

Mystics Magazine

Zoroastrian Mystical Theology

Conversations with Charles William King

Compiled by Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

www.outofbodytravel.org



Zarathustra

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*Journal Twelve: The 800th Anniversary of Jalalludin Rumi, and
the True Spiritual Heritage of Afghanistan and the Middle East*

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*Journal Fourteen: Reverend John Macgowan - Forgotten
Protestant Mystic*

*Journal Fifteen: A. Farnese - Forgotten Mystic Amanuensis (to
Franchezzo)*

*Journal Sixteen: Comte St. Germain - Forgotten Immortal
Mystic of the Mystery Schools*

Journal Seventeen: Franz Hartmann - Forgotten Mystical Adept

*Journal Eighteen: SA'D UD DIN MAHMŪD SHABISTARĪ -
Forgotten Islamic Sufi Mystic*

*Journal Nineteen: Dionysius - Forgotten Christian Mystic of the
Early Church*

*Issue Twenty: Acvaghosha - Forgotten Buddhist Mystic of the
Mahayana Path*

*Issue Twenty One: Bishop Shelemon of Armenia - Forgotten
Nestorian Christian Mystic*

*Issue Twenty Two: Abú Sa'íd Ibn Abi 'l-Khayr- Forgotten
Islamic Mystic*

*Issue Twenty Three: Rev. G. Vale Owen - Forgotten Christian
Mystic*

*Issue Twenty Four: Swami Abhedânanda- Forgotten Hindu
Mystic*

*Issue Twenty Five: Moses Maimonides - Forgotten Jewish
Mystic*

Issue Twenty Six: The Bab - Forgotten Baha'i Mystic

*Issue Twenty Seven: Shinran Shonin - Forgotten Mystic of Pure
Land Buddhism*

*Issue Twenty Eight: Bustan of Sadi - Forgotten Persian Islamic
Mystic*

*Issue Twenty Nine: John Bunyan - Forgotten Protestant
Christian Mystic*

*Issue Thirty: Ixtlilxochitl and Nezahualcoyotl - Forgotten
Aztec Mystics and Myth Bearers*

Mystics Magazine

*Issue One - Christian Mystical Theology, Conversations with Jacob
Boehme*

*Issue Two - Buddhist Mystical Theology, Conversations with Charaka
and Acvagosha*

*Issue Three – Islamic Mystical Theology, Conversations with Imam
Ghazzali*

*Issue Four – Egyptian Mystical Theology, Conversations with W.
Marsham Adams*

*Issue Five – Hindu Mystical Theology, Conversations with Sri
Ramakrishna*

*Issue Six – Jewish Mystical Theology, Conversations with Rabbi
Simeon*

*Issue Seven – Sikh Mystical Theology, Conversations with Guru
Nanak*

*Issue Eight – Zoroastrian Mystical Theology, Conversations with
Charles William King*

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CONTENTS:

Mystics Magazine

Zoroastrian Mystical Theology

Conversations with Charles William King

Compiled by Marilyn Hughes

Conversations with Charles William King

Great Zoroastrian Mystical Theologians

Excerpts from the Gnostics and their Remains

*(Including the Mithraic Sacraments, Initiations
and a Roman Mithraic in his Cave)*

By Charles William King

11

Mystics Magazine

Zoroastrian Mystical Theology
 Conversations with Charles William King
 By Marilyn Hughes

Mystics Magazine ventures to take on the issues of Mystical Theology in Different Faiths and World Religions in a new and unique way. It is the purpose of each issue of the magazine to embrace the personal dialogue and teachings of a great Master of the Mystical Path within that religion and allow them to speak of their personal experience and conclusions based on their years of inquiry into the supersensual world.

We've utilized many texts which involve actual dialogue between the Great Mystics and others wherein they explain important aspects and understanding of the mystical theology (and sometimes moral theology) of their own unique religious path.

The Author does not necessarily agree with all views presented, but wishes to present the similarities and differences between some of the Great Mystics the world over. In doing so, we can see better where we agree and where we disagree. We can also pick up points from other paths that may enhance our own.

Look upon this journey into Mystics Magazine as an opportunity to discern for yourself as to how these things may be able to help you in your own spiritual journey.

This is an opportunity to have a conversation with some of the greatest mystical minds in history. So consider listening in . . .

The Gnostics and Their Remains

By Charles William King, 1887

II. THE MITHRAIC SACRAMENTS.

The principal rites of the worship of Mithras bore a very curious resemblance to those subsequently established in the Catholic church; they likewise furnished a model for the initiatory ceremonies observed by the secret societies of the Middle Ages, and by their professed descendants in modern times. The Neophytes were admitted by the rite of *Baptism*; the initiated at their assemblies solemnly celebrated a species of *Eucharist*: whilst the courage and endurance of the candidate for admission into the sect were tested by *twelve* consecutive trials, called "The Tortures," undergone within a cave constructed for the purpose; all which "tortures" had to be completely passed through before participation in the Mysteries was granted to the aspirant.

The two distinguishing Rites, or "Sacraments" (to use the technical term) are thus alluded to by Justin Martyr (*Apol. II*) in the earliest description which has been left us of their character. "The Apostles in the Commentaries written by themselves, which we call

Gospels, have delivered down to us that Jesus thus commanded them: He having taken bread, after that He had given *thanks*, said: Do this in commemoration of me; this is my body. Also having taken a cup and returned thanks, He said: This is my blood, and delivered it unto them alone. Which things indeed the evil spirits have taught to be done, out of memory, in the Mysteries and Initiations of Mithras. For in these likewise a cup of water, and bread, are set out, with the addition of certain words, in the sacrifice or act of worship of the person about to be initiated: a thing which Ye either know by personal experience or may learn by inquiry." Again, Tertullian, writing in the following century, has in the same connection: "The Devil, whose business it is to pervert the truth, *mimicks the exact circumstances* of the Divine Sacraments, in the Mysteries of idols. He himself *baptises* some that is to say, his believers and followers; he promises forgiveness of sins from the *Sacred Fount*, and thereby initiates them into the religion of Mithras: thus he *marks on the forehead* his own soldiers: there he celebrates the *oblation of bread*: he brings in the symbol of the Resurrection, and wins the crown with the sword." By the "symbol of the Resurrection" Tertullian clearly means that "simulation of death" mentioned by Lampridius (of which more hereafter), and which is typified on so many talismans by the corpse bestridden by the Solar Lion. The final ceremony he has himself explained in another passage: "Blush, my Roman fellow-soldiers, even though ye be not to be judged by Christ, but by any 'Soldier of Mithras,' who when he is undergoing

initiation in the *Cave*, in the very Camp of the Powers of Darkness, when the *crown* (garland, rather) is offered to him (a sword being placed between, as though in semblance of martyrdom), and about to be set upon his head, is instructed to put forth his hand, and push the crown away, transferring it perchance, to his shoulder, saying at the same time: My crown is Mithras. And from that time forth he never wears a crown (garland), and this he has for the badge of his initiation, for he is immediately known to be a 'soldier of Mithras,' if he rejects a garland when offered to him, saying that his crown is his god. Let us therefore acknowledge the craftiness of the Devil; who copies certain things of these that be Divine, in order that he may confound and judge us by the faithfulness of his own followers." As to the ceremony here mentioned, unimportant as it may seem to the modern reader, it may be remarked that as the wearing a garland was indispensable among the ancients on all festive occasions, the refusal of one upon such occasions would be a most conspicuous mark of singularity, and of unflinching profession of faith. But every dispassionate observer will perceive that these overzealous Fathers proceed to beg the question when they assume that the Mithraic rites were devised as *counterfeits* of the Christian Sacraments: inasmuch as the former were in existence long before the first promulgation of Christianity; unless indeed to *imitate* by anticipation be considered as merely another proof of the mischievous sagacity of its diabolical opponent. On the other hand, there is good reason to suspect that the simple commemorative, or distinctive,

ceremonies, instituted by the first founder of Christianity, were gradually invested with those mystic and supernatural virtues which later ages insisted upon as articles of faith, by the teaching of unscrupulous missionaries, anxious to outbid the attractions of long-established rites of an apparently cognate character. By this assimilation they offered to their converts through the performance of, as it were, certain magical practices, all those spiritual blessings of which the rites themselves were, at their institution, the *symbols* only, not the instruments. A very instructive illustration of such union of Mithraicism and Christianity, in the celebration of the Eucharist, is afforded by the Pistis-Sophia's description of the great one celebrated by the Saviour himself upon the shore of the Sea of Galilee, which will be found given at length in its proper place. And lastly, it deserves to be mentioned that "eating the flesh and drinking the blood" of a human sacrifice was far from being a mere figure of speech in certain of these mystic celebrations. Pliny gives high praise to Claudius for having suppressed the worship of the Druids (whom he considers as identical in their religion with the Magi), in whose rites "it was esteemed the highest act of religion to slaughter a man, and the most salutary of proceedings to eat the flesh of the same." And in this notion, which necessarily became attached by suspicion to the proceedings of all secret societies, lay most probably the root of the belief so widely diffused amongst the Roman vulgar, that the real Eucharist of the first Christians at their nocturnal meetings was the

sacrifice, and the feasting upon, a new-born child, concealed within a vessel of flour, into which the catechumen was directed by his sponsors to plunge a knife.

In the particulars preserved to us of the Mithraic Sacrament, certain very curious analogies to those of the Christian rite cannot fail to arrest our attention. The "Bread therein used was a round cake," emblem of the solar disk, and called *Mizd*. In this name Seel discovers the origin of *Missa*, as designating the Bloodless Sacrifice of the Mass, assuming that this *Mizd* was the prototype of the Host (*hostia*), which is of precisely the same form and dimensions.

It is not out of place to notice here the various etymologies which have been proposed for the word *Missa*. The most popular one, which moreover has the sanction of Ducange, derives it from the words "Ite, missa est," with which the priest dismissed the *non-communicant* part of the congregation, before proceeding to the actual consecration of the Eucharist. The translation of the phrase by the vulgar into "Depart, it is the *Missa*," would certainly be obvious enough. But, according to the rule in all such cases, the *object* sacrificed gives its name to the ceremony, rather than a phrase from the ceremonial itself, and this object had from time immemorial gone by the name of *hostia*, or "victim." The early Christians were quite as partial as the Gnostics to the naturalizing of the Hebrew terms belonging to the Mosaic ordinances, and applying the same to their own

practices. Thus the old Covenant went amongst them by the name of *Phase*, for example:--

"In hoc festo novi Regis,
Novum *Pascha* novæ legis
Vetus *Phase* terminat."

The Rabbins have possibly preserved a tradition that explains the true origin of the wafer. Alphonsus de Spira, in his "*Fortalium Fidei*" (II. 2), asserts that its circular form is a symbol of the sun, and that it is in reality offered in sacrifice, at the celebration of the Mass, to the genius of that luminary! For the Kabbalists hold that Moses and the prophets were inspired by the genius of Saturn, a good and pure spirit, whereas Jesus was by that of Mercury, a malevolent one; and the Christian religion was the work of Mercury, Jupiter and the Sun, all combining together for that purpose. There is yet another curious analogy to be noticed, when it is remembered that the Mass symbolises the *death* of its first institutor. A *round* cake (the *chupatty* of such evil notoriety at the commencement of the Sepoy Mutiny) is, amongst the Hindoos, the established offering to the Manes of their ancestors. The Christian "breaking of bread," besides symbolising the great sacrifice once offered, seems, from the account of the Manifestation at Emmaus, to have been done in some peculiar way which should serve for a *masonic* token, or means of mutual recognition amongst the brethren.

The sacramental Cup, or *chalice*, is often represented as set upon the Mithraic altar, or rather, *table*; and a

curious piece of jugglery connected with its employment (though not amongst the Mithraicists), is described by Epiphanyes (Hæres. xxxiv.). The followers of Marcus, in their celebrating the Eucharist, employed *three* vases made of the clearest glass. These were filled with wine which, during the progress of the ceremony, changed into a blood-red, purple, and blue colour, respectively. "Thereupon the officiating minister, or more properly speaking, *magician*, hands one of these vessels to some lady of the congregation, and requests her to bless it. Which done, he pours this into another vase of much greater capacity, with the prayer, "May the grace of God, which is above all, inconceivable, inexplicable, fill thine inner man, and increase the knowledge of Himself within thee, sowing the grain of mustard-seed in good ground!" Whereupon the liquid in the larger vase swells and swells until it runs over the brim.

The worship of Mithras long kept its ground under the Christian emperors in the capital itself, and doubtless survived its overthrow there for many generations longer in the remote and then semi-independent provinces. At the very close of the fourth century, Jerome, writing to Læta, says, "A *few* years ago, did not your kinsman Gracchus, a name the very echo of patrician nobility, when holding the office of Prefect of the City, break down and burn the Cave of Mithras, with all the monstrous images which pervade the initiatory rites, as Corax, Niphus, the Soldier, the Lion, the Persian, Helios, and Father Bromius?"

In the imagery here alluded to, it is easy to recognise figures that perpetually occur upon the still extant representations of the Mithras worship. In *Corax*, the Raven; in *Niphus*, Cneph the serpent; the *armed man*; the *Lion* bestriding the human victim; the youth in *Persian* garb; the *Sun*, expressed either by Phœbus in his car, or by the star with eight rays; and *Bromius* "the Roarer," appropriate title of the Grecian Dionysos; who also appears as the Asiatic *Phanaces*, a youth holding a torch in each hand, one elevated and one depressed to signify his rising and setting. Chiflet's gem (Fig. 62) may on good grounds be taken for a picture of the Mithraic ritual, and upon it all the forementioned figures and symbols are easily to be discovered. Two erect serpents form a kind of frame to the whole tableau; at the top of which are seen the heads of Sol and Luna confronted; between them stands an eagle with outspread wings; at the back of each, a raven. In the field are two naked, crowned men on horseback, trampling upon as many dead bodies; between them a kneeling figure in supplicatory attitude, over whose head are two stars. Behind each horseman stand two soldiers. In the exergue is set out a table supporting a loaf, a fawn (sacred to Bacchus), a chalice, and something indistinct, but probably meant for the *crown* Tertullian speaks of. The reverse presents a more simple design: two crested serpents (*dracones*), twined about wands, and looking into a cup; two stars over a table resting upon a larger vase; and on each side a bow, the ends of which finish in serpents' heads.

In this composition we probably see portrayed certain amongst the tests of the neophyte's courage, which, according to Suidas, were termed the "Twelve Degrees" or "Tortures." These corresponded in nature, although of vastly more severe reality, with those trials of courage to which our Masonic Lodges subject the "apprentice" who seeks admission amongst them. During the Mithraic probation, which lasted *forty* days, the candidate was tested by the Four Elements, he lay naked a certain number of nights upon the snow, and afterwards was scourged for the space of two days. These Twelve Tortures are sculptured upon the border of the famous Mithraic tablets preserved in the Innsbruck Museum, and a brief account of their several stages will serve to elucidate much of what remains to be discussed. I. Man standing and about to plunge a dagger into the throat of a kneeling figure, who holds up his hands in supplication. (This scene appears analogous to the one in the modern ceremonial, when the candidate, ordered to remove the bandage from his eyes, beholds many swords pointed in the most threatening manner at his naked breast.) II. Naked man lying on the earth, his head resting on his hand, in the posture of repose. (Probably the penance of the bed of snow.) III. The same figure, standing with hands uplifted in a huge crescent (perhaps an *ark*, and representing the trial by water. To this last, Plato is reported to have been subjected during his initiation in Egypt, and to have but narrowly escaped drowning). IV. The same, but now with the *pileus*, cap of liberty, upon his head, rushing boldly into a great fire (the trial by fire). V.

He is now seen struggling through a deep stream, and endeavouring to grasp a rock. VI. Bull walking to the left.

On the other side come the remaining stages. VII. Four guests reclining at a horseshoe table (*sigma*), upon which is set a boar roasted whole. VIII. Youth guided up a flight of interminable steps by an aged man. IX. Youth kneeling before a man in a long robe, whose hand he grasps in prayer. X. The same figures, but their positions are interchanged. XI. Seated man, before whom kneels a naked, crowned, youth, escorted by one in a long robe. XII. Naked man holding up the hind legs of a cow, so as to receive in his face the stream still regarded by the Hindoos as the most efficient laver of regeneration, and consequently always administered to persons at their last gasp. The same sacred fluid (as I am informed by a Parsee) is used in the sacramental cups drunk by every male upon his first admission into that religion, which takes place on his completing his seventh year. Nay more, such is the belief in its cleansing virtue, that scrupulous Parsees always carry a bottle thereof in their pocket, wherewith to purify their hands after any unavoidable contact with unbelievers!

Very similar ceremonies to these were practised in the secret societies of the Middle Ages, if we choose to accept Von Hammer's interpretation of certain mysterious sculptures, still to be seen in the Templar-churches of Germany; and which he has copiously illustrated in his 'Mysterium Baphometis revelatum.'

In the intaglio already described, the kneeling neophyte is encompassed by all the terrific and mysterious host of Mithras, so remorselessly destroyed by the zealous Gracchus. And again, the corpses trampled on by the crowned horsemen clearly refer to that recorded test of the candidate's fortitude--the apparent approach of death--for Lampridius puts down amongst the other mad freaks of Commodus, that during the Mithraic ceremonies, "when a certain thing had to be done for the purpose of inspiring terror, he polluted the rites by a *real murder*:" an expression clearly showing that a scenic representation of such an act did really form a part of the proceedings. The Raven properly takes its place here, as being the attribute of the Solar god in the Hellenic creed, on which account it is often depicted standing upon Apollo's lyre.

Many other gems express the spiritual benefits conferred by the Mithraic initiation upon believers. A frequent device of the kind, is a man, with hands bound behind his back, seated at the foot of a pillar supporting a gryphon with paw on wheel, that special emblem of the solar god; often accompanied with the legend ΔΙΚΑΙΩΣ, "I have deserved it." Another (Blacas) displays an unusual richness of symbolism: the same gryphon's tail ends in a scorpion, whilst the wheel squeezes out of its chrysalis a tiny human soul that stretches forth its hands in jubilation; in front stands Thoth's ibis, holding in its beak the balance, perhaps the horoscope of the patient. This talisman too, unites the Egyptian

with the Magian creed, for the benefit of the carrier; for the reverse displays Isis, but in the character of Hygieia, standing upon her crocodile; the field being occupied by strangely complicated monograms, of sense intelligible to the initiated alone, and doubtless communicated to the recipient of the talisman, who found in them "a New Name written, that no man knoweth, save he that receiveth the same." But both doctrines and ceremonial of this religion are best understood through the examination of extant representations displaying them either directly or allegorically; which in their turn are illustrated by the practice of the faithful few who still keep alive the Sacred Fire, namely the Parsecs of Guzerat. The series therefore will be most fittingly opened by the following curious description of a cave of Mithras, as discovered in its original and unprofaned condition, written by that eminent antiquary, Flaminius Vacca. (No. 117.)

III. A ROMAN MITHRAS IN HIS CAVE.

"I remember there was found in the vineyard of Sig. Orazio Muti (where the treasure was discovered), opposite S. Vitale, an idol in marble about 5 palms high ($3\frac{3}{4}$ ft.), standing erect upon a pedestal in an empty chamber, which had the door walled up. This idol had the head of a lion, but the body that of a man. Under the feet was a globe, whence sprung a serpent which encompassed all the idol, and its head entered into the lion's mouth. He had his hands crossed upon the breast, with a key in each; four wings fastened upon the shoulders, two pointing

upwards, two downwards. I do not consider it a very antique work, being done in a rude manner, or else indeed it was so ancient that at the time when it was made the good style was not yet known. Sig. Orazio, however, told me that a theologian, a Jesuit Father, explained its meaning by saying it signified the Devil, who, in the times of heathenism, ruled over the world: hence the *globe* under his feet, the *serpent* which begirt his body and entered into his mouth, signified his foretelling the future with ambiguous responses; the *keys* in his hands, his sovereignty over the world; the *lion's head*, his being the ruler of all beasts; the *wings*, his presence everywhere. Such was the interpretation given by the Father aforesaid. I have done everything to see the idol, but Sig. Orazio being now dead, his heirs do not know what has become of it. It is not, however, unlikely that by the advice of the same theologian, Sig. Orazio may have sent it to some *limekiln to cure its dampness*, for it had been buried many and many a year." Thus was this most interesting monument destroyed through the conceited ignorance of a wretched ecclesiastic, himself more truly a worshipper of the Evil Principle, than was the ancient votary of the beneficent Lord of Light who carved that wondrous image. Vacca adds, "I remember, there was found in the same place, after the above-mentioned idol, another, only in bas-relief, also having a lion's head, but the rest of the body human: with the arms extended, in each hand a torch; with two wings pointing upwards, two downwards, from between which issued a serpent.

At his right stood an altar with fire; from the idol's mouth proceeded a ribbon or scroll extending over the fire."

This *lion*-headed deity can be no other than Jerome's "Pater Bromius," a Grecian title of Bacchus; and he, we are told, distinguished himself under that disguise in the famous war of the giants--

"Tu cum Parentis regna per arduum
Cohors Gigantum scanderet impia,
Rhætum retorsisti *leonis*
Unguibus horribilique mala."
(Horace, Od. II. xix. 21-24.)

And, tracing back this composite figure to the real source of such iconology, it is found to be the very one under which "Nri-singha-avatar" is depicted. It was assumed by the deity in order to destroy the tyrant Hiransyakacipu, who had obtained the gift of invulnerability against all *known* beasts, either by day or night.

A Mithraic cave, with the contiguous buildings, was discovered at Spoleto in 1878. In the end wall were the usual three niches for the god and his torch-bearers. In front of them an altar inscribed "Soli invicto Mithræ sacrum." Close to the altar, a tall phallic stone, perforated with a square hole near the top--perhaps the "stone symbolizing the Birth of Mithras" mentioned by Firmicus. The cave, with the ground plan of the whole edifice is given in the 'Archæologia,' vol. 47, p. 205.

V. GNOSTIC SACRAMENTS AND INITIATIONS AS CONNECTED WITH THE MITHRAIC.

In my account of Mithraicism notice has been taken of the very prominent part that sacraments for the remission of sin play in the ceremonial of that religion; the following extracts from the grand Gnostic text-book will serve to show how the same notions (and probably, forms) were transferred to the service of Gnosticism.

Baptism, Remitting Sins.--(Pistis-Sophia) (298). Then came forth Mary and said: Lord, under what form do *Baptisms* remit sins? I have heard thee saying that the Ministers of Contentions (ἐριδαῖοι) follow after the soul, bearing witness against it of all the sins that it hath committed, so that they may convict it in the judgments. Now, therefore, Lord, do the mysteries of Baptism blot out the sins that be in the hands of the Receivers of Contention, so that they shall utterly forget the same? Now, therefore, Lord, tell us in what form they remit sins; for we desire to know them thoroughly. Then the Saviour answered and said: Thou hast well spoken: of truth those Ministers are they that testify against all sins, for they abide constantly in the places of judgment, laying hold upon the souls, convicting all the souls of sinners who have not received the mystery, and they keep them fast in chaos tormenting them. But these contentious ones cannot pass over chaos so as to enter into the courses that be above chaos; in order to convict the souls therefore receiving the mysteries, it is not lawful for them to force so as to drag them down into chaos,

where the Contentious Receivers may convict them. But the souls of such as have not received the mysteries, these do they desire and hail into chaos: whereas the souls that have received the mysteries, they have no means of convicting, seeing that they cannot get out of their own place; and even if they did come forth, they could not stop those souls, neither shut them up in their chaos. Hearken, therefore, I will declare to you in truth in what form the mystery of Baptism remitteth sins. If the souls when yet living in the world have been sinful, the Contentious Receivers verily do come, that they may bear witness of all the sins they have committed, but they can by no means come forth out of the regions of chaos, so as to convict the soul in the places of judgment that be beyond chaos. But the counterfeit of the spirit testifies against all the sins of the soul, in order to convict it in the places of judgment that be beyond chaos; not only Both it testify, but also sets a *seal* upon all the sins of the soul, so as to print them firmly upon the soul, that all the Rulers of the judgment place of the sinners may know that it is the soul of a sinner, and likewise know the *number* of sins which it hath committed from the seals that the counterfeit of the spirit hath imprinted upon it, so that they may punish the soul according to the number of its sins: this is the manner in which they treat the soul of a sinner. (300). Now therefore if any one hath received the mysteries of Baptism, *those mysteries become a great fire*, exceeding strong, and wise, so as to burn up all the sins: and the Fire entereth into the soul secretly, so that it may consume within it all the sins which the counterfeit of

the spirit hath printed there. Likewise it entereth into the body secretly, that it may pursue all its pursuers, and divide them into parts--for it pursueth within the body, the counterfeit of the spirit, and Fate--so that it may divide them apart from the Power and the Soul, and place them in one part of the body--so that the fire separates the counterfeit of the spirit, Fate, and the Body into one portion, and the Soul and the Power into another portion. The mystery of Baptism remaineth in the middle of them, so that it may perpetually separate them, so that it may purge and cleanse them in order that they may not be polluted by *Matter*. Now therefore, Mary, this is the manner whereby the mystery of Baptism remitteth sins and all transgressions.

(301) And when the Saviour had thus spoken, he said to his disciples: Do ye understand in what manner I speak with you? Then came forth Mary, saying: Of a truth, Lord, I perceive in reality all the things that thou hast said. Touching this matter of the Remission of Sins, thou speaketh aforetime to us in a parable, saying: I am come to bring *fire* upon the earth; nay, more, let it burn as much as I please. And, again thou hast set it forth openly, saying: I have a baptism wherewith I will baptise and how shall I endure until it be accomplished? Ye think that I am come to bring peace upon the earth? By no means so, but dissension, which I am come to bring. For from this time forth there shall be five in one house; three shall be divided against two, and two against three. This, Lord, is the word that thou speakest openly. But concerning the

word that thou spakest: I am come to bring fire upon the earth, and let it burn so much as I please: in this thou hast spoken of the mystery of Baptism in the world, and let it burn as much as thou pleasest for to consume all the sins of the soul, that it may purge them away. And again thou hast shewn the same forth openly, saying: I have a baptism wherewith I will baptise, and how shall I endure until it be accomplished? The which is this; Thou wilt not tarry in the world until the baptisms be accomplished to purify all the perfect souls. And again what thou spakest unto us aforetime: "Do ye suppose I am come to bring peace upon earth," &c. (302). This signifieth the mystery of Baptism which thou hast brought into the world, because it hath brought about dissension in the body of the world, because it hath divided the Counterfeit of the spirit, the Body, and the Fate thereof, into one party, and the Soul and the Power into the other party. The same is, "There shall be three against two, and two against three." And when Mary had spoken these things the Saviour said: Well done, thou Spiritual One in the pure light, this is the interpretation of my saying.

Then Mary went on and said: Bear with me, Lord, whilst I yet inquire of thee. Lo! we know now fully after what form Baptism remitteth sin. Now therefore declare unto us the mystery of the Three Courts, and the mystery of the First Mystery, and likewise the mystery of the Ineffable One; in what form do these also remit sin? Do they remit sin in the *form of baptism* or not? (303) The Saviour answered again: By no

means; but all the mysteries of the Three Courts remit in the soul, and in all the regions of the Rulers, all the sins that the soul hath committed even from the beginning. They remit also the sins that the soul shall have committed afterwards up to the time that each one of the mysteries taketh unto itself, the time whereof I will declare unto you hereafter. Moreover the mystery of the First Mystery, and the mystery of the Ineffable One, remit unto the soul in all the regions of the Rulers all the sins and transgressions that it hath committed. And not only do they remit, but they do not *impute sin* to the soul, from henceforth for ever by reason of the free-grace of the mystery and the exceeding glory of the same. Then said the Saviour: Do ye understand all that I have said unto you? Then Mary answered: Lord, I have caught up all the words thou hast spoken. Now therefore as to the saying that all the mysteries of the Three Courts remit sins, and blot out iniquities. Concerning this same matter hath David the prophet spoken, saying: "Blessed are they whose sins they have remitted, and whose iniquities they have covered," and as to thy saying that the mystery of the First Mystery, and the mystery of the Ineffable One, do not only remit all sin unto the soul for ever, but also do not suffer sin to be *imputed* unto the same for ever and ever, by reason of the free-gift of the great mystery, and the exceeding glory thereof; concerning this same matter David the prophet foretold, saying: "Blessed are they unto whom the Lord will not impute sin," which signifieth they will not impute sin from henceforth unto those that receive the mystery of the First Mystery and the

mystery of the Ineffable One. Then answered the Saviour: Well done, thou Spiritual One, this is the interpretation of my word.

(305) Then Mary continued, saying: Lord, if a man shall have received the mystery in the mystery of the First Mystery, and afterwards shall turn back and sin, and again shall repent and pray in his own mystery, shall his sin be remitted to him or not? Then answered the Saviour; Whosoever after receiving the mystery shall again sin twelve times, and again repent twelve times, and then shall pray in his own mystery, his sin shall he remitted unto him. But and if, after these twelve times, he shall turn again and transgress, then of a truth his sin shall never more be remitted, so that he may turn again unto his own mystery whatsoever it be. For such an one there is no repentance, unless indeed he hath received the mystery of the Ineffable One that remitteth all sins, and shall remit them at every time.

Then said Mary: Lord, those who have received the mystery of the First Mystery, and then have turned back and sinned, if such without having repented shall depart out of the body, shall they inherit the kingdom or not, forasmuch as they have received the free gift of that mystery? (306) The Saviour answered: Of such the judgment shall be the most merciful amongst all the judgments, for their dwelling is in the Middle Gate of the Dragon of Outer Darkness, and at the end of all those that be in torment; because such an one hath received the free gift of the mystery, and

hath not remained steadfast therein. Then said Mary: Such as have received the mystery of the Ineffable One and then shall turn back and sin, but afterwards shall repent in their lifetime, how many times shall their sin be remitted unto *them*? Then answered the Saviour: To such an one, not only if he turn back and sin once, and then repent, shall his sin be remitted, but even if he doth so continually, so long as he shall repent whilst yet alive, not being in hypocrisy, and shall pray according to his own mystery, because those mysteries are merciful and remit sin at every time (307). Then asked Mary: But if such an one shall depart out of the body before he hath repented, what then shall happen unto him? (307) Then answered the Saviour: Of such an one the judgment shall be worse than of any other, and exceeding great; for even if those souls be *new ones*, they shall not return unto the changes of the earthly bodies, neither shall they do any work, but they shall be cast out into the uttermost parts of the Outer Darkness, and shall be consumed so that they shall not exist for ever and ever.

(308) To this declaration Mary refers the saying: "Salt is good, but if the salt hath lost its savour," &c.

The following extracts, from the same high authority, will much elucidate the *pass-words* communicated to the dying believer, which form so important a feature of the Gnostic system.

Benefits of Initiation.--I will declare unto you that mystery, which is this: Whosoever shall have received that *One Word*, when he shall depart out of the body

of the Matter of the Rulers, there shall come the Contentious Receivers to loosen him out of that body, which same Receivers loosen every one departing out of the body. And when they shall have loosened the soul that hath received that mystery which I have declared unto you, in that very moment wherein he is set loose, he becometh a great *flood of light* in the midst of them. And the Receivers shall fear the light of that soul, and shall tremble, and shall cease through their fear of the great light which they behold. And that soul shall fly up aloft, and the Receivers shall not lay hold upon him, neither shall they discern by what way he is gone, inasmuch as he is become a great *Ray of Light*, and flieth up aloft, neither is there any Power that can overtake him, nor ever come nigh unto him at all (228). But he passes through all the regions of the Rulers, and also the regions of the offspring of the Light, neither doth he give-in a declaration in any region, nor yet a defence of himself, nor yet the password (or symbol). Neither can any Power of them all draw near him, but all the regions of the Rulers and of the offspring of the Light shall sing hymns, each one in his own place, fearing the flood of light that clotheth that soul, until he shall come into the place of the heirs of the mystery that he hath received, and become conjoined with the members of the same. Verily, I say unto you, ire shall be in all the regions in the time that a man can shoot an arrow. Again I say unto you, whosoever shall receive that mystery and make himself perfect in all the types and figures thereof, that man is in the world, but he is more excellent than the angels, and shall be before them all;

he is a man in the world, but he is better than the archangels and shall be before them all (229); he is higher than all the tyrants, and all the lords, and all the gods, and all the luminaries, and all the pure ones, and all the triple powers, and all the Primal Fathers, and all the Unseen Ones; he is a man in the world, but he is more excellent than the great unseen Primal Father, and shall be more exalted than he, and above all those pertaining to the Middle-space, and above all the emanations of the Treasury of Light, and above all the confusion, and above every region of the Treasure of Light; he is a man in the world, but he shall reign with me (230) in my kingdom; he is a man in the world, but he shall be a king in the Light; he is a man in the world, but he is not of the world; and verily I say unto you, that man is *I*, and I am *that man*; and in the dissolution of the world, when the universe shall be raised up, and all the number of perfect souls shall be raised up, and I am made king over all the offspring of the Light, and when I am made king over the seven AMHN, and the Five Trees, and the Three AMHN, and the Nine Keepers; and when I am king over the Boy of the boy which be the Twin Saviours, and over the Twelve Saviours, and over all the number of perfect souls which have received the mystery of Light, then whosoever shall have received the mystery of the Ineffable One, they shall be joint kings with me and shall sit upon my right hand and upon my left hand in my kingdom. Verily I say unto you, those men are *I*, and I am those men. For this cause have I said to you formerly, ye shall sit upon your thrones on my right hand and on my left in my

kingdom, and ye shall reign together with me (231). Therefore I did not refrain, neither was I abashed to call you my brethren and my fellows, inasmuch as ye shall be joint kings with me in my kingdom. These things therefore I said unto you, knowing that I was about to give unto you the mystery of the Ineffable One, because that mystery is I, and I am that mystery. Now therefore not only ye shall reign with me, but also whatsoever men shall have received that mystery they shall be joint kings with me in my kingdom; and I am they, and they are I. But my throne shall be more exalted than theirs; and inasmuch as ye shall receive sorrows in this world beyond all other men whilst ye are preaching the words that I declare unto you, therefore your thrones shall be next to my throne in my kingdom. For this cause I said of old time, in the place where I shall be, my twelve ministers shall be also; but Mary Magdalene, and John the Virgin, shall be the most excellent amongst my disciples. And all men that shall have received the mystery of the Ineffable One shall be upon my right hand and upon my left, for I am they and they are I, and they shall be equal with you in every thing; but your thrones shall be more exalted than theirs, and my throne shall be more exalted than yours (232). And all men that shall find out the *Word* of the Ineffable One, verily I say unto you all the men that shall know that *Word*, the same shall understand also the knowledge of all the words that I have spoken unto you, both in their depth and in their height, in their length and in their breadth. And what things I have not told you those I will tell you in their place and in their order in the

emanation of the universe. Verily I say unto you, they shall know how the world is established, and after what form those that pertain unto the height (highest place) be made, and for what end the universe was created.

And when the Saviour had said these things, Mary Magdalene came forward and said: Lord, be not wroth with me if I seek out everything with diligence. Whether is the Word of the mystery of the Ineffable One, one thing, and the Word of the Knowledge of All, another? Then the Saviour answered, and said: The Word of the mystery of the Ineffable is one thing, and the Word of the Knowledge of All is another. Then said Mary: Suffer me, Lord, to ask thee yet again one thing. Unless when we are living we understand the knowledge of the whole Word of the Ineffable One, we shall not inherit the kingdom of Light? (233). Then the Saviour answered, and said: Of a truth, whosoever shall have received the mystery of the kingdom of Light, the same shall go to inherit it into that place the mystery whereof he hath received. But he shall not obtain the knowledge of the All, wherefore all things were made, except he shall have known that One Word of the Ineffable, the which is the knowledge of all. And again, there is no way of knowing that One Word of knowledge, except a man shall have first received the mystery of the Ineffable One; but every man shall go to inherit that place the mystery whereof he hath received. For which cause I said to you formerly: "He that believeth a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that believeth

a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward," which is this: of whatsoever place each hath received the mystery, into that same place shall he go. He that hath received a humble mystery, the same shall inherit a humble place. He that hath received an excellent mystery, the same shall inherit an exalted place; and every one shall abide in his own place in the light of my kingdom, and every one shall have authority over the Course that is below him, but over that which is above himself he shall not have authority, but shall abide in his inheritance of the light of my kingdom, dwelling in a great light unto which there is no measure, next to the gods and to the Unseen Ones, and he shall be in great joy and gladness (234).

Now therefore I will speak with you touching the glory of those also that shall receive the mystery of the First Mystery. He that hath received the same, at the time when he shall depart out of this body of Matter, the Contentious Receiver shall come that they may take his soul out of the body, and that soul shall become a great Pay of light and shall fly aloft through the midst of them, and shall pass through all the regions and shall not give-in any declaration, or defence, or symbol, token (password), but shall pass through all, that he may come and reign over all the places belonging to the First Saviour. In the like manner he that hath received the Second Mystery and the Third and Fourth up to the Twelfth, that soul likewise shall pass through all the regions without giving in his defence, or token, and shall come and

reign over all the places belonging to the Twelve Saviours. And in like manner those receiving the second mystery shall reign over the places of the Second Saviour amongst the heirs of light. In like manner those receiving the third and the fourth up to the twelfth, shall reign over the regions of that Saviour whose mystery each hath received. But they shall not be equal with those that have received the mystery of the Ineffable One, but shall abide in the Courses of the Twelve Saviours.

Then Mary answered, saying: Lord, suffer me yet again. How is it that the First Mystery hath twelve mysteries, whereas the Ineffable hath but one? Jesus answered: Of a truth He hath but One, but that mystery maketh *three* others; the mystery is indeed *one*, but to each of them there is a different form, and moreover it maketh *five* mysteries.

As for the First Mystery, when thou hast performed it well in all the forms thereof, when thou departest out of thy body thou shalt forthwith become a great Ray of light, and it shall traverse all the regions of the Rulers and all the regions of Light, all being afraid of that light of the soul, until it shall come into its own kingdom. As for the Second Mystery, he that shall perform the same rightly in all the forms thereof, if he speak it over the head of a man departing out of the body, and *into his two ears*, that man departing out of the body when he hath received the mystery a second time, and been made partaker of the *Word of Truth*, that man's soul shall become, when it leaveth the

body, a great flood of light, so as to traverse all the regions until it cometh into the kingdom of that mystery. But and if that man hath not received that mystery, neither hath been made partaker of the words of truth, if he that hath performed that mystery shall speak the same into the ears of him who is departing out of the body, verily I say unto you, the soul of that man, although he hath not received the mystery of Light nor partaken of the words of truth, shall not be judged in the places of the Rulers, neither shall it be punished in any place, neither shall the fire touch it, by reason of the mystery of the Ineffable which goeth along with it. And they shall hasten to deliver that soul one to the other, and shall guide it Course after Course, and place (239) after place, until they bring it before the Virgin of Light: for all the regions shall fear the mystery and the *Mark* of the kingdom of the Ineffable One that is with it.

And when they have brought the soul unto the Virgin of Light, she shall see the Mark of the mystery of the kingdom of the Ineffable One which is with it. And the Virgin of Light marvelleth thereat, and she judgeth that soul, but suffereth him not to be brought unto the light until he hath accomplished the ministry of the light of that mystery, which be these: the purification of the renouncing of the world and of all the *Matter* that therein is. And the Virgin of Light sealet him with a special seal, which is this: in the same month in which he hath departed out of the body, she will cause him to be placed in another body that shall be righteous, and shall obtain the divinity of

truth and the high mystery, so that he may inherit the same, and also inherit the Light for ever and ever. This is the grace of the Second Mystery of the Ineffable One.

As touching the Third Mystery: the man that hath performed the same duly in all the forms thereof and shall *name* that mystery over the head of one departing out of the body whether he be living or *dead, or abiding in the midst of the torments of the Rulers,* and their different fires, they shall make haste to release that man out of them all, and shall bring him before the Virgin of Light, who shall place him in a righteous body that shall inherit the light.

(243) Moreover in the dissolution of the Universe, that is, when the number of perfect souls is made up, and the mystery is accomplished on account of which the Universe has been created, then I will spend a thousand years, according to the years of light, ruling over the offspring of the light, and over the number of the perfect souls which have received all the mysteries. Then Mary said, Lord, how many years in the years of this world is one year of light? Jesus answered, One day of light is one thousand years of this world, wherefore thirty and six myriads and a half of the years of the world make one year of light. I shall therefore reign a thousand years of light, being king in the middle of the last *Parastates*, being king over all the offspring of light, and over all the number of perfect souls that have received the mysteries of light. And ye, my disciples, and each one that hath

received the mysteries of the Ineffable One, shall be upon my right hand and upon my left, being kings together with me in my kingdom. And those likewise that receive the three mysteries of the five mysteries of the Ineffable shall be kings together with you in the kingdom of light. But they shall not be equal with you, and with those receiving the mystery of the Ineffable One, for they shall continue kings behind you. And those receiving the five mysteries of the Ineffable shall remain behind the three mysteries being kings also. Likewise those receiving the twelve mysteries of the First Mystery, they too shall abide as kings behind the five mysteries of the Ineffable One. And they also are kings each one of them according to his course, and all receiving in the mysteries in all the places of the Court of the Ineffable One, so that they shall be kings also but come after such as have received the mystery of the First Mystery: being sent forth according to the glory of each, so that those receiving high mysteries shall dwell in high places, but those receiving humble mysteries shall abide in humble places.

These are the *Three Lots* of the Kingdom of Light, and the mysteries of these Three Lots of Light are exceeding great. Ye will find them in the great Second Book of *IEV*; but I will give unto you and declare unto you the mysteries of each lot, which be more exalted than any other place (246), and are chief both as to place and as to order: the which also lead all mankind within, into lofty places; according to the, court belonging to their inheritance, so that ye have

no need of any of the *lower mysteries*, but ye will find them in the Second Book of **IEV** which Enoch wrote when I spoke with him out of the Tree of Knowledge and out of the Tree of Life in the Paradise of Adam.

Now therefore after I shall have declared unto you all Emanation, I will give and I will tell unto you the Three Lots of my Kingdom which be the chief of all.

Inasmuch as *Ordeals* and *Meritorious Penances* held so important a place in the Mithraic ceremonial, it will not be irrelevant here to adduce for comparison a series of the kind as excogitated by the extravagant imagination of the Brahmins. The penances of the *demon* Taraka, the Tapa-asura, by means whereof he constrained Brahma to grant him whatever he chose to demand, are thus enumerated, each stage being of one century's duration. 1. He stood on one foot, holding up the other with both hands towards heaven, his eyes fixed immovably upon the sun. 2. He stood on one great toe. 3. He took for sustenance nothing but water. 4. He lived similarly upon air. 5. He remained immersed in the water. 6. He was buried in the earth, continuing, as during the last penance, in continued adoration. 7. He performed the same act in the fire. 8. He stood on his head with his feet upwards. 9. He stood resting on one hand. 10. He hung by his hands from a tree. 11. He hung on a tree by his feet, with his head downwards. (The twelfth degree Moor (Edward Moor, *The Hindu Pantheon*--JBH.) has, for some reason, omitted.)

By means like these, termed the *Yog*, the ascetic *Yogī* is enabled to obtain nine several gifts, that set him above all the laws of Nature. For example, he may expand or contract his body to any size he pleases; he may float in the air upon a sunbeam; he may exert all his sense at an infinite distance from the objects of them; with other capabilities of like kind. And with respect to the sixth penance of Taraka, this, incredible as it appears, is still performed. To be buried alive in a small vault covered deep with earth until a crop of grain, sown over him at the time of inhumation, shall be ripe for cutting, is yet esteemed the most efficacious of good works for extorting from heaven the blessing most desired by the patient or his employer (the doctrine of *vicarious* atonement being most thoroughly Hindoo). The English Resident at Runjeet Singh's court has minutely described all the preparation made by the royal proxy, (whose regular trade it was thus to die for others), and the successful completion of his penance, which occupied the space of six weeks. The Resident assisted at the closing and the opening of the vault, and was certain that no deception could possibly have been practised by the Yogi. The blessing aimed at was the gift of fecundity for a favourite queen of Runjeet's.

The "Taurobolia," or *Baptism of Blood*, during the later ages of the Western Empire, held the foremost place, as the means of purification from sin, however atrocious. Prudentius has left a minute description of this horrid rite, in which the person to be regenerated, being stripped of his clothing, descended into a pit,

which was covered with planks pierced full of holes; a bull was slaughtered upon them, whose hot blood, streaming down through these apertures (after the fashion of a shower-bath), thoroughly drenched the recipient below. The selection of the particular victim proves this ceremony in connection with the Mithraica, which latter, as Justin says, had a "Baptism for the remission of Sins"; and the Bull being in that religion the recognised emblem of *life*, his blood necessarily constituted the most effectual laver of regeneration. No more conclusive evidence of the value then attached to the Taurobolia can be adduced, than the fact mentioned by Lampridius that the priest-emperor Heliogabalus thought it necessary to submit to its performance; and a pit, constructed for the purpose as late as the fourth century, has lately been discovered within the sacred precincts of the Temple at Eleusis, the most holy spot in all Greece.

The subject will find its most appropriate conclusion in the list of "Degrees" to be taken in the Mysteries, as laid down by M. Lajard, in his elaborate treatise, 'Le Culte de Mithra,' These degrees were divided into four stages, Terrestrial, Aerial, Igneous, and Divine, each consisting of three. The Terrestrial comprised the Soldier, the Lion, the Bull. The Aerial, the Vulture, the Ostrich, the Raven. The Igneous, the Gryphon, the Horse, the Sun. The Divine, the Eagle, the Sparrow-Hawk, the Father of fathers. Lajard's theory is best elucidated by quoting his way of expounding a very frequent cylinder-subject. He finds the admission to the degree of "The Soldier," in the group where a man

is seen standing before a "hierophant," or priest, who stands on the back of a bull *couchant* on a platform. The hierophant, wearing a cap tipped by a crescent, holds out to the neophyte a curved sword, symbol of admission into the Order. A priestess stands apart, separated from him by the horn, or Tree of Life, over which soars the emblem of the Assyrian Triad. Her cap is tipped by the Sun-star, but she also wears the crescent, to show the hermaphrodite nature of Mylitta!

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