

Hagia Sophia

Sacred Wisdom from the Christian Tradition of the Greeks

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Hagia Sophia



Interior



“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”
Tertullian of Carthage (3rd century AD)

Athens



Jerusalem



It's Greek to you?
No Problem...

Sophia

Wisdom

Philosophy From:

Philo = Love

+

Sophia = Wisdom

Hagia

Holy

Latin:

Sacra = Sacred

Holy Wisdom

Sacred Wisdom

Greek Philosophy?

Sacred Wisdom?

Christianity?

Tertullian of Carthage

“For philosophy is the material of the world’s wisdom, the rash interpreter of the nature and dispensation of God. Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy... What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the Academy to do with the Church? What have heretics to do with Christians? Our instruction comes from the porch of Solomon, who had himself taught that the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. Away with all attempts to produce a Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic Christianity! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquiry after receiving the Gospel!”

Christian Tradition and the Greeks

- Greeks and the Bible
- Sacred Wisdom

Book of Daniel

- “...he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate...”
9:27, ESV
- “For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.”
11:30-31, ESV (Note: Kittim = Greeks)

What happened?

Alexander the Great

(4th century BC)



Zeus worshipped at Jerusalem Temple

“...the king sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their ancestors and no longer to live by the laws of God; also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus... Harsh and utterly grievous was the onslaught of evil. For the temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with prostitutes and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit. The altar was covered with abominable offerings that were forbidden by the laws. People could neither keep the sabbath, nor observe the festivals of their ancestors, nor so much as confess themselves to be Jews. On the monthly celebration of the king’s birthday, the Jews were taken, under bitter constraint, to partake of the sacrifices...a decree was issued to the neighboring Greek cities that they should adopt the same policy toward the Jews and make them partake of the sacrifices, and should kill those who did not choose to change over to Greek customs.”

2 Maccabees 6:1-9, NRSV

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Jerusalem Temple Restored

“Judas and his brothers said, ‘See, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it.’ ... Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev... they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering that they had built. At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days...”

1 Maccabees 4:36, 52-56 NRSV

Feast of Dedication established Came to be known as... “Hanukkah”

“They decreed by public edict, ratified by vote, that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days every year.”

2 Maccabees 10:8 NRSV

Jesus at Temple for Hanukkah

“At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.”

John 10:22-23 ESV

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Paul at Athens

“Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him...”

Acts 17:16-18 ESV

Paul at Athens

“So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for

‘In him we live and move and have our being;’

as even some of your own poets have said,

‘For we are indeed his offspring.’**”

Acts 17:22-28 ESV

* Probably associated with Epimenides of Crete (7th or 6th century BC)

** From Aratus’s poem “Phaenomena” (3rd century BC)

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Greek Philosophy?

Sacred Wisdom?

Christianity?

St. Justin Martyr the Philosopher

(2nd century AD)

“I will tell you... what seems to me; for philosophy is, in fact, the greatest possession, and most honourable before God, to whom it leads us and alone commends us...”

St. Justin Martyr the Philosopher

“...the perception of immaterial things quite overpowered me, and the contemplation of ideas furnished my mind with wings, so that in a little while I supposed that I had become wise; and such was my stupidity, I expected forthwith to look upon God, for this is the ultimate goal of Plato's philosophy. ...

...the Deity cannot be seen merely by the eyes, as other living beings can, but is discernible to the mind alone, as Plato says; and I believe him.”

St. Justin Martyr the Philosopher

“And while I was thus disposed, when I wished at one period to be filled with great quietness, and to shun the path of men, I used to go into a certain field not far from the sea... I delight... in such walks, where my attention is not distracted, for converse with myself is uninterrupted...”

St. Justin Martyr the Philosopher

“There existed, long before this time, certain men more ancient than all those who are esteemed philosophers, both righteous and beloved by God, who spoke by the Divine Spirit... They are called prophets. These alone both saw and announced the truth to men... speaking those things alone which they saw and which they heard, being filled with the Holy Spirit. Their writings are still extant, and he who has read them is very much helped in his knowledge of the beginning and end of things, and of those matters which the philosopher ought to know, provided he has believed them...”

St. Justin Martyr the Philosopher

“But pray that, above all things, the gates of light may be opened to you; for these things cannot be perceived or understood by all, but only by the man to whom God and His Christ have imparted wisdom.

...a flame was kindled in my soul; and a love of the prophets, and of those men who are friends of Christ, possessed me; and whilst revolving his words in my mind, I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable. Thus, and for this reason, I am a philosopher.”

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Hagia Sophia and Greek Philosophy

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Hagia Sophia and Greek Philosophy

- The goal is to see God; Greek = Theosis
- Worldly distractions are cast aside;
Greek = Asceticism, Apatheia

Hagia Sophia and Greek Philosophy

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Greek = Ascesis, Apatheia
- Quietness is sought; Greek = Hesychia

Hagia Sophia and Greek Philosophy

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Thus is a true philosopher

St. John of Damascus

(8th century AD)

“Philosophy, again, is the love of wisdom. But true wisdom is God. Therefore, the love of God, this is true philosophy.”

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