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A HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

“The Greek Influences Upon the Early Church”¹

by

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¹ Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers* (unpublished research papers, 2015 to 2022).
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² Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers* (unpublished research papers, 2015 to 2022).
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Introduction

In the Gospel of John,³ after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and the fame of this great miracle had spread throughout Judea,⁴ and after Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem upon a young donkey before the cheering crowds and the palm branches, and after he was hailed “King of Israel,” there were “**certain Greeks**” who “came to worship at the feast” [of the Passover]⁵ and who “**desired... [to] see Jesus.**”⁶ Two of the disciples informed Jesus about the desire of these Greeks to see him.

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

³ John 12:1-50.

⁴ John 12: 17-18.

⁵ John 12: 1, 20-21.

⁶ John 12:21.

Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.⁷

In the New Testament, then, the Greeks are the “first among the Gentiles” to come to Christ. I do not intend here to say that the Greeks are superior to other Gentiles, but only to say that, within the New Testament, and in the theology of the Early Church, the Greeks were generally the first amongst the Gentiles to come to Christ. Most significantly, through the writings of the Apostle Paul and Augustine of Hippo, the famed Hellenic Greek philosophy helped to elucidate and explain the Decalogue, the Torah, and Christian theology.

This paper is designed to introduce the reader to the convergence of Greek philosophy (not mythology and pagan religion) into the fundamental and foundational theology of the Early Church. This is demonstrated through the writings of both Paul and Augustine, both of which laid the core foundation of the very Renaissance and Humanist movements that influenced the Christian humanist lawyer John Calvin (1509- 1564) and the 16th century Protestant Reformation.

⁷ John 12: 23-32.

Chapter One

“Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic Grecian Empire”

The Book of Daniel is believed to have foretold the rise of the great Hellenistic kingdom of the Greeks, as follows:⁸

Daniel 7: 4 “the first beast”	Kingdom of Babylon
Daniel 7:5 “the second beast”	Kingdom of the Medes/Persians
Daniel 7:6 “the third beast”	Kingdom of the Hellenistic Greeks
Daniel 7: 7 “the fourth beast”	Kingdom of the Romans

Of course, Daniel’s prophecy describes each kingdom as a subsequent conqueror and subduer of the previous kingdom, in historical succession.

The rise of Hellenistic Greek civilization began when Alexander the Great overthrew the Achaemenid Persian Empire following a series of military campaigns from between 334 to 324 BC.

King Alexander conquered large areas of northern Africa, ancient Palestine, Asia Minor, south-central Asia, and southern Europe.



⁸ Secondary Source: Isaac Newton, *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* (United States of America: Renaissance Classics, 2012).

After Alexander died in 323 BC,⁹ the Diadochi divided his empire was divided into four parts, to wit:

Egypt & Northern Africa:	Kingdom of Ptolemy I Soter
Seleucid Empire in Middle East:	Kingdom of Seleucus I Nicator
Greece & Macedonia:	Kingdom of Cassander
Trace & Dacia in Asia Minor	Kingdom of Lysimachus

The first two Greek kingdoms—that of King Ptolemy (Egypt) and King Nicator (Seleucid) – dominated ancient Judea and the Jews from the period 323 to 63 BC., and form the primary basis of the historical antagonism of the Jews.

The province of ancient Judea was sandwiched between these two Greek powers, and consequently it became a subjugated political pawn, as well as a buffer, between these two powers.¹⁰ Not all of the Jewish leaders were subservient, however, as they were sometimes savvy enough to play these two Greek kingdoms against again other, and also to play the Romans against the Greeks, in order to secure multilateral political leverage.

The Jewish struggles against these two major Grecian powers are recorded in *Josephus: The Complete Works*¹¹ and the *First and Second Books of the Maccabees*.¹²

⁹ See, “Alexander the Great,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great (“On either 10 or 11 June 323 BC, Alexander died in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar II, in Babylon, at age 32.... Given the propensity of the Macedonian aristocracy to assassination, foul play featured in multiple accounts of his death.”)

¹⁰ See, e.g., Hasmonean Dynasty, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean_dynasty (“The entire region was heavily contested between the successor states of Alexander's empire, the Seleucid Empire and Ptolemaic Egypt, during the six Syrian Wars of the 3rd–1st centuries BCE: ‘After two centuries of peace under the Persians, the Hebrew state found itself once more caught in the middle of power struggles between two great empires: the Seleucid state with its capital in Syria to the north and the Ptolemaic state, with its capital in Egypt to the south...Between 319 and 302 BC, Jerusalem changed hands seven times.’”)

¹¹ *Josephus: The Complete Works* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998).

¹² These books, which a part of the Apocrypha, are reviewed in detail the next paper.

Chapter Two

“The Grecian Kingdom of the Ptolemaic Egypt”

Following the Death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, his vast empire was divided amongst his generals, who were called the Diadochi.¹³

One of the kingdoms which emerged was the Egyptian kingdom of the Ptolemies. The Ptolemaic kings were sometimes the friends, and sometimes the foes, of the Jewish people. . In the *First* and *Second Books of the Maccabees*,¹⁴ “Ptolemee king of Egypt” is repeatedly mentioned as a major player in international and local Jewish political affairs.¹⁵

The Ptolemaic Dynasty’s kings who ruled the Jews of Alexandria and who frequently dominated the Jews of ancient Juda include the following:

Ptolemaic Dynasty (Greek) of Egypt, 303 BC to 40 AD

- **Ptolemy I Soter** (303–282 BC) married first Thaïs, then Artakama, then Eurydice, and finally Berenice I
- **Ptolemy II Philadelphus** (285–246 BC) married Arsinoe I, then * Arsinoe II; ruled jointly with Ptolemy Epigonos (267–259 BC)
- **Ptolemy III Euergetes** (246–221 BC) married Berenice II
- **Ptolemy IV Philopator** (221–203 BC) married Arsinoe III

¹³ “Alexander’s death was sudden and his empire disintegrated into a 40-year period of war and chaos in 321 BCE. The Hellenistic world eventually settled into four stable power blocks: **the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt**, the Seleucid Empire in the east, the Kingdom of Pergamon in Asia Minor, and Macedon.” Source:

[https://chem.libretexts.org/Courses/Lumen_Learning/Book%3A_Western_Civilization_\(Lumen\)/Ch._04_Ancient_Greece_and_the_Hellenistic_World/05.19%3A_Alexander%E2%80%99s_Empire#:~:text=Alexander's%20death%20was%20sudden%20and,in%20Asia%20Minor%2C%20and%20Macedon.](https://chem.libretexts.org/Courses/Lumen_Learning/Book%3A_Western_Civilization_(Lumen)/Ch._04_Ancient_Greece_and_the_Hellenistic_World/05.19%3A_Alexander%E2%80%99s_Empire#:~:text=Alexander's%20death%20was%20sudden%20and,in%20Asia%20Minor%2C%20and%20Macedon.)

¹⁴ These books, which are a part of the Apocrypha, are reviewed in detail the next paper.

¹⁵ See, e.g., 1 Maccabees 1:18-20; 3:38; 10:51-58; and 11: 3-18.

- **Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203–181 BC)** married Cleopatra I Syra
- **Ptolemy VI Philometor (181–164 BC, 163–145 BC)** married Cleopatra II, briefly ruled jointly with Ptolemy Eupator in 152 BC
- **Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator** (possibly never reigned)
- **Ptolemy VIII Physcon (170–163 BC, 145–116 BC)** married Cleopatra II, then Cleopatra III; temporarily expelled from Alexandria by * Cleopatra II from 131 to 127 BC, then reconciled with her in 124 BC.
- **Cleopatra II Philometora Soteira (131–127 BC)**, in opposition to Ptolemy VIII Physcon
- **Ptolemy Apion (c.120-96 BC)**, son of Ptolemy VIII. Last Ptolemaic king of Cyrene.
- **Cleopatra III Philometor Soteira Dikaiosyne Nikephoros (Kokke) (116–101 BC)** ruled jointly with Ptolemy IX Lathyros (116–107 BC) and * Ptolemy X Alexander I (107–101 BC)
- **Ptolemy IX Lathyros (116–107 BC, 88–81 BC as Soter II)** married Cleopatra IV, then Cleopatra Selene; ruled jointly with Cleopatra III in his first reign
- **Ptolemy X Alexander I (107–88 BC)** married Cleopatra Selene, then Berenice III; ruled jointly with Cleopatra III till 101 BC
- **Berenice III Philopator (81–80 BC)**
- **Ptolemy XI Alexander II (80 BC)** married and ruled jointly with Berenice III before murdering her; ruled alone for 19 days after that.
- **Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos (Auletes) (80–58 BC, 55–51 BC)** married Cleopatra V Tryphaena
- **Cleopatra VI Tryphaena (58–57 BC)** ruled jointly with Berenice IV Epiphaneia (58–55 BC), possibly identical with Cleopatra V Tryphaena
- **Cleopatra ("Cleopatra VII Philopator", 51–30 BC)** ruled jointly with Ptolemy XIII Theos Philopator (51–47 BC), Ptolemy XIV (47–44 BC) and Ptolemy XV Caesarion (44–30 BC).

- **Arsinoe IV (48–47 BC)**, in opposition to Cleopatra
- **Ptolemy of Mauretania (13 or 9 BC–AD 40)** Client king and ruler of Mauretania for Rome

Between the period 300 to 198 BC, the Ptolemaic kings sometimes claimed kingship over ancient Judea, thus setting up the Jewish High Priest and other Jewish leaders to rule in the name of King Ptolemy.¹⁶

From 301 to 198, the province of Yehud, with its temple city Y'rushelem (Aramaic) or Hierousalem (Greek) is dominated by the dynasty founded by Ptolemy I Soter (i.e., "the savior"). Internally there are no changes to the type of administration established under the Achaemenid Persians. There is most likely a governing council of elders (a gerousia, which may be identical with what is later called the synhedrion or Sanhedrin). The most influential members of this society are the priests. The form of government is aristocratic, i.e., the city and whatever belongs to it, is run by a group of influential families. During the Ptolemaic period, tax farming for Palestine was in the hands of the influential family of the Tobiads whose land base was in Transjordan in the area of Ammon. At the head of the Jerusalem gerousia was the high priest, a hereditary office held, at that time, by the family of Onias. Political leadership and land ownership are thus in the hands of a small group of influential clans.

The century of Ptolemaic rule over Judah/Palestine and Phoenicia ends when Antiochus III. ("the Great"), scion of the Seleukids ruling the eastern parts of the lands conquered by Alexander, asserts his claim to the coastal cities and the rest of the southern Levant by several military campaigns. A decisive victory at Panias (Banyas) in 198 forces the young Greco-Egyptian ruler, Ptolemy V., to yield.

¹⁶ Source: "History of Jerusalem Under the Ptolemies (c. 301-198BCE)" [https://www.bu.edu/mzank/Jerusalem/cp/ptolemhist.htm#:~:text=History%20of%20Jerusalem%20Under%20the,301%2D198BCE\)&text=From%20301%20to%20198%2C%20the,%2C%20%22the%20savior%22\).](https://www.bu.edu/mzank/Jerusalem/cp/ptolemhist.htm#:~:text=History%20of%20Jerusalem%20Under%20the,301%2D198BCE)&text=From%20301%20to%20198%2C%20the,%2C%20%22the%20savior%22).)

After the Ptolemaic garrison is driven from Jerusalem, Antiochus, welcomed by an established pro-Syrian party among the priestly aristocrats who hoped for a more lenient system of administration, reaffirmed the right of the Yehudim to live by their paternal laws.¹⁷

It is important to note here that the Jews of ancient Judea felt subjugated by a Greco-Egyptian kingdom. For this reason, their idea of a Messiah (i.e., Christ) naturally incorporated the idea of reestablishing an independent and sovereign “Davidic” kingship as it has been established under David and Solomon. But this idea would have been “treasonous” under the Greco-Ptolemaic rule of ancient Judea.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Chapter Three

“The Grecian Kingdom of Seleucid Asia”

Following the downfall of the Ptolemaic rule over ancient Judea, the plight of the Jews fared much worse under their new rulers, the Greco-Seleucid kings from Asia Minor and western Asia.

The book of I Maccabees opens with a brutal description of how Antiochus Epiphanes “made war against Ptolemee king of Egypt: but Ptolemee was afraid of him, and fled...”¹⁸

Soon thereafter, King Antiochus Epiphanes destroyed the Jew’s Second Temple, as 1 Maccabees 1:20-40 states:

20 And after that Antiochus had smitten Egypt, he returned again in the hundred forty and third year, and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great multitude,

21 And entered proudly into the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof,

22 And the table of the shewbread, and the pouring vessels, and the vials. and the censers of gold, and the veil, and the crown, and the golden ornaments that were before the temple, all which he pulled off.

23 He took also the silver and the gold, and the precious vessels: also he took the hidden treasures which he found.

24 And when he had taken all away, he went into his own land, having made a great massacre, and spoken very proudly.

25 Therefore there was a great mourning in Israel, in every place where they were;

26 So that the princes and elders mourned, the virgins and young men were made feeble, and the beauty of women was changed.

¹⁸ 1 Maccabees 1:17-20.

27 Every bridegroom took up lamentation, and she that sat in the marriage chamber was in heaviness,

28 The land also was moved for the inhabitants thereof, and all the house of Jacob was covered with confusion.

29 And after two years fully expired the king sent his chief collector of tribute unto the cities of Juda, who came unto Jerusalem with a great multitude,

30 And spake peaceable words unto them, but all was deceit: for when they had given him credence, he fell suddenly upon the city, and smote it very sore, and destroyed much people of Israel.

31 And when he had taken the spoils of the city, he set it on fire, and pulled down the houses and walls thereof on every side.

32 But the women and children took they captive, and possessed the cattle.

33 Then builded they the city of David with a great and strong wall, and with mighty towers, and made it a strong hold for them.

34 And they put therein a sinful nation, wicked men, and fortified themselves therein.

35 They stored it also with armour and victuals, and when they had gathered together the spoils of Jerusalem, they laid them up there, and so they became a sore snare:

36 For it was a place to lie in wait against the sanctuary, and an evil adversary to Israel.

37 Thus they shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary, and defiled it:

38 Insomuch that the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled because of them: whereupon the city was made an habitation of strangers, and became strange to those that were born in her; and her own children left her.

39 Her sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness, her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into reproach her honour into contempt.

40 As had been her glory, so was her dishonour increased, and her excellency was turned into mourning.

Thus, with the rise of King Antiochus Epiphanies in 175 BC, the dye was cast, and the stage was set, for a long, bloody struggle of the Jews against Greco-Hellenistic imperialism. The story of I and II Maccabees in the *Apocrypha* recounts this struggle.

The Seleucid Dynasty's kings who ruled the Jews of Alexandria and who frequently dominated the Jews of ancient Juda include the following:

Seleucid Dynasty (Greek) of Asia, 311 BC to 65 AD

- **Seleucus I Nicator** 311- 281 BC
- **Antiochus I Soter** 281 - 261 BC
- **Antiochus II Theos** 261 - 246 BC
- **Seleucus II Callinicus** 246 - 225 BC
- **Seleucus III Keraunos (or Soter)** 225 - 222 BC
- **Antiochus III the Great** 222 - 187 BC
- **Seleucus IV Philopator** 187 - 175 BC
- **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** 175 – 164 BC
- **Antiochus V Eupator** 164 - 162 BC
- **Demetrius I Soter** 161 - 150 BC

- **Alexander I Balas** 152- 145 BC
- **Demetrius II Nicator** (first reign) 145 - 138 BC
- **Antiochus VI Dionysus** (or Epiphanes) 145/144 - 141/140 BC
- **Diodotus Tryphon** 141/140 - 138 BC
- **Antiochus VII Sidetes** (or Euergetes) 138 – 129 BC
- **Demetrius II Nicator** (second reign) 129 - 125 BC
- **Alexander II Zabinas** 129 - 123 BC
- **Cleopatra Thea** 125 BC
- **Seleucus V** 125 BC
- **Cleopatra Thea and Antiochus VIII Grypus** 125 - 121 BC
- **Antiochus VIII Grypus** 121 - 96 BC
- **Antiochus IX Cyzicenus** 115 - early 95 BC
- **Demetrius III Eucuerus** (or Philopator) 97/96 - 87 BC
- **Seleucus VI Epiphanes Nicator** 96 - 94 BC
- **Antiochus XI Epiphanes Philadelphus** c .95 - 93/92 BC
- **Philip I Philadelphus** c.95 - c.75 BC
- **Antiochus X Eusebes Philopator** 95 - c.88 BC
- **Antiochus XII Dionysus** 87 - 83/82 BC
- **Tigranes II the Great of Armenia** 74/73 - 69 BC
- **Antiochus XIII Asiaticus** 69 - 64 BC
- **Philip II Philoromaeus** 67/66 - 66/65 BC

Up to the period of the rise of Hellenistic Greek empires in about 300 BC, the Persians had dominated ancient Judea from between, circa, 538 – 333 B.C.¹⁹ After 323 BC, the Greeks would dominate ancient Judea until about 63 BC. And after the Greeks, came the Romans, who would dominate ancient Judea from 63 BC onward for the next several centuries.

Neither the Seleucid or Roman rulers would have wanted or tolerated a completely independent Jewish king whose independent authority and kingdom were patterned after that of Kings David and Solomon.

Hence, the political implications of Jesus’s independent authority as “king of the Jews” were inherently *treasonous*—both to the Greco-Roman rulers (i.e., the Gentiles) as well as the Jewish elites who catered to these Greco-Roman rulers.

This was the explosive political condition of first century ancient Judea when Jesus of Nazareth was arrested, tried, and executed.

¹⁹ See, e.g., “Timeline of Judaism after Babylonian Exile (538 B.C. to 70 A.D.)

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/timeline-of-judaism-after-the-babylonian-exile-538-bce-70-ce>.

The Jews returned to ancient Judea in, circa, 538 B.C., following the Edict of Cyrus the Great (the Persian emperor). Thus, the Jews lived under the grace and rule of the Persian empire from, circa, 538 to 333 B.C.

The “Second Temple” was rebuilt in Jerusalem during the period 520 – 515 B.C. The theological idea of a Messiah (“Christ”) who will be a military, political, and moral leader develops around, circa, 500 B.C.

The prophets Ezra and Nehemiah lead a Reformation during the period, circa, 450 to 400 B.C.

Chapter Four

“Koine Greek and the Hellenization of the Jewish Diaspora”

When Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem, the first-century Jews were politically subjugated to a Greco-Roman imperial world and were thoroughly Hellenized. Koine Greek had become, and remained, the imperial language of Greco-Roman world.

The events of the New Testament gospels and epistles thus occurred within a Hellenistic Jewish culture that was incorporated into the Roman empire. “[W]ith the conquests of Alexander the Great (333-323 BC) and the subsequent establishment of Hellenistic kingdoms (above all, the Seleucid Empire and Ptolemaic Kingdom), Koine Greek became the dominant language in politics, culture and commerce in the Near East.”²⁰

And as Roman military arms, law, and government administration conquered the Grecian empire, Greek language, culture, philosophy, literature, and civilization continued to remain predominant in the eastern part of the Roman empire. Indeed, Hellenistic Greek culture, in turn, not only influence but it also conquered the Roman empire. “In the city of Rome, Koine Greek was in widespread use among ordinary people, and the elite spoke and wrote Greek as fluently as Latin.”²¹

Jewish Koine Greek did not exist as a separate dialect, but some Jewish texts in Koine Greek do show the influence of Aramaic in syntax and the influence of Biblical background in vocabulary....

After the Babylonian captivity, Aramaic replaced Biblical Hebrew as the everyday language in Judea. The two languages were as similar as two Romance languages or two Germanic languages today.

Thus Biblical Hebrew, which was still used for religious purposes, was not totally unfamiliar, but still, a somewhat strange norm that demanded a certain degree of training to be understood properly.

After Alexander, Judea was ruled by the Ptolemies and the Seleucids for almost two hundred years. Jewish culture was heavily influenced by Hellenistic culture, and Koine Greek was used

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

not only for international communication but also as the first language of many Jews. This development was furthered by the fact that the largest Jewish community in the world lived in Ptolemaic Alexandria. Many of these diaspora Jews would have Greek as their first language, and first, the Torah and then other Jewish scriptures (later the Christian "Old Testament") were therefore translated into standard Koine Greek, i.e. the Septuagint.²²

The Aramaic—it should be noted—was an imperial language of ancient semitic, non-Jewish empires of the Near East. Aramaic replaced the Hebrew language following the Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C. and, later, the Babylonian captivity in 588 B.C.²³

The collapse of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, together with the destruction of the First Temple, together with the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, brought about changes in common language spoken by the ancient Jews. The ancient Hebrew language and dialect was slowly replaced with the imperial Aramaic language and Koine Greek.²⁴

The languages of Jesus of Nazareth, the first Apostles, and especially Apostle Paul was Aramaic, Hebrew, and Koine Greek.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid. See, also, "Aramaic," <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic>, stating:

The scribes of the Neo-Assyrian bureaucracy had also used Aramaic, and this practice was subsequently inherited by the succeeding Neo-Babylonian Empire (605–539 BC), and later by the Achaemenid Empire (539–330 BC). Mediated by scribes that had been trained in the language, highly standardized written Aramaic (named by scholars as Imperial Aramaic) progressively also become the lingua franca of public life, trade and commerce throughout the Achaemenid territories. Wide use of written Aramaic subsequently led to the adoption of the Aramaic alphabet and (as logograms) some Aramaic vocabulary in the Pahlavi scripts, which were used by several Middle Iranian languages (including Parthian, Middle Persian, Sogdian, and Khwarazmian).

²⁴ Ibid., See, also, "Aramaic," <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic> ("Aramaic was the language of Jesus, who spoke the Galilean dialect during his public ministry, as well as the language of several sections of the Hebrew Bible, including parts of the books of Daniel and Ezra, and also the language of the Targum, the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible. It is also the language of the Jerusalem Talmud, Babylonian Talmud and Zohar.")

Chapter Five

“Koine Greek as the Biblical Language for the Old and New Testaments”

King Ptolemy of Egypt (Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 BC)) incorporated the Jewish Old Testament into the great library at Alexandria in Egypt, when he ordered that this ancient religious text to be interpreted from ancient Hebrew into the Greek language.

This translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Koine Greek occurred largely in the Greek city of Alexandria, in northern Africa, as recounted by Augustine of Hippo in his *The City of God*, as follows:

One of the Ptolemies, kings of Egypt, desired to know and have these sacred books. For Alexander of Macedon, who is also styled the Great, had by his most wonderful, but by no means enduring power, subdued the whole of Asia, yea, almost the whole world, partly by force of arms, partly by terror, and, among other kingdoms of the East, had entered and obtained Judea also, on this death his generals did not peaceably divide the most ample kingdom among them for a possession, but rather dissipated it, wasting all things by wars. Then Egypt began to have the Ptolemies as her kings. The first of them, the son of Lagus, carried many captive out of Judea into Egypt. But another Ptolemy, called Philadelphus, who succeeded him, permitted all whom he had brought under the yoke to return free; and, more than that, sent kingly gifts to the temple of God, and begged Eleazar, who was the high priest, to give him the Scriptures, which he had heard by report were truly divine, and therefore greatly desired to have in that most noble library he had made [the library of Alexandria]. When the high priest had sent them to him in Hebrew, he afterwards demanded interpreters of him, and there were given him seventy-two, out of each of the twelve tribes six men, most learned in both languages, to wit, the Hebrew and Greek; and their translation is by custom called the Septuagint. It is reported, indeed, that there was an agreement in their words so wonderful, stupendous, and plainly divine, that when they had sat at this work, each one apart (for so it pleased Ptolemy to test their fidelity), they differed from each other in no word which had the same meaning and force, or in the order of the words; but, as if the translators had been one, so what all had translated was one, because

in very deed the one Spirit had been in them all. And they received so wonderful a gift of God, in order that the authority of these Scriptures might be commented not as human but divine, as indeed it was, for the benefit of the nations who should at some time believe, as we now see them doing.²⁵

The Jewish diasporic community in Alexandria thus became the epicenter of Jewish learning and culture. Indeed, the Jewish synagogue system had been founded in Alexandria. And so the Greek-interpretation of the Old Testament (i.e., the Septuagint) was likewise originated and published in the city of Alexandria (Egypt).

The full Greek title derives from the story recorded in the Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates that "the laws of the Jews" were translated into the Greek language at the request of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–247 BCE) by seventy-two Jewish translators—six from each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Biblical scholars agree that the first five books of the Hebrew Bible were translated from Biblical Hebrew into Koine Greek by Jews living in the Ptolemaic Kingdom, probably in the early or middle part of the third century BCE.

The remaining books were presumably translated in the 2nd century BCE. Some targumim translating or paraphrasing the Bible into Aramaic were also made during the Second Temple period.

Few people could speak and even fewer could read in the Hebrew language during the Second Temple period; Koine Greek and Aramaic were the most widely spoken languages at that time among the Jewish community. **The Septuagint therefore satisfied a need in the Jewish community.**²⁶

During the first century, A.D., the Hellenistic city of Alexandria, Egypt had more Jews than did Jerusalem.²⁷ During this period, more Jews spoke Greek than

²⁵ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 651.

²⁶ "Septuagint," <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint>

²⁷ Ibid.

Hebrew.²⁸ The languages of Jesus of Nazareth would likely have been Aramaic, Hebrew, and Koine Greek—in that order.²⁹

For this reason, in addition to the Septuagint, the New Testament (1st century, AD), was also written in Koine Greek.³⁰ In the Eastern Mediterranean, Koine Greek had remained the predominant language easily from the conquests of Alexander the Great (335–323 BC) until the evolution of Byzantine Greek (c. 600 AD). Thus, Koine Greek had become the common language of the Roman empire during the first and second centuries, AD.

This means that, by the third century, BC, the religion of the Old Testament, which was originally written in the ancient Hebrew language, eventually needed to be translated into a common language in which even the Jews could understand it: Koine Greek of the Septuagint.³¹

The Greek language—Koine Greek—replaced Aramaic and Hebrew as the Biblical language for the Early Church, because most the Gentiles and the Jews of the diaspora spoke Koine Greek.

Most biblical scholars adhere to the view that the Greek text of the New Testament is the original version... since most of the texts are written by diaspora Jews such as Paul the Apostle and his possibly Gentile companion, Luke, and to a large extent addressed directly to Christian communities in Greek-speaking cities (often communities consisting largely of Paul's converts, which appear to have been non-Jewish in the majority), and since the style of their Greek is impeccable, a Greek original is more probable than a translation. Even Mark, whose Greek is heavily influenced by his Semitic substratum,

²⁸ Ibid. (“Currently, 1,600 Jewish epitaphs (funerary inscriptions) are extant from ancient Judea dating from 300 BC to 500 AD. Approximately 70 percent are in Greek, about 12 percent are in Latin, and only 18 percent are in Hebrew or Aramaic. ‘In Jerusalem itself, about 40 percent of the Jewish inscriptions from the first century period (before 70 C.E.) are in Greek. We may assume that most Jewish Jerusalemites who saw the inscriptions in situ were able to read them.’”)

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “Language of the New Testament,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_of_the_New_Testament

³¹ “Septuagint,” Wikipedia (online encyclopedia) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint#:~:text=The%20Septuagint%20is%20written%20in,have%20a%20stronger%20Greek%20influence>. (“The Septuagint is written in Koine Greek.”)

seems to presuppose a non-Hebrew audience. Thus, he explains Jewish customs... and he translates Aramaic phrases into Greek.³²

Thus, the Septuagint was read by Jesus of Nazareth, the Disciples, and the Early Church.³³

³² Ibid.

³³ See, e.g., John D. Meade, "The Bible Jesus Read," *Text & Canon Institute* <https://textandcanon.org/bible-jesus-read/> ("However, the concept of multiple translations was already in evidence by the time of Jesus. He would have been familiar with a popular Greek translation of Hebrew Scripture commonly known as the Septuagint, which had already been around for a long time, as well as other Greek and even some Aramaic translations.")

Chapter Six

“Hellenization of the Jews”

Although many Jews saw Hellenism as a direct threat to Jewish culture, custom, law, and religion, many of the leading Jewish intellectuals, philosophers, and theologians were not only influenced by Hellenism, but they borrowed heavily from Hellenistic thought. Included among this list of Hellenized Jews include:

- Jason of Cyrene;³⁴
- Eupolemus;³⁵

³⁴ “Jason of Cyrene,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jason_of_Cyrene

Jason of Cyrene (Greek: Ἰάσων ὁ Κυρηναῖος) was a Hellenistic Jew who lived around the middle of the second century BCE (fl. ~160–110 BCE?). He is the author of a five-volume history of the Maccabean Revolt and its preceding events (~178–160 BCE), which subsequently became a lost work. His history was preserved indirectly in an abridgment by an unknown Egyptian Jew, the **book of 2 Maccabees**, which was eventually included in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Jewish scriptures. 2 Maccabees was eventually recognized as a deuterocanonical book included in the Catholic and Orthodox Christian biblical canon.

Jason of Cyrene is an unknown Hellenistic Jew. **While Greek-speaking, he still favored the rebel Maccabees in their revolt against the Seleucid Empire; the rebels included both traditionalist Aramaic-speaking Jews as well as Greek-speaking Jews who opposed the anti-Jewish decrees of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes.** Cyrene, Libya in the Hellenistic era was a province at the western edge of the Ptolemaic Kingdom, which also included Egypt and Cyprus. Diaspora Jews had spread through Ptolemaic lands in this era, so him being from Cyrene is plausible, and the long-standing Ptolemaic rivalry with the Seleucids that had resulted in the Syrian Wars would have meant that supporting the Maccabees and opposing the Seleucids would have aligned with the politics of the government, so there would be little fear of censorship.

Some scholars suggest that Jason might have been an eyewitness to the events of the Maccabean Revolt and lived in Judea at some point. This is dismissed by other scholars as unlikely, as parts of the book 2 Maccabees that seem likely to stem from Jason's history make strange geographical statements concerning the region, such as a claim in 2 Maccabees 12:9 that a fire in distant Jamnia was visible from Jerusalem.

³⁵ “Eupolemus,” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eupolemus>

Eupolemus (Greek: Ἐυπόλεμος) is the earliest Hellenistic Jewish historian whose writing survives from Antiquity....

The fragments usually considered Eupolemus' genuine work are:

- A statement that Moses was the first wise man, that he taught the alphabet to the Jews who passed it on to the Phoenicians who passed it on to the Greeks, and that Moses first wrote laws for the Jews (Praep. 9.26.1).

- Demetrius the chronographer;³⁶
- Artapanus of Alexandria;³⁷
- Cleodemus Malchus;³⁸

-
- Some chronology about the period from Moses to David and some details of David's arrangements for building the temple followed by purported transcripts of letters exchanged between King Solomon and "Vaphres King of Egypt" and between Solomon and "Souron the King of Tyre", the Biblical Hiram (Praep. 9.30.1–34.18).
 - A short statement about gold shields made by Solomon (Praep. 9.34.20).
 - A very short account of the persecution of the prophet Jeremiah by King "Jonachim" who seems to correspond to the Biblical kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah followed by a short fictionalized account of the fall of Judah ending with the note that Jeremiah preserved the ark and the tablets (Praep. 9.39.2–5).
 - A chronological summary indicating 5,149 years from Adam to the 5th year of Demetrius (Strom. 1.141,4).

³⁶ “Demetrius the Chronographer,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demetrius_the_Chronographer

Demetrius the Chronographer (or Demetrius the Chronicler; Greek: Δημήτριος) was a Jewish chronicler (historian) of the late 3rd century BC, who lived probably in Alexandria and wrote in Greek.... From the orthography of proper names, and from various expressions used, it is evident that Demetrius used the Septuagint text of the Bible. For the determination of certain dates he relied on the Biblical exegesis in use among the Palestinian Jews. Josephus used Demetrius' chronicles for his Antiquities of the Jews and adopted his chronological system.

³⁷ “Artapanus of Alexandria,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artapanus_of_Alexandria

Artapanus of Alexandria (Gk. Ἀρτάπανος ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεύς) was a historian, of Alexandrian Jewish origin, who is believed to have lived in Alexandria, during the later half of the 3rd or 2nd century BCE. Although most scholars assume Artapanus lived in Alexandria, others argue he resided in the countryside. Regardless, Artapanus lived in Egypt.

Artapanus wrote Concerning The Jews, a history of the Jews, in Greek between 250 and 100 BCE, but this text has not survived to the present.... One of the most striking aspects of Artapanus' works is the ease with which he syncretizes Jewish and Egyptian culture and religion.

Although it is possible that Artapanus influenced the Jewish historian [Josephus](#), it seems that he generally had little impact on later Jewish literature.

³⁸ “Cleodemus Malchus,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleodemus_Malchus

Cleodemus Malchus (fl. 200 BCE) was a Jewish writer of whom only a few lines survive. He connects the inhabitants of Syria and North Africa with Abraham by identifying them as descendants of three sons whom Abraham had by Keturah: Apheran (the town of Aphra), Asoureim (the Assyrians), and Iaphran (Africa). His work appears cited in a quote from Alexander Polyhistor referenced by Josephus in Antiquities of the Jews 1.239-41.

- Thallus;³⁹
- Philo of Alexandria;⁴⁰

Josephus was cited by Eusebius in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.20-2.4. According to Robert Doran, "the two texts show minor variations."

³⁹ "Thallus (historian," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thallus_\(historian\)#cite_note-Voorst-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thallus_(historian)#cite_note-Voorst-2)

Thallus or Thallos (Greek: Θαλλός) perhaps a Samaritan, was an early historian who wrote in Koine Greek. He wrote a three-volume history of the Mediterranean world from before the Trojan War to the 167th Olympiad, 112–108 BC, or perhaps to the 217th Olympiad, AD 89-93. Most of his work, like the vast majority of ancient literature, has been lost, although some of his writings were quoted by Sextus Julius Africanus in his *History of the World*. It is not known when he lived and wrote, but his work is quoted by Theophilus of Antioch, who died around AD 185 and most scholars date his writings around 50 AD.

The works are considered important by some Christians as confirming the historicity of Jesus and providing non-Christian validation of the Gospel accounts. According to the early Christian scholar Africanus, Thallus in the third book of his histories, apparently refers to the purported darkness at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and explained it away as a solar eclipse; there is a range of interpretations on the matter.

⁴⁰ "Philo," <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philo>

Philo of Alexandria (/ˈfaɪloʊ/; Ancient Greek: Φίλων, romanized: *Philōn*; Hebrew: פִּלּוֹן, romanized: *Yəḏīdyāh* (*Jedediah*); c. 20 BCE – c. 50 CE), also called Philo Judaeus, was a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher who lived in Alexandria, in the Roman province of Egypt.

Philo's deployment of allegory to harmonize Jewish scripture, mainly the Torah, with Greek philosophy was the first documented of its kind, and thereby often misunderstood....

Many critics of Philo assumed his allegorical perspective would lend credibility to the notion of legend over historicity. Philo often advocated a literal understanding of the Torah and the historicity of such described events, while at other times favoring allegorical readings.

Though never properly attributed, Philo's marriage of Jewish exegesis and Stoic philosophy provided a formula later picked up by other Midrash content from the 3rd and 4th centuries. Some claimed this lack of credit or affinity for Philo by the Rabbinic leadership at the time, was due to his adoption of allegorical instead of literal interpretations of the Hebrew Bible, though it was likely due to his criticism of Rabbinic scholars,[4] citing their works and ideas were "full of Sybaritic profligacy and licentiousness to their everlasting shame", "eager to give a specious appearance to infamous actions, so as to secure notoriety for disgraceful deeds",[6] and ultimately, that he "disregards the envious disposition of such men, and shall proceed to narrate the true events of Moses' life" of which Philo felt were unjustly hidden and covered over.

According to Josephus, Philo was largely inspired by Aristobulus of Alexandria and the Alexandrian school. The only event in Philo's life that can be decisively dated is his participation in the embassy to Rome in 40 CE; whereby he represented the Alexandrian Jews in a delegation to the Roman Emperor Caligula following **civil strife between the Alexandrian Jewish and Greek communities**.

- Paul of Tarsus;⁴¹
- Josephus;⁴² and,

⁴¹ “Paul the Apostle,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle

Paul (previously called Saul of Tarsus; c. 5 – c. 64/65 AD), commonly known as Paul the Apostle and Saint Paul, was a Christian apostle who spread the teachings of Jesus in the first-century world. Generally regarded as one of the most important figures of the Apostolic Age, he founded several Christian communities in Asia Minor and Europe from the mid-40s to the mid-50s AD....

He was from a devout Jewish family based in the city of Tarsus. One of the larger centers of trade on the Mediterranean coast and renowned for its university, Tarsus had been among the most influential cities in Asia Minor since the time of Alexander the Great, who died in 323 BC....

While he was still fairly young, he was sent to Jerusalem to receive his education at the school of Gamaliel, one of the most noted teachers of Jewish law in history. Although modern scholarship agrees that Paul was educated under the supervision of Gamaliel in Jerusalem, he was not preparing to become a scholar of Jewish law, and probably never had any contact with the Hillelite school....

Although it is known (from his biography and from Acts) that Paul could and did speak Aramaic, modern scholarship suggests that **Koine Greek was his first language**. In his letters, Paul drew heavily on his knowledge of Stoic philosophy, using Stoic terms and metaphors to assist his new Gentile converts in their understanding of the Gospel and to explain his Christology.

See, also, Romans 1:14-15 (“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians.... So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.”); Romans 1:19-20 (“that which may be known of God is manifest in them...the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made....”); Romans 2:11-16 (“when the Gentiles... do by nature the things contained in the law... shew the work of the law written in their hearts”); Romans 10:8 (“The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart”); Romans 10:18 (“But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.”) The Greek influence upon both the Apostle Paul was profound.

⁴² “Josephus,” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus>

Flavius Josephus (/dʒoʊˈsiːfəs/; Greek: Ἰώσηπος, Iōsēpos; c. AD 37 – c. 100) was a 1st-century Roman–Jewish historian and military leader. Best known for writing *The Jewish War*, he was born in Jerusalem—then part of the Roman province of Judea—to a father of priestly descent and a mother who claimed royal ancestry.

He initially fought against the Roman Empire during the First Jewish–Roman War as general of the Jewish forces in Galilee, until surrendering in AD 67 to the Roman army led by military commander Vespasian after the six-week siege of Yodfat. Josephus claimed the Jewish messianic prophecies that initiated the First Jewish–Roman War made reference to Vespasian becoming Emperor of Rome. In response, Vespasian decided to keep Josephus as a slave and presumably interpreter. After Vespasian became Roman Emperor in AD 69, he granted Josephus his freedom, at which time Josephus assumed the Emperor's family name of Flavius.

- Justus of Tiberias.⁴³

While this Hellenization of Jews and Judaism was occurring, there was also a parallel development from within the Jewish community that sought to reject Hellenism in an effort to preserve Jewish autonomy and independence, as well as the integrity of the Second Temple.

These more conservative Jews believed that they were continuing the legacy of Abraham, Isaac, Israel, Moses, and the prophets. They fought—both politically and culturally, as well as through open warfare, civil disobedience, and warfare—against their Greek overlords, whether they came from Ptolemaic Egypt or the Seleucid-dominated Asia.

These conservative Jews also fought against their own brothers, the Hellenistic Jews who were often installed in powerful and key political position by the Greek kings from Egypt or Asia.

Flavius Josephus fully defected to the Roman side and was granted Roman citizenship. He became an advisor and friend of Vespasian's son Titus, serving as his translator when Titus led the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70. Since the siege proved ineffective at stopping the Jewish revolt, the city's pillaging and the looting and destruction of Herod's Temple (Second Temple) soon followed.

Josephus recorded the Great Jewish Revolt (AD 66–70), including the siege of Masada. His most important works were *The Jewish War* (c. 75) and *Antiquities of the Jews* (c. 94).

⁴³ “Justus of Tiberious,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justus_of_Tiberias

Justus of Tiberias (Tiberias, ca. 35 AD - Galilee, ca 100 AD) was a 1st century Jewish author and historiographer. ... After the Great Jewish Revolt (66-70), Justus was the secretary of King Agrippa II and waited until his death to publish his *History of this revolt*. He is also known as the author of two other writings which disappeared much later. Thus in the ninth century, Bishop Photios of Constantinople was still able to access a copy of the *Chronicle of the Jewish Kings* written by Justus.

Politics of Ancient Judea (323 BC to 63 BC)

1.

Conservative Orthodox Jews
(Second Temple)

2.

Greek Kings (Egypt/ Seleucid)

Hellenistic Jews (Pro-Egypt vs. Pro-Seleucid)

The lines between the conservative Orthodox Jews and the Hellenistic Jews were not always clear-cut. Some Hellenized Jews supported the Orthodox Jews in their efforts to overthrow Greek imperialism. At the same time, some conservative Orthodox Jews enjoyed the perks of political power and influence which were bestowed upon the High Priest and the priesthood of the Second Temple.

Nevertheless, the Greek language and the Greek imperial governments were nuisances to the Jews of ancient Judea. Their struggles against this Greek imperialism are recorded in *Josephus: The Complete Works*⁴⁴ and the *First and Second Books of the Maccabees*.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Josephus: The Complete Works* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998).

⁴⁵ These books, which a part of the Apocrypha, are reviewed in detail the next paper.

Chapter Seven

“Apostle Paul and the Greek Influence”

Jesus Christ himself sent the Paul of Tarsus to the Greeks (i.e., the Gentiles). When the Apostle Paul spoke about the Gentiles in his Epistle to the Romans and in other letters, he often meant the Greeks.

Thus, in perhaps Paul’s most important letter, he wrote, “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians.... For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”⁴⁶

The Apostle Paul, who had been a Pharisee and former student of the Rabbi Gamaliel, also reconciled the Greek idea of *logos* (i.e., word) with the Hebrew scriptures. In his landmark *Epistle to the Romans*, Paul went so far as to state that God had already plainly revealed sufficient theological knowledge to the Gentiles (i.e., all nations of the world, other than Israel), having written:

“[T]hat which is known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it to them. For His invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, also His eternal power and Godhead.”⁴⁷

In this epistle, Paul paraphrased Psalm 19, which speaks of God’s declaration of his will and law through the works of his creation, “day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”⁴⁸ This, says Paul, demonstrates that even the Gentiles have already heard the “word of God,”⁴⁹ who is Jesus Christ,⁵⁰ even without having first heard the Gospel or having received the Law of Moses.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Romans 1:14-16.

⁴⁷ Romans 1:19-20.

⁴⁸ Psalm 19:2-4.

⁴⁹ Romans 10:17-18. Here, the universal moral law means the two-fold duty to honor or obey God and love neighbor.

⁵⁰ Romans 10:5-9. (For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in

It is for this reason that Paul concluded that, “by nature,” the Gentiles were capable of fulfilling the requirements of the Mosaic law, to wit:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another....⁵²

Hence, we are to conclude that the words “by nature” denotes natural religion or natural philosophy, but not a complicated body of knowledge which only a Greek genius such as Aristotle might understand, but rather a simple knowledge that is readily accessible to the common man.

The Apostle Paul went on to found several churches in Greece or amongst the Greeks, including churches in Philippi,⁵³ Thessalonica,⁵⁴ Corinth,⁵⁵ and

thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? **The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart:** that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the **Lord Jesus**, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”)

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Romans 2:14-15.

⁵³ “Philippi,” *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* (Online): <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippi> (“Philippi ... a major Greek city northwest of the nearby island, Thasos. Its original name was Crenides (Greek: Κρηνίδες, Krenides "Fountains") after its establishment by Thasian colonists in 360/359 BC. The city was renamed by Philip II of Macedon in 356 BC....”). See, also, “Epistle to the Philippians,” *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* (Online): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Philippians (“The Epistle to the Philippians is a Pauline epistle of the New Testament of the Christian Bible. The epistle is attributed to Paul the Apostle and Timothy is named with him as co-author or co-sender. The letter is addressed to the Christian church in Philippi. Paul, Timothy, Silas (and perhaps Luke) first visited Philippi in Greece (Macedonia) during Paul's second missionary journey from Antioch, which occurred between approximately 49 and 51 AD. In the account of his visit in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul and Silas are accused of "disturbing the city").

⁵⁴ Thessalonica is located in Greece. “Thessalonica,” *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* (Online): <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thessaloniki>. See, also, “Epistle to the Thessalonians,” *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* (Online): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Epistle_to_the_Thessalonians (“The First Epistle to the Thessalonians is a Pauline epistle of the New Testament of the Christian Bible. The epistle is attributed to Paul the Apostle, and is addressed to the church in Thessalonica, in modern-day Greece. It

Ephesus.⁵⁶ We might safely conclude, then, that the Early Christian Church, then, began as a sort of cultural fusion between both Jews and Greeks (i.e., Gentile) within the Jewish synagogue.⁵⁷

This is readily apparent in the Book of Acts, where Paul preached the Gospel to both Jews and Greeks, and when the Jews themselves often rejected the Gospel, great multitudes of the Greeks received it.⁵⁸ For it was then when the

is likely among the first of Paul's letters, probably written by the end of AD 52, though some scholars believe the Epistle to Galatians may have been written by AD 48.”).

⁵⁵ Corinth is located in south-central Greece. “Corinth,” *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* (Online): <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corinth>. See, also, “Epistle to the Corinthians,” *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* (Online): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Epistle_to_the_Corinthians. (Paul’s Epistle “addresses various issues that had arisen in the Christian community at Corinth, and is composed in a form of Koine Greek.”)

⁵⁶ Ephesus was a city in Greece. “Ephesus,” *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* (Online): <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus>

⁵⁷ The Apostle Paul was a Jewish Pharisee, nevertheless he wrote in Romans 1:14-15 that “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians.... So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.”

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Acts 17: 1-28, stating:

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To The Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

Apostle Paul, a cosmopolitan Jew, was able to speak to the Greeks in their own tongue, and to syncretize many of the Greek pagan beliefs and customs with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to wit:

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.... For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.⁵⁹

Here we see plainly that Paul acknowledges that even within the Greek pagan customs and religions, there had been some vague acknowledgement of the one true God (i.e., “THE UNKNOWN GOD”), which acknowledgement was sufficient for Paul to lay a cornerstone for the further preaching of the Gospel.

25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

⁵⁹ Acts 17: 23, 28.

Chapter Eight

“Augustine of Hippo and the Greek Influence”

In *The City of God*, Augustine of Hippo catalogued two great Greek philosophical schools, to wit, the “Italic” or Pythagorean (Greek) and the Ionic (Greek) schools from which the idea of the universal moral law may be traced.⁶⁰ Here Augustine sought to demonstrate “that which is known of God He manifested to them when His invisible things were seen by them, being understood by those things which have been made; also His eternal power and Godhead by whom all visible and temporal things have been created. We have said enough upon that part of theology which they call physical, that is, natural.”⁶¹

The Italic school was founded by Pythagoras of Samos and the Ionic school was founded by Thales of Miletus. For, indeed, is to the Ionic school that the idea of the divine *logos* evolved. As Augustine recounts:

The founder of the ionic school, again, was **Thales of Miletus**.... Thales was distinguished as an investigator into the nature of things; and, in order that he might have successors in his school, he committed his dissertations to writing. That, however, which especially rendered him eminent was his ability, by means of astronomical calculations, even to predict eclipses of the sun and moon. He thought, however, that water was the first principle of things.... Over all this work, however... he set nothing of the nature of divine mind.⁶²

⁶⁰ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, pp. 244-246.

⁶¹ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, pp 251, 25. (Using this demonstration, Augustine held in *The City of God* that even the Apostle Paul did not hold or contend that all philosophy or philosophers were faithless, ungodly, and counter-productive to the Christian faith. “[T]hat he may not suppose,” writes Augustine, “that all philosophers are such as [‘deceive you through... vain deceit’], he hears the same apostle say concerning certain of them, ‘Because that which is known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it to them....’”).

⁶² Ibid.

To him succeeded **Anaximander**, his pupil, who held a different opinion concerning the nature of things; [but] nor did he, any more than Thales, attribute anything to a divine mind in the production of all this activity of things....⁶³

Anaximander left as his successor his disciple **Anaximenes**, who attributed all the causes of things to an *infinite air*....⁶⁴

Anaxagoras, however, who was his pupil, perceived that a divine mind was the productive cause of all things which we see, and said that all the various kinds of things, according to their several modes and species, were produced out of an infinite matter consisting of homogeneous particles, but by the efficiency of a *divine mind*.⁶⁵

Diogenes, also, another pupil of Anaximenes, said that a certain air was the original substance of things out of which all things were produced, but that it was possessed of a *divine reason*, without which nothing could be produced from it....⁶⁶

Anaxagoras was succeeded by his disciple **Archelaus**, who also thought that all things was made, but that those particles were pervaded by a *divine mind*, which perpetually energized all the eternal bodies, namely, those particles, so that they are alternately united and separated.⁶⁷

Socrates, the master of Plato, is said to have been the disciple of Archelaus.... Socrates is said to have been the first who directed the entire effort of philosophy to the correction and regulation of manners, all who went before him having expended their greatest efforts in the investigation of physical, that is, natural phenomena.... For he saw that the causes of things were sought for by them—which causes he believed to be ultimately reducible to nothing else than the

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

will of the one true and supreme God—and on this account he thought they could only be comprehended by a purification of the life by good morals, in order that the mind, delivered from the depressing weight of lusts, might raise itself upward by its native vigour to eternal things, and might, with purified understanding, contemplate that nature which is incorporeal and unchangeable light, where live the causes of all created natures.⁶⁸

It is evident, however, that he hunted out and pursued, with a wonderful pleasantness of style and argument, and with a most pointed and insinuating urbanity, the foolishness of ignorant men, who thought that they knew this or that—sometimes confessing his own ignorance, and sometimes dissimulating his knowledge, even in those very moral questions to which he seems to have directed the whole force of his mind. And hence there arose hostility against him, which ended in his being calumniously impeached, and condemned to death....⁶⁹

Illustrious, therefore, both in his life and in his death, Socrates left very many disciples of his philosophy.... But, among the disciples of Socrates, **Plato** was the one who shone with a glory which far excelled that of the others, and who not unjustly eclipsed them all.⁷⁰

In *The City of God*, St. Augustine accredits the Greek philosophy of Socrates and Plato with having divine revelation which God had generally made available to all the Gentile nations.⁷¹ “For, though the voices of the prophets were silent,” writes Augustine, “the world itself, by its well-ordered changes and movements,

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ See, e.g., St. Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 46 (“[S]till the teachings of the philosophers are... the discoveries of men, who, at the prompting of their own speculative ability, made efforts to discover the hidden laws of nature, and the right and wrong in ethics, and in dialectic what was consequent according to the rules of logic, and what was inconsequent and erroneous. And some of them, by God’s help, made great discoveries; but when left to themselves they were betrayed by human infirmity, and fell into mistakes. And this was ordered by divine providence, that their pride might be restrained....”)

and by the fair appearance of all visible things, **bears a testimony of its own**, both that it has been created, and also that it could not have been created save by God, whose greatness and beauty are unutterable and invisible.”⁷² And this “testimony of the things made” from God’s natural order was especially revealed to the ancient Greeks, as St. Augustine has explained:

Since, therefore, [the Greeks] saw that body and mind might be more or less beautiful in form, and that, if they wanted form, they could have no existence, they saw that there is some existence in which is the first form, unchangeable, and therefore not admitting to degrees of comparison, and that in that they most rightly believed was the first principle of things, which was not made, and by which all things were made. Therefore that which is known of God He manifested to them when His invisible things were seen by them, being understood by those things which have been made; also His eternal power and Godhead by whom all visible and temporal things have been created. We have said enough upon that part of theology which they call physical, that is, natural.⁷³

And this “testimony” of God’s natural order was especially revealed to Plato, whom Augustine considered to be the greatest of all the Greek philosophers. Indeed, Augustine’s description of Plato’s philosophical conclusions and beliefs about God is not less sacred than the Old Testament: “Plato determined the final good to be to live according to virtue, and affirmed that he only can attain to virtue who knows and imitates God.... Therefore he did not doubt that to philosophize is to love God.... Whence it certainly follows that the student of wisdom, that is, the philosopher, will then become blessed when he shall have begun to enjoy God.... [T]he true and highest good, according to Plato, is God, and therefore he would call him a philosopher who loves God; for philosophy is directed to the obtaining of the blessed life, and he who loves God is blessed in the enjoyment of God.”⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 251.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 253. See, also, “Greek Philosophy and Humanism,” <https://schoolworkhelper.net/greek-philosophy-and-humanism/>

Philosophy is a Greek word, meaning “love of wisdom”. It is the study of existence, morality, and truth. Philosophy was a way of trying to make sense of the world without guidance through religion. Instead of myths and legends, logic and reason were used to find answers. Through the

Hence, through Socrates and Plato, the Platonists and Neo-Platonists uncovered theories of nature that were closely aligned with Christian theological beliefs. Indeed, St. Augustine points out in *The City of God* that there are several philosophical points upon which the Greek philosophers and Christian theologians all agreed⁷⁵:

[w]ith respect, however, to that wherein they agree with us we prefer [the Greeks] to all others, namely, concerning the one God, the author of this universe, who is not only above every body, being incorporeal, but also above all souls, being incorruptible—our principle, our light, our good.... This, therefore, is the cause why we prefer these [Greek philosophers] to all the others, because, whilst other philosophers have worn out their minds and powers in seeking the causes of things, and endeavoring to discover the right mode of learning and of living, these, by knowing god, have found where resides the cause by which the universe has been constituted, and the light by which truth is to be discovered, and the fountain at which felicity is to be drunk. All philosophers, then, who have had these thoughts concerning God, whether Platonists or others, agree with us. But we have thought it better to plead our cause with the Platonists, because their writings are better known. For the Greeks, whose tongue holds the highest place among the languages of the Gentiles, are loud in their praise of these writings; and the Latins... have studied them more heartily than other writings, and, by translating them into our tongue, have given them greater celebrity and notoriety.⁷⁶

writings of ancient Greek philosophers and Renaissance humanists, new versions of philosophy were found, and ideas proposed that contributed greatly to the Renaissance.

⁷⁵ See, e.g., St. Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 46 (“[S]till the teachings of the philosophers are... the discoveries of men, who, at the prompting of their own speculative ability, made efforts to discover the hidden laws of nature, and the right and wrong in ethics, and in dialectic what was consequent according to the rules of logic, and what was inconsequent and erroneous. And some of them, by God’s help, made great discoveries; but when left to themselves they were betrayed by human infirmity, and fell into mistakes. And this was ordered by divine providence, that their pride might be restrained....”)

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

But there were other great Gentile philosophers who were not among the Greeks or the Jews. For instance, in a section of *The City of God*, titled “Concerning that philosophy which has come nearest to the Christian faith,” Augustine says there have been “wise men and philosophers **among all nations** who discovered to have seen and taught”⁷⁷ the existence of “the supreme God, that He is both the maker of all created things, the light by which things are known, and the good in reference to which things are to be done; that we have in Him the first principle of nature, the truth of doctrine, and the happiness of life.”⁷⁸ And these pagan Gentile philosophers, writes Augustine, have hailed from a variety of nations, “be they Atlantics, Libyans, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Chaldeans, Scythians, Gauls, Spaniards, or of other nations.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 254.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 253.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 254. See, also, Roger Williams. *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (Miami, FL: Hardpress, 2019), p. 231 (Rev. Williams pointed out in his book, *The Bloody Tenet*, that pagan rulers such as Darius and Artaxerxes were primary examples of just magistrates who were fully capable of meting out natural justice. “[H]ence are magistrates instructed favourably,” writes Rev. Williams, “to permit their subjects in their worships, although themselves be not persuaded to submit to them, as Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerces did.”)

Chapter Nine

“The Greeks, the Renaissance, and Reformed Protestant Theology”

During the next two or three centuries after the death of the first Apostles, the Early Church in northern Africa first began to seriously examine the writings of the ancient Greeks. This was initially accomplished in the city of Alexandria, where the great sagas Origen, Athanasius, and Clement of Alexandria once lived. But perhaps the greatest of these north African theologians was Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 AD). Augustine’s *The City of God*, which highly acclaimed Greek philosophers such as Plato and the Neo-Platonists, and which emphasized the natural law theology of St. Paul, became the *foundational text* of the Western Church and Western civilization.⁸⁰

Significantly, Augustine’s catholic theology became the primary guidepost for the 16th-century Christian humanism known as the Renaissance and, subsequently, the Protestant Reformation.⁸¹

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Ruben Alvarado, *Calvin and the Whigs: A Study in Historical Political Theology* (The Netherlands: Pantocrator Press, 2017), pp. 7-8:

In dating the origins of Western civilization, and consequently of its constitution, the publication of Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei* [*Of the City of God*] serves as well as any for a reference point. This book was perhaps the most important ever written in the West; for a thousand years after its publication it exercised an influence unrivalled by any other, besides the Bible itself. For good reason, one writer calls it ‘The Charter of Christendom.’

Augustine believed that the Providence of God was universal and governed all nations. See, e.g., *The City of God*, supra, p. 158 (“God can never be believed to have left the kingdoms of men, their dominations and servitudes, outside of the laws of His providence”).

⁸¹ St. Augustine, *Confessions* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble Books, 2007), p. 293, to wit:

Augustine was renowned in the Latin-speaking world as a founding father of Christian theology, but his influence proceeds far beyond that. In the *Confessions*, Augustine broke ground by exploring his chosen topic— faith in God—using a tool that had little precedent in prior scholarship: his own life. Equally important, **Augustine found room in the young Christian religion for the highly evolved thought of the so-called pagan philosophers, particularly Plato.** This may seem simple enough on its face, but, without exaggeration, **Augustine was centuries ahead of his time.** The personal nature of the *Confessions* gave everyday relevance to the more **abstract elements of Platonic thought and Christian theology**, bringing the rival philosophies into harmony and delivering them to millions of readers. **Weaving together introspection, classical learning, and faith, Augustine outlined the underpinnings of the Renaissance in Europe**, two centuries that followed the Middle Ages and were marked by a ‘rebirth’ of classical values and humanism, the belief in **the dignity of each member of the**

Augustine's writings, which was heavily influenced by Greek Platonism, thus significantly shaped the Lutheran/Reformed Theology of the Protestant Reformation.⁸² For instance, Augustine of Hippo was also highly acclaimed by Protestant Reformers Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) and John Calvin (1509 – 1564). Martin Luther's "theology was Augustinian and a form of Augustinianism was the official faith of the Western church: for many it needed no sacrifice of their intellect or of their faith to side with Martin Luther."⁸³ And, through the writings of Martin Luther, John Calvin may have become introduced to St. Augustine's

human race. The **Renaissance**, according to many scholars, began on the spring day in 1336 when a young poet named Petrarch opened a copy of the Confessions and found in it a justification for scanning his own consciousness rather than searching the world for answers to the great questions of life. In some ways, the **Renaissance** never ended, as the innovations made during that period in art, science, commerce, and politics laid the basis for the world as recognize today. In many fundamental ways, in the *Confessions* Augustine articulated the soul of modern man.

⁸² See, e.g., Kenneth Talbot and Gary Crampton, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, and Arminianism* (Lakeland, FL.: Whitefield Media Publishing, 1990), p. 114 ("Calvinists avow that the chief theologian of the first century church was the apostle Paul. We believe that this book has fully documented the fact that apostolic doctrine was that of Reformed theology. The second and third century church did not produce a systematic theology treatise, per se, but the writings of the Patristic period reveal strong leanings toward Calvinism. **The doctrines of these early years were further developed during the time of Saint Augustine (A.D. 354- 430), one of the greatest theological and philosophical minds that God has ever so seen fit to give to His church. Augustine was so strongly Calvinistic, that John Calvin referred to himself as an Augustinian theologian.** Augustine's theology was dominant in the church for a millennium.") See, also, "Augustinian Calvinism," Wikipedia Encyclopedia (Online), stating:

Augustinian Calvinism is a term used to emphasize the origin of John Calvin's theology within Augustine of Hippo's theology over a thousand years earlier. By his own admission, John Calvin's theology was deeply influenced by Augustine of Hippo, the fourth-century church father. Twentieth-century Reformed theologian B. B. Warfield said, "The system of doctrine taught by Calvin is just the Augustinianism common to the whole body of the Reformers." Paul Helm, a well-known Reformed theologian, used the term Augustinian Calvinism for his view in the book "The Augustinian-Calvinist View" in *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views*. John Calvin wrote, "Augustine is so wholly within me, that if I wished to write a confession of my faith, I could do so with all fullness and satisfaction to myself out of his writings." "This is why one finds that every four pages written in the Institutes of the Christian Religion John Calvin quoted Augustine. Calvin, for this reason, would deem himself not a Calvinist, but an Augustinian.

⁸³ T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Louisville, K.Y.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), p. 10.

theology. For Calvin quoted St. Augustine in his landmark *Institutes of the Christian Religion* more than any other authority except the Bible.⁸⁴

The ancient Greeks thus indirectly played a significant and positive role in the formation of the Early Church and its Christian theology.

THE END

⁸⁴ “Especially Augustine Particularly the influence of the church father Augustine on Calvin was great. Smits (1957-1958) points out meticulously the extent to which Calvin borrowed from Augustine. The total number of references to Augustine in Calvin’s *Institutes* (1559 edition) as identified by Smits runs to **1,175**. For all Calvin’s works this number comes to **4,119** (cf. also Mooi, 1965).” Philosophical and theological influences in John Calvin’s thought: reviewing some research results. B.J. van der Walt School of Philosophy Potchefstroom Campus North-West University POTCHEFSTROOM E-pos: hannah@intekom.co.za.

APPENDIX

“The Greek Philosophers:

The Foundations of 16th Century Christian Humanism and the Renaissance”

Thales of Miletus (Modern day Turkey/ Asia Minor) (624 – 545 BC)

Thales of Miletus ... was a Greek mathematician, astronomer, statesman, and pre-Socratic philosopher from Miletus in Ionia, Asia Minor.

He was one of the Seven Sages of Greece. Many, most notably Aristotle, regarded him as the first philosopher in the Greek tradition, and he is otherwise historically recognized as the first individual known to have entertained and engaged in scientific philosophy.

He is often referred to as **the Father of Science**.

Thales is recognized for **breaking from the use of mythology to explain the world and the universe**, instead explaining natural objects and phenomena by offering naturalistic theories and hypotheses.

Almost all the other pre-Socratic philosophers followed him in explaining nature as deriving from a unity of everything based on the existence of a single ultimate substance instead of using mythological explanations.

Aristotle regarded him as the founder of the Ionian School of philosophy and reported Thales' hypothesis that the originating principle of nature and the nature of matter was a single material substance: water.

In mathematics, Thales used geometry to calculate the heights of pyramids and the distance of ships from the shore. He is the first known individual to use deductive reasoning applied to geometry by deriving four corollaries to Thales' theorem. He is also the first known to whom a mathematical discovery has been attributed.

Anaximander of Miletus
(Modern day Turkey/ Asia
Minor)
(610 – 546 BC)

He belonged to the Milesian school and learned the teachings of his master Thales.

He succeeded Thales and became the second master of that school where he counted Anaximenes and, arguably, Pythagoras amongst his pupils.

Little of his life and work is known today. According to available historical documents, he is **the first philosopher known to have written down his studies**, although only one fragment of his work remains. Fragmentary testimonies found in documents after his death provide a portrait of the man.

Anaximander was **an early proponent of science** and tried to observe and explain different aspects of the universe, with a particular interest in its origins, claiming that **nature is ruled by laws**, just like human societies, and **anything that disturbs the balance of nature does not last long**.

Like many thinkers of his time, Anaximander's philosophy included contributions to many disciplines.

In astronomy, he attempted to describe the mechanics of celestial bodies in relation to the Earth.

In physics, his postulation that the indefinite (or apeiron) was the source of all things led Greek philosophy to a new level of conceptual abstraction.

His knowledge of geometry allowed him to introduce the gnomon in Greece.

He created a map of the world that contributed greatly to the advancement of geography.

He was also involved in the politics of Miletus and was sent as a leader to one of its colonies.

Anaximenes of Miletus
(Modern day Turkey/ Asia
Minor)

(586 – 525 BC)

He was the last of the three philosophers of the Milesian School, considered the first philosophers of the Western world.

Anaximenes is best known and identified as a younger friend or student of Anaximander, who was himself taught by the very first philosopher Thales, one of the Seven Sages of Greece. Thales proposed all was made of water; Anaximander proposed all was made of *apeiron* or something indefinite rather than something specific, and **Anaximenes proposed all was made of air**. More condensed air made for colder, denser objects and more rarefied air made for hotter, lighter objects.

The life and views of Anaximenes remain obscure as none of his work has been preserved, and he is only known through comments about him made by later writers. His cosmological views seem similar to his two Milesian predecessors. Anaximenes thought that the earth was flat and tilted, with the shape of a table (or trapezoid), and floated on air. The other celestial bodies were also flat and supported by air.

Anaxagoras of Athens
(Modern day Athens/ Greece)

(500 – 428 BC)

Responding to the claims of Parmenides on the impossibility of change, Anaxagoras introduced **the concept of Nous (Cosmic Mind) as an ordering force**.

He also gave several novel scientific accounts of natural phenomena, including the notion of panspermia, that life exists throughout the universe and could be distributed everywhere.

He deduced a correct explanation for eclipses and described the Sun as a fiery mass larger than the Peloponnese, as well as attempting to explain rainbows and meteors.

Diogenes the Cynic (412 – 323 BC)

Diogenes... was a Greek philosopher and one of the founders of Cynicism. He was born in Sinope, an Ionian colony on the Black Sea coast of Anatolia in 412 or 404 BC and died at Corinth in 323 BC....

Diogenes was captured by pirates and sold into slavery, eventually settling in Corinth. There he passed his philosophy of Cynicism to Crates, who taught it to Zeno of Citium, who fashioned it into the school of Stoicism, one of the most enduring schools of Greek philosophy....

Diogenes made a virtue of poverty. He begged for a living and often slept in a large ceramic jar, or pithos, in the marketplace. He used his simple lifestyle and behavior to criticize the social values and institutions of what he saw as a corrupt, confused society. He had a reputation for sleeping and eating wherever he chose in a highly non-traditional fashion and took to toughening himself against nature. He declared himself a cosmopolitan and a citizen of the world rather than claiming allegiance to just one place.

He modeled himself on the example of Heracles, believing that virtue was better revealed in action than in theory. He became notorious for his philosophical stunts, such as carrying a lamp during the day, claiming to be looking for a "man" (often rendered in English as "looking for an honest man"). He criticized Plato, disputed his interpretation of Socrates, and sabotaged his lectures, sometimes distracting listeners by bringing food and eating during the discussions. Diogenes was also noted for having mocked Alexander the Great, both in public and to his face when he visited Corinth in 336 BC.

Archelaus... was an Ancient Greek philosopher, a pupil

Archelaus (5th Century, BC)

of Anaxagoras, and may have been a teacher of Socrates. He asserted that the principle of motion was the separation of hot from cold, from which he endeavoured to explain the formation of the Earth and the creation of animals and humans...

He is commonly reported to have taught Socrates and Euripides.... Archelaus held that air and infinity are the principle of all things... he still held infinite Mind to be the cause of all things.

Beginning with primitive Matter, (identical with air mingled with Mind), by a process of thickening and thinning, arose cold and warmth, or water and fire, the one passive, the other active.^[5] Archelaus deduced motion from the opposition of heat and cold, caused by the will of the material Mind. This opposition separated fire and water, and produced a slimy mass of earth. While the earth was hardening, the action of heat upon its moisture gave birth to animals, which at first were nourished by the mud from which they sprang, and gradually acquired the power of propagating their species. Humans also appear, at first in lower forms. All these animals were endowed with mind, but humans separated from the others, and established laws and societies. It was just from this point of his physical theory that he seems to have passed into ethical speculation, by the proposition, that right and wrong are "not by nature but by custom" ... dogma possibly suggested to him by the contemporary Sophists.

Socrates of Athens (470 – 399 BC)

Socrates was a Greek philosopher from Athens who is credited as the founder of Western philosophy and among the first moral philosophers of the ethical tradition of thought. An enigmatic figure, Socrates authored no texts and is known mainly through the posthumous accounts of classical writers, particularly his students Plato and Xenophon....

Socrates attracted great interest from the Athenian public and especially the Athenian youth.... Socrates was indifferent to material pleasures, including his own appearance and personal comfort....

Politically, he did not take sides in the rivalry between the democrats and the oligarchs in Athens; he criticized both.

The character of Socrates as exhibited in Apology, Crito, Phaedo and Symposium concurs with other sources to an extent that gives confidence in Plato's depiction of Socrates in these works as being representative of the real Socrates.

Socrates died in Athens in 399 BC after a trial for impiety and the corruption of the young that lasted for only a day.

He spent his last day in prison among friends and followers who offered him a route to escape, which he refused. He died the next morning, in accordance with his sentence, after drinking poison hemlock.

**Plato of Athens (428 – 347
B.C.)**

Plato... was an ancient Greek philosopher born in Athens during the Classical period in Ancient Greece. In Athens, Plato founded the Academy, a philosophical school where he taught the philosophical doctrines that would later become known as Platonism....

Plato was an innovator of the written dialogue and dialectic forms in philosophy. He raised problems for what later became all the major areas of both theoretical philosophy and practical

philosophy. His most famous contribution is the Theory of forms, where he presents a solution to the problem of universals....

His own most decisive philosophical influences are usually thought to have been, along with Socrates, the pre-Socratics Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Parmenides, although few of his predecessors' works remain extant and much of what we know about these figures today derives from Plato himself....

Along with his teacher, Socrates, and his student, Aristotle, Plato is a central figure in the history of philosophy.

Unlike the work of nearly all of his contemporaries, Plato's entire body of work is believed to have survived intact for over 2,400 years.

Although their popularity has fluctuated, Plato's works have consistently been read and studied.

Through Neoplatonism Plato also greatly influenced both Christian and Islamic philosophy (through e.g. Al-Farabi). In modern times, Alfred North Whitehead famously said: "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."

Aristotle of Athens (384 – 322 B.C.)

Aristotle ... was an Ancient Greek philosopher and polymath. His writings cover a broad range of subjects including physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, aesthetics, poetry, drama, music, rhetoric, psychology, linguistics, economics, politics, meteorology, geology, and government.

As the founder of the Peripatetic school of philosophy in the Lyceum in Athens, he began the wider Aristotelian tradition that followed, which set the groundwork for the development of modern science....

At seventeen or eighteen years of age he joined Plato's Academy in Athens and remained there until the age of thirty-seven (c. 347 BC). Shortly after Plato died, Aristotle left Athens and, **at the request of Philip II of Macedon, tutored his son Alexander the Great beginning in 343 BC.**

He established a library in the Lyceum which helped him to produce many of his hundreds of books on papyrus scrolls.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not mention that Egyptian civilization likely had a great influence upon these ancient Hellenic Greeks. See, e.g., several references stated below:

Egyptian Influence Upon the Greeks

See, e.g., Dungen, W. "Ancient Egypt: Impact of Ancient Egypt on Greek Philosophy." Sofiatopia <http://www.maat.sofiatopia.org/hermes1.htm> (accessed 4 December 2012).

See, e.g., George, M. J. 1954. *Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Egyptian Philosophy*. New York: Philosophical Library.

See, e.g., Odele, H. 1984. "The African Foundations of Greek Philosophy." In *African Philosophy: An introduction*, edited by R. A. Wright. Lanham: University Press of America, as quoted in Osuagwu, M. I. 1999. *African Historical Reconstruction*, vol. I. Owerri: Assumpta Press.

See, e.g., Nicholas Chukwudike Anakwue. "The African Origins of Greek Philosophy: Ancient Egypt in Retrospect" (Univ. of South Africa Press, Vol. 18, 2017).