

The summary of the doctoral thesis

The topic of the following thesis is "The Philosopher on the Throne. The Attitude of Marcus Aurelius towards Christians".

The thesis aims at showing the attitude of Marcus Aurelius towards Christians with reference to his political and philosophical views. The structure of the thesis includes three chapters. In the first entitled "Marcus Aurelius as a man and a philosopher" I have focused on the notion of philosophy and presented its various interpretations, which enabled me to present the explanation of Aurelian philosophy. According to Marcus Aurelius, philosophy is a sort of relief and alleviation, and a cure for any condition, which may suit anyone, not particularly the narrow circle of philosophers and wisemen.

I have also presented a short biography of the philosopher referring to the concept of God and explained the difference between the Socratic and Aurelian approach. The main difference lies in the fact how an individual being is perceived. Socrates claims that a wiseman is responsible for an individual, whereas Marcus Aurelius maintains that the responsibility develops thanks to affinity to the reason and common sense..

Another important part of the chapter is the notion of spiritual exercise which is discussed with reference to its similarity to Christianity. Next, I have described the thread of the stoical self-development in the service of the Imperium Romanum. It is my own perception of the stoical philosophy represented by Marcus Aurelius. It is mainly based on some profound spirituality, which is discussed in the chapter. In the final part of the first chapter, I focus on the philosopher's involvement in the persecution of Christians.

It is worth mentioning that in the subtle and sensitive philosophy of Marcus Aurelius there are substantial discrepancies in his approach towards Christians. Obviously, I had to deal with some moral dilemmas doing my research.

The chapter ends with the presentation of Marcus Aurelius' views and his characteristics which had a considerable influence on the ruling of Ancient Rome at that time.

The second chapter: "Marcus Aurelius as the Ruler of the Empire"

In the introductory part I have presented a short definition of law, the historical description of how it is created. Then, I have presented the preparations of Marcus Aurelius to rule the country. Then, I have described how Marcus Aurelius perceived the law.

I have paid attention to the notion of justice which aims at social good. I have also referred to his family issues and his attitude towards slaves and gladiators fights, which are discussed as the subsequent points of the chapter.

Marcus Aurelius supported slaves and he defended them and was willing to make some difficult decisions even if they have damaged the public finances. As far as the gladiators are concerned, Marcus objected to the fights and he was eager to facilitate the organisation rules and procedures.

So was Marcus Aurelius full of viable and unseen conflicts. It is to be seen in the case of the martyrdom of Christians. On the one hand he was trying to be just and humane and at the same time he passed sentences to execute the victims.

In the following part of the chapter I have discussed the functioning of *Pax Romana* regarding the value of the Imperium Romanum as the great power. The chapter ends with the examples of different reforms in order to rule the country by Marcus Aurelius.

In the summary of the chapter, I have presented Marcus Aurelius characteristics as the philosopher on the throne. From my point of view, he needs to be treated as an individual who had not used all the opportunities to reform the country and propose social changes, which eventually led to the collapse of the Roman Empire.

The third chapter: "Christianity in the Era of Marcus Aurelius"

This chapter discusses the conflict and its sources between Judaism and polytheism of the Mediterranean World long before Jesus Christ. Then, I have highlighted the main reasons for the conflict between Christians and the state religion of Ancient Rome referring to the examples of the Earlychristian martyrs from the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

I have presented basic documents which were used to make accusations and persecute Christians (the trial and legal documents).

In addition to this, I have described examples of trials of Christians which preceded the reign of Marcus Aurelius, focusing on the Antonine dynasty in particular.

Taking into consideration a detailed analysis of the acts of martyrdom and interpretation of the circumstances during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, we can come up with the conclusion that Marcus Aurelius was not the persecutor of Christians, though the persecutions occurred during his rulership.

In the third chapter I have cited numerous Christian apologists, who tried to explain religious dogmas and views to Marcus Aurelius, which helped to dispel myths around Christianity and to show discrepancies on trials.

Tertullian makes accusations of some underlying conflict in the trials of Christians and the laws and judiciary regulations of Ancient Rome.

The Catholic priest, F. Drączkowski in "Patrology" (str. 128-130) maintains that the accused was tortured until they claimed guilt. The Christians who confessed were forced to do it being tortured so as to renounce their faith.

I end the chapter with the conclusion that Marcus Aurelius was not the persecutor of Christians despite the fact that many sentences were passed during his reign. Nonetheless, he is not to be treated like a nobleman in reference to the Christian martyrdom.

The Summary

The Christian conflicts had two underlying causes. The first was about the discrepancies between two religious views: monotheistic and polytheistic.

The second one was the conflict in ideology.

Christianity at its beginning manifested as a revolutionary force which was not free from ideology. It offered love for incessant struggle. It could not be seen as a positive thing in Ancient Rome as there was no ground for it.

Marcus Aurelius was supposed to rule the country and lead the people of the Empire, and the ruler was perceived like a deity. Hence, there was a conflict between *sacrum* and *profanum* which was emphasised by the fact that Christians did not want to accept the deity of the caesar. Hence, it was the underlying reason for the conflicts which Marcus Aurelius had to cope with.