

[1949. In *Collier's Encyclopedia*. New York: P.F. Collier and Son.]

ALEXANDRIAN SCHOOL, the general designation of tendencies in literature, philosophy, and art that arose in Alexandria, Egypt, especially in the first few centuries of the Christian Era. Here many people, guaranteed religious freedom and anxious to avail themselves of the great advantages of study at the museum and library, settled and came into contact with the deteriorating Platonic and Stoic schools. Monotheism was highly acceptable in this intellectual climate, and Judaism flourished. It was in Alexandria that Philo Judaeus (c. 20B.C.-C. A.D. 54) attempted to combine Greek philosophy with Hebrew theology, and it was here, too, that Gnosticism arose. Neoplatonism, the final synthesis of all Greek philosophy, was developed here by Ammonius Saccas and his great pupil, Plotinus (c. 205-270), who later resided in Rome, and Alexandria was also the seat of a flourishing Christian school, of which Origen (c. 185-c. 254) was a leader. A later group of theologians in the fourth and fifth centuries, headed by Saint Cyril (376-444), is also well known as an Alexandrian school, though one which, in its persecution of all that disagreed with its precepts, differed widely from its predecessors.

The Alexandrian schools of literature produced a great body of work in epic, didactic, elegiac, satiric, mimetic, and lyric forms, as well as in historical prose; among the most important writers were Apollonius Rhodius (*Argonautica*), Theocritus (*Eidyllia*), Bion, Moschus, and Polybius. The work of the Alexandrian critics in grammar and philology was of high quality. Aristarchus and Zenodotus did important work on the Homeric writings; Dionysius Thrax was the first Greek grammarian. Also in Alexandria Claudius Ptolemaeus studied astronomy, Erasistratus anatomy, and Archimedes and Euclides mathematics. G.H.CL.