by S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1996b. *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*. Rev. ed. London: Duckworth.
- Dillon, J. M., and A. A. Long, eds. 1988. *The Question of "Eclecticism": Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Engberg-Pedersen, T. 1998. "Marcus Aurelius on Emotions." Pages 305–37 in *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*. Edited by J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pedersen. New Synthese Historical Library 46. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- . 2000. *Paul and the Stoics*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- . 2009. "The Material Spirit: Cosmology and Ethics in Paul." *New Testament Studies* 55:179–97.
- . 2010. *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Frede, M. 2005. "Epilogue." Pages 771–97 in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*. Edited by K. Algra et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gill, C. 2003. "The School in the Roman Imperial Period." Pages 33–58 in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*. Edited by B. Inwood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2007. "Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*: How Stoic and How Platonic?" Pages 189–207 in *Platonic Stoicism, Stoic Platonism: The Dialogue between Platonism and Stoicism in Antiquity*. Edited by M. Bonazzi and C. Helmig. Ancient and Medieval Philosophy 1/39. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Leisegang, H. 1919. *Der Heilige Geist: Das Wesen und Werden der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis in der Philosophie und Religion der Griechen*. Leipzig: Teubner.
- Long, A. A. 2002. *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Long, A. A., and D. Sedley, eds. 1987. *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sedley, D. 1989. "Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman World." Pages 97–119 in *Philosophia Togata: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society*. Edited by M. Griffin and J. Barnes. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 2003. "The School, from Zeno to Arius Didymus." Pages 7–32 in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*. Edited by B. Inwood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2005. "Stoic Metaphysics at Rome." Pages 117–42 in *Metaphysics, Soul and Ethics: Themes from the Work of Richard Sorabji*. Edited by R. Salles. Oxford: Oxford University Press.