

Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Series II/Volume III/Lives of Illustrious Men/Jerome — Philo Judaeus

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CHAPTER XI.

PHILO^[1] the Jew, an Alexandrian of the priestly class, is placed by us among the ecclesiastical writers on the ground that, writing a book concerning the first church of Mark the evangelist at Alexandria, he writes to our praise, declaring not only that they were there, but also that they were in many provinces and calling their habitations monasteries. From this^[2] it appears that the church of those that believed in Christ at first, was such as now the monks desire to imitate,^[3] that is, such that nothing is the peculiar property of any one of them, none of them rich, none poor, that patrimonies are divided among the needy, that they have leisure for prayer and psalms, for doctrine also and ascetic practice, that they were in fact as Luke declares believers were at first at Jerusalem. They say that under Caius^[4] Caligula he ventured to Rome, whither he had been sent as legate of his nation, and that when a second time he had come to Claudius, he spoke in the same city with the apostle Peter and enjoyed his friendship, and for this reason also adorned the adherents of Mark, Peter's disciple at Alexandria, with his praises. There are distinguished and innumerable works by this man: *On the five books of Moses*, one book *Concerning the confusion of tongues*, one book *On nature and invention*, one book *On the things which our senses desire and we detest*, one book *On learning*, one book *On the heir of divine things*, one book *On the division of equals and contraries*, one book *On the*

three virtues, one book *On why in Scripture the names of many persons are changed*, two books *On covenants*, one book *On the life of a wise man*, one book *Concerning giants*, five books *That dreams are sent by God*, five books of *Questions and answers on Exodus*, four books *On the tabernacle and the Decalogue*, as well as books *On victims and promises or curses*, *On Providence*, *On the Jews*, *On the manner of one's life*, *On Alexander*, and *That dumb beasts have right reason*, and *That every fool should be a slave*, and *On the lives of the Christians*, of which we spoke above, that is, lives of apostolic men, which also he entitled, *On those who practice the divine life*, because in truth they contemplate divine things and ever pray to God, also under other categories, two *On agriculture*, two *On drunkenness*. There are other monuments of his genius which have not come to our hands. Concerning him there is a proverb among the Greeks "Either Plato philonized, or Philo platonized," that is, either Plato followed Philo, or Philo, Plato, so great is the similarity of ideas and language.

Footnotes

1. [↑](#) Visited Rome a.d. 40, and must have lived (Edersheim) ten or fifteen years after his return.
2. [↑](#) *From this* etc. Acts 2. 4; Acts 4. 32

3. ↑*desire to imitate* the mss.; *strive to be* Cypr. Fabr. Val., on account of the difficult construction with *imitate*.
4. ↑*Caius*Cypr. Fabr. Val.; Gaius all the mss.; omit Her.

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