

‘ME QUOQUE EXCELLENTIOR’: BOETHIUS, *DE
CONSOLATIONE* 4. 6. 38*

In the best Menippean tradition the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius is peppered with quotations from different authors, most notably from the works of Homer. The quotations are generally spoken by Philosophy, and are used to articulate the narrative, e.g. at 1. 4 we find a line from *Iliad* 1. 363 whose application to the present situation is immediately comprehensible,¹ and would have been appreciated by the average reader. Another similar quotation is that of *Iliad* 12. 176: ἀργαλέον δέ με ταῦτα θεὸν ὥς πάντ’ ἀγορεύειν at 4. 6. 53. Such uses are very similar to what one finds in the *Apocolocyntosis* of Seneca,² albeit there used for comic effect. There are also snippets of popular wisdom in the form of an old proverb³ – though it is one with Menippean associations – and a Pythagorean maxim.⁴

The Homeric quotations can be divided into two categories: those which genuinely sprang to mind, direct from their Homeric context, as befitting the dramatic narrative (such is the one just quoted), and those that have developed a life and meaning of their own through the attentions of the philosophical Homeric exegetes. Courcelle successfully shows that many of the passages quoted by Boethius come to him from the works of later Neoplatonists, Olympiodorus, Proclus, and Ammonius.⁵ An excellent example of this method of transmission is provided by the quotation of *Iliad* 3. 277 πάντ’ ἐφορᾶν καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούειν at 5. m. 2. 1. We hear from Olympiodorus (*In Phaedonem* p. 26. 22 Norvin) that Proclus used this line to prove that celestial bodies possessed only sight and hearing, higher senses which contribute to the perfection of divine beings, rather than all five as had been suggested by Damascius.

All obviously signposted quotations in the *De Consolatione* have been satisfactorily identified – with one notable exception. The passage in question is 4. 6. 37:

Est alius cunctis virtutibus absolutus sanctusque ac deo proximus: hunc contingi quibuslibet adversis nefas providentia iudicat adeo ut ne corporeis quidem morbis agitari sinat. Nam ut quidam me quoque excellentior: ἀνδρὸς δὴ ἱεροῦ δέμας αἰθέρες οἰκοδόμησαν.

Opinions have varied about whom Philosophy considers ‘me quoque excellentior’. Hildebrand, eager to vindicate the Christianity of Boethius, felt that it had to be a Scriptural reminiscence, and produced a number of surprising emendations to reinforce his point.⁶ Ascensius, quoted by Cally in Migne (*PL* 63. 819), ascribes the words to Hermes Trismegistus, but without further explanation.⁷ Semeria,⁸ following

* I am most grateful both to the late Colin Macleod and to Charles Murgia for criticisms and suggestions on an earlier draft of this article. The errors that remain may be attributed to my own stubbornness. A version of this paper was given at the December meeting of the American Philological Association in 1981.

¹ Thetis consoling the mourning Achilles parallels Philosophy addressing the weeping Boethius.

² Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis* 5. 4 ff.

³ *Cons.* 1. 4. 1.

⁴ *Cons.* 1. 4. 38.

⁵ P. Courcelle, *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire* (Paris, 1967), p. 166.

⁶ A. Hildebrand, *Boethius und seine Stellung zum Christentum* (Regensburg, 1885), p. 141. He wishes to read δόμους for δέμας in direct contradiction to ‘corporeis morbis’. Two conjectures are supplied on p. 141 n. 1 including Ἀνδρὸς σώμ’ ἱεροῖο περίστεραι ψκοδόμησαν!

⁷ Examination of Ascensius’ notes on Boethius in *Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae... cum commentariis Ascensii Badii* (Venice, 1542), fo. 72^v reveals no mention of Hermes at all. I cannot be sure of either the source or the accuracy of Cally’s information.

⁸ G. Semeria, ‘Il Cristianesimo di Severino Boezio Rivendicato’, *Studi e Documenti di Storia e di Diritto* 21 (1900), 151.

Usener, thought it an oracle. Peiper, the editor of the 1871 Teubner edition, felt that the line was from Parmenides, but the two passages he cites to support this theory bear little relevance to the text under discussion. More recently Courcelle,⁹ followed by H. Chadwick,¹⁰ puts the line in the same category as the second type of Homeric quotation mentioned above, and – most reasonably – suggests that it is ‘un de ces innombrables *Oracula Chaldaica* ou *Carmina Orphica* dont Proclus orne si fréquemment ces ouvrages’. The passage he quotes does not support his assertion at all,¹¹ yet on the basis of this alone the line has found its way into Des Places’ edition of the *Oracula Chaldaica* as Fr. 98. The most recent suggestion comes from A. Raubitschek,¹² who thinks that the line has a Gnostic flavour but does not prove this in the course of a short contribution to the *Bieler Festschrift*. J. Gruber, the most recent commentator on the *De Consolatione*, mentions a few of these theories, but does not discuss them at any length.¹³

Before we re-examine the text of the quotation it is possible to clear the ground somewhat by eliminating some of the suggested possible sources. The line is unlikely to be a Biblical quotation. There is nothing like it in the Bible, and – more importantly – Boethius deliberately suppresses virtually all overt Scriptural quotation. We may have an example of one at 3. 12. 22 ‘fortiter suaviterque disponit’ (*Sap.* 8. 1), but this is the most probable of the suggested borrowings. The others are much harder to prove,¹⁴ and none of them is obviously introduced. We can also eliminate any historical Greek philosopher. How could Philosophia say that one of the ‘violentorum quorundam’ (*Cons.* 1. 1. 5) who tore her robe was greater than herself? This leaves a number of possibilities open: a pseudepigraphical oracle, a genuine oracle, a Hermetic writing, or some Gnostic text.

The line is most unlikely to be Chaldaean. Fragments of the *Oracula Chaldaica* are nearly always ascribed not to the deity who may have pronounced the oracle but to the putative authors, the Juliani, usually called the ‘theourgai’, in which case they are referred to in the plural.¹⁵ In other cases one finds a depersonalized ‘theologia’ cited. It is unlikely that Philosophy should call one of the ‘theourgai’ greater than herself when at the beginning of the *De Consolatione* Boethius, as a Christian should, indignantly rebuts a charge of what may be sorcery or else theurgy, both practices with an ill-delineated shared border.

That the line was one ascribed to the Sibyl is *prima facie* a better case. This authority, at least, was one who could be referred to in the singular as ‘quidam’, but this time the gender is wrong: Philosophy is scrupulous about such matters, referring to herself as ‘nostra quidem dux’ at *Cons.* 1. 3. 13, and would never have said ‘quidam’ had she meant the Sibyl. The line could be a theological oracle, similar to those delivered at Klaros, but again the simple fact that nothing quite like it is to be found in the extant oracular corpus militates against this theory.

⁹ *op. cit. supra* n. 5 p. 167.

¹⁰ H. Chadwick, *Boethius: the Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (Oxford, 1981), p. 243.

¹¹ Proclus, *In Tim.* III, p. 266. 19 Diehl = *Or. Chald.* 54 Des Places.

¹² A. E. Raubitschek, ‘Me quoque excellentior (Boethii Consolatio 4. 6. 27)’, *Latin Script and Letters A. D. 400–900*, ed. O’Meara and Naumann (Leiden, 1976), p. 62.

¹³ J. Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae* (Berlin–New York, 1978), *ad loc.*

¹⁴ *Cons.* 3. m. 10 ‘huc omnes pariter venite capti’ and Mt. 11. 28 ‘Venite ad me omnes’ and *Cons.* 4. 1. 6. ‘Vilia vasa colerentur’ and 2 Tim. 2. 20 ‘non solum sunt vasa aurea...’ are far from convincing.

¹⁵ H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* (Cairo, 1956), Excursus 1 ‘on the Neoplatonist’s mode of quoting the Chaldaean Oracles’, pp. 443–7.

It is worth having a brief look at the text of the line. No edition gives a full conspectus of variants for the middle of the line – precisely where the text is most in question. The reader may compare the apparatuses of Peiper, Weinberger, and Bieler with little profit. I give the following sample of readings:¹⁶

Munich, Staatsbibl. Clm. 18,765 *ΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΔΗΥΙΕΡΟΥ ΔΑΙΜΑ ΣΑΙΕΘΕ Ε ΠΣ ΟΙΚΟΔΟΜΗΣΑΝ*
 marg. *ΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΔΗΕΡΟΥ ΑΙΘΕΡΕΣ ΟΙΚΟΔΟΜΗΣΑΝ*
 London, B.L. Harley 3095 *ΑΝΗΡ Η ΦΕΡΕΙΟΣ ΘΟΑΛΗΝΟΣ ΟΥΜΕ ΚΟΛΟΜΕΣΑΝ*
Η ΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΔΕ ΙΕΡΟΙ ΛΛΗΦΕΡΕΣ ΟΙΚΟΔΟΜΗΣΑΝ
Η ΑΓΙΟΥ ΑΝΔΡΕΣ ΣΤΟΜΑΤΑ Η ΙΔΙΑ ΟΔΟΜΕΙΣΑΝ
 Gotha, MS. 103 + 104 *ΑΝΔΡΟΣ· ΔΗΥΕΡΟΥ· ΔΑΥΘΗΡΕΣ· ΟΙΚΟΔΟΜΙΣΑΝ*
 Oxford, Bodl. Auct. F. 6. 5.
ΑΝΑΡΟΣ· ΑΗΥΡΟΥ· ΑΑΥΜΑΣΑ· ΛΕΘΕΡΕΣ· ΟΙΚΟΑΟ· ΜΕΣΑΝ
 Rawl. G. 39 *ΑΝΑΡΟΣ· ΑΥΣΡΟΥ· ΑΑΙΟ· ΣΡΕΣ· ΟΥΚΟΛΟΜΙΣΑΝ*

Our present text is an emendation of Haupt's.¹⁷ It is certainly clear that the variety of readings presented by our manuscripts can all be explained as variants on an archetype that had *ΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΔΗ ΙΕΡΟΥ ΔΕΜΑΣ ΑΙΘΕΡΕΣ ΟΙΚΟΔΟΜΗΣΑΝ*, and I would not dispute that this was probably in the archetype. What needs to be questioned is whether the archetype had the right reading. I will suggest that it did not, and that the line should be emended.

What does the line mean? I quote the new Loeb translation: 'the body of a holy man the heavens did build', a fair representation of the modern consensus. There is a problem: what does *αἰθέρες* mean? Heavens? Aethers? Heavenly spheres or beings? There is only one other example of the word in the plural.¹⁸ This is to be found in Olympiodorus' commentary on the *Phaedo* at pp. 239. 3–4 Norvin, now printed as Fragment 62 of the *Oracula Chaldaica* by Des Places. From Norvin's apparatus it is impossible to tell what the manuscript authority for *αἰθέρες* is, let alone precisely what it means.¹⁹

Our line is clearly a hexameter. If it were prose, one would expect articles, of which there is no trace in any of the manuscripts. The clear metrical features of the beginning and the end of the line leave little doubt that the verse was a hexameter.

¹⁶ The first manuscript cited is T of our editions, perhaps the earliest manuscript of the *De Consolatione*. I have collated it from a microfilm. I owe the readings from Harley 3095 to D. Ganz. The Gotha reading is from Haupt (cf. infra n. 17). I have examined the Oxford manuscripts, and they are cited as an example of the amount of corruption present in an average s.xii text.

¹⁷ M. Haupt, 'Analecta', *Hermes* 3 (1869), 146.

¹⁸ The instance mentioned by Stephanus, who refers to Schleusner's lexicon of the LXX, does not exist.

¹⁹ ὅτι τὰ ἐπ' ἄκρων τῆς γῆς καὶ σὺν ἐκείνῃ στοιχεῖα ὕδωρ τὸ ὡς ἀτμῖς καὶ οἶον ὑγρὸς ἀήρ, ἀήρ δὲ ὁ αἰθήρ, αἰθήρ δὲ τὸ ἀκρότατον τοῦ αἰθέρος. εἰ δὲ καὶ ὀρη αὐτόθι ἔστι, δηλον, ὡς ἐγγύς τι φαίνει τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. ἀπλῶς δ' οὖν οἱ τῶν στοιχείων αἰθέρες, ὡς φησι τὰ λόγια, ἐκεῖ.

The passage is a commentary on *Phaedo* 110c. There may well be something wrong with the text given by Norvin: *αἰθέρος* p. 239. 2 may require changing to *ἀέρος*, 'the aether is the highest portion of the air'.

Des Places cites 'P.T.'s' opinion that the fragment 'sans doute' refers to 'les éléments du monde (les astres) du fr. 39.5'. *στοιχεῖα* must mean 'planets' in fr. 39. but here, according to Olympiodorus, who was in a better position to know than we are, it definitely refers to the traditional elements of ancient cosmology, earth, water, air, and aether. The parallel is not an apt one.

The 'aethers of the elements' does not seem to make sense, even as a Chaldaean neologism, and – given an error with the same word a few lines above – may well be a dittography. The occurrence of the word in the *Oracula* must be attributed to coincidence which produced parallel corruptions in lines with a prima-facie claim to being Chaldaean. The corrupt word in the *Phaedo* commentary may have led Bieler and Des Places to add Boethius to the collection.

An obvious feature of the manuscripts of the *De Consolatione* is that the Greek they transmit is usually utter nonsense.²⁰ In most cases we succeed in restoring the text and translating only because we have a parallel text with which to compare the quotation. How could one be expected to recognize *ἐξαύδα μὴ κεῖθε νόῳ* in *EYOMO AOTO EMEN KAIYE EMOEN* (Bodleian Lib. Rawl. G. 39 fo. 9^v)? Even the number of characters and word-divisions bears no relationship to the original Homer. The critic cannot safely trust the *ductus litterarum*.

If anything, it is the Latin which provides the most accurate guide to the meaning of the text. Many manuscripts feature Latin interlinear translations which preserve the Greek with greater accuracy than the main text, e.g.

an es experts lire
AN ONOΣ APPΑΣ²¹

ὄνος has been confused with *ἄνευ*, and the scribe was not sure where precisely the Greek quotation began and has added the Latin 'an' to it, but none the less the Latin preserves the important word 'lyra', which has been corrupted in the Greek because of the similarity between the letter forms for lambda and alpha and upsilon and rho. Another example of the way the Latin interlinear translation preserves the original Greek much better than the majuscule scribal attempts at Greek letters is to be found in the pages of August Engelbrecht's textual questions on the *De Consolatione*.²² At l. 4. 38 Philosophy quotes the maxim *ἔπου θεῶ*. The text according to all manuscripts is *θεόν*. As Peiper noted, the accusative with *ἔπεισθαι* is unacceptable, and we must emend to *θεῶ*. But the manuscripts with interlinear Latin have the gloss 'deo non diis', or else a corrupted version 'de non diss', clearly indicating that what stood in the text originally was a dative, translated literally for the Greekless reader.

The Latin translation of our line is established from an early period: 'viri autem sacri corpus virtutes edificaverunt'.²³ I do not attempt to suggest that Latin translations are infallible, but rather that they are more resistant to corruption than the Greek of the text and, when they are inaccurate, are inaccurate in an explicable way, e.g. whoever produced the Latin translation of the line mistook *δή* for *δέ* and wrote 'autem' – a comprehensible and retrievable error.

Beginning from the Latin gloss there is a simple way to get to a Greek hexameter: *ἀνδρὸς δὴ ἱεροῦ δυνάμεις δέμας οἰκοδόμησαν*.²⁴ That *δυνάμεις* is a word that would be glossed by 'virtutes' is suggested by the fact that Planudes' Greek translation of the *De Consolatione* reads *ἀνδρὸς ἱεροῦ σώμα δυνάμεις οἰκονόμουσι*.²⁵ The fact that

²⁰ A fact of which even the Carolingian commentators with their minimal or non-existent knowledge of Greek were aware, cf. P. Courcelle, 'La Culture antique de Rémi d'Auxerre', *Latomus* 7 (1948), 250, who quotes a note from MS. B.N. lat. 15090 fo. 70^r 'Proverbiale exemplum in Graeco positum, quod corruptum est...'.
²¹ Taken from Bodleian MS. Rawl. G. 39 fo. 9^v, but identical glosses are found in many, perhaps most codices.

²² A. Engelbrecht, 'Die Consolatio Philosophiae des Boethius', *Sitzb. Akad. Wien. phil.-hist. klasse* 144 (1902), 8.

²³ cf. Haupt (op. cit. supra n. 17), p. 146, and the various medieval commentaries.

²⁴ Having seen what can happen to a few Greek words between the ninth and twelfth centuries, we should not feel confidence in texts for which we do not have a proper Greek version for comparison. The variants in Harley 3095 show a glossator who is tinkering with ecclesiastical Greek, substituting *ἅγιος* and *σώμα* for the more poetic *ἱερός* and *δέμας*. Perhaps a similar half-knowledge of Greek generated our error *αἰθέρες*. A Christianizing glossator draws our attention to 'deo' one god, as opposed to 'diis', many gods, at l. 4. 38; perhaps here there was a Greek gloss *αἰθέριοι* to explain precisely what sort of *δυνάμεις* these were.

²⁵ A.-E. Bétant, *Boèce, de la Consolation de la Philosophie: traduction Grecque de Maxime Planude* (Amsterdam, 1964), p. 92. That *δύναμις* and 'virtus' gloss each other reciprocally is

the Latin translation reverses the Greek word order is not a difficulty. In perhaps the oldest extant manuscript of the *De Consolatione* (Munich, Bayer. Staatsbibl. Clm. 18,765; cf. table of variants, above p. 279) both the words 'autem' and 'virtutes' are left out of the interlinear translation, and 'corpus' is written not over ΔΑΙΜΑΣ but over ΣΑΙΕΘΕ. All that would need to go wrong would be one such miscopying, with the addition of the missing word later, in the wrong place, to cause the word reversal. In the same manuscript Latin translations are often written in the margins rather than interlinearly, circumstances under which transpositions are likely.

As a working hypothesis, let us take this new version of the line, as reconstructed from the Latin gloss, 'Then the virtues built the body of the holy man', and see what sense can be made of it. In context the line comes in a passage where Philosophy is discussing the different fates of different sorts of men. One man has good fortune, since it would not be appropriate for him to suffer. 'There is another, close to Divinity, holy, perfect in all virtues. Providence deems it so undesirable that he be touched by any sort of misfortune, that he is not troubled even by bodily pain. For as one has said who is greater even than I am: "The virtues then built the body of the holy man."' "

The case of the first man is straightforward: he is the recipient of ordinary good fortune in the form of lack of adversity. In the second case the point is not that the ἀνὴρ ἱερός is not assailed by diseases, but that they have no power to affect him. As an explanation of this remarkable state of affairs we are told that 'virtues' have built a body for the holy man that proves impregnable to corporeal ailments.

The problem now is to locate the figure of a teacher of supernatural authority who believed that 'powers' or 'virtues' built the body of the holy man. Precisely such a doctrine is to be found in the 13th tractate of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a discourse of Hermes to Tat on the doctrine of παλιγγενεσία, or spiritual rebirth. The author of *CH* 13 knew *CH* 1, the *Poimandres* (*CH* 13. 15. 13), a work which bears the imprint of Gnostic mythology in its account of the accretion of evil properties to the soul of primal man during his descent through the heavenly spheres. These properties are shed on his re-ascent after death. But *CH* 13 discusses not eschatology, but regeneration during this life on earth: in this tractate the evil powers are twelve, and instead represent the Zodiac. Here in a process of spiritual rebirth man acquires a new body formed by the ten virtues or δυνάμεις who chase away the evil dodecad.

These ten virtues can also be shown to have an astrological significance, if one compares a Valentinian doctrine cited by Hippolytus (*PG* 16. 3287A), 'They enumerate the ten powers thus: seven circular-shaped bodies, which they call the heavens, then the circle which encircles them, which they call the eighth heaven, in addition to these the moon and the sun. And these being ten they say that the number is an image of the invisible decad which comes from life and the logos.' Thus in Hippolytus also these forces are called δυνάμεις.

The ten δυνάμεις are: (*CH* 13. 8–9) γνώσις θεοῦ, γνώσις χαρᾶς, ἐγκράτεια, καρτερία, δικαιοσύνη, κοινωνία, ἀλήθεια, ἀγαθόν, ζωή, φῶς. As Festugière points out,²⁶ the first two are properties of mortals, the next five are moral virtues, and the last three are constituents of God. The first seven are deliberately opposed to the seven planetary vices of *CH* 1, and the last three may be the result of contamination with another source.

CH 13 describes the initiation of Tat, a process which occurs through Hermes'

also attested by the Greco-Latin glosses; cf. G. Goetz, *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum* (Leipzig, 1888), ii. 281 'ΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ: tenor, vigor, vis, virilitas, potentia, valentia, potentatus, virtus' and p. 209 'virtus: ἀρετή, δύναμις, . . . ὑλίκης'.

²⁶ A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris, 1944–54), iii. 156.

revelation of his own *παλιγγενεσία*. The event is called *τὴν ἐν θεῷ γένεσιν* (CH 13. 6. 25), and its result is a sort of apotheosis (13. 10. 3 *καὶ ἐθεώθημεν τῇ γενέσει*). The man who undergoes this process leaves his sense perceptions behind him, and now composed of the ten *δυνάμεις* rejoices. The most important part of the description from the point of view of Boethius is the new body. This mortal tent, *τὸ σκῆνος τοῦτο* (CH 13. 12. 9 and 13. 15. 19), which is left behind, is Zodiacal;²⁷ the new body is a *σῶμα τέλειον* (PGM 4. 495), a perfect body that cannot be destroyed. When Tat asks, 'Tell me, father, will this body composed of the powers be destroyed?' (CH 13. 14. 9), the answer is, 'Be silent, and do not speak of things which are impossible' (CH 13. 14. 10–11).

The results of this spiritual and physical rebirth are worth comparing with the freedom from corporeal diseases found in Boethius. 'This change that has transformed Hermes into an intellectual being has also made him inaccessible to sense perceptions, which are effective only in the physical realm (lines 35–41). Apparently Hermes still has a physical body... but the real Hermes is not to be found in the body...' ²⁸ Tat also is rendered *ἀκλίνης* or unshakable – beyond the range of the senses.

Similar conceptions are found in extra-canonical Hermetic fragments drawn from Zosimus:²⁹ 'Hermes and Zoroaster said that the race of philosophers is above fate, because they do not rejoice in the good fortune it brings – since they are above pleasures – nor are they overcome by ill-fortune, for they live in immateriality'. Fragment 21 of the collection expresses similar sentiments.

Thus all the doctrines of the Boethius passage can be found in Hermetic writings: the unconquerable new body built by the *δυνάμεις*, the *ἑρὸς ἀνὴρ* who is endowed with such a gift, and the stability and freedom from the vicissitudes of fortune which the acquisition of such a body confers. For these reasons it seems not improbable that it is to Hermes Trismegistus that Philosophia turns as her authority on the spiritual body of the archetypal philosopher.

Particularly important is the distinction made by Boethius between those who 'suppliciis inexpugnabiles exemplum ceteris praetulerunt invictam malis esse virtutem' (Cons. 4. 6. 42), martyrs and Stoics, a lower breed, and him who is 'absolutus sanctusque ac deo proximus', who cannot be affected at all. It is this distinction that makes it clear that we had to find a quasi-supernatural authority for our hexameter, and that discredits the suggestion that it might be any ordinary philosopher such as Parmenides.

That the Christian Boethius should make his Philosophy call Hermes Trismegistus greater than herself need not cause surprise. Despite her miraculous epiphany like Pallas Athene, Philosophia does not accord herself divine authority. She quotes *Iliad* 12. 176 *ἀργαλέον δέ με ταῦτα θεὸν ὥς πάντ' ἀγορεύειν* with reference to herself, and goes on to say 'neque fas est homini' at Cons. 4. 6. 53–5. Boethius, as the *Anecdota Holderi* tells us, was definitely a Christian but, in the intellectual melting-pot in which he was raised, gathered much of this philosophical learning from late pagan Neoplatonism.³⁰ Such authority given to a legendary pagan sage is not unusual. To men of Late Antiquity Hermes was a pagan saint, similar to the Pythagoras whose

²⁷ One notes the use of the word *σκῆνος*, a tent, for the body (cf. John 1. 14). This might well be compared with the architectural metaphor implicit in *οἰκοδόμησαν* of our fragment. For the 'tent' as a metaphor for the body see *Pseudo-Plato. Axiochus*, ed. J. P. Hershbell (Ann Arbor, 1981), 366A (with note 18).

²⁸ W. C. Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden, 1979), p. 90.

²⁹ CH, ed. Nock-Festugière IV, 'fragments divers' no. 20, p. 117.

³⁰ cf. Cassiodorus, *Variae*, MGH XII, p. 40. 5 ff. 'sic enim Atheniensium scholas longe positus introisti'.

precepts Boethius, disillusioned by misfortune, flung in Philosophy's face (*Cons.* 1. 4. 38). The *Tübingen Theosophy* provides a good sample of opinion about him.³¹ An ecumenical oracle of c. A.D. 500 placed Hermes, Moses, and Apollonius of Tyana on a par: §44 ὅτι πρὸς τὸν ἐρωτήσαντα εἰ δι' ἐπιμελείας βίου δύναται γενέσθαι θεοῦ ἐγγύς...

Ἰσὸθεον δίξῃ γέρας οὗ σοι ἐφικτόν
Αἰγύπτου τόδε μόνος ἔλεν γέρας αἰνετὸς Ἑρμῆς
Ἑβραίων Μωσῆς καὶ Μαζακίων σοφὸς ἀνὴρ...

For Christian respect for Hermes in an earlier period one has to go no further than book VII of Lactantius' *Divine Institutes*.

In the case of *CH* 13 the parallel is even less surprising. The text is one of those most often suspected of connection with the New Testament, and might well be quoted by a philosophically minded Christian. The doctrine of regeneration and the formation of a new body or σῶμα πνευματικόν is quite close to that of 1 Cor. 15. 35–54, as Grese points out,³² the difference being that the Hermetic doctrine promises a new body to the living man, while Paul says that this grace will be accorded to the resurrected. Hermetica were respectable enough sources to be used by Lactantius, who calls them a testimonium 'simile divino' because they came from someone 'ex hominibus in deos relatus' (*Inst.* 1. 6. 1).³³

That the line is a hexameter does not show that it is not Hermetic in origin. There is a certain amount of evidence for hexameter Hermetica.³⁴ Occasionally in the later period even an Orphic line becomes attributed to Hermes.³⁵ So Hermes speaking in verse would not have caused undue surprise. One cannot be sure about the precise identity of the tractate from which the line came; presumably the work is no longer extant. I merely suggest that one should reconstruct a background similar to that of *CH* 13, and that Hermes, as Lactantius suggests in *Epitome* 4. 4 ff., can be referred to allusively because 'et doctrina et vetustate philosophos antecessit'.

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³¹ H. Erbse, *Fragmente Griechischer Theosophien* (Hamburg, 1941), para. 44.

³² op. cit. supra n. 28, p. 92.

³³ It is worth noting that Lactantius knew a Hermetic writing on the perfection of the human body which might even have discussed its regeneration; cf. *Inst.* 2. 10. 13 'quod Hermes quoque tradit, qui non tantum hominem ad imaginem dei factum esse dixit a deo, sed etiam illud explanare temptavit, quam subtili ratione singula quaeque in corpore hominis membra formaverit cum eorum nihil sit quod non tantundem ad usus necessitatem quantum ad pulchritudinem valeat'.

³⁴ cf. *CH* 29 in Scott, *Corpus Hermeticum* i. 530 (= Stobaeus 1. 5. 14, i. 77 Wachsmuth) with Scott's note in iii. 269. See also Abel, *Orphica*, pp. 141–3.

³⁵ cf. C. A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus, sive de theologiae mysticae Graecorum causis* (Regimontii Pruss. 1829), p. 737.