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1911.

THE 520TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

WAS HELD IN

THE LECTURE HALL OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS
BY KIND PERMISSION, ON MONDAY, 12TH JUNE, 1911,
AT 4.30 P.M.

THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON BERESFORD POTTER TOOK THE
CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read and confirmed.

The Secretary announced the election of two Associates :—

Mrs. Stuart Trotter.

Mrs. Edward Trotter.

The Rev. W. St. Clair Tisdall was then invited to read his paper :—

MITHRAISM: Christianity's Greatest Rival under the Roman Emperors. By the Rev. W. ST. CLAIR TISDALL, D.D.

Οὐδὲν ἀνθρώπων λαβεῖν μείζον οὐδὲ χάρισσασθαι Θεῷ
σμενότερον ἀληθείας.

(Plutarch.)

NUMEROUS as were the rivals with which, during the first few centuries of our era, Christianity had to contend for the empire of the human heart and of the world, none was more powerful, more dangerous, and (in spite of certain deceptive and merely superficial resemblances)* more opposed

* Attention is called to these outward resemblances by Tertullian, Justin Martyr, etc. Origen (*Contra Celsum*, Lib. VI, 22) says that Celsus accused the Christians of borrowing their seven heavens from the Mithraic mysteries. In modern times Lajard, *Recherches sur le culte publique et les mystères de Mithra*, has unintentionally exaggerated these resemblances: while Mr. J. M. Robertson in his *Pagan Christs*, Mr. Vivian Phelips ("Philip Vivian") in his *The Churches and Modern Thought*, Dr. Frazer in *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, Mr. Mallock in *Nineteenth Century and After* for September, 1905, and others, have called in the aid of excited imaginations, if not also inventive talent of a very high order, with the object of making these points of outward contact between Christianity and Mithraism seem so numerous and so important as to lead their readers to infer a very close relationship between the two faiths. This will be evident in the passage we quote further on in the text.

to it in spirit and in principle than the Religion of Mithra.* The contest began in the closing years of the first Christian century, waxed fiercer in the second, reached its crisis towards the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth, and culminated in the complete triumph of Christianity,† a Christianity, alas! no longer of unsullied purity, before the year 400.

In our own day an attempt has been made to renew the struggle in another form; to lead men to fancy that Mithraism‡ and Christianity were of kindred origin, if not actually from one and the same source; that in rites, ethics and doctrines they differed little, if at all; and that in fact the Divine Infant born in the stable and laid in the manger at Bethlehem was identical in all but name with the youthful hero§ in Phrygian attire, the so-called "God from a Rock" (θεὸς ἐκ πέτρας), who was destined to be worshipped for a time by multitudes of stalwart devotees from the Hindû Kush to the Roman Wall

* In Sanskrit *Mitra* ("a friend"), Avestic *Mithra*, Pahlavî *Mitrô*, Greek *Mithras* and *Mίθρης*, Latin *Mithras*, *Mithrês*, and *Mitra*. Mod. Pers. *Mîhr*, Armenian *Mîhr*.

† Mithraism in the Roman Empire flourished most widely in the third century. Its public worship was forbidden at Rome in A.D. 378, and more successfully throughout the Empire by the Theodosian Code in A.D. 391.

‡ Manes (Mânî) was apparently the first to start this theory (A.D. 215-276). At an earlier age such a supposition would have needed no refutation. He apparently identified Christ with Mithra.

§ This is but another form of the now exploded Solar Myth theory. Seydel, *Das Evangelium Jesu in s. Verhältnissen zu Buddha-Sage, and Buddha und Christus*, has tried to do the same thing, substituting Buddha for Mithra; and his failure is admitted even by Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 290-292. Mr. J. M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*, endeavours to trace Christianity to the legends of Krishna. E. Schuré, *Krishna and Orpheus*, though pretending to derive his information from the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* and the *Vishnu-Purâna*, writes a romance founded on the Gospels, with the same object. M. Jacolliot, *La Bible dans l'Inde et la vie de Jezeus Christna*, and Dr. Marius, *La Personnalité du Christ*, do the same still more audaciously, and are well answered by Professor De Harlez, *Vedisme, Brahmanisme et Christianisme*, who shows that they have deliberately and unblushingly lied to support a contention which they knew to be false. M. Notovitch, *The Unknown Life of Christ*, has been exposed somewhat similarly by J. A. Douglas in the *Nineteenth Century* for April, 1896. See Professor S. Dill's remarks, *Roman Society from Nero to Aurelius* (pp. 622, 623): "Futile attempts have been made to find parallels to Biblical narrative or symbolism in the faint and faded legend of Mithra. . . . One great weakness of Mithraism lay precisely here, that, in place of the narrative of a divine life, instinct with human sympathy, it had only to offer the cold symbolism of a cosmic legend."

of Caledonia. Mr. Mallock, for instance, says that the religion of Mithra "resembled that of Christ in being a religion of inward holiness, of austere self-discipline and purity ; but the details of its resemblance are incomparably more close and curious" (than in the case of the religion of Isis). . . . "According to Mithraic theology, God, considered in His totality, is a Being so infinite and so transcendent that His direct connexion with man and the universe is inconceivable. In order to become the Father of Man and Creator, He manifested Himself in a second personality, namely Mithra, who was in his cosmic character identified with the 'Unconquered Sur,' and, as a moral and intellectual being, was the Divine Word or Reason, and, in more senses than one, the 'Mediator' between man and the Most High. Life on earth, according to the Mithraic doctrine, is for man a time of trial. The Spirit of Evil, his adversary, is always seeking to destroy him, to crush him with pain and sorrow, or to stain his soul with concupiscence, but in all his struggles Mithra is at hand to aid him, and will at the last day be at once his judge and advocate, when the graves give up their dead, when the just are separated from the unjust, when the saved are welcomed like children into eternal bliss, and the lost are consumed in the fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. This Divine Saviour came into the world as an infant. His first worshippers were shepherds ; and the day of his nativity was December 25th . . . His followers preached a severe and rigid morality, chief among their virtues being temperance, chastity, renunciation and self-control. They kept the seventh day holy . . . They had seven sacraments, of which the most important were baptism, confirmation, and an Eucharistic Supper, at which the communicants partook of the Divine Nature of Mithra under the species of bread and wine." (*Nineteenth Century and After*, September, 1905.)

We shall be better able to judge of the correctness of these remarkable assertions when we have concluded our examination of Mithraism and seen what its real nature was and how far it was from resembling Christianity in any real sense.*

* Meanwhile Professor De Harlez' words in dealing with the once notorious M. Jacolliot's similar attack on the truth of the Gospel may be quoted as applicable in the present case also : "Que nos frères de la libre pensée nous permettent . . . cette réflexion qui est dans l'esprit de tous : Quand nous les voyons user de semblables moyens et attaquer nos croyances avec des armes de cette espèce, comment pourrions-nous nous défendre de suspecter leur bonne foi ?" (*Vedisme, Brahmanisme et Christianisme*, p. 156).

To the serious student the theory that the legend of Mithra and the Gospel account of Christ are one and the same needs little confutation. The facts on which Christianity is based are matters of history. The writers of the New Testament were in many cases eye-witnesses* of the most important of the events which they record, and in other cases they wrote on the authority of eye-witnesses. When, about A.D. 30 or a little later, the Apostles, and especially the other brethren, set out from Jerusalem† to begin the task of making all nations‡ disciples, and "went about preaching the Word,"§ it is evident that they must have had *some* message to proclaim, some news of their Master to tell. What that news was we learn from the New Testament. According to the latest scholarship of our day,|| the Synoptic Gospels were written and published, the earliest about 20, and the latest not more than 40 years after Christ had been crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius.¶ Therefore even the most credulous opponent of Christianity can hardly believe that the heralds of Christ confounded Him with Mithra, whose cruel and barbarous** worship, associated†† with

* Cf. I John i, 1-3.

† Lk. xxiv, 46-49; Acts i, 8.

‡ Matt. xxviii, 19.

§ Acts viii, 4.

|| Harnack (*Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und zur Abfassungszeit der Synoptischen Evangelien*) dates the non-Marcian source used by Matthew and Luke as written about or before A.D. 50. (Ramsay thinks it may have been composed even before the Crucifixion: see also Professor Petrie, *The Growth of the Gospels*.) He dates Mark's Gospel between A.D. 50 and 60, and says it cannot be later; Matthew's about A.D. 70; Luke's before the conclusion of the Acts *circa* A.D. 60. There is therefore no room for the growth of myth, nor is there any possibility that the disciples confounded their beloved Master with the Persian Sun-god. The New Testament portraiture of Christ cannot be resolved into myth, fiction, or hallucination. See, e.g., Row's *Jesus of the Evangelists*, Seeley's *Ecce Homo*, Simpson's *The Fact of Christ*, and my own *Religio Critici*, ch. II. ¶ Tacitus, *Annales*, Lib. xv, 44.

** Cf. Lampridius, *Vita Commodi*, cap. 14: Socrates, *Hist. Ecc.*, Lib. iii, cap. ii, §§ 2-6: Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, Lib. x, vv. 1006-1050 (Dressel's Ed.): Nonnus, *Συναγωγὴ Ἰστοριῶν*, §§ 6, 47: Porphyry, quoted by Cumont, *Textes et Monuments figurés*, vol. ii, p. 42: A. Gasquet, *Essai sur le culte et les mystères de Mithra*, p. 27.

†† In the rites of Cybele, Mâ, etc. A. Gasquet, *op. cit.*, p. 27, states that Artaxerxes I., erecting statues to Mithra and Anahita at Susa, Ecbatana, Babylon, Damascus, and Sardis, identified them with Marduk and Ishtar, and attached to their temples thousands of hierodules of either sex, "voués aux prostitutions sacrées." Professor Dill, *Roman Society*, p. 625, says: "Through the astral fatalism of Babylon, Mithra was inseparably connected with the darkest superstitions of East or West, which covered all sorts of secret crime and perfidy, which lent themselves to seduction, conspiracy, and murder." Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, Hutchinson's transla-

the vilest immorality, they afterwards encountered in Phrygia and elsewhere, and against whom, even when enthroned in the person of a Nero,* a Vitellius, a Domitian, a Commodus, an Elagabalus, they were destined to contend unto blood, unto death by torture, on the cross, at the stake, by the teeth of wild beasts. The deification of the Roman Emperors was directly due to Mithraism.† It was their determined opposition to such blasphemy, and their resolve to die in agonies indescribable rather than burn a handful of incense before the Emperor's statue, which, from the point of view of Roman statesmanship, rendered necessary those terrible persecutions of the Christians that, again and again during three centuries, arrayed against the martyr church all the might of the Empire, only to succeed after all in crowning its faithfulness with the victor's palm. In the *Vicisti Galilæe* of Julian the Apostate, Mithraism uttered its dying groan.

The worship of Mithra, brought to Rome by the Cilician pirates‡ captured by Pompey in 68 B.C., did not at first spread to any extent, though even then Eastern religions were becoming in some degree popular in the West. Of Latin writers Statius (*Thebais*, Lib. I, 716 *fin.*)§ is the first to mention it, about

tion, p. 266, speaking of Mithraism, says: "The immorality of the ancient Phrygian Sabazia had not disappeared, but was masked by a veneer of pantheism and mysticism."

* Dio Cassius, Lib. lxxiii, 5, represents Tiridates of Armenia as saying to Nero: *Kai ἤλαθον πρὸς σε τὸν ἐμὸν θεὸν, προσκυνήσων σε ὡς καὶ τὸν Μίθραν*. Nero bears many divine and semi-divine titles in recently found papyri.

† "On a souvent insisté sur les ressemblances que la cour de Dioclétien offre avec celle de Chosroès. Ce fut le culte solaire, ce furent en particulier, les théories mazdéennes, qui répandirent les idées sur lesquelles les souverains divinisés tentèrent de fonder l'absolutisme monarchique. La rapide diffusion des mystères persiques dans toutes les classes de la population servit admirablement les ambitions politiques des empereurs" (Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, vol. i, Preface, p. xi). *Vide* too what he says of the "effective support" given by the Emperors to Mithraism (*Mysteries of Mithra*, Eng. Ed., pp. 87-89).

‡ Plutarch, *Life of Pompey*, cap. 24.

§ "Adsis, o, memor hospitii, Iunoniaque arva
Dexter ames: seu te roseum Titana vocari
Gentis Achaemeniae ritu, seu praestat Osirin
Frugiferum, seu Persei sub rupibus antri
Indignata sequi torquentem cornua Mitram."

The Scholiast explains this by saying that Mithra is represented as grasping the bull's horns with both hands and twisting them. He (wrongly?) says that the bull is the moon. Note the syncretism in these lines.

A.D. 80. Then and ever afterwards it was universally recognised that Mithra was not a deified man,* not a supposed Divine Incarnation, not any being who had ever trod the earth, but the Sungod.† This we learn from Mithraic inscriptions found in Italy, Dacia, Gaul, Britain, but above all in Austria and Germany. They date from the reigns of Trajan (A.D. 98–117) and Hadrian (A.D. 117–138) onward. Among the most common‡ words in such inscriptions are Ἡλίῳ Μίθρα and *Invicto Soli Mithrae*. About the end of the first century Mithraism began to spread rapidly throughout almost the whole Roman Empire except Greece and the Hellenic world, carried with them by the legions, which were largely composed of foreigners and included not a few Asiatics. It was pre-eminently the religion of barbarous warriors, and its ruthlessness and disregard of purity commended it to others besides. Its spread was rendered the easier from the fact that it opposed no Pagan faith. On the contrary, Western Mithraism (differing in this, as in much else, from the original Persian form of the religion) was at once eclectic and also syncretic§ to the utmost extent. It strove

* Euhemerism, which resolved every deity into a deceased man or woman (and has been revived in our time under another name by such writers as Mr. Grant Allen) does not seem to have been applied to Mithraism, the facts of the case being too obviously against it. Yet Mr. Mallock perhaps implies something of the kind when he says (*Nineteenth Century and After*, September, 1905): "The earthly career of Mithra belonged to an unimaginable past." Mithra as a dweller on earth had no "earthly career" at all. Even Julian the Apostate, who speaks of himself as τοῦ βασιλεως οπαδὸς Ἡλίου (Orat. iv, *initio*) and of Hēlios as τῶν νοερῶν θεῶν μέσος ἐν μέσοις τεταγμένος κατὰ παντοίαν μεσότητι (141, D.), identifies Hēlios with Mithra (εἰ σοι μετὰ τοῦτο φαίην, ὡς καὶ τὸν Μίθραν τιμῶμεν καὶ ἄγομεν Ἡλίῳ τετραετηρικοῦς ἀγῶνας, κτλ. (Oratio iv, Hertlein's Ed., vol. i, p. 201), though distinguishing the solar disc from the Sungod himself.

† Hermann Oldenberg, whether correct or not in what he says about the Babylonian (Akkadian) origin of Sun-worship, is undoubtedly correct in saying: "Mithra, der uralte Sonnengott, unzweifelhaft eine der hervorragendsten Gestalten im populären Glauben der iranischen Völker und auch im Kultus der Achämenidenkönige . . ." (*Die Iranische Religion*, p. 83 of *Die Orientalischen Religionen*). In late Persian Zoroastrianism, Mitrô as angel of the Sun's light is distinguished from the Sun himself in *Dînd î Maînôg î Khirad*, cap. liii, 4, 8, but identified with the Sun in *Sikand Gârnânik Vijâr*, cap. iv, 39.

‡ Vide vol. ii of Cumont's *Textes et Monuments relatifs aux mystères de Mithra*, *passim*.

§ Vide Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, and Prætextatus' argument there that all the gods were in reality one and the same, and might all be summed up under the name of the Sungod. In Lib. i, cap. xxi, it is explained

to unite into one the many varying forms of Physiolatry represented by all the religions of the Roman world, with the solitary exception of Judaism and Christianity. At the same time it tended more and more to promote the worship of the Emperor as the representative and in some sense an incarnation* of the Sungod, who was the most widely adored deity of the East, and was worshipped under various names in the West† also. Such a religion had much to commend it to philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen alike. It formed a specially close alliance with Stoicism. It allied itself, too, with the worship of the Great Mother,‡ the Earth-Goddess, whether called Cybele, Isis,§ Demeter, Ceres, Rhea or by other names, and at least did nothing to discourage the licentious|| rites connected with too many of these deities. Yet the strange rites and imposing

that Adonis is the Sun, as is Attis: Mater deum is the Earth, Osiris is the Sun, and Iris the Moon. So in cap. xxiii, it is stated that Hadad and Atargatis are the Sun and the Earth. Cf. also cap. xx, etc.

* "When the Cæsars of the third century pretended to be gods descended from heaven to the earth, the justification of their imaginary claims had as its corollary the establishment of a public worship of the divinity from whom they believed themselves the emanations" (Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, Eng. Ed., p. 185).

† "From the time of Plato and Aristotle, Greek philosophy regarded the celestial bodies as animate and divine creatures. Stoicism furnished new arguments in favour of this opinion; while Neo-Pythagoreanism and Neo-Platonism insisted still more emphatically on the sacred character of the luminary which is the ever-present image of the intelligible God" (*op. cit.*, p. 184).

‡ "From the moment of the discovery of traces of the Persian cult in Italy, we find it intimately associated with that of the *Magna Mater* of Pessinus, which had been solemnly adopted by the Roman people three centuries before" (*op. cit.*, p. 86).

§ Cf. Apuleius, *Met.* xi, cap. 22-24. Isis identifies herself with other goddesses, such as Deum mater, Minerva, Venus, Diana, Proserpina, Ceres, Juno, Bellona, Hecate, and claims to be "rerum naturae parens" in *Met.* xi, cap. 5: cf. capp. 2 and 11.

|| On conduct in temples of Isis, for example, *vide* Ovid, *Amores*, Lib. ii, El. ii, 25; Juvenal, *Sat.* vi, 488; Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, Lib. xviii, §§ 65 *sqq.* There can be nothing to wonder at in the conduct of the devotees of Isis when we remember that she was goddess of fertility. So in Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, Lib. i, cap. 20, *fn.*: "Isis . . . est vel terra vel natura rerum subiaciens soli. Hinc est, quod continuatis uberibus corpus deae omne densetur." *Vide* also the passage on Isis and Osiris translated (from Maspero's *Les Inscriptions des Pyramides de Saqqarah*, Paris, 1894) in Budge's "Book of the Dead," Introduction to Translation, p. cxxxiv. Athanasius (*κατὰ Ἑλλήνων*, cap. 26) says that the heathen held that: ἐκ μὲν γὰρ Διὸς τὴν παιδοφθορίαν καὶ τὴν μοιχείαν, ἐκ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης τὴν πορνείαν, καὶ ἐκ μὲν Ἑρας τὴν ἀσελγίαν ἐκ δὲ Ἄρεος τοῦς φόνοῦς, καὶ ἐξ ἄλλων ἄλλα τοιαῦτα μεμαθήκασιν.

ceremonies of Mithraism, its pretence to Eastern wisdom and great antiquity, its connexion with magic, its mysteries and secret doctrines known only to the initiated, its worship in dim caves and crypts, its solemn sacrifices, in which the victims were said not always to be merely animals,* its orders and priesthood, and its claim to reveal the secrets of the after-life, all combined to attract the attention, arouse the curiosity, and revive the dying hopes of an age ever fluctuating between the utmost extremes of Atheism and abject superstition, unable to find the truth, unable to rest without it, unwilling to accept it when revealed, cruel, licentious, and devoid of hope for time and for eternity.

In its Eastern forms, the worship of Mithra can be traced among the Āryans to very early times. They carried it into India with them, perhaps as early as 2000 B.C. In the Rig-Veda, Mitra is one of the seven Ādityas or sons of the goddess Aditi, "the Expanse."† His father is at one time called Kaśyapa,‡ at another Daksha,§ and at another Rīta.|| Mitra is generally mentioned in close connexion with Varuṇa (Οὐρανός), so close indeed that the dual of the word Mitra¶ is used to denote Mitra and Varuṇa, while in the plural it means "the [three] friends," Mitra, Varuṇa, and Aryaman. The Sun is the common eye** of Mitra and Varuṇa. Mitra is rarely mentioned

* The Ecclesiastical historian Socrates (*Hist. Ecc.*, Lib. iii, cap. ii, §§ 2-6) tells of a ruined temple of Mithra at Alexandria, ἐν ᾗ οἱ Ἕλληνες (i.e. Gentiles) τὸ παλαιὸν τῷ Μίθρᾳ τελετὰς ποιῶντες ἀνθρώπων κατέθουον. Of the objects found in the ruins he says : ταῦτα δὲ ἦν κρανίᾳ ἀνθρώπων πολλὰ νέων τε καὶ παλαιῶν, οὓς λόγος κατεῖχε πάλαι ἀναερεῖσθαι. Sozomen, however (*Hist. Ecc.*, Lib. v, cap. vii, §§ 5, 6) does not mention the skulls. Cumont (*Mysteries of Mithra*, Eng. Version, p. 161) says : "Sometimes the terrified mystic took part, if not as an actor, at least as a spectator, in a simulated murder, which in its origin was undoubtedly real. In late periods the officiants were contented with producing a sword dipped in the blood of a man who had met a violent death."

† E.g., *Śatopatha-Brah̄mana*, 2 Kāṇḍa, 3 Adhyāya, 4 Brāh̄mana, śl. 37. It is said that "Aditi is this earth" (1 Kāṇḍa, 1 Adh., 4 Brāh̄., śl. 5 : and 1 Kāṇḍa, 3 Adh., 1 Brāh̄., śl. 15 and 17).

‡ *Agni-Purāṇa*, cap. xix, śl. 1 and 2 (where twelve Ādityas are mentioned).

§ Rig-Veda, Maṇḍala viii, Hymn 25, śl. 3 and 5.

|| Atharva-Veda, vii, 6, 1.

¶ *Vide* Grossmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda*, s.v. Mitra.

** Rig-Veda, Maṇḍala vii, Hymn 61, śl. 1 :

Udvām cakshur, Varuṇa, supratikam devayor eti sūryas tatanvān :
Abhi yo viśvā bhuvanāni caṣhte, sa manyum martyeshv āciketa.

O Varuṇa, the Sun, the beauteous Eye of you two gods, having

alone, but one famous hymn* in his sole honour speaks of him as having borne both earth and sky, as viewing the races of men without winking, as overspreading earth, stream, and sky, as bearing all the gods (*or* the *Viśva-devas*), and as protecting his worshippers from trouble, defeat, and death. He is spoken of as *priyatamo nrindam†* ("the most friendly of males?" "the greatest friend of males?"). Though Mitra is the Sungod in the Rig-Veda, yet in later hymns we find his *fertilising* energy dwelt upon to some extent. Thus in the Atharva Veda,‡ while Varuṇa is god of waters, including especially the ocean, Mitra and he are conjointly gods of *rain*. In Persia this aspect of his character, that of giver of fertility, was further developed.

When we turn to the latter country we find Mithra spoken of in the Avesta as son of Ahura Mazda by his own daughter Speñta Ārmaiti, and as brother of the other Amesha Speñtas, of Ashi Vañuhî, Sraosha, Rashnu, and many other deities.§ He holds a high position, his praise is sung in long poems,|| he punishes untruth and breaches of faith, presides over justice, and is famed for his wisdom. He sees and hears everything that occurs. He is distinctly the Sungod, as is evident from very many passages, of which it suffices to quote the following :

"Mithra, owner of broad pastures, the watchful one, do we honour, him whom red, swift, yoked steeds draw in a chariot with one golden wheel : and his spear-points are all-resplendent if one bears offerings towards his abode."¶

risen, is coming : he who has graciously beheld all beings has comprehended zeal in mortals."

* Rig-Veda, Maṇḍala iii, Hymn 59.

† Rig-Veda, Maṇḍala vii, Hymn 62, śl. 4.

‡ Atharva-Veda v, 24, śll. 4-5.

§ *Vide* Yasna, xlv, 4 ; xxxiv, 10 ; Yasht xvii, 16 ; xvii, 2 ; Yasna xi, 2 ; xxxvi, 3 ; xlvii, 2. In the Pahlavi commentary on Vendidad xi, 5 ; Ahura Mazda is husband of other female divinities besides Ārmaiti ; *cf.* Yasna xxxviii, 1 ; Visp. iii, 4.

|| The whole of the long tenth Yasht is in his honour.

¶ Yasht x, 136 :—

Mithrem vouru-gaoyaoitīm, etc., jaghaurvōñhem.

yahmāi aurusha aurvanta

yūkhta vāsha thanjasōntē

āeva cakhra zaranaēna :

asānasca viśpō-bāma,

yēzi-shē zaōthrō baraiti

avi-shē maēthanem.

Notice his *wheel* (disc) ; *cakhra* = Skt. *cakra*, his *red* steeds (*aurusha* = Skt. *arusha*, used of Agni and his horses), his resplendent spear-points or rays, and his association with Ahura Mazda.

He is often closely associated with Ahura Mazda, as in the Rig-Veda with his equivalent Varuṇa. Thus we read :

“Mithra, Ahura, the lofty ones, the imperishable, the righteous, do we honour: . . . Mithra, lord of all the provinces, do we honour.”*

He aids Ahura Mazda in his long contest against Anrô Mainyuš, “the Hurtful Spirit,” and all the evil beings which assist him and his evil creatures. Since the Sun visits the Underworld at night, Mithra was held to be one of the rulers of the world of the dead. On the fourth day after death, when the spirit of a deceased Zoroastrian reached the entrance to the “Bridge of the Judge” (*Chinvat-peretu*), which stretched from the Alburz to the Chakât Dâitih, he was there tried by Mithra, Sraosha, and Rashnu, of whom the latter weighed his deeds in a balance. If he passed this test, the bridge expanded before him to the width of a parasang. His good deeds, assuming the form of a beautiful girl, came to meet and welcome him to Paradise, Garô-nmâna, † “the Home of Hymns,” the Heaven of Ahura Mazda. The wicked could not cross the bridge, but were driven to torment. ‡

High as was Mithra’s position under the Zoroastrian reformation, § it was apparently lower than it had been before Zoroaster’s time. He had previously been one of the chief deities, perhaps the greatest and most popular of all: whereas now he was not included among the Amesha-Speñtas, || who

* Yasht x, 145 :—

Mithra Ahura berezanta

aithyêjanha ashavana yazamaidê : . . .

Mithrem višpanâm dahyunâm

daiñhu-paitim yazamaidê.

† In the Gâthâs called *Garô-demâna*.

‡ Vide *Vendidad* xix, 100, 101 ; Artâ Virâf Nâmak, iii, 1 ; iv, 7 ; v, i, 2 ; xvii, 1 ; *Bând* xii, 7, etc.

§ Before this reformation the religion of the Persians must have been more similar to that of the Âryans in India. The names of many beings worshipped in India remain in the Avesta, as Indra, Mithra (Skt. Mitra), Airyaman (Skt. Aryanman), Asha (Skt. Rita), Ahura (Skt. Asura), Apâm Napô (Skt. Apâm Napât), Tištriya (Skt. Tishya ?), Râman (Skt. Râma), Vâyu, Vâta, etc. But some of these have become demons (e.g. Indra, who in the Avesta is the demon of untruthfulness) ; and *deva* (deus, *θεός*), “god,” has become *daêva*, “demon.”

|| “Or Bounteous Immortals” ; Ahura Mazda, Vôhu Manô, Asha Vahišta, Khshathra Vairya, Speñta Ârmaiti, Haurvatât and Ameretât. Ahura Mazda was their chief, and was generally regarded as father of the rest, Speñta Ârmaiti, his spouse (tâ câ višpâ, Ahurâ, thwahmî, Mazdâ, *Khshathrôbi* â vöyathrâ, *Yasna* xxxiv, 10), being his own daughter (*Yasna*, xlv, 4). In Yasht xviii, 2, Ashi Vañuhi is said to be Ahura Mazda’s daughter : in

correspond with the Âdityas of the Rig-Veda. Yet the Avesta shows that attempts were made to restore him to his lofty place by making him equal to Ahura Mazda. In fact in one passage it is said that "Ahura Mazda adored" Mithra "near (*or* with) brilliant Garô-ninâna."* Elsewhere we are told that Ahura Mazda had made Mithra as great as himself "to keep guard over all this moving† world," and that he had rendered him as great in dignity and honour as‡ himself. This shows that it was felt necessary to prevent rivalry between Ahura Mazda and Mithra by recognising their equality. In other words, the later parts§ of the Avesta show that Zoroastrianism was decaying and Mithra was again coming to the fore. This prepared the way for his Western conquests.

As early as the time of Artaxerxes Ochus, we find Mithra honoured and worshipped in connexion with Ahura Mazda. Thus in an inscription of this King we read: "King|| Artaxerxes

v. 16 of the same *yasna* we read of her: "Thy father is Ahura Mazda . . thy mother is Ârmaiti Speñta." This name means "Bountiful or Productive) Pleasure" (Sanskrite verbo *â-ram*, "requiescere," "gaudere," nonnumquam de re venerea utuntur), and she is the tutelary goddess of the earth. Originally, in many cases at least, the other Amesha Speñtas were personified attributes of Ahura Mazda. One proof that Mithra is in no sense a "manifestation" of Ahura Mazda, but a separate deity, is the fact that Mithra is *not* an Amesha-Speñta, though, like all the latter and also Rashnu, Sraosha, etc., he is in the Avesta one of Ahura Mazda's children (Yasht, xvii, 2, 16.) Yet Mr. J. M. Robertson (*Pagan Christs*, 2nd Ed., p. 320), assures us that Mithra was the *chief* of the Amesha-Speñtas.

* *Mithrem . . . yim yazata Ahurô Mazdô raokhshnât paiti Garôn-mânât* (Yasht x, 31, 123.)

† Yasht x, 103; Yim haretâremca aiwyâkhštâremca.

Fradathat Ahurô Mazdô.

Vispayô fravôis gæthayô.

"Whom Ahura Mazda set forth as both guardian and overseer of all this moving world" (i.e., cattle, etc.)

‡ Yasht x, 1; Mraot Ahurô Mazdô Spitamâi Zarathuštrâi; Âat yat Mithrem, yim vouru-gaoyaitim, frâdadhâm azem, Spitama, âat dim dadhâm avôñitem yêsnyata, avôñitem vahmyata, yatha mâmcit, yim Ahurem Mazdâm.—"Ahura Mazda said to beneficent (?) Zoroaster, 'Then, when I set forth Mithra, lord of broad pastures, O beneficent one, then I rendered him as great in worshipfulness, as great in venerableness, as even myself Ahura Mazda.'"

§ It is as yet impossible to fix the date of the composition of the various parts of the Avesta. The Gâthâs were probably composed by Zoroaster (Zarathuštra) himself, about 600 B.C. or a little later, while the Khorda Avesta consists of prayers, etc., which received their present form under the editorship of Âhdarpâdh Mahraspand in the reign of Shâpûr (Sapor) ii (A.D. 310-379.)

|| Thâtiy Artakhshatrâ khshâyathiya: Mâm Auramazdâ utâ Mithra

saith: 'May Auramazdâ and the god Mithra protect me and this province.' Artaxerxes Mnemon associates Anâhita (Anahata) with the other two deities, and prays thus: "May* Auramazdâ, Anahata, and Mithra protect me." This is the earliest inscription known to us in which Anâhita takes her place beside Mithra. In the much more fully developed polytheism of most of the Avesta, many other deities are worshipped with him. It was easy therefore for Mithraism to associate with this god the deities of the lands to which it afterwards spread towards the West.

Here, however, we must notice one of the great differences† between Avestic and Western Mithraism. Zoroastrianism taught that between the Good and the Evil Principle (Ahura Mazda and Ahrô Mainyuš) there raged a life and death struggle, that the latter should at all costs be opposed, that neither Ahriman‡ nor any of his evil *daévas* should be worshipped,

baga pâtuv utâ imâm dahyum (Spiegel, *Die Altpersischen Keilinschriften* p. 70).

* Auramazdâ Anahata utâ Mithra mâm pâtuv (restored, *op. cit.*, p. 68).

† The differences seem to have been many and great, so much so that we can accept only with much hesitation the teaching of the Avesta as representing in any way what was held by Western Mithraists. For example, regarding Ahura Mazda and the Amesha Spēntas, the Bull, the kind of sacrifices used, the state of the spirits of the dead, the disposal of dead bodies, eschatology, sexual morality, Ahriman and his allies, and many other subjects, the divergence of Western Mithraism from the teaching of the Avesta must have been great and wide.

Professor Hermann Oldenberg (*Die Iranische Religion*, p. 85 of *Die Orientalischen Religionen*, 1906) says: "Wenn durch die Weiten des römischen Reichs der Mysterienkult, der sich an den Namen des Mithra knüpfte, wenn Manis tiefsinnige Lehre von der Läuterung des Lichts aus dem Kerker der Finsternis in Orient und Okzident unberechenbaren Erfolgen nah zu kommen schien, so sind das nicht mehr Siege des Mazdaglaubens gewesen. Die völkerbezwingende *Genialität der Weltreligionen* war diesen nicht eigen." That is to say, the religion had to admit much lower and debasing elements to enter it before it could enter on the conquest of the world.

‡ It may be well to give the various forms which the names of the Good and Evil Principles assumed in course of time and in different languages.

	<i>The Good.</i>	<i>The Evil.</i>
Avesta	Ahura Mazda	Ahrô Mainyuš.
Achaemenian Inscr.	Auramazdâ	(not found).
Pahlavi	Aûharmazd	Aharman.
Old Pers.	Hôrmazd... ..	Ahriman.
Mod. Pers.	Ôrmazd	Ahraman, Ahrîman
		Ahran, etc.
Greek	Ἄρομάζης	Ἄρεμάνιος.

adoration being due only to Ahura Mazda (Ōrmazd) and his good creatures. Hence a fierce contest was carried on against the worship of idols and evil deities. Thus, in the so-called Bahman Yasht, Mithra orders the destruction of idol-temples.* But in Western Mithraism no such opposition to the powers of evil is found. Plutarch tells us that in it† Mithra was styled the Middleman (μεσίτης) between Ahriman and Ōrmazd. He adds that worship and sacrifice were offered to both the Good and the Evil Principle, and that the Mithraists, mixing wolf's blood with the juice of the *moly* (μῶλυ = *haoma* perhaps), used to pour it out as a libation in a sunless place. Hence we find in a Mithraic inscription a dedication to *Ahriman*!‡

In passing through Armenia and Phrygia into Europe, Mithraism seems to have adopted some of the worst abominations of Nature-worship, and not least those distinctive of the religion of Attis and the Mother of the Gods. The reason of this is not far to seek. Although the Avesta sternly condemns unchastity,§ yet Mithra was never the guardian of *purity*. He was the god of fertility in every sense, and blessed men by raising up for them "virtuous offspring."|| Persian Zoroastrianism seems to have had little idea of holiness or purity, except¶ in a ceremonial sense. The great distinction between Ahura Mazda and Anrô Mainyuš was that the former created and the latter

* Bahman Yasht, Ch. III, 35.

† Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, cap. 46, says: Νομίζουσι γὰρ οἱ μὲν θεοὺς εἶναι δύο καθάπερ ἀντιτέχνους, τὸν μὲν ἀγαθῶν, τὸν δὲ φαύλων δημιουργόν, οἱ δὲ τὸν μὲν ἀμείνονα θεόν, τὸν δ' ἕτερον δαίμονα καλοῦσιν ὡσπερ Ζωροάστρησ ὁ μάγος . . . οὗτος οὖν ἐκάλεε τὸν μὲν Ὀρομάζην, τὸν δ' Ἀρειμάνιον· καὶ προσαπεφαίνετο τὸν μὲν εἰκέναι φωτὶ μάλιστα τῶν αἰσθητῶν, τὸν δ' ἔμπαλιν σκότῳ καὶ ἀγνοίᾳ, μέσον δ' ἀμφοῖν τὸν Μίθρην εἶναι· διὸ καὶ Μίθρην Πέρσαι τὸν Μεσίτην ὀνομάζουσιν, ἐδίδαξε δὲ τῷ μὲν εὐκταῖα θύειν καὶ χαριστήρια, τῷ δ' ἀποτρόπαια καὶ σκυθρωπά· πᾶν γὰρ τινα κόπτοντες Μῶλυ καλουμένην ἐν ὄλμῳ, τὸν Ἄϊδην ἀνακαλοῦνται καὶ τὸν σκότον· εἶτα μίξαντες αἵματι λύκου σφαγέντος εἰς τόπον ἀνήλιον ἐκφέρουσι καὶ ρίπτουσι.

‡ "D(eo) Arimanio Agrestius v(ir) c(larissimus) defensor magister et pater patrum voti c(ompos) d(at) : "Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, vol. ii, p. 98 : *cf. op. cit.*, pp. 96, 110, 119, etc., for inscriptions to various other deities. The title *pater patrum* shows the dedication to have been not only a Mithraist but one of the very highest grade.

§ On the ground that prostitution hindered the growth of the population.

|| Yasht X, 108.

¶ See the *Vendidad passim*.

destroyed. Even the creatures he made were* destructive. On the other hand, all that was conducive to the production and growth of plants, harmless animals and men, was associated with Ahura Mazda and his allies. To them the term *speñta*, often rendered "holy," but really meaning "productive,"† was applied as a consequence of this. The procreative side of Mithra's character was therefore readily developed. In all systems of Physiolatry, sky and earth, the sun and water, heat‡ and moisture, are deified as the procreative§ powers of nature. So in Persia, Mithra the Sungod was associated with Aredvī Sûra, which was a mythical river called *anâhita* or "undefiled" because of the purity of its waters. This was personified as the goddess of|| fertility, and became known as Anâhita (in Greek Ἀναΐτις). In Armenia especially the "Golden Anahit" was as popular a deity as "golden Aphrodite" in the Hellenic world, and was served with much the same abominable rites as the Cyprian goddess.¶ It was but natural that Mithraism through its early association with the worship of Anâhita should in Phrygia form the same close alliance with that of the

* *Vide, e.g.,* Vendidad, *Farvard I.*

† The root *span*, *spên* = Skt. *svi*, "to swell, grow." The Pahlavi commentary renders *speñta* by *afzânîk*, "causing to increase." So *anra*, "evil," comes from the root *angh* (Germ. *eng*), "to narrow, decrease, destroy." Anrô Mainyuš is therefore often described as *Pôuru-mahrka*, "full of death."

‡ *Cf.* what the Egyptians said to Solon, that Nêith (Athene) had reared certain people, ἐκ Γῆς τε καὶ Ἡφαίστου τὸ σπέρμα παραλαβοῦσα (Plato, *Timæus*, 3).

§ *Cf.* Albrecht Dieterich's "Mutter Erde," also Frazer, "Adonis, Attis, Osiris," *passim*.

|| *Cf.* Porphyry, *De Antro Nympharum*, cap. 17: Συνεργεῖ γὰρ γενέσει τὸ ὕδωρ • διὸ καὶ ἐν τοῖς κρατήρσι καὶ ἀμφιφορεύσι τιθαιβώσσοουσι μέλισσαι, τῶν μὲν κρατήρων σύμβολον τῶν πηγῶν φερόντων, καθὼς παρὰ τῇ Μίθρᾳ ὁ κρατὴρ ἀντὶ τῆς πηγῆς τέτακται, τῶν δ' ἀμφιφορέων, ἐν οἷς τὰ ἀπὸ τῶν πηγῶν ἀρνόμεθα. He adds that anciently souls were represented by the bees, and that the ancients called Demeter's priestesses bees as *μύστιδες* of the Earth goddess.

¶ So Strabo, p. 532, and others. *Vide my Hist. of Conversion of Armenia* pp. 45, 46; also the Armenian *Ēntir Hatouadsner*, Tiflis, 1889, pp. 118 sqq. In Agathangelos, King Tiridates calls Anahit not only "Queen" but also "the glory and life-giver of our nation," and says that through her "the land of the Armenians lives and supports its vitality" (ch. v: Tiflis Ed. of Armenian text, pp. 40, 41, 47, 48). On the whole repulsive subject, see Dr. Frazer's *Golden Bough* and *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*: also *Armenia* in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. On Anahita's popularity in Armenia *vide* Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, Lib. xxx, 24. The 5th Yasht is in her honour.

corresponding local Nature-goddess Mâ (Cybele, Magna Mater, Mater Deûm), and should carry the abominations of that worship into the Roman world. In the West, some hold that men only were allowed to worship Mithra, their women* devoting themselves to Cybele.† Others say that there were female Mithraists called "Hyænas,"‡ not a very attractive name. In Phrygia, Mithra seems to have been in large measure identified with Attis, also a Sungod; hence the violet and the pine-tree,§ both sacred to Attis, were in Western Mithraism consecrated to Mithra. Agdistis, another Phrygian deity and

* So Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra*, p. 173, etc.

† "The most ancient Mithraeum known to us was contiguous to the μητροῶν of Ostia, and we have every reason to believe that the worship of the Iranian god and that of the Phrygian goddess were conducted in intimate communion with each other throughout the entire extent of the Empire" (Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra*, p. 179). He adds: "Further, since men only were permitted to take part in the secret ceremonies of the Persian liturgy, other Mysteries to which women were admitted must have formed some species of alliance with the former to make them complete. The Great Mother succeeded thus to the place of Anâhita; she had her *Matres* or 'Mothers,' as Mithra had his 'Fathers.'"

‡ Or "Lionesses," according to another reading, Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, Lib. iv, cap. 16, quoted below, p. 262, note †.

§ Ovid (*Metam.* x, 104) says that Attis was transformed into a Pine-tree, because of his self-mutilation under such a tree (Servius on *Æn.* ix, 114). The violet was also sacred to Attis, since garlands of violets were bound on the pine when solemnly brought (Arnobius v, 16 and 39) into Magna Mater's temple. It was also sacred to Mithra (*Bûndakishnêh*, xxvii, 24). Julius Firmicus Maternus (a late writer not by any means reliable) says that, in the Phrygian rites of the Mater Deûm, "per annos singulos arbor pinea caeditur, et in media arbore simulacrum iuvenis subligatur" (*De Errore Prof. Rel.*, cap. 28), cf. Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* xvii, 10). It is usual to consider that in these and the Mithraic rites the pine-tree signified immortality, but this seems more than doubtful. It more probably denoted the vigour of youth, manly vigour, reproductive energy. Perhaps this explains why it was sacred not only to Cybele (Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, vi, 9: Verg. *Æn.* x, 230) and to Diana (Hor. *Od.* iii, 22, 1: Propert. ii, 15, 17) but also to Faunus (Ovid, *Her.* v, 137) and to Pan (Propert. i, 18, 29). The words *pinea* and *πίτυς* (Skt. *pîtu-dâru* and *pîta-dru*) are from the root *pl*, which in the Rig-Veda means "to render fruitful," "to increase." In the Avesta the root has the same meaning. The pine was not well suited to express the idea of a victory over death, because, rightly or wrongly, it was held in ancient times that, if cut down, it never springs up again. Hence Croesus of Lydia (not very far from Phrygia) threatened *πίτυος τρόπον ἐκτρίψειν* the people of Lampsacus, *i.e.*, to destroy them utterly, as is explained in Herodotus vi, 37. From this came the proverb current in Greece later *πίτυος τρόπον ἐκτρίψεσθαι*.

father, in a certain* sense, of Attis, was said to be the son of Jupiter and of a huge rock.† As Agdistis is evidently “a double‡ of Attis,” it was not difficult to transfer to Mithra the statement that he was born of a rock, especially as in Avestic Persian the same word *asman* (in Vedic Sanskrit *aśman*) means not only *rock*, but also *cloud* and *sky*. It was evident to all that the Sungod was born afresh from the sky day by day. As the Avestic account of Mithra’s birth§ does not mention either sky or rock, it is evident that the birth from the ‘*petra genetrix*’ was borrowed, with so much else, from Phrygia. From the same source came the *taurobolion*|| and *kriobolion* ceremonies,

* *Vide* the story in Arnobius, Lib. v.

† Arnobius, Lib. v. The account is said to be taken from the Mysteries of the *Mater Deum*, but it is not fit for quotation.

‡ *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, p. 224.

§ No details are given, but, as we have seen, Mithra is said to have had Ahura Mazda for his father and Ârmaiti, the Earth-spirit, for his mother.

|| Aurelius Prudentius gives the following graphic description of this rite (*Peristephanon*, Lib. x, 1011-1050) :—

“Summus sacerdos nempe sub terram scrobe
arta in profundum consecrandus mergitur,
mire infulatus, festa vittis tempora
nectens, corona tum replexus aurea,
cinctu Gabino sericam fultus togam.

Tabulis superne strata texunt pulpita,
rimosa rari pegmatis compagibus,
scindunt subinde vel terebrant arcam
crebroque lignum perforant acumine,
pateat minutis ut frequens hiatibus.
Huc taurus ingens fronte torva et hispida,
sertis revinctus aut per armos floreis,
aut impeditis comibus, deducitur :
necnon et auro frons coruscat hostiae
setasque fulgor bractealis inficit.

Hic ut statuta est immolanda bellua,
pectus sacrato dividunt venabulo :
eructat amplum vulnus undam sanguinis
ferventis, inque texta pontis subditi
fundit vaporum flumen et late aestuat.
Tum per frequentes mille rimarum vias
inlapsas imber tabidum rorem pluit,
defossus intus quem sacerdos excipit
guttas ad omnes turpe subiectans caput,
et veste et omni putrefactus corpore.
Quin os supinat, obvias offert genas,
supponit aures, labra, nares obicit,
oculos et ipsos perluit liquoribus,
nec iam palato parcit et linguam rigat,
donec cruorem totus atrum conbibat :” etc.

originally belonging to the worship of Cybele, in which a bull and a ram respectively were slain and their blood allowed to stream down upon a priest or other devotee seated in a pit beneath the place of slaughter. These played an important part in European Mithraism.

All students of nature-worship are aware how much stress is laid in them on the procreative power of the sun.* So it was in Mithraism too, at least in Europe. Porphyry speaks of Mithra as the "Dêmiourgos† Bull," and as "Lord of Generation" Herodotus, the earliest extant European writer to mention Mithra, was so much impressed by the immortality which, even at that early date, attended his worship, that he fell into the mistake of stating that the Persians under this name spoke of

* Hence in Sun-worship the phallic emblem is so very common. So in a Mithraeum found at Spoleto, near an altar inscribed *Soli invicto Mithrae sacrum*, "stood two large stones, one triangular and the other conical and perforated" (Pullan, in article on "Mithraism" in vol. xxx of 9th ed. of *Encyclop. Brit.*: see picture in Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, vol. ii, p. 255. This is explained by similar objects found in India (the *linga* and *yonî*), and especially among the Phœnicians and in the Zimbabwe ruins. Cf. the "towers" pictured in Bent's *Ruined Cities of Mashonaland*, p. 149, and the "cone" (p. 150) depicted on a coin of Byblos. See also pp. 187-189, 203, 204, of the same book, and cf. (Lucian) *De Syria Dea*, § 16: *φαλλοὶ δὲ ἐστῶσι ἐν τοῖσι προπυλαίοισι δύο κάρτα μεγάλοι*. The *rose* has an obscene significance at Zimbabwe: ita etiam Arabice penis أبو الورود, *pater* (i.e., qui possidet) *rosæ* dicitur. In Cumont's book, vol. ii, p. 191, fig. 17, there is a sculpture thus described: "Mithra-Attis coiffé d'une tiare élevée, vêtu d'une tunique à manches attachée sur la poitrine par une bouche ronde et d'un large pantalon, qui laisse l'abdomen et les parties génitales à découvert, maintient du genou un taureau abattu," etc. On this subject Julian the Apostate thus writes, speaking of the Sungod (the identity of whom with Mithra he seems to recognise in 155 B): *Εἴπερ χρὴ πεῖθεσθαι τοῖς σοφοῖς, πάντων ἀνθρώπων εἶναι τοῦτον κοινὸν πατέρα. λέγεται γὰρ ὀρθῶς ἀνθρώπος ἀνθρώπων γεννᾶν καὶ ἥλιος · ψυχὰς [δὲ] οὐκ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν σπεῖρειν εἰς γῆν* (131 C.). He speaks of the sun as *τελειότητος καὶ συνοχῆς καὶ γοιῖμου ζωῆς καὶ τῆς ἐνοειδοῦς οὐσίας τὰ μέσα ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ* (142 A.). He seems to be the real author of the erroneous fancy so often repeated nowadays, that *moral purity* was taught by these Nature religions, for he asks: *τίς μὲν ὁ Ἄττις ἦτοι Γάλλος, τίς δὲ ἡ τῶν θεῶν μήτηρ, καὶ ὁ τῆς ἀγνείας ταυτησαί τρόπος ὅποιος;* (*Orat.*, V, *incipit*). Julian also speaks of Hélios' connection with *Aphrodite*, and seeks to explain it (150 B., C.).

† *De Antro Nympharum*, xxiv (cf. xviii): *ὡς καὶ ὁ ταῦρος δημιουργηὸς ὢν [ὁ Μίθρας] καὶ γενέσεως δεσπότης*.

Aphrodite,* whom he identifies with the goddess Mylitta,† of whose vile worship at Babylon he gives such a fearful account.‡ It was not Mithra but his female associate and *sister*§ (according at least to the Armenian myth), Anâhita, who was really the counterpart of the Nature-goddess, and was worshipped in a similar way in Persia and Armenia. In later times in the West, the majority at least of the female devotees of Mithra were, as already stated, worshippers of Cybele,|| regarding the rites of which goddess not even the greatest ingenuity of the imagination of our modern mythologists has been able to invent the theory that they were distinguished by the "inculcation of moral purity."

We have seen that Mithra was entitled the "World-producing Bull" (ὁ ταῦρος δημιουργός). In Egypt, India and other lands, the Bull was one of the most usual symbols of reproduction. One of the most common of the bas-reliefs in Mithraic temples represents Mithra kneeling upon a bull, into the throat of which he is driving a dagger. The particular form in which this idea is expressed owes much to Greek artistic influence; in fact it is largely copied from a Greek statue of Nikê¶ slaying a bull, and it is supposed to have been adapted to Mithraism by a sculptor belonging to Pergamum. But it is well known that it is usual in many cases for the animal upon which a deity is seated to be but another representation of the deity itself. Thus in India the rat is the *vâhana* or "vehicle" of Gaṇeśa, the bull (Nandin) of Śiva, etc. Hence Mithra may, from one point of view, be himself the bull. On the other hand the same thing may be intended by his slaughter of the bull, it being an established fact that in many forms of Nature-worship the deity and the victim offered to him are regarded as identical.

* Καλέουσι ἐν Ἀσσύριοι τὴν Ἀφροδίτην Μύλιττα . . . Πέρσαι ἐν Μίτραν. (Herod., i, 131.)

† Μύλιττα = Babylonian *muallidat gimrišunu* (omnium eorum *genetrix*), called also *Bêltu muallidtu* (Domina Genetrix), *i.e.*, Ishtar.

‡ Herod., i, 199.

§ The same relationship is implied, however, in the Avesta. Hence, perhaps, the next-of-kin marriages for which Persia was infamous. They were styled in Avestic *hvaētavadâtha*, in Pahlavi *Khvêttâkdas*, when between relatives of the first degree.

|| Similarly, "the Roman Silvanus has a niche in one Mithraeum, and in another Saturn and Jupiter, Mars, Mercury and *Venus*, are figured, beside the purely Eastern symbols of the planets and the signs of the zodiac" (Dill, p. 592, referring to Donsbach, p. 17).

¶ The Νίκη ταυροκτόνος of Athens.

In any case the slaying of the bull by Mithra is borrowed from Phrygia and not from Persia. In the Avesta and later Zoroastrian writings there is not the slightest trace of any sacrifice of a bull by Mithra. It is true that we are told that the first creature of Ahura Mazda was a bull, and that this was killed, but its death was due to a wasting disease caused* by Anrô Mainyuš. The second Gâthâ, probably by Zoroaster himself, contains the lament uttered by the bull's soul because of the cruel treatment it had received. This bull most probably represented the earth (as in Sanskrit and Avestic the words *Gaus* and *Gâuš*† respectively do, being cognate with γαῖα, γῆ as well as with βούς and *bos*). Hence the *Bündahishnîh* tells us that in the original‡ creation men passed from region to region upon it," and that the vegetable§ principle proceeding from its limbs and marrow caused grain and medicinal plants to spring up where it fell. It is true that the same book proceeds to state that, when Saoshyañs|| comes to produce the renovation of the world, he will raise to life again this ox, called Hadhayôš and Sarsaok. He¶ will then slaughter it as part of a sacrificial rite** (*yazišn*), and from its fat, mingled with the juice of the *haoma* plant, he†† and his assistants will prepare the beverage

* Bând, ch. iii, § 14, § 18: ch. iv, § 1, etc. The bull's seed was said to be preserved in the Moon, and the bull was the cause of the upspringing of some 280 species of plants, according to Strôzah I, 12: Vend. xxi, i, 1: Bând xi, § 3: etc.

† In Yasna lxiv, 61, *Gâuš*, the bull, is evidently the earth. There we read: "Give me, O thou who didst make the bull (*gām*, cf. γῆ) and the waters and the plants, immortality, health—O most bountiful Spirit, Mazda—strength, might, through Vôhu Manô, I say."

‡ Bând, ch. xix, 3, cf. xv, 27.

§ Bând, ch. x, § 1: ch. xiv, §§ 1, 2.

|| *Vide* Yasht xix, § 88, 89-94: Yasht xiii, §§ 128, 142: Bând, cap. 75.

¶ Note that the killing of the bull is *not* done by *Mithra*, but by *Saoshyañs*, quite a different person in every way.

** Bând, ch. xix, § 3 (cf. Dâdhistân i Dinâk, Part II, answer no. 89): ch. xxx (xxxii), § 25: cf. ch. lxxv.

†† Saoshyañs is the third of the three great deliverers who were to be born of Zoroaster's seed. His mother's name was to be *Vispa-taurvâ*. De hoc Horomazae nuntio futuro, illo in libro qui *Creatio* (*Bündahishnîh*) appellatur, dicitur fore ut, saeculi iam appropinquante fine, haec puella, in eo lacu, cui nomen *Kâsavî*, corpus abluens, e Zoroastris semine ibi servato grâvida facta filium pariat. Nostri temporis scriptores saepe affirmant, in libris Persicis scriptum esse hunc vatem *virgine* nascendum. At quaeritur, num puella virili semine grâvida *virgo* appellari possit. The account of the conception of the other two prophets is similar. *Vide* Vendidad xix, 4-6: Yasht xiii, 128, 142: Bând, xxxii, 8, 9.

called *Hūsh*,* which means "mind," "intelligence," by drinking which the dead man is rendered immortal when recalled to life by Saoshyāns. De Harlez holds that this book was composed in the era of the Sāsānides (A.D. 218-640) and received its final form after the Muḥammadan conquest of Persia, A.D. 640.† Yet it doubtless contains many ancient‡ legends. It is very doubtful, however, whether any part of this Bull-legend was accepted by the Western Mithraists. There is some reason to think that the Phrygians were—at least in large measure—Āryans: hence we may perhaps connect the slaying of the bull by Mithra (as represented in the Mithraea) with the Vedic sacrifice of cattle, with the Taurobolion, and possibly with the idea that the Earth might be spoken of as a bull, or as a cow. On the other hand the fact that the *clouds* are often called *cattle* in the Rig-Veda, where Indra is their owner, and that the epithet *βουκλόπος* or "stealer of oxen" is given to Mithra by Porphyry,§ renders it possible that the striking a dagger into the bull refers rather to the smiting of a rain-cloud in order to pour down the life-giving stream to fertilise the|| earth. The sacrificial significance of the act is rendered very doubtful by the fact that nowhere do we find any legend which represents Mithra as offering sacrifice to Ahura Mazda (Ōrmazd), though we have found a reference to something similar on Ahura Mazda's part towards Mithra.¶ In Western Mithraism Ōrmazd seems to have been almost or altogether eclipsed by Mithra, and is hardly ever mentioned.

It is easy to reconstruct the theology of India and Persia in relation to Mithra: but we have hardly any *data* to go upon if we endeavour to state the Mithraic theology of the West. We

* Avestic *ushi* (cf. also *ušta*, health, healthy): Pahlavi *hūsh*, Mod. Pers. *hūsh*.

† De Harlez: *Manuel de la langue pehlie*, p. 85.

‡ Cf. *Bānd*, §§ 3-5 with Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, cap. 47.

§ Cf. Yasht x, 86. Compare the Greek story of Cacus and the cattle rescued by Herakles. In Armenian and Persian the names given to the Milky Way bear evidence to some tale about stealing cattle, or at least straw for them. But in Armenian the thief was not Mithra but Vahagn (=Avestic Verethraghna.) In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* the Galaxy is called "the Path of Āryaman," an associate of Mithra in the Rig-Veda. Strangely enough, in Coptic and among Arabs, Syrians, Chaldeans, and Ethiopians, it was known as "the strawy way" (Kircher in Peyron's *Lex. Copt.*, p. 258).

|| Similarly in Mithraic carvings Mithra is often represented as shooting an arrow into a rock (*i.e.*, a cloud) and causing water to flow from it.

¶ Yasht x, 123, *vide* p. 247, note *.

have no extant Mithraic scriptures,* and all that is told us by Porphyry (Eubulus) and the various other Greek and Latin writers who mention the matter, is far too scanty in amount and fragmentary in character to justify any scholar in attempting to give a full account of the beliefs of Mithraists. Nor can we recover any Mithraic myth—if there ever was one—from the carvings found in the Mithraea, of which so many have been discovered. Accounts are given us *by modern European writers* of Mithra's birth, death, resurrection and ascension: but on examination these are found to be romances, put together partly through confounding Persian with Western Mithraism, but mostly through misunderstanding certain casual references contained in early and later Christian writers. A vivid imagination too often supplies the place of knowledge, and conjecture that of investigation. Common as this method of dealing† with some subjects is in our day, it can hardly be said to be scholarly, scientific, reliable, or even honest.

With reference to Mithra's birth we have already stated all that is actually known to have been held by his worshippers. The modern idea that they conceived of him as having been born of a Virgin, and entering the world as an infant, has absolutely no foundation whatever. An Armenian Christian writer‡ of the fifth century does, it is true, tell us that the Christian bishops of Armenia, in reply to an attack upon their faith by the Persian viceroy Mihr Nerseh, taunted the Persians with holding that "the God Mithra was born of a§ woman," and in another place he explains this by affirming that a Persian sage had taught that "the God Mithra has been incestuously born of a mortal|| mother." The reference is doubtless to the Avestic legend referring to Mithra as son of Ahura Mazda and Armaiti, which was of course an incestuous birth.¶ But as to

* The *Ἀπαθαντισμός*, published from a *Zauber-papyrus* by A. Dieterich under the title of *Évne Mithrasliturgie*, is held not to be Mithraic by Cumont. Mithra's name occurs in it only once, nor does it tell us anything about him.

† Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs* is only one, though perhaps the most striking, example of this unsatisfactory method.

‡ Eghishê (Elisæus), *Concerning the Vardans and the Armenian War*, Armenian original, Venice, 1864.

§ *Mihr astouads i' knockê dsnav*; (*op. cit.*, p. 53).

|| *Mihrn astouads mairadsin ê i marâkanê* (*op. cit.*, p. 57).

¶ Another Armenian writer, Eznik, in his *Refutation of Heresies* (Bk. II, cap. x, p. 133, Armenian original) tells a story as to the Persian belief of the coming birth of one of the three future prophets, in which he

the mother's *virginity* nothing is said, but the very contrary is implied. In the same way we nowhere find any account of Mithra's death or resurrection. Until proof is forthcoming that the whole of the legend of Attis was taken up by the Mithraists, we have no right to assume that this was accepted by them. Nor, even were this shown to be the case, would it be necessary to do more than repeat what has already been written about the Attis legend by various scholars. A modern writer has endeavoured to prove that Mithra was supposed to have died, been buried in a rock tomb, and come to life again.* The only proof he can give is a passage from a Christian writer, Jul. Firmicus Maternus: but this writer not only *does not mention Mithra at all* in this passage, but does not even say anything of either a rock-tomb or a resurrection. The context, moreover, shows that he is describing the interment of Osiris.† It is unsafe

attributes to *Ormazd* the procreative part to be played by *Zoroaster* in both the Avesta and in later Persian accounts (*vide* above, p. 255, note ††).

In such matters it is hardly wise to attach too much importance to late foreign and hostile writers, like Eznik, when we have the original authorities to which to refer. Moreover this example should warn us not to trust to the complete accuracy of similar statements in other writers of ancient times whose works show that they had not made a careful study of Mithraism.

* Mr. J. M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, pp. 317, 318, 323 of 2nd Ed.

† Maternus (writing about A.D. 344, according to Migne, note on cap. 30) says: "Nocte quadem simulacrum in lectica supinum ponitur, et per numeros digestis fletibus plangitur . . . Tunc a sacerdote omnium qui flebant fauces unguuntur: quibus perunctis, sacerdos hoc lento murmure susurrat,

ἠαρπεῖτε, μύσται τοῦ θεοῦ σεσωσμένου,

ἔσται γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐκ πόνων σωτηρία.

. . . . Dei tui mors nota est, vita non comparet, nec de resurrectione eius divinum aliquando respondit oraculum. . . . Idolum sepelis, idolum plangis, idolum de sepultura profers, et miser, cum hæc feceris, gaudes. Tu deum tuum liberas, tu iacientia lapidis membra componis, tu insensibile corrigis saxum" (*De Errore*, cap. xxiii (*al.* xxii)). This passage evidently refers to *Osiris*, not to Mithra (Mr. Robertson), nor to Attis (Dr. Frazer). Careful study of the words used (for instance, *Dei tui mors nota est*, true of Osiris, not of Mithra) shows that they suit Osiris' case and not Mithra's. The *ἠαρπεῖτε* reminds us that the "motto of the Isiac faith, inscribed on many tombs, was εἰνψύχει" (Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 575), with the same significance, and the *θεοῦ σεσωσμένου* suits the case of Osiris admirably, since Isis had to collect the scattered fragments of his body, torn in pieces by Typhon (Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, capp. 2, 13, 18) and bury them. This she did. It may be worth while calling attention to the fact that the Egyptians did not believe Osiris to have risen from the dead (*Vide my Mythic Christs and the True*, pp. 55-57).

therefore to state that Mithraists in the West believed Mithra to have died and risen again. Certainly no such idea ever existed in Persia,* and we have not the slightest indication that it did elsewhere, either in the East or in the West.

Fancy sketches have been drawn of Mithraic theology, and it has been stated that the titles Holy Word, Mediator, Incarnate Word, were given to Mithra, that he was regarded as son of the Most High God, as equal to Ahura Mazda (Ôrmazd), as his Manifestation, and as a suffering Saviour.† Much of this is due to a misunderstanding. We have seen that, in Persia, Mithra was one of Ahura Mazda's numerous offspring, as were most of the other gods and goddesses. He was a rival of Ahura Mazda, and finally in the West entirely eclipsed him, being spoken of as the Creator. In ancient Persia he was doubtless said to be equal to Ahura Mazda, but so were other deities, such for instance as Tištrya.‡ This probably indicates Henotheism, as a similar phenomenon does in India. In no sense is Mithra called a *manifestation* of Ahura Mazda, nor is he ever represented as a "suffering Saviour." The latter idea has been suggested only by the fact

* What Mr. Robertson quotes (p. 323 of *Pagan Christs*, new edition) from Wait is so obviously a blunder of an ignorant Arab (in the *Burhân i Qâti'*) who mistook *mîhr* for *mîr*, root of *murdan*, "to die," and *gân* for *Khân*, that, though repeated (with other and more probable stories as substitutes) in the *Shamsul' Lughât*, it forms no exception to this statement.

† By Mr. Robertson, Mr. Vivian Phelps ("Philip Vivian") and others.

‡ Yasht viii, 50 :—

Azêṃ dadhâm, spitama Zarathuštra,
aom stârem, yim Tištrim,
avôñtem yēsnyata,
avôñtem vahnyata,
avôñtem khshnaothwata,
avôñtem frasastata,
yatha mâmcit, yim Ahurem Mazdâm.
"I created, O bountiful (?) Zoroaster,
this star, Tištrya (Sirius),
as great in worshipfulness,
as great in venerableness,
as great in worthiness of being propitiated,
as great in praise,
as even myself, Ahura Mazda."

If we compare this with what is said about Mithra in Yasht x, 1 (above, p. 247, note †), it will be evident that even *more* is here said of the greatness of the Dog-star than is said of the dignity of Mithra. So in the *Shâyast lâ Shâyast*, cap. xxiii, §§ 2 and 3, it is said: 'Din-pâ-Âtarô is just like Aûharmazd . . . Din-pâ-Mitrô is just like Aûharmazd, Mitrô is more judicial, Srôsh is more vigorous.'

that sometimes his face when slaying the bull exhibits a look of reluctance.* The title of "Mediator" seems never to have been given him in the Christian sense at all. Plutarch (who was not a Mithraist), indeed, in one passage,† in mentioning the religion of the "Persians," says that they named him *ὁ Μεσίτης*, but the reason he gives is that he was regarded as standing *midway between Ormazd and Ahriman*, not as "in more senses than one the 'Mediator' between man and the Most High," as a modern writer‡ ventures to assert. What Plutarch here states is§ quite incorrect on this point regarding Avestic (*Persian*) Mithraism, so it probably refers to the Western form of that religion, and *may possibly* be true in reference to the latter. But if so, *μεσίτης* cannot here be correctly rendered by "Mediator" in the modern theological sense: it means rather "intermediary." If Mithra was regarded as a link between the Good and the Evil Principle, this shows how much lower the moral conceptions of Western Mithraism were than those of Avestic.||

Of a Logos doctrine in Western Mithraism we know nothing. In Persian Mithraism it is certain that there was nothing of the kind. In the Avesta the words *māthrō speñtō*, "sacred¶ text," occasionally occur, and some translators have rendered

* As in the head (from the Mithraic statue of the Capitol) pictured on the cover and on p. 192 of Cumont's *The Mysteries of Mithra*. Cumont describes "the singular mixture of exultation and remorse depicted in the countenance of" the god Mithra when he has succeeded in slaying the Bull (p. 211, see also p. 135).

† *De Iside et Osiride*, cap. 46, quoted on p. 249, above, note †.

‡ Mr. Mallock, in *Nineteenth Century and After*, Sept., 1905.

§ I mean about Mithra being a *μεσίτης*, and also about worship (at least according to the Avesta) being offered to Ahriman by the "Persians." A good deal of the rest of what Plutarch tells us about Zoroastrian teaching, especially in capp. 46 and 47, is correct to some considerable degree.

|| Hence doubtless it was that Mithraism in the West admitted to its pantheon such a large number of the gods of the various tribes with which it came in contact, without at all shutting out those that were distinctly associated with immorality. A man might be a Mithraic priest and yet hold a high position in the service of other gods at the same time. The inscriptions quoted by Cumont (*Textes et Monuments figurés*, vol. ii) give many instances of this. One cited by A. Dieterich may be given here. It runs thus: "Pater sacrorum summi invicti Mithræ, sacerdos Isidis, dei Liberi archibucolus, sacratas Eleusiniis, tauroboliis, deum matris pontifex, hierofanta Hecatæ (Dieterich, *Eine Mithrastiturgie*, p. 210, Second Ed.). Zoroastrianism would never have permitted this.

¶ If for the sake of convenience we render *speñtō* by "sacred": but see note †, p. 250, above.

them "Holy Word." But *māthró* is connected with the Sanskrit *mantra*, "a hymn"; it does not mean "word," and the context shows that it denotes simply the *text* of the Avesta. The latter is connected with Ahura Mazda, "whose spirit is the sacred* text" itself. Mithra is nowhere identified, directly or indirectly, with this "sacred text." Another mistake is responsible for the fancy that Mithra is called the "Incarnate Word." The vocable thus rendered, *tanu-māthró*, is an *adjective*, and means either "having the Text as his body," or, more probably, "subjecting his body‡ to the Text" in obedience. It is *never* applied to Mithra, but it is applied to inferior and merely human persons, such as the hero Karesna,§ and even to the priest|| who offers prayer for a worshipper. The term cannot possibly therefore mean "Incarnate Word." Inaccuracies such as these cannot be too carefully avoided by all who wish to form a true conception of the doctrines of Mithraism or of any other faith.

Western Mithraism, instead of the belief in Paradise and Hell, and ultimately in a Resurrection¶ brought about by three

* *Yénhé urva mathró spēntô*: *Vend.*, Farg. XIX, 14.

† This is West's rendering (*cf.* Yasht xi, 23: xi, 18: xxiv, 85).

‡ From *tanu*, "body," and *māthró*, "text": *cf.* *tanu-druj*, "subjecting one's body to a *druj*."

§ Yasht xiii, 106:—

Karsnahê zburvaithinahê,
ashaonô fravashîm yazamaidê,
takhmahê, *tanu-māthrahê*,
darshi-draoš, âhûiryêhê.

"We worship the Genius of Karesna, son of Zburvañt, the pious, the strong, *body-texted* (or *subjecting his body to the Text*), mighty-spared, godly."

|| Yasht x, 137:

Ušta ahmâi nairê mainyâi,
(uiti mraot Ahurô Mazdô),
âi ashâum Zarathuštra,
yahmâi zaota ashava
anhéuš dahmô, *tanu-māthró*,
frasteretât paiti baresmen.

"Hail to that spiritual man,"
(thus spake Ahura Mazda),
"O pious Zoroaster,
for whom a pious priest
good of (=in) the world, *body-texted*,
did spread forth [an offering]
with the pomegranate-twigs."

¶ The word "Resurrection" (*ristâkhîz* in the Patêl, a *very* late Pahlavi work: from *irista* "deceased" and *khîz*=Avestic *hwîs*, "to rise") does not occur in the Avesta at all. There however in late passages, we find the

future prophets* in three stages, with an interval of a thousand years between them, had adopted the then extremely popular doctrine of Metempsychosis.† There is only a very slight trace‡ of this doctrine having obtained in Persia in late Zoroastrian times, and it is not found in the Avesta or in modern Pársism. But Pythagoras had introduced it into Europe,

word *frashô-kereti* ("made before," "previous creation," Pahlavi *frash-kert*) with the sense of *restoration* to a previous condition. Neither phrase occurs in any passage that is not much later (according at least to Darmsteter) than the removal of the Israelites (2 Kings xvii, 6) to Media, the country in which it seems certain that Zoroaster was born. Even accepting (as I do not accept) the Higher Critical theory of the date of Daniel, the passage Dan. xii, 2, would precede the occurrence of any reference to the doctrine in the Avesta, even that in Yasht xix, 89.

* Cf. Yashts xiii, 128, 142; xix, 88-94, about Saoshyañs, the last of the three: also *Bündakish*, etc., etc.: also Eznik, "Refutation of Heresies," Armenian original, Bk. ii, cap. 10, p. 133 of Constantinople Ed. of 1873. Saoshyañs is also called *Ástvat-ereta*; his companions (or rather predecessors) are *Ukhshyat-ereta* and *Ukhshyat-nemañh*.

† Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, Lib. IV, cap. 16: *Παρά γε μὴν τοῖς Πέρσιν οἱ περὶ τὸ θεῖον σοφοὶ καὶ τούτου θεράποντες μάγιοι μὲν προσαγορεύονται . . . διήρηντο δὲ οὗτοι εἰς γένη τρία, ὡς φησὶν Εὐβουλος ὁ τὴν περὶ τοῦ Μίθρα ἱστορίαν ἐν πολλοῖς βιβλίοις ἀναγράφας, ὧν οἱ πρῶτοι καὶ λογώτατοι οὐτ' ἐσθίουσιν ἐμψυχον οὔτε φονεύουσιν, ἐμμένουσι δὲ τῇ παλαιᾷ τῶν ζώων ἀποχῇ · οἱ δὲ δεύτεροι χρωῦνται μὲν, οὐ μόντοι τῶν ἡμέρων ζώων τι κτείνουσιν · οὐδ' οἱ τρίτοι ὁμοίως τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐφάπτονται πάντων · καὶ γὰρ δόγμα πάντων ἐστὶ τῶν πρώτων τὴν μετεμψύχωσιν εἶναι, ὃ καὶ ἐμφαίνειν εὐίκασιν ἐν τοῖς τοῦ Μίθρα μυστηρίοις · τὴν γὰρ κοινότητα ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς τὰ ζῶα αἰνιττόμενοι εἰς τῶν ζώων ἡμᾶς μηνύειν εἰώθασιν · ὡς τοὺς μὲν μετέχοντας τῶν αὐτῶν ὄργων μύστας λέοντας καλεῖν, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας λεαῖνας [al. υἰάνας], τοὺς δὲ ὑπηρετοῦντας κόρακας. ἐπὶ τε τῶν πατέρων [lacuna] . . . ἀετοὶ γὰρ καὶ ἑρακες οὗτοι προσαγορεύονται. ὃ τε τὰ λεοντικά παραλαμβάνων, περιτίθεται παντοδαπῶς ζώων μορφάς · ὧν τὴν αἰτίαν ἀποδείδους Πάλλας ἐν τοῖς περὶ τοῦ Μίθρα τὴν κοινὴν φησὶ φορὰν οἶσθαι, ὡς πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ζωδιακοῦ κύκλου ἀποτείνειν · τὴν δὲ ἀληθινὴν ὑπόληψιν καὶ ἀκριβῆ περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν αἰνίττεσθαι, ἄς παντοδαποῖς περιέχεσθαι σώμασι λέγουσι.*

‡ The only one I have been able to find is that, in the Yasht-Sádeh, Órmazd informs Zoroaster that the victorious Bahrâm (Varahrân), the most active of the Yazatas, came first as a wind, second as a golden-horned ox, third as a golden-eared horse, fourth as a camel, fifth as a Virâj, sixth as a youth of 15 years of age, seventh as a bird sacred to Órmazd, eighth as a boar, ninth as a buck, tenth as a shining lamb with a golden head. (Cf. Bhagavad Gítá, bk. iv, śll. 7 and 8, for reasons of Vishnu's avatâras.) But this story may have nothing to do with a belief in transmigration.

from India, or, much more probably, from Egypt,* and it had spread very extensively, commending itself to Plato† and many later philosophers, including the Neo-Platonists. It was one of the leading doctrines of the Mithraism of the West. This very fact itself seems to confute the assertion that Western Mithraists believed in a *Resurrection* to be brought about by Mithra himself. Even in Persia, where in very late times belief in the Resurrection was found, *Mithra* took no part in it.

In early Christian times the widespread belief in Transmigration on the part of the heathen world was dependent on the doctrine that the human spirit had come into this lower world from a higher and more ethereal‡ one. Even in the Rig-Veda we discover a trace of the same idea, for, to the departing spirit, these words are addressed: "Having abandoned imperfection, go thou home again."§ Just in the same way the setting sun is said to be "going home." Much later, when belief in transmigration had become almost universal among Hindûs,|| the terms *dehin* and *śarīrin*, "the embodied,"

* Herodotus, ii, 123. Diodorus Siculus (*Bibl.*, i, p. 62) thinks Pythagoras learnt it in Egypt. Cf. Diogenes Laërtius (lib. vii, cap. i) and *Prooemium*, § 7, Lactantius and Augustine (cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Quaest.*, i, 16) ascribe the introduction of belief in metempsychosis to Pherecydes, who learnt it in Egypt, according to Josephus (*Cont. Apionem*, lib. 1). Sayce (*Religion of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia*, pp. 102, 108) denies that the Egyptians held the doctrine. Yet in the popular *Tale of Two Brothers* there is something very similar. In the rubrics to caps. 72 and 86 of the "Book of the Dead," and also in capp. 77, 78, 81, *a* and *b*, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, the *ba* can in the Underworld transform itself into a hawk, lotus, phoenix, heron, swallow, serpent, crocodile, etc.

† Cf. *Phaedo*, capp. xxx, xxxi: *Republic*, x, capp. 11-16: *Meno*, capp. 14, 15, etc. Pindar (*Olymp.* ii, 68, cf. *Thren.*, fr. 4), Empedocles, Porphyry, Carpostrates, etc., also held the doctrine.

‡ Empedocles (444 B.C.) taught this clearly, so also, it is thought, did both the Orphic and the Pythagorean mysteries. Hence Apuleius (*Asclepius*, cap. 12) says that to those who have lived wickedly, "Et reditus denegatur in caelum et constituitur in corpora alia indigna animo sancto et foeda migratio." Of the teaching of the Hermetic Books, J. L., in Buchberger's *Kirchliches Handlexicon*, vol. i, says: "Nach dieser Lehre, die aber die Volkstüml. Götter duldet, schafft Gott den *νοûς* und dieser die Seele, die der Wanderung durch verschiedene Körper unterworfen ist."

§ Rig-Veda, *Maṇḍala* x, hymn 14, śl. 8: "Hitvâyāvadyaṃ punar astam ehi, saṃ gacchasva tanvâ suvarcâh."

|| It does not occur in the Rig-Veda, though traces of it are found in the Yajur-Veda. The dead go to Yama's realm (*Rig-Veda*, x, 14, § 1, 2, 7-13, etc.: *Śatapatha-Brahmana*, i, 9, 3, 10: cf. *Mahâbhârata*, iii, śll.

came to mean "the spirit," and are so used in the Bhagavad Gītā* and elsewhere. Pythagoras distinctly taught the doctrine of transmigration, probably with the idea that the spirit would thus get rid of its faults and imperfections. In Western Mithraism the doctrine of the descent† of the human spirit upon earth and the means by which it might escape and reascend were explained to those who became initiated into its mysteries. These mysteries were celebrated in a natural or artificial cavern,‡ removed from the light of day. They are said to have included a pretended human sacrifice,§ which the Emperor Commodus, when being initiated, insisted on having

1751 *sqq.*). Transmigration is taught in a very fully developed form in Manu's *Dharmaśāstra*, bk. xii, śll. 3-103, and elsewhere.

* Cf. *Bhagavad Gītā*, ii, 18 (*śarīrin*):

"Antavanta ime dehâ nityasyoktâh śarīraṇaḥ,"

(and for *dehîn*): *Op. cit.* ii, 13:

"Dehino 'smin yathâ dehe kaumâram yauvanam jarâ,"

and ii, 22:

"Vasâñsi jīrnâni yathâ vihâya navâni grihnâti nâro 'parâni,
tathâ śarīrâni vihâya jīrnânyanyâni sañyâti navâni dehî."

"Just as a man, having left worn-out garments, takes other new ones, so the embodied soul (*dehîn*), having left worn-out bodies, betakes itself to other new ones." It is remarkable that the Egyptians thought the "justified" soul could enter any material form it chose, and could change those forms at will, like a garment (Sayce, *Religions of Anc. Egypt and Bab.*, pp. 102, 108).

† Nonnus, though his account of the number of "punishments" or painful tests which the Mithraic neophytes had to undergo may be exaggerated, at least makes this clear. He (*Συναγωγὴ Ἱστοριῶν*, § 6, p. 139, quoted by Lajard, p. 117) mentions *ὑπόβασις* and *ἀνάβασις* (see note †, to p. 264, below).

‡ Porphyry, *De Antro Nympharum* (Ed. Ang. Nauck), cap. vi.: Οὕτω καὶ Πέρσαι τὴν εἰς κάτω κάθοδον τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ πάλιν ἔξοδον μυσταγωγούντες τελοῦσι τὸν μύστην, ἐπονομάσαντες σπήλαιον [τὸν] τόπον· πρῶτα μὲν, ὡς φησὶν Εὐβουλος, Ζωροάστρου αὐτοφνέες σπήλαιον ἐν τοῖς πλησίον ὄρει τῆς Περσίδος ἀνθηρόν καὶ πηγὰς ἔχον ἀνιερῶσαντος εἰς τιμὴν τοῦ πάντων ποιητοῦ καὶ πατρὸς Μίθρου, εἰκόνα φέροντος [αὐτῶ] τοῦ σπηλαίου τοῦ κόσμου ὃν ὁ Μίθρας ἐδημιούργησε, τῶν δὲ ἐντὸς κατὰ συμμέτρους ἀποσιτίσεις σύμβολα φερόντων τῶν κοσμικῶν στοιχείων καὶ κλιμάτων· μετὰ δὲ τοῦτον τὸν Ζωροάστρη κρητήσαντος καὶ παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις, δι' ἄντρων καὶ σπηλαίων εἶτ' οὖν αὐτοφνέων εἶτε χειροποιήτων τὰς τελετὰς ἀποδιδόναι.

§ Eusebius quotes Porphyry, Philo, Dionysius, Diodorus, etc., to prove that human sacrifices continued to be offered in the Roman Empire, until the Emperor Hadrian's time (*Praeparat. Evangelica*, Lib. iv, 15 and 16).

performed* in reality, as there is reason for believing had formerly been† customary. The doctrine of metempsychosis was inculcated, and the neophytes were taught their kinship with the lower animals,‡ in which dwelt spirits that had once perhaps inhabited human bodies and might do so again. Here we are forcibly reminded of the Hindû doctrine as taught, *e.g.*, by Manu§ in his *Dharmaśāstra*. Of the three classes into which the Mithraic hierophants were divided, the highest abstained altogether on this account from killing and eating animals, the second class ate animal food but would not slay any tame animal, while the third class abstained from certain kinds of flesh.||

Jerome¶ informs us that the initiate was at first admitted to the lowest of seven** grades or orders, that of *corax* (κόραξ). From that he passed to the order called *cryphius* (κρύφιος) and then successively became a *miles*, a *leo*, a *Persês*, a *Heliodromus*

* Lampridius, *Commodus*, cap. ix. : "Sacra Mithriaca homicidio vero polluit, quum illic aliquid ad speciem timoris vel dici vel fingi soleat."

† Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra*, p. 161.

Is it possible to derive this Mithraic habit of human sacrifice from an old Persian legend (afterwards revived by Mânî, though repudiated by the Zoroastrians)? We find the legend in *Sikand Gârnâk Vijâr*, cap. xvi, 10-20 (translated in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxiv, pp. 243, 244), where it is said that Mânî taught that "the sky is from the skin, the earth from the flesh, the mountains from the bones, and the trees from the hair of the demon Kuni" [probably the Kuñda of *Vend.* xi, 28, 36 : xix, 138, the Kundak of *Bând.* xxviii, 42] . . . "And Kuni is the commander of the army of Aharman, who, to be liberated by his nails from the divinity Aûharmazd, in the first conflict swallowed the light; and in the second conflict the demon Kuni was captured by them, together with many demons. And it is in binding the demon Kuni on the [celestial] sphere that he is killed, and these magnificent creatures are preserved from him and formed." The first part of this story reminds us of the Hindû myth of the slaughter of Purusha and the Norse account of the killing of the giant Ymir. But much the same story is found in China about Pwân K'ü, and in ancient Babylonia it was told regarding Tiâmat (*vide* the "Creation Tablets").

‡ Porphyry, *De Abstemientia*, Lib. iv, cap. 16, quoted in note †, p. 262, *supra*.

§ Especially in *Dharmaśāstra*, Book xii.

|| Porphyry, *De Abstemientia*, Lib. iv, cap. 16.

¶ Jerome, Ep. 107, § 2.

** It is to the ceremonies introductory to admissions to these that Modern Mythologists refer when they speak of "seven Mithraic sacraments."

(ἡλιόδρομος) and a *Pater*.* Porphyry says that the initiated were styled *lions*, if men, *lionesses* (or *hyænas*)† if women; while the attendants were called *ravens*. He mentions also that some of the *Mystæ* were entitled *eagles* and *hawks*, and that while being initiated into the order of *lions*, the neophyte had to assume the appearance of various animals. Some held that this was intended to represent the sun's course through the signs of the zodiac, others explained it as setting forth the progress of the spirit from body to body. Those seeking initiation had to undergo various very severe trials, sometimes described as punishments or torments. Nonnus‡ says that there were no fewer than eighty degrees of these. He connects them with the doctrine of "descent" and "ascent" already referred to. The lighter tests came first, then the more severe. The neophyte had to pass through fire, through icy cold, to endure hunger and thirst and much more, before he had sufficiently proved his hardihood to be admitted into the society.§

Part of these tests were probably derived from ancient Persian Mithraism. For, in the *Avesta*, when Zoroaster enquires how the faithful are to please Mithra, Ahura Mazda replies: "Let|| them for three days and three nights wash their bodies; let them suffer thirty strokes for a sacrifice and petition to Mithra, lord of wide pastures. Let them for two days and two nights wash their bodies; let them suffer twenty strokes

* The chief of the *Patres* was styled *Pater patrum*. It is not known whether these *Patres* acted as sacrificial priests, but certain sacrifices were offered to Mithra by *sacerdotes*, whose chief was apparently styled *summus sacerdos* (Prudentius quoted above, note || to p. 252).

† *Op. cit.*

‡ Quoted by Lajard, p. 117: 'Ο τοίνυν Μίθρας νομίζεται παρά Πέρσαις εἶναι ὁ ἥλιος, καὶ θυσιάζουσι αὐτῆ, καὶ τελούσι τινὰς τελευτὰς εἰς αὐτόν· οὐ δύναται οὖν τις εἰς αὐτόν τελεσθῆναι, εἰ μὴ πρότερον διὰ τῶν βαθμῶν τῶν κολάσεων παρέλθοι. βαθμοὶ ἐεἰ εἰσι κολάσεων, τὸν μὲν ἀριθμὸν ὀγδοήκοντα (?), ἔχοντες δὲ ὑπόβασιν καὶ ἀνάβασιν· κολάζονται γὰρ πρῶτον τὰς ἐλαφροτέρας, εἶτα τὰς δραστικωτέρας· καὶ εἴθ' οὕτω μετὰ τὸ παρελθεῖν διὰ πασῶν τῶν κολάσεων, τότε τελεῖται ὁ τελούμενος· αἱ δὲ κολάσεις εἰσὶ, τὸ διὰ πυρὸς παρελθεῖν, τὸ διὰ κρίου, διὰ πείνης καὶ δίψης, διὰ ὀδοιπορίας πολλῆς, καὶ ἀπλῶς διὰ πασῶν τοιούτων. Nonnus repeats this in substance in p. 143, § 47, quoted by Lajard, *ibidem*.

§ Suidas, quoted by Windischmann, *Über Mithra*, p. 68, says: Οὐκ ἂν οὖν εἰς αὐτόν ἐνησαιοῦτο τις τελεσθῆναι, εἰ μὴ διὰ τινῶν βαθμῶν παρελθῶν τῶν κολάσεων δεῖξει ἑαυτὸν ὄσιον καὶ ἀπαθῆ.

|| Yasht x, 30, 122.

for a sacrifice and petition to Mithra, lord of wide pastures." Western Mithraists bathed the neophyte and branded him (apparently with a hot iron) on the forehead. They had a rite in which bread and water* were eaten and drunk.† In at least one Mithraic subterranean sanctuary a sculpture represents seven priests at table, and the inscriptions are described as equivalent to "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow‡ we die." Plutarch§ is the only writer who tells us that one of the libations offered in Mithraic crypts was composed of wolf's blood and the juice of the plant which he calls *μῶλον*, but we know from others that certain of the initiated were suffused with the blood of a bull or of a ram (the so-called *ταυροβόλιον* and *κριοβόλιον* respectively) poured upon them from an elevated platform.|| Tertullian mentions that at one of their ceremonies a crown or garland was placed upon the "Soldier of Mithra's" head, but that he was required to refuse it, saying that Mithra was his crown.¶ One or all of these rites together

* On the significance of this, *vide* Porphyry, *De Antro Nympharum*.

† Tertullian (*De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, cap. 40, ed. Erwin Preuschen) says: "Sed quaeritur, a quo intellectus interpretetur eorum, quae ad haereses faciunt? A diabolo scilicet, cuius sunt partes interverendi veritatem, qui ipsas quoque res sacramentorum divinatorum idolorum mysteriis aemulatur. Tingit et ipse quosdam, utique credentes et fideles suos; expiationem delictorum de lavacro repromittit, et sic adhuc initiat Mithrae. Signat illic in frontibus milites suos, celebrat et panis oblationem, et imaginem resurrectionis inducit, et sub gladio redimit coronam. Quid, quod et summum pontificem in unius nuptiis statuit? Habet et virgines, habet et continentes. Ceterum, si Numae Pompilii superstitiones revolvamus, si sacerdotalia officia, insignia, et privilegia, si sacrificalia ministeria, et instrumenta et vasa ipsorum sacrificiorum, ac piaculorum et votorum curiositates consideremus, nonne manifeste diabolus morositatem illam Iudaicae legis imitatus est?" The only important varied reading given by Preuschen is *memini Mithrae* for *initiat Mithrae*, the latter being the best supported.

‡ As admitted by Mr. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, p. 325, new ed.

§ *De Iside et Osiride*, cap. 46, quoted above, note † to p. 249.

|| *Vide* the description of the *taurobolion* in Prudentius, quoted above p. 252, note ||.

¶ Tertullian, Ed. Migne, vol. ii, p. 102, *De Corona Militis*, cap. 15: "Erubescite, commilitones Eius, iam non ab ipso iudicandi, sed ab aliquo Mithrae milite, qui cum initiatur in spelaeo, in castris vere tenebrarum, coronam interposito gladio sibi oblatus, quasi nimum martyrii, debinc capiti suo accommodatam, monetur obvia manu a capite pellere, et in humerum, si forte, transferre, dicens Mithram esse coronam suam, atque exinde nunquam coronatur, idque in signum habet ad probationem sui, sicubi tentatus fuerit de sacramento: statimque creditur Mithrae miles, si deiecerit coronam, si ram in deo suo esse dixerit. Agnoscamus ingenia diaboli, idcirco quaedam de divinis affectantis, ut nos de suorum fide

were supposed to confer immortality,* for on Mithraic monuments the phrase *Renatus in æternum* not unfrequently occurs.

A sentence used by Tertullian in the first of the two passages to which we have just referred† has led some to assert that Mithraism inculcated moral purity and self-restraint. But the restoration of the correct reading makes it clear that Tertullian teaches nothing of the kind, that the words *Habet et virgines,‡ habet et continentes*, do not in any way refer to Mithra and his religion. A very careful study of all that remains to us of Mithraism, Eastern as well as Western, has not enabled me to find what their moral code was. In Persia it inculcated truthfulness and fidelity to one's obligations, and this *may* have been the case with Western Mithraism too. But that the latter was "a religion of inward holiness, of austere self-discipline and purity," though often asserted, is a statement not only unproved, but contrary to all that we know of all

confundat et indicet." This treatise was written A.D. 201, when Tertullian had become a Montanist. He here objects to a Christian's wearing a garland, and says that by refusing it a *niles Mithrae* set Christians a good example. This has been distorted into a statement that, *in matters of moral conduct*, Mithraists set a good example to Christians!

* Cf. Julian the Apostate (*Convivium, fin* : Hertlein's Ed. vol. i, p. 432). Σοὶ δὲ, πρὸς ἡμᾶς λέγων ὁ Ἑρμῆς, ἐέδωκα τὸν πατέρα Μίθραν ἐπιγινῶναι. σὺ δ' αὐτοῦ τῶν ἐντολῶν ἔχου, πείσμα καὶ ὄρμον ἀσφαλῆ ζῶντί τε σεαυτῷ, παρασκευάζων, καὶ ἥνικα ἂν ἐνθένδε ἀπιέναι εἴη, μετὰ τῆς ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος ἡγεμόνα θεὸν εὐμενῆ καθιστὰς σεαυτῷ. Here Julian is possibly letting the Christianity he had renounced colour his language.

† P. 31, note ¶ (*De Praescriptione*, cap. 40).

‡ This was first pointed out to me by the Rev. C. C. Martindale. The subject of *signat* is *ipse, i.e., diabolus*. The *summus pontifex* is the *Pontifex maximus* of Rome (a fact that has escaped the notice of the writer of the article "Mithraism" in the new Ed. of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*), not the *Pater Patrum* or *summus sacerdos* of the Mithraists. It is known that the old Roman religious law allowed only one marriage to the *Pontifex maximus*, which suits the context here. The *habet et virgines* refers to the *Vestal virgins* at Rome, the subject of *habet* being *diabolus* once more. Hence, thinking of the old Roman worship, Tertullian quite naturally proceeds to mention Numa Pompilius. The *habet et virgines* has by some, misled by an incorrect reading, been supposed to mean that there were virgins in connexion with *Mithraism* : and, on this slender foundation (if it were a fact, which the present reading shows not to be the case at all) has been constructed the often repeated assertion that Mithraism was "a religion of inward holiness, of austere self-discipline and purity." Mr. Robertson (*Pagan Christs*, 2nd Ed., p. 308) falls into the error of understanding the *virgines* and the *summus pontifex* as belonging to Mithra.

§ Mr. Mallock in *Nineteenth Century and After* for Sept. 1905, p. 496.

other Nature-religions (such as the worship of Isis,* for instance), and to the association of Mithraism with the worship of Cybele and other such deities, to say nothing of Anâhita.

Mithraic sculptures are abundant. The figure of Mithra himself slaying the bull is generally the leading ornament in a Mithraeum. He is represented as a vigorous youth, wearing a Phrygian cap and attire, striking a dagger into the flank or neck of a bull, whose nostrils he is holding. A dog and a serpent are drinking the bull's blood, or trying to do so, and a scorpion endeavours to destroy the animal's reproductive organs. Panels containing the twelve signs of the Zodiac, through which the Sun's apparent path lies, enclose this central bas-relief. At other times the panels contain carvings which seem to represent Mithra's exploits, some of which resemble (if we may judge from the engravings) certain of the labours of Hercules, and possibly, like the latter, have an astronomical meaning. Attempts have been made to reconstruct from these sculptures the details of the whole Mithraic myth, but conjectures such as these are too fanciful to dwell upon here. Nor is it necessary to speak at length of the Kronos-Zervân statue occasionally found in association with Mithraic remains. The nude lion-headed human figure with four wings, enfolded in the coils of a monstrous serpent, may represent the *Zrvâna-akarana* ("Boundless Time") so seldom mentioned in the Avesta,† from which sprang both Ôrmazd and Ahriman according to the later Persian philosophical myth, but it has little practical concern with Mithra-worship. It should be noticed, however, that in Persia the twelve signs of the Zodiac

* Mr. Mallock and others speak of *purity* as distinctive of the Religion of Isis. M. Renan's opinion is rather different, and he is supported by classical writers. He says (*Marcus Aurelius*, Hutchinson's version, pp. 284, 285): "Courtesans especially were nearly all devotees of Isis and Serapis; the temples of Isis had the reputation of being rendezvous for lovers. . . . There were fasts and austerities and days of continence. Ovid and Tibullus complain of the wrong these holy days do their pleasures, in a tone that clearly indicates that the goddess demanded very limited mortifications from her fair devotees." Cf. Ovid, *Amores*, Lib. I, El. viii, 74: Lib. III, El. ix, 30: Propertius II, 33, 3: Tibullus I, 3, 23. "Statues of Dionysus and *Venus* and *Priapus* stood in the court of the Isium at Pompeii" (Prof. Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 581). *Vide* also Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* Lib. xviii, 3, 4.

† Though in *Vendidad*, Fargard xix, § 1, Ahura Mazda bids Zoroaster invoke Zrvâna-Akarana as well as other deities.

were held to be on the side of Ōrmazd, and the seven planets* on that of Ahriman. This distinction does not seem to have been emphasized in the West.†

Mithraism undoubtedly, like every other religion, taught men the certainty of an after-life. We have seen that with this in Western Mithraism was connected belief in transmigration. How that transmigration was to end, and what form of happiness was to be finally enjoyed, we do not know. There are difficulties in connecting the doctrine of metempsychosis with belief in a resurrection. Yet Tertullian‡ and some other Christian writers use the latter word in connexion with Mithraism. We may therefore suppose that Western Mithraists still held something of the eschatology of later Zoroastrianism. According to the latter, the 9,000 years' contest§ between Ōrmazd and Ahriman

* *Dinā ī Mainōg ī Khrad*, cap. viii, 17-21: "Every good and the reverse which happen to mankind, and also to the other creatures, happen through the seven [planets] and the 12 [constellations]. And those 12 constellations are such as in revelation are the 12 chieftains who are on the side of Aūharmazd, and those 7 planets are called the 7 chieftains who are on the side of Aharman. These 7 planets pervert every creature and creation, and deliver [them] up to death and every evil. And, as [it were], those 12 constellations and 7 planets are organising and managing the world." Cf. *Sikand-Gūmandīk Vijār*, cap. iv, 28-45. (From S.B.E. version.)

† At least, if the Ἄπαθανατισμός be really a Mithraic work. In p. 10, lines 15 and 16, of the 2nd Ed., mention is made of οἱ ἑπτὰ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ τοῦ κόσμου, and these Albrecht Dieterich holds to be the planet-gods (p. 69).

‡ *De Praescript. Haer.*, cap. 40: quoted p. 267 above, note †.

§ *Būdahishnīh*, §§ 3-5: "Therefore Ōrmazd said to the Evil Spirit, 'I appoint for the contest a period, in mixture (of good and evil), of 9,000 years.' For he knew that, in that period, he would render the Evil Spirit impotent. Then the Evil Spirit, through blindness and ignorance, agreed to that treaty. . . . It was Ōrmazd who, through omniscience, knew that, of these 9,000 years, 3,000 would pass according to Ōrmazd's will, 3,000 years in a mixture of the will of Ōrmazd and Ahriman, and finally for 3,000 years that the Evil Spirit will be powerless, he will be restrained from working opposition. Then Ōrmazd repeated the prayer *Ahuna Vairya*, he pronounced *Yathā Ahū Vairyo*" (the first words of the *Ahuna Vairya*) "in 21 words. Thereupon: he showed to the Evil Spirit the accomplishment of his own victory, the defeat of the Evil Spirit, the destruction of the demons, the resurrection, the final" (*i.e.*, future) "body the unopposedness of the creations for ever and ever. And the Evil Spirit, because he beheld his own defeat and the destruction of the demons, became disheartened: he fell back into thick darkness. . . . He remained in dejection for 3,000 years. During Ahriman's dejection, Ōrmazd made the creation. He first produced Vōhu Manō, who was the

was to end in the final triumph of the Good Principle and the destruction of Ahriman and all his assistants and evil creatures. (This is probably a very old Âryan myth, for it reappears in a somewhat different form in the Eddas of Scandinavia.)* Then comes Saoshyañs and raises the dead. "First the bones of Gâyômarđ† are raised up, then those of Mâshya and Mâshyôî, then those of the rest of mankind. In the fifty-seven years of Sôshyans‡ they prepare all the dead, all mankind arise; whoever is righteous and whoever is wicked, every human creature do they arouse from the place where its lifeš departs." The whole world will then be restored to its original state of happiness, and the just will be immortal. Such was the *Zoroastrian* view, but how much of it was held by the Western Mithraists we have no means of knowing. For, as has been said above, the Western form of the religion had lost so much that was good in Zoroastrianism and adopted so much that was bad from other faiths, losing sight of the eternal and necessary opposition between Ahura Mazda and Anrô Mainyuš for one thing, and adopting the worship of the latter and of many impure deities, that it would be rash to conclude that it had retained in its full grandeur the Zoroastrian doctrine of the final victory of the good and true.

It has been held by some that, before ultimately becoming extinct, Mithraism exercised a considerable influence upon Christianity. This may be admitted with regard to sculpture and painting. Possibly, too, the term "Father" (*pater*) as applied to a Christian presbyter has the same source.|| The same influence may have favoured the admission of the sacerdotal idea, which Bishop Lightfoot is¶ undoubtedly correct in tracing

prosperity of Ôrmazd's creation." Elsewhere the *Bull* is said to have been the first creature made by Ôrmazd. It is nowhere said that he first produced *Mithra*, as is sometimes asserted. Indeed, this is contrary to the Avesta, which represents Mithra as son of Ôrmazd and Speñta Ârmaiti. As for the date of the *Bând.*, vide De Harlez, *Manuel de la langue pehlvie*, p. 85.

* *Gylfaginning* (Wilken's Ed. of old Norse text), cap. liii : Vgluspá, §§ 61-66.

† Gâyômarđ (*Cow-man*), in the Avesta *Gayo-meretan*, is the first man created : Mâshya and his wife Mâshyôî (called also Matrô and Matrôyâó) sprang up at his death (*Bând.* ch. xv.)

‡ Pahlavi form of *Saoshyañs*.

§ *Bând.* ch. xxx (or xxxi.) § 6.

|| Contrast our Lord's command, Matt. xxiii, 9.

¶ *Dissertation on the Christian Ministry*.

to a heathen origin. The word *ιερεύς* is, as is well known, never applied to a Christian presbyter in the New Testament, and is first so used by Lucian.* But we have already seen that the facts of the case absolutely refute the suggestion that the teaching of the *New Testament* owes anything to Mithraism. Some of the early Christian writers† were struck with a resemblance‡ between certain Mithraic rites and those in use in the Christian Church, as, for instance, the Mithraic dipping or bathing and Christian baptism; or, again, the Mithraic ceremonial sharing of bread and water (sometimes mixed with wine) among the initiated and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But solemn ablutions|| in connexion with religion are found almost everywhere, and so is participation in a common mystic meal. If there was any borrowing, it must have been on the part of the religion of Mithra, which we have seen readily admitted both rites and doctrines from nearly every faith with which it was brought in contact. Just in the same way at the present day,

* Quoted by Lightfoot, *op. cit.*

† Justin Martyr, Tertullian, etc. The passage from Tertullian (*De Præscript*, cap. 40) already quoted is a sufficient proof of this. In *De Baptismo*, cap. 5 (Ed. A. Reifferscheid and G. Wissow, Pt. i, pp. 204, 205), he says: "Sacris quibusdam per lavacrum initiantur, Isidis aliciui aut Mithrae, . . . Certe ludis Apollinaribus et Eleusiniis (*var. lect. Pelusii*) tinguntur, idque se in regenerationem et impunitatem periuriorum suorum agere præsumunt." Justin Martyr (1st Apol. cap. 66), after mentioning the Gospel account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, adds: "Ὅπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς τοῦ Μίθρα μυστηρίοις παρέδωκαν γίνεσθαι μιμησάμενοι οἱ πονηροὶ δαίμονες." Here he distinctly states his belief that the Mithraic feast was instituted later than and copied from the Lord's Supper.

‡ The word *mître* (*mîtra*, *μίτρα*) reminds us of the name of the Sungod: but, if derived therefrom, it must have come into use ages before Mithraism had spread in the West. Sayce (*Rel. of Anc. Eg. and Bab.*, p. 357) says that *μίτρα* is from the Sumerian *mutra*, Ass. *mutru*, and points out that "the *mîtra* properly signified the Oriental turban; but as no such head-dress was worn by the Greeks, it is already used by Homer for the girdle of the waist." One may regret that it was not left to women and effeminate young men, as at Rome at one time. But, whether borrowed from Mithraism or not, it is not a proof of Mithraic influence on New Testament doctrine.

|| Observe that the Mithraist ablutions were frequent, probably like those enjoined in the Avesta (*Yasht X*, 30. 122, quoted in p. 30, *supra*), and similar to those observed by Hindûs and Muḥammadans to-day before offering prayer. We have no proof of anything resembling Christian baptism among them, though such a simple and natural rite might easily have commended itself to them and have been borrowed, or even reinvented, by them.

in Japan, India, and Ceylon especially, Shintoism, Buddhism, and Hindûism are boldly borrowing and adopting much that is Christian, often endeavouring to claim it as originally their own. It is possible, however, though by no means certain, that the practice of celebrating our Lord's birth on the 25th December is due to the desire to turn to Christian use not only the ancient Roman festival of the Saturnalia but also the Mithraic celebration of the winter solstice on that day.*

Christianity had endured centuries of danger, discouragement, and persecution. Mithraism had been favoured for centuries by the state,† and had on its side the army, and many of the wealthy and powerful. More than one Emperor had either been initiated into its mysteries or had at least openly encouraged its spread. Julian did his best to make the worship of the sun, whom he identified with Mithra, the religion of the Empire. Yet, when he died and when persecution fell in turn (as, alas! was the case) upon the Mithraic community, it showed none of the unconquerable vitality of the Christian Church. It soon vanished from the face of the earth, leaving little trace of its having existed, except the sculptures in its hidden, underground sanctuaries. Christianity had behind it the invincible might of the truth. Therefore the cosmic myth of Mithra, with all its works of darkness, its unhallowed mysteries, its alliance with the lowest and most licentious forms of heathenism and superstition, after centuries of struggle, vanished at last like a morning mist before the rays of the Sun of Righteousness.

* Only after Aurelian's building of a temple to the Sun at Rome (Vopiscus, *Aurel.*, 39), A.D. 270, does the 25th December seem to have been observed there as the *Sun's* "birthday," i.e., the time when the day begins perceptibly to lengthen after the winter solstice; but about A.D. 220 Hippolytus mentions it as the day on which the Western Church in his time celebrated the Nativity of Christ. Almost certainly this was the wrong date. Evidently the early church had not observed such a day at all, but when it became desirable to fix a day for the Christmas festival, it was natural to endeavour to convert to that purpose a day already religiously observed at Rome. The Roman Saturnalia under the Republic fell on December 19th. Julius Cæsar's reformed calendar fixed this festival on the 17th December. Augustus extended it over the 17th, 18th, and 19th. Later it lasted for five, and finally for seven days.

† Openly from the time of Commodus' initiation (Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra*, pp. 83, 84, 87-103), more privately long before (*op. cit.*, p. 87).

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN.—I have followed this paper with the greatest possible interest, and it certainly is valuable that we have heard so much about Mithraism. The writer has been careful to guard against the supposition of the derivation of Christian doctrines from this system, and his very careful statements have carried conviction.

At the same time, I cannot quite accept what he says on p. 240, viz., that “according to the latest scholarship of our day the synoptic gospels were written and published, the earliest about twenty, and the latest not more than forty years after Christ had been crucified.” In the footnote he refers us to Professor Petrie’s *Growth of the Gospels*. In this work the author states his belief that the “nucleus” of the Gospels, *i.e.*, the portion common to the three synoptic Gospels, dates probably from about A.D. 40. But he also holds that other streams of tradition became incorporated with this nucleus, at a later period. We have no evidence that the early Christian records, such as Papias refers to in the well-known passage quoted by Eusebius, were identical with the completed Gospels, as we now have them, whose earliest MSS. date from the fourth century. This apparent assumption has always seemed to me to mar Professor Salmon’s great work, and it seems to be shared by the writer of the paper to-day. With regard to the incorporation of earlier ideas into the Gospels, there is no doubt a remarkable correspondence between early Egyptian conceptions and Christian doctrines, and also between early Babylonian beliefs and Jewish ones. I think we may admit without danger of losing any really valuable truth, that in the formation of dogmas in centuries somewhat removed from Our Lord’s life-time, and also in the later expression of Jewish beliefs, even within the pages of the sacred writings, there was some colouring due to surrounding influences and pre-existing religious conceptions. At the same time the author of this paper is quite right to guard us against the theory of a manufactured Christianity.

The Rev. D. MACFADYEN said: The paper contained an examination and a refutation of some of the statements that have been made in a very careless and recklessly written book called *Pagan Christs* by Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P. Mr. J. M. Robertson is

carrying on work of a very dangerous character, dangerous because his intellectual eminence is admitted, and anything he says on subjects he knows very little about is accepted by large audiences. I heard him lecture yesterday and heard him describe how wherever the Bible had gone it had produced the deterioration of the people who used it. There are statements in this book referred to resting largely upon a clever imagination, but very little upon sound learning or careful examination of facts.

Dr. Tisdall, almost shall I say over-proved his case, at any rate he raised the question, how was it that Mithraism, if it were no more than he described, was a serious rival to Christianity for over three centuries as described in Sir Samuel Dill's book *From Nero to Aurelius*. The Mithraic priests must surely have learned a great deal from Christianity and must have incorporated much that they borrowed into their teaching. Otherwise it is difficult to understand how they were able to draw to themselves many of the best elements in Roman society. It would have been more convincing if Mr. Tisdall had explained what Mithraism became in its highest development. It is a very valuable thing to trace back a Pagan religion to its origin, because no religion can rise permanently higher than its origin. If we once know what is at the root of Mithraism we can understand why it vanished away when it came into acute conflict with Christianity, and people began to realise what they had to choose between in preferring Christianity to Paganism.

Rev. J. J. B. COLES, M.A., said : There is some underlying truth in all these ancient Mysteries ; there is some connecting link, and I think that possibly in our next session a paper on the continuity and essential unity of esoteric teaching in all these rites would be helpful and suggestive.

Not until we study Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies from an esoteric standpoint shall we be able to find the true solution of many interesting problems.

Colonel ALVES said : As I remarked on a previous occasion (p. 234), there are undoubtedly points of contact between Christianity, which is completed Judaism, and the various pagan systems of religion. To deny this is not only foolish, but mischievous.

But whilst Christian doctrine is like a clear river, the various pagan streams are muddy and foul, and very confused.

The points of contact are easily understood. Man, by nature,

hates God, not as Creator, but as revealed in the Bible ; and, as man is by nature " a worshipping animal," he will worship either that God in a forbidden manner, or some false God.

The pre-Mosaic era evidently had a Bible of some kind, oral or written ; and it is only natural to suppose that, at the dispersion at Babel, the various tongues carried with them traditions which, being Divine, they would speedily corrupt. But corruption is neither absolute destruction nor denial ; points of contact between the true and the false are thus easily accounted for.

One thing, however, distinguishes the true, on the one hand, from all the false on the other. It is the power of the religion believed in to change the inward desires and outward life of the believer ; or rather, I should say, to give new desires and power to restrain the old desires, the new being stronger than the old ; for the " carnal mind " which remains in us till death, or change at the Lord's coming, is not and cannot be, subject to the law of God. The proof of this is shown in the fact that two saints bring into the world, not a little saint, but a little sinner. It is this power which differentiates between the Christian Religion and all other religions.

If we deny points of contact, we may cause people who search for themselves and give the result to others, to think, not only what is true, that all religions start from one source, but also that Christianity is only one branch from this source, instead of being, as it is, the true original source.

(At this point the CHAIRMAN had to leave and CHANCELLOR LIAS took his place.)

Lieut.-Col. MACKINLAY said: The paper we have just heard is a most valuable contribution to the Victoria Institute. The author has well shown the immense fundamental differences between Mithraism and Christianity. The former assimilated the beliefs of many religions, the latter teaches its followers that there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved, Acts iv, 12. The resurrection of Christ, as proclaimed by the Apostle Paul, differed from anything known to the heathen world, for at Athens the learned philosophers mocked at the idea as quite beyond all belief, hence it was not familiar to them.

The highest morality the world has ever known is taught in the New Testament, and practised by those who are really Christians in heart. Our author tells us that the Mithraic scriptures are lost,

but all records tell us of the terrible immoralities practised by the followers of Mithraism.

The fact that some of our calendar arrangements have a heathen source is founded on convenience, and does not touch the question of any connection between the two religions. I am glad to notice that Dr. Tisdall maintains that 25th December was not the real day of the Nativity; it is doubtless to be regretted that a heathen festival has received a Christian name which is incorrect, but this does not demonstrate any connection between Mithraism and Christianity.

Our first Chairman maintained that the Holy Scriptures are coloured by the current beliefs of the days in which they were written. They were coloured by them doubtless to the extent that they refer to other religions to protest against them. In the Old Testament the prophets denounced the idolatry of the heathen nations, and in the New Testament the followers of Christ are exhorted to come out from the world and its worship and to be separate. (2 Cor. vi, 17.)

CHANCELLOR LIAS said: It is a great pleasure to me, as one of the oldest members of the Institute—my first paper was read in January, 1877—to welcome our newest recruit. We must all recognize the excellence of his paper, and the store of learning which he has opened out to us. And I may also express the pleasure I feel that this store of learning is employed in defence of the Christian position.

As a matter of fact genuine learning will always be found on the side of those who defend that position. I have noticed that in spite of the somewhat condescending attitude adopted by the modern critic towards those who take the traditional view of Scripture and the Christian scheme, his own learning is often only skin-deep. I thoroughly associate myself with Dr. Tisdall's criticism of the critics on p. 257 of his paper. I have noted how a certain type of critic ignores all that has been said for ages on the opposite side of the question to his; how often he cites no authority more than twenty-five, or at the utmost thirty, years old; how he views the question he treats from one, and only one, point of view, instead of endeavouring to approach it, as every large question should be approached, from various standpoints. I have been astounded at his large assumptions. In a question, for instance, such as the priority of Christian doctrine to that about Mithra, it is quite

sufficient to point out a resemblance between the Christian and any other religion in order to prove that Christianity must of necessity have borrowed it from that other religion. To assert, with a critic of this stamp, is to prove; to maintain the Divine origin of the Christian scheme is to show yourself incapable of reasoning and unworthy of attention. And he further assumes, and if experience is to go for anything, is quite wrong in assuming, that his belief is the final verdict of inquirers on the points with which he deals. I thought the last reader of a paper before the Institute seemed a little daunted by this attitude on the part of many critics. I am glad that Dr. Tisdall is not afraid to say—and to prove the truth of—what he thinks.

Before I sit down I should like to dissociate myself from the remarks of my predecessor in the chair on Dr. Tisdall's reference to Harnack on p. 240. But I will venture to go further than he does. I really don't care what the opinion of Harnack, or any other writer who may happen to be popular just now, may be on the question of the authority of the Gospels. I have lived long enough to have seen a whole array of theories as positively put forth as those which are supposed now to hold the field, pass away like a morning cloud. Strauss, Baur, Oldshausen, Tholuck, Meyer, De Wette, Lange, Pfeiderer, and a host of other authorities supposed in their time to be infallible, have had "their day, and ceased to be." I have read a good deal on both sides of the question whether the historical portions of St. Matthew or St. Mark are to be regarded as the earlier, and I venture to predict that a good deal more will have to be said before that difficult question can be regarded as settled. And as to the idea that the facts of Christ's life and teaching have been coloured by the prepossessions of those who handed them down to us, I would remind you that St. Mark was to St. Peter what Timothy was to St. Paul, was the cousin of St. Barnabas, and despite an unfortunate misunderstanding the friend and companion of St. Paul. His mother was, to use a Pauline expression, the hostess of St. Peter and of the whole Church in Jerusalem. Such a man got his information at first hand, and knew thoroughly well what he was saying. And as a previous speaker has said, the first disseminators of the Christian faith, strong in their personal knowledge of Christ and His truth, assumed a decided attitude of detachment from the prevalent opinions of their day. They were definitely

hostile to those opinions, and in no sense guided by them. And if, as nineteen centuries of Christianity have abundantly taught us, Christ was "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," sent forth from God to reveal His Mind and Purpose to the world, it were strange indeed if He did not make full provision for the faithful transmission of the Message He had sent.

I am quite sure I have your consent to thank Dr. Tisdall most cordially for his able and convincing paper.

Dr. TISDALL: Archdeacon Beresford Potter has apparently omitted to notice that the authority I quoted concerning the date of the composition of the Gospels was Professor Harnack's very latest work on the subject, as mentioned in my note, p. 240. A careful study of Petrie's *Growth of the Gospels* will, I think, show that it also supports my contention in the text, to which the Archdeacon takes exception. He forgets the immense number of ancient *quotations* from the Gospels, beginning with the "Apostolic Fathers," the many ancient versions of the New Testament, and a mass of other evidence, which permits of the issue of such an edition of the Greek text as that just published by Professor Alexander Souter at the Clarendon Press, Oxford. If two MSS. date from early in the fourth century and show a variety of readings, it is plain that the original work existed at least considerably earlier. If a writer of the second century quotes passages from a book in such a way as to show that he knows that his readers know and honour it, it is safe to conclude that the work had come into existence very considerably before his time. This has been exhaustively dealt with by a host of able writers. Consider one specimen fact out of many. Origen, who died A.D. 248, mentions our four Gospels by name as well known and generally accepted by Christians. His commentary on St. John's Gospel in thirty-two books is still extant and easily obtainable (Cambridge University Press, 2 vols., 1896). How long must that Gospel have been known and honoured *in its present form* before such a work on it was needed!

Some considerable study of Comparative Religion (*vide* my little book under that title published by Longmans) and a certain degree of knowledge of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* and the Babylonian creation and deluge tablets, etc., in their original languages have led me to a conclusion absolutely contrary to that of the Archdeacon regarding what he calls the "remarkable correspondence between

early Egyptian conceptions and Christian doctrines, and also between early Babylonian beliefs and Jewish ones." With this I have dealt in some measure in *Mythic Christs and the True* (Hunter and Longhurst) and in articles entitled "The Relation between the Hebrew and the Babylonian Cosmologies" (*Nineteenth Century*, August, 1905), and "Ḥasisatra and Noah" (*Churchman*, November, 1906). But of course my paper on Mithraism was not the place for dealing with these subjects.

Turning now to the kindly criticisms of the main subject of the paper, I may be allowed to say that I had to omit many important points because my time was so short. As it is, I fear I have unduly trespassed on the endurance of my hearers.

Professor Cumont gives only a *tentative* explanation of the carvings encircling the figure of Mithra and the bull in the bas-reliefs. We have no Mithraic scriptures to cast light on their real meaning. I have done my best to explain "what Mithraism became in its highest development," but I differ from certain writers on the subject in limiting my statements to facts proved by reasonably reliable evidence, instead of giving free reins to imagination. My reason for tracing Mithraism as far back in Persia and India as possible was to show that Mithra was *nowhere* regarded as having once lived on earth as a man. I think I have shown that he was not regarded as the *incarnation* of a deity. As we have no proof that he was believed to have been a man, to have died or to have been put to death, it is absurd to assert (as has been done) that his worshippers believed in his *Höllenfahrt* and in his "resurrection." It has been said that Mithraists believed in the final destruction of the world by fire. Of that I am unable to find any proof. The Stoics held that tenet, and it is taught in certain Indian Purāṇas, but no inscription or ancient author, as far as I know, attribute the same view to the Mithraists.

With regard to Mithra and the bull the question arises whether the killing of the animal was in sacrifice or not. Animal sacrifices are found, early or late, in almost all religions, but I am not aware of any passage in which *Mithra* is represented as offering a sacrifice or as worshipping any being superior to himself. It is therefore somewhat rash to conclude that the fact of his driving a dagger into the bull's neck proves that he offered a sacrifice to Ōrmazd.