

**THE NEO-PLATONISTS; A
STUDY IN THE
HISTORY OF HELLENISM.
[CAMBRIDGE-1918]**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649753499

The Neo-Platonists; A Study in the History of Hellenism. [Cambridge-1918] by Thomas Whittaker

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

THOMAS WHITTAKER

**THE NEO-PLATONISTS; A
STUDY IN THE
HISTORY OF HELLENISM.
[CAMBRIDGE-1918]**

THE NEO-PLATONISTS

THE NEO-PLATONISTS

*A STUDY IN THE HISTORY OF
HELLENISM*

BY

THOMAS WHITTAKER

SECOND EDITION

WITH A SUPPLEMENT ON THE
COMMENTARIES OF PROCLUS

CAMBRIDGE

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1918

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION

DURING the time that has elapsed since the publication of the first edition of this work, I have at intervals kept myself in contact with the subject; but it was not until lately that I saw clearly how the book might receive the completion which from the first had appeared desirable. The task that obviously remained was to give a more circumstantial account of the Athenian period of Neo-Platonism. I once thought of doing this in a second volume; but it became evident in the end that, for the aim I had in view, what was necessary and sufficient was a more adequate exposition of Proclus. I had never proposed to deal with all minutiae on a uniform scale. My purpose was, while not neglecting to give some account of the lesser as well as the greater thinkers, to set forth substantially the doctrine of the school so as to bring out its real originality and its historical importance. Now, for this purpose, even Porphyry and Iamblichus, while they must always retain an honourable place in the history of philosophy, are of minor significance. The case is otherwise with Proclus, whose name has by general consent taken rank next to that of Plotinus as representing the last powerful expression of Hellenic thought before it ceased to have any effective originality.

Since the book was written, the publication of improved texts has put it in my power to do more justice to the thought of Proclus than would have been possible at first. I hope that, with the aid of these, I have been able to set before the reader an account of his principal commentaries bringing out their distinctive features and the new developments by which its finished form was given to the great system of philosophy initiated by Plotinus two centuries earlier.

vi P R E F A C E T O T H E S E C O N D E D I T I O N

In the text and notes of the book as it appeared in 1901, I have made only slight alterations. The Appendix on the outlying subject of Gnosticism, however, I found must be rewritten in view of recent research. The nature of the modification needed, I have indicated in the Appendix itself in its new form.

T. W.

February, 1918.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	ix
CHAPTER I	
GRAECO-ROMAN CIVILISATION IN ITS POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.	1
CHAPTER II	
THE STAGES OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY	7
CHAPTER III	
RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS IN LATER ANTIQUITY	17
CHAPTER IV	
PLOTINUS AND HIS NEAREST PREDECESSORS	26 ✓
CHAPTER V	
THE PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM OF PLOTINUS	40 ✓
1. PSYCHOLOGY	43
2. METAPHYSICS	53
3. COSMOLOGY AND THEODICY	70
4. AESTHETICS	87
5. ETHICS	91
CHAPTER VI	
THE MYSTICISM OF PLOTINUS	98 ✓
CHAPTER VII	
THE DIFFUSION OF NEO-PLATONISM	107
1. PORPHYRY	107
2. IAMBlichUS	121
3. THE SCHOOL OF IAMBlichUS	131

CHAPTER VIII

	PAGE
THE POLEMIC AGAINST CHRISTIANITY	136

CHAPTER IX

THE ATHENIAN SCHOOL	155
1. THE ACADEMY BECOMES NEO-PLATONIC	155
2. PROCLUS	157
3. THE END OF THE PLATONIC SUCCESSION	180

CHAPTER X

THE INFLUENCE OF NEO-PLATONISM	185
--	-----

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION	205
----------------------	-----

APPENDIX

I. THE COMMUNISM OF PLATO	216
II. THE Gnostics	218
III. IAMBlichus AND PROCLUS ON MATHEMATICAL SCIENCE	225

SUPPLEMENT

THE COMMENTARIES OF PROCLUS	229
ON THE <i>FIRST ALCIBIADES</i>	242
" " <i>PARMENIDES</i>	248
" " <i>TIMAEUS</i>	264
" " <i>REPUBLIC</i>	295
INDEX OF NAMES	315

INTRODUCTION

THAT the history of ancient culture effectively ends with the second century of the Christian era is an impression not infrequently derived from histories of literature and even of philosophy. The period that still remains of antiquity is obviously on its practical side a period of dissolution, in which every effort is required to maintain the fabric of the Roman State against its external enemies. And, spiritually, a new religious current is evidently beginning to gain the mastery; so that, with the knowledge we have of what followed, we can already see in the third century the break-up of the older form of inner as well as of outer life. In the second century too appeared the last writers who are usually thought of as classical. The end of the Stoical philosophy as a living system coincides with the death of Marcus Aurelius. And with Stoicism, it is often thought, philosophy ceased to have an independent life. It definitely entered the service of polytheism. In its struggle with Christianity it appropriated Oriental superstitions. It lost its scientific character in devotion to the practice of magic. It became a mystical theology instead of a pursuit of reasoned truth. The structure of ancient culture, like the fabric of the Empire, was in process of decay at once in form and content. In its permeation by foreign elements, it already manifests a transition to the new type that was to supersede it.

An argument for this view might be found in a certain "modernness" which has often been noted in the later classical literature. Since the ancient type was dissolved in the end to make way for the modern, we might attribute the early appearance of modern characteristics to the new growth accompanying incipient dissolution. The general falling-off in literary quality during the late period we should ascribe to decay; the wider and more consciously critical outlook on life, which we call modern, to the movement of the world into its