


BP
565
. M4
E27
1906
1



" RISE AND FOLLOW THY DREAM "

LIBRARY OF
KATHARINE LEE BATES
BEQUEATHED TO
WELLESLEY COLLEGE 

K.L.B.

from

L.C.B.L.

For 'Egyptians', nothing
- Wisdom could suffice

THE GNOSIS
OF
THE MIND. .

WORKS BY THE SAME
 ——— AUTHOR ———

	<i>Net.</i>
THRICE GREATEST HERMES (3 vols.) -	30/-
FRAGMENTS OF A FAITH FORGOTTEN -	10/6
APOLLONIUS OF TYANA - - - - -	3/6
THE GOSPEL AND THE GOSPELS - - -	4/6
DID JESUS LIVE 100 B.C. - - - - -	9/-
PLOTINUS - - - - -	1/-
THE UPANISHADS (2 vols.) - - - - -	3/-

ECHOES
FROM
THE
GNOSIS

BY
G. R. S.
MEAD
VOL. I

THE
GNOSIS
OF
THE
MIND

THE
THEOSOPHICAL
PUBLISHING
SOCIETY

LONDON
AND
BENARES
1906

[Faint, illegible handwriting]

PRINTED BY PERCY LUND, HUMPHRIES & CO., LTD.,
THE COUNTRY PRESS, BRADFORD;
3, AMEN CORNER, LONDON. E.C. 4;
AND 97, BRIDGE STREET, MANCHESTER.

BP

243740

565

M4E27

1906

1

ECHOES FROM THE GNOSIS.

Under this general title it is proposed to publish a series of small volumes, drawn from, or based upon, the mystic, theosophic and gnostic writings of the ancients, so as to make more easily audible for the ever-widening circle of those who love such things, some echoes of the mystic experiences and initiatory lore of their spiritual ancestry. There are many who love the life of the spirit, and who long for the light of gnostic illumination, but who are not sufficiently equipped to study the writings of the ancients at first hand, or to follow the labours of scholars unaided. These little volumes are therefore intended to serve as introduction to the study of the more difficult literature of the subject, and it is hoped that at the same time they may become for some, who have, as yet, not even heard of the Gnosis, stepping-stones to higher things.

G. R. S. M.

The references in this volume are to the recently-published work—*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*, 3 vols. (London, 1906).

THE GNOSIS OF THE MIND.

For long I have been spending much of my time in a world of great beauty of thought and purity of feeling, created by the devotion and intelligence of one of the many theosophical fraternities of the ancient world. They called themselves disciples of Thrice-greatest Hermes, and sometimes spoke of their faith as the Religion of the Mind. They were prior to and contemporary with the origins and earliest centuries of Christianity, and they lived in Egypt.

What remains of their scriptures and what can be gleaned of their endeavour

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

has recently been made accessible in the English tongue, in such fashion as I have been able to reproduce their thought and interpret it. The labour of many months is ended; the task of reproduction is accomplished, and the echoes of the Gnosis of Thrice-greatest Hermes are audible across the centuries for English ears in fuller volume than before, and I hope in greater clarity.

It is no small thing—this Gnosis of ten-thousand-times-great Hermes, as Zosimus in an ecstasy of enthusiasm calls Him; for it has as its foundation the Single Love of God, it endeavours to base itself upon the True Philosophy and Pure Science of Nature and of Man, and is indeed one of the fairest forms of the Gnosis of the Ages. It is replete with Wisdom (Theosophia) and Worship (Theosebeia) in harmony—the Religion of the Mind. It is in its beginning Religion,

true devotion and piety and worship, based on the right activity and passivity of the Mind, and its end is the Gnosis of things-that-are and the Path of the Good that leads man unto God.

Do I claim too much for the Gnosis of Thrice-greatest Hermes? I do but echo what He teaches in His own words (or rather those of His disciples) turned into English speech. The claim made is for the Gnosis, not for the forms of its expression used by its learners and hearers. All these forms of expression, the many sermons, or sacred discourses, of the disciples of this Way, are but means to lead men towards the Gnosis; they are not the Gnosis itself. True, much that is set forth appears to me to be very beautifully expressed, and I have been delighted with many a thought and phrase that these nameless writers and thinkers of years long ago have

handed down to us in the fair Greek tongue ; all this however, is as a garment that hides the all-beautiful natural form and glory of the Truth.

What is of importance is that all these Theosophists of the Trismegistic tradition declare with one voice—a sweet voice, that carries with it conviction within, to the true knower in our inmost soul—that there is Gnosis and Certitude, full and inexhaustible, no matter how the doubting mind, opinion, the counterfeit mind, may weave its magic of contrary appearances about us.

Seeing, then, that I have now much in mind of what has been written of this Religion of the Mind, I would set down a few thoughts thereon as they occur to me, an impression or two that the contemplation of the beautiful sermons of the disciples of the Master-Mind has engraved upon my memory.

And first of all I would say that I regard it as a great privilege to have been permitted by the Gods to be a hander-on in some small way of these fair things ; for indeed it is a great privilege and high honour to be allowed in any fashion to forward the preparation for the unveiling of the beauties of the Gnosis in the hearts of one's fellows,—even in so insignificant a way as that of translating and commenting on that which has already been set forth by greater minds in greater beauty centuries ago. The feeling that arises is one of joy and thankfulness that so pleasant a task has been granted by the Providence of God as a respite on the way (to use a phrase of Plotinus'). And so, as in all sacred acts, we begin with praise and thankfulness to God, as Hermes teaches us.

But when is there (the disciple of the Master will interject) an act that is not

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

sacred for one who is a "man" and not a "procession of Fate"? He who is coming unto himself, who from the unconscious and the dead is beginning to return to consciousness and rise into life, self-consecrates his every act for ever deeper realisation of the mystery of his divine nature; for now no longer is he an embryo within the womb, nourished in all things by the Mother-Soul, but a man-babe new-born, breathing the freer spirit of the greater life, the cosmic airs of the Father-Mind. And so it is that every act and function of the body should be consecrated to the Soul and Mind; the traveller on this Way should pray unceasingly, by devoting his every act unto his God; thinking when eating: As this food nourishes the body, so may the Bread of Wisdom nourish the mind; or when bathing: As this water purifies the body, so may the Water of Life

vivify the mind ; or when freeing the body of impurities : As these impurities pass from the body, so may the refuse of opinion pass from the mind !

Not, however, that he should think that anything is in itself unclean or common, for all is of the divine substance and of mother-matter ; this he already knows in his heart of hearts, but his lower members are not as yet knit together in right harmony ; they are as yet awry, not centred in the perfect whole. He as yet sees things from only one point ; he has not yet realised that *the* Point is everywhere, and that for everything there is a point of view whence it is true and right and beautiful and good. That all-embracing point of view is the one sense, all-sense, the common sense, the sense of the intelligence, in which the sensible and the intelligible are identical and not apart. It is the little

**THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.**

mind, the mind in man, the fate-pro-
cession, that creates external duality ;
the Great Mind knows that the without
and the within are twain in one, are self-
conditioned complements, the one within
the other and without the other at one
and the same time.

In this Religion of the Mind there is
no opposition of the heart and head.
It is not a cult of intellect alone, it is not a
cult of emotion alone ; it is the Path of
Devotion and Gnosis inseparably united,
the true Sacred Marriage of Soul and
Mind, of Life and Light, the ineffable
union of God the Mother and God the
Father in the Divine Man, the Logos, the
Alone-Begotten of the Mystery of Mys-
teries, the All and One—Ineffability and
Effability eternally in simultaneous Act
and Passion.

And if you should object to the word
Mind as excluding other names of equal

dignity, know that this also has been spoken of again and again by the disciples of Thrice-greatest Hermes.

He has no name, for He is the One of many names, nay, He is the One of all names, for He is Name itself and all things else, and there is naught that is not He. Nor is He One alone, though He is the One and Only One, for He is All and Nothing, if such a thing as nothing there can be.

But we, because of our ignorance, call Him Mind, for Mind is that which knows, and ignorance seeks ever for its other self, and the other self of ignorance is Gnosis. And seeking Gnosis, whether it love or hate its own false view of what it seeks, ignorance is ever changing into some form of knowing, experiencing some novelty or other as it thinks, not knowing that it is experiencing itself. But Mind is not only that which knows, but also

**THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.**

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

the object of all knowledge ; for it knows itself alone, there being nothing else to know but Mind. It self-creates itself to know itself, and to know itself it must first not know itself. Mind thus makes ignorance and Gnosis, but is not either in itself. It is itself the Mystery that makes all mysteries in order that it may be self-initiate in all.

Thus we are taught that Mind, the Great Initiator, is Master of all master-hood, Master of all ignorance as well as knowledge. And so we find the Supreme addressing one of His Beloved Sons, one who has won the mastery of self, as "Soul of my Soul and Mind of My own Mind."

The Religion of the Mind is pre-eminently one of initiation, of perpetual perfecting. The vista of possibility opened up to the mind's eye of the neophyte into these sacred rites

transcends credibility. One asks oneself again and again : Can this be true ? It seems too good to be true.

But how can it be "too good" (the Master smiles in reply) when the inevitable end of everything is the Perfection of perfection, The Good Itself ?

It cannot be *too* good, for that which is too good is out of its own self ; but with the Good there is neither too little nor too much, it is Perfection.

What then, we feebly ask, is imperfection ? And in the Master-Presence we cannot but reply : It is the doubt "It is too good" that is the imperfection of our nature ; we fear it cannot be for us, not knowing that the "little one" who catches some glimpse of the vista, the earnest of the Vision Glorious, sees not something without, but that which is within himself. It is all there potentially, the full Sonship of the Father. It is

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

there and here and everywhere, for it is the nature of our very being.

The first glimpse of this Divine possibility is brought to the consciousness of the prepared disciple by the immediate Presence and Glory of the Master, according to the records of the followers of the Religion of the Mind. But who is the Master? Is He someone without us; is He some other one; is He some teacher who sets forth a formal instruction?

Not so. "This race," that is to say, he who is born in this natural way, "is never taught, but when the time is ripe, its memory is restored by God." It is not therefore some new thing; it is not the becoming of something or other; it is a return to the same, we become what we have ever been. The dream is ended and we wake to life.

And so in one of the marvellous

descriptions of initiation handed on in the Trismegistic sermons, in which the disciple is reborn, or born in Mind, he is all amazed that his "father" and initiator here below should remain there before him just as he ever was in his familiar form, while the efficacious rite is perfected by his means. The "father" of this "son" is the link, the channel of the Gnosis; the true initiation is performed by the Great Initiator, the Mind.

And that this is so may be learned from another sermon, in which a disciple of a higher grade is initiated without any intermediate link; by himself, alone as far as any physical presence of another is concerned, he is embraced by the Great Presence and instructed in the mystery.

The office of the "father" is to bring the "son" to union with himself, so that he may be born out of ignorance into Gnosis, born in Mind, his Highest

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

Self, and so become Son of the Father indeed.

What is most striking in the whole of the tradition of the Mind-doctrine is its impersonal nature. In this it stands out in sharp contrast with the popular Christianity and other saving cults contemporary with it. It is true that the sermons are set forth mostly in the form of instruction of teacher to pupil. We learn to love Hermes and Asclepius and Tat and Ammon, and become friends with all of them in turn; they seem to be living men, with well-marked characters. But they are not historical characters; they are types. There is an Ammon, a Tat, an Asclepius, and a Hermes, in each one of us, and that is why we learn to love them. The "holy four" are in the shrine of our hearts; but transcending all, embracing all, is the Shepherd of all men, the Love

Divine that through the lips of our Hermes teaches us—as Asclepius or Tat or Ammon—as we have ears to hear the words of power, or eyes to see the gnostic splendour of the teaching.

Nay, more than this; such instruction, beautiful and true as it may be, is not the highest teaching of the Mind. They who are born in Mind, are taught by Mind by every act and every thought and every sensation. The Mind eternally instructs the man through body, soul and mind; for now the man begins to know through all of these, for he is changing from the little mind and soul and body that he was to the Great Body and Great Soul and Mind of the Great Man. He no longer seeks a teacher, for all things teach him, or rather the One Teacher teaches him through all. All that there is transforms itself for him into the nature of the Gnosis of the Good.

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

No longer is he a hearer, but the Hearer ; for he has ears on all sides to hear the voice of Nature, Spouse of the Divine, in everything that breathes and all that seems to have no life—the simultaneous winter and summer of the Lord.

No longer is he a seer, but the Seer ; for he has eyes on all sides to see the beauty of the whole, and fairest things in things that are most foul.

No longer is he a doer, but the Doer ; for all he does is consecrated to the Lord who dedicates Himself to acting in the man.

And so all of his senses and his energies are set on the Great Work of self-initiation in the Mysteries of God ; his life becomes illumined by the glory of perpetual perfecting, and he no longer thinks that he has ever been other than now he is. For memory is ever present with him, and the memory of the Mind is of the

41222-1111

nature of eternity, which transcends all time and sees all past and future and all present in the instant that endures for evermore.

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

And what does the Religion of the Mind teach us of God, the universe and man? It teaches us many things of great solemnity and joyous presage; but one thing especially it seems to teach, and that is the impossibility of human speech to tell the mystery. For every man is but a letter in the language of the Gods; so that all that a man may write, no matter how well stocked his mind may be with systems of the world or of theology, or with the science of the human state, no matter how exactly he may reproduce his thought and trick it forth in fairest human language—all that he can express is but a single letter of his Word. The Words of God are written with the general purposed acts

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

of men, and are not uttered by their individual spoken speech or penned with written words. The Words of God are spoken by the energies of Nature, and are not written on the surfaces of things; the surfaces of things are scribbled over with the false appearances that men project from their unknowing minds.

How then can men describe the universe, except by their inscribing of themselves upon the fields of space? To describe the universe as it is they must become the universe, and then they will describe themselves; and to describe themselves they will be able to discover no better way than that in which the universe gives utterance to itself. It speaks perpetually the Language of the Gods, the Universal Tongue, for it is God for ever giving utterance unto Himself.

The Tongue of the Eternal is the Mind

of God. It is by Mind, the Reason of His Self-subsistence, that He perpetually speaks forth all things.

Thus we learn that the Religion of the Mind is pre-eminently the Religion of the Logos, and throughout the whole of our Trismegistic tractates no name comes more frequently before us than the word Logos. For the Logos is the Word of God, not in the sense of a single Word, but the Word in the sense of the Universal Scripture of all worlds and of all men.

And so it is that Hermes is the Scribe of the Gods. Not that Hermes is one of the Gods who is a scribe for the rest, as though they could not write themselves; but Hermes is the Logos of God, and the Words he writes are Gods.

We men are letters of our Word or our God; for man has the glorious destiny before him, nay, the actuality even now in his universal nature, of being a God, a

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

**THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.**

Divine Being, of the nature of Gnosis and Joy and Subsistence. That Word has written itself many times in the world, now one letter and now another ; it spells itself in many ways, in sequences of lives of men, and of other lives as well.

And time will be when each and every God-Word, in its own proper turn, will sound forth in all its glory, not letter by letter, but the whole Word simultaneously on earth ; and a Christ will be born and all Nature will rejoice, and the world of men will know or be ignorant according to the nature of the times and the manner of the utterance of the Word.

Such are some of the ideas aroused by some of the leading conceptions of the Religion of the Mind, or the Pure Philosophy, or Single Love, as the disciples of Thrice-greatest Hermes called their Theosophy some nineteen centuries ago.

**THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.**

The most general term, however, by which they named their science and philosophy and religion was Gnosis; it occurs in almost every sermon and excerpt and fragment of their literature which we possess. The doctrine and the discipline of Mind, the Feeder of men and Shepherd of man's soul, are summed up in that fairest word—Gnosis.

Let us then briefly consider the meaning of the name as the followers of this Way understood it. Gnosis is Know-ledge; but not discursive knowledge of the nature of the multifarious arts and sciences known in those days or in our own. On this "noise of words," these multifarious knowledges of the appearances of things and vain opinions, the followers of the True Science and Pure Philosophy looked with resignation; while those of them who were still probationers treated them with even less tolerance,

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

declaring that they left such things to the "Greeks"; for "Egyptians," of course, nothing but Wisdom could suffice.

At any rate this is how one of the less instructed editors of one of the collections of our sermons phrases it. For him Egypt was the Sacred Land and the Egyptians the Chosen Race; while the Greeks were upstarts and shallow reasoners. The like-natured Jew of the period, on the other hand, called the body "Egypt," while Judæa was the Holy Land, and Palestine the Promised Land, and Israel the Chosen of God; and so the game went merrily on, as it does even unto this day.

But the real writers of the sermons knew otherwise. Gnosis for them was superior to all distinction of race; for the Gnostic was precisely he who was reborn, regenerate, into *the* Race, the Race of true Wisdom-lovers, the Kinship

of the Divine Fatherhood. Gnosis for them began with the Knowledge of Man, to be consummated at the end of the perfecting by the Knowledge of God or Divine Wisdom.

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

This Knowledge was far other than the knowledge or science of the world. Not, however, that the latter was to be despised; for all things are true or untrue, according to our point of view. If our standpoint is firmly centred in the True, all things can be read in their true meaning; whereas if we wander in error, all things, even the truest, become misleading for us.

The Gnosis began, continued and ended in the knowledge of one's self, the reflection of the Knowledge of the One Self, the All Self. So that if we say that Gnosis was other than the science of the world, we do not mean that it excluded anything, but only that it regarded all

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

human arts and sciences as insufficient, incomplete, imperfect.

Indeed it is quite evident on all hands that the writers of the Trismegistic tractates, in setting forth their intuitions of the things-that-are, and in expressing the living ideas that came to birth in their hearts and heads, made use of the philosophy and science and art of their day. It is, in very deed, one of the stories of their endeavour that they did so ; for in so doing they brought the great truths of the inner life into contact with the thought of their age.

There is, however, always a danger in any such attempt ; for in proportion as we involve the great intuitions of the soul and the apocalypses of the mind in the opinions of the day, we make the exposition of the mysteries depart from the nature of scripture and fall into the changing notions of the ephemeral.

**THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.**

Human science is ever changing ; and if we set forth such glimpses of the sure ideas and living verities of the Gnosis as we can obtain, in the ever-changing forms of evolving science, we may, indeed, do much to popularise our glimpse of the mysteries for our own time ; but the days that are to come will accuse us of clothing the Beauty of the Truth in rags as compared with the fairer garments of their own improved opinions.

The documents that have been preserved from the *scriptoria* of the Trismegistic tradition are by many hands and the product of many minds. Sometimes they involve themselves so closely with the science of their day that the current opinion of the twentieth century will turn from them with a feeling of contemptuous superiority ; on the other hand they not infrequently remain in the paths of clear reason, and offer us an

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

unimpeded view of vistas of the Plain of Truth. But even when they hold most closely to the world-representations and man-knowledges of their own day they are not without interest; for it may be that in their notions of living nature—the very antipodes of our modern day opinions based on the dead surfaces of things—they may have been with regard to some things even nearer the truth than we are ourselves in this so boasted age of grace and enlightenment.

Be this as it may, there are many examples of clean and clear thinking in the *logoi* or sacred sermons, or discourses, or utterances, of the School; and one of the most attractive elements in the whole discipline is the fact that the pupil was encouraged to think and question. Reason was held in high honour; a right use of reason, or rather, let us say, right reason, and not its counterfeit, opinion,

was the most precious instrument of knowledge of man and the cosmos, and the means of self-realisation into that Highest Good which, among many other names of sublime dignity, was known as the Good Mind or Reason (Logos) of God.

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

The whole theory of attainment was conditioned by the fact that man in body, soul and mind was a world in himself—a little world, it is true, so long as he is content to play the part of a “ procession of Fate ” ; but his Destiny is greater than that Fate, or rather, let us say, his Unknowingness is Fate, his Awareness will be his Destiny. Man is a little world, little in the sense of personal, individual, separate ; but a world for all that—a monad. And the destiny of man is that he should become the Monad of monads, or the Mind of God—the Cosmos itself, not only as perceived by

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

the senses as all that is, both that which moves and moves not, which is the Great Body and Great Soul of things; but also as conceived by mind, as that Intelligible Greatness of all greatnesses, the Idea of all ideas, the Mind and Reason of God Himself, His own Self-created Son, Alone-begotten, the Beloved.

On this transcendent fact of facts is founded the whole discipline and method of the Gnosis of the Mind. The Mystery of mysteries is Man or Mind. But this naming of the Mystery should not be understood as excluding Soul and Body. Mind is the Person of persons, the Presence of all presences. Time, space, and causality are conditioned by the Mind. But this Mind, the True Man, is not the mind in bondage to causality, space and time. On the other hand, it is just this mind in bondage, this "procession of Fate," the "servant's

form," which is the appearance that hides the potentiality of becoming the All, of becoming the Æon, the Presence, —that is, the Subsistence of all things present, at every moment of time, and point of space, and every instant cause-and-effect in the Bosom of Fate. It is true that in the region of opinion, body, soul and mind seem separate and apart; they are held by the man in separation as the fundamental categories of his existence; and truly so, for they are the conditions of *ex*-istence, of standing *out* of Being, that environment of incompleteness—the complement or fulfilment of which is *ec*-stasis, whereby the man goes forth from his limitations to unite himself with Himself, and so reaches that Satisfaction and Fulfilment, which our Gnostics call the Plerōma when set over against the conception of space, and the Æon when set over against the

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

idea of time, and the Good when contrasted with the notion of Fate.

But Being is the Three in One, Mind, Soul and Body—Light, Life and Substance, co-eternal together and co-equal.

It therefore follows that he who would be Gnostic, must not foolishly divorce within himself the mystery of the triple Partners, the Three Powers, or the Divine Triad. For him the object of his endeavour is to consummate the Sacred Marriage within himself, where Three must “marry” to create; that so he may be united to his Greatest Self and become at-one with God. Body, soul, and mind (or spirit, for in this Gnosis spirit is frequently a synonym of mind) must all work together in intimate union for righteousness.

The body of man must be regarded as a holy temple, a shrine of the Divine—the most marvellous House of God that

exists, fairer far than the fairest temple raised with hands. For this natural temple which the Divine has wrought for the indwelling of His beloved sons, is a copy of the Great Image, the Temple of the Universe in which the Son of God, the Man, dwells.

Every atom and every group of atoms, every limb and joint and organ, is laid down according to the Divine Plan; the body is an image of the Great Seal, Heaven-and-Earth, male-female in one.

But how few know or even dream of the possibilities of this living temple of the Divine! We are sepulchres, tombs of the dead; for our bodies are half-atrophied, alive only to the things of Death, and dead to the things of Life.

The Gnosis of the Mind thus teaches us to let the Life flow into the dead channels of our corporeal nature, to invoke the Holy Breath of God to enliven

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

the *substance* of our frames, that so the Divine Quickener may first bring to birth in us our divine complement, our other self, our long-lost spouse, and then we may ourselves with ungrudging love and fair wooing of her bring our true selves to birth, so becoming regenerate or reborn,—a trinity of Being, not a unit of vegetative existence, or a duality of man-animal nature, but the Perfect Triangle jewelled with all three sparks of perfected manhood.

It is very evident, then, that if the idea of this Gnosis be carried out logically, the hearer of this Mathesis must strive ever to become a doer of the Word, and so self-realise himself in every portion of his being. The object that he has in view is intensification of his whole nature. He does not parcel out his universe or himself into special compartments, but he strives ever to refund himself into ever

more intimate union with himself— meaning by this his ever-present consciousness; for there is nothing really that he is not.

Indeed it is one of the pleasantest features of the Trismegistic Gnosis, or rather, one may say its chief characteristic, a characteristic which should specially endear it to our present age, that throughout it is eminently reasonable. It is ever encouraging the pupil to think and question and reason; I do not mean that it encourages criticism for the sake of pedantic carping, or questioning for the sake of idle curiosity, but that it is ever insisting on a right use of the purified reason, and the striving to clarify the mind and soul and body, so that they may become a crystal prism through which the One Ray of the Logos, the All-Brilliancy, as Philo calls it, may shine with unimpeded lustre in clean

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

and clear colours according to the nature of the truth in manifestation.

And here we may attempt to compare, though not with any idea of contrasting to the disparagement of either, the greater simplicity of the Gnosis of the Mind with the dazzling multiplicity and endless immensities of the, perhaps for my readers, more familiar revelations of the Christianised Gnosis. They are two aspects of the same Mystery; but whereas the former is conditioned by the clear thinking of philosophic reason as set forth pre-eminently in the Logic of Plato, and refuses to sever its contact with the things-that-are "here" as well as "there," the latter soars into such transcendent heights of vision and apocalypsis, that it loses itself in ecstasies which cannot possibly be registered in the waking consciousness.

I, for my part, love to try to follow

the seers of the Christian Gnosis, in their soaring and heaven-storming, love to plunge into the depths and greatness of their spiritual intuitions ; yet it cannot but be admitted that this intoxication of the spirit is a great danger for any but the most balanced minds. Indeed, it is highly probable that such unrestrained outpourings of divine frenzy as we meet with in some of the Christian Gnostic Apocalypses, were never intended to be circulated except among those who had already proved themselves self-restrained in the fullest meaning of the term.

The Trismegistic sermons show us that such rapt and visions were also the privilege of "them who are in Gnosis"; but they did not circulate the revelations of such mysteries ; and though they taught the disciple to dare all things in perhaps more daring terms than we find recorded in any other scripture, they

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

again and again force him to bring all to the test of the practical reason, that so the vital substance received from above may be rightly digested by the pure mind and fitly used to nourish the nature below.

But as for us who are hearers of the Gnosis, of Theosophy, wherever it is to be found, it would be unwise to reject any experience of those who have gone before upon the Way. Whether we call it the Gnosis of the Mind with the followers of Thrice-greatest Hermes, or the Gnosis of the Truth as Marcus does, or by many another name given it by the Gnostics of that day, it matters little; the great fact is that there *is* Gnosis, and that men have touched her sacred robe and been healed of the vices of their souls; and the mother-vice of the soul is ignorance, as Hermes says. But this ignorance is not ignorance of the arts

and sciences and the rest, but ignorance of God ; it is the true a-theism, the root-superstition of the human mind and heart,—the illusion that prevents a man realising the oneness of his true self with the Divine.

The dawning of this sacred conviction, the birth of this true faith, is the beginning of Gnosis ; it is the Glad Tidings, the Gnosis of Joy, at whose shining Sorrow flees away. This is the Gospel, as Basilides the Gnostic conceived it, the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings ; that is to say, the Father in the likeness of a dove—the Father of Light brooding over the sacred vessel, or divine chalice, or cup, the awakened spiritual nature of the new-born son.

This is the true baptism, and also the first miracle, as in the Gnosis of the Fourth Gospel, when the water of the watery spheres is turned into the wine

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

of the spirit at the "first marriage."

But perhaps my readers will say: But this is the Christian Gnosis and not the Gnosis of the Mind! My dear friends (if you will permit me, I would reply), there is no Christian Gnosis and no Trismegistic Gnosis; there is but one Gnosis. If that Gnosis was for certain purposes either associated with the name and mystic person of the Great Teacher known as Jesus of Nazareth, or handed on under the typical personality of Great Hermes, it is not for us to keep the two streams apart in heart and head in water-tight compartments. The two traditions mutually interpret and complete one another. They are contemporaneous; they are both part and parcel of the same Economy. Read the fragments of these two forgotten faiths, or rather the fragments of the two manifestations of this forgotten

faith, and you will see for yourselves.

But again, some one may say (as a matter of fact not a few have already said): What do we want with a forgotten faith, fragmentary or otherwise? We are living in the twentieth century; we do not want to return to the modes of thought of two thousand years ago; we can create a new Gnosis that will interpret the facts of present-day science and philosophy and religion.

I too await the dawn of that New Age; but I doubt that the Gnosis of the New Age will be new. Certainly it will be set forth in new forms, for the forms can be infinite. The Gnosis itself is not conditioned by space and time; it is we who are conditioned by these modes of manifestation. He who is reborn into the Gnosis becomes, as I have heard, the Lord of time and space, and passes from man into the state of Super-man and

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

union of dualities

Christ, or Daimon and God, as a Hermes would have phrased it two thousand years ago, or of Bodhisattva and Buddha, as it was phrased five hundred years before that.

Indeed, if I believe rightly, the very essence of the Gnosis is the faith that man can transcend the limits of the duality that makes him man, and become a consciously divine being. The problem he has to solve is the problem of his day, the transcending of his present limitations. The way to do so is not, I venture to submit, by exalting his present-day knowledge in science or philosophy or religion at the expense of the little he can learn of the imperfect tradition of the religion and philosophy and science of the past, handed on to us by the forgetfulness of a series of ignorant and careless generations. The feeding of our present-day vanity on the husks from

the feasts of other days is a poor diet for one who would be Gnostic. It is very true that, speaking generally, we do know more of physical observation, analysis and classification, we do know more of the theory of knowledge, and many other things in the domain of the lower world of appearances; but do we know more of religion as a living experience than the great souls of the past; do we know more of the Gnosis than the Gnostics of other days? I doubt it.

We are beginning once more to turn our attention in the direction of the Greater Mysteries; the cycles of the Æon are, I believe, once more set in a configuration similar to the mode of the Time-Mind when such illumination is possible for numbers of souls, and not for stray individuals only. But the conditions of receiving that illumination

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

are the same now as they have ever been ; and one of the conditions is the power to rise superior to the opinions of the Hour into the Gnosis of the Eternal Æon.

It therefore follows, if I am right in my premises, that the illusion of all illusions which we must strive to transcend is that of the Lord of the Hour ; it is just the general opinions and pre-suppositions and prejudices of our own day against which we must be on our watch with greatest vigilance. There are certain forms of knowledge, forms of religion, and forms of philosophy, that dominate every age and every hour ; these forms are most potent, for they are alive with the faith of millions ; and therefore it follows that it may be we shall find less difficulty, in our endeavour to pierce through the clouds of opinion to the living ideas beyond, if we study forms that are no longer charged with the

passions of mankind,—with that storage of the hopes and fears of incarnated minds, the shock of which few are strong enough to withstand. It may thus be that the forms of the Gnosis of the past may be read more dispassionately and seen through more clearly.

However this may be, it would be manifestly absurd to go back to the past and simply pour ourselves once more into these ancient forms; this would be death and a mental and spiritual “re-incarnation” backwards, so to speak. It is precisely this absurdity which so many literalists attempt in theology, only to find themselves stranded among dead forms with the tide of the spiritual life far out.

On the other hand, there may be some who feel that in what has been said above, the artist and lover of the Beautiful in us risk to be sacrificed entirely to the

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

Philistine. There is such a thing as scripture; there are such things as the best books. *Non refert quam multos sed quam bonos libros legas*; it is not the quantity but the quality of the books we read that is of importance. The Gnosis is enshrined in scripture, in bibles and not in books. And I doubt not that even to-day there are enough bible-lovers, in the wider sense of the word, among us to appreciate the beautiful and permanent in literature.

The Trismegistic sermons have a common language with the writers of the New Testament books, and they also use the language of Plato. They can, therefore, hardly be said to be out of date even as to their form; while as to their content, as far as their main ideas are concerned, I venture to say that they belong to the great books of the world, they are part of the world-scripture.

If, then, any would learn of the Gnosis ^{THE} of the Mind, they will not lose anything ^{GNOSIS} by reading what the disciples of this ^{OF THE} form of the Wisdom-Tradition have ^{MIND.} handed on to us. They may prefer more modern expositions, or they may find some other scripture of the past more suitable to their needs; but if they are lovers of comparative theosophy, and are persuaded that he who is acquainted with one mode of theosophy only does not know theosophy truly, even as he who is acquainted with one language only knows no language really, they may learn much by comparing the theosophy of the Hermes-Gnostics with the theosophy of the Christian Gnostics, or of the Buddhist or Brahmanical lovers of the Gnosis.

In conclusion, I would add a few quotations touching the Gnosis from the Trismegistic sermons; for, as Lactantius,

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

the Church Father, tells us of the Holy Scribe who inspired these scriptures :

“ He wrote books, indeed many of them, treating of the Gnosis of things divine, in which he asserts the Greatness of the Highest and One and Only God ” (iii., 233).

Yes, *He* wrote many books, whether we call Him “ Hermes ” or by any other of His many names. For as He says in another scripture of that Day of Sunshine, writing of the inner history of the Christ-Mystery, most probably before even there were as yet any Christian scriptures :

“ Wherefore, send me, O Father !
Seals in my hands, I will descend ;
Through Æons universal will I make
a Path ;
Through mysteries all I'll open up
a Way !
All Forms of Gods will I display ;
The Secrets of the Holy Path I will

hand on,

And call them Gnosis ” (i., 192).

Yes, He wrote many books, many sermons and sacred discourses, entitled by many names, one of them called precisely: “An Introduction to the Gnosis of the Nature of All Things ” (ii., 68).

Not that there is any precise beginning of the Gnosis or any definite introduction confined to any formal instruction; it may be presented in infinite modes to the learner and hearer, for it is like unto its Great Original.

And so we read :

“For to the Good there is no other shore ; It hath no bounds ; It is without an end ; and for Itself It is without beginning, too, though unto us It *seemeth* to have one—the Gnosis.

“Therefore to It Gnosis is no beginning ; rather is it that Gnosis doth

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

afford to us the first beginning of *Its being known*” (ii., 90).

And so again we find a Jewish mystic, who wrote just prior to the days of Paul, quoting from some scripture of the Gnosis (in all probability from one of the lost sermons of our School) which sets forth the matter in still greater clarity in the striking aphorism :

“ The beginning of Perfection is Gnosis of Man ; but Gnosis of God is Perfect Perfection ” (i., 178).

Thus Hermes in teaching his beloved son, the seeker, the suppliant and hearer, how to set his feet upon the path of self-realisation, points out the way in the wise and gentle words :

“ Seek'st thou for God, thou seekest for the Beautiful. One is the Path that leadeth unto It—Devotion joined with Gnosis ” (ii., 114).

And again he sets forth the boundary-

marks of the Way of the Good Commandments in admirable instruction, saying :

“ The Seeds of God, ’tis true, are few, but vast and fair and good—virtue and self-control, devotion. Devotion is God-Gnosis ; and he who knoweth God, being filled with all good things, thinks godly thoughts and not thoughts like the many think.

“ For this cause they who Gnostic are, please not the many, nor the many them. They are thought mad and laughed at ; they’re hated and despised, and sometimes even put to death. . . .

“ But he who is a devotee of God, will bear with all—once he has sensed the Gnosis. For such an one all things, e’en though they be for others bad, are for him good ; deliberately he doth refer them all unto the Gnosis. And, thing most marvellous, ’tis he alone

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

who maketh bad things good" (ii., 131). The devotee of God is the Gnostic, and "they who are Gnostic" stand in the original as "they who are in Gnosis." It is of more than ordinary interest to compare this simple statement of fact addressed to "those in Gnosis" with the well-known words adapted from some early collection of "Logoi of the Lord" for the comfort of "those in Faith." What the Sayings preserved by the first and third evangelists may have been in their original form, we do not know, though any day the Oxhyrhynchus "rubbish-heaps" may yield us a clue. Some of these "Sayings of the Lord" which in their original form circulated in the inner communities, were, in the highest probability, subsequently adapted to the prophetic mood by a Christian evangelist prior to our first and third synoptists. Thus we find the writer of

our First Gospel handing on one of these Sayings as :

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

“Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you, lying, for My sake.”

Here the “lying” is evidently the gloss of some scrupulous scribe who knew there were some things that could be said against them justly ; whereas the third evangelist keeps closer to his original, writing :

“Blessed are ye when *men* shall hate you, and when they shall separate you forth (from them), and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of *the Man*.”

But even so there still seems to be a blend of two traditions before the Saying reached the hands of our third evangelist. The antithesis between “men” and “Son of the Man” is familiar to us in our

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

Trismegistic sermons, and would be understood by all who knew of the "Myth of Man in the Mysteries" (i., 139-198); it is clearly to be distinguished from the "My sake" of the first evangelist. Whereas the separating forth and the casting forth of the name as evil are, I believe, to be understood as expulsion of members from a community and the removal of their names from the list of the brethren.

But to return to the Gnosis. Devotion is God-Gnosis. True Piety is "nothing else than the Gnosis of God"—as Lactantius, quoting Hermes, phrases it in Latin (ii., 243). This piety, however, is something other than pious exercise and the practice of devotional worship; it leads unto "the complete or all-perfect contemplation," and embraces the "learning of the things-that-are, the contemplating of their nature and the

knowing God ”; or, in other words, the “being taught the nature of the all and the Supreme Vision” (ii., 264). And that Supreme Vision, if I understand aright, is no rapt into regions beyond the sky, but a Seeing of the Good in everything. For the Master of this Way teaches his disciple concerning the Gnosis of the Good, that is the Gnosis of God, saying :

“For only then wilt thou upon It gaze when thou canst say no word concerning It. For Gnosis of the Good is holy silence and a giving holiday to every sense.”

It is the gaining of the “all sense,” the “common sense,” the “sense of the intelligence.”

“For neither can he who perceiveth It, perceive aught else, nor he who gazeth on It, gaze on aught else; nor hear aught else. . . .

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

“And shining then all round his mind, It shines through his whole soul, and draws it out of body, transforming all of him to essence.

“For it is possible, my son, that a man’s soul should be made like to God, e’en while it still is in a body, if it doth contemplate the Beauty of the Good ” (ii., 144).

This is the “deification” or “apotheosis” of a man ; he becomes like unto God, in that he becomes a God. The Beauty of the Good is the Cosmic Order ; and the mode of meditation was that of self-realisation whereby the soul is brought into sympathy with the Cosmic Soul.

and so speaking of such a soul, of one gnostic in true piety, Hermes writes :

“But on the pious soul the Mind doth mount and guide it to the Gnosis’ Light. And such a soul doth never

tire in songs of praise to God and pouring blessing on all men, and doing good in word and deed to all, in imitation of its Sire ” (ii., 155).

And so again in the outer preaching, in warning the multitude against the “fierce flood” of ignorance, the missionary of the Gnosis and evangelist of Salvation exhorts them, saying :

“Be then not carried off by the fierce flood, but using the shore-current, ye who can, make for Salvation’s port, and, harbouring there, seek ye for one to take you by the hand and lead you unto Gnosis’ Gates.

“Where shines clear Light, of every darkness clean, where not a single soul is drunk, but sober all they gaze with their hearts’ eyes on Him who willeth to be seen.

“No ear can hear Him, nor can eye see Him, nor tongue speak of Him,

**THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.**

but only mind and heart ” (ii., 121).

And from this preaching we learn the very interesting fact that there was some great association that the Gnostic evangelist regarded as Salvation’s port, a harbour of refuge for many ; but even when safe within the quiet of the discipline that could calm the waves of the fierce flood of passion and ignorance, there was still a further adventure for the soul before the Light of the New Day dawned. A guide who knew the Way to the Gates of the Spiritual Sun must be found, one who was “ in Gnosis ” and not only “ in Faith.”

For faith is conditioned upon feeling, upon sense, and not knowledge ; as Hermes says :

“ But Gnosis is far different from sense. For sense is brought about by that which hath the mastery o’er us, while Gnosis is the end of science, and

science is God's gift " (ii., 147).

It is true that a refuge can be found in the Harbour of Salvation by means of Faith ; but Salvation itself is Gnosis.

" This is the sole Salvation for a man—God's Gnosis. This is the Way up to the Mount.

" By Him alone the soul becometh good, not whiles is good, whiles evil, but good out of necessity " (ii., 150).

And again He says :

" The virtue of the soul is Gnosis. For he who knows, he good and pious is, and still while on the earth Divine " (ii., 146).

For in this view of the mystery, in consonance with the teaching of the Buddha, and with Indian theosophy in general, " the soul's vice is ignorance." And so we find Gnosis heading the list of virtues—Gnosis, Joy, Self-control, Continence, Righteousness, Sharing-with-all,

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

Truth; a septenary consummated in the divine triad of Life, Light and the Good (ii., 246). For Gnosis is that which doth distribute life to all, and light to all, and good to all (ii., 296). And so the Master, in the spiritual theurgic rite at which he consecrates his beloved son to the holy life, declares :

“Gnosis of God hath come to us, and and when this comes, my son, not-knowing is cast out.

“Gnosis of Joy hath come to us, and on its coming, son, sorrow will flee away to them who give it room ” (ii., 225).

For it is by this “enformation according to Gnosis” that the man is made like unto the Great Man, the Good Mind or Reason of God. This Gnosis is not only Light and Life, the father-motherhood of God, but also Love. It is this Love of the Gnosis, of that which gives light and

life to all, that urges on the disciple ; it is the Breath of God Himself energizing in the heart, inspiring us. It is the Providence or Foresight of God, the Holy Spirit. And so in one of the sacred discourses, called " The Perfect Sermon," we read :

" To them, sunk in fit silence reverently, their souls and minds pendent on Hermes' lips, thus Love Divine began to speak " (iii., 260).

To be Knowers we must be Lovers ; we must have " the Single Love, the Love of wisdom-loving, which consists in Gnosis of Divinity alone—the practice of perpetual contemplation and of holy piety " (ii., 330).

Of such Lovers and such Gnostics we read :

" But they who have received some portion of God's gift, these, son, if we judge by their deeds, have from Death's

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

bonds won their release ; for they embrace in their own mind all things, things on the earth, things in the heaven, and things above the heaven —if they be aught.

“ And having raised themselves so far they sight the Good ; and having sighted It, they look upon their sojourn here as a mischance ; and in disdain of all, both things in body and the bodiless, they speed their way unto that One and Only One.

“ This is, my son, the Gnosis of the Mind, vision of things Divine ; God-knowledge is it, for the Mind is God’s ” (ii., 88).

Hard as it may be to leave the “ things we have grown used to,” the things habitual, it must be done if we are to enter into the Way of the Gnosis. But no new Path is this, no going forth into new lands (though it may have all the

appearance of being so). The entrance on the Path of the Gnosis is a Going Home ; it is a Return—a Turning-Back (a true Repentance of the whole nature). “ We must turn ourselves back into the Old, Old Way ” (ii., 98).

And for those who will thus “ repent,” there are promises and words of fair comfort spoken by the Mind Himself in the Gospel of the Gnosis called “ The Shepherd of Men ” :

“ I, Mind, Myself am present with holy men and good, the pure and merciful, men who live piously.

“ To such my Presence doth become an aid, and straightway they gain Gnosis of all things, and win the Father’s love by their pure lives, and give Him thanks, invoking on Him blessings and chanting hymns, intent on Him with ardent love ” (ii., 14).

And to the truth of this, testimony is

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

borne by one of those in Gnosis who had heard and had believed and had known, when he writes :

“ But I, with thanks and blessings unto the Father of the universal Powers, was freed, full of the Power He had poured into me, and full of what He'd taught me of the nature of the all and of the loftiest vision ” (ii., 17).

And so he begins to preach to men “ the Beauty of Devotion and of the Gnosis ” ; for he cannot refrain from uttering the Word, now that he has become a knower, a doer, and not a hearer only. He prays no longer for himself, but that he may be the means whereby the rest of human kind may come to Light and Life, saying :

“ Give ear to me who pray that I may ne'er of Gnosis fail, Gnosis which is our common being's nature ; and

fill me with Thy Power, and with this Grace of Thine, that I may give the Light to those in ignorance of the Race, my brethren and Thy sons” (ii., 20).

THE
GNOSIS
OF THE
MIND.

With these brief indications of the Gnosis of the Mind, drawn from a wealth of like noble teachings, we bring to an end the first volume of these “Echoes from the Gnosis,” in the hope that there may be some who will turn to the fair originals, and “read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them.”

SOME PROPOSED SUBJECTS
————— FOR —————
FORTHCOMING VOLUMES

THE HYMNS OF HERMES.
THE VISION OF ARIDÆUS.
THE HYMN OF JESUS.
THE CHALDÆAN ORACLES.
A MITHRIAC LITURGY.
THE Gnostic HYMN OF THE
PRODIGAL SON.



Date Due

OCT 26 '53		
JUN 4 '59		
MAR 10 '60		
MAY 14 '61		
MAR 23 '62		
FEB 12 '63		
MAY 7 '64		
APR 23 '65		
MAY 6 '61		
FEB 26 '69		
OCT 27 1976		
MAR 20 1981		
FEB 23 1982		
APR 12 1983		
6262736		

273.1 M46 v.1

CLAPP



3 5002 00102 7981

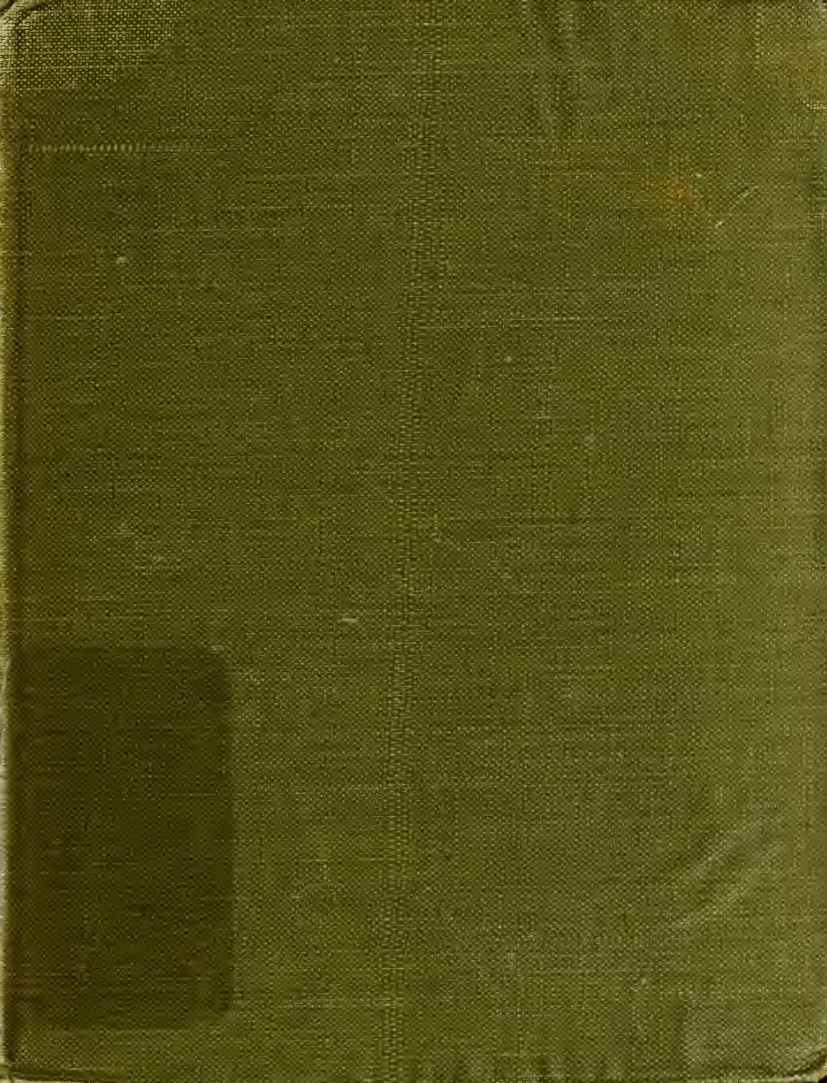
Mead, G. R. S.
Echoes from the Gnosis /

BP 565 .M4 E27 1906 1

Mead, G. R. S. 1863-1933.


Echoes from the Gnosis







" RISE AND FOLLOW THY DREAM "

LIBRARY OF
KATHARINE LEE BATES
BEQUEATHED TO
WELLESLEY COLLEGE 

K. L. B.

from

L. C. B. L.

THE HYMNS
OF
HERMES. .

WORKS BY THE SAME
 ——— AUTHOR ———

	<i>No.</i>
THRICE GREATEST HERMES (3 vols.) -	30/-
FRAGMENTS OF A FAITH FORGOTTEN -	10/6
APOLLONIUS OF TYANA - - - - -	3/6
THE GOSPEL AND THE GOSPELS - - -	4/6
DID JESUS LIVE 100 B.C. ? - - - -	9/-
PLOTINUS - - - - -	1/-
THE UPANISHADS (2 vols.) - - - -	3/-

ECHOES
FROM
THE
GNOSIS

BY
G. R. S.
MEAD
VOL. II.

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES

THE
THEOSOPHICAL
PUBLISHING
SOCIETY

LONDON
AND
BENARES
1907

Faint, illegible handwriting at the top of the page.

BP

243741

565

, M4E27

1906

2

PRINTED BY PERCY LUND, HUMPHRIES & CO., LTD..
THE COUNTRY PRESS, BRADFORD;
3, AMEN CORNER, LONDON. E.C. ;
AND 97, BRIDGE STREET, MANCHESTER.

ECHOES FROM THE GNOSIS.

Under this general title it is proposed to publish a series of small volumes, drawn from, or based upon, the mystic, theosophic and gnostic writings of the ancients, so as to make more easily audible for the ever-widening circle of those who love such things, some echoes of the mystic experiences and initiatory lore of their spiritual ancestry. There are many who love the life of the spirit, and who long for the light of gnostic illumination, but who are not sufficiently equipped to study the writings of the ancients at first hand, or to follow the labours of scholars unaided. These little volumes are therefore intended to serve as introduction to the study of the more difficult literature of the subject, and it is hoped that at the same time they may become for some, who have, as yet, not even heard of the Gnosis, stepping-stones to higher things.

G. R. S. M.

HYMNS OF HERMES

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE SERVICE OF SONG	9
A TRIPLE TRISAGION	30
A HYMN TO ALL-FATHER GOD	44
THE SECRET HYMNODY	57
A HYMN OF GRACE FOR GNOSIS	71
A SONG OF PRAISE TO THE ÆON	78

The references in this volume are to the recently-published work—*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*, 3 vols. (London, 1906).

ECHOES FROM THE
———— GNOSIS ————

VOL. I. THE GNOSIS OF THE
MIND.

VOL. II. THE HYMNS OF HERMES.

SOME PROPOSED SUBJECTS
———— FOR ————
FORTHCOMING VOLUMES

THE VISION OF ARIDÆUS.

THE HYMN OF JESUS.

THE CHALDÆAN ORACLES.

A MITHRIAC LITURGY.

THE HYMN OF THE PRODIGAL.

SOME ORPHIC FRAGMENTS.

THE HYMNS OF HERMES.

THE SERVICE OF SONG.

Clement of Alexandria tells us that the whole of the religious philosophy—that is, the wisdom, discipline and multifarious arts and sciences—of the Egyptian priesthood was contained in the Books of Hermes, that is of Thoth. These Books, he informs us further, were classified under forty-two heads and divided into a number of groups according to the various septs or divisions of the priests.

In describing a certain sacred ceremonial—a procession of priests in their various orders—Clement tells us that it was headed by a representative of the order of Singers, who were distinguished by appropriate symbols of music, some of which apparently were carried in the

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

hands and others embroidered on the robes.

These Singers had to make themselves masters of, that is, learn by heart, two of the divisions of the Books of Hermes, namely, those which contained collections of Hymns in Honour of the Gods or of God, and Encomia or Hymns in Praise of the Kings (iii., 222).

Many specimens of similar hymns in praise of the Gods are preserved to us in Egyptian inscriptions and papyri, and some of them are most noble out-pourings of the soul in praise of the majesty and transcendency of the Supreme, in terms that may be not unfavourably compared with similar praise-giving in other great scriptures. But, alas ! the hymn-books of Thoth, to which Clement refers, are lost to us. He may, of course, have been mistaken in so definitely designating them, just as he was indubitably mistaken in thinking that they were collections of hymns composed by a single individual, Hermes.

The grandiose conception of Thoth as the inspirer of all sacred writings and the teacher of all religion and philosophy was Egyptian and not Greek; and it was but a sorry equivalent that the Greeks could find in their own pantheon when, in the change of God-names, they were forced to "translate" "Thoth" by "Hermes."

Thoth, as the inspirer of all sacred writings and the president of all priestly discipline, was, as Jamblichus tells us, a name which was held by the Egyptians to be "common to all priests"—that is to say, every priest as priest was a Thoth, because he showed forth in his sacred office some characteristic or other of the Great Priest or Master Hierophant among the Gods whose earthly name was Thoth—Tehuti.

Thoth was thus the Oversoul of all priests; and when some of the Greeks came to know better what the inner discipline of the true priestly mysteries connoted, they so felt the inadequacy

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

of plain Hermes as a suitable equivalent for the Egyptian name which designated this great ideal, that they qualified "Egyptian Hermes" with the honorific epithet "Thrice-greatest."

It is of the Hymns of this Thrice-greatest Hermes that I shall treat in the present small volume—hymns that were inspired by the still living tradition of what was best in the wisdom of ancient Egypt, as "philosophised" through minds trained in Greek thought, and set forth in the fair speech of golden-tongued Hellas.

But here again, unfortunately, we have no collection of such hymns preserved to us; and all we can do is to gather up the fragments that remain, scattered through the pages of the Trismegistic literature which have escaped the jealousy of an exclusive bibliolatry.

The main Gospel of the Trismegistic Gnosis is contained in a sacred sermon which bears in Greek the title "Poëmandres." This may perhaps have been

originally the Greek transliteration of an Egyptian name (ii., 50); but from the treatise itself it is manifest that it was understood by the Greek followers of this Gnosis to mean "The Shepherd of Men," or "Man-shepherd." This Shepherd was no man, but Divine Humanity or the Great Man or Mind, the inspirer of all wisdom and hierophant of all spiritual initiations.

This majestic Reality or Essence of Certitude was conceived of as a limitless Presence, or Person, of Light and Life and Goodness, which enwrapped the contemplative mind of the pious worshipper of God or the Good, of the single-hearted lover of the Beautiful, and of the unwearied striver for the knowledge of the True.

And so, in His instruction to one who was striving to reach the grade of a true self-conscious Hermes, Pœmandres declares :

"I, Mind, Myself am present with

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

holy men and good, the pure and merciful, men who live piously.

“ To such My Presence doth become an aid, and straightway they gain Gnosis of all things, and win the Father’s love by their pure lives, and give Him thanks, invoking on Him blessings, and chanting hymns, intent on Him with ardent love ”
(ii., 14).

And the same instruction is practically repeated in the sermon called “ The Key,” where we read :

“ But on the pious soul the Mind doth mount and guide it to the Gnosis’ Light. And such a soul doth never tire in songs of praise to God and pouring blessing on all men, and doing good in word and deed to all, in imitation of its Sire ”
(ii., 155).

The sole conditions for reaching this consummation, so devoutly to be wished, are here laid down :

The good alone can know the Good ; even as one of the invocations to Hermes as the Good Mind, preserved in the Greek Magic Papyri, phrases it :

“Thee I invoke! Come unto me, O Good, Thou altogether good, come to the good!” (i., 86).

The pure alone can know the Pure ; and by “Pure” I think Hermes sometimes meant far more than is generally connoted by the term. “Pure” is that which remains in itself, and is neither too much nor too little ; it is the equilibrium, the balanced state, the mysterious something that reconciles all opposites, and is their simultaneous source and ending—the Divine Justice.

The merciful alone can know the Merciful, the source of the infinite variety of the Divine Love.

To such the Divine Presence becomes an aid ; it is in the field of this “Good Land” alone, in the self-cultivated soil

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

of the spiritual nature—the good and pure and merciful nature—of man, that the Divine Presence can sow the self-conscious seeds of the heavenly Gnosis, so that from this Virgin Womb of Virtue may come to birth the true Man, the child of Freedom, or Right Will, or Good Will.

To others, to those who are still in ignorance of spiritual things, the Divine Presence is also an aid, but unknowingly ; for being manifested for them in its reversed mode, by means of the constraints of Fate, the many consider it a hindrance, as indeed it is—a hindrance to their falling into greater ignorance and limitation. The soil must be cleared of tares and ploughed, before it can be sown.

But when man of his own freewill reverses his mode of life, and revolves with the motion of the heavenly spheres instead of spinning against them, the conscious contact with the Divine Presence which is thus effected, stirs the

whole nature to respond ; sunlight pours into the true heart of the man from all sides, and his heart answers ; it wakes from the dead and begins to speak true words. The Great God gives speech to the heart in the Invisible, even as He does to the dead Osirified ; and that unspoken speech is a continual praise-giving of right deeds. There is also a spoken speech, becoming articulate in human words in hymns of praise and thanks to God—the liturgy of a piety that answers to the Divine and is thus responsible.

Indeed this is the basis of all liturgy and cult, even in their crudest forms or reflections—in the dreams of men's sleeping hearts. But the Trismegistic writings are dealing with the self-conscious realization of true Gnostic Passion, where feeling has to be consciously transmuted into knowledge.

The singing of hymns on earth is the reflection of a heavenly mystery. Before the man can really sing in proper tune

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

he must have harmonized his lower nature and transformed it into cosmos or fit order. Hitherto he has been singing out of tune, chaotically—howling, shrieking, crying, cursing, rather than singing articulately, and so offering “reasonable oblations” to God.

The articulation of the “members” of his true “body” or “heart” has not yet been completed or perfected; they are still, to use the language of the ancient Egyptian myth, scattered abroad, as it were, by his Typhonic passions; the limbs of his body of life are scattered in his body of death. The Isis of his spiritual nature is still weeping and mourning, gathering them together, awaiting the day of the New Dawn, when the last member, the organ of Gnosis, shall complete the *taxis*, or order, or band of his members, and the New Man shall arise from the dead.

It is only when these “limbs” of his are harmonized and properly articulated that he has an instrument for cosmic

music. It matters not whether the old myth tells us of the fourteen "limbs" of the dead Osiris, or the later instruction speaks of the seven spheres of the creative Harmony that fashion forth the "limbs" of every man, and views them as each energizing in two modes, according as the individual will of man goes with them or against them—it all refers to the same mystery. Man in limitation is two-fold, even as are his physical limbs; man in freedom as cosmicly configured is two in one in all things.

And therefore when this "change of gnostic tendency" is wrought, there is a marvellous transmutation of the whole nature. He abandons his Typhonic passions, the energizings of the nature that has battled with God, in order that what the anonymous writer of that mystic masterpiece *The Dream of Rāvan*, so finely calls the "Divine Catastrophe" may be precipitated, and the Titan in him may be the more rapidly destroyed, or rather transmuted into the God.

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

For though these passions now seem to us to be of the "Devil," and though we look upon them as born of powers that fight against God, they are not really evil; they are the experiences in our nature of the natural energies of the Divine Harmony—that mysterious Engine of Fate, which is the seven-fold means of manifestation, according to our Trismegistic tradition. For the Divine Harmony is the creative instrument of the Divine Energy, that perpetually produces forms in substance for consciousness, and so gradually perfects a form that shall be capable of imaging forth the Perfect Man.

The natural energies that have been hitherto working through him unconsciously, in order that through form self-consciousness may come to birth, are, however, regarded by the neophyte, in the first stages of his gnostic birth, as inimical; they have woven for him garments that have brought experience, but which now seem rags that he would

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

ain strip off, in order that he may put on new robes of power and majesty, and so exchange the sackcloth of the slave for the raiment of the King. Though the new garments are from the same yarn and woven by the energies of the same loom, the weaver is now labouring to change the texture and design; he is now joyfully learning gnostically to follow the plan of the Great Weaver, and so cheerfully unravels the rags of his past imperfections to reweave them into "fine linen" fit for King Osiris.

This gnostic change is in our treatise described by the Great Mind teaching the little mind, as following on the stripping off of the vices of the soul, which are said to arise from the downward mode of the energies of the seven spheres of the Harmony of Fate. The subsequent beatification is set forth in the following graphic declaration :

"And then, with all the energizing of the Harmony stript from him, he

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

cometh to that nature which belongs unto the Eighth, and there with those that are hymneth the Father.

“They who are there welcome his coming there with joy; and he, made like to them that sojourn there, doth further hear the Powers who are above the nature that belongs unto the Eighth, singing their songs of praise to God in language of their own.

“And then they, in a band, go to the Father home; of their own selves they make surrender of themselves to Powers, and thus becoming Powers they are in God. This the good end for those who have gained Gnosis—to be made one with God” (ii., 16).

This is the change of gnostic tendency that is wrought in the nature of one who passes from the stage of ordinary man, which Hermes characterizes as a “pro-cession of Fate,” to that true manhood which leads finally to Godship.

The ancient Egyptians divided man

into at least nine forms of manifestation, or modes of existence, or spheres of being, or by whatever phrase we choose to name these categories of his natures.

The words "clothed in his proper Power" refer, I believe, to one of these natures of man. Now the *sekhem* is generally translated "power," but we have no description of it whereby we may satisfactorily check the translation; and so I would suggest that the *khaibit*, though generally translated "shadow" (i., 89), is perhaps the mystery to which our text refers, for "in the teaching of Egypt, around the radiant being [perhaps the *ren* or name], which in its regenerate life could assimilate itself to the glory of the Godhead, was formed the *khaibit*, or luminous atmosphere, consisting of a series of ethereal envelopes, at once shading and diffusing its flaming lustre, as the earth's atmosphere shades and diffuses the solar rays" (i., 76).

This was typified by the linen swathings of the mummy, for "Thoth, the Divine

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

Wisdom, wraps the spirit of the Justified a million times in a garment of fine linen," even as Jesus in a certain sacred act girt himself with a "linen cloth" which Tertullian characterizes as the "proper garment of Osiris" (i., 71). And Plutarch tells us that linen was worn by the priests "on account of the colour which the flax in flower sends forth, resembling the ethereal radiance that surrounds the cosmos" (i., 265).

The same mystery is shown forth in the marvellous passage which describes the transfiguration of Jesus in the Gnostic gospel known as the *Pistis Sophia*, which is of almost pure Egyptian tradition. It is the mystic description of a wonderful metamorphosis or transformation that is wrought in the inner nature of the Master, who has ascended to clothe himself with the Robe of Glory, and who returns to the consciousness of his lower powers, or disciples, clad in his Robe of Power.

“ They saw Jesus descending shining exceedingly ; there was no measure to the light which surrounded him, for he shone more brightly than when he had ascended into the heavens, so that it is impossible for any in this world to describe the light in which he was. He shot forth rays shining exceedingly ; his rays were without measure, nor were his rays of light equal together, but they were of every figure and every type, some being more admirable than the others in infinite manner. And they were all pure light in every part at the same time.

“ It was of three degrees, one surpassing the other in infinite manner. The second, which was in the midst, excelled the first which was below it, and the third, the most admirable of all, surpassed the two below *it*. The first glory was placed below all, like to the light which came upon Jesus before he ascended into the heavens, and was very regular as to its own light ” (pp. 7, 8).

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

This triple glory, I believe, was the “body of light” of the nature of the eighth, ninth and tenth spheres of glory in the scale of the perfect ten. In our text the “clothed in his proper Power” must, I think, be referred to the powers of the seven spheres unified into one, the eighth, which was the vehicle of the pure mind, according to Platonic tradition, based originally, in all probability, x on Egyptian tradition. This “vehicle” was “atomic” and not “molecular,” to use the terms of present-day science, simple and not compound, same and not other—“very regular as to its own light.”

And so when this gnostic change is wrought in the man’s inner nature there is an accompanying change effected in the substance of his very “body,” and he begins to sing in harmony with the spheres; “with those that are he hymneth the Father.”

He now knows the language of nature, and therewith sings praise continually

in full consciousness of the joy of life. He sings the song of joy, and so singing hears the joyous songs of the Sons of God who form the first of the choirs invisible. They sing back to him and give him welcome; and what they sing the lover of such things may read in the same *Pistis Sophia* (p. 17), in the Hymn of the Powers "Come unto Us"—when they welcome the returning exile on the Great Day of that name.

But this is not all; for higher still and higher, beyond and yet beyond, are other choirs of Powers of even greater transcendency who sing. As yet, however, the newly born cannot understand or bear, their song, for they sing in a language of their own, there being many tongues of angels and archangels, of daimones and gods in their many grades.

But already the man has begun to realize the freedom of the cosmos; he has begun to feel himself a true cosmopolitan or world-citizen, and to thrill in harmony with the Powers. He experiences an

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

ineffable union that removes all fear, and longs for the consummation of the final Sacred Marriage when he will perform the great sacrifice, and of himself make joyful surrender of all that he has been in separation, to become, by union with Those alone who truly are, all that has ever been and is and will be—and so one with God, the All and One.

It is thus evident that our Hymns of Hermes are in direct contact with a tradition which regarded the spiritual life as a perpetual service of song; and this is quite in keeping with the belief of the Egyptians that man was created for the sole purpose of worshipping the Gods and rendering them pious service. The whole duty of man was thus conceived of as an utterance of "true words" or a continual singing of a song of harmony of thought and word and deed, whereby man grew like unto the Gods, and so at last becoming a God was with the Great God in the "Boat of

the millions of Years," or "Barque of the Æons," in other words, was safe for eternity.

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

And now we will turn to the four hymns preserved to us in Greek from the hymn-book of this truly sacred liturgy.

The first is appended to the "Poemandres" treatise, and was evidently intended to give some idea in human terms of the nature of the Praise-giving of the Powers to which reference has just been made. For, as we shall see later on, the less instructed of the community fervently desired to have revealed to them the words of this Song, thinking in their ignorance that it was some hymn resembling those of earth, and not yet understanding that it was the heavenly type of all earth-praising, whether expressed by man or animal, by tree or stone.

The first part of our hymn consists of nine lines, divided by their subjects

into three groups, every sentence beginning with "Holy art Thou!" It is thus in the form of a three-fold "Holy, Holy, Holy!"—and we may thus, for want of a proper title, call it "A Triple Trisagion."

A TRIPLE TRISAGION.

Holy art Thou, O God, the Universals' Father.

Holy art Thou, O God, Whose Will perfects itself by means of its own Powers.

Holy art Thou, O God, Who willest to be known and art known by Thine own.

Holy art Thou, Who didst by Word make to consist the things that are.

Holy art Thou, of Whom All-nature hath been made an Image.

Holy art Thou, Whose Form Nature hath never made.

Holy art Thou, more powerful than all power.

Holy art Thou, transcending all pre-eminence.

Holy art Thou, Thou better than all praise.

Accept my reason's offerings pure, from soul and heart for aye stretched up to Thee, O Thou unutterable, unspeakable, Whose Name naught but the Silence can express!

Give ear to me who pray that I may ne'er of Gnosis fail—Gnosis which is our common being's nature—and fill me with Thy Power, and with this Grace of Thine, that I may give the Light to those in ignorance of the Race, my Brethren and Thy Sons!

For this cause I believe, and I bear witness. I go to Life and Light. Blessed art Thou, O Father. Thy Man would holy be as Thou art holy, e'en as Thou gavest him Thy full authority to be.

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

“ Holy art Thou, O God, the Universals’
Father.”

God is first praised as the Father of the Universals, that is of the Greatnesses of all things, the Æonic Immensities, or Supreme Mysteries that are plural yet one—the Subsistencies of the Divine Being in the state of pure Divinity.

“ Holy art Thou, O God, Whose Will perfects itself by means of its own Powers.”

God is next praised as the Power or Potency of all things ; for Will is regarded by our Gnostics as the means by which the Deity reveals Himself unto Himself by the Great Act of perpetual Self-creation of Himself in Himself. “ From Thee ” are all things—when God is thought of as Divine Fatherhood ; and “ Through Thee ” are all things—when God is regarded as Divine Motherhood. For this Will is the Divine Love which is the means of Self-perfection, the source of all consummation and satisfaction, of certitude and bliss. The Deity for ever initiates Himself into His own Mysteries.

“Holy art Thou, O God, Who willeth to be known and art known by Thine own.”

The Will of God is Gnostic ; He wills to be known. The Divine Purpose is consummated in Self-knowledge. God is knowable, but only by “His own,” that is by the Divine Sonship, as Basilides, the Christian Gnostic, calls it, or by the Race of the Sons of God, as Philo and our Gnostics and others of the same period phrase it.

The Sonship is a Race, and not an individual, because they of the Sonship have ceased from separation and have made “surrender of themselves to Powers, and thus becoming Powers they are in God.” They are one with another, no longer separated one from another and using divided senses and organs ; for they constitute the Intelligible Word or Reason (Logos) which is also the Intelligible World (Kosmos) or Order of all things.

The next three praise-givings celebrate

the same trinity of what, for lack of appropriate terms, we may call Being, Bliss and Intelligence, but now in another mode—the mode of manifestation or enformation in space and time and substance of the Sensible Universe, or Cosmos of forms and species.

The three *hypostases* or *hyparxes* or subsistences of this mode of the Divine self-manifestation are suggested by the terms Word, All-nature and Form. Word is the Vice-regent of Being, because it is this Word or Reason that established the being of all things, the that in them which causes them to be what they are, the essential reason of their being; All-nature is the ground or substance of their being, the All-receiver or Nurse, as Plato calls her, who nourishes them, the Giver of Bliss, the Ever-becoming which is the Image of Eternity; while Form is the impression of the Divine Intelligence, the source of all transformation and metamorphosis.

The final trisagion sings the praise of

God's transcendency, declaring the powerlessness of human speech adequately to sing the praise of God.

Therefore is it said that the sole fit liturgy, or service of God, is to be found in the offerings of reason alone, the reason or *logos* which is the Divine principle in man, the image of the Image, or Divine Man, the Logos. It is the continual raising of the tension of the whole nature whereby the man is drawn ever closer and closer to God, in the rapt silence of ecstatic contemplation—when alone he goes to the Alone, as Plotinus says. The Name of God can be expressed by Silence alone, for, as we know from the remains of the Christianized Gnosis, this Silence, or *Sigē*, is the Spouse of God, and it is the Divine Spouse alone who can give full expression to the Divine Son, the Name or Logos of God.

The prayer is for Gnosis, for the realization of the state of Sonship, or the self-consciousness of the common

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

being which the Son has with the Father. This is to be consummated by the fulfilment of the man's whole nature, by the completion of his insufficiency or imperfection (*hysterēma*), whereby he becomes the Fullness or Wholeness (*Plērōma*) the Æon or Eternity. This is to be achieved by the descent of the Great Power upon him, by the Blessing of God's Goodwill, that Charis or Grace or Love, which has been all along his Divine Mother, but which now becomes his Divine Spouse or Complement or Syzygy.

The prayer is not for self but for others, that so the man may become the means of illumination for those still in darkness, who as yet do not know of the Glad Tidings of the Divine Sonship, who are ignorant of the Race of Wisdom, but who nevertheless are, as are all men, brethren of the Christ and sons of God.

And so in this ecstasy of praise, the traveller, as he sings upon the Path of the Divine, feels within him the certitude that he is indeed on the Way of Return,

his face set forward to the True Goal ; he is going to Light and Life, the eternal fatherhood and motherhood that are ever united in the Good, the One Desirable, or Divine Father-Mother, two in one and three in one.

Finally as God has been praised throughout in His nature of holiness, that is as most worshipful, meet to be adored, praiseworthy and the object of all wonder, so that which has proceeded from Him, His Man, or the Divine in man, now longs consciously to become of like nature with Him, according to the Purpose and Commandment of the Father Who has destined him for this very end, and bestowed on him power over all things.

It is indeed a fair psalm—this Hymn of Hermes, that is, the praise-giving of some lover of this Gnosis who had, as he expresses it, “reached the Plain of Truth” (i., 19), or come into conscious contact with the reality of his own Divine nature, and so been made a Hermes indeed, capable of interpreting the inner

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

meaning of religion, and of leading souls back from Death to Life—a true psychagogue. It matters little who wrote it ; his body may have been Egyptian or Greek or Syrian, it may have borne this name or that, it may have lived precisely from this year to that, or from some other to some other year, all this is of little consequence except for historians of the bodies of men. What concerns us here more nearly is the outpouring of a soul ; we have here a man manifestly pouring forth from the fulness of his heart the profoundest experiences of his inmost life. He is telling us how it is possible for a man to learn to know God by first learning to know himself, and so unfold the flower of his spiritual nature and unwrap the swathings of the immemorial heart of him, that has been mummified and laid in the tomb so many ages of lives that have been living deaths.

And now we may pass to our next hymn. It is found in a beautiful little

treatise which bears as title the enunciation of its subject, "Though Unmanifest God is most Manifest," and is a discourse of "father" Hermes to "son" Tat. The subject of this sermon is that mysterious manifestation of the Divine Energy which is now so well known by the Sanskrit term *Māyā*, so erroneously translated into English as "Illusion"—unless we venture to take this illusion in its root-meaning of Sport and Play; for in its highest sense *Māyā* is the Sport of the Creative Will, the World-Drama or God in activity.

The Greek equivalent of *māyā* is *phantasia*, which, for lack of a single term in English to represent it rightly, I have translated by "thinking-manifest." The Phantasy of God is thus the Power (Shakti in Sanskrit) of perpetual self-manifestation or self-imagining, and is the means whereby all "This" comes into existence from the unmanifest "That"; or as our treatise phrases it :

“ He is Himself, both things that are and things that are not. The things that are He hath made manifest, He keepeth things that are not in Himself.

“ He is the God beyond all name— He the unmanifest, He the most manifest ; He whom the mind alone can contemplate, He visible unto the eyes as well. He is the one of no body, the one of many bodies, nay, rather, He of every body.”

“ Naught is there which He is not, for all are He, and He is all ” (ii., 104).

He is both things that are “ here ” in our present consciousness, and all that are not in our consciousness, or rather memory—“ there ” in our eternal nature. He is both the Manifest and Hidden—hidden in the manifest and manifest in the hidden, manifest in all we have been and hidden in all we shall be.

From the things that are not He maketh things that are ; and so He may be said to create out of nothing—as far

as we are concerned ; indeed He creates out of nothing but Himself.

He is both that which the mind alone can contemplate—that is the Intelligible Universe, or that constituted in His Divine Being which the divided senses cannot perceive—and also all that which the senses, both physical and super-physical, can perceive—the whole Sensible Universe.

He is to be conceived simultaneously from a monotheistic, polytheistic and pantheistic point of view, and from many others—as many points of view indeed, as the mind of man can conceive, not to speak of an infinitude that he cannot ever imagine. He is corporeality and incorporeality in perpetual union. He is in no body, for no body can contain Him, and yet is He in every body and every body is in Him. “ Naught is there which He is not, for He is all.”

It is indeed difficult to understand why so many in the West so greatly dread the very thought of allowing

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

pantheistic ideas to enter into their conception of God. This fear is in reality over-daring or rash presumption, for they have the hardihood to dare to limit the Divine according to their own petty notions of what they would like God to be, and so they bitterly resent the disturbance of their self-complacency when it is pointed out that He will not fit the miserably narrow cross on which they would fain crucify Him.

What right have we, who in our ignorance are but puny creatures of a day, to exclude God from any one or any thing? But they will reply: It is not God who is excluded; it is we who exclude ourselves from God.

Indeed; try as we may, we cannot do so. This is the impossible, for we cannot exclude ourselves from ourselves. And who are we apart from God? Did we create ourselves? And if we did, then we are God, for self-creation is the prerogative of the Divine alone.

But the pious soul will still object

that God is good alone. Agreed, if you will ; but what is Good ? Is Good our good only, or the Good of all creatures ? And if God is the Good of all creatures, then equally so must He be the Evil of all creatures ; for the good of one creature is the evil of another, and the evil of one the good of another—and so the Balance is kept even. It is a limited view to say that God is good alone, and then to define this as meaning some special form of good that we imagine for ourselves, and not that which is really good for all ; for it is good that there should be such apparent evil in the universe as pantheism, and that man's notions of apparent good should so far fall short of the reality. The wise man, or rather the man who is striving after Gnosis, is he who can see in the Good and Evil as conceived by man good in every evil, and evil or insufficiency in every good.

But if we say with Hermes that " All are He and He is all," we do not assert that we know what this really means,

we only assert that we are in this declaration face to face with the ultimate mystery of all things before which we can only bow the head in reverent silence, for all words here fail.

And so the mystic who wrote these sentences continues his meditation with a magnificent hymn, expressive of the inability of the learner's mind rightly to sing God's praises, which, for lack of a better title, we may call "A Hymn to All-Father God."

A HYMN TO ALL-FATHER GOD.

WHO, then, may sing Thee praise of Thee, or praise to Thee?

WHITHER, again, am I to turn my eyes to sing Thy praise; above, below, within, without?

There is no way, no place is there about Thee, nor any other thing of things that are.

*All are in Thee ; all are from Thee ;
O Thou Who givest all and takest naught,
for Thou hast all and naught is there
Thou hast not.*

*And WHEN, O Father, shall I hymn
Thee ? For none can seize Thy hour or
time.*

*FOR WHAT, again, shall I sing hymn ?
For things that Thou hast made, or things
Thou hast not ? For things Thou hast
made manifest, or things Thou hast
concealed ?*

*HOW, further, shall I hymn Thee ? As
being of myself ? As having something
of mine own ? As being other ?*

*For that Thou art whatever I may be ;
Thou art whatever I may do ; Thou art
whatever I may speak.*

*For Thou art all, and there is nothing
else which Thou art not.*

*Thou art all that which doth exist, and
Thou art what doth not exist,—Mind when
Thou thinkest, and Father when Thou
makest, and God when Thou dost energize,
and Good and Maker of all things (ii., 105).*

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

Who is capable of singing God's praises, when it requires the whole universe of Being, and the countless universes of all the beings that are, to sing the praises of God in any truly adequate manner? Who, then, what man, has the understanding wherewith to praise God fitly, when though in his separated consciousness he knows he knows not who he is, he yet begins to realize that the "who he really is" must inevitably be God and no other? In what manner can the Divine sing praises of itself as of some other than itself, when "I" and "Thou" must essentially be one, and the utterance of praise as of some other one seems to be a departure from the blessed state of that Divine intuition.

Is God again to be limited by space and spatial considerations? Is there a "whither" in respect to God? Certainly there cannot be any special place where the Divine may be said to be, for He is in all places, and all places and spaces are in Him. He cannot be said

to be in the heart more than in any other organ or limb of the body, for He is in all things and all things are in Him. Equally so is there no special direction in which the eyes of the mind can turn, for He is to be seen in every direction of thought in which the mind can proceed; and if we say there are evil turnings of the mind, evil thoughts, he who has experienced this "change of gnostic tendency" will reply that the only evil he now knows is not to be conscious that God is in all things, and that with the dawning of this true self-consciousness the right side of every thought presents itself with the wrong side in the joy of pure thinking.

The idea of the next praise-giving is perhaps somewhat difficult to follow, as it appears to be a contradiction in terms. But in these sublime heights of human thought all is seeming contradiction and paradox, because it is the state of reconciliation of all opposites.

It might be said that if God is He

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

who gives all things, equally so must He be He who receives all things ; but the antithesis can be equally well declared by the thought of all and nothing as by the idea of giving and receiving, for God manifestly takes nothing, in that He has no need of anything, seeing that He already has all things.

And if God cannot be limited by space, equally so is it impossible that He can be conditioned by time. Therefore the true Gnostic *Te Deum* cannot be sung at any one time only, but must be sung eternally ; the man must transform himself into a perpetual song of praise in every thought and word and deed.

Nor can the Deity be hymned for one thing, rather than for another, for all things are equally from God, and he who would make himself like unto God should have no preferences, but should view all things with equal eye, and embrace them all with equal love.

On account of what, again, as regards himself in distinction from the world,

shall the Gnostic praise God? Shall he hymn the Divine for the fact of his own self-existence, or because of the powers and faculties and possessions that are his, or because he is other than, presumably, the many who are not in Gnosis? The uselessness of all such distinctions becomes apparent in the doubt that the very asking of such questions awakens, and the devotee of Wisdom brushes them all aside in splendid outburst: "For that Thou art whatever I may be; Thou art whatever I may do; Thou art whatever I may speak." There is no separation in the reality of things. Whatever the man is in this ecstatic state, it is the Being of God in him; whatever the man does, it is the Working of God in him; whatever the man speaks, it is the Word of God in him.

Nay, more than this; to such a consciousness God is in very truth all things both manifest and hidden. God is Mind when we think of Him as thinking, devising and planning; God is Father

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

when we conceive Him as willing and creating and bringing all things into existence; and God is Good when we regard Him as energizing or inworking or breathing in all things to give them Light and Life. He is the Good or End of all things, even as He is the Beginning or Maker of all.

Our next hymn is found in the marvelous initiation ritual which now bears the title "The Secret Sermon on the Mountain," with the sub-heading "Concerning Rebirth and the Promise of Silence," but which might very well be called "The Initiation of Tat."

This Rebirth or Regeneration was, and is, the mystery of the Spiritual Birth or Birth from Above, the object of the greater mysteries, even as in the lesser mysteries, the subject of the instructions

was concerning the Birth from Below, the secret of genesis, or how a man comes into physical birth. The one was the birth or *genesis* into matter, the other the essential birth or *palingenesis*, the means of re-becoming a pure spiritual being.

It is the mystic rite of the "laying on of hands," the rite of invocation by Hermes, the hierophant or father on earth, whereby the Hands of Blessing of the Great Initiator, the Good Mind, are laid upon the head of Tat, the candidate, his son. These Hands of Blessing are no physical hands, but Powers, Rays of the spiritual Sun, even as they are symbolized in the well-known Egyptian frescoes of the Atem-cult. Each Ray is a Gnostic Power, the light and virtue of which drive out the darkness of the soul's vices and prepare the way for transforming the fleshly body into the true ray-like or star-like body of a God—the *augoeides* or *astroeides*, to which we referred under its Egyptian equivalent

at the beginning of this little volume.

This mystic rite of Gnostic initiation brings the God in man to birth ; he is at first, however, but a baby God, who as yet neither hears nor sees, but only feels. And so when the rite is duly ended, Tat begs as a great privilege to be told the marvellous Song of the Powers of which he has read in his studies, and which his father, Hermes, is said to have heard when he came to the Eighth Sphere or Stage in his ascent of the Holy Mountain or Sacred Stairs.

“ I would, O father, hear the praise-giving with hymn which thou dost say thou heardest when thou wert at the Eight.”

In answer to Tat's request Hermes replies that it is quite true the Shepherd, the Divine Mind, at his own still higher initiation into the first grade of masterhood, foretold that he should hear this Heaven-Song ; and he commends Tat

for hastening to "strike his tent" now that he has been made pure. That is to say, the final rite of purification has now been operated in Tat, the powers of the cathartic or purifying virtues have descended upon him, so that he now has the power to "strike his tent," or free himself from the trammels of the body of vice, and so rise from the tomb which has hitherto imprisoned his "daimonic soul," as the Pythian Oracle says of Plotinus.

But, adds Hermes, it is not quite as Tat supposes. There is no one Song of the Powers written in human speech and kept secret ; no MS., no oral tradition, of some physically uttered hymn.

"The Shepherd, Mind of all masterhood, hath not passed on to me more than hath been writ down, for full well did He know that I should of myself be able to learn all, and see all things.

"He left to me the making of fair things. Wherefore the Powers within me,

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

e'en as they are in all, break into song."

The Song can be sung in many modes and many tongues, according to the inspiration of the illumined singer. The man who is reborn becomes a psalmist and a poet, for now is he tuned in harmony with the Great Harmony, and cannot do otherwise than sing God's praises. He becomes a maker of hymns and is no longer a repeater of the hymns of others.

But Tat persists; his soul is filled with longing to hear some echo of the Great Song. "Father, I wish to hear; I long to know these things!"

And so Hermes is at last persuaded, and proceeds to give him a model of such praise-giving which he now can use in substitution for the prayers he has previously employed, and which were more suited to one in the state of faith.

Hermes bids Tat calm himself and so await in reverent silence the hearing of the potent theurgic outpouring of the

whole nature of the man in praise of God, which shall open a path throughout all Nature straight to the Divine. This is no ordinary hymn of praise but a theurgic operation or gnostic act. Therefore, Hermes commands :

“ Be still, my son ! Hear the praise-giving that keeps the soul in tune, Hymn of Rebirth—a hymn I would not have thought fit so readily to tell, had'st thou not reached the end of all.”

Not, of course, the end of all Gnosis, but the end of the probationary path of purification and faith, which is the beginning of the Gnosis. Such hymns were taught only to those who had been made pure ; not to those who were slaves of the world or even to them who were still struggling with their lower vices, but only to those who had got themselves ready and “ made the thought in them a stranger to the world-illusion ” (ii., 220).

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

“Wherefore,” says Hermes, “this is not taught, but is kept hid in silence.” It is a hymn that must be used ceremonially at sunrise and sunset:

“Thus then, my son, stand in a place uncovered to the sky, facing the west, about the sinking of the setting sun, and make thy worship; so in like manner, too, when he doth rise, with face unto the east.”

And for those who cannot perfect the rite on all planes, let them stand naked, with all the garments of false opinion stripped from them, naked in the midst of High Heaven’s clear sphere, facing straight with the Spiritual Sun, or the Eye of Mind that illuminates the Great Sphere of our spiritual nature in the stillness of the purified intelligence.

And so Hermes, before he sings what is called “The Secret Hymnody,” once more utters the solemn injunction:

“Now, son, be still!”

THE SECRET HYMNODY.

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

Let every nature of the world receive the utterance of my hymn!

Open, thou Earth! Let every bolt of the Abyss be drawn for me! Stir not, ye Trees!

I am about to hymn creation's Lord, both All and One.

Ye Heavens open, and ye Winds stay still; and let God's Deathless Sphere receive my word!

For I will sing the praise of Him who founded all; who fixed the Earth, and hung up Heaven, and gave command that Ocean should afford sweet water to the Earth, to both those parts that are inhabited, and those that are not, for the support and use of every man; who made the Fire to shine for gods and men for every act.

Let us together all give praise to Him, sublime above the Heavens, of every nature Lord!

'Tis He who is the Eye of Mind; may He accept the praise of these my Powers!

Ye Powers that are within me, hymn the One and All; sing with my Will,

Powers all that are within me!

*O blessed Gnosis, by thee illumined,
hymning through thee the Light that mind
alone can see, I joy in Joy of Mind.*

Sing with me praises, all ye Powers!

*Sing praise, my Self-control; sing thou
through me, my Righteousness, the praises
of the Righteous; sing thou, my Sharing-
all, the praises of the All; through me
sing, Truth, Truth's praises!*

*Sing thou, O Good, the Good! O Life
and Light, from us to you our praises
flow!*

*Father, I give Thee thanks, to Thee Thou
Energy of all my Powers; I give Thee
thanks, O God, Thou Power of all my
Energies.*

*Thy Reason sings through me Thy
praises. Take back through me the All
into Thy Reason—my reasonable oblation!*

*Thus cry the Powers in me. They sing
Thy praise, Thou All; they do Thy Will.*

*FROM THEE, Thy Will; To Thee, the
All. Receive from all their reasonable
oblation. The All that is in us, O Life,*

preserve ; O Light, illumine it ; O God, inspirit it !

It is Thy Mind that plays the Shepherd to Thy Word, O Thou Creator, Bestower of the Spirit upon all.

For Thou art God ; Thy Man thus cries to Thee, through Fire, through Air, through Earth, through Water, and through Spirit, through Thy creatures.

'Tis from Thy Æon I have found Praise-giving ; and in Thy Will, the object of my search, have I found Rest (ii., 230-232).

We can see at once that this is no ordinary hymn, no hymn conceived in the mode of the psalms to which we have been used, but the gnostic outpouring of a man who has begun to realize the nature of his own spiritual dignity and proper place in the universe, based on the tradition of what is best in Egyptian theurgy, or that Divine energizing which

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

sends forth words of command that all nature willingly obeys.

He is about to utter words "that are true," words that from the true go unto the True, without let or hindrance. Every nature will therefore receive such words and hand them on. All elements will hasten to serve the man who is serving God with the lawful liturgy of his whole nature.

The Earth in the midst, the Heaven above, the Abyss beneath, will open all the gates of their secret ways to let the true words of him who is "true of word" pass onwards to the Deathless Sphere of the True God—that is, to the Æon itself wherein the True God dwells, not to some space of Heaven or of Earth or of the Abyss, but to that which transcends them, and is the source, preserver and end of all of them.

Not only the trees of the earth, but also the Trees of Paradise, the Divine Beings that dwell in Æonic Bliss, will rest in reverent silence as the potent praise of

proper reverence passes to the end of all adorations.

The winds of earth will still themselves, and also the Winds of Heaven, the Intelligent Breaths in the inmost chambers of man's Greater Mind.

For the praise-giving is not poured forth to this or that daimon or god, but unto the Lord of All; and they, the Obedient Ones, whose life consists in praising God, cannot but rejoice that the Disobedient One should at last of his own freewill join in the unwearied liturgy of nature.

The hymn is in praise of the One and All, of the One Lord of all creation, who is both the One who creates and the All that is created. It is a hymn sung in harmony with the liturgy, or service of praise, of the four great primal natures, the Cosmic Elements of Earth and Air and Water and Fire—Father Heaven and Mother Earth, Father Fire and Mother Ocean. The man sings *with* them the glory of their common Lord,

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

the Eye of Mind—that is, the Mind, the True Spiritual Sun, whose eyes are the countless suns in space. This True Sun is the True Light, the Light that mind alone can see; the little mind of man, now illumined by the Light of Gnosis, becomes of the nature of the Great Mind, and so a prismatic trinity of Good and Light and Life, through which the All-Brilliancy of the One and All shines forth in a septenary of Powers or Virtues,

These Powers are, with one exception, given in our hymnody in the exact classification in which they stand in the text of the mystic rite, namely: Gnosis, Joy, Self-control, Continnence, Righteousness, Sharing-with-all, and Truth—which severally drive out Not-knowing, Sorrow, Intemperance, Desire, Unrighteousness, Avarice and Error. And with the coming of Truth the measure of the Good is filled full, for unto Truth is joined Good and Life and Light.

The nature of the persons of the latter trinity is still further revealed and the

transmutability of these hypostases, by praising God as the Energy of all Powers and the Power of all Energies, that is, as Light and Life again, Light the masculine energizer, and Life the feminine nourisher, the father-motherhood of God, the Good, the Logos or Reason of all things.

And so the gnostic psalmist at last resolves his praise-giving into the offering of a reasonable oblation—which, in final analysis, is the Song of the Logos ; the Reason, the Son of God, the Alone-begotten, singing through the whole nature of the man and refunding the cosmos which is himself into the source of his Being. It is the consummation of the Great Return ; the Will of God is now the sole will of the man.

“ *From Thee Thy Will ; To Thee the All.* ”

That is, from Thee proceeds Thy Will ; Thou art the Source of Thy Will, Thy Desire, Thy Love ; and Thy Will is Thy Spouse, through whom are all things,

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

the whole universe, Thy Alone-begotten, whose end also as well as beginning is Thyself, for He is Thyself eternally.

For as another mystic hymn of the period phrases it (i., 146): "*From Thee* is Father and *Through Thee* is Mother"—to which we may add "and *To Thee* is Son."

And so the hymn-singer continues with his "reasonable oblation," the offering of his true self, the *logos* within him, of his angel "that perpetually beholds the Face of the Father,"—praying that his whole cosmos, the whole that there is of him, may be preserved or saved by Life the Mother, illumined or irradiated by Light the Father, and inspirited or inspired or spiritualized by the Great Breath of God that eternally and simultaneously outbreathes and inbreathes.

For the man is now no longer a single "Letter" or a "Procession of Fate," but a true "Name," a free Man, a Word of God, a proper Cosmos, ordered in due and lawful harmony by the conversion of

self-will into a willing union with God's Will ; and of that Word, or God, or Angel, the Shepherd, or Feeder—He who gives the Divine nectar, or spiritual food, by which that Word is nourished—is the Great Mind, or Light, or Illuminator, the twin of the Great Soul, or Saving Life, the Inspirer and Preserver, both of which are bestowed upon us by God the Creator.

The man has now become a Man, a Word, a true Being of Reason, whose energy is expressed in living ideas that can be impressed upon the souls and minds of men, and lived out in a life of example ; from an imperfect man he has become a perfect Cosmos or Order, or Harmony, and thus he can make his own purified natures sing together with the great elements and the quintessence of all of them, which is the Spirit or Breath of God, the Ātman of Indian theosophy.

For having attained unto this true

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

mode of breathing—breathing and thinking with the Great Life and Great Mind of things—the man is no longer a man but a Man, an Æon, an Eternity, and so rebecoming his own true Self he expresses his natural joy in songs of praise, and finds his rest in the Great Peace, the Motherhood of God. He is born anew, a child Christ; and, as he grows in stature, towards full manhood, so will she, who has hitherto been his mother, refreshed with the eternal youth of the Gods, change from mother into spouse.

The remaining hymn that has been preserved to us in the extant Trismegistic literature is found at the end of “The Perfect Sermon,” of which, unfortunately, the Greek original has been lost. We are dependent solely on an Old Latin version, which is frequently unsatisfactory.

This sermon is by far the longest of our extant Trismegistic *logoi*. The introduction informs us that Hermes and Asclepius and Tat and Ammon are gathered

together in the *adytum* or holy place. There the three disciples reverently listen to their master, who delivers a long instruction on the Gnosis, with the purpose of perfecting them in the knowledge of spiritual things. The discourse is, therefore, rightly called "The Perfect Sermon," or "The Sermon of Initiation."

Asclepius, Tat and Ammon stand for three types of disciples of the Gnosis, three natures of man. Asclepius is the man of intellect, skilled in the knowledge of the schools, of the arts and sciences of the day. Tat is intuitional rather than intellectual; he is "young" compared with Asclepius; nevertheless it is he who succeeds Hermes as teacher, when Hermes is taken to the Gods, for he has the spiritual nature more strongly developed than Asclepius, so that he can soar to greater heights of illumination. Ammon is the practical man of affairs, the king, the doer, not the scientist or the mystic.

It would, however, be a mistake to keep these types too clearly distinguished

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

in our mind ; for mystically all three are in each of us, and the true illumination of our three-fold nature depends upon their proper balance and harmony, upon the brotherly love of the three disciples—James, John and Peter—who must each complete each other, and subordinate themselves to one another, and vie with one another in love of their teacher, the purified mind, or Hermes, through whom alone the instruction of the Great Mind, the Shepherd, can as yet come to them.

And so we find the conditions of right contemplation dramatically set forth in the last sentence of the introduction of the sermon in the words :

“ When Ammon, too, had come within the holy place, and when the sacred group of four was now complete with piety and with God’s goodly Presence—to them, sunk in fit silence reverently, their souls and minds pendent on Hermes’ lips, thus Love Divine began to speak (ii., 309).

This Love Divine is that same Presence, the Highest Mind, or Shepherd of men, which illumines Hermes, or the higher mind within us, directly; but these immediate living words of power have to be passed on in human words to the three natures of our lower mind, the Asclepius and Tat and Ammon in us, who are the learners and hearers.

After the instruction is ended and they have come forth from the holy place, the narrative tells us that they turned their faces towards the setting sun, before uttering their hymn of praise.

That is to say mystically, the mind ceasing from contemplation, in which the outward energies have been caught up to the heights, or turned within, and stilled by the higher in the intercourse of Love that has been blessed with the Presence of the Divine, these energies, before betaking themselves to their appointed separate tasks, all unite in a hymn of praise, with their eyes still turned to the now apparently departing glory of the

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

setting spiritual Sun.

Hereupon the knower of forms in us, the Asclepius who is wise in the sciences and arts, and ceremonies, proposes to Tat, in whispered words, that they suggest to their father Hermes, that they should say their prayer to God "with added incense and with unguents." This is the suggestion of the mind that still clings to outward forms, the ritualist. But Hermes recalls them to the gnostic nature of their spiritual cult.

"Whom when Thine greatest heard, he grew distressed and said :

"Nay, nay, Asclepius ; speak more propitious words ! For this is like to profanation of our sacred rites—when thou dost pray to God, to offer incense and the rest.

"For naught is there of which He stands in need, in that He is all things, and all are in Him.

"But let us worship, pouring forth our thanks. For this is the best incense

in God's sight—when thanks are given to Him by men ” (ii., 388).

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

And so they begin their praise-giving, which for lack of a better title we may call “ A Hymn of Grace for Gnosis.”

A HYMN OF GRACE FOR GNOSIS.

We give Thee grace, Thou highest and most excellent! For by Thy Grace we have received the so great Light of Thy own Gnosis.

O holy Name, fit Name to be adored, O Name unique, by which God only must be blest through worship of our Sire,—of Thee who deignest to afford to all a Father's piety, and care, and love, and whatsoever virtue is more sweet than these, endowing us with sense, and reason, and intelligence ; —with sense that we may feel Thee ; with reason that we may track Thee out from the appearances of things ; with means of

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

*recognition that we may joy in knowing
Thee.*

*Saved by Thy Power divine, let us
rejoice that Thou hast shown Thyself to
us in all Thy Fullness. Let us rejoice that
Thou hast deigned to consecrate us, still
entombed in bodies, to Eternity.*

*For this is the sole festival of praise
worthy of man—to know Thy Majesty.*

*We know Thee ; yea, by the Single
Sense of our intelligence, we have perceived
Thy Light supreme,—O Thou True Life
of life, O Fecund Womb that giveth birth
to every nature !*

*We have known Thee, O Thou completely
filled with the Conception from Thyself of
Universal Nature !*

*We have known Thee, O Thou Eternal
Constancy !*

*For in the whole of this our prayer in
worship of Thy Good, this favour only of
Thy Goodness do we crave : that Thou
wilt keep us constant in our Love-of-
knowing-Thee, and let us ne'er be cut off
from this kind of Life (ii., 389, 390).*

We give Thee thanks, grace for Grace, goodwill for Thy Goodwill. The Goodwill of God is, as we have already learned, that "He willeth to be known," and the goodwill of man is his "love of knowing God."

The Latin of the next sentence is very obscure, but judging by other passages and by the context, the unique effable Name of God is "Father." The worship of God as Father is true religion, piety and love, since these are the natural expressions of thanks to God, in that it is He who pours out on us the treasures of His piety and care (*religio* in Latin) and love, though indeed all of these words really fall short of expressing this Divine *efficacia*, or power of giving utter satisfaction, of God; for He alone gives without stint, in that He bestows His Fullness upon us.

He endows us with sense and reason and intelligence, the three means of knowing Him: with sense to feel God in all things; with reason to track out the

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

manifestation of the Divine in all phenomena ; and with intelligence, or spiritual intuition, which is the means of face to face recognition, when objective and subjective, and when object and subject blend and there is the complete joy and satisfaction of Self-knowledge.

The Power of God is the Will of God, the Goodwill, whereby He willeth to be known, that is to say, the Purpose of which is Gnosis ; and this brings joy and rejoicing, for it is the manifestation of God to man in all His Fullness, that is to say, the manifestation of the Plērōma, the Intelligible Cosmos, or God in the nature of His Alone-begotten Son.

The “ holy four ” sing with joy in that they have been made holy, hallowed as priests of the Most High, while still in the tomb of the body ; and so their very bodies have been consecrated as fit temples of the Son of God, the Æon or Eternity.

Therefore the sole festival of praise worthy of man in his divine nature, that

is, in his true manhood or union with Great Mind—is to know God's Majesty or Greatness, that is, again, the Æon.

This Knowing, or Gnosis, is achieved by the Single Sense of the intelligence; not by sense alone, nor by mind alone, but by a means superior to both, in which the twain blend in Gnosis, and so become conscious with a new consciousness, or self-knowledge, of the Light of God, or the Over-mind of all things, and of the Life of God, or the Over-Soul of all things, which latter is graphically described as the "Fecund Womb that giveth birth to every nature."

This is the Gnosis of the Divine as the Plērōma, or Fullness, which is replete with the Conception of universal nature from God Himself.

Finally, God is praised for being known as the Eternal Constancy, Stability, Duration, Unchangeableness, Sameness.

And so this beautiful gnostic thanksgiving or grace ends with the one prayer of those in Gnosis, namely, that He who

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

is Eternal Constancy, or God in His energy of Æonic Sameness, will ever keep them constant in the Pure and Single Love, the Love of knowing God.

What noble hymns are these four, hymns worthy of all that is best in man, and all that is worthiest in the true worshipper of God! If only we had a psalter of such psalms, as doubtless once existed in this excellent community of servants of God and Gnostic liturgists! But alas! while the indifference of time has preserved for us so much of the classical writers that we could not unfrequently well spare, the jealousy of Providence has kept from us the major part of the most beautiful monuments of man's gnostic genius—perchance, however, because the world was not ready to appreciate them.

There is, therefore, nothing to do but to follow again the Way of the Hermeses of the past, and betake ourselves once more to "the making of fair things," for what

man has once achieved he can again accomplish, and, if I am not mistaken in my augury, the times are again becoming ripe for such true poesy.

We have no more Hymns of Hermes wherewith to make glad the hearts of our readers—as we would fain hope they have gladdened them—but we will add another hymn of so like a nature that it might very well have been penned by a Hermes of the Trismegistic faith.

It is “A Song of Praise to the Æon,” which is said to have been inscribed on a “secret tablet,” by some unknown Brother of a forgotten Order, perhaps one of the Communities of the Æon—the Highest and Supercelestial One—which Philo of Byblos, in the second half of the first century of our era, tells us were in existence in Phœnicia in his day, and doubtless were also existing in Egypt (i., 403). The text is found in the Greek Magic Papyri.

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

A SONG OF PRAISE
TO THE ÆON.

*Hail unto Thee, O Thou All-Comos of
æthereal Spirit!*

*Hail unto Thee, O Spirit, who doth
extend from Heaven to Earth, and from the
Earth that's in the middle of the orb of
Cosmos to the ends of the Abyss!*

*Hail unto Thee, O Spirit, who doth
enter into me, who clingeth unto me or
who doth part Thyself from me according
to the Will of God in goodness of His
heart!*

*Hail unto Thee, O Thou Beginning and
Thou End of Nature naught can move!*

*Hail unto Thou, Thou Liturgy un-
weariable of Nature's Elements!*

*Hail unto Thee, O Thou Illumination
of the Solar Beam that shines to serve the
world!*

*Hail unto Thee, Thou Disk of the night-
shining Moon, that shines unequally!*

*Hail, Ye Spirits all of the æthereal
Statues of the Gods!*

Hail to You all, whom holy Brethren and holy Sisters hail in giving of their praise!

O Spirit, Mighty One, most mighty circling and incomprehensible Configuration of the Cosmos, hail!—celestial, æthereal, inter-æthereal, water-like, earth-like, fire-like, air-like, like unto light, to darkness like, shining as do the Stars—moist, hot, cold Spirit!

I praise Thee, God of gods, who ever doth restore the Cosmos, and who doth store the Depth away upon its Throne of Settlement no eye can see, who fixest Heaven and Earth apart, and coverest the Heaven with Thy golden everlasting wings, and makest firm the Earth on everlasting Thrones!

O Thou who hangest up the Æther in the lofty Height, and scatterest the Air with Thy self-moving Blasts, who mak'st the Water eddy round in circles!

O Thou who raisest up the Fiery Whirlwind, and makest thunder, lightning, rain, and shakings of the earth, O God of Æons!

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

*Mighty art Thou, Lord God, O Master
of the All!* (i., 408, 409).

The Æon is the Invisible Intelligible Cosmos, the All-Cosmos of Æthereal Spirit or Quintessence, as distinguished from the Sensible Cosmos of the four Great Elements, pure Fire and Air and Water and Earth, and not our mixed elements.

The reader has only to compare the opening and closing sentences of "The Secret Hymnody" with the first paragraph of our hymn to see that we are in precisely the same circle of ideas.

Heaven, Earth and the Abyss, the three worlds, through which the Spirit, like Viṣṇu in the Purāṇa's, takes "three strides."

It is this Spirit, the Great Breath of Life, that is the out-breath and in-breath of man's manifold existences. When the Spirit breathes out he is born, from death into life, and also from life into death; for the life of the body is the death of

the soul. And when the Spirit inbreathes he becomes dead, dead to things of the body, but alive to the things of the soul.

And all this is "according to the Will of God in goodness of His heart." For the Will of God is the Energy, or Effective Working, of God,—that which transcends all our human ideas of Love—dictated by the goodness of His heart, which ever wills the good of all beings, for the Heart of God is the Good Itself, the Æon.

The Æon is neither Beginning nor End, but both; for all the Spheres of Being which it energizes, end where they begin, and begin where they end—they dance in eternal revolution, for their "everlasting revelling-place" is in the Vortex of the Ceaseless Liturgy, or Service, of the Elements. The Æon is the Cause of the Magna Vorago, the Mighty Whirlpool of the Universe, for it is the Monad or Supreme Atom of all atoms and all combinations of atoms.

The Æon is the Illumination or Source of Light for all the Lights of Heaven,

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

the Sun and Moon and all the rest of the "Æthereal Statues of the Gods"—the countless suns in space.

The Æon is Spirit, of Light and Life consisting, and so Father-Mother of all Spirits, whose true Bodies are the fiery spheres, the sidereal bodies—ray-like, star-like.

Therefore, the Brethren and Sisters of this community of gnostic servants of God rightly praise all the Gods, for these Gods are the true community of saints or holy ones in Heaven, even as the Brethren and Sisters are endeavouring to become saints on earth, holy as they are holy.

The Æon is the Great Paradigm or One Exemplar of all things, the Eternal Configuration of the Cosmos and all cosmoi, in a septenary of three quint-essential and four essential elements, which are completed by the all-colour, Light, and no-colour, Darkness, into a decad of which Spirit is the beginning and the end, existing in three modes—

reminding us of the Trigunam, or three-fold nature of Prakriti or Nature in Indian theosophy—moist, hot, cold ; black red, white ; Tamas, Rajas and Sattva.

The Great Work of the God of Gods is perpetually to restore the Cosmos, to refresh, to renew it, in its threefold nature of Height and Midst and Depth—the endoderm, mesoderm and ectoderm, as it were, of the cosmic germ-cell—over which the Spirit broods with its golden everlasting wings, as the Great Bird who perpetually hatches forth the Egg of the Universe.

And from this brooding there ever comes forth into being the perpetual cosmo-genesis of all things ; and, seeing that all beings come forth from the Æon, each and all, in their cosmic nature, are Æons as well, so that the Æon is also God of Æons.

He is the God of millions of years, of millions of months, and millions of days—whether those time-periods be of the earth or of the universe—and so God of

THE
HYMNS
OF
HERMES.

all existences, even as He is God of the Eternity of all beings.

And here we must bring our little hymn-book to a close, in the hope that some may be found to sing in response to the Hymns of Heathen Hermes even in this twentieth century of Christian grace; for perhaps, after all, Hermes and Christ are not in reality such strangers to each other as traditional theological prejudice would have us believe.

273.1 M46-2

CLAPP



3 5002 00102 7999

Mead, G. R. S.
Echoes from the Gnosis /

BP 565 .M4 E27 1906 2

Mead, G. R. S. 1863-1933.

Echoes from the Gnosis

