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Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus.

A Treatise preliminary to the Study of the Hermetic Philosophy.

By Fr. K. X^o.

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In commencing the exegetical study of any system of philosophy it is absolutely necessary that we adjust our perspective as accurately as possible, in conformity with the known FACTS regarding the character, personality, individuality, words and works, of the founder.

Perhaps no character in history has formed the subject of so much and so varied study and speculation as that of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus and we shall realize the truth of this statement as we individually seek light upon the sublime philosophy rightly attributed to this Avatar.

At the very outset, we are confronted with a remarkable dearth of exact information regarding his person and life; a dearth all the more inexplicable when we realize that from the Rosicrucian standpoint Hermes may be justly regarded as one of the greatest of all Messiahs who have incarnated on this sphere.

Yet the very mythos which apparently surrounds his existence has a special value to occultists, for a similar obscurity and absence of specific data attaches to the characters of Melchisedek, King of Salem, Osiris, Attis, Confucius, and John the Baptist, of all of whom the origin is unknown.

Our consideration of Hermes must necessarily be along the lines of what is called external and internal evidence, a process similarly employed by theologians in the critical and exegetical study of the collection of Scriptural writings known as the Bible, both the old and the new canons.

The external evidence regarding the man Hermes is distressingly scant, and for the most part, is now encyclopaedic. The title "Trismegistus" or "thrice greatest" is an honorary appellation given to the Egyptian sage afterward deified as Thoth, the God of Wisdom. In later hieroglyphics we find the name of this deity often accompanied by the title "twice very great," and again, the "thrice very great." In the demotic or popular language the title "five times very great" has been found to have been in use as late as the third century B.C. A careful examination of all the references to this deity throughout the known dynasties seems to leave no doubt that the title "thrice greatest" originated in the Egyptian epithets referred to.

Thoth was the "scribe of the Gods," or as the papyri have it, the "Lord of Divine Words" and this is exactly the title given to Hermes by the later Greek commentators, and to him is

ascribed the authorship of the collection of archaic writings commonly known as Hermetic.

According to Clemens Alexandrinus, the only ancient authority worthy of consideration by modern scholars on this subject, there were forty-two of these writings or books, subdivided into six divisions. The ten books constituting the first division were under the charge of the chief "Prophet" of the Temple, and related to laws, deities, and the education of priests. The next ten books were those of the Stolistes, the Temple official who was entrusted with the care of the statues of the Gods, a peculiarly solemn and responsible function among the ancients. This group of books treated of sacrifices and offerings, and contained prayers and hymns for festive occasions. The third set of books were those of the hierogrammatists and bore the title "Hieroglyphics" and was devoted to cosmographical, geographical, and topographical information.

Four books known as the "Horoscopus" were devoted to astronomy and astrology; two books known collectively as the "Chanter" consisted of a collection of songs in honor of the Gods, and a description of the royal life and its duties. This book or set of books was one of the ancient authorities for the concept of the divine origin of kings.

The sixth and last sub-division of the writings constituted the "Pastophorus" and were largely medical. Clemens' statements must be accepted for the tombs, papyri, bas-reliefs and monuments abound with references to geography, astronomy, ritual, medicine, myths, and philosophy, the originals of which are also found in the Hermetic writings.

The native priests ascribed these mural documents to Hermes, which is of importance to us as there were already a goddess of writing, Seshit, and the holy scribes Imuthes and Amenophis, and the later inspired doctors Ptolemy and Nechepso. Whether the whole of these Hermetic writings ever constituted a canon, even in later times, is not certainly known, tho it is certain that some of them undoubtedly did so, the others possibly bearing a relation similar to what we now call the apocryphal books of the Bible.

From the papyri it is known however, that the Vizier of Egypt (Upper) at Thebes in the eighteenth dynasty, required forty out of the forty-scrolls to be before him in the Hall of Audience. Forty-two was the number of the

The Wisdom of Benjamin Franklin. No. 1.

"He that cannot bear with other people's passions, cannot govern his own."

Divine Assessors at the Judgment of the Dead before Osiris, and was also the number of the nomes or districts of Egypt.

The very name of Hermes has been indiscriminately juggled by historians and theologians. From the third century on, it seems to have been regarded as a convenient synonym to place at the head of numerous syncretistic writings in which it was sought to combine Neo-Platonic philosophy, Philonic Judaism, and Cabalistic Theosophy as a substitute for the increasing popularity of Christianity which even at that time gave evidences of the wide spread acceptance it was destined to attain.

Of these pseudipigraphic writings some have survived, but the most of them have perished utterly, the survivors coming down to us in Greek, Latin and Arabic.

The writings preserved to us which will form the subject of our immediate study, taken from the Divine Pymander, consist of seventeen chapters and treat of the Nature of God, the Origin of the World, the Creation and Fall of Man, and the Divine Illumination necessary to effect his deliverance. The principal edition of this work appeared in Paris in 1554, and has had several subsequent editions. Other Hermetic writings of undoubted genuineness were preserved by Patricius in the Nova de Universis Philosophia, 1593. An address to the Human Soul was translated from the Arabic and put out by H. L. Fleischer in 1870.

The translation of the Pymander, which name is of Greek, not Egyptian origin and means, broadly rendered, "Shepherd or Guide of Man" is a fac-simile reprint of one from the Arabic by Rev. John Everard who was born about 1575 and died about 1650. Dr. Wynn Westcott mentions the various translations prior and subsequent to the Everard work. It is not to be assumed that any scriptural writing could reach the scholar of today without suffering the inevitable corruption due to oft repeated translation, not to mention religious and philosophic partisanship, but it is quite probable that the translation before us is as complete and accurate as we could reasonably hope in a document of such vast antiquity.

The student will note the reference in Dr. Westcott's edition, to the name of Hiram, the ancient operative Grand Master in Masonry, but as the Masonic legend is of so much later origin than the subject matter of any of the Hermetic writings, it seems logical to assume that the analogy is at best, little more than a co-incidence.

Again, Dr. Westcott, while admitting the identity of Hermes with the God Thoth, places the former as about 1800 B.C. Egyptian chronological records are as yet far from being established on a basis of inviolate accuracy, and many archaeologists, and scholars both in and out of the domain of occultism, place Hermes as about 5000 years before Christ.

The ascription of this date is not made as ex cathedra utterance on behalf of the Brotherhood, but in the opinion of many well informed Rosicrucian scholars, this date approximately would meet the various conditions implied with a much greater degree of accuracy. Neither this date, or any other that might reasonably be advanced would be susceptible of demonstrable truth or proof. A large portion of the members of the Brotherhood accept this hypothesis, but it is not offered as an incontrovertible truth.

In taking up the study of the internal evidence as to the authenticity of the Hermetic writings, we enter a much more gratifying and inspiring field. While various leaders of Rosicrucian thought unite in placing Hermes as one of the World's Messiahs, considerable difference of opinion exists as to his exact sequential place. This is not of material value. Hermes, in his teachings undoubtedly originated the concept long cherished and preserved among the Egyptians that the royal chief of state was the child of the Sun. As many scholars ascribe the beginning of the dynasties of richly endowed rulers of ancient Egypt to Hermes, he is, in the opinion of many, the original incarnation of the

sun spirit, or incarnation of the highest initiate of the Sun period.

The last incarnation we unitedly agree in ascribing to the Christos, who obsessed or occupied the physical vehicle of the Man Jesus. Both India and China claim records of an antiquity so vast as to pass human comprehension. These claims however are not subject to proof of any sort and while we may not ascribe them to flights of the imagination, we must remember that, if true, some of them would antedate even Lemuria. Then again, all occult scientists know, that time, except as progression of incident does not exist cosmically and while events may undoubtedly be read and recovered from the A'Kashic Records, it would require some degree of hardship for any occult scholar to attempt to voice an expression of exact time data therefrom. The Rosicrucian Brotherhood eschews the realm of the speculative and hypothetical and confines itself strictly to what data of evidential value may be specifically at hand.

Archaeologists ascribe the civilizations of the Ganges and Euphrates to Nilitic origins, and we have no evidence of importance, to the contrary.

If this be true, and we believe it to be the most logical conclusion, Hermes was the first to our knowledge of the long line of Messiahs or Avatars which included Osiris, Zarathustra, Confucius, Gautama Buddha, Moses, Melchizedek Enoch and Abraham, up to Jesus, and it is held by competent occultists and taught by many schools that all were the continued incarnation of one and the same Sun Spirit.

If, by their works we shall know them, we observe that in the Book of the Dead, the Book of Light, the Golden Mean, the Song Celestial and the Sermon on the Mount, identical parallels force themselves inevitably upon our attention.

The same mysteries of Theosophy, Alchemy and Magic are taught in all, as specifically stated in the form of parable. And the greatest evidence we could desire as to the inspiration of the Hermetic work lies, not alone in the foregoing statement of fact, but in the still more impressive truth of the continuity of these works throughout the very ages in which later scriptures and later revelations of divine wisdom and power were given.

Great root and race religions have come into manifestation since the Hermetic writings were first given to humankind, yet their strength and virility remain undiminished even to this day, which is witnessing a renaissance of Hermetism which but a few years ago would have appalled the doctors and fathers of orthodoxy. Although in the world to a much greater length of time than any subsequent scriptures, they have undergone fewer changes than any other.

Many arcane and occult bodies esteem and even venerate the Hermetic writings and their author, and from remote periods even to this day there have been organizations and Brotherhoods calling themselves Hermetic, but to the Rosicrucian Brotherhood alone belongs the distinction of hailing the "thrice greatest" as the Father of its Art. For it has long been a Brotherhood tradition that Hermes Trismegistus was the originator of what has since been known to the world as the Rosicrucian Brotherhood.

This tradition does not imply that Hermes by any manner of means definitely and constructively organized the outward and visible fabric of the Brotherhood; it means simply that the Rosicrucian organization was the first to develop from the principles laid down in the Hermetic writings, and that at a time which also according to tradition must have more closely approached the actual promulgation of the principles than any aggregation of scholars and students known at the present time.

Throughout the Rosicrucian rituals the appellation "Father of our Art" repeatedly occurs, and as these rituals are of the most obscure and remote origin it is quite evident to students of liturgical and ceremonial origins that some very specific reason therefor must have existed when they were first formulated.

Taking up the thread of internal evidence again, we note another feature which stands out with marked prominence, namely, the tone of

authority employed throughout the entire writings.

This quiet, unassuming, yet uncompromising authoritative note reminds us of the New Testament writers who said of the Master Jesus, "He spake as one having authority." If th's was true of Jesus, it was equally true of Hermes. There is no dogmatism, little doctrinalia, but quiet, forceful, convincing, impressive authority in every line of the Hermetic writings, which is undoubtedly the true cause of their longevity and survival through the storms of controversial and argumentative debates of schools, academies ecumenical councils and forums of ancient and modern times.

The supreme power of true spiritual origin is manifest in every line of the entire collection. "I and the Father are One" said Jesus. "No man cometh unto the Father except through Me." Thus did the man Jesus proclaim his divine sonship and authority. "Therefore am I called Trismegistus, as possessing the three parts of the philosophy of the whole world, said Hermes, a claim or statement no man could make unless well assured of his complete at-onement with the divine source of being, and the author of the known universe, for to possess the knowledge of the whole, one must be at one with the whole, and history does not record it as said of any other human beings save those whose at-onement with the Father or divine source was clearly and unmistakably evident, that they made any similar claim to possession of the complete knowledge of the arcana of Nature, and it is well known to all spiritual aspirants, wether within or without the pile of occult science that the farther one progresses in spiritual attainment, the more humble does such an one become in his or her attitude toward the members of the human family among whom they may be called to work.

And in still another sense, this claim of Hermes to possession of the three parts of the knowledge of the whole world is analogous to the sayings of Jesus which have led to the Christian concept of the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. For Hermes gave that knowledge which had been entrusted to him by his divine source of inspiration to the world of his day, and the power of the divine spi it has preserved that knowledge unto us of this day, for our study and enlightenment, even as it perpetuated the teachings of the Man Jesus, who when leaving the scene of his mortal mission said, "I leave you not comfortless and informed his fellow workers that the Holy Spirit should come.

As to the concept that Hermes was an Atlantean avatar, we are not concerned. Early Christian teachings warned the followers of that system against antichrist, and against those who should arise in later days, with such plausible claims to authority, preaching and healing in the name of Jesus in such a manner as deceive the very elect. In the same manner we may take warning in a day when the revelations of occult science are opening to our vision and our thought truths indeed stranger than the strangest fiction, against those who teach and work under claims which are far from susceptible to demonstrable proof or evidence. Civilizations wax and wane, and from time to time the celestial hierarchies clear the stage for a new scene or chapter in the activities of earthly children, but it is also as far as our present light extends, reasonable to conclude that with the obliteration of one system of evolution, the advanced or initiate members of that evolution continue their labors in planes and spheres far removed from those of the next succeeding era.

The Rosicrucian concept of Hermes is that of

the first avatar to the human family as known to students of history, sociology, and archaeology, whose mission was performed at a time not beyond the comprehension of modern man, and whose contact with the unseen and divine source of creative power was so intimate and personal as to make the results of that mission effective throughout the whole extent of the present evolutionary wave. In each succeeding incarnation he amplified that mission, its works and teachings with clearer revelations and observations according to the race or age in which they were given, until ultimately they have spread to the uttermost parts of the world, exactly as the man Jesus commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to all the world and to every nation, and behold, the teachings of the first and the last avatars are practically identical. Nowhere do the Hermetic teachings and the Mosaic and Christian teachings conflict, when the true esoteric meaning of each is clearly understood.

All the above named writings, and in fact all the teachings of the several avatars, have been given in parable, allegory and simile. Of the man Jesus it is recorded, that without a parable spake He not unto them. The best efforts of learned Jewish Rabbis and Talmudists have been exerted to reveal the true meaning of the Quabbalah, exactly as the theologians of Christianity have been at work for ages to define the exact meaning of the sayings and teachings attributed to Jesus, with the result that the few, those who are entitled in this evolution to understand, have attained the light, while those who have gained but a partial glimpse have organized and subdivided their organizations into multifold sects and schools. This is true to an even greater extent of the Hermetic writings.

World renowned scholars have sought for ages to reveal the Hermetic mysteries, mysteries so intense that no church or definite religiosity has ever been built upon them, and almost the entire number of those scholars have failed in their endeavors. Yet, behold we find a man here and there unexpectedly who in the simplest phrase lets the light into our spiritual vision upon this masterwork of the ages. Not to the great ones of the academies and the universities does the Hermetic knowledge come; only to those who are entitled to it by virtue of the sincerity and purity of their spiritual desires.

And it is only just to state to our students that though we may engage in the study of the Hermetic writings in our Colleges though the words be read most carefully, the light will not come through the spoken word of any leader or teacher, nor by virtue of membership in this Brotherhood, but only in accordance with the intensity of legitimate desire, and singleness of purpose, individual concentration, and personal prayer of each member of the Order.

Erudition and strong desire to know, may be worthy in their place, but taken solely by themselves they will accomplish nothing in progress toward the supreme knowledge. There is no royal road to this knowledge, and the simple personal conviction that one desires knowledge and is therefore certain that one is entitled to it, is no passport to the higher vision in the eyes of those upon whose assistance we must depend for spiritual guidance and illumination.

Spiritual sincerity is the keynote to the Hermetic mysteries. Hermeticism, like Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity constitutes a "Secret Doctrine", and is perhaps the most secret of them all, for even the name "Hermetic" has been a synonym throughout the ages not alone for the occult and mystic, but for the most intense secrecy.

(To be continued)

Errata.

In Mercury, Vol. 5, No.8, Page 56, under the sub-caption "The Disciples of Jesus," due to an error in transcription of the author's original manuscript, the words "nervous" and "liver" appear. For these should be substituted the words "sympathetic" and "organic" respectively.

The corrected paragraph should read.—The Disciples of Jesus and the Levites or Servers of the Human Temple are, the Bony Man, the Venous, Muscular, Arterial, Tubular, Lymphatic, Sympathetic, Organic, Cerebro-spinal and Skin Man and the Conscious and Sub-conscious Faculties; twelve in all.

Special Notice

to all Members of the S. R. I. A. of whatsoever Grade or Degree. Previously, it has been the custom to furnish each member with a brochure of instruction entitled, "Principles and Practice for Rosicrucians," also a copy of the Landmarks and Constitution of the Fraternity.

When the edition was exhausted, it was decided to publish a complete Manual of Instruction containing the following subjects:

- WHO MAY BECOME MEMBERS OF THE S. R. I. A. (Reprint of Official No. 2.)
- LANDMARKS OF THE ROSICRUCIAN FRATERNITY.
- CONSTITUTION OF THE S. R. I. A.
- BY-LAWS OF METROPOLITAN COLLEGE (The Mother College of the Order.)
- "ROSICRUCIAN ORDERS" by Dr. Franz Hartman.
- THE ROSICRUCIAN CLASSICS.

- Fama Fraternitatis
- Confessio
- Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosencreuz.

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE FOR ROSICRUCIANS, (Revised and enlarged.)

The Constitution as published is the Revision of 1919, effective January 1st, 1920. All the articles contained in the brochures previously distributed have been revised and greatly enlarged and much new and valuable matter has been incorporated in this new CLOTH BOUND VOLUME which supersedes all previous official publications.

NO MEMBER OF THE FRATERNITY CAN AFFORD TO BE WITHOUT THIS OFFICIAL VOLUME.

It will be ready for distribution early in June and the price will be \$1.50 per copy, just what is required to cover the actual cost of publication by the Flame Press, in these days of advanced prices.

THE EDITION IS LIMITED TO 500 COPIES, and as these few copies will be quickly taken, it is important that you enter your order at once from the Secretary or any officer of the College, as orders will be filled in the order in which they are received. Others than members of Metropolitan may send their orders direct to the FLAME PRESS, Room 1429 Masonic Hall, 24th Street, New York City, or to G. E. S. Miller, 712 West 180th Street, New York City.

High Council Communication.

Official announcement is made herewith of the formal Institution of Morganton College, S. R. I. A., Morganton, North Carolina, by Illustrious Fr. Saturninus, 9°-2°, on Friday, May 7th, 1920. The Officers of the new College are,

- W. A. Saturninus, 9°-2°.
- Cel. F. C. McDowell.
- Suff. E. Logan.
- Sec. and Treas. B. E. Cox.

We bespeak for Morganton College all possible progress and success in the Magnum Opus. The new Worshipful Adept was exalted at the last Vernal Consistory of the High Council.

College Notes.

On Sunday, May 16th, beginning at 10:15 A.M., the Degree of Zelator, 1°-10°, was conferred by the W. A. in full ceremonial form on twenty-five candidates, as follows:

<i>Fraters</i>		<i>Sorores</i>	
Galle	Discus	Intrepida	Integrita, (West Gate)
Rivier	Bassus	Renuncia	Verax
Lismore	Fervidus	Fidas	Egria
Codrus	Balbus	Columna	Agatha
Sopater	Flaccus	Activitas	Lesbia
Franciscus	Strabo	Studia	
Fannius	Ophites		

On Friday evening, May 14th, by special dispensation, the Degree was conferred in synoptic form after the regular class work, upon the following:

Tertullian Savonarola Maya
 The W. A. as Hierophant was assisted by Frs. K. as Hier., Patricius, as Heg; Firmus, as Dad; Hermeticus, as Stol; Dionysius, as C. of N.; Progressia, Serena, Thetis, Conus and Rahula as the V. D. in the 1st section.

Directory.

The One Hundred and Twenty-third Stated Convocation of Metropolitan College S. R. I. A., will be held in the Adytum, 310 Lenox Avenue Between 125th. and 126th. Streets, opposite 125th. Street station, Lenox Ave. Subway. Friday Evening, May 28, 1920, at 8.00 P. M. precisely

Work:

Neophytes' Class Instructor V. Wor. Fr. Reficio IX°

Elementary Rosicrucian Philosophy, No. 14,

Subject: "CHRISTIAN ROSENCREUZ."

This Class will meet at 8 P.M., on Wednesday, June 2, in Room 1429 Masonic Temple, 24th Street.

Take Elevators from 24th Street entrance.

Senior Hermetic Class.....Instructor. Rt. Wor. Fr. Paracelsus IX°

Subject: No. 1, "THE SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM."

Advanced Class.Instructor, Fr. K.

Subject: "RYTHM."

The Theological Class

Convenes on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month at 712 West 180th Street at 8:30 P.M.

June 3,—LIFE, CHARACTER AND NOTABLE WORKS OF JESUS.

Astrological Class.

Sr. Progressia 9°-2°.

Class closed till October.

Masonic Notices.

THE THIRTIETH REGULAR VOYAGE AND DINNER OF METROPOLITAN LODGE NO. 1, ARK MARINER MASONS, will be held at the Au Coq Gaulois, 32 West 57th Street, Manhattan, on a date to be announced in the next issue of Mercury.

Declaratio Obsequii.

Metropolitan College acknowledges allegiance to the Magi and Officers of the High Council of the Societas Rosicruciana In America and Affiliated Councils, as the Sovereign Source of the Rosicrucian Art in the United States of America. The House of the S. S. of this Obedience is at present situate in the the City of New York.