

The Hymns of Hermes

Echoes from the Gnosis

by

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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 were apparently carried in the 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 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 outpourings of the soul in praise of the majesty and transcendency of the Supreme, in terms that may be not unfavorably compared with similar praise giving in other great scriptures. But, alas! the hymnbooks 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 Iamblichus 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 earthy 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 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 'philosophized' 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 "Poemandres." This may 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 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, Poemandres declares:

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 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 of the spiritual nature-the good and the 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 the 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 and 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 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 Ravan*, 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.

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 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 laboring 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 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 wrought in the nature of one who passes from the stage of ordinary man, which Hermes characterizes as a "procession 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 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 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).

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, 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 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 Aeons," in other words, was safe for eternity.

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 preeminence.

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.

"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 Aeonian 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 Sige, 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 being which the Son has with the Father. This is to be consummated by the fulfillment of the man's whole nature, by the completion of his insufficiency or imperfection (hysterema), whereby he becomes the Fullness or Wholeness (Pleroma), the Aeon 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; his 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 meaning of religion, and of leading souls back from Death to Life-a true psychagogue. It matters little who wrote it; 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 fullness 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 Maya, 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 Maya is the Sport of the Creative Will, the World-Drama or God in activity.

The Greek equivalent of maya 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 superphysical 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 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 anyone or anything? 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 (i, 105).

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 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 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 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 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 in working 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 marvellous 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 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 manuscript, 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, 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).

"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 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

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, inspire 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 Aeon 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 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 Aeon 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 Aeonic 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 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-Brilliance 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, Continenence, 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 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 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 Atman of Indian theosophy.

For having attained unto this true 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 Aon, an Eternity, and so rebecoming his own true Self he expresses his natural joy in songs of praise, and finds 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 of 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 in our mind; for mystically all three are in each of us, and the true illumination of our three-fold nature depends 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 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).

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 appearances of things; with means of 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 designed 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!

Form 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 of *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 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 Pleroma, 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 Aeon 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 Aon.

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 self-knowledge, or the Light of God, or the Overmind

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 Pler6ma, 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 is Eternal Constancy, or God in His energy of Aonic 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 Hermes 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 Aeon," 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 Aeon-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 Phoenicia in his day, and doubtless were also existing in Egypt (i, 403). The text is found in the Greek Magic Papyri.

A SONG OF PRAISE TO THE AEON

Hail unto Thee, O Thou All-Cosmos of ethereal 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 unweariable 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 ethereal 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, aethereal interaethereal, water-like, earth-like, fire-like, airlike, 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 hapest up the (Ether in the lofty Height, and scatterest the Air with Thyself 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 (Eons! Mighty art Thou, Lord God, O Master of the All! (i, 408, 409).

The Aeon is the Invisible Intelligible Cosmos, the All-Cosmos of Aethereal 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 Vishnu in the Purina'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 Aeon.

The Aeon is neither Beginning nor End, but both; for all the Spheres or 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 Aeon 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 Aeon is the Illumination or Source of Light for all the Lights of Heaven, the Sun and Moon and all the rest of the "Aethereal Statues of the Gods" the countless suns in space.

The Aeon 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 endeavoring to become saints on earth, holy as they are holy.

The Aeon is the Great Paradigm or One Exemplar of all things, the Eternal Configuration of the Cosmos and all cosmoi, in a septenary of three quintessential and four essential elements, which are completed by the all-color, Light, and no-color, 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 Aeon, each and all, in their cosmic nature, are Aeons as well, so that the Aeon is also God of Aeons.

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

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.