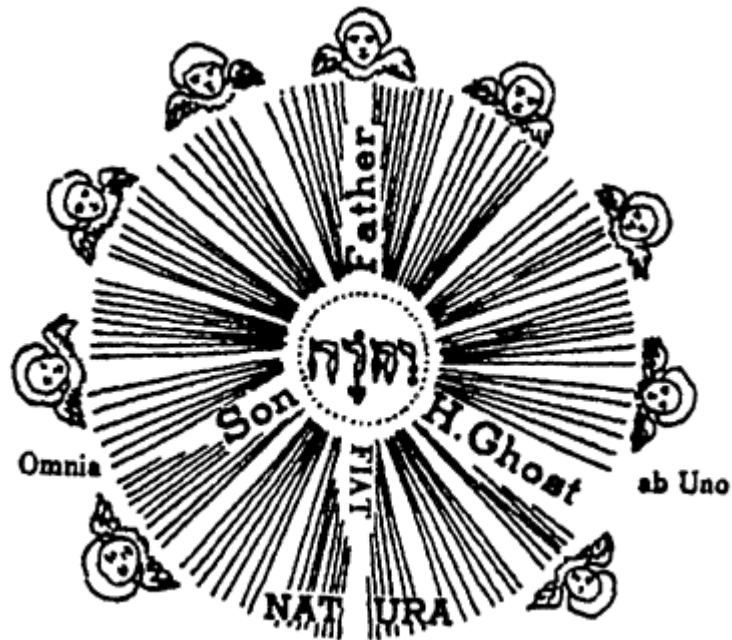


A MITHRAIC RITUAL



G.R.S. Mead

PREAMBLE.

The last little volume gave the reader a brief outline of what is known of the cult of Mithra and the spread of the Mithriac Mysteries in the Western world. We have now to deal with a Mithriac Ritual of the most instructive and intensely interesting character, which introduces us to the innermost rite of the carefully guarded secrets of the Mithriaca.

This Ritual is all the more precious in that our knowledge of the Liturgies of the ancient Pagan cults of the West is of the scantiest nature. A few fragments only remain, mostly in the form of hymns; whereas the Ritual before us is complete, and the only complete one so far discovered. Dieterich calls it a {9} Liturgy; but a Liturgy is a service in which several take part, whereas it is plain that our Ritual was a secret and solemn inner rite for one person only.

The credit of unearthing it from the obscurity in which it was buried, and of conclusively demonstrating its parent-age, is due to Dieterich; for though Cumont in his great work quotes several passages from the unrevised text, he does so only to reject it as a genuine Mithriac document.

It is dug out of the chaos of the great Paris Magic Papyrus 574 (*Supplement grec de la Bibliotheque nationale*), the date of which is fixed with every probability as the earliest years of the fourth century A.D.. The original text of the Ritual has, however, been plainly worked over by a school of Egyptian magicians, who inserted most of the now unintelligible words and names (*ashma ovomata, nomina barbara, nomina arcana*), and vowel-combinations and permutations (*voces {10} mysticae*), of their theurgic language, which were known in Egypt as "words of power."

The subject is naturally one of the most obscure that is known to scholarship, and so far no one has thrown any real light on it. That, however, there was once in Egypt and Chaldea a science of this "nature language," or "tongue of the gods," which subsequently passed into the superstition of a purely mechanical tradition, is highly probable; and one means towards a recovery of the understanding of its nature is a study of the still living tradition of *mantra-vidya*, or the science of *mantrah*, or mystic utterances and invocations, in India of to-day.

When these evidently later insertions are removed, there still remains a certain number of *nomina arcana* and *mystica voces* which cannot be removed without doing violence to the text. It, therefore, follows that these stand as part of the Ritual. Did they, however, form part {11} of the *original* Ritual? The original Ritual must have contained, one would have imagined, Persian names. But the distinguished scholar Bartholomae, whom Dieterich has called in to his assistance, declares that nothing Persian can be made out of them without violent changes of the letters. But why, it might be asked, should not the original Persian Ritual have contained *nomina arcana*

taken over from Chaldeæ? However this may be, our Greek Ritual evidently contained certain names and words "of power," before it reached the hands of the Egyptian magical school who inserted the majority of the mantric formulæ in our present text.

The latter are, of course, entirely eliminated from the translation, while the former are marked by obeli.

On the whole the most likely supposition is that we have before us (when the latter insertions are removed) a Ritual translated or paraphrased into Greek, and adapted for use in Egypt, {12} and that, too, for picked members of the most esoteric circles. For our Ritual is not for the initiation of a neophyte of the lower grades, but for a candidate who is to self-initiate himself in the solitary mystery of apotheosis, whereby he became a true "Father" of the inmost rites, one possessing face to face knowledge and gnosis.

Dieterich thinks that this Greek ritual was first made in Egypt about 100-150 A.D., and was used in the Mysteries until 200 A.D. It was then that it got into the hands of the magical school, and was included, together with many other pieces, some of them similarly treated, in a collection which was copied on the papyrus which we now possess, about 300 A.D.

It is exceedingly probable, therefore, that we have in this Ritual of initiation certain theurgic practices of Egyptian tradition combined with the traditional Mithraic invocations done into Greek.

As to the chanting of the vowels, it is {13} of interest to learn from Demetrius, *On Interpretation*, c. 71 (p.20 Raderm.), that:

"In Egypt the priests hymn the Gods by means of the seven vowels, chanting them in order; instead of the pipe and lute the musical chanting of these letters is heard. So that if you were to take away this accompaniment you would simply remove the whole melody and music of the utterance (*logos*)."

The statement of Nicomachus of Gerasa the "musician" and mystic (second century A.D.), is still clearer; for he not only tells us about the vowels and consonants, but also of certain other "unarticulated" sounds which were used by the theurgists, and which are directed to be used in the rubrics of our Ritual. In speaking of the vowels or "sounding letters" - each of the seven spheres being said to give forth a different vowel or nature-tone - Nicomachus (c. 6) informs us that these root-sounds in nature are combined with certain material elements, as they are in spoken speech with the {14} consonants; but "just as the soul with the body, and music with the lyre-strings, the one produces living creatures and the other musical modes and tunes, so do those root-sounds give birth to certain energetic and initiatory powers of divine operations. It is because of this that whenever theurgists are awe-struck in any such operation, they make invocation symbolically by means of "hissings" and "poppings" and un-articulated and discordant sounds.

The exact translation of the Greek terms, *surigmoj* and *poppusmoj* is somewhat of a difficulty. The first denotes a shrill piping sound or hissing, the Latin *stridor*. It is used of such different sounds as the rattling of ropes, the trumpeting of elephants and a singing in the ears. The second is used of a clicking or clucking with the lips and tongue, and of the whistling, cheeping, chirruping, warbling or trilling of birds. It is used of the smack of a loud kiss and also of the cry "hush." Both Aristophanes and Pliny {15} tell us that it was used as a protection against, or rather a reverent greeting of, lightning; and the latter adds that this was a universal custom.

The English "pop" perhaps represents the idea of the Greek most nearly. In the Ritual, however, I have rendered it by "puff" as it is connected with breath.

It is evident that we have here to do with certain nature-sounds, which have disappeared from articulate speech, except in some primitive languages such as the "clicking" of the Zulus. It pertains to the art of *onomatopiia* or *onomatopoesis*, or the forming of words expressive of natural sounds. The ' root-idea seems to be that in mystic operations designed to bring man in touch with the hidden powers of nature, the language of nature must be employed.

As we have said, the Ritual before us is not of the nature of a church or temple service; on the contrary, it contains directions for a solitary sacrament, in which the whole effort of the celebrant {16} is to stir into activity, and bring into conscious operation, his own hidden nature or the root-substance of his being. It is a *yoga*-rite (*unio mystica*), or act for union, in which the physical breath, the etheric currents, and the psychic auræ, or life-breaths, or *prana's* work together with the inbreathing of the Great Breath, or Holy Spirit, or Atmic Energy.

It should therefore prove of very great interest to many who have of late heard much concerning yoga, both in its higher contemplative modes, and also in its modes of deep and psychic breathing (*hatha-yoga*); for it may be news to many that in the ancient West, especially in Egypt, there was a high art of this selfsame *yoga* which has been developed so elaborately in India.

We will now give a translation of the Ritual and then proceed to comment on it. The prayers and utterances are printed in italics, and the rubrics or instructions in Roman type. {17}

THE RITUAL.

I.

[THE FATHER'S PRAYER.]

O Providence, O Fortune, bestow on me Thy Grace - imparting these the Mysteries a Father only may hand on, and that, too, to a Son alone - his Immortality - [a Son] initiate, worthy of this our Craft, with which Sun Mithras, the Great God, commanded me to be endowed by His Archangel; so that I, Eagle [as I am, by mine own self] alone, may soar to Heaven, and contemplate all things.

II.

THE INVOCATORY UTTERANCE (LOGOS).

- 1. O Primal Origin of my origination; Thou Primal Substance of my substance; First Breath of breath, the breath that is in me; First Fire, God-given for the Blending of the blendings in me, [First Fire] of fire in me; First Water of [my] water. the water in me; Primal Earth-essence of the earthy essence in me; Thou Perfect Body of me - N. N. son of N. N., son of N.N. (fem.) - fashioned by Honoured Arm and Incorruptible Right Hand, in World that's lightless, yet radiant with Light, [in World] that's soulless, yet filled full of Soul!*
- 2. If, verity, it may seem good to you, translate me, now held by my lower nature, unto the Generation that is free from Death; in order that, beyond the insistent Need that presses on me, I may have Vision of the Deathless Source, by virtue of the Deathless Spirit, by virtue of the Deathless Water, by virtue of the [Deathless] Solid, and [by virtue of] the [Deathless] Air; in order that I may become re-born in Mind; in order that I may become initiate, and that the Holy Breath may breathe in me; in order that I may admire the Holy Fire; that I may see the Deep of the [New] Dawn, the Water that doth cause [the Soul] to thrill; and that the, Life-bestowing Æther which surrounds [all things] may give me, Hearing.*
- 3. For I am to behold to-day with Deathless Eyes - I, mortal, born of mortal womb, but [now] made better by the Might of Mighty Power, yea, by the Incorruptible Right Hand - [I am to see to-day] by virtue of the Deathless Spirit the Deathless Æon, the master of the Diadeins of Fire - I with pure purities [now] Purified, the human soul-power of me subsisting for a little while in purity; which [power] I shall again receive transmitted unto me beyond the insistent Bitterness that presses on me, Necessity whose debts can never go unpaid - I, N. N., son of N. N. (fem.) - according to the Ordinance of God that naught can ever change.*

4. *For that it is beyond my reach that, born beneath the sway of Death, I should [unaided] soar into the Height, together with the golden sparklings of the Brilliancy that knows no Death.*
5. *Stay still, O nature doomed to Perish, [nature] of men subject to Death! And straightway let me pass beyond the Need implacable that presses on me; for that I am His Son; I breathe; I am!*

III.

[THE FIRST INSTRUCTION.]

1. Take from the [Sun-]rays breath, inhaling thrice [as deeply] as thou canst; and thou shalt see thyself being raised aloft, and soaring towards the Height, so that thou seem'st to be in midst of Air.
2. Thou shalt hear naught, nor man nor beast; nor shalt thou see aught of the sights upon the earth, in that same hour; but all things thou shalt see will be immortal.
3. For thou shalt see, in that same day and hour, the Disposition of the Gods - the Ruling Gods ascending heavenwards, the other ones descending. And through his Disk - the God's, my Father's - there shall be seen the Way-of-going of the Gods accessible to sight.
4. And in like fashion also [shall be seen] the Pipe, as it is called, whence comes the Wind in service [for the day]. For thou shalt see as though it were a Pipe depending from His Disk; and toward the regions Westward, as though it were an infinite East Wind. But if the other Wind, toward the regions of the East' should be in service, in the like fashion shalt thou see, toward the regions of that [side,] the converse of the sight.
5. And thou shalt see the Gods gazing intently on thee and bearing down upon thee. Then straightway lay thy dexter finger on thy lips and say:

IV.

[THE FIRST UTTERANCE.]

Silence! Silence! Silence!

The Symbol of the Living God beyond Decay.

Protect me, Silence! †!

Next "hiss" forth long: *Sss! Sss!*

Then "puff" saying: *†!*

And thereon shalt thou see the Gods gazing benignly on thee, and no longer bearing down upon thee, but proceeding on the proper order of their doings.

V.

[THE SECOND INSTRUCTION.]

When, then, thou see'st the Upper Cosmos clean and clear, with no one of the Gods (or Angels) bearing down on thee, expect to hear a mighty thunder-clap so as to startle thee.

Then say again:

THE [SECOND] UTTERANCE (LOGOS).

1. *O Silence! Silence!*

I am a Star, whose Course is as your Course, shining anew from out the depth †.
Upon thy saying this, straightway His disk will start expanding.

2. And after thou hast said the second utterance - to wit, twice *Silence* and the rest - "hiss" twice, and "puff" twice; and straightway shalt thou see a mighty host of stars, five-pointed, emerging from His Disk, and filling all the Air.

3. Then say again:

O Silence! Silence!

And when His Disk is opened [fully] out, thou shalt behold an infinite Encircling and Doors of Fire fast closed.

Straightway set going then the utterance that follows, closing thy eyes:

THE THIRD UTTERANCE (LOGOS).

1. *Hear me, give ear to me - N. N., son of N. N. (fem.) - O Lord, who with Thy Breath hast closed the Fiery Bars of Heaven; Twin-bodied; Ruler of the Fire; Creator of the Light; O Holder of the Keys; Inbreather of the Fire; Fire-hearted One, whose Breath gives Light; Thou who dost joy in Fire; Beauteous of Light; O Lord of Light, whose Body is of Fire; Light-giver [and] Fire-sower; Fire-loosener, whose Life is in the Light; Fire-whirler, who sett'st the Light in motion; Thou Thunder-rouser; O Thou Light-glory, Light-increaser; Controller of the Light Empyrean; O Thou Star-tamer!*
2. *Oh! Open unto me! For on account of this, the bitter and implacable Necessity that presses on me, I do invoke Thy Deathless Names, innate with Life, most*

worshipful, that have not yet descended unto mortal nature, nor have been made articulate by human tongue, or cry or tone of man:

ëö · öëö · iöö · öë · ëö · ëö · öëö · iöö · öëë · öë · ööë · ië · ëö · öö · öë · iëö ·
öë · ööë · iëööë · iëö · eë · iö · öë · iöë · öëö · eoë · oeö · öië · öiëö · oi · iii · ëöë ·
öüë · ëö · öë · eöëia · aëaeëa · ëëë · eëë · eëë · iëö · ëö · öëëöë · ëö · euö · öë ·
eiö · ëö · öë · öë · öë · ee · ooouiöë!

3. Utter all these with Fire and Spirit once unto the end; and then begin again a second time, until thou hast completed [all] the Seven Immortal Gods of Cosmos. When thou hast uttered them, thunders and crashings shalt thou hear in the Surround, and feel thyself a-shake with every crash. Then once more utter *Silence!* [and] the utterance [following it].
4. Thereon open thy eyes ; and thou shalt see the Doors thrown open, and the Cosmos of the Gods that is within the Doors; so that for joy and rapture of the sight thy Spirit runs to meet it, and soars up. Therefore, hold thyself steady, and, gazing steadily into thyself, draw breath from the Divine. When, then, thy Soul shall be restored, say :

VIII.

[THE FOURTH UTTERANCE.]

1. *Draw nigh, O Lord!*

Upon this utterance His Rays shall be turned on thee, and thou shalt be in midst of them.

2. When, then, thou hast done this, thou shalt behold a God, in flower of age, of fairest beauty, [and] with Locks of Flame, in a white Tunic and a scarlet Mantle, wearing a Crown of Fire.

Straightway salute Him with the Salutation of the Fire:

IX.

[THE FIFTH UTTERANCE.]

1. *Hail Lord! O Thou of mighty Power; O King of mighty Sway; Greatest of Gods; O Sun; Thou Lord of Heaven and Earth; O God of Gods! Strong is Thy Breath; strong is Thy Might!*
O Lord, if it seem good to Thee, make Thou announcement of me unto God Most-high, who hath begotten and created Thee !
2. *For that a man - N.N., son of N.N. (fem.), born of the mortal womb of N.N. (fem.), and of spermatic ichor, yea, of this [ichor], which at Thy Hands to-day hath undergone the transmutation of re-birth -, one, from so many tens of thousands, transformed to immortality in this same hour, by God's good-pleasure, of God transcendent Good-, [a man, I say,] presumes to worship Thee, and supplicates with whatsoever power a mortal hath.*
3. Upon this utterance He shall come to the Pole, and thou shalt see Him moving round as on a path.

Then gaze intently, and send forth a prolonged "bellowing," like to a horn-note, expelling the whole breath, with pressure on the ribs, and kiss the amulets, and say first to that upon the right:

X.

[THE SIXTH UTTERANCE.]

Protect me! †!

When thou hast uttered this. thou shalt behold the Doors thrown open, and, issuing from the Depth, Seven Virgins, in byssus-ropes, with serpent-faces. and golden sceptres in their hands. These are they who are the so-called Heaven's Fortunes (*Tychai*).

When thou dost see these things, make salutation thus:

XI.

[THE SEVENTH UTTERANCE.]

1. *Hail Heaven's Seven Fortunes, Virgins august and good, ye sacred ones who live and eat with †! Ye holiest Protectors of the Four Supports!*

Hail thou, the First, †!

Hail thou, the Second, †!

Hail thou, the Third, †!

Hail thou, the Fourth, †!

Hail thou, the Fifth, †!

Hail thou, the Sixth, †!

Hail thou, the Seventh, †!

2. There come forth others, too - Seven Gods, with faces of black bulls, in linen loin-cloths, with seven golden fillets on their heads. These are the so-called Heaven's Pole-lords.

And in like fashion unto each of them thou must make salutation with his special name.

XII.

[THE EIGHTH UTTERANCE.]

1. *Hail Guardians of the Pivot, ye, sacred sturdy Youths, who all, at once, revolve the spinning Axis of Heaven's Circle, ye who let loose the thunder and the lightning, and earthquake-shocks and thunder-bolts upon the hosts of impious folk, but [who bestow] on me, who pious am and worshipper of God, good-health, and soundness of my frame in every Part, and Proper stretch of hearing and of sight, and calm, in the now Present good-hours of this day, O mighty Ruling Lords and Gods of me!*

Hail thou, the First, †!

Hail thou, the Second, †!

Hail thou, the Third, †!

Hail thou, the Fourth, †!

Hail thou, the Fifth, †!

Hail thou, the Sixth, †!

Hail thou, the Seventh, †!

2. Now when they [all] are present in their order, here and there, gaze in the Air intently, and thou shalt see lightnings down-flashing, and lights a-quiver, and the earth a-shake; and [then] a God descending, [a God] transcending vast, of radiant

Presence, with golden Locks, in flower of age, [clad] in a Robe of brightness, with Crown of gold [upon His Head], and Garments [on His Legs], holding in His Right Hand the golden Shoulder of the Calf.

This latter is the Bear that moves the Heaven[-dome], and changes its direction, now up now down, according to the hour.

Then shalt thou see lightnings leap from His Eyes and from His Body stars.

3. Straightway send forth a "bellowing" prolonged, with belly-pressure, to start thy senses going all together-prolonged unto the very end, kissing again the amulets and saying:

XIII.

[THE NINTH UTTERANCE.]

†, [*O Lord*] of me - N. N. - *abide, with Me, within my Soul! Oh! leave me not! For † bids thee [remain].*

And gaze intently on the God, with "bellowing" prolonged, and thus salute Him:

[THE TENTH UTTERANCE.]

Hail Lord, Thou Master of the Water! Hail, Founder of the Earth! Hail, Prince of Breath!

O Lord, being born again, I Pass away in being made Great, and, having been made Great, I die.

Being born from out the state of birth-and-death that giveth birth to [mortal] lives, I now, set free, Pass to the state transcending birth, as Thou hast stablished it, according as Thou hast ordained and made, the Mystery.