

Leonard O Goenaga

Professor Boronat

POT3013

November 10, 2008

Platonic and Christian Theology: A Paper Analyzing the Relationship between Platonic Thought
and Christian Philosophy.

Outline

Topic: Plato and Christian Theology: A Paper Analyzing the Relationship Between Platonic Thought and Christian Philosophy.

I. Introduction

- a. Hook: The Relation between Platonism and Christianity. The linkage between the *λογος* in Hellenistic thought (specifically plato), and the role of the *λογος* in Christianity. You could also insert the words of Augustine on the subject.
- b. Thesis Question: “What are the chief similarities, the chief differences, and which preponderates over the other?” (J. Wild).

II. Outline

III. Body

- a. Christian Theology & Philosophy:
 - i. Christian Natural Theology
 1. The Nature and Characteristic of God
 - ii. Christian Philosophy of Nature & Anthropology
 1. Creation, Genesis.
 2. Human Nature
 3. A Christian Theory of Forms
 - iii. Goal of Human Action
 1. Purpose of Individual
 2. Basic Human Group
 - iv. Christian Ideology & Enemies
 1. Christian Ideology
 - a. Free intelligent Creator
 - b. God’s concern with history & individuals
 - c. NT’s Essence of Freedom
- b. Platonic Philosophy:
 - i. Platonic Natural Theology
 1. Divine is Rationally Intelligible
 2. The Former, The Form, and The First Mover
 3. The Platonic Deity, *Demiurgos*
 - ii. Platonic Philosophy of Nature
 - iii. Goal of Moral Action
 - iv. Platonic Ideology & Enemies
 1. Platonic Ideology
 2. Inimical Ideologies
- c. Neoplatonism and Platonic Christianity
- d. Review
 - i. Chief Similarities
 - ii. Chief Differences

IV. Summary

V. Conclusion

- a. Restated Thesis:
- b. Concluding statement:

Being quite the intellectual, Augustine, having received a prestigious academic chair within the Latin world, was oddly in internal turmoil. Having been a devout follower of Manichaeism, Augustine was moving away from the religion on the basis of a theological disagreement. In its place, Augustine pursued skepticism, only to later fall under the sway of Neoplatonism. It was here that his vehicle to Christianity, that of reason under Neoplatonic influence, would take him into the embrace of Christianity.¹ Having arrived through this vehicle of reason, Augustine was to become one of the most inspirational thinkers in Western Christianity, and would be the father of thought further developed during the medieval era. It is no wonder then, that even now, Christians freely speak of his thought as common dogma: from his concept of original sin, to his ideas of just war. The interplay between reason, Augustine's Christianity, and his Platonic influence thus begs the question: if Augustine found immeasurable value between these two schools, what could a comparison between Christianity and Platonism provide for modern readers and practitioners? What similarities and differences do these two invaluable schools of belief and thought hold? This paper will focus on detailing and comparing Christian Theology with Platonic Philosophy, underscoring the similarities and differences between the two, and concluding with an evaluation of this assessment.

First and foremost, a discussion of the similarities between Platonic Philosophy and Christian Theology necessitates a brief summary of the nature of God. To start, God is a perfect being, containing within himself the reason for His existence, and absolute freedom. In addition, the Christian God contains various Omni-traits, as have been agreed upon by the Christian theologians of the ages. He contains within himself absolute intelligence, power, goodness,

¹ During his conversion, Augustine heard a child-like voice sing to him to grab the nearest book and read. In response, he grabbed and opened up to Romans 13-13-14, "**13**Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. **14**Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

freedom, and needs no external force for His continued existence. Within this absolute freedom, we find a will that wished creation into being, with no external or internal factors forcing the creation of this world. Rather, God created the world simply because He desired to. In addition to these characteristics, God is also a reasonable and all knowing figure, allowing humans to understand him on a rational basis, and concerning himself greatly with man's affairs. Upon creation, God desired man to find fulfillment and completion in a loving relationship with Him. However, man, containing a free will in the image of the freedom of God, yet not containing the all-knowingness of God, could choose between entering into a genuine relationship with God (as loving presupposes choice and free will), or rejecting him. It is from this rejection of God that sin and imperfection enters the world, and it is God's redemptive plan, through the saving powers of Grace through the salvation and revealed self-expression found within Jesus Christ (the $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$), that God made manifest his plan to reconnect humanity to their primal purpose: intimacy with the Father. It is from this brief summary of the Nature of God and the purpose of humanity that we build upon.

After establishing the absolute freedom and power of the Judaic-Christian God, we can now establish the Creation, and humanities relation to God. The Christian God created the world *ex nihilo*, or 'out of nothing'. His purpose for creating the world is his own, and is not dependent, like the Platonic *Demiurgos*, on any external or internal factor. The infinite God created simply because he had the power and freedom to do so, and in this we find his purpose for doing so. Within this creation, which he deemed Good, we find the creation of Man in His image (Genesis 1:26², 31³). With the character of the Christian God established, and a general summary of creation made, we can now move to Human Nature and Man's intended purpose.

² "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness," (Genesis 1:26).

As earlier mentioned, man's purpose is to enter into an intimate relationship with his Creator, for a flock without a Shepard is lost. Man is lost in the sense that by following himself, his own impulses and his selfishness, man is trapped in a life of sinfulness, and sinfulness stands in opposite to the goodness and relationship God intends for Humanity. God created man with the purpose of making him in His "image and likeness" (Gen 1:26). However, Man has the ability to dedicate himself to God, or to sinful materialism. To combat man's sinfulness, God revealed his self-expression in his son, Jesus, whom man could emulate to fulfill the above-mentioned purpose (As the Father, the Son, and the Spirit exist in a loving trinity). Through loving Christ, and modeling oneself after Him, man could fulfill his created purpose (entering into relationship with God, and modeling oneself 'in His image'). Jesus, the *Logos*, is the revealed knowledge of God, and represents a physical entity that individuals can learn to and follow, in order to enter into communion with and understand God's expression and love. This purpose and idea is personified in the Christ, and made manifest in the form of Jesus' teachings and His sacrifice and resurrection. Jesus is thus "God's 'definition' of what humanity and the world are all about," (Komonchak 28). Jesus is the Christ destined to save humanity from their self-imposed sinfulness, and steer them on a redemptive path towards their initial intended purpose.

Another important topic on the subject of Human Nature is the element of Grace. Grace can be defined in Christian terms as the "sphere of the freely offered love-relationship between the triune God and humans," (Komonchak 711). This is somewhat similar, as a factor for motivating good, with the Platonic concept of Eros (developed in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*). According to this concept, "the impulse to philosophy arises when the soul

³ "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day." (Genesis 1:31).

recognizes the imperfect copies of ideas present in material reality, and with longing love (*Eros*) strives to transcend the corporeal and reach the purity of ideal forms,” (Brauer 664). The similarity is drawn with Christianity in this: The Christian understands God to be the source of Goodness and Completion (as to the Platonist the source of Goodness is the Good and the world of transcendent ideas/Forms), and through the divine Grace of God, man’s “desire for good and the freedom to pursue it is established,” (Komonchak 711). The force that motivates the Christian to do good is the divine grace given to him by God, and he is established in a general longing for completeness via a relationship with God through the saving Christ, whereas the motivating factor for the Platonist to do good is the longing love (*eros*) to reach the perfection of ideals, and thus share these ideas with humanity. The Christian concept of human nature desiring divine intimacy can be similar to the Platonic longing love (*eros*) to connect with the world of ideas/Forms. In addition, both, as found in Christian Charity, and as found in the Republic’s Philosopher Kings and knowledge of The Good, can be forces for moral good and love in the world.

One lasting note on the subject of Human Nature is a unique Christian version of the Theory of Forms. According to Gen 1:31, all things were made Good by a Good God. Here, in the beginning within the Garden, the forms and ideals manifest in the world were perfect. After the fall of Man, personified as Adam and Eve selfishly pursuing ‘knowledge’ in absence of God (summarized as selfishness; sin), sinful nature is brought into this world. The result of sinfulness is change and accident in the world, leading to a distortion and deprivation of these ideal forms. The ideal forms, however, are still found in the teachings of God, made manifest in His Word (his *Logos*), Jesus, and his inspired word (revelation found in the Bible). Thus, man’s connection to this lost world of ideas/forms, the source of real knowledge, is via the channel of revelation

from God (seen in the Hebrews and the Hebrew Bible), and direct discipleship and relationship with His *Logos*, Jesus the Christ. Reason leads one to understand and embrace revelation.

In addition to the discussion of God, nature and humankind's purpose, we can now analyze the goal of human action. The purpose of human action is summarized in the Great Commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...and... 'love your neighbor as yourself.' " (Matt 22:37-39). The second of these indicates a certain sociability of purpose, as loving neighbors is a proactive command and suggests a society in which to love. With this in mind, "human nature cannot be activated without the cooperation of many individuals working together in a social structure for the common good," (Wild 5). The sociability of man is here established (far before the moderns), and "God is himself a society of persons each sharing perfectly and identically in the supreme values of divinity, and cooperating in different ways for the attainment of a single end willed by all. This is the model for human society," (Wild 6). This harkens a similarity to the sociability of man in Platonism, and the need for man to work together (modeled in the *Republic's* ideal government and Philosopher Kings) in order to bring about Good change and good government. Through knowing God via Jesus, the Christian can love his fellow man (bringing about the earthly kingdom of heaven and the end of worldly injustices taught by Jesus), and through knowing the Good, the Platonic Philosopher can lead and teach his Society (the Good Polis).

We can finally summarize Christian Philosophy as follows: 1. a free intelligent Creator of the Universe, and the free and rational human being ('made in his image'). 2. God concerns Himself with individuals, social order, and concrete human history (Jesus' sacrifice, revelation, Mosaic and the Great Commandments, etc.). 3) The freedom of man and the essence of freedom (Commandments imply the freedom of man, as man would necessitate freedom in order to

follow a law), (Wild 4, 7). “To be truly human is to be *like* God, so far as human limitations permit. So far as we act as God acts [as Jesus acts and taught], we may be as God is [with the Father, as Jesus is], and thus achieve a mode of human perfection which is as that unlimited perfection of our Heavenly Father [salvation and communion with God],” (Wild 6).

Although we have attempted the impossible task of summarizing Christian philosophy within a handful of pages, so too is it impossible to summarize Platonic Philosophy. When we speak of Platonism, we speak of a complicated school inspired by the teachings of Plato that stretched over 800 years, dividing itself into the “Old Academy (347-267 B.C.E.), the ‘New’ (Skeptical) Academy (267-ca. 80 B.C.E.), Middle Platonism (80 ca. B.C.E.-250 C.E.), and Neoplatonism (ca. 250 B.C.E.)” (Freedman 378). For this reason, when we speak of Platonic Philosophy, we will be focusing on the main body of thought as expressed by Plato in his writings, as well as the intellectual tradition developed within these periods. After our summary, we will lightly explore the vehicle of Neoplatonism in permanently inspiring Christianity through Christian Platonist and ideas.

In understanding a Platonic Natural Theology, the first premise in which we work on is that the divine is rationally intelligible. Man can use his reason to understand the transcendental truths and perfections found in the world of forms. Everything in reality is created in forms, as there exist within humanity itself an ideal concept in which we call humanness. Every multiple form has a perfected Form in this transcendental world of Forms, and it is this understanding that the cosmos is organized (formed), and not chaotic (unformed). From this, we must say that all good Forms must come from a good creator, as sporadic chaos cannot form order. For the Good Creator to create Good Forms there must be an Ideal concept of Goodness in which he can model after (The Good). Since material forms are in constant change, the Former and Forms must be in

a fixed state, as to remain ideal. Because of all this, there exist a “Former (Demiurgos), and the Form (Good) after which all things are formed,” (Geisler 594). In addition, Plato realized that the world is in constant motion, but objects do not move themselves (a ball stays at rest until pushed). However, the human body can initiate motion itself, and the Mover of the Human Body is thus the Human Soul. As such, there must also exist (Besides the Form, and The Former), a First Mover (World Soul) that put the cosmos in motion (A Triad of circumstances: The Former, The Form, and the First Mover are established) (Geisler 594). The cosmos is in constant motion, and as motion necessitates a mover, this First Mover must also be an eternal principle.⁴ This idea of a First Mover is later found in Philosophical defenses of Christianity, and “we may say that of the five later casual arguments developed by Christian philosophy, four are at least implicitly stated by Plato,” (West 9).

Plato also gives us an anthropomorphic conception of a finite God, one that leaves little room for freedom. The Platonic God is subjected to creating the best possible world, and for striving for perfected order. The Platonic God cannot choose to not create the world, but is “subjected to an inner moral need for emanating order and law.” (West 9). “The Platonic Deity is only the maker or moulder of a coexistent matter or spatial receptacle, not a creator *exnihilo*.” (Wild 9). This finite God is subjected to some higher principle: The Good. The Christian God, however, has true freedom, and could have easily chosen not to create the world.

In addition to Platonic Natural Theology, and the Platonic Deity, we will next analyze the Platonic Anthropology and Creation. Traditionally, the Platonic tradition has rejected a “concept of creation from nothing,” as found within Christianity (Freedman 380). Rather, the Platonists believed in the molding of the *κοσμος* (organized world) from preexistent matter (Freedman

⁴ “All science is a search for order...Science, whether it is aware of the fact or not, presupposes a first ordering principle capable of accounting for the existence of the order it is seeking,” (West 8, 9).

380). The maker of this world is known as the Demiurge (according to the Creation myth found in *Timaeus*), and created the world using the “idea of the good as a pattern and a cause,” (Brauer 664). It is from this pattern of Creation, and the the essence of God and cause of creation being the Good, that we find certain similarities with the Creation in Genesis and the later Christian teleological ideas.

The essence of reality and the world are divided, according to the important Platonic idea of the doctrine of ideas. This division occurs between the essence of reality, and the decomposing phenomenal world (Brauer 664). True reality is a place of unchangeable ideas, and to attain knowledge within the phenomenal material world, “the rational soul must direct itself beyond material sensuous becoming to contemplation of these transcendent ideas, all of which are encompassed in the idea of the good, the Godhead,” (Brauer 664). Philosophy is thus the pursuit of these perfected ideas, or Forms, and the division of reality is between this mere shadow of decomposing existence (best personified by the ever changing human body) and the realm of perfected ideas or forms (radiations of the Good).

To Platonism, the Soul itself was “ungenerate and eternal,” and according to the *Phaedo*’s story of a soul’s fate after death, “as the principle of life and of motion in bodies, [the soul] is by definition incapable of death and thus everlasting, without beginning or end,” (Ferguson 455). Within *The Republic*, Plato groups mankind into three images: “a many headed beast, a lion, and an inner human.” (Freedman 378). Plato seeks to relate these three images to a “tripartite nature of the soul: appetitive, spirited, rational.” (Freedman 378). *The Republic* thus divides this tripartite nature into the highest part, reason, which should rule the others, being ‘spirit’ (or noble courage), and the bodily desires (Ferguson 735). It is of interest that we find a tripartite division within the being of man as found within the Christian Theological tradition:

man too is divided into the body (appetite), mind (thoughts), and the soul (essence). In addition to this human division, we can find perhaps the tripartite beginnings that inspired the idea of a Trinity within the Platonists hierarchy of being (this hierarchy being the relations between Soul [Rational], spirit [courage], and desires [body]). Within the writings of Plato's *Republic* and *Timaeus*, we find the existence of the Good and of the Demiurge. Later Platonists divide these two into a supreme God (λογος) and an irrational world soul (Plutarch), or the supreme God and a world mind and soul (Albinus). It is from this later intellectual development that the gradual triadic sequence of "God the Father (the Good), Demiurge, and World Soul," was formalized by later Neoplatonist such as Plotnius (the supposed founder of Neoplatonism). The Trinitarian division of the Godhead between God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son (the Λογος as defined in the Gospel of John), and the Holy Spirit recall a similarity with the above-mentioned triadic sequence developed within Platonic thought (Ferguson 736). A footnote to this is that although there is a tripartite division, this does not necessarily mean Plato had a concept of the trinity, as "the Form and the World Soul are not even persons in any significant sense of the term... [and] do not all share one and the same nature," (Geisler 595).

What now, is the Platonic Goal of Human Action? As earlier stated, the goal of philosophy is the attainment of truth, and the attainment of truth is the process of a one's rational soul reaching out to the perfected ideas as radiated from the Good. Man's purpose is thus found in contemplating these perfected ideas and virtues in their purest form, and in contemplating them he will have an idea how to further perfect his own nature. The Platonic realization of one's nature, one's essence, thus gives one purpose for moral action. In contemplating the Good in a rational sense, and by reaching out to this world of perfected forms and ideas, one receives the knowledge to act morally. It is when one ignores his or her reason, and rejects these universal

forms, that one commits evil. “When it allows its bestial, sensuous inclinations to deform its higher nature and deflect its striving for ideal purity and truth,” evil comes about (Brauer 664). Man may contemplate this world of ideas, and thus understand how to live a moral life, and if one grasps the nature of the Good, one can further free his rational soul from the bonds of bodily ignorance via death. For this reason of contemplating and understanding these universal truths and this world of ideas, *The Republican* concludes that those best to govern (those who govern most morally), are Philosopher kings (those individuals who have rationally ‘seen’ the Good, and can thus govern by an understanding of these perfected virtues). Individuals must then model their material selves to the likeness of The Good (God). “This basic conception of the imitation of God underlies the whole Platonic ethics, for all existence to some degree participates in the divine perfection. Hence the aim of activity is to intensify such participation,” (Wild 13).⁵

In summarizing Platonic Ideology (truly an impossible task), I will reach for those ideological similarities it shares with Christian Ideology. In the words of Plato, and similar to the first two Christian ideological summaries, “the three assertions—that the Gods exist, and that they are concerned with the affairs of men, and that they can never be persuaded to do injustice are now sufficiently demonstrated,” (*Laws*, 907). Although in the quote Plato refers to ‘Gods’, his writings in “Phaedo 106 d, Republic 382 d, 567 c, and laws 913 d,” establish an understanding of one finite Creator God, known to us as *Demiurgos* (Wild 14). With the establishment of the free and rational human being, the idea of a Creator God, and the concern God has in the universe (as stated in his writings), the third area of ideological agreement is the freedom of man. The Platonic system cannot function without there being a freedom in man.

Although Plato probably fails greatest in not according this same essential freedom to his God,

⁵ “no state can be happy which is not designed by artists who imitate the heavenly pattern...And one feature they will erase and another they will put in until they have made the ways of men as far as possible agreeable to the ways of God.” (*Gorgias* 501c).

the *Demiurgos* (*Demiurgos* was constrained to create as according to the Form of the Good), the Platonic system cannot function without an understanding that man was essentially free enough to pursue the world of transcendental forms with his reason, and thus gain true knowledge, or continue to be an object and an enslavement of his bodily passions. Placing this besides the task of a Christian to accept God's redemptive plan and his revelation in Christ, and adhere to these Good principles, vs. the rejection of this Gospel and the resulting enslavement to one's sinfulness, is rather illuminating.

In addition to having analyzed the Christian and Platonic systems in their own right, we shall also quickly survey and acknowledge the role of Neoplatonism and Christian Platonists in communicating these ideas with each other. It is no exaggeration to state that Neoplatonism was a main vehicle in inspiring Christian philosophical thought. The term itself designates a school of Platonism founded by Plotinus (204-305 C.E.). One of the main additions within this new school was the division of thought in dualistic terms (a thinking element and an object of thought). Another important aspect from Neoplatonism that inspired later philosophical Christian arguments was Plotinus' idea of matter and evil as negativities, or "the dark edges of light radiated by the one," (Freedman 380). In addition, a de-emphasis of the mathematical element of Platonism is replaced with "the notion of a chain of being, a hierarchical series of strata extending with diminishing perfection from the One all the way down to the lowliest level of matter," (Brauer 591). With the rise of various salvation cults in the 2nd century (Neo-Pythagoreanism, Gnosticism, Oriental salvation cults, etc.), Christians thought it necessary to develop a theology for Christianity. When this was attempted, it is no surprise that early Christians turned to the ideas of Platonism and Neoplatonism for their philosophical defense. Already various Judaic Platonists had fused Platonism with Judaic thought (As found in the *Book*

of Wisdom), arguing for a harmony that followed suit in such Christian Platonist thinkers as Justin Martyr (fl. Ca. 150 C.E.), Alexandrians Clement (ca. 150-215), and Origen (ca. 176-254). Some, such as Justin Martyr, that Socrates and Plato received “divine illumination,” (Brauer 665). Some have even argued that Plato knew Christ through an understanding of the pre-existent *Logos*, whom the Gospel of John borrows the term to define Christ (“in the beginning was the word [λογος] and the word was with God, and the word was God,” John 1:1). With Eastern Christian thinkers such as Origen and Clement incorporating Platonist ideas into Christian Theology, St. Augustine is accredited most with cementing Platonic notions into Western thought and Latin Christianity, via his hefty usage of Platonic ideas to communicate his Christian Philosophical convictions (Cross 1300). St. Augustine showed various Neoplatonic influence in Book 7 of *The Confessions* and Book 8 and 10 of *The City of God*, and even claimed that Platonism was both the closest philosophy to Christianity (missing the incarnation, and an aid to his own personal conversion (Brauer 592).

In review, we find various similarities between Platonism and Christian philosophy. One area of firm agreement, and a place where Christian Philosophers and Apologists have borrowed and developed from, is that of the proofs Plato provides for God. From his arguments Christians developed the Teleological, First Cause, and Ontological arguments. Also, as discussed in Plato’s theory of forms, truth was an absolute, and absolutes exist. As such, there is an ideal pattern of behavior for humanity modeled off of virtues that found their perfection in this concept of The Good. Plato advocated a system in which moral absolutes, such as justice and goodness, existed, and as such should be modeled in ones life. This system of moral absolutes is similar to that of the Christian world, where God has established a series of moral absolutes (as found in Mosaic commandments, and the Golden Rule).

Another similarity between the two involves the superiority of the unseen. With his ideas of the theory of form, and his concept of the Form of Good which goodness is modeled, Plato places the highest priority in the realm of the unseen. Similarly, Christianity places the highest value in the things not of this world, but of the heaven's.

A fourth area of similarity is the immortality of the soul. Although early Judaic and Greek traditions lack a teaching on the concept of the immortality of the soul, it has become commonplace in modern Christian theology. Although the Pharisaic tradition affirmed the immortality of the soul, there is understandable influence of this concept from Platonic thought. It is within Platonism that we find this type of immortality of the Soul, and it isn't until the Christian Platonist thinkers of Justin, Irenaeus and Origen that we find the tradition cemented that the Soul survives death (Ferguson 457). Although Justin Martyr is careful not to explain the Soul in platonic terms of being ungenerate, he does establish that the soul survives death.

Also similar is the primal enemies both fields face. Christianity's greatest enemy is the Darwinist self-sustained evolving theory of life, its purpose, its morality, and its creation. Plato's greatest enemy was the materialism of the Stoics, and in their rejection of any metaphysical necessities such as a first mover, perfected forms, and an Ideal Goodness. Both rely on the necessity of purpose being found in transcendental absolutes (those of God and of The Good).

In addition to these various similarities established between the traditions, we must also fairly acknowledge the key differences. One of these differences between Christianity and Platonism is the Platonic dualism of creation out of pre-existing matter (*ex material*), vs. the Christian concept of a monarchial creation from nothing (*ex nihilo*) (Geisler 595). Unlike Christianity, the Platonic concept of the universe is one of eternal, and not temporal, material (Geisler 595). In addition, as mentioned earlier, God created the world and saw that it was good.

In Platonism, there is the thought that the material world was bad (being in a state of constant change and corrosion), and as such one must remove his trapped soul from the imprisonment of the body.

A second difference is the Anthropological Dualism of Platonism. In the Judea-Christian tradition, the soul is embodied in the body, whereas in the Platonic tradition, the Soul is rather trapped in the body. Being created as embodied beings, Christians would not see the body in the prison-perspective used by the Platonists. Rather, the Christian tradition is one where a new resurrected body awaits the Christian, and upon creation in the Garden, man (Adam) was made with a good body. It is more the action of willed sinfulness that initiates evil, than the fact that the body is evil in and of itself.

A third area of extreme contention with Christianity is the Platonic idea of reincarnation. Similar to eastern concepts, Plato believed in a reincarnation of the soul in the entrapment of another body (unless realization of true knowledge was attained). Although sharing similarities with the Vedic and Eastern Oriental traditions, this has no similarity within the Judea-Christian tradition, and has been firmly debunked by Christian theologians.

One final area of conflict between the two is that of Finite Godism. “Unlike the theistic God of Christianity who is infinite in power and perfection, Plato’s God was finite,” (Geisler 595). From the Christian God come universal truths and a concept of goodness. God’s ideas of what are good are generate from Himself, unlike Plato’s God. In Platonism, the highest metaphysical principle of the Good is not directly identified with God (Geisler 595-596). Rather, the creator of the world, known as Demiurgos, is below this metaphysical principle. This is overly different to the hierarchy and sovereignty of God over such ideas.

In conclusion, having analyzed Christian natural theology, philosophy of nature, anthropology, the goals of human action, and Christianity's ideology and enemies, along with those of Platonic philosophy, natural theology, philosophy of nature, goal of moral action, and its ideology and enemies, we find some interesting similarities. We have drawn some exciting conclusions regarding the Judeo-Christian God with the Platonic one, their focus on transcendental forms and perfections, the purpose of God's redemptive plan and the Platonic responsibility of the philosopher to adhere and teach the principles of the Good, and the enslavement to one's sinfulness or ignorance. After having analyzed these deep philosophical and ideological tones, we analyzed Neo-Platonists and Platonized Christians, reviewing the influence and significance they had within their traditions. After drawing similarities, and providing the contrasting differences, we summarized key areas of agreement (Platonic and Christian proofs for God, moral absolutes, superiority of the unseen, immortality of the soul, and their shared materialistic enemies), as well as key areas of disagreement (Platonic dualism, *ex material* vs. *ex nihilo*, Anthropological Dualism, reincarnation and eternal life, and Finite Godism). We may now conclude, having reviewed these details in length, that Christianity shares many Platonic themes. Although it would be silly to say Platonism mainly influenced Christianity, as doing so would reject the special relationship Christianity has with its father religion Judaism (and perhaps actually project Christian ideas into what would be Platonism), we may conclude that Christians, ever eager to fulfill the Great Commission and bring converts into the warm embrace of salvation, adapted the language and ideas of their times to further the end of God's kingdom: both in terms of souls saved, and of reverential reason.

Works Cited

- Brauer, Jerald C. The Westminster Dictionary of Church History. N.p.: Westminster John Knox Pr , 1971.
- Cross, F. L., and E. A. Livingstone. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. N.p.: Oxford University Press, USA; 3 edition , 1997.
- Ferguson, Everett, Federick Norris, and David Scholer. Encyclopedia of Early Christianity. New York: Garland Publishers, 1990.
- Freedman, David Noel. The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary, O-Sh: Volume 5 (The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary). N.p.: Yale University Press; Eighth edition , 1992.
- Geisler, Norman L. "Platonism, Neoplatonism, Teleological Argument for God, Creation." Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics . 1998.
- Komonchak, Joseph A., Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane. The New Dictionary of Theology (Reference Works). N.p.: Michael Glazier Books, 1993.
- Wild, John. "Plato and Christianity: A Philosophical Comparison," Journal of Bible and Religion Vol. 17. .Issue 1. (1949): PP. 2-16.