

who is comparatively modern, and who lived at a long period after the establishment of the fixed year of Alexandria, must have confounded the epochs. Diodorus * and Strabo † only attribute such a year to the Thebans; they do not say that it was in general use, and they themselves did not live till long after Herodotus.

Thus the Sothian or great year must have been a comparatively recent invention, since it results from the comparison of the civil year with this pretended heliacal year of Sirius; and it is for this reason that it is only spoken of in the works of the second and third century after Christ ‡, and that Syncellus alone, in the ninth, seems to cite Manetho as having made mention of it.

Notwithstanding all that is said to the contrary, the same opinion must be formed of the astronomical knowledge of the Chaldeans. It is natural enough to think, that a people who inhabited vast plains, under a sky perpetually serene, must have been led to observe the course of the stars, even at a period when they still led a wandering life, and when the stars alone could direct

* Bibl. lib. i. p. 46.

† Geogr. p. 182.

‡ See regarding the probable newness of this period the excellent dissertation of M. Biot, in his *Researches respecting several points of the Egyptian Astronomy*, p. 148 *et seq.*