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Hebraists and Hellenists

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The Gnostic interpretation of Scripture was designed to appeal to the Hellenistic intellectual communities such as existed in Alexandria, Egypt. They did not relate to the New Testament [gospel](http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/the_gospel_of_the_kingdom_of_god/13168.aspx) (http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/the_gospel_of_the_kingdom_of_god/13168.aspx), as it presented a Hebraic view of the world, which was in opposition to the philosophical constructs of Hellenistic culture.

This reality provides an interesting corroboration of Paul's earlier comments to the Corinthians about the differences between the Hellenistic (or Greek) and Hebraic worldviews (1 Corinthians 1:20–22).

The study of the Greek philosopher Plato was well established in Alexandria, and the Gnostics built on this tradition. Philo, a Jewish writer who lived in Alexandria at the start of the first century, is described as a middle Platonist—as distinct from the Platonists, who were contemporary with Plato, and the neo-Platonists, who were to arise in the third century C.E. Philo's use of Platonic approaches in explaining Scripture may have provided a useful intellectual foundation for the Gnostics.

Subsequently most of the early church fathers from Egypt (e.g., Clement of Alexandria and Origen), as well as Augustine of Hippo, followed the Alexandrian school of exegesis, or interpretation.

