

**RECONCILING CLASSICAL AND CHRISTIAN CULTURE: MARCUS AURELIUS AND
HIS MEDITATIONS IN VICTORIAN SCHOLARSHIP**

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ABSTRACT

Much attention has been paid recently to the reception of classical culture in Victorian Britain. Yet studies like Richard Jenkyns' *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* neglect the significant and complex connections which existed between the study of pagan antiquity and contemporary religious debate. This article argues that an examination of the scholarly appeal of the second-century Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius may do much to elucidate some of these important connections. It explores the reasons behind Marcus' popularity with a wide range of Victorian scholars of diverse religious opinions. The first section considers Marcus' mid-century appeal for liberal Anglican scholars like F.W. Farrar and the hostility they showed towards the anti-Christian tone of Marcus' first Victorian translator, George Long, in his own scholarly work on the emperor. It goes on to examine Marcus as the 'darling of agnosticism' in the writings of Matthew Arnold and Ernest Renan, while finally considering his reputation as a persecutor of Christians in the work of conservative Christian writers like Charles Merivale. In particular, it is suggested that Marcus' popularity with such a wide range of scholars is directly attributable to the liminal position which he occupied in the Victorian imagination between classical and Christian culture.

