

Hermes Trismegistus

The First Book

1. O my Son, write this first Book, both for Humanity's sake, and for Piety towards God.
2. For there can be no Religion more true or just, than to know the things that are; and to acknowledge thanks for all things, to him that made them, which thing I shall not cease continually to do.
3. What then should a man do, O Father, to lead his life well, seeing there is nothing here true?
4. Be Pious and Religious, O my Son, for he that doth so, is the best and highest Philosopher; and without Philosophy, it is impossible ever to attain to the height and exactness of Piety or Religion.
5. But he that shall learn and study the things that are, and how they are ordered and governed, and by whom and for what cause, or to what end, will acknowledge thanks to the Workman as to a good Father, an excellent Nurse and a faithful Steward, and he that gives thanks shall be Pious or Religious, and he that is Religious shall know both where the truth is, and what it is, and learning that, he will be yet more and more Religious.
6. For never, O Son, shall or can that Soul which while it is in the Body lightens and lifts up itself to know and comprehend that which is Good and True, slide back to the contrary; for it is infinitely enamoured thereof. And forgetteth all Evils; and when it hath learned and known its Father and progenitor it can no more Apostatize or depart from that Good.
7. And let this, O Son, be the end of Religion and Piety; whereunto when thou art once arrived, thou shalt both live well, and die blessedly, whilst thy Soul is not ignorant whether it must return and fly back again.

8. For this only, O Son, is the way to the Truth, which our Progenitors travelled in; and by which, making their Journey, they at length attained to the Good. It is a Venerable way, and plain, but hard and difficult for the Soul to go in that is in the Body.

9. For first must it war against its own self, and after much Strife and Dissention it must be overcome of one part; for the Contention is of one against two, whilst it flies away and they strive to hold and detain it.

10. But the victory of both is not like; for the one hasteth to that which is Good, but the other is a neighbour to the things that are Evil; and that which is Good, desireth to be set at Liberty; but the things that are Evil, love Bondage and Slavery.

11. And if the two parts be overcome, they become quiet, and are content to accept of it as their Ruler; but if the one be overcome of the two, it is by them led and carried to be punished by its being and continuance here.

12. This is, O Son, the Guide in the way that leads thither for thou must first forsake the Body before thy end, and get the victory in this Contention and Strifeful life, and then thou hast overcome. Return.

13. But now, O my Son, I will by Heads run through the things that are: Understand thou what I say, and remember what thou hearest.

14. All things that are, are moved; only that which is not, is unmovable.

15. Every Body is changeable.

16. Not every Body is dissolvable.

17. Some Bodies are dissolvable.

18. Every living thing is not mortal.

19. Not every living thing is immortal.

20. That which may be dissolved is also corruptible.
21. That which abides always is unchangeable.
22. That which is unchangeable is eternal.
23. That which is always made is always corrupted.
24. That which is made but once, is never corrupted, neither becomes any other thing.
25. First, God; Secondly, the World; Thirdly, Man.
26. The World for Man, Man for God.
27. Of the Soul, that part which is Sensible is mortal, but that which is Reasonable is immortal.
28. Every essence is immortal.
29. Every essence is unchangeable.
30. Every thing that is, is double.
31. None of the things that are stand still.
32. Not all things are moved by a Soul, but every thing that is, is moved by a Soul.
33. Every thing that suffers is Sensible, every thing that is Sensible suffereth.
34. Every thing that is sad rejoiceth also, and is a mortal living Creature.
35. Not every thing that joyeth is also sad, but is an eternal living thing.
36. Not every Body is sick; every Body that is sick is dissolvable.

37. The Mind in God.
38. Reasoning (or disputing or discoursing) in Man,
39. Reason in the Mind.
40. The Mind is void of suffering.
41. No thing in a Body true.
42. All that is incorporeal, is void of Lying.
43. Every thing that is made is corruptible.
44. Nothing good upon Earth, nothing evil in Heaven.
45. God is good, Man is evil.
46. Good is voluntary, or of its own accord.
47. Evil is involuntary or against its will.
48. The Gods choose good things, as good things.
49. Time is a Divine thing.
50. Law is Humane.
51. Malice is the nourishment of the World.
52. Time is the Corruption of Man.
53. Whatsoever is in Heaven is unalterable.
54. All upon Earth is alterable.
55. Nothing in Heaven is servanted, nothing upon Earth free.
56. Nothing unknown in Heaven, nothing known upon Earth.

57. The things upon Earth communicate not with those in Heaven.
58. All things in Heaven are unblameable, all things upon Earth are subject to Reprehension.
59. That which is immortal, is not mortal: that which is mortal is not immortal.
60. That which is sown, is not always begotten; but that which is begotten always, is sown.
61. Of a dissolvable Body, there are two Times, one from sowing to generation, one from generation to death.
62. Of an everlasting Body, the time is only from the Generation.
63. Dissolvable Bodies are increased and diminished,
64. Dissolvable matter is altered into contraries; to wit, Corruption and Generation, but Eternal matter into its self, and its like.
65. The Generation of Man is Corruption, the Corruption of Man is the beginning of Generation.
66. That which off-springs or begetteth another, is itself an offspring or begotten by another.
67. Of things that are, some are in Bodies, some in their Ideas.
68. Whatsoever things belong to operation or working, are in a Body.
69. That which is immortal, partakes not of that which is mortal.
70. That which is mortal, cometh not into a Body immortal, but that which is immortal, cometh into that which is mortal.
71. Operations or Workings are not carried upwards, but descend downwards.

72. Things upon Earth do nothing advantage those in Heaven, but all things in Heaven do profit and advantage the things upon Earth.

73. Heaven is capable and a fit receptacle of everlasting Bodies, the Earth of corruptible Bodies.

74. The Earth is brutish, the Heaven is reasonable or rational.

75. Those things that are in Heaven are subjected or placed under it, but the things on Earth, are placed upon it.

76. Heaven is the first Element.

77. Providence is Divine Order.

78. Necessity is the Minister or Servant of Providence.

79. Fortune is the carriage or effect of that which is without Order; the Idol of operation, a lying fantasy or opinion.

80. What is God? The immutable or unalterable Good.

81. What is Man? An unchangeable Evil.

82. 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 Contents or Abridgment of them.

83. Avoid all Conversation with the multitude or common People, for I would not have thee subject to Envy, much less to be ridiculous unto the many.

84. For the like always takes to itself that which is like, but the unlike never agrees with the unlike: Such Discourses as these have very few Auditors, and peradventure very few will have, but they have something peculiar unto themselves.

85. They do rather sharpen and whet evil men to their maliciousness, therefore it behoveth to avoid the multitude and take heed of them as not understanding the virtue and power of the things that are said.

86. How dost Thou mean, O Father?

87. Thus, O Son, the whole Nature and Composition of those living things called Men, is very prone to Maliciousness, and is very familiar, and as it were nourished with it, and therefore is delighted with it. Now this wight if it shall come to learn or know, that the world was once made, and all things are done according to Providence and Necessity, Destiny, or Fate, bearing Rule over all: Will he not be much worse than himself, despising the whole because it was made. And if he may lay the cause of evil upon Fate or Destiny, he will never abstain from any evil work.

88. Wherefore we must look warily to such kind of people, that being in ignorance, they may be less evil for fear of that which is hidden and kept secret.