From the pavement of Siena Cathedral

HERMETICA

THE ANCIENT GREEK AND LATIN WRITINGS WHICH CONTAIN RELIGIOUS OR PHILOSOPHIC TEACHINGS ASCRIBED TO

HERMES TRISMEGISTUS

EDITED

WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND NOTES

BY

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Introduction

Texts and Translation

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Cover: Cretan coin from Sybritta displaying a head of Hermes. Courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv Munchen.

INTRODUCTION

THE *Hermetica* dealt with in this book may be described as 'those Greek and Latin writings which contain religious or philosophic teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus'. It does not much matter whether we say 'religious' or 'philosophic';[1] the writers in question taught philosophic doctrines, but valued those doctrines only as means or aids to religion.

There is, besides these, another class of documents, the contents of which are also ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus; namely, writings concerning astrology, magic, alchemy, and kindred forms of pseudo-science.[2] But in the character of their contents these latter differ fundamentally from the former. The two classes of writers agreed in ascribing what they wrote to Hermes, but in nothing else. They had little or nothing to do with one another; they were of very different mental calibre; and it is in most cases easy to decide at a glance whether a given document is to be assigned to the one class or to the other. We are therefore justified in treating the 'religious' or 'philosophic' *Hermetica* as a class apart, and, for our present purpose, ignoring the masses of rubbish which fall under the other head.

By what sort of people, and in what circumstances, were our *Hermetica* written? That question may be answered as follows. There were in Egypt under the Roman Empire men who had received some instruction in Greek philosophy, and especially in the Platonism of the period, but were not content with merely accepting and repeating the cut-and-dried dogmas of the orthodox philosophic schools, and sought to build up, on a basis of Platonic

[1] 'Theological', if taken in the etymological sense of the word, would perhaps be better; for the *Hermetica* are 'talks about God', or 'discussions concerning God'. But the word *theology*, as now commonly used, has associations that would be misleading.

[2] These things might be grouped together under the vague but convenient term '*occult* arts and sciences'.

doctrine, a philosophic religion that would better satisfy their needs. Ammonius Saccas, the Egyptian teacher of the Egyptian Plotinus, must have been a man of this type; and there were others more or less like him.[1] These men did not openly compete with the established schools of philosophy, or try to establish a new school of their own on similar lines; but here and there one of these 'seekers after God' would quietly gather round him a small group of disciples, and endeavour to communicate to them the truth in which he had found salvation for himself. The teaching in these little groups must have been mainly oral, and not based on written texts; it must have consisted of private and intimate talks of the teacher with a single pupil at a time, or with two or three pupils at most. But now and then the teacher would set down in writing the gist of a talk in which some point of primary importance was explained; or perhaps a pupil, after such a talk with his teacher, would write down as much of it as he could remember; and when once written, the writing would be passed from hand to hand within the group, and from one group to another.

Specimens of such writings have come down to us, and these are our *Hermetica*. The *Hermetica* are short records, most of them not many pages in length, of talks such as I have described, or similar talks imagined by the writer, and doubtless modelled on those which actually took place.

But if that is what the *Hermetica* are, how is it that they have been commonly thought to be something very different? That has

[1] Ammonius Saccas died in or about A. D. 243. He is known to us chiefly by what is said of him in Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*, 3: 'Plotinus, in his 28th year (A. D. 233), took to philosophy. He attended the lectures of the teachers who were at that time in high repute in Alexandria; but he came away dejected and sorrowful. A friend, to whom he described his state of mind, understood what his soul desired, and took him to Ammonius, of whose teaching he had not till then made trial. Plotinus went to Ammonius and heard him speak, and thereupon said to his friend, "This is the man I was looking for". And from that day he stuck to Ammonius, and under his instruction became so devoted to philosophy that', &c. (Porphyry says he had heard this told by Plotinus himself.)

There is no external evidence that Ammonius Saccas was in any way connected with the Hermetists; but seeing that (1) Plotinus is known to have been strongly influenced by Ammonius Saccas, and (2) there is much in the teachings recorded in the *Hermetica* that approximates to the philosophic religion of Plotinus, we may fairly put these two facts together, and infer that the Hermetic teachers were men of the same type as Ammonius Saccas. Indeed, it is not impossible that in some few of the extant *Hermetica* we have specimens of the teaching of Ammonius Saccas, set down in writing (and ascribed to Hermes) by one of his pupils. There is no evidence for that; but at any rate we are justified in saying that the teaching of Ammonius Saccas must have closely resembled that which we find in some of the *Hermetica*.

resulted from the fact that in these writings the names given to teacher and pupils are fictitious. The teacher is, in most cases, called Hermes Trismegistus, and the pupil, Tat or Asclepius or Ammon.

What was the reason for that? Why did these writers prefer to call the tractates which they wrote 'Discourses of Hermes Trismegistus', and compose dialogues in which they made Hermes speak as teacher, instead of writing in their own names, and saying in their own persons whatever it was that they wanted to say? The motive must have been similar to that which made a Jew write a Book of Daniel, or a Book of Enoch, instead of a book of his own. In the Hellenistic period, and under the Roman Empire, that vigour of independent thought, which showed itself so conspicuously among the Greeks of earlier centuries, had dwindled away. There was an increasing tendency to lean on the support of authority and tradition; and among those who were interested in philosophy, the man who was 'nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri' became more and more exceptional. It is true that there was at the same time a strong tendency to syncretism; that is to say, men of different philosophic schools were very ready to borrow thoughts from one another; but that, for the most part, meant little more than that a man acknowledged the authority of two or more masters instead of only one, and made some attempt to blend or reconcile the teachings of those masters. The names of the great thinkers of earlier times—Plato, Pythagoras, and others—were held in almost superstitious veneration; and lists were drawn up in which the succession of pupils of those great teachers was set forth, and it was stated that A had learnt from B, and B from C, and so on. Every one must, it was thought, have learnt from some one else whatever wisdom he possessed; it hardly occurred to people that any one could possibly hit on a truth by thinking for himself. And the great masters themselves came to be dealt with in the same way. Plato was commonly held to have learnt from Pythagoras; and there arose a desire to get direct access to the sources from which Plato had drawn his philosophy. In Plato one got the wisdom of Pythagoras at second hand; it would be still better if one could get it at first hand. It must have been chiefly in response to this demand, that there were produced (mostly between 100 B. C. and 100 A. D.) large numbers of pseudonymous writings ascribed to this or that early Pythagorean—or in some cases even to Pythagoras

himself, in spite of the recorded fact that Pythagoras had left nothing in writing.[1]

But then again, Pythagoras in turn must have learnt from some one else. From whom did *he* get his wisdom?

An answer to this question was found by Greeks resident in Egypt, or men of Egyptian race who had acquired Greek culture. It had long been accepted as a known historical fact that both Pythagoras and Plato studied in Egypt. They must have studied in the schools of the Egyptian priests. And what was taught in those schools? No one, except the priests themselves, knew what was taught in them; the priests were careful to keep that knowledge to themselves. All that the outside public knew about it was that the priests had in their hands a collection of ancient books, which were said to have been written by the god Thoth,[2] the scribe of the gods and inventor of the art of writing. Some of those books are known to us now—the 'Book of the Dead', for instance, and others of like character; and it may seem to us strange that any one should ever have imagined them to contain a profound philosophy. But in those times none but the priests had access to them; and a Greek, even if he had got access to them, could have made nothing of them, since they were written in a script and language unknown to him. That which was known to so few must, it was thought, be something very high and holy. From all this it was inferred that Pythagoras and Plato got their wisdom from the priests of Egypt, and the priests of Egypt got it from their sacred books, which were the books of Thoth.[3]

Greeks, from the time of Herodotus[4] or earlier, had been accustomed to translate the Egyptian god-name Thoth by the name Hermes. At a later time they distinguished this Egyptian Hermes from the very different Hermes of Greece by tacking on to the name

[1] A long list of these 'Neo-Pythagorean' writings is given by Zeller, *Philos. der Gr.* III. ii (1903), p. 115, n. 3. The author of each of them put forth under a feigned name, and usually in a would-be Doric dialect, his own version of the syncretic Platonism that was current in his time, and sought to make it appear that this was the sort of thing Pythagoras had taught.

[2] A full account of Thoth, based on 'a fairly complete examination of the chief references to the god in Egyptian literature and ritual', is given by P. Boylan, *Thoth, the Hermes of Egypt*, 1922.

[3] We may compare the theory maintained by many Jews and Christians (e.g. by Clement of Alexandria), that the Greek philosophers got their wisdom (or such imperfect wisdom as they had) from Moses.

[4] Herodotus 2. 67 calls the city of Thoth Ἑρμέω πόλις; and in 2. 138 he mentions a temple of 'Hermes' (meaning Thoth) in Bubastis.

a translation of an epithet applied by Egyptians to their god Thoth, and meaning 'very great'; and thenceforward they called this personage (whether regarded by them as a god or as a man) Hermes τρισμέγιστος,[1] and the Egyptian books ascribed to him 'the writings of Hermes Trismegistus'.

Hence it was that men such as I have spoken of, little known and almost solitary thinkers, came to choose Hermes Trismegistus as the name best suited for their purpose, and in their writings gave out as taught by Hermes what was really their own teaching. These men were teaching what they held to be the supreme and essential truth towards which Greek philosophy pointed; and it was taken as known that Greek philosophy was derived from the Egyptian books of Hermes, in which that essential truth was taught. Their own teachings therefore must necessarily coincide in substance, if not in words, with the unknown contents of those Egyptian books—that is, with what Hermes himself had taught. That being so, that which they wrote might as well be ascribed to Hermes as to the actual authors; and if that were done, their writings would gain the prestige attached to that great name. A piece of writing to which little attention might be paid if it only bore the name of some obscure Ammonius, would carry more weight if it professed to reveal the secret teaching of Hermes Trismegistus.

[1] In Egyptian texts Thoth is frequently called *C3 C3*, 'great-great' (i.e. 'greatest' or 'very great'), and is also frequently called *C3 C3 wr*, which probably means 'very great-great'. (For references to the Eg. texts see P. Boylan, *Thoth, the Hermes of Egypt*, pp. 129 and 182). He is called 'five times great' in a text of early Ptolemaic date (see Griffith and Thompson, *Demotic Magical Papyrus*, p. 30, note on l. 26). In an Eg. text published by Griffith, *Stories of the High Priests of Memphis*, p. 58 (Reitzenstein, *Poim.*, p. 118), he appears to be called 'five times great' (if not more than five times); but in this instance the reading is doubtful. In Greek, 'Thoth great-great' is translated Ἑρμῆς ὁ μέγας καὶ μέγας in the *Rosetta Stone* inscr., 196 B.C. (Similarly, in some Fayum inscriptions, the god Souchos is called *μέγας μέγας*: Mahaffy, *Empire of the Ptolemies*, p. 320. Cf. Ἥρων θεὸς μέγας μέγας on a stele dated 67 B.C.: Perdrizet, *Negotium perambulans in tenebris*, p. 9.) τρίσμεγας also occurs (cf. Zosimus Alchem. i. 9 in *Testim.*: ὁ τρίσμεγας Πλάτων καὶ ὁ μυριόμεγας Ἑρμῆς); but the usual epithet of the Egyptian Hermes in Greek writings is τρισμέγιστος.

There can be no doubt that τρισμέγιστος was meant for a translation of one of the Egyptian epithets of Thoth; but why did the Greeks choose the particular form 'thrice-greatest'? It is most likely that τρισμέγιστος is (as Mr. Boylan is inclined to think) a translation of *C3 C3 wr*, 'very great-great'; and the word can be best accounted for in this way. The Greek who first invented it rendered *C3 C3*, 'great-great', by μέγιστος, and expressed the meaning of the appended *wr*, 'very', by prefixing τρισ-. A prefixed τρισ- is frequently used in Greek to intensify the meaning of an adjective; e.g. τρίσμακαρ, τρισόλβιος, τρισάγιος (Plutarch, *Is. et Os.* 36, says, τὸ "πολλάκις" εἰώθαμεν καὶ "τρὶς" λέγειν, ὡς τὸ "τρισμάκαρες"). On the other hand, δισ- is not thus used; a Greek would therefore not be disposed to write δίσμεγας or δισμέγιστος.

Some one of the teachers of whom I have spoken must have been the first to hit on this device; others, into whose hands his writings passed, were urged by like motives to follow his example; and before long the Hermetic dialogue or discourse became, in certain circles in Egypt, the established form for writings on these subjects.[1]

It is not necessarily to be assumed that the authors of the *Hermetica* intended to *deceive* their readers, any more than Plato did, when he wrote dialogues in which Socrates was made to say things that Socrates had never said. It may be that the writers, or some of them at least, did not mean or expect to deceive any one, and that, within the narrow circle of readers for which each of these writings was originally intended, no one was deceived. But when the document passed beyond the bounds of that circle, and got into the hands of others, those others at any rate were apt to take it at its face value, and think it to be a genuine and trustworthy record of things that had been said by an ancient sage named Hermes Trismegistus, or a translation into Greek of things that he had written in the Egyptian language. And that is what was commonly thought by people who knew of these writings, for about thirteen hundred years, from the time of Lactantius to that of Casaubon. There may, perhaps, be some who think so still.

What sort of person was this Hermes Trismegistus thought to be? Was he a god or a man? If one of the Hermetic writers had been asked that question, he would, I think, have answered in some such way as this: 'Hermes was a man like you and me—a man who lived in Egypt a very long time ago, in the time of King Ammon. But he was a man who attained to *gnosis* (that is to say, knowledge of God, but a kind of "knowledge" that involves union with God); and he was the first and greatest teacher of *gnosis*. He died, as other men die; and after death he became a god—just as you and I also, if *we* attain to *gnosis*, will become gods after *our* deaths. But in the dialogues which I and others like me write, and in which we make Hermes speak as teacher, we represent him as talking to his pupils at the time when he was living on earth; and at that time he was a man.'

Comparing the *Hermetica* with other writings of the period on

[1] It should be remembered that all the extant *Hermetica* together are probably only a small fraction of the mass of such writings that was once in existence. There were most likely hundreds of Hermetic *libelli* of like character in circulation about A. D. 300.

the same subjects, we find that there are two things that are 'conspicuous by their absence' in these documents. In the first place, the Hermetic writers recognize no inspired and infallible Scripture; and there is, for them, no written text with the words of which all that they say must be made to conform. They are therefore not obliged, as were the Jew Philo, and Christians such as Clement and Origen, to connect their teaching at every step with documents written in other times and for other purposes, and to maintain, as Jews and Christians were driven to do, that when the inspired writer said one thing he meant another. Hence each of the Hermetists was free to start afresh, and think things out for himself—free in a sense in which Jews and Christians were not free, and even the professional teachers of Pagan philosophy, much occupied in expounding and commenting on the writings of Plato or Aristotle or Chrysippus, made comparatively little use of such freedom as they had. Released from this subjection to the past, a Hermetist could go straight to the main point, unhampered by the accumulations of lumber by which others were impeded; and this made it possible for him to pack into the space of a few pages all that he found it needful to write. Hence there is in the *Hermetica* a directness and simplicity of statement such as is not to be found in other theological writings of the time, whether Pagan, Jewish, or Christian. I do not mean to say that there is much that is *original* in the doctrines taught in the *Hermetica*; the writers were ready enough to accept suggestions from others (mostly from the Platonists), and there is little in these documents that had not been thought of by some one else before. But if a Hermetist has adopted his beliefs from others, they are none the less *his own* beliefs; and his writing is not a mere repetition of traditional formulas. He may have accepted the thought from some one else, but he has thought it over afresh, and felt its truth in his own person.[1] Some at least of the Hermetic writers felt themselves to be inspired by God.[2] They speak of the divine νοῦς in much the same way that a Jew or Christian might have spoken of the Spirit

[1] The Hermetic *libelli* differ so much among themselves, that few general statements can be made concerning them to which exceptions may not be found; but I am here describing the impression produced by them as a whole, or for the most part.

[2] A Hermetic teacher might have said, like a Homeric bard (*Od.* 22. 347), αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμί, θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἵμας παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν. The meaning of θεός had changed, but the notion of inspiration was still nearly the same.

of God. It is the divine νοῦς which has entered into the man that tells him what he needs to know; and with that divine νοῦς the man's true or highest self is identical or consubstantial. 'Think things out for yourself', says a Hermetist, 'and you will not go astray.'[1]

And a second thing to be noted is the absence of *theurgia*—that is, of ritualism, or sacramentalism. The notion of the efficacy of sacramental rites, which filled so large a place both in the religion of the Christians and in that of the adherents of the Pagan mystery-cults, is (with quite insignificant exceptions) absent throughout these *Hermetica*. The writer of *Corp.* XI. ii, for instance, says, 'Everywhere God will come to meet you'. He does not say that God will come to meet a man in initiation-rites like those of Isis or Mithras, or in the water of baptism, or the bread and wine of the Christian Eucharist; what he does say is, 'God will come to meet you *everywhere*', in all you see, and in all you do.

At what dates were the *Hermetica* written? This question, together with the closely connected question from what sources were derived the doctrines taught in them, is discussed in detail in the notes on the several *libelli*. I here sum up shortly the conclusions at which I have arrived.

The external evidence (collected in the *Testimonia*) proves that in A. D. 207–13 some *Hermetica* of the same character as ours were already in existence and accessible to Christian readers; and that in or about A. D. 310 most, if not all, of the extant *Hermetica* were in existence, as well as many others that have perished.

From internal evidence I have been able to assign a definite date to one document only. If I am not mistaken, the Greek original of *Ascl. Lat.* III was written within a year or two of A. D. 270.

With respect to all the other *Hermetica*, we have nothing to go upon except the character of the doctrines taught in them.[2] What can be inferred from that?

There was no one system of Hermetic philosophy or theology, no one body of fixed dogmas; each of these numerous writers had his own manner of thinking, and looked at things from his own

[1] *Corp.* XI. ii *fin.*

[2] Perhaps some evidence as to dates might also be got by a close investigation of the *words* and *diction*, dealt with as in lexicons and historical grammars. This I have not attempted; possibly some one else may think it worth while to undertake it.

point of view; and there are wide differences between the teaching of one *libellus* and that of another. But underlying all these differences there is a certain general similarity, such as would naturally result from similar training and a common environment.

In the first place, the influence of Plato—and of the *Timaeus* more than any of Plato's other dialogues—is manifest in almost every page. Most of the Hermetists were probably not much given to reading (that would seem to follow from the fact that they relied on talk much more than on books in their teaching), and it may be that some of them had never read a line of Plato's own writings; but somehow or other, whether by attendance at the public lectures of professional teachers of philosophy, or by private talk with men who knew about these things, they had imbibed the fundamental doctrines of that kind of Platonism which was current in their time.

But this prevailing Platonism is modified, in various degrees, by the infusion of a Stoic ingredient. Terms and conceptions derived from Stoic physics or cosmology are to be found in most of the *libelli*. Now Platonism modified by Stoic influence—the sort of syncretic Platonism that we find in Philo, for instance—was not and cannot have been anywhere in existence much before the first century B. C. There can have been no such blending of doctrines during the period of scepticism in the Platonic school, when Academics such as Carneades[1] were waging war against the dogmatism of the Stoics. It was not until that feud had died down, that the scepticism of the Academy was replaced by a more positive form of Platonic teaching; and it was only then that Platonists began to Stoicize, and Stoics to Platonize. This new departure may be dated, roughly speaking, at about 100 B. C. Among the Stoics who Platonized, the most prominent name is that of Posidonius, who wrote between 100 B. C. and 50 B. C.; and in some of the *Hermetica* the influence of Posidonius can be clearly seen. Any proposal to put the date of the *Hermetica* before 100 B. C. may therefore be disregarded. It is not merely probable, but certain, that the true date is later than that.

But how much later? If we want an answer to that question, we must not be content with talking about the *Hermetica* in general; we must examine the *libelli* one by one, and try to find out, with regard to each of them in turn, what date is indicated by the details

[1] Carneades was in Rome in 155 B. C., and died 129 B. C.

of doctrinal statement that we find in that particular document. That is what I have tried to do. Inferences drawn from *data* of this kind must inevitably be somewhat vague; but the conclusion towards which I have found myself led is this—that the *Hermetica* which have come down to us were most of them, if not all, written in the third century after Christ.[1] Some of them may have been written before the end of the second century;[2] but probably none[3] so early as the first century. And this conclusion, drawn from the doctrinal contents of the documents, agrees with the date A.D. 270, which is indicated by the prophecy in *Ascl. Lat.* III, and does not disagree with the external evidence.

So far, I have spoken only of doctrines derived from Greek philosophy. That includes nearly all that these documents contain; but not quite all. There are, in some of the *libelli*, things that may or must have come from some other source. But these are of quite subordinate importance.

In the first place, it may be asked whether there is anything in the *Hermetica* that is derived from the indigenous religion of Egypt. As far as definite statements of doctrine are concerned, there is very little. With the exception of the mere framework and setting of the dialogues—the names Hermes Trismegistus, Ammon, &c., and mentions of a few supposed facts that are connected with those names—there is hardly anything of which it can be asserted without doubt that it is of native Egyptian origin. Here and there one comes on a form of expression, or a way of putting things, which is not quite that to which we are accustomed in Greek philosophic writings; and in some of these cases it seems *possible* that what the writer says was suggested to him by phrases that were in use in the Egyptian cults. For instance, we find it stated in some of the *Hermetica* that God is self-generated; that God is hidden; that God is nameless, and yet innumerably-named; that God is bisexual; that God is life, and the source or author of all life; and so on. Parallels to these statements can be found in native Egyptian documents; and in each of these cases it is possible that the writer got the notion from an Egyptian source; but then it is also possible that it came to him from some other quarter. And even

[1] The *Isis to Horus* documents, which form a class apart, and differ in some respects from the rest, may possibly be as late as the fourth century.

[2] That is, in or about the time of Numenius, A.D. 150–200.

[3] There may possibly be one or two unimportant exceptions, e.g. *Corp.* III.

if on such points we give Egypt the benefit of the doubt, the Egyptian ingredient in Hermetic doctrine still remains comparatively small in amount; the main bulk of it is unquestionably derived from Greek philosophy.

Egyptian influence may, however, have worked more strongly in another way; it may have affected the spirit or temper of the writers. These men were, some of them certainly, and probably almost all, Egyptians by race, though Greek by education; and there is in some of their writings a fervour and intensity of religious emotion, culminating in a sense of complete union with God, or absorption into God,[1] such as is hardly to be found in Greek philosophic writings, until we come down to Plotinus, who was himself an Egyptian by birth and bringing up. It is true that in Plato himself there was something of 'mysticism', if this mood or state of feeling may be so named; but in him there was so much else beside, that the passages in his writings in which it finds expression are comparatively few and far between. And something of the same sort may be said also of most of the followers of Plato in later times (until we come to Plotinus)—such men as Plutarch, for instance. Numenius (who was a Syrian) may have been more like the Hermetists; but of him we have only short fragments. There may have been something more nearly analogous to the religious fervour of the Hermetic writers in some of the Greek mystery-cults, and still more in foreign mystery-cults adopted by the Greeks, especially that of Isis (which again was of Egyptian origin). But the votaries of those cults stood, for the most part, on a far lower intellectual level than the Hermetists, and their devotion to the gods they worshipped was inextricably intermixed with sacramental rites and quasi-magical operations from which the Hermetic teachers held aloof. And when we compare the Hermetists with the Greek writers on philosophy from whom they got their doctrines, we find that it is just this greater intensity of religious fervour that marks them off as different. I am inclined to think then that it is this tone of feeling that is the distinctively Egyptian element in the *Hermetica*. What we have in them is the effect that was produced by Greek philosophy when it was adopted by men of Egyptian temperament.

Secondly, is there anything of Jewish origin? There is, un-

[1] See, for instance, *Corp.* V. 11.

doubtedly, something of this; but not much. In *Corp.* I (the *Poimandres*), and in the short piece *Corp.* III, knowledge of the beginning of the Book of Genesis is clearly shown. Moreover, *Corp.* I contains a doctrine derived from Jewish speculations about Adam, and shows, in some respects, close resemblances to Philo. The writer of that one document was certainly affected by Jewish influence. But that *libellus* differs widely from the rest of the *Hermetica*; there is no reason to suppose that most of the Hermetists had ever seen or heard of it; and I do not think it was ascribed to Hermes by its author.

In the rest of the *Hermetica* we find hardly more than an isolated term or phrase here and there that seems to be of Jewish origin; hardly more, that is, than any Pagan might have picked up in occasional talks with Jews, or by reading the first chapter of *Genesis*, which was probably known to many Pagans of the time as an interesting specimen of a barbarian cosmogony.

Thirdly and lastly, is there any borrowing from Christians? To this my answer is that I have failed to find anything in the doctrines taught that is of Christian origin—with the possible exception of the doctrine of rebirth in *Corp.* XIII. That is the only extant *libellus* in which the notion of rebirth occurs; and its author (or the author of an earlier *Hermeticum* to which he refers) *may* have got it from a Christian source; but it cannot be said to be certain that he did.

Setting that aside, I can find nothing in the doctrines taught that is derived from Christianity. The Hermetists have no Christ, and no equivalent for Christ.[1] Hermes is nothing of the sort; he is merely a man and a teacher, and differs from other human teachers only in degree. Some of the Hermetists speak of a 'second God', and apply to him phrases resembling some of those applied by Christian theologians to the second Person of the Christian Trinity. But this 'second God' of the Hermetists is the Kosmos (or, in some few cases, Helios); and when Hermetic writers call the Kosmos 'son of God' and 'image of God', they are following a tradition derived from Plato's *Timaeus*, and not from the New

[1] The contrast between the Hermetic teaching and Christianity might be described in another way by saying that, in the view of the Hermetists, every man is (potentially at least) what the Christians held Christ, but Christ alone, to be; for the Hermetists said that each and every man is a being whose origin and home is in the world above, and who has come down to earth and been incarnated for a time, but (if he lives aright on earth) will return to the home above from which he came. That is not Christianity, but Platonism.

Testament. (There are also a *few* Hermetic passages in which a hypostatized λόγος of God occurs; but in those cases the source is Jewish, not Christian.) The 'second God' of the Hermetists differs fundamentally from the Christ of the Christians in this, that he is not a Saviour of mankind. There is in the *Hermetica* no trace of a 'Saviour' in the Christian sense—that is, of a divine or supracosmic Person, who has come down to earth to redeem men, has returned to the world above, and will take up his followers to dwell there with him. Hermetists might speak of salvation; it was salvation that they sought, and held that they had found; but they did not speak of a Saviour such as was worshipped by the Christians. According to their doctrine, it is by the operation of the divine νοῦς in a man[1] that the man is saved; and the divine νοῦς was never incarnated upon earth.[2]

The Hermetic writers must, of course, have known very well that Christianity was there. Some of them may have known little about its inner meaning, and may perhaps have thought of Christians merely as one of the various kinds of people included under the general term ἀσεβεῖς or ἄθεοι; but whether they knew much or little about Christianity, they ignored it in their writings. There is, indeed, one Hermetic document, *Ascl. Lat.* III, the writer of which does speak of Christianity (without naming it); but he speaks of it as of a deadly enemy, and foresees its coming victory over the Pagan cults with intense distress and horror. There is also, in *Corp.* IX, a passing remark which probably refers to Christians, and likewise implies that they are enemies. But these two instances are exceptional; and the Hermetists in general appear to have considered Christianity either a thing too hateful to be spoken of, or a thing too contemptible to be worth mention.

It would almost seem then that, if any borrowing took place,

[1] In this respect the divine νοῦς of the Hermetists is comparable to Christ (or 'the spirit of Christ') indwelling in the individual Christian (not in the Church, for the Hermetists recognized nothing analogous to the Christian Church); but it is in no way comparable to the Christ who lived on earth and died and rose again. For the most part the Hermetic νοῦς corresponds, not to Christ, but to the Jewish and Christian πνεῦμα. But the Hermetic conception of νοῦς was not derived from Jewish or Christian sources; it is wholly of Platonic origin.

[2] Except indeed in the sense that it 'enters into' every man that is worthy to receive it. Sometimes a man might imagine that he heard the divine νοῦς speaking to him, as if with a human voice, and even that he saw it, in a dream or vision (*Corp.* I); or Νοῦς might be represented (merely by a literary artifice!) as a teacher giving instruction to a human pupil (*Corp.* XI); but that is a very different thing from what Christians meant when they spoke of the incarnation of Christ.

it must have been the other way about. Did Christians borrow anything from Hermetists? But 'borrowing' is hardly the right word. It is not to be supposed that the Christian Church took over this or that theological dogma ready made from Hermetists, or from any other Pagans. And yet the Christian Church took over a good deal; for it took over the men themselves. If not the very men by whom our *Hermetica* were written, at any rate most of their sons or grandsons or great-grandsons, and most of their pupils, or the pupils of their pupils, must have turned Christians, as most Pagans did at about that time. Some few of them may have held out, and stuck to Paganism; and the results towards which the teaching of such men tended may be seen in Plotinus and his Neoplatonic successors. But most of them must have turned Christians. And what did that mean? In some respects the change would not be a large one. The Hermetist, when he became a Christian, would not have so very much to unlearn. If one were to try to sum up the Hermetic teaching in one sentence, I can think of none that would serve the purpose better than the sentence 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'. To that extent at least the Hermetist had nothing new to learn from the Christian catechist. He had been accustomed to aspire towards union with God, and to hold that 'to hate one's body'[1] is the first step on the way to the fulfilment of that aspiration; and when we come upon him, a little later on, transformed into a Christian hermit in the Egyptian desert, we find that he is still of the same opinion.[2] On the other hand, the convert would have to accept, *in addition to* the doctrines which he already held, some others that were new and strange to him; he would be told that he must henceforth believe in a Saviour who had 'become flesh'; and he would have to admit the efficacy of certain sacramental rites, and the infallibility of certain writings, and so on.

But we have to consider not only what conversion to Christianity meant for the Hermetists themselves, but also what were the effects produced by their conversion in the body of Christians into which they were incorporated. And it is here, if anywhere, that the influence of the Hermetic teaching on Christianity is to be looked for. However much these men may have been 'born again' in

[1] *Corp.* IV. 6 b.

[2] Cf. *De imitatione Christi*, 1. 3: 'Ista est summa sapientia, per contemptum mundi tendere ad regna caelestia.' That might have been said by a Hermetist.

Christian baptism, they must have retained, under altered forms, much of their ingrained ways of thinking and feeling, and must have impressed something of this on those who were henceforth their fellow-Christians. So far as their influence extended, there would be a tendency to emphasize those sides or aspects of Christian doctrine and of Christian life which were most nearly in accord with the Hermetic teaching. And though the Hermetic teachers and their adherents must have been few in number in comparison with the mass of Egyptian Christians, their influence may have been far more than in proportion to their number; for they were the men who had been most in earnest about religion as Pagans, and they would be much in earnest still. Men of the stamp of these Hermetic teachers must have been prominent among those who set the tone in the Christian monasteries which sprang up in Egypt in the fourth century, and took the lead in debates on questions of Christian theology in Alexandria. And in that sense it might be said that in the *Hermetica* we get a glimpse into one of the many workshops in which Christianity was fashioned.

The extant *Hermetica* are:

(1) The *libelli* of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.
(2) The Latin *Asclepius* mistakenly attributed to Apuleius.
(3) The Hermetic excerpts in the *Anthologium* of Stobaeus.
(4) Fragments quoted by Lactantius, Cyril, and other writers.[1]

List of Hermetic Writings.

Hermes to Tat (*a.* γενικοὶ λόγοι; *b.* διεξοδικοὶ λόγοι): Corp. IV, V, VIII, X, XII. i, XII. ii, XIII; Stob. *Exc.* I–XI; Fragm. 12, 30, 32 (?), 33.

Hermes to Asclepius: Corp. II, VI, IX, XIV (epistle); Ascl. Lat. (λόγος τέλειος); Fragm. 23, 24, 31.

Hermes to Ammon: Stob. *Exc.* XII–XVII (XVIII and XIX?).

Hermes (no pupil named): Corp. III; Stob. *Exc.* XVIII–XXII: Fragm. 1–11, 13–22, 25–8, 32, 34–6.

Νοῦς to Hermes: Corp. XI. i, XI. ii.

Agathos Daimon to Hermes: reported by Hermes to Tat in Corp. XII. i.

[1] In this edition, the Hermetic fragments are collected under the heading *Fragmenta*; but each of them is also given, together with the context of the writing in which it is quoted, and with notes, under the heading *Testimonia*.

Agathos Daimon to Osiris: reported by Hermes to Asclepius, Fragm. 31.

Agathos Daimon to an Egyptian τεμενίτης: reported by Hermes, Fragm. 29.

Agathos Daimon: Fragm. 37.

Asclepius to Ammon (epistle): Corp. XVI.

Tat to King (Ammon?): Corp. XVII.

Isis to Horus: Stob. *Exc.* XXIII (*Kore Kosmu*), XXIV–XXVII.

Poimandres to a prophet: Corp. I.

Sermon (preached by the same prophet?): Corp. VII.

[Oration by a *rhetor*: Corp. XVIII.]

[Apophthegm of Hermes: Stob. *Exc.* XXVIII.]

[Verses on the planets: Stob. *Exc.* XXIX.]

CORPUS HERMETICUM

Corpus Hermeticum is the name given by recent commentators to a collection of about seventeen[1] distinct documents, which first makes its appearance (as a collection) in manuscripts of the fourteenth century. In the MSS. the collection as a whole bears no title, but each of the several documents contained in it has a separate heading of its own. The heading of the first document is Ἑρμοῦ τρισμεγίστου Ποιμάνδρης; and Ficinus, who published a Latin translation of the first fourteen documents in 1471, made the mistake of supposing that heading to be meant for a title of the whole collection.[2] Turnebus, who printed the *editio princeps* of the Greek text (1554), followed Ficinus in this mistake, and entitled *Corp.* I–XIV *Mercurii Trismegisti Poemander*. Similarly, Flussas (1574) gives to *Corp.* I–XIV, together with a '*Caput* XV' made up of Hermetic excerpts from elsewhere, the title *Mercurii Trismegisti Pimandras*, distinguishing the several documents as '*Caput* I', '*Caput* II', &c. (He appends '*Caput* XVI' under the different title *Aesculapii ad Ammonem.*) The blunder was corrected by Patrizzi (1591),[3] who uses the name *Poemander* rightly to denote *Libellus* I; but Parthey (1854) reverted to the old mistake, giving the title *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander* to his edition of *Corp.* I–XIV, and calling the several documents *cap.* 1, *cap.* 2, &c. This is much as if one were to call the New Testament as a whole 'the Gospel according to St. Matthew',

[1] By my reckoning, the number of distinct *libelli* in our text of the *Corpus* amounts to nineteen; and if we add a lost *libellus* between I and II, the original number must have been twenty.

[2] Ficinus, f. 2b: 'Est autem huius libri (i.e. of *Corpus* I–XIV) titulus *Pimander*, quoniam ex quattuor personis quae hoc in dyalogo disputant (i.e. in *Corp.* I–XIV regarded as a single "dialogue") primae Pimandro partes attribuuntur. . . . Ordo autem voluminis est, ut in libellos quattuordecim distinguamus, utque primae dialogi partes Pimandro dentur, secundas teneat Trismegistus, tertias Esculapius, quartum locum obtineat Tacius.'

[3] Patrizzi says, 'Nostra sententia Poemander ille a Ficino in 14 capita dissectus non unus liber est, sed totidem libelli per se, a Poemandro separati, cui solus primus debetur. Reliqui, cum nullam Poemandri mentionem faciant (he should have added, "with the exception of *Libellus* XIII"), nec ab eo pendeant aut ordine dogmatum aut connexione ulla, Poemandri partes dici non possunt.'

and refer to the Epistle to the Romans, for instance, as 'the sixth chapter of Matthew'. The documents of the *Corpus* differ from one another in the same sort of way as the various writings of the New Testament; it is certain from internal evidence that most of them, if not all, were written by different authors; and there is nothing to show that the majority of the writers had read *Corp.* I, or had ever heard of the name *Poimandres*.

As to the numbering of the documents, there is much discrepancy and confusion. The variations are shown in the appended table.

Present edition	Manuscripts			
	A (I–XIV)	BCDM (I–XVIII)	R (I–XVIII)	*Index capitum* in S
Libellus I	No numbering	No numbering	κε(φάλαιον) α′	α′
— II &c.			— β′ &c.	β′ &c.
— XI. i			— ια′	ια′
— XI. ii				
— XII. i			— ιβ′	ιβ′
— XII. ii				
— XIII			(XIII. 1–16) ιγ′ (XIII. 17–22) ιδ′	ιγ′ ιδ′
— XIV			— ιε′	ιε′
— XVI		XVI and XVII as one document	XVI–XVIII as a separate work, in three unnumbered parts, viz. XVI+XVII, XVIII. 1–10, XVIII. 11–16	ις′
— XVII				
— XVIII		XVIII. 1–10 XVIII. 11–16		

By separating the two parts of XI and the two parts of XII, I have increased the number of distinct documents in the *Corpus* from seventeen to nineteen; and if I had been starting afresh, I should have numbered them consecutively from I to XIX. But in order to avoid confusion of references, I have thought it best to retain the numbering of Flussas and Parthey in respect of *Libelli* I–XIV, and that of Flussas and Reitzenstein in respect of XVI, and to follow Reitzenstein in calling the last two documents XVII and XVIII. The 'Caput XV' of Flussas is not a part of

Ficinus (I–XIV)	Turnebus (I–XVIII)	Flussas (I–XVI)	Patrizzi	Parthey (I–XIV)	Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*
No numbering	No numbering	Caput I	The *libelli* of the *Corpus* placed in a different order, with other *Hermetica* interspersed among them.	Cap. I	Kap. I
		— II &c.		— II &c.	— II (III) &c.
		— XI		— XI	— XI (XII)
		— XII		— XII	— XII (XIII)
		— XIII		— XIII	— XIII (XIV)
		— XIV		— XIV	— XIV (XV)
	Three excerpts from Stob. are here appended.	— XV, made up of same three excerpts from Stob. and an extract from Suidas.			
	XVI–XVIII as in R.	— XVI			— XVI
					— XVII
					— XVIII

the *Corpus*; there is therefore no *Libellus* XV in the present edition.

In dividing the text of each *libellus* into sections, I have, for the most part, followed Reitzenstein in the *libelli* edited by him in his *Poimandres* (viz. I, XIII, XVI, XVII, XVIII), and Parthey in the rest of the *Corpus*; and in cases where further subdivision seemed desirable, I have added letters to the number of the section, dividing § 3, for instance, into § 3 a and § 3 b. But I have here and there slightly shifted the point of division between two sections, in order to make it correspond better with a division in the sense.

The manuscripts of the *Corpus* have been carefully investigated by Reitzenstein, to whom I owe most of the information given in the following list. But to the fifteen MSS. mentioned and described by him (*Poim.* pp. 323 ff.) must be added three Oxford MSS. (Bodl. 3388, which I call Q; Bodl. 8827, which I call R; and Bodl. 3037, which I call S), of the existence of which he appears to have been unaware.[1] All the manuscripts reproduce, with slight variations, the text of a common archetype,[2] which was full of corruptions. The first task of an editor is to reconstruct the text of the lost archetype; his second and more difficult task is to infer from this what the author of each document wrote; his third task is to find out what the author meant. And in cases in which it is impossible to recover the precise words which the author wrote, it may still be possible to guess his meaning.

List of MSS. of the *Corpus*.

A: *Laurentianus* 71, 33; 14th cent.; contains *Corp.* I–XIV.

This manuscript was brought from Macedonia to Cosmo de' Medici at Florence, and was by him handed over to Marsiglio Ficino, who made from it the Latin translation which he published in 1471.

From 'a twin-brother of A' (Reitz.) are derived the following three MSS.:

[1] He speaks of Bodl. 16987, but says nothing about the three other *Bodleiani*.

[2] In our MSS. two large pieces are missing. The first of them contained the beginning of our *Corp.* II, together with a lost *libellus* which originally preceded our II (see prefatory note on *Corp.* II); the second contained almost the whole of *Corp.* XVII, of which only a short passage at the end has been preserved. It must be inferred from these omissions that in the archetype of our MSS. some leaves were torn out and lost at each of these two points.

Ottobonianus Graec. 153, 15th cent.
Coislinianus 332, 15th cent.
Parisinus 2518, written by Vergicius, 16th cent.

B: *Parisinus Graec.* 1220; middle of the 14th cent.; contains *Corp.* I–XVIII.

There are numerous corrections by one or more later hands (B^2); but it appears that these corrections are for the most part conjectural, and not derived from another MS.

C: *Vaticanus Graec.* 237; 14th cent.; contains *Corp.* I–XVIII.

Closely connected with C are:
Parisinus Graec. 2007, 16th cent.
Ottobonianus Graec. 177, 16th cent.

D: *Vindobonensis phil.* 102; 15th cent.; contains *Corp.* I–XVIII.

The printed text of Turnebus is a reproduction of a MS. nearly related to D; so that his edition may be treated as equivalent to a MS. of this family.

Palatinus Graec. 53, 15th or 16th cent., was found by Reitzenstein to be closely connected with D.

M: *Vaticanus Graec.* 951; 14th cent.; contains *Corp.* I–XVIII.

Q: *Bodleianus* 3388 (Arch. Seld. B 58); 15th cent. The text breaks off at the foot of fol. 62 b, at the words καὶ τὸ μὲν θνητὸν in *Corp.* XIII. 14; and the following leaves, which presumably contained the rest of the *Corpus* down to the end of XVIII, have been lost. Q is closely connected with D.

Bodleianus 16987 (d'Orville 109, Auct. X. 1. 4. 7); 16th cent.; contains *Corp.* I–XVIII. This MS. is a faithful transcript of Q.[1] There are numerous corrections by a different hand; the corrector must have used another MS.

R: *Bodleianus* 8827 (Misc. 131, Auct. F, infr. 2. 2); 16th cent.: contains *Corp.* I–XVIII.

In *Corp.* I–XIV, R is derived from a MS. hardly distinguishable from A.[2] (In this part of R, there are numerous corrections by

[1] The derivation of Bodl. 16987 from Q is sufficiently proved by the fact that two passages in *Corp.* II and four passages in *Corp.* XII, which have been accidentally omitted in Q, are also omitted in Bodl. 16987 (first hand).
The connexion of Bodl. 16987 with D was recognized by Reitzenstein, who did not know of the existence of Q, the immediate source of Bodl. 16987.

[2] R cannot be derived from A itself, because five small lacunae which occur in

a different hand; these corrections must have been taken from another MS.) The writing of *Corp.* XVI–XVIII is smaller, but similar in character to that of I–XIV, and both parts of the MS. may have been written by the same hand. The text of XVI–XVIII appears to be derived from a MS. closely related to D. (See the readings of R given in the foot-notes to *Corp.* XVI–XVIII.)

S: *Bodleianus* 3037 (Misc. Gr. 36, Auct. E 2. 8): 16th cent. The text of S breaks off at the words ταῦτά σοι ἀσκληπιὲ ἐνοῦντι in *Corp.* IX. 10, and the rest is lost; but the prefixed *Index capitum* gives the headings of all the documents in the *Corpus*, including XVI–XVIII. S is closely connected with C.[1]

Reitzenstein mentions three other MSS., viz.: *Parisinus Graec.* 1297; 16th cent.; contains *Corp.* I–XIV; 'much touched up, often agrees with B^2.' *Vaticanus Graec.* 914; end of 15th cent.; contains *Corp.* I. 1–28. *Parisinus Graec. suppl.* 395; 17th cent.; contains *Corp.* I. 1–21. But these three are of no importance.

It is possible that there may be in existence some MSS. of the *Corpus* which have not yet been discovered;[2] but it is not likely that any future discovery will make any appreciable addition to the material already at our disposal. The known MSS. are more than sufficient to enable us to reconstruct the lost archetype from which they are all derived; the more serious difficulties begin when we try to correct by conjecture the corrupt text of that archetype. Reitzenstein considers that, when the relations of the MSS. to one another and to the printed texts have once been ascertained, an editor need concern himself only with the readings of A, C, and M, and can safely disregard the rest. I have not done precisely that; but I hope that what I have done in this matter does not fall very

the A-text of *Corp.* I. 4, 5, and are indicated by blank spaces in A, do not occur in R. But in all else, R (I–XIV) very closely agrees with A. E. g. I. 3, φησὶν om. AR | I. 9, ὑπάρχων om. AR | *Ib.*, ἑπτά τινας AR: τινας ἑπτά cett. | I. 11 b, νοητὰ AR: νηκτὰ cett. | I. 15, ὢν om. AR | I. 21, καὶ πατὴρ AR: καὶ ὁ πατὴρ cett. | I. 22, ἐγὼ αὐτὸς AR: ἐγὼ Q Turn.: αὐτὸς ἐγὼ cett. | *Ib.*, ὑμνοῦσι AR: ὑμνοῦντες cett. | I. 26 a, συγχαίρουσι . . . πατέρα om. AR (*homoeoteleuton*). | I. 27, κάλλος AR: κλέος cett. | I. 28, σπάνῃ AR: πλάνῃ cett.

[1] For instance, S agrees with C, and differs from ABDM, in the following readings: I. 4, τούτῳ CS: τοῦτο cett. | I. 5 b, σῶαβαίνοντος CS: ἀναβαίνοντος cett. | I. 6, βλέπων καὶ ἀκούων CS: βλέπον καὶ ἀκοῦον cett. | I. 7, ἀντέπησέ CS: ex ἀντέφησέ corr. ἀντώπησέ A: ἀντώπησέ cett. | I. 9, περιέχοντε CS: περιέχοντας cett. | I. 11 a, ἔτρεψε CS: ἔστρεψε cett. | I. 14, ὡς τε C: ὥστε S: ὡς ἅτε cett.

[2] Reitzenstein says that he was obliged to leave Italy without carrying out his intention of searching for MSS. of the *Corpus* in the smaller libraries of that country.

far short of that which he thinks requisite. In *Corp.* I and XIII, I have given the readings of the MSS. used by Reitzenstein (viz. ABCDM), and of the printed text of Turnebus, and added those of Q. In *Corp.* II–XI, I have given the readings of A, Q, and Turn.; and in II–IX. 10, I have added those of S, using S as a substitute for C, with which it is closely connected. In *Corp.* XII and XIV, not having a collation of A in my hands, I have used R as a substitute for A (to which R, as tested in *Corp.* I and XIII, closely adheres), and have given the readings of Q, R, and Turn. in XII, and those of R and Turn. in XIV. And in *Corp.* XVI–XVIII, I have given the readings of the MSS. used by Reitzenstein (viz. BCDM), and those of Turn., and have added those of R (which, in this part of the *Corpus*, agrees closely with D). It would have been more entirely satisfactory if I could have added the readings of C and M in II–XI, and those of A, C, and M in XII and XIV; but I see no reason to think that, if I had postponed the completion of my work on the text till I could go to Italy to get those readings, the results would have been of sufficient importance to compensate for the delay. The manuscripts differ but slightly from one another and from the text of Turnebus; and it is unlikely that, if I had had before me a complete *conspectus* of the readings of all existing MSS., I should have arrived at a different conclusion as to the meaning of a single clause in the whole *Corpus*.

For the manuscript readings given in my foot-notes to the text of the *Corpus*, my authorities are as follows:

Dr. F. C. Conybeare, to whom my most hearty thanks are due for his generous help, has collated for me the greater part of A (viz. I–XI and XIII. 1, 2), and some specimens of three other MSS. (viz. I. 1–21, XIII. 1–10, and XVIII. 11–16 in C and M, and I. 1–21 in *Palat. Gr.* 53).[1]

Reitzenstein has published the readings of A in *Corp.* I and XIII; those of B, C, D, and M in I, XIII, and XVI–XVIII; and those of A, C, and M in a few short passages in other *libelli*; and I have made use of his published readings.[2]

[1] His collation is my sole authority for the readings of A which are given in my foot-notes to *Corp.* II–XI.

[2] In A, *Libelli* I, XIII, XIV were collated for Reitzenstein by G. Vitelli; in C, *Libelli* I, XIII, XVI–XVIII were collated for him by Dr. De Stefani. Reitzenstein has himself collated the rest of A and C, and the whole of B, D, and M. Thus he has had at his disposal complete collations of ABCDM; but he has published the readings of these MSS. in those parts of the *Corpus* only which are mentioned above.

I have myself collated the whole of Q; *Corp.* I and XII–XVIII in R; and the whole of S and Bodl. 16987.[1]

Parthey used collations of A and B in his edition of *Corp.* I–XIV. But the collation of A, with which he was supplied, was either inaccurate or carelessly employed by him; and his statements as to the readings of B are vitiated by the fact that he makes no distinction between the first hand and B[2]. I have therefore deliberately ignored Parthey's report of the readings of A and B.

In the case of MSS. which I have not myself collated, I have expressly named this or that MS. (e. g. A) only when I had before me a positive statement as to its reading, and not when that reading was only to be inferred from the collator's silence. I have used the abbreviation *codd.* to signify the *consensus* of all MSS. of which the readings are known to me in any way, whether from my own collation, or from positive statements of others, or by inference from the silence of the collators.

I have, as a rule, taken no notice of the accents, breathings, and punctuation of the MSS., nor of the presence or absence of ι *subscript* in them.

The notation employed in my text of the *Corpus*, and in that of the other *Hermetica* also, is as follows:

Letters, words, and passages which occur in the MSS., and presumably occurred in the archetype from which our MSS. are derived, but which, in my opinion, were either certainly or probably not present in the text as written by the author, are enclosed by two-angled brackets, thus: [ ].

Letters, words, and passages which do not occur in any MS., but have been inserted by conjecture, are enclosed by one-angled brackets, thus: ⟨ ⟩.

Words and passages transposed by conjecture are (with the exception of a few of the longer passages) printed both at the place where they stand in the MSS., and at the place to which I have transposed them. At the place where they stand in the MSS., they are enclosed by two-angled brackets doubled, thus: [[ ]]. At the place to which I have transposed them, they are enclosed by one-angled brackets doubled, thus: ⟨⟨ ⟩⟩.[2]

[1] I had collated Bodl. 16987 throughout before I discovered its dependence on Q, which makes its readings valueless for our purpose, at least in regard to *Corp.* I–XIII. 14, the part of the text which has been preserved in Q.

[2] In cases in which the alteration indicated by the brackets has been made by some one else before me, that fact is stated in a foot-note. When there is no such statement in the foot-notes, it is to be understood that it is I that propose this alteration of the text.

Words and passages which I take to be corrupt, but which I have left standing unaltered, are enclosed between the marks ⌜ ⌝.

Letters substituted by conjecture for others (not always in exactly equal number) given by the MSS. are printed in distinct type.

My object in adopting this notation is to make it manifest where the traditional text (i. e. that which, on the evidence of the MSS., may be inferred to have been the text of the archetype) is given unaltered in the present edition, and where and how much it is altered. If the reader retains the letters, words, and passages which are enclosed by the marks [ ] and [[ ]], omits those enclosed by the marks ⟨ ⟩ and ⟨⟨ ⟩⟩, and, in the case of letters printed in distinct type, substitutes the reading given in the foot-note for that in the text, he will have each document before him in the form in which it has been transmitted to us in the MSS. He will find in it many passages which consist of words without meaning, and which, therefore, cannot have been first written in the shape in which they now stand; and in dealing with every such passage, he will be free to choose whether to treat it as a blank, or to accept the more or less probable guess at what the author wrote that is here offered, or to make another guess (which may very likely be a better one) for himself. The unsightliness of the printed text which results from this procedure may be considered an advantage, because it makes apparent to the eye the extent of the corruptions, and secures the reader against the danger of mistaking the conjectures of a modern editor for readings supported by manuscript authority.

When and by whom was the archetype written? Reitzenstein (*Poim.*, pp. 211, 319, 325 f.) says that a damaged manuscript of the *Corpus* was re-discovered in the eleventh century, and came into the hands of Michael Psellus, the great reviver of Platonic studies in Byzantium[1] (*c.* A. D. 1050); that Psellus wrote or got some one to write[2] a copy of that manuscript; and that the copy written by Psellus, or under his direction, was the archetype from which our MSS. are derived. And he thinks it probable that the traditional text contains glosses and interpolations added by Psellus, and that,

[1] See Zervos, *Michel Psellos (un philosophe néoplatonicien du XI[e] siècle)*, Paris, 1920.

[2] Reitzenstein speaks of the 'Text der Psellosabschrift'.

in *Corp.* XVIII especially, Psellus filled gaps in the text by inserting conjectural supplements. But what evidence is there that Psellus took the part assigned to him by Reitzenstein, or any part at all, in the transmission of the *Corpus*?

In support of his statements,[1] Reitzenstein puts forward only the two following facts. (1) In *Corp.* I. 18, there is inserted in the text of *Cod.* M an anonymous *scholion*,[2] in which it is pointed out that 'this γόης' (i. e. the author of *Corp.* I, who is assumed to be Hermes) must have been acquainted with the Mosaic account of the Creation. And in the margin of *Cod.* B, this same *scholion* is written by a later hand (B^2), with the superscription τοῦ Ψέλλου. (2) In *Cod.* M (which contains several different and unconnected works), the *Corpus Hermeticum* is immediately preceded by two copies of a treatise of Psellus on the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and the second of these two copies is written by the same hand as the *Corpus Hermeticum*.[3]

The second fact is negligible. It does not follow, because two works which appear side by side in a *Codex* of the fourteenth century were written by the same hand in that *Codex*, that the archetype of the one had been written by the hand of the man (of the eleventh century) who was the author of the other, or had ever been in that man's possession.

It seems then that the only evidence[4] that Psellus had a hand in the transmission of the *Corpus* is the fact that a *scholion* on *Corp.* I. 18 is ascribed to Psellus by an unknown person who revised

[1] Reitzenstein says that it was Br. Keil who first called his attention to 'the connexion of the Platonic studies of Psellus with the editing of the *Corpus*'; but I have not met with any published statement of Keil on this subject.

[2] For this *scholion* see Psellus in *Testim.*

[3] Similarly, in Cod. S (which was not known to Reitzenstein), the *Corpus Hermeticum* is immediately preceded by Psellus *In psychogoniam Platonis*, written by the same hand.

[4] Or at least, the only evidence given by Reitzenstein in his *Poimandres*.

From the passages of Psellus which I give under *Testim.* it appears that Psellus had probably read *Corp.* X, and perhaps *Corp.* XI. ii; and if the *scholion* is rightly ascribed to him, he had certainly read *Corp.* I. But that is not enough to prove that the *Corpus* as a collection was known to him. I have not made a thorough search in the writings of Psellus; and it is not unlikely that there are in them other *testimonia* which I have failed to find. Zervos, *Michel Psellos*, p. 191, says that 'plusieurs commentaires théologiques de Psellos ont été tirés des livres orphiques et *hermétiques*', and on this point refers to an unpublished manuscript, Paris, Bibl. Nat. MS. grec, no. 1182, fol. 26 and fol. 265 vo.

Zervos, *ib.* p. 168, says 'Nous ne savons pas le nombre d'ouvrages que Psellos avait composés sur la littérature hermétique. Il n'en reste qu'une scholie sur le *Poemander*' (i. e. the *scholion* on *Corp.* I. 18). But is there any evidence that Psellus 'composed works on the Hermetic literature', or any one such work?

Cod. B. Assuming the truth of this ascription, how much can be inferred from it? It necessarily follows that Psellus had read and reflected on *Corp.* I; and as this *libellus* is not known to have been anywhere in existence in the middle ages except as a part of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, it is probable (but not certain) that Psellus had in his hands a MS. of the whole *Corpus*; that he wrote in the margin of that MS. his *scholion* on I. 18; and that from that MS. were derived both the M-text of the *Corpus*, and the unknown MS. from which the reviser of *Cod.* B got the *scholion*. But it does not follow that Psellus transcribed the *Corpus* with his own hand, or had it transcribed for him, and that all our MSS. are derived from that transcription. And still less does it follow that he added to the corruption of the text by inserting glosses, supplements, or conjectures of his own.

If we take it as established that Psellus had in his hands a MS. of the *Corpus*, it is a legitimate hypothesis that that MS. was the archetype of all our MSS.; and considering the leading part which he is known to have taken in the revival of Platonic studies, it is perhaps more likely that it was so than that it was not so. But as far as I have been able to ascertain, it is a hypothesis only, and not a proved fact.

What was the history of the text before the time of Psellus? Some help towards answering this question may be got from the fact that excerpts from three of the *libelli* of which the *Corpus* is made up[1] occur in the *Anthologium* of Stobaeus (*c.* A. D. 500). The text of these pieces as given by Stobaeus differs from that of the *Corpus*-archetype in many details;[2] but there are some corruptions which are common to Stobaeus and the *Corpus*, and must therefore have got into the text of these three *libelli* before A. D. 500.

At what date was the collection of documents which we call the *Corpus* put together? As far as I know, there is no absolutely cogent proof that it was in existence before the fourteenth century, in which our earliest MSS. were written. But as there must have been a lapse of time between the writing of the *Corpus*-archetype and the loss of some of its leaves,[3] and a further lapse of time

[1] Viz. *Corp.* II. 1–4, 6 b–9, 10–13; IV. 1 b, 10–11 b; X. 7–8 b, 12–13, 16–18, 19, 22 b–25.

[2] At the beginning of *Libellus* II, a passage which is missing in our *Corpus* MSS. has been preserved by Stobaeus.

[3] It is conceivable that the two losses of leaves (that between I and II and that between XVI and XVII) may have taken place independently, and in two different

between the loss of the leaves and the writing of our MSS., it may be considered almost certain that the collection as a whole existed at least as early as the twelfth century. Moreover, it is probable that the *Corpus* as a whole was known to Psellus, and consequently, that the *libelli* of which it is composed had been brought together by about A. D. 1050. That, however, is the earliest date at which any trace of it can be found.

The *Corpus* was almost certainly known to the author of the *Hermippus*,[1] as he shows knowledge of five at least of the *libelli* contained in it,[2] and in some of his borrowings from them, reproduces the corruptions of our *Corpus*-text. But the date of the *Hermippus* is unknown; it may have been written as late as the eleventh century,[3] or even later.

Fulgentius Mythographus (*c.* A. D. 500) refers to *Libellus* I, and quotes a phrase from it;[4] but that is no proof that the collection of *libelli* which we call the *Corpus Hermeticum* existed in his time.

Stobaeus prefixes to his excerpts from *Libellus* X the heading Ἑρμοῦ ἐκ τῶν πρὸς Τάτ, and to those from *Libellus* II the heading Ἑρμοῦ ἐκ τῶν πρὸς Ἀσκληπιόν. (Of his two excerpts from *Libellus* IV, the first has no heading, and the second is headed simply Ἑρμοῦ.) It is to be inferred from this that he found *Libellus* X (and presumably *Libellus* IV also) in a book entitled 'The discourses of Hermes to Tat',[1] and *Libellus* II in a book entitled 'The discourses of Hermes to Asclepius'. He shows no knowledge of any collection resembling our *Corpus*, which contains discourses addressed to Tat together with others addressed to Asclepius. Nor is any knowledge of the *Corpus* as a whole shown by Lactantius or Cyril, though both of them quote from or refer to some of the *libelli* included in it.[2]

The alchemist Zosimus (soon after A. D. 300) had read *Libellus* I and *Libellus* IV;[3] but there is no evidence that he had read them in the *Corpus*.

It is possible then that the *Corpus* was first compiled in the time of Psellus; and it is not impossible that Psellus himself was its compiler. On the other hand, it is also possible that this collection of Hermetic documents had been made several centuries before the date of Psellus, and even that, though unknown to Stobaeus, Cyril, and Lactantius, it was already in existence in their time, and had come into being almost immediately after the composition of the latest of the *libelli* contained in it.[4] In short, the *Corpus* may have been put together at any time between A. D. 300 and 1050. Or again, it may not have been put together at any one time, or by any one person, but may have been formed gradually, by appending to *Corp.* I a series of other *libelli* (or small groups of *libelli*) in succession, and at various dates.

Whence were the individual *libelli* taken? To this question also no definite answer can be given. The several *libelli* may have been taken directly from the collections of *Hermetica* known to Stobaeus (the 'Discourses of Hermes to Tat', &c.); though in that case, it is not clear for what reasons the man or men who put them into the *Corpus* selected some of the *libelli* contained in those collections, and rejected others. But it is possible that some of the Hermetic

MSS.; and in that case neither of those two MSS. need necessarily have included the whole *Corpus*. One of them, for instance, might have contained I–XIV, and the other XVI–XVIII; and our *Corpus* as a whole might have been brought into being at some later time by putting together these two groups of *libelli*. But that, though not impossible, is unlikely.

[1] As to the *Hermippus*, see prefatory note on *Corp.* XVI.

[2] Viz. *Corp.* I, IV, X, XIII, XVI. He does not, as far as I have observed, show knowledge of any *Hermetica* not included in the *Corpus*.

[3] Kroll, *De oraculis Chaldaicis*, p. 76, points out two passages in the *Hermippus* which show knowledge of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. That fact somewhat increases the probability that the author of the *Hermippus* was in touch with Psellus, who made a collection of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and wrote about them.

[4] See *Corp.* I. 1. Reitzenstein (*Poim.*, p. 210) adds that Fulgentius (Helm, p. 88. 3) quotes, but *ascribes to Plato*, some words of *Corp.* XII. The passage of Fulg. to which Reitz. refers is this: '*illam . . . Platonis antiquam firmantes sententiam, ubi ait*: nus antropinosteos utose anagatosteos euuermenos; *id est: sensus hominis deus est; i si bonus sit, deus est propitius.*' The Greek was probably *νοῦς ἀνθρώπινος θεός· οὗτος ἐὰν ἀγαθὸς ⟨ᾖ, ὁ⟩ θεὸς* [*euu*! perhaps *ἐστιν*!] *εὐμενής*. There is very little resemblance between this and the passages in *Corp.* XII with which Helm compares it, viz. *οὗτος δὲ ὁ νοῦς ἐν μὲν ἀνθρώποις ⌜θεός⌝ ἐστι* (XII. 1), and *ὁ γὰρ νοῦς ψυχῶν ἐστιν εὐεργέτης ἀνθρώπων· ἐργάζεται γὰρ αὐτα[ς ε]ἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν* (XII. 2); and I see no reason to think that Fulgentius got his 'ancient saying of Plato' from that document. It is more likely that he got it from some *scholion* or commentary on Pl. *Tim.* 90 A (*τὸ κυριώτατον ψυχῆς εἶδος*, i. e. *τὸν νοῦν*) *δαίμονα θεὸς ἑκάστῳ δέδωκε*.

[1] He gives under this same heading (Ἑρμοῦ ἐκ τῶν πρὸς Τάτ) a number of other passages which come from Hermetic *libelli* not included in the *Corpus*. His *Anthologium* contains also some excerpts from a third book, called 'The discourses of Hermes to Ammon', and some from a collection of Hermetic documents (including the *Kore Kosmu*) in which the teacher is Isis, and the pupil Horus.

[2] Lactantius quotes from *Corp.* XII. ii and *Corp.* XVI; it is more or less probable that he also refers to *Corp.* V, *Corp.* IX, and *Corp.* X. Cyril quotes from *Corp.* XI. ii and *Corp.* XIV. See *Testim.*

[3] See note on *Corp.* I. 2.

[4] The probable date of *Corp.* XVIII is within a year or two of A. D. 300, and there is no reason to think that any of the other *libelli* in the *Corpus* are of later date than this.

libelli included in the collections used by Stobaeus were also in circulation singly; and there may have been others which had never been included in them, but stood alone. If so, a compiler of the *Corpus* may have added each *libellus* in turn to his own collection as he happened to meet with it.

In some of the MSS., the *Corpus* is divided into two distinct parts, the first part (*Corp.* I–XIV) being thought to contain the teachings of Hermes, and the second (*Corp.* XVI–XVIII), the teachings of Asclepius. It is probably a result of this distinction that *Libelli* XVI–XVIII were omitted in A; the transcriber copied only 'the teachings of Hermes', and did not go on to copy 'the teachings of Asclepius', which he considered to be a different work. But we do not know whether this division existed from the first, or was subsequently introduced by some redactor or copyist. As a matter of fact, *Corp.* XVI, in which the teacher is Asclepius, and the surviving fragment of *Corp.* XVII, in which the teacher is Tat, are similar in general character to the majority of the preceding *libelli*, and must have come from similar sources; while *Corp.* XVIII, which the transcribers apparently assumed to be a speech (or two speeches) delivered by Asclepius, has in reality no connexion either with Hermes or with his pupils.

At any rate, it seems to have been by deliberate intention that the three *libelli* in which Hermes does not appear either as teacher or as pupil[1] were placed together, and put at the end of the collection. But in *Corp.* I–XIV, there are few traces of designed arrangement. It is true that *Libellus* I, in which a man (assumed by the transcribers to be Hermes) is taught by God, and sets forth to teach to mankind the *gnosis* which God has taught him, is well suited for its place at the beginning; and the documents which follow may have been regarded as specimens of that teaching of which *Libellus* I describes the origin. But in II–XIV, there is no internal connexion between adjacent documents,[2] and the order in which these *libelli* stand in the *Corpus* appears to be merely accidental.

[1] There are three other *libelli* (I, III, and VII) which, when first written, probably had nothing to do with Hermes; but these three had doubtless been ascribed to Hermes before they were included in the *Corpus*.

[2] It is possible that in two or three instances a redactor of the *Corpus* may have slightly altered the opening words of a *libellus*, in order to make them appear to refer back to the document which immediately precedes it in the collection. (See the first sentences of *Corp.* V, X, and XIV.) But in no case is there any real connexion between the contents of two successive *libelli*, except, perhaps, in XI. i and XI. ii, in both of which the teacher is Νοῦς.

Printed Editions of the *Corpus*, Translations, and Commentaries.[1]

Ficinus, 1471.[2]—*Mercurii Trismegisti Liber de Potestate et Sapientia Dei, e Graeco in Latinum traductus a Marsilio Ficino . . . Tarvisii.* This is a Latin translation of the Greek text of Cod. A, and consequently contains only *Corp.* I–XIV.

In an *Argumentum* prefixed to his translation, Ficino gives the following account of Hermes Trismegistus: 'Eo tempore quo Moyses natus est, floruit Athlas astrologus, Promethei physici frater, ac maternus avus maioris Mercurii; cuius nepos fuit Mercurius Trismegistus. . . . Primus igitur (Merc. Trismegistus) theologiae appellatus est auctor. Eum secutus Orpheus secundas antiquae theologiae partes obtinuit. Orphei sacris iniciatus est Aglaophemus. Aglaophemo successit in theologia Picthagoras; quem Philolaus sectatus est, Divi Platonis nostri praeceptor. Itaque una priscae theologiae undique sibi consona secta ex theologis sex miro quodam ordine conflata est, exordia sumens a Mercurio, a Divo Platone penitus absoluta.'

Ficino's theory of the relation between Hermes Trismegistus and the Greek philosophers was based partly on *data* supplied by early Christian writers, especially Lactantius and Augustine, and partly on the internal evidence of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the Latin *Asclepius* of Pseudo-Apuleius. He saw—as indeed no competent scholar who had read Plato and the *Hermetica* could fail to see—that the resemblance between the Hermetic doctrines and those of Plato was such as necessarily to imply some historical connexion; but accepting it as a known fact that the author of the *Hermetica* was a man who lived about the time of Moses, he inverted the true relation, and thought that Plato had derived his theology,

[1] See Fabricius, *Bibl. Graec.* (revised by Harles), 1790, vol. i, pp. 52–66. A full list of editions and translations of the *Corpus* is given by G. R. S. Mead, *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*, 1906, vol. i, pp. 8–16. I mention here only those publications which I have found some reason to notice.

[2] Reitzenstein says—on what authority I do not know—that Ficino translated the *Corpus* in 1463. This must mean that he *wrote* his translation in that year. But the earliest printed edition of it is dated thus: 'Finitum. M.CCCC.LXXI. Die XVIII Decemb.' *Tarvisium* is Treviso, near Venice.

Ficino subsequently wrote a *Theologia Platonica* (printed in 1482), and translated Plato (1483–4) and Plotinus (1492). He was one of the most influential promoters of that revival of Platonism in Western Europe which had been started at Florence by Pletho, who resided for a time (from 1438 on) at the court of Cosmo de' Medici.

through Pythagoras, from Trismegistus. And his view was adopted, at least in its main outlines, by all who dealt with the subject down to the end of the sixteenth century.

The publication of Ficino's translation of the *Corpus* excited keen and widespread interest in Hermes Trismegistus and his teaching.[1]

[1] It is an indication of this general interest, that Hermes Trismegistus is depicted in one of the designs with which the pavement of the cathedral of Siena is decorated. (See Frontispiece.) These designs are 'pictures incised in slabs of white marble, and filled in with black or red marble' (Murray's *Handbook*, 1900). The date of the Hermes-group is 1488. 'It is not definitely known who designed' this group, 'but it is generally supposed, with considerable show of reason, to have been Giovanni di Maestro Stefano' (R. H. H. Cust, *The Pavement Masters of Siena*, 1901). The Hermes-design is placed in the middle of the floor at the west end of the Duomo, so that it is the first thing that meets the eye as one enters; and on either side of it are ranged five Sibyls. The designers had doubtless read about Hermes Trismegistus and the Sibyls in Lactantius, and considered them suitable subjects for the decoration of a church, on the ground that they were heathen prophets who, in very ancient times, had borne witness to the truths of Christian theology. (As Ficino says, 'Lactantius (Trismegistum) inter sibyllas ac prophetas connumerare non dubitat'.)

At the foot of the design is the inscription *Hermis Mercurius Trismegistus contemporaneus Moysi*. The group contains three figures. In the middle of the picture stands a man with a long beard, who wears a high pointed hat or mitre. He is handing an open book to a bearded man wearing a turban, who reverentially accepts it from him; and behind the turbaned man stands a beardless man wearing a hood. In the book which the first of the three men is handing to the second, is written *Suscipite o licteras et leges Egiptii*. The word *licteras* is *litteras* misspelt; and the meaning is 'Take up letters and laws, O Egyptians'. This is probably meant for a hexameter (hence the strange position of *O*); though, if so, there are two false quantities, *licteras* and *Egiptii*. The words were doubtless suggested by Cic. *Nat. deor.* 3. 56 (quoted by Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 1. 6. 2): *Mercurius . . . quintus* (whom the Egyptians call Theuth) . . . *dicitur . . . Aegyptiis leges et litteras tradidisse.*

The left hand of the man in the pointed hat rests on the upper edge of a slab, on which is inscribed in Latin a saying of Trismegistus (*Deus omnium creator*, &c.). This is a free translation of the Greek original of a passage in *Ascl. Lat.* I. 8. The designer must have got the saying directly or indirectly from Lactantius, who gives this passage in the original Greek.

Who are the persons represented by these three figures? And which of them is Hermes? Mr. Cust (*op. cit.* p. 20) says, 'The principal figure (i. e. the man in the pointed hat) represents . . . Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, who, as we read below, was *contemporaneus Moysi*. The two (other) men, one old (or middle-aged?) and turbaned, and the other veiled (or rather hooded), may perhaps typify the learned men of the East and West.'

I was at first inclined to think that the 'principal figure' is Moses, and that it is the turbaned man who respectfully receives instruction from him that is meant for Trismegistus, the turban being intended to mark him as an Egyptian. If so, the hooded man who stands behind Trismegistus might be one of his Egyptian pupils (say Asclepius), and the two together would then be the 'Egyptii' whom Moses is addressing; or the hooded man might perhaps be Plato. This interpretation of the design would agree well with the notions which were current at the time; 'Hermes', it was thought, 'learnt his philosophy from Moses, in whose time he lived; from Hermes the doctrine was transmitted to Plato; and so it came about that Plato, in his *Timaeus*, reproduced the teaching of Moses concerning the creation of the world.' But on the other hand, it is Trismegistus that, in Cic. *Nat. deor.*, '*dicitur Aegyptiis leges et litteras tradidisse*'; and if the words written in the book were taken from that passage, it follows that the man who is handing the book over (i. e. the 'principal figure' in the pointed hat) must be Trismegistus, and not Moses, and that the turbaned man who receives it from him must represent the Egyptians whom Trismegistus taught. If it is so, the hooded man may be meant to stand for Plato and the Platonists, including, perhaps, Italian scholars such as Ficino.

Eight editions of Ficino's book appeared before 1500; and Mead enumerates twenty-two editions of it from 1471 to 1641.

Turnebus, 1554.—*Mercurii Trismegisti Poemander, seu de potestate ac sapientia divina. Aesculapii definitiones ad Ammonem regem. . . . Parisiis, M.D.LIIII: apud Adr. Turnebum typographum regium.*

This is the *editio princeps* of the Greek text. It contains the whole *Corpus*, I–XIV under the title *Mercurii Trismegisti Poemander*, and XVI–XVIII under the title *Aesculapii definitiones*. One MS. only was used; and the printed text appears to be an exact reproduction of that MS., which must have been closely related to *Cod.* D. At the end are given about fifty variant readings, which may have been got from the margin of the MS.

The text printed by Turnebus is preceded by a preface, in Greek, written by Vergicius. (This preface is reprinted in Parthey's *Poemander*.) Vergicius says that 'Hermes Trismegistus was an Egyptian by race; but who his father and his mother were, no one can say. He flourished before the time of Pharaoh, as many of the *chronographi* think.[1] Some, among whom is Cicero, suppose that he is the person whom the Egyptians called Thoth. Some reckon him a contemporary of Pharaoh; but I differ from them, for the following reason. . . . He must, therefore, have lived before Pharaoh, and consequently, before Moses also.[2]

'They say that this Hermes left his own country, and travelled all over the world . . .; and that he tried to teach men to revere and worship one God alone, the *demiurgus* and *genetor* of all things; . . . and that he lived a very wise and pious life, occupied in intellectual contemplation (ταῖς τοῦ νοῦ θεωρίαις), and giving no heed to the gross things of the material world (τῶν κατωφερῶν τῆς ὕλης); and that having returned to his own country, he wrote at that time many books of mystical philosophy and theology. Among these writings, there are two of special importance; the one[3] is called *Asclepius*, and the other,[4] *Poimandres*.'

[1] See Malala, *Testim.*

[2] Vergicius then rejected the opinion, which was held by some, that Trismegistus learnt from Moses.

[3] Viz. the Latin *Asclepius* of Pseudo-Apuleius.

[4] Viz. *Corp.* I–XIV.

Vergicius lays stress on the resemblances between the teaching of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and that of Christianity; and he quotes from Suidas what he calls 'the greatest and most marvellous of all the sayings of Hermes', in which that ancient Egyptian 'expressly teaches the doctrine of the Holy Trinity'.[1] He adds that he has found many other sayings or writings of Hermes in Stobaeus.

In Turnebus's edition, three Hermetic excerpts from Stobaeus (viz. *Exc.* II A, *Exc.* I, and the Greek original of *Ascl. Lat.* III. 27 e) are printed as an appendage to *Corp.* I–XIV, and included under the title *Poimandres.*

Flussas (François Foix de Candalle), 1574.—*Mercurii Trismegisti Pimandras utraque lingua restitutus, D. Francisci Flussatis Candallae industria. . . . Burdigalae, . . .* 1574.

Flussas used no manuscript. His text is based on that of Turnebus. He has made a good many alterations (some of his emendations were suggested or approved by 'Josephus Scaliger, iuvenis illustrissimus', and other scholars); but where his printed text differs from that of Turnebus, he has, with few exceptions, given the Turnebus-reading in his margin. Thus, if we substitute the marginal readings for those of the text, we have in this edition an almost exact reproduction of the MS. from which Turnebus printed. The *Pimandras* of Flussas[2] is to this day, with the exception of the scarce *editio princeps*, the only publication in which is to be found a trustworthy printed text of those parts of the *Corpus* which have not been edited by Reitzenstein—i. e. of *Corp.* II–XII and XIV.

Flussas gives to *Corp.* I–XIV the title *Trismegisti Pimandras*, and calls the several *libelli* 'Caput I', 'Caput II', &c. After XIV he appends, and includes under the title *Pimandras*, a 'Caput XV', which is made up of the same three Stobaeus-excerpts which had been inserted by Turnebus, with the addition of the extract from Suidas which Vergicius had quoted in his preface to the *editio princeps*. After this stands 'Caput XVI' (our *Libellus* XVI), under the title *Aesculapii ad Ammonem.* But Flussas tacitly omits the surviving fragment of *Libellus* XVII, doubtless because he saw that it has nothing to do with *Libellus* XVI, to which, in the MSS. and the *editio princeps*, it is joined on as a part of the same document.

[1] See Suidas, *Testim.*

[2] The latest reprint of the *Pimandras* of Flussas is that which is included in the Cologne edition (1630) of Rossel's commentary. (See below.)

He also omits *Libellus* XVIII, probably because he saw that it could not rightly be ascribed to Asclepius.

In his dedicatory letter, addressed to the Emperor Maximilian II,[1] Flussas says that Hermes attained to a knowledge of divine things surpassing that which was revealed to the Hebrew prophets, and equalling that of the Apostles and Evangelists. 'Nimirum hic (Trismegistus) unus inter eos, qui divinitus inspirati sunt, de omnipotentis dei essentia solerti admodum colloquio quamplura detegit—mundi facturam, hominis ad Dei imaginem ac similitudinem opificium, eiusdem insuper tantae miseriae lapsum, huius denique lapsus amplioris foelicitatis medelam: undique Deum incorporeum ac extra materiam sciscitandum edocet. At si exigua sint haec, et antiquos Divini nutus nuncios nihilo antecellentia, aderunt quamplura, quae a Mose, prophetis, ac quibusvis Christi patefactionem praecedentibus silentio praetermissa sunt, Mercurio huic termaximo patefacta. Qualia sunt, de Triade summa uno Deo sermo:[2] Divinum insuper Verbum Patris filium:[3] ac a Patre et Verbo Spiritum, ignis et spiritus Deum, prolatum, cunctorum operatorem fuisse:[4] Verbum autem unum hominem, Divino nutu regenerandorum hominum ἐνέργειαν extitisse:[5] ab hoc insuper regenerandi solo effectu salutem pendere.[6] Cratere item Spiritu referto sacrosanctum aperit Baptisma.[7] Corporibus officio functis ad sua munia reditum pollicetur.[8] Precationes demum omnipotenti Deo prolatas, per Verbum offerri iubet.'[9] 'What more', asks Flussas, 'is made known to us by those who were instructed by our Saviour himself? And yet this man was anterior in time, not only to the disciples of our Lord, but also to all the prophets and teachers of our Law, and, as the Ancients say, to Moses himself.' He must then, Flussas thinks, have been inspired by God, and more fully inspired than any of the Hebrew Prophets.

In his preface (which is reprinted in Parthey's *Poemander*) Flussas

[1] *Invictissimo Caesari Maximiliano huius nominis quarto.* The man is Maximilian II, who was emperor from 1564 to 1576. What does Flussas mean by calling him 'the *fourth* of that name'? Miss Helen Cam tells me that there were two Saints named Maximilian, one of whom was martyred in A. D. 295 and the other in A. D. 362 (*Biographie Universelle*), and suggests that these two Saints may have been reckoned as the first and second Maximilians.

[2] This refers especially to the extract from Suidas.

[3] *Corp.* I. 6. [4] *Corp.* I. 9. [5] *Corp.* XIII. 4.

[6] *Corp.* XIII *passim.* [7] *Corp.* IV. 4.

[8] *Corp.* III. 4, taken to signify the resurrection of the body.

[9] *Corp.* XIII. 21. Most of these supposed instances of distinctively Christian doctrine in the *Hermetica*, if not all of them, are due to misunderstandings of the text.

mentions, and apparently adopts,[1] the opinion that Trismegistus first put forth his writings in the Egyptian language, and afterwards himself translated them into Greek.

As to the Latin *Asclepius*, Flussas thinks it probable that Apuleius, who is known to have been a very wicked man, inserted idolatrous and impious passages[2] into his translation of the Greek text of Hermes, and then suppressed the Greek original, in order that his fraud might escape detection. Since the *Asclepius* has been thus polluted, Flussas decides not to include it in his edition.

He discusses the date of Trismegistus at some length, and gives reasons for thinking that he flourished about the time of Abraham.

Hannibal Rossel, *Pymander Mercurii Trismegisti*, Cracow, 1585–1590. This is a ponderous commentary, in six volumes, on selected passages of *Corp.* I–VII and the Latin *Asclepius*. The passages taken from the *Corpus* are given in Latin only, and not in Greek. I have merely glanced into Rossel's commentary; but I gather from what others say about it that nothing could possibly be gained by reading it. He appears to use the sayings of Hermes merely as pegs on which to hang his own disquisitions on things in general.[3]

A later edition of Rossel's commentary, with a reprint of Flussas's *Pimandras* prefixed to it, was printed in Cologne in 1630.

Patritius, 1591.—Patrizzi published the *libelli* of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, together with much other matter, in a comprehensive work, which was printed at Ferrara in 1591.[4]

Title-page of the second edition: *Nova de universis philosophia, libris quinquaginta comprehensa: in qua Aristotelico methodo non per motum, sed per lucem et lumina ad primam causam ascenditur. Deinde nova quadam ac peculiari methodo tota in contemplationem venit divinitas. Postremo methodo Platonico rerum universitas a conditore Deo deducitur.*[5] *Auctore Francisco Patritio. . . . Quibus postremo sunt adiecta | Zoroastris oracula CCCXX, ex Platonicis collecta: | Hermetis*

[1] His language on this point is far from clear, and I am not sure that I have understood him rightly.

[2] He doubtless means especially *Ascl. Lat.* III. 23 b–24 a and 37–38 a, the passages in which it is asserted that 'men make gods'.

[3] The contents of the several volumes are described in the title-pages as follows: Tom. I, '*de S. S. Trinitate*'; Tom. II, '*de Spiritu S. et angelis*'; Tom. III, '*de ente, materia, forma, et rebus metaphysicis*'; Tom. IV, '*de caelo*'; Tom. V, '*de Elementis, et descriptione totius orbis*'; Tom. VI, '*de immortalitate Animae*'.

[4] I have seen the second edition of this work (Venice, 1593), but not the first edition (Ferrara, 1591).

[5] In place of all this (from *Nova de universis* to *Deo deducitur*), the title of the first edition, as given by Fabricius, has only *De aethere ac rebus coelestibus.*

Trismegisti libelli, et fragmenta, quotcumque reperiuntur, ordine scientifico disposita: | Asclepi discipuli tres libelli: | Mystica Aegyptiorum, a Platone dictata, ab Aristotele excepta et perscripta Philosophia: | Platonicorum dialogorum novus penitus a Francisco Patritio inventus ordo scientificus: | Capita demum multa in quibus Plato concors, Aristoteles vero Catholice fidei adversarius ostenditur. | Venetiis, . . . 1593.[1]

Patrizzi seems to have been impelled by a genuine enthusiasm to take upon himself the task of bringing about a restoration of true religion; and he regarded the *Hermetica* as one of the most effective instruments that could be used in the execution of this design. In his preface, addressed to Pope Gregory XIV, he says: 'In this volume I present to you five philosophies, viz. (1) *nostram recens conditam*,[2] (2) *Chaldaicam Zoroastri*,[3] (3) *Hermetis Trismegisti Aegyptiam*,[4] (4) *Aegyptiam aliam mysticam*,[5] and (5) *aliam Platonis pro-*

[1] Certain parts of Patrizzi's work, including his collection of *Hermetica*, were reissued at London in 1611, in a volume thus entitled: *Hermetis Trismegisti Opuscula, cum fragmentis quotquot reperiuntur, ordine scientifico disposita . . . | Item Asclepii discipuli tres libelli. | Quibus sunt adiecta | Zoroastri oracula CCCXX . . .: | Mystica Aegiptiorum a Platone dictata . . . Philosophia. | Londini 1611. | Illustrissimo . . . D. Johanni Radcliffe . . . admirandum hunc divinae sapientiae thesaurum, grati animi obsequium, L.M.D.C.Q.* In this republication Patrizzi's own system of philosophy is omitted; the *Hermetica* are placed at the beginning of the volume, as being first in importance, and two of Patrizzi's other *adiecta* are appended to them. In the parts thus reissued in 1611 the pages agree, letter for letter, with those of the 1593 edition of Patrizzi.

[2] i. e. a system of philosophy constructed by Patrizzi himself. In Ueberweg's *Hist. of philosophy*, Eng. tr. 1874, ii, pp. 20, 25, 465, Patrizzi's teaching is described as a blend of a theosophy based on Neoplatonism with opinions on natural science which he adopted from his elder contemporary Bernardinus Telesius.

[3] i. e. the extant fragments of the so-called *Chaldaean Oracles*, an exposition, in clumsy Greek hexameters, of a Pagan system of *gnosis*. These *Oracles* were known to Porphyry, and were probably composed about A. D. 200. Scattered fragments of them, preserved by quotation in the writings of Proclus and other Neoplatonists, were collected and commented on by Psellus, from whom Patrizzi got them. See Kroll, *De Oraculis Chaldaicis*, 1894.

[4] i. e. the teaching of Hermes (*Corp.* I–XIV, Stobaeus-excerpts, &c., and the Latin *Asclepius*), and that of his pupil Asclepius (*Corp.* XVI–XVIII). As to the latter, Patr. says, '*De tribus his libellis, primus quidem* (i. e. *Corp.* XVI) *et tertius* (*Corp.* XVIII. 11–16) *digni videntur quibus Hermetis auditor* (Asclepius) *fuerit author. Sed secundus* (*Corp.* XVIII. 1–10), *quamvis ab eo tertius pendere videatur, suppositus possit existimari.*'

[5] The work reprinted by Patrizzi under the title *Mystica Aegyptiorum . . . philosophia* is a Latin version of a treatise entitled 'The *Theologia* of Aristotle', which had been translated from Greek into Arabic about A. D. 840, and was well known and highly esteemed among the Arabs, who supposed it to be a genuine work of Aristotle. The bulk of it is a paraphrase of portions of Plotinus, *Enneads* IV–VI; but in the introductory chapter Aristotle is made to speak in his own person, and refers to 'my earlier book, the *Metaphysics*'. Ueberweg (*Hist. Phil.*, Eng. tr. 1880, i, p. 425) says that it 'was known in a Latin translation to the Scholastics'. Soon after 1500 Franciscus Roseus found an Arabic MS.

priam.[1] . . . In our day, men laugh at philosophers ; and it is commonly said " So-and-so is a philosopher, he does not believe in God ". The reason of this is, that the only philosophy studied is that of Aristotle, which, as men know and are told, denies the omnipotence and providence of God. Yet Hermes said *sine philosophia impossibile esse summe esse pium.*[2] Reflecting on this saying, I thought that it might be possible to discover a truer philosophy, by which we might return to God who made us. I threw myself into the search for it ; . . . and after much toil and resolute effort, I think I have brought it to completion.

'I have appended to my own philosophy the other four (i. e. those numbered (2), (3), (4), and (5) above) ; for all these alike "propositum sibi finem habent, ut doceant Deum rerum esse conditorem, rectorem, curatorem ac provisorem, et ut homines tum illum, tum seipsos cognoscant, et addiscant, quibus modis ad creatorem Deum animae humanae redeant, aeternaque apud eum beatitudine fruantur ".

'I hope', says Patrizzi to the Pope, 'that you and your successors will adopt this new and restored religious philosophy, and cause it to

of it at Damascus, and got Moses Rouas to translate the Arabic text into Italian ; the Italian of Rouas was translated into Latin by Petrus Nicolaus ex Castellaniis ; and the Latin version thus produced was printed at Rome in 1519, under the patronage of Pope Leo X, with the title *Sapientissimi Aristotelis Stagiritae Theologia sive mistica Philosophia Secundum Aegyptios noviter Reperta et in Latinum Castigatissime redacta.* A revised edition of it, in more polished Latin, was published by Carpentarius at Paris in 1572 ; but Patrizzi preferred to reproduce the edition of 1519, as more faithfully representing the original. Fr. Dieterici has published the Arabic text (*Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles*, 1882), and a German translation of it (1883). Dieterici says that the Latin version of 1519 (i. e. that which Patrizzi reprinted), 'judged from the present standpoint of Arabic philology, is worthless'.

Patrizzi saw that the doctrine of this treatise is what is commonly called Neoplatonic ; yet he contrived to retain his belief that it had been written by Aristotle. His theory about it is as follows. Plato studied for thirteen years under the Egyptian priests at Heliopolis (Strabo 806), and was permitted by them to read the writings of Hermes Trismegistus. After his return to Athens, Plato taught two distinct philosophies—an 'exoteric' philosophy, which is given in his written Dialogues, and an 'esoteric' philosophy, based on the ancient wisdom of Egypt, which he imparted orally to his pupil Aristotle. The latter wrote down day by day the secret teaching which he received from the lips of Plato ; and the *Mystica philosophia* consists of the notes which he thus wrote down. Afterwards, Aristotle quarrelled with Plato and his followers, and started a school of his own in opposition to them ; and the books commonly known as Aristotle's writings are those which he wrote during that period of his life. But in his old age he returned to the true Platonic faith. The book in which this 'mystic philosophy' was written down by Aristotle was lost, Patrizzi thinks, immediately after his death, but was found again in the time of Ammonius Saccas, the teacher of Plotinus ; and the Neoplatonists borrowed from it.

[1] i. e. Plato's 'exoteric' teaching, which is given in his Dialogues.

[2] Herm. *ap.* Stob. *Exc.* II B. 2.

be studied everywhere. Why are those parts alone of Aristotle's philosophy studied which are hostile to God and his Church, while these *piae adiutrices* are disregarded? Assuredly the treatise of Hermes *de pietate ac philosophia*[1] contains more philosophy than all the works of Aristotle taken together. . . . "Poemander (i. e. *Corp.* I) creationem mundi et hominis, cum Mosaica fere eandem, complectitur. Et Trinitatis mysterium longe apertius quam Moses ipse enarrat. Multi apud (Hermetem) et vera pietate et vera philosophia sunt plenissimi libelli, qui pro Aristotelis impiis subrogari et possint et debent."

'Many of Plato's dialogues also may be publicly taught "sine impietatis periculo ullo, pietatis adiumento multo" ; especially the Philebus, Timaeus, Sophista, Parmenides, and Phaedo. "Plotini libri omnes sacram quandam continent verius theologiam quam philosophiam." (He mentions with approval Proclus and Damascius also.)

'Almost all the early Fathers, "quia scirent paucis mutatis Platonicos facile Christianos fieri posse, . . . Platonem eiusque sectatores hosce philosophis reliquis omnibus antetulerunt, Aristotelem non nisi cum infamia nominarunt. Quadringentis vero abhinc circiter annis[2] Scholastici Theologi in contrarium sunt annixi, Aristotelicis impietatibus pro fidei fundamentis sunt usi. Excusatos eos habemus, quod cum Graecas litteras nescirent, illos cognoscere non potuerunt. Non vero eos excusamus, quod impietate (-tati?) pietatem adstruere sint conati. . . ."

'I would have you then, Holy Father, and all future Popes, give orders that some of the books which I have named[3] shall be continually taught everywhere, as I have taught them for the last fourteen years at Ferrara. You will thus make all able men in Italy, Spain, and France friendly to the Church ; and perhaps even the German protestants will follow their example, and return to the Catholic faith. It is much easier to win them back in this way than to compel them by ecclesiastical censures or by secular arms. You should cause this doctrine to be taught in the schools of the Jesuits, who are doing such good work. If you do this, great glory will await you among men of future times. And I beg you to accept me as your helper in this undertaking.'

[1] i. e. Herm. *ap.* Stob. *Exc.* II B, which Patrizzi has placed at the beginning of his collection of *Hermetica*.

[2] i. e. from about A. D. 1200.

[3] Including the *Hermetica*.

In an introduction to that part of his book which contains the *Hermetica*, Patrizzi says, 'Videtur Hermes hic Trismegistus coetaneus quidem fuisse Mosy, sed paulo senior. . . . Apparebit autem ex hisce Hermetis tum libellis tum fragmentis pia quaedam erga Deum philosophia, fidei dogmatibus ut plurimum consona. Apparebit quoque Graecas philosophias omnes, Pythagoream, Platonicam in divinis ac morum dogmatibus,[1] Aristotelicam autem et Stoicam in physicis, et medicinae etiam prima principia, et ex his et ex aliis qui perierunt eius libris fuisse desumptas.

'Quamobrem (apparebit) longe satius et Christianis hominibus consultius et utilius longe futurum esse, si Hermetis dogmata potius quam Aristotelica, quae ubique magna scatent impietate, in scholis publicis et monachorum Aristoteli nimium addictorum coenobiis aliquando legantur. Quod ut comodius fieri queat, libellos iuxta materiarum, uti diximus, sequellam et seriem in ordinem redegimus.'

He has rearranged the *Hermetica*, and placed them in the following order: Stob. I. 41. 1 (which I have divided into the two distinct excerpts II B and XI): *Corp.* I, III, X, V, VI, XIII, VII, II, XI, XII, IV: *Kore Kosmu*, followed by eight other Stobaeus-excerpts: *Corp.* IX: six Stobaeus-excerpts: *Corp.* VIII: *Corp.* XIV: fragments from Cyril, Stobaeus, &c.: the Latin *Asclepius*. Then follows, as a separate work by a different author, the ὅροι Ἀσκληπιοῦ πρὸς Ἄμμονα (i. e. *Corp.* XVI–XVIII). In regarding the several documents contained in the *Corpus* as unconnected *libelli*, Patrizzi made a decided advance beyond the position of the earlier editors; but there is not much to be said for the order in which he thought fit to arrange the Hermetic writings.

What were the sources from which Patrizzi got his text of the *libelli* of the *Corpus*? He certainly used the printed editions of Turnebus and Flussas. But Reitzenstein has found reason to think that Patrizzi based his text on a MS. other than that used by Turnebus, and that he merely introduced here and there the readings of the earlier editors. The question is, however, of little importance; for as Patrizzi has made many arbitrary alterations in the text, and does not tell us whether the reading which he adopts is derived from some authority or is of his own invention, his edition furnishes no material that can be used as an aid to textual criticism.[2]

[1] i. e. in theology and ethics.

[2] I have noted some signs of a specially close relation between Patrizzi's text of the *Corpus-libelli* and that of Q and Bodl. 16987. But it would be waste of time to investigate the question of Patrizzi's sources more thoroughly.

Casaubon, 1614.—*Isaaci Casauboni . . . Exercitationes XVI. Ad Cardinalis Baronii Prolegomena in Annales. . . . Londini . . . MDCXIIII.* In *Exercit.* I. 10, pp. 70 ff., Casaubon discusses the date and origin of the *Sibyllina* and *Hermetica*; and in this short tractate we find for the first time a view of the Hermetic writings which is, in the main at least, historically sound. As compared with all who had previously written on the subject, from Lactantius to Patrizzi, Casaubon οἷος πέπνυται, τοὶ δὲ σκιαὶ ἀΐσσουσιν. He does not deny that there may have been a man named Hermes Trismegistus who lived before Moses; but he sees that the *Hermetica* cannot have been written by any such person. He says, 'Librum . . . qui sub nomine Mercurii Trismegisti circumferri ab aliquot seculis cepit (i. e. the Corpus Hermeticum) non veremur pronuntiare, et omni asseveratione confirmare, esse ψευδεπίγραφον': and he concludes that it was written about the end of the first century after Christ.[1] 'Nunc probemus certis argumentis . . . librum qui hodieque plerisque doctorum in deliciis et magno pretio est tanquam vere Mercurii Trismegisti, ψευδεπίγραφον esse et merum πλάσμα. . . . Nos igitur . . . affirmamus, in eo libro contineri non Aegyptiacam Mercurii doctrinam, sed partim Graecam e Platonis et Platonicorum libris, et quidem persaepe ipsis eorum verbis, depromptam: partim Christianam[2] e libris sacris petitam.

'Quodnam philosophiae genus in usu olim fuerit apud veteres Aegyptios, a libris Eusebii . . . et aliis priscis scriptoribus potest intelligi. At Pseudomercurii huius diversa est genere toto philosophandi ratio:[3] et res enim et verba scholam Platonis sapiunt, iis dumtaxat exceptis, quae miscet e libris divinis. Ne temere videamur tot doctorum opinioni contraire, paucis demonstremus quod dicimus.' (Here he goes into details, and discusses particular passages in the *Corpus*.)

'Tum autem, si vere Mercurii esset hic liber, oporteret ut vel ipse Graece eum scripsisset, vel ex Aegyptiaco sermone aliquis vertisset. Nos utrumvis horum firmissime negamus esse factum: prius, quia stylus huius libri alienissimus est a sermone illo quo

[1] He puts the date a little too early; most of the *libelli* of the *Corpus* were probably written in the third century, some perhaps in the second century.

[2] He ought rather to have said *Judaicam*. (See *Corp.* I and III.)

[3] More is now known about the modes of thought of the ancient Egyptians; but Casaubon's opinion on this point is confirmed by the results of modern Egyptology. Traces of the influence of indigenous Egyptian thought, if not entirely absent, are rare in the *Hermetica*.

Graeci Hermetis aequales sunt usi. . . . Hic (i. e. in the Hermetica) nullum penitus vestigium antiquitatis: . . . contra, multa hic vocabula, quae ne vetustior quidem Hellenismus agnoscat eo qui vigebat circa nativitatem Domini. . . . Quis priorum dixit ὑλότης, οὐσιότης, et id genus alia?

'Nego etiam ex alia lingua versa haec esse: αὐτοφυῆ esse et Graece primitus scripta pertendo. Nulla unquam versio tam feliciter elaborata fuit, quae peregrinitatem non prae se ferret, et certis indiciis demonstraret. Hic nihil eiusmodi. Omnia γνησίως Graeca, et Hellenismo eius quam designavi aetatis, sua ubique constat ratio . . . .

'Falsum igitur est, immo falsissimum, quod iste planus in Epistola ad Ammonem (*Corp.* XVI) persuadere vult nobis; a Mercurio prius Aegyptiaco sermone ista fuisse conscripta. Falsissimum etiam est, quod docti indocti videntur hactenus credidisse; aut scripta haec fuisse a Mercurio Trismegisto, vetustissimo Aegypti sapiente, aut ex illius scriptis esse versa. Quorum utrumque probavimus esse longe absurdissimum.'

In one important matter, however, Casaubon's view requires correction. He thinks, as his predecessors thought, that the *Corpus* contains distinctively Christian doctrines; and he thence infers that the *Hermetica* were, like the *Oracula Sibyllina*, forged by a Christian ('or rather', he adds, 'a semi-Christian'), with the object of recommending the doctrines of his religion to his Pagan neighbours by making it appear that they were vouched for by the authority of an ancient and venerated name.[1] This is true of some of the *Sibyllina*; but it is not true of the *Hermetica*. The authors of the *libelli* collected in the *Corpus* were Pagans; and apart from a few interpolated words, the resemblances to Christian doctrine which we find in the Hermetic writings are to be accounted for, not by assuming that the writers borrowed from the New Testament or from other Christian sources, but by recognizing the fact that, at the time when the *Hermetica* were written, there were many matters on which Christians and Pagan Platonists thought and spoke alike. We must, therefore, substitute 'a number of Pagan writers' for the 'Christian or semi-Christian' author of whom Casaubon speaks. With this

[1] Casaubon says, 'Neque vero dubitamus id egisse auctorem, ut multa pietatis Christianae dogmata, quae ceu nova et prius inaudita reiiciebantur, probaret ab ultima antiquitate sapientibus fuisse nota, et ab illo ipso Mercurio in literas fuisse relata, quem non solum Aegyptii, sed etiam Graeci propter vetustatem et doctrinae opinionem magnopere suspiciebant.'

correction, his statement of the motive for employing the name of Hermes may be considered to hold good.

Casaubon's opinion as to the period in which the *Hermetica* were written gradually prevailed, and came to be adopted by all competent scholars;[1] and, deprived of the prestige which their supposed antiquity had conferred on them, the Hermetic writings lost their hold on men's interest, and sank into comparative neglect.[2] Translations of the *Corpus* continued to appear from time to time;[3] but from 1630 to 1854, no reprint of the Greek text was issued.

Tiedemann, 1781.—*Hermes Trismegists Poemander oder von der göttlichen Macht und Weisheit, aus dem Griechischen übersetzt . . . von Dieterich Tiedemann. Berlin und Stettin*, . . . 1781. This is a

[1] e.g. T. Gale, in his edition of 'Iamblichus *De mysteriis*', 1678, says, 'Equidem parum tribuo omnibus istis scriptis, quae sub Hermetis nomine extant. Credo nihil esse aliud, quam adumbrationes quorundam locorum ex sacra pagina et antiquioribus philosophis excerptorum.'

[2] The true significance of the *Hermetica*, as documents of primary importance for the history of religion, not in the second millennium before Christ, but in the third century after Christ (the critical period of the struggle between Paganism and Christianity), has been strangely overlooked in the past, and is even now inadequately recognized.

[3] For instance: *The divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, in XVII books. Translated formerly out of the Arabick* [this presumably means 'out of the Egyptian'] *into Greek, and thence into Latine, and Dutch, and now out of the Original*[!] *into English: by that Learned Divine Doctor Everard: London . . . 1650.* This is a translation of *Corp.* I–XIV and three Stobaeus-excerpts. The text translated is that of Patrizzi, and the *libelli* are placed in the order in which Patrizzi arranged them. The preface (written, after Everard's death, by some one who signs himself 'J. F.') begins thus: 'This Book may justly challenge the first place for antiquity, from all the Books in the World, being written some hundreds of yeers before Moses his time, as I shall endevor to make good. . . . In this Book, though so very old, is contained more true knowledg of God and Nature, then in all the Books in the World besides, I except onely Sacred Writ.' Everard's translation has been several times reprinted—most recently by the Theosophical Publishing Society in 1893; and doubtless some readers, down to our own time, have accepted it without question as the oldest book in the world.

Des Mousseaux, *La magie au dix-neuvième siècle*, 1860, p. 343, speaking of the passages about 'making gods' in *Ascl. Lat.* III, says, 'Telle est l'antiquité de Trismegiste (whom he assumes to be the author of the *Asclepius*), que beaucoup d'auteurs le prennent pour un fils de Cham ou pour Cham lui-même! Ses ancêtres, dont il nous parle là, seraient donc les chefs *de la magie antédiluvienne!* Quelle date! et combien elle est logique!' Des Mousseaux, a devout Roman Catholic, includes under the term 'magic' both the Pagan cults of antiquity and modern mesmerism and spiritualism, and is convinced that both in ancient oracles, &c., and in the phenomena of contemporary hypnotism and the like (of which he has had much personal experience), the agent who operates is the Devil, or a devil. His book is ably written, and contains much interesting matter.

The time of the Deluge is the earliest time to which I have found the Hermetic teaching assigned in Europe. But Arabic writers dated it still earlier; for they identified Hermes with Enoch, and his teacher Agathos Daimon with Seth, son of Adam.

German translation of the *Corpus*, based on the Greek text of Flussas. Reitzenstein says that Tiedemann gives in his notes 'a whole series of excellent conjectures'. The book is scarce, and I have not seen it.

Parthey, 1854.—*Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander. Ad fidem codicum manu scriptorum recognovit Gustavus Parthey. Berolini, MDCCCLIV.*[1] This is an edition of *Corp.* I–XIV. Parthey says in his preface that, if it meets with a good reception, he intends to edit afterwards *reliqua Hermetis scripta, apud Lactantium, Cyrillum, Stobaeum servata*; but this project was never carried out by him. He says nothing about *Corp.* XVI–XVIII.

Parthey made use of the editions of Turnebus, Flussas, and Patrizzi, and Tiedemann's notes; but he professes to base his text mainly on two MSS., A and B.[2] *Cod.* A had been collated for him by F. de Furia, and *Cod.* B by D. Hamm. But whether through his own carelessness or incompetence, or through that of the collators, his statements as to the readings of A and B are untrustworthy;[3] and for any one who has access, either directly or through the medium of the *Pimandras* of Flussas, to the sounder text of the *editio princeps*, which reproduces without alteration that of a MS., Parthey's edition is useless, if not misleading.

Ménard, 1866.—*Hermes Trismégiste. Traduction complète, précédée d'une étude sur l'origine des livres Hermétiques. Par Louis Ménard. . . . Paris, . . . 1866.* The *Traduction* is a free translation of *Corp.* I–XIV, the Latin *Asclepius*, twenty-six Stobaeus-excerpts, some fragments from Cyril, &c., and *Corp.* XVI–XVIII. Ménard does not stick closely to the (often meaningless) words of the traditional text, but expresses in fluent French what he rightly or wrongly takes to have been the author's meaning. His introductory *Étude* (111 pages) is a sensible and well-written treatise on the *Hermetica*. For those who wish to make acquaintance with the Hermetists, but do not read Greek and Latin, Ménard's book is, I think, to be recommended in preference to any other work on the subject that has yet been published.

Zeller (*Philosophie der Griechen, Theil III, Abth. II*, 4th edition, 1903, pp. 242–54) gives an account of the *Hermetica*, and summarizes the doctrines taught in them. He says that these writings 'seem in their present form to belong to the last *decennia* of the third century after Christ'.

Reitzenstein, 1904.—*Poimandres. Studien zur griechisch-aegyptischen und früh-christlichen literatur. Von R. Reitzenstein. Leipzig, . . . 1904.* As an appendix to the book is printed Reitzenstein's critical edition of *Corp.* I, XIII, and XVI–XVIII.

The publication of Reitzenstein's *Poimandres* marks the beginning of a fresh stage in the study of the Hermetic writings. Working as a pioneer in what was, for modern scholarship, almost a new and untouched field, he has made some serious mistakes; but he has put the study of the *Hermetica* on a scientific footing, and all later work on this subject must be based on his investigations.

Reitzenstein has also discussed some passages of the *Corpus* in *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen, ihre Grundgedanken und Wirkungen*, 1910.

Among recent publications may be mentioned *Thrice-Greatest Hermes. Studies in Hellenistic Theosophy and Gnosis. Being a Translation of the Extant Sermons and Fragments of the Trismegistic Literature, with Prolegomena, Commentaries, and Notes. By G. R. S. Mead. London and Benares. The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1906* (three volumes). Mr. Mead's point of view is indicated by these words in his preface: 'Along this ray of the Trismegistic tradition we may allow ourselves to be drawn backwards in time towards the holy of holies of the Wisdom of Ancient Egypt. The sympathetic study of this material may well prove an initiatory process towards an understanding of that Archaic Gnosis.'

A strange and quite untenable theory as to the dates of the *Hermetica* has been put forward by Dr. Flinders Petrie, in a paper printed in the *Transactions of the Third Internat. Congress of the History of Religions*, 1908, pp. 196 and 224. He puts the date of the *Kore Kosmu* (which he calls 'the earliest Hermetic document') at 'about 510 B. C., or certainly before 410 B. C.'; that of *Corp.* XVI at 'about 350 B. C.'; and that of the original of the Latin *Asclepius* at 'about 340 B. C.'. And he says that 'if the longest Hermetic writings thus belong to the Persian age' (i. e. to a time before 332 B. C.), 'it is probable that the whole group are not far removed from that period'. In a book entitled *Personal Religion in Egypt before Christianity*, 1909 (ch. 3, 'The dateable Hermetic writings'),

[1] An exact reprint of Parthey's *Poemander* of 1854 has been published within the last few years. It would have been better if the *editio princeps*, or the *Pimandras* of Flussas, had been reprinted instead.

[2] 'Codices A et B ita secutus sum, ut nusquam, nisi monito lectore, ab eorum auctoritate recesserim.'

[3] 'Auf keine seiner Angaben ist irgenwelcher Verlass', says Reitzenstein.

he again expresses the same opinion as to the dates of *Kore Kosmu*, *Corp.* XVI, and *Ascl. Lat.*, adding that 'there is nothing incompatible with such a date for Egyptian originals, while the Greek translations may very likely show a later style'. He thinks (*ib.*, pp. 85–91) that *Corp.* II, III, V, VI, VII, VIII, and X, were probably written before the time of Alexander, and between 450 and 350 B.C.; that *Corp.* XII 'must' be earlier than 332 B.C.; that *Corp.* IV 'belongs to about 300 B.C.'; that *Corp.* XIII 'seems to be of the same date or rather later'; and that the date of *Corp.* I, which 'seems to be the last of the longer writings of this class', may very well be about 300–200 B.C. 'The Hermetic books as a whole', he says (p. 102), 'seem to hang together, and to belong to one general period, 500–200 B.C.' If these dates were proved to be right, there would necessarily result from them an astounding *bouleversement* of all commonly accepted views as to the history of Greek thought. But the arguments by which he endeavours to support his datings are not such as to be worth serious attention.[1]

Josef Kroll, *Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos*, Münster i. W., 1914. In this book Kroll's aim is 'to trace in detail the connexion of the Hermetic doctrines with Greek or Hellenistic doctrines in general, and to assign to the several notions (which present themselves in the *Hermetica*) their place in the history of religious and philosophic thought'. For that purpose, he arranges the teachings of the *Hermetica* under a series of subject-headings; and in dealing with each subject, he brings together what is said about it in the several Hermetic *libelli*, and quotes or refers to parallels in other writings. He concludes (pp. 386–9) that in the main the doctrines of the *Hermetica* belong to 'the sphere of Hellenistic thought—the general philosophy of the culture-world of that time', and that among the sources from which the Hermetists drew, special importance is to be assigned to Posidonius; that their thoughts have been little, if at all, affected by Egyptian influence; that their doctrines are in many respects similar to those of Philo, and that here and there are to be found in them distinctively Jewish notions; and that there is in the *Hermetica* 'no trace of any influence of Christianity'.[2]

[1] It is to be regretted that a man who has earned a high reputation by good work in other departments has in this case strayed into a field of research in which he does not know his bearings.

[2] These conclusions are in close agreement with those at which I had independently arrived before reading Kroll's book.

As to the dating of the Hermetic writings, Kroll says (p. 389) that, for most of them, any date after the time of Philo is possible, but that there are some pieces, one of which is *Corp.* I, that cannot have been written before the time of Numenius (A.D. 150–200). He adds, 'the dating in detail (of the several *libelli*) must be carried out by some one who undertakes the attractive but difficult task of distinguishing the different strata of the doctrines, and considering each of the different tractates in itself, and their relations to one another'.

That is precisely what I have aimed at doing in the present edition. There was no one Hermetic school or sect, and no one body of Hermetic doctrine. What we have before us is a number of *libelli*, written by a number of different men, each of whom had his distinct and separate point of view and mode of thought. There is in their teachings a certain general similarity, but there is also much divergence; and it is, for most purposes, more profitable to take the Hermetic *libelli* one by one, and investigate the doctrine of each of them separately, than to lump them all together.

C. F. G. Heinrici, *Die Hermes-Mystik und das Neue Testament*, edited by E. von Dobschütz, Leipzig, 1918. Heinrici died leaving the book unfinished, and von Dobschütz published Heinrici's MS. almost unaltered, merely adding some pages of *Nachträge* written by himself.

The purpose of this book is to determine the relation between the teachings of the *Hermetica* and those of primitive Christianity as presented in the New Testament. With that purpose in view, Heinrici, in Part II, examines the Hermetic documents one by one (in that respect his method is preferable to that of J. Kroll), and in each of them looks for similarities in word or thought to things said in the New Testament. In Part III, he arranges the teachings of the *Hermetica* in general under a series of subject-headings, and under each heading compares the teachings of the New Testament on the same subject. His conclusions may be summed up by saying that he finds in the *Hermetica* many passages that are *parallels* to passages in the New Testament, but little that is *borrowed* from the New Testament.[1]

He does not undertake to examine the relations between the *Hermetica* and Greek philosophic writings; his book is intended

[1] As to this, I should differ only by reducing his 'little' to still less, or to nothing.

to be a complement to that of J. Kroll, in which that subject was dealt with.

Heinrici's book contains some useful suggestions; but it does not throw much fresh light on the Hermetic writings. I have found in it mistakes on particular points,[1] some of which are of considerable importance. And taking the book as a whole, Heinrici does not seem to understand rightly the main drift of the Hermetic teaching, and the relations in which it stands to other religious and philosophic movements of the time. The term 'Hermes-*Mystik*', employed by him in the title and throughout the book, is ambiguous. Of 'mysticism' in the sense of aspiration towards union with God, there is much in our *Hermetica*; but of the sacramentalism of the Pagan mystery-cults, and of *theurgia* in general, there is hardly anything; and Heinrici, though he here and there shows some recognition of this fact, is too much inclined to bring the philosophic *Hermetica* into connexion with mystery-cults and magical practices which he includes under the vague term *Mystik*, but with which they have in reality little or nothing in common.[2] He begins by contrasting *Mystik* (which he defines as 'revelation-literature') with philosophy, and coupling together the names Orpheus and Hermes as representative of this *Mystik*. It would be truer to say that the name Hermes (as far as the *libelli* of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the other documents of the same class are concerned) stands for philosophy, or for a religion based on philosophy, and that of Orpheus (the reputed founder of the mystery-cults, and supposed author of the *Orphica* revered by the later Neoplatonists) stands for *theurgia* as opposed to philosophy. He refers to Plato now and again; but he does not adequately recognize the fact that the doctrines of these *Hermetica* are, in the main, derived from Platonism, and that all the other ingredients together are of comparatively small amount.

[1] Some of the mistakes might perhaps have been corrected if the author had lived to revise his work.

[2] For instance, he includes among the documents with which he deals the pieces printed in Pitra, *Analecta* II, which obviously (with one exception) belong to a different class, and have nothing to do with the philosophic *Hermetica*.

THE LATIN ASCLEPIUS

THE *Asclepius* has come down to us in the form of a Latin dialogue attributed to Apuleius. This Latin dialogue is a translation of a Greek original, which was known to Lactantius and others, but is now lost.

The manuscript tradition of the Latin text has been thoroughly investigated by P. Thomas; and the results of his researches are incorporated in the text which he has published in his edition of the philosophic writings of Apuleius (*Apulei opera quae supersunt vol. III, De philosophia libri, rec. P. Thomas*, Teubner, Lips. 1908). Thomas's edition supersedes all earlier publications of the text; and I have used it as my sole authority for the readings of the manuscripts.

Thomas classifies the more important manuscripts in two groups, as follows:

I. *Codices melioris notae:*

(1) B = Bruxellensis 10054–10056; written early in the eleventh century. Collated by Thomas. This MS. is very decidedly superior to all the rest. The hands of several correctors can be distinguished. One of these, B 2, who made his corrections at or near the end of the eleventh century, seems to have been a well-instructed man. In a few instances he alone gives what is certainly or probably the true reading; but Thomas concludes that his emendations are merely conjectural. The other correctors of B contribute nothing of value.

(2) M = Monacensis 621; twelfth century. Collated by Goldbacher for his edition of Apuleius, 1876, and again by Thomas.

(3) V = Vaticanus 3385; twelfth century. The text of the *Asclepius* contained in this MS. has not yet been collated. But as V very closely resembles M (being, in Goldbacher's opinion, a more carelessly written copy of the same original from which M was copied), it is not likely that its collation will add largely to the material at our disposal for textual restoration. M and V are closely

related to B; but Thomas thinks it probable that they were copied, not directly from B, but from a corrected copy of B.

(4) G = Gudianus 168 Bibliothecae Guelferbytanae; thirteenth century. Collated by Goldbacher.

II. *Codices deteriores:*

Collated by Goldbacher:

(1) P = Parisinus 6634; twelfth century.

(2) L = Laurentianus plut. LXXVI cod. 36; twelfth or thirteenth century.

(3) F = Florentinus, olim Marcianus 284; twelfth century.

Besides these two groups, Thomas mentions a MS. in the British Museum (Add. 11983, twelfth century), which he has found to be of very little value; and a large number of 'interpolated MSS.', which he has deliberately disregarded.

Thomas has reconstructed the text of the archetype from which our MSS. are derived. But that is only the first stage on the road to the discovery of the Hermetic teacher's meaning. The text of the archetype itself was corrupt; and even if we could restore the Latin to the exact form in which it came from the hand of its first writer, we should still be far from the completion of our task. We have to do with a Latin translation of a Greek document. The Greek text was probably already damaged when it came into the translator's hands; the translator was very imperfectly qualified for his work, and it is certain that he has frequently blundered. Our first business is to work back to the Latin text as the translator wrote it; but having done this, we have still to guess what was the Greek which the translator had before him, and thence to infer the meaning which the writer of the lost original intended to convey. Thomas has brought together the results of the previous work of other scholars in the emendation of the text, and has added much of his own that is of high value; but he has still left much to be done. Not only have both the Greek original and the Latin translation been damaged by errors of transcription; but it is evident that either the original or the translation has been mutilated in a quite exceptional way. Some passages have been lost, some have been misplaced, and many words, phrases, and sentences have been transposed from a context in which they made sense to a context in which they make nonsense. If the Latin text had once

existed in an intelligible and clearly written form, it is difficult to imagine any process by which it could have been reduced to its present state. The ordinary causes of corruption do not suffice to explain its condition. The facts might perhaps be accounted for by assuming that the translator never wrote out a fair copy of his work, but left it full of erasures and corrections, with words and phrases, representing his second thoughts, scribbled in wherever he could find room for them; and that this confused mass of words was afterwards copied out by some one who mechanically wrote down what he saw before him, without regard for the meaning.

The text which results from my attempts to restore the original order of the words is still very faulty, and I hope that it will be further emended by others; but in spite of the many problems which remain unsolved, I think that it is near enough to the original to enable us to recover the thoughts of the writer (or writers) of the Greek treatise in the main, though not in every detail.

In order that the reader may have before him the continuous text in the traditional arrangement, each word, phrase, or passage which I have transposed (with the exception of a few of the longest of these passages) is printed between doubled rectangular brackets [[ ]] at the place where it stands in the MSS., and repeated between doubled brackets of a different shape ⟪ ⟫ at the place to which I have transferred it.

In the foot-notes to the text, I have adopted the notation employed by Thomas:

ω = *omnium codicum consensus.*

ς = *codices interpolati.*

Ed. Rom. = *editio princeps Romana*, 1469.

In the English translation which faces the Latin text, I have aimed at expressing what I suppose to have been the meaning of the original Greek, rather than the meaning—or, too frequently, the absence of meaning—of the Latin.

The component parts of the ASCLEPIUS. It appears from internal evidence that the dialogue has been made up by putting together three distinct and unconnected documents—which I have named respectively '*Asclepius I* (*De homine*)', '*Asclepius II* (*De origine mali*)', and '*Asclepius III* (*De cultu deorum*)'—and adding a '*prologus*' and an '*epilogus*'.

The contents of ASCLEPIUS *I.* That part of the traditional text

which I call *Ascl.* I (viz. chs. 2–14 a) is a well-constructed whole, the parts of which are arranged and linked together with some skill. It is a treatise '*de tota summitate*' (ch. 7 c)—concerning *Deus*, *Mundus*, and *Homo*, and their inter-relations;—but the writer deals with this all-embracing subject from a definite point of view, and according to a definite plan. Throughout the discussion, *Man* is the central figure;[1] and the teacher nowhere loses sight of his practical aim—that of urging men to live the life to which, as men, they are called. To this end he describes man's origin and nature (partly cosmic and partly supracosmic), and his station among and relations to beings of other grades (2–7); the twofold function assigned to him in accordance with his twofold nature (7 *fin.*–11 a); and the destiny which awaits him according as he fulfils his function or neglects it (11 b–12 *init.*). The subdivisions in the treatment of the theme are clearly marked, and yet are so connected that we pass on from each to the next without a break. There are two subordinate topics on which the writer has a special message to deliver, viz. the call to renounce possessions (11 a), and the mischief of a certain method of philosophic teaching (12 *fin.*–14 a). But each of these topics is introduced without breach of continuity. The renunciation of possessions is spoken of as a thing required with a view to the fulfilment of man's function; and the corruption of philosophy is coupled with the love of possessions, as one of the hindrances to the realization of man's high destiny. Thus the concluding paragraph, on philosophy, is made to arise naturally out of the main subject; and so the discourse ends appropriately with a description of that teaching which the writer holds to be the true philosophy, and of which the treatise itself is a specimen.

Asclepius I, then, is a well ordered whole, complete in itself. There can, I think, be little doubt that the Greek original of *Ascl.* I at first existed as a separate document, of the same type as the *Hermes to Asclepius* libelli preserved in the *Corpus*; and it may be presumed that it once formed part of the collection of discourses known to Stobaeus as τὰ Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Ἀσκληπιόν.

The sources of Ascl. *I.* In this treatise, as in most of the *Hermetica*, there is little novelty or originality in the doctrines taught; and the discourse of Hermes contains few statements to

[1] The subject of this document might be described in the words of Pl. *Theaet.* 174 b: τί δέ ποτ' ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος, καὶ τί τῇ τοιαύτῃ φύσει προσήκει διάφορον τῶν ἄλλων ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν, ζητεῖ (ὁ φιλόσοφος).

which parallels cannot be found in earlier Greek writings. Yet the teaching of *Ascl.* I is not a mere repetition of traditional formulas; the writer's words ring true, and are alive with genuine feeling. If he has adopted his beliefs from others, they are none the less his own.

The influence of Plato is manifest throughout. The fundamental articles of the writer's creed—the doctrine of a supracosmic God, who is the maker and ruler of the universe, and that of a supracosmic element in the human soul—have been transmitted to him from Plato; and verbal echoes of phrases used by Plato may be recognized (see for instance the reminiscences of the *Timaeus* in ch. 8). But there is ample evidence of dependence on Greek writers of later date than Plato. The terms ὕλη and *qualitas* (ποιόν or ποιότης), as employed in *Ascl.* I, did not come into use until after Plato's time. The cosmology of chs. 2–6 is largely Stoic. The notion of a lower and mortal soul which is either composed of fire and air, or inseparably connected with those elements, must have been arrived at by a blending of Platonism with Stoic physics. The terms *quod sursum versus fertur* and *quod deorsum fertur* (τὸ ἀνωφερές, τὸ κατωφερές), ch. 2—*species* (εἶδος) in the sense of an individual, or the group of qualities distinctive of an individual, chs. 2 *fin.*–4—*spiritus* (πνεῦμα), ch. 6—and the statement that plants are ἄψυχα, ch. 4, are of Stoic origin. The phrase (νοῦς) *quae quinta pars soli homini concessa est ex aethere*, ch. 6 *fin.*, seems to have been derived from the Peripatetic Critolaus, perhaps through the syncretic Platonist Antiochus.[1]

The writer of *Ascl.* I says that man has been embodied on earth 'in order that he may tend the things of earth' (ἵνα τὰ ἐπίγεια θεραπεύῃ); and it is in the treatment of this theme, if anywhere, that he shows independence. The earliest Pagan writer in whom I have found this thought expressed is Cicero; and he probably got it from Posidonius. In this part of *Ascl.* I, therefore, the influence of Posidonius may be suspected.

The modification of a fundamentally Platonic system of thought by an intermixture of Stoic physics, such as we find in this document as well as in most of the other *Hermetica*, must have been derived from Antiochus and Posidonius, or from writers subsequent to them and influenced by them.

[1] The passage ⟨*sunt res*⟩ *quaedam quae ante factae sunt*, &c., ch. 5 *init.*, probably comes from Antiochus; but it is doubtful whether this passage existed in the original text of *Ascl.* I.

There seems to be nothing distinctively Egyptian in the doctrine of *Ascl.* I. The religious fervour of the writer is characteristic of his Egyptian nationality; but there is nothing in his dogmas that cannot be derived from Greek philosophy.

There are several phrases which show some resemblance to passages in the first two chapters of *Genesis*. See notes on ch. 3, *mundus . . . praeparatus est a deo* (i.e. ὕλη has been created by God); ch. 7, *pars* (*hominis*, sc. the νοῦς), *quam vocamus divinae similitudinis formam*; ch. 8, καλὸς δὲ (τῷ θεῷ) ἐφάνη ὢν (ὁ κόσμος); *ib., talesque omnes esse praecepit* (which implies the making of a 'first man'); *ib.*, man has been embodied *ut possit . . . gubernare terrena*. There is, then, a possibility that the writer was to some slight extent affected by Jewish influence; but as each of these thoughts may very well have been suggested in some other way, it remains a possibility only.

The writer uses the term ὁ κύριος as a name or title of the supreme God (ch. 8). Is this to be regarded as a result of Jewish influence? The word κύριος (with a dependent genitive) was applied to Zeus by Pindar, *Isthm.* 4 (5). 67: Ζεὺς τά τε καὶ τὰ νέμει, Ζεὺς ὁ πάντων κύριος· and according to Liddell and Scott, κύριος occurs 'in inscriptions, as a name of divers gods, Zeus, Hermes, Kronos, &c., *vide C. I.* Index III; so Κυρία of Artemis, &c., *ib.*' But it was not commonly used by Greek philosophic writers with reference to the supreme God. There is no instance of this use of it in Diels *Fr. Vorsokr.*, in Plato, in Aristotle, or in Diels *Doxogr.*[1] But it was employed by the translators of the LXX as a rendering of the Hebrew name of God; and where it is similarly used by Pagan writers, it may have been taken over by them from Hellenistic Jews. It occurs frequently in the books of magic; e.g. the god is addressed as κύριε in Dieterich *Mithrasliturgie*, pp. 8, 10 (thrice), 14 (twice), and Dieterich *Abraxas*, p. 177, &c. Its use in such cases is comparable to that of the Hebrew names (e.g. Σαβαώθ, *Abraxas* p. 176) employed in magic invocations.

I have failed to find the slightest trace of Christian influence in *Ascl.* I.

Date of the Greek original of ASCL. *I.* The only definite *terminus a quo* is that which is given by the fact that the writer mixes Stoic physics with his Platonism. This sort of syncretism began in the time of Antiochus and Posidonius, i.e. in the first half of the first century B.C. It is therefore certain that the treatise cannot have been written before 100 B.C. But it was probably not written until much later.

A *terminus ante quem* may, perhaps, be inferred from the absence of any recognition of the existence of Christianity. The attitude of the writer of *Ascl.* I presents in this respect a contrast to that of the writer of *Ascl.* III. The latter, writing about A.D. 270 (see below), regards the advance of Christianity with horror and dismay; it is already clear to him that the Christians will soon get the upper hand, and that the Pagan cults will be abolished. But the writer of *Ascl.* I, when he asks himself (ch. 12 f.) what is the most serious obstacle in the path of those who seek salvation, finds it in the fact that certain Pagan teachers attach too much importance to the study of mathematics. If he had been aware that the very existence of his religion was threatened by the spread of Christianity, he could hardly have omitted to mention at this point a danger in comparison with which the error of which he speaks would have seemed to him a negligible trifle. This seems a sufficient reason for putting the date of *Ascl.* I earlier than that of *Ascl.* III. *Ascl.* I was probably written at a time when Christianity was not yet strong or aggressive enough to cause grave alarm or distress to the adherents of the old religions; *Ascl.* III was written at a time when it had already become apparent to the writer, not only that a danger was impending, but that the total extinction of Pagan religion was inevitable. For reasons given below, I think that a man in the situation of the writer of *Ascl.* I would not have been likely to ignore this danger at any time later than A.D. 260. We may therefore fix on 100 B.C. and A.D. 260 as the extreme limits between which the date of *Ascl.* I must be placed; and we might with strong probability restrict the range somewhat more narrowly, and say that the date must lie between 50 B.C. and A.D. 250.

I can find no internal evidence which would enable us to fix the date of *Ascl.* I more exactly; but on the ground of considerations which apply to the *Hermetica* in general, I am inclined to think that this *libellus* is not likely to have been written before the second century A.D.; and perhaps we should not be far wrong in conjecturing that the writer was a contemporary of Clement, who was teaching in Alexandria between A.D. 190 and 200.

[1] The nearest approaches to it are the following. Aetius, *Doxogr.*, p. 297 (Stoic): τῶν μὲν ἁπάντων τὸ θεῖον κυριώτατον, τῶν δὲ ζῴων ἄνθρωπος κάλλιστον. Hermias, *ib.*, p. 652, in a statement of the doctrine of Anaxagoras: ἀρχὴ πάντων ὁ νοῦς, καὶ οὗτος αἴτιος καὶ κύριος τῶν ὅλων. But in both these instances the word is followed by a genitive.

The circumstances of the writer. The author of *Ascl.* I was probably an Egyptian by race. He can hardly have been a priest; for he takes no interest in theurgic ritual; and the worship of 'daemons' (i.e. temple-gods) is, in his eyes, a comparatively low form of religion, though better than none. It may be inferred that he had not been trained in the schools of the Egyptian priests, but had received a Hellenic education in Alexandria. Perhaps he had attended the lectures of one of the professional teachers of Platonism in that city, and is speaking from his own experience when he complains that such teachers put difficulties in the way of a seeker after God by including in their curriculum a compulsory course of mathematics. But in spite of these difficulties, he succeeded in learning as much of Greek philosophy as he needed for his purpose; and we may suppose that he afterwards retired to some more secluded place, where he could live the contemplative life in companionship with a small group of congenial spirits, at first, perhaps, as a pupil of some older teacher of the *gnosis*, and afterwards as a teacher in his turn. The instruction in these little communities must have been chiefly oral, and carried on, for the most part, by means of colloquies between the master and a single pupil at a time; and when one of the teachers committed his thoughts to writing, no doubt he reproduced, in the form of imaginary dialogues between Hermes and Tat or Asclepius, the method and contents of his own talks with this or that disciple.

If the writer of *Ascl.* I practised what he preached (ch. 11), he must have renounced all private possessions; and it almost necessarily follows from this that the brotherhood to which he belonged, and of which he was perhaps the head, held property in common, and that the produce of their labours was thrown into a common stock, from which the wants of all the members were supplied. They must have divided their time between *cultus terrenorum* and *cultus caelestium*; that is, they must have been occupied partly in tilling the piece of land which they owned collectively, and partly in adoration of the *di caelestes* (especially in the form of hymn-singing, ch. 9), and in drawing near to the supreme God by private prayer and meditation, and by such talk between teacher and pupil as is exemplified in our *Hermetica*. They felt that, in living such a life as this, they were doing the work which God had sent them down to earth to do; and they looked forward with trustful hope to the time when they would be 'released from the bonds of mortality', and, by God's grace, permitted to return to their true home above.

Asclepius II. That part of the composite dialogue which I call *Ascl.* II deals with the origin of evil; the writer seeks to account for the existence of evil by attributing it to the operation of ὕλη. This discussion is not in any way connected either with the contents of *Ascl.* I or with those of *Ascl.* III; and the dualism of *Ascl.* II is irreconcilable with the monism of *Ascl.* I and *Ascl.* III. There can, therefore, be little doubt that the Greek original of *Ascl.* II was in existence before it was made use of to form a part of the *Asclepius*. It appears to be complete in itself; but whether it was an independent *libellus*,[1] or a piece extracted by the compiler of the *Asclepius* from a longer document, we have no means of knowing.

There is no indication of any definite date for the Greek original of *Ascl.* II. We may suppose it to have been written in the same period as the Greek originals of *Ascl.* I and *Ascl.* III, i.e. probably about A.D. 150–270; and this supposition is to some extent confirmed by the resemblance between the teaching of *Ascl.* II and that of Numenius and Hermogenes (A.D. 150–200) on the same subject.

The contents of ASCLEPIUS *III.* That part of the traditional text which I have named *Ascl.* III presents, at first sight, a mere chaos of passages not only unconnected with *Ascl.* I and *Ascl.* II, but also unconnected with one another. But this confusion may be in part, if not wholly, a result of the mutilated and disordered state in which the Latin text has come down to us; and it seems probable that the Greek original of *Ascl.* III existed as a single document before the composite dialogue was compiled.

It appears that a number of passages were somehow severed from their context, but were preserved as detached fragments; and that these fragments were collected into two blocks (27 b–29 b and 33–6), which have been inserted into the text at the two places at which we find them. I have transposed these passages to what I conjecture to have been their original positions; and the contents of *Ascl.* III, as rearranged by me, may be tabulated as follows:

[1] It would be a short *libellus*, but not shorter than some other *Hermetica* which may perhaps have been written as independent *libelli*, and meant to stand alone, e.g. *Corp.* VIII and *Corp.* III.

α { 16 b, 17 a c, ⟨⟨33 a c, 34 a⟩⟩: *Ratio mundanorum*; a short account of the constituents of the material universe, viz. ὕλη, μορφαί, and πνεῦμα.
18 b, 19 a, ⟨⟨34 b⟩⟩, 19 b ⟨⟨27 c b⟩⟩,[1] 19 c, ⟨⟨34 c, ⟨⟨17 b⟩⟩, 35, 36⟩⟩: *Ratio divinorum*; a discussion of νοητά.

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β { 20, 21: *Alia ratio divinorum*; on procreation.
22, 23 a: the gift of reason bestowed by God on man.
23 b, 24 a: man's power of making gods.
24 b–26 a: *the Prophecy*; Hermes predicts the extinction of the national religion of Egypt.
26 b, 27 a, 29 c–32 a, ⟨⟨40 b⟩⟩: the eternity of God and the time-process of the Kosmos.
32 b: the three kinds of νοῦς (divine, cosmic, and human).

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γ { 37, ⟨⟨27 d⟩⟩, 38 a: gods made by men (i. e. terrestrial gods).
38 b–40 a: functions of terrestrial and celestial gods; Heimarmene.

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δ { ⟨⟨27 e–29 a⟩⟩: *de inmortali et mortali*: on the life after death. (The latter part of this passage is lost.)
⟨⟨29 b⟩⟩[2]: the happiness of the pious in this life.

In the portion marked β (i. e. chs. 20–32 b, omitting the misplaced fragments 27 b–29 b), the discourse of Hermes runs on without a break. The portion marked γ (i. e. chs. 37–40 a), which is also continuous in itself, begins with a reference back to 23 b (*homo fictor est deorum*), and is thereby shown to have been intended by its writer to form part of the same treatise with β. As to the rest, there is much that remains doubtful; but the portion marked α, as conjecturally reconstructed, seems suitable for the beginning of the treatise; and the portion marked δ may very well have stood at or near the end of it.

Even in that part of the text which is undoubtedly continuous (viz. β, chs. 20–32 b), there is a lack of orderly and systematic arrangement; the writer seems to stray at random from one topic to another, as each in succession happens to occur to him. (In this

[1] It is doubtful whether the passage 19 b ⟨⟨27 c b⟩⟩ (i. e. the list of οὐσιάρχαι) is rightly placed here.
[2] It is uncertain where the fragment 29 b ought to stand.

respect, *Ascl.* III stands in marked contrast to *Ascl.* I.) The treatise as a whole has little unity; and it is difficult to describe its subject in a single phrase. But every part of it contributes in some way to the exposition of what the writer holds to be the true religion; and in some parts at least he is occupied in explaining what gods are to be worshipped, and how men ought to worship them. In the Prophecy he laments the impending abandonment of the old cults; his repeated assertion that men make gods (23 b, 37) is a defiant justification of the usages of Pagan worship in the face of Christian hostility; and the passage on time and eternity (26 b–32) leads up to a mention of that vision of the Eternal in which all worship culminates. Perhaps then the loosely connected discussions of which *Ascl.* III is composed may be fairly comprehended under the title *De cultu deorum*.

The sources of ASCLEPIUS *III.* The influence of Plato is manifest throughout. The fundamental conceptions of the writer—that of a supracosmic God, and that of an incorporeal νοῦς—are derived from Plato. The notion of eternity (26 b–32) is Platonic; and the use of the word *aeternitas* (αἰών) to express this notion comes from the *Timaeus*. The doctrine of νοητὰ and εἴδη contained in chs. 17 b, 18 b, 19 a c, 34 b–36, is based on the teaching of Plato; and the distinction between νοητὰ εἴδη and αἰσθητὰ εἴδη (17 b and 35) belongs to a stage of Platonism which can hardly have been reached before the time of Antiochus (first century B.C.). The daemonology of 27 e–29 a must have been taken over from some Platonic authority. The use of the term ὕλη (17 a) originated among the pupils of Plato. In 16 b, the Kosmos is described as *sensibilis deus* (αἰσθητὸς θεός, Pl. *Tim.*).

To Stoic influence must be ascribed the use of the term *spiritus* (πνεῦμα) in 16 b, 17 a, 18 b, and the doctrine of εἱμαρμένη in 39, 40 a. The definition of *vox* (φωνή) in 20 a is Stoic. In the words *quod dicitur extra mundum*, 33 a, the writer refers to the Stoic doctrine of a void outside the Kosmos. The statement that no two individuals are alike (ch. 35) is derived from the Stoics of the second century B. C., who maintained this doctrine in opposition to the Academics; and the astral explanation of individual differences (*ib.*) would hardly have been found in the writings of any Stoic earlier than Posidonius. The terms ἀποκατέστησεν and *regenitura* (παλιγγενεσία) in the last paragraph of the Prophecy, 26 a, are Stoic, and the contents of this paragraph are probably derived in part from a Stoic source. In the

account of the life after death, 27 e–29 a, the assumption that all souls alike, on their separation from the body, ascend into the atmosphere is of Stoic origin; and the division of the atmosphere into two distinct strata, and the purgation of impure souls in the lower stratum, are derived from Posidonius.

The statement that νοῦς is *divina pars mundi*, ch. 22 b, is due to the influence of Stoic materialism, but may perhaps have been transmitted to the writer by the Peripatetic Critolaus and the Platonist Antiochus. The remarks on circular movement in 31 *fin.* and 40 b may perhaps have been derived from Aristotle.

The contents of chs. 20, 21 (God is ἀνώνυμος or παντώνυμος—God is ἀρσενόθηλυς) may possibly be derived from native Egyptian sources. The views expressed in connexion with the statement that man makes gods (23 b, 24 a, and 37, 38) are Egyptian rather than Hellenic. In these passages, the writer formulates certain beliefs of his countrymen; he is here speaking of things familiar to him by direct and personal knowledge, and has no occasion to borrow from earlier writers.

In the list of οὐσιάρχαι (19 b, 27 c), the notion of a system of departmental gods, and the names *Zeus*, *Heimarmene*, indicate a Stoic source; but the terms ⟨*Decani*⟩, *Horoscopi*, and *Pantomorphos* are derived rather from the astral religion of Hellenistic Egypt. The combination of Stoic and Egyptian ingredients in this passage might be accounted for by the assumption that the scheme of οὐσιάρχαι has been borrowed from the Egyptian Stoic Chaeremon.

The form of the Prophecy, 24 b–26 a, may have been suggested by earlier apocalypses, Egyptian or Jewish; but its contents, so far as it refers to contemporary events, must be original.

Analogies to Jewish teaching may be found in the exaltation of human procreation, ch. 21 (cf. Gen. i. 28, αὐξάνεσθε καὶ πληθύνεσθε); in the statement that man is made *ex parte corruptiore mundi et ex divina*, ch. 22 (cf. Gen. ii. 7, ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς κ.τ.λ.); and in the application of the term *summus* (ὕψιστος) to the supreme God (*summus qui dicitur deus*, 16 b); but there is no proof that the writer was in any way affected by Jewish influences.

There is not the slightest reason to think that any part of the doctrine of *Ascl.* III has been derived from Christian sources. On the other hand, the writer's attitude is to a large extent determined by his repugnance to Christianity. This repugnance finds direct

expression in the Prophecy, and underlies his treatment of the topics of god-making and procreation.

Date of the Greek original of ASCLEPIUS *III.* A consideration of the sources from which the doctrine of *Ascl.* III is derived makes it certain that the treatise must have been written after the time of Antiochus and Posidonius, i. e. at some time later than 100 B.C. At no earlier period could Stoic conceptions have been blended with Platonism as we find them blended in this document. And if the writer has borrowed from Chaeremon, the date must be later than A.D. 50.

But the Prophecy, ch. 24 f., contains references to contemporary events; and by examining these references, it may be possible to determine the date more exactly. The contents of the Prophecy may be summarized thus: 'Cruel and impious foreigners will invade the land of Egypt, and slaughter a large part of the inhabitants; thereupon, the Egyptians themselves will become cruel and impious, and the national religion will die out.' At what date were these predictions written? It is evident that the writer is describing, under the form of a prophecy uttered by Trismegistus, things which had recently taken place, or were taking place before his eyes. If, therefore, we can identify the events of which he speaks, we shall obtain an approximate date for the writing of chs. 24–6 at least, if not for the whole treatise.

Let us consider first the predicted abandonment of the national religion.

Under the rule of the Persians and the Greeks, and under the earlier Roman empire, the Egyptian religion had maintained itself, not indeed unchanged, but unimpaired in strength, and unshaken by any sudden or violent transformation; and at no time could it be thought to be in danger of perishing, until it was threatened with extinction by the advance of Christianity.[1]

[1] Under the Ptolemies and the early Roman emperors, the only declared opponents of Paganism in Egypt were the Jews; and they were never numerous or influential enough to cause such a feeling of impending and inevitable doom as is expressed by our Hermetist. (On the Jewish rising under Trajan, see below.)

An illustration of the attitude of the Jews towards the Egyptian religion is to be found in *Orac. Sibyll.* 5. 484–503, written by an Alexandrian Jew of unknown date (possibly about the time of Trajan or Hadrian):

Ἴσι, θεὰ τριτάλαινα, μενεῖς ἐπὶ χεύμασι Νείλου
μούνη, μαινὰς ἄνανδος ἐπὶ ψαμάθοις Ἀχέροντος,
κοὐκέτι σου μνεία γε μενεῖ κατὰ γαῖαν ἅπασαν.
καὶ σύ, Σάραπι, λίθους ἀργοὺς ἐπικείμενε πολλούς,
κείσῃ πτῶμα μέγιστον ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ τριταλαίνῃ·

What, then, is the earliest date at which Christianity was powerful and aggressive enough in Egypt to give rise to such gloomy anticipations as are expressed in chs. 24–5 of the *Asclepius*? Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums*, Book IV, has collected the evidences of the spread of Christianity down to A. D. 325. Celsus[1] (A. D. 176–80) speaks as if Christianity had been almost extirpated. Doubtless he exaggerates the success of the repressive measures of Marcus Aurelius; but he could not have spoken thus if the Christians were numerous enough to cause serious alarm. In his time, Pagans regarded Christianity with hatred and contempt, but not with fear.

Tertullian[2] (A. D. 197–213) speaks in a tone which foreshadows the coming danger to Paganism. But allowance must be made for his rhetorical style; he greatly exaggerates the numbers and power of the Christians.

> ὅσσοι δ' Αἰγύπτου πόθον ἤγαγον εἰς σε, ἄπαντες
> κλαύσονταί σε κακῶς, θεὸν ἄφθιτον ἐν φρεσὶ θέντες·
> γνώσονταί σε τὸ μηδέν, ὅσοι θεὸν ἐξύμνησαν.
> καὶ ⟨τότε⟩ τῶν ἱερέων τις ἐρεῖ, λινόστολος ἀνήρ·
> "δεῦτε, θεοῦ τέμενος καλὸν στήσωμεν ἀληθοῦς·
> δεῦτε, τὸν ἐκ προγόνων δεινὸν νόμον ἀλλάξωμεν,
> τοῦ χάριν οἱ λιθίνοις καὶ ὀστρακίνοισι θεοῖσιν
> πομπὰς καὶ τελετὰς ποιούμενοι οὐκ ἐνόησαν.
> στρέψωμεν ψυχὰς θεὸν ἄφθιτον ἐξυμνοῦντες
> τὸν πρύτανιν πάντων, τὸν ἀληθέα, τὸν βασιλῆα,
> ψυχοτρόφον γενετῆρα, θεὸν μέγαν αἰὲν ἐόντα."

The Jewish Sibyllist here predicts the conversion of the Egyptians, as the writer of Isaiah ch. 19 had predicted it before him; but it is hardly to be thought that an Egyptian idolater would at any time have admitted that the conversion of the whole nation to Judaism was even possible, much less that it was inevitable.

[1] Celsus, in Origen *contra Cels.* 8. 69: ὑμῶν δὲ (sc. of you Christians) κἂν πλανᾶταί τις ἔτι λανθάνων, ἀλλὰ ζητεῖται πρὸς θανάτου δίκην. (The dates of the books here cited are taken from Harnack, *Chronol. der Altchrist. Litt.*, 1897–1904.)

[2] Tertull. *Apolog.* 2 (A. D. 197) 'Obsessam vociferantur civitatem, in agris, in castellis, in insulis Christianos, omnem sexum, aetatem, condicionem, etiam dignitatem transgredi ad hoc nomen'. *Ib.* 37 'Si et hostes exertos, non tantum vindices occultos agere vellemus, deesset nobis vis numerorum et copiarum? . . . Hesterni sumus, et vestra omnia implevimus. . . . Cui bello non idonei, non prompti fuissemus, etiam impares copiis, qui tam libenter trucidamur, si non apud istam disciplinam magis occidi liceret quam occidere? . . . Si enim tanta vis hominum in aliquem orbis remoti sinum abrupissemus a vobis, suffudisset utique dominationem vestram tot qualiumcumque civium amissio, immo etiam et ipsa destitutione punisset. . . . Plures hostes quam cives vobis remansissent. Nunc etiam pauciores hostes habetis prae multitudine Christianorum, paene omnium civitatium paene omnes cives Christianos habendo.' Tertull. *adv. Judaeos* (A. D. 198–203) 'In quem alium universae gentes crediderunt nisi in Christum?' Tertull. *adv. Marc.* 3. 20 (A. D. 198–209) 'Aspice universas nationes de voragine erroris humani exinde emergentes. . . . Christus totum iam orbem evangelii sui fide cepit.' Tertull. *ad Scapulam* 2 (A. D. 212–13) 'Tanta hominum multitudo, pars paene maior civitatis cuiusque, in silentio et modestia agimus'. See also Minucius Felix 9 (A. D. 222–50).

Origen[1] (A. D. 246–9), speaking the language of sober truth, supplies the necessary corrective to Tertullian's exaggerations. He admits that there are still many people, even in the Roman empire, whose ears the preaching of Christianity has not yet reached; and that the Christians are still 'very few' as compared with the Pagans. He looks forward with confident assurance to the ultimate prevalence of good over evil, either in this world or in the world to come; but he doubts whether the universal acceptance of the true religion is possible on earth.

Harnack (*op. cit.*, p. 376) concludes that 'as regards the stages in the history of the mission-work, the great advances, after the time of Paul, were made (1) in the epoch of Commodus (A. D. 180–92) and his next successors, and (2) in the years 260–303; and it was in the latter period that the progress was most rapid'.[2]

From the time of the edict of toleration issued at Milan by Constantine and Licinius in A. D. 313, the victory of the new religion was assured. Eusebius,[3] about A. D. 325, describes the Christians as 'the most numerous of all the nations'; and Firmicus Maternus, some twenty years later, speaks of Paganism as almost extinct.[4]

[1] Origenes, *ad Matth.* 24. 9 (A. D. 246–9) 'Multi enim non solum barbararum, sed etiam nostrarum gentium usque nunc non audierunt Christianitatis verbum'. Orig. *contra Cels.* 3. 29 (A. D. 246–8) ὁ δὲ πέμψας τὸν Ἰησοῦν θεὸς . . . ἐποίησε πανταχοῦ τῆς οἰκουμένης ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπιστροφῆς καὶ διορθώσεως κρατῆσαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον Ἰησοῦ, καὶ γενέσθαι πανταχοῦ ἐκκλησίας ἀντιπολιτευομένας ἐκκλησίαις δεισιδαιμόνων καὶ ἀκολάστων καὶ ἀδίκων. *Ib.* 8. 69 εἴπερ "ἂν δύο συμφωνῶσιν" ἐξ ἡμῶν . . . "γενήσεται αὐτοῖς παρὰ τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς πατρός," . . . τί χρὴ νομίζειν, εἰ μὴ μόνον ὡς νῦν πάνυ ὀλίγοι συμφωνοῖεν, ἀλλὰ πᾶσα ἡ ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχή; *Ib.* 8. 68 ἤτις (*sc.* ἡ τῶν Χριστιανῶν θρησκεία) καὶ μόνη ποτὲ κρατήσει, τοῦ λόγου ἀεὶ πλείονας νεμομένου ψυχάς. *Ib.* 8. 72 εὐχήν τινα εἰπὼν (*sc.* Celsus) τὴν "Εἰ γὰρ δὴ οἷόν τε εἰς ἕνα συμφρονῆσαι νόμον τοὺς τὴν Ἀσίαν καὶ Εὐρώπην καὶ Λιβύην κατοικοῦντας Ἕλληνας καὶ βαρβάρους ἄχρι περάτων νενεμημένους", ἀδύνατον τοῦτο νομίσας εἶναι, ἐπιφέρει ὅτι "ὁ τοῦτο οἰόμενος οἶδεν οὐδέν". εἰ δὲ χρὴ καὶ τοῦτ' εἰπεῖν, λελέξεται ὀλίγα . . . εἰς τὸ φανῆναι οὐ μόνον δυνατόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀληθὲς τὸ λεγόμενον περὶ τοῦ εἰς ἕνα συμφρονῆσαι νόμον πᾶν τὸ λογικόν . . . πάντων γὰρ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ κακῶν δυνατώτερος ὢν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ἡ ἐν αὐτῷ θεραπεία, προσάγει κατὰ βούλησιν θεοῦ ἑκάστῳ αὐτήν· καὶ τὸ τέλος τῶν πραγμάτων ἀναιρεθῆναί ἐστι τὴν κακίαν . . . καὶ τάχα ἀληθῶς ἀδύνατον μὲν τὸ τοιοῦτον τοῖς ἔτι ἐν σώματι, οὐ μὴν ἀδύνατον καὶ ἀπολυθεῖσιν αὐτοῦ.

[2] See Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 5. 21. 1; 6. 36. 1; 8. 1. 1; 9. 9.

[3] Euseb. *H. E.* 1. 4. 2 πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν πολυανθρωπότατον.

[4] Firmicus Maternus, *de Err. Prof. Relig.* 20 (A. D. 346–7) 'Licet adhuc in quibusdam regionibus idololatriae morientia palpitent membra, tamen in eo res est ut a Christianis omnibus terris pestiferum hoc malum funditus amputetur'. But this is an exaggeration. Paganism died slowly; and the reaction under Julian, A. D. 361–3, gave it a fresh lease of life. Firmicus himself, ch. 13, admits that the cult of Sarapis in Alexandria was still openly carried on at the time when he wrote. During the youth of Augustine, about A. D. 372, festivals of the Magna Mater and Attis were publicly celebrated in Carthage (Aug. *De civ. dei* 2. 4 and

From the evidence of the authors so far cited, we may form some notion of the stages by which Christianity advanced in the Roman empire as a whole. Our present purpose would be better served if we could trace the progress made in Egypt. The history of Christianity in Egypt down to A. D. 180 is almost a blank;[1] concerning that period we know only that some early Christian documents were probably written there; that a 'Gospel according to the Egyptians' was in circulation; and that Basilides, Valentinus, and other Christian Gnostics taught in Egypt. About 180, we find a vigorous Christian Church established in Alexandria, and the Christian 'Catechetical School' already at work. In the time of Clement (from A. D. 190 onwards), that School was attended by Pagans as well as Christians; and if Clement's words[2] may be taken as specially applying to Egypt, they imply that Christianity had gained a firm footing among the people of the country. Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 6. 1, 2) says that in the persecution of Septimius Severus, A. D. 202, a large number of Christians 'from all (Lower) Egypt and all the Thebaid' suffered martyrdom in Alexandria.[3] Harnack (*op. cit.*, p. 454) says that 'from the fragments of the letters of Dionysius Alex., bishop of Alexandria (A. D. 247–65), and from the accounts of the persecutions (A. D. 250–60), we get the impression that the number of Christians in Alexandria was large, and that Christianity had spread to a considerable extent in the towns and villages of the country. After the middle of the third century, Lower Egypt was certainly one of the regions in which the Christians were especially numerous. . . . At the time of the persecution of Decius (A. D. 250) there were already Christians holding public offices in Alexandria, and many wealthy men were Christians (Euseb. 6. 41; 7. 11)'. The descriptions of the persecution of Diocletian (A. D. 303) prove that there were at that time large numbers of Christians in the Thebaid. Dionysius Alex. (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 6. 41) speaks of Christians among the native Egyptian population as well as among the Greeks; and the translation of the Bible into Coptic was probably begun, in Upper Egypt, in the second half of the third century. 'It is certain', says Harnack, 'that at the time of the persecution of Diocletian the Christians in Egypt had long outnumbered the Jews; at the beginning of the fourth century their number probably exceeded a million.'

7. 26; Boissier, *Fin du paganisme*, i, p. 347). Libanius, *De templis*, about A. D. 384–7, speaks of Pagan cults as still practised (Boissier, *ib.*, ii, p. 341); the edict of Theodosius in A. D. 392 (*Cod. Theodos.* 16. 10. 12) shows that the need of fresh enactments against them was still felt at that time; and even Theodosius II (*Cod. Theod.* 16. 10. 22) issued an edict against *paganos qui supersunt, quamquam iam nullos esse credamus.* In A. D. 398, Claudian (*De quarto cons. Honorii* 570 sqq.; Otto, *Priester und Tempel*, ii. 281 and i. 404) describes a procession of statues of the gods in Memphis.

[1] Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung des Chr.*, p. 448.

[2] *Strom.* 6. 18. 167 ὁ δέ γε τοῦ διδασκάλου τοῦ ἡμετέρου λόγος . . . ἐχύθη . . . ἀνὰ πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην, πείθων Ἑλλήνων τέ ὁμοῦ καὶ βαρβάρων κατὰ ἔθνος καὶ κώμην καὶ πόλιν πᾶσαν, οἴκους ὅλους καὶ ἰδίᾳ ἕκαστον τῶν ἐπακηκούτων, καὶ αὐτῶν γε τῶν φιλοσόφων οὐκ ὀλίγους ἤδη ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν μεθίστας.

[3] Eusebius here speaks of 'a myriad' of martyrs: μυρίων ὅσων τοῖς κατὰ τὸ μαρτύριον ἀναδουμένων στεφάνοις. But μυρίοι in Euseb. merely means 'a good many'. Origen, *c. Celsum* 3. 8, says: ὀλίγοι κατὰ καιροὺς καὶ σφόδρα εὐαρίθμητοι ὑπὲρ τῆς Χριστιανῶν θεοσεβείας τεθνήκασι.

What, then, is the earliest date at which it would be possible for an adherent of Paganism in Egypt to foresee and lament the coming extinction of his religion? To this question no exact and certain answer can be given; but we may conclude that chapters 24–5 can hardly have been written before the renewed expansion of Christianity which followed on the close of the period of persecution under Decius, Gallus, and Valerian (A. D. 250–3 and 257–60). Thus from what we know of the progress of Christianity, we might fix on the year 260 as the *terminus a quo* for the Greek original of chs. 24–6. A *terminus ante quem* is given by Lactantius's quotation from the Greek original of ch. 26 in his *Div. Inst.*, written within a few years of A. D. 310. The prophecy, then, was probably written at some time in the half-century A. D. 260–310.

But we may hope to fix the date more exactly by identifying the particular events referred to. The prophecy speaks of an invasion of Egypt by *alienigenae*, and an immigration of 'Scythians or Indians or some such barbarians'. Who are these *alienigenae*? The term cannot be meant to apply to Greeks or Jews; for Greeks and Jews had been resident in Egypt in large numbers ever since the time of Alexander, and the invasion spoken of is evidently recent. Nor can the Roman conquest be meant; for we are told that the foreigners will 'fill the land'; but the Roman conquest caused no large and sudden influx of foreigners; indeed, Italians were at no time numerous in Egypt. And neither Greek, Jew, nor Italian can be described as 'Scythes aut Indus'.

We are also told of a vast slaughter, or series of slaughters, in which a large part of the population of Egypt perishes. The earliest incident to which this description could possibly be supposed to apply is the insurrection of the Jews under Trajan.[1] But though

[1] Mommsen, *Provs. of Rom. Empire*, Eng. tr., 1886, ii, p. 221: 'In the year

the Jewish insurgents, during their short-lived success, may have dealt harshly with the Egyptian idolaters, there is no reason to suppose that any large proportion of the Egyptians abandoned the religion of their fathers; and no one at that date could anticipate the total extinction of Egyptian Paganism. Besides, there is nothing in that incident to account for the mention of *alienigenae*[1] and *Scythes aut Indus*. It is therefore certain that the event referred to cannot be the Jewish insurrection of A. D. 116.

The next incident to which the prophecy of slaughter might seem to be applicable[2] is the massacre of Alexandrians by order of Caracalla[3] in A. D. 215. But the words *alienigenis terram complentibus* and *inhabitabit Aegyptum Indus aut Scythes* cannot be made to apply to Caracalla's soldiers.

It would seem that after this disaster Alexandria never fully recovered its former prosperity; and from this time onward, things went from bad to worse in Egypt. In A. D. 252 we first hear of a pestilence which ravaged the empire in successive outbreaks during a space of fifteen years, and by which large numbers of Egyptians perished. But it was especially during the troubled years which followed the capture of Valerian by the Persians in 260, that calamities fell thick and fast upon the land. We have a contemporary description of the situation in Egypt between A. D. 261 and 265,[4] in the letters written by Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria.

116, the Jews of the eastern Mediterranean rose against the imperial government.' The chief seats of the rising were Cyrene, Cyprus, and Egypt; it was 'directed to the expulsion of the Romans as well as of the Hellenes, and apparently to the establishment of a separate Jewish state'. The Jews for a time got the upper hand in Egypt; 'they killed those (Greeks and Romans) whom they seized'; but 'in Alexandria, which does not itself appear to have fallen into the hands of the Jews, the besieged Hellenes slew whatever Jews were then in the city'. The insurrection was suppressed by an army and fleet sent by Trajan. Appian says that Trajan annihilated the Jews in Alexandria.

[1] The insurgent Jews in Egypt, though they may have been reinforced by contingents from elsewhere, must have been in the main Egyptian residents, and not invaders.

[2] It is certainly not applicable to the insurrection of the Βουκόλοι in Egypt in the time of Marcus Aurelius (Dio Cass. 71. 4).

[3] Schiller, *Gesch. der röm. Kaiserzeit*, i. 747: 'A rising in Egypt summoned Caracalla to that land, and Alexandria was severely punished; the town was given up to the soldiers to be plundered, and a great part of the inhabitants were killed.' Dio 77. 22, 23; Herodian 4. 8. 6–9 and 9; Spartianus, *Vita Caracall.* 6. 2. 3. The details are uncertain, but the fact that a great slaughter took place cannot be doubted. 'The subjection of Egypt' is depicted on a Roman coin struck at this time.

[4] Euseb. *H. E.* 7. 21 ff. The persecution of the Christians was stopped by order of Gallienus (Euseb. *H. E.* 7. 13); and as, after the capture of Valerian in 260, the rule of Macrianus was for a time recognized in Egypt, the order of

'When persecution had ceased', says Eusebius, 'Dionysius returned to Alexandria. There, civil strife and war broke out; and as the Christians were divided between the two factions, it was not possible for him to visit in person all the brethren in the city. He, therefore, at the Easter festival, communicated with them by letter, writing to them as if from beyond the borders, though he was in Alexandria.'

What was the στάσις καὶ πόλεμος of which Eusebius is speaking? The only recorded disturbance in Egypt which can be assigned to this time is the insurrection of Aemilianus.[1] It may be presumed, then, that one part of Alexandria was held by the troops and partisans of Aemilianus, and another part by those of the Roman commander Theodotus.[2]

Dionysius writes thus: 'I am obliged to communicate by letter with the members of my own church; and how my letter is to be conveyed to them, I do not know. For it would be easier to go

Gallienus cannot have taken effect there before 261. Dionysius died in 265 (Euseb. 7. 28. 3). The letters must therefore have been written between 261 and 265.

Mommsen's account of these events is self-contradictory. He rightly says that Dionysius died in 265 (*Rom. Emp.*, ii, p. 250, n. 2), and that the Palmyrene invasion of Egypt did not take place until after the death of Odaenathus in 266–7 (*ib.* pp. 106, 107); and yet he speaks of the incidents described by Dionysius as if they arose out of the Palmyrene invasion (*ib.* p. 250).

[1] Trebellius Pollio, *Vita Gallieni*, 4. 1: 'Per idem tempus (i. e. not far from the time of the death of Macrianus, A. D. 262) Aemilianus apud Aegyptum sumpsit imperium. Sed hunc dux Gallieni Theodotus conflictu habito cepit.' *Ib.* 5. 6; 6. 4; 9. 1. *Tyrann. Trig.* 22: the Alexandrian mob attacked the house 'Aemiliani ducis': . . . 'Aemilianus sumpsit imperium. . . . Consenserunt ei Aegypti totius exercitus, maxime in Gallieni odium. Nec eius ad regendam remp. vigor defuit; nam Thebaidem totamque Aegyptum peragravit, et, quatenus potuit, barbarorum gentes (Blemmyes and Saracens?) forti auctoritate summovit. . . . Misso Theodoto duce, Gallieno iubente, dedit poenas.' *Ib.* 26. 4 (whence it appears that Theodotus was an Egyptian by birth). This 'Aemilianus dux' may be identical with the Αἰμιλιανὸς διέπων τὴν ἡγεμονίαν in Egypt, before whom Dionysius was summoned during the persecution of 257–60, Euseb. *H. E.* 7. 11. 6.

Mommsen, *Rom. Emp.*, ii. 251, n. 1, rejects the evidence of Trebellius Pollio, and doubts the existence of the alleged usurper Aemilianus. But this is surely an excess of scepticism. At any rate, the contemporary evidence of Dionysius makes it certain that either Aemilianus, or some person whose name we do not know, raised 'civil strife and war' in Egypt between 261 and 265.

As the Easter letter written by Dionysius during the στάσις is followed by another Easter letter written by him when fighting had ceased and pestilence was raging, and that again by others written 'when the city was at peace again', the στάσις may be assigned with probability, if not with certainty, to the year 262.

[2] We shall find a similar situation recurring a few years later in the 'siege of Brucheion'. We are told that Caracalla, after his massacre in 215, had ordered a wall to be built, by which the city was divided into two parts; Dio 77. 23, τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν διατειχισθῆναί τε καὶ φρουρίοις διατειχισθῆναι ἐκέλευσεν, ὅπως μηκέτ' ἀδεῶς παρ' ἀλλήλους φοιτῷεν. It would seem that this fortification was still in existence, and was utilized by the combatants, in the time of Dionysius.

into a foreign country, or even to traverse the world from East to West, than to pass from one part of Alexandria to the other. The principal street of the city is more impassable than the desert of Sinai; and the harbours of Alexandria have become like the Red Sea, for they have many times been reddened with bloodshed. The river which waters the city[1] was at one time drier than the desert;[2] at another time it overflowed its banks and flooded all the ways and lands around the city; and it is continually polluted with blood and slayings and drownings. As in the days of Moses, "the waters have been turned to blood, and the river stinks".[3] The air is turbid with noisome vapours; earth and sea, river and harbour reek with foul exhalations; corpses lie rotting everywhere,[4] and the dew is corrupted by their fetid juices. And yet men wonder what is the cause of these incessant pestilences! And they ask whence comes this great and manifold destruction of mankind,[5] and why it is that the inhabitants of our great city, young and old together, are fewer in number than the elderly persons[6] alone were in times gone by. For though all from fourteen to eighty years of age have now been included in the list of those entitled to receive the public corn-dole, they are less numerous than the people from forty to seventy years of age used to be in those times.[7] Men see the human race continually diminishing and wasting away, and yet they do not tremble, though the course of things is tending more and more towards their total destruction.'

In another letter, written (apparently in the following year) when the war is ended, but the pestilence is at its height, Dionysius says, 'There is lamentation and mourning everywhere; the city resounds with cries of woe by reason of the multitude of the dead, and of those that are dying day by day;[5] for "there is not a house where

[1] i. e. the canal by which the water of the Nile was brought to Alexandria.
[2] The regulation of the water-supply was probably neglected during the disturbances, and the water may have been purposely cut off by the besiegers.
[3] Exod. vii. 20, 21. Cf. *Ascl. Lat.* 24 b: 'Torrenti sanguine plenus usque ad ripas erumpes, undaeque divinae non solum polluentur sanguine, sed totae corrumpentur.'
[4] *Ib.* 'Tunc terra ista . . . sepulcrorum erit mortuorumque plenissima'.
[5] *Ascl. Lat.* 24 b: 'Vivis multo maior erit numerus sepulchrorum.'
[6] ὠμογέροντας, i. e. old, but still vigorous.
[7] Dionysius does not tell us of what earlier time he is speaking; it may have been any time before the massacre of Caracalla. It appears that, for the purpose of the corn-dole, a maximum limit of number was maintained unaltered. In the time of greatest prosperity the full number had been made up by entering on the roll those between forty and seventy alone; as the population decreased, the names of younger and older persons were added to the register.

there is not one dead"[1]—and would that there were not more than one. Even before this, many terrible things had befallen us; first, the persecution of the Christians;[2] . . . then, war[3] and famine, which we Christians endured together with the Pagans, sharing the evils which they inflicted on each other; . . . and then, after short respite to us and them, there came on us this pestilence, a thing most terrible to them, and the most cruel of all disasters.' The Christians, Dionysius says, tenderly nursed the sick, and buried the dead; and many of them, in so doing, caught the infection and died themselves. 'But with the Pagans, it is far otherwise; they thrust away from them people who were sickening; they fled from their nearest and dearest; they flung them out into the streets when they were dying; and they cast forth corpses unburied, like offal.'

There is a striking resemblance between the situation depicted in these letters and that predicted by Trismegistus; and it seems probable enough that the writer of the prophecy had lived through the events which Dionysius describes. As yet, however, we have met with no trace of the *alienigenae*. But Egypt was invaded by foreigners a few years later. Odaenathus of Palmyra, who ruled over the provinces of Syria and Arabia, and some adjacent countries,[4] nominally as *Dux Orientis* under Gallienus, but in practical independence, was murdered between August 29, 266, and August 29, 267. His widow Zenobia claimed the succession for her son Vaballathus, and ruled in his name; and, shortly after her husband's death,[5] she sent an army under her general Zabdas to occupy Egypt, professedly on behalf of the Roman emperor. The fullest and most trustworthy account of the Palmyrene invasion is that given by Zosimus. He says (1. 44 ff.) that, after the first Gothic campaign of Claudius, 'Zenobia, seeking to extend her power, sent Zabdas to Egypt, which Timagenes, a native of the country, was endeavouring to bring under the rule of the Palmyrenes. The invading army was composed of Palmyrenes, Syrians, and barbarians, and amounted to the number of 70,000 men. The Egyptians met them with a force of 50,000, and a great battle took place. The Palmyrenes were

[1] Exod. xii. 30.
[2] A. D. 257–61.
[3] i. e. the στάσις of the first letter.
[4] 'Possibly Armenia, Cilicia, and Cappadocia,' says Mommsen, *Rom. Emp.*, ii. 107.
[5] Apparently in the year 268; for Zosimus and Trebellius Pollio (*Vita Claud.* 11) agree that the Palmyrene invasion of Egypt took place in the reign of Claudius. Claudius succeeded Gallienus in 268, and there would hardly be room for the subsequent events if we placed the invasion later than that year.

victorious in the war; they placed a garrison of 5,000 men in the country, and withdrew. Probus, who had been appointed by the emperor (Claudius) to clear the sea of the (Gothic) pirates, hearing that Egypt was occupied by the Palmyrenes, proceeded thither with his force, and being joined by those Egyptians who were not of the Palmyrene faction, attacked the garrison and drove it out.[1] The Palmyrenes[2] once more marched against Egypt; Probus got together an army of Egyptians and Libyans to oppose them; the Egyptians (under Probus) got the upper hand, and were driving the Palmyrenes out of the country. Probus took up a position on the mountain near Babylon,[3] meaning to bar the passage of the enemy there as they marched towards Syria; but Timagenes, making use of his knowledge of the locality, occupied the summit of the mountain with 2,000 Palmyrenes, and surprised and destroyed the Egyptian force. Probus was caught with the rest, and killed himself. Thus Egypt became subject to the Palmyrenes.'[4]

[1] It appears that Probus, in treating the Palmyrene invaders as enemies of Rome, acted on his own responsibility, without waiting for instructions from the emperor; and Claudius, being too much occupied with the Goths to be willing to involve himself in a simultaneous war in the East, afterwards acquiesced in the *fait accompli*, and recognized Vaballathus as governor of Egypt in his name.

[2] i.e. probably the main army, recalled, in the course of its homeward march, by the news of the defeat of the garrison.

[3] Babylon is the fortress of 'Old Cairo', on the eastern bank of the Nile. (See A. J. Butler, *Babylon of Egypt*, p. 23.) The most convenient route from Alexandria to Syria passes round the apex of the Delta, from which Cairo is only a few miles distant up the river; and if the Palmyrenes, at the time of their retreat from Alexandria, still held the fortress of Babylon, they would naturally choose the point guarded by it for their crossing of the Nile. 'The mountain near Babylon' must mean some spur of the desert heights to the north-east of Babylon, i.e. east of the modern town of Cairo. (The citadel of Cairo stands on such a spur, and its site may be the very place.) Probus posted his force here, apparently with the intention of attacking the Palmyrenes in flank as they marched northward from Babylon after crossing the river. While the attention of Probus was fixed on the river-valley below him, Timagenes stole round behind, over the desert tableland, and came down upon him from above.

[4] These events are summarized by Trebellius Pollio, *Vita Claud.* 11, as follows: 'Dum haec a divo Claudio aguntur, Palmyreni ducibus Saba et Timagene contra Aegyptios bellum sumunt, atque ab his Aegyptia pervicacia et indefessa pugnandi continuatione vincuntur. Dux tamen Aegyptiorum Probatus Timagenis insidiis interemptus est: Aegyptii vero omnes se Romano imperatori dederunt, in absentis Claudii verba iurantes.' Trebellius Pollio has omitted to say that Timagenes was an Egyptian; but his account, as far as it goes, agrees in the main with that of Zosimus. But who is Probatus? Schiller, *röm. Kaiserzeit*, i. 859, says that 'near the end of the reign of Gallienus, Egypt had revolted under a usurper Probatus. On the accession of Claudius II . . . Zenobia . . . caused the land to be reconquered for the Roman empire by her general Zabda.' But there is no evidence for the existence of Probatus except this passage of Trebell. Poll.; and Mommsen (ii. 107, n. 1) is undoubtedly right in identifying the 'dux Aegyptiorum Probatus' of Trebell. Poll. with the Probus of Zosimus, who was not a usurper, but a Roman commander opposing the Palmyrenes in the interest of the empire.

The war of conquest must have lasted for at least a large part of a year (A. D. 268–9). How long did the Palmyrenes hold the country they had conquered? Zosimus (i. 50) says that Aurelian, after his accession (early in 270), spent some time in settling affairs in Italy and Paeonia, and then 'was purposing to make war on the Palmyrenes, who by this time were masters of the inhabitants of Egypt, and of all the East as far (westward) as Ancyra in Galatia'. Aurelian probably set out on his expedition to the East in 271, captured Zenobia and received the surrender of Palmyra in the spring of 272, and, on the renewed revolt at Palmyra, destroyed that city in the spring of 273.[1] At what stage in the war did he recover possession of Egypt? Zosimus does not tell us. Vopiscus says that Egypt was reconquered for Aurelian by the future emperor Probus,[2] but gives no date. The most probable date seems to be

The *insidiae Timagenis* by which he perished must mean the fight near Babylon. What pretext, if any, Zenobia put forward to justify her occupation of Egypt, we do not know; but if there was any disturbance in the country which might be represented as calling for her interference, no record of it has come down to us; and Probus evidently regarded the invasion as an act of war against Rome, though Claudius subsequently found it convenient to recognize the Palmyrene as legitimate governor of Egypt in his name.

The last sentence of Trebell. Poll., 'Aegyptii vero . . . verba iurantes', must be taken to mean that the Egyptians submitted to Vaballathus, accepting him, however, not as an independent ruler, but as viceregent of the Roman emperor Claudius.

[1] Bury on Gibbon, i. 462.

[2] *Vita Probi* 5. 9 '(Probus) pugnavit etiam contra Palmyrenos Odenati et Cleopatrae (i. e. Zenobiae) partibus Aegyptum defendentes, primo feliciter, postea temere, ut paene caperetur; sed postea refectis viribus Aegyptum et orientis maximam partem in Aureliani potestatem redegit'. The earlier part of this passage (as Mommsen has noted) suspiciously resembles the account of the conquest of Egypt by the Palmyrenes in 268–9. In that war another Probus had fought against the Palmyrenes in Egypt; and according to Zosimus's account, it might be said of him that he had fought 'primo feliciter, postea temere, ut caperetur'. It seems probable, therefore, that Vopiscus has erroneously taken as referring to the more famous Probus something that he had read about the doings of the other. The statement which follows, that the future emperor Probus reconquered Egypt for Aurelian, may none the less be correct; but the evidence is open to suspicion.

Mommsen (ii, p. 108) says, 'Egypt was already, *at the close of the year* 270, brought back to the empire . . . by Probus'; and he adds, 'The determination of the date depends on the fact that the usurpation-coins of Vaballathus cease entirely in the fifth year of his Egyptian reign' (by which must be understood the fifth year from the death of his father Odaenathus, not from his acquisition of Egypt), 'i. e. Aug. 29, 270—Aug. 29, 271; the fact that they are very rare speaks for the beginning of the year'. But this merely negative evidence is hardly conclusive; and the cessation of the coins may be otherwise accounted for, by the supposition that Vaballathus died in 270–1 (Schiller, i. 864).

Mommsen, *ib.*, p. 250, says, 'When Probus, the general *sent by Claudius*, at length gained the upper hand', &c. Is this a slip of the pen? Or has Mommsen, like Vopiscus, here confused the one Probus with the other? It is certain that the Roman war against the Palmyrenes did not begin till after the death of Claudius.

271; so that we may conclude that Egypt was under the dominion of the Palmyrenes for about two years.

An incident in this war of reconquest[1] is described by Eusebius (*H. E.* 7. 32), who speaks of it as occurring 'in the course of the siege of Piruchion[2] at Alexandria'. The Roman commander held one part of the city, and was blockading the Palmyrene faction (including, it would seem, the bulk of the inhabitants), who were cooped up in the other part, and were dying of hunger. The besieged Alexandrians were under the rule of a council (*βουλή, συνέδριον*). An influential Christian who was amongst them induced the council to grant permission to the starving non-combatants to pass the lines and go over to the Romans, and at the same time, communicating with a friend on the other side who had access to the Roman commander, obtained from the latter a promise to spare the lives of all who came over to him. By so doing, he saved from death not only the aged, the women, and the children, but also a large number of able-bodied men, who took the opportunity to escape from the blockaded quarter, disguised in women's clothes.

The Palmyrene faction was conquered for the time, but it was not yet extinguished. Even before the invasion, there had been in Egypt a party, headed by Timagenes, which sought to place the land under the rule of the Palmyrenes; and some two years after the reconquest of the country by Aurelian's force, this party (no

[1] Schiller (i. 865) speaks of the siege of Brucheion as taking place in the course of the suppression of the subsequent revolt of Firmus in 273. But against this view it may be argued (1) that we are told that Aurelian suppressed that revolt 'statim' (Vopiscus), *σὺν τάχει* (Zosimus), and this is not consistent with a prolonged blockade; and (2) Eusebius's mention of an unnamed 'Roman commander' (*τοῦ Ῥωμαίων στρατηλάτου, τὸν Ῥωμαίων στρατηγόν*) implies that Aurelian was not present in person, whereas it is stated that, in the suppression of the revolt of Firmus, Aurelian himself was in command.

[2] According to Mommsen, ii. 108, the Prucheion (Piruchion, or Brucheion) 'was no part of the city, but a locality close by the city on the side of the great oasis; Hieronymus, *vit. Hilarionis, c.* 33, 34, vol. ii, p. 32 Vall.' *Ib.*, p. 250, 'the strong castle of Prucheion in the immediate neighbourhood of the city'. Eusebius, however, was of a different opinion; for his narrative clearly implies that the place besieged was a part of the city itself—presumably one of the two parts into which the city was divided by the wall of Caracalla. The two statements may be reconciled by assuming that, in consequence of the devastation of this part of the city by Aurelian, and the subsequent dwindling of the population, the Brucheion ceased to be inhabited. It was a part of the Alexandria known to Eusebius; it was outside the Alexandria known to Jerome. Cf. Ammianus 22. 16. 15 'Alexandria, . . . Aureliano imperium agente, civilibus iurgiis ad certamina interneciva prolapsis dirutisque moenibus amisit regionis maximam partem, quae Bruchion appellabatur'. Eusebius, *Chron.*, mentions the siege of Brucheion, but puts it in the first year of Claudius, 268. Is this a mistake? Or does it refer to a distinct event which occurred at the time of the Palmyrene invasion in that year?

doubt strengthened by foreign immigrants who had settled there during the Palmyrene supremacy) once more asserted itself. About the time of the final revolt of Palmyra in 273, and probably in connexion with it, the Palmyrene faction in Egypt rose in insurrection, under the lead of a rich Egyptian merchant named Firmus,[1] who called in the Blemmyes[2] and Saracens as his allies. Aurelian, shortly after his return from Palmyra, proceeded to Egypt in person, promptly suppressed the insurrection, and inflicted punishment on Alexandria.[3] But he was unable to expel the Blemmyes, or at any rate, to prevent their return; and they continued to hold a large part of Upper Egypt until driven out by the emperor Probus in A.D. 279.[4]

[1] Vopiscus, *Vita Aurelian.* 32 'Firmus quidam extitit, qui sibi Aegyptum sine insignibus imperii, quasi ut esset civitas libera, vindicavit. (As to *civitas libera* cf. the *συνέδριον* spoken of by Eusebius in his account of the siege of Brucheion.) Ad quem continuo Aurelianus revertit (from Europe, shortly after his return from Palmyra in 273). Nec illic defuit felicitas solita; nam Aegyptum statim recepit.' Vopiscus xxix, *Vita Firmi*, 2–6: 'Firmum, qui Aureliani temporibus Aegyptum occupaverat. . . . Illum et purpura usum et percussa moneta Augustum esse vocitatum. . . . (Firmus), Zenobiae amicus et socius, qui Alexandriam Aegyptiorum incitatus furore pervasit, et quem Aurelianus . . . contrivit. . . . Idem et cum Blemmyis societatem maximam tenuit et cum Saracenis. . . . Hic ergo contra Aurelianum sumpsit imperium ad defendendas partes quae supererant Zenobiae. Sed Aureliano de Thraciis redeunte superatus est.' *Ib.*, c. 5, dispatch of Aurelian: 'Firmum etiam, latronem Aegyptium, barbaricis motibus (*sc.* of Blemmyes and Saracens) aestuantem, et feminei propudii (*sc.* Zenobiae) reliquias colligentem, . . . fugavimus, obsedimus, cruciavimus, et occidimus.'

Mommsen, *Rom. Emp.*, ii. 111, n. 1, and 251, n. 1, rejects the evidence of Vopiscus concerning Firmus as worthless; and he says that 'the so-called description of the life of Firmus is nothing else than the sadly disfigured catastrophe of Prucheion' (i. e. the reconquest of the country by Probus for Aurelian at an early stage of the war against Zenobia). Vopiscus is not a Thucydides; but it is difficult to believe that he can have created *ex nihilo* the story of this insurrection. What motive could he or his informant have for such audacious lying? Moreover, Mommsen ignores the corroborative evidence of Zosimus, who speaks of the suppression of a revolt in Egypt by Aurelian at the time in question. Zos. 1. 61 (Aurelian destroyed Palmyra), *σὺν τάχει δὲ καὶ Ἀλεξανδρείας στασιάσαντας καὶ πρὸς ἀπόστασιν ἰδόντας παραστησάμενος, θρίαμβον εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην εἰσαγαγὼν κ.τ.λ.*

[2] The Blemmyes lived in the mountain country to the south-east of Egypt. They harried Egypt with frequent raids from this time onward to the Arab conquest.

[3] We are told that he destroyed all buildings in the Brucheion that might harbour insurgents, and increased the dues paid to Rome by the Egyptians. *Vita Aurel.* 45. 1. Zosimus 1. 61.

[4] Mommsen, ii, 250–1. To complete the list of the calamities of Egypt during the third century, I quote from Mommsen (*ib.*): 'Under the government of Diocletian, we do not know why or wherefore, as well the native Egyptians as the burgesses of Alexandria rose in revolt against the existing government. . . . The revolt lasted from three to four years, the towns Busiris in the Delta and Coptos not far from Thebes were destroyed by the troops of the government, and ultimately under the leading of Diocletian in person in the spring of 297 the

It appears, then, that it is impossible to find any time to which the prophecy of Trismegistus could refer, except the time of the Palmyrene occupation of Egypt; and that the events of that time—i. e. of the five years 268–73—correspond exactly with the indications given in the prophecy.

We are told that the invading army, 70,000 in number, was composed of Palmyrenes, Syrians, 'and barbarians'. These barbarians were, no doubt, contingents sent by countries subject or allied to Zenobia, and adventurers attracted by the prospect of pay and plunder. Among them were certainly Saraceni (Bedouin Arabs), probably Armenians, perhaps Iberians, and possibly Persians.[1] A patriotic Egyptian might naturally enough describe a body thus composed by the contemptuous phrase 'Scythes aut Indus aut aliquis talis de vicina barbaria'. It should be remembered that the trade-route between Egypt and India traversed the Red Sea, and consequently the inhabitants of the southern coast-lands of the Red Sea—Arabes Eudaemones and Axomitae, and perhaps Blemmyes also—were, from the point of view of an Egyptian, neighbours of the Indians;[2] while the Armenians, Iberians, and Persians were neighbours of the Scythians. Moreover, the conquest of the country would probably give occasion for a large influx of Arab and other immigrants in addition to the armed forces; and if to these we add the hordes of the Blemmyes pouring in over the

capital was reduced after an eight months' siege.' This, however, cannot be the event referred to in the prophecy; for there was at this time no fresh invasion of *alienigenae*.

[1] During the siege of Palmyra in 272, Zenobia was expecting succour from Persia. Letter of Zenobia in Vopiscus, *Vita Aurelian.* 27: 'Nobis Persarum auxilia non desunt, quae iam speramus; pro nobis sunt Saraceni, pro nobis Armenii.' Letter of Aurelian in Trebell. Poll. *Trig. Tyrann.* 30. 7: 'Possum adserere tanto apud Orientales et Aegyptiorum populos timori mulierem fuisse, ut se non Arabes, non Saraceni, non Armenii commoverent.' Vopiscus, *Vita Aurelian.* 33, describing Aurelian's triumph at Rome after his conquest of Palmyra, mentions the attendance of deputations from the Blemmyes, Axomitae (Abyssinians), Arabes Eudaemones, Indi, Bactrani, Hiberi, Saraceni, Persae. It is implied that all these races had been so far concerned in or affected by the struggle, that they found it expedient to show respect to the conqueror; and with the exception of the Indi, all the nations named may have given some support to Zenobia. Cf. the hyperbolical encomium quoted in *Vita Aurelian.* 41. 9: '(Aurelianus) Persas ... fudit, fugavit, oppressit: illum Saraceni, Blemmyes, Axomitae, Bactrani, Seres (!), Hiberi, Albani, Armenii, populi etiam Indorum veluti praesentem paene venerati sunt deum.'

[2] In Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* 2. 385, Agrippa describes Egypt as ὅμορος τῆς Ἰνδικῆς. In a Coptic document, quoted by E. O. Winstedt in *Classical Quarterly*, July, 1909, p. 218, the Axomitae, the Adulitae, the Homeritae (of south-west Arabia), and other dwellers in that region (including a tribe which Mr. Winstedt identifies with the Blemmyes) are called Indians.

southern frontier, there is quite enough to account for the words 'Alienigenis terram istam complentibus'.

The loss of life caused by war and insurrection during these five years, and by the famine and disease that war brought with it, must have been enormous; and scenes such as those described by Dionysius a few years earlier must have recurred again and again. It might well be said that 'the land was filled with corpses', and 'the waters were polluted with blood', and even (if we make some allowance for a prophet's rhetoric) that 'the dead were far more in number than the survivors'.

The inhabitants were divided into two factions, the one siding with the Palmyrenes, and the other opposing them. Thus the horrors of civil war were added to those of foreign invasion; 'Egypt itself was infected with yet worse plagues' than those inflicted by the barbarian invader, and 'set an example of cruelty to the world'.

And lastly, the national religion was dying out. As we have already seen, the power which Christianity had acquired by A. D. 260, and its rapid growth from that time onward, were enough to give a worshipper of the gods of Egypt cause to anticipate the total defeat and overthrow of his religion; and the violent disturbance of native traditions caused by the shock of the Palmyrene invasion must have further promoted that general abandonment of the old cults which was already in progress. The invaders and immigrants, who at this time 'filled the land', were doubtless worshippers of many different gods,[1] but all of them alike must have been strangers to the national religion of Egypt, and little disposed to venerate its rites. The Palmyrene rulers, if they did not directly promote the spread of the new faith, were at any rate not hostile to it;[2] and a devout Egyptian might well feel, when his land fell under their dominion, that Egypt was forsaken by the gods, and that the national religion, already much impaired by the encroachments of Christianity, was now indeed doomed to perish.

[1] There must have been Christians among them. Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung des Chr.*, p. 440: 'It is established that before 190 A. D. Christianity was strong in Edessa and the vicinity, and that (soon after the year 201, or even earlier!) the royal family of Edessa had gone over to the Church.' (Edessa was one of the principal cities within the dominion of Zenobia.) In the kingdom of Armenia, Christianity was the officially established religion by the beginning of the fourth century: Harnack, *ib.*, p. 472; Euseb. *H. E.* 9. 8. 2.

[2] Paulus of Samosata, the bishop of Antioch described in Euseb. *H. E.* 7. 30, is said to have been favoured by Zenobia. Harnack, *ib.*, p. 430. On the other hand, the Pagan Longinus was one of her counsellors. The Palmyrene invaders may perhaps have plundered temples, or confiscated temple endowments.

I think then that we may take it as established that the prophecy in chs. 24–6 of the *Asclepius* was written under the impression produced by the Palmyrene invasion of Egypt and the events connected with it. And as there is in the prophecy no hint that the foreigner will be expelled or dispossessed, and it seems to be assumed that his occupation of the land will be permanent ('inhabitabit Aegyptum'), it may be inferred that the passage was written either before the reconquest of the country for Aurelian in 271, or at any rate, before the final suppression of the Palmyrene faction in 273. The writing of the prophecy then (with the exception of two sentences added after A.D. 353) must be assigned to the years 268–73.

It remains to be considered whether *Asclepius* III as a whole is of the same date. It is conceivable that the prophecy might have been inserted into an already existing document. But as ch. 26, which is closely connected with the preceding predictions, passes on without a break into the main current of the treatise, I do not think this hypothesis can be admitted. It is also conceivable that different parts of the prophecy itself might be of different dates—i.e. that the prediction of the extinction of the national religion (in chs. 25 and 26) might have formed part of an *Ascl.* III which was in existence before 268, and that the references to the Palmyrene invasion ('Alienigenis enim . . . videbitur alienus', if my rearrangement of the sentences is accepted) might have been subsequently inserted in 268–73. But against this it may be said, first, that the latter passage, if not absolutely needed for continuity, at any rate fits perfectly with its context, and supplies a cause for that decay of religion of which the writer goes on to speak; and secondly, that, since we have already found reason to think the writer's conviction of the impending doom of the national religion could hardly have arisen before A.D. 260, the dates of the two portions of the prophecy could in any case be separated by no more than a few years at most. I conclude therefore that this hypothesis also must be rejected, and consequently, that the Greek original of *Ascl.* III as a whole was written in A.D. 268–73.

Circumstances of the writer of ASCLEPIUS III. The author of *Ascl.* III must have been an Egyptian by race; he regards Egypt as his country, and his Hellenic education has not diminished the intensity of his national patriotism (ch. 24 b). Seeing that he localizes the cult of the god Asclepius (ch. 37) and the ancient cult

of the Egyptian kings (ch. 27 d) at Arsinoe-Crocodilopolis, it seems probable that he resided in or near the Fayum. His keen interest in the national temple-cults, and his grief at the prospect of their suppression, suggest that he may have been an Egyptian priest. His approval of marriage (ch. 21) makes it unlikely that he was a member of a monastic brotherhood such as that to which the writer of *Ascl.* I presumably belonged. He shows a less unworldly disposition than that writer; he values the mundane benefits which the temple-gods confer; and his hearty love and admiration of the material universe (ch. 25) seems hardly consistent with the *contemptus mundi*, and aspiration to escape from the body, which his principles required him to profess. We may imagine him then to have been a priest attached to the temple of one of the local deities of the Fayum; and we may suppose that he had assimilated the Hermetic doctrine without ceasing to discharge his priestly functions and to take his part in social life, and that he found in that doctrine a justification of the worship in which his interests centred, and a means of defending it against the attacks of the Christians.

Date of the composite Λόγος τέλειος. The Greek original of the Latin *Asclepius* as a whole was known to Lactantius, under the title Λόγος τέλειος, about A.D. 310. The redactor who joined together the Greek *Ascl.* I, *Ascl.* II, and *Ascl.* III to make a single dialogue must therefore have done his work at some time between A.D. 270 and 310. But *Corp.* IX announces itself as a sequel to the Λόγος τέλειος; and if, as seems probable, this title was given only to the composite document, and not to any of its component parts before they were joined together,[1] the redactor's work must have been done before *Corp.* IX was written. We may conjecture then that the Λόγος τέλειος was compiled about A.D. 280–90, and that *Corp.* IX was written about A.D. 290–300. It is possible that the same person who compiled the composite Λόγος τέλειος proceeded to write *Corp.* IX as a sequel to it; if so, the date of both might be about A.D. 290.

It may be doubted whether the concluding prayer of the *Asclepius* (41 b) formed part of the original *Ascl.* III (written about A.D. 270), or was added by the compiler of the Λόγος τέλειος. This prayer has been borrowed by the sorcerer who wrote one of the magic incantations preserved in the *Papyrus Mimaut* (Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, pp. 151, 156). Wessely (*Denkschr. der kais. Akad. der Wissensch.*

[1] See notes on *Ascl. Lat. init.*

xxxvi, Wien, 1888, Abth. 2, p. 36) says that the *Papyrus Mimaut* was written in the fourth century A.D.; but Reitzenstein (*Arch. für Rel.*, 1904, p. 397) is inclined to assign it to the third century rather than the fourth. Thus the prayer may have been first written about A.D. 270–90, and borrowed by a sorcerer a little later.

Date of the Latin translation. The Latin *Asclepius* has come down to us among the works of Apuleius. Now Apuleius was born about A.D. 125, and wrote under Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, i.e. before A.D. 180. If, therefore, any good reason could be shown for attributing the translation to Apuleius, it would be necessary to reconsider our conclusion as to the date of the Greek original of *Ascl.* III.

Hildebrand (*Apuleii Opera*, 1842, vol. i, pp. xlix ff.) discusses the question whether the translation was written by Apuleius, dealing with it mainly on the ground of Latin style, and states his conclusion thus: 'hunc dialogum ab Apuleio confectum esse persuasum mihi quidem est. . . . Demonstrasse mihi videor, dicendi rationem quae in hoc dialogo cognoscitur ab Apuleiana non esse alienam, ac pluribus locis cum ea concordare. Inde quamquam colligi per se nequit Apuleium revera huius dialogi esse auctorem, tamen cum accedat manuscriptorum auctoritas, qui optimi quique Apuleii nomen in fronte habent, non intelligo cur nostro scriptori hic liber abiudicandus sit.'

But the incompetence shown by our translator[1] is a strong argument against identifying him with Apuleius, who would surely have done the work better. Moreover, the method of translation in the *Asclepius* differs widely (as Hildebrand admits) from that of Apuleius in his version of the Aristotelian *De mundo*.[2] In the *De mundo*, the translation is free and fluent; in the *Asclepius*, it is literal[3] and clumsy.

It may be considered certain that Augustine, who knew our translation, did not suppose it to have been written by Apuleius. In quoting from it,[4] he says 'Huius Aegyptii verba, *sicut in nostram linguam interpretata sunt*, ponam', without naming the translator. But in the same passage Augustine speaks of Apuleius, and contrasts the view of Apuleius with that of 'Hermes' (i.e. that expressed in the *Asclepius*); if therefore he had thought the Latin *Asclepius* to be the work of Apuleius, he would have mentioned the fact—as he does elsewhere in the case of the *De mundo*.

[1] The quality of his work as a translator can be judged from the fragments of the Greek original which have been preserved, as well as from the numerous difficulties in the text which can only be explained on the assumption that he has misunderstood or inadequately rendered the meaning of the Greek.

[2] That the translator of the *De mundo* was Apuleius is attested by Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 4. 2: 'quae . . . Apuleius breviter stringit in eo libello quem de mundo scripsit.'

[3] e.g. we find a Greek genitive (gen. abs. or gen. after a comparative) represented by a Latin genitive, where Latin grammar demands an ablative.

[4] *Civ. Dei* 8. 23 ff.

I can therefore see no reason to dissent from Goldbacher,[1] who says, 'Asclepi dialogum . . . iniuria inter Apulei opera referri mihi persuasum (est)'. After speaking of the passage in Augustine, Goldbacher continues, 'Quo cum accedant aliae res gravissimae, quas Bernaysius[2] . . . exposuit, haud quemquam fore putaverim, qui hunc dialogum ab Apuleio e Graeco in Latinum conversum esse existimet'. The Latin *Asclepius* was, no doubt, attributed to Apuleius in the archetype of our MSS.: but that attribution was an error. Consequently, there is nothing to set against the conclusion at which we have already arrived, namely, that the Greek original of *Ascl.* III was written in A.D. 268–73; and the Latin translation must have been written at some time after that date.

The *terminus ante quem* for the Latin translation is given by the fact that Augustine quotes from it in his *De civ. Dei*, about A.D. 413–26. If the references to penal laws against Pagan worship are contemporary with the rest of the Latin text,[3] the translation must be dated between 353 and 426. If those references have been subsequently interpolated into the Latin text, any date between about 280 and 426 is possible for the translation.

Who was the translator? That question cannot be answered with certainty; but the only man known to us to whom the translation might with some probability be attributed is C. Marius Victorinus. Hieronymus *Vir. illustr.* 101: 'Victorinus, natione Afer, Romae sub Constantio principe (A.D. 350–61) rhetoricam

[1] *Apulei Opuscula quae sunt de Philosophia*, 1876, p. xv.

[2] Bernays, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. i, p. 340: 'tritt hierdurch zu der inneren Unmöglichkeit, das ein stilistischer Künstler mit gelehrte Bildung wie Apuleius der Urheber unserer holperichten und zuweilen schnitzerhaften Uebersetzung sei, noch ein äusseres Anzeichen, da Lactantius eine durch Apuleius' Namen empfohlene Arbeit schwerlich unbenutzt gelassen hätte.'

[3] Boissier, *La Fin du Paganisme*, ii, p. 229, speaking of the Latin *Asclepius*, says: 'L'ouvrage original était composé avant la victoire du christianisme, mais le traducteur, qui écrivait pendant que l'ancien culte était persécuté, n'a pu s'empêcher d'ajouter au texte quelques allusions à ces lois, . . . qui proscrivent la piété et en font un crime capital.' The two references to penal laws are certainly of later date than the rest of the prophecy; and it is probable that one of them at least was inserted by the translator.

docuit, et in extrema senectute Christi se tradens fidei[1] scripsit adversus Arium libros more dialectico valde obscuros, qui nisi ab eruditis non intelleguntur, et commentarios in apostolum' (*sc.* Paulum).[2] Hieron. *Praef. comm. in Ep. ad. Galat.*: 'Non quia ignorem C. Marium Victorinum, qui Romae me puero[3] rhetoricam docuit, edidisse commentarios in apostolum, sed quod occupatus ille eruditione saecularium litterarum omnino sanctas ignoraverit.'[4] Hieron. *Chron.*, ad ann. 2370:[5] 'Victorinus rhetor et Donatus grammaticus praeceptor meus Romae insignes habentur; e quibus Victorinus etiam statuam in foro Traiani meruit.' August. *Confess.* 8. 2: 'legisse me quosdam libros Platonicorum, quos Victorinus quondam rhetor urbis Romae, quem Christianum defunctum esse audieram, in Latinam linguam transtulisset.[6] . . . Ille doctissimus

[1] The conversion of Victorinus to Christianity is spoken of at greater length by Augustine, *Confess.* 8. 1–5; and we are there told that he was already a Christian at the time when, by Julian's edict (A. D. 362), Christians were prohibited from holding posts as public teachers. He may have been converted about A. D. 356.

[2] Christian writings ascribed to Victorinus are printed in Migne, *Patr. Lat.* 8. 993–1310. Those which may be accepted as certainly authentic are (1) *De generatione Verbi divini, ad Candidum Arianum*; (2) *IV libri contra Arium*; (3) *De ὁμοουσίῳ recipiendo*; (4) *Hymni tres de Trinitate*; (5) *Commentarii in Apostolum* (*Gal.*, *Philipp.*, and *Eph.*). In these writings Victorinus maintains the Nicaean *ὁμοούσιον*-formula in opposition to the Arians. Their contents are discussed by Gore, *C. Marius Victorinus Afer*, in Smith and Wace, *Dict. of Christian Biography*, 1887; G. Geiger, *C. Marius Victorinus, ein neuplatonischer Philosoph*, Landshut, 1888; and R. Schmid, *Marius Victorinus Rhetor und seine Beziehungen zu Augustin*, Kiel, 1895. Victorinus's treatment of the question is a blending of Christian doctrine with a Neoplatonic system closely resembling that of Plotinus. (In that respect his position is similar to that of Augustine about the time of his baptism, A. D. 387. See P. Alfaric, *L'évolution intellectuelle de S. Augustin*, i. 515–27: 'S'il (*sc.* Augustin) était mort après avoir rédigé les *Soliloques* (written at Cassiciacum, A. D. 387) ou le traité *De la quantité de l'âme* (written at Rome, A. D. 387–8), on ne le considérerait que comme un Néoplatonicien convaincu, plus ou moins teinté de Christianisme.')

These writings are rightly described by Jerome as *valde obscuri*. It is, as Gore says, 'matter of astonishment that one who had Victorinus's reputation as a rhetorician should have been so wholly incapable of giving clear expression to his thought'; and since his style, as shown in his Christian treatises, so little deserves the reward of a public statue, we must suppose that he gained that honour rather by his influence as a teacher of the Plotinian philosophy, and perhaps by personal qualities which won for him the respect and affection of his senatorial pupils.

[3] Jerome was born about A. D. 340; *me puero* therefore agrees with the other evidence, which indicates that Victorinus held the post of *rhetor* at Rome during the years A. D. 350–62.

[4] Victorinus's frequent quotations from the Bible in his Christian writings show that, at the time when he wrote them, he was not '*wholly* ignorant of sacred literature'; but he lived to old age in the study of Pagan philosophy before he became a Christian.

[5] A. D. 354, Teuffel; A. D. 358, Gore.

[6] Alfaric, *L'évolution intell. de S. Augustin*, i. 374 sqq., says that among the *libri Platonicorum*, of which Latin translations by Victorinus were read by

senex et omnium liberalium doctrinarum peritissimus, quique philosophorum tam multa legerat et diiudicaverat, doctor tot nobilium senatorum, qui etiam ob insigne praeclari magisterii . . . statuam in Romano foro meruerat et acceperat.' Boethius, *In Isagogen Porphyrii*, Brandt (*Editionis primae*), 1. 1: 'id quod Victorinus, orator sui temporis ferme doctissimus, Porphyrii per Isagogen, id est per introductionem in Aristotelis Categorias, dicitur transtulisse.' Boethius *ib.* (*Editionis secundae*), 5. 24: 'huius libri seriem primo quidem ab rhetore Victorino, post vero a nobis Latina oratione conversam.' Boethius found Victorinus's translation of the *Isagoge* to be inaccurate,[1] and for that reason wrote a fresh translation of it for himself.

Victorinus then, in the course of a long life which ended soon after A. D. 362, was much occupied in the study of Pagan philosophy; he translated into Latin (presumably for the use of his pupils at Rome) 'books of Platonists', among which were some of the writings of Plotinus and Porphyry; and his translations were read by Augustine, who, since he did not read Greek, was dependent on them for his knowledge of Neoplatonism. Such a man would almost necessarily become acquainted with the Hermetic Λόγος τέλειος, and might very well think it worth while to translate a document which contained doctrines so closely related to those of his Neoplatonic creed; and the fact, made known to us by Boethius, that he sometimes misunderstood his Greek original, and made mistakes in translation, adds to the probability of the hypothesis that our Latin *Asclepius* is his work. There is no positive evidence that it was so; but it may safely be said that the translator was either Victorinus or some one who had much in common with him.

Augustine, were probably Plotinus, *Enn.* i, 2, 3, 4, 6; iii, 2; and v, 1; and perhaps also Porphyry, *De reditu animae ad Deum* and *Sententiae ad intellegibilia ducentes* (Ἀφορμαὶ πρὸς τὰ νοητά).

[1] e. g. Boeth. *ib.* 2. 6: *quod Victorinus scilicet intellexisse minus videtur: nam quod Porphyrius ἀνάλογον dixit, id est proportionale, ille* (*sc. Victorinus*) *sic accepit quasi ἄλογον diceret, id est irrationale.*

THE *HERMETICA* IN THE *ANTHOLOGIUM* OF STOBAEUS

JOANNES STOBAEUS, at some date not far from A. D. 500,[1] compiled a large collection of extracts from Pagan Greek writers. The collection was divided into four books, and was entitled *ἐκλογῶν, ἀποφθεγμάτων, ὑποθηκῶν βιβλία τέσσαρα*. It seems to have been made up by putting together the contents of earlier collections of extracts, and adding to them passages extracted by Stobaeus himself from books which he had read. He arranged the extracts in chapters according to subjects, and placed at the head of each chapter a superscription stating the subject of the extracts contained in it.

Photius (*c.* A. D. 850) read this *anthologium* in a copy differing little from the original as written by Stobaeus; and in his *Bibliotheca*, p. 112 a, 16 ff., he describes it as a work in two volumes (*τεύχη*), consisting of four books (*βιβλία*), and gives the superscriptions of the 208 chapters into which the four books were divided.

Our MSS. of Stobaeus are derived from an archetype closely resembling the MS. used by Photius, if not from that very MS. But at some time not far from A. D. 1000, the two volumes of which the archetype consisted were separated; the two parts passed into different hands, and thenceforward, each of them was copied and recopied separately. Hence the first part (Bks. I and II) has come down to us in one set of MSS., and the second part (Bks. III and IV) in another set of MSS. The two parts consequently came to be edited separately, as if they were two different works; and the editors gave to Bks. I and II the title *Eclogae physicae et ethicae*, and to Bks. III and IV the title *Florilegium*. Either the term *Eclogae* or the term *Florilegium* might serve as a title for the whole (each extract, whether in Bks. I and II or in Bks. III and IV, is an

[1] The latest writer quoted by Stobaeus is the Neoplatonist Hierocles, a contemporary of Proclus (A. D. 410–85). The fact that Stobaeus ignores all Christian writings makes it improbable that he lived much later than Hierocles (Christ, *Gesch. der gr. Litt.*, p. 848).

ecloga, and the four Books are collectively a *florilegium*); but the assignment of the title *Eclogae* to one part of the collection and the title *Florilegium* to the other is arbitrary and groundless, and Wachsmuth and Hense, the latest editors, have rightly rejected these titles. In their edition, what had hitherto been called *Stob. Ecl.* is called *Stobaei Anthologii libri duo priores*, and what had hitherto been called *Stob. Floril.* is called *Stobaei Anthologii libri duo posteriores*; and their correction will doubtless be henceforth accepted by all scholars.

After the separation of the two parts of the *Anthologium*, the first part (Bks. I and II) was reduced to smaller compass by an epitomator, who had a preference for philosophical writings. He copied out almost in full Bk. I, chs. 1–30; but from that point onward as far as his handiwork can be traced (i. e. down to Bk. II, ch. 9), he omitted nearly all extracts except those from Plato, Aristotle, Archytas, Porphyry, and (fortunately for our present purpose) Hermes. The last part of his *epitome* (Bk. II, chs. 10–46) is lost. It is only this mutilated *epitome* of Bks. I and II, and not the full text of these two books as read by Photius, that has come down to us in the MSS. of Stobaeus. Some of the missing passages have, however, been recovered from a *gnomologium*, partially preserved in a cod. Laurentianus (fourteenth century), the compiler of which borrowed largely from the four Books of Stobaeus at a time when they were still complete; and from that source Wachsmuth has been able to print the text of Stob., Bk. II, chs. 15, 31, 33, and 46.

Stobaeus seems to have got his *Hermetica* from (1) a collection of Ἑρμοῦ λόγοι πρὸς Τάτ; (2) a collection of Ἑρμοῦ λόγοι πρὸς Ἀσκληπιόν; (3) a collection of Ἑρμοῦ λόγοι πρὸς Ἄμμωνα; and (4) a collection of Ἑρμοῦ λόγοι Ἴσιδος πρὸς Ὧρον. The total number of Hermetic excerpts in his *Anthologium* is forty-two,[1] if we include *Exc.* [XXVIII] and [XXIX], and count as separate excerpts the two parts of Stob. 1. 41. 1 (which I call *Exc.* II B and *Exc.* XI), and the two parts of Stob. 1. 41. 6 (which I call *Exc.* IV B and *Exc.* III). Of these, ten are taken from *libelli* which have been preserved in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (*Corp.* II, IV, and X); and one (Stob. 4. 52. 47)

[1] There may perhaps have been some more *Hermetica* in chs. 10–46 of Bk. II, which are missing in our MSS. of Stobaeus; ch. 11, for instance, the superscription of which was Ὅτι χρὴ σέβειν τὸ θεῖον, may very likely have contained some Hermetic extracts.

is an extract from the Greek original of the Latin *Asclepius*. The remaining thirty-one are given in the present edition as Excerpts I, II A, II B, III, IV A, IV B, V—[XXIX]. I have arranged and numbered them, grouping together the *Hermes to Tat* Excerpts (I–XI), the *Hermes to Ammon* Excerpts (XII–XVII), the Excerpts in which there is no indication of the pupil's name (XVIII–XXII), and the *Isis to Horus* Excerpts (XXIII–XXVII); and I have divided the longer Excerpts into numbered sections.

Twenty-seven of these 'Excerpts', as well as all the ten extracts from *libelli* which are extant in the *Corpus*, occur in Stob. Bk. I, and two (*Exc.* I and *Exc.* XVIII) in what remains of Stob. Bk. II. There are only two Hermetic extracts (*Exc.* II A and *Exc.* XXVII) in Stob. Bk. III, and only one (the extract from the original of *Ascl. Lat.*) in Stob. Bk. IV. But by an accident which must have happened before the separation of the two parts of the *Anthologium*, the leaf of Bk. II on which *Exc.* I was written in the archetype was, together with two other leaves, shifted from its place, and inserted in Bk. IV; and the contents of these three leaves have consequently been transmitted as part of the text of Bk. IV. For the text of *Exc.* I therefore we are dependent on the MSS. of Bks. III and IV (the so-called *Florilegium*), and not on the MSS. of Bks. I and II (the so-called *Eclogae*). Wachsmuth has now restored these misplaced passages to their original positions in Bk. II, chs. 1, 4, and 2.

Of the MSS. which contain the extant remains of Stob. Bks. I and II, two only need be taken into account, as all the other MSS. are derived from them. These two are

cod. Farnesinus (F), fourteenth century;
cod. Parisinus (P), fifteenth century.

F and P then are our only sources for the text of all the Hermetic extracts except four. F is much the better of the two; but the evidence of P also is of some value. There are in P numerous corrections by two or three later hands; but these corrections (marked P^2) are conjectural.

The other four Hermetic extracts (viz. *Excerpts* I, II A, XXVII, and the fragment of the Greek original of *Ascl. Lat.*) have come down to us in the MSS. of Stob. Bks. III and IV. Of these, the earliest and best is cod. Vindobonensis (S), written soon after A. D. 1000. The *editio princeps* of Bks. III and IV by Trincavelli

(Tr.) faithfully reproduces the text of a cod. Marcianus (fifteenth or sixteenth century) closely related to S, if not wholly derived from it, and is useful chiefly as a substitute for certain missing parts of S. There are two other MSS. which are of some value, as representing a text of different descent, viz. cod. Escurialensis (M), *c.* A. D. 1100, and cod. Parisinus (A), fourteenth century. Hense has also made use of the cod. Laurentianus (L) mentioned above, which contains extracts from Stob. Bks. III and IV as well as from Stob. Bks. I and II, and of another *gnomologium*, preserved in cod. Bruxellensis (Br.), fourteenth or fifteenth century, which likewise contains borrowings from Stob. Thus our sources for these four Hermetic extracts are S (with Tr.) and MA, supplemented by L and Br.

The chief printed editions of Stobaeus are the following:—

Bks. I and II: Canter (*ed. princeps*), Antwerp, 1575; Heeren, 1792–1801; Gaisford, 1850; Meineke, 1860–3; and Wachsmuth, Berlin, 1884.

Bks. III and IV: Trincavelli (*ed. princeps*), Venice, 1535–6; Gesner, 1st edition 1543, 2nd ed. 1549, 3rd ed. 1559; Gaisford, 1822; Meineke, 1860–3; and Hense, Berlin, 1894–1912.

Wachsmuth and Hense have investigated the MSS. far more thoroughly than any of the previous editors; and the edition of the *Anthologium* of Stobaeus which they have produced by their combined labours supersedes all earlier publications of the text. Their edition is my sole authority for the readings of the MSS. in the Hermetic extracts.

In my text of the *Excerpts*, and in my textual notes on them, I have used the same notation as in the *libelli* of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.[1] The readings of P^2 I have treated as conjectures.

The task which Wachsmuth and Hense have set themselves in their edition, and which they may be considered to have accomplished, as far as its accomplishment is possible, is that of restoring the text of the *Anthologium* as written by Stobaeus.[2] There remains

[1] In passages based on F and P alone, I have sometimes marked as P a reading of that MS. which I have inferred from a statement of Wachsmuth concerning F, or vice versa.

[2] Wachsmuth, vol. i, p. xxxi, says: 'Ex his igitur codicibus recognovi Stobaei verba; cui fundamento certo speramus fore ut iam multi suam emendandi operam superstruant; nam permultos philosophorum potissimum locos etiamnunc medicina egere nemo me melius intellegit. Quodsi in hac editione non improbabiliter emendationem incohatam esse confido, id prorsus debetur amicitiae Hermanni Useneri. . . . In afferendis verbis eorum scriptorum, quorum libri ipsi aetatem tulerunt (e.g. in the extracts from *libelli* which are extant in the *Corpus*

the further task of emending the more or less corrupt text of each extract as read by Stobaeus, and so recovering, as nearly as may be, the original text of the passage as written by its author. For the performance of this task also, Wachsmuth and Hense have given valuable help; but much remains to be done; and it is this that, as far as the Hermetic extracts are concerned, I have aimed at doing in the present edition. Starting from the text of the archetype of the Stobaeus-MSS., as reconstructed by Wachsmuth and Hense, I have tried to discover or guess, firstly, what words the author of each Hermetic passage wrote, and secondly, what he meant by the words he wrote. When one has concluded that a phrase is corrupt, the best way to deal with it is usually to attack the second of these two problems first; i. e. to infer from the context, and from parallels in other writings, what the author must have meant, and thence, if possible, to infer what words he used to express his meaning. In a matter of this kind, complete success is unattainable; but there is much that can be done, and it is to be hoped that the process of recovering the thoughts of the Hermetic writers, to which I have tried to contribute, will be taken up and carried farther by others.

Hermeticum), hanc normam tenui, ut non ea quae ipsos scripsisse probabile esset, sed ea tantum quae in exemplo suo Stobaeus legisse videretur restituerem.'

Hense, vol. iii, p. lxv, says: 'Mihi quid in hac editione propositum fuerit, iam puto elucere. Ad librorum manuscriptorum fidem reversus id operam dedi, ut et ordo eclogarum et contextus ab illorum archetypo abesset quam proxime.'

TESTIMONIA

THE earliest evidence for the existence of writings of similar character to our religious and philosophic *Hermetica* is that of Athenagoras, A. D. 177–80. But that evidence is not quite free from doubt; for the statement which Athenagoras apparently ascribes to Hermes, viz. that he was descended from 'gods' who were men (i. e. from men who were held to have become gods after death), might have occurred in any sort of document the teaching of which was attributed to Hermes, e. g. in a dialogue dealing with astrology or magic.

Tertullian, *De an.* 33, quotes a passage from a writing of the same kind as our *Hermetica*. His obscure style makes it difficult to be sure what he means in the three passages in which he mentions Hermes Trismegistus without quoting him; but it may be inferred from *Adv. Valentin.* 15 and *De an.* 2 that he knew of writings of which Hermes was supposed to have been the author, and which contained doctrines resembling those of Greek philosophers, and especially those of Plato. His evidence proves then that in A. D. 207–13 some *Hermetica* similar to ours were in existence, and were accessible to Christian readers; but it does not prove that at that time any of the extant *Hermetica* had yet been written.

In the writings of Clement of Alexandria,[1] there is no mention of any Greek *Hermetica*. What is to be inferred from this fact? Large parts of Clement's *Stromateis* are occupied with discussions of the relation between Greek philosophy and 'barbarian' philosophy (by which he usually means the teaching of Moses and the Hebrew prophets). He seeks to prove that the Greek philosophers were later in date than the Hebrew writers, and 'stole' from them. If he had known our *Hermetica*, and believed them to contain the

[1] Clement taught in the Catechetical School of Alexandria from about A. D. 190 to 202 or 203. At the latter date he quitted Egypt; he was residing in Asia Minor about A. D. 211, and he died in or about A. D. 216. The dates of his chief writings are probably *Protrept.*, A. D. 190–200; *Strom.* i–iv, *Paedag.*, *Strom.* v–vii (in this order), A. D. 203–16 (Harnack, *Chronol.*, ii. 3–18).

teachings of an ancient Egyptian sage, he could not possibly have omitted to speak of them in the course of these discussions. He could not have failed to notice the resemblance between the Hermetic doctrines and those of Plato; and he would have said, as others did, 'Plato borrowed from Hermes'.[1] His silence concerning the Greek *Hermetica* can therefore be accounted for only by assuming either that they were not yet in existence; or that they were in existence but unknown to him; or that he knew them, but knew them to be of recent date, and therefore had no more reason to speak of them than of other recent writings. Now the hypothesis that no such writings were yet in existence is excluded by the evidence of Clement's contemporary, Tertullian, who quotes from a philosophic *Hermeticum*; and if writings of this character were known to Tertullian, it is most unlikely that they were unknown to Clement, whose work as a teacher in Alexandria must have brought him into contact with thinkers of all kinds that were to be found in Egypt, Pagans as well as Christians. It is therefore probable that Clement knew of the existence of some Greek *Hermetica* of the same character as ours, but knew them to have been composed by men of his own time, and therefore to have no bearing on the question what sort of doctrines were taught in Egypt before the beginnings of Greek philosophy.

Arguments *ex silentio* are often of little weight; but in the case of Clement, the force of this argument will, I think, be evident to any one who reads the following passages. *Strom.* 1. 15. 66–73 (a long list of Greek philosophers who were either barbarian by race or pupils of barbarian teachers). *Strom.* 1. 21. 134 (an item in a long list of Pagan prophets): ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις ἀνθρώπων ποτέ, γενομένων δὲ ἀνθρωπίνῃ δόξῃ θεῶν, Ἑρμῆς τε ὁ Θηβαῖος καὶ Ἀσκληπιὸς ὁ Μεμφίτης.[2] *Strom.* 5. 5. 29: καὶ ὅλως ὁ Πυθαγόρας καὶ οἱ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ σὺν καὶ Πλάτωνι μάλιστα τῶν ἄλλων φιλοσόφων

[1] Moreover, if he had read our *Hermetica* with attention, he would have noticed in *Corp.* I and elsewhere certain resemblances to *Genesis*, and would consequently have added, as some others did, 'Hermes borrowed from Moses'. But we have no proof that any of the *extant* Hermetica were in existence in Clement's time.

[2] The conjunction of these two names might perhaps be thought to indicate a knowledge of dialogues in which Hermes and Asclepius were speakers. But Clement cannot here have been thinking of any writings resembling our *Hermetica*. The context shows that he means by 'prophets' men who predict future events (see § 135); but in our *Hermetica* Hermes does not speak as a prophet in that sense (except in the 'Prophecy' in *Ascl. Lat.* iii, and in a few *obiter dicta* elsewhere).

σφόδρα τῷ νομοθέτῃ ὡμίλησαν (i. e. read the Books of Moses), ὡς ἐστιν ἐξ αὐτῶν συμβαλέσθαι τῶν δογμάτων. Why did not Clement mention the much more evident resemblance between the doctrines of Plato and the Greek *Hermetica*? *Strom.* 5. 12. 78: Clement quotes Pl. *Tim.* 28 C (τὸν γὰρ πατέρα . . . ἐξειπεῖν ἀδύνατον), and says that Plato got this thought from *Exod.* xix, where it is shown that God is ἀόρατος καὶ ἄρρητος; and he compares some verses of Orpheus, who, he says, got the same truth from the same source. Why did he not rather adduce Herm. *ap.* Stob. *Exc.* I (which is much more like the passage in Plato), if it was known to him? *Strom.* 6. 4. 35–8: εὕροιμεν δ' ἂν καὶ ἄλλο μαρτύριον εἰς βεβαίωσιν τοῦ τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν δογμάτων τοὺς ἀρίστους τῶν φιλοσόφων παρ' ἡμῶν (i. e. from our Hebrew Scriptures) σφετερισαμένους ὡς ἴδια αὐχεῖν, τὸ καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων βαρβάρων (i. e. from others besides the Hebrews) ἀπηνθίσθαι τῶν εἰς ἑκάστην αἵρεσιν συντεινόντων τινά, μάλιστα δὲ Αἰγυπτίων τά τε ἄλλα καὶ τὸ περὶ τὴν μετενσωμάτωσιν τῆς ψυχῆς δόγμα.[1] μετίασι γὰρ οἰκείαν τινὰ φιλοσοφίαν Αἰγύπτιοι· αὐτίκα τοῦτο ἐμφαίνει μάλιστα ἡ ἱεροπρεπὴς αὐτῶν θρησκεία. (Here follows a list of the different orders of Egyptian priests, and of the subjects dealt with in the 'Books of Hermes' which priests of the several orders were required to study.) δύο μὲν οὖν καὶ τεσσαράκοντα αἱ πάνυ ἀναγκαῖαι τῷ Ἑρμῇ γεγόνασι βίβλοι· ὧν τὰς μὲν τριάκοντα ἓξ, τὴν πᾶσαν Αἰγυπτίων περιεχούσας φιλοσοφίαν, οἱ προειρημένοι (priests) ἐκμανθάνουσι, τὰς δὲ λοιπὰς ἓξ οἱ παστοφόροι, ἰατρικὰς οὔσας . . . καὶ τὰ μὲν Αἰγυπτίων, ὡς ἐν βραχεῖ φάναι, τοιαῦτα· Ἰνδῶν δὲ ἡ φιλοσοφία κ.τ.λ. Clement evidently means by 'Books of Hermes' books written in the Egyptian language, and ascribed to Thoth, which were used in the schools of the priests. He must have got the

[1] Clement thought that the doctrine of *metensomatosis*, taught by Pythagoras and Plato, was of Egyptian origin. But there is no need to suppose that he was here thinking of Greek *Hermetica* in which that doctrine was taught; he may have got his mistaken notion from Herodotus 2. 123. The notion that the Egyptians believed in *metensomatosis* was probably a false inference drawn by Greeks, in or before the time of Herodotus, from the observed fact that Egyptians reverenced certain kinds of animals, and thought it wicked to kill and eat them. A Greek, knowing that Pythagoreans abstained from the flesh of animals, would be apt to think that the reason for these strange Egyptian usages must be the same that Pythagoreans gave for their abstention, viz. that they believed that a human soul was or might be incarnated in the animal. Moreover, Greeks would be told by Egyptians that in each of the individual animals worshipped in the temple-cults (e. g. the Apis-bull) some god (e. g. Osiris), who had once reigned as a king on earth, was incarnated; and this might easily seem to the Greek visitor to be merely a particular instance of the doctrine of *metensomatosis* taught by Pythagoras.

list of books, directly or indirectly, from a native Egyptian; and he knew nothing about their contents, beyond the meagre information which he gives at second hand. If he had believed any Greek *Hermetica* known to him to be translations or paraphrases of ancient and genuine 'books of Hermes', he would necessarily have referred to them here, as the best evidence accessible to him and his readers concerning the character of the 'Egyptian philosophy', instead of talking of the books studied by the priests, books which he could not read, and about which he knew very little.

We must conclude then that Clement either did not know of any Greek *Hermetica* such as ours, or else, as seems more likely, knew of some such writings (not necessarily any of those which have come down to us), but knew that they were of recent date, and that their contents could not be rightly attributed to the ancient teacher Hermes.[1]

Did Origen (A. D. 185–255) know any philosophic or religious *Hermetica*? No quotations from or references to Hermetic documents have been found in his writings. Origen, like his teacher and predecessor Clement, repeatedly asserts that Moses and the Hebrew prophets were prior in time to the Greek philosophers, and says that, as far as there was any borrowing, it must have been the Greeks that borrowed from the Hebrews; but he does not discuss this question at length and in detail, as Clement does; and I do not know of any passages in Origen's works in which the course of his argument is such that, if he had known any Greek *Hermetica* and thought the teachings contained in them to be Egyptian and of ancient date, it would have been *necessary* for him to speak of them.[2]

[1] Clement assumed without question the authenticity of pseudonymous writings such as those ascribed to Orpheus and the Sibyl; and he would hardly have been capable of discovering the true character and date of *Hermetica* merely by examining their contents (as Casaubon did at a later time). But he may have known something about the authors of Greek *Hermetica* by direct information; indeed, it is not impossible that he was personally acquainted with some of them.

[2] There are passages in which a mention of the *Hermetica* would have been appropriate; e. g. Orig. *c. Cels.* I. 12: οἱ μὲν Αἰγυπτίων σοφοὶ κατὰ τὰ πάτρια γράμματα πολλὰ φιλοσοφοῦσι περὶ τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς νενομισμένων θείων (*al.* θεῶν)· οἱ δὲ ἰδιῶται, μύθους τινὰς ἀκούσαντες ὧν τοὺς λόγους (meanings or explanations) οὐκ ἐπίστανται, μέγα ἐπ' αὐτοῖς φρονοῦσιν. Origen here goes on to say that the only men who know this secret wisdom of the Egyptians, and from whom it might be learnt, are the priests. (That however is merely an *obiter dictum*.)

Ib. 4. 39: 'Some think that Plato, while staying in Egypt, met Jewish philosophers (τοῖς τὰ Ἰουδαίων φιλοσοφοῦσι), and learnt some things from them.' That notion is not so absurd as it might seem at first sight; there were Jews in Egypt before the time of Alexander, and it is not quite impossible that some report of the Jewish account of the Creation may have reached Plato by that route, and may have been borne in mind by him (together with much else) when he was writing the *Timaeus*. But to any one who knew our *Hermetica*, and thought them to be ancient, it would have seemed much more evident that Plato had learnt some things from *them*.

It may however be said of Origen, with even more confidence than of Clement, that if any such writings were current in his time, he must have been aware of their existence. Origen was born and brought up in Alexandria, and lived and taught there as head of the Catechetical School (with some intermissions) from A. D. 203 to 230, after which he migrated to Palestine. He had a wide and thorough knowledge of Pagan philosophic writings, and especially of those of the Platonists, down to and including Numenius. Some have thought that he was for a time a pupil of Ammonius Saccas, and a fellow-pupil with Plotinus (who was junior to him by about eighteen years). Statements to that effect seem to have arisen out of a confusion between the Christian Origen and a Pagan Platonist of the same name. But be that as it may, the fact remains that he was living in Egypt at the same time as Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus; that he *may* have been personally acquainted with one or both of them; and that he *must* have got his Platonism from the same sources that they did, or from similar sources. Among the sources from which he got it, were any *Hermetica* included? That question we have no means of answering. There are in his writings many passages which, in the thoughts expressed, closely resemble passages in our *Hermetica*; but I have found no instances of verbal resemblance of a kind that could be held to prove direct borrowing; and the resemblances in thought prove nothing more than that both Origen and the Hermetists were familiar with Platonism.

In any case, Origen's writings are of special significance for the study of the *Hermetica*, because he lived at the very time during which we have reason to think that most of the earlier of our extant *Hermetica* were written. He was a Platonist as well as a Christian.[1] The Platonism that is to be found in his writings is intermixed with allegorical interpretations of Bible texts, but it can, for the most part, be disentangled from them without much difficulty;[2] and we

[1] Just as Philo was a Platonist as well as a Jew.

[2] See, for instance, Orig. *De principiis*, I. 1. 5–7, pp. 31–9 Lommatzsch (concerning the incorporeality of God and mind). That passage might, without change of a single word, have been written by a Pagan Platonist; and if it had come down to us as a *libellus* ascribed to *Hermes*, we should have found in it nothing incongruous with that ascription.

have it in a specimen of the kind of Platonism that was current in Egypt at that time, i.e. after Numenius, and before the publication of the teachings of Plotinus.

The date of the sentence concerning Hermes in Cyprian (?) *Quod idola* is so uncertain, that no inference can safely be drawn from it.

The author of the *Cohortatio ad Graecos* (probably A. D. 260–302) quotes Herm. *ap.* Stob. *Exc.* I; and if the conjecture Ἀγαθοῦ δαίμονος for Ἄκμωνος is accepted, he also knew a Hermetic dialogue in which Agathos Daimon was the teacher.

The earliest Pagan *testimonium* is that of Porphyry, who, in his *Letter to Anebo*, written in the latter part of the third century, said that he had met with some philosophic *Hermetica* (*Abammonis resp.* 8. 4 a: ἐν τοῖς συγγράμματιν οἷς λέγεις περιτετυχηκέναι . . . τὰ μὲν γὰρ φερόμενα ὡς Ἑρμοῦ κ.τ.λ.).

It might perhaps be argued that the Greek *Hermetica* may have been for some considerable time kept secret (as is enjoined in some of them), that is, may have been passed from hand to hand within the small groups of men for whose instruction they were written, but concealed from all others; and that they may therefore have been in existence long before they became known to outsiders. But that seems improbable. Among 'seekers after God', such as were the authors of our *Hermetica* and their pupils, conversions to Christianity must have been frequent; and a Hermetist who had become a Christian would no longer have any motive for concealing the writings which he had previously held sacred. There was therefore nothing to prevent these documents from becoming widely known soon after they were written.

We find then that the external evidence agrees with and confirms the conclusion to which the internal evidence points, namely, that most of the extant *Hermetica* were written in the course of the third century after Christ, and that few of them, if any, can have been written long before A. D. 200.

That most of them, if not all, were in existence at the end of the third century, is proved by the evidence of Lactantius.

The treatise of Lactantius *De opificio dei*, his larger work *Divinae institutiones*, and his treatise *De ira dei* were written between A. D. 303 and 311.[1] The contents of the *Divinae institutiones* are

[1] See Harnack, *Chronol. der altchrist. Litt.*, ii. 415 ff., and Bardenhewer, *Patrologie*, pp. 178–80.

repeated in an abridged form, with some variations and additions, in the *Epitome div. inst.*, which was written by Lactantius some years later, perhaps about A. D. 315. For the text of Lactantius, my authority is Brandt's edition, *Corp. script. eccl. Lat.* vol. xix (1890) and vol. xxvii (1893–7).[1]

In the *De opif. dei* (*c.* A. D. 304), there is no mention of Hermes. In *Div. inst.* 2. 10. 14 f., speaking of the making of the human body by God, Lactantius mentions Hermes, together with the Stoics and Cicero, as having dealt with the subject, and adds, 'I pass over this topic now, because I have recently written a book (viz. the *De opif. dei*) about it'. But he does not there say that he made use of any Hermetic document when he was writing the *De opif. dei*; and it is possible that the Hermetic passage (probably *Corp.* V. 6) to which he refers in *Div. inst. l. c.* was not known to him until after the *De opif. dei* was finished.

Brandt, *Über die Quellen von Lactanz' Schrift De opificio dei* (*Wiener Studien* 13, 1891, pp. 255–92), tries to prove that one of the two main sources of the *De opif. dei* was a Hermetic document—probably, he thinks, the *Aphrodite*, of which Herm. *ap.* Stob. *Exc.* XXII is a fragment. His argument may be summarized as follows: 'Lactantius, throughout *De opif. dei* cc. 2–13, insists on the *beauty* of man's bodily structure even more than on its *utility*. Now that is exceptional; in most other writings on the same topic (e. g. in Cic. *Nat. deor.* 2. 133–53) the utility of the bodily organs is spoken of, but not their beauty. Lactantius must therefore have drawn from a source other than Cicero and Varro, and other than the Stoic writings of which Cicero and Varro made use. And as Lactantius in *Div. inst.* 2. 10. 13 says that Hermes had dealt with the subject, the peculiar source from which Lactantius drew in the *De opif. dei* must have been a *Hermeticum*. In that *Hermeticum*, beauty must have been spoken of side by side with utility. The only extant Hermetic passage in which the construction of the human body by God is dealt with is *Corp.* V. 6; and that', says Brandt (mistakenly, as it seems to me), 'cannot be the passage referred to in *Div. inst. l. c.*, because it speaks only of the beauty of the bodily organs, and not of their utility. The *Hermeticum*

[1] The chief MSS. of *Div. inst.* are *B*, sixth or seventh century; *R*, ninth century; *H*, tenth century; *S*, twelfth century; *P*, ninth century; *V*, tenth or eleventh century; and (for the passages quoted in Greek by Lactantius) *Sedulius*, ninth century.

of which Lactantius made use in the *De opif. dei* must therefore have been a *libellus* which is now lost; and it may very likely have been the *Aphrodite*. From it are derived those parts of the *De opif. dei* in which either the utility and the beauty of the bodily organs are spoken of together, or their beauty is spoken of alone; viz. *cap.* 2, *cap.* 5. 13, nearly the whole of *cap.* 7, much in *cap.* 8. 1–8, much in *cap.* 10, and most of *cap.* 13.'

If that were established, it might be said that a large part of the contents of a lost Hermetic *libellus* has been preserved in the *De opif. dei*. But Brandt's argument does not appear to me to be convincing.[1] Beauty as well as utility is spoken of in this connexion by Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 17. 11: 'formae nostrae pulchritudo deum fatetur artificem: . . . nihil in homine membrorum est, quod non et necessitatis causa sit et decoris.' The passages of Lact. *De opif. dei* which Brandt thinks to be of Hermetic origin are an expansion of that statement. Minucius Felix shows no knowledge of Hermetic writings. His *Octavius* was certainly known to Lactantius; and the passages in the *De opif. dei* of which Brandt speaks may have been suggested to Lactantius either by that passage of Minucius Felix, or by some Stoic treatise which was known to both of them.[2] We must conclude then that there is no evidence that anything in the *De opif. dei* of Lactantius comes from a Hermetic source. But Hermes is many times spoken of and quoted in the *Div. inst.*, and is once referred to in the *De ira dei*.

Lactantius knew of 'many' writings ascribed to Hermes that were of the same character as our *Hermetica* ('libros, et quidem multos, ad cognitionem divinarum rerum pertinentes', *Div. inst.* 1. 6. 4). He had read the Greek original of *Ascl. Lat.*, which he calls Λόγος τέλειος; and as he refers to three different parts of it (*Ascl. Lat.* I. 8; III. 24 b–26 a; *Epilogus* 41 a under that same title—*Div. inst.* 4. 6. 4; 7. 18. 4; 6. 25. 1) there can be no doubt that the compilation

[1] Brandt's conclusion is rejected by Gronau, *Poseidonios und die jüdisch-christl. Genesisexegesis*, 1914, p. 162.

[2] Gronau, *op. cit.*, p. 162, points out the resemblance between Lact. *De opif. dei* 2. 7 (*si homini ferinos dentes aut cornua aut ungues aut ungulas aut caudam aut varii coloris pilos addidisset, quis non sentiat quam turpe animal esset futurum?*) and Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 141 B (εἰ . . . οὕτως δυνάμεως εἶχεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὡς τῇ μὲν ὠκύτητι παρατρέχειν τὸν ἵππον, ἄτριπτον δὲ ὑπὸ στερρότητος ἔχειν τὸν πόδα, ὁπλαῖς τισιν ἢ χηλαῖς ἐρειδόμενον, κέρατα δὲ καὶ κέντρα καὶ ὄνυχας ἐν ἑαυτῷ φέρειν, . . . θηριώδης τις ἂν ἦν καὶ δυσάντητος). A large part of the contents of Gregory's *De hom. opif.*, as Gronau has shown, must have been derived directly or indirectly from Posidonius; and a large part of the contents of Lact. *De opif. dei* may have been derived from the same source.

of that composite dialogue was already completed, and that it was known to him in a form differing little from that in which it has come down to us in the Latin translation. There is positive proof that he knew also *Corp.* XII. ii (*Div. inst.* 6. 25. 10), *Corp.* XVI (*Div. inst.* 2. 15. 7), Herm. *ap.* Stob. *Exc.* I (*Epit.* 4. 5 and *De ira dei* 11. 11), and *Exc.* II A (*Div. inst.* 2. 12. 5); and there is probably, if not certainly, a reference to *Corp.* V in *Div. inst.* 2. 10. 14. It is possible, but not certain, that *Corp.* X is referred to in *Div. inst.* 1. 11. 61, and *Corp.* IX in *Div. inst.* 2. 15. 6. Lactantius also quotes or refers to several passages in Hermetic writings which were known to him but are not now extant (*Div. inst.* 1. 6. 4; 4. 7. 3; 7. 13. 3; 1. 7. 2; 4. 8. 5; 7. 9. 11).

It may be inferred then from the evidence of Lactantius that nearly all the extant *Hermetica*,[1] as well as a considerable number of Hermetic *libelli* that are now lost, were written before A. D. 311 at the latest, and probably before A. D. 300.

From the time of Lactantius onward, the existence of religious or philosophic *Hermetica*, and the resemblance of the doctrines taught in them to those of Platonism, were widely known among the Christians. In the course of the Arian controversy of the fourth century, disputants on both sides referred to these documents. (See Marcellus of Ancyra and Ps.-Anthimus.) They were read by Didymus (A. D. 380–93), and by Cyril of Alexandria (A. D. 435–41). Augustine (A. D. 413–26) read *Ascl. Lat.* in the translation which has come down to us, but does not appear to have read any other *Hermetica*. He did not read Greek; and the Λόγος τέλειος was probably the only *Hermeticum* that had in his time been translated into Latin. Lactantius, Augustine, and Cyril took for granted the antiquity and authenticity of the *Hermetica*; and it does not appear that any doubt on that point arose among Christians thenceforward down to the time of Casaubon.

The Pagan Neoplatonists paid little attention to the *Hermetica*. Porphyry spoke of them in his *Letter to Anebo*, but there is no reference to them in any of his extant writings. The author of *Abammonis responsum* shows knowledge of them in his reply to Porphyry. Iamblichus is said by Proclus *In Tim.* 117 D to have cited a statement of 'Hermes'; and Proclus makes use of that statement to show that a certain doctrine was taught by 'the

[1] There is no proof that any of the *Isis to Horus* documents were known to Lactantius.

tradition of the Egyptians'. But with these exceptions, the *Hermetica* are ignored in Neoplatonic literature.[1] Seeing that the doctrines set forth in the Hermetic writings are closely connected with those taught by Plotinus and his successors, we might have expected the Neoplatonists to be keenly interested in these documents. Why did they neglect them, and prefer to accept as inspired scriptures the *Oracula Chaldaica* and the *Orphica*, which would seem to us far less suitable for their purpose? Probably because they knew that the attribution of the *Hermetica* to the ancient prophet Hermes was an error. Porphyry was too good a scholar and critic to be misled in this matter; he must have seen them to be what in fact they are, namely, documents written by Egyptian Platonists in his own time, or very shortly before it. The author of *Abammonis resp.* knew at least that they were not written by Hermes (that is implied by his phrase τὰ φερόμενα ὡς Ἑρμοῦ, 8. 4 a, which he may have taken over from Porphyry); though he mistakenly thought that they correctly reproduced the meaning of doctrines taught in books written by ancient Egyptian priests. The later Neoplatonists, if they were aware that the *Hermetica* were of recent date, would have little reason to refer to them; for all that was acceptable to them in the teaching of the *Hermetica* was to be found more fully worked out in Plotinus.

Some of our *Hermetica* were known to the alchemist Zosimus (A. D. 300–50?). Stobaeus, *c.* A. D. 500, had access to the whole mass of *Hermetica*, and made copious extracts from them. About the same time Fulgentius happened to meet with *Corp.* I; and the Λόγος τέλειος, and at least one other *Hermeticum*, were read by Lydus, *c.* A. D. 550. From that time onward the Greek *Hermetica* seem to have been little known and seldom read, until they were brought to light again in the revival of learning which took place at Constantinople under the lead of Psellus. In that interval (A. D. 550–1050) most of them perished; and (apart from extracts and quoted fragments) those only survived which were, at some date unknown to us, put together to form the *Corpus Hermeticum*. The Latin *Asclepius* may have owed its preservation to the fact that it was mistakenly ascribed to Apuleius, and handed down together with his writings.

[1] Malalas (Migne, tom. 97, col. 512) says that in A. D. 367–83 Θέων ὁ σοφώτατος φιλόσοφος (that is, no doubt, Theon of Alexandria, the father of Hypatia) ἐδίδαξε καὶ ἡρμήνευε τὰ ἀστρονομικά, καὶ τὰ Ἑρμοῦ τοῦ τρισμεγίστου συγγράμματα, καὶ τὰ Ὀρφέως. (See note on Herm. *ap.* Stob. *Exc.* [XXIX].) But we are not told that 'the writings of Hermes Trismegistus' on which Theon commented were philosophic or religious; they may have been writings on astrology or some other kind of 'occult' science.

Cyril of Alexandria (Migne, tom. 76, col. 548 B; see *Testim.*) says that some man, whom he does not name, 'composed at Athens the fifteen books entitled Ἑρμαικά'; and he quotes from the first book of that work (which seems to have been written in the form of a dialogue) a passage, put into the mouth of an Egyptian priest, in which it is said that Hermes was the founder of Egyptian civilization and science. But we do not know how long before Cyril's time the work called *Hermaica* was written; we know nothing about its contents except the extract quoted by Cyril; and in that extract nothing is said of Hermes as a teacher of philosophy or religion.

But while the reputation of Hermes as a philosopher and teacher of religion dwindled in Europe, it lasted on undiminished in another region. The centre in which it most strongly maintained itself, and from which it spread afresh, was Harran,[1] an important city in northern Mesopotamia, situated on the main road between Babylonia and the West. When Christianity, in the course of the fourth century, became the dominant religion in the neighbouring regions of the Roman empire, the majority of the Harranians refused to be converted, and continued to worship in their heathen temples as before;[2] so that Harran came to be spoken of by Christians as a 'city of Pagans' (Ἑλλήνων πόλις).[3] When Syria and Mesopotamia were invaded and conquered by the Arabs (A. D. 633–43), a large part of the Harranians were still Pagans; and under Moslem rule they adhered to their religion with the same pertinacity. We hear little of them for nearly two centuries; but they emerge into light again in the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mún (son of Hárún ar-Rashíd). In A. D. 830, al-Mamun, setting out from Bagdad, his

[1] The evidence of Arabic writers concerning the Pagans of Harran has been collected and very thoroughly discussed by D. Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, St. Petersburg, 1856 (a work in two volumes, which contains large stores of material, exasperatingly ill arranged). Chwolsohn's main conclusions are accepted by more recent authorities, e.g. Carra de Vaux, *Avicenne*, 1900, pp. 61–71, and E. G. Browne, *Lit. Hist. of Persia*, 1902, pp. 302–6. (It is very likely that my transliterations of Arabic names will be found inaccurate or inconsistent. In writing the names I usually omit diacritical marks, except at the first place where each name occurs.)

[2] Northern Mesopotamia was the chief battle-ground in the long series of wars between the Romans and the Persians. It was therefore of great importance to the Roman government to retain the loyalty and goodwill of the inhabitants of Harran, which was one of the chief strongholds of that region; and it may have been for this reason that Paganism was connived at there when it was forcibly suppressed in other places.

[3] Chwolsohn, i, pp. 303 and 438. (He refers to *Acta Conciliorum*, t. ix, ed. Paris, 1644, pp. 34 and 37.) Procopius, *Bell. Pers.* 2. 13, says that in A. D. 540 the Persian king Chosroes showed exceptional favour to Harran 'because its inhabitants were mostly Pagans' (ὅτι δὴ οἱ πλεῖστοι οὐ Χριστιανοί, ἀλλὰ δόξης τῆς παλαιᾶς τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες).

capital, on a campaign against the Byzantines, passed through Harran,[1] and noticing, among those who there presented themselves before him, some people strangely dressed, asked them, 'To which of the peoples protected by law[2] do you belong?' They answered, 'We are Harranians'. 'Are you Christians?' 'No.' 'Jews?' 'No.' 'Magians?' 'No.' 'Have you a holy scripture or a prophet?' To this question they gave an evasive answer. 'You are infidels and idolaters then', said the caliph, 'and it is permitted to shed your blood. If you have not, by the time when I return from my campaign, become either Moslems or adherents of one of the religions recognized in the Koran, I will extirpate you to a man.'[3] Under this threat, many of them, in outward profession

[1] This story is quoted by an-Nadím, *Fihrist* (A. D. 987), Bk. 9, cap. 2 (Chwolsohn, ii, pp. 14 sqq.), from a book called *The disclosure of the doctrine of the Harranians, who are in our time known under the name of Ṣabians*, which was written (probably *c.* A. D. 900) by a Christian named Abú-Júsuf Abshaa'al-Qathíí.

[2] According to Mohammedan law, 'Peoples of a Book', i. e. non-Moslems whose religion was founded on a scripture containing truths revealed by God to one whom Moslems recognized as a prophet, were entitled to toleration, on condition of payment of a fixed tax. This law was based on certain passages in the Koran in which Jews, Christians, and 'Sabians' were favourably spoken of. (*Koran* 2. 59: 'The believers, be they Jews, Christians, or Sabians, if only they believe in God and the last day, and do what is right, will find reward in the presence of their Lord; neither fear nor sorrow shall torment them.' See also *Koran* 5. 73 and 22. 17.)

According to Chwolsohn, the people called 'Sabians' by Mohammed were the Mandaeans, a sect residing in the marsh-lands near the head of the Persian Gulf. (See Brandt, *Mandäische Religion*, 1889, and *Mandäische Schriften*, 1893.) These people called themselves Mandaeans, a name derived from *mandâ*, which means ἡ γνῶσις; but their neighbours called them Ṣabians, a Semitic word meaning 'people who wash themselves', or 'baptists'. A few thousands of Mandaeans were still to be found in the neighbourhood of Basra in the nineteenth century; but they are probably by this time almost, if not quite, extinct. The sect may have been in existence as early as the second century A. D. Their scriptures are written in an Aramaic dialect, and contain a mixture of Babylonian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian ingredients, slightly modified by Christian influence. These writings, in the form in which they are now extant, may perhaps have been composed about the seventh or eighth century A. D., but were doubtless compiled out of documents of earlier date. In the ninth century, so little was generally known about this sect, that it was possible for the Pagans of Harran, who had no connexion whatever with them, to claim the name of Sabians without fear of contradiction, and thereby to get for themselves a legal status similar to that of Jews, Christians, and Magians (i. e. Zoroastrians) under Moslem rule.

There is, however, some doubt whether Chwolsohn was right in identifying the 'Sabians' of the Koran with the Mandaeans. De Goeje (*Actes du 6me congrès international des Orientalistes*, Pt. ii, section 1, Leyden, 1885, p. 289) says that the people called Sabians in the Koran were 'a Christian sect strongly impregnated with Pagan elements, the Elkasaites, who existed in Babylonia, and who, while having much resemblance to the Mandaeans, are not identical with them, as Chwolsohn thought they were'. But whether the sect denoted by the name Sabians before A. D. 830 was that of the Mandaeans or some other, it was in any case a sect with which the Pagans of Harran had nothing to do.

[3] Ameer Ali, *A Short History of the Saracens*, 1921, p. 274, says: 'In his sagacious tolerance, Mamun recognized no distinction of creed or race; all his subjects were declared eligible for public offices, and every religious distinction was effaced. . . . Liberty of conscience and freedom of worship had been always enjoyed by non-Moslems under the Islamic *régime*; any occasional variation in this policy was due to the peculiar temperament of some local governor. Under Mamun, however, the liberality towards other religions was large-hearted and exemplary.' This seems hardly consistent with the story told above. But the discrepancy is to be explained in this way; Mamun's tolerance of non-Moslem religions was genuine as far as it went, but it extended only to those religions which were recognized by law.

Carra de Vaux, *Avicenne*, p. 30, tells a story (reported by Masudi) of a group of Manichaeans arrested and put to death as heretics by Mamun's order.

at least, went over to Islam, and others to Christianity. But some of them held out, and consulted a Moslem jurist, who, in return for a large fee, gave them this advice: 'When al-Mamun comes back, say to him, "We are Sabians"; for that is the name of a religion of which God speaks in the Koran.' Al-Mamun never came back (he died two or three years later, while still at war); but the Harranian Pagans acted on the advice of the jurist. They called themselves Sabians, and were thenceforward officially recognized by the Moslem government as entitled to toleration under that name.[1]

But in order to make good their claim to this legal status, it was necessary for them not merely to call themselves by a new name, but also to put forward a Book on which it could be said that their religion was based, and a Prophet or Prophets to whom the contents of that Book had been revealed. The sacred books of the sect which had hitherto been denoted by the name Sabians were probably unknown and inaccessible at Harran; and if they had been known there, it would have been evident that those books had nothing to do with the religion of the Harranians. It was therefore

[1] Hence, from A. D. 830 onward, the name Sabians had a new and different meaning. Some Arabic writers were aware that there were people 'in the marshes' near the head of the Persian Gulf who were called Sabians; but the name was henceforward more commonly used to denote the Harranian Pagans. And since these were the only Pagans with whom the Moslem Arabs of the Bagdad region were directly or personally acquainted, the name Sabians came to be habitually used (from about A. D. 1000 onward) to signify Pagan polytheists or 'star-worshippers' in general. (The Arabs were inclined to think that all Pagans were star-worshippers; this notion they probably got by generalizing from what was known to them about the local cults of Harran.) An Arabic writer says, for instance, that Constantine was converted from 'Sabism' to Christianity; and another says that Pharaoh was a 'Sabian'.

The name 'Sabians' then had three different meanings. (1) Before A. D. 830, it meant the Mandaeans, or some other sect of similar character. (2) From A. D. 830 to about 1000, it meant the Harranian Pagans. (3) From about A. D. 1000 onward, it meant Pagans in general, of all places and all times. But most Moslems were not aware of these distinctions; and it is often difficult to decide whether an Arabic writer is using the name in the second or the third sense.

necessary to choose some other writings, which would serve the purpose better.

Now the religion of the Pagan Harranians of the ninth century was the indigenous religion of heathen Syria, more or less modified by Hellenic and perhaps by Persian and other influences. For the mass of the people, religion must have been, there as elsewhere, a matter of cult far more than of doctrine. Of the local cults of Harran some descriptions have come down to us in Arabic writings; but these are mostly vague and meagre, and some of the more definite statements are evidently due either to gross misunderstanding or to malicious invention. We learn from them, however, that there was at Harran a temple of the Moon-god Sîn,[1] and that among the deities worshipped by the Harranians the seven planet-gods were prominent; and there are also descriptions of a cult[2] which seems to show some resemblances to Mithraism.

But there were among the Pagans of Harran learned men who were well acquainted with Greek philosophy; and in those times Greek philosophy meant a religious philosophy founded on Plato and Aristotle—that is, in one word, Neoplatonism.[3] The religion

[1] The cult of the Moon-god Sin must have been firmly rooted at Harran ever since what may be vaguely called 'the time of Abraham'; and this Harranian cult was in high repute under the Roman empire. We hear of it, for instance, in the time of Caracalla; and in A. D. 363, Julian, halting at Harran on his way to war against the Persians, worshipped in the temple of the Moon-god (Amm. Marcell. 23. 3. 1). This worship seems to have continued without intermission under Moslem rule, until the temple of Sin at Harran was finally destroyed, either in A. D. 1032, or according to another authority, at the time of the Tartar invasion in A. D. 1230.

[2] We are told (Chwolsohn, i. 496, 513, and ii. 319–64) that in one of the temples at Harran was worshipped a god named *Shemâl*, 'the lord of the genii (or daemons), the highest God, the God of the mysteries'; and that underneath this temple there were crypts, in which were idols, and in which mysteries were celebrated. Boys were admitted into a crypt, and were there terrified by weird sounds and voices. Women were excluded from the rites. There was a sacrament in which cakes were eaten (we are told that these cakes were made of meal mixed with the blood of a slaughtered baby; but that is doubtless a calumny, like similar accusations against the early Christians; and in both cases alike, the accusation may have been based on a too literal interpretation of symbolic actions and metaphorical phrases used in the ritual); and there was also a sacramental drinking of some liquid out of seven cups.

In this description there is much that reminds one of Mithraism. It must have been in some region not far distant from northern Mesopotamia that the Mithraic cult which spread over the Roman empire first took shape; and after it had spread westward, it might have been brought back to that same region and revived there by Roman soldiers and merchants.

[3] Roughly speaking, it may be said that the Neoplatonists made use of Aristotle as their chief authority for logic, but Plato for philosophy in the stricter sense. But they habitually tried to explain away the differences between Plato and Aristotle, and to show that one and the same philosophy was taught by both. The 'Aristotle' of the Arabs meant Aristotle as interpreted by Neoplatonic commentators, and included, *inter alia*, the so-called *Theologia of Aristotle*, which is a paraphrase of Plotinus.

of these men must have been related to that of the uneducated mass of worshippers of Sin and the planet-gods in the same sort of way that the religion of Iamblichus was related to that of uneducated Pagans in the Roman empire. And when the Pagan Harranians were required, on pain of death or merciless persecution, to name a Book on which their religion was based, it would necessarily fall to the learned men among them to find an answer to the question, and to speak on behalf of the whole body. They might have said with some truth that their religion (i. e. the philosophic religion of these learned men themselves, though not the religion of the mass of Pagans) was based on Plato's Dialogues; but they preferred to name what were believed to be the more ancient writings from which Plato had derived his wisdom—that is, the Greek *Hermetica*. 'Our Scriptures', they must have said to the Moslem officials, 'are the Hermetic writings; and our Prophets are those whose teaching is recorded in those writings, namely, Hermes Trismegistus, and his teacher Agathos Daimon.'[1]

The Moslems did not set any fixed limit to the number of 'prophets' acknowledged by them (among those whom they recognized as prophets were Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, &c., and we are told by one authority that the total number of prophets amounted to 313, Chw. i. 626); and there might be no great difficulty in adding two more to the list; but it would be easier to get these two accepted if they could be identified with prophets already well known to Mohammedans. It was probably for this reason, and at the suggestion of Harranians, that Agathodaimon came to be identified with Seth son of Adam, and Hermes with Idrîs, whom Moslems held to be identical with Enoch (*Koran* 19. 57 and 21. 85).

The fact that the Harranian Pagans, when required to name a Scripture, chose the *Hermetica*, proves that in A. D. 830 a collection of *Hermetica* was known and read in Syria; and the fact that they named Agathodaimon as a prophet together with Hermes proves that their collection included some dialogues (now lost, and known

[1] An Arabic writer, who died in A. D. 898, describes the doctrine of the 'Sabians' (i. e. Harranian Pagans) as a philosophy, and says that their teachers are Agathodaimon and Hermes, and that they have a writing of the latter (Chwolsohn, i. 196).

to us only by a few fragments and references), in which Hermes was the pupil, and Agathos Daimon the teacher. It may be inferred from the occurrence of the names Tat, Asclepius, and Ammon in conjunction with that of Hermes in Arabic writings,[1] that these Harranians had in their possession Hermetic *libelli* in which the pupils were so named; and among these were presumably some that are now lost, as well as those which have come down to us.

In the ninth century, Hermetic documents were most likely known to some scholars at Harran in the original Greek; but the *Hermetica* had probably been translated into Syriac long before that time, and were doubtless usually read in Syriac by Harranians and their neighbours at Edessa and elsewhere.[2]

[1] 'Tat son of Hermes' is repeatedly spoken of in Arabic writings; and Asclepius is mentioned as one of the prophets recognized by the Harranians (Chwolsohn, i. 229, ii. 523, &c.), and is called a follower of Hermes (Chw., i. 243). Of Ammon there is at least one mention; al-Qifthí, A. D. 1248 (Chw., i, p. 787, and ii, p. 533), wrote a book containing, *inter alia*, biographies of Idris (i. e. Hermes), *King Amon*, Asclepius, Empedocles, and Plato.

[2] We know from Ephraim Syrus (see *Testim.*) that *Hermetica* were known in Syria *c.* A. D. 365, and that at that time a Syrian who probably did not read Greek had some knowledge of their contents (but perhaps only at second hand). De Boer, *Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam*, 1901, says that translation of profane writings from Greek into Syriac began in or about the fourth century. In the fifth century, there was in Edessa a flourishing academy, furnished with a large library of Greek and Syriac books (Chw., i. 172–4), and there can be little doubt that among those books were the *Hermetica*. We hear of works of Aristotle translated into Syriac in the fifth century (Chw., *ib.*). The school at Edessa, having become infected with Nestorianism, was suppressed by the emperor Zeno in A. D. 489 (C. de Vaux, *Avicenne*, p. 41), and there seems to have been thenceforward no one central seat of learning for Syrian Christians; but the work which had been centred at Edessa was still carried on in other Syrian cities (e. g. at Nisibis). Meanwhile, Harran was the chief seat of learning for Syrian Pagans, and continued to be so down to the end of the ninth century. The Arabs got their knowledge of Greek science and philosophy partly from Syrian Christians (orthodox, Monophysite, and Nestorian), but (from A. D. 830 onward, if not before) partly also from Syrian Pagans of Harran.

Masudi (*ap.* C. de Vaux, *Avic.*, p. 38) reports from a lost work of al-Farabi (who died in A. D. 950) the following sketch of the history of learning: 'The chief seat of human knowledge was transferred from Athens to Alexandria in Egypt. The emperor Augustus, after destroying Cleopatra, established two centres of teaching, Alexandria and Rome; the emperor Theodosius put a stop to the teaching at Rome, and brought back the whole of it to Alexandria. Under Omar son of Abd-el-Aziz (A. D. 705–10), the chief seat of teaching was transferred from Alexandria to Antioch; and later on, in the reign of Mutawakkil, it was transferred to Harran.' The caliph Mutawakkil, 'the Nero of the Arabs', was a drunken debauchee, and a rigidly orthodox Mohammedan (Ameer Ali, *Short Hist.*, p. 288). Why is he, of all people, mentioned in this connexion? Apparently because it was in his reign (A. D. 847–61) that the learning of the Harranians first became widely known among the Arabs. From the time of the Arab conquest until A. D. 830, the date at which their religion was granted legal recognition, the learned Pagans of Harran had been forced to remain in concealment.

From that time onward, for about two centuries (A. D. 850–1050), we hear much of the Harranian Pagans. Some of them rose to positions of high eminence, and played an important part in the intellectual life of Bagdad.

The most famous of them is Thabit ibn Qurra,[1] who was born A. D. 835, and died *c.* A. D. 901. During the earlier part of his life he resided in Harran, as a money-changer. But shortly before A. D. 872, there was a schism in the community[2] of 'Sabians', as the Harranian Pagans were now called; Thabit's party was defeated, and he was expelled, and forced to leave the city. After some years he settled at Bagdad, was introduced to the caliph, and attained to high favour at court; and he got the government to recognize him and his companions as a separate and independent community of 'Sabians', with a head of its own.[3] Most of the learned men of Harran probably migrated to Bagdad and joined him. The community thus established at Bagdad must have been a sort of school of Pagan Neoplatonism,[4] in some respects analogous to the school of Pagan Neoplatonism which had flourished at Athens until suppressed by Justinian about 350 years before.[5] But there

[1] Chw., i. 546 sqq., 482 sqq., 177, 516, &c.

[2] When the Harranian Pagans obtained a legal status, it would necessarily follow that they became, like Jews and Christians under Moslem rule, a definitely organized body, with an official head or primate, through whom the government would communicate with them.

We are not told what the quarrel was about; but it may be conjectured that the learned men and students of philosophy differed so widely in their views from the uneducated vulgar, that it was found impossible for the two parties to act together.

[3] Chwolsohn (i. 488) says that this Sabian community in Bagdad was probably founded under the caliph Mutadhid, A. D. 892–902.

[4] One result of the migration must have been to diminish the importance of cult for these men, and increase the comparative importance of philosophy. The Harranians who had migrated to Bagdad might still take a theoretic interest in the local cults of Harran, but would henceforth be debarred from practising them; and there were in Bagdad no Pagan temples in which they could worship.

Masudi calls the Sabians (meaning the Harranian Pagans of Bagdad) 'eclectic philosophers' (Chw., i. 543); and Avicenna (†1037) speaks of them as having a philosophic theory of religion (Chw., i. 225).

[5] We are not told that any of the teachers and students who quitted Athens at that time settled at Harran; but it seems not unlikely that some of them did so. The heads of the Athenian schools who, when forbidden to teach at Athens, migrated to Persia in the expectation of finding ideal happiness there under the rule of a philosopher-king, and returned disillusioned a few years later, most likely passed through Harran, both on their way to Persia and on their way back. A. Stahr, in Smith's *Dict. Biogr.*, says that Damascius, who was the professor of Platonic philosophy at Athens when Justinian closed the Pagan schools there in A. D. 529, and who was one of those that migrated to Persia, 'appears to have returned to the West' in A. D. 533; but that 'we have no further particulars of the life of Damascius; we only know that he did not, after his return, found any

were doubtless considerable differences; and one of the differences was this, that whereas the Neoplatonists of Athens had ignored the *Hermetica*, the Harranian Neoplatonists of Bagdad recognized the *Hermetica* as their 'Scripture', and regarded the Hermetic teaching as the source whence their philosophy was derived.

Thabit lived on at Bagdad, occupied in teaching and writing, till his death about A. D. 901. We are told that towards the end of his life he was forced to become a Mohammedan; but his sons remained Pagans, and the Pagan community which he had founded in Bagdad continued its activities after his death.

Thabit's work as a writer extended over a wide range of subjects. He is spoken of as highly distinguished in mathematics, astronomy, logic, and medicine, as well as in philosophy. His mother tongue was Syriac, but he knew also the Greek and Arabic languages. Barhebraeus says that Thabit wrote about 150 works (translations included?) in Arabic, and 16 in Syriac. He translated Greek writings, and corrected earlier translations made by others; and according to an Arabic writer, it was said that 'no one would have been able to get any benefit from the philosophic writings of the Greeks, if they had not had Thabit's translations'.[1] Among his writings on philosophy and logic were the following: a *Tractatus de argumento Socrati ascripto*; a *Tractatus de solutione mysteriorum in Platonis Republica obviorum*; a translation of part of Proclus's commentary on the *Aurea carmina* of Pythagoras; an *Isagoge in logicam*; commentaries on Aristotle's Περὶ ἑρμηνείας, and a part of Aristotle's Φυσικὴ ἀκρόασις; extracts from Arist. *Cat.*, *Anal. prior.*, and Περὶ ἑρμ. But he was, like the Neoplatonists of Athens, interested in Pagan cults (more especially, perhaps, but not exclusively, the local cults of Harran), as well as in philosophy; and under this head may be placed the following titles given in the list of his writings: *Liber de lege et canonibus* (ceremonial law and ritual?) *ethnicorum*; *Liber de sepultura mortuorum*; *Liber de confirmatione religionis ethnicorum*; *Liber de munditie et immunditie*;

school either at Athens or at any other place'. Is it certain that Damascius did not settle down at Harran and teach there? He could hardly find any other place where he would feel so much at home as in that 'city of Pagans'. He was a Syrian, born at Damascus, whence he got his name.

[1] This agrees with what is said by Carra de Vaux, *Avicenne*, p. 37: 'Translation into Arabic began under al-Mansur (A. D. 753–74); but philosophic writings were not at first included among those translated, and the Arabs had not sufficiently perfect translations of Aristotle into Arabic until the time of al-Farabi, at the beginning of the fourth century of the *Hegira*' (i. e. *c.* A. D. 912, a few years after Thabit's death).

Liber de animalibus sacrificio aptis; *Liber de horis precum*; *Liber de lectionibus recitandis ad singulas septem planetas accommodatis*; *Liber de poenitentia et deprecatione*; *Liber de religione Sabiorum*; *Liber de legibus* (ceremonial regulations?) *Hermetis, et de orationibus* (prayers) *quibus utuntur ethnici.* From one of these books (perhaps the *Liber de confirmatione religionis ethnicorum*) must have been taken the following passage, quoted from Thabit by Barhebraeus: 'We are the heirs and propagators of Paganism. . . . Happy is he who, for the sake of Paganism, bears the burden (of persecution?) with firm hope. Who else have civilized the world, and built the cities, if not the nobles and kings of Paganism? Who else have set in order the harbours and the rivers? And who else have taught the hidden wisdom? To whom else has the Deity revealed itself,[1] given oracles, and told about the future, if not to the famous men among the Pagans? The Pagans have made known all this. They have discovered the art of healing the soul; they have also made known the art of healing the body. They have filled the earth with settled forms of government, and with wisdom, which is the highest good. Without Paganism the world would be empty and miserable.'

Thabit seems to have also dabbled in the 'occult' sciences; he paid some attention to astrology, and he wrote a commentary on a 'Book of Hermes' concerning *doctrina litterarum et nominum*—probably a treatise dealing with the cryptic significance or magic efficacy of letters of the alphabet.[2] It is very likely that he knew other books also on such subjects (e.g. on astrology) that were ascribed to Hermes, and assumed them to have been written by the same Hermes that he believed to be the author of the teachings recorded in the religious and philosophic *Hermetica*.

Thabit's son Sinán was a physician of high repute, and held by official appointment the position of head of the medical profession in Bagdad. Masudi says that Sinan had a thorough knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, logic, metaphysic, and the philosophic systems of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

Chwolsohn (i. 577 sqq.) enumerates twenty-seven other 'Sabians' (i. e. Harranian Pagans) whose names have been preserved. One of them, al-Battáni (A. D. 877–918), was a famous astronomer and mathematician, known as Albategnus in medieval Europe.[3]

[1] An audacious thing to write under a Mohammedan government.

[2] See F. Dornseiff, *Das alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, Teubner, 1922.

[3] C. de Vaux says, 'It is thought that al-Battani knew Greek; he commented

It appears that the 'Sabians' lived on at Bagdad, and continued to be known there as a separate sect, for about 150 years after the death of Thabit (A. D. 900–1050). At that time the 'Golden Age' of the great caliphs (al-Mansur, ar-Rashid, and al-Mamun, A. D. 754–833) was past, and the vast empire over which they had ruled had fallen to pieces. The decline may be said to have begun in the reign of Mutawakkil, *c.* A. D. 850. There was a period of confusion, in the course of which caliphs at Bagdad were helpless in the hands of Turkish praetorians, and provincial governors made themselves independent and established local dynasties. But shortly before A. D. 950 one of these local rulers, a son of Buwayh, who had got possession of a large part of Persia, made himself master of Bagdad; and thenceforward (until the coming of the Seljuks in 1055) the Buwayhids governed there as 'Mayors of the Palace', and the caliphs, reduced to impotence, retained only a shadowy dignity as pontiffs. Thus during the greater part of the century A. D. 950–1050 Bagdad was under a tolerably firm and settled government, and though shorn of much of its earlier glory, was still the chief city of a considerable dominion (Mesopotamia, Iraq, and western Persia).

During these political changes, students pursued their work without intermission, some at Bagdad, and others at the place of residence of this or that local dynast; and it was not until after the political decline had begun that Arabic learning reached its highest level.

In the intellectual activity of A. D. 900–1050 the Sabians of Bagdad took their part. During that time, or at least during the earlier part of it, there was still under Moslem rule much freedom of thought; and non-Moslems, though subject to occasional ill-usage or annoyance, were often well received at court, and found the highest careers open to them. But from about A. D. 1050 we hear no more of these Sabians; and their disappearance is probably to be accounted for as the result of a gradual increase in the strictness with which Mohammedan orthodoxy was enforced.

Among 'the two and seventy jarring sects' of Islam, there were, and had been from the first, two main tendencies in conflict. There was a school of theologians (the 'orthodox' theologians as they may be called) who relied wholly and solely on the authority of

on the *Tetrabiblos* of Ptolemy, and revised the *Almagest* and several works of Archimedes'.

revelation—i. e. on what God had revealed to Mohammed—and refused to diverge from this or go beyond it; and opposed to them there was a school of 'liberal' theologians, who, while accepting the authority of the Koran, claimed a right to the use of human reason in the interpretation of the sacred text, and exercised that right to a varying extent. In the ninth century, when the Arabs had got access to Greek learning, there arose, side by side with the two schools of theologians, a third school, that of the 'philosophers'.[1] Philosophy meant, for the Arabs, not a search for truth in any direction, but adherence to those philosophic doctrines which they had learnt from the Greeks—that is, to Neoplatonism; so that the 'philosophers' were, in fact, a sect among other sects. They were professedly Mohammedans (differing in this from the Sabians, who were not Mohammedans in any sense), and they did not openly reject the Koran; but they disregarded it as far as they could with safety, and when obliged to take notice of it, contrived some sort of compromise between their Neoplatonic doctrines and those of Moslem theology. Meanwhile, the liberal theologians also read the philosophic writings, and got from them arguments which they employed in their controversies with the more rigidly orthodox. Thus the 'orthodox theologians' and the 'philosophers' came to stand opposed to one another as the two extremes, while the 'liberal theologians' held an intermediate position between them.

Under the great caliphs, the liberal theologians had, on the whole, the upper hand, and men of all ways of thinking could express their opinions openly. But as time went on, the orthodox party grew in strength, and asserted itself more and more. The tenets of this party, or of a comparatively moderate section of it, were formulated by al-Ashari (who died A. D. 935, i. e. about half a century after the founding of the Sabian community in Bagdad); and his followers, known as 'the Asharites', carried on the struggle until they brought it to a victorious conclusion. From the school of the Asharites issued Ghazali (A. D. 1058–1111), who 'crushed the philosophers', and finally established the system of Mohammedan orthodoxy which has, in the main, been in force from his time down to our own day.

[1] Among the numerous Oriental Arabs who taught philosophy in their writings, there are three whose names stand out conspicuously, viz. al-Kindi, who died about A. D. 873 (of his writings only small remnants have been preserved); al-Farabi, who died A. D. 950; and ibn-Sina (Avicenna), who died A. D. 1037.

What is here said about the religious parties and disputes of the Moslem Arabs is taken chiefly from de Boer, *Gesch. der Philosophie im Islam*, 1901, and Carra de Vaux, *Avicenne* and *Gazali*.

Thus, about A. D. 1050, the forces hostile to freedom of thought were already prevailing. Men such as the Sabians of whom I have been speaking could no longer venture to speak out; they could escape ill-treatment only by remaining in obscurity; and they were probably soon absorbed into the mass of orthodox Moslems.

Now the time at which the Sabians disappear at Bagdad (*c.* A. D. 1050) is just about the time at which documents of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, after an interval of five centuries during which nothing has been heard of them in Europe, reappear at Constantinople, in the hands of Psellus. Is there not something more than chance in this? It may be that one of the Sabians of Bagdad, finding that his position under Moslem rule was becoming unendurable, migrated to Constantinople, and brought in his baggage a bundle of Greek *Hermetica*—and that our *Corpus* is that bundle. If so, the line along which the *libelli* of the *Corpus* have been transmitted to us from Egypt runs through Harran and Bagdad. This is merely an unproved hypothesis; but it is one that agrees well with the facts known to us. The Pagans of Harran almost certainly possessed the whole collection of *Hermetica* (including many documents that are not now extant) in Greek, at the time when they adopted these writings as their Scriptures, in A. D. 830; and there can be little doubt that Thabit, who was a good Greek scholar, still had a copy of them in Greek at the end of the ninth century. During the 150 years which had since elapsed, knowledge of Greek must have almost, if not quite, died out at Bagdad, and the *Hermetica* must have been now read only, or almost only, in Syriac or Arabic translations. But a man such as the Sabian I am supposing would, even if he did not himself know the Greek language, have good reason to preserve with care, and to take with him when he migrated to a place where Greek was spoken, any portions of his Scriptures, in the original Greek, that had chanced to escape destruction and to come into his hands; and it is just such a chance collection of specimens that we have in the *Corpus*.

Moreover, if we choose to indulge in yet further conjectures, there is nothing to prevent us from supposing that it was the arrival in Constantinople of a few such Sabian Neoplatonists from Bagdad, and the writings which they brought with them, that first started that revival of Platonic study in which Psellus[1] took the leading

[1] Psellus might be called a Byzantine Cicero. A modern Plutarch would be able to show that the lives of Cicero and Psellus are curiously parallel in some

part. This would be very much like what took place four centuries later, when Neoplatonism, conveyed by Greeks who migrated westward, passed on from Constantinople to Florence, and again carried with it the *Corpus Hermeticum*.

It is almost surprising that no extracts or quotations from the *Hermetica* (except the insignificant scrap which I call Fragment 37) have been found in Arabic writings. Possibly some such passages may yet be discovered. There may be in existence unpublished MSS. containing treatises on philosophic or religious subjects, written by Thabit b. Qurra or by other Sabians of Bagdad; and it might be expected that these men would sometimes quote from the documents which were regarded as their Scriptures.[1]

Al-Kindi (who died about A. D. 873, i. e. before the Sabian community in Bagdad was founded) said that he had seen a book 'the teaching of which is accepted by' the Pagans of Harran, and which consisted of treatises 'which Hermes wrote for his son' (i. e. a collection of *Hermes to Tat* documents); but he does not quote from these documents, and he tells us little about their contents, except that they teach 'the unity of God'.

Shahrastani (†A. D. 1153), Katibi (†A. D. 1276), and other Arabic writers give summaries of the philosophic teaching of the Harranian Sabians; and the contents of these summaries are probably derived (either directly or through Moslem intermediaries) from some of the writings of Thabit and his associates. The doctrines which these Arabic writers ascribe to the Harranian Sabians are for the most part such as are to be found in our *Hermetica*, or might have been found in *Hermetica* now lost; but we have no means of knowing whether the Sabian writers got them from the *Hermetica*, or from Platonic sources of the same kind as those from which the Hermetists drew.

Among the Arabic writers whose *testimonia* are known to me, the only one who shows any considerable knowledge of the contents of the Greek *Hermetica* is the mystic Suhrawardi (†A. D. 1191). This man says he 'finds himself in agreement' with Hermes as well as with Plato; and this implies that he knew writings which contained philosophic or religious teachings ascribed to Hermes,

respects; and one of the things in which the two men were alike is that each of them did much to make philosophy known to his countrymen.

[1] It would be worth while to examine for this purpose a document entitled *Gubernatio animarum*, written by Sinan son of Thabit (British Museum *Cod. Arab.* MS. Add. 7473 Rich, foll. 26–31).

and saw that these teachings resembled those of Plato. He says 'it can be proved' of Hermes (as well as of Plato) that he 'saw the spiritual world' (i. e. τὰ νοητά); and he must have found his proof of this in passages of the *Hermetica* in which Hermes speaks of 'seeing' God or things incorporeal 'with the eye of the mind'. He says that Hermes (as well as Pythagoras, Plato, and others) taught 'transmigration of souls', and the doctrine 'that the spheres of heaven give forth sounds'; these statements must be based on particular passages in the *Hermetica*.

It appears then that Suhrawardi had the same sort of knowledge of the philosophic *Hermetica* that he had of the writings of Plato, and of the doctrines ascribed to Pythagoras by Greek tradition; and hence it may be inferred that he had either himself read some of the *Hermetica* (in a Syriac or Arabic translation), or got information about their contents from the writings of Sabians or Moslems who had read them. We know from Barhebraeus (*Testim.*) that a Syriac translation of a collection of *Hermes to Tat* dialogues was extant in and after Suhrawardi's time.

The statements of Arabic writers concerning Hermes show that, down to the twelfth century and later, his name was widely known among them, and was held in high repute as that of a teacher of philosophic religion; but they add nothing to our knowledge of the Greek *Hermetica*. There has come down to us, however, one document which may be called an Arabic *Hermeticum*; namely, *Hermes de castigatione animae*, a translation of which is given at the end of the *Testimonia*. There are many passages in it which contain teaching that closely resembles that of some of the Greek *Hermetica*. It seems probable that most of these passages are extracts from the writings of men who knew the Greek *Hermetica* (or Syriac or Arabic translations of them), and that some of them have been translated, with little alteration, from Greek originals. It is possible that some of these Greek originals were *Hermetica*; but it cannot be said with certainty of any passage in the *Castig. an.* that it is a translation of a Greek *Hermeticum*.

A collection of 'Sayings of Hermes' is given by Honein ibn Isháq,[1] *Dicta philosophorum* (Loewenthal, 1896). This book contains a *gnomologium* in which are reported *dicta* of several sages (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, &c.), one of whom is Hermes. Among the thirty-six sayings ascribed by him to Hermes are the following: 'Desire is slavery; renunciation is freedom.' 'He who publicly reprimands any one deserves blame and contempt.' 'Let nothing of the advantages which the Creator has given you be small in your eyes, that you may not lose that which is already given.' 'Leave the liar and his company, for you get nothing that is of use from him; he is like the mirage in the desert, which shines, but does no quench your thirst.' 'He who scorns another on account of his sins finds no forgiveness.' 'For the merciful, the repentance of the offender is a sufficient advocate.' 'Death is like an arrow (that is already) in flight, and your life lasts only until it reaches you.' 'The height of magnanimity is to be merciful to fools.' Gnomic sayings such as these have nothing to do with the Greek *Hermetica*. It is evident that the name Hermes has here been employed at random, and it is a mere chance that these sayings are ascribed to him, and not to Socrates or some other sage. This document therefore is, for our present purpose, significant only as showing that in the ninth century Hermes was, in the circle to which Honein belonged, reputed a 'wise man' in the same sense as the chief Greek philosophers.

Bardenhewer, in his introduction to the *Castig. an.*, says that there is an unpublished writing of Mubashshiri b. Fatik (*Cat. bibl. Acad. Lugd.-Bat.* iii, p. 342) which contains a *collectio acute dictorum* (doubtless a *gnomologium* resembling that of Honein), and in which *Hermes gravem agit personam*; and that there are other similar and partly identical Arabic collections of gnomic sayings.

[1] Honein ibn Ishaq (†A. D. 873) was a Nestorian Christian. He took a leading part in the translation of Greek writings into Arabic, and was assisted in the work by his son and nephew. He resided mostly at Bagdad, but travelled in Byzantine territory, where he remained for two years, and brought back thence a collection of Greek writings. But as far as one can judge from the book translated by Loewenthal, he appears to have been surprisingly ignorant of Greek life and thought, and can hardly have been capable of understanding the writings which he translated.