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## THE HERMETIC WRITINGS.

THIS article aims at giving (i) a brief statement of the history of the Hermetic writings, so far as it can be gleaned from the scanty external evidence at our disposal; (ii) some account of the contents of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and allied Hermetic fragments, together with a discussion of recent literature (mostly German) on the subject; and (iii) an attempt to estimate the significance of the writings for the history of religion.

## I

The most considerable remains of the Hermetic writings are contained in a collection which is generally known as *Poemander*, after the title of its first piece. The MSS of this *Corpus Hermeticum* are derived from one tattered copy which perhaps owes its preservation to Michael Psellus,<sup>1</sup> the Platonist Theologian, who commented on the book at Constantinople in the eleventh century. After the capture of Constantinople in 1453 a MS was secured by Cosimo Medici, and the collection, which was much prized by the Florentine Platonists, was translated into Latin in 1463. The Greek text was first edited by Adrian Turnebus in 1554; the edition of François Foix, based upon the text of Turnebus, followed twenty years later. The somewhat uncritical edition of Patricius—published in 1591—underlies the text of Parthey (Berlin 1854).<sup>2</sup> Dr Reitzenstein's volume *Poimandres* (Leipzig 1904) contains a fresh edition of the text of nos. I and XIII of the collection, together with the text of the three concluding numbers, which are not included in Parthey's edition.<sup>3</sup> Fragments of Hermetic writings

<sup>1</sup> The comment of Michael Psellus on *Poimandres* 18 ἀξάνεσθε ἐν ἀξήσει καὶ πληθύνεσθε ἐν πλήθει, in which he affirms his belief that Poimandres is the Devil, quoting Scripture for his own purpose, is printed in Parthey's edition of *Poemander ad loc.* I am indebted to Dr Armitage Robinson for the following reference of Psellus to the Hermetic writings: Τὴν δὲ Ἑρμαϊκὴν μονάδα (*Corp. Herm.* iv) καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τούτου συγγράμματα ἃ δὴ πρὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ παῖδα τὰτ ὑπηγόρευσεν, ἐν οἷς μὴ καθαρῶς ταῖς ἀληθείαι δόξαι ἐναντιοῦται, προσέειπε: κρείττονα γὰρ ἢ κατὰ τὴν Πλάτωνος φιλοσοφίαν καὶ χρησμοῖς ἀκριβῶς εἰκότα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκ τῆς ὕλης ἀνάγοντα, καὶ τὸν Ποιμάνδρην τούτου (οὕτω γὰρ τὸν οἰκείον λόγον ἐπέγραψεν) ὡς ὀνειρώττοντα διαπτύετε. Psellus ed. Boissonade Περὶ μαθητῶν ἀμελούντας p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, quotations are from Parthey's edition.

<sup>3</sup> These three numbers are found in all the MSS except the Florentine (Laurent. 71, 33) and three closely allied MSS. Dr Reitzenstein suggests that the omission was due in the first place to a fear that the pagan apotheotic motive which these

are preserved by Stobaeus; a Latin translation of a Hermetic book, entitled *λόγος τέλειος*, is to be found among the works of Apuleius under the title *Asclepius*. Hermetic writings are contained among the works of the Greek alchemists, and finally Hermetic writings are extensively quoted by Lactantius and Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>1</sup> The works of 'Hermes' on medicine and astrology need not detain us here.<sup>2</sup>

The *religionsgeschichtliche Forschung* of the present century has brought this literature into fresh prominence, and it is suggested that light will be thrown on the origins of the Christian faith by the 'pia erga Deum philosophia, fidei dogmatibus ut plurimum consona' of the collection, which led Patricius at the end of the sixteenth century to declare that the doctrines of Hermes would be a suitable substitute in the schools for those of Aristotle.<sup>3</sup>

The literary fiction which attributed all Egyptian science and literature to 'Tat' was known to Plato: "Ἦκουσα περὶ Ναύκρατιν τῆς Αἰγύπτου γενέσθαι τῶν ἐκεῖ παλαιῶν τινα θεῶν, οὗ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ἱερόν, ὃ δὴ καλοῦσιν Ἰβιν, αὐτῷ δὲ ὄνομα τῷ δαίμονι εἶναι Θεῖθ· τοῦτον δὲ πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν τε καὶ λογισμὸν εὐρεῖν καὶ γεωμετρίαν καὶ ἀστρονομίαν, ἔτι δὲ περτείας τε καὶ κυβείας, καὶ δὴ καὶ γράμματα."<sup>4</sup> The Egyptian Tat was identified with the Greek Hermes. Cicero distinguished five Mercurys, and says that the fifth, who was worshipped by the Pheneatae of Arcadia, was related to have slain Argus, and to have fled to Egypt, where he gave the Egyptians laws and letters. 'Hunc', adds Cicero, 'Aegyptii Theuth appellat, eodemque nomine anni primus mensis apud eos vocatur'.<sup>5</sup> Hence also Strabo, speaking of the astronomical activities of the priests of Egyptian Thebes, says ἀνατιθέασιν δὲ τῷ Ἑρμῇ πᾶσαν τὴν τοιαύτην σοφίαν.<sup>6</sup> Clement of Alexandria gives an account of forty-two books of Hermes on a variety of subjects including geography, astronomy, theology, and medicine.<sup>7</sup> Iamblichus (*de Mysteriis* viii 1) relates that Hermes had made a complete exposition of the universal essences (τὰς ὄλας οὐσίας) in 20,000 books, as Seleucus declared, or as Manetho said, in 36,525.<sup>8</sup>

numbers betray would discredit the entire collection. Cf. *Poimandres*, appendix *Die Texte*, p. 319 foll. of which the paragraph above is a summary.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fabricius *Bibl. Graec.* ed. Harles, vol. i p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> A short account of these, some of which are extant in Latin translations from the Arabic, will be found in art. 'Hermes Trismegistos' by Kroll in Pauly-Wissowa *R. E.* vii pp. 797 foll.

<sup>3</sup> *Praefatio* apud Parthey *op. cit.* p. xix.

<sup>4</sup> *Phaedr.* 274 C, cf. also *Phileb.* 18 B.

<sup>5</sup> Cic. *de Nat. Deorum* iii 56 and Mayor *ad loc.*

<sup>6</sup> Strabo xvii 25.

<sup>7</sup> *Strom.* vi 4. 35 sqq.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. also *De Myst.* i 1 Θεὸς ὁ τῶν λόγων ἡγεμὼν, ὃ Ἑρμῆς πάλαι δέδοκται καλῶς ἅπασιν τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν εἶναι κοινός . . . ᾧ δὴ καὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι πρόγονοι, τὰ αὐτῶν τῆς σοφίας εὐρήματα ἀνετίθεσαν, Ἑρμοῦ πάντα τὰ οἰκεία συγγράμματα ἐπονομάζοντες.

These allusions prove that the device of attributing Egyptian literature to Hermes was widely recognized, at any rate by the first century B.C., but they prove nothing as to the date of the Hermetic literature with which we are dealing. The books referred to by Manetho and Seleucus, and those of which Clement speaks, were perhaps not written in Greek, and 'Hermes Trismegistos' does not seem to have appeared in Greek or Roman literature before the last quarter of the second century A.D., when he was referred to by Athenagoras the Christian apologist. His allusion, however, is too vague to give any idea of the nature of his source.<sup>1</sup> Philosophic literature under the name of Hermes Trismegistos was certainly current in the first decade of the third century. Tertullian (*adv. Val.* 15)<sup>2</sup> refers to 'Mercurius Trismegistos' as 'magister omnium physicorum' and complains that not even he has given a satisfactory account of Creation. A few years later in the *De Anima* he speaks of 'Mercurius Aegyptius, cui praecipue Plato insuevit' (§ 2), and quotes him (*ib.* § 33) as saying that when the soul leaves the body, it is not reabsorbed into the soul of the universe, but remains determinate, that it may render an account to the Father of its deeds in the body.<sup>3</sup> Hermes Trismegistos is also quoted in the *Quod idola dñi non sint* attributed to Cyprian.<sup>4</sup>

Lactantius seems to be the first writer whose quotations from 'Hermes' can be identified with passages in the Hermetic writings which have survived. He is an important witness, for his references to 'Hermes'—of whom he had a high opinion<sup>5</sup>—prove the existence of a body of Hermetic writings in the early years of the fourth century which included the Greek original of the pseudo-Apuleius *Asclepius*, some, though probably not all, of the numbers of the surviving *Corpus*, together with other works that have perished. The *Asclepius* is quoted under the title 'λόγος τέλειος'.<sup>6</sup> Now the ninth number of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, from which Lactantius also quotes,<sup>7</sup> opens with the following words:

<sup>1</sup> Athen. *Leg. pro Christ.* 28 'Ἐπεὶ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ Ἑρμῆς ὁ τρισμέγιστος ἐπικαλούμενος συνάπαν (Otto συνήπτων) τὸ ἴδιον (MSS αἰδιον) αὐτοῖς (i. e. Osiris and Horus) γένος καὶ ἄλλοι μύριοι ἵνα μὴ καθ' ἕκαστον καταλέγοιμι, οὐδὲ λόγος καταλείπεται βασιλεῖς ὄντας αὐτοὺς μὴ νονομίσθαι θεοῦς. Harnack (*Chron.* i p. 318) dates the book A. D. 177–180.

<sup>2</sup> Date shortly before A. D. 208, Harnack *Chron.* ii pp. 282–285.

<sup>3</sup> I have not been able to identify the quotation in any of the surviving Hermetic writings. The editor of Tertullian in the Vienna Corpus refers to *Corp. Herm.* x, but there is nothing in that number which can have been the original of Tertullian's words 'uti rationem, *inquit*, patri reddat eorum quae in corpore gesserit'.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* 6 'Hermes quoque Trismegistos unum deum loquitur eumque incomprehensibilem atque inaestimabilem confitetur'.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lact. *Instit. Div.* iv 9 'Trismegistos, qui veritatem paene universam nescio quo modo investigavit . . . '.

<sup>6</sup> *Instit. Div.* iv 6; vii 18.

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.* ii 15. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* ix 4.

Χθές, ὃ Ἀσκλήπεια, τὸν τέλειον ἀποδέδωκα λόγον, ἣν δὲ ἀναγκαῖον ἡγοῦμαι ἀκόλουθον ἐκείνῳ καὶ τὸν περὶ αἰσθήσεως λόγον διεξελθεῖν. From this it may be concluded that in the Hermetic writings as known to Lactantius, the Greek original of the *Asclepius* stood in close relation with no. IX of the present *Corpus*.<sup>1</sup> Lactantius also quotes no. XII. External evidence thus proves what internal evidence will be found to confirm, that the *Corpus* is not a complete collection and cannot have been known to Lactantius in its present form.

The Hermetic writings seem to have had a considerable vogue about the time of Lactantius, for they are also cited by the author of the pseudo-Justin *λόγος παραινετικός πρὸς Ἑλληνας*,<sup>2</sup> whom Harnack assigns

<sup>1</sup> Zielinski (*Archiv f. Religionswissenschaft* viii p. 335 n. 1) challenges the identification of the *λόγος τέλειος*, referred to in *Corp. Herm.* ix, with the Greek original of the *Asclepius*. He regards the latter as 'pantheistische Hermetik', while *Corp. Herm.* ix—and therefore also the *λόγος τέλειος* there referred to—is 'platonisierend-dualistische'. Reference will be made later to Zielinski's attempt to distinguish between a Peripatetic, a Platonic, and a Pantheistic Hermetic (p. 523 n. 2 *infra*). It will be enough here to examine the particular grounds on which he rejects this identification: (1) He claims that the following words in IX § 4, τὴν γὰρ κακίαν ἐνθάδε δεῖν οἰκεῖν εἴπομεν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτῆς χωρίῳ ὄσσαν, must refer to the *λόγος τέλειος* alluded to in § 1, and that there is no parallel in our *Asclepius*; (2) Lydus, *de mensibus* iv 32 and 149, quotes a passage from a *λόγος τέλειος* of Hermes, giving an account, in Platonic manner, of the future of the souls of evil men. Wünsch *ad loc.* refers to *Ascl.* xxviii which Zielinski declares is no parallel. Accordingly Zielinski thinks we must assume a second (Platonizing) *λόγος τέλειος*, to which *Corp. Herm.* ix 1 refers, and from which, in all probability, Lydus is quoting. In answer to (1) it may be pointed out that both the *Asclepius* and *Corp. Herm.* ix have clearly always belonged to a considerable collection, and that there is no reason to suppose that εἴπομεν in *Corp. Herm.* ix 4 refers to the *λόγος τέλειος* of § 1. (2) Lydus *ib.* iv 7 again quotes the *λόγος τέλειος* of Hermes, and the Greek original of *Asclepius* cc. xix and xxxix was unmistakably his source (though perhaps he had a different recension from the Latin translator). Moreover, we know from passages of the Greek original preserved in Lactantius that the translator treated the Greek with great freedom, omitting and inserting whole sentences; thus, though the verbal parallel between Lydus *de mens.* iv 32 and 149 and *Ascl.* xxviii is not very close, there is no difficulty in supposing the Greek original of the *Ascl.* to have been the book known to Lydus. In both passages the sense is the same.

Lactantius (*Instit. Div.* ii 15) refers to another *λόγος τέλειος*, written by 'Asclepius' and addressed to 'the king'—*sermo perfectus, quem scripsit (Asclepius) ad regem*. This must in any case be distinguished from the *λόγος τέλειος* of 'Hermes'. A fragment of the *λόγος τέλειος πρὸς βασιλέα* is probably preserved in *Corp. Herm.* xvi and xvii (Reitz. *op. cit.* pp. 348-354) under the title Ὅροι Ἀσκληπίου cf. *infra* p. 524.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit. fin.* Ἀμμωνος μὲν ἐν τοῖς περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγοις πάγκρυφον τὸν θεὸν ὀνομάζοντος, Ἐρμού δὲ σαφῶς καὶ φανερῶς λέγοντος Ἐθεὶν νοῆσαι μὲν ἐστὶ χαλεπὸν, φράσαι δὲ ἀδύνατον. The passage, which is also quoted by Lactantius (*Epit. Instit.* 4), Cyril of Alex. (*c. Iul.* i p. 31, Aubert), and Stobaeus (*περὶ θεῶν* ii 9) is an adaptation of Plato, like so much of the literature, cf. *Tim.* 28 C τὸν μὲν οὖν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς εὑρεῖν τε ἔργον καὶ εὐρόντα εἰς πάντας ἀδύνατον λέγειν.

to this same period; and Arnobius refers to Mercury, along with Plato and Pythagoras, as a recognized classic in philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Our Latin paraphrase of the *λόγος τέλειος* was probably written sometime in the fourth century: it is freely quoted by St Augustine in the eighth book of the *De Civitate Dei* (cc. 23, 26) A. D. 413.

Cyril of Alexandria's reply to Julian's polemic against Christianity was written between the years 432 and 444, the year of Cyril's death.<sup>2</sup> It contains a number of quotations from Hermes Trismegistos,<sup>3</sup> two of which are to be found in our *Corpus*; <sup>4</sup> two others are parallel to quotations by Lactantius; <sup>5</sup> the rest come from a collection of which we have no further trace.

Stobaeus, who is generally assigned to the latter half of the fifth century, has preserved a large number of excerpts from Hermetic writings of varying character. Among them are quotations from nos. II, IV, and X of our *Corpus*.<sup>6</sup> It is noteworthy that in each case the text of Stobaeus is very different from that of the *Corpus*, so that he affords evidence of an entirely different tradition.<sup>7</sup>

The Hermetic literature then was varied and extensive. The collection used by Lactantius in the fourth century, that used by Cyril, and that used by Stobaeus in the fifth, were all of them far larger than our

<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Nat.* ii 13.

<sup>2</sup> Hauck *R.-Encycl.* art. 'Cyrill v. Alexandrien'.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 31-35, 52-57, 63, 130, 274, ed. Aubert.

<sup>4</sup> *c. Iul.* ii p. 52, cf. *C. H.* xi 22; *id. ib.* p. 63, cf. *C. H.* xiv 6 sqq.

<sup>5</sup> *c. Iul.* i p. 31, cf. *Lact. Instit. Div.* ii 8; *c. Iul.* iv 130, cf. *Lact. op. cit.* ii 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Phys.* 384 sqq. (Heeren), cf. *Corp. Herm.* ii; *ib.* 68 and 306, cf. *C. H.* iv; *ib.* 766, 770, 774, 1000, 1004, cf. *C. H.* x.

<sup>7</sup> A classification of the fragments in Stobaeus can only be tentative:—

*Physica* 134, 162, 182, 188 (Heeren), deal with *εἰμαρμένη*, *ἀνάγκη*, and *πρόνοια*. The last two at any rate are addressed to Ammon, and they may possibly be some of the works referred to in pseudo-Apuleius *Asclepius* c. 1 (cf. *infra* p. 519 n. 3).

*Physica* 384 sqq. (cf. *Corp. Herm.* ii), 398, 698-710, probably all belong to the *Asclepius* tradition (cf. *infra* p. 519 n. 3).

*Physica* 256 is addressed to Tat, and deals with the nature of Time.

*Physica* 316 treats of *ύλη* as the *ἀγγεῖον γενέσεως*.

*Physica* 468 and 754 are astrological. (For the *δέκανοι* mentioned in these fragments cf. *De Myst.* p. 266; *vide* also Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* pp. 33, 118.)

*Physica* 718, 726, 740, 744, 800, deal for the most part with the nature of body, soul, and perception.

There is a Hermetic fragment in the *Περὶ ἀληθείας* 23 on the nature of Truth.

In the *Ἐπαινος θανάτου* a passage is quoted from Hermes maintaining that death is merely the 'dissolution of the body and the disappearance of bodily sensation' (§ 27).

The longest fragment (*Phys.* 928 sqq.) is from the *Κόρη Κόσμου*, and contains an elaborate cosmological doctrine related by Isis to her son Horus, and formerly revealed to Isis by Hermes. The teaching here is quite distinct from that of any other surviving Hermetic writing.

*Corpus*, and all of them embodied some at any rate of the numbers we possess. The composite character of our collection suggests that it was compiled at a comparatively late date from various strata of Hermetic writings.<sup>1</sup> The alchemist Zosimus, who flourished early in the fourth century, clearly knew of 'Poimandres' (*Corp. Herm.* i) and 'baptism in a bowl' (cf. *Corp. Herm.* iv), but we cannot be sure that he used our *Corpus*. Our *Corpus* was almost certainly in existence, approximately in its present state with perhaps nos. XVI, XVII, and XVIII (Reitz.) complete, at the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century. About that date Hermippus in his work *περὶ ἀστρολογίας* embodies quotations without acknowledgement from nos. I, X, XVII (R.) and possibly XVIII (R.);<sup>2</sup> and Fulgentius, who is assigned to the same period, quotes *Poimandres*: 'Unde et Hermes in Opimandrae libro ait: ἐκ κόρου τροφῆς ἢ ἐκ κούφου σώματος' (p. 26. 17 ed. Helm).<sup>3</sup> Other allusions to Hermes in Fulgentius (85. 21; 74. 11) may refer to lost fragments of the last three numbers of the collection. These are the only clues to the history of the *Corpus* before the eleventh century.

## II

In attempting to analyse the *Corpus Hermeticum*, it will be well to start from the narrow but firm foothold with which the external evidence has supplied us. Lactantius used a collection of Hermetic writings in the early years of the fourth century, which included the Greek original of the pseudo-Apuleius *Asclepius*,<sup>4</sup> and nos. IX and XII of the *Corpus*. What, so far as we can judge from his quotations and references, was the character of the collection used by Lactantius? And what other numbers of the *Corpus* may we assign with reasonable probability to the same source?

To Lactantius as to Tertullian, Hermes was a wise man, who had lived in the distant past and whose doctrines were often in striking

<sup>1</sup> Mr Granger's article in this JOURNAL, April 1904, *The Poimandres of Hermes Trismegistus*, appeared shortly before Dr Reitzenstein's *Poimandres*. The concluding numbers of the *Corpus*, which Reitzenstein has printed in an appendix to his book, prove conclusively that the *Corpus* cannot be both homogeneous and of a Christian origin, as Mr Granger then supposed. No. XVII (R.) is a frank apology for paganism. Nor, again, does Mr Granger's theory that the *Asclepius* is of an entirely different character from the other Hermetic writings seem to be borne out either by external or by internal evidence.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Reitzenstein *op. cit.* p. 210. Hermippus (ed. Kroll and Viereck) p. 9. 3, cf. *C. H.* i 5; Hermip. 21. 5, cf. *C. H.* x 12; Hermip. 70. 17, cf. *C. H.* x 6; Hermip. 25. 10, cf. *C. H.* xvi 12 (R.); and for Hermip. 12. 21 and 14. 13 cf. *C. H.* xviii.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Poim.* i ἐκ κόρου τε καὶ τροφῆς ἢ ἐκ κόπου σώματος. The text in Fulgentius is obviously corrupt.

<sup>4</sup> Text edited by Thomas *Apulei Opera* vol. iii, Teubner, 1908.

agreement with Christian revelation. Both Plato and Empedocles were probably indebted to him.<sup>1</sup> 'Some', says Lactantius, 'will reckon him among the philosophers, and allow him no more authority than they would to Plato and Pythagoras, although in Egypt he is regarded as a god, and worshipped under the name "Mercury"',—accordingly Lactantius proceeds to prove his point by quoting Apollo Milesius, an unmistakable god.<sup>2</sup> The quotations from Hermes in Lactantius are of a philosophical character, and account for, if they do not justify, that Father's high estimate of their author.

The pseudo-Apuleius *Asclepius* was one of a collection, for Hermes declares at the beginning of the dialogue that he intends to write this book in the name of Asclepius, since he has already composed a number of books in the name of Hammon, and to his dearly beloved son, Tat, he has written 'multa physica, exoticaque<sup>3</sup> quam plurima'.

A brief analysis of the Theology of the *Asclepius*<sup>4</sup> will form the best introduction to an examination of the Greek Corpus; some of the numbers in the latter will be found to be in close agreement with the general trend of thought in the *Asclepius*, while in other numbers the inconsistencies with the *Asclepius* will point to a different tradition. Other numbers again will not fall easily under one category or the other.

The doctrine of God and the World in the *Asclepius* is adapted from the *Timaeus*, and often expressed in the language Plato had used. At the head of all stands God, the father, the lord, 'qui est unus omnia, vel ipse est creator omnium' (c. ii). This statement of the transcendence and the immanence of the supreme God at once in the same breath, without any apparent consciousness of the metaphysical difficulties involved, is characteristic of the writer's shallow philosophy. 'This Lord and Maker of all', he tells us,<sup>5</sup> 'made a second god, visible and sensible. . . . When then he had made this god, first, alone, and one, and when his god appeared to him fair and full of all good things,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lact. *Instit. Div.* i 6; ii 12; *Epit.* 42. Tert. *de An.* 2.

<sup>2</sup> Lact. *Instit. Div.* vii 13.

<sup>3</sup> So MSS. Thomas ingeniously suggests *diexodica*. Cf. Cyr. Alex. *c. Iul.* ii p. 56 'Ὁμοίως καὶ αὐτὸς (Ἑρμῆς) ἐν τῷ πρὸς τὰτ διεξοδικῶ λόγῳ πρώτῳ, φησίν. The fragments on εἰμαρμένη, ἀνάγκη, and πρόνοια, preserved in Stob. *Phys.* 134, 162, 182, 188, of which the last two were addressed to Hammon, may have belonged to the collection here referred to as written in the name of Hammon. Cf. also Stob. *Phys.* 398 and 698-710, where the teaching is similar to that of the *Asclepius* and allied writings in the *Corpus Hermeticum*.

<sup>4</sup> For a learned and exhaustive account of Hermetic teaching *vide Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos* (Münster in Westfalen, 1913) by Dr J. Kroll. This book, however, does not discriminate between the various strata of Hermetic writings.

<sup>5</sup> Chap. viii Greek preserved *apud Lact. Instit. Div.* iv 6.



he marvelled, and loved him greatly as his own son (τόκος).<sup>1</sup> In a later chapter (xxix) the world is described as an 'animal' in the style of the *Timaeus*. At the cost of consistency the sun is here introduced as the 'secundus deus omnia gubernans omniaque mundana inlustrans'. The relation of the sun to the world is not made clear. To return to chapter viii—Hermes then proceeds to relate that 'God, being so great and good, willed that there should be another who could behold Him, whom He had made from Himself, and therewith He makes man to imitate His wisdom and His care (*diligentiae*)'. So then 'the lord of eternity is the first God, the second is the world, man is the third' (c. x).

Man is an *animal duplex*: one part of him is οὐσιώδης, the form of the divine likeness; the other ἑλικός, that is to say, the body in which the divinity of the mind is enclosed. To the question why man was put into the world, instead of passing his time in bliss, where God is, Hermes answers that 'when God had created man οὐσιώδης, he observed that he could not love all things, unless he were covered with a worldly (*mundano*) covering. Accordingly God clothed him with a bodily tabernacle (*domo*? = σκῆνι), and ordained that all men should be so, and taking [a part] from each nature, he fused and combined them into one, as far as should serve his purpose. Thus God fashions man from a nature of soul and a nature of body, that is to say, an eternal and a mortal nature, in order that an animal thus fashioned should be able to satisfy both of its sources, to marvel at, and worship things celestial, and inhabit and govern things terrestrial' (c. viii, p. 43). The reward of those who 'live piously with God and lovingly with the world' is to be 'loosed from the bonds of mortality and to be restored, pure and holy, to the nature of their higher part, to wit the divine'. To the wicked 'a return to heaven is denied, and there is ordained a migration into other bodies, foul and unworthy of a holy soul'.

Epicurean physics are repudiated: there is no such thing as void; that which appears to be void is full of spirit and air (c. xxxiii p. 72).

The dialogue concludes with prayer and praise to the supreme God. While they are praying, Asclepius asks Tat in a whisper whether they ought not to suggest to their father that they should burn incense during prayer. Hermes overhears the question and reproves Asclepius. 'It is like sacrilege', he declares, 'to burn incense while praying to God. . . . The highest offerings (*incensiones*) to God are the thanks of men.' After prayer, in which they ask God to keep them in the

<sup>1</sup> The language here is closely parallel to *Tim.* 37 C ὡς δὲ κινήθην αὐτὸ καὶ ζῶν ἐνόησε τῶν αἰδίων θεῶν γεγονὸς ἄγαλμα ὁ γεννήσας πατὴρ ἡγάσθη τε καὶ εὐφραθεῖς. . . .

love of His knowledge,<sup>1</sup> they 'turn to a repast—pure and without animal food'.

The last paragraph contains the key to the book ; the writer's interest is rather religious than philosophical, and he uses his metaphysics as an intellectual justification for the pagan revival. His theory of the gods of mythology is interesting : God, the Lord and Father, is Creator of the heavenly gods whom He makes like Himself ; the gods who are contained in temples are fashioned by man after his own likeness. The forms of the gods, made by man, are of two natures—a divine and a material. Statues have feeling and breath ; they can foretell the future by dreams and other means ; they can cause and cure human ills. A lament on the decay of Egyptian religion follows ; soon the gods will leave the earth, which will be given over to the *πονηροὶ ἄγγελοι*, and things will go from bad to worse, until at length the supreme God 'will recall the world to its ancient form' (c. xxiii foll.).

As it stands, the *Asclepius* is the longest Hermetic writing that we possess, but Zielinski is probably right in distinguishing four loosely connected numbers as follows :—

(1) cc. i–xiv, ending 'et de his sit huc usque tractatus' (p. 49 l. 16, Thomas).

(2) cc. xiv–xxvii, beginning 'de spiritu vero et de his similibus hinc sumatur exordium', and ending 'et haec usque eo narrata sint' (p. 65 l. 17, T.).

(3) cc. xxvii–xxxvi, beginning 'de immortali vero aut de mortali modo disserendum est' and ending 'sed iam de talibus sint satis dicta talia' (p. 76 l. 15, T.).

(4) cc. xxxvii to end, beginning 'iterum ad hominem rationemque redeamus' (cf. *Corp. Herm.* viii 1 *περὶ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος, ὃ παῖ, νῦν λεκτέον*).<sup>2</sup>

These divisions correspond, more or less, in length to the numbers of the *Corpus*. It should be added that Lactantius himself knew the Greek original as one whole under the title *λόγος τέλειος*.<sup>3</sup>

It has already been mentioned that at least two of the numbers in our collection (IX and XII) were associated with the Greek original of the *Asclepius* in the Hermetic writings as known to Lactantius.<sup>4</sup> No. IX opens with an allusion to the *τέλειος λόγος*, and the phraseology

<sup>1</sup> The Greek original of this prayer is preserved in the Mimaut Magical papyrus, cf. *infra* p. 533 n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. f. Rel.* viii p. 369.

<sup>3</sup> He quotes cc. viii, xxvi, and xli (*Instit. Div.* iv 6 ; vii 18 ; vi 25) as from the *λόγος τέλειος*. His quotations prove the Latin to be a very loose paraphrase.

<sup>4</sup> Lact. *Instit. Div.* ii 15, cf. *Corp. Herm.* ix 14 ; Lact. *Instit. Div.* vi 25, cf. *Corp. Herm.* xii *fin.*

and the line of thought in both are strikingly similar. There is the same doctrine of the nature of man, and the same antitheses of *αἰσθησις* and *νόησις*, *ἑλικός* and *οὐσιώδης*. No. XII, the other number from which Lactantius quotes, treats of *νοῦς κοινός*. *νοῦς* is one with the essence of God (*ὁ θεός*), as light is one with the sun. In men it is 'god' (*θεός* without the article)<sup>1</sup>—and some men may be said to be 'gods'—and in animals it is *φύσις*. The argument is developed in a different way from that of the *Asclepius*, but the two are not inconsistent. The description of the Universe as 'the great God and image of the greater' is quite in keeping with the Theology of the *Asclepius*, and the doctrine of the immutability of the *κόσμος* (§ 18) and of the godlike nature of man (§ 19) recalls similar passages in the other work (cf. *Ascl.* 35 and 36).

How many of the other numbers in the collection may be referred to the same cycle? No. II (*πρὸς Ἀσκληπιὸν λόγος καθολικός*) is similar both in matter and style. The phraseology of the opening discussion on *σῶμα* and *ἀσώματον*, *κινεῖν* and *κινούμενον* is closely related to no. XII 11, and the repudiation of void in §§ 10, 11 recalls *Asclepius* 33. No. V, *ὅτι ἀφανὴς ὁ θεὸς φανερώτατός ἐστιν*, is addressed to 'Tat', and may well be one of the *physica ad Tat* to which reference is made in the opening scene of the *Asclepius*. It is an elaboration of the cosmological argument for the existence of God. It clearly belongs to the same group. *πάντα δίδως καὶ οὐδὲν λαμβάνεις, πάντα γὰρ ἔχεις καὶ οὐδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔχεις* (§ 10 *fin.*) may be compared with no. II 16 *fin.* *ὁ γὰρ ἀγαθὸς ἀπαντὰ ἐστι διδοὺς καὶ μηδὲν λαμβάνων. ὁ οὖν θεὸς πάντα δίδωσι καὶ οὐδὲν λαμβάνει*; while the concluding words *ὑλῆς μὲν γὰρ τὸ λεπτομέρεστερον ἀήρ, αἲρος δὲ ψυχὴ, ψυχῆς δὲ νοῦς, νοῦ δὲ ὁ θεός* are found word for word in no. XII 14. No. VIII treats of God, the World, and Man in a manner closely resembling the *Asclepius*. Here, as there, the World is described as *δεύτερος θεός*, and *ζῶων ἀθάνατον*. Man is the third animal: *κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κόσμου γενόμενος, νοῦν κατὰ βούλησιν τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχων παρὰ τὰ ἄλλα ἐπίγεια ζῶα, οὐ μόνον πρὸς τὸν δεύτερον θεὸν συμπάθειαν ἔχει, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔννοιαν τοῦ πρώτου*.

No. VI, addressed to Asclepius, maintains that there is good in nothing save God. This does not agree with the doctrine of no. IX, as will be shewn in the next paragraph. But the general similarity of phraseology and style<sup>2</sup> justify us in considering it with these numbers.

We may then fairly regard nos. II, V, VI, VIII, IX, and XII of the *Corpus* and the *Asclepius* as closely related in style, phraseology, and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Origen's distinction: *In Joh.* ii 2 *πᾶν δὲ τὸ παρὰ τὸ αὐτόθεος μετοχῇ τῆς ἐκείνου θεότητος θεοποιούμενον οὐχ ὁ θεὸς ἀλλὰ θεὸς κυριώτερον ἂν λέγοιτο*.

<sup>2</sup> We may e.g. compare vi 4 *ἡ οὐσία τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰ γε οὐσίαν ἔχει, τὸ καλὸν ἐστι* with xii *ἰνί. ὁ νοῦς, ὡς Τάτ, ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ οὐσίας ἐστιν, εἰ γέ τις ἐστιν οὐσία θεοῦ*.

subject-matter. It is not, however, necessary to suppose that they are all by the same hand: indeed, the contrary seems more probable. Reitzenstein<sup>1</sup> points out that no. IX contains a polemic against the teaching of no. VI: no. VI 4 declares that ὁ κόσμος πλήρωμά ἐστι τῆς κακίας, to which no. IX 4 replies that χῶριον αὐτῆς (i. e. κακίας) ἢ γῆ, οὐχ ὁ κόσμος, ὡς ἐνίοι ποτε ἐροῦσι βλασφημοῦντες. Zielinski makes this difference of teaching a ground for distinguishing between a 'peripatetic-dualistic' and a 'Platonist-dualistic' Hermetic, and accordingly associates no. IX with parts of no. I and with no. VII as Platonic. As we shall see later on, I and VII are of a very different character from both VI and IX, and the difference lies not so much in actual divergence of teaching as in atmosphere and method of treatment. Nos. I and VII are hortatory, while nos. VI and IX are didactic. The controversy to which Reitzenstein and Zielinski<sup>2</sup> call attention provides a point of contact between VI and XI rather than a ground for separation.

Nos. XI and XIV are also of a philosophical character, but they do not betray any close relationship to the *Asclepius*. Αἰών and χρόνος play a large part in the cosmological doctrine of XI, and in both numbers a favourite antithesis is τὸ ποιῶν and τὸ γιγνόμενον—terms which are not prominent in the other numbers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> Zielinski contributed two articles entitled *Hermes und die Hermetik* to the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* viii (1905) and ix (1906). In the second he severely criticizes the 'Ägyptomanie' of Reitzenstein's *Poimandres*, and comes to the conclusion that we may expect Egyptology to throw light on the 'lower' Hermetic (i. e. alchemy, &c.), but that the 'higher' Hermetic (i. e. the *Corpus Hermeticum* and similar remains) is entirely Greek.

The former article attempts to discriminate between the various strata of Hermetic teaching, and contains some valuable criticism though the main drift of the argument seems open to question. *Corp. Herm.* i (Ποιμάνδρης), it is assumed rather than proved, is the oldest Hermetic writing; in this number Zielinski finds a combination of Peripatetic and Platonic Hermetic; and then he groups the other numbers according to this distinction as far as possible; and lastly he finds a Pantheistic group (including the *Asclepius*).

It may perhaps be questioned in the first place how far it is legitimate to distinguish precisely between 'peripatetic' and 'Platonic' in a syncretic age like the second or the third century, and secondly the *Poimandres* itself seems to be of such a different character from the philosophic numbers of the *Corpus* that it is doubtful whether it is safe to base an analysis of the *Corpus* on divergences to be found within the *Poimandres*. Cf. *infra* p. 527.

<sup>3</sup> Both these numbers are quoted by Cyril of Alexandria (*Corp. Herm.* xi 22, cf. *Cyr. Alex. c. Iul.* ii p. 52, Aubert; *Corp. Herm.* xiv 6 sqq., cf. *Cyr. Alex. c. Iul.* ii p. 64). It is impossible to determine the relation of Cyril's collection of Hermetic writings to that of Lactantius. Twice they quote the same passage (*Lact. Instit. Div.* ii 8 and *Id. ib. Epit.* 4, cf. *Cyr. c. Iul.* i 31), but there is no extant Hermetic book from which they both quote. Cyril's collection at any rate must have been a miscellaneous assortment; it included an account of the creation given by ὁ μέγας

No. X is obviously composite: § 7 affirms, and § 19 denies the transmigration of the souls of the wicked into the bodies of animals. It is addressed to Tat, and professes to be an epitome of the γενικοί λόγοι, which had been spoken to him before. It is extensively quoted by Stobaeus,<sup>1</sup> who, however, used a very different text from that in the *Corpus*. The γενικοί λόγοι are referred to in an astrological fragment preserved by Stobaeus (*Phys.* 468), and again in another fragment on the soul (Stob. *Phys.* 806) which may well have come from the same source as part of this number. *Corp. Herm.* xiii contains the only other reference to the γενικοί λόγοι in our *Corpus*, and there are other parallels which suggest a connexion between X and XIII.<sup>2</sup> We shall probably not go far wrong, if we follow Zielinski<sup>3</sup> in regarding §§ 4-9 as distinct from the rest of the number, and closely related to XIII. Tat's exclamation (§ 4) ἐπλήρωσας ἡμᾶς, ὦ πάτερ, τῆς ἀγαθῆς καὶ καλλίστης θεᾶς follows lamely on the preceding sections which have more in common with the *Asclepius* group. The reference to the γενικοί λόγοι in § 1 (they come again in § 7) will then be due to the compiler.

Nos. XVI and XVII (Reitzenstein)<sup>4</sup> do not resemble any of the preceding either in matter or in style. No. XVI is a philosophical discourse addressed to 'the king' by somebody who quotes Hermes as his authority. Its present title, Ὅροι Ἀσκληπίου, probably dates only from Byzantine times, and it may perhaps be part of the *sermo perfectus quem scripsit Asclepius ad regem* of Lact. *Instit. Div.* ii 15.<sup>5</sup> The cosmology of this number is entirely different from that of the *Asclepius*: God is the father of all, the sun is demiurge,<sup>6</sup> and the κόσμος is the instrument (ὄργανον) of creation. The intelligible essence (νοητὴ οὐσία) controls (διοικεῖ) heaven, and heaven the gods. The demons are ranged under the gods and control men. No. XVII is a fragment of a dialogue between Tat and 'the king', in which Tat exhorts the king to worship statues ὡς καὶ αὐτὰ ἰδέας ἔχοντα ἀπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ κόσμου.<sup>7</sup>

ἀγαθὸς δαίμων to Osiris, which is clearly based on the LXX version of Gen. i (Cyr. c. *Iul.* ii p. 56).

<sup>1</sup> *Phys.* pp. 766, 770, 774, 1000, 1004, Heeren.

<sup>2</sup> e. g. cf. x 4 Καὶ ὀλίγου δεῖν ἐσεβάσθῃ μου ὁ τοῦ νοῦ ὄφθαλμος ὑπὸ τῆς τοιαύτης θεᾶς with xiii 14 ἀσεβηθήσεται σοῦ ὁ ὄφθαλμος τοῦ νοῦ.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* viii p. 347 foll.

<sup>4</sup> For text *vide Poimandres* p. 348 foll. Reitzenstein adopts a different numeration: no. XVI (Reitz.) follows no. XIV (Parthey).

<sup>5</sup> So Reitzenstein *op. cit.* p. 192. Lactantius *loc. cit.* says that Asclepius expands the teaching of Hermes on piety as the one protection for man against evil demons and fate; this might well refer to Ὅροι Ἀσκληπίου 11 foll.

<sup>6</sup> On the sun in late Platonic speculation cf. Cumont *Astrology and Religion* pp. 31, 118.

<sup>7</sup> This number concludes as follows: Ὁ οὖν βασιλεὺς ἐξαπαστὰς ἔφη· Ὅρα ἔστιν, ὦ προφήτα, περὶ τὴν τῶν ξένων ἐπιμέλειαν γίνεσθαι· τῇ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ περὶ τῶν ἐξῆς θεολογί-

No. XVIII (R.) Πρὸς βασιλέας is unique and was perhaps included in the collection by a mistake. Neither Hermes, nor Asclepius,<sup>1</sup> nor Tat is mentioned. It is a disquisition on the 'Divine Right of Kings': the reverence due to kings is analogous to the reverence due to God, and should be regarded as a preparatory exercise for the worship of the Supreme.<sup>2</sup>

It remains to consider nos. I, III, IV, VII, and XIII; it will be argued in the following paragraphs that nos. I, III, IV, and VII presuppose a different *milieu* from that of the main body of Hermetic writings; that the LXX version of Gen. i was certainly used in I and III; that New Testament influence is probable in I, VII, and XIII, while IV—on 'baptism in a crater'—was almost certainly suggested by the Christian rite. Finally it will be shewn that a 'Gnostic' amalgam of Persian, Greek, Jewish, and Christian elements, preserved by the alchemist Zosimus, was associated with Hermes, and this fact, coupled with the allusion of Zosimus to 'Poimandres' and 'baptism in a crater', will suggest that we need not discount Jewish influence, as recent writers have tended to do, and that Christian influence is not to be ruled out of court on a *pro priori* grounds.

No. I is an account of a Theophany: Poimandres, 'the mind of the supreme power' (ὁ τῆς ἀθθεντίας νοῦς) appeared to the writer, when he was in a trance (κατασχεθεισῶν μου τῶν σωματικῶν αἰσθήσεων), and shewed him the creaton in a vision. A dialogue ensues in which Poimandres explains the vision and gives an account of the creation of the

σομεν. It is not clear whether Tat and the προφήτης are identical; the following passage from Iamblichus *De Mysteriis* viii 5 suggests that they are not: Ἐφηγήσατο δὲ καὶ ταυτὴν τὴν ὁδὸν Ἑρμῆς ἠρμήνευσε δὲ Βίττυς προφήτης Ἀμμωνι βασιλεῖ ἐν ἀδύτοις εὐρῶν ἀναγεγραμμένην ἐν ἱερογλυφικοῖς γράμμασι κατὰ Σαῖν τὴν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ. It may also be noted that the complaint of the ἀστατος εὐρεσιλογία of the Greeks in *De Myst.* vii 5 finds a curious parallel in the attack on the Greek language with no. XVI opens—Ἐλληνες, ὦ βασιλεῦ, λόγους ἔχουσι κενούς, (οὐδὲ) ἀποδείξων ἐνεργητικούς. καὶ αὐτὴ ἐστὶν (ἡ) Ἑλλήνων φιλοσοφία, λόγων ψόφος· ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ λόγους χρώμεθα ἀλλὰ φωναῖς μεσθαῖς τῶν ἔργων.

<sup>1</sup> There is no MS authority for the mention of Asclepius in the title.

<sup>2</sup> Reitzenstein *op. cit.* p. 207 sqq. suggests that the reference to 'kings' points to Diocletian and his colleagues; he thinks it was written to shew that Hermetic 'religion' meant loyalty to the Emperor and was added to the collection by the compiler, and in this way he tries to date the collection. There is, however, no ground for supposing that Diocletian and his colleagues are referred to: the reference to 'kings' is general, and its occurrence at the end of the collection is no evidence at all of date. Kroll (Pauly-Wissowa *R.E.* s.v. *Hermes Trismegistos*) even suggests that it may have been added by Psellus. Cf. Dibelius *Zeitschr. f. Kirchengeschichte* xxvi 168 sqq., Krebs *Der Logos als Heiland im ersten Jahrhundert p.* 134 sqq., and Review of latter in this JOURNAL, October 1913, p. 122, by Dr Bethune-Baker.

seven *διοικηταί*, who control the seven spheres of the sensible world. The beasts were brought forth by Earth, Water, and Air. Then the Father of the Universe 'begat Man equal to Himself, and loved him as His own son . . . and gave him all His creations'. Man, however, wished himself to create, and thus fell through the seven spheres, receiving some quality from each. When Nature saw him, she loved him, and they were united, and Nature brought forth seven men; these were hermaphrodite and had characters corresponding respectively to each of the seven spheres. Both men and beasts were then divided into male and female, and generation and multiplication followed by order of God. Man's salvation is effected by an ascension (*ἀνοδος*) through the seven spheres, at each of which he lays aside some quality he acquired at his fall. Thus at the first *ζώνη* he surrenders *τὴν αἰσθητικὴν καὶ μειωτικὴν ἐνέργειαν*; at the second, *τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν*; at the third, *τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην* and so on. At last he reaches the *ὀγδοατικὴ φύσις*, where he joins the other beings (*οἱ ὄντες*) in glorifying the Father. They then all approach the Father in order, and surrender themselves into 'powers' (*δυνάμεις*). Thus they are absorbed in God, and reach their final goal—deification (*θεωθῆναι*).<sup>1</sup> Poimandres charges his hearer to guide those who are worthy, 'that mankind may be saved by God through him', and 'mingles with the powers'. The writer then relates how he began to preach to men 'the beauty of piety and knowledge'. Some scoffed, but others threw themselves at his feet and begged to be instructed. 'And I raised them up and became guide to the race of men, teaching them how and by what means they might be saved. And I sowed in them words of wisdom and they were fed from the ambrosial water. And when even was come and all the brightness of the sun was beginning to set, I bade them give thanks to God. And when they had finished their thanksgiving (*εὐχαριστίαν*), they turned each to his own resting-place.' The number closes with a hymn of praise.

It is generally agreed that no. I as it stands is composite: there are two accounts of the fall of man in §§ 12–14, and the use of *Νοῦς* for *Ποιμάνδρης* himself in §§ 1 and 22 is hardly consistent with the identification elsewhere (e. g. §§ 9 and 12) of *Νοῦς* with the supreme God,<sup>2</sup> but reconstruction of sources is not easy.

<sup>1</sup> This and similar doctrines originated in the astrological lore of Babylon; they gained a hold on the Western world during the Hellenistic period and were recognized by Stoic philosophers such as Posidonius, the teacher of Cicero. Cf. Cumont *Les Religions orientales* p. 369, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* pp. 67 foll.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Reitzenstein *op. cit.* p. 36 sqq.; Dibelius *Zeitschr. f. Kirchengesch.* xxvi (1905) p. 175; Zielinski *Archiv f. Religionswiss.* viii p. 323 sqq.

Nos. III and VII may be considered together with I; no. III is a fragment on the Creation, and is of a similar character to much of I<sup>1</sup>; and the exhortation in no. VII 'to stand soberly and look up with the eyes of the heart' is parallel both in thought and style to I 27.

These three numbers are marked off from the other Hermetic writings by differences of conception and style: broadly speaking, they are more mythological and less philosophical than the writings we have considered hitherto. The Theophany in I and the hortatory spirit of I 7 and VII cannot be paralleled in the *Asclepius* and kindred writings. The terms used are different, and the descriptions of the Creation in I and III are realistic and unmetaphysical. Finally the following parallels<sup>2</sup> prove conclusively that Gen. i (LXX) was known to the writer of I and III, whereas we have seen no reason to suspect *direct* Jewish or Christian influence in the numbers dealt with in the first half of this section.

*Corr. Herm. i (Ποιμάνδρης)*

§ 5 κινούμενα δ' ἦν (γῆ καὶ ὕδωρ)  
διὰ τὸν ἐπιφερόμενον πνευματικὸν  
λόγον.

§ 11 διακεχώρισται δὲ ἀπ' ἀλλή-  
λων ἢ τε γῆ καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καθὼς  
ἠθέλησεν ὁ νοῦς, καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐξήνεγκεν  
ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἃ εἶχε ζῶα τετράποδα,  
έρπετά, θηρία ἄγρια καὶ ἡμερα.

§ 12 Ὁ δὲ πάντων πατὴρ ὁ νοῦς,  
ὡν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς, ἀπεκύησεν ἄνθρωπον  
ἐαυτῷ ἴσον, οὗ ἠράσθη ὡς ἰδίου τόκου·  
περικαλλῆς γὰρ ἦν τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς  
εἰκόνα ἔχων. ὄντως γὰρ καὶ ὁ θεὸς  
ἠράσθη τῆς ἰδίας μορφῆς, καὶ αὐτῇ  
παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουρ-  
γήματα.

§ 18 ὁ δὲ θεὸς εὐθύς εἶπεν ἀγίῳ  
λόγῳ· Αὐξάνεσθε ἐν αὐξήσει καὶ  
πληθύνεσθε ἐν πληθει, πάντα τὰ  
κτίσματα καὶ δημιουργήματα. (Also  
III 3.)

Genesis i

v. 2 καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο  
ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος.

v. 7 καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνά  
μέσον τοῦ ὕδατος . . .

v. 24 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός· Ἐξαγα-  
γέτω ἡ γῆ ψυχὴν ζῶσαν κατὰ γένος,  
τετράποδα καὶ έρπετὰ καὶ θηρία τῆς  
γῆς κατὰ γένος.

v. 26 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός· Ποιήσωμεν  
ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ  
καθ' ὁμοίωσιν· καὶ ἀρχέτωσαν τῶν  
ἰχθύων τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ τῶν πετει-  
νῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῶν κτηνῶν καὶ  
πάσης τῆς γῆς καὶ πάντων τῶν έρπε-  
τῶν τῶν έρπόντων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

v. 28 καὶ ἐβλόγησεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς  
λέγων· Αὐξάνεσθε καὶ πληθύνεσθε.

<sup>1</sup> Another somewhat similar fragment is preserved by Suidas, s.v. Ἐρμῆς ὁ Τρισμέγιστος.

<sup>2</sup> I think I am right in saying that neither Reitzenstein nor Zieliński refers to Genesis i.



*Corp. Herm.* iii (λόγος ἱερός)

§ 1 ἦν γὰρ σκότος ἄπειρον ἐν ἀβύσσῳ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ πνεῦμα λεπτὸν νοερόν.

§ 2 ἀδιορίστων δὲ ὄντων ἀπάντων καὶ ἀκατασκευάστων.

## Genesis i

v. 2 καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου, καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος.

v. 2 ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκευάστος.

Before proceeding to examine the parallels to the New Testament in these numbers we must refer to the opening paragraph of the fifth vision of the *Shepherd* of Hermas, which contains some curious resemblances to the *Poimandres*. If, as Dr Reitzenstein and Dr Norden<sup>1</sup> think, Hermas has borrowed from *Poimandres*, we have an important clue to the date of the latter.

The passages run as follows :—

*Poimandres* i

Ἐννοίας μοί ποτε γενομένης περὶ τῶν ὄντων καὶ μετεωρισθείσης μου τῆς διανοίας σφόδρα, κατασχεθεισῶν τε τῶν σωματικῶν αἰσθήσεων—καθὰ περ οἱ ἐν ὕπνῳ βεβαρημένοι ἐκ κόρου τε καὶ τρυφῆς ἢ ἐκ κόπου σώματος—ἔδοξά τινα ὑπερμεθέγη μέτρῳ ἀπεριορίστῳ τυγχάνοντα καλεῖν μου τὸ ὄνομα καὶ λέγοντά μοι. Τί βούλει ἀκοῦσαι καὶ θεάσασθαι καὶ τί νοήσας μαθεῖν καὶ γινῶναι;

φημί ἐγώ. Σὺ γὰρ τίς εἶ;

Ἐγὼ μὲν, φησὶν, εἰμὶ ὁ Ποιμάνδρης, ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς, οἶδα δὲ ὁ βούλει, καὶ σύνεμί σοι πανταχοῦ. φημί ἐγώ. Μαθεῖν θέλω τὰ ὄντα, καὶ νοῆσαι τὴν τούτων φύσιν καὶ γινῶναι τὸν θεόν· τοῦτ', ἔφην,

*Shepherd of Hermas* Vis. v

Προσευξαμένου μου ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ, καὶ καθίσαντος εἰς τὴν κλίνην

εἰσῆλθεν ἀνὴρ τις ἔνδοξος τῇ ὄψει, σχήματι ποιμεικῷ περικείμενος δέρμα λευκόν, καὶ πήραν ἔχων ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων καὶ βράβδον εἰς τὴν χεῖρα. καὶ ἠσπάσατό με, κἀγὼ ἀντησπασάμην αὐτόν. καὶ εὐθὺς παρεκάθισέν μοι, καὶ λέγει μοι Ἄπεστάλην ὑπὸ τοῦ σμενοτάτου ἀγγέλου, ἵνα μετὰ σοῦ οἰκήσω τὰς λοιπὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς σου. Ἐδοξά ἐγὼ ὅτι πάρεστιν ἐκπειράζων με, καὶ λέγω αὐτῷ. Σὺ γὰρ τίς εἶ; ἐγὼ γάρ, φημί, γινώσκω ᾧ παρεδόθη. λέγει μοι. Οὐκ ἐπιγινώσκεις με; Οὐ, φημί. Ἐγώ, φησὶν, εἰμὶ ὁ Ποιμὴν ᾧ παρεδόθης.

<sup>1</sup> Reitzenstein's conclusions are assumed in Norden's *Agnostos Theos* p. 5 n. 3.

*Poimandres* i*Shepherd of Hermas* Vis. v

ἀκοῦσαι βούλομαι. φησὶν ἐμοὶ πάλιν  
 Ἔχε τῷ νῶ ὅσα θέλεις μαθεῖν, κἀγὼ  
 σε διδάξω. Τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἠλλάγη τῇ  
 ἰδέᾳ, καὶ εὐθέως πάντα μοι ἤνοικτο  
 ῥοπή καὶ ὄρω θεῶν ἀόριστον.

Ἐτι  
 λαλοῦντος αὐτοῦ ἠλλοιώθη ἡ ἰδέα  
 αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπέγνων αὐτὸν ὅτι ἐκεῖνος  
 ἦν ᾧ παρεδόθη.

Dr Reitzenstein thinks that the resemblances between these passages can only be explained by literary dependence, and he has no hesitation in affirming the priority of *Poimandres*. The figure of the Shepherd in Hermas he describes as a 'sinnlose Maskerade',<sup>1</sup> which has obviously been imperfectly adapted to its position in the *Shepherd*. Indeed, Dr Reitzenstein considers that Hermas probably belonged at one period to the 'Poimandres-Gemeinde', which proved a half-way house to the Christian Church! If this be admitted, we are forced to push back the date of *Poimandres* at least to the early years of the second century, in order to allow for the teaching to spread from Egypt to Rome. Moreover, if this be so, it is not probable that we shall find Christian influence at so early a date. Whether or not the confused metaphysical speculations of the *Poimandres* would be likely to appeal to the simple mind of the author of the *Ποιμὴν* is a question which it is not easy to discuss; but it may be submitted that the figure of the Shepherd in Hermas, so far from being a 'sinnlose Maskerade', is in full keeping with Jewish and early Christian conceptions; the image of the Lord as Shepherd was familiar to every Jew: *Poimandres* is far more of an enigma. If it is necessary to suppose literary connexion, the artificial literary composition<sup>2</sup> of *Poimandres* makes it more probable that the borrowing was on that side.<sup>3</sup>

However, the similarity between the two passages is less remarkable than appears at first sight, and is probably a coincidence: there is really nothing in common between the very substantial Shepherd of Hermas with his sheepskin, his wallet, and his staff, and the mysterious apparition of the *Poimandres*<sup>4</sup>; and the question—Σὺ γὰρ τίς εἶ;—with which

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Casaubon (*Exercit.* i ad Baron. p. 80) illustrates the author's acquaintance with Classical Greek by comparing the opening words of *Poimandres*, Ἐννοίας μοί ποτε γενομένης περὶ τῶν ὄντων . . . with the first line of Xen. *Cyropaed.* Ἐννοιά ποθ' ἡμῶν ἐγένετο ὅσαι δημοκράτεια. . . . These writings are syncretic in style as well as matter.

<sup>3</sup> See Krebs *Der Logos als Heiland*, 1910, pp. 136 ff, and Bardy in *Revue Biblique*, 1911, pp. 391 ff, for severe and searching criticism of Dr Reitzenstein's view.

<sup>4</sup> If *Ποιμάνδρης* is derived from *ποιμὴν* and *ἀνήρ*, as is generally supposed, the formation is unparalleled. Mr. Granger (*J.T.S.* 1904, vol. v p. 400) suggested that the word is a transliteration of the Coptic *Pemenetre*, meaning 'The Witness', with reference to the widely spread legend about Hermes. On this assumption there would be no allusion at all in *Poim.* to a shepherd. And, as Mr Granger shews, the

the unexpected visitor is in both cases greeted is too natural to call for comment.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to attach any weight to Dr Reitzenstein's other argument for the dependence of the *Shepherd* on *Poimandres*.<sup>2</sup> In the ninth similitude of the *Shepherd* Hermas is conducted to a mountain in Arcadia, where he sees a vision. The mention of Arcadia is strange and has not been satisfactorily explained. Now the Egyptian Hermes is supposed to have come from Arcadia (cf. Cic. *de Nat. deor.* iii 56 quoted above p. 514), and no. XIV refers to the γενικοί λόγοι which had been spoken ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ ὄρους μεταβάσεως. Hence Dr Reitzenstein detects Hermetic influence in the Arcadian mountain of the *Shepherd*. It is perhaps sufficient to point out that there is no trace of an allusion to Hermes in the *Shepherd* and no trace of an allusion to Arcadia in *Poimandres*; and that the reference to the mountain, even if it proved anything, occurs in a number which Dr Reitzenstein himself regards as later than *Poimandres* and but slightly connected therewith.<sup>3</sup>

The next question we have to consider is the question whether any of these numbers betray Christian influence.

In no. IV Hermes relates to Tat how the Creator made the world by *logos* and then created man. He bestowed *logos* on all men, but reserved *nous* as a special reward (ἀθλον), 'God filled a great bowl (κρατήρ)<sup>4</sup> with *nous* and sent it down and a preacher (κῆρυξ) therewith, and bade him preach thus to the hearts of men: Baptize thyself, thou heart that canst, into this bowl, thou that believest that thou shalt ascend unto Him that sent down the bowl, thou that dost recognize wherefore thou hast been born. And as many as understood the message and baptized themselves in *nous*, were made sharers in knowledge (γνώσις), and became perfect men by receiving the gift of *nous*.' When Tat expresses a desire for baptism, Hermes answers, that he must first hate his body, and so love himself, and that by loving himself he will win *nous*, and by *nous* he will share in *episteme*. Man's true

passage xiii 19 λόγον γὰρ τὸν σὸν ποιμαίνει ὁ νοῦς, πνευματοφόρε δημιουργέ, lends very little support to the meaning required for Ποιμάνδρης if it is derived from ποιμήν and ἀνήρ, though it may indicate that the author of *Corp. Herm.* xiii connected the title (which he uses earlier § 15) with the conception ποιμήν. Zosimus derived the name from ποιμήν and ἀνήρ, as his formation of the Acc. Ποιμένανδρα shews (*loc. cit. infra* p. 534).

<sup>1</sup> We may compare Acts ix 5 εἶπεν δὲ (ὁ Σαῦλος) τίς εἶ, κύριε; ὁ δὲ ἔγώ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 214 sqq.

<sup>4</sup> The κρατήρ was perhaps suggested by Plato *Tim.* 41 D. The reference of Arnobius to 'Platonicus ille crater, quem conficit miscetque Timaeus' (*adv. nat.* ii 52) shews that the passage was well known. There is another Platonic reminiscence in § 8: ἐπεὶ ὁ μὲν θεὸς ἀνάιτιος, ἡμεῖς δὲ αἴτιοι τῶν κακῶν is obviously adapted from the famous words αἰτία ἐλομένου, θεὸς ἀνάιτιος (Plat. *Rep.* 117 E).

destiny is to reach the *monas*, 'which controls and draws upward those who haste to behold her, even as they say a magnet draws iron'.

It is difficult not to think that Christian baptism supplied the writer with his simile of baptism: we may surmise that he was a pagan, perhaps not unfriendly to Christianity, who wished to shew that the true baptism was to be found in his own philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

In no. XIII Tat asks Hermes to explain further his enigmatical statement in the *γενικοί λόγοι* that nobody can be saved before regeneration. Hermes answers that regeneration is effected by the will of God. When Tat enquires further, Hermes replies: 'What shall I say, my son? I can only say that I see a vision, which has arisen, uncreated (*ἀπλαστον*) in me out of the mercy of God, and I have gone out of myself into an immortal body . . .' 'O Father, you have shaken me into no small madness and frenzy', answers Tat, 'for now I see not mine own self.' After further talk on regeneration, Hermes reveals to Tat the 'hymn of regeneration'. 'Stand thus, my son, beneath the open sky and worship looking towards the south wind, as the sun sets, and at sunrise likewise towards the east. Now hush! my child.' Then follows *ἕμψοδία κρυπτή*. The powers of nature are invoked, and a *λογική θυσία* is offered to God. The dialogue closes with an injunction to Tat to keep secret 'the tradition of regeneration'. It should be added that this dialogue contains the only passage in the *Corpus* outside no. I in which the name of *Ποιμάνδρης* occurs (§ 15). The reference suggests literary relation rather than common authorship.

The following parallels in this number to the Fourth Gospel are remarkable though hardly conclusive; §§ 2, 4 τοῦ θελήματος τοῦ θεοῦ as the agent in regeneration, cf. John i 13 οἱ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων, οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκός, οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν. § 2 τοῦτο τὸ γένος, ὃ τέκνον, οὐ διδάσκεται, ἀλλ' ὅταν θέλη, ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναμνησκέται. Cf. John xiv 25 ὁ παράκλητος . . . ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν. § 21 θεέ, σὺ πάτερ, σὺ ὁ κύριος, σὺ ὁ νοῦς recalls the Christian Trinity. Finally with § 21 Σὺ, ὃ τέκνον, πέμψον δεκτὴν θυσίαν τῷ πάντων πατρὶ θεῷ· ἀλλὰ καὶ προσθές, ὃ τέκνον, "διὰ τοῦ Λόγου", compare 1 Pet. ii 5 ἀνερέγκαι πνευματικὰς θυσίας εὐπροσδέκτους θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

We must now return to no. I. The parallels here to the New Testament—especially to the Fourth Gospel—are closer, and when we

<sup>1</sup> Did the baptismal vow suggest the following sentence in § 7 οὐδὲν δὲ εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἐπλημμέλησεν ἢ τοῦτο μόνον, ὅτι καθάπερ αἱ πομπαὶ μέσον παρέρχονται μήτε αὐταὶ ἐνεργησαί τι δυνάμεναι, τοὺς δὲ ἐμποδίζουσαι—τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ οὗτοι μόνον πομπεύουσιν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ παραγόμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν σωματικῶν ἡδονῶν? Cf. Tert. *de cor. mil.* c. 3 'Aquam adituri ibidem sed et aliquando prius in ecclesia sub antistitis manu, contestamur nos renuntiare diabolo et *pompa* et angelis eius'.

remember the use made in this number of the LXX we shall be prepared for literary dependence on the New Testament.

*Poimandres*

§ 19 ὁ δὲ ἀγαπήσας τὸ ἐκ πλάνης ἔρωτος σῶμα, οὗτος μένει ἐν τῷ σκότει πλανώμενος, αἰσθητῶς πάσχων τὰ τοῦ θανάτου.

§ 31 ἅγιος ὁ θεός, ὃς γνωσθῆναι βούλεται, καὶ γινώσκειται τοῖς ἰδίοις.

§ 32 διὸ πιστεύω σοι καὶ μαρτυρῶ, εἰς ζωὴν καὶ φῶς χωρῶ. εὐλόγητος εἶ πάτερ· ὁ σὸς ἄνθρωπος συναγιάζειν σοι βούλεται, καθὼς παρέδωκας αὐτῷ τὴν πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν.

*Poimandres* 27 οἱ μέθη καὶ ὕπνω ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδεδωκότες, καὶ τῇ ἀγνωσίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, νήψατε παύσασθε κραπαλῶντες θελγόμενοι ὕπνω ἀλόγῳ (cf. also VII 1) reads like an echo of I Cor. xv 34 ἐκνήψατε δικαίως καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε, ἀγνωσίαν γὰρ θεοῦ τινὲς ἔχουσιν (cf. also Luke xxi 34).<sup>1</sup>

Is it fanciful to see an allusion to the Christian Baptism and Eucharist in the following account of his mission by the writer of *Poimandres*?— καὶ ἔσπειρα αὐτοῖς τοὺς τῆς σοφίας λόγους, καὶ ἐτρέφισαν ἐκ τοῦ ἀμβροσίου ὕδατος;<sup>2</sup> ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης . . . ἐκέλευσα αὐτοῖς εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ θεῷ. καὶ ἀναπληρώσαντες τὴν εὐχαριστίαν, ἕκαστος ἐτρέπη εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν κοίτην (§ 29).

Before leaving no. I a word must be said about the prayer with which it concludes; it is a curious passage and is worth quoting in full:—

Διὸ δίδωμι ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ ἰσχύος ὅλης εὐλογίαν τῷ πατρὶ θεῷ. Ἄγιος ὁ θεός, ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὄλων· ἅγιος ὁ θεός, οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων· ἅγιος ὁ θεός, ὃς γνωσθῆναι βούλεται καὶ γινώσκειται τοῖς ἰδίοις· ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ λόγῳ συστησάμενος τὰ ὄντα· ἅγιος εἶ, οὗ πᾶσα φύσις εἰκὼν ἔφν· ἅγιος εἶ ὃν ἡ φύσις οὐκ ἐμόρφωσεν· ἅγιος εἶ ὁ πάσης δυνάμεως ἰσχυρότερος· ἅγιος εἶ ὁ πάσης ὑπεροχῆς μεζῶν· ἅγιος εἶ ὁ κρείστων τῶν ἐπαίνων. δέξαι λογικὰς θυσίας ἀργὰς ἀπὸ ψυχῆς καὶ καρδίας πρὸς σε ἀνατεταμένης, ἀνεκλάλητε, ἄρρητε, σιωπῇ φωνοῦμενε. αἰτουμένῳ τὸ μὴ σφαλῆναι τῆς γνώσεως

<sup>1</sup> So Kennedy *St Paul and the Mystery Religions* p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> For the water of baptism regarded as a draught cf. *Passio S. Perpet.* viii, *Odes of Sol.* vi 10, 11, and Bernard *ad loc.* I owe these references to Dr Armitage Robinson. Dr Robinson has also pointed out to me two more slight but curious parallels to New Testament phraseology in *Poimandres*: the writer's 'call' *λοιπὸν τί μέλλεις*; *οὐχ ὡς πάντα* . . . § 26 may be compared with the words of Ananias to St Paul, *καὶ νῦν τί μέλλεις*; Acts xxii 16, and the curiously redundant expression § 29 *ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἡλίου ἀρχῆς ἀρχομένης δύεσθαι* recalls Mark i 32 *ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης, ὅτε ἔδυσεν ὁ ἥλιος*.

## St John

iii 19 καὶ ἠγάπησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι μᾶλλον τὸ σκότος ἢ τὸ φῶς.

xii 46 . . . ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ μὴ μείνη.

i 11 εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν.

x 14 γινώσκω τὰ ἐμὰ καὶ γινώσκουσί με τὰ ἐμὰ.

For μαρτυρῶ cf. St John *passim*.

xvii 1 Πάτερ, ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα· δόξασόν σου τὸν υἱόν, ἵνα ὁ υἱὸς δοξάσῃ σε, καθὼς ἔδωκας αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν. . . .

τῆς κατ' οὐσίαν ἡμῶν ἐπένευσόν μοι, καὶ ἐνδυνάμωσόν με καὶ τῆς χάριτος ταύτης φώτισον τοὺς ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ τοῦ γένους μου ἀδελφούς, υἱὸς δὲ σοῦ. διὸ πιστεύω σοὶ καὶ μαρτυρῶ, εἰς ζωὴν καὶ φῶς χωρῶ. εὐλογητὸς εἶ πάτερ· ὁ σὸς ἄνθρωπος συναγαμίζειν σοὶ βούλεται, καθὼς παρέδωκας αὐτῷ τὴν πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν.

Two remarkable parallels to St John have already been remarked upon. We may also observe that the prayer is introduced with an expression taken from the LXX or New Testament—*δίδωμι ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ ἰσχύος ὅλης*<sup>1</sup> *εὐλογίαν τῷ πατρὶ θεῷ*. The phrases in thick type above are closely similar to phrases in the Greek original of the prayer at the end of the *Asclepius*, discovered by Reitzenstein in the Mimaut Papyrus,<sup>2</sup> and we may surmise that the compiler of this prayer was familiar with the *Asclepius* prayer or some similar composition.

The *Poimandres* prayer also occurs in a papyrus—dating probably from the third century, published in the Berliner Klassikertexte Heft VI *Altchristliche Texte* p. 110. The papyrus contains three prayers, of which the first and third are unmistakably Christian. The editors had not detected the source of the second prayer, and accordingly treated it as Christian too. The identity of the prayer with the conclusion of *Poimandres* has been pointed out by Reitzenstein in the Göttingen *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften* (philol.-hist. Klasse) 1910 pp. 324 ff. A Christian doxology has been added; otherwise the differences are slight, but there can be no doubt that Reitzenstein is right in claiming the *Poimandres* text as prior to that of the papyrus.

It may be submitted that if the *Poimandres* was recognized as a semi-Christian production, it is *prima facie* easier to account for the inclusion of the prayer in a collection of Christian prayers, than if we regard the document, with Dr Reitzenstein, as a purely heathen work.

This section will conclude with some account of the quotations from and references to Hermes<sup>3</sup> in the alchemist Zosimus, who, as already stated, clearly knew of 'Poimandres' and 'baptism in a bowl'.

Zosimus flourished early in the fourth century A.D.,<sup>4</sup> and was the author of a chemical encyclopaedia containing treatises of Cleopatra, Mary the Jewess, and others. We possess about 150 pages of his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Deut. vi 5 ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου . . . ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς δυνάμεώς σου (*al. ἰσχύος*, cf. Origin *Hexapl ad loc.*) and Mark xii 30, and Swete *ad loc.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Wessely *Griechische Zauberpapyri* p. 36, *Denkschr. der k.k. Akademie, philos. Klasse*, Wien. The papyrus dates from the fourth century and contains a number of incantations and prayers—many quite unintelligible—loosely strung together. Jewish names are prominent. Reitzenstein has reconstructed the text of the prayer in *Archiv für Rel.* vii p. 396.

<sup>3</sup> The writer is indebted to Reitzenstein's *Poimandres* for the references in the first place.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Riess art. 'Alchemie', Pauly-Wissowa *R.E.* i 1348. Zosimus quotes Porphyry and is used by Synesius.

works, which have come down to us in the form of extracts made later by Byzantine commentators, whose comments and interpolations are not always easy to distinguish from the original. His remains are a queer jumble of chemistry and magic.<sup>1</sup> The following passage<sup>2</sup> occurs in a letter of Zosimus to his sister Theosebeia:—

Σὺ γοῦν μὴ περιέλκου ὡς γυνή, ὡς καὶ ἐν τοῖς κατ' ἐνείαν ἐξεῖπόν σοι καὶ μὴ περιρέμβου, ζητοῦσα θεόν· ἀλλ' οἰκάδε καθέζου, καὶ θεὸς ἤξει πρὸς σέ, ὁ πανταχοῦ ὢν καὶ οὐκ ἐν τόπῳ ἐλαχίστῳ ὡς τὰ δαιμόνια καθεζομένη δὲ τῷ σώματι, καθέζου καὶ τοῖς πάθεσιν, ἐπιθυμία ἡδονῆ θυμῷ λύπη καὶ ταῖς ἰβ' μύραις τοῦ θανάτου· καὶ οὕτως αὐτὴν διευθύνουσα προσκαλέσθη πρὸς ἑαυτὴν τὸ θεῖον· καὶ οὕτως ἤξει τὸ πανταχοῦ ὢν καὶ οὐδαμοῦ· καὶ μὴ καλουμένη, πρόσφερε θυσίας τοῖς . . ., μὴ τὰς προσφύρους, μὴ τὰς θρεπτικὰς αὐτῶν, καὶ προσηνεῖς, ἀλλὰ τὰς ἀποθρεπτικὰς αὐτῶν καὶ ἀναιρετικὰς ὡς προσεφώνησεν Μεμβρῆς τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων βασιλεῖ Σολομῶντι, αὐτὸς δὲ μάλιστα Σολομῶν ὅσας ἔγραψεν ἀπὸ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σοφίας· καὶ οὕτως ἐνεργοῦσα, ἐπιτεύξη τῶν γνησίων καὶ φυσικῶν καιρικῶν ταῦτα δὲ ποιεῖ ἕως παντελειωθῆς τὴν ψυχὴν. ὅταν δὲ ἐπιγνοῦσα αὐτὴν τελειωθείσας, τότε καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν τῆς ὕλης κατάπτησον, καὶ καταδραμοῦσα ἐπὶ Ποιμένανδρα, καὶ βαπτισθεῖσα τῷ κρατήρι, ἀνάδραμε<sup>3</sup> ἐπὶ τὸ γένος τὸ σόν.

Whatever may be the meaning of this obscure passage, we have undoubtedly here an allusion to the Ποιμάνδρης and the κρατήρ of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Another passage in Zosimus further illustrates the connexion<sup>4</sup>: Σὺ δέ, ὦ μακαρία, παῦσαι ἀπὸ τῶν ματαίων στοιχείων, τῶν τὰς ἀκοάς σου ταραπτόντων. ἤκουσα γὰρ ὅτι μετὰ Παφροντίας τῆς παρθένου καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν ἀπαιδευτῶν ἀνδρῶν διαλέγη. καὶ ἄπερ ἀκούεις παρ' αὐτῶν μάταια καὶ κενὰ λογύδρια πράττειν ἐπιχειρεῖς. παῦσαι οὖν ἀπὸ τῶν τετυφλωμένων τὸν νοῦν καὶ ἄγαν καιομένων· καὶ γὰρ κἀκεῖνος ἐλεθῆναι δεῖ καὶ ἀκοῦσαι τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, καθὼς εἰσὶν ἄξιοι, ἐπειδὴ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀνθρωποὶ εἰσιν, ἀλλ' οὐ βούλονται ἐλέους ἐπιτεχεῖν. In view of the former passage, the parallels here to the following quotations from the *Corpus* can hardly be accidental:—

I 26 λοιπὸν τί μέλλεις; οἶχ ὡς πάντα παραλαβὼν καθοδηγὸς γίνῃ τοῖς ἀξίοις;

XIII 3 ὁρῶ τῷ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἄπλαστον θέαν γεγεννημένην ἐξ ἑλέου θεοῦ

XIII 8 ἀφίστανται δ' αὐται (i. e. various vices) ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐλεθθέντος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ

This use of ἔλεος, ἐλεθῆναι may be<sup>5</sup> due to Jewish influence

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Berthelot *Les Alchimistes grecs* p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> Berthelot *op. cit.* p. 244. No attempt has been made to correct the mistakes in the MS readings.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Corp. Herm.* x 16 ἀναδραμοῦσης τῆς ψυχῆς εἰς ἑαυτήν.

<sup>4</sup> Berthelot *op. cit.* p. 190.

<sup>5</sup> Usages of ἔλεος in Epictetus are by Lightfoot (*Philippians* p. 314 n. 3, and by Bonhöffer *Epiktet u. d. Neue Testament* p. 69). Particularly striking is

(cf. e. g., Jer. vii 16 and LXX and New Testament *passim*) for in this alchemistic literature 'Moses', 'Mary', and Jews in general play a large part. Particularly significant is the association of 'Hermes' with Jewish works.<sup>1</sup> Hence also it is not surprising to find Zosimus using Genesis i,<sup>2</sup> much as we found it used in *Corp. Herm.* i and iii, and also in the Hermetic fragment preserved by Cyril of Alexandria referred to above (p. 523 n. 3).

One more quotation from 'Hermes' in Zosimus must be referred to, because it contains one direct mention of, and much allusion to, Jesus Christ.

It occurs in a letter to Theosebeia<sup>3</sup>: 'Ο μέντοι Ἑρμῆς ἐν τῷ περὶ ἀναυλίας διαβάλλει καὶ τὴν μαγείαν, λέγων ὅτι οὐ δεῖ τὸν πνευματικὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν ἐπιγνώντα ἑαυτὸν, οὔτε διὰ μαγείας κατορθοῦν τι, ἔαν καὶ καλὸν νομίζηται, μηδὲ βιάζεσθαι τὴν ἀνάγκην, ἀλλ' ἔαν ὡς ἔχει φύσεως καὶ κρίσεως πορεύεσθαι δὲ διὰ μόνου τοῦ ζητεῖν, ἑαυτὸν καὶ θεὸν ἐπιγνώντα, κρατεῖν τὴν ἀκατονόμαστον τριάδα· καὶ ἔαν τὴν εἰμαρμένην ἧ θέλει ποιεῖν, τῷ ἔαν τῆ σπηλῶ,<sup>4</sup> τούτεστιν τῷ σώματι. καὶ οὕτως, φησί, νοήσας καὶ πολιτευσάμενος θεάσῃ τὸν θεοῦ υἱὸν πάντα γινόμενον τῶν ὁσίων ψυχῶν ἕνεκεν· ἵνα αὐτὴν ἐκοπάσῃ ἐκ τοῦ χώρου τῆς εἰμαρμένης ἐπὶ τὸν ἀσώματον, ὅρα αὐτὸν γινόμενον πάντα, θεόν, ἄγγελον, ἄνθρωπον παθητόν· πάντα γὰρ δυνάμενος πάντα ὅσα θέλει γίνεται, καὶ πατρὶ ὑπακούει διὰ παντὸς σώματος διήκων, φωτίζων τὸν ἑκάστης νοῦν εἰς τὸν εὐδαίμονα χώρον ἀνώρμησεν, ὅπουπερ ἦν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τὸ σωματικὸν γενέσθαι, αὐτῷ ἀκολουθοῦντα καὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δρεγόμενον καὶ ὀδηγούμενον εἰς ἐκεῖνο τὸ φῶς. An interesting passage follows in which Adam and Tat (Θωῖθ) are identified, and a distinction is drawn between ὁ σάρκινος Ἀδάμ and ὁ ἔσω αὐτοῦ ἄνθρωπος ὁ πνευματικός. τὸ δὲ προσηγορικὸν αὐτοῦ ὄνομα, Zosimus continues, φῶς καλεῖται, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ φῶτας παρηκολούθησε λέγεσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. This heavenly being was persuaded, when he was φῶς, ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν παρ' αὐτοῦ (?) Ἀδάμ, τὸν ἐκ τῆς εἰμαρμένης, τὸν ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων στοιχείων. The story of Prometheus, Epimetheus, and Pandora is then introduced: Pandora is Eve, and Prometheus and Epimetheus correspond to the spiritual and fleshly Adam respectively, and are together one Man. Καὶ πότε μὲν ψυχῆς ἔχει εἰκόνα ὁ Προμηθεύς, πότε δὲ νοός, πότε δὲ σαρκός, διὰ τὴν παρακοήν τοῦ

Epictetus ii 7, 12 τὸν θεὸν ἐπικαλούμενοι δεόμεθα αὐτοῦ. "Κύριε ἐλέησον· ἐπίτρεψόν μοι ἐξελεῖν." (Cf. also Paris Pap. 51 = Milligan *Greek Papyri* no. 6 l. 24.) This, however, is surely insufficient evidence to support Dr Norden's statement (*Agnostos Theos* p. 389) that the Church borrowed the *kyrie eleison* from Hellenic ritual, in view of such passages as Matt. xv 22, xx 31; Ps. 13.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. e. g. Berthelot *op. cit.* p. 232 καὶ ταῦτα μόνου Ἑβραίου καὶ αἱ ἱεραὶ Ἑρμοῦ βίβλοι. . . .

<sup>2</sup> Berthelot *op. cit.* p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib. op. cit.* p. 230.

<sup>4</sup> Clearly πηλῶ should be read. No attempt has been made to emend the MS text.



Ἐπιμήθεως ἦν παρήκουσε τοῦ Προμήθεως τοῦ ἰδίου· φησὶ γὰρ ὁ νοῦς<sup>1</sup> ἡμῶν· Ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ πάντα δυνάμενος, καὶ πάντα γινόμενος ὅτε θέλει, ὡς θέλει, φαίνει ἐκάστῳ Ἄδὰμ προσῆν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς (ὅς) ἀνήνεγκεν, ὅπου καὶ τὸ πρότερον διῆγον φῶτες καλούμενοι. Ἐφάνη δὲ καὶ τοῖς πάντι ἀδυνατοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ἀνθρώπος γεγονώς, παθητὸς καὶ βραπιζόμενος, καὶ λάθρα τοὺς ἰδίους φῶτας συλήσας, ἅτε μηδὲν παθῶν, τὸν δὲ θάνατον δείξας καταπατεῖσθαι, καὶ ἔωσθαι καὶ ἔως ἄρτι καὶ τοῦ τέλους τοῦ κόσμου τόποισι λάθρα, καὶ φανερά· συλλῶν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ, συμβουλευῶν αὐτοῖς λάθρα, καὶ διὰ τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν καταλλαγὴν ἔχειν τοῦ παρ' αὐτῶν Ἄδὰμ, κοπτομένου καὶ φονεομένου παρ' αὐτῶν τυφληγοῦντος καὶ διαζηλουμένου τῷ πνευματικῷ καὶ φωτεινῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, τὸν ἑαυτῶν Ἄδὰμ ἀποκτείνουσι. This continues until the coming of the ἀντίμιμος δαίμων, who says that he is the Son of God, although he is ἄμορφος both of body and soul. οἱ δὲ φρονιμώτεροι γενόμενοι ἐκ τῆς καταλήψεως τοῦ ὄντως υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ, δίδουσιν αὐτῷ τὸν ἴδιον Ἄδὰμ εἰς φόνον, τὰ ἑαυτῶν φωτεινὰ πνεύματα σώζοντες (ἐς) ἴδιον χώρον ὅπου περ καὶ πρὸ κόσμου ἦσαν. Before the ἀντίμιμος δαίμων comes himself, he sends a πρόδρομος from Persia. καὶ ταῦτα μόνον Ἑβραῖοι καὶ αἱ ἱεραὶ Ἑρμού βίβλοι περὶ τοῦ φωτεινοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ τοῦ ὁδηγοῦ αὐτοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ γιγίνου Ἄδὰμ, καὶ τοῦ ὁδηγοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀντίμιμου τοῦ δυσφημῖα λέγοντος ἑαυτὸν εἶναι υἱὸν θεοῦ πλάνη.

It is significant that this curious amalgam of Egyptian, Greek, Jewish, and Christian ideas was associated with 'Hermes'. Since it purports to come from the same hand as almost the only reference to 'Poimandres' that has been discovered, we may be prepared to assign more weight to Jewish influence than Dr Reitzenstein seems prepared to allow, and to regard Christian influence as at least possible.

### III

The bulk of the Hermetic writings were probably written in the third century or not earlier than the end of the second century. Lactantius supplies us with our first reliable date for the extant literature, but philosophical writings under the name of Hermes were current in the first decade of the third century when Tertullian wrote the *De anima* and *Adversus Valentinianos*. However, as we have seen, 'Hermetic' conceptions are not markedly original, and they may, without question, be regarded as products of a movement reaching back far beyond the date of the writings themselves. Dr Reitzenstein in his *Poimandres* regards Hermetic doctrine as a combination of Stoic and Egyptian theories dating from the time of the Ptolemies.<sup>2</sup> I am not qualified

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the title of *Corp. Herm.* xi Νοῦς πρὸς Ἑρμῆν.

<sup>2</sup> Reitzenstein's *Poimandres* is not easy reading: there is a convenient summary of his position in Krebs *Der Logos als Heiland* pp. 126-133, and in Dr Bethune-Baker's review of the latter in this JOURNAL, October 1913. Reitzenstein's *Ägyptomanie* is vigorously attacked by Zielinski *Archiv f. Rel.* 1906 pp. 27 foll.

to express an opinion on the extent of Egyptian influence, but it appears to me that the *Asclepius* at any rate, and the allied numbers of the *Corpus* are little more than popularized Greek metaphysics, coloured by astrology.

Dr Reitzenstein further maintained that the *Poimandres* presupposed a 'Gemeinde', founded probably about the time of the birth of Christ and lasting down to the fourth century.<sup>1</sup> In the course of the second century it spread to Rome (this takes in Hermas) and in the third became absorbed in other Hermetic 'Gemeinden'. This theory has not won acceptance among scholars; M. Cumont has pointed out that there is no trace, at any rate in the Latin world, of a Hermetic sect with clergy and a *cultus*<sup>2</sup>; but I venture to suggest that it has not been generally recognized how drastic an alteration of Dr Reitzenstein's estimate of the writings is required, if we abandon his theory of a community (for which there is no evidence beyond the writings themselves) lasting through several centuries.

It will be well first to have the verdict of two eminent scholars on 'Hermetism'. Dr W. Kroll, criticizing Reitzenstein, says: 'Least of all can I believe in communities of Poimandres (at the time of the birth of Christ), Nus, Anthropos, &c.; and our writings are not to be considered as liturgies of these communities, on the contrary, their character is purely literary.'<sup>3</sup> M. Cumont, speaking of the mysteries of Isis, remarks that "'Hermetism", which tried to construct a theology to satisfy all minds by a skilful mixture of Greek, Egyptian, and Semitic elements, never appears to have been imposed generally on the Alexandrine Mysteries, which are earlier than it; and, even so, it was unable to escape the contradictions of Egyptian thought. It was not in virtue of its doctrine that Isiac religion had its hold over men's hearts',<sup>4</sup>

Recent investigation of religious thought and practice in the Graeco-Roman world at the time of the rise of Christianity has shewn that a philosophico-religious view of the world was widely held. Stoicism—tempered with Platonism and dominated by astrology—held the field. German research has taught us to discover Posidonius, the elder contemporary of Cicero, behind much of Philo, of Seneca, and of Plutarch, and to recognize him as the forerunner of a host of lesser writers. The Hermetic writings are later in date, but they may be assigned, broadly speaking, to the movement associated with Posidonius.<sup>5</sup> The other fact which is being pressed home by recent research is the prevalence

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* 248.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Religions orientales* p. 340 n. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Art. 'Hermes Trismegistos' Pauly-Wissowa *R.E.* viii pp. 820-821 (1912).

<sup>4</sup> *Les Religions orientales* p. 132.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the interesting account of Posidonius in E. Bevan's *Stoics and Sceptics* pp. 85 foll.

at the same time of mystery cults of Isis, Attis, and, later, of Mithra. What was the relation of the popular philosophic movement to these cults? Many recent writers seem to think that it was very close, and give the impression that teaching such as that found in the Hermetic writings was little short of a recognized 'Hellenistic mystery-theology',<sup>1</sup> and doubtless many individuals, like Plutarch for instance, or, later on, Iamblichus, *did* read their philosophy into the cults. The question, however, is rather whether these doctrines were bound up with the cults themselves. Was Hermetic teaching ever associated with a cult, in the way in which primitive Christian teaching was connected with Baptism and the Eucharist? Dr Reitzenstein seems to imply that it was. But his theory does not seem to be probable in itself, and he has not adduced evidence to support it.

J. M. CREED.

<sup>1</sup> I think this fairly represents the trend of e. g. Reitzenstein's *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*. Dr Kennedy in his book, *St Paul and the Mystery Religions*, seems to me a little misleading when in chapter iii on 'The character and influence of the mystery-religions' he includes an account of Hermetism together with the accounts of Eleusis, Cybele, and Isis Mysteries. He admits that Hermetism is not quite parallel to these cults, but believes in 'religious communities' associated with Hermes (p. 114). Can a Theosophical Society be properly termed a 'community'?