

Love's Limits in Paul of Tarsus and Seneca the Younger

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Abstract: This paper argues that we can get a better grip on the divergences and convergences between Paul and Seneca on the ethics of love than those on offer in the large and growing literature comparing the two by distinguishing their attitudes to two broad and conceptually distinct families of love, which Tyler VanderWeele has described as “contributory love” (which desires that the good of the beloved be promoted for its own sake) and “unitive love” (which regards the beloved as a good to be enjoyed in one’s own life). I argue that debates over whether Seneca and Paul had the more universal ethic of neighbor love are largely a distraction; the two are fundamentally in agreement about the scope of love, although Paul’s thinking in this area is shaped in fundamental ways by his conviction that the whole cosmos is defined to be eventually and finally united and so conformed to the resurrected and glorified Christ. Rather, Paul’s true difference from Seneca on the ethics of love lies instead in the importance he affords to unitive love; for Paul, the flourishing life does not consist simply in virtuous activity but also requires appropriate union with one’s beloveds, paradigmatically with God in Christ and with Christ’s body, the church. Seneca and Paul would each have accepted Sigmund Freud’s observation that “we are never so defenseless against suffering as when we love”. Seneca, however, would have taken it as a caution against attachments to anything whose loss might cause us to suffer, while Paul, by contrast, would have taken it as a statement of our condemnation to suffering “in this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4), in which we must love what we will inevitably lose.

Keywords: The Apostle Paul; Seneca the Younger; early Christianity; Roman Stoicism; love



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1. Introduction

There is an ancient tradition that, while imprisoned in Rome, Paul of Tarsus met the Stoic philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca (“the Younger”), a Roman patrician and statesman, grandson of Marcus Antony, and tutor to the future Emperor Nero, by whom he was later forced to commit suicide rather than face execution (Tacitus 1937, pp. 15.60–63; Wilson 2014, pp. xi–xiii *et passim*). This tradition is embodied most fully in the (very likely) apocryphal Latin correspondence between the two men, which was first attested by Jerome in the fourth century (James 1924, sct. 1.1).¹ Nonetheless, the New Testament itself establishes a slender connection between the Apostle and the Philosopher: in Acts 18:12–17, Paul was put on trial in Corinth before the Roman proconsul Lucius Junius Gallio Annaeanus (“Gallio”), who was none other than Seneca’s older brother.² However unlikely in actual fact, a meeting between Paul and Seneca in Rome would have deepened a dialogue between Christianity and Stoicism, which was already underway in Paul’s letters, as recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized.

Paul and Seneca are particularly apt for comparison, both for some striking biographical similarities (e.g., certainly Seneca and likely Paul died at Nero’s behest), and especially for some apparent convergences in their thought. In some passages (e.g., Philippians 4:11, to which we will return below), Paul sounds strikingly “Stoic”: on this score, we might compare Paul’s claim, “I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content (ἐμαθὼν ἐν οἷς εἶμι ἀντάρκης εἶναι)” (Phil. 4:11)³ with Seneca’s, “The happy man is content with his present lot, no matter what it is, and is a friend to his circumstances (*beatus est praesentibus, qualiacumque sunt, contentus amicusque rebus suis*)” (Seneca the Younger 1932, pp. 114–15

[DBV 7.6.2]). By the same token, some passages in Seneca are strikingly “Pauline”, e.g., “A holy spirit dwells within us, one who marks our good and bad deeds, and is our guardian. . . Indeed, no man can be good without the help of God (sacer intra nos spiritus sedet, malorum honorumque nostrorum observator et custos. . . Bonus vero vir sine deo nemo est)” (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 272–73 [Ep. 41.1–2]). Unsurprisingly, there is a large and growing literature on the relation between early Christianity and Stoicism in general, and Paul and Seneca in particular (cf., e.g., Sevenster 1961; Malherbe 2013; Engberg-Pedersen 2000; Engberg-Pedersen 2010; Harrill 2010; Wright 2012, pp. 1354–401; Rowe 2016; Briones and Dodson 2017; Becker 2021, pp. 83–100; Muir 2024). A frequent theme touched on in this comparative literature is the role of love in the thought of Paul and Seneca. Unfortunately, comparisons of the two men on this score have tended either toward a “Pauline chauvinism”, which downplays the central role played by love for all humanity in Stoicism (cf. Sevenster 1961, p. 174; Wright 2012, p. 1374, discussed below, p. 11, and in Seneca in particular), or toward a “Stoic chauvinism”, which denies the equal universalism of Paul’s love-ethic (cf. the discussion of Thorsteinsson, Engberg-Pedersen, and Muir below, p. 16).

This paper argues that we can more profitably compare Paul and Seneca on the theme of love by distinguishing their attitudes to two broad and conceptually distinct families of love, namely, “contributory love” (which desires that the good of the beloved be promoted for its own sake) and “unitive love” (which regards the beloved as a good to be enjoyed in one’s own life). (This distinction is drawn from VanderWeele (2023), discussed further in Section 2). I argue that debates over whether Seneca and Paul had the more universal ethic of neighbor love are largely a distraction; the two are fundamentally in agreement about the scope of contributory love, although Paul’s thinking in this area is shaped in fundamental ways by his conviction that the whole cosmos is defined to be eventually and finally united and so conformed to the resurrected and glorified Christ.

Rather, while Paul’s views on contributory love were not nearly as parochial as Runar Thorsteinsson suggests, his true difference from Seneca on the ethics of love lies instead in the importance he affords to unitive love; for Paul, the flourishing life does not consist simply in virtuous activity, but also requires appropriate union with those one loves, paradigmatically with God in Christ and with Christ’s body, the church. Seneca and Paul would each have accepted Sigmund Freud’s observation that “we are never so defenseless against suffering as when we love” (Freud 2005, p. 11). Seneca, however, would have taken it as a caution against attachments to anything whose loss might cause us to suffer, while Paul, by contrast, would have taken it as a statement of our condemnation to suffering “in this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4), in which we must love what we will inevitably lose.

2. Contributory Love and Unitive Love: A Conceptual Framework

A few words are in order at the outset about VanderWeele’s framing distinction between contributory and unitive love. He proposes that, in ordinary language, love is “a disposition towards either (i) desiring a perceived good or desiring union with it, either as an end itself or with it being a source of delight in itself or (ii) desiring good for a particular object for its own sake”.⁴ VanderWeele identifies an antecedent to this distinction in Thomas Aquinas’s distinction between “concupiscent love (*amor concupiscentiae*)” and “friendly love (*amor amicitiae*)”.⁵ C.S. Lewis’s more recent distinction between “Need-love” and “Gift-love” also maps closely onto that between unitive and contributory love.⁶

Unitive love is, most broadly, a disposition to desire to enjoy some good by way of appropriate union with it. We can be united with many goods in many different ways: the conjugal union proper to marital love is different from the union proper to a child’s love for an ice cream cone, and both are different from the union proper to a connoisseur’s love of Bach’s *Cello Suites*. Common to all of these cases, among many others, however, is that the lover desires to enjoy the good embodied in some other (person, place, or thing) in the way appropriate to their relationship.

Contributory love also aims at the other's good, but in quite a different way than does unitive love: where the latter seeks intimacy with that good, the former instead desires that the good of the other be promoted.⁷ Parents who scrimp and save for their children's inheritance, soldiers who believe that "*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*", and volunteers in soup kitchens embody contributory love. While these two attitudes often coincide (and in interpersonal love, their coincidence is arguably both normal and, in many cases, normative), they are separable in practice as well as in thought, and often issue in precisely opposite effects: in a happy family, it is unitive love that brings a man or woman back home to their spouse and children at the day's end rather than to a bar with colleagues, while it is contributory love that sends them out of the house each morning to put food on the table. (In unhappy families, the reverse might be true.)

In its chemically pure forms (rarely realized outside of a philosophical thought experiment), contributory love is disinterested in a way that even the most rarified kinds of appreciation (of, e.g., the *Cello Suites*) are not. The music lover may give no thought to his rapturous enjoyment even as he experiences it in the concert hall (as Simone Weil put it, "Perfect joy excludes even the feeling of joy, because in the soul filled by the object there is no corner free to say 'I'" (Veto 1971, p. 104), but the Good Samaritan willingly embraces expense and inconvenience, not to benefit himself but for the sake of the one he benefits (cf. Lk. 10:27–29).

This distinction between enjoyment and benevolence, it's important to note, is conceptual, not linguistic, notwithstanding that Christian moralists have sometimes been wont to distinguish between (in Greek) "*erōs*" and "*agapē*", the former supposedly denoting one's own preferential loves and the latter one's unselfish benevolence toward others.⁸ However, neither word in classical or *koinē* Greek was as sharply defined in its semantic range as this distinction would suggest; even in the New Testament, other terms (such as *φιλία* and its cognates) could equally denote what VanderWeele calls contributory love, even in the New Testament, while "*ἀγάπη*" and its cognates sometimes refer to what VanderWeele calls "unitive love" (for further discussion of this, see below, pp. 28–29). As Thorsteinsson observes,

"An increasing number of scholars are now recognizing that the two concepts, *ἀγάπη/ἀγαπᾶν* and *φιλία/φιλεῖν*, are virtually synonymous. A good example of this is found already in Aristotle: 'To be loved (*φιλεῖσθαι*) is to be cherished (*ἀγαπᾶσθαι*) for one's own sake.' . . . The apostle Paul himself, who, as we have seen, speaks of *ἀγάπη* as the primary virtue of the Christ-believing communities, illustratively uses the verb *φιλεῖν* instead of *ἀγαπᾶν* at the close of his First Letter to the Corinthians (16.22): εἴ τις οὐ φιλεῖ τὸν κύριον, ἦτω ἀνάθεμα ('If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed!')." (Thorsteinsson 2010, pp. 159–60)

Our distinction, by contrast, aims at things, not words; it distinguishes kinds of attitudes, ways of desiring and believing, and acting in relation to others. These differences can be brought into speech in indefinitely many ways, or not at all, but remain really distinct nonetheless.

In many interpersonal relationships, these two loves are ordinarily and properly intertwined, each reinforcing the other. In particular, unitive love (of spouses for one another, or of parents for children) is often a spur to contributory love, though these also can come apart: spouses in a passionless marriage can nonetheless seek one another's good, and the romantic ardor of, e.g., Francesca for Paolo or Anna for Vronsky can in fact lead to their destruction rather than flourishing. Indeed, marital love is perhaps most contributory when it seems to spouses to be most unitive, to arise purely from simple delight in the other. And the same is true in other areas: as Roger Scruton (2012) emphasized, environmental conservation efforts are often motivated by what he called "*oikophilia*", "the love of home", since those who are attached to a particular landscape are the most likely to be vocal in protesting its spoliation.

This entanglement of unitive and contributory love is not only normal in most interpersonal relationships, but—at least for many—seems to be normative, the way things ought to go. The significance and interest of Stoic thought on love in particular lies in the lengths it goes to attempt to prise them apart. This paper’s first part compares Seneca’s and Paul’s development of an ethic of contributory love, and maintains that each is properly universal in scope, even if Paul’s is profoundly informed by his convictions about Jesus and the coming end of history (Christology and eschatology, in the later theological jargon). The second part turns to a comparison of their strikingly different attitudes to unitive love, which I suggest is the place where their accounts of love truly come apart.

Given the vastness of Seneca’s surviving body of writings in comparison with Paul’s, I have restricted my attention only to the former’s epistles and treatises (notably setting aside his numerous plays, following the approach of [Vogt \(2024\)](#)), and then only to those (considerable) elements of them that illuminate the role either of contributory or unitive love in a flourishing life. I also quote more extensively from Seneca than from Paul, on the assumption that readers are likely to be more familiar with the latter’s works than the former’s. And despite the varied occasions and dates for both Seneca’s and Paul’s works, each of them betrays relatively little development or changes of mind on the topics addressed here, so I largely read each of their works as part of a synchronic and mutually illuminating whole.

3. Can We Compare Paul and Seneca? A Brief Reflection on Rowe’s One True Life

Before we turn to Seneca and Paul in turn, it is worthwhile to venture a few methodological comments in defense of this kind of cross-traditional dialogue. Recent scholarship on Stoicism’s relationship to early Christianity has been much preoccupied by the question of whether comparisons of this kind are even possible, in view of the extent to which particular Stoic or early Christian claims about, e.g., God or virtue depend for their very intelligibility on their embeddedness within distinctive forms of life. As Kavin Rowe puts the concern, “Both the Roman Stoics and the early Christians claimed that their pattern of life was the truth of all things but also that such truth could be known only through the time it took to live the tradition that was the truth” ([Rowe 2016](#), p. 6). He goes so far as to insist that “the only truly adequate accounts are written by participants in the tradition about which they write”, though an outsider can approximate this fluency by coming to learn a rival tradition as what Alasdair [MacIntyre \(1989\)](#) calls a “second first language” ([Rowe 2016](#), pp. 202–3).

I certainly do not have the space here for a full response to Rowe’s methodological concerns, which are subtle enough to defy a simple summary, much less a quick refutation. I will simply note that, while I share Rowe’s (and MacIntyre’s) interest in avoiding flat-footed comparisons that simply identify token-equivalents of key terms in each tradition and juxtapose apparently parallel sentiments, I do not share his apparent pessimism about the prospects for textual dialogue across deeply divergent traditions. This is largely because I accept Donald Davidson’s argument against the possibility of incommensurable conceptual schemes—the view, that is, that each and every particular disagreement must take place against a backdrop of overwhelming conceptual agreement ([Davidson 1973, 1974](#))—which Rowe (following [MacIntyre 1989, 1994](#)) rejects, or at least highly qualifies ([Rowe 2016](#), p. 175 *et passim*). He concedes, to be sure, that Stoics and early Christians “could not help but share some assumptions about this or that”, but insists that “the most significant assumptions and convictions of each tradition—tradition comprising assumptions and convictions—are precisely those that keep them apart”, and this because such propositions can only be understood as part of incommensurable ways of life, internally consistent languages whose standards of truth are (in some cases at least) equivocal with the standards of truth employed in (at least some) other languages ([Rowe 2016](#), p. 260).

Without at all seeking to diminish or downplay the profound diversity of human culture and social organization (cf. [Henrich 2020; Flanagan 2016](#)), I would instead emphasize the extent to which these necessarily depend on still-greater commonalities, not least

because all such traditions—at least those which endure more than a few years—have to reckon with a common set of constraints and challenges endemic to the human condition itself. For instance, no household, much less a society, could long endure that systematically privileged unfairness, dishonesty, fornication, or murder; any such community would prove a self-consuming artifact, whether torn apart in a genocidal frenzy or suffocated by demographic collapse. This is not to deny that many societies, particularly in the absence of outside competition, can long limp along in a highly dysfunctional state (q.v. [Edgerton 1992](#)), nor that norms concerning these wrongs will vary from place to place; nonetheless, every human society, even the dysfunctional or moribund ones, sets itself, however fitfully, against this common store of evils and maladies.

I would even venture that the only way we can only interpret another's actions as at all meaningful is by presupposing this deep commonality of viewpoint and judgment (cf. again [Davidson 1973, 1974](#)). For instance, when we try to enter sympathetically into the worldview that underlies, e.g., the Aztec practice of human sacrifice, we do so precisely by situating it in the region of the human condition we label with the virtue of piety, both to the gods and to the city. By contrast, an account of that sacrificial practice that saw its proper analog, not in churches and mosques but rather in butcher shops, would have altogether failed to come to grips with it. (I borrow this example from [Taylor 2002](#), p. 116.) To be sure, this naturalness of moral judgment does not mean that all societies succeed equally well in it—far from it. But a society that rips beating hearts from the chests of innocents to slake the thirst of the sun (or which condones slavery or refuses education to girls) is failing in those respects in the larger project of living humanly, in which all societies, no matter how apparently foreign, are engaged. (On the complications and challenges involved in judging another culture's beliefs or practices to be harmful or maladaptive, cf. again [Edgerton 1992](#), esp. pp. 20–42).

Something similar ought to be said, it seems to me, about Christian-Stoic encounters. Mutual understanding certainly involves more than juxtaposing propositions employing a superficially similar vocabulary, since the meaning of God-talk on a Stoic's and a Christian's lips will surely vary according to the form of life each belongs to, and one would have to understand an indefinite number of things about that form of life to understand the talk (cf. [Lindbeck 1984](#)). But even before we have achieved full mastery of a rival tradition, we can be confident that we are on the right track in thinking that Seneca's talk of "Deus" is addressing the same region of the human condition (or "what is the case") as is Paul's talk of "θεός", such that they can fruitfully be put into conversation one with another.

However, I would also want to offer the following as a corollary to Davidson's principle of charity: even if we take it that no form of life is ultimately unintelligible to us, it is also true that even once we have understood everything that can be understood, every person (including, and perhaps especially, oneself) remains fundamentally mysterious. Indeed, I worry that Rowe understates the true limits of human communication by focusing on encounters across traditions. Augustine seems to me to have come closer to capturing our fundamental limits in his reflection on his pervasive inability ever to say just what he means: "My speech almost always displeases me. For I long for something better, which I often enjoy interiorly, before I begin to unfold it with sounding words; and when I assess it as less than what moved me, I am saddened that my tongue could not suffice for my heart (*contristor linguam meam cordi meo non potuisse sufficere*)" ([Augustine of Hippo 1865](#), sct. 2.3)".

Arthur [Schopenhauer \(1977\)](#) later put the same point more pithily still: "The passage from the idea to the concept is always a fall (*Der Übergang von der Idee zum Begriff ist aber immer ein Fall*)" ([Schopenhauer 1977](#), §50, p. 299). All language veils as much as it reveals, which is perhaps why Augustine thought that it would be brought to nothing in the kingdom of God ([Augustine of Hippo 1844](#), p. 22.29.6). Nonetheless, "tho' much is taken, much abides". Without pretending to have fully resolved these large and difficult questions, we do best to get on with the interesting and rewarding work of reading Seneca

and Paul in concert, “strong in will”, despite our inevitable shortcomings, “To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield” (Tennyson 1842).

4. Seneca’s Theology of Universal Contributory Love

Thorsteinsson is right to complain that commentators on early Christianity’s relationship to Stoicism sometimes display a kind of Christian chauvinism, in which the former is credited with making other-regard central to its moral outlook, while the latter is at least implicitly regarded as merely individualistic or even selfish. For instance, N.T. Wright observed, in a work published two years after Thorsteinsson’s *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism*, that “love (*agapē*)” was a virtue “unknown to the ancient pagan world” (Wright 2012, p. 1374n67), which, if broadly true as a philological claim about the word “*agapē*”, is demonstrably false as a philosophical one about the concept of contributory love (cf. the discussion above, p. 2, and the treatment of love in Seneca, which follows below). Thorsteinsson makes a strong case for seeing Roman Stoicism in particular as centered on an ethic of universal (contributory) love and goes so far as to argue that the Stoics had a more “universalistic” conception of whom one ought to love than did Paul or other early Christians.

Contributory love in particular is central to Seneca’s conception of a flourishing life. He wrote to his younger friend, the nobleman Lucilius, “Nature begot me as a lover of all (*Natura me amantem omnium genuit*)” (Seneca the Younger 1925, pp. 178–79 [Ep. 102.18]). Earlier, he had futilely exhorted the merciless Nero to cultivate “an all-embracing love of humans even as of oneself (*humani generis comprehendens ut sui amor*)” (Seneca the Younger 1928, pp. 390–91 [Clem. 1.11.2]), a teaching he later echoed to Lucilius: “You must live for another, if you wish to live for yourself (*Alteri vivas oportet, si vis tibi vivere*)” (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 314–15 [Ep. 48.2]).

Seneca expands on the same notion in the crucial *Epistle* 95, which offers a dense summary of Stoic physics and ethics at once:

Then comes the second problem,—how to deal with men. What is our purpose? What precepts do we offer? Should we bid them refrain from bloodshed? What a little thing it is not to harm one whom you ought to help! It is indeed worthy of great praise, when man treats man with kindness! . . . I can lay down for mankind a rule, in short compass, for our duties in human relationships: all that you behold, that which comprises both god and man, is one—we are the parts of one great body. Nature produced us related to one another, since she created us from the same source and to the same end. She engendered in us mutual love (*amorem mutuuum*), and made us prone to friendships. She established fairness and justice; according to her ruling, it is more wretched to commit than to suffer injury. (Seneca the Younger 1925, pp. 90–91 [Ep. 95.51–52])

All that is, from gods to the grass, comprise parts of the single body of Nature, which Seneca can also identify as “God” *tout court*: “This whole universe that encompasses us, is one and it is God” (Seneca the Younger 1920, pp. 466–67 [Ep. 92.30]). Seneca, like earlier Stoics, married Plato’s robust doctrine of divine creation and providence with Aristotle’s insistence that God must be entirely self-regarding and self-sufficient by identifying God with that “*causa*” or “*ratio*” that pervades and actualizes inert matter and so fashions a cosmos from what would otherwise be chaos (cf. Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 444–45 [Ep. 65.2]; Plato 1903, pp. 50c–52b; Aristotle 1933, Λ, 1072a–b; Sedley 2008, pp. 207–10).

As part of his (its?) providential disposition of things, God or Nature has taken steps to ensure that all parts of his body will relate harmoniously to one another, not least by implanting in rational beings a disposition of “mutual love”, which inclines us not merely to avoid harming others but indeed to actively benefit them, by treating others with kindness. Seneca can summarize a life “according to Nature”, in our social relations, with the simple maxim to nurture this disposition to universal benevolence. Love, he might almost have said, and do what you will (cf. Augustine of Hippo 1850, sct. 7.8). The early Stoics termed this process of expanding the circle of moral concern “*oikeiōsis*”,

“familiarization”, or perhaps “appropriation”. As Julia Annas describes it, “We start from a primitive attachment to our offspring, and from there extend our sympathies outwards to concern for others. Once we have started to do this, we find that there is no rational stopping place until we have concern for every human just insofar as he or she is human. And this attitude, of impartial concern for the interests of all others, is the basis of justice and of communal life” (Annas 1993, p. 265; cf. also Engberg-Pedersen 2000, pp. 67–69). The “naturalness” of these dispositions, for Seneca, does not mean that he does not also regard them as works of divine graciousness, if only in the form of (so to speak) “common grace”. Elsewhere in the *Moral Epistles*, Seneca describes the source of all virtuous behavior as a “holy spirit” that “indwells us”:

We do not need to uplift our hands towards heaven, or to beg the keeper of a temple to let us approach his idol’s ear, as if in this way our prayers were more likely to be heard. God is near you, he is with you, he is within you. This is what I mean, Lucilius: a holy spirit indwells within us, one who marks our good and bad deeds, and is our guardian. As we treat this spirit, so are we treated by it. Indeed, no man can be good without the help of God. (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 272–72 [Ep. 41.1–2])⁹

In this passage, as elsewhere, “Seneca speaks of God in remarkably personal terms”, as Rowe (2016), p. 28 notes. This register is obviously in some tension with the more impersonal, pantheistic note struck by, e.g., Ep. 95 (discussed above, p. 9)—whether the former is anything more than a pious veil drawn across the latter, as Rowe (2016), pp. 28–29 argues, is beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

Moreover, the love in view throughout these passages is clearly contributory love, at least in the first instance. As Thorsteinsson observes, “The close connection between love, on the one hand, and mutual help and care, on the other, is openly expressed, too, in the Stoic writings. Thus, on one occasion, Seneca pairs that which is loving together with that which advances mutual help, in contrast to that which is hostile and brings only mutual destruction: ‘What is more loving (*amantius*) to others than man? What more hostile than anger? Man is born for mutual help (*adiutorium mutuuum*); anger for mutual destruction’” (Thorsteinsson 2010, p. 161, quoting *Ira* 1.5.2).¹⁰

As Thorsteinsson emphasizes, Seneca interprets “love of the human race” in stringent terms, as excluding any return of evil for evil (Thorsteinsson 2010, p. 167, cf. *Ira* 1.16, 2.32), and as requiring the qualification of even the most extreme social inequalities, such as those between masters and slaves. The sage must not be afraid of courting public scandal for the sake of that universal love to which God or Nature beckons him. Seneca offers a particularly striking reflection on the obligations of masters toward slaves in his *Epistle* 47 to Lucilius, whom he praises for his familiar relations (*familiariter vivere*) with his own slaves, an attitude that “befits your prudence and erudition” (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 300–1 [Ep. 47.1]). Not coincidentally, “*familiariter vivere*”, “living familiarly”, evokes the Stoic theory of moral “familiarization” or “*oikeōsis*” discussed above (p. 12).

Seneca was no abolitionist, to be sure, though he does at points seem to gesture toward an interest in larger legal reforms of Roman slavery (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 306–7 [Ep. 47.11]). But then, so far as we know, there were no vocal abolitionists in this period, nor would there be until Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century (cf. Hart 2001). Rather, Seneca thought that the wise man would seek to attenuate the differences of rank and status between himself and his inferiors, even including slaves. Rather than forcing his slaves to stand, “hungry and dumb (*ieuni mutique*)”, while he gorges himself at dinner, he should at least be open to inviting them to the table and so replace a grudging servant with a loyal friend (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 302–3 [Ep. 47.2–5]).

This admonition is born, in part, from the practical consideration that what goes around tends to come around: “To epitomize my precept: you should live in relation to your inferior as you would like your superior to live in relation to you” (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 306–7 [Ep. 47.11]). (This is of course a version of the “Golden Rule” taught within many of the great spiritual and philosophical traditions, including in the Torah (cf. Lev.

19:18) and by Christ in the Gospels (cf. Matt. 22:39 *et par*). Nonetheless, Seneca equally appealed to what we might call theological motives, observing that “he, whom you call your slave, was born from the same seeds [as you], to enjoy the same heaven, equally to breathe, equally to live, equally to die” (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 306–7 [Ep. 47.10]). Freeman should not call others “slaves”, then, but “rather ‘fellow-slaves [*conserui*]’, if one reflects that Fortune has equal rights over slaves and free men alike” (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 302–3 [Ep. 47.2]). Indeed, considering how, in the populace at large, “one serves lust, another avarice, another ambition, and all, fear”, we should recognize that these latter forms of slavery are more disgraceful than mere legal bondage, since they are “self-imposed” (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 310–11 [Ep. 47.17]).

Seneca, then, Christian detractors notwithstanding, is as thoroughgoing an advocate of theologically grounded, universal benevolence as any early Christian, though it is true as well that his defense of this ethic, like that of other Stoics, remained largely trapped in the pages of his writings rather than being embodied in a missionary community like the early Church. (This is a point to which we will return below.) However, as we saw above, Thorsteinsson and others have insisted that, on the topic of contributory love, Paul is in fact parochial in comparison with Seneca.

5. Love as Law’s Fulfillment: Paul’s Ethics of Charity

Pauline ethics is undoubtedly centered on the cultivation of love, the “greatest” of the virtues (1 Cor. 13:13), which is limned in rapturous prose throughout 1 Corinthians 13. Love fulfills the whole of the moral Law (Rom. 13:8, i.a.), and in its most exalted form, is enabled by the presence of the divine Spirit within the baptized (cf. Rom. 5:5). But what of the scope of Pauline love? Advocates of a “Stoic” reading of Paul, such as Engberg-Pedersen and Thorsteinsson, aver that Paul’s love-ethic was in fact less universalistic than Seneca’s, focused exclusively on those within the Christian community. “According to the traditional interpretation”, Thorsteinsson writes, “Paul’s love ethic is decidedly universalistic. The Pauline ἀγάπη embraces all humanity, it is claimed or assumed, including even persecutors, as Romans 12.14 states. On a closer examination, however, this is actually far from evident” (Thorsteinsson 2010, p. 192).

As he goes on to note, “When in v. 14 Paul urges his audience to ‘bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them’ (εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντάς ὑμᾶς, εὐλογεῖτε καὶ μὴ καταράσθε), it does not involve a demand to ‘love’ these people, as has commonly been claimed. There is no ‘love of enemies’ witnessed in this verse” (Thorsteinsson 2010, p. 193; cf. Engberg-Pedersen 2000, p. 276). Instead, as he sees it, Paul’s appeals to love are consistently within the context of “an *in-group* ethic”, applying only to other Christians and not (as in Seneca) universally (Thorsteinsson 2010, p. 194). In his recent comparison of Paul and Seneca on the theme of consolation, Muir summarizes and endorses Thorsteinsson’s position as follows: “The Roman Stoics were committed to universal humanity”—in the sense of an ethic which applied in principle to all persons—“whereas Roman Christians were not” (Muir 2024, p. 190).

Paul’s admonitions to love generally take as their focus the community of the church: “serve one another through love”, he commands the Galatians (5:13b), while he commends the Colossians’ “love for all the saints” (1:4). (Though Colossians and Ephesians are regarded by many scholars today as forgeries, a compelling case for their authenticity is given in Campbell 2015, pp. 260–309.) Nonetheless, and as helpful as Thorsteinsson’s work is in correcting the errors of a certain kind of Pauline chauvinism vis-à-vis the Stoics, something like a Stoic chauvinism vis-à-vis Paul appears in his own account of Paul’s love-ethic; in particular, Thorsteinsson shows a consistent interest in minimizing any apparently universal exhortations to love in the Apostle’s letters. In the first place, while Thorsteinsson does an excellent job of identifying the “theological” framework of “*oikeōsis*” within which Stoicism’s love-ethic is situated, he does not similarly attend to the theological, and particularly narrative, framework presupposed in Paul’s reflections on love, namely

God's loving generosity in sending his Son to save human beings who were estranged from and at enmity with him.

In Romans 5, for instance, immediately after claiming that "the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5), Paul illustrates this divinely given love by recounting how it was displayed in Christ: "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (5:8). The love of Christ for us, here explicitly linked to the love poured into our own hearts by the Holy Spirit, is a love that embraces "enemies" (5:10), even to the point of death. And—it hardly needs to be said—the "us" for whom Paul understands Christ to have died is not a narrowly sectarian community, but rather all of humanity (cf. Rom. 5:18), or even the entire cosmos (cf. Rom. 8:19–21).

The idea, then, that the "love" to which Paul exhorts his Roman readers is in principle limited to members of a narrow in-group is implausible on its face; Paul himself makes clear that Christian love, like other Christian attitudes, is to be modeled on Christ's own self-sacrificial love for all humanity. Indeed, Paul might reasonably have expected his readers to recall Christ's example of love for his "enemies" (Rom. 5:10) in dying for them while they were "still sinners" (Rom. 5:8) when he exhorted them, in Romans 12:14, to "bless those who persecute you".

This is all the more likely given that Paul's command here seems to be a free paraphrase of Christ's own teaching, variously recorded in Matthew and Luke, that his followers should love their enemies. Below, Paul's exhortation appears between its Synoptic parallels, with verbal overlaps illustrated with color-coding. (Paul–Matthew overlaps are in red; Paul–Luke overlaps are in green; and Matthew–Luke overlaps are in blue.)

1. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς) (Matt. 5:44).
2. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse (εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντας ὑμᾶς εὐλογεῖτε καὶ μὴ καταρᾶσθε) (Rom. 12:14).
3. Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you (ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καλῶς ποιεῖτε τοῖς μισοῦσιν ὑμᾶς εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμᾶς προσεύχεσθε περὶ τῶν ἐπηρεάζοντων ὑμᾶς) (Lk. 6:27–28).

Paul's version of the teaching is an interesting blend of Matthean and Lukan elements—the command to "bless" is Lukan, but its object ("persecutors" rather than "those who curse") is Matthean. This mixture raises redaction-critical questions that are of interest to students of the Synoptic Problem and of the historical Jesus; for our purposes, however, the salient point is that Paul's exhortation to bless persecutors seems very likely to presuppose the wider context of the dominical exhortation to enemy-love recorded somewhat differently in Matthew and Luke alike.

Thorsteinsson expresses doubts about Paul's dependence on a dominical tradition here, and it is true enough that Paul does not explicitly indicate his dependence on such a tradition, as he arguably does in, e.g., Rom. 14:14 (Thompson 2014, p. 191; Dunn 2019, p. 21; cf. Mk. 7:18–19); 1 Cor. 7:10–11 (Collins 1992, p. 264; Fee 1987, p. 323; Hays 1997, pp. 119–20; cf. Mk. 10:11–12), 9:14 (Dungan 1976, pp. 3–75; Fee 1987, pp. 455–56; Hays 1997, p. 152; Thiselton 2000, pp. 692–93; cf. Matt. 10:10/Lk. 10:7), 11:23–26 (Marshall 1978, p. 805; Hays 1997, p. 198; Thiselton 2000, p. 878; cf. Lk. 22:19–24); and 1 Thess. 4:15–17 (Hartmann 1966, p. 189; Wenham 2002, pp. 98–99; Malherbe 2000, p. 268; cf. Matt. 24:15–31). (For doubts about the last of these allusions, cf. Jacobi 2015, p. 45; Tuckett 2014, p. 337.) Nonetheless, there are other instances in Paul's letters in which he seems to allude to Christ's life and teaching without directly flagging that he is doing so, perhaps because he takes his readers' familiarity with them for granted. Consider, for instance, the apparent allusion to the Transfiguration in 2 Corinthians 4:4–6 [cf. esp. Matt. 17:1–ff.] and to Christ's promise to Peter at Caesarea in Galatians 1:15–16 [cf. Matt. 16:17–18] (Lee 2009, pp. 81–82; Barbaglio 1989, p. 21; Wenham 2002, p. 69; Case 2022, pp. 83–85). And in any case, there is broad agreement among commentators on Romans that chapters 12–14 in particular reflect Paul's use of Synoptic traditions, from faint echoes to noisy allusions, including in Romans

12:14 (cf. also, e.g., Rom. 12:21/Matt. 5:38–48, Lk. 6:27–36; Rom. 14:17/Matt. 6:31–33) (Thompson 2014, *passim*; Fitzmeyer 1992, pp. 656, 679, 696; Jewett 2007, pp. 766, 810; Moo 1996, pp. 781, 784, 815; Neiryneck 1986, p. 270).

Another probable Pauline allusion to a dominical tradition is also relevant to assessing the scope of the Apostle's love-ethic. In Romans 13, Paul lists several of the Ten Commandments and suggests that these are summarized in Leviticus 19:18's command to neighbor-love: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Rom. 13:8–9). (This is likely dependent on another Matthean tradition (cf. Matt. 19:18–19 and the more distant parallels in Mk. 10:18 or Lk. 18:20). For further discussion, cf. (Case 2022, pp. 86–88).) Thorsteinsson denies that the command to neighbor-love, which concludes this passage, has any application beyond the church, for Paul prefaces it with a command to "love one another (τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν)". "'The other' (ὁ ἕτερος) and 'the neighbour' (ὁ πλησίον [sc. ὄν]) spoken of in 13:8–10, whom the addressees are obliged to 'love'", Thorsteinsson suggests, "are persons who belong to a very specific part of humankind: they are fellow believers in Christ" (Thorsteinsson 2010, p. 190).

Now, there is no doubt that Paul's immediate concern here is for the love and concern of Christians in Rome for one another. From the moment early Christian congregations began to separate from the synagogue, they became vulnerable to legal harassment and proscription. Instead of being classed among the competing varieties of Judaism, and so as an odd but indisputably venerable cultural inheritance, the church then became a novel cult, an unapproved association (*hetaeria*) dedicated to the disruptive project of tearing converts away from their ancestral traditions and running afoul of Rome's broadly tolerant but deeply conservative approach to religious difference, which prized stability above all (Wilken [1984] 2003, pp. 1–26). In Paul's day, baptism meant, not simply a change of creed but a profound rupture with uncountably many aspects of one's former life; new members of the church—many of them poor to begin with (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26)—found themselves suddenly alienated both from the world of "Greeks" and of "Jews" (cf. 1 Cor. 10:32) and often could rely only on one another.

Nonetheless, we can distinguish between what Paul concretely hoped to achieve with his words (their "perlocutionary force", in J.L. Austin's terms) and what those words in fact meant (their "illocutionary force") (Austin [1962] 1975). Thorsteinsson might be right that Paul's principal (perlocutionary) concern was to persuade Roman Christians to take care of one another, but how did Paul drive home that obligation? He did so, as we noted above, by glossing several of the Ten Commandments (the proscriptions against adultery, murder, theft, and coveting, all from the "second table" of the Commandments, which are particularly concerned with interpersonal relations) as being captured in Leviticus 19:18's command to love one's neighbor as oneself.

This is the clearest problem with Thorsteinsson's case against the universal scope of Pauline neighbor-love: it implies that Paul also understood the biblical proscriptions of murder, adultery, and theft to apply only within the Christian community. After all, if the requirement of neighbor-love includes (even if it goes beyond) those moral proscriptions, and indeed "any other commandment" (Rom. 13:8), it is hard to see how the former (if anything, more encompassing), positive command could be limited to the church and the latter, negative ones, extended to all humanity.¹¹ By far the most reasonable interpretation is that Paul, like Christ as recorded in Luke 10:25–37, interpreted "neighbor" to mean "anyone". If you ought not murder, steal from, or cuckold anyone, then you ought to love everyone, granting that each is to fulfill this obligation in the way most appropriate to his situation.

We have so far established that, for Paul as for Seneca, the moral obligation of neighbor-love extended, in principle, to any and everyone. We can go a step further still, however, and note that Paul—quite unlike Seneca—seems to have been convinced that an *actual*

community of universal, loving brotherhood would come into being after Christ's return to restore the cosmos. For Paul, the movement of God's grace is always from the particular to the universal, beginning with the single individual, Abraham, who was elected so that "all the nations shall be blessed by you (ένευλογηθήσονται έν σοι πάντα τὰ έθνη)" (Gal. 3:8, cf. Gen. 12:3 LXX), in a process of outward expansion that is in-principle unrestricted.¹² Paul, after all, writes in many places as though he is confident that every human being will ultimately be united to Christ and so saved. Here is a representative sample of such sentiments:

- "As in Adam all (πάντες) die, so also in Christ shall all (πάντες) be made alive. . .so that God may be all things, in all things (τὰ πάντα έν πᾶσιν)" (1 Cor. 15:22, 28b).
- "As one man's trespass led to condemnation for all human beings (πάντας άνθρώπους), so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all human beings (πάντας άνθρώπους)" (Rom. 5:18).
- "God has consigned all (τοὺς πάντας) to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all (τοὺς πάντας)" (Rom. 11:32).
- God "has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things (τὰ πάντα) in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10).
- "In [Christ] all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things (τὰ πάντα), whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20).
- God "wills all human beings (πάντας άνθρώπους) to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).¹³

These texts strongly suggest that Paul believes that all will be saved. Particularly compelling are those passages that draw parallels between the universality of fall and redemption. After all, few doubt that, when Paul writes of "one man's trespass lead[ing] to condemnation for all human beings" (Rom. 5:18a), he is not engaging in hyperbole or describing "all kinds of people", but instead refers to every individual without remainder; why then not apply the same logic to our interpretation of the grammatically parallel clause about justification in the remainder of Romans 5:18?

A full treatment of Paul's apparent universalism would need to account for, e.g., apparently annihilationist texts such as 2 Thessalonians 1:9 and Romans 2:8–9, as well as wider theological questions that would take us too far afield at present.¹⁴ Nonetheless, if Paul is indeed in earnest in the passages quoted above, then the central focus of his love-ethic on the community of the church as the body of Christ in fact anticipates a glorious—and in Paul's mind, likely imminent (1 Cor. 7:29, Rom. 13:11–12, i.a.)—future in which that community, that body, will in fact become co-extensive not only with the human race, but indeed with the cosmos as such. This, at least, is how Gregory of Nyssa read Paul's account of the end of all things in 1 Corinthians 15: in a celebrated homily on that chapter, he proposed, "When the whole creation becomes one body and all people in him grow together with one another by obedience, then [Christ] offers for himself the subjection of his own body to the Father [cf. 1 Cor. 15:24]. . .We learn in this passage of the apostle's letter to believe that nothing is outside what is to be saved" (Gregory of Nyssa 2015, pp. 126–27).

6. Seneca on the Sage's Imperviousness to Loss

We have so far considered the broad agreement between Paul and Seneca as to the proper (universal) scope of contributory love, notwithstanding the important ways in which Paul's own views were inflected by his understanding of Christ and the last things. As we discussed above, however, love also possesses a conceptually distinct "unitive" dimension; Seneca's attitude toward the latter was almost completely opposite his attitude toward the former, and it is here that the most important differences between his and Paul's ethics of love emerge.

The Stoics were distinctive among classic philosophical schools for their insistence that virtue is sufficient for happiness, which they identified as a condition of being free from all negative emotions. As Seneca summarizes the classic Stoic view: “He that possesses prudence is also self-restrained; he that possesses self-restraint is also unwavering; he that is unwavering is untroubled (*inperturbatus*); he that is untroubled is free from sadness (*sine tristitia*); he that is free from sadness is happy (*beatus*). Therefore, the prudent man is happy, and prudence is sufficient to constitute the happy life” (Seneca the Younger 1920, pp. 286–87 [Ep. 85.2]). All goods external to one’s character are, strictly speaking, indifferent, though some indifferents are “preferable” and others are “non-preferable” (Seneca the Younger 1920, pp. 248–49 [Ep. 82.14]). In the Stoic view, true human flourishing is impossible if it depends on any external goods. Consider the familiar view (defended in the ancient world by the Peripatetics, among others) that a flourishing life requires not only a good character but also a measure of “external” goods, such as friends, wealth, and health.

One problem with this enlarged basket of goods, as Seneca would be quick to point out, is that a person who makes any external good essential to his well-being has given hostages to fortune, and this will be evident not only when he loses some or all of them, but even ahead of time, in the fear and anxiety that will beset him when he thinks about the possibility of their loss. Seneca returns again and again to the fickleness of worldly goods, as in a letter written to console a friend on the death of his brother:

“Whole kingdoms together with their kings, whole nations with all their component tribes, have all submitted to their doom. All men, nay, all things look forward to an end of their days: yet all do not come to the same end: one man loses his life in the midst of his career, another at the very beginning of it, another seems hardly able to free himself from it when worn out with extreme old age, and eager to be released: we are all going to the same place, but we all go thither at different times”.¹⁵

Our impending doom is so evident, he writes elsewhere to his mother that “no man loses anything by the frowns of Fortune, unless he has been deceived by her smiles”.¹⁶

Another key Stoic objection to the Aristotelian view that external goods should be weighed in the balance alongside flourishing is that this implies a false and demeaning equivalence between two classes of incommensurable goods. Seneca offers a version of this argument in *Epistle 92*: “We meet with one person who maintains that a wise man who has met with bodily misfortune is neither wretched nor happy. But he also is in error, for he is putting the results of chance upon a parity with the virtues, and is attributing only the same influence to things that are honourable as to things that are devoid of honour. But what is more detestable and more unworthy than to put contemptible things in the same class with things worthy of reverence!” (Seneca the Younger 1920, pp. 458–59 [Ep. 92.19]). The fact that Aristotelians resist this inference shows, on the Stoic view, that they too recognize the *sui generis* and trumping character of virtue over all other goods. (For further discussion, cf. Annas 1993, pp. 365–71.)

Seneca insists instead that virtue suffices for happiness; nothing we can lose is actually essential to a flourishing life: “If that alone is good which is honorable (*honestum*), everyone agrees that virtue is sufficient for the purpose of living happily (*beate vivendum*)” (Seneca the Younger 1920, pp. 294–95 [Ep. 85.18]). In an opusculum, *On Providence*, which was written shortly before his own forced suicide, Seneca raises the classic question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” His answer, counter-intuitive though it may seem, is that they do not: “No evil can befall a good man (*Nihil accidere bono viro mali potest*); contraries cannot combine. . . I do not say that he does not feel them, but he conquers them, and on the occasion calmly and tranquilly rises superior to their attacks” (Seneca the Younger 1928, pp. 6–7 [Prov. 1.2.1–2]).

“What then?” an interlocutor objects in his *Epistle 85*; “Is [the sage] not to fear death, imprisonment, burning, and all the other missiles of Fortune?” Seneca’s response is characteristically extreme: “Not at all; for he knows that they are not evils, but only seem to be. He reckons all these things as the bugbears (*formidines*) of man’s existence” (Seneca

the Younger 1920, pp. 300–1 [Ep. 85.27]). Even in the midst of actual torture, the true sage “unconquered looks down from a lofty height upon his sufferings. Do you ask me what spirit animates him in these circumstances? It is the spirit of one who is comforting a sick friend”, namely, his body (Seneca the Younger 1920, pp. 302–3 [Ep. 85.30]).

If sorrow at one’s own suffering is inappropriate, then so too (*a fortiori*) is sorrow at another’s—the Stoic ambition is to weaken or even eliminate negative emotions such as anger, grief, or fear. Even if he sees his father being murdered, Seneca famously insisted in *On Anger*, the sage will not become angry, though he will pursue swift justice (Seneca the Younger 1928, pp. 136–37 [Ira 1.12.1–3]). Holding on to resentment, for a Stoic, is like taking poison in the hope that your enemy will die.¹⁷ Some negative emotions, such as grief, are inevitable in the face of certain kinds of loss, and Seneca’s counsel is to temper them rather than eliminate them completely, to prevent “false opinion [from adding] something more to our grief than Nature has prescribed” (Seneca the Younger 1932, pp. 22–23 [De consol. ad Marc. 7.1]). Nonetheless, this is merely a concession to biological necessity, since negative emotions only harm their bearers and in fact hinder effective action in the face of the evil that prompts them: “For what madness it is to punish one’s self for misfortune and add new ill to present ills (*quae enim, malum, amentia est poenas a se infelicitatis exigere et mala sua novo augere!*)” (Seneca the Younger 1932, pp. 14–15 [De Consol. ad Marc. 3.4]). If the highest aim of human life is universal benevolence, then a pang of sympathy at the suffering of others can only distract from it. After all, we all prefer a surgeon who remains calm in the face of the patient suffering on his table to one who breaks down weeping the moment he makes an incision (cf. Gavrilyuk 2004, p. 9).

Seneca’s insistence on the imperviousness of true happiness to any loss, even that of a beloved friend or family member, does not mean that he counseled avoiding affection; on the contrary, he wrote movingly about the good of friendship in particular (cf. Motto 2007, pp. 79–86). Responding to a letter whose bearer Lucilius had described as a “friend”, even while counseling Seneca not to share too much about his own affairs with him, Seneca protests that while it’s common to call every affable acquaintance a “friend”, “if you esteem someone a friend whom you do not trust completely, you grievously err. . . Before friendship, a person is to be judged, but after friendship, trusted” (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 8–11 [Ep. 3.1–2]). Echoing Aristotle’s dictum that “the friend is another self (ἕσται γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτότος)” (Aristotle 1926, sct. 9.2, 1165b30). Seneca continues, “Why should I withhold any words before my friend? What’s this? Why should I not think myself alone before him?” (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 10–11 [Ep. 3.3]).

A Stoic sage is free to feel affection, at least for a virtuous friend, so long as that affection is tempered by the recognition that its loss—which could come at any moment—would not meaningfully diminish his happiness: “Mortal have you been born, to mortals have you given birth. You, who are a crumbling and perishable body and oft assailed by the agents of disease,—can you have hoped that from such frail matter you gave birth to anything durable and imperishable?” (Seneca the Younger 1932, pp. 32–33 [De consol. ad Marc. 11.1]). This is a common sentiment among the Roman Stoics, perhaps expressed most starkly in Marcus Aurelius’s rehearsal of Epictetus’s advice, “When a man kisses his child, said Epictetus, he should whisper to himself, ‘To-morrow perchance thou wilt die’” (Marcus 1916, p. 11). Anything which can be lost must be held lightly; to cling to a good you cannot control would be unreasonable, would set one up for failure and despair (Seneca the Younger 1932, pp. 28–29 [De consol. ad Marc. 10.1]). We have to learn to proportion our affections to the fragility of the goods they encompass. Stoics grant that health, wealth, and family are rightly thought of as “preferable” to their alternatives, but not as genuine constituents of our well-being.

The truly wise person will be able to enjoy all external goods in a measured, deliberate way, as “the user of the Fortune’s rewards, but not their slave (*Usura fortunae muneribus, non servitura*)” (Seneca the Younger 1932, p. 106 [De beata vita 3.3–4]). The Stoic ideal is Socrates, who freely embraced death rather than accept dishonor and made even his deathbed an occasion for a cheerful philosophical dispute. Nonetheless, as Phillips-Garrett

(2021) rightly observes, this insistence on the ultimate indifference of the loss of friends among other “external” goods does mean that

Seneca’s account of friendship faces a significant practical tension between the intimate friendships Seneca seeks and the role self-sufficiency plays in the Stoic good. Thus, since these are competing goals, any Stoic who accepts both Seneca’s account of friendship and his broader ethical account must choose between having friendships full of intimacy and trust that leave the Stoic susceptible to grief or distant friendships that lack intimacy but do not make her vulnerable to the loss of her happiness (Phillips-Garrett 2021, p. 201).

Seneca considers an Aristotelian objection to Stoicism’s parsimonious account of happiness, namely that external goods, even if they’re not constituents of a flourishing life in their own right, nonetheless supply necessary conditions for the acquisition, maintenance, and exercise of virtue. That is, “poverty will make even the wise man worse, and so will pain, and so will anything else of that sort. For although those things will not rob him of his virtue, yet they will hinder the work of virtue” (Seneca the Younger 1920, pp. 302–3 [Ep. 85.31]). Seneca replies that virtue, like the pilot’s art, is not made worse by the storms of life, even if it proves unable to pass them: “He who has been able to say, ‘Neptune, you shall never sink this ship except on an even keel,’ has fulfilled the requirements of his art; the storm does not interfere with the pilot’s work, but only with his success” (Seneca the Younger 1920, pp. 304–5 [Ep. 85.33]). So too, that virtue that mounts a heroic struggle with fortune’s slings and arrows is no less virtuous for being unable to keep its bearer alive; its task is not to make us immortal but to make us good.

Seneca thus has a highly “realized eschatology”, in the sense that he sees the fullness of beatitude as available here and now, for those who are fit to enjoy it. Nonetheless, there is still an element of future eschatology in his writings as well. Writing to Marcia to console her on the death of her son, he reminds her, “Only the image of your son—and a very imperfect likeness it was—has perished; he himself is eternal and has reached now a far better state, stripped of all outward encumbrances [sc. the body] and left simply to himself” (Seneca the Younger 1932, pp. 88–89 [De consol. ad Marc. 24.5]). Seneca even portrays Marcia’s son as being welcomed in the heavens by a great company of noble Romans, from “the Scipios and the Catos” to his own grandfather (Seneca the Younger 1932, pp. 88–89 [De consol. ad Marc. 24.5]).

This sentimental picture is perhaps at least partly the product of Seneca’s aim to comfort a grieving mother; in a more philosophical text, such as *Epistle 92*, he simply describes death as the return of what is divine in us to its heavenly origin:

“He in whose body virtue dwells, and spirit/E’er present” [Virgil, *Aen.* 5.363], is equal to the gods; mindful of his origin, he strives to return thither. No man does wrong in attempting to regain the heights from which he once came down. And why should you not believe that something of divinity exists in one who is a part of God? All this universe which encompasses us is one, and it is God; we are associates of God; we are his members. Our soul has capabilities, and is carried thither, if vices do not hold it down. (Seneca the Younger 1920, pp. 466–67 [Ep. 92.30])

This latter text makes particularly clear that death offers, not the addition of goods that were lacking to the mortal sage, but merely the elimination of non-preferables that necessarily beset him (Seneca the Younger 1920, pp. 468–69 [Ep. 92.33–35]). And in any case, the postmortem existence envisioned by Seneca—whether in the colorful version he sketches for Marcia or the more restrained one he offers to Lucilius—is bounded by the coming universal conflagration (*conflagratio, ekpyrōsis*), in which the entire cosmos will be consumed in fire and begin another round in the eternal return of the same (Seneca the Younger 1971, pp. 284–85 [Quaes. Nat. 3.28.7–29.5]; cf. also Harrill 2010, pp. 203–43).

So far, we have considered Seneca’s Stoicism as a particularly extreme approach to reconfiguring the shape of ordinary human loves: whereas the two broad families of love, which I have been calling unitive and contributory, tend to be braided together in a person’s life, the one increasing in proportion to the other (i.e., most of us bear greater

contributory and unitive love alike toward close relatives than toward strangers), Seneca advocated attenuating our investment in unitive love while maximizing our investment in contributory love. We ought to allow our flourishing to depend on the enjoyment only of what we cannot lose, which, here below, is nothing other than our virtue. Nonetheless, the Stoic sage is no egoist, indifferent to others, for the truly human form of life, one lived “according to Nature” or God, is one that displays love (sc. benevolence) toward all others, regardless of their difference from oneself.

7. Beloved: The Eschatological Horizon of Pauline Unitive Love

We have seen that, for Seneca, unitive love, however preferable to its contraries, was no part of a flourishing life, and to treat it as such was to mortgage one’s happiness to time and chance. It is in this dimension of love, which has been hitherto neglected in comparisons of Paul and Seneca on the theme, that the deepest differences between Seneca and Paul are to be found, for Paul insists that a good life is constituted in part by our deep attachments to those whom, in this vale of tears, we cannot help but lose. For instance, Paul frequently addresses his friends in other churches as his “beloveds (ἀγαπητοί)” (cf. Rom. 16:5, 8–9, 12; 1 Cor. 4:14, 15:58; Eph. 6:21; Phil. 2:12; Phm. 1:1; etc.); the love which this epithet brings into view is not principally that of benevolent care but rather of tender affection, as in his description of Timothy as his “beloved child (τέκνον ἀγαπητόν)” (1 Cor. 4:17).

This affectionate inflection to Paul’s use of “ἀγαπητόν” is fundamentally theological, rooted in the fact that God himself has a “beloved Son”. In Colossians, Paul writes that God has “transferred us into the kingdom of his dear Son (τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ)” (Col. 1:13). Translated woodenly, Paul’s description of Christ is somewhat ambiguous: “the Son of his love” might mean any number of things. Nonetheless, when this phrase is heard within the resonant chamber of Israel’s Scriptures, it can only be interpreted as indicating that the Father takes delight in the Son.

This reading is unavoidable in view of the allusion carried in the phrase, “beloved Son (υἱός τῆς ἀγάπης)”, which echoes the mysterious episode of the Binding of Isaac, Abraham’s “beloved son (τὸν υἱόν τὸν ἀγαπητόν)” (cf. Gen. 22:2, 12, LXX). The allusion certainly underscores that Christ, like Isaac, was given over to death by his Father, and elsewhere this is Paul’s principal interest in the Isaac-typology, as in Romans 8:32a (“He did not spare (τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο) his own Son, but handed him over for all of us”), which echoes Genesis 22:12 LXX (“You did not spare your beloved Son (οὐκ ἐφείσω τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ) because of me”). Nonetheless, it equally conveys that Christ is “dear” to the Father, his “beloved”—at least, this is clearly how Jerome interpreted it in the Vulgate, where he rendered this phrase as “filii dilectionis eius”, “of the son of his delight”. Similarly, the Syriac Peshitta renders it “*d-bareh chavayva*”, “of his beloved Son”. And this “unitive” dimension of Isaac’s relationship to Abraham is also the most prominent aspect of the Gospels’ allusions to Christ as the “new Isaac” (cf. Matt. 3:17, Mk. 1:11, Lk. 3:22; Huizinga 2009).

That God himself not only loves but has beloveds profoundly shaped Paul’s own account and enactment of the ethics of love. As Augustine observed in his polemic against the Stoics in *De civitate Dei*, this paradigm of the life of faith, who could command us to imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor 11:1), was no model of Stoic reserve; quite the opposite, in fact. “Very joyfully”, Augustine insists, “do we with the eyes of faith behold [Paul] rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep” (Augustine of Hippo 1844, sct. 14.9.2, cf. Rom. 12:15). He notes that Paul spent much of his life in a state of anguish at the world’s brokenness, in “continual grief (*continuum dolorem*)” at the failure of Israel to receive her Messiah (cf. Rom 9:2), and “proclaiming his sorrow (*luctum suum denuntiantem*)” over some in the Corinthian church who refused to repent of their sins (cf. 2 Cor 12:21) (Augustine of Hippo 1844, sct. 14.9.2). He even colorfully described himself to the Galatians as “in labor pains until Christ is formed in you” (4:19).

What Nicholas Wolterstorff observes about Augustine’s mature break with Stoicism applies at least implicitly to Paul himself: both maintained that “virtue is not sufficient

for happiness. That which is disturbance worthy for me is not just the moral and religious condition of my soul" (Wolterstorff 2009, p. 198). For Paul, genuine flourishing is impossible unless one's beloveds are flourishing as well. This in fact represents the deepest difference between Seneca's and Paul's love-ethics: where the former seeks to attenuate our dependence on unitive love in the interest of expanding contributory love, the latter insists on extending both to a community that is in principle universal, embracing not only all of humanity, but, as we saw above, the entire cosmos (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22–24; Rom. 5:18, 11:32; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20, i.a.).

This might seem an implausible claim in view of the strikingly "Stoic" elements in, e.g., Philippians 4, which we noted above: "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content [or "self-sufficient"] (*ἀντάρκη*). I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:11–13). How different is this, after all, from Seneca's insistence, "The happy man is content with his present lot, no matter what it is, and is reconciled to his circumstances"? (Seneca the Younger 1932, pp. 114–15 [DBV 7.6.2]). All the elements of the Stoic template would seem to be present: Paul has cultivated sufficient inner resilience to external shocks, itself of properly divine origin, so that he is neither elated by good fortune nor downcast by ill.

Some Pauline interpreters have sought to distinguish Paul's "theonomous", Christological reformulation of "*autarkeia*" from the Stoic's supposed autonomous individualism (e.g., Sevenster 1961, p. 114), but this underrates the role Seneca affords to divine grace in human virtue (cf. the discussion of *Ep.* 41 above, p. 13). Rather, the key difference between Pauline contentment and Stoic self-sufficiency is the radical reshaping of the former by history (Sevenster 1961, p. 27), and particularly by the notion of a permanent (eschatological) resurrection of the dead and renewal of creation. Philippians 4:11–13 is not an appeal to the overwhelming superiority of divinely given virtue to any mere preferable (though that superiority is doubtless an area of common ground between Paul and Seneca), but rather an appeal to the fact that Christ, now at work in his elect by his Spirit, will eventually raise them from the dead into a life of imperishable glory in his presence, and will even liberate the entire cosmos from its bondage to death and decay.

This is a story to which Paul often alludes, but which he tells most fully in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 8; the latter in particular can fairly be read as an expansion of Paul's compressed statement that he has learned to be content with whatever circumstances bring him, because he "can do all things through the one who strengthens [him]" (Phil. 4:11–13). In Romans 8:9–11, Paul first observes that Christ indwells his followers by his Spirit, as a guarantee of their future resurrection, and then later observes "that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18), when "the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). This promise gives us the assurance "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38–39).

When Paul writes to the Thessalonians "concerning those who are asleep", viz., who have died, in the hope that they "may not grieve as others do who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13), his counsel is emphatically not that the Thessalonians have no cause for grief in the face of lost loved ones, since what truly matters for their flourishing can never be taken from them. Rather, he reminds them that those who have died in Christ are not truly lost after all: "Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thess. 4:14).

The Stoics sought to conceive of a happiness that would be possible under conditions of death and decay, and so they located it in a soul that had become invulnerable to the loss of whatever death might touch. Paul insists, instead, that true happiness will be possible only in a world that has been "freed from its bondage to decay" (Rom. 8:21). Paul sees life in Christ as a colossal wager on the truth of the resurrection: "If Christ has not been raised,

your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:17–19). Full flourishing will be possible only when Christ returns to "change our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21), a "spiritual body", imperishable and immortal (1 Cor. 15:44, 52), in a cosmos in which "God is all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). It is only because Paul hoped for a world from which death had been banished and all losses restored that he could intelligibly widen the scope of unitive love to the extent he did—in principle, all of humanity is destined to be our "beloved" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22–28, Rom. 11:32, Col. 1:20, 1 Tim. 2:4, i.a.), and so exhort his reader to long for the day when they would be, perfectly and indefectibly.

8. Conclusions: Paul and Seneca, Face to Face

Even if it is apocryphal, there is a ring of truth to Seneca's remark in his first epistle of his supposed correspondence with Paul, "We were much refreshed by the reading of your book, by which I mean some of the many letters which you have addressed to some city or capital of a province, and which inculcate the moral life with admirable precepts" (James 1924, sct. 1.1). As we have seen, in his insistence on the duty of universal love, among other key claims, Paul's ideas were indeed strikingly convergent with Seneca's, and it is not at all difficult to imagine Seneca nodding along to many passages in what the Seneca of the *Correspondence* calls Paul's "letters to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Achaians", the latter presumably meaning 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 1:1), or even concluding that "it is the holy spirit which is in you [sc. Paul] and high above you which expresses these exalted and adorable thoughts" (James 1924, sct. 1.11, cf. the discussion of Seneca's *Ep.* 41 above, p. 13).

Nonetheless, for all their common ground in advocating for a universal ethic of charity and of detachment from present ills, in the end, Paul was a Christian—or better, a "new covenant Jew", tasked with bringing the nations to the "obedience of faith" in Israel's Messiah (cf. Pitre et al. 2019)—and Seneca was an eclectic Stoic. (Seneca's eclecticism is best illustrated by his frequent habit of concluding his letters to Lucilius with quotations from Epicurus (cf. Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 8–9 [*Ep.* 2.5–6]; pp. 18–19 [*Ep.* 4.10]; pp. 28–29 [*Ep.* 6.11], etc.), a practice he justified with the remark, "I am wont to cross over even into the enemy's camp—not as a deserter, but as a scout" (Seneca the Younger 1917, pp. 8–9 [*Ep.* 2.5]).)

Paul's great departure, not only from Stoics such as Seneca but from Hellenistic moralists more broadly, was not over the proper scope of contributory love. As we saw above, Seneca maintained an obligation to universal benevolence grounded in a richly theological (or at least, metaphysical) conception of human dignity. Christians are right to emphasize, however, the way in which the Church made these teachings widely available as a way of life, something which the Stoics never achieved—if there's some truth to Nietzsche's quip that, metaphysically speaking, Christianity is a kind of "vulgar Platonism", there's still more truth to the idea that, in the moral sphere, Christianity is a kind of "vulgar Stoicism", a development whose novelty Justin Martyr nicely captured already in the second century AD: "For no one believed in Socrates so as to die for this dogma, but in Christ...not only philosophers and philologists believed, but also craftsmen and the altogether uneducated, scorning both glory and fear and death; since he is the power of the ineffable Father, not a vessel of human reason" (Justin 1865, §10, my translation).

Rather, Paul's most striking divergence from the Stoicism of a Seneca was in expanding the proper scope of unitive love. For Seneca, your flourishing is a function of the excellence of your character as manifest in your actions, particularly actions to benefit others. He required at once universal contributory love and universal attenuation of attachments to anything time might touch. As we have seen, Paul rejected this attitude of detachment: from the loss of friends in 1 Thessalonians 4 to the travails of the whole creation in Romans 8, Paul insists that it is not only reasonable but obligatory to nourish deep attachments to those whose loss you will one day painfully grieve, secure in the hope that they will be restored to you when, at last, God is all in all.

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Notes

- ¹ We should, however, note the minority report of Ilaria Ramelli, who has argued in several publications that, with the exception of *Epistles* 11 and 14, there are some indications that the correspondence could possess a genuine historical core. She notes that the latter two epistles betray clear signs of being later additions to the Correspondence, as both are missing from several manuscripts of the Correspondence. This is significant, since the Correspondence's clearest indications of pseudepigraphy come from these letters: *Ep.* 11 mis-dates the burning of Rome, and *Ep.* 14 includes the implausible suggestion that Seneca converted to Christianity (Ramelli 2014). Ramelli further observes that Paul's letters in the (shorter) correspondence, and *only* his letters, contain a number of semantic and syntactical "Graecisms", which would be characteristic of the Latin-style of an author accustomed to thinking and writing in Greek (Ramelli 2013b, pp. 326–29). If, as is usually thought, the Correspondence is the product of a single hand, then it was a subtle forger who thought to pepper only his Pauline letters with appropriate solecisms.
- ² Gallio's presence in Achaia as proconsul was dramatically confirmed by the 1905 discovery of the "Delphi inscription", added in ca. 52 AD at the order of the Emperor Claudius to the temple of Apollo at Delphi, which mentions "my friend and proconsul Gallio" (Sevenster 1961, p. 8). Seneca addressed his *De Ira* (hereafter, *Ira*) and *De Beata Vita* (hereafter, *DBV*) to Gallio, the former under his given name, "Novatus". Cf. *Ira* 1.1 in Seneca the Younger (1928); *DBV* 1.1, in Seneca (1932).
- ³ Quotations of the Bible in English are (with frequent alterations) from *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University, NRSV (1996)). Quotations from the Greek New Testament are from Nestle (1993).
- ⁴ VanderWeele, "On an Analytic Definition of Love", 106. VanderWeele proposes that love is best thought of as a disposition to desire rather than a desire itself, to emphasize that the truth-value of statements such as "John loves Mary" does not depend on John's having overt or articulate feelings of love for Mary at the time of utterance. Even asleep, John can rightly be said to love Mary if he has reliable dispositions to desire to enjoy loving union with Mary, or to see Mary's good promoted (*ibid.*, p. 107).
- ⁵ *Summa Theologiae* (Textum Leoninum, Thomas 1888) 1–2.26.4.
- ⁶ "The typical example of Gift-love would be that love which moves a man to work and plan and save for the future well-being of his family he will die without sharing or seeing; of the second, that which sends a lonely or frightened child to its mother's arms" (*The Four Loves* (Lewis [1960] 2007, p. 6).
- ⁷ I have framed this definition in the passive voice to underscore that contributory love need not solely involve the desire to promote the beloved's good oneself—if I intend to donate a kidney to help a friend with renal failure, I (probably) will not be disappointed to learn that he had miraculously made a full recovery before I had the chance to do so.
- ⁸ The most famous instance of this is Lewis's *Four Loves*, but cf. Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*: "Agapē is the Christian addition to the forms of affection here recognized [i.e., *erōs* and *philia*], and suggests a less focused, universal benevolence that pays little or no regard to reciprocity" (Blackburn 1994, p. 225).
- ⁹ *Ep.* 41.1–2.
- ¹⁰ Seneca's emphasis on *mutual* help underscores a point to which John Barclay has drawn attention, namely that despite Seneca's insistence that benefits ought to be given as an exercise of virtue, without concern for repayment or self-aggrandizement (cf. *De beneficiis* 1.1.10), he also takes it that "the purpose of benefit-giving is to create bonds of friendship, whose purpose is the solidarity of mutual benefit" (Barclay 2016, p. 116, cf. *De beneficiis* 1.4.2; 2.31.2). As we'll see further below, the moral value of contributory love, for Seneca, lies in its expression of a virtuous and noble spirit; its contingent and defeasible fostering of actual friendships of mutual regard is only a *preferable*, and so ultimately *indifferent*, fact. (For discussion of preferables, cf. p. 24 below.)
- ¹¹ An anonymous reviewer rightly observes that the Ten Commandments themselves originally applied only to Israel rather than to humanity as a whole (cf. esp. Deut. 5:1). This is true enough, but nonetheless, the Decalogue's "second Table" of commands pertaining to social relations always—so far as I can tell—was taken to apply to not only an Israelite's dealings with fellow Israelites, but equally to his dealings with Gentiles. This is nicely illustrated, for instance, in the punishments meted out to King David for his adultery with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11–12). Even if Paul only understood the Commandments as binding the consciences of members of the church, then, we should still assume that he would have taken them to govern Christ-followers' dealings with all of humanity, not merely with fellow believers.
- ¹² NB: The fact that this is how *Paul* understood the dynamics of God's covenant(s) with Abraham and his descendants does not mean that this was the only or even the dominant understanding of that relationship, either in Paul's day or since, or that this

- is necessarily the best reading of Genesis 12, which can be interpreted to mean that non-Israelite nations would come to use Abram's name as a blessing (cf. Ps. 72:17). Here again, I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for inviting this clarification.
- ¹³ Even if, following the majority view today (cf. Campbell 2015, pp. 339–403), 1 Timothy is a forgery, it is meant to be a convincingly Pauline text, and so speaks to the reception of Paul's ideas in the earliest church, with a *terminus ad quem* in Polycarp of Smyrna's reception of 1–2 Timothy and Titus as Pauline, no later than 135 AD, and perhaps two decades earlier (cf. Holmes 2007, pp. 284–89; Berding 1999).
- ¹⁴ In his translation of the New Testament, for instance, David Hart renders the “ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον” promised to the disobedient in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, not as “eternal destruction”, but rather as “ruin in the Age” (Hart 2017, p. 336). For the sense of the adjective “αἰώνιον” in the New Testament and in late-ancient Greek more broadly, cf. Ramelli and Konstans (2013). For an overall interpretation of Paul as a universalist, cf. Ramelli (2013a, pp. 38–41). And for the wider theological issues raised by universalism, cf. Hart (2019), *passim* (defending universalism); Fudge ([1982] 2011); and Ratzinger (2007) (defending a Hell of everlasting conscious dereliction). For a comparison of all three approaches, cf. (Case 2021, pp. 147–66).
- ¹⁵ *De Consolatione ad Polybium* 11, in *Moral Essays II*. For the setting of this epistle, *De consolatione ad Helviam*, and *De consolatione ad Marciam* just before and during Seneca's exile by the Emperor Claudius on Corsica, cf. Muir, *Paul and Seneca within the Ancient Consolation Tradition*, 39, 52.
- ¹⁶ *De Consolatione ad Helviam* 5, in *Moral Essays II*. Wilson notes that the “*ad Helviam*” in particular is unusual in the genre in having been written by Seneca to console his mother (Helvia) on the occasion of his *own* exile, so that he is both the letter's author and its occasion (*The Greatest Empire*, 84).
- ¹⁷ This proverb—made popular by Alcoholics Anonymous, and now attributed online to Nelson Mandela, the Buddha, Augustine of Hippo, and many others—seems to have originated with Emmet Fox: “No Scientific [*sic*] Christian ever considers hatred or execration to be ‘justifiable’ in any circumstances, but whatever your opinion about that may be, there is no question about its practical consequences to you. You might as well swallow a dose of prussic acid in two gulps, and think to protect yourself by saying, ‘This one is for Robespierre; and this one for the Bristol murderer.’ You will hardly have any doubt as to who will receive the benefit of the poison” (Fox 1938, p. 80).

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