

# *PAUL AND THE EARLY CHURCH:*

*A Study in Messianic Judaism*



**Part Four**

*"The Apostle Paul and the Greeks  
(and Black Greek-Letter Societies)"*

*by*

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**Table of Contents**

Preface.....	4
About the Author .....	14
Introduction .....	15
Chapter One- “City of Tarsus and the Making of a ‘Court Jew’” .....	17
Chapter Two- “Greek Stoicism in the City of Tarsus” .....	22
Chapter Three- “Rome and the Christian Takeover of Stoicism” .....	28
Chapter Four- “The Eurocentric Nature of the Western Church” .....	38
Chapter Five- “Paul’s Rejection of the Greek and Roman Gods” .....	42
Chapter Six- “The Black ‘Greek Letter’ College Fraternities and Sororities” .....	56
Conclusion .....	67
Appendix 1 “Ultra- and Modern Orthodox Jews and Greek-Letter Societies” .....	69
Appendix 2 “The Black Greek-Letter Societies” .....	73
Appendix 3 “The Jewish and Christian Greek-Letter Alternatives” .....	84

**--- The End of Part Four ---**

*“I am a Jew, and Jesus is my Rabbi!”*

*-- Messianic Judaism*

## *Preface*

As a Messianic Jew, who also studies the maxims and writings of the Ultra- and Modern Orthodox Jews, I present this paper on the Apostle Paul to my dearly beloved Black Church in the United States, which is today *grappling* with the growing presence of “*Hellenization*” within its pews.<sup>1</sup> The chief concern is that this Hellenization has created “divided loyalties” and a sort of “dual homage” both to Christ and to various Greco-Roman deities who are symbolically etched into the paraphernalia of several black Greek-letter organizations. These influential organizations today have within its membership many influential African Americans who are also professed Christians and leading churchmen.

Ancient Greek civilization and culture have greatly influenced both the Black Church and African American high society since the early 1900s when the first all-Black fraternities and sororities were founded, first, at Philadelphia, and, secondly, on several university and college campuses throughout the United States. Today there is a great debate in African American bible colleges, seminaries, and churches as to whether membership in those Greek-letter organizations is inconsistent with church membership or with the Christian way of holy living. As background, for those readers who are not familiar with this aspect of “Greek-letter” African American life, the following summary from E. Franklin Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoise* should be informative:

[The Greek-letter fraternities’ and sororities’] preoccupation with ‘society’ has its roots in the traditions of the Negro community in the United States.... [I]n their position of house servants during slavery, Negroes acquired from their white masters notions of what constituted ‘social’ life or ‘society.’

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., *A.I. Overview*, stating, “Hellenization is the historical spread, adoption, or forced imposition of ancient Greek culture, language, philosophy, and customs upon non-Greek peoples, particularly following the conquests of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BCE.”

After emancipation they continued in the role of personal servants, and therefore saw the white man only in his home or when he was engaged in recreation.... As a consequence they devoted much time and much of their meager resources to attempting to carry on a form of 'social' life similar to the whites.' For many Negroes, it appears that 'social' life became identified with the condition of freedom....<sup>2</sup>

It is in the Greek letter fraternities that the so-called intellectual members of the black bourgeoisie often gain recognition and power. Negro Greek letter societies arose as the result of the refusal of white Greek letter societies to admit colored people. The first of these societies, Sigma Pi Phi (which has come to be known simply as the *Boule*) was organized in Philadelphia in 1904.... Although the original aim of this society was to bring together the 'aristocracy of talent,' it has become one of the main expressions of social snobbishness on the part of the black bourgeoisie....

These Greek letter societies are especially important in molding the outlook of the black bourgeoisie. In the Negro colleges, membership in these organizations indicates that the student has escaped from his working-class background and achieved middle-class status.... [But in] their enthusiasm for their fraternities and sororities, these adult leaders give the impression that they have never grown up. The fraternities represent... their deepest loyalties. One college professor, who was a 'great fraternity man,' stated that the three things which he loved most were his God, his wife, and his fraternity....<sup>3</sup>

[A social study on "Negro teachers" revealed] [t]heir intense devotion to their Greek letter societies [as] their *raison detre*.... While their white colleagues were inclined to return to religion,

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<sup>2</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Chicago, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

the Negro teachers were fleeing from religion.... Conversation and books had no place in their recreation, which consisted in playing cards, drinking, movies, and 'parties.' Their interest was in automobiles, furniture, and household appliances, the same values as the rising white middle class.<sup>4</sup>

But in addition to these worldly features of the Black Greek-letter organizations developed, perhaps beginning in the second half of the twentieth century, physically dangerous and spiritually controversial "pledge" or new-membership intake processes and procedures within these organizations and which also challenge the Christian values of the Black Church of the United States. Altogether, the culture and civilization of these Black Greek-letter organizations (i.e., *Hellenization*) pose one of the greatest challenges facing African American ecclesiastical, spiritual, and cultural life.

Unlike the Ultra- and Modern Orthodox Jews who have experienced a long history of struggle against Greco-Roman Hellenism's threats to national Jewish life since ancient times, the African American community has never had to confront and defend itself against Hellenization. But today, however, the Black Church in the United States is more and more confronted with this very "*Hellenization*" challenge. This paper on the Apostle Paul is partly designed to help Black pastors and churches with confronting this challenge of "*Hellenization*" that is prominent within the Black Church.

In order to adequately grapple with this controversial question of whether Christians should join these Greek-letter organizations, it is necessary to address more broadly the influences of Greek culture and civilization on the Apostle Paul's own theology and on the ensuing development of orthodox Rabbinical Judaism, as well as the orthodox Catholic Christian theology of the Western Church.

Greek culture and civilization were thoroughly woven into many of the Apostle Paul's letters. However, for nearly two centuries before Paul

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

was born, the Jewish nation has already been grappling with the influence of the Greeks and with Hellenization; and Paul, as a Jew, inherited those same Jewish national concerns. As we have previously observed in this series, the Apostle Paul was a highly educated Jew, a Pharisee, a citizen of Rome, and a resident of the city of Tarsus. To some degree, Paul's education and training brought him into close contact with Greco-Roman culture and civilization, and, to some extent, he continued to embrace those Greco-Roman influences even after he converted to the Messianic Jewish or Christian faith.

Likewise, the Jewish nation has, since the times of Paul and the fall of the Second Temple in 70 A.D., continued to address those same concerns of "Hellenization." And this is especially true with respect to the Ultra- and Modern Orthodox Jews, who jealously safeguard the Torah and Jewish life against the inroads of idolatrous secular or Gentile culture. Here, I surmise that present-day Black Church might borrow for the lessons of these orthodox Jews when addressing African American concerns regarding "Hellenization" within the Black Church. In addition, the Black Church should analyze the Apostle Paul's life as a Hellenistic Jew, while carefully studying how he grappled with Greek culture and civilization within his theological development of the Early Church.

Interestingly, I have in this paper decided to characterize the Apostle Paul as a "court Jew," which is a term of art that I have borrowed from the Jewish community. It helps me to explain Paul; and I think that both the Black Church's and the African American community's historical "House Negro"<sup>5</sup> experience allows them to especially relate to this aspect of Jewish life. The Jews have described many of their traitors and heroes as "court Jews," because these Jews are typically close to the centers of the political power of the Gentiles. In such roles, they often serve as diplomats and emissaries of the Jewish community. Sometimes they act treacherously against the interests of their fellow Jews, but sometimes they act heroically. In either case, "court Jews" have typically been highly educated and

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<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, supra, p. 203 ("[I]n their position of house servants during slavery, Negroes acquired from their white masters notions of what constituted 'social' life or 'society.'")

influential Jews who walk the halls of power and influence within the kingdoms and empires of the nations.

About 160 years before Paul was born, the Greek empire had conquered Jerusalem and the Jews. Thenceforth, there were “court Jews” who spoke fluent Greek, mastered Greek culture, and served as intermediaries between the Greek emperors and the Jewish nation. After the Romans conquered the Greeks and took over their empire, certain “court Jews” served in similar intermediary roles between the Roman emperors and the Jewish nations.

Notably, since the time of the Maccabees in, circa, 175 – 10 BC, the Jewish question revolved largely around a contest between *Hellenized “court Jews”* who promoted submission and accommodation to Greco-Roman power and influence,<sup>6</sup> and the *orthodox-Judaized “court Jews”* (and other patriotic religious (e.g., the Pharisees) and political Jewish leaders) who fought against this foreign domination and influence.

Clearly, the Apostle Paul had the education and training of a “court Jew.” This would have placed him at the seat of Roman power and influence. And to retain this position, Paul would have needed to thoroughly understand Greco-Roman civilization and culture – far more than the average Jew of this day. As a Pharisee, however, Paul had the ideological training of those Jewish sects who sought to preserve the integrity of Jewish law and national sovereignty.

Therefore, as a Pharisee, Paul would have been considered an “*orthodox-Judaized Court Jew*” who would not have agreed to incorporate elements of Greek law, Greek customs, and Greek culture into orthodox Jewish life. In fact, Paul appeared to be a very conservative, orthodox Jew who strictly applied Jewish law to Jewish national life, and who zealously prosecuted Jewish heretics. This is largely why Paul was present with the first Messianic Jews or Christians were being massacred and martyred.

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<sup>6</sup> It seems to the undersigned author that by using the word “**Black Bourgeoisie**,” sociologist E. Franklin Frazier was making a similar criticism of the African American middle class as being something just like “**Hellenized court Jews**.” See, generally, E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, supra.

Paul persecuted “unorthodox Jews” such as those Jews who were accused of following unorthodox “*the Way*” of the man named Jesus of Nazareth.

When our risen Lord Christ met Paul who was then traveling on the road to Damascus to persecute certain unorthodox Jewish followers of “*the Way*,” our risen Lord commissioned Paul to serve as the lead apostle to the Gentiles. And fate would have it that this same Apostle Paul would become primarily Christ’s emissary to the Greeks and the Romans (i.e., the “Gentiles”). When this occurred, all of Paul’s erudite Pharisaic and Greco-Roman learning came under the service of Christ and the Church. I have argued here that Paul’s advanced knowledge of Greco-Roman culture and civilization made him more qualified than any of the other apostles to preach to the Greek and Roman “Gentiles” of his day.

The great theological mind of the Apostle Paul moved freely between the Law of Moses, various Greek conceptions of nature, and Roman civil law. Since Stoicism was the predominant Greek philosophy in the city of Tarsus where Paul grew up, I deduced that Stoicism was the Greek philosophy with which Paul was most familiar. I have also analyzed the similarities between certain Stoic beliefs and Paul’s terminology on “nature” or natural law that are mentioned within his epistles. Hence, this paper suggests that Pauline theology gave the proverbial “green light” to future generations of Catholic Christian churchmen to merge Stoic philosophy into the Law of Moses and the teachings of Christ. Future generations of Catholic Christian churchmen believed that they were following Paul’s lead in this process. As subjects or citizens of Rome, they did not hesitate to integrate Greco-Roman philosophy and law into the ecclesiology and theology of the Roman Catholic Church, which Western Europe inherited.

The Protestant Reformation, on the other hand, pushed back against this “Hellenization” of the Roman Catholic Church. And it appeared that the Protestant Reformers had borrowed much from the Old Testament’s Hebrew model and from contemporary orthodox Jews who continued to push back against the influences of Greco-Roman and Gentile civilization and culture. Certain elements of the Calvinistic Puritan movement were considered as part and parcel of *the Judaizing movement* within European

Christianity. Those denominations could be found amongst the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians, the Quakers, the Baptists, and (to a lesser extent) the Methodists – denominations which eventually claimed most of the African American Christian converts in colonial British North America.

Outside of the Black Church, there has always been a very strong, secular, and non-sectarian Pan-African critique of Black Greek-letter organizations. This critique is just as robust as that of the Black Churches'. For instance, E. Franklin Frazier's 1957 classic *Black Bourgeoisie*<sup>7</sup> is along the lines of a classic Pan-African critique of Black Greek-letter culture and life. But in this paper, I have decided that its focus should remain squarely on the debate taking place within the Black Church of the United States, and on Apostle Paul's letters and theology being the most relevant and carrying the most weight in this discussion.

Within the Black Church of the United States, *the Judaizing elements* of the Protestant Reformation have also been very strong. This *Judaizing* element is especially predominant amongst the Black Primitive Baptists. It can also be observed among many other Black independent congregations. These other Black independent congregations tend to be very "conservative." But, in reality, these conservative Black congregations are very much aligned the aforementioned Ultra- and Modern Orthodox Jews whom I mentioned earlier. Within this Jewish tradition, the Torah and the Temple must not be contaminated with secular and worldly forms of idolatry! And such orthodox Jews have long deemed Greek and Roman symbolism, culture, and civilization as saturations of such idolatry.

Closely affiliated with this "conservative" Black Christian perspective is that of Black Messianic Judaism, which also embraces the same orthodox beliefs and practices that are present in Ultra- and Modern

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<sup>7</sup> It seems to the undersigned author that by using the word "**Black Bourgeoisie**," sociologist E. Franklin Frazier was making a similar criticism of the African American middle class as being something just like "**Hellenized court Jews**." See, generally, E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, supra.

Orthodox Judaism.<sup>8</sup> For instance, the “**Feast of Lights (Hanukkah)**” is a Jewish holiday that reminds Jews of the cleansing of the Second Temple after the Greeks had desecrated it with the institution of pagan sacrifices to various Greco-Roman gods. This important Jewish holiday – which the Christian church inherited but eventually rejected – thus highlights the Jews’ explicit rejection of Greek culture and religion as idolatrous practices. Today’s Ultra- and Modern Orthodox Jews continue to reject all forms of Greco-Roman paganism as *blasphemy*; and this perspective naturally discourages membership within traditional Greek-letter organizations requiring “pledging” due homage and allegiance to Greco-Roman pagan deities.<sup>9</sup>

The present-day Judaizing tendency within the “Black Church” that is leading to the *rejection* [or *discouragement*] of membership in Black Greek-letter fraternities and sororities is a mirror image of the Torah practices of the ancient Jews of the first and second centuries, B.C.; of the theology of the Apostle Paul; and of present-day Messianic Jews and Ultra- and Modern Orthodox Judaism.<sup>10</sup> This paper’s primary focus, however, is to analyze the theology of the Apostle Paul, who advised the Christians to rely upon the Old Testament Scripture as a source of doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction;<sup>11</sup> and who deemed the Greco-Roman deities to be “demons.”<sup>12</sup> There are today many within the Black Church who are relying upon this Pauline theology when grappling with the question of whether “pledged membership” in Greek-letter fraternities or sororities is inconsistent with Christian holiness and (or) church membership.

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<sup>8</sup> As a Lemba Jew, the undersigned author falls within this category of “Black Jews.”

<sup>9</sup> See **Appendix 1**, “Ultra- and Modern Orthodox Jews and Greek-letter Societies.”

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> 2 Timothy 3: 16-17.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:20 (“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.”)

I have suggested throughout this series on the Apostle Paul that these later developments within the Western Church – including African slavery and the transatlantic slave trade-- were not within the purview Paul's original intentions or within the purview of any reasonable foresight that Paul to have reasonably anticipated. Hence, I have noted this Pan-African objection, but it oversimplifies the complexity of Pauline theology and the future spread and development of the Christian religion. I have rejected this Pan-African viewpoint in its ultimate objective, which is that all persons of African descent should reject the Christian religion outright. This paper thus concludes that even though the Apostle Paul's theology and mission were directed towards the "white" Greco-Roman Gentiles of Greece and Asia Minor, his theology and mission are indirectly applicable to all nations, including the dark-skinned peoples of the Americas, Asia, and Africa.

On the other hand, the Pan-Africanists' claims against the ethnocentric tendencies that are clearly within the Western Church are not entirely irrelevant to this discussion. The Pan-Africanists' claims have naturally forced African and African American Christians to more carefully analyze and construe the relevance of "Pauline theology" in the life of, e.g., the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church or the Black Church of the United States. Here is where I believe the Black Church should begin its inquiry into whether membership within black Greek-letter societies (e.g., the "Divine Nine") is appropriate for African American Christians.

For these reasons, I here demonstrate that the Apostle Paul's confrontations with the ancient Greeks' worship and embrace of the ancient Greek myths, deities, and gods are directly parallel and relevant to the present-day question of whether the Black Church should discourage its churchmen, lay members, and, indeed all the Christian faithful from

becoming or remaining as members of the “*Divine Nine*” or other *similar Greek letter fraternities and sororities*. Moreover, I suggest that *major internal reform* of Black Greek-letter life, as opposed to outright rejection of it, might be a more sensible course.

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## *About the Author*



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## *Introduction*

The Apostle Paul is widely known as the apostle who was specially sent to the Gentiles— especially to the Greco- Roman Gentiles. His upbringing in the city of Tarsus, which is the capital of an ancient Roman province that was known for its Greco-Roman Stoic philosophers, helped to expose the young Paul to cultural influences far beyond his Jewish upbringing and ultimate training as a Pharisee. Indeed, Paul’s letters suggest that he had some knowledge of Stoicism and Greek philosophy. Those letters also suggest that Paul rejected many important aspects of ancient Greek philosophy and religion, but that he also incorporated some of its most important elements into his own “Pauline theology,” which ultimately became the foundation of the theology of the Western Church (both Catholic and Protestant).

Therefore, this paper introduced the Reader to the various ways in which the Apostle Paul interacted with Greco-Roman philosophy, religion, law and culture. It demonstrates how the Apostle Paul rejected some major aspects of Greco-Roman culture and civilization, while embracing other major aspects of that culture and civilization. At the same time, while Paul did all of this, he kept Christ at the center of his new and emerging Christian theology. Here, I have suggested that the Black Church of the United States may benefit from Paul’s hermeneutical analysis of the Hebrew Scriptures and how it either repulsed or was congruent with certain aspect of Greco-Roman culture and civilization.

This paper thus looks at the Apostle Paul’s theological nexus to Greco-Roman culture and civilization from a Black Church or African American perspective. Most significantly, in light of the Apostle Paul’s analysis of Greek culture and civilization, I have here called upon the Black Church of the United States to carefully scrutinize the present state of the world-renowned and famous African American “Greek- letter”

organizations that are known as the “Divine Nine,” and which include the *Alpha Phi Alpha* fraternity (1906); the *Alpha Kappa Alpha* sorority (1908); the *Kappa Alpha Psi* fraternity (1911); the *Omega Psi Phi* fraternity (1911); the *Delta Sigma Theta* sorority (1913); the *Phi Beta Sigma* fraternity (1914); the *Zeta Phi Beta* sorority (1920); the *Sigma Gamma Rho* sorority (1922); and the *Iota Theta Phi* fraternity (1963).

This paper also attempts to provide useful suggestions to the Black Church as it grapples with the question “*whether Christian men and women should join one of the Greek-letter college fraternities or sororities known as the ‘Divine Nine.’*”<sup>13</sup> While I have purposefully offered no final solutions, I believe that, with this thorough analysis of the Apostle Paul’s theological approach to Greco-Roman culture and civilization, I have made an important contribution, and thus provided a service, to the life of the Black Church in the United States.

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<sup>13</sup> See **Appendix 2**, “The Black Greek Letter Societies.”

## Chapter One: “City of Tarsus and the Making of a ‘Court Jew’”

The distinguished *emeritus* Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz discussed the complexities of many high-profiled and noteworthy Jewish individuals who greatly influenced Jewish national life.<sup>14</sup> Throughout Jewish history, says Professor Dershowitz, there have been “official ‘court Jews’” – including “lawyers, rabbis, lay leaders, and ordinary people” – who “have decided that the best way to get along was to go along. Some blindly accepted the commands of kings, dictators, and other rulers.”<sup>15</sup> During the time of Jesus, there were, of course, “official ‘court Jews’” who collaborated with Rome, with Caesar, and with the provincial governors throughout the empire. To function in this role, such Jews needed to understand Greco-Roman civilization and culture, as well as Jewish civilization and culture. Without question, Paul of Tarsus had the perfect background, training, pedigree, and education to fulfill the influential role of the “court Jew.”

The Apostle Paul was a Jew who since his childhood was *exposed* to both orthodox Judaism and high-class Greek and Roman culture. We do not know the full extent of his *exposure* to various aspects of Greek philosophy or contemporary philosophical thinking then predominant in the city of Tarsus where he grew up. But from his “birthright” Roman citizenship and having been raised by his father who was a Pharisee,<sup>16</sup> we know that Paul was raised by an elite class of Pharisaic Jews with ties to the elite Roman class. Significantly, Paul was *not* a “first-generation, self-

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<sup>14</sup> Alan M. Dershowitz, *Abraham: The World’s First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer* (New York, N.Y.: Schocken Books, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>16</sup> Acts 23:6.

made" elite. Rather, Paul had received, from his father's influence,<sup>17</sup> an inherited elite training, class privilege from within Jewish circles, and influential connections to Roman imperial power. In this instance, Paul's father appears to have arranged for Paul to have received an elite Jewish education in Tarsus, so that he would be appropriately prepared to enter his temple training at Jerusalem, where Paul studied to become a Pharisee under Rabban Gamaliel I, the renowned doctor of Jewish Law.<sup>18</sup>

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During the first century, A.D., the Jewish diaspora had become widely known and influential within the Jewish community in Jerusalem. The nature of that influence was Hellenistic in nature. That is to say, the influential Jews from throughout the diaspora tended to possess dual expertise in Greco-Roman law and culture as well as Hebrew-Jewish law, customs, and culture. The life and career of the Apostle Paul exemplifies this dual professional expertise in both Greco-Roman and Jewish culture.

The Paul was born in modern-day southeastern Turkey in the modern-day province of Mersin in, circa, 4 AD. At that time, the Turkish province of Mersin was called the Roman province Cicilia; and Tarsus was then the capital city within Cicilia. (Today, the ancient city of Tarus is an administrative district within the Turkish province of Mersin.)

Ancient Tarus enjoyed having the Cydnus River, which was a major water highway that connected Anatolia (Asia Minor)<sup>19</sup> to the Levant (i.e.,

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<sup>17</sup> Paul's father was probably an elite Jew who enjoyed special privileges within elite Roman circles.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 22: 3.

<sup>19</sup> "Anatolia, also known as Asia Minor, is the large peninsula forming the Asian part of modern Turkey, bordered by the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and Aegean Sea, serving as a crucial bridge between Asia and Europe and a cradle for ancient civilizations like the Hittites, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Ottomans. It's characterized by its central high plateau, surrounded by mountains, and boasts a rich history with significant archaeological sites, shaping early cultures and empires." See, generally, [www.biblicalturkey.org](http://www.biblicalturkey.org)

ancient Syria and Judea). The Cydnus River's navigable lower section allowed commercial ships to reach Tarsus. This made a significant port with access to trade routes across the Mediterranean, thus boosting its commercial importance. Situated on the Cydnus and near the Cilician Gates, Tarsus also became a nexus for both maritime and overland trade which connected Asia Minor with Syria and the Roman East.<sup>20</sup>

When Paul was born in Tarus in, circa, 4 AD, it was already a historical city:

In historical times, the city was first ruled by the Hittites, followed by Assyria, and then by the Persian Empire. As the principal town of Cilicia, Tarsus was the seat of a Persian satrapy from 400 BC onward. Indeed, Xenophon records that in 401 BC, when Cyrus the Younger marched against Babylon, the city was governed by King Syennesis in the name of the Persian monarch.

At this period the god of the city was Sandon, of whom a large monument existed at Tarsus at least until the 3rd century AD. Coins showed Sandon standing on a winged and horned lion, and it is now thought likely that the Lion of Saint Mark on the pillar in the Piazza San Marco in Venice was in origin a winged lion-griffin copied from such a monument in Tarsus.

Alexander the Great passed through with his army in 333 BC and nearly met his death here after bathing in the Cydnus. By this time Tarsus was already largely influenced by Greek language and culture, and as part of the Seleucid Empire it

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<sup>20</sup> "Situated on the Cydnus and near the Cilician Gates, Tarsus became a nexus for both maritime and overland trade, connecting Asia Minor with Syria and the Roman East." See, generally, [www.biblicalturkey.org](http://www.biblicalturkey.org)

became more and more Hellenised. Strabo praised the cultural level of Tarsus in this period with its philosophers, poets and linguists. The schools of Tarsus rivalled those of Athens and Alexandria. A reference in the Bible (2 Maccabees (4:30)) records the city's revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes in about 171 BC. The king had renamed the town Antiochia on the Cydnus although the name did not stick because too many cities were named Antioch. At this time the library of Tarsus held 200,000 books, including a huge collection of scientific works....

After crushing the feared Cilician pirates, Pompey brought Tarsus under Roman rule In 67 BC, and it became the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia. To flatter Julius Caesar, it was briefly named Juliopolis. Cassius Longinus planned to kill him here as early as 47 BC, and Cleopatra and Mark Antony met and was the scene of the celebrated feasts they gave during the construction of their fleet (41 BC)....

In the Roman period, the city was an important intellectual centre, boasting its own academy. One of its leading lights, the philosopher Athenodorus Cananites, was the tutor of the first Roman emperor, Augustus, a fact which secured continuous imperial patronage for the city.

When the province of Cilicia was divided, Tarsus remained the civil and religious metropolis of Cilicia Prima, a grand city with palaces, marketplaces, roads and bridges, baths, fountains and waterworks, a gymnasium on the banks of the Cydnus, and a stadium. Tarsus was later eclipsed by nearby Adana but remained important as a port and shipyard. Several Roman emperors were interred here: Marcus Claudius Tacitus,

Maximinus II and Julian the Apostate, who planned to move his capital here from Antioch if he returned from his Persian expedition.<sup>21</sup>

From approximately the times of the Maccabees in, circa, 170 BC, Jews were resettled in Tarsus during the reign of Greek emperor Antiochus IV Epiphanes.<sup>22</sup> It is likely that Paul's Jewish ancestry in Tarsus traces its roots to this period of Jewish resettlement.

From this, we may deduce that Paul was an orthodox Jew and a Pharisee who – as a member of the *Jewish diaspora* within the Greek and Roman empires – was also cosmopolitan, well-educated, and very knowledgeable of Greco-Roman law and culture. As such, the New Testament indicates that Paul was fluent in *Greek* and *Hebrew*. And, given his circumstances and other cultural exposure, it is likely that he spoke the common language which Jesus of Nazareth, the first apostles, and the Jews in ancient Judea also spoke: *Aramaic*. (In addition, as a Roman citizen, Paul may also have learned and spoken Latin.)

To sum things up, the Apostle Paul had the upbringing, pedigree, and training of a “court Jew” for the Roman empire. As both a learned Pharisee and a Roman citizen, Paul moved effortlessly and seamlessly throughout the halls of power. As such, he would have been a “Jewish” face of the Roman empire; he would have been the intermediary between the Jewish elites in Jerusalem and the imperial Roman elites in Roman and throughout the Roman empire.

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<sup>21</sup> “Tarsus, Mersin,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarsus,\\_Mersin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarsus,_Mersin)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter Two: “Greek Stoicism in the City of Tarsus”

During Paul’s formative years in the city of Tarsus, the predominant Stoic philosophy naturally incorporated into its central tenets the belief ancient Greek theology and religion. Stoicism had become the connecting thread of ancient Greece to “Hellenized” Rome. Stoicism had connected “Hellenized” Rome to the other known nations, peoples, and empires, such as Egypt, Persian, and Babylon – as well as to the conglomerate of less-civilized peoples in lesser-known regions of the world who were popularly known as the barbarians.

In the city of Tarsus, where Paul was raised, Stoicism was the predominant judicial, political, philosophical, and even religious philosophy of the imperial Romans who governed the city. For this reason, many scholars have questioned whether Paul was familiar with Stoic philosophy; because, for instance, throughout the Pauline New Testament letters, he often uses terminology which appear to have been copied from the Romanized Stoicism of his day.

For example, Paul’s theology sometimes referenced the word “nature” [or natural law] as being something that is coterminous with the Decalogue [or the Ten Commandments]. He also references “nature” as being a manifestation of God’s moral laws that was revealed to the Gentiles who did not have either the Decalogue or Law of Moses. Paul’s letters appears to have tacitly admitted that even *many of the Greeks* had already *obtained the same understanding of the same divine principles* that were espoused in the Decalogue or *Law of Moses*.<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to see how Paul was able to make this connection without having a deep and profound understanding of Stoic philosophy and ideology.

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<sup>23</sup> Romans 1:19-20; and Romans 2: 13-16.

In Paul's day, Stoicism had gone much further than Judaism in setting forth the universality of law and the fundamental brotherhood of all mankind.<sup>24</sup> To be sure, this aspect of Stoicism was not inconsistent with the fundamental teachings within the Law of Moses, but the Roman empire had gone much further than the kingdom of Israel in putting these principles into practice among a larger number of peoples and nations within the ancient world.

Significantly, Stoics' philosophy greatly enhanced the 'universalization' which the Roman empire (and later the Roman Catholic Church) embraced. Although orthodox Judaism and the Torah also tacitly acknowledged the same fundamental principles regarding the universal brotherhood of mankind, Stoicism went much further than Judaism in embracing Gentiles as their brothers....

The Stoics, as we have seen, believed in the brotherhood of man, and did not confine their sympathies to the Greeks. The long dominion of Rome accustomed men to the idea of a single civilization under a single government. We are aware that there were important parts of the world which were not subject to Rome – India and China [and most of Africa], more especially. But to the Roman it seemed that outside the Empire there were only obscure barbarian tribes, who might be conquered whenever it should be worth while to make the effort. Essentially and in idea, the empire, in the minds of the Romans, was world-wide. This conception descended to the Church, which was "Catholic" in spite of Buddhists, Confucians, and (later) Mohammedans. *Securus judicate orbis terrarium is a*

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<sup>24</sup> To be sure, as the Torah itself reflects, the ancient Hebrews and even the first-century Jews had always acknowledged that the Gentiles were sons of God and part of their ecumenical brotherhood. But the Apostle Paul – much like the Stoics – went farther than his Hebrew fore-parents and Jewish brethren by bringing even Gentiles within the promise given to Abraham's seed, through their faith in Christ!

**maxim taken over by the Church from the later Stoics; it owes its appeal to the apparent universality of the Roman Empire.<sup>25</sup>**

Here is where the Apostle Paul's interactions with the Stoics, and subsequent acknowledgment of their concept of "nature," find saliency with archeologists and anthropologists who construe his New Testament writings. Paul had to use Stoic philosophy to speak to the Greco-Roman Gentiles who had been raised on, believed in, and applied Stoic principles to their practical, everyday lives.

While the Apostle Paul did not formally convert to Stoicism, he does seemingly place Stoic "natural law" principles underneath the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and in the service to the burgeoning Christian church.<sup>26</sup> Clearly, when Paul's does this, he creates a somewhat revisionist Pharisaic doctrine<sup>27</sup> that incorporates the new belief in Christ as the Messiah with the prevailing Stoicism of the Greco-Roman world.

Paul's theology was difficult for even leading apostles such as Peter to understand.<sup>28</sup> Paul had a complex theology not wholly elaborated upon in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke.<sup>29</sup> Paul's theology acknowledged that Gentiles – even *Epicureans* and *Stoics*-- who believed in Christ were also the *adopted sons of Israel*. Paul's Christian theology allowed such Epicureans and Stoics, e.g., to retain the "best" elements of their Greco-Roman culture and civilization; to reject the "worst" elements

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<sup>25</sup> Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 2007), p. 282.

<sup>26</sup> Romans 1: 19-20; Romans 2: 13-16.

<sup>27</sup> The Pharisees had already promoted the belief in the resurrection of the dead. Paul's new theology on the resurrection of the dead to the salvation and judgment of Jesus Christ was a "revision" of that doctrine.

<sup>28</sup> 2 Peter 3: 15-18.

<sup>29</sup> Luke was companion of Paul, but his Gospel does not expound upon Paul's theology or preaching. Here, I do not mention the Gospel of John, because this Gospel was written many years after the first three Gospels and after Paul's letters. The Gospel of John, by that time, incorporated certain "Greek" elements – such as that of the *Logos* – into the Christian narrative.

of that culture and civilization; and to become the engrafted sons of Abraham and Israel. But to the orthodox Jews – even to Apostles Peter and James who led the Messianic-Jewish Christians in Jerusalem – Pauline theology on the Gentiles proved to be confusing, and even intimidating.<sup>30</sup>

Naturally, the Apostle Paul's theological logic and openness to receiving and embracing the "best" elements of Stoicism would allow Greco-Roman law and philosophy into the Jewish synagogue and that would contaminate not only the Law of Moses, but also the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those "best" elements of Stoicism naturally included the ideas of such luminaries as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero – these Greco-Roman luminaries and others, together with Moses and Jesus, altogether played important roles in Paul's conception of practical Gospel and the new "Christian" religion.

From these foundations, the Stoics absorbed both Platonism and Aristotelianism; and, for this reason, contributed to the production of a new synthesis called "Middle Platonism" and, later, "Neo-Platonism." A detailed analysis of these developments are far beyond the scope of this paper.

The doctrine of natural right, as it appears in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, is a revival of a Stoic doctrine, though with important modifications. It was the Stoics who distinguished *jus naturale* from *jus gentium*. Natural law was derived from first principles of the kind held to underlie all general knowledge. By nature, the Stoics held, all human beings are equal.... And when at last, in the seventeenth century, the opportunity came to combat despotism effectually, the Stoic doctrines of natural law and natural equality, in their

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<sup>30</sup> Acts 21: 17- 26 (Apostle James and other elders confronts Paul). Galatians 2: 11-21 (Apostle Paul confronts Peter for treating the Gentile Christians differently from the Messianic-Jewish Christians).

Christian dress, acquired a practical force which, in antiquity, not even an emperor could give to them.<sup>31</sup>

Paul's allegorical interpretation of Sacred Scriptures, of course, proved to be too much for the orthodox Jews of his day; and they thus conspired to have Paul arrested, tried, and executed.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, we must fairly assess the legacy of Paul's theology and preaching through the context and content of his witness to the Greeks and the Romans (i.e., the "Gentiles" to whom he primarily preached). Clearly, Paul relied upon the very "best" elements of Stoicism in order to communicate with, and preach to, the ancient Greeks. And while relying upon these best elements of Stoicism, Paul wittingly incorporated those "best" elements of Stoicism into the new Christian religion – i.e., "Pauline" Christianity.

This is why in the Book of Acts, where Paul addresses the men in Athens "in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens,"<sup>33</sup> etc., Paul acknowledges the fundamental and basic Stoic belief that "*God... hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth*"; and he merges this Stoic principle with the Gospel's fundamental and basic belief that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Christ Jesus] whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."<sup>34</sup>

According to this Book of Acts, after Paul preached this message, several of the Greeks – including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris – believed on Christ. This exemplifies the nature in which

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., Acts 21: 1-40; Acts 22: 1-30; Acts 23: 1-35; Acts 24: 1- 27; Acts 25: 1- 27; and Acts 26: 1- 32.

<sup>33</sup> Acts 17: 22.

<sup>34</sup> Acts 17: 24-31.

the Apostle Paul established churches among the Greco-Roman Gentiles throughout the Roman empire.

## Chapter Three: “Rome and the Christian Take-over of Stoicism”

Once Pauline Christianity was firmly established amongst the Greco-Roman elites during the first and second centuries, a slow but steady process of take-over and replaced occurred – that is to say, the new Christian religion slowly began to *take-over* and *replace* Stoicism (and all other lesser forms of Greco-Roman philosophy and religion) as the new dominant religious philosophy within Roman empire.

This unique interplay, interaction, take-over, and replacement that occurred between “Christianity” and “Greco-Roman Stoicism” was indeed cultural phenomenon that unique to Europe and, perhaps, some parts of northern Africa where Rome had provinces. As such, the development of the Christian religion in this part of Europe was coterminous with the merger of Greco-Roman Stoicism with the new Christian religion, and with the resulting creation of the “Catholic Church,” proper. This “Catholic Church” thus became the mother church of all of Europe.

And although the word “catholic” meant that this Catholic Church was universal. In reality, this Catholic Church was *not really universal*; and its Pauline synthesis of “Greco-Roman” culture with the Gospel of Jesus Christ was not really the universal experience of the Christian religion as it was spread in, for instance, Ethiopia, where the Apostle Matthew had brought his Gospel According to St. Matthew to the Black Jews of Ethiopia – as a Jew preaching and teaching other Jews.

For this reason, we must keep the Apostle Paul’s target audience – i.e., Greeks and Romans – in mind, when we assess his New Testament letters. Paul was not tasked with preach to, or teaching, his fellow Jews in Jerusalem or with traveling to the synagogues of Egypt, where there were established orthodox Jews, or to Ethiopia, where there had been orthodox, pre-Rabbinic and Solomonic Black Jews since the days of Solomon and Sheba. Instead, we must keep in mind that Paul’s target audience of Gentiles were largely the “white” Greeks and “white” Romans who were, of course, deserving of hearing and receiving the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but who also needed to hear and receive that same Gospel from the

perspective and vantage-point of their own cultural experiences up to that point. This is why the Apostle Paul had to meet the Greco-Romans where they stood at that time – i.e., inside of the world of ancient Greco-Roman mythology, religion, philosophy, and law. At time, Stoicism had become most prominent and predominant, and so Stoicism is where the great Apostle Paul had to direct a large part of his preaching to these Gentiles.

### A. Who Were the Stoics?

The Book of Acts also places the Apostle Paul in Athens, Greece, where he also encountered, reasoned with, and preached to a group of Greek philosophers called the Stoics.<sup>35</sup> Similar to Epicurus and the Epicureans, Zeno (circa 341 – 270 BC) who was a contemporary of Epicurus and the founder of the Stoicism movement, also lived and worked in Athens, Greece. The influence and significance of Stoicism upon Greco-Roman thought and, later, upon the Early Christian Church, was profound. From Stoicism came a more mature conception of natural law.

Significantly, “[v]irtue was what [Zeno] thought important” and “Socrates was the chief saint of the Stoics throughout their history.”<sup>36</sup> “To the Stoic, his virtue is an end in itself, not something that does good.”<sup>37</sup> “The Stoic is not virtuous in order to do good, but does good in order to be virtuous.”<sup>38</sup>

Within stoicism is the spirit of self-reliance and of faith in the human will to comport with nature and to persevere against all injustice and all adversity. Such spirit of self-reliance and perseverance were also accompanied with callous indifference toward adversity, pain, and even

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<sup>35</sup> Acts 17: 18 (“Then certain philosophers of the ... Stoics, encountered [Paul].”)

<sup>36</sup> Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, p. 253.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

apparent calamities such as poverty and death. The stoics believed that the ultimate course of Fate would lead to justice, serenity, and perfection.

In the life of an individual man, virtue is the sole good; such things as health, happiness, possessions, are of no account. Since virtue resides in the will, everything really good or bad in a man's life depends only upon himself. He may become poor, but what of it? He can still be virtuous. A tyrant may put him in prison, but he can still persevere in living in harmony with Nature. He may be sentenced to death, but he can die nobly, like Socrates. Other men have power only over externals; virtue, which alone is truly good, rests entirely with the individual. Therefore every man has perfect freedom, provided he emancipates himself from mundane desires. It is only through false judgments that such desires prevail; the sage whose judgments are true is master of his fate in all that he values, since no outside force can deprive him of virtue....<sup>39</sup>

Unlike the agnostic-leaning Epicureans, the Stoics believed in the proverbial "God" of Socrates and Plato. Although the Stoics enjoyed Homer's classical tales of the Olympian gods, they paid homage to a singular unseen "God" of nature and or reason (i.e., *Logos*). The Stoics also believed that:

God is not separate from the world; He is the soul of the world, and each of us contains a part of the Divine Fire. All things are parts of one single system, which is called Nature; the individual life is good when it is in harmony with Nature.

To the Stoics, "God" was the author of "Nature" or "natural law." Therefore, the righteous, virtuous man lives according to "Nature" and "natural law."

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<sup>39</sup> Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, pp. 253 - 254.

In one sense, every life is in harmony with Nature, since it is such as Nature's laws have caused it to be; but in another sense a human life is only in harmony with Nature when the individual will is directed to ends which are among those of Nature.

Virtue consists in a will which is in agreement with Nature. The wicked, though perforce they obey God's law, do so involuntarily; in the simile of Cleanthes, they are like a dog tied to a cart, and compelled to go wherever it goes.

Finally, the Stoics conceptualized God as Divine Reason, as Light, and the Soul of the world. They believed that the individual souls of human beings were a part and parcel of that Divine Reason or Light.

[Zeno] defined God as the fiery mind of the world, that he said God was a bodily substance, and that the whole universe formed the substance of God; Tertullian says that, according to Zeno, God runs through the material world as honey runs through the honeycomb. According to Diogenes Laetius, Zeno held that the General Law, which is **Right Reason**,<sup>40</sup> pervading everything, is the same as Zeus, the Supreme Head of the government of the universe: God, Mind, Destiny, Zeus, are one thing. Destiny is a power which moves matter; 'Providence' and 'Nature' are other names for it....<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 289 ("It was this intellectual element in Plato's religion that led Christians – notably the author of Saint John's Gospel – to identify Christ with *Logos*. *Logos* should be translated 'reason' in this connection...."); p. 326 ("...in Saint John... Christ is identified with the Platonic-Stoic *Logos*."); pp. 404 - 405 ("The bridge between the One and the many is the *Logos*.... The *Logos* is the principle that brings the many back to the One, and man back to God; it is thus the Saviour of the world."); pp. 437- 438 ("In the beginning was the *Logos*," says Saint John's Gospel, and this, he thought, proves the dignity of Logic. His chief importance is in logic and theory of knowledge.")

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

Moreover, to the Stoics, “God is the father of men, and we are all brothers,”<sup>42</sup> and “all alike are sons of God.”<sup>43</sup>

Through the Roman senator Cicero (106 – 43 BC), “Stoicism became known to the Romans.”<sup>44</sup> In addition to Cicero, there were “three [others] who were connected with Rome: Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius – a minister, a slave, and an emperor, respectively.”<sup>45</sup> Although Epictetus (60 – 100 AD) and Marcus Aurelius (121 – 180 AD) were important figures in the history and development of Stoicism, their lives post-dated that of the Apostle Paul’s, and thus fall outside the scope of our discussion of Stoicism’s influences upon Paul. For the Apostle Paul, the Roman Stoicism of his day was that of Cicero’s and Seneca’s (3 BC – 65 AD).

But the Stoicism of both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius – together with the Stoicism of Zeno, Cicero, and Seneca – are taken up, and addressed, at great length in the Pauline-Catholic theologian Augustine of Hippo’s *The City of God*, which is an encyclopedic analysis and refutation Greco-Roman philosophy, theology, and cosmology.<sup>46</sup>

In Cicero’s writings on natural law we find parallel’s to the Apostle Paul’s conception of “nature.”<sup>47</sup> And because Seneca was a contemporary of Paul’s (both men were likely executed by Emperor Nero in the same year, 65 AD),<sup>48</sup> Seneca’s writings on natural law and nature is likely a

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>46</sup> *The City of God*, supra, pp. 281-285, 449-456, 648-651, 676 -683.

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., “Natural Law,” *Wikipedia* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural\\_law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_law).

<sup>48</sup> Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York, N.Y.: Touchstone, 2007),p. 260.

reflection of the type of Stoicism which the Apostle Paul encountered during his travels.

The Roman natural law, which became of primary importance to the Christian West, was the Stoic's "natural law," "*jus naturale*," and "*jus gentium*."<sup>49</sup>

#### **"Stoic natural law**

"The development of this tradition of natural justice into one of natural law is usually attributed to the Stoics. The rise of natural law as a universal system coincided with the rise of large empires and kingdoms in the Greek world. Whereas the 'higher' law that Aristotle suggested one could appeal to was emphatically natural, in contradistinction to being the result of divine positive legislation, the Stoic natural law was indifferent to either the natural or divine source of the law: the Stoics asserted the existence of a rational and purposeful order to the universe (a divine or eternal law), and the means by which a rational being lived in accordance with this order was the natural law, which inspired actions that accorded with virtue.

"As the English historian A. J. Carlyle notes:

There is no change in political theory so startling in its completeness as the change from the theory of Aristotle to the later philosophical view represented by Cicero and Seneca ... We think that this cannot be better exemplified than with regard to the theory of the equality of human nature.

"Charles H. McIlwain likewise observes that "the idea of the equality of men is the most profound contribution of the Stoics to political thought" and that "its greatest influence is in the changed conception of law that in part resulted from it.

"Natural law first appeared among the Stoics, who believed that God is everywhere and in everyone (see classical pantheism). According to this belief, there is a "divine spark" within us that helps us live in accordance

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

with nature. The Stoics believed there is a way in which the universe has been designed, and that natural law helps us to harmonize with this.”<sup>50</sup>

## B. The Christian Take-Over of Stoicism

According to Professor Russell, “Christianity took over this part of Stoic teaching along with much of the rest,”<sup>51</sup> and that:

[t]he Stoics thought of the virtuous life as a relation of the soul to God, rather than as a relation of the citizen to the State. They thus prepared the way for Christianity, which, like Stoicism, was originally unpolitical, since, during its first three centuries, its adherents were devoid of influence on government. Social cohesion, during the six and a half centuries from Alexander to Constantine, was secured, not by philosophy and not by ancient loyalties, but by force, first, that of armies and then that of civil administration. Roman armies, Roman roads, Roman law, and Roman officials first created and then preserved a powerful centralized State. Nothing was attributable to Roman philosophy, since there was none.

During this long period, the Greek ideas inherited from the age of freedom underwent a gradual process of transformation. Some of the old ideas, notably those which we should regard as specifically religious, gained in relative importance; others, more rationalistic, were discarded because they no longer suited the spirit of the age.

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<sup>50</sup> “Natural Law,” *Wikipedia* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural\\_law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_law).

<sup>51</sup> Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, p. 270 (“And when at last, in the seventeenth century, the opportunity came to combat despotism effectually, the Stoic doctrines of natural law and natural equality, in their Christian dress, acquired a practical force which, in antiquity, not even an emperor could give to them.”)

In this way the later pagans trimmed the Greek tradition until it became suitable for incorporation in Christian doctrine.

Christianity popularized an important opinion, already implicit in the teaching of the Stoics, but foreign to the general spirit of antiquity – I mean, the opinion that a man’s duty to God is more imperative than his duty to the State. This opinion – that ‘we ought to obey God rather than Man,’ as Socrates and the Apostles said – survived the conversion of Constantine....<sup>52</sup>

To be clear, it was at first **the epistles of the Apostle Paul**, and to a lesser extent the Gospel of John, were **the primary vehicles** whereby these Stoic teachings on the *Logos* and natural law came into the Roman Catholic Church. Within the theology of the Roman Catholic Church, Stoicism was accepted under the guise of “nature” and “natural law.” Roman canon law equated “nature” with “equity” and “justice.” “The Catholic Church was derived from three sources. Its sacred history was Jewish, its theology was Greek, its government and canon law were, at least indirectly, Roman. The [Protestant] Reformation rejected the Roman elements, softened the Greek elements, and greatly strengthened the Judaic elements.”<sup>53</sup>

Hence, from the Stoic’s conception of “God” we find *a vague image* of the God of the ancient Hebrews. From Paul’s letters, it is clear that Paul himself saw within this same “God” of the ancient Greeks *a vague image* of the God of the ancient Hebrews.<sup>54</sup> This similarity between these two divine images formed the basis of the Apostle Paul’s preaching in Athens where he ascribed the “Unseen God” of the ancient Greeks to being the same God of ancient Israel.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. XV - XVI.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. xx.

<sup>54</sup> Acts 17.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

The canon laws of the Roman Catholic Church picked up from where the great Apostle Paul left off. Natural law and Nature were at the foundations of the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. There were many Church Fathers who helped to develop this Catholic theology – men such as Origen, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Ignateus, Athanasias, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, and many others. To that extent, the Apostle Paul’s letters became the heritage for all believers in the new Faith – especially those who established or inherited the faith of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the autocephalous Oriental Orthodox Churches. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, for instance, has included all of Paul’s letters in its canon.

Greek theology – i.e., Stoicism – found an inroad into the Christian religion, but not through the orthodox Messianic Jews such as Apostles Peter, James, Matthew, and Mark. It was not to be found in the Baptist named John the Baptist, either. These first-century Jews either had never heard of Stoicism or a Stoic philosopher speak; and, even if they had, they likely would not have obtained a mastery of Stoic principles, thus making this utterly unable or unqualified to preach to, or to teach, the Greeks and the Romans. Without the services of the Apostle Paul, the new Christian religion might have never obtained that name “Christian,” and it might have remained a separate section of Judaism, and perhaps only known as “Messianic Judaism.”

And yet, even the Hebrew scriptures denote that the Messiah would bring together his lost sheep from every nation in the world, and that his kingdom would be an everlasting one. If, then Jesus was in fact the Messiah, whom Paul met while traveling to Damascus to persecute the Church, then we might readily give Paul’s interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures as having great deference. This is true even despite the fact that

the Gentiles to whom he preached included only a small sampling of Gentiles who then existed in the world.

## **Chapter Four:** **“The Eurocentric Nature of the Western Church”**

I have argued in this series that because the Apostle Paul’s letters incorporated Greek philosophy into Christian theology, and because his targeted audience were exclusively the “white” Greco-Roman Gentiles, that subsequent generations of European Christians have misconstrued the Christian religion as a movement that was exclusively under the dominion and control of primarily “white” persons of European extraction – whom they believed to be the engrafted and true heirs of Israel.

Naturally, this misconception of the Christian religion as having been entrusted through the Paul’s letters primarily, if not exclusively, to the “white” Greco-Roman Gentiles of Europe and western Asia also tended to invest great political power into the Christian churches that were under the direction and control of the first Christian emperors of Rome; and into the Roman Catholic Church; and, subsequently, into the national Protestant churches in northern Europe.

Hence, ethnocentrism within the Roman Catholic Church commenced in earnest in 451 A.D., and in continued on through 1054 A.D., and beyond.

For instance, when we note that within the history of the Roman Catholic Church is the Chalcedonian Schism of 451 A.D., whereby this same Catholic Church severed its communion with autocephalous Oriental Orthodox Churches (including the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church);<sup>56</sup> and also the Great Schism of 1054 A.D., whereby this same

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<sup>56</sup> See, e.g., W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa* (New York, N.Y.: International Publishers, 2015), p. 220, stating:

This thousand years of history might have been different if the Christian Church had retained its hold upon Asia and Africa instead of expelling these countries and turning to the Nordic barbarians. In Northern Africa, the Nile Valley, and Ethiopia, in Syria and the Middle East, the Catholic Church had a wide range and power during the early Middle Ages. Through the greed of the Eastern Roman Empire, and because of endless controversy and disputes... all these churches were lost to the Roman hierarchy....

Catholic Church severed its communion with the Eastern Orthodox Church, which has maintained good relations with the Oriental Orthodox Churches, we begin to notice how the Western Roman Catholic Church – which became the mother church of Western Europe – become deeply ethnocentric.<sup>57</sup>

Did the Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe and colonial British North America change or correct this Eurocentric component of the Roman Catholic Church?

It did not.<sup>58</sup>

When, for instance, the Protestant denominations or Protestant national churches (e.g., the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, or the Luthern Church in Germany) developed, they became even more provincial, more regional, and more ethnocentric than the far more global Roman Catholic Church. Hence, the Protestant Reformation only changed certain internal procedural components of Roman Catholicism – but it *did not* change the ethnocentric nature of Western Christendom.

The Roman Catholics and the Protestants thus found within **the very pages of the Apostle Paul's letters** – which was addressed to only a limited segment of that Gentile population who were primarily “white” Greeks or “white” Romans – a defense of their racist claims that God had favored the white race, and ordained it for manifest destiny, through the “right of sword” to conquer and enslave non-Christian heathens and to

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When, on the other hand, Christianity met black folk in the African slave and red men in America, it regarded them as lost heathens to be exterminated or enslaved. Thus the Church upheld the slave trade and its consequences.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Outside of the domain of a few highly educated Western theologians and scholars who thoroughly knew and understood the development of church history and theology, most Christians in northern Europe came to view the Christian religion through a “white-washed” Roman Catholic or a “white-washed” Protestant or Western European worldview.

teach them the blessings of the Christian religion.<sup>59</sup> Some of them, too, have relied upon the very words of Paul to defend slavery and slave trade.<sup>60</sup>

And, today, I find no better authority, teacher, and example of the whole business of the “Christian hypocrisy” upon which African slavery and the transatlantic slave trade were built, orchestrated, and defended, than Frederick Douglas (1818 – 1895).<sup>61</sup> All of this, and more, we may rightfully deduce from very many tracts on the justification of the indigenous populations of the New World; African slavery; the transatlantic slave trade; and much more.<sup>62</sup>

In closing this chapter, I must reiterate the important fact that the great Apostol Paul himself did not condone, and could not have foreseen, the aforementioned misuse and misinterpretation of several epistles to the

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<sup>59</sup> See, e.g., W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, pp. 53, 64, and 66 (“[T]he conscience of the world began to writhe. ‘Modern slavery was created by Christians, it was continued by Christians, it was in some respects more barbarous than anything the world had yet seen, and its worst features were to be witnessed in countries that were most ostentatious in their parade of Christianity. It is this that provides the final and unanswerable indictment of the Christian Church.’”)

<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., **1 Timothy 6:1-2** (Paul tells slaves to honor their masters to avoid blaspheming God's name); **Ephesians 6:5-8** (Paul instructs slaves to work with fear and sincerity as if serving Christ); **Colossians 4:1** (Paul commands masters to treat slaves with justice and fairness, noting they also have a Master in heaven); **1 Corinthians 7:21-23** (Paul advises slaves to seek freedom if possible, but emphasizes that their status does not affect their standing in Christ, even advising against becoming slaves of men); and **Philemon** (Paul sends the runaway slave Onesimus back to Philemon, not as a slave, but as a beloved brother, advocating for his freedom).

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies* (New York, N.Y.: The Library of America, 1995), p. 10 (“‘A slaveholder’s profession of Christianity is a palpable imposture. He is a felon of the highest grade....’”); p. 97 (Christianity is, inter alia, a slaveholding religion; and there is a difference between “the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ”); p. 99 (the Christianity of America is hypocrisy and iniquity by virtue of its perpetuation of slavery); p. 400 (while boasting of Christianity, Americans deny basic human rights to American slaves); p. 406 (slavery is still possible even in a land of professing Christians); p. 407 (the humanity of Christianity is needed to remove slavery); p. 420 (the American slaveholder even though he be a Christian is still prone to cruelty); and p. 438 (the slave power and American Christianity).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

Early Church. I am simply pointing out *how* and *why* those respective Pauline letters were intentionally misused and misinterpreted by Christian Church.

## **Chapter Five: “Paul’s Rejection of the Greek and Roman Gods”**

Although the Apostle Paul’s ministry and message were directed to “white” Greeks and “white” Romans, nearly all of the principles which he taught were applicable to the Ethiopians (as well as other Jews or Gentiles) – this I would like to make clear. This is true in large measure because nearly all of the Greek gods were derived from Ethiopian Gods; and nearly all of the Roman gods were derived from the Greek gods. And the Apostle Paul called all of these pagan gods “demons.”<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, where the Apostle Paul condemns the Greek or Roman gods as “demons,”<sup>64</sup> he may also be understood to have also condemned the Egyptian and the Ethiopian gods as “demon,” too. In other words, when the Apostle Paul preached *directly* against Greco-Roman superstition and idolatry – even though he is speaking to “white” Greeks and “white” Romans about idolatrous aspects of Greco-Roman life and culture – he was also preaching *indirectly against* all similar types of superstition and idolatry that can be found in other nations, peoples, and races, too.

For this reason, it was appropriate for the Ethiopians (as Messianic Jews) to also listen to Paul’s message, and to incorporate Paul’s letters into the Ethiopian canon of Scriptures, because the truth of the matter is this:

**“Ethiopia was the ‘Land of All the Gods’ – Egyptian, Greek, and Roman”**

In both civilization and culture, the Ethiopians claimed that Egypt was its daughter; that the Greek race was born through miscegenation in Egypt; and that the source of the Greco-Roman gods and myths had Ethiopian origins. On this very Ethiopian claim, the renowned Pan-African scholar W.E.B. Du Bois has thus written:

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<sup>63</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:20 (“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.”)

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

The history of Ethiopia consists of a prehistoric period running down to 3500 B.C., a protohistoric period from 3500 to 1723 B.C., and a historical period from 723 B.C. to A.D. 355.

In prehistoric times the Ethiopians looked upon themselves as the source of Egypt and declared, according to Diodorus Siculus, that Egyptian laws and customs were of Ethiopian origin. The Egyptians themselves in later days affirmed that their civilization came out of the south, and modern research confirms this in many ways....<sup>65</sup>

According to mythology, **the Greek people** themselves came into being as the result of *miscegenation*. Zeus, the Father of the Gods, mates with the fair Greek maiden Il, and has a mulatto son, Epaphus, who is born in Egypt....

In the eyes of the Greeks a thousand years B.C. and even in the age of Pericles, black Africans were considered equal to though different from Greeks, and superior to European and Asiatic barbarians. Significant indeed was the attitude of the early Greeks toward Africa. **It was to them a land of ideals. Here in legend their gods retired to rest and recuperate.** In the dawn of Greek literature, in the Iliad, we hear of **the gods feasting among the 'blameless Ethiopians.'**...<sup>66</sup>

Two of the most illustrious writers of Greece were called Negroes – Aesop and Sappho. Planudes asserts this; Zundel, Champfleury, and others think that the 'woolly-haired Negro' on the coins of Delphos was Aesop....<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, supra, p. 124.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

The Ethiopians are closely linked with the rising and setting of the sun. Memnon, the son of Eos, says Hesiod, is their king....<sup>68</sup>

In the theology, mythology, and primordial religion, there was a large measure of cultural borrowing, cutting, pasting, and adaptations between the Ethiopians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. Hence, there is no surprise that most of the Greco-Roman pagan gods had Ethiopian counterparts, as follows:

<b>Ethiopian - Greek - Roman Religious Connection</b> <sup>69</sup>			
<b>Ethiopian</b>	<b>Greek</b>	<b>Roman</b>	<b>Description of the Deity</b>
Almouqah	Zeus	Jupiter	Lord of the sky and supreme ruler of the gods. Known for throwing lightning bolts.
Beher	Poseidon	Neptune	Ruler of the sea. Brother of Zeus. Carried a three-pronged spear known as a trident.
_____	Hades	Pluto	Ruler of the underworld and the dead. Brother of Zeus. Had a helmet which rendered its wearer invisible.
Anuket	Hestia	Vesta	A virgin goddess and sister of Zeus. No distinct personality or part in myths. Goddess of the Hearth, the symbol of the home.
Atete	Hera	Juno	Zeus's wife and sister. Protector of marriage, spent most of her

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p. 121.

<sup>69</sup> Edith Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of God and Heroes* ( New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2011).

			time punishing the many women Zeus fell in love with. Likes cows and peacocks.
Maher	Ares	Mars	God of war and son of Zeus and Hera. Likes vultures and dogs.
Andromeda	Athena	Minerva	Daughter of Zeus alone. No mother.(?) She sprang from his head full-grown and in full armor. The protector of civilized life, handicrafts, and agriculture. Invented the bridle, and first to tame the horse. Likes Athens, olives, and owls.
Shams	Apollo	Apollo	Son of Zeus. Master musician, archer god, healer, god of light, god of truth, sun god. A busy god who likes the laurel tree, dolphins, and crows.
Astar/ Astarte	Aphrodite	Venus	Daughter of Zeus. Goddess of Love and Beauty. Likes the myrtle tree, doves, sparrows, and swans.
Thoth	Hermes	Mercury	Son of Zeus. Wore wings on his sandals and his hat, thus was graceful and swift.
Atete	Artemis	Diana	Apollo's twin sister and daughter of Zeus. Lady of wild things and huntsman to the gods. As Apollo is the Sun, Artemis is the moon.

_____	Hephaestus	Vulcan	Son of Hera, God of Fire. The only ugly and deformed god. Makes armor and weapons forged under volcanoes.
Medr (Meder)	Gaea	Terra	Mother Earth.
Beher	Asclepius	Aesculapius	God of medicine.
Sive (or Shiva)	Cronus	Saturn	God of the sky; Ruler of the Titans (Roman mythology: God of agriculture)
Medr (Meder)	Demeter	Ceres	Goddess of grain.
Osiris (or a Kushite Interpretation of Him)	Dionysus	Bacchus	God of wine and vegetation.
_____	Eros	Cupid	God of love.
_____	Hypnos	Somnus	God of sleep.
Nut	Rhea	Ops	Wife of Cronus/Saturn. Mother Goddess.
_____	Uranus	Uranus	God of the sky. Father of the Titans.
_____	Nike	Victoria	Goddess of Victory.

What all of this means is that the “paganism” of ancient Greece and Rome had been nearly identical to the “paganism” of ancient Ethiopia – except that Ethiopia’s paganism was more ancient and had been extinguished since, circa, 402 BC.<sup>70</sup> Hence, when the Apostle Paul lived and preached,

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<sup>70</sup> King Elalion (Taake) of Ethiopia restored Judaism as the official religion of the Aksumite kingdom in 402 BC. Judaism was initially established in Ethiopia in 982 BC, but it had been abolished since, circa, 788-765 BC.

the Ethiopians had already converted to Judaism and were no longer under the spell of paganism.<sup>71</sup> This is why I have suggested in the third installment of this series on the Apostle Paul, that Christ had ordained the Apostle Matthew – not Paul – to be the missionary apostle to the Ethiopians.<sup>72</sup>

But not only was “Ethiopia the Land of the Gods,” but Ethiopia’s daughter, which is Egypt, became the primary source of Greek philosophy.<sup>73</sup>

### **The Greek’s “Platonic” Philosophy had an Egyptian Foundation:**

First, **Thales of Miletus (625 – 545 BC)**, who is considered to be the first Greek philosopher and the founder of the Greek’s *Ionic school*, *studied in Egypt*,<sup>74</sup> and he traveled there periodically throughout his life.<sup>75</sup> Hence, the Ionic school had an Egyptian foundation.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> In the third installment, titled, “The Apostle Paul, the Gentiles, and the Ethiopians,” I suggested that the Apostle Matthew either wrote his Gospel while he was living in Ethiopia, or he had already written it and carried it with him there where he preached to the Ethiopians.

<sup>73</sup> See next three Footnotes below on Thales of Miletus 625-545 BC); Pythagora of Samos (570 – 490 BC); and Plato (428- 347 BC).

<sup>74</sup> William C. Michael, O.P., “Thales of Miletus (625 – 545 BC)” *Classical Liberal Arts Academy* (December 11, 2025) (“He studied Geometry and Astronomy with priests in Egypt”).  
<https://classicalliberalarts.com/blog/thales/>.

“Thales of Miletus” *Wikipedia*  
[https://www.archania.org/wiki/Individuals/Polymaths/Thales\\_of\\_Miletus](https://www.archania.org/wiki/Individuals/Polymaths/Thales_of_Miletus)

Ancient writers say that Thales travelled to Egypt and the Near East, which shaped his education. Egypt was known for practical geometry – for example, its “rope-stretchers” surveyed fields after Nile floods – and astronomy. According to tradition, Thales studied with Egyptian priests and observed their mathematical methods.

<sup>75</sup> See, e.g., J. U. Passion, “Thales, the first Greek philosophy studied in Egypt” (April 30, 2023)  
<https://jupassion.com/thales-the-first-greek-philosopher-studied-in-egypt-studying->

Second, **Pythagoras of Samos (570 – 490 BC)**, who was a student of Thales, and who is considered to be the founder of the Greek's *Italic school*, *studied in Egypt* 22 years.<sup>76</sup> Hence, the *Italic school* also had an Egyptian foundation.

Third, **Plato (428- 347 BC)**, who was the most gifted and student of the philosopher Socrates, also *studied in Egypt*<sup>77</sup> as well as in Italy (i.e., the *Italic School*).<sup>78</sup> For it is Plato who synthesized the philosophies of two major Greek schools (i.e., the *Ionic School* and the *Italic School*) and produced his philosophy which later became known as "Platonism." Hence, Platonism was built up upon solid Egyptian foundations.

**Platonism was Acceptable to Paul, St. Augustine, and the Early Church;  
But the Greeks' Pagan Gods and Myths Were Not**

The Apostle Paul's obvious embrace of Stoicism (which had adopted large elements of Platonism as well as Aristotelian-Peripatetics) is most readily reflected in chapters one, two, and ten of his epistle to the Romans.<sup>79</sup> Notably, chapter ten of this epistle explicitly identified Christ as

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[mathematics-astronomy-and-navigation/](#) ("Thales visited Egypt multiple times, studying mathematics, astronomy, and navigation. He learned from the well-established Egyptian civilization, about irrigation, astronomy, and geometry, which all became fundamental to his system of thinking.")

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., "Pythagoras (569-475)" B.C.)<https://plato2051.tripod.com/pythagoras.htm#:~:text=These%20he%20performed%20so%20readily,he%20might%20discover%20something%20worthwhile.>

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 247 ("Thus [Plato] learned from the Egyptians whatever they held and taught as important; and from Egypt, passing into those parts of Italy which were filled with the fame of the Pythagoreans, he mastered, with the greatest facility, and under the most eminent teachers, all the Italic philosophy which was then in vogue.")

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> The most famous verses most often quoted are Romans 1: 19-20; Romans 2: 11-16; and Romans 10: 17-18. But there are many other passages of Pauline scriptures which reiterate these same principles.

the *logos* mentioned within the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>80</sup> Next, several years later, the Gospel of John also explicitly identified Christ with the *Logos* of Greco-Roman philosophy.<sup>81</sup> But it was Augustine of Hippo's magnum opus, *The City of God*, which most explicitly connected these Pauline scriptures to Plato and to the Platonic school's laudable search for wisdom and truth.<sup>82</sup> Since that time, certain elements of Greek philosophy were incorporated into the Christian theology of the Greco-Roman church (i.e., the Roman Catholic Church, which consisted of a Western Latin Church and an Eastern Greek Church).

And yet while Platonism (and certain elements of Stoicism) were deemed acceptable to the Roman Catholic Church, at least in principle it rejected polytheism in the form of the pantheon of the Greek gods. In *The City of God*, for instance, Augustine of Hippo explicitly called them "demons."

### The Art of Making the Gods

In Book Eight to *The City of God*, Augustine of Hippo wasted no time, and pulled not punches, against the esteemed Platonists, who viewed that the Greek gods, collectively, were all good divine beings who were worthy of honor, homage, and worship.<sup>83</sup> "[W]e have the opinion of Plato," wrote Augustine, "affirming that all the gods are good."<sup>84</sup> But Augustine goes to

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<sup>80</sup> Romans 10: 1-9 (referencing Deut. 30); Deuteronomy 30: 11- 14 ("the word is very nigh unto thee").

<sup>81</sup> See, e.g., Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2007), p. 309 ("For Christians, the Messiah was the historical Jesus, who was also identified with the Logos of Greek philosophy...."); and p. 289 ("It was this intellectual element in Plato's religion that led Christians – notably the author of Saint John's Gospel – to identify Christ with the Logos. Logos should be translated 'reason' in this connection.").

<sup>82</sup> See, generally, Book VIII, Ch. 6, "Concerning the meaning of the Platonists in that part of philosophy called physical," *The City of God*, supra, pp. 250- 251 (citing Romans 1: 19-20).

<sup>83</sup> St Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, pp. 258-259.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p 258.

great length to demonstrate how “the gods command... crimes to be celebrated in their own honor.... [T]hey not only demanded base things, but also did cruel things....”<sup>85</sup> Many of the Greeks believed that “demons,” which were not gods but lower-level beings, should be lobbied and appeased in order they not harm mortal human beings.<sup>86</sup> Such a strange interaction with “demons” proved troublesome in later Christian thought, especially that of St Augustine’s.<sup>87</sup> For such appeasement of the “demons” led also to the human invention of the “magic arts”<sup>88</sup> and, indeed, to the human invention of other deities or gods.<sup>89</sup>

Augustine’s *The City of God* cites one **Egyptian** by the name of Hermes Trismegistus, who admitted that “the gods” were human inventions, which, upon being invented, were infused with real demonic spirits that subsequently had a catastrophic influence upon their human suppliants.<sup>90</sup> “[T]here dwell in [these gods] certain spirits,” wrote Augustine, “which have been invited to come into them, and which have power to inflict harm, or to fulfil the desires of those by whom divine honours and services are rendered to them. To unite, therefore, by a certain art, those invisible spirits to visible and material things, so as to make, as it were, animated bodies, dedicated and given up to those spirits who inhabit them – this, he says, is to make gods, adding that men have received this great and wonderful power.... [S]o man is the maker of the gods who are in the temples....”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 264; pp. 266-268.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., pp. 268-269 (“That we [Christians] must... reject the worship of demons”).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp. 264- 265; pp. 268 - 269.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., pp. 269- 275.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

The Greek gods, then, symbolized “idols” or “idolatry” – i.e., “the works of [man’s] own hands... through his worship of them, become gods.”<sup>92</sup> Augustine believed that the Apostle Paul had referenced these same “idols” or “works of [man’s] own hands,” where he wrote in his Epistle to the Romans,<sup>93</sup> the following words:

**Romans 1: 20-32**

**20** For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

**21** Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

**22** Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

**23** And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

**24** Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

**25** Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

**26** For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

**27** And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

**28** And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

<sup>30</sup> Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

<sup>31</sup> Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

<sup>32</sup> Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

In Book II of *The City of God*, Augustine goes to great length to show how the decline and fall of the Roman empire was caused from “those calamities which the Romans suffered before the time of Christ, and while the worship of the false gods was universally practiced... and that, far from being preserved from the only, or at least the greatest, of all calamities – the corruption of manners, and the vices of the soul.”<sup>94</sup>

The Greeks gods led to, and were responsible for:

- “folly”;<sup>95</sup>
- “impurity”;<sup>96</sup>
- “obscenity”;<sup>97</sup>
- “lacking of holiness”;<sup>98</sup>
- “shameful actions”;<sup>99</sup>
- “crimes”;<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 42-43.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-49.

- “immorality”;<sup>101</sup>
- “evil actions”;<sup>102</sup>
- “obscene morals; wickedness”;<sup>103</sup>
- “adultery”;<sup>104</sup> and,
- “pagan worship.”<sup>105</sup>

This was, according to Augustine’s *The City of God*, the primary reasons for the decline and fall of the Roman empire.

Moreover, according to Augustine, the Apostle Paul’s preaching of the Gospels of Jesus Christ to the Greeks thus had the effect of overthrowing the reign of these false Greek gods. To this point, Augustine writes:

[At] the present time... the Christian religion is overthrowing all lying figments with a vehemence and liberty proportioned to its superior truth and holiness, in order that the grace of the true Saviour may deliver men from those gods which man had made, and subject them that God by whom man was made.<sup>106</sup>

The Greek gods were thus at best “false gods” and at worst “demons” who were unworthy of association with the Christian religion – “the true religion... which neither errs nor leads into error; for it is not like him who, blown hither and thither by every wind of doctrine, and mixing true things with things which are false....”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp. 69-70.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 76-77.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 128, 131, 135.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 270.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

While relying upon the Apostle Paul's writings, Augustine admonished the Christian faithful to flee from, and to have nothing to do with, the Greek gods because they "demons," stating:

For although man made gods, it did not follow that he who made them was not held captive by them – into the fellowship not of stolid idols, but of cunning demons.... Whence the apostle says, 'We know that an idol is nothing, but those things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I would not ye should have fellowship with demons.'<sup>108</sup>

The Christian or Pauline conception of Greek philosophy and Greek religion was that they were saturated with evil influences leading to evil consequences; and, hence, Greek philosophy and religion must be supplanted with the true religion or the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "And so," concludes Augustine, "the friends of demons have nothing considerable to alleged why we should rather worship them as our helpers than avoid them as traitors to our interests."<sup>109</sup>

Indeed, in the Hebrew scriptures, even the heavenly angels, whom some have believed to be the same Greek gods, refuse the worship of mortal men, instead directing them to worship only the one true God.<sup>110</sup> In the Hebrew scriptures, such heavenly angels "were even then present as instructors" to "the saints of old" even before the time of Mose or of Christ, inspiring men and women to obtain a certain "godliness of life," even when there were no Hebrew scriptures.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 274. Citing the Apostle Paul's 1 Corinthians 10: 19-20. Notably, verses 21-22 goes on to state: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., pp. 324-325.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 329.

For the angels recorded in the Hebrew scriptures were not those same Greek gods or demons who permitted and allowed all sorts of crimes and misdemeanors, or who desired homage and worship. Rather, the angels in the Hebrew scriptures “do not wish us to worship them as our gods, but to join them in worshipping their God and ours; nor to sacrifice to them, but, together with them, to become a sacrifice to God.”<sup>112</sup>

Therefore, we must conclude this chapter with the Apostle Paul’s clear and plain warning to all nations; namely, that with God “there is no respect of persons”<sup>113</sup> – whether they be black or white, Ethiopians or Greeks or Romans, the worshipper of the gods (i.e., the demons) are blasphemers and sinners against the one true God.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>113</sup> Romans 2: 11.

## Chapter Six: “The Black ‘Greek Letter’ College Fraternities and Sororities”

I now return to the very important theological question that is now plaguing the contemporary Black Church in the United States – namely this, *whether Christian men and women should join one of the Greek-letter college fraternities or sororities known as the “Divine Nine.”*<sup>114</sup>

I have heard many times that where colleges and universities in the West, and perhaps elsewhere in the world, use Greek letters after which they name their various collegiate organizations, that they *pay homage* to the “wisdom” of the ancient Greeks – but not to the Greek gods.

I have also heard from various Pan-Africanist intellectuals, to whom I also pay great respect, that when persons of African descent join such Greek-letter organizations, that they unwittingly disrespect their own Ethiopian or African heritage, because, as I have previously demonstrated, those Greeks learned from the both the Egyptians and the Ethiopians; and because, as the Pan-Africanists say, the Greeks stole their civilization from Egypt and Ethiopia and seldom gave them credit! Those Pan-Africanists go one step further in claiming, too, that the Christian West merely reaffirmed these Greeks’ theft of the aforementioned African culture and civilization, and – while removing Egypt from Africa – the Christian West has yet to give any credit whatsoever to the continent of Africa.

These Pan-Africanist scholars also often point out that the Greeks’ own Herodotus supports that position and is their proof of their claims, to wit:

In his *Histories* (c. 440 BC) Herodotus presents some of the most ancient and detailed information about ‘Aethiopia’. He relates

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<sup>114</sup> See Appendix 2.

that he personally traveled up the Nile to the border of Egypt as far as Elephantine Island (modern Aswan); in his view, 'Aethiopia' is all of the inhabited land found to the south of Egypt, beginning at Elephantine. He describes a capital at Meroe, adding that the only deities worshipped there were Zeus (Amun) and Dionysus (Osiris). He relates that in the reign of Pharaoh Psamtik I (c. 650 BC), many Egyptian soldiers deserted their country and settled amidst the Aethiopians. He further wrote that of Egypt's 330 Pharaohs, there were 18 'Aethiopian' Pharaohs before the Sabacos Kushite dynasty (i.e. the Memnon or 18th dynasty). He asserts that Aethiopia was one of the countries that practiced circumcision. Herodotus tells us that king Cambyses of Persia (c. 570 BC) sent spies to the Aethiopians 'who dwelt in that part of Libya (Africa) which borders upon the southern sea.' They found a strong and healthy people. Although Cambyses then campaigned toward their country, by not preparing enough provisions for the long march, his army completely failed and returned quickly. In Book 3, Herodotus defines 'Aethiopia' as the farthest region of 'Libya' (i.e. Africa): 'Where the south declines towards the setting sun lies the country called Aethiopia, the last inhabited land in that direction. There gold is obtained in great plenty, huge elephants abound, with wild trees of all sorts, and ebony; and the men are taller, handsomer, and longer lived than anywhere else.'<sup>115</sup>

Similarly, I have heard many white Reformed theologians – those Puritans and Presbyterians who follow the theological school of thought founded by the influential John Calvin (1509 - 1564) – who likewise forewarn Christians against paying any homage whatsoever to Greek theology, mythology, or philosophy, to the extent they contradict the

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<sup>115</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aethiopia>

ancient Hebrew Scriptures and the sayings of Jesus Christ. That position appears to have been embraced by many black pastors, theologians, and laypersons who critique black Greek-letter organizations as being ungodly.

When I was an undergraduate student in Baltimore during the late 1980s, both the Pan-Africanists and the Reformed Calvinists lines of thinking weighed heavily upon me (a young Christian college student) as I weighed heavily upon whether to join one of the “Divine Nine” African American college fraternities. At that time, I was beginning to experience tremendous spiritual and intellectual growth in the Christian faith, in philosophy, and in my general studies of political science. I was heavily reading Augustine’s *Confessions* and *The City of God* in my spare time!<sup>116</sup>

Even as a 19 year old college student, I began to ask fundamental questions regarding the purpose of the “secret in-take” procedures of those “Divine Nine” organizations; I wanted to know how or why those procedures could develop character, leadership and service; and, also, I questioned why my devotion to Christ and membership in the Methodist Church did not already fulfill those solemn obligations, or whether I would be missing out on something very important in life, if I did not join one of these “Divine Nine” organizations, because, so far as I could tell, the predominant spirit of the 1980s was that having a college degree alone (even with honors) was not sufficient to obtain respect amongst the people who controlled career opportunities, influence, and prestigious access to elites.

Hence, the unwritten rule – as least to my mind – was that a “price” had to be paid for this very important membership which could provide so much more opportunities in addition to merely having a college degree (even despite having graduated summa cum laude, etc.). And that “price”

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<sup>116</sup> I was one or two years ahead of the collegiate founders of the **Alpha Nu Omega, Inc.** [Appendix 3], a “Christian alternative” to the Divine Nine on the campus where I attended college; and one of those founders (Mr. Thayer Robinson) was my roommate.

was the *hazing procedures* which came from the 1980s-style of pledging of one of those fraternities or sororities!

What impressed me the most was that nearly all of my African American heroes who had graduated from a HBCU were members of one of those “Divine Nine” organizations, including W.E.B. Du Bois, Thurgood Marshall, Kwame Nkrumah, and Martin Luther King, Jr. And so I paused and hesitated. I, myself, questioned whether such intelligent men had agreed to submit themselves to such 1980s-style hazing then prevalent. Most importantly, I could not conceive of how Christian men would design a process for developing strong manhood and true brotherhood through the implementation of intake processes so dangerous that some new-intake pledgees were being maimed, killed, and kicked out of college! I could not conceive of why the ultimate objective of “fraternity” and “service” were contingent upon those processes.<sup>117</sup>

Was I missing something? As I can recall, I felt alone in my thoughts! I did not see or hear others sharing my concerns. Moreover, some of the most important, learned, and senior professors or administrators at those colleges and universities were also members of one of those “Divine Nine” organizations, and they appeared to “wink and nod” at all of these very questionable features of the “Divine Nine” system. Obviously, I was alone in my own mind: my questions appear ill-advised. This appeared to be *just my opinion* at that time. And so, I only quietly rejected both the hazing processes, while only moderately agreed with the ultimate purposes and objectives of those “Divine Nine” college fraternities and sororities.

There seemed to be something with my own DNA which caused me to *not enjoy* the same sorts of social activities – such as the step shows; the wearing of the Greek letters; the branding; and the huddling together in

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<sup>117</sup> See, e.g., E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Chicago, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 83, 94-95, 203 (generally critiquing Black Greek-letter fraternities’ and sororities’ troublesome influences upon African American life).

fraternity/sorority houses and the fights against rival organizations, etc. — which I saw many of the “Divine Nine” fraternities and sororities perpetuate. Engaging in those sort of activities felt exhausting to me; and yet somehow, I also felt a sense of duty to my African American people to conjure up the desire to want to be a member of one of those “Divine Nine” organizations. In every respect, folks kept asking me about whether I was a member, because I seemed like the perfect candidate for membership.

While I continued to pay great homage and respect to my fellow African American classmates who had their own ideas and who desired to join one of those “Divine Nine” organizations, I was then simultaneously engaging in great spiritual growth in my studies of the Sacred Scriptures, as mediated especially through Augustine of Hippo’s *The City of God*, so that, in reality, the dogma and the philosophy of the “Divine Nine” simply could not compete!

In retrospect, I also marvel at how African American college students had the insight, the resources, and the inclination to design those “Divine Nine” organizations during the period of African American history in which they came into existence from between the years 1906 through 1922, and then again 1963! The famous African American “Greek” letter organizations include the *Alpha Phi Alpha* fraternity (1906); the *Alpha Kappa Alpha* sorority (1908); the *Kappa Alpha Psi* fraternity (1911); the *Omega Psi Phi* fraternity (1911); the *Delta Sigma Theta* sorority (1913); the *Phi Beta Sigma* fraternity (1914); the *Zeta Phi Beta* sorority (1920); the *Sigma Gamma Rho* sorority (1922); and the *Iota Theta Phi* fraternity (1963).

My Pan-African love for black organizations and institutions, however, caused me to retain a very high level of respect for my fellow African American classmates and, later, professional colleagues who desired to join and participate in one of those “Divine Nine” organizations. For it is with that same respect — i.e., my respect towards those persons who are churchmen and who are also members of one of the Greek-letter organizations — that I now address the central questions with which I have

commenced this chapter, namely, *whether Christian men and women should join one of the Greek-letter college fraternities or sororities known as the “Divine Nine.”*<sup>118</sup>

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First off, I join the Apostle Paul (and also Augustine of Hippo) in my admiration of the ancient Greeks! I admire those ancient Greeks even though they were not black Africans (e.g., Ethiopians or Egyptians) or Christians.<sup>119</sup> I admire those ancient Greek philosophers because they sought *wisdom* and *truth* with the ancient tools then made accessible to them. And, here, I was also led to believe that this “*wisdom*” and “*truth*” is also Christ.<sup>120</sup> I was thus beginning to see “Christ” within the wisdom of Greek philosophy. For instance, when one reads Socrates, for example, there is an element of “Christ” in his speech that is undeniable. That there is a divine grace or divine spirit in the speech of Socrates is undeniable;

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<sup>118</sup> See Appendix 1, “The Black Greek Letter Societies.”

<sup>119</sup> Although W.E.B. Du Bois reminds us in his *The World and Africa*, supra, that 2 or 3 of the most famous Greek poets were indeed “Negro.”

<sup>120</sup> “For by consulting the Gospel we learn that **Christ is Truth.**” St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 645. “But I thought otherwise. I saw in our lord Christ only a man of eminent wisdom to whom no other man could be compared – especially because he was miraculously born a virgin – sent to us an example of despising worldly things for the attainment of immortality, and thus exhibiting his divine care for us. It was because of this, I held, that he had merited his great authority as leader. But concerning the mystery contained in ‘**the word was made flesh,**’ I could not even form a notion. From what I learned from what had been handed down to us in the books about him – that he ate, drank, slept, walked, rejoiced in spirit, was sad, and discoursed with his fellows – I realized that his flesh alone was not bound to your word, but also that there was a bond with the human soul and body. Everyone knows this who knows the unchangeableness of your word, and this I knew by now, as far as I was able, and I had no doubts at all about it.... And this man I held to be superior to all others, not only because he was a form of the **truth**, but also because of the great excellence and perfection of his human nature, due to his participation in **wisdom.**” St. Augustine, *Confessions* (New York, N.Y.: Barnes & Nobles Classics, 2007), pp. 105-106.

and through the writings of Paul and Augustine, I was beginning to see how even pagan Gentiles like Socrates could be linked to Jews such as Moses and Jesus, even though Socrates himself had never the Gospel preached.

Through Augustine's writing, I was beginning to understand that what the Apostle Paul was saying in his epistle to the Romans; namely, that the Gospels were indeed *already being preached* in so many other miraculous ways through the *law of nature* (i.e., *Logos*) which was made manifest to the Gentiles.<sup>121</sup> Wherefore, this greatness of the Greeks' philosophy rested in their tending toward both this *Logos* (i.e., Christ) and towards the brotherhood of all men (i.e., Stoicism), and this greatness is undeniable.

And yet while these very complicated ideals were taking root, and being formulated in my mind, I could not honestly see how the "Divine Nine" organizations were leading men and women into this great philosophical tradition of the Greeks!<sup>122</sup> I saw the "*symbolism*," but I honestly could not see the "*substance*" of this great Greek philosophical tradition. Hence, in my view, the universities and colleges which "*symbolize*" this philosophical Greek tradition would be wise to clarify their aims and objectives, through the commemoration of this great Greek philosophical legacy – e.g., a legacy that is exemplified in the *Italic, Ionic, Platonic, and Peripatetic* schools of Greek philosophy.

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<sup>121</sup> The most famous verses most often quoted are Romans 1: 19-20; Romans 2: 11-16; and Romans 10: 17-18. But there are many other passages of Pauline scriptures which reiterate these same principles.

<sup>122</sup> See, e.g., E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Chicago, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 83, 94-95, 203 (generally critiquing Black Greek-letter fraternities' and sororities' troublesome influences upon African American life).

## The Ionic School

Thales of Miletus (625 – 545 BC) studied in Egypt,<sup>123</sup> where he traveled to periodically throughout his life.<sup>124</sup>

- He was one of the “seven sages” of ancient Greece;<sup>125</sup>
- He is considered to be the first Greek philosopher; <sup>126</sup>
- Pythagoras of Samos (570 – 490 BC), a student of Thales, also studied in Egypt 22 years. He founded the “Italic School,” which became the second major school of Greek learning.
- Anaximander, student of Thales, carried on the traditions of Thales’ Ionic School;  
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<sup>123</sup> William C. Michael, O.P., “Thales of Miletus (540 – 545 BC)” *Classical Liberal Arts Academy* (December 11, 2025) (“He studied Geometry and Astronomy with priests in Egypt”).  
<https://classicalliberalarts.com/blog/thales/>.

“Thales of Miletus” *Wikipedia*

[https://www.archania.org/wiki/Individuals/Polymaths/Thales\\_of\\_Miletus](https://www.archania.org/wiki/Individuals/Polymaths/Thales_of_Miletus)

Ancient writers say that Thales travelled to Egypt and the Near East, which shaped his education. Egypt was known for practical geometry – for example, its “rope-stretchers” surveyed fields after Nile floods – and astronomy. According to tradition, Thales studied with Egyptian priests and observed their mathematical methods.

<sup>124</sup> See, e.g., J. U. Passion, “Thales, the first Greek philosophy studied in Egypt” (April 30, 2023) <https://jupassion.com/thales-the-first-greek-philosopher-studied-in-egypt-studying-mathematics-astronomy-and-navigation/> (“Thales visited Egypt multiple times, studying mathematics, astronomy, and navigation. He learned from the well-established Egyptian civilization, about irrigation, astronomy, and geometry, which all became fundamental to his system of thinking.”)

<sup>125</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 244-246.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

- Anaximenes, a student and disciple of Anaximander (Ionic School); <sup>128</sup>
- Anaxagorus (the origin of all things came from “*a divine mind*”) and Diogenes (the origin of all things came from “*a divine reason*”), were two influential pupils of Anaximenes (Ionic School); <sup>129</sup>
- Archeleaus (the origin of all particles, elements and things spring from “*a divine mind*” that energized the world), a student and disciple of Anaxagorus (Ionic School); <sup>130</sup>
- Socrates (first Ionic philosopher to deduce that human morals and laws were derived from “*the will of the one true and supreme God*”) was a student and disciple of Archeleus (Ionic School); <sup>131</sup>
- Plato, was perhaps the most gifted student and disciple of Socrates (Ionic School),<sup>132</sup> who also studied in Egypt<sup>133</sup> and Italy (i.e., the Italic School),<sup>134</sup> merged the teachings of Socrates (“*active part*” of philosophy) with Pythagoras (“*contemplative part*” of philosophy), to extrapolate a “tripartite division” of philosophy: (a) *moral* (i.e., ethics); (b) *natural* (i.e., science); and (c) *rational* (i.e., true or false?). From Plato came a clearer “*idea of God as to admit that in Him are to*

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., pp. 244-245.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 247 (“Thus [Plato] learned from the Egyptians whatever they held and taught as important; and from Egypt, passing into those parts of Italy which were filled with the fame of the Pythagoreans, he mastered, with the greatest facility, and under the most eminent teachers, all the Italic philosophy which was then in vogue.”)

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

*be found the cause of existence, the ultimate reason for the understanding, and the end in reference to which the whole life is to be regulated.”<sup>135</sup>*

### The House of Plato

- **Aristotle** (384 – 322 BC), a student and disciple of Plato, and tutor to Alexander the Great;<sup>136</sup>
  
- **Middle Platonism** (80 BC to 250 AD)
  - Antiochus of Ascalon (130 – 68 BC)
  - Philo of Alexandria (20 BC – 50 AD)
  - **Paul of Tarsus (c. 5 – 65 AD)**
  - Plutarch (46 – 120 AD).
  
- **Neo Platonism** (c. 200 – 599 AD)
  - Plotinus (204 – 270 AD)
  - Porphyry (234 – 305 AD)
  - Proclus (412 – 485 AD).
  
- **Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 AD)** (“[t]he most seminal Christian thinker after Saint Paul, of whom he would be an influential interpreter”)<sup>137</sup> incorporated Platonism, Middle Platonism, and Neo Platonism into “catholic” Christian theology, especially in his magnum opus *The City of God* (c. 327 AD).

For in this great Greek philosophical tradition in the West, it is clear that, beginning with the Apostle Paul, the Christian faithful had been grappling with Greek philosophy in an effort to demonstrate how the “*very*

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., pp. 244-245.

<sup>137</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions* (New York, N.Y.: Barnes & Nobles Classics, 2007), p. v.

*best within Greek philosophy*” lead us to Jesus Christ, the *Logos* of God.<sup>138</sup> And all of this I was beginning to see in the late 1980s, as I read Augustine’s *Confessions* and *The City of God* as a college student while in Baltimore. But what caused me to hesitate in joining one of those “Divine Nine” organizations is that I honestly did not see that same great Greek philosophical tradition – which lead men’s minds to the divine *Logos* (i.e., Christ) – being reflected in the “Divine Nine” fraternities and sororities, whether they were undergraduate or postgraduate associations.<sup>139</sup> (On the other hand, as previously mentioned, what I observed I also did not find agreeable to my own “DNA” and personal preferences as to how best to spend my leisure time: I did not enjoy the step shows or the other related activities; but I passed no harsh judgment upon how others – even my fellow Christian brothers and sisters-- chose to expend their own leisure time being engaged in those “Divine Nine” organizations.)

In concluding this chapter, I must encourage the Black Church of the United States, together with American colleges and universities as whole, to honestly address whether the “Divine Nine” fraternities and sororities represent the “*very best in Greek philosophy,*” or whether they risk what both the Apostle Paul and Augustine of Hippo has described as “*conjuring up the Greek gods who are also demons.*” From what I have gathered from

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<sup>138</sup> See, e.g., Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2007), p. 309 (“For Christians, the Messiah was the historical Jesus, who was also identified with the *Logos* of Greek philosophy....”); and p. 289 (“It was this intellectual element in Plato’s religion that led Christians – notably the author of Saint John’s Gospel – to identify Christ with the *Logos*. *Logos* should be translated ‘reason’ in this connection.”).

<sup>139</sup> Hence, my own personal deliberations on these matters led me to decide not to join one of those organizations, and yet I sought out no clear reasons to condemn those Christian men and women who did join one of those “Divine Nine” organizations. I would be remiss, however, if I did not notice a new Christian fraternity/ sorority which originated in my dormitory in the year 1988, called the Alpha Nu Omega, which came closest to the “Christian” ideal which I then had in mind; but it being new and unrecognized to the outside world, caused me to delay in joining it. Today, I am one of its “honorary” brothers, and I was pleased to assist with helping to found one of its graduate chapters in Houston, Texas at the Christian Bible Institute & Seminary. See <https://christianbibleinstitute.net/greek-life/alpha-nu-omega-incorporated/>

many testimonials from many people who have cancelled membership in those organizations is that there is some possibility of the latter being more likely truer than the former. I make *no* final judgments here. I only call this matter to the attention of the Black Church with an assurance to the Reader that my Pan-African love for black organizations, such as the “Divine Nine” fraternities and sororities, remains firm. I only suggest here that there is much need for spiritual, social, and organic reform of these organizations.<sup>140</sup>

## Conclusion

In concluding this study, I would be remiss if I did not state forthrightly that the troublesome concerns about the character and development of the African American “Greek-Letter” organizations that are expressed in E. Franklin Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoise* (1957) have led me to solemnly ponder how the great Apostle Paul and the Ultra-and Modern Orthodox Jewish communities would address the Black Church in the United States. And as I have solemnly pondered these matters, I also confronted my own hesitancies, apprehensions, and difficulties – as a Black Messianic Jew in communion with Black Primitive Baptists – in amalgamating myself and my soul with certain “Hellenistic” aspects of African American middle-class life that is so thoroughly saturated with Black Greek-Letter affiliation and symbolism. Hence, this paper is the result of those solemn reflections.

I have also found the Jewish “**Feast of Lights (Hanukkah)**” to be instructive, because it reminds us Messianic Jews that ancient Greek deities, civilization, and culture had once desecrated the Second Temple in Jerusalem and threatened the very existence of the Old Testament Church, from which eventually came Christ and the Gospel. This Judaizing holy

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<sup>140</sup> See, e.g., E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Chicago, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 83, 94-95, 203 (generally critiquing Black Greek-letter fraternities’ and sororities’ troublesome influences upon African American life).

commemoration that is within Messianic Judaism helps to caution Messianic Jews against membership in any Greek-letter organization that requires pledging loyalties to Greco-Roman deities. Here, Messianic Jews interpret the Apostle Paul's theology as requiring reliance upon the Old Testament Scripture as a source of doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction.<sup>141</sup> To some degree, there is a growing movement within the Black Church (i.e., the Christian denominational churches of the United States) to adopt this same approach to rejecting membership within any Greek-letter organization – however prestigious it may be – that requires pledging loyalties to Greco-Roman deities.

Most significantly, the Apostle Paul called these pagan Greco-Roman gods “demons.”<sup>142</sup> Similarly, in *The City of God*, while quoting Paul,<sup>143</sup> Augustine of Hippo goes so far as to say that the worship of these “demons” caused the decline and fall of the Roman empire. And from what I have been able to surmise, E. Franklin Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957) raised similar concerns about *the harmful influences* of Black “Greek-Letter” societies upon African American social and cultural life. From this perspective, I have here suggested that the Black Church of the United States, together with American colleges and universities, ought to re-review, how Greek letter organizations deploy the “symbolism” of the ancient Greek gods and whether they actually exemplify the pursuit of wisdom and truth or forms of unproductive behavior that defeat the character-development objectives of higher education.

## THE END

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<sup>141</sup> 2 Timothy 3: 16-17.

<sup>142</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:20 (“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.”)

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

## APPENDIX 1

### “Ultra- and Modern Orthodox Jews And Greek-Letter Societies”

#### I. Ultra-Orthodox Judaism and Greek-Letter Fraternities and Sororities

Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jews typically do not join Greek-letter societies (fraternities and sororities) due to a strict adherence to halacha (Jewish law) that prohibits participation in, or reverence of, pagan deities and idol worship, which are central themes in classical Greek mythology and, symbolically, in the histories of such organizations.

While contemporary fraternities and sororities rarely worship Greek gods, the foundational separation stems from several ideological and practical factors:

##### **Prohibition of Idolatry:**

Jewish law forbids entering places designated for idolatrous worship. The symbolic use of Greek deities, temples, and pagan iconography (often found in fraternity rituals, crests, and mottos) is seen as a violation of the prohibition against avodah zarah (foreign/pagan worship).

##### **Separation from Secular/Gentile Culture:**

Haredi communities prioritize segregation from non-Torah influences and secular culture. They avoid institutions that promote assimilation, such as typical college social life, fraternities, and sororities.

"Hadash Assur Min HaTorah": A key principle in many Haredi communities is that "all new things are forbidden," leading them to avoid modern, non-traditional, or secular organizations.

Focus on Torah Study: The Haredi lifestyle is focused on intense religious study in yeshivas, leaving no room for the social, often secular, activities of "Greek life".

##### **Historical Anti-Semitism:**

Historically, many Greek-letter organizations had "Aryan-only" or Christian-only clauses, leading to the creation of separate, historically Jewish fraternities. While modern Jewish fraternities like Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi) exist, Haredi students generally do not participate in them due to the reasons listed above.

### **Haredi Life vs. Modern Greek Life**

The core conflict lies in the Haredi dedication to maintaining a completely Torah-centered life, which resists the secularism, partying culture, and potential for intermarriage often associated with American campus social life. Even if the pagan elements are merely symbolic, the association with a "pagan" name is generally sufficient to make it unappealing or prohibited.

### **Cultural Separation:**

Haredim practice high levels of social segregation to preserve their religious identity. Historically, when Jewish students began attending college, they were often excluded from mainstream Greek life by antisemitic "gentlemen's agreements," leading them to form their own Jewish-specific organizations (like Alpha Epsilon Pi or Zeta Beta Tau). However, Haredi students typically avoid even these Jewish fraternities, as they are still seen as a "waste of time" that distracts from the study of Torah.

### **Historical Trauma (Hellenism):**

The Haredi worldview is deeply shaped by the Hanukkah story – the conflict between the Maccabees and the Hellenized Jews who adopted Greek culture. Adopting Greek symbols is often seen as a modern form of Hellenization, which is historically viewed as a threat to Jewish survival.

## **II. Orthodox Judaism and Greek-Letter Fraternities and Sororities**

In Orthodox Judaism, the requirement to reject pledging to Greek gods is fundamentally based on the prohibition of idolatry (*Avodah Zarah*), which is one of the three 'cardinal sins' in Jewish law that a person must avoid even at the cost of their life.

### **Religious Context for Orthodox Jews**

While modern fraternities and sororities generally use Greek letters as symbols of excellence rather than for literal deity worship, the specific rituals of some organizations can present serious conflicts for Orthodox students:

- **Prohibition of Idolatry:** Jewish law strictly forbids making oaths or pledges to any deity other than the one God. If a fraternity's ritual involves even symbolic allegiance to a Greek god or goddess, an Orthodox Jew would be required to reject that portion of the pledge.
- **Avoidance of "Strange Oaths":** Orthodox Judaism places extreme importance on the sanctity of oaths. Pledging absolute loyalty to a secular organization or its "spirits" can be seen as a violation of the commandment to have no other gods before the Creator.
- **Separation from Pagan Rituals:** Many Greek organizations have "secret" rituals. If these rituals include elements that mirror ancient pagan rites – such as symbolic rebirth or altars – they are typically viewed as incompatible with halakhic (Jewish law) standards.

### Jewish Greek Organizations

To navigate these conflicts while still participating in campus life, many Jewish students join organizations that align with Jewish values and omit pagan-style rituals.

**Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi):** Founded specifically because Jews were excluded from other fraternities, it focuses on Jewish heritage and values.

**Zeta Beta Tau (ZBT):** Originally formed as a Zionist youth society, it provides a space for Jewish identity within the Greek system.

**Alpha Epsilon Phi (AEPi):** A sorority founded by Jewish women at Barnard College to provide a community free from the discrimination of other organizations.

### Contemporary Practice

In reality, most mainstream fraternities and sororities do not require literal worship of Greek gods. However, because rituals are often secret, Orthodox students are frequently advised to consult with a campus rabbi (such as through a Chabad on Campus or Hillel) before pledging to ensure the specific chapter's traditions do not conflict with their religious obligations.<sup>144</sup>

## Bibliography

### Recommended Books and Articles

The following resources discuss the intersection of Jewish identity, the Greek system, and the religious opposition to secular/pagan influences:

*The Contradictory History of Jewish Greek Life* (Moment Magazine): Explores the century-long history of Jewish students navigating the Greek system and the tensions between cultural independence and assimilation.

*Jewish Fraternities and Sororities as Sites of Campus Belonging* (Journal of Jewish Education): A modern study examining how these organizations function as educational and communal spaces for Jewish students.

*Why Couldn't the Jews and Greeks Just Get Along?* (Chabad.org): Provides a theological breakdown of the fundamental clash between the Jewish and Greek worldviews, focusing on the Hanukkah narrative and the concept of "Jerusalem vs. Athens".

*Jewish College Sororities and Acculturation* (AJS Perspectives): Discusses how Jewish women used the Greek system to navigate white Christian elite spaces in the mid-20th century.

## APPENDIX 2

### “The Black Greek-Letter Societies”

The famous African American “Greek” letter organizations include the Sigma Pi Phi (“the Boule”); Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity; Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority; Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity; Omega Psi Phi fraternity; Delta Sigma Theta sorority; Phi Beta Sigma fraternity; Zeta Phi Beta sorority; Sigma Gamma Rho sorority; and the Iota Theta Phi fraternity.

The first black Greek-letter fraternity, Sigma Pi Phi (a/k/a/ the Boule), was founded in 1904. Although it is considered to be the most exclusive and perhaps most prestigious of all the others, this organization is not a collegiate fraternity and is not considered to be a part of the “Divine Nine.” The remainder of the above-listed Greek-letter organizations are considered the prestigious “Divine Nine” within the African American collegiate, social, and professional world.

Below is the listing of the ten most notable African American Greek-letter organizations:

**1. Sigma Pi Phi—Founded 1904 in Philadelphia (Postgraduate Only)**



<http://www.sigmapiphi.com>

“Sigma Pi Phi (ΣΠΦ), also known as *The Boulé*, is an African American professional fraternity. Founded in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1904, it is the oldest Greek lettered fraternity for African Americans. The fraternity does not have

collegiate chapters and is designed for professionals in mid-career or older. Sigma Pi Phi has over 5,000 members and 139 chapters throughout the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Bahamas.”<sup>145</sup>

“Sigma Pi Phi was founded in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1904 as a professional fraternity for African American men. When Sigma Pi Phi was founded, black professionals were not offered participation in the professional and cultural associations organized by the white community.”<sup>146</sup>

The Sigma Pi Phi fraternity is associated with the Greek/ Egyptian deity known as the SPHINX.

A **sphinx** (/sfɪŋks/ *SFINKS*;

Greek: σφίγξ, pronounced [spʰíŋks]; pl. **sphinxes** or **sphinges** /'sfɪndʒi:z/) is a mythical creature with the head of a human, the body of a lion, and the wings of an eagle.

In Greek tradition, the sphinx is a treacherous and merciless being with the head of a woman, the haunches of a lion, and the wings of a bird. According to Greek myth, she challenges those who encounter her to answer a riddle, and kills and eats them when they fail to solve the riddle. This deadly version of a sphinx appears in the myth and drama of Oedipus.

In Egyptian mythology, in contrast, the sphinx is typically depicted as a man (an **androsphinx** (Ancient Greek: ἀνδρόσφιγξ)), and is seen as a benevolent representation of strength and ferocity, usually of a pharaoh. Unlike Greek or Levantine/Mesopotamian ones, Egyptian sphinxes were not winged.

Both the Greek and Egyptian sphinxes were thought of as guardians, and statues of them often flank the entrances to temples.<sup>147</sup>

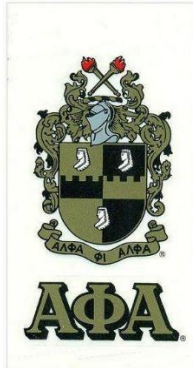
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<sup>145</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigma\\_Pi\\_Phi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigma_Pi_Phi)

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sphinx>

## 2. Alpha Phi Alpha— Founded 1906 (Cornell University)



A **sphinx** (/sfɪŋks/ *SFINKS*;

Greek: σφίγξ, pronounced [spʰíŋks]; pl. **sphinxes** or **sphinges** /'sfɪndʒi:z/) is a mythical creature with the head of a human, the body of a lion, and the wings of an eagle.

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<sup>148</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sphinx>

### 3. Alpha Kappa Alpha— Founded 1908 at Howard University



#### **Patron god #1: Themis (Greek god); Justitia (Roman), or Lady Justice**

“In Greek mythology and religion, **Themis** (/ˈθiːmɪs/; Ancient Greek: Θέμις, romanized: *Themis*, lit. 'justice, law, custom') is the goddess and personification of justice, divine order, law, and custom. She is one of the twelve Titan children of Gaia and Uranus, and the second wife of Zeus. She is associated with oracles and prophecies, including the Oracle of Delphi.”

#### **Patron god # 2: Atlas (Greek Titan God);**

In Greek mythology, **Atlas** (/ˈætləs/; Ancient Greek: Ἄτλας, *Atlās*) is a Titan condemned to hold up the heavens or sky for eternity after the Titanomachy. Atlas also plays a role in the myths of two of the greatest Greek heroes: Heracles (Hercules in Roman mythology) and Perseus. According to the ancient Greek poet Hesiod, Atlas stood at the ends of the earth in the extreme west. Later, he became commonly identified with the Atlas Mountains in northwest Africa and was said to be the first King of Mauretania (modern-day Morocco and west Algeria, not to be confused with the modern-day country of Mauritania). Atlas was said to have been skilled in philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy. In antiquity, he was credited with inventing the first celestial sphere. In some texts, he is even credited with the invention of astronomy itself.

Atlas was the son of the Titan Iapetus and the Oceanid Asia<sup>1</sup> or Clymene. He was a brother of Menoetius, Epimetheus and Prometheus. He had many children, mostly daughters, the Hesperides, the Hyades, the Pleiades, and the nymph Calypso who lived on the island Ogygia.

Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator characterized Atlas as the founder of geography, leading to the modern sense of the term "atlas" for a collection of maps after Mercator published his own work in honor of the Titan.

The "Atlantic Ocean" is derived from "Sea of Atlas." The name of Atlantis mentioned in Plato's *Timaeus* dialogue derives from "Atlantis nesos" (Ancient Greek: Ἀτλαντὶς νῆσος), literally meaning "Atlantean Island".

#### 4. Kappa Alpha Si— founded in 1911 at Indiana University



#### Greek god # 1: Apollo

In ancient Greek religion and mythology, **Apollo** is one of the Olympian deities. His numerous functions include healing, prophecy, music, poetry, and archery. He is the son of Zeus and Leto, and the twin brother of Artemis, goddess of the hunt. He is considered to be the most beautiful god and is represented as the ideal of the *kouros* (ephebe, or a beardless, athletic youth). In the 5th century BC, his worship was imported to Rome.

As the patron deity of Delphi (*Apollo Pythios*), Apollo is an oracular god—the prophetic deity of the Delphic Oracle and the deity of ritual purification. His oracles were often consulted for guidance in various matters. He was in general seen as the god who affords help and wards off evil, and is referred to

as Alexicacus, the "averted of evil". Medicine and healing are associated with Apollo, whether through the god himself or mediated through his son Asclepius. Apollo delivered people from epidemics, yet he is also a god who could bring ill health and deadly plague with his arrows. The invention of archery itself is credited to Apollo and his sister Artemis. Apollo is usually described as carrying a silver or golden bow and a quiver of arrows.

As the god of *mousike*, Apollo presides over all music, songs, dance, and poetry. He is the inventor of string-music and the frequent companion of the Muses, functioning as their chorus leader in celebrations.

### **Greek god # 2: Ares (Greek); Mars (Roman)**

**Ares** (/ˈɛəriːz/; Ancient Greek: Ἄρης, *Árēs* [árɛːs]) is the Greek god of war and courage. He is one of the Twelve Olympians, and the son of Zeus and Hera. Many Greeks were ambivalent towards him. He embodies the physical valor necessary for success in war but can also personify sheer brutality and bloodlust, in contrast to his sister Athena, whose martial functions include military strategy and generalship. An association with Ares endows places, objects, and other deities with a savage, dangerous, or militarized quality.

### **5. Omega Si Phi— founded in 1911 at Howard University**



**[This Fraternity is not affiliated with any Greek deities]**

The Omega Si Phi fraternity (also known as the “Que Dogs”) has drawn parallels to the Greek deity “**Anubis** (/əˈnjuːbɪs/ <sup>ⓘ</sup>; Ancient Greek: Ἄνουβις), also known

as **Inpu**, **Inpw**, **Jnpw**, or **Anpu** in Egyptian (Coptic: ἀνουπ, romanized: *Anoup*), is the god of funerary rites, protector of graves, and guide to the underworld in ancient Egyptian religion, usually depicted as a canine or a man with a canine head.

“Like many ancient Egyptian deities, Anubis assumed different roles in various contexts. Depicted as a protector of graves as early as the First Dynasty (c. 3100 – c. 2890 BC), Anubis was also an embalmer. By the Middle Kingdom (c. 2055–1650 BC) he was replaced by Osiris in his role as lord of the underworld. One of his prominent roles was as a god who ushered souls into the afterlife. He attended the weighing scale during the "Weighing of the Heart", in which it was determined whether a soul would be allowed to enter the realm of the dead. Anubis is one of the most frequently depicted and mentioned gods in the Egyptian pantheon; however, few major myths involved him.

“Anubis was depicted in black, a color that symbolized regeneration, life, the soil of the Nile River, and the discoloration of the corpse after embalming. Anubis is associated with Wepwawet, another Egyptian god portrayed with a dog's head or in canine form, but with grey or white fur. Historians assume that the two figures were eventually combined. Anubis's female counterpart is Anput. His daughter is the serpent goddess Kebechet.”<sup>149</sup>

## 6. Three Greek Organizations

### A. Delta Sigma Theta—founded in 1913 at Howard University



### B. Phi Beta Sigma—founded in 1914 at Howard University

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<sup>149</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anubis>



### C. Zeta Phi Beta—founded in 1920 at Howard University



The Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (1913), the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity (1914), and the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority (1920) all affiliated with the same Greek gods or deities.

**Patron god: Pallas Athena (Roman); Minerva (Greek) [Connected to the Egyptian goddess *Neith*]**

“**Athena** or **Athene**, often given the epithet **Pallas**, is an ancient Greek goddess associated with wisdom, warfare, and handicraft<sup>[2]</sup> who was later syncretized with the Roman goddess Minerva.<sup>[3]</sup> Athena was regarded as the patron and protectress of various cities across Greece, particularly the city of Athens, from which she most likely received her name.<sup>[4]</sup> The Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens is dedicated to her. Her major symbols include owls, olive trees, snakes, and the gorgoneion. In art, she is generally depicted wearing a helmet and holding a spear.

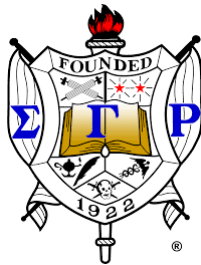
From her origin as an Aegean palace goddess, Athena was closely associated with the city. She was known as *Polias* and *Poliouchos* (both derived from *polis*, meaning "city-state"), and her temples were usually located atop the fortified acropolis in the central part of the city. The Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis is dedicated to her, along with numerous other

temples and monuments. As the patron of craft and weaving, Athena was known as *Ergane*. She was also a warrior goddess, and was believed to lead soldiers into battle as *Athena Promachos*. Her main festival in Athens was the Panathenaia, which was celebrated during the month of Hekatombaion in midsummer and was the most important festival on the Athenian calendar.

In Greek mythology, Athena was born from the forehead of her father Zeus; in Hesiod's *Theogony*, this occurred after Zeus swallowed his consort Metis while she was pregnant with Athena. In the founding myth of Athens, Athena bested Poseidon in a competition over patronage of the city by creating the first olive tree. She was known as *Athena Parthenos* "Athena the Virgin". In one archaic Attic myth, Hephaestus tried and failed to rape her, resulting in Gaia giving birth to Erichthonius, an important Athenian founding hero whom Athena raised. She was the patron goddess of heroic endeavor; she was believed to have aided the heroes Perseus, Heracles, Bellerophon, and Jason. Along with Aphrodite and Hera, Athena was one of the three goddesses whose feud resulted in the Trojan War. She plays an active role in the *Iliad*, in which she assists the Achaeans and, in the *Odyssey*, she is the tutelary deity to Odysseus.

In the later writings of the Roman poet Ovid, Athena was said to have competed against the mortal Arachne in a weaving competition, afterward transforming Arachne into the first spider, and to have transformed Medusa into the Gorgon after witnessing the young woman being raped by Poseidon in the goddess's temple. Ovid also says that Athena saved the mortal maiden Corone from the same god by transforming her into a crow.<sup>[5][6]</sup> Since the Renaissance, Athena has become an international symbol of wisdom, the arts, and classical learning. Western artists and allegorists have often used Athena as a symbol of freedom and democracy.”

## 7. Sigma Gamma Rho— founded in 1922 at Butler University



**Patron god: Aurora (Roman); Eos (Greek); [Her son, Memnon, was king of the Ethiopians]**

“In Roman mythology, Aurora renews herself every morning and flies across the sky, announcing the arrival of the Sun. Her parentage was flexible. The poet Ovid named her as the daughter of the Titan Hyperion, but also referred to her as Pallantis, signifying she was the daughter of Pallas. She has two siblings, a brother— Sol, the Sun— and a sister— Luna, the Moon. Roman writers rarely imitated Hesiod and later Greek poets by naming Aurora as the mother of the Anemoi (the Winds), who were the offspring of Astraeus, the father of the stars. Aurora and Cephalus, 1733, by François Boucher

Most commonly, Aurora appears in erotic poetry with one of her mortal lovers. A myth taken from the Greek by Roman poets tells that one of her lovers was the prince of Troy, Tithonus. Tithonus was a mortal, and would therefore age and die. Wanting to be with her lover for all eternity, Aurora asked Jupiter to grant immortality to Tithonus. Jupiter granted her wish, but she failed to ask for eternal youth to accompany his immortality, and he continued to age, eventually becoming forever old. Aurora turned him into a cicada.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurora\\_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurora_(mythology))

## 8. Iota Phi Theta — founded in 1963 at Morgan State College



[Christian Cross Symbol on Coat of Arms denotes affiliation with the Christian religion].

[Greek god; centaur]

A **centaur** (/ˈsɛntɔːr, ˈsɛntɑːr/ *SEN-tor*, *SEN-tar*; Ancient Greek: κένταυρος, romanized: *kéntauros*; Latin: *centaurus*), occasionally **hippocentaur**, also called **Ixionidae** (Ancient Greek: Ἴξιονίδαι, romanized: *Ixionídai*, lit. 'sons of Ixion'), is a creature from Greek mythology with the upper body of a human and the lower body and legs of a horse that was said to live in the mountains of Thessaly.<sup>[3]</sup> In one version of the myth, the centaurs were named after Centaurus, and, through his brother Lapithes, were kin to the legendary tribe of the Lapiths.

Centaur are thought of in many Greek myths as being as wild as untamed horses, and were said to have inhabited the region of Magnesia and Mount Pelion in Thessaly, the Foloi oak forest in Elis, and the Malean peninsula in southern Laconia. Centaur are subsequently featured in Roman mythology, and were familiar figures in the medieval bestiary. They remain a staple of modern fantastic literature.

## APPENDIX 3

### “The Jewish and Christian Greek-Letter Alternatives”

Historically, when Jews founded their own Greek-letter organizations, they did so in order to create safe-spaces for, inter alia, Jewish cultural and religious values (i.e., Judaism). So far at this author has been able to ascertain, there has been only one Black Greek-letter organization that has been founded in order to explicitly safeguard African American “Christian values,” namely: **Alpha Nu Omega, Inc.**, which was founded in 1988 on the campus of Morgan State University.

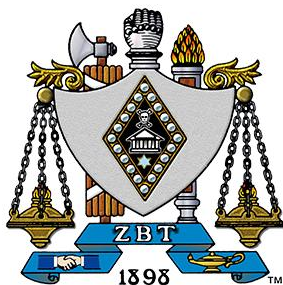
I suppose the Black Church might consider a combination of “reform” for the existing “Divine Nine” Greek-letter societies, while also supporting the Alpha Nu Omega, Inc. and (or) establishing other similar Greek-letter organizations that provide safe spaces for Christians and also safeguard “Christian values.”

#### Jewish Greek-Letter Collegiate Societies

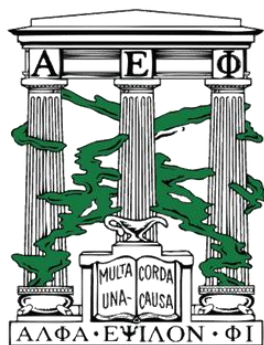
**Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi):** Founded specifically because Jews were excluded from other fraternities, it focuses on Jewish heritage and values.



**Zeta Beta Tau (ZBT):** Originally formed as a Zionist youth society, it provides a space for Jewish identity within the Greek system.



**Alpha Epsilon Phi (AEPH):** A sorority founded by Jewish women at Barnard College to provide a community free from the discrimination of other organizations.



## Black Christian Greek-Letter Collegiate Societies

**Alpha Nu Omega (ANQ):** A joint fraternity/sorority founded by Black Christian students at Morgan State University to provide “Christian” alternative to the “Divine Nine” Black Greek-letter fraternities and sororities.



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