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THE DIVINE PYMANDER* OF HERMES TRISMEGISTUS

(I) LITERATURE.

The Series, of which this article is introductory, is an endeavour to systematize and to unfold something of the significance of the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.

The numerous profound truths, which the Corpus Hermeticum contains, are not easily recognizable from a general perusal of them in the form in which they are usually presented.

The extant Trismegistic literature consists of the Pymander collection of fourteen Sermons; the Definitions of Asclepius, or the Perfect Sermon; the twenty-seven Excerpts from John Stobæus (including a Sermon entitled "The Virgin of the World"), and of many fragments and references from the Philosophers and the Church Fathers.

This is all that remains of what was evidently an extensive literature. No precise date can be assigned as to when it first saw light, but many of the early Church fathers accepted the Trismegistic writings as being both ancient and authoritative, sometimes utilizing them to support Christian doctrines; while the Philosophers, in whose works they appear, did not question their authenticity.

Some of those who quoted from them were: Iamblichus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, St. Cyprian, Eusebius Pamphilus, Clement of Alexandria, Firmianus Lactantius, St. Augustine, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Suidas, and Julian the Emperor. And nearly all the Spiritual Humanists of the Middle Ages ranked them, especially the Pymander, in the very first list of religious literature.

* More accurately "Pœmandres," but the work is better known as "Pymander," and therefore this name is adopted throughout these articles.

The Extracts contained in this Series of articles are not taken from any one particular version, but are the result of comparing three English Translations, namely, by John Everard, D.D., 1650; J. D. Chambers, 1882; and G. R. S Mead, 1906.

The references quoted herein are taken from the last version.

(2) THE PYMANDER.

The Supreme Lord of all, Who has walked and talked with the Worthy Ones of every period since the dawn of time, is the very same Lord under whatever name He is invoked, whenever and wherever He is said to appear.

He is known as Adonai, as the Christ, as Osiris, as Krishna. But it was as the Divine Pymander that He appeared unto Hermes Trismegistus, the mighty Egyptian Hierophant, called also Mercurius Termaximus, and Thrice-Greatest Thoth, the Father of the Hermetic Wisdom.

Pymander means "Shepherd of men." He is Leader and Teacher, Illuminator and Ideal Archetype of all mankind.

"I am Pymander, the Shepherd of Men, the Nous of the Supreme; I know what thou desirest."—I. 2.

"Have Me in thy mind and whatever thou wouldst learn, I will teach thee."—I. 3.

"I am that Light, the Nous, thy God, Who was before moist Nature appeared out of the darkness; and that Light-Word from the Nous is the Son of God."—I. 6.

The Nous may be understood here as the Mind of God, the Divine Reason of all things, the Illuminating Idea in the light of which all other ideas and aspects of truth are unfolded.

Nous, as objective to the Supreme, is the same as the Logos: as subjective to Soul, it is best translated "Spirit."

"I myself," said the Pymander, "the Nous, am present with holy men and good, the pure and merciful; men who live piously; and My Presence is a help unto them, and forthwith they know all things, and lovingly propitiate the Father, praising Him, giving Him thanks, singing hymns; being ordinate and intent on Him, with adoration and love."—I. 22.

"The Father of all things," declared the Pymander,— "the Nous being Life and Light—brought forth (Archetypal) Man, like unto Himself, Whom He loved as His own Child;

for he was beautiful beyond compare, having the Image of his Father. In very truth God loved His own Form, and on him did bestow all His own formations."—I. 12.

"Contemplate through Me" (the Archetype), said the Pymander, "the Cosmos now subject to thy vision; regard carefully its beauty, a Body in pure perfection, though one than which there is none more ancient, ever in the prime of life, and ever young, nay, rather in ever fuller and yet fuller prime."—XI. 6.

Since the Pymander is the Supreme Archetype, it follows that to contemplate the Cosmos through Him is to see it as it really is—subjectively and objectively—in its pure and everlasting perfection; constituting, as it were, the Grand Body in which are made manifest the ideas or thoughts in the divine Nous.

"Behold, also, the Seven Worlds set over us, adorned with an everlasting beautiful Order, filling eternity with their varied courses. See how all things are full of light, but fire is nowhere, for it is the love and blending of the contraries and dissimilars that doth give birth to light shining forth by the energy of God, the Father of all Good, the Leader of all Order, and the Ruler of the Seven World-Orders."—XI. 7.

The Seven Worlds, or World-Orders, need not be taken as referring only to visible worlds or planets, but rather in a larger sense to the Seven Planes or Conditions of Existence.

The first of these planes or Eternal World-Orders is Superessential, the next three are Subjective, and the remaining three are Objective. If this is borne in mind throughout when considering the words of the Pymander it will be found that many apparent inconsistencies and contradictions which have prejudiced some modern scholars against the work as a whole are thereby reconciled. The Seven Planets, while symbolizing the above worlds, are all objective.

"Behold the Moon, Organ of Nature, changing the Matter here below. Behold the Earth, set in the midst of all, foundation of the Cosmos beautiful; nourisher and nurse of all things on earth. And contemplate the multitude of deathless lives, how great it is; of that of the lives subject to death; and, midway between, the things immortal-and-mortal."—XI. 7.

The Moon is here a Symbol of Nature, the Formative Principle behind all Matter. The Earth is the ultimate precipitation, thus it is the foundation from which all upward progressive life begins.

“And all things are full of Soul, and all are moved by it, each in its proper way; some indeed round the Heaven, others around the Earth; see how the right move not unto the left; nor the above below, nor the below above. And that all these are subject to generation, O most beloved Hermes, thou hast no longer need to learn of Me,—for they are bodies, have Souls, and are moved. But for all these to come together into one, it is impossible without a principle to gather them into one; therefore there must be such a one, and He is altogether One.”—XI. 8.

Thus does the Pymander reveal unto Hermes the Panorama of the Cosmos, in which are written the Thoughts of the One Father. For the Divine Pymander Himself is the Word made manifest, the Perfect Man, made from all Eternity in the Image of God; the First-born and the Firstfruits, from Whom all mankind proceeds, and into Whose likeness all may earn the right to be assumed.

“And God, indeed, is in the Nous, and the Nous is in Soul, and the Soul in Matter, but all these through eternity. But all this Universal Body (Cosmos) in which are all the bodies, is full of Soul, and the Soul is full of Nous, and the Nous full of God. For within, He fills them; and without He contains them, vivifying the Cosmos.”—XI. 4.

“The Soul of Eternity is God; but the Soul of the Cosmos is Eternity.”—XI. 4.

Thus the Soul is the principle whereby God eternally vivifies the Cosmos. Soul acts upon Matter, through the medium of Nature, which depends upon Soul. But Soul, in turn, depends upon Nous, and Nous depends upon God.

The above extracts afford a good example of the manner in which the Pymander speaks of things both in the subjective and the objective sense. For instance, since that which is considered within is subjective to that which is considered without, God, when conceived as within Nous, is subjective to Nous; Nous within Soul is subjective to Soul; and Soul within Matter is subjective to Matter. But Body, as full of

Soul, is objective to Soul; and Soul as full of Nous, is objective to it; and Nous as full of God is objective to Him. Therefore all things may be either subjective or objective according to how the human mind views them.

“He, (the Archetypal Man) who hath dominion over all mortals in the Cosmos, and over its irrational lives, bent His Face downwards through the Harmony of the Cosmos, breaking through its spheres, showed to downward-borne Nature the beautiful Form of God. And when She beheld that fair Form, which can never satiate, and Him who possessed within Himself every energy of the Seven Rulers, as well as of God’s own Form, She rejoiced with love,—for it was as though She saw the image of Man’s fairest form upon Her waters, and His shadow upon Her earth. But He, in His turn, beholding the form like unto Himself in Her water, loved it and willed to dwell with it; and with the will came the act (energy), and so He vivified the form devoid of reason.”—I. 14.

Thus, in line with the Hermetic axiom, upon that which is below is imprinted the objective reflection of that which is above, and the Perfect Archetypal Lord, although subjective and dwelling above, is also, paradoxically, indwelling in all that is below, in order that man, through the power of his Nous, may have dominion over Nature and thus rise above it.

“And straightway God spoke His Holy Word (Logos): Increase ye in increasing, and multiply in multitude all formations and creations; and let man, who hath Nous, know himself to be immortal, and that the cause of mortality is the love of body; and let him learn all things that are.”—I. 18.

(3) THE THREE HEADS.

Throughout the Trismegistic writings there is constant reference to three distinct principles, and, in conformity with his title, the Thrice-Greatest Thoth explains all things under three heads. For having received the One basic Idea of Truth from the Divine Pymander, he unfolds the significance of the three principal ideas which it contains, and which, in their fulness, necessarily embrace all that it is possible for the intelligence to conceive or know.

“Now, my Son,” says Hermes to his disciple, “I will go through all the things that are, by heads. First God; second

the Cosmos; third Man. The Cosmos for Man's sake; and Man for God's. If thou perfectly remember these Heads, thou canst not forget those things which in more words I have largely expounded unto thee, for these are the summaries or syntheses of them."—Ex. I.

"From One Source all things depend; but the Source is from the One and Only. Three then are they:—God the Father and the Good, the Cosmos, and Man. God doth contain the Cosmos; the Cosmos containeth Man. The Cosmos is the offspring of God, and Man, as it were, is the offspring of the Cosmos."—X. 14.

"The Cosmos is, indeed, from God, and in God; but Man, of the world and in the world. The Beginning and the End, and the constitution of all things, is God."—VIII. 5.

The first Head, or Idea, is the subject of Theology, the Science not only of the Supreme God, but of all the High Gods and Ruling Intelligences. It is the highest of all sciences, and includes the causes of all real beings, ideas, and worlds.

The second Head, or Idea, is the subject Cosmology, the Science of the Cosmos. Literally, the word "cosmos" (*Κόσμος*) means order and beauty, but commonly it is taken to signify the solar system and the universe, and sometimes the world. But in the *Pymander*, as the second of the three Heads, it is the principle, or idea, of all Order by which all things not only proceed from their causes, but by which alone is it possible for them to be manifested, to be held together, to be related or ordained to each other, and to the End and Purpose for which they exist.

For the Voice of God sounded over the primeval darkness of the deep, which was void and without form, and out of that Chaos came the Cosmos and all the orders of existence which it comprehends.

Therefore, the Cosmos includes all worlds and universes—subjective and objective,—all planes, sub-planes, spheres, and regions, of existence and of activity. But it does not include the Divine Natures and Ruling Intelligences who operate in the various worlds, for these belong to the first science and its sub-sciences. Neither does Cosmos include the Idea of Man, who, although a microcosm of the macrocosm, is also, potentially, something more, and therefore he is the subject of

the third Head, namely, Anthropology, the Science of Man; that is, of Archetypal Man, of individual man, with his manifold principles, and of pan-humanity or mankind as a whole.

If all that is implied by these three sciences—of God, the Cosmos, and Man—with their respective inter-relationships, is thoroughly realized, a valuable criterion is established which is an almost infallible guide in the recognition, not only of the manifold phases of truth presented in different systems of thought, but also of the elements of error with which they are sometimes mingled. For the confusion of these three Ideas, and the withdrawing of them from their proper relationships, is probably productive of most of the false teachings prevalent in every age. But the manner in which they are dealt with in the Trismegistic writings, provides a further striking example of how Hermetism can elucidate so many of the problems confronting the human reason.

The contemplation of all things from the standpoint of each of the three Heads gives rise to three distinct conceptions, each of which is a relative aspect of Absolute Truth.

The first view is Theological, with God as the starting point.

According to the Pymander, God is the Father, the First Principle and Idea, Who produces and contains all things. Nous is full of God, and, as the Mind of God, it is not only the Image of God, but also the Archetype of all things which are expressed in the Cosmos.

The second view is that which considers things Cosmologically.

The Perfect Cosmos gives expression to what is in the Mind or Nous of God and in that of all His Ministering Intelligences. It is a mighty System of Orders superimposed upon orders, of orders within orders, of worlds within worlds. Thus, in the Cosmic sense, it truly embraces all things and all the seven primal conditions of existence.

The third view is Anthropological.

Archetypal Man, as Nous, is full of God, and reflects His Image in the Cosmos. Since Nous is in Soul, and since all things are full of Soul, Man, as Soul and Nous, embraces the whole Cosmos,—but in this subjective sense only.

Thus each of the three conceptions, represented by the above views, contains the other two Heads within itself. Hence, if taken alone, each view might be misrepresented as the final and whole truth.

For example, the second view by itself might be interpreted to mean that God is wholly contained within the Cosmos and that the Cosmos is God; but in this case the Creator and the Created would be identical, which is self-evidently absurd.

In the same way, if all things are viewed solely from the anthropological view-point, then the conception of Man becomes unduly exalted, with the result that he may be led to affirm: "I am God and all things." Again, this is self-evidently false, for the very affirmation itself distinguishes between the three ideas of "I," "God," and "all things," and thus shows that they are not identical.

It is true, as stated above, that in certain senses God, the Cosmos, and Man can be regarded as within each other, but they still remain distinctive ideas, and in no real sense equal. Nor must it ever be forgotten that all things, of which the human mind can hold any conception, are for ever within the One Inconceivable God-head, Who is of necessity before all and beyond all.

"For truly first of all is God, the Creator of the Cosmos, the Eternal and Uncreate. The second is the Cosmos, after His Own Image, brought into being by Him, by Him held together, nourished and immortalized, as by its own Father, ever free from death. The third life,—Man—made after the image of the Cosmos, but having Nous, according to the Will of the Father beyond other earthly lives, not only has affinity with the Second Head, but also intelligence of the First; for the Second he apprehends as a Body, but the First he receives the intelligence as incorporeal and the Mind of God." —VIII. 2-5.

"God, then, is Father of the Cosmos; but the Cosmos is father of the things in the world. And the Cosmos, indeed, is the offspring of God, but the things in the world are of the world.

"And properly is it called 'the Cosmos,' 'Order,' for it orders, adorns, and beautifies all things with the variety of Generation, with perpetuity of Life, with the unweariedness

of Operation, the swiftness of Necessity, the mingling of the Elements, and the Order of its creatures. The same, then, of propriety, should have the name of 'Order.'"—IX. 8.

"The Creator (Demiurgos), not with His Hands, but by His Word (Logos) made the Cosmos. So thou shouldst think of Him, as everywhere, and ever-being, the Author of all things; One, and Only, Who, by His Will, framed the things that are. For this is the Body of Him, not tangible, nor visible, nor measurable, nor extensible, nor like any other body; nor fire, nor water, nor air, nor wind; but all these things are from Him, for, being the Good, He willed to consecrate this Body to Himself alone, and adorn it.

As an ornament of the divine Body, he sent down Man—a life that dies and yet cannot die. And over all other lives, and over the Cosmos, did Man excel, because of his Reason and the Nous. For Man became the spectator of the works of God, and marvelled, and did strive to know their Author."—IV. 1-2.

"God is not ignorant of Man; nay, right well doth He know him, and willeth to be known. This is the sole salvation of Man—the knowledge of God. This is the way up to the Mount Olympus. By this alone the Soul becometh Good: not sometimes good and sometimes evil, but Good of necessity."—X. 15.

JEWELS

"Participation in God is to see God and to enjoy His goodness. The Glory of God is a living man, and the life of man is the vision of God."—(St. Irenaeus.)

"The goal is to become oneself as beautiful as the Beauty which one has touched and entered, and to be made bright and luminous oneself in communion with the real Light."—(St. Gregory of Nyssa.)

"The Soul is by a strict necessity attracted to the kindred Deity."—(Ibid.)

"The universe is double—that which is seen and that which is not seen—the world within the world we see. The seen is a symbol of the unseen, the material a parable of the real. The visible world is the garment and drapery of God."—(Ibid.)

"There are as many unveilings of God as there are saintly Souls."—(John Scotus Erigena.)

"God does not know things because they are—they are because He knows them."—(Ibid.)

HISTORY OF THE GOLDEN HERMETIC SUCCESSION

II.—EPOCHS AND PERIODS.

The whole history of the Hermetic Stream may be conveniently divided into five epochs, under each of which there are distinct sub-epochs, or periods. The following is the table of these divisions of time, which will form the framework of this historical sketch.

Epoch I. The Pristine Epoch.

- Period 1. Edenic, or Golden Age
- „ 2. Dispersal or Patriarchal.

Epoch II. The “Mystery” Epoch.

- Period 1. Egyptian, Chaldean, and Hebrew.
- „ 2. Orphic.
- „ 3. Pythagorean.
- „ 4. Platonic or Academic.
- „ 5. Solomonic and Alexandrian.
- „ 6. Neopythagorean.

Epoch III. The Neoplatonic Epoch.

- Period 1. Plotinian.
- „ 2. Proclian.

Epoch IV. The “Dark” Epoch (with many lights, however, in the darkness).

- Period 1. First Byzantine.
- „ 2. Arabian.
- „ 3. Second Byzantine.
- „ 4. Florentine.
- „ 5. Renaissance Transition.
- „ 6. Cambridge.

Epoch V. The Restoration Epoch.

- Period 1. New Dawn.
- „ 2. Re-establishment.

There is something distinctive about each period, and the above arrangement is not an arbitrary one; indeed, volumes could be written concerning each period. It is only possible in these articles to give a general treatment of the main features regarding each, but sufficient will be given to show that all the eighteen periods have their individuality and have left their own characteristic impress upon the synthetic

Hermetism of to-day; thus evincing that they are all waters of the one mighty River of Wisdom flowing from the Mountain of the Pristine Revelation.

III.—THE PRISTINE EPOCH.

Period I.—Edenic or Golden Age.

Although the name "Hermetic" cannot historically be attributed to the two periods of the Pristine Epoch, yet, even as all teachings possessing a universal significance have their sources in this dim past, so the Ancient Hermetic Wisdom, which is truly universal in its import, has a Golden Age origin. In fact, one of its special features is the importance that it assigns to the Edenic Period and to the Ideals which stand for the Restoration of that Age of Gold, and which only Hermetism and the Hebrew Prophets emphasize.

Since the two periods of the Pristine Epoch are only partly historic, it is well to treat them carefully, and not to make any improbable assumptions, but to base all assertions upon what is reasonable to, as well as confirmable by, each individual student.

For instance, it is sometimes claimed that the Pristine Revelation was delivered to pristine man by Celestial Beings, or by the Lords of other worlds, or by the Angelic Hosts, or even by the Supreme God Himself. Clearly, this, however true, is outside the sphere of exoteric history. There is sufficient in the *known* traditions and teachings of the world to lead the earnest Soul to see something of the Stream of Everlasting Truth running through the ages, however much it may be warped by popular misconceptions concerning ancient creeds and dogmas. And, having seen this, or arrived at it by his own contemplation, meditation, prayer, research or reasoning, the Seeker has only to commune with the Inner All-knowing Lord in order to receive the verification of what has been so revealed. The synthesis of the revelations of the Great Ones of all ages is itself the essence of the Pristine Revelation, which although world-ancient is ever young and new.

With regard to the Golden Age Period, one fact of unmistakable universality stands out, namely, that practically all the races of mankind—severed though many of them have been from inter-communication, either by time, or place, or circumstance—have possessed their own traditions or legends

of a Golden Age—of a period when, as it is expressed in the Hermetic Wisdom, the Gods walked with men and all was peace and joy. In the old prophecies and apocalypses, a restoration of this Edenic Age, or Messianic Rule, is foreshadowed, and is so generally believed in and hoped for, that it would more than seem as though the Soul of man had inherited a taste or memory of Eden, and subconsciously yearned for its return.

The ancient Scriptures and all the sacred myths point to a common source and origin, to a common state of Edenic man. This state may be summed up in a few words, namely, that in the Golden Age man had an intimate though child-like communion with the Ideal Eternal Realms and the Divine Beings thereof.

The reason for this intimacy is to be found in a consideration of the nature and origin of the human Soul, which it is necessary to touch on briefly here because it explains the close relationship of the Sacred Hermetic Tradition with the Golden Age Period.

According to Hermetism, the Soul of man is immortal in essence because it is a child of the Immortal Gods; but it is temporal in energy, because its known activities have a beginning in Time. Therefore, in its essential nature the Soul is at-one and in communion with the Immortals, but in its activities necessarily enters the realm of Time. The farther the Soul proceeds from its pure essential state the more is the memory of that pristine condition dimmed by its multifarious activities in the transient world. (In this, incidentally, is the mystery of what is called the Soul's "Fall," which results from the use of its self-will,—in pre-existent as well as terrestrial states.)

In an analogous sense the Everlasting Truth is essentially one in the Ideal Archetypal Realm, but, as the human Soul progresses, so the nature of truth is more and more unfolded and expressed upon the plane of human consciousness. This is precisely what is implied by the Golden Hermetic Succession, which is a Stream of Great Souls who, having themselves regained a memory of the ancient wisdom of the Golden Age, have successively adapted and re-expressed it to meet the demands and conditions of the Souls of their own period.

The pure Ancient Hermetic Path leads the Soul directly

back to its first Sources, and to a memory of the pristine wisdom and innocence of its childhood with the Gods. A full realization of all that this wisdom stands for could never have been gained had the Soul never gone forth into the "far country" for experience and education,—this greater wisdom, therefore, is added to the child-wisdom.

The Hermetic value, therefore, of the Pristine Edenic Period is the manner in which it emphasizes the fact that before the Greater Wisdom of a Returned Golden Age can be enjoyed by man, he must, in the Hermetic sense, become as a little child. And this Return is not to be regarded merely as an event for future attainment—near or remote—but rather as something that the Soul,—which learns the way—may participate in NOW, because it belongs to the same Timeless Realm as the Soul's own innermost immaculate essence.

The distinctive mark, then, of the Golden Age is pure Soul-vision, priceless as such, but super-intellectual. It is the vision of the child-soul, who sees, but does not understand what it sees, for the simple reason that the intellectual powers have not been sufficiently unfolded.

Period 2.—The Dispersal.

When the Golden Age had passed away, through man becoming more and more enamoured of the beautiful material world and thus forgetful of his Parents, the truths that man then possessed began to be *believed* in rather than *seen*. This, therefore, in very deed begins a new and distinct era.

The stamp of the Golden Age is the prophetic yearning for its restoration, which exists until this day.

The stamp of the Dispersal Period is the necessity for *Faith*, which likewise holds good to this day. For here we walk by faith and not by sight, although that sight or Soul-vision may be restored. This, as will be seen later, is the value of the Sacred Mysteries, but it carries a great responsibility along with it.

Though no precise date can be assigned for the beginning of the Dispersal Period, yet it is during this time that actual history commences, and the truths traceable to it—Hermetic and otherwise—can be found in the Egyptian, Chaldean, Vedic, Chinese, and Hebrew records.

Even then there were some who "walked with God,"—as

Enoch did, and was no more seen of men. But that which was the general rule in the Golden Age now becomes exceptional. This Biblical statement about Enoch may be taken to mean much more than that he was a righteous man:—he regained the Golden Age state: he “was translated” (Heb. xi. 5)—his state was changed.

Enoch has sometimes been identified with Hermes Trismegistus, and some have even regarded him as the earliest accredited Revealer of Divine Secrets to man, and the actual founder of the Hermetic Wisdom; but it is not the purpose of this article to dogmatize on such a point as this.

In this period was the birth of numerous legends and myths, most of which not only bore practical reference to the Golden Age, but also enshrined some teaching about the origin and destiny of man, and his relation with God and the Gods.

These legends and sacred *muthoi*, or veiled truths, were first transmitted orally. Little can be told about their sources, save that they were a natural outcome of man's dispersal or departure from companionship with the Immortals.

But these sacred *muthoi* of antiquity are invaluable to the Hermetist, and it is by means of them that he is able to link up this period with the one that succeeds it.

This period may also be called the Patriarchal, because the handing down of the teaching of the true worship of God, which then had its beginnings, was chiefly in the hands of the patriarchs who devoted their whole lives to the service of God.

This early instruction in the worship of the Supreme is mentioned in Gen. iv. 26: “To him [Seth] also was born a son; and he called his name Enosh, then began men to call upon the name of the Lord” (M.T.).

This “calling upon the name of Adonai” is generally interpreted as a set worship. Seth may be considered the father of the Dispersal Period.

The sacred traditions were mainly in the keeping of the sons in the spiritual succession of the patriarchs, and of the early epic poets, who preserved them and passed them on from generation to generation to those worthy and capable of receiving them.

(To be continued.)

PROCLUS' THEOLOGY OF PLATO

[Extracted from Thos. Taylor's Translation.]

(1) *Biographical.* Of the Sitters in the Academical Chair of the Neoplatonists who followed the Master Plotinus, undoubtedly the venerable Proclus was the most original thinker as well as the ablest systematizer of the Teachings of Plato.

He was well called, by way of eminence, "The Platonic Successor."

He was born at Constantinople, 8th February, 410 A.D., of a Lycian family, and died 17th April, 485 A.D.

His teacher was Syrianus, of whom he always speaks with great reverence and gratitude.

In these days, when the need for systematic training is perhaps becoming more than ever universally recognized, there should be a goodly field of disciples to whom Proclus particularly appeals. And this in spite of the fact that according to some critics he is considered too methodical. But, in justice, this criticism is usually accompanied by the deepest admiration for the perfect order and the finished logic which characterize his style. Moreover, as soon as the student becomes accustomed to Proclus' somewhat uncommon composition, he begins to discover in it unsuspected charms, wondrous profundities, and marvellous flashes of Truth, couched in the very simplest of words. He is also impressed by the fact that Proclus, like Plato, never loses touch with the Primal and Universal Principle even when discussing the most multiplex and particularized aspects of it, nor does he leave the track of direct deduction, but builds up his conclusions, step by step, leaving nothing to supposition.

Students of Plotinus will find that Proclus is complementary to him in a wonderful manner.

Plotinus is the religious-philosophical mystic, *par excellence*.

Proclus is the philosophical theologian and metaphysician, for it has been affirmed with truth, that he set the philosophical and dialectical methods of the Schoolmen, and of all Christian Mystical Science.

He was an acute mathematician, too, as an examination of his "Commentaries on Euclid" will evince.

There is little doubt that he thoroughly mastered the Philosophy of Plato, and, after passing it through the splendour of his own illuminating Intellect, re-presented the Platonic Teachings for the benefit of all subsequent ages.

“The Theology of Plato,”—of which this series of articles will comprise a selection of choice passages with occasional comments—is a monumental work, of which the indefatigable English Platonist, Thos. Taylor, has left us an English Translation which preserves the spirit and style of the original, although, perhaps, it may not be perfect from a purely philological point of view.

In this work Proclus unfolds the Platonic doctrine of the Supreme God and of all the Sublime Hierarchies of Beings (*i.e.*, The Gods) who eternally proceed from Him, manifest His Ineffable Nature, express His unfathomable Mystery, and interpret His Infinite Will; and rule over, preserve, and perpetually perfect the entire cosmos.

(2) *Introductory*. I. “I am of opinion,” says Proclus, “that the whole philosophy of Plato was at first unfolded into light through the beneficent will of Superior Natures, exhibiting the intellect (Comment 1,—see below) concealed in them, and the truth subsisting together with beings, to Souls conversant with generation (so far as it is lawful for them to participate of such supernatural and mighty Good). And again, after having received its perfection, returning, as it were, into itself, it became unapparent to many who professed to philosophize, but once more advancing into light it became again effable to all who earnestly desired to engage in the investigation of true being. But I particularly think that the mystic doctrine respecting divine concerns, which is purely established on a sacred foundation, and which perpetually subsists with the Gods Themselves, became thence apparent to such as are capable of enjoying it for a time through one man (namely Plato), whom I should not err in calling the primary leader and hierophant of those true Mysteries, into which Souls, separated from terrestrial places, are initiated, and of those entire and stable visions, which those participate

Comment 1.—Intellect. In Proclus, “Intellect” is the equivalent of the Greek “Nous.” Its connotation is not what is modernly understood by intellect. It is the principle above Soul, and therefore might be translated Spirit or Spiritual-mind.

in who genuinely embrace a happy and blessed life. But this philosophy shone forth at first from him so venerably and arcanelly, as if established in sacred temples, and within their adyta, and being unknown to many who have entered these holy places, in certain orderly periods of time, proceeded as much as was possible for it into light, through certain true priests, and who embraced a life corresponding to the tradition of such mystic concerns.

II. These interpreters of the *epopteia* (or mystical spectacles) of Plato, who have unfolded to us all-sacred narrations of divine concerns, and who were allotted a nature similar to their leader, I should determine to be the Egyptian Plotinus and those who received the theory from him, I mean Amelius and Porphyry, together with those in the third place who were produced like virile statues from these, namely, Iamblichus and Theodorus, and any others, who after these, following this divine choir, have energized about the doctrines of Plato with a divinely-inspired mind. From these Syrianus, who, after the Gods, has been our Leader to everything beautiful and good, receiving in an undefiled manner the most genuine and pure light of truth in the bosom of his Soul, made us a partaker of all the rest of Plato's philosophy, communicating to us that arcane information which he had received from those more ancient than himself, and caused us, in conjunction with him, to be divinely enthusiastic about the mystic truth of divine concerns.

To this man, therefore, if we should undertake to return thanks adequate to the benefits which we have received from him, the whole of time would not be sufficient because they are eternal benefits.

III. But if it is necessary, not only that we should have received from others the transcendent good of the Platonic Philosophy, but that we should leave to posterity monuments of those blessed spectacles of which we have been spectators, and emulators to the utmost of our ability, under a leader the most perfect of the present time, and who arrived at the summit of philosophy; perhaps we shall act properly in invoking the Gods, that They will enkindle the light of truth in our Soul, and, in supplicating the attendants and ministers of Better Natures to direct our Intellect, and lead it to the

all-perfect divine, and elevated end of the Platonic Theology. For I think that everywhere he who participates in the least degree of intelligence, will begin his undertakings from the Gods, and especially in explications respecting the Gods; for we can no otherwise be able to understand a Divine Nature than by being perfected through the light of the Gods; nor divulge it to others unless governed by Them, and exempt from multiform opinions, and the variety which subsists in words, preserving at the same time the interpretation of divine names. Therefore, knowing this, and complying with the exhortation of the Platonic Timæus, we in the first place establish the Gods as Leaders of the Doctrine respecting Themselves. But may They, in consequence of hearing our prayers, be propitious to us, and benignantly approaching, guide the Intellect of our Soul, and lead it about the Vesta of Plato (Comment 2), and to the arduous sublimities of this speculation; where, when arrived, we shall receive all the truth concerning Them, and shall obtain the best end of our parturient conceptions of divine concerns, desiring to know something respecting Them, inquiring about Them of others, and, at the same time, as far as we are able, exploring Them ourselves.”—Book I, Ch. 1.

(3) *The ONE and the Many.* “The most proper beginning of the thesis proposed by us is that from which we may be able to discover the First Cause of all beings.

“For being impelled from this in a becoming manner, and having our conceptions purified respecting it, we shall with greater facility be able to distinguish other things.” (Comment 3.)

“If many things have a subsistence, each of the many is

Comment 2.—Vesta of Plato. Vesta is the Goddess of the immutable centre and heart of all things; to be led to the Vesta of Plato, therefore, is to approach the innermost significance of his Philosophy.

Comment 3.—The Platonic Conception of the Supreme God is one of the most profound and exalted to be found in any system of thought; hence, in proportion as we are able to apprehend it, so our conceptions of the natures that proceed from God are correspondingly elevated. And since these natures, which immediately proceed from Him, are most like unto God, they are appropriately denominated “The Gods,” by the Platonists. Such conceptions, however, are not in any sense idolatrous, or pagan, nor do they detract from the glory of the One Supreme, but rather enhance It, because as we shall learn from Proclus, “all the Gods are God.”

But before proceeding to the Theology proper, which deals with the Gods, it is meet that we first prepare our minds by reviewing with Proclus the Platonic Doctrine of the First Divine Great Principle of all.

something or a certain One. But if each of them is nothing, or not even one thing, neither is it possible for the many to exist; for the many are many so far as each individual of the multitude exists. If, therefore, the many alone have a subsistence, and the One in no respect is, neither will the many exist. For things which are in no respect one have not any existence whatever.

“There is no number of beings if the One in no respect is; but all things and each thing will be not one. For the principle of number, the monad, is one, and every number itself is one.” (Comment 4.)

“But if the One, which is The One Itself, alone has a subsistence, and there is nothing else, there will be among all things neither a whole, nor that which has parts. For everything which has parts is many, and every whole has parts. But the One is in no respect the many.

“All things, however, *are*, and are generated what they are, through the One. And together with the One, indeed, every being is preserved; but separated from the One it proceeds to the corruption of itself.

“From these things therefore it is necessary that the many should participate of the One, that the One should be unmingled with multitude, and that nothing should be better than the One, but that this should also be the cause of being to the many.” (Comment 5.)—Book II, Ch. 1.

“For that which is deprived of the One is nothing. Hence the One is prior to essence.”—Book II, Ch. 2.

(4) *The Principle of all things.* “But if that which is first is something which is not essence, it is absurd to assert that it is subordinate to essence. For the Principle of all things is that which has the greatest power and the most absolute authority, and is most sufficient to itself, and is not

Comment 4.—The Monad. In divine natures, the Monad is that which contains a multiplicity of unities, distinct and yet at the same time, profoundly united,—and which produces a multitude intimately allied to itself. It is a particular wholeness, a plural-unity, which is one and yet comprehends and produces all numbers. There could be no Orders or particular causal chains if the Monad remained in itself unprolific.

The ONE is the Monad of Monads.

Comment 5.—Cause of Being. The first thing conceivable to the human mind is that which has being or essence; for that which is without, or beyond, being, cannot be conceived. Hence the cause of being, or of “be-ness,” is that initial act of causation which can be attributed to the First Cause of all, Who, of necessity, is beyond being or essence.

that which is most ignoble and indigent of the many. And, in short, it is necessary that no secondary nature should be better than the Principle.

“But the Principle is invariably principle (Comment 6), and other things proceed from it. If, however, that which is not essence is better than all essence, it will either be participated by it, or it will be entirely imparticipable. If, however, essence participates of the Principle, of what will it be the principle? And how will it be the principle of all beings? For it is necessary that the Principle of beings should be no one of beings; since if it were any one of them, it is necessarily not the principle of all beings. But everything which is participated by another thing is said to be that by which it is participated and in which it primarily is.

“The Principle, however, is separate, and belongs in a greater degree to itself than to other things. Besides, everything which is participated proceeds from another more excellent cause; since that which is imparticipable is better than that which is participable. (Comment 7.) It is not, possible, however, to conceive anything better than that which is most excellent, and which we call the Principle. For it is not lawful to assert that things secondary to the Principle, and which proceed from it, are in any respect better than their principle. The Cause, therefore, of all beings is above all essence, is separate from every essence, and is neither essence, nor has essence as an addition to its nature. For such an addition as this is a diminution of simplicity, and of that which is one.”—Book II, Ch. 2.

“That the One, therefore, is the Principle of all things, and the First Cause, and that all other things are posterior to the One, is, I think, evident from what has been said.”—*ibid.*, Ch. 4.

Comment 6.—Principle. The Principle of any thing is its beginning, origin, *arche*, head, or idea;—*e.g.*, the principle of being, or be-ness, is that according to which all beings are produced, are able to subsist or exist, and by which they participate in essence. And similarly with the principles of life, intelligence, and anything else. The Monad is the principle of numbers; but the ONE is the Principle of principles,—or rather, Principle itself.

Comment 7.—The Imparticipable is that which is not consubstant with a subordinate nature. It has the relation of a Monad; being exempt from participants and yet producing things which may be participants. Thus imparticipable Intellect is the intellect which is not consubstant with Soul, but is exempt from it; and imparticipable Soul is the Soul which is not consubstant with body,—and so in other things.—(T. Taylor).

(5) *The One and the Good.* “The mode of demonstration pertaining to the One is twofold. For Plato delivers to us two names of the Ineffable Cause. In the ‘Republic,’ indeed, he calls it ‘The Good,’ and demonstrates it to be the fountain of the Truth which unites intellects and intelligibles (Comment 8). But in the ‘Parmenides’ he denominates such a principle as this ‘The One,’ and shows that it gives subsistence to the divine unities.

“Again, therefore, of these names, the One is the principle of the progression of the whole of things, but the Good of their conversion. For because all things derive their subsistence and proceed from the First Principle, on this account referring the One to it, we demonstrate that it is the cause of all multitude and every progression. For whence is multitude unfolded into light except from the One? But, again, because the progressions from it are naturally converted to it, and desire its ineffable and incomprehensible *hyparxis* (Comment 9) we denominate it the Good. For what else is that which converts all things, and which is extended to all beings as the object of desire, but the Good? For all other things subsist distributedly, and are to some beings honourable, but to others not. And every thing which in any respect whatever is said to have a subsistence, aspires after some things and avoids others. But the Good is the common object of desire to all beings, and all things according to their nature verge and are extended to this. The tendency, however, of desiring natures is everywhere to the appropriate object of desire.

“The Good, therefore, converts; but the One gives subsistence to all secondary natures. Let not, however, any one suppose that the Ineffable can on this account be named, or that the cause of all union is doubled. For here, indeed, we transfer to it names, looking to that which is posterior to it, and to the progressions from it, or the circular conversions to

Comment 8.—Intelligibles and Intellects. In the Platonic sense Intelligible natures are such as possess real permanent being, and therefore are *truly* knowable or intelligible;—things which do not possess real being, but subsist in a continual condition of change, are not truly knowable.

Intellects perceive Intelligibles by becoming united with them.

Comment 9.—Hyparxis. The *hyparxis* is the first principle or the foundation of a thing. It is the essential root and the innermost nature of a thing, as well as that characteristic essence or summit of any nature through which it is what it is. In the Gods it is analogous to the unity and deity of their natures.

it. Because, indeed, multitude subsists from it, we ascribe to it the appellation of the One; but because all things, even as far as to things that have the most obscure existence, are converted to it, we denominate it The Good.

“ We endeavour, therefore, to know the unknown nature of the First Principle through the things which proceed from, and are converted to it; and we also attempt through the same means to give names to that which is ineffable.

“ This Principle, however, is neither known by beings, nor is effable by any one of all things; but being exempt from all knowledge, and all language, and subsisting as incomprehensible, it produces from itself, according to one cause, all knowledge, everything that is known, all words, and whatever can be comprehended by speech. But its unical nature, which transcends all division, shines forth to the view triadically in the natures posterior to it. For all things abide in, proceed from, and are converted to the One. For, at one and the same time they are united to it, are dependent on its union, which is exempt from the whole of things, and desire the participation of it.”—Book II, Ch. 6.

(6) *The Two Modes of Ascent.* “ We also define two modes of ascent to the First (Comment 10), conjoining that mode which is through analogy with the appellation of the Good, but that which is through negations with the appellation of the One; which Plato, also indicating, in the ‘ Republic ’ calls the first ‘ The Good,’ and at the same time makes a regression to it through analogy; but in the ‘ Parmenides ’ establishing it as The One Itself, he unfolds the transcendency of it which is exempt from beings through negative conclusions. According to both these modes, therefore, the First Principle transcends all gnostic powers and is entirely exempt from definition, but all other things afford us the cause of knowledge and of appellation. And the First Principle,

Comment 10.—*The Two Modes of Ascent* are called “ *Via Affirmativa* ” and “ *Via Negativa*,” respectively. The “ *Affirmative Way* ” is pursued by regarding God as Himself the superplenitude of every conceivable virtue and power; but the “ *Negative Way* ” is followed by denying that God can possibly be any of the things which He produces, but that He must be entirely exempt from them and infinitely transcend them all. Therefore, when, by negation, we have separated Him, in our consciousness, from every conceivable attribute; He remains the Absolute, Incomprehensible, mysteriously “ *Unknowing* ” and *Unknowable ONE*. We cannot even say the *ONE exists*; hence Plato’s paradox: “ *If the ONE is, It is not.* ”

indeed, unically (Comment II) gives subsistence to all the unions and hyparxes of secondary natures; but the things posterior to this Cause participate of it in a divided manner. These also become multiplied by abiding, proceeding, and returning; but The One is at once perfectly exempt from all the prolific progressions, convertive powers, and uniform hypostases in beings."—Ibid.

(7) *The First Principle and the Gods.* "This, therefore, is the one truth concerning the First Principle, and which possesses one reason remarkably conformable to the Platonic hypothesis, namely, that this Principle subsists prior to the whole orders in the Gods, that it gives subsistence to the boniform essence of the Gods, that it is the fountain of super-essential Goodness, and that all things posterior to it, being extended towards it, are filled with Good, are united to it, and after an ineffable manner, subsist uniformly about it. For its unical nature is not unprolific, but it is by so much the more generative of other things which have a subsistence. Nor does its fecundity tend to multitude and division; but it abides with undefiled purity, concealed in inaccessible places. For in the natures also which are posterior to it we everywhere see that which is perfect desires to generate, and that which is full hastens to impart to other things its plenitude. In a much greater degree, therefore, it is necessary that the nature which contains in one, all perfections, and which is not a certain good, but Good itself, and super-full (if it be lawful so to speak) should be generative of the whole of things, and give subsistence to them; producing all things by being exempt from all things, and by being imparticipable, similarly generating the first and the last of beings.

"The Good is the most final of all ends, and the centre of all desirable natures. All desirable natures, indeed, impart an end to secondary beings; but that which pre-subsists, uncircumscribed by all things, is the First Good."—Book II, Ch. 7.

(8) *The Apprehension of the Gods.* "All who have ever touched upon Theology have called the first and the most self-sufficient principles of things, 'Gods,' and have said that the theological science is conversant about these.

Comment II.—Unical. That which is characterized by unity.

“And some, indeed, have (erroneously) considered a corporeal essence as that alone which has any existence, and have placed in a secondary rank, with respect to essence, all the genera of incorporeal natures, considering the principles of things as having a corporeal form, and evincing that the habit in us by which we know these, is corporeal. (Comment 12.)

“The divine narration, however, of Plato despises all corporeal natures in the consideration of these principles. Because, indeed, everything divisible and endued with interval, is naturally unable either to produce or preserve itself, but possesses its being, energy, and passivity through Soul, and the motions which Soul contains.

“But Plato demonstrates that the psychical essence (*i.e.*, the essence pertaining to Soul, see Comment 13) is more ancient than bodies, and is suspended from an Intellectual (Spiritual) hypostasis. He shows that Intellect is the father and cause of bodies and Souls, and that all things both subsist and energize about it, which are allotted a life conversant with transitions and evolutions.

Plato, however, proceeds to another principle entirely exempt from Intellect, more incorporeal and ineffable, and from which all things, even though you should speak of such as are last, have necessarily a subsistence. For all things are not naturally disposed to participate of Soul; nor are all things able to enjoy Intellect; but it is necessary that the Principle of all things should be participated by all things. Plato having divinely discovered this First Principle of wholes, which is more excellent than Intellect, and is concealed in inaccessible recesses; and having exhibited these three causes and monads, (Comment 14) denominated them as incorporeal and above bodies, produces from these monads their proper numbers; one multitude being indeed unific, but the second intellectual, and the third psychical. For every monad is the leader of a multitude co-ordinate with itself.

Comment 12.—Incorporeal Natures. Since the Gods are God, they are necessarily infinitely superior to all ideas of body or corporeality; hence they can never be apprehended by corporeal faculties.

Comment 13.—Psychical is here used in its original and best sense; it has nothing whatever to do with what is nowadays known as “Psychism” and “the Psychic,” which refer to the astral world and not to the Soul itself.

Comment 14.—The ONE, Intellect, and Soul. These Principles, considered as Monads, contain and produce an infinite number of unities, intellects, and souls.

“But as Plato connects bodies with Souls; so likewise he connects Souls with Intellects, and these again with the unities of beings. But he converts all things to one imparticipable Unity. And having run back as far as to this Unity, he considers himself as having obtained the highest end of the theory of wholes; and that this is the truth respecting the Gods, which is conversant with the unities of beings, and which delivers their progressions and peculiarities, the contact of beings with them, and the orders of forms which are suspended from these unical hypostases.

“But he teaches us that the theory respecting Intellect, and the forms and the genera revolving about Intellect, are posterior to the science which is conversant with the Gods themselves. Likewise, that the intellectual theory apprehends intelligibles, and the forms which are capable of being known by the Soul through the projecting energy of Intellect (Comment 15); but that the theological science, transcending this, is conversant with arcane and ineffable hyparxes, and pursues their separation from each other, and their unfolding into light from one cause of all; whence, I am of opinion, that the intellectual peculiarity of the Soul is capable of apprehending intellectual forms, and the difference which subsists in them, but that the summit, the flower of Intellect and hyparxis, is conjoined with the unities of beings, and through these, with the occult union of all the divine unities. (Comment 16.) For as we contain many gnostic powers, through these alone we are capable of being conjoined with and of participating in this occult union. For the Genus of the Gods cannot be apprehended by sense, because it is exempt from all bodies; nor by opinion and *dianoia* (Comment 17), for these are divisible and come into contact with multiform concerns; nor by intelligence in conjunction with reason, for knowledge of this kind belongs to true beings; but the

Comment 15.—Intellectual Projection. The projecting energy of Intellect is intuitive perception, an immediate darting forth, as it were, to its proper object, the Intelligible.

Comment 16.—Occult. This term is employed in its literal sense, meaning “hidden.” It is applied to that which is above, or hidden from, intellectual perception, and has nothing to do with “occultism.”

Comment 17.—Dianoia. This is the discursive energy of reason; it is the power of the Soul which reasons scientifically, or dialectically, deriving the principles of its reasoning from Intellect.

hyparxis of the Gods rides on beings, and is defined according to the union itself of wholes.”

(9) *The Soul's Ascent to the Gods.* It remains, therefore, if it be admitted that a divine nature can in any respect be known that it must be apprehended by the hyparxis of the Soul. For we say that everywhere things similar can be known by the similar; namely, the sensible by sense, the doxastic (Comment 18) by opinion, the dianoetic by dianoia, and the intelligible by Intellect. So that the most unical nature must be known by the ONE, and the Ineffable by that which is ineffable.

“Indeed, Socrates in the First Alcibiades rightly observes that the Soul, entering into herself, will behold all other things and Deity itself. For, verging to her own hyparxis and to the centre of all life, laying aside multitude and the variety of the all-manifold powers which she contains, she ascends to the highest watch-tower of being.

The Soul, then, when looking to things posterior to herself, beholds the shadows and images of beings, but when she converts herself to herself, she evolves her own essence and the reasons which she contains.* And at first indeed she, as it were, beholds herself alone; but when she penetrates more profoundly into the knowledge of herself, she finds in herself both Intellect and the orders of beings. When, however, she proceeds into her interior recesses and into the adytum, as it were, of the Soul, she perceives with her eye closed the Genus of the Gods, and the Unities of beings. For all things are in us psychically, and through this we are naturally capable of knowing all things, by exciting the powers and the images (ideas) of wholes which we contain.

And this is the best employment of our energy, to be extended to a divine nature itself, having our powers at rest, to revolve harmoniously round it, to excite all the multitude of the Soul to this union, and laying aside all such things as are posterior to the ONE, to become seated and conjoined with that which is ineffable and beyond all things. For it is lawful for the Soul to ascend till she terminates her flight in the Principle of things; but arriving thither, beholding the

Comment 18.—Doxastic; from doxa, opinion. This is the lowest of the gnostic powers of the rational soul. It knows that a thing is, but not why it is; i.e., it is ignorant of the cause.

* (It is interesting to note that this passage is identical with the very foundation of Oriental Raja Yoga).

place which is there, descending thence, and directing her course through beings, likewise evolving the multitude of forms, and apprehending intellectually how each is suspended from its proper unity, then we may consider her as possessing the most perfect science of divine natures, perceiving in a uniform manner the progressions of the Gods into beings, and the distinctions of beings about the Gods.

“Such then, according to Plato’s decision, is our theologian; and his theology is a science of this kind, which unfolds the hyparxis itself of the Gods, separates their unknown and unical light from the peculiarity of their participants, and announces it to such as are worthy of this energy, which is both blessed and comprehends all things at once.”—Book I, Ch. 3.

HYMN

“O SUPREMEST BEING.”

He dies, O Lord Supreme who loves Thee to Perfection,
And slumbering, ever rests in blissful contemplation;

O Supreme Being!

A yearning there possest me, to lose the “self and mine,”
In need I wandered helpless, seeking help divine;

O Supreme Being!

My pride became then softened, and touched by Thee above,
My will became Thine own, and I dissolved in love;

O Supreme Being!

O Thou of all the weary and heavy-laden Rest,
Henceforth Thy Name by me for ever shall be blest;

O Supreme Being!

Thou nectar never-cloying, Thou Stream of heavenly Bliss,
O Thou the Good that dwells in perfect loneliness;

O Supreme Being!

However guilty I, whatever wrong I do,
I ask Thee, Mother-like, Thy pitying Love to show;

O Supreme Being!

O.A.W. Hymn, No. A 1.—Tayumanavar, a Tamil Mystical Poet

Air: Lá iláha, No. 3.

JEWELS

“To the man to whom God has ever been great, all creatures seem small, and fleeting pleasures are as nothing.”—(Tauler.)

“If a man has wrong suppositions in his mind concerning God, he will be wrong through all parts of his religion.”—(B. Whichcote.)

THE SOUL AND ITS UNION WITH BODY

According to AMMONIUS SACCAS, THE NEOPLATONIST

Ammonius, who has been called the founder of Neoplatonism, was the famous Master of Plotinus, and lived from 162 to 243 A.D. His suggested commemoration is on May 12th. He was surnamed "Saccas" (σάκκας = a sack-bearer) because his first vocation was that of a carrier of goods in the port of Alexandria.

Theodoret tells us that Ammonius, abandoning the sacks in which he carried grain, embraced the life of a philosopher and became a teacher of the Platonic Wisdom.

His greatness may perhaps be judged from the further title of "*Theodidaktos*" (Θεοδιδάκτος), "taught by God," which was applied to him, although it may also indicate that he was not man-taught, *i.e.*, that he had no human instructors.

Ammonius, like Socrates and other great teachers, taught orally only and never committed his doctrines to writing. He was a teacher of remarkable genius, ability, and insight, and some of the most gifted men of the age were among his hearers.

Plotinus, after attending many philosophic schools with extreme dissatisfaction, when he heard Ammonius discourse, exclaimed joyfully: "This is the man I was looking for," and became his attentive pupil for eleven years—in itself a very high testimonial. The teachings of Ammonius were preserved in the works of his disciples and in the record of his lectures. It is probable that many of his auditors made accurate reports or memoranda of his lectures as they were delivered, for their own use and that of their friends. Partial reports of two of these, "On the Nature of the Soul; and its Union with the Body," are preserved by Numenius in his book, "On the Nature of Man." There is little reason to doubt their authenticity or faithful transmission, and they are well worthy of the reputation of Ammonius as a great thinker.

The following English version of these fragmentary reports is taken from the translation of Helen M. Johnson, appearing in the works of Prof. Thos. M. Johnson, the American Platonist, who before his death was a patron of the Order of Ancient Wisdom and a link with the past.

I. Bodies, being by their very nature mutable, wholly dissoluble, and infinitely divisible, need a principle to bring them together, to join them, to bind and hold them in unity. This principle we call the Soul. Now, if the Soul is a body of any kind, even if it is the most subtle or refined, what again is that which holds it together. For, since every body requires a connecting and binding principle, this will be true of every body *ad infinitum*, until we reach an incorporeal principle. If it should be asserted, for instance, that there is a certain tense motion in or about bodies, extending at the same time to the internal or external parts of bodies, and that this motion, tending outwards, is the cause of quantities and qualities, and tending inwards, is the cause of unity and essence, then it must be asked—since every motion proceeds from some power—what is this power, and in what lies its essence? If this power is a certain matter, the same question can be asked. If it is not matter, but a material thing (a material thing is different from matter since that which participates of matter is called “material”), what then is that which participates of matter? If it is matter, how can it be material and not matter? If it is not matter, it is therefore immaterial; if it is immaterial, it is not a body, for every body requires matter of some kind. If it should be said that bodies have the three dimensions, and that the Soul, extending through the whole body, likewise has the three dimensions, and is consequently necessarily a body, then it must be answered that every body has the three dimensions, but that everything having the three dimensions is not a body. For quantity and quality, which are incorporeal in their nature, are accidentally capable of increase or diminution, if they are in a thing which has magnitude. And so it is with Soul, which in its essence or nature has no dimensions, but, accidentally is considered to have three dimensions by reason of its connection with the body, because that has three dimensions. Moreover, every body is moved (acted upon), either from without, or from within; but if from without, it will be inanimate; if from within it will be animate. If the Soul is a body, and if it is moved from without, it will be inanimate; if from within, it will be animate. But it is absurd to assert that the Soul is both inanimate and animate, for it is the cause

of motion to the body—hence it is not a body itself. Further, the Soul, if it is nurtured, is nurtured by the incorporeal, for the sciences train it; but no body is directly nurtured by the incorporeal, hence the Soul is not a body.

II. It is necessary now to investigate how the union of the Soul with an inanimate body arises.

Intelligible things (*i.e.*, those possessing real permanent being) possess such a nature that, when they are united to the things which are able to receive them, they are not changed, like corporeal things, but remain distinct and indestructible, just like things which are laid side by side. But with respect to bodies, union with each other, changes them entirely, because they are changed into other bodies, just as simple elements are changed into compound bodies; nourishment into blood, blood into flesh and other parts of the body. As to Intelligible natures, union may arise, but there is no change of essence as a result; for an intelligible thing, by reason of its nature, does not change its essence, for its nature does not admit of change. Nor is it corruptible into non-existence, for in this case it would not be immortal. The Soul, being self-vital, if it were changed in the mixture or union, would be different and no longer self-vital.

Thus, since Intelligible natures are immutable in essence, it necessarily follows that they do not perish with the things to which they are united. The Soul is intimately united with the body, but yet remains totally distinct. That it is united to the body, sympathy with the body shows, for the whole sympathizes with itself as one being. That it remains distinct is evident from the fact that in a certain way the Soul can withdraw from the body during sleep. Moreover, when the Soul, by and of itself, apprehends any Intelligible nature; then, as much as possible, the Soul separates itself from the body, and isolates itself, in order that thereby it may rise to the knowledge of real beings. For since it is incorporeal, it separates itself from the whole body, as from things which are wholly corruptible, but yet remains indestructible and distinct, preserving its own unity and changing the things wherein it abides by its own life and yet not being changed

by them. Just as the Sun, by its presence, makes the atmosphere luminous; the light being, as it were, united with the air, and yet the Sun, at the same time, remains distinct and unmingled; so, in a similar manner, the Soul, although united to the body, remains absolutely distinct, differing, however, from the Sun in this, that the Sun, being a body and being circumscribed by place, is not itself everywhere as its light is. But the Soul, being incorporeal and uncircumscribed by place, passes as a whole both through its own light and the whole body wherein it is, and there is no part lighted by it in which it is not totally present, for it is not dominated by the body, but dominates the body. Nor is it in the body as in a jar or bag, *but rather the body is in it*; for Intelligible natures are not hindered by corporeal, but enter, penetrate, and pass through every body, and cannot possibly be restrained by corporeal place. Because, since they are intelligible, they are in intelligible places, for they are either in themselves, or in Intelligible natures which are above. Thus, then, the Soul is in itself when it reasons; it is in Intellect (Spirit) when it perceives intuitively. And when it is said to be in the body, it is not in body as if it were in a place, but, as it were, *in a certain relation to the body*, and present to it in such a way as God is said to be present in us. For we say that the Soul is bound to the body by a certain relation or habitude, inclination and disposition, as the lover is bound to the object of his love; not corporeally, nor locally, but by their relation. For since the Soul is an essence without size, magnitude, or parts, it is superior to any place circumscribed according to parts; for since it has no parts, in what place could it be enclosed? Place is co-existent with magnitude, for place is the boundary of that which contains, inasmuch as it holds that which is contained. If anyone should say, then, my Soul is in Alexandria, and in Rome, and everywhere, he does not notice that he really says "place" again; for the words "in Alexandria" and here and there or everywhere, designate place. But the Soul is nowhere in any respect as in a place, but only in a certain relation to it; for it has been demonstrated that it cannot be enclosed in a place. Therefore, whenever an Intelligible nature is said to be in relation to some place or thing which is in a place, we are guilty of an abuse of

language in saying that it itself is there, because as a matter of fact only its activity is there; we therefore assume the place for the relation and the activity of it. To speak accurately we should say: "it acts there," not that "it is there."

JEWELS

"Our whole work in this life is to heal the eye by which we see God."—(St. Augustine.)

"The Beatific Country is not only to be gazed upon, but to be dwelt in."—(Ibid.)

"God Himself being infinitely full, and having enough and to spare, is always overflowing: and goodness and love issue forth from Him by way of redundancy."—(John Smith, Cambridge Platonist.)

"He who contemplates the Supreme TAO that is; he who gives It a place in the heart; his ears will hear the Songs of the Immortal Gods, the Spirit and Breath will effect a Union, and the Bloom of Childhood return—his eyes will behold scenes unfolded within him—he has escaped from the toils of life and death."—(Zhâh Yung King.)

"It was a great delight to me to think on my Soul as a garden, and on the Lord as walking in it. I prayed Him to increase the perfume of the little flowerets of virtue which began, so it seemed, to wish to peer above the ground; so that it might be to His Glory, and to nurture and cut those He wanted (since I wanted nothing for myself), for I already knew that they would only come up stronger for it."—(St. Teresa.)

"There is a sleep of the Soul, and there is a sleep of the body. Sleep of body we all ought to have, because if sleep is not taken the body fainteth. Therefore God hath granted sleep, whereby the members of the body are recruited, and it is thereby able to sustain the Soul-watching. But let us take heed that the Soul herself sleeps not; for evil is the sleep of the Soul. In that state she forgetteth God."—(St. Augustine.)

"A Soul is resuscitated by God. Two lives there are in man:—one of the body, another of the Soul. As the life of the body is the Soul, so the life of the Soul is God. In like manner, if the Soul forsake the body, the body dieth; so the Soul dieth if God forsake it. But this is His Grace:—He resuscitates the Soul that He may be ever with it."—(Ibid.)

"One of the greatest gifts of God to the Soul in this life—not permanent but transient—is that deep sense and understanding of God by which it feels and understands clearly that it can neither understand nor feel Him at all."—(St. John of the Cross.)