

of three hundred and sixty-five days and a quarter, to the Egyptians. But this author, comparatively modern, and who lived long after the fixed year of Alexandria, may have confounded the epochs. Diodorus(1) and Stabro(2) only give a similar year to the Thebans; they do not say that it was generally adopted, and they lived long after Herodotus.

Thus the sothaic year, the great year, may have been but a modern invention, since it results from a comparison of the civil year with this pretended heliac year of Sirius; and that accounts for its not being spoken of before the writings of the second and third century after Christ,(3) and that Syncellus alone, in the ninth century, seems to quote Manetho, as having mentioned it.

Whatever may be said on the subject, we have the same ideas of the astronomical science of the Chaldeans. That a people inhabiting vast plains, under a sky always serene, may have been led to observe the course of the stars, even from the times when they were wandering tribes, and when the stars alone could guide them at night, is natural. But since what period did they become astronomers, and how far have they carried the science of astronomy? That is the question. It is agreed that Callisthenes sent Aristotle observations made by them, which went as far back as 2200 years before Christ. But this is stated only by Simplicius,(4) according

(1) *Bibl. lib. i. p. 46.*

(2) *Geogr. p. 102.*

(3) See the admirable dissertation of M. Biot, on the probable newness of this period, in his researches on many points of Egyptian Astronomy, p. 148, et seq.

(4) See M. Delambre's *Hist. d'Astro. v. 1, p. 212.* See also his *Analysis of Geminus, ib. p. 211.* Compare with them the