Hajjar, Y. La triade d'Héliopolis-Baalbek, iconographie, théologie culte et sanctuaires — Montréal, 1985, pp. 423, planches xiii.

The scholarly world, especially those rare souls interested in the religions of the Levant and their spread in the Roman period, are in debt to Prof. Youssef Hajjar, of the Université de Montréal, for the volume, in two parts, that he published in 1977 on La triade d'Héliopolis-Baalbek as vol. 51 of the series Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain. This thoroughgoing work presented the iconographic and epigraphic documents (418 pp.), the literary texts (about 40 pp.) and also a corpus called ‘monuments non- hélioplutains’. This was followed by a discussion of the cult of the Heliopolitan triad and its diffusion in the Roman empire. Beside detailed indices and concordances, the reader was given 128 plates of epigraphic and iconographic material for study. The premise stated in the title, that there was a Heliopolitan triad set the format of the book. This triad consisted of Jupiter, Venus and Mercury. The author uses the Roman designations for these gods, rather than the earlier Aramaic or Greek, since they appear in the epigraphic material only in Roman form. The existence of this triad has been doubted by many scholars. There can be no doubt about the divine pair Jupiter and Venus, coming in place of Zeus and Aphrodite, and eventually in place of Hadad and Atargatis. They are found in the West Semitic arena in various guises, but Mercury—that is Hermes and before him in all likelihood Nabu (Biblical Nebo)—as a third member of the group is extremely doubtful. The divine pair appear together at some sites, and at others complement each other, that is, at Heliopolis-Mabbug, they both appear on coins of the same series. Some mythographers, both ancient and modern, tried to place a younger god in the picture and at times also made him the son of the pair under discussion. Thus some scholars in a sort of search for an early trinity have proposed for Tyre the triad Ba'alshamem, Ashtart and Melqart, or for Sidon the triad Ba'alshamem, Ashtart and Eshmun. This endeavour has been brought down into the hellenistic and Roman periods. Suffice it to say that there is no evidence for this; indeed the legends that would have the younger god romantically attached to his supposed mother vitiates against this sort of reasoning. The only triad about which there can be no argument is that of Hatra—in which the gods are called: mārān “our lord”, marātān “our lady” and bar mārān “son of our lord”.

This is not to assert that these three gods do not appear together in inscriptions. Thus in the often discussed Latin inscription CIL III, 138 and 14385b from Heliopolis-Baalbek, which figures as nos. 2, 3 in Hajjar’s corpus (pp. 7-12) the three gods (after proper restoration) are named

Numen, Vol. XXXVII, Fasc. 2
together and the same is true of other inscriptions, but there is no affiliation provided for them. The same is true for the iconographic representations. Although one may admit that there are at least two items in the corpus that present the three gods together: the Antioch altar (no. 170, pl. lxiv—but note that there is a fourth icon) and the plaque found in Roman on the Palatine hill (no. 293, pl. cxiv); Hajjar finds other representations of the triad in his iconographic material, but a bit of scepticism is in order. The Heliopolitan Jove was popular in Rome and throughout the Roman empire in the West as is abundantly clear from Hajjar’s valuable corpus, and the other Heliopolitan gods were also revered, but this does not as yet make for a plausible triad.

All of the above is a sort of preface to the proper review of Prof. Hajjar’s more recent work. He has taken the results of the research recorded in the earlier work as a given. Although he did enter into discussion of some matters of substance in that volume, he uses his second book as a means of locating the gods of Heliopolis and their cult in both spatial and temporal dimensions. He also engages in a comparative study of these deities, using primarily Syro-Phoenician material, but with attention to Anatolian, Mesopotamian and Egyptian comparative phenomena. The first part (pp. 19-174) deals with the iconography of the ‘Heliopolitan triad’ with Jupiter Heliopolitanus, to use the author’s terminology, taking pride of place with over 114 pages, while the other members of the triad get only about 20 pages each. The justification for this imbalance lies in the fact, ascertained by an examination of the Corpus in the earlier volume, that the formula (l(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) H(elipolitano) was the dominant dedication in these inscriptions.

There can be no doubt that the author has spread his net widely and has read broadly. The text and footnotes present a sort of omnium gatherum of a good part of the material that has been written on the topics discussed. Thus, since the socle of many of the images of Jupiter Heliopolitanus consists of two young bulls, there is under ‘taureaux’ (pp. 37-61) a detailed discussion of the use of animals as the base of a divine statue, and as such the discussion is indeed useful. However, a critical reading shows that much of assembled material is indeed irrelevant. The same is true in the discussion of Venus Heliopolitana’s ‘animaux-attributes’ (pp. 143-146) and ‘coiffure et costumes’ (pp. 146-152). I find that items that belong to essentially different categories are juxtaposed. If the author felt constrained to bring all of this comparative material, he should have then attempted to sort it out. For example, the comparison of the kalathos worn by Venus Heliopolitana (the local Atargatis, and by all the Atargatis-like goddesses in the arena) and the head-dress of Ishtar on Mesopotamian terra cotta figurines is particularly jarring. The discus-