

Introduction to Studies in Orphism

by Martin Euser, December 2019

It is with great pleasure that I have compiled the seven-part series on Orphism by F.S. Darrow, A.M., Ph. D. (Harv.), that originally was published in the Theosophical Path from April, 1912 to March, 1913 (see tuponline.org). This material is in the public domain, of course, and it seems appropriate to offer this material to the Academia researchers, especially to those interested in Neo-Platonic teachings, which latter after all have drawn much from the Orphic tradition.

Darrow outlines the deeper meanings contained in the Orphic mystery teachings and makes some connections to Egyptian and Hindu mythology.

The mysteries were always kept very secret to the non-initiated, dealing with deep spiritual, psychological and even scientific matters. The notion of purification of the soul and its re-ascent and merging with the divine-spiritual essence within is central in the mysteries. There have been Mystery-schools in several countries, varying from India, Egypt, Greece, Italy, and other places. In the course of time degeneration of mentality was taking place to such a degree, that these Schools were closed. In the Renaissance, renewed interest in Greek and Latin culture made Neo-Platonic teachings gradually available to the cultured people.

In the 19th century, interest in Oriental philosophy began to take a flight in the minds of people. A Theosophical organization was formed to stimulate research into the underlying essence of religious philosophies, varying from Buddhism, Hinduism, Kabbalah, Gnosis, and other systems of thought. The idea of universal brotherhood was promoted as essential for the advancement of the human race. The most important public figures in that circle as regards depth of teaching were, in my opinion, H.P. Blavatsky and G. de Purucker, both rather unknown now and much underestimated. After all, sensitive human beings always have intuited that there is more to life than mere sense-pleasure and material well-being. They know that there must be some deeper truth hidden in religion and that there have been living wise men and women in the world at some time in history.

Spiritual teachings cannot be understood by the brain-mind alone. A deeper faculty exists, intuition or direct capturing or temporarily merging with the essence of a thing or situation; a registration of the essential vibrations of people, situations, etc. This has never been taught at our schools and universities, while in our current time it may be essential to survival of our civilization. Respect for the natural world, the ecosystem, and the order that is expressed through it, is indispensable.

Scholars of diverse spiritual traditions would do well to take note of the above. A literal translation of words and sentences seldom captures the deeper meaning of what is said. The requirement for a true scholar is greater than that. In fact, studying esoteric traditions (including the Neo-Platonic School) was always meant to stimulate the inner faculties of the human being engaged in such a study. It is my hope that this compilation will contribute a little to that.

The following text is a merge from seven separate pdfs. In some instances, Greek text in a footnote may be garbled. The reader is kindly referred to the original site of these texts.

STUDIES IN ORPHISM: by F. S. Darrow, A. M., Ph. D. (Harv.)

I. THE MYTHICAL AND THE HISTORICAL ORPHEUS

(a) THE MYTHICAL ORPHEUS OR THE MAGICAL BARD



H. P. BLAVATSKY, the first of the three Theosophical Leaders, in *Isis Unveiled* says:

The fable of Aristaeus pursuing Eurydice into the woods where a serpent occasions her death is a very plain allegory, which was in part explained in the earliest times. *Aristaeus* is *brutal power*, pursuing *Eurydice, the Esoteric Doctrine* into the woods where the *serpent, emblem of every sun-god* — kills her, i. e., forces truth to become still more esoteric and seek shelter in the Underworld, which is not the hell of our theologians. Moreover, the fable of Orpheus torn to pieces by the Bacchanals is another allegory to show that the gross and popular rites are always more welcome than divine but simple truth.¹

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice has ever been a favorite theme with the greatest poets of ancient and modern times, but its significance has not in general been recognized because most of the extant traditions about Orpheus are mythical, that is, symbolical and allegorical truths, *not* historical facts. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish the historical kernel around which these have been grouped. Orpheus' supreme importance lies not in these legends but in the fact that he was a religious reformer, one of the first to teach to the *historical nations of Europe* the eternal truths regarding the origin of things, the divinity of humanity and the immortality of the soul — the Truths which were dramatically embodied in the rites of the Greek Orphic Mysteries.

The myth of Orpheus, the Magical Bard, contains seven symbolical moments: (1) his Divine Birth; (2) his Sacred Quest as the savior of the Argonautic expedition; (3) his Mystic Marriage with Eurydice and his mission as a divine teacher; (4) his First Agony at the first death of Eurydice; (5) his Descent into Hades; (6) his Second and Final Agony at the second death of Eurydice, culminating in (7) his Passion.

1. THE DIVINE BIRTH

Orpheus "the far-famed Bard, the father of song sent by Apollo"² was according to tradition born in Thrace on Mount Olympus, which district, according to Strabo, though in his day held by the Macedonians, had formerly belonged to Thrace, "for," he says, "Pieria and

1. *Isis Unveiled*, II, pp. 129-130. 2. Pindar, iv, *Pythian Ode*, vv. 176-7 (313-315).

Olympus and Pimpleia and Leibethra were of old Thracian mountains and districts, . . . and the Thracians who colonized Boeotia dedicated Helicon to the Muses and also the cave of the Nymphs called Leibethriades.”³ Orpheus was the son of the God of Light, the patron divinity of Music, Apollo, and the Muse of Epic Poetry, Calliope. When a mere child he was nearly killed by a venomous snake and was saved only by taking refuge in a nearby sanctuary of Helios. Therefore ever afterwards the Bard annually worshiped the sun on the anniversary of this event.⁴ Orpheus was then presented by his father Apollo with the God’s lyre and was given divine instruction until he had become the most marvelous of musicians, capable of moving by his music not only the gods and men, but also the wild beasts, the trees, and the very rocks of the field.

Orpheus with his lute made trees
And the mountain-tops that freeze
Bow themselves when he did sing:
To his music plants and flowers
Ever sprung; as sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring.

Everything that heard him play —
E’en the billows of the sea —
Hung their heads and then lay by.
In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep or hearing die.⁵

Where stern Olympus stands;
In the elm woods and the oaken
There where Orpheus harped of old,
And the trees awoke and knew him
And the wild things gathered to him,
As he sang amid the broken
Glens his music manifold.⁶

At his sweet strains the rushing stream
Its uproar stilled, and all its waves
Paused in forgetfulness of flight;
And while the waters stayed to hear,
The Tribes far down the Hebrus’ stream

3. Strabo, x, 3 §722, (Casaubon, 471). 4. The frequency with which the symbolic serpent reappears in the Orphic Myth is significant of the Bard’s inner connexion both with Helios and Apollo. 5. Shakespeare, *Henry the Eighth*, iii, 1. 3.

6. Euripides, *Bacchae*, vv. 651 ff. (Murray).

Deemed that the river was no more.
 All wingéd creatures of the wood
 And e'en the woods themselves came near
 To listen; or, if far on high
 Some bird was wheeling through the air
 To that sweet music swift he fell
 On drooping wings. The mountains came:
 Rough Athos with his Centaur herd,
 And Rhodope, its drifted snows
 Loosed by the magic of that song
 Stood by to hear. The Dryads left
 The shelter of their oaken trunks
 And gathered round the tuneful bard.
 The beasts came, too, and with them came
 Their lairs: hard by the fearless flocks
 The tawny Afric lion crouched;
 The timid does feared not the wolves;
 And serpents crawled forth to the light,
 Their venom quite forgot.⁷

And the spotted lynxes for joy of the song
 Were as sheep in the fold, and a tawny throng
 Of lions trooped down from Othrys' lawn,
 And her light foot lifting, a dappled fawn
 Left the shade of the high tressed pine,
 And danced for joy to that lyre.⁸

It is thus evident that there is a striking parallelism between this part of the Greek myth and Isaiah's vision of the rule of the Messiah during the millennium:

And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the hind; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together. . . . And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy *mountain*; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. . . . Unto him shall the nations seek and his resting-place shall be glorious.⁹

This parallelism was commonly recognized by the early Christians who on many of their sarcophagi placed an exact copy, drawn from Greek art, of the figure of Orpheus taming the Beasts by the power of

7. Seneca, *Hercules Oetaeus*, vv. 1033 ff. (Miller). 8. Euripides, *Alcestis*, vv. 579 ff. (Way), spoken of Apollo, the Father, but likewise true of Orpheus, the Son.
 9. *Isaiah*, xi, 6-10.

his magical music, and used it to represent the Good Shepherd. Gradually, however, under ecclesiastical influence the wicked wild animals were weeded out until the entire congregation consisted merely of mild and docile sheep. The fact of this borrowing is further significant of the real internal connexion which exists between Orphism and Christianity. The early Church was correct in thus admitting that the prototype of the mythico-historical figure of Jesus, the Christ, was to be found in the noble and ascetic Orpheus.

2. THE SACRED QUEST: ORPHEUS AS THE SAVIOR OF THE ARGONAUTIC EXPEDITION

The Argonauts were able to accomplish their mission successfully only by the help of Orpheus, whose importance in the Saga of the Search for the Golden Fleece is in itself evidence of the notable connexion between Orpheus and Apollo and Helios, for the solar key unlocks many of the mysteries in the story of Jason's Quest.

The Argo could be launched only to the accompaniment of Orpheus' lyre, whereupon it glided into the sea of its own accord. The Argonauts themselves were rescued from the seductive pleasures on the Island of Lemnos only by means of the Bard's magical music. The Symplegadae, or the Twin Clashing Rocks, which threatened to crush the Argo between them, were stopped in the midst of their wild movement by the same means and forever anchored fast at the mouth of the Bosphorus in the Black Sea, where they have remained to this day. Then, too, the Heroes, when they neared the Flowery Isle of the Sirens, became so entranced that they would have landed on the fatal shore had not Orpheus saved them by striking upon his lyre. Thus all escaped safely, except Butes, who flung himself into the sea and strove to swim to the beach. Nevertheless, by the interposition of Aphrodite even he was ultimately rescued. Also, it was Orpheus who lulled to sleep the Colchian dragon which guarded the Golden Fleece. And finally, when the Argonauts, crowned with success and accompanied by the Princess Medeia, the witch grand-daughter of Helios, were returning, they were rescued from utter shipwreck only by the prayer which Orpheus directed to the Mystery Gods of Samothrace as he played upon the lyre — a myth which may indeed be the prototype or the source of the stilling of the tempest on the Sea of Galilee by Jesus.¹⁰

10. *Matthew*, viii, 23-27; *Mark*, iv, 35-41; *Luke*, viii, 22-25

3. THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE WITH EURYDICE; AND ORPHEUS' MISSION AS A DIVINE TEACHER

Hyginus and Apollodorus report that Orpheus was killed by a stroke of lightning while sailing with the Argonauts, but the usual form of the myth declares that after bringing the Heroes safely back to Greece the sacred Bard journeyed to Egypt where he was fully initiated by the hierophants.

His marriage with Eurydice is not a beautiful love-story, although so regarded often by the ancient poets and regularly by the modern, but in the words of H. P. Blavatsky, "a very plain allegory," for it is an almost inevitable characteristic of the God-man of the Mystery-Story among all nations to be represented as the Divine Bridegroom. The Sacred Marriage, or rather the two Sacred Marriages, form the intrinsic part of the Mystery-Story. The etymology of the name Eurydice is enlightening. The word means "She of Wide Power, Authority, or Justice," hence, "She who is rich by reason of the right of Succession"; and what is richer in hereditary rights than the "Secret Doctrine," which has been handed down from time immemorial by the "Golden Chain of Succession"? Also it is noteworthy that Orpheus won his bride by the magic power of his music. Hymen, the God of marriage, was invited to bless the nuptials with his presence; but although he attended, the omens were unpropitious, for his torch smoked and brought tears into the eyes of all the guests. It is likewise significant that after his Mystic Marriage Orpheus returned to Pimpleia on Mount Olympus, where he dwelt in a *cave* and devoted the rest of his life to civilizing and helping his savage neighbors by teaching them the Mysteries which thereafter in his honor were called Orphic.

4. THE FIRST AGONY AT THE FIRST DEATH OF EURYDICE

Eurydice (the "Secret Doctrine"), soon after her marriage to Orpheus (the God-man), was seen and pursued by Aristaeus (brutal power), who became enamored of her beauty. Thereupon Eurydice died from a bite upon her foot, inflicted by a poisonous snake (the solar emblem, as noted before). The heartbroken Bard sang his grief to all that breathed the upper air, gods and men alike. "Orpheus made thee (Eurydice), thee, all to himself on a lonely shore, thee at dawn of day, thee at set of sun, his unending song."¹¹

11. Virgil, *Georgics*, iv, vv. 465-6.

Eurydice, the Thracian dames
 Bewailed; Eurydice, the gods,
 Who ne'er had wept before; and they
 Who with forbidding, awful brows,
 In judgment sit and hear the crimes
 Long since committed, unconfessed,
 They sat and wept Eurydice.¹²

Finally, Orpheus wandered to the assembly of the gods on Mount Olympus and in his endeavor to regain his lost Eurydice, although warned of the perilous nature of the undertaking, obtained permission from Zeus, the Father of Gods and Men, to visit the Lower Regions *alive*.

5. THE DESCENT INTO HADES

The Descent into Hades, like the Mystic Marriage, the Agony, and the Passion, is an integral part of the Mystery-Story and will reappear in the Christ-Story. Orpheus descended by means of the cave upon the promontory of Taenarus, not far from ancient Sparta, and like those other heroes, Heracles, Theseus, Odysseus, and Aeneas, reached the Underworld alive. He charmed Charon, the aged ferryman of the Styx and appeased the rage of Cerberus, the three-headed dog of Hades, by his music, and finally reached in safety the thrones of Hades, the king of the Lower World, and of Persephone, his queen, to both of whom he sang his petition while he played his magical lyre. The dead wept; Tantalus, in spite of his endlessly unsatisfied thirst, stopped his straining after the ever-retreating water; the vultures ceased to tear and rend the ever-growing liver of Tityus; Ixion's wheel stood still; the Danaïds rested from their ever-lasting task of filling the leaky jar with the water drawn in a sieve; while Sisyphus sat on his rock to listen. Then for the first time the Furies wept, and Persephone and Hades her husband hastened to grant the poet's prayer by summoning the newly-arrived Eurydice who came, still limping because of her wounded foot. Orpheus was permitted to take her back to Earth but on condition that he should not turn around and look at her until they reached the upper air. Mindful of this the Bard led the way, while Eurydice followed. Unhindered they passed through the horrors of Hades while all things held their breath.

When through the doors of Taenarus
 He made his way to the silent land,

12. Seneca, *Hercules Furens*, vv. 578 ff. (Miller).

Sounding his mournful lyre the while,
 The glooms of Tartarus were filled
 With his sad song; and the sullen gods
 Of Erebus were moved to tears.
 He feared not the pool of the Stygian stream
 By whose dread wave the heavenly gods
 Make oath unbreakable.
 The whirling rim of the restless wheel
 Stood still, its breathless speed at rest.
 The immortal liver of Tityus
 Grew, undevoured, while at the song
 The spellbound birds forgot their greed.
 Thou, too, didst hear, O boatman grim,
 And thy bark that plies the infernal stream
 With oars all motionless came on.
 Then, first, the hoary Phrygian
 Forgot his thirst, although no more
 The mocking waters fled his lips
 But stood enchanted; now no more
 He reaches hungry hands to grasp
 The luscious fruit.
 When thus through that dark world of souls
 Sweet Orpheus poured such heavenly strains
 That impious rock of Sisyphus
 Was moved to follow him.¹³

They sat and wept Eurydice,
 Until the Lord of Death exclaimed:
 "We grant thy prayer. Away to Earth!
 But on this sole condition go:
 Do thou behind thy husband fare!
 And look thou not upon thy wife
 Until the light of day thou see
 And Spartan Taenarus appear."¹⁴

6. THE SECOND OR FINAL AGONY AT THE SECOND DEATH OF EURYDICE

Then did the goddesses of fate
 Renew the exhausted thread of life
 For fair Eurydice. But when,
 Unmindful of the law they gave,
 And scarce believing that his wife

13. Seneca, *Hercules Oetaeus*, vv. 1061 ff. 14. Seneca, *Hercules Furens*, vv. 582 ff.

Was following, the hapless man
 Looked back, he lost his prize of song;
 For she, who to the very verge
 Of life had come again, fell back
 And died again.¹⁵

But soon, too soon, the lover turns his eyes
 Again she falls, again she dies, she dies!

Now under hanging mountains,
 Beside the fall of fountains
 Or where the Hebrus wanders,
 Rolling in meanders,
 All alone
 Unheard, unknown
 He makes his moan.

Now with Furies surrounded,
 Despairing confounded,
 He trembles, he glows,
 Amidst Rhodope's snows.¹⁶

Dimly thy sad leave-taking face,
 Eurydice! Eurydice!
 The tremulous leaves repeat to me
 Eurydice! Eurydice!¹⁷

Orpheus tried for a second time to follow Eurydice into the Lower World, but Charon repulsed him and refused him passage. For seven days (a significant number) he remained on the banks of the Styx without food or sleep. Then for seven months Orpheus sat in chilly caverns or under the open sky beside the river Strymon, taking neither food nor drink.

Beneath a rock o'er Strymon's flood on high,
 Seven months, seven long continued months, 'tis said,
 He breathed his sorrows in a desert cave,
 And soothed the tiger, moved the oak with song.¹⁸

At the end of the seven months (again the significant number) the Bard withdrew to the higher and more wintry regions of Mounts Rhodope and Haemus so that he might mourn in still greater solitude.

Alone over Hyperborean ice and Tanaïs the snowy, and fields whose marriage

15. Seneca, *Hercules Oetaeus*, vv. 1083 ff. (Miller). 16. Pope, *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, vi. 17. Lowell, *Eurydice*. 18. W. S. Landor, *Orpheus and Eurydice in Dry Sticks*.

bond with Rhipaeen frost is never severed, he would wander, mourning his lost Eurydice and Hades' cancelled boon.¹⁹

He chose a lonely seat of unhewn stone,
Blackened with lichens, on an herbless plain.

He does no longer sit upon his throne
Of rock upon a desert herbless plain,
For the evergreen and knotted ilixes,
And cypresses that seldom wave their boughs,
And sea-green olives with their grateful fruit,
And elms dragging along the twisted vines,
Which drop their berries as they follow fast
And blackthorn bushes with their infant race
Of blushing roseblooms; beeches, to lovers dear,
And weeping willow trees; all swift or slow,
As their huge boughs or lighter dress permit,
Have circled in his throne, and Earth herself
Has sent from her maternal breast a growth
Of starlike flowers and herbs of odor sweet,
To pave the temple that his poesy
Has framed, while near his feet grim lions crouch,
And kids, fearless from love, creep near his lair.
Even the blind worms seem to feel the sound.
The birds are silent, hanging down their heads,
Perched on the lowest branches of the trees;
Not even the nightingale intrudes a note
In rivalry, but all entranced she listens.²⁰

7. THE PASSION

While Orpheus, ever remembering his sorrow, was wandering on Mount Rhodope, it is said a band of Bacchanals, the Bassaridae, frenzied women-worshippers of Dionysus, met the wanderer and asked him to play for them some gay music that they might dance, but when he was unable to please the merrymakers because of his grief, the leader of the women enraged at his sad notes shouted: "See yonder our despiser!" and hurled her javelin, which, however, as soon as it came within the sound of the magical lyre, fell harmless at the Bard's feet. Thereupon the others began to throw stones, which also left him unharmed, until the voice of the lyre was overwhelmed by the uproar, when the maniacs tore him limb from limb and cast his head and his lyre into the river Hebrus, down which they floated ever murmuring sad music to which the shores responded.

19. Virgil, *Georgics*, iv, vv. 517-520. 20. Shelley, *Orpheus*.

See, wild as the winds, o'er the desert he flies;
 Hark! Haemus resounds with the Bacchanals' cries —
 Ah, see, he dies! he dies!
 Yet e'en in death Eurydice he sung.
 Eurydice, still trembled on his tongue,
 Eurydice the woods
 Eurydice the floods,
 Eurydice the rocks and hollow mountains sung.²¹

What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
 The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
 Whom universal nature did lament
 When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
 His gory visage down the stream was sent,
 Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore.²²

The Muses gathered the fragments of the body and buried them in the district of Pieria on Mount Olympus at Leibethra, where ever since, it is said, the nightingale sings more sweetly over the grave than in any other part of Greece. Here too the river Helicon now flows for some distance underground, although legend declares that originally it flowed above ground throughout its entire course, but when the women who slew Orpheus wished to wash off the bloodstains in the Helicon, the river straightway rushed beneath the ground that it might not share in the pollution. Later, at the time of the destruction of Leibethra the urn with the ashes of the Bard and the pillar marking the grave were moved to the neighboring city of Dium. Upon this pillar was inscribed the following epigram; which, it should be noted, records a variant tradition from that described above, inasmuch as Zeus is said to have slain Orpheus by lightning because the Bard, like Prometheus, revealed the Mysteries of the Gods to men.

Here the Bard buried by the Muses lies
 The Thracian Orpheus of the golden lyre:
 Whom mighty Zeus the Sovereign of the skies
 Removed from earth by his dread lightning's fire.²³

After the murder, Dionysus is said to have metamorphosed the Basaridae into trees.

As the head floated down the stream the dead lips still murmured "Eurydice," and while his soul passed for the second time to Hades to rejoin his Mystic Bride, twice-lost, he incessantly called "Eurydice,"

21. Pope, *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, vi. 22. Milton, *Lycidas*, vv. 58 ff.

23. Diogenes Laertius, *Proemium*, iv.

until the brooks, the trees, and the fountains he had loved so well, re-echoed the longing cry, repeating it over and over again.

Even, then, while the head, rent from that pale marble neck was carried floating down Oiafrican Hebrus' flood, Eurydice, the lifeless voice of the cold tongue with latest breath kept calling —Ah! my poor Eurydice! Eurydice! the banks returned all down the stream.²⁴

The head drifted across the Aegean and after a long lapse of time reached the Island of Lesbos, unharmed by the water, still singing and still freshly bleeding. Just as it touched the shore an infuriated serpent (again the solar emblem) strove to insert its fangs, but Phoebus Apollo drove the viper away and turned it into stone with its jaws still gaping. Then, at last, the Bard rejoined his lost Eurydice, at whose side in the Fields of the Blessed he walked, gazing his full without fear of penalty.

The head and the lyre were both preserved in the Island of Lesbos in an oracular hero-shrine within the sacred precinct of Apollo, to which in later times pilgrims flocked even from distant Babylon, and among those who thus sought the guidance of the dead Prophet was Cyrus the Great. It is also related that Neanthus, son of Pittacus, the Sage-tyrant of Mitylene, because of the many wonders formerly wrought by the magical lyre, was so eager to gain possession of it that he bribed the priest of Apollo. Whereupon the young man with the lyre in his bosom stealthily left the city by night and as soon as he reached the open country began to strike the strings under the belief that he too would be able to move rocks and trees, but he failed so miserably that the dogs of the neighboring villages straightway fell upon him and tore him to pieces. Now, the Lyre, at the intercession of Apollo and the Muses has been placed among the stars, where it forms the constellation Lyra. Such, in outline, is the ancient myth of Orpheus the Magical Bard. It conceals a historical basis to a consideration of which we shall now turn.

(b) THE HISTORICAL ORPHEUS OR THE EARLY RELIGIOUS REFORMER

Of the life of Orpheus, the man, the great religious teacher and reformer, who was born in Thrace, spent most of his life at Pimpleia on Mount Olympus, and lived (perhaps) about 1250 B. C., in contradistinction to the Magical Bard, little is known except possibly his father's name. Diodorus Siculus says:

24. Virgil, *Georgics*, iv. vv. 523-527.

Charops, grandfather of Orpheus, gave help to the god Dionysus, who in gratitude instructed him in his sacred Mysteries; Charops handed them down to his son Oiagros and Oiagros to his son, Orpheus. Orpheus was a man of natural genius and superlative training, who introduced many changes into the rites of the Mysteries: hence they called the rites which had their origin in Dionysus, Orphic.²⁵

In the *Rhesus* which has come down to us among the plays of Euripides, Orpheus is referred to as a God-man, the Prophet of Dionysus, who

'neath Pangaios' rock
Dwelt, god-revered by them that knew the Truth.²⁶

And Aristophanes declares:

First Orpheus withheld us from bloodshed impure, and vouchsafed us the *Great Revelation*.²⁷

Strabo adds:

Near the city of Dium is a village called Pimpleia where Orpheus lived. . . . He was a man of magical power in both music and divination and taught the rites of the Mysteries — thereby obtaining many followers and a great influence. . . . Some accepted him willingly but others . . . attacked and slew him.²⁸

It seems certain therefore that Orpheus, poet, philosopher, prophet, musician, and theologian, who came “not to destroy but to fulfil,” had that charm which has ever attended the greatest of the religious teachers — the charm which creates devoted followers and disciples; and on the other hand murderous enemies, traitors, and assassins.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the earliest traditions connect Orpheus not with Dionysus but with *Apollo*, although the name of Orpheus is written large upon the mystery-worship of Dionysus. Says Eratosthenes:

Orpheus did not honor Dionysus but considered the Sun to be the greatest of the gods, whom also he called Apollo; and arising during the night, he ascended before dawn the mountain called Pangaion that he might first catch sight of the Sun, therefore Dionysus was enraged and sent the Bassaridae against him, as the poet Aeschylus says²⁹ and they tore him to pieces and scattered his limbs abroad, but the Muses collected them and buried them in the place called Leibethra.³⁰

These statements are highly important although apparently Eratosthenes failed to understand the inner relationship between Apollo

25. Diodorus Siculus, iii, 65. 26. *Rhesus*, vv. 972-3 (Way). 27. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, v. 1032 (Murray). 28. Strabo, vii, frgs. 17, 18, 19. 29. Aeschylus, in his lost play, entitled the *Bassaridae*. 30. Eratosthenes, *Catasterismi*, xxiv.

and Dionysus. Apollo is the Day-sun, and Dionysus the Spiritual Night-sun. The sacred dress worn during the Mysteries is significant of this symbolism, consisting as it does of the crimson robe over which was hung from the right shoulder the sacred fawn-skin, whose spots represent the heavens at night, the moon and the stars, while the third element of the Mystic Dress, the golden belt, symbolizes the rays of the Spiritual Sun. This is proved by the following quotations, which might easily be multiplied. Proclus, the ancient Platonist, says in his Hymn to the Sun: "They celebrate thee (the Sun) as the illustrious parent of Dionysus." And in an Orphic verse occurs the statement that "he is called Dionysus because he *whirls in circular motion* through the *immeasurably extended heavens*," while Macrobius quotes still another verse as follows: "*The Sun whom men call Dionysus.*" Lastly, in the Eumolpic verses we read: "Dionysus with face of flame, glistens like a star with his rays," and in Aristophanes' *Frogs* the chorus of Mystae sing:

Come, arise, from sleep awaking, come the fiery torches shaking,
 O Iacchus! O Iacchus!³¹
Morning Star that shinest *nightly*.
 Lo, the mead is blazing brightly.³²

In explanation of this night worship of the Sun, the following words of H. P. Blavatsky in *Isis Unveiled* are very interesting:

Hence we may understand why the sublimer scenes of the Mysteries were always in the night. The life of the interior spirit is the death of the external nature; and the night of the physical world denotes the day of the spiritual. Dionysus, the night-sun, is therefore worshiped rather than Helios, orb of day.³³

It is thus evident that Orpheus was a prophet of the Religion of Light, a worshiper of the Spiritual Sun in its twofold aspect of Apollo-Dionysus, and reformed the popular orgies held in honor of Dionysus by introducing the Mystery-worship into the earlier rites, and as a result was himself slain by the votaries of the old, popular, degenerated worship, as is established out of the mouth of many witnesses. Later his tomb became a hero-shrine. Thus, it is said by the scholiast to Euripides' *Alcestis*, who quotes the early philosopher Heraclitus as his authority, that "*Orpheus set in order the religion of Dionysus* in Thrace on Mount Haemus, where, it is said, are certain writings of

31. The Mystery-Title of Dionysus in the Eleusinian Mysteries. 32. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, vv. 340-344 (Rogers). 33. H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* I, Before the Veil, p. xiv.

his on Tablets.”³⁴ Therefore, it is probably certain that the Orphic religion of ancient Greece sprang from the blood of a real teacher and reformer, one of the great benefactors of humanity.

Eurydice, the Mystic Bride, is the divine light within. The Muses who gather up the scattered fragments of the Bard's body are the repentant Maenads,³⁵ his former murderers; that is, the worshipers of the older unreformed Dionysiac worship, who subsequent to the Passion were converted to the new teachings. They knew not what they did, when in their state of frenzy. This conversion of Maenad to Muse is exactly parallel to the reform of the wild and unrestrained Bacchic worship into orderly and ascetic Orphism, the transformation of brutality into noble restraint and righteousness under the refining spirit of music and law.

The marvelous myth of the Magical Bard has misled some of the best classical scholars into a denial that Orpheus was a historical figure, a denial which apparently has the support of Aristotle. Such scholars declare that Orpheus was originally an Underworld God, the counterpart of Dionysus.³⁶ This hypothesis, however, fails to account for several features of the myth, and it ignores the almost unanimous testimony of antiquity in regard to the historical existence of Orpheus, and does not explain the very significant fact that Orpheus is filled with the spirit of orderliness and grave earnestness, typical of Apollo, but diametrically opposed to the *popular conception* of Dionysus. Historically, then, Orpheus was a mighty religious teacher, mythically a wonder-working musician.³⁷ Orpheus, the man, reformed the common worship of Dionysus by teaching the eternal truths of the inner light, the divinity of humanity, and the immortality of the soul. He was a worshiper of the Spiritual Sun, whose only prayer was that voiced in the beautiful paraphrase of the Gâyatrî:

O Thou who givest sustenance to the Universe,
 Thou from Whom all proceed, to Whom all must return,
 Unveil to us the face of the true Spiritual Sun, now hidden by a disk of golden
 light:
 That we may see the Truth and do our whole duty
 As we journey toward thy Sacred Seat.

Hence his mythical association with both Apollo and Dionysus.

The declaration of Diodorus Siculus that “the whole mythology

34. Scholiast to Euripides, *Alcestis*, v. 968. 35. *Vide* the suggestive words of Miss J. E. Harrison in her excellent *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 2d. Ed. pp. 463-4.
 36. E. Maass, *Orpheus*, pp. 127-72. 37. Miss J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 2d. Ed. pp. 454-73.

of Hades" was brought from Egypt into Greece, and that the Mysteries of Osiris are the same as those of Dionysus, and those of Isis the same as those of Demeter,³⁸ when linked with the similar statements of Plutarch in his *Isis and Osiris*, throws light upon the tradition that Orpheus was initiated by the hierophants in Egypt. In fact there can be no doubt but that the Mystery-god Zagreus is substantially the same as the Egyptian Osiris.

The following words of the ancient Platonist Proclus in his Commentaries on the *Republic* of Plato furnish a suggestive and important key:

Orpheus because of his perfect knowledge is said to have been killed in various ways: for the reason, I believe, that the men of his age understood the Orphic Harmony (that is, the mystical teachings of Orpheus) only *partially*: inasmuch as they were unable to receive a universal and perfect knowledge of it. But the Lesbians best understood his melody, and therefore, perhaps, the head of Orpheus separated from his body is said to have been transported to Lesbos. Fables of this kind, *consequently, are related of Orpheus as well as Dionysus, and because he was the leader in the rites of Dionysus, he is said to have suffered the same fate as his god.*³⁹

This does not imply, I think, that Proclus intended to deny the Passion of Orpheus, as a historical fact, but that he meant to explain the origin of the myth of the Magical Bard, which has arisen from the teachings given by the historical Orpheus in regard to the Mystery-god within. The traditions have clothed the religious reformer with many characteristics taken from the Greek story of the Mystic Savior. However, among the later teachers of Orphism there was not a St. Paul to conceive of the idea of identifying the prophet with his prophecy by making the religious teacher himself the incarnation of the God-man savior. Therefore although a mythical Bard Orpheus has been created by reflection from the teachings of the historical Orpheus, the religious reformer, yet the teacher has remained more or less distinct from his teaching; that is, he has never been thoroughly identified with Zagreus, the Mystery-god, whom he preached, although the myth of Orpheus is in itself an adaptation from the Mystery-story.

Orpheus is thrice-crowned victor by his divine music (that is, his mystic teaching): on earth over men, beasts, trees, and rocks; in heaven by obtaining permission from Zeus to descend to Hades alive; and victor in the Lower World by his success in persuading Persephone

38. Diodorus Siculus, i, 96. 39. Proclus to Plato's *Republic*, p. 398.

and Hades to let Eurydice return to earth, if only for a time. His lyre of seven strings with its divine harmony of the human heart made perfect by suffering, embraces all within its universal compass, and though we have forgotten its complete harmony we can still hear fragments of the lost notes; and the impulse transmitted to historical Europe by its ancestor of sacred poetry and of music, its primeval revealer of the eternal truths, may still be felt by those willing to stop and listen.

What wondrous sound is that, mournful and faint,
 But more melodious than the murmuring wind
 Which through the columns of the Temple glides?
 It is the wandering voice of Orpheus' lyre,
 Borne by the winds, who sigh that their rude king
 Hurries them fast from these air-feeding notes;
 The waning sound scattering it like dew
 Upon the startled sense.⁴⁰

The figure of Orpheus, the son of Oïagros, prophet both of Apollo and of Dionysus, will, in the true History of Religion, which remains still to be written, be placed in honored company with Gautama the Buddha and Jesus the Christ.

WHERE IS IRISH SPOKEN? by a Connaught-man



DISCUSSION on the above question was raised by a paragraph in THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH for December, in which the translation of Donnelly's *Atlantis* into Irish was suggested. After a lively skirmish among brandishers of second-hand information the question was referred to an advanced student of Irish who spends months every year in the heart of Gaeldom. Here is the substance of his pronouncement:

As regards Donnelly's book it would be more relevant to inquire where Irish is read than where it is spoken; for the two areas, so far from coinciding, would only very slightly overlap.

Everyone knows that the places where the natives would understand Irish and could speak it if they liked, are in the northwest, west, and southwest, besides Waterford, O'Meath, etc., etc. — about one third of Ireland. But everyone does not realize that the ability to speak Irish is, literally, in inverse ratio to the ability to read it. There

40. Shelley, *Orpheus*.

denies the antiquity of man also implies his antiquity, since the theories of the biological evolutionists demand an enormous length of time for the carrying out of their supposed process of evolution from the lower animals. In other words these speculations are not consistent.

To sum up — the answer to the question propounded at the beginning may be given as follows. The reasons why so few human bones are found are (1) that there were fewer men to shed them; (2) that men burned or entombed their bones instead of scattering them about; (3) that we have not yet found more than a very small fraction of what there is to be found.

STUDIES IN ORPHISM: by F. S. Darrow, A. M., Ph. D. (Harv.)

II. THE TEACHINGS OF ORPHISM

THE IDEAL WORLD

1. INTRODUCTION



THERE is good reason for believing that the legend of Orpheus in Greek Mythology grew around and partially obscured the actual life of a great prehistoric religious reformer in Greece, of whom Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, says:

This alone can be depended on, from general assent, that there formerly lived a person named Orpheus, who was the founder of theology among the Greeks, the institutor of their life and morals, the first of prophets, and the prince of poets — who taught them their Sacred Rites and Mysteries, and from whose wisdom, as from a perennial and abundant fountain, the divine Muse of Homer and the sublime theology of Pythagoras and Plato flowed.¹

No less than six different men of the name of Orpheus were known to antiquity, but the original Orpheus, the founder of those Mysteries which ensure the salvation of mankind, the interpreter of the gods, who revealed the knowledge of Things Divine, poet, musician, theologian and mystagog, seems to have lived about the middle of the thirteenth century before Jesus Christ. However, historic Orphism, which was evolved from the teachings of Orpheus, comes to the forefront in Greek religious life particularly during two widely separated ages, namely, during the sixth century before Jesus and during the first

1. Thomas Taylor, *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*.

four centuries of the Christian era. It is noteworthy that both of these periods witnessed a religious activity and awakening, extending throughout the civilized world — an activity which ran its course not only in Greece and Rome but in Egypt, Persia, India, and China as well. Our principal sources of knowledge in regard to the earlier Revival of the sixth and fifth centuries are Empedocles, Pindar, Euripides, Aristophanes, Plato, and the Orphic Tablets, which date from the fourth century B. C. Our principal authorities for the later period are the Neo-Platonists and their opponents the early Christian Fathers.

The history of Pythagoreanism both in its earlier and later forms, and of later Platonism, is intimately connected with that of Orphism, for in the words of Proclus:

The whole theology of the Greeks is the child of Orphic mystagogy. Aglaophamus first taught Pythagoras the Mystic Rites of the Gods, and next Plato received the perfect knowledge of such things from the Pythagorean and Orphic writings.²

Three figures stand out during the earlier period of historic Orphism as of especial importance, namely, the Cretan prophet, Epimenides, guardian of the Dictæan Cave on Mount Ida, wherein, tradition says, the infant Zeus was nurtured; the philosopher, Pherecydes; and the scholar Onamacritus. Of Greek cities, Athens and Croton seem to have been among the most important centers of this earlier Orphism. Pherecydes, who is reported to have been an early teacher of Pythagoras, is represented as the first literary editor of the Orphic Sacred Writings. That he was well-fitted for the task is attested by the statement that he had been initiated into the Mysteries of the Phoenicians, Chaldaeans, and Egyptians, as well as into those of Orpheus. Furthermore, it is known that he taught the complete immortality of the human soul, its eternity, and its rebirth, in his great prose work on Theology, which unfortunately is no longer extant, except for a few fragments. Onamacritus, one of the scholars connected with the court of Peisistratos, tyrant of Athens (560-527 B. C.), is also mentioned as an editor of the Orphic Literature and it was probably largely due to his influence that the rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries were modified so as to include the Orphic Mystery-Myth of Dionysus-Zagreus, who was identified with the Eleusinian divinity Iacchos, the holy babe. Several other Orphic editors, like Zopyrus of Heraclea and Orpheus of Croton (not to be confused with the original Orpheus),

2. Quoted by Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, p. 723.

are little more than names to us. In the fifth century before Christ vast quantities of Orphic literature were in circulation at Athens, and we know the titles of about forty different works which are no longer extant. We possess only the *Orphic Hymns*, a collection of more than eighty invocations used in the Mysteries; the *Lithica*, a poem on the Nature and Engraving of Precious Stones for use as Talismans; the *Orphic Argonautica*, a poem reciting the story of Orpheus' connexion with the Argonautic Expedition; and various miscellaneous fragments. Orthodox scholarship dates all these, in their present form at least, during the later period of historic Orphism, although a just reaction in favor of the recognition that their subject-matter goes back to very early pre-Christian times is already noticeable.

The real Greek religion is not, as is commonly supposed, to be found only in the mythology of the anthropomorphic Olympians, but (using the term pantheism in its true sense) in the pantheistic worship of the trinity consisting of Zeus, (a divinity quite distinct from the Ruler of the Homeric Olympus) and the two many-named Chthonic or Earth Gods, the gods of life, death, and rebirth: namely, (1) Zeus, the Divine All-Father; (2) Dionysus, the divine son, both mortal and immortal, the God-man, the Higher Self in man, the only begotten, the first born, Zagreus, the mighty horned hunter, Iacchos, the holy babe, Bromios, the spirit of entheastic inspiration, the God-within, Hades King of the Dead, the spiritual sun, the reborn Savior, the twice born, the fire born, dithyrambos, He of the Twin Portals, the reascended soul or perfected man, He of Many Names and Many Forms; and (3) Rhea-Demeter-Kore, the divine mother-wife-sister-daughter, the Earth Goddess, Persephone, the virgin queen of the dead, and Phersephassa, the risen dove-queen. Side by side with true Orphism were many false and counterfeit cults, which always spring into being whenever truth is proclaimed anew inasmuch as falsehood ever seeks to cloak itself under a more or less formal semblance of truth. We are concerned with the true Orphism and consequently shall not deal with its perversions.

The entire mythology of Orpheus is intentionally symbolical and allegorical, as is distinctly stated by the ancients in the following quotations. Proclus says:

The Orphic method aimed at revealing divine things by means of symbols, a method characteristic of all writers on divine wisdom (theomythia).³

3. Proclus, *Theol.*, I, iv, 9.

Plutarch also testifies to the same fact:

It is clear from the Orphic poems and the Egyptian and Phrygian writings that the archaic natural science both among the Greeks and non-Greeks was for the most part hidden in myths — a secret and mysterious theology containing an allegorical and hidden meaning.⁴

This was also known to the Early Christian Fathers, for Clement of Alexandria says:

All who have referred to divine things, whether Greeks or non-Greeks, have veiled the primal principle and have spoken the truth in riddles, symbols, allegories, metaphors, and similar figures.⁵

And the author of the *Clementine Recognitions* declares:

All the literature among the Greeks dealing with the origin of antiquity is based — primarily upon Orpheus and Hesiod. Their writings, when considered from the standpoint of interpretation, are found to be twofold, literal and allegorical. While the people at large have clung to the literal interpretation, all the eloquence of the philosophers and of the learned is spent in admiration for the allegorical sense.⁶

In the face of such explicit testimony both from Pagan and Christian authors, no one who is open-minded can deny that the Orphic myths, to be rightly comprehended, must be interpreted allegorically.

Our clearest knowledge in regard to the allegorical interpretation of Orphic theology in antiquity is gained from the Neo-Platonists. One of the chief points to bear in mind is that Orphic cosmogony represents the successive stages in the growth of the universe under the figure of successive dynasties of gods, the earlier dynasty being dethroned and supplanted by the later. Also number-symbology lies at the basis of the whole system, the key-numbers being 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, and 12, while a triadic structure is everywhere evident. For example, there are two Diacosms or Worlds, the Ideal or Noumenal World and the Material or Phenomenal World; seven orders of Heavenly Hierarchies, each consisting of a triad of Essence (Father, the creative powers), Life (Mother, the preservative powers), and Intelligence (Son, the regenerative powers), but all in their entirety are emanations from the Unknown Absolute Deity. The Orphic teachings in their purity are identical with the teachings of the Wisdom-Religion, the parent "Secret Doctrine" underlying all historical religious systems, and they can be understood only with the help of

4. Plutarch, *De Daed.*, Frag. IX, i, 754. 5. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, v, 4.

6. *Clementine Recognitions*, x, 30.

the keys given by the Theosophical Leaders. For further explanation the student should consult H. P. Blavatsky's masterpiece, *The Secret Doctrine*, upon which the following brief exposition is based.

2. THE ABSOLUTE DEITY

The ultimate postulate of Orphism is well expressed by Thomas Taylor as a belief

in one First (or rather Causeless) Cause of all things, whose nature is so immensely transcendent that it is even super-essential (that is, beyond and above the realm of existence) and that in consequence of this it cannot properly either be named, or spoken of, or conceived by opinion or be known or perceived by any being.⁷

This immense principle is superior even to Being itself; exempt from the whole of things, of which it is nevertheless ineffably the source.⁸

All things, says an Orphic verse, are contained in "the single power and the single might of the One Deity, whom no man sees."⁹ So Maximus Tyrius states:

There is one Deity, the King and Father of all, and many gods, sons of the Deity, ruling together with him. This the Greek says, the barbarian says, the inhabitant of the continent and he who dwells near the sea, the wise and the unwise.¹⁰

So also Aristotle:

Our ancestors and men of great antiquity have bequeathed to us a tradition, involved in fable, that the first principles are gods and that the Deity includes the whole of nature.¹¹

The Absolute Deity is named by Orphism "The Thrice Unknown Darkness" (a term adopted from the Egyptians), and Chronos or Unaging Time, Endless Duration. Since the Ineffable is of necessity unknowable, Orphic speculation turns to the dual principles of primordial spirit and matter, previous to the manifestation of which Orpheus declares "the Boundless unweariedly revolved in a circle."¹²

3. AETHER, CHAOS, AND PHANES

The two principles immediately posterior to "the Thrice Unknown Darkness" are called in Orphic teaching Aether (the Father, spirit), and Chaos (the Mother, the World-stuff, primordial matter). Manifested life is itself the offspring of these two principles and is repre-

7. Thomas Taylor, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, 1st ed. 1805, p. 26. 8. Thomas Taylor, *Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*. 9. Quoted by Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, p. 479. 10. Maximus Tyrius, *Dissertation on What God is According to Plato*. 11. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, xii, 8. 12. Quoted by Proclus, *On the Cratylus of Plato*, p. 78.

sented by the symbol of the silvery-white Mundane Egg, from which leaps forth in gleaming glory Phanes-Protogonos, the First Born, the first Logos or cosmogonic Eros, love divine which fashions the world, male-female, the triple dragon-formed God with four eyes gazing everywhere, and golden wings with which he travels in every direction, known also as Metis and Ericapaeus. Phanes, the "Appearer," as the name signifies, is the first of the five successive Cosmic Rulers, the Parent of the gods and the creator and ruler of the ideal world, the prototype and ancestor of Zeus, the demiurge or creator and ruler of the material world. With Phanes, Night is associated, as both mother and wife. These Orphic teachings are outlined in the following quotations. The *Clementine Recognitions* declare:

It is Orpheus, indeed, who proclaims that Chaos first existed, eternal, uncreate, neither darkness nor light, nor moist nor dry, nor hot nor cold, but all things intermingled ever in one unformed mass; and that at length, in the shape of a huge egg, it brought forth and produced from itself a twofold form, wrought out in the course of immense cycles of time, male-female, a form made concrete by the admixture of opposites — the principle of all things, which arose from matter and which coming forth, effected a separation of the four elements and made heaven of the two elements which are first (fire and air), and earth of the other two (water and earth); and from them he says that all things now are born and produced by a mutual participation in them.¹³

Proclus states that

The Egg was produced by Aether and Chaos, Aether fashioning it according to limit, for it is the root of all; and Chaos according to infinity, for it has no bounds.¹⁴

Furthermore, Lactantius tells us that Orpheus called the first born Phanes, or "the Appearer, because while as yet there was nought He first appeared and came forth from the Infinite."¹⁵ "None could look upon Phanes except Holy Night alone. The others — all amazed beheld the sudden light in space, such radiance shone forth from Phanes."¹⁶ "This power Orpheus calls Phanes because upon its appearance the whole universe shone forth by the light of fire — the most glorious of the elements."¹⁷

And its names Orpheus heard in a prophetic vision and proclaimed them to be Metis, Phanes, and Ericapaeus, which interpreted signify Forethought (Will),

13. *Clementine Recognitions*, x, 30. 14. Proclus, *On the Timaeus of Plato*, I, 138.
15. Lactantius, *Institutiones*, I. 5. 16. Orphic Verse, quoted by Hermias, *In Phaëdrum*, p. 141. 17. Clemens Alexandrinus, quoted by Lobeck, *Aglaophanus*, p. 478.

Light, and Life (the Light-giver); and he added that these three divine powers . . . are but the single power and might of the one Deity, whom no man sees — and by whose power all things come into being, both the immaterial principles and the sun and moon and all the stars.¹⁸

4. URANUS AND GAEA

As Phanes carries within the ideal germ of all things divine and earthly with the help of his mother and wife Night, he generates the ideal world, and from the upper part of the broken shell of the Mundane Egg he forms Uranus or Heaven, his Son, the second Logos or the second of the successive Cosmic Rulers; and from the lower part of the broken shell Gaea or Earth, wife of Uranus. This is referred to by Aristophanes in the following verses:

There was Chaos at first, and Darkness and Night, and Tartarus, vasty and
dismal;
But the Earth was not there, nor the Sky nor the Air, till at length in the bosom
abysmal
Of Darkness an Egg, from the whirlwind conceived, was laid by the sable-plumed
Night.

And out of that Egg, as the seasons revolved, sprang Love,¹⁹ the entrancing, the
bright,
Love brilliant and bold with his pinions of gold, like a whirlwind, refulgent, and
sparkling,
Then all things commingling together in love, there arose the fair Earth and
the Sky
And the limitless Sea; and the race of the gods, the Blessed, who never shall die.²⁰

5. KRONOS AND RHEA

The offspring of Heaven and Earth were first, the three Fates or Karmic Powers, the three Hecatoncheires, the monsters with a hundred hands, and the three Cyclopes, both of which groups represent cosmic builders among the celestial hierarchies, who, because of a premature revolt against their father Uranus were hurled into the lowermost depths of Tartarus. The twelve Titans, as a second progeny, were then brought forth by Earth in secret for the purpose of avenging their defeated brethren. The second revolt, that of the Titans, proved successful. Uranus was dethroned, and after a short reign of the Titan Ophion and his wife Eurynomê, the daughter of Ocean, the scepter passed to Kronos, the third of the successive cosmic rulers, and

18. Malela, iv, 31; Cedrenus, i, 57, 84, quoted by Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, pp. 479-480.
19. That is, Cosmogonic Eros or Phanes. 20. Aristophanes, *Birds*, 693-703 (Rogers).

his wife Rhea, the Great Goddess, Mother of the Olympian Gods. This part of the Orphic cosmogony is referred to by Apollonius Rhodius in the following verses:

And lo, with his lyre upheld
 In his left hand, Orpheus arose, and the fountain of song upwelled.
 And he sang how in the beginning the Earth and the Heaven and the Sea
 In the selfsame form were blended together in unity;
 And he sang of the goal of the course in the firmament fixed evermore
 For the stars and the moon, and the printless paths of the journeying sun,
 And how the mountains arose, how rivers that babbling run,
 They and their nymphs were born, and whatso moveth on Earth;
 And he sang how Ophion at first, and Eurynomê, Ocean's birth,
 In lordship of all things sat on Olympus' snow-crowned height;
 And how Ophion must yield unto Kronos' hands and his might;
 And she unto Rhea, and into the Ocean's waves plunged they.
 O'er the blessed Titan Gods these twain for a space held sway,
 While Zeus as yet was a child, while yet as a child he thought,
 And dwelt in the Cave Dictæan, while yet the time was not
 When the Earth-born Cyclops the thunderbolt's strength to his hands should give,
 Even thunder and lightning; by these doth Zeus his glory receive.
 Low murmured the lyre and slept, and the voice divine was still.²¹

6. ZEUS

As Phanes, the first of the cosmic rulers, is the creator of the ideal world and the ancestor of the gods, so Zeus, the fourth in the chain of succession, the last power in the ideal world, is the creator of the material world, the demiurge, and the Father both of gods and men. Consequently Orphic myth represents Zeus as having swallowed or absorbed his great prototype, Phanes. Also, Zeus is said to have dethroned his father, Kronos, from whose blood sprang into being the race of giants, who in the early years of Zeus' reign instituted an unsuccessful revolt against the newly-established power. The wife of Zeus in Orphic mythology is Demeter-Kore, the great Earth-goddess, as Mother and Maid, rather than Hera, the Queen of the Sky, as in the common myth.

Modern scholars and commentators frequently confuse Phanes and Zeus with each other as well as with the Absolute Deity of Orphism; but the following Orphic Hymns refer to Zeus, the demiurge, rather than to Phanes, the first Logos, or Chronos, the "Thrice Unknown Darkness," the Absolute Deity. However, in this connexion the following explanation of Thomas Taylor must not be overlooked:

21. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, I, 494-512 (Way's Translation).

According to this theology, each of the gods is in all, and all are in each, being ineffably united to each other and the highest Deity, because each being a superessential unity their conjunction with each other is a union of unities. And hence it is by no means wonderful that each is celebrated as all.²²

Therefore the various goddesses are often represented as mother, wife, and sister of the same god, and sometimes even as his daughter. Thus an Orphic verse declares: "The Goddess who was Rhea, when she bore Zeus became Demeter."

Now rather turn the depths of thine own heart
 Unto the place where light and knowledge dwell,
 Take thou the Word Divine to guide thy steps
 And walking well in the straight and certain path,
 Look to the One and Universal King —
 One, self-begotten, and the Only One,
 Of whom all things and we ourselves are sprung.
 All things are open to His piercing gaze,
 While He Himself is still invisible.
 Present in all his works, though still unseen.

And other than the great King there is none.
 The clouds for ever settle round His throne
 And mortal eyeballs in mere mortal eyes
 Are weak, to see Zeus reigning over all.²³

There is one Zeus, one Sun, one Underworld,
 One Dionysus, one lone God in all.²³

Zeus was the first, Zeus of the bright thunderbolt shall be the last of things; Zeus is the head; Zeus fills the midst; all things are framed of Zeus; Zeus is the foundation both of earth and of starry heaven; Zeus is male; Zeus the divine feminine; Zeus is the breath of all things; Zeus the rushing of irresistible fire; Zeus the great fountain of the deep; Zeus the sun and moon; Zeus is the king; Zeus the leader of all; for he of the bright thunderbolt, after hiding all within him, brought them forth again from his sacred bosom to the gladsome day, doing ever wondrously.²⁴

For all things lie within the mighty frame of Zeus. His head and fair countenance is to be beheld in the gleaming sky, adorned with the golden rays of the glittering stars, as with beautiful hair; and on either hand are the two golden horns as of a bull, the East and the West, the paths of the heavenly gods; and his eyes are the sun and the shining moon; his royal ear that tells him all things truly is the imperishable ether, wherethrough he hears and hath intelligence of all things. Nor is there any voice or any cry or noise or rumor, which escapes the

22. Thomas Taylor, *Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*. 23. Orphic Hymn, quoted by Justin Martyr, *Exhortation*, xv. 24. Orphic Hymn (Campbell's Translation).

ear of all-prevailing Zeus, the son of Kronos. Thus immortal is his head and faculty of thought, and his body all radiant, immeasurable, imperishable, unshakable, of mighty limbs and all-subduing, is thus framed; the shoulders and the chest and broad back of the god is the wide circumambient air, and he hath wings, moreover, whereon he is wafted every way, and his holy abdomen is the earth, mother of all things, and the lofty mountain-tops; and the girdle of his middle is the swelling and sounding sea. And the ground he treads are the inward parts of earth firmly rooted beneath gloomy Tartarus. Hiding all these things within him, he brings them forth again into the gladsome light, doing ever wondrously.²⁵

Zeus is the great God who is all things that be —
 The Pillar of the Earth and starry Sky,
 The Depth of the great Deep; the Sun, the Moon,
 The Word which Makes, the all-compelling Love —
 For all things lie within his formless frame.²⁶*

The following hymn by Cleanthes, though written by a Stoic, is thoroughly in the Orphic spirit:

Greatest of the gods, God with many names,
 God ever-ruling, and ruling all things!
 Zeus, origin of Nature, governing the universe by law,
 All hail! For it is right for mortals to address thee;
 For we are thy offspring, and we alone of all
 That live and creep on earth have the power of imitative speech.
 Therefore will I praise thee, and hymn forever thy power.
 Thee the wide heaven, which surrounds the earth, obeys;
 Following where thou wilt, willingly obeying thy law.
 Thou holdest at thy service, in thy mighty hands,
 The two-edged, flaming, immortal thunderbolt,
 Before whose flash all nature trembles.
 Thou rulest in the common reason, which goes through all,
 And appears mingled in all things, great or small,
 Which filling all nature, is king of all existences.
 Nor without thee, O Deity, does anything happen in the world,
 From the divine ethereal pole to the great ocean,
 Except only the evil preferred by the senseless wicked.
 But thou also art able to bring to order that which is chaotic,
 Giving form to what is formless, and making the discordant friendly
 So reducing all variety to unity, and making good out of evil.
 Thus throughout nature is one great law
 Which only the wicked seek to disobey —
 Poor fools! who long for happiness,
 But will not see nor hear the divine commands.

25. Orphic Hymn (Campbell's Translation). 26. Orphic Hymn (Translation by Lewis Morris).

In frenzy blind they stray away from good,
 By thirst of glory tempted, or sordid avarice,
 Or pleasures sensual, and joys that pall.
 But do thou, O Zeus, all-bestower, cloud-compeller!
 Ruler of thunder! guard men from sad error.
 Father! dispel the clouds of the soul, and let us follow
 The laws of thy great and just reign!
 That we may be honored, let us honor thee again,
 Chanting thy great deeds, as is proper for mortals,
 For nothing can be better for gods or men
 Than to adore with hymns the Universal King.²⁷

7. ZAGREUS

The fifth and last of the cosmic rulers in the Orphic theology is Zagreus-Dionysus, the divine son, God-in-man, the separated deity, and as such a power of the material world, intellectual and spiritual light, son of Zeus and Demeter-Kore the Earth-goddess. Zagreus was proclaimed to be the divine successor by Zeus himself, who announced: "Hear me, ye gods, I place over you a king." The myth of Zagreus formed the basis of the Orphic Mystery-drama and will be considered later.

8. SUMMARY OF ORPHIC COSMOGONY

It is thus plain that the Orphic Cosmogony postulates the Ineffable, Unknowable, Absolute Deity, called Chronos or Unaging Time and Endless Duration, as the ultimate fact; but in the evolution of the world, outlines seven emanations of the Absolute in the Ideal world, viz: (1-2) Aether (spirit) and Chaos (matter), from which springs (3) the Mundane Egg (Manifested Life), out of which leaps (4) Phanes (the first Logos), who in turn is succeeded by (5) Uranus and (6) Kronos (the second and third Logoi), who are also succeeded by (7) Zeus (the demiurge), the last power of the Ideal World, who starts again the sevenfold process of emanation by begetting Zagreus-Dionysus the God-in-man, the divine son. The importance of the septenary key in Orphic theology is further shown by the following verses:

When the Seventh Light comes, the All-powerful Father begins to dissolve all things, but for the good there is a Seventh Light also; for there is a sevenfold origin of all things.²⁸

27. Hymn of Cleanthes (Version given by James Freeman Clarke in his *Ten Great Religions*). 28. Orphic Verses, quoted by Eusebius in *Praep. Ev.* xiii, 12, 688.

STUDIES IN ORPHISM: by F. S. Darrow, A. M., Ph. D. (Harv.)

III. THE GREEK MYSTERIES

I



THE Orphic teachings in regard to the fifth and last of the Cosmic Rulers, Zagreus-Dionysos, were embodied in the mystery-drama, which was witnessed by those initiated into the sacred rites. Nevertheless, using the keys given by H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*, many details of this story of the Greek Mystic Savior can be recovered by piecing together the statements made by the later Platonists and their opponents, the early Christian Fathers.

First, a few quotations from H. P. Blavatsky in regard to the general character of the Mysteries.

The Mysteries were observances, generally kept secret from the profane and uninitiated, in which were taught by dramatic representation and other methods, the origin of things, the nature of the human spirit, its relations to the body, and the method of its purification and restoration to higher life.¹

Elsewhere she adds: "Their object was to re-establish the soul in its primordial purity, or that state of perfection from which it had fallen."²

In the Mysteries were symbolized the pre-existent condition of the spirit and soul, the lapse of the latter into earth-life and Hades, the miseries of that life, the purification of the soul, and its restoration to divine bliss or reunion with spirit.³

And again:

It is well known that throughout antiquity besides the popular worship composed of the dead-letter forms and empty exoteric ceremonies every nation had its secret cult, known to the world as the Mysteries. . . . These . . . were the last surviving heirloom of archaic wisdom. During the public classes and general teachings the lessons in cosmogony and theogony were delivered in allegorical representation. . . . Alone, the high initiates, the Epoptai, understood their language and meaning.⁴

Fair-minded scholars have always admitted the nobility and purity of the true and undegenerated forms of the Greek Mysteries.

Bishop Warburton declares:

1. *Isis Unveiled*, I, Before the Veil, p. xxxvii, s. v. Mysteries. 2. Cf. Plato, as quoted by Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, Vol. I, Bk. II, § iv, p. 210; ed. London, 1837: Σκοπὸς τῶν τελετῶν ἔστω, εἰς τέλος ἀναγαγεῖν τὰς ψυχὰς ἐκεῖνο ἀφ' οὗ τὴν πρώτην ἐποίησαντο κάθοδον, ὡς ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, i. e. "It was the end and design of initiation to restore the soul to that state from which it fell, as from its native seat of perfection." Also cf. Sallust, the Greek Neo-Platonist, *On the Gods and the World*, iv: "It is the intention of all mystic ceremonies to conjoin us with the world and the Gods." 3. *Isis Unveiled*, I, Before the Veil, p. xiv.

4. *Lucifer*, IV, pp. 226, 227.

The wisest and best of the Pagan world invariably hold that the Mysteries were instituted pure and proposed the noblest ends by the worthiest means.⁵

The Reverend Dr. Edwin Hatch, also justly emphasizes the fact that —

The main underlying conception of initiation was that there were elements in human life from which the candidate must purify himself before he could be fit to approach the Deity. . . . Thus, the race of mankind was lifted on to a higher plane when it came to be taught that only the pure in heart can see God.⁶

In fact, the whole aim of initiation was to procure for the pilgrim soul true bliss by freeing it from the snares and impediments of a purely earthly life. Therefore, the mystics were taught to worship the One Ineffable Deity and to live a clean, pure life in accordance with the spirit of brotherhood. Or in the words of an Orphic fragment:

Love light and not darkness. Remember thy journey's end, whilst thou travellest. For when souls [after death] return to the light [i. e. earth-life], they wear as hideous scars upon their ethereal body all the sins of their former lives, which they must wash away by returning to earth.

The teachings of the Mysteries were rarely conveyed by the exposition of doctrine and dogma, for the Greeks knew of no hard-and-fast creedal systems; but by means of a drama, illustrative of the soul's history, representing allegorically life, death, and rebirth, symbolically revealing the soul's divine parentage, its fall, and its final restoration to Deity. The faith in and the authority of the Mysteries was based *not* upon external forms but upon the *Light within*, by means of which man was lifted out of his lower animal self, brought into communion and association with the Divine Within and Above, and purified by the leverage of aspiration. Plotinos says:

Knowledge has three degrees — opinion, science, and illumination. The means or instrument of the first is reception; of the second, argumentative reasoning; of the third *intuition*.

And it was the function of the Mysteries to develop the intuition.

A most interesting Orphic confession of Faith, dating from the fifth century B. C. has been preserved to us by Porphyry from the lost *Cretans* of Euripides, in which the mystic declares:

In one pure stream
My days have run, the servant I,

5. *The Divine Legation of Moses*, Vol. I, Bk. ii, § iv, p. 244, ed. London, 1837.

6. *Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, Hibbert Lectures for 1888, ed. London, 1907, p. 285.

Initiate, of Idaean Jove;⁷
 Where midnight Zagreus roves, I rove;
 I have endured his thunder-cry;⁸

Fulfilled his red and bleeding feasts;⁹
 Held the Great Mother's mountain flame;¹⁰
 I am set free; and named by name¹¹
 A Bakchos of the Mailed Priests.¹²

Robed in pure white I have borne me clean
 From man's low birth and coffined clay,
 And exiled from my lips alway
 Touch of all meat where life hath been.¹³

The successive stages or grades in initiation are given by Theon of Smyrna as: first, previous purification; secondly, admission to participation in the lesser mysteries or myesis; thirdly, initiation into the greater mysteries or epoptic revelation; fourthly, investiture or enthroning; and fifthly, interior communion with the Divine. His complete statement well deserves study. He says:

Again, philosophy may be called Initiation into the true sacred rites and the instruction in the genuine Mysteries; for there are five parts of initiation, the first of which is the preliminary purification. Inasmuch as the Mysteries are not communicated to all who wish to receive them certain persons are precluded by the voice of the sacred Herald, such as those whose hands are impure and whose enunciation is unintelligible. Then such as are not excluded must first be refined by certain purifications; and after purification, the instruction in the sacred rites (myesis) succeeds; while the third part is denominated revelation or inspection (epopteia). The fourth, which is the end and design of the revelation is the investiture or enthronement, the binding of the head and the fixing of the crowns, whereby the initiated person is enabled to communicate to others the sacred rites in which he has been instructed, whether after this he becomes a Torch-bearer or a Hierophant of the Mysteries or sustains some other part of the sacerdotal office. The fifth part, which is produced from all these is friendship and interior communion with the Deity and the enjoyment of that happiness which arises from intimate association with divine beings — or, according to Plato, an assimilation to Divinity, as far as it is possible to mankind.¹⁴

7. Here "Idean Jove" or Zeus, the All-Father, is identified with Zagreus-Dionysos, the Mystic God-Man, for in the words of St. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, v, ii, p. 688: "Euripides, the philosopher of the stage, has divined as in a riddle that the Father and the Sons are One God." 8. i. e. persevered, as a neophyte, in the Divine Quest after Spiritual Illumination. 9. i. e. partaken of the covenant of blood or the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

10. i. e. carried the mountain pine-torch at the celebration of the mystic marriage. 11. i. e. from the treadmill cycle of ignorance. I have passed into the circle of Divine Knowledge and am familiar with the laws of life and death. 12. i. e. an initiate follower of the Mystic Savior, a member of the sacred guardian band of the Kouretai.

13. Murray's Translation. 14. *Math.*, I, p. 18 (ed. Baill).

Proklos, also, bears similar testimony:

The perfective rite (telete) precedes in order of time the initiation (myesis), and initiation the final apocalypse (epopteia).¹⁵

It is thus evident that there were three principal stages or grades in all mysteries: (1) preliminary purification; (2) initiation; and (3) revelation. To the perfective rite belonged the sacrament of baptism and to the revelation the sacrament of the eucharist.

The ceremonial of the Mysteries began with a solemn proclamation made by the sacred Herald either in the form:

Let no one enter whose hands are not clean and whose tongue is not prudent.

or

He only may enter who is pure from all defilement and whose soul is conscious of no wrong and who has lived well and justly.¹⁶

This proclamation is reproduced by Aristophanes, as follows:

All evil thoughts and profane be still; far hence, far hence from our chorus depart,
Who knows not well what the mystics tell, or is not holy and pure of heart;
Who ne'er has the noble revelry learned.¹⁷

In connexion with the ancient mysteries there were two forms of baptism, the common or popular form consisting of bathing in or sprinkling with pure water; and a second form, apparently peculiar to the Orphic ritual.

In the common form those entering the sacred precinct purified themselves by dipping their hands in holy water, drawn from a sacred spring and were at the same time admonished to present themselves with pure minds, without which mere external baptism was of no avail. When the rite consisted in bathing it was usually performed in the sea.

Euripides thus refers to the usual rite, as performed in the fifth century B. C.:

Pass ye, and cleanse with the pure spray-rain
Your bodies, or ever ye enter the fane.
Set a watch on the door of your lips; be there heard
Nothing but good in the secret word
That ye murmur to them whose hearts be stirred
To seek to the shrine, that they seek not in vain.¹⁸

15. *On the Theology of Plato*, IV. p. 220. 16. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, III, 59.
17. *Frogs*, 354-356, Rogers' Translation. 18. *Ion*, 96-101.

And in the Greek Anthology we read:

Come, pure in heart, and touch the lustral wave;
One drop sufficeth for the sinless mortal;
All else, e'en ocean's billows can not lave.¹⁹

With hallowed hands, with mind and tongue
Both pure and true,
Come, enter in, not cleansed by baths
But washèd white
In spirit; for from wickedness
The ocean wide
With all its floods can not the stain
Wash clean away.²⁰

The exact parallelism between these verses of ancient Greece and the following verse from the *Epistle to the Hebrews* is at once obvious:

Let us draw near with a true heart, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.²¹

This is, in fact, to all intents and purposes a paraphrase of the words of Euripides, written in the fifth century B. C. Therefore Pagan baptism was explained by Justin Martyr as an anticipatory imitation of the true baptism, that the false votaries might have a pretended purification by water.²²

The peculiar Orphic form of baptism is no longer practised in Christian ceremonial. It consisted in washing from the face of the neophyte a mixture of clay and bran with which it had been previously smeared. The smearing referred to the disguise adopted by the Titans in the Orphic Myth preparatory to their murder of Zagreus-Dionysos, the God-man or Mystic Savior, and typified the disguise and deceit associated with man's lower nature, from which the candidate for initiation must be cleansed. Therefore the significance of this rite, which has been often misunderstood, lay not in the smearing of the face but in the later cleansing of the neophyte, comparable to the reduction of the bodies of the Titans to ashes by the lightning of Zeus, subsequent to the Passion of Zagreus.

Baptism was not infrequently followed by a ceremonial sacrifice of salvation, the so-called Soteiria, which was symbolical of spiritual regeneration. Then followed the admission to participation in the lesser mysteries or myesis; while the third stage, that of revelation,

19. Sandys' Translation. 20. From the Greek Anthology. 21. *Hebrews*, x, 22
22. *First Apology*, chapter Ixii.

seems to have culminated in the sacrament of the eucharist, which typified the direct union of humanity with Divinity, and which as in the case of the myesis was preceded by an allegorical ceremony signifying the renunciation of the desires of the lower nature.

The mystic Pagan eucharist of the fifth century B. C. is thus described by Euripides, who says, in speaking of Dionysos as the Mystic Savior:

In the God's high banquet, when
Gleams the grape-blood, flashed to heaven²³
To all that liveth His wine he giveth,
 Griefless, immaculate.²⁴
Yea, being God, the blood of Him is set
Before the Gods in sacrifice, that we
For His sake may be blest.²⁵
Then in us verily dwells
The God Himself, and speaks the things to be,²⁶
The Lord of Many Voices,
Him of mortal mother born,
Him in whom man's heart rejoices,
First in Heaven's sovereignty.²⁷

If further proof of the existence of the eucharist in the Mysteries is desired, it is given in the explicit statements of the early Christian Fathers, in Justin Martyr (*First Apology*, c. LVI) and in Tertullian (*De Praes. Haeret.*, c. XI), for instance.

In speaking of the eucharist as celebrated in the pre-Christian Mysteries, H. P. Blavatsky writes:

Cicero mentions it in his works and wonders at the strangeness of the rites. There had been an esoteric meaning attached to it from the first establishment of the Mysteries and the Eucharistia is one of the oldest rites of antiquity. With the Hierophants it had nearly the same significance as with the Christians. Demeter was *bread* and Bacchus was *wine*; the former meaning regeneration of life from the seed, and the latter — the grape — the emblem of wisdom and knowledge; the accumulation of the spirit of things and the fermentation and subsequent strength of that esoteric knowledge being justly symbolized by wine.²⁸

In the Greek Mysteries there were not only two forms of baptism, the common and the Orphic, but also two forms of the eucharist as well. Orphic ritual seems to have forbidden the use of wine and to have substituted a kind of mead made of honey and milk. Therefore Euripides sings of the epiphany of Dionysos:

23. *Bacchae*, vv. 383, 384 (Murray's Translation). 24. *Ibid.*, vv. 421, 422. 25. *Ibid.*, vv. 284, 285. 26. *Ibid.*, vv. 300, 301. 27. *Ibid.*, vv. 376-380. 28. *Isis Unveiled*, II, 44.

Then streams the earth with *milk*, yea streams
With *wine*, and *honey* of the bee.²⁹

And again in speaking of the Maenads upon Mount Kithaeron:

If any lips
Sought whiter draughts, with dipping finger-tips
They pressed the sod, and gushing from the ground
Came springs of *milk* and reed-wands ivy-crowned
Ran with sweet *honey*.³⁰

On the Orphic Tablets dating from the fourth century B. C., the Soul of the Initiate in the after-world says "A Kid I have fallen into milk,"³¹ an expression which probably refers to the Orphic Communion. It is noteworthy in this connexion that in the rites of the primitive Christian church the neophyte drank not only of wine but also of a cup of *milk* and *honey* so that those "new-born in Christ" tasted of the food of babes as is declared by Tertullian:

When we are taken up (as new-born children) we taste first of all of a mixture of milk and honey.³²

Likewise, upon one of "the Magic Papyri" the worshiper is thus mystically advised:

Take honey with milk, drink of it before sunrise, and there shall be within thy heart something divine.³³

The symbolism of the two elements of this Orphic Communion is given by Porphyry and Macrobius. The honey typified both purification and preservation, both life and death, and as it was used by the ancients in embalming, it represented eternal bliss as well. Therefore we read upon a sepulchral inscription of the first century B. C.:

Here lies Boethos, Muse-bedewed, *undying*
Joy hath he of sweet sleep in *honey lying*.³⁴

The milk symbolized both reincarnation upon earth and spiritual regeneration. Sallust, the Greek Neoplatonist, in speaking of the five species of fables, says:

We employ the nutriment of milk, as if passing by this means into a state of regeneration.³⁵

29. *Bacchae*, vv. 146, 147 (Murray). 30. *Ibid.*, vv. 708-710. 31. Campagno Tablet (a) vide *Critical Appendix on the Orphic Tablets*, by Professor Gilbert Murray, in Miss Harrison's *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 2d. ed. 1908, p. 667. 32. *De Corona Militis*, III. 33. *Berliner Zauber-papyrus*, in *Abh. d. Berl. Akad.* 1865, p. 120, l. 20. 34. O. Benndorf, *Grabschrift von Telmessos in Festschrift für Th. Gomperz*, p. 404 (Translation given by Miss Harrison). 35. *On the Gods and the World*, c. IV.

H. P. Blavatsky has stated: "the Mysteries are as old as the world."³⁶

And Euripides speaks of

Heaven's high Mysteries, that heritage sublime
Our sires have left us, *Wisdom old as time*.³⁷

Dr. Hatch also makes the same declaration:

The Mysteries were probably the survival of the oldest religion of the Greek races and of the races which preceded them. They were the worship not of the Gods of the sky — but of the Gods of the earth and the Underworld, the Gods of the productive forces of nature and of death.³⁸

The Mystery-drama, as a part of the "Secret Doctrine" handed down throughout the ages, is independent of time and place. Everywhere it will be found to be identical in spirit, although divergent in letter and form. It contains, at least, seven well-marked symbolical moments or salient features. These are (1) the first Mystic Marriage, the marriage of the Divine All-Father with the mighty Earth-Mother; (2) the first birth of the Divine Son, as the mortal God-Man; (3) the Agony or Passion of the mortal, mystic Savior; (4) the second Mystic Marriage of the Divine All-Father with the Earth Goddess in the guise of a mortal virgin; (5) the conquering of death or the Descent to and Emergence from Hades of the Divine Son; (6) his second Birth as the risen immortal Mystic Savior; and lastly (7) his triumphant Re-ascent to his Heavenly Homeland.

II

Of these seven symbolical moments the emphasis and symbolism of the fourth, the second Mystic Marriage, varies somewhat in the different forms of the national myths; but the elements are invariably the same: while the subject of the Mystery-drama is always the story of the Agony and the Passion of the Divine in man followed by Its ultimate triumph. The Mystery-teachings universally held out the hope of Divine help in this life, the promise of regeneration and atonement for past wrong-doing, and the hope of immortality in the hereafter, and all inculcated the belief in the One Life from which all separate individual lives have sprung into being.

In this connexion the following points should be noted: First, the Mystery-God is both mortal and immortal: he suffers a Passion,

36. *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 98. 37. *Bacchae*, vv. 200, 201 (Murray).

38. *Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages Upon the Christian Church*, ed. 1907, pp. 283, 284.

is torn to pieces, dies, and comes to life again. Therefore, he brings the hope of immortality. Secondly, the worshiper becomes one with the Mystery-God and thereby immortal. So in the Orphic Confession, already quoted, the worshiper of Zagreus becomes a Bakchos; and the pure soul in the Egyptian underworld becomes Osiris. Thirdly, the worship of the Mystery-God is ascetic, that is, the true worshiper renounces his lower nature. The key-note is: "God thou art and unto God thou shalt return." Whether Eleusinian, Orphic, common Bakchic, Samothracian, Phrygian, Phoenician, or Egyptian, the Mysteries all came from one common source, as is shown by the identity of the teaching underlying the diversity of the mythical setting. This ultimate identity was clearly recognized in antiquity, as may be seen from the following epigram of the poet, Ausonius:

Ogygia (i. e. Greece) calls me Bakchos;
 Egypt thinks me Osiris;
 The Mysians name me Phanax;
 The Hindûs consider me Dionysos;
 The Roman Mysteries call me Liber;
 The Arabian race, Adonis.³⁹

Ancient Mysteries were of two chief varieties: civic, that is, administered by the state; and private, controlled and managed by individuals. Of the civic Greek Mysteries those of Athens, celebrated at Eleusis and according to tradition founded as early as 1800 B. C., were the most famous. The Eleusinian Mysteries continued to be celebrated for more than five hundred years after Greece became a Roman province, that is until 396 A. D., when the Telesterion or temple of the Mysteries was destroyed by the soldiers of Alaric the Goth at the instigation of fanatical Christian monks. The Eleusinian Divinities were Demeter Thesmophoros, the Earth-Mother, as Goddess of Law and Order; Persephone-Kore, the Divine Maid; and Iakchos, the Divine Son.

Judging from the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, the Sacred Drama was originally based merely on the myth of Persephone, but probably in the sixth century B. C., under the influence of Epimenides and of Onomakritos the editor of the Orphic Poems, a scholar prominent in the court of Peisistratos (564-527 B. C.) at Athens, the Orphic Mystery-myth of Zagreus-Dionysos was incorporated into the Eleusinian ritual, and the Eleusinian Divinity, Iakchos, the son of Demeter, was

identified with the Orphic God-Man. The Lesser Mysteries of the Eleusinia were celebrated every spring at Agrae, a suburb of ancient Athens, in the neighborhood of the Panathenaic stadium. These seem to have consisted of the dramatization of the Carrying-off of Persephone and of the Murder of Zagreus: in which case the Greater Mysteries, which were celebrated at the Telesterion or temple of the Mysteries at Eleusis, represented the Return of Persephone from Hades and the Rebirth of Dionysos.

Speaking of the Eleusinian Mysteries Sophokles says:

Ah! would I were there

By the torch-lit shore,
Where awful powers still watch,
O'er solemn rites for men of mortal race;
Whose golden key is set upon the lips
Of priests, Eumolpidae, who tend the shrine.⁴⁰

And Krinagoras in the Greek Anthology advises:

Go thou to Attica;
Fail not to see those great nights of Demeter,
Mystical, holy!
There thou shalt win thee a mind that is care-free
Even while living,
And when thou joinest the major assembly
Light shall thy heart be.⁴¹

Although in ancient times there were many Mysteries celebrated in honor of Demeter, Kore-Persephone, Hermes, Iasion, Ino, Achermos, Agraulos, Hekate, and other Divinities, the chief myths which were utilized as versions of the Mystery-story were (1) those of Demeter, Persephone, and Dionysos; (2) of Zeus, Rhea-Kybele, the Great Mother of the Gods and Attis; and (3) of Aphrodite and Adonis. Of all these the pure and unadulterated Orphic Mysteries were the noblest and the most important. Proklos states justly that

All Greek theology is derived from the Orphic Mystagogy [that is, from the Orphic Mystery-teaching].⁴²

And Augustine declares:

The Kingdom of the Impious [that is, the Pagan Graeco-Roman World] is

40. *Oedipus at Colonus*, vv. 1044-1053.

41. Allinson's Translation.

42. Quoted by Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, 1839, Vol. I. p. 723.

wont to set Orpheus as head over the rites that have to do with the world-hereafter.⁴³

The Orphic Mystery-Gods are three in number: Zeus, the Divine All-Father; Demeter-Persephone, the Earth-Goddess, as both Mother and Maid; Zagreus-Dionysos, the Divine Son or God-Man. In later Greek times many foreign mystery-myths were introduced into Greek lands; namely, the myth of Rhea-Kybele from Phrygia; that of Adonis from Phoenicia; that of Mithra from Persia; and the myths of Isis, Osiris, and Horus, from Egypt.

The historical Mysteries of Greece were derived from Egypt if we may trust the statement of Diodorus Siculus, who says that the whole mythology of the Greek Hades was adopted from that of Egypt and that the Mysteries of Osiris are the same as those of Dionysos, and those of Isis the same as those of Demeter.⁴⁴

Plutarch makes the same statement in his treatise on *Isis and Osiris*, and adds that Isis and Osiris are not merely local Gods of Egypt but universal divinities worshiped under one name or another by all mankind. Herodotos says:

I can by no means allow that it is by mere coincidence that the Bakchic ceremonies in Greece are so nearly the same as the Egyptian.⁴⁵

Elsewhere he adds:

The rites called Orphic and Bakchic are in reality Egyptian and Pythagorean.⁴⁶

And the case is made all the stronger by the further statements repeated by several ancient authors that not only Orpheus but Pythagoras and Plato as well were initiated by the Egyptian hierophants. Therefore it can hardly be doubted that the Orphic Mystery-God Zagreus-Dionysos is identical with Osiris.

On the other hand, the statement of Diodorus Siculus⁴⁷ to the effect that "all the Mysteries which had their origin in Dionysos are called Orphic" needs to be qualified. The true Orphic teachings constituted "a system of the purest morality," and were quite distinct from the common unreformed Bakchic rites,⁴⁸ by whose votaries, apparently, Orpheus himself had been put to death.⁴⁹ Only those rites celebrated in honor of Zagreus-Dionysos, as reformed by Orpheus, the religious teacher, deserve the name Orphic. In these not only

43. *De Civitate Dei*, xviii, 14. 44. I, 96. 45. II, 49. 46. II, 81. 47. III, 65.
48. Vide, H. P Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 129. 49. Vide, *Studies in Orphism*, I. Mythical and Historical Orpheus, *Theosophical Path*, April, 1912

were all forms of license strictly forbidden but in the eucharist milk and honey took the place of wine.

Consecration, perfect purity issuing in Divinity is — the keynote of Orphic faith, the goal of Orphic ritual.⁵⁰

The best and the noblest in all Greek religion and philosophy is to be found in the "Golden Chain of Succession," extending from Orpheus through Pythagoras and Plato down to Neo-Platonism, the last blossom on the tree of the Dionysiac faith. The genuine followers of Orpheus carefully distinguish between merely formal and true initiation, as is shown by their proverb: "Many are the wand-bearers [i. e., those who carry the mystic thyrsos] but few the Bakchoi," i. e., the pure or true Initiates. In one of the *Chaldaean Oracles* we read:

Things Divine cannot be realized by those whose intellectual eye is directed to the body. But only those can succeed in possessing them, who, stript of their garments, hasten to the summit.

The rise of the Orphic worship of Dionysos is the most important fact in the history of Greek religion, and marks a great spiritual reawakening. Its three great ideas are (1) a belief in the essential Divinity of humanity and the *complete* immortality or eternity of the soul, its pre-existence and its post-existence; (2) the necessity for individual responsibility and righteousness; and (3) the regeneration or redemption of man's lower nature by his own higher Self.

Orphism was the last word of Greek religion, and its ritual was but the revival of ancient practices with a new significance.⁵¹

It is fitting to close with the words of Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, who of all modern scholars has most justly appreciated the spirit of the Greek Mysteries:

As to the philosophy, by whose assistance the Mysteries were developed, it is coeval with the universe itself; and, however its continuity may be broken by opposing systems, it will make its appearance at different periods of time, as long as the sun himself shall continue to illuminate the world. It has, indeed, and may hereafter be violently assailed by delusive opinions; but the opposition will be just as imbecile as that of the waves of the sea against a temple built on a rock, which majestically pours them back,

Broken and vanquished, foaming to the main.⁵²

However it may be involved in oblivion in barbarous and derided in impious ages, it will again flourish — through all the infinite revolutions of time.⁵³

50. Miss Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 2d ed. p. 477. 51. *Ibid.*, p. xii. 52. Preface to *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, 1st ed. Amsterdam (London), 1790; 2d ed. London, 1816. 53. Preface to *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, 1st ed. London, 1805; 2d ed. London, 1820.

STUDIES IN ORPHISM: by F. S. Darrow, A. M., Ph. D. (Harv.)

IV. THE MYTH OF ZAGREUS-DIONYSOS

1. THE FIRST MYSTIC MARRIAGE OF THE DIVINE ALL-FATHER WITH THE MIGHTY EARTH-MOTHER AND THE FIRST BIRTH OF THE DIVINE SON AS ZAGREUS.



AS the Orphic teachings revealed the story of cosmic evolution or the formation of the Macrocosm by means of an allegory, centered around seven mythological figures, Orphism in a similar fashion expounded its teachings in regard to the Microcosm or the Little World (of which man is the center), by means of a mythical narrative related of Zagreus-Dionysos, the savior of Greek mythology, and it was this story which supplied the subject-matter of the Dionysiac Greek Mystery-drama.

In the Orphic Theogony the wife of Zeus, the Demiurge, the divine All-Father, is not Hera the Homeric Queen of Heaven, but the mighty Earth-Goddess in her twofold aspect as Demeter, the Divine Mother, and Kore, the Divine Maid, appearing both as the immortal goddess Persephone the Virgin Queen of the Dead, and as the mortal maid Semele, later immortalized as Thyone, the inspired, the mother of the mystic savior.

Not only are Demeter, Persephone, and Semele-Thyone in essence one, the Earth-Goddess in her three aspects as wife, mother, and daughter, but Zagreus-Iakchos, the divine Son, child of Zeus in the form of a dragon and of Demeter-Kore, is from one point of view at least identical with Zeus the Demiurge, and Phanes, the first of the Macrocosmic powers, the germ of manifested life. These shifts in personality with an identity of divine essence are common in mythology. Though the personages differ the Deity impersonated is one, for the various persons represent, as it were, merely different stages or aspects of one and the same life.

Zagreus, both the holy Babe and the mighty horned Hunter, the mystic savior of Orphism, is first mentioned in extant Greek literature in a verse, preserved from the lost Epic, the *Alkmaeonis*, which runs as follows:

Holy Earth and Zagreus, greatest of all the Gods.

As a word, Zagreus seems to have at least three distinct meanings:

first, the mighty Hunter, that is, the pilgrim Soul; secondly, He that takes many captives, that is, the Lord of the Dead; and thirdly, the restorer to life and strength, or the king of the reborn.

Zagreus from the moment of his birth is his father's favored son, proclaimed as successor of Zeus, who, placing the symbols of power, the scepter of Heaven and a golden apple, in the child's hands, declared to the assembled Gods:

Hear ye, O Gods, over you I place a King.¹

This declaration aroused the jealous wrath of Hera who forthwith plotted the speedy destruction of Zagreus.

2. THE AGONY OR PASSION OF ZAGREUS

Therefore, in the pursuit of her murderous design against the holy Babe she released from the depths of Tartaros the pent-up fury of the dethroned earth-born Titans, upon the condition that they would be the ministers of her vengeance and slay Zagreus. To this they agreed. The Orphic fragments mention fourteen different Titans, seven male and seven female,² which are referred to by Proklos as the "divine Titanic hebdomads." Some scholars under the lead of Faber and his "seven Arkite Titans,"³ have attempted to distinguish between seven good Titans and an indeterminate number of evil-minded ones, the murderers of Zagreus, but such a distinction does not seem justified in Orphic theogony, which apparently was content with representing the Titanic nature as dual, composed of divine and earthly elements, without distinguishing between two separate classes. The number seven is evidently part and parcel of the Orphic number-symbology and has an obvious connexion with that portion of the myth which tells of the dismemberment of the body of Zagreus.⁴

Hera bided her time and carried out her plot during the temporary absence of Zeus. Apollo and the Curetes, the appointed guardians of the infancy of Zagreus, were enticed away from their charge by her wiles. Whereupon, the Titans with their naturally black faces artificially whitened by means of a mixture of chalk and clay, stealthily approached the Liknon, or cradle-basket, wherein the holy Babe lay surrounded by the symbols of power which had been entrusted to him

1. Proklos *In Cratylum*, p. 59. 2. Proklos *In Timaeum*, V. p. 295. 3. Faber, George Stanley: *A Dissertation on the Mysteries of the Cabiri*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1803.
4. Proklos *In Timaeum*, III, p. 184.

by his fond father. Each Titan carried a false toy with which to beguile the child away from the protection of the nursery. One carried the Thyrsos or sacred Bacchic wand, another a top, and a third a mirror. Zagreus relinquished his symbols of power and reached for these proffered toys. His fancy was especially captivated by the mirror, and while he was engaged in viewing his own image in it he was suddenly surprised by the assassins. In vain he tried to escape from their fearful grasp by constantly changing his shape, until finally in the form of a bull he was overcome with dismay at the magic bellows caused by Hera. Thereupon his body was torn into seven or fourteen pieces, that is, twice seven as in the Egyptian mystery-myth of Osiris. The dismembered limbs were first boiled and afterwards roasted by the Titans who then began to devour the flesh; but Zeus returned, and upon discovering their wickedness blasted them with his thunderbolt, and from their ashes have sprung into being the human race. Thus the Orphic poet sings:

The Earth-born [Titans] who showered down from heaven
 Their blood, the grievous germ of birth [that is, of incarnation in the material
 world], from which sprang
 The race of mortals, who ceaselessly inhabit the boundless earth.⁵

And again:

O mighty Titans, who from heav'n and earth
 Derive your noble and illustrious birth,
 Our fathers' sires, in Tartaros profound
 Who dwell, deep merg'd beneath the solid ground
 Fountains and principles from whom began
 Th' afflicted, hapless race of man.⁶

Athena and Apollo were both present with Zeus at the time of the destruction of the Titans, and the goddess of Wisdom discovering that the heart of Zagreus was still palpitating, forthwith handed it to her father, as thus described by the great Platonist Proklos in his Hymn to Athena:

Once by thy care, as sacred poets sing,
 The heart of Bakchos, swiftly-slaughtered king,
 Was saved in aether, when, with fury fir'd
 The Titans fell, against his life conspired:
 And with relentless rage and thirst for gore,
 Their hands his members into fragments tore:

5. Orphic *Argonautika*, 12. 6. *Orphic Hymns*, xxxvii, Taylor's Translation.

But ever watchful of thy father's will,
 Thy pow'r preserv'd him from succeeding ill,
 Till from the secret counsels of his sire,
 And born from Semele through heavenly fire,
 Great Dionysos to the world at length
 Again appeared with renovated strength.⁷

In accordance with the commands of Zeus, Apollo gathered the scattered fragments of the limbs of Zagreus and placed them in a coffin near the Omphalos or sacred conical stone at Delphi, marking, according to Greek myth, the navel of the earth. In historic times, if we may trust the account given in the *Chronicles* of the Byzantine historian Malalas — an account which seems to be derived from the lost *Atthis* of Philochoros, (3d century B. C.), the coffin was thus inscribed: "Here lieth dead, the body of Dionysos, the Son of Semele."⁸ At first the actual wording of the epitaph may seem strange, as we might expect that it would have read: "Here lieth dead, the body of Zagreus, the Son of Demeter." Perhaps the explanation is to be found in the fact that the Semele myth was exoteric property and commonly current, while the story of Zagreus was familiar only to the Orphic Mystics. The close connexion of Dionysos, the spiritual night-sun, with Apollo, the day-sun, noted before, is also shown by the circumstance that the Delphic shrine was occupied each year between Christmas and Easter not by Apollo, who then withdrew to the distant land of the Hyperboreans, but by Dionysos.

3. THE SECOND MYSTIC MARRIAGE OF THE DIVINE ALL-FATHER
 WITH THE EARTH-GODDESS IN THE GUISE OF THE MORTAL VIRGIN
 SEMELE; AND THE SECOND BIRTH OF THE DIVINE SON,
 THE GOD-MAN, AS DIONYSOS.

"A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son."

The common exoteric form of the Dionysiac Myth regularly represents the god as the son of Zeus by the mortal maid Semele, the daughter of Kadmus, the Man from the East, the Founder of Thebes, the mystic city of the seven gates. The mystery-key to this is given in the following fragment of Apollodoros:

There is also a legend which says that Dionysos was born of Zeus and Earth: from Earth called Themele⁹ because all things are so to speak placed in it as

7. Taylor's Translation. 8. Malalas, *Chron.*, II, p. 45 ed. Bonn. Philochoros Frag. xxii.

9. Which word is here regarded as a variant form of the Greek word *θεμεθλα*, meaning that which is first laid or placed — the foundation.

a foundation, which by changing one letter [the theta] and by substituting therefor an S, the poets call Semele.¹⁰

Therefore, Semele is merely one of the many variant forms assumed by the Earth-goddess, as mother and maid. She is none other than Demeter-Kore in the guise of a mortal woman, to whom is entrusted the still beating heart of Zagreus. Hera, upon perceiving that she had failed to destroy Zagreus by having him dismembered, transformed herself likewise into a mortal woman, into Beroë the aged nurse, who, when the newly-formed life arising from the beating heart of the old was in its seventh month (again the Orphic septenary), succeeded in poisoning the mind of Semele with suspicion by insinuating that the lover, who had given this life to her keeping, was not the mighty King of Heaven but some human impostor bent on deceiving a poor maid. Thereupon, Semele at the next visit of Zeus in human form, after exacting from him a promise to grant whatever she might ask, requested him, if he was really the father of gods and men, to appear to her in his full majesty. Zeus, knowing that mere humanity may not look upon unveiled Divinity and live, tried to evade the granting of this request, but bound by his spoken pledge, he was forced at length to yield to the importunities of Semele and to appear in his true form amid thunder and lightning. As such a vision was unendurable to mortality, Semele, the human form of Kore, was destroyed, but the holy Babe was for a second time saved from destruction, inasmuch as Zeus broke his own body and sewed the child up in his own thigh, whence, at the expiration of the full time of nine months, the life that formerly was Zagreus, was reborn as Dionysos, the risen savior, "He of the Two Portals," "The Thrice Begotten."

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given!"

From the author of the *Philosophoumena*, or Refutation of all Heresies, presumably the Patristic writer, Hippolytos, we learn that the revelation of the sacred birth of the Mystic Savior formed the crowning act of the highest Eoptic or apocalyptic rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries, for he says, while expounding the doctrines of the Christian Gnostics, known as Naasenes:

The Athenians when they initiate at the Eleusinian Mysteries exhibit to the Eoptae [the highest mystics] the mighty and marvelous and most complete apocalyptic mystery, an ear of corn reaped in silence. Now, this ear of corn the

10. Apollodoros, Frag. xxiv or xxix, apud Joan. Lyd. Cf. also Hesychios sub voce Semele.

Athenians believe represents the great and perfect Light, which proceeds from That which is formless, as the Hierophant, himself . . . by night at Eleusis under the light of a bright flame enacting the great and unutterable mysteries, cries out in a loud voice: "Holy Brimo hath borne a consecrated Son, Brimos," which is to say, the mighty Goddess hath borne a mighty child; and holy, holy is the birth that is spiritual, that is heavenly, that is from above, and mighty is he that is so born.¹¹

That the birth thus referred to is the second birth as Dionysos the risen savior, and not the first birth as Zagreus, is shown by the fact that it was represented as a part of the highest epoptic rites, and we learn from Clement of Alexandria that Brimo was a title of the Earth-Goddess.¹² Further light as to her identity with Demeter-Kore-Persephone-Semele is to be gained from the following verses of Apollonios Rhodios, who thus describes a spell woven by the witch-princess Medeia:

When seven times she had bathed her in waters unresting that glide,
And seven times upon Brimo, the Nursing Mother had cried —
Night-wandering Brimo, the Underworld Goddess, the Queen of the Dead.¹³

Dionysos, the reborn God-Man, has his birthday at Easter, at the joyful time of the resurrection of the Earth in "his own holy Spring." Therefore, a paean, recently discovered at Delphi, thus refers to the God:

Evoë, Bakchos, hail, Paean [Healer] hail!
Whom in sacred Thebes, th' mother fair,
She, Thyone [that is, Semele], once to Zeus did bear
All the stars danced for joy. Mirth
Of mortals hailed thee, Bakchos, at thy birth.¹⁴

Very suggestive are the following references to the tale of Dionysos, "the All-Father's mystic Son," from that wonderful mystery-play of Euripides' old age, *The Bacchae*:

Dionysos is God, no God more true nor higher.¹⁵

Appear, appear, whatso thy shape or name
O Mountain Bull, Snake of the Hundred Heads,
Lion of the Burning Flame!
O God, Beast, Mystery, come!¹⁷

11. *Philosophoumena*, V, 3. 12. *Exhort.* II. 13. *Argonautika*, III, 860-862, Way's Translation. 14. Miss Harrison's Translation based on the text as established by Dr. H. Weil. 15. V. 366, Murray's Translation. 16. V. 777, *Ibid.* 17. VV. 1017-1020, *Ibid.*

Oh, bring the joy-bestower,
God-seed of God, the Sower.¹⁸

Whom erst in anguish lying
For an unborn life's desire
As a dead thing in the Thunder
His mother cast to earth!

For her heart was dying, dying,
In the white heat of the fire:
Till Zeus, the Lord of Wonder
Devised new lairs of birth:
Yea, his own flesh tore to hide him,
And with clasps of bitter gold
Did a secret Son enfold.¹⁸

That same
Babe that was blasted by the lightning flame —
Was re-conceived, born perfect from the thigh
Of Zeus, and now is God!¹⁹

Iakchos, Bromios, Lord, God of God Born!²⁰

God's true Son, in fulness God,
Most fearful, yet to man most soft of mind.²¹

All hail, God of the Voice,
Manifest ever more!
Dionysos, Child of the Highest!²²

Thou Mystery, we hail thee by thy name!²³

The Babe of God, the Mystery!
When from out the fire immortal
To himself his God did take him,
To his own flesh, and bespake him:
"Enter now life's second portal,
Motherless Mystery: lo I brake
Mine own body for thy sake,
Thou of the Twofold Door, and seal thee
Mine, O Bromios," — thus he spake —
"And to thy land reveal thee."²⁴

4. THE TRIUMPH OF DIONYSOS

Hera, nothing daunted by the birth of Dionysos from the thigh of Zeus, continued to harass the god, who was first placed under the

18. VV. 88-98, Murray's Translation. 19. VV. 243-245, *Ibid.* 20. V. 725, *Ibid.*
21. VV. 860-861, *Ibid.* 22. VV. 1032-1038, *Ibid.* 23. V. 67, *Ibid.* 24. VV. 521-529, *Ibid.*

care of Ino and Athamas. Both of these were frenzied by Hera, so that Zeus was forced again to interpose his divine power in order to save his Son, whom he temporarily transformed into a ram. The care of the child's nurture next devolved upon the nymphs of Mount Nysa who succeeded in bringing him up safely within a cave. Finally, when Dionysos had grown up into young manhood, Hera cast him into a state of frenzy and forced him to wander constantly over the face of the earth, not only throughout Greek lands but even throughout India and Egypt and as far westward as Spain, dooming the god everywhere to meet with mighty opposition. But eventually he overcame all obstacles and was everywhere successful in establishing his Mysteries.

The Triumph of Dionysos is thus described by Euripides in *The Bacchae*. The god himself is the speaker:

Behold God's Son is come into this Land
 Of Thebes, even I, Dionysos, whom the brand
 Of heaven's hot splendor lit to life, when she
 Who bore me, Cadmus' daughter Semele,
 Died here. So changed in shape from God to man. . . .
 I now do come to Hellas — having taught
 All the world else my dances and my rites
 Of Mysteries to show me in men's sight
 Manifest God. . . . born of Semele to Zeus.
 Then to another land, when all things here
 Are well, must I fare onward, making clear
 My Godhead's might . . . though I veil it with the wan
 Form of things that die and walk as man.²⁵

Mine is the soul of that dead life of old.²⁶

Later on in the play the Maenads or inspired women, followers of Dionysos, sing:

He will come to thee with dancing,
 Come with joy and mystery:
With the Maenads at his hest,
*Winding, winding to the West.*²⁷

Lo, this new God, whom thou dost flout withal,
 I cannot speak the greatness wherewith He
 In Hellas shall be great!²⁸

25. VV. 1-5, 20-22, 53-54, Murray's Translation. 26. V. 181, Ibid.
 27. VV. 565-570, *Ibid.* 28. VV. 271-273.

Hard heart, how little dost thou know what seed
 Thou sowest! Blind before, and now indeed
 Most frenzy-fraught! . . . Wise words being brought
 To blinded eyes will seem as things of nought.²⁹

'Tis thine own impurity
 That veils Him from thee.³⁰

Is it so hard a thing to see —
 That the Spirit of God [that is, the mystic Savior],
 whate'er it be
 The Eternal and Nature-born — these things be strong?
 What else is wisdom? ³¹

Therefore I counsel thee, . . .
 Receive this Spirit whoe'er he be,
 To Thebes in glory. Greatness manifold
 Is all about Him. Do thou let Him live;
 For if he die, then Love herself is slain,
 And nothing joyous in the world again.³²

Oh, had ye seen
 Truth in the hour ye would not, all had been
 Well with ye, and the Child of God your friend.³³

As the lord of life and death, as the sinking and the rising sun, as the Ruler of the Under-world, and as the principle of vitality, breathing in beauty and freshness from the ground Dionysos is the Earth-cleaver, as he is the Earth-shaker. The gates of Hades cannot prevail against him, nor the bars of earth restrain.³⁴

Therefore, after triumphing throughout the world, he descended into Hades, the lower world, and led forth his mother Semele, rechristened as Thyone, the inspired,³⁵ who thereafter among the Olympian divinities shone forth in radiant splendor as the divine mother and universal queen.³⁶ In after times the Troezenians showed the place whence the Twain had arisen, within the sacred precinct of their temple of Artemis Soteira ³⁷; but the Argives maintained that Dionysos had emerged with his mother from the Alcyonian Lake.³⁸ So the two Divinities, rising from the depths of Hades, ascended up unto Heaven and have ever thereafter ranked not only as divinities of earth, but of heaven as well.

29. VV. 358-359, 480, Murray's Translation. 30. V. 502, *Ibid.* 31. VV. 895-898, *Ibid.* 32. VV. 769-774, *Ibid.* 33. VV. 1342-1344, *Ibid.* 34. Robert Brown, Jr., *The Great Dionysiac Myth*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1878, II, p. 31. 35. Apollodoros, III, 45. 36. *Orphic Hymns*, xlv; Nonnus viii, 409. 37. Pausanias, II, 31, 2. 38. Pausanias, II, 37, 5; Clemens Alexandrinus, *Exhort.* p. 22.

5. EPITHETS OF DIONYSOS

Dionysos is, above all, polyonymos, a God of many names, and polymorphos, of many forms. Most of his epithets, however, are readily explained by a knowledge of the complete Dionysiac Myth, as the myth was developed in the Greek mysteries. They refer especially to his twofold character as the suffering and mortal god Zagreus, and as the immortal and reborn Savior. Thus, with reference to his two mothers, Demeter and Kore-Semele, he is *dimetor*, having two mothers; *diphues*, two-nurtured; *dithyreites*, He of the Twin Entrances; and *dithyrambos*, He of the Two Portals. He is *trigonos* or thrice-born: first, born as Zagreus; secondly, born prematurely as a seven-months' child at the death of Semele; and thirdly, born maturely from the thigh of Zeus. He is *triphues*, of threefold nature, as the Producer, Preserver, and Destroyer. He is fireborn and thigh-nurtured. Thus in the Orphic Hymns the poet sings:

Loud-sounding Dionysos most divine,
 Inspiring God, a twofold shape is thine:
 Thy various names and attributes I sing,
 O first-born, thrice-begotten, Bakchic King.³⁹

Born of two mothers, honor'd and divine:
 Lysian, Evian Bakchos, various-nam'd,
 Of Gods the offspring, secret, holy, fam'd.⁴⁰

From fire descended, raging, Nysian king,
 From whom initiatory rites do spring,
 Liknitan Bakchos, pure and fiery bright,
 Prudent, crown-bearer, wand'ring in the night:
 Nursed on *Mount Mero*, all-mysterious pow'r,
 Triple, ineffable, Zeus' secret flow'r:
 Ericapaeus [one of the titles of the macrocosmic
 Phanes], first-begotten nam'd
 Of Gods the father, and the offspring fam'd,
 Bearing a scepter, leader of the choir,
 Whose dancing feet, phrenetic furies fire. . . .
 Born of two mothers, Amphietos bright:
 Love, mountain-wand'ring, clothed with skins of deer,
 Apollo golden-ray'd, whom all revere.⁴¹

A paean in honor of Dionysos recently discovered at Delphi, thus begins:

39. *Orphic Hymns*, xxx, 1-4, Taylor's Translation.

40. *Ibid.*, 1, 2-4.

41. *Ibid.*, lii, 3-12, 15-17.

Come, O Dithyrambos [God of the two portals], Bakchos come,
 Evios [God of ecstasy], thyrsos-lord [Bearer of the mystic wand],
 Braïtes [an epithet of doubtful import], come,
 Bromios [God of the thunder-cry] come, and coming with thee bring,
 Holy hours of thine own holy spring —
 Evoë, Bakchos, hail, Paeon [Healer] hail! ⁴²

Also many of the titles refer to Dionysos in his character as the mystic savior: thus he is Soter, the Savior; Eleuthereus, the restorer to freedom; Lysios, the releaser; and Lyaïos, the deliverer from care. In reference to his descent into Hades he is Rexichthon or the Earth-cleaver; as Thesmophoros he is the lawgiver, and as Teletarchos, the founder of the Mysteries; and as Theinos, he is the God of the mystic drink which confers immortality. He is identified at times not only with his father Zeus but also with the first of the five cosmic rulers, Phanes Protogonos, the first-born, the macrocosmic germ of manifested life, as is shown by the following Orphic Fragment:

He who is called through the earth both Phanes and Dionysos
 And King Eubouleus [the Wise Counsellor] and the widely seen Sparkler,
 Antauges [the Spiritual Sun].
 And other men of the earth by other names call him.
 First of all came he to light and then was he named Dionysos,
 Since he must wander ⁴³ about through the boundless and blessed Olympos.⁴⁴

Finally some of the manifold epithets of Dionysos, as the principle of growth and vitality, have been thus excellently explained. Although in a few cases the exact wording of the paraphrase may be called into question, the explanation as a whole is decidedly enlightening:

He is the all-potent (Pantodynastes), permanent (Ambrotos), life-blood of the world (Akratophoros), and power of reproduction (Priapos): which, giving to all their share of being (Isodaites), appears (Phanes) blooming (Antheus) all around (Amphithales) in the majesty of the forest (Dendrites), in fruit (Eukarpos), in foliage (Katapogon), in the hum of the bee (Brisaios), in the flowing of the stream (Eurychaites), in motive power (Elilichthon), and generally, in the fulness of the earth beneath (Hyes-Phleon), which brings forth abundantly (Karpios) clad in its mantle of green (Ernesipeplos), ever varying in phase (Aiolomorphos), and infinite in its changes (Polymorphos): which, being of a mingled nature (Mise) is androgynous (Thelymorphos), comprehends both active and passive potentialities (Diphues), and shows their double action (Dimorphos) in the ever-renewing life-power of the vast material world.⁴⁵

42. Miss Harrison's Translation. 43. *Διυέτραι*, here associated etymologically with the word Dionysos. 44. Orphic Frag. vii, apud Macrobius, *Saturn.*, i, 18. 45. Robert Brown, Jr.: *The Great Dionysiak Myth*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1878, II, p. 154.

Dionysos as Zagreus is lord of the Underworld, the chthonian and telluric deity, "Who as Amphithales, the Blooming-on-both-sides, bears sway alike in the Upper and Lower Worlds; as Isodaites, the Equal-divider, portions out life and death to all, and shares the wealth of nature amongst his subjects; and as Rexichthon, the Earth-cleaver, can penetrate to the depths of the Underworld, and rise again unwearyed to Olympos."⁴⁶

Valle Crucis Abbey, Wales

THE abbey of Valle Crucis, situated in a dell near the town of Llangollen, Denbighshire, Wales, is one of the most famous ruins in that land of many beautiful ruins. Like most of the abbeys in Wales, it was built by the Normans at or near the site of one of the old Welsh half-monastic half-educational institutions, which took part in the struggle of the Celtic Church first against the dominance of Rome and then against that of Canterbury; a struggle that ended in each case in the triumph of the foreign church, supported as Rome was by Saxon, and as Canterbury was by Saxon and Norman invaders, and by Rome. Llangollen is associated with the memory of Collen, a saint of the old British or Celtic church renowned for his contests with Gwyn ab Nudd, King of the Beautiful Family of Fairies; like all the Welsh saints except St. David, he has not been canonized at Rome. As a Norman institution, Valle Crucis belonged to the Cistercians.

Tintern Abbey, Wales

THE accompanying illustration gives but little idea of the ruins of Tintern Abbey, on the river Wye, in Monmouthshire, Wales. The building, which is Early English, is almost entire, with the exception of the roof, and may be ranked as one of the finest of the monastic ruins in Great Britain. It was founded for the Cistercians by Walter de Clare, a Marcher Lord, in 1131.

46. Robert Brown, Jr., *The Great Dionysiak Myth*, pp. 154-155.

STUDIES IN ORPHISM: by F. S. Darrow, A. M., Ph. D. (Harv.)

V. TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ZAGREUS-DIONYSOS MYTH

1. INTRODUCTION



P. BLAVATSKY has called attention to the fact that:

No one can study ancient philosophies seriously without perceiving that the striking similitude of conception between all — in their exoteric form very often, in their hidden spirit invariably — is the result of no mere coincidence but of a concurrent design: and that there was during the youth of mankind one language, one knowledge, one universal religion, when there were no churches, no creeds or sects, but when every man was a priest unto himself.¹ Indeed, there are few myths in any religious system worthy of the name but have a *historical* as well as a *scientific* foundation. “Myths,” justly observes Pococke,² “are now proved to be fables, just in proportion as we misunderstand them: truths, in proportion as they were once understood!”³

She also declares that there are “*seven* keys, which open the Mysteries, past and future.”⁴

As truly stated by Ragon:

The ancient Hierophants have combined so cleverly the dogmas and symbols of their religious philosophies that these symbols can be fully explained only by the combination and knowledge of all the keys.⁵

But,

shall one, for fear of incurring the penalty of being called a superstitious fool and even a liar, abstain from furnishing proofs — as good as any — only because that day, when all the *seven* keys shall be delivered unto Science or rather unto the men of learning and research in the symbolical department, has not yet dawned?⁶

Allegory and personification are essential to the genius of antiquity, and this fact that several keys are requisite to an understanding of the significance of mythology is explicitly stated by the Neoplatonist Sallust as follows:

Fables may be interpreted theologically, physiologically, psychologically, physically, and lastly, compositely. Fables are theological which make use of nothing corporeal but which speculate upon the very essence of the Gods themselves: such as the fable which asserts Kronos devoured his children: for it occultly intimates the nature of an intellectual or spiritual god, since the intellect returns

1. *The Secret Doctrine*, I, p. 341, Point Loma Edition. 2. E. Pococke, *India in Greece or Truth in Mythology*, London, 1852, Preface, p. viii. 3. *The Secret Doctrine*, I, p. 339, Point Loma Edition. 4. *Ibid.* I, p. 325. 5. *Ibid.* I, p. 363. 6. *Ibid.* I, p. 323.

unto itself. But we speculate upon fables physiologically when we refer to the energies of the Gods in the world: as when considering Kronos to be the same as Time we call the moments of time his children and state that the children are devoured by their parent. We employ fables psychologically when we contemplate the energies of the soul: because the intellections of our souls, though by a discursive energy they proceed into other things, yet abide in their parents. Fables are regarded physically when divinities are considered to be and are named by corporeal objects, such as Isis, earth; Osiris, humidity; Typhon, heat, etc. . . . Of these various interpretations of myths the theological are characteristic of philosophers; the physical and psychological of the poets; but the composite belong to the Mysteries since it is the intention of all mystic rites to conjoin us with the world and the Gods.⁷

2. ASTRONOMICAL KEY

The astronomical significance of the myth of the Mystic Savior, invariably present in all its various forms, can be easily recognized at least in its broad outlines. It is thus given by Madame Blavatsky:

The Christians . . . adhere to a religion entirely based upon solar and lunar worship. It is useless and vain for the Protestants to exclaim against the Roman Catholics for their "Mariolatry" based on the ancient cult of lunar goddesses, when they themselves worship Jehovah (that is, the equivalent of the Orphic Demiurge) pre-eminently a *lunar* god: and when both churches have accepted in their theologies the Sun-Christ and the Lunar Trinity.⁸ . . . It was in the *Bakchos myth* that lay concealed for long and dreary centuries both the future vindication of the reviled "Gods of the Nations" and the lost clue to the enigma of Jehovah.⁹ . . . Dionysos is one with Osiris, with Krishna and with Buddha (the heavenly wise) and with the coming (tenth) Avatar, the glorified Spiritual Christos.¹⁰

The astronomical import of the following points in the Zagreus-Dionysos Myth are obvious as soon as attention is called to them. Dionysos is born prematurely at the death of Semele on Christmas Day, that is at the time of the winter-solstice, just at the point in the sun's path which marks the beginning of the new year, at that point which ushers in the new season of springtime growth and rebirth; but as the winter is doomed still to linger on for some time, this birth is immature, a seven months' child, and the Reborn Savior is born maturely from the thigh of Zeus not at Christmas but at Easter in the joyous springtime of the Resurrection.

7. *On the Gods and the World*, IV. 8. *The Secret Doctrine*, I, p. 388, Point Loma Ed.
9. *Isis Unveiled*, II, p. 527. 10. *The Secret Doctrine*, II, p. 419-420, Point Loma Ed.

So also the symbolism of the sacred dress, which was worn during the celebration of the Mysteries, has an evident connexion with the astronomical meaning of the myth. The purple robe typified the Solar heat, and the fawn skin, which was thrown over this, hanging from the right shoulder, symbolized by its spots the heavenly vault at night, the moon and the assemblage of the stars, as is stated by Diodorus.¹¹ The golden belt, which completed the ceremonial dress, typified the Ocean of life, aglow from the rays of the Spiritual Sun. Furthermore, it is declared in the myth that when Dionysos was born from the thigh of Zeus, Hermes, the Psychopomp, or Guide of the Soul, received the infant divinity on a *fawn skin*. The symbolism of the sacred dress is clearly given in the following Orphic fragment:

He who desires in pomp of sacred dress
 The sun's resplendent body to express,
 Should first a robe assume of purple bright,
 Like fair bright beams combin'd with fiery light:
 On his right shoulder, next, a fawn's broad hide
 Widely diversified with spotted pride
 Should hang, an image of the pole divine,
 And Daedal stars, whose orbs eternal shine.
 A golden splendid zone, then, o'er the vest
 He next should throw, and bind it round his breast:
 In mighty token, how with golden light,
 The rising sun, from earth's last bounds and night
 Sudden emerges and with matchless force,
 Darts through old Ocean's billows in his course.¹²

While treating of the mythical and historical Orpheus some of the points of solar connexion in the Dionysos Myth were noted.¹³ And it is important to keep in mind that Dionysos typifies the spiritual Night-Sun and is distinct from Helios, the symbol of the visible physical sun and from Apollo, the occult potency of the spiritual Day-Sun. Thus, Dionysos is Nyktelios, Lord of the Night, and Nyktipolos or Night-wandering, and Aristophanes represents the Mystics as calling upon Iakchos, the Eleusinian Mystery-name of Zagreus-Dionysos as "the Morning Star that shinest *nightly*."¹⁴ Macrobius quotes an Orphic verse which speaks of "The Sun whom men call Dionysos,"

11. Diodorus Siculus, I, 11. 12. Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, I, 18 (Taylor's Translation); Thomas Taylor, *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, 2d ed. *Pamphleteer*, London, 1816, pp. 480-1. 13. *Studies in Orphism*, I, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, II, 4, April 1912, pp. 256-7, 260, 267-269. 14. *The Frogs*, v, 343 (Rogers' Translation).

while another Orphic fragment says: "He is called Dionysos because he *whirls in circular motion through the immeasurably extended heavens.*" And the Eumolpic verses state that "Dionysos with face of flame glistens like a Star with his rays." Lastly Diodorus in speaking of Osiris observes:

And when these are translated into Greek, Osiris means many-eyed, for throwing his rays on all sides, he seems to behold the whole earth and sea as if with many eyes. And the Poet (Homer) thus speaks of him in these words. "Helios, who sees and hears all things." And among the Hellenes some of the most ancient mythologists called Dionysos Osiris or Scirios (that is, the Scorching or Hot-One), by a slight change of name.¹⁵

Many of the epithets of Dionysos are likewise obviously of a solar significance. Thus, he is Antauges, the Sparkler; Aithiopaïs, the child of the Sun-Burnt-Land; Chrysopes, the Golden-faced; Chrysokomes, the Golden-haired; Chrysomitres or Gold-mitred; Pyropos or Ficry-faced; Pyrisporos or Fire-engendered; and Pyrigenes or Fire-born. Also the following fragment of an Orphic Invocation was presumably addressed to Dionysos:

"Oh, all-ruling Sun, Spirit of the Universe; Power of the Universe; Light of the Universe!"

Finally, the solar significance of the Dionysos myth is disclosed by the four animal-symbols which are associated with the god: the ram, Aries; the bull, Taurus; the lion, Leo; and the serpent, Draco. These four symbols are presumably identical with the Evangelical zoolatry, that is, the worship of the sacred animals associated with the writers of the Four Gospels, namely, the bull, the eagle (a substitute for the ram), the lion, and the angel ("in reality the Cherub, or Seraph, the fiery-winged serpent.")¹⁶

It should be noted that all four of the animal-symbols are associated not only with Dionysos, but with Phanes, the first of the macrocosmic powers, and with Zeus, the Demiurge, as well. Thus, Proklos says:

These things Orpheus has revealed about Phanes; for the first God bears with him the heads of animals, of a bull, of a serpent, and of a lion — all sprung from the Primeval Egg.¹⁷

And again:

15. Diodorus Siculus, I, 11. 16. *The Secret Doctrine*, I, p. 363, Point Loma Edition.
17. I. P. Cory, *Ancient Fragments*, 2d ed. London, 1832, p. 299.

The Theologer (Orpheus) places around him (Phanes) the heads of a ram, a bull, a lion and a serpent.¹⁸

When Zagreus was attacked by the Titans he assumed among other forms the shape of a ram, and likewise he was transformed into a ram by Zeus when Hera attempted to destroy Dionysos by making his guardians Ino and Athamas frenzied.¹⁹

The bull, symbolical of virile strength, and the lion, typifying the destructive power of the sun, are common solar emblems. Therefore, Zagreus, as the mighty Horned Hunter, a figure which unites the horn of the bull with the predatory instincts of the lion, is addressed in the *Bacchae* of Euripides as "Mountain Bull and Lion of the Burning Flame."²⁰

The bull, and especially the serpent, play important rôles in the Zagreus-Dionysos myth, for Zeus assumed the form of a dragon when he begot Zagreus, as is shown by the following quotation from St. Clement of Alexandria:

Pherephatta (one of the many names of the Earth Goddess) has a child in the form of a bull, as a . . . poet (that is, Orpheus) sings, "The bull the dragon's father and the father of the bull, the dragon; on a hill the herdsman's hidden ox-goad," alluding, I suppose, under the phrase "the herdsman's ox-goad" to the thyrsos or mystic wand carried by the Bacchanals.²¹

We have already perceived that the mystic worshipers invoke Dionysos in the *Bacchae* of Euripides as "Snake of the Hundred Heads."²²

Serpents or images of serpents were regularly carried in the mystic processions held in honor of Dionysos, while the god himself as an infant was snake-crowned. Therefore, in art the Maenads or inspired women-followers of Dionysos are often represented either as carrying serpents, or as having them interwoven in their hair, and it has been rightly pointed out that:

The connexion between the serpent and Dionysos as the solar Lord of Time appears somewhat occultly in those myths in which the Sun-god slays some dracontic monster, spawn of earth, which has been warmed into life by his beams; as Apollo slays the Python and Dionysos Kampe, the Winding-one; that is, the sun in his resistless career across the heavens, reaches the turning-points in

18. I. P. Cory, *Ancient Fragments*, 2d. Ed. London, 1832, p. 299. 19. *Studies in Orphism*, IV, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 3, Sept. 1912, pp. 169-170. 20. *Ibid.* 168.
21. *Protrep.* II, 16. 22. *Studies in Orphism*, IV, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 4, September 1912, p. 168.

the East and the West, and devours and destroys the circles and cycles of time, which he himself marks out and brings into existence.²³

The serpent symbol has four principal points of contact with Dionysos; first, as a type of earth-life; secondly, as a symbol of time and eternity; thirdly, as a type of wisdom; and fourthly, as a solar emblem. Thus in the Egyptian "Book of the Dead" we read:

I am the Serpent-soul of the Earth, whose length is years laid out, and I am born daily. I am the Soul of the Earth in the parts of the earth. I am laid out and am born, decay and become young daily.²⁴

This is the life-giving serpent that broods over the waters of space and appears twined around the Orphic Mundane Egg. Sanchouniathon says in the Phoenician Cosmogony:

The serpent was esteemed . . . to be the most inspired of all the reptiles and of a fiery nature; inasmuch as it exhibits an incredible swiftness, moving by its spirit, without either hands or feet or any of those external members by which other animals effect their motion. And in its progress it assumes a variety of forms, moving in a spiral course and darting forward with whatever degree of swiftness it pleases. It is, moreover, long-lived and has the quality not only of putting off its old age and assuming a second growth but of receiving at the same time an increase of its size and strength. . . . Upon which account this animal is introduced in the sacred rites and Mysteries.²⁵

St. Justin, the early Christian Apologist, is surely correct when he says:

Along with each of those whom you esteem Gods there is painted a serpent, *a great symbol and mystery.*²⁶

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL KEY

The ceremonies of the Mysteries are their cloak. The simple look only at the garment, but the initiated see not merely the cloak but also that which the cloak conceals. As Dionysos in the sky is the toiling Savior Sun, ever rising and ever setting, ever causing life to bud in the spring, to flower in the summer, to die in the winter, and to be reborn next Easter-time; so Dionysos in man is the Deliverer who frees human souls from their cave-prisons of the flesh, triumphing over death, for he did himself descend into the underworld and yet arose therefrom, thus teaching man that "Whoso shall lose his life,

23. Robert Brown, Jr., *The Great Dionysiak Myth*, London, 1878, II, pp. 72-73.

24. Chapter Ixxxvii. 25. I. P. Cory, *Ancient Fragments*, 2d. Ed. London, 1832, pp. 17-18. 26. *First Apology*, xxvii.

shall yet find it." He is the bestower of sacred bliss in that he reveals how to live freely according to the dictates of nature. He is the soul of all life, the dispenser of real wealth and wisdom, and doth offer his gifts freely to all the peoples of the earth. As the human soul, the spiritual life of man, the individuality which by rebirth is regenerated and restored to its pristine nobility, he shows how man can rebecome a god.

This psychological key is given by Macrobius in his Neoplatonic commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*:

By Dionysos the Orphics meant to signify the Hylie Nous (that is, the human soul incarnated in the material world), which is born from the Impartible or Indivisible (the Divine Mind), and is separated in various parts (the different personalities). Therefore in the Orphic Mysteries Dionysos is represented by traditions as torn into separate limbs and the pieces buried in a tomb made empty by the resurrection of the God intact; which signifies that the Nous (the human soul) which we call the Mind, by making itself divisible from being indivisible and by becoming indivisible from being divisible incarnates in all forms of nature and yet does not abandon the mysteries of its own being.²⁷

So also Hermeias says:

"This God (Dionysos) is the cause of rebirth."²⁸

Therefore, there can be no doubt but that the story of the murder and resurrection of Zagreus-Dionysos is the story of how the Pilgrim-soul loses and later regains its heaven-born wings — the story of the deathless and birthless soul, successively resurrecting and reincarnating, living through death and life, returning to earth again and yet again; the Divine Man for whom "the hour will never strike," the first-begotten, fire-born son of the Father-in-heaven; for in the words of Proklos: "The whole demiurgic (or creative) activity of the Gods has its end in rebirth."²⁹ And again:

The Spirit Within us is the true image of Dionysos. He therefore who acts erroneously in regard to It and who after the manner of the Titans sunders Its impartible nature through manifold falsehood certainly sins against Dionysos himself.³⁰

Furthermore, that the Greeks thus interpreted the myth, is expressly stated by the great Christian Neoplatonist, Origen.³¹

Thus Plutarch declares:

We have heard the theologians both in verse and in prose say that the Deity

27. I, 12. 28. *In Phaedone*, p. 87. 29. *In Timaeo*, V, 31. 30. *In Cratylo*, quoted by Thomas Taylor, *Works of Plato*, London, 1804, V, p. 693. 31. *Contra Celsum*, IV, 17.

is of its nature incorruptible and eternal, but yet because of a decree of fate and of reason, It suffers changes by Itself, being sometimes kindled into a fire and making all things alike, and at other times becoming manifold in different shapes, appearances, and powers, like unto the world. . . . The wiser men, cloaking their meaning from the profane, call the change into fire "Apollo" from Its unity,³² and Phoibos from Its purity and incorruption; but the condition and change of turning and conversion into air, water, and earth, and the production of the stars and the various kinds of plants and animals, they enigmatically denote by the terms "Exile" and "Dismemberment" and they then call the God "Dionysos, Zagreus, Nyktelios, and Isodaites."³³ They also tell of certain destructions and disappearances, deceases and rebirths, which are riddles and fables pertaining to the aforementioned transformations; and they sing the Dithyrambic Song in honor of Dionysos, filled with suffering and allusions to a change of state that brought with it wanderings backwards and forwards and dispersion . . .³⁴ . . . The stories that are related about the dismemberment of Dionysos and the attack of the Titans upon him and of their tasting his slain body and their punishment afterwards . . . are but a myth representing the rebirth of the soul. For what is unreasonable, disorderly, and boisterous, being not divine but demoniacal, the ancients term Titans, that is, tormented and punished, from *Τίνω* the Greek word, meaning to punish.³⁵

Consequently, in view of such explicit and manifold testimony from antiquity, it is certain that the myth of the dismemberment of Zagreus was intended to be a dramatic version of the history of the wanderings of the Pilgrim-soul throughout the material universe.

Demeter, the Earth Goddess, is the mother, and Zeus, the God of Heaven, the father, because the soul is the child both of heaven and of earth. Dionysos is Dimetor, having two mothers — Demeter, the immortal Goddess, and Semele, the mortal Virgin; because the soul is a Pilgrim from the heavenly homeland incarnated in humanity.³⁶

The symbology of the Sacred Marriages of the myth is thus explained by Proklos:

Theologists signify this by means of "Sacred Marriages," which in brief symbolize the interaction of divine causation. When they perceive this interaction to occur between elements of the same kind, they name it "the marriage of Hera and Zeus," "of Heaven and Earth," "of Kronos and Rhea"; but when between lower and higher, they designate it "the marriage of Demeter and Zeus," and when between superior and inferior they call it "the marriage of Zeus and Kore," (that is, the Earth Goddess as a maid).³⁷

32. As though the word Apollo was derived from *ἀ* and *πολλοί*, meaning not many, or one.

33. *Studies in Orphism*, IV, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 3, Sept. 1912, pp. 172-4.

34. *On the Ei at Apollo's Temple at Delphi*, ix.

35. *On the Eating of Flesh*, Or. I, 7.

36. *Studies in Orphism*, IV, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 3, Sept. 1912, pp. 169, 172.

37. *In Parmenide*, II, 214.

We have previously noted that the adjective Liknites is an important epithet of Dionysos.³⁸ It is thus explained by Hesychios: "Liknites — a title of Dionysos, from the cradle in which they put children to sleep." In Greek the name Liknon was given both to a fan and to a shovel-shaped basket. It served three purposes, for it was used, first, as a fan to winnow grain; secondly, as a basket to hold grain and fruit; and thirdly, as a cradle for a baby. Thus Servius in commenting upon Virgil's words, "Iacchus' Mystic fan," says:

The mystic fan of Iacchus, that is, the sieve of the threshing-floor. He (Virgil) calls it the mystic fan of Iacchus, because the rites of Father Liber (the Latin name of Dionysos Soter, Dionysos the Savior) had reference to the purification of the soul, and men were purified through his Mysteries as grain is purified by fans. It is on this account that Isis is said to have placed the limbs of Osiris, when they had been torn apart by Typhon, on a sieve, for Father Liber (Dionysos Soter) is the same person (as Osiris), he in whose Mysteries the fan plays a part, because as we said he purifies souls. Wherefore, also he is called Liber because he Liberates or saves, and it is he, who, Orpheus said, was torn asunder by the Titans. Some add that Father Liber was called by the Greeks Liknites. Moreover, the fan is called by them Liknon, in which (as a cradle) he is said to have been placed directly after he was born. Others explain its being called "Mystic" by saying that the fan is a large wicker vessel in which peasants, because of its large size, are wont to heap their first fruits and consecrate it to Liber and Libera (Persephone, the Earth goddess as a maid). Hence it is called "Mystic."³⁹

Harpocration adds that:

"The Liknon was serviceable for every rite of Initiation, for every sacrifice."⁴⁰ It was used not only in the celebration of the "Sacred Marriages," but according to Plutarch it was customary at Athens during the celebration of ordinary marriages for a boy, both of whose parents were alive, while carrying a Liknon filled with loaves, to pronounce the words, "Bad have I fled, better have I found," — a formula evidently adopted from the ritual of the Mysteries.⁴¹ In this connexion it is also interesting to note that the early Christian Church in the celebration of its Eucharist employed two "mystic or sacred fans" — a custom which still survives in the Greek and Armenian churches.⁴²

Therefore the significance of the epithet Liknites and the symbol-

38. *Studies in Orphism*, IV, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 3, September 1912, p. 172.
 39. *Commentary upon Virgil's Georgics*, IV, 166. 40. S. v. τὸ ἄλκνον. 41. *Proverbial Sayings of Alexander*, xvi, 1255. 42. Cyril of Scythiopolis, *Life of St. Euthymius*, 70, and the *Euchologeion* (a Service Book of the Eastern Church).

ogy of the Liknon is evident: as a sieve or fan it symbolized purification; as a basket filled with the first fruits it served as a symbol of rebirth; and lastly as the cradle of the Holy Babe it typifies the "Manger" of Scripture story.

In considering the symbolical meaning of Hera, the relentless enemy of Zagreus-Dionysos, the following ancient statements are suggestive. Chryssippos, a Stoic philosopher of the third century B. C., says:

"Hera is matter and Zeus is Spirit."⁴³ If this interpretation is correct, Hera must signify primordial matter, as the antagonistic pole of the pair of opposites, Spirit and Matter — a conception which is essentially different from that of receptive organic matter, which is suffused and vivified by the incarnated Spirit-soul, for this latter conception of matter is typified by the Earth-Goddess, Demeter-Kore-Semele, and not the antagonistic and quarrelsome Hera. Furthermore, Olympiodoros says:

Hera is the supervising guardian of motion and progression, that is, the spirit of vibratory change, which is of course antagonistic to the essential peace and serenity of the spirit.⁴⁴

The Curetes were not only the protectors of the infancy of Zeus but are also appointed guardians of Zagreus, and carry the kettledrum and the tambourine, typifying the natural pendulum-movement, the cyclic swing of organic life.

The Titans, however, as murderers of Zagreus, the ministers of Hera's revenge, symbolize the confused movements of a perverted personal life, enslaved to the emotions; hence they carry the "false gifts" with which to beguile the Holy Babe: the top, symbolic of motion; the dice, typifying a life ruled by the pairs of opposites, the sensations of pleasure and pain; the mirror, suggestive of illusions; and the thyrsos, emblematic of rebirth. The giddy, spinning top, and the maddening throw of the gambler with its attendant ruin, hardly require any further comment. The symbolism of the mirror proved very interesting to the ancients. Thus in the language of Proklos it signifies the inability of the material world to receive the fulness of spiritual perfection. It is the phenomenal world which beguiles the young soul by its illusions and false reflections. Plotinos in referring

43. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Homiletics*, V, 18, 668; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, IV, 48.

44. In *Phaedone*, quoted by Thomas Taylor, *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, 2d ed. Pamphleteer, London, 1816, p. 473.

to the mirror of Dionysos, which psychologically speaking typifies the image of the Higher Self in man, his lower self or personality, says that the souls of men when they have once seen the image of their true selves will hasten above, since the soul having become divided must retrace its path and return to its originally spiritual state. And just as when it saw its reflection in the material world it went forth after it, so it must now contemplate its type or idea in the immaterial noetic or spiritual world, and be joined thereto.⁴⁵

Olympiodoros observes that:

The thyrsos is a symbol of the material and parted substance from its scattered condition; and on this account it is a *Titanic* plant. This it was customary to extend before Dionysos instead of his paternal sceptre; and through this they called him down into a partial nature. Indeed, the *Titans* are Thyrsos-bearers; and Prometheus concealed fire in a thyrsos or reed; after which he is considered as bringing celestial light into generation, or leading the soul into the body, or calling forth the Divine Light (the whole being ungenerated) into generated existence. Hence Sokrates calls the multitude Thyrsos-bearers Orphically, as living according to a *Titanic* life.⁴⁶

From this explanation it appears that the thyrsos as a symbol of rebirth, physiologically speaking, typifies the nervous system centered in the spinal-cord surmounted by the brain. Therefore the Bakchic wand is topped by the pine cone, which also represents "the heart of Zagreus," which was discovered to be still throbbing by Athena and given to Zeus — the heart from which the reborn Dionysos sprang into being and which contains within itself the true explanation of the mythical "imponderable, incorruptible, incombustible bone believed throughout the Middle Ages to be the necessary nucleus of the resurrection body." The ivy-leaves, "never sere," which are commonly intertwined around the cone-summit of the thyrsos, also typify immortality. From the macrocosmic standpoint the cone symbolizes the Mundane Egg.

A word or two ought to be added in regard to the "Symbols of Power" entrusted to Zagreus by his father, namely, the paternal scepter and the golden apple. The golden apple was from the Tree of Life that sprang into being at the marriage of Zeus and Hera in the Garden of the Hesperides. Thus, the mythical parallelism between this Greek myth and the story told in *Genesis* immediately suggests itself. The mystic objects, whether the "Symbols of Power," or the

45. *Ennead* IV, 3. 46. In *Phaedone*, quoted by Thomas Taylor, *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, 2d ed. *Pamphleteer*, London, 1816, p. 477.

“False Toys,” are all connected with the story of the soul’s fall into matter, and the play of the infant Zagreus, is the evolution of the physical world by means of the involution of the Spiritual life.

As Dionysos is the human soul, so the Titans are the earth-powers, and the arts that they employed to ensnare Zagreus are symbolical of the apparently divisible energies of the earth-powers, the powers of generation. They typify the animal nature or the powers of evil and darkness, who, however, are ultimately saved in the persons of their progeny, mankind, by reason of their feast upon the flesh of the slain Savior. This portion of the myth is the origin of the symbolical rite of the Eucharist. The Titans are physical and material powers which divert the Soul from its true Path by means of its longing for things of sense. The artificial whitening of the Titans’ naturally black faces, symbolizes the disguise and deceit of man’s lower or animal nature in its attempts to mislead and confuse the wavering soul. There was a direct reference to this part of the myth in the Orphic Baptism.⁴⁷

The metamorphoses assumed by Zagreus while attempting to escape from the stifling grasp of the Titans typify the manifold incarnations of the soul in the course of its Pilgrimage through the material universe. The dismemberment of Zagreus represents the Fall, the descent of the soul into a body, the incarnation of spirit. The limbs are first boiled because water is a symbol of the astral world and the soul first falls into the elemental astral kingdoms. The limbs are later roasted by fire, the myth thereby typifying the reascent of the soul purified by its journey through the Cycle of Suffering. The soul is torn to pieces, that is, scattered abroad throughout the universe by incarnation. Therefore Zeus, the Divine Father in Heaven, when the soul reascends to its original home, converts the Titans, physical and material powers, into his own essence by reducing them to ashes by means of his thunder-bolt.

Olympiodoros says:

In the first place, then, we are composed of fragments, because through falling into generation, our life has proceeded into the most distant and extreme division, but from Titanic fragments, because the Titans are the ultimate artificers of things and stand immediately next to whatever is constituted from them. But further, our irrational life is Titanic, by which the rational and higher life is torn to pieces. And hence when we disperse the Dionysos or the intuitive intellect contained in the secret recesses of our own nature, breaking in pieces the kindred

47. *Studies in Orphism*, III, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 1, July 1912, p. 49.

and divine form of our essence, which communicates, as it were, both with things subordinate and things supreme, then we become Titans, but when we establish ourselves in union with this Dionysiac or kindred form, we become Bakchoi, or perfect guardians of our irrational life; for Dionysos . . . is himself a guardian divinity, dissolving at his pleasure the bonds by which the soul is united to the body. . . . But it is necessary that the passive part of our irrational nature through which we are bound to the body and which is nothing more than the resounding echo, as it were, of soul, should suffer the punishment incurred by descent (into a body). For when the soul casts aside the peculiarity of her own nature, she requires a separate but at the same time a multiform body, that she may again become in need of the common form, which she has lost through Titanic dispersion into matter.⁴⁸

Damascius says:

“ This union with the Deity should be an all-perfect at-one-ment, a return upwards of our soul to the Divine.”⁴⁹

The throbbing “ heart of Dionysos ” is said to have been preserved by Athena, the wisdom-guardian of life, because while the soul is distributed in the world of generation, the material world of birth and decay, it is, nevertheless, preserved entire by the protecting power of the Divine Intelligence. So, also, Apollo, the source of union and harmony, is called by Proklos “ the key-keeper of the fountain of life,” and as the representative of spiritual life Apollo gathers up the scattered limbs of Zagreus that they may be properly buried, that is, converted into spirit.⁵⁰ But the coffin of Zagreus at Delphi was only a cenotaph because in the significant words of Macrobius “ the tomb of Dionysos was made empty by the resurrection of the God *intact*.”⁵¹

Olympiodoros thus explains the myth:

The form of that which is universal is plucked off, torn in pieces and scattered into generation, and Dionysos is the Monad of the Titans. . . . In another aspect, Dionysos is the supervising guardian of generation because he presides over life and death. . . . But Zeus is said to have hurled his thunder at the Titans; the thunder signifying a conversion on high; for fire naturally ascends, and therefore Zeus by this means converts the Titans to his own essence. . . . It is necessary first of all for the soul to place a likeness of herself in the body. Secondly, it is necessary for her to sympathize with the image as being of like idea, for every external form or substance is wrought into an identity with its interior essence through an ingenerated tendency thereto. In the third place, being situated in a divided nature it is necessary that she should be torn in pieces and fall into a last separation until through the action of a life of purification she shall raise

48. Quoted by Thomas Taylor, *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, 2d ed., Pamphleteer, London, 1816, pp. 473-5. 49. *Vita Isidori*, Photius, ccxlii, 526. 50. *Hymn to the Sun*, v 3.

51. Context given on p. 329.

herself from the dispersion, loose the bond of sympathy, and act, as of herself without the external image, having become established according to the first created life. The like things are fabled in the myth; for Dionysos because his image was formed in a mirror, pursued it and thus became distributed into everything, but Apollo collected him and brought him up, being a divinity of purification and the true savior of Dionysos and on this account he is styled in sacred hymns Dionysites.⁵²

In the variant forms assumed in the different national myths of the mystic savior, the symbology of the second Sacred Marriage differs somewhat. Sometimes, instead of being represented as a second mystic union of the Divine All-Father with the Earth-goddess as a mortal virgin, the normal type, it becomes the sacred marriage of the divine son, as was noted while considering the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, and as is to be seen in the legend of St. Catharine, the Bride of Christ.⁵³ Although in the myth Dionysos is represented as having two mothers, nevertheless he is also called "the Motherless Mystery," in reference to his birth from the thigh of Zeus, because the soul is not generated upon earth but is a sojourner from heaven.⁵⁴

It is thus evident that Orphism by means of its mystery-drama of Zagreus-Dionysos taught allegorically the great central truths of the eternity, the pre-existence, and the rebirth of the human soul, and the unfoldment of life in accordance with the law of justice.

Can we not still hear the genuine followers of Orpheus declare? —

That which we seek is but our other Self,
Other and Higher, neither wholly like
Nor wholly different, the half-life the Gods
Retained when half was given. For each
The complement of each, in truth
A double essence, human and divine.
So that the God is hidden in the man.
Soul's but a particle of God, sent down to man,
Which doth in turn reveal the world and God.
Thine eyes have seen the soul of man, the deathless soul,
Defeated, struggling, purified and blest.
It shall be well with thee as 'tis with us
If only thou art true. The World of life,
The world of death, are but the opposing sides
Of one great orb, and the light shines on both.⁵⁵

52. In *Phaedone*, quoted by Thomas Taylor, *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, 2d ed., Pamphleteer, London, 1816, pp. 473, 476. 53. *Studies in Orphism*, I, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, II, 4, April 1912, p. 260. 54. *Ibid.* IV, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 3, Sept. 1912, p. 169. 55. Lewis Morris: *Epic of Hades*.

STUDIES IN ORPHISM: by F. S. Darrow, A. M., Ph. D. (Harv.)

VI. THE LIFE-HISTORY OF THE SOUL



THE Orphic conception of the origin and history of the human soul has had a very important and vital influence not only upon ancient Greek thought but also upon all subsequent religious belief in the West, for from it was derived the psychology of Pythagoras and of Plato as well as of all their myriad followers throughout the ages. This psychology is based upon the intrinsic connexion of the Macrocosm or Universe with the Microcosm or man. The connexion is especially discernible in the Orphic teachings in regard to the Seven Principles of man and the Planetary Chain.

Since man sprang into being from the ashes of the Titans, who were blasted by the lightning of Zeus, Orphism taught that human nature is dual or composite, partly base (Titanic), and partly divine (Dionysiac). For, it will be remembered that the Titans feasted upon the dismembered limbs of Zagreus, thereby assimilating some of the Divine nature of the Mystic Savior.¹ This fundamental dualism gives rise to the struggle of life. It was therefore the constant endeavor of the true follower of Orpheus to purify himself from the Titanic element, hoping thereby eventually, in life after life by the help of Dionysos Eleuthereus, the Redeemer, to win back union with the Deity, a living particle of which was enshrined within every man. Dion Chrysostom thus refers to the struggle between the two natures:

I will tell you something which is neither pleasant nor agreeable. We men are of the blood of the Titans, and since they are hostile to the Gods, we are not friends with the latter but are ever being punished by them.²

The other standpoint is thus given by Iamblichus:

There is a faculty of the human mind which is superior to all which is born or begotten. Through it we are enabled to attain union with the superior Intelligences by being transported beyond the scenes of this world and by partaking of the higher life and peculiar functions of the Heavenly Powers.³

The composite, known as man, is therefore linked on the one hand to eternity by participation in Divinity but on the other hand is joined to the material world by generation or incarnation. As this latter bond constitutes a kind of death or oblivion to the higher forms of

1. Vide, *Studies in Orphism*, IV, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 3, Sept. 1912, pp. 164-166.

2. *Or.* XXX, 550. 3. Quoted by H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, I, p. 435.

life the encasement of the soul in the physical body is comparable to an incarceration in a living grave. Thus Plato says:

According to some (namely the followers of Orpheus, Pythagoras and others) the body is the sepulcher of the soul, which they consider to be buried in our present life: or again the body is regarded as the sign of the soul because the soul signifies (its wishes) through the body, and indeed the followers of Orpheus appear to me to have established the Greek name for body (to wit, *σῶμα*), principally because the soul suffers in the body punishment for its (former) guilt and the body is an enclosure which may be compared to a prison in which the soul is incarcerated as the (Greek) word body implies,⁴ until the penalty is paid.⁵

Elsewhere Plato adds:

I should not wonder if Euripides spoke truly in saying — “Who knows whether to live is not to die and to die, is not to live?” And we, perhaps are in reality dead (while living). For, I have heard from one of the wise that we are indeed now dead; and that the body is our sepulcher and that the part of the soul which is the seat of the Passions and Desires can be persuaded and influenced upwards or downwards.⁶

In the *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, Euripides represents his heroine, as thus referring to death while speaking her last farewell to life:

Hail, Light-divine!
Hail, Day in whose hands doth the World's Torch shine!
In a strange new *life* must I dwell,
And a strange new lot must be mine.⁷

And Cicero in a fragment says, evidently thinking of the Orphic teachings:

The ancients whether they were seers or interpreters of the Divine Mind in the tradition of the Sacred Initiations seem to have known the truth when they affirmed that we were born into the body to pay the penalty for sins committed (in former lives).⁸

A similar statement is likewise made by the Christian writer, Clement of Alexandria:

The ancient Theologists and prophets also testify that the soul is yoked to the body by way of punishment and is buried in the body as in a sepulcher.⁹

It is thus evident that according to the Orphic teachings the soul

4. The English word body seems to be derived from the same root as the word bind. Therefore apparently it signifies as Plato suggests in the case of the Greek word (*σῶμα*), the enclosure of the soul. 5. *Cratylus*, 400 c. 6. *Gorgias*, 492, e-f. 7. vv. 1505-1508 (Way's translation). 8. *Hortensius*, Frag. p. 601. 9. *Stromata*, III, 3.

is confined in the body as in prison. Consequently the Orphics not infrequently identified Hades with the physical universe, and denominated the imprisonment of incarnation, genesis or generation. It was therefore to escape from this thralldom by karmatharsis or purification that Dionysos, through his prophet Orpheus, taught men the Mysteries. The Orphic doctrines of the pre-existence, the penance, the reincarnation and the final purification of the soul seem to have been amplified with considerable detail in the lost Orphic Manual entitled *The Descent into the Realm of Hades*, in which were described the vicissitudes endured by the immortal soul, preparatory to its final freedom by penance from the Cycle of Birth.

These teachings in regard to birth and death are well exemplified in the following fragments from the Orphic poet-prophet Empedocles:

More will I tell thee, too; there is no birth
 Of all things mortal, no end in ruinous death;
 But a mingling only and interchange of the mixed
 There is, and birth is but its name with men. . . .
 Foolish they
 Who trust that what-is-not can e'er become,
 Or aught that-is can wholly die away.
 From what-is-not what-is can ne'er become:
 So that what-is should e'er be all destroyed,
 No force could compass and no ear hath heard.
 For there 'twill be forever where 'tis set,—
 No wise man dreams such folly in his heart,
 That only whilst we live what men call life
 We have our being and take our good and ill,
 And ere as mortals we compacted be,
 And when as mortals we be loosed apart,
 We are as nothing. . . .
 I will report a twofold truth. Now grows
 The One from many into being. Now
 Even from the One departing come the Many.
 Twofold the birth, twofold the death of things:
 For, now, the meeting of the Many brings
 To birth and death: and, now, whatever grew
 From out this sundering flies apart and dies,
 And this long interchange shall never end.¹⁰

Orphism did not sunder "the twin doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation" but enthroned Dike, the Goddess of Justice upon the right hand of Zeus, teaching that "Justice revealed of old sits with Zeus in

10. Leonard's translation.

the might of eternal laws.”¹¹ Thus, two of the manifold epithets of Dionysos have an obvious connexion with the doctrine of Karma, namely Aisymnetes, “The Appointer of Destiny” and Isodaites “The Equal Divider.”¹²

The relation of the doctrine to Orphic teaching is thus given by Demosthenes:

Justice, holy and unswerving, she whom Orpheus, the Institutor of our Most Revered Mysteries, declares to be seated by the throne of Zeus.¹³

And in the great Orphic Mystery Play of Euripides, *The Bacchae*, the Maenads thus call upon the Goddess:

Thou Immaculate on high:
Thou Recording Purity:
Thou that stoopest, Goldenwing,
Earthward, manward, pitying.¹⁴

Finally the poet declares in one of the Orphic Hymns:

I sing the all-seeing eye of Dike of fair-form,
Who sits upon the holy throne of Zeus,
The king and on the life of mortals doth look down,
And heavy broods her justice on the unjust.¹⁵

First and foremost it is necessary to keep in mind that Orphism proclaims in clarion tones the heavenly and divine origin of the soul. It is a particle of the Divine Breath, imprisoned in human form. It is “rooted in the celestial element.”¹⁶ Before its fall into generation, before its first incarnation in the physical universe, it lived blessed and serene in company with the Gods and was in fact itself a God. Thus Empedocles sings:

It stands decreed by fate, an ancient ordinance of the immortal Gods, established from everlasting, ratified by ample oaths that, when a Spirit of that Race, which hath inherited the length of years divine, sinfully stains his limbs with blood, he must go forth to wander thrice ten thousand years from heaven, passing from birth to birth through every form of mortal change: shifting the toilsome paths of life without repose, even as I now roam, exiled from God, an outcast in this world, the bondsman of insensate strife.¹⁷

11. Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, vv. 1381-1382. 12. Vide, *Studies in Orphism*, IV, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 3, Sept. 1912, pp. 172-174. 13. *c. Aristogeit. Or.* I, XXV. 14. vv. 370-372 (Murray's translation). 15. *Hymn LXII.* 16. Orphic Frag. quoted by O. Gruppe in *Griechische Mythologie*, München, 1906, II, p. 1035. 17. Symond's translation.

The Divine Spirit in its process of descent suffers a sort of intoxication. Forgetful of its natal country, the world from which it comes, its only hope of regaining its lost knowledge is by the practice of virtue.¹⁸ The Spirit remained at peace above in the Inerratic Sphere until like Narcissus it viewed its reflection in the Mirror of Dionysos,¹⁹ that is in the physical world of flux, into which it madly plunged, mistaking the image for the reality, in its intoxication drinking a draft of Forgetfulness of Eternal Truth from the bowl or Crater of Dionysos whence, plunged in the ever-flowing stream of sensation and generation, it is born upon this earth "The Cave of Lethe or Forgetfulness"; being clothed "in a strange garment of flesh."²⁰ But in some cases the oblivion to the Heavenly Homeland is more complete than in others, for "the Dry Souls," that is unintoxicated, the truly wise retain many memories of the Ideal.²¹

In regard to the Fall of the Spirit, Macrobius in his Commentary upon Cicero's Dream of Scipio states:

As soon, therefore, as the soul gravitates towards body in this production of herself, she begins to experience a material tumult, that is, matter flowing into her essence. And this is what Plato remarks in the *Phaedo*, that the soul is drawn into the body staggering with recent intoxication: signifying by this, the new drink of matter's impetuous flood, through which the soul becoming defiled and heavy is drawn into an earthly abode. . . . But the Starry Bowl (the Crater of Dionysos), placed between Cancer and Leo, is a symbol of this mystic truth, signifying that descending souls first experience intoxication in that part of the heavens through the influx of matter. Hence, oblivion, the companion of intoxication, there begins silently to creep into the recesses of the soul. For if souls retained in their descent to bodies the memory of Divine Concerns, of which they were conscious in the Heavens, there would be no dissension among men about Divinity. But all indeed, in descending drink of oblivion, though some more, and others less. On this account, though truth is not apparent to all men on the earth, yet all exercise their opinions about it; because a defect of memory is the origin of opinion. But those discover most who have drunk least of oblivion (Lethe) because they easily remember what they had known before in the Heavens.²²

The following statements of Olympiodoros are filled with meaning in this connexion:

The soul descends after the manner of Persephone into generation but is dis-

18. Cf. Macrobius, *Som. Scip.*, I, 8, 3. 19. Plotinus, *Ennead*, iv, 3, 12. 20. Empedocles, fr. 126, Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 2te. Aufl. erster Band, Berlin, 1906.

21. Bywater, *Heracleti Rel.*, p. 30. 22. Macrobius, *Som. Scip.*, I, 12.

tributed by generation (or incarnation in the material universe), after the manner of Zagreus: and she is bound to the body after the manner of Prometheus and the Titans; she frees herself therefore from its bonds by exercising the strength of Heracles but she is collected into one through the assistance of Apollo and the savior Athena by philosophizing in such a way as truly to purify herself.²³

As according to this conception the original cause of the soul's descent was sin, its imprisonment in the body has a penitentiary purpose. 'The earth is a "cave roofed over by the heavens."²⁴

'The soul upon first beholding its unfamiliar prison-house wept and lamented loudly,²⁵ but it soon discovered that it could regain its heavenly freedom only by yoking itself to the Cycle of generation or the wheel of rebirth. 'This cyclic evolution is thus described by Empedocles, who says the exile

wanders from the home of the Blessed, being born into all kinds of mortal forms, passing from one laborious path of life to another. For the mighty air chases him into the sea, and the sea spits him forth upon the dry land, and the earth casts him into the light of the blazing sun and the sun hurls him into the eddies of the air. She takes him from the others and he is hated of them all.²⁶

In the course of this Pilgrimage the soul leaves no realm of nature unvisited but "she drees her weird on earth and sky and sea."²⁷

The divine spirit in man, his Higher Self, a fallen angel doing penance for its sins can recover its lost inheritance only by becoming pure or holy, "a Saint."²⁸ Mere ceremonial purity is unavailing, for in the words of the Orphic poet the soul "must fast from sin."²⁹ 'Therefore, as Miss Harrison well says: "Consecration, perfect purity issuing in divinity is the keynote of Orphic faith, the goal of Orphic ritual."³⁰ Consequently Empedocles thus rebukes the heedless and the unbrotherly: "Do you not see that in the thoughtlessness of your hearts ye are devouring one another?"³¹

Orphism taught that the soul, upon leaving the body, entered upon an intermediate state of rewards and punishments. Thus, in a Dirge of Pindar, the poet declares, as a believer in the teachings of Orpheus:

23. *On the Phaedo of Plato*, quoted by Thomas Taylor, *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, 2d ed. *Pamphleteer*, London, 1816, p. 57. 24. Empedocles, Frag. 120, Diels, 2te. Aufl. 25. *Ibid.*, Frag. 118, 121. 26. *Ibid.*, Frag. 115, 116. 27. *Ibid.*, Frag. 117. 28. Καθαρὸς καὶ ἅγιος. 29. Empedocles, Frag. 144, Diels. 2te. Aufl. cf. the Second of the Logia of Jesus discovered in 1897: "Except ye fast from the world." 30. J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the study of Greek Religion*, 2d ed., 1908, p. 487. 31. Empedocles, Frag. 136-137, Deils, 2te. Aufl.

Though the body yield to death,
 Yet the shape of vital breath
 Still in life continueth:
 It alone is heaven's conferring.³²

Plato and Virgil both give the duration of this intermediate state as approximately one thousand years, which seems to have been the customary Orphic teaching, and an Orphic fragment declares:

They who are pious in their life beneath the rays of the sun enjoy a gentler lot when they have died, in the beautiful meadow around deep-flowing Acheron.³³

Purgatory was symbolized as an ever-flowing sea of mud. Of this Plato represents Socrates as saying:

I conceive that the founders of the Mysteries had a real meaning and were not mere triflers when they intimated in a figure long ago, that he who passed unsanctified and uninitiated into the world below will live in a slough, but that he who arrives there after initiation and purification will dwell with the Gods.³⁴

Genuinely Orphic is the Third Olympian Ode of Pindar:

Throughout the happy fields of light
 When Phoebus with an equal ray
 Illuminates the balmy night
 And gilds the cloudless day
 In peaceful, unmolested joy,
 The good their smiling hours employ. . . .
 And in their joyous calm abodes
 The recompense of Justice they receive:
 And in the fellowship of Gods
 Without a tear uncounted ages live.³⁵
 Shines for them the sun's warm glow
 When 'tis darkness here below:
 And the ground before their towers,
 Meadow-land with purple flowers,
 Teems with incense-bearing treen,
 Teems with fruit of golden sheen, . . .
 O'er that country of desire,
 Ever as rich gifts are thrown
 Freely on the far-seen fire,
 Blazing from the altar-stone. . . .
 But the souls of the profane,
 Far from heaven removed below,

32. Conington's translation. 33. Frag. 152, Abel. 34. *Phaedo*, 69 a; cf. *Republic*, II, 363 d. 35. Gilbert West's translation slightly altered.

Flit on earth in murderous pain
 'Neath the unyielding yoke of woe:
 While the pious spirits tenanting the sky
 Chant praises to the mighty one on high.³⁶

At the expiration of the intermediate state, the character of the lot of the soul during each new stage of its career upon earth is determined by the degree of "purity" or "holiness" which it possesses at the moment of reincarnation. So Empedocles states that the nobler souls become

prophets and sacred bards, physicians and leaders among men upon the earth: whence they arise Gods, supreme in honor, sharing the same hearth and tables with the other Immortals exempt from dour and hurt.³⁷

They from whom Persephone
 Due atonement shall receive
 For the things that made to grieve,
 To the upper sunlight she
 Sendeth back their souls once more,
 Soon as winters eight are o'er.
 From those blessed spirits spring
 Many a great and goodly king,
 Many a man of glowing might,
 Many a wise and learned wight:
 And while after-days endure,
 Men esteem them heroes pure.³⁸

The expression "soon as winters eight are o'er" (in the Greek the numeral is nine), may receive some explanation from the following suggestive interpretation of Plutarch, who in interpreting the Greek myth, which declared that Apollo because of his slaughter of the earth-born serpent, the Python, was forced to go into exile in Thessaly for *nine* years, says:

The slayer of the Python was neither banished for nine years nor yet to Tempe. Rather, we should declare that he came as a fugitive into another world (kosmos) and returned thence again at the expiration of nine great years or cycles, pure and truly Phoebus-like (that is, filled with light).³⁹

It is therefore not necessary to accept the poet's expression as referring to eight solar years of 365 days, each of 24 hours duration.

Finally at the end of the cycle of rebirth, Orphism taught that

36. Conington's translation. 37. Frag. 146-147. 38. Pindar (Conington's translation).
 39. *De defect, Orac.*, XXI, p. 723 (ed. Wytttenbach).

the righteous soul regained its lost inheritance. Therefore, there are two kinds of death, for Proclus states:

After death the soul continueth to linger in the aerial body (or astral form) till it is entirely purified from all angry and voluptuous passions . . . then doth it put off by a *Second* death the aerial body, as it did the earthly one (by the first death). Whereupon the men of olden time say that there is a celestial body always joined to the soul, which is immortal, luminous and star-like (the *Au-goeides*).⁴⁰

The second death is thus referred to, more at length, by Porphyry:

That which nature binds, nature also dissolves; and that which the soul binds, the soul likewise dissolves. Nature, indeed, bound the body to the soul; but the soul binds herself to the body. Nature, therefore, liberates the body from the soul; but the soul liberates herself from the body. . . . Hence there is a twofold death; the one, indeed universally known, in which the body is liberated from the soul; but the other peculiar to philosophers, in which the soul is liberated from the body. Nor does the one entirely follow the other.⁴¹

In the elucidation of this last passage Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, adds:

The meaning of this twofold death is as follows. Though the body, by the death which is universally known may be loosened from the soul, yet while material passions and affections reside in the soul, the soul will continually verge to another body, and as long as this inclination continues, remain connected with body. But when, from the predominance of an intellectual nature, the soul is separated from material affections, it is truly liberated from the body; though the body at the same time verges and clings to the soul, as to the immediate cause of its support.⁴²

In speaking of the soul's Pilgrimage, Maximus Tyrius says:

The end of this journey is not heaven, nor what it contains, but it is necessary to pass even beyond this, until we attain to the Supercelestial Place, the Plain of Truth,⁴³ and the serenity which is there,

To the fair Elysian plains,
Where the time fleets gladly, swiftly,
Where bright Rhadamanthus reigns.
Snow is not, nor rain, nor winter,

40. Quoted by H. P. Blavatsky in *Isis Unveiled*, I, p. 432. 41. *Auxiliaries to the Perception of Intelligibles*, quoted by Thomas Taylor as noted in the following footnote.

42. Thomas Taylor, *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*, note 117, p. 162. 43. The Greek word for Truth (*ἀλήθεια*), etymologically considered, means not to forget, and may well have been coined under the inspiration of the Orphic teachings in regard to the Soul's Lethe or Forgetfulness while incarcerated in generation.

But clear zephyrs from the west,
Singing round the streams of Ocean
Round the Islands of the Blest,⁴⁴

where no corporeal passion disturbs the vision such as here disturbs man's unhappy soul and hurls her from contemplation by its uproar and tumult.⁴⁵

This ultimate goal in the Inerratic Sphere, the Supercelestial Place or the Plain of Truth (Unforgetfulness) seems also to have been called the Tower of Kronos, of which Pindar sings:

All whose stedfast virtue thrice
Each side the grave unchanged hath stood,
Still unsexed, unstained with vice,—
They by Zeus' mysterious road
Pass to Kronos' realm of rest.
Happy Isle that holds the Blest.
Where fragrant breezes, vernal airs,
Sweet children of the main,
Purge the blest island from corroding cares,
And from the bosom of each verdant plain,
Whose fertile soil immortal fruitage bears,
Trees, from whose flaming branches flow,
Arrayed in golden bloom, refulgent beams;
And flowers of golden hue, that blow
On the fresh borders of their parent streams,
These by the Blest in solemn triumph worn
Their unpolluted heads and clustering locks adorn.⁴⁶

Although those who are completely purged at the end of a given Life-cycle pass to the Supercelestial Place, the Plain of Truth, above and beyond the Cycle of Necessity, the Wheel of Rebirth, and abide there in the impregnable Tower of Kronos on the Isle of the Blessed, it does not appear that Orphism taught that this return of the Prodigal to the Heavenly Homeland was final but rather seems to have connected it with the Greek Doctrine of the Restoration of all Things (*ἡ ἀποκατάστασις πάντων*). In which case the return must have been conceived as followed by a new Day at the commencement of which the Great Breath is again to outbreathe a manifested universe. Such, at least, is the Pythagorean and Stoic teaching and such doubtless was also the Orphic.

44. Quoted by Maximus Tyrius from Homer, *Odyssey*, IV, vv. 561-568. 45. *Dissertation on what God is According to Plato*. 46. *Third Olympian Ode*, West's translation except the first six lines.

Of great importance for a correct appreciation of the Orphic teachings in regard to the origin and destiny of the human soul are the Orphic Tablets, which consist of eight inscribed gold plates discovered about 1875, six in South Italian tombs near the site of ancient Sybaris, one near Rome, and the eighth upon the island of Crete. The inscriptions upon these tablets, which date from the third or fourth century B. C., consist of instructions given the soul for its guidance in its journey through the afterworld, and confessions of faith which remind us of the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Fragmentary and short though the Orphic Tablets are, they nevertheless give an epitome of the Theosophical teachings in regard to the Divine and the Animal in Man, the pre-existence, rebirth, and final freedom of the soul from earthly chains under the action of the Karmic law.

The instructions on the tablets are addressed to the soul and the speakers are the Divine Guide, who addresses the soul, the soul itself, the holy Spring of Memory, and Persephone, and the Guardians "who strike down those who have not the password,"⁴⁷ — the Guardians of whom Plutarch speaks in his treatise on the Face in the Moon: "Certain Daemons (divine Beings) . . . are present and celebrate the most sublime Mysteries and are punishers of evil deeds and watchers or Guardians over such."⁴⁸

Combining the fragmentary inscriptions of the various tablets, so far as they differ and adding the indication of the speakers, the tablets read as follows:

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO THE SOUL BY THE DIVINE GUIDE

But as soon as thy Spirit hath left the light of the sun,
 Thou shalt find on the left of the house of Hades a well-spring.
 And by the side thereof standing a white cypress.
 To this well-spring approach not near (for it is the well-spring of Lethe),
 But thou shalt find (on the right) another by the Lake of Memory (the well-spring of Ennoia)
 Cold water flowing forth, and there are guardians before it.
 Say (to the Guardians): "I am a child of earth and of starry Heaven:
 But my race is of Heaven (alone). This ye know yourselves
 And lo, I am parched with thirst and I perish. Give me quickly
 The cold water flowing forth from the Lake of Memory."
 And of themselves they will give thee to drink of the holy well-spring,
 And thereafter among the other Heroes, thou shalt have lordship.

47. From the Interpretation of the mystical picture entitled *The Path*, by Mr. R. Machell, **THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH**, Point Loma. 48. XXX.

COLLOQUY IN THE AFTERWORLD BETWEEN THE SOUL, THE SPRING,
THE GUARDIANS, AND PERSEPHONE

- (Soul) I am parched with thirst and I perish.
 (Well-spring of Memory) Nay, drink of me, the Well-spring flowing forever on the right.
 (Guardians) Who art thou? Whence art thou?
 (Soul) I am a child of earth and of starry Heaven. But my race is of Heaven (alone). . . .
 (Persephone) Hail, hail to thee journeying on the right . . . (through the) Holy meadows and groves of Phersephoneia (Persephone-Kora, the Queen of the Underworld).
 (Soul addresses Persephone) Out of the Pure I come, Pure Queen of the Pure below,
 Eukles and Eubouleus and the other Gods Immortal. . . .
 For I also, I avow me, am of your blessed race.
 I have paid the penalty for deeds unrighteous
 And Fate laid me low and the other Gods Immortal,
 . . . (with) star-flung thunderbolt.
 I have passed with eager feet to the Circle Desired.
 I have entered into the bosom of Despoina (or Persephone, Queen of the Underworld),
 And now I come a suppliant to Holy Phersephoneia
 That of her grace she receive me to the seats of the Hallowed.
 (Persephone) Hail, thou who hast suffered the Suffering. This thou hast never suffered before
 Thou art become God from Man. A kid thou art fallen into milk.
 Happy and Blessed One, thou shalt be God instead of Mortal.
 (Soul) A kid I have fallen into milk.⁴⁹

Much might be written by way of comment and interpretation in regard to these tablets. The word Hades thereon evidently means the intermediate state of the soul in the afterworld. There is an interesting parallel in Egyptian mythology to the Orphic sacred well-spring of Memory, for Osiris has a "cold well of water" of which he gives the thirsty soul to drink as is shown by the ancient formula: "May Osiris give thee cold water."⁵⁰ The true followers of Orpheus are to avoid the fountain on the left with the white cypress growing near because it is the fountain of Lethe and after a life or rather after many lives spent in purification they must not forget if they are to be successful in reaching the Plain of Truth. Therefore in one of the Orphic Hymns the poet prays:

49. J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 2d ed., Critical Appendix, pp. 659-673 (Murray's translation). 50. *Ibid.*, p. 575.

And in thy mystics waken *Memory*
O' the Holy Rite and Lethe drive afar.⁵¹

The key-sentence of the soul: "I am a child of Earth and of Starry Heaven but my race is of Heaven alone," of course refers to the Orphic teachings as to the dual nature of man and is an avowal of the Divine Origin of the Higher Self. It is noteworthy that this avowal itself constitutes the right of the soul to receive a drink from the fountain of Remembrance — a right which is immediately recognized by the Guardians. To drink of the Holy well-spring is to partake of the sacrament, the reality symbolized by the Eucharist of Orphic ritual.

The address of the soul to Persephone, the Queen of the Underworld, "Out of the Pure, I come, Pure Queen of the Pure Below," also has an interesting Egyptian parallel, for in the long negative confession of the soul to Osiris in the Egyptian Book of the Dead occurs the declaration: "I am pure — I am pure — I am pure."⁵² It means of course I have been initiated into the true Mysteries of life and death.

The titles Eukles and Eubouleus meaning The Glorious One and the Wise Counsellor are two of the myriad titles of Zagreus-Dionysos, the Reborn Savior, Lord of both Death and Life. The soul's avowal, "I have paid the penalty for deeds unrighteous and Fate laid me low and the other Gods Immortal — (with) star-flung thunderbolt," refers to the soul's suffering under the Karmic law for former sins, the taint or "ancient woe" inherited from the earth-born Titans. The meaning is, Karma sank me into the material world. There is also a reference to the Zagreus myth, especially to the punishment of the Titans by the star-flung thunderbolt hurled by Zeus.

"The sorrowful weary wheel," is the treadmill Cycle of Rebirth without knowledge and the avowal signifies I have learned the necessity of soul-purification and I remember. It is well to compare these verses with the following statement from the *Phaedo* of Plato:

It is an ancient doctrine that the souls of men come Here from There and go There again and come back Here from the Dead.⁵³

The expression "I have passed with eager feet to the Circle Desired. I have entered into the bosom of Despoina," seems to be an avowal signifying that the soul having passed beyond the Wheel of Rebirth, the Cycle of Necessity, has attained to the Plain of Truth,

51. *Hymn* LXXVII (Harrison's translation). 52. J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 2d ed., p 588. 53. *Phaedo*, p. 70 c.

and thereby has mastered the meaning of both Life and Death. The expression reminds us of the teachings of the Celtic Bards in regard to Cylch y Gwynfyd, the Circle of Bliss.⁵⁴ "The Seats of the Hallowed" are presumably the Elysian Fields where is the "Impregnable Tower of Kronos."

The phrase "Thou who hast suffered the suffering" seems to mean thou who hast incarnated or incarcerated in the prison-house of the body. "Thou art become God from man," that is, thou hast attained to the Supercelestial Place. The words, "A Kid, thou art *fallen* into milk," may be paralleled by the expression "a Lamb of God" and appears to refer to the Orphic Eucharist or perhaps to the Orphic Baptism as seems rather to be suggested by the word "fallen." The symbolism of milk used as one of the elements in the Orphic Eucharist has been previously discussed.⁵⁵



. . . IN order that one should fully comprehend individual life with its physiological, psychic and spiritual mysteries, he has to devote himself with all the fervor of unselfish philanthropy and love for his brother men, to studying and knowing *collective* life, or Mankind. Without preconceptions or prejudice, as also without the least fear of possible results in one or another direction, he has to decipher, understand and *remember* the deep and innermost feelings and the aspirations of the poor people's great and suffering heart. To do this he has first "to attune his soul with that of Humanity," as the old philosophy teaches; to thoroughly master the correct meaning of every line and word in the rapidly turning pages of the Book of Life of MANKIND and to be thoroughly saturated with the truism that the latter is a whole inseparable from his own SELF.

. . . Theosophy alone can gradually create a mankind as harmonious and as simple-souled as Kosmos itself; but to effect this Theosophists have to act as such. Having helped to awaken the spirit in many a man — we say this boldly, challenging contradiction — shall we now stop instead of swimming with the TIDAL WAVE? — From "The Tidal Wave," by H. P. Blavatsky, *Lucifer*, V, 173.

54. *The Pith and Marrow of Some Sacred Writings*, Script 11, p. 33, Aryan Theosophical Press, Point Loma, Cal. 55. Vide *Studies in Orphism*, III, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, July 1912, pp. 50-54.

STUDIES IN ORPHISM: by F. S. Darrow, A. M., Ph. D. (Harv.)

VII. CONCLUDING STUDY

(a) THE PLANETARY SPHERES AND THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES



THE intimate connexion of Pythagoreanism and of Platonism in their earlier as well as later forms with Orphic thought has been previously pointed out.¹ The same sacred knowledge, "which was first mystically and symbolically promulgated by Orpheus, was afterwards disseminated enigmatically through images by Pythagoras and in the last place scientifically unfolded by Plato and his genuine disciples."²

So from Pythagorean wells refreshed,
The master-builder of pure intellect,
Imperial Plato, piled the palace where
All great, true thoughts have found a home forever.³

The importance of the number seven in Orphic theology has been previously discussed where it was shown that Orphism recognized a sevenfold emanation of the Absolute in the Ideal World previous to the formation of the material universe.⁴ Furthermore, from the expositions of the Orphic teachings given by the Neoplatonists it is evident that among the tenets was a belief in seven orders of Heavenly Hierarchies — seven orders of Divine Beings, presiding over and pervading the entire universe. Usually the Hierarchies were grouped in two triads, since the Absolute Deity, "the Thrice Unknown Darkness," as the primal source of all, was classed by itself. The Noumenal Triad belonging to the Ideal World consisted of (a) the Noëtic or Spiritual Powers, (b) the Noëtic and Noëric or Psychological Powers, and (c) the Noëric or Intellectual Powers. The three Hierarchies composing the triad of the Phenomenal world were named, (a) the Encosmic or Material Powers and the two classes of invisible although Physical Powers, denominated respectively (b) the Liberated or Supercelestial, and (c) the Supercosmic Powers.⁵

There is a vital connexion between the life history of the soul according to Orphism and those views of astronomy which are associated with Pythagoras; for the astronomical pilgrimage of the human

1. *Studies in Orphism*, II, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, II, 5, May 1912, p. 319. 2. Thomas Taylor: *Proclus on the Theology of Plato*, London, 1816, I, p. ix. 3. J. S. Blackie.
4. *Studies in Orphism*, II, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, II, 5, May 1912, pp. 318-328.
5. Thomas Taylor: *Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*, Introduction, pp. xxii-xxiv.

spirit is based upon the conception of man as a microcosm. We read in Simplicius:

The Pythagoreans supposing ten to be a perfect number wished to collect the revolving heavenly bodies into a decade. Hence they say that the Inerratic Sphere, the seven planets, this our earth and the Autochthon, (i. e. the Counter-earth or "Eighth Sphere"), complete the decade.⁶

In this connexion Orphism taught that the Immortal Self has fallen from its native land in the Inerratic Sphere or Highest Heaven, also "called the Plain of Truth," in which according to Plutarch, "lie the Logoi (or Creative Powers), and the molds or ideas, the invariable models of all things which have been and which shall be; while about these is eternity, whence flows time as from a river."⁷ During the fall, previous to its first incarnation upon earth, the Spirit has traversed the seven Planetary Spheres. Its destiny is to return to the Plain of Truth after it has been duly purified by means of a series of sojourns in Hades and of rebirths upon earth.

This passage of the Spirit through the Planetary Spheres was pictured allegorically by the so-called Seven-gated Stairs in which the various stages were compared to stations or doors.⁸ Thus Celsus in describing the Mysteries of Mithra asserts:

This descent is designated symbolically by means of a *Ladder*, which is represented as reaching from heaven to earth and as divided into seven stages, at the end of each of which is a Gate; the eighth Gate is at the top of the ladder and leads into the Inerratic Sphere.⁹

He then states that the first Gate, made of *tin* is assigned to *Saturn* and then apports the other gates among the remaining planets, describing each gate in turn as composed of the metal characteristic of the planet in question.

An interesting parallel is presented by Jacob's Dream:

He dreamed and behold a ladder set upon the earth and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it . . . and Jacob awakened out of his sleep and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place: *this is no other but the House of God and this is the Gate of Heaven.*¹⁰

In barest outline the teachings seem to have been as follows. The

6. *Commentary on Aristotle's Treatise de Coelo*, lib. II cf. Thomas Taylor: *Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*, footnote pp. 156-157. 7. Plutarch, *Why the Oracles cease to Give Answers*, XXII. 8. J. A. Stewart: *The Myths of Plato*, Macmillan, 1905, p. 351.

9. Origen *Contra Celsum*, VI, 22. 10. *Genesis* xxviii, 10-19.

One, supreme, unapproachable and ineffable, resides in the highest heaven and is itself the source of both mind and life. It pervades all things from the brightest star in mid-ether to the lowest and most inert molecule of so-called inanimate matter. The universe is the Temple of the Divine, which is universally pervasive.

The Spirit of Man has fallen gradually from its original blessedness in the Inerratic Sphere, the Highest Heaven, descending through the *Gate of Cancer*. In the course of its descent it has passed through the seven Planetary Spheres where by its contact with matter it has become transformed into *soul*, thereby acquiring the various faculties which now make up the composite nature of man. The Moon marks the boundary between the eternal and the perishable, for everything below the Moon is mortal except, indeed, the Celestial Traveler, the Higher Self which in the future will retrace the Planetary Spheres and mount the stages of the Celestial Stairs by ascending through the *Gate of Capricorn*.

These ideas are unfolded at some length in Porphyry's Treatise on the *Cave of the Nymphs* from which the following quotations are taken:

Since Cancer is nearest to us, it is very properly attributed to the Moon, which is the nearest of all the heavenly bodies to the earth. But as the southern pole, by its great distance, is invisible to us, hence Capricorn is attributed to Saturn; the highest and most remote of all the planets. Again, the signs from Cancer to Capricorn, are situated in the following order: and the first of these is Leo, which is the house of the Sun; afterwards Virgo, which is the house of Mercury; Libra, the house of Venus; Scorpio, of Mars; Sagittarius, of Jupiter; and Capricornus, of Saturn. But from Capricorn in an inverse order, Aquarius is attributed to Saturn; Pisces, to Jupiter; Aries, to Mars; Taurus, to Venus; Gemini, to Mercury; and, in the last place, Cancer to the Moon.

Theologians therefore assert, that these two gates are Cancer and Capricorn; but Plato calls them entrances. And of these, theologians say, that Cancer is the gate through which souls descend; but Capricorn that through which they ascend. Cancer is indeed northern, and adapted to descent; but Capricorn is southern and adapted to ascent. The northern parts, likewise, pertain to souls descending into generation. And the gates of the cavern which are turned to the north, are rightly said to be pervious to the descent of men; but the southern gates are not the avenues of the Gods, but of souls ascending to the Gods. On this account, the poet (i. e. Homer) does not say that they are the avenues of the Gods, but of immortals; this appellation being also common to our souls, which are *per se*, immortal.¹¹

11. Porphyry, *Cave of the Nymphs*, 10-11.

The Orphic terminology for the Seven Principles of man's nature, the principles which were gradually acquired by the Spirit as a result of its descent through the Planetary Spheres, seems to have been as follows. The highest principle, the Noëtic or Spiritual Soul in leaving the Inerratic Sphere is first clothed with the Luminous Vehicle, known as the Augoeides. Later on Saturn the Spirit acquired its Theoretic or Contemplative functions, which seem to correspond in modern Theosophical terminology to Manas in some of its aspects. On Jupiter the so-called Political or Social Soul was added, apparently representing other aspects of Manas; while on Mars and on Venus were acquired the Spirited and Acquisitional elements, the Passions and Desires called respectively in the Orphic system the Thymetic and Epithymetic elements. From the Sun and from Mercury were gathered the elements of the Life Principle referred to as the Sensitive and the Hermeneutic element. Lastly from the Moon came the vegetative or Astral Body and from the Earth the Physical Body. Thus Macrobius states:

The Spirit, therefore, falling from the Zodiac and the Milky Way into each of the Planetary Spheres . . . is not only clothed with the Luminous Body, the Augoeides, but also develops during its passage through the spheres the different faculties which it is to exercise (during incarnation on earth). Thus it acquires in the Sphere of Saturn the Reasoning Power and the Intelligence or the Theoretic and Contemplative element; in that of Jupiter the power of acting and of organization or the Social element; in that of the Sun the power of feeling and of believing, or the Sensitive and Imaginative element; in that of Venus the Principle of Desire, or the Epithymetic element; in the Sphere of Mercury the power of expressing and interpreting sensation or the Hermeneutic element; finally upon entering the Sphere of the Moon it acquires the necessary faculty of forming and developing bodies. This lunar sphere, although from the standpoint of the divine the lowest, is the first and highest from the standpoint of the earthly, and the Lunar Body although it is the sediment of Celestial Matter is nevertheless the purest form of animal matter.¹²

The testimony of Proclus is similar:

If you will take it, of the beneficent planets, the Moon is the cause to men of nature, being herself the visible image of primitive nature. The Sun is the creator of everything having the power of sensation in consequence of being the cause of sight and visibility. Mercury is the cause of the motions of phantasy, but of the imaginative essence itself so far as sense and phantasy are one, the Sun is the producing cause. Venus is the cause of the Epithymetic appetites and Mars

12. Commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, I, 12.

of the passionate motions which are conformable to nature. Of all the vital powers Jupiter is the common cause; but of all intellectual (or rather spiritual) powers, Saturn.¹³

(b) CONCLUSION

Our survey of Orphism has now been completed — a survey made for the express purpose of serving as a partial illustration and commentary upon the following statement of H. P. Blavatsky:

Underlying every ancient popular religion was the same ancient Wisdom-doctrine, one and identical, professed and preached by the initiates of every country, who alone were aware of its existence and importance.¹⁴

The identity of the Theosophical teachings throughout the ages was as clearly perceived in antiquity as in modern times by those who had eyes to see. This is evident for example from the following anathema which was hurled by the early Christian ecclesiastics against the ancient Manichaeans:

I anathematize the Book of Aristocritus which he names *Theosophy*, wherein he attempts to show that Judaism, Hellenism, Christianity and Manichaeism are one and the same doctrine.¹⁵

Similarly we learn from Photius that an anonymous writer of Constantinople composed in the seventh century a synthesis of the *Theosophical* teachings of the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Chaldeans, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans wherein he showed their essential agreement with Christianity.¹⁶

Since Orpheus was reputed to be the religious teacher from whom the Greeks derived their Mystery teachings — the author of their knowledge of art and of science as well as of religion, it is not surprising that even a casual glance is sufficient to reveal the identity between Orphism and the primeval Wisdom-Religion, as disclosed to the modern world in the teachings of the three Theosophical Leaders. A similar study of such philosophical and religious systems as the Jewish Kabala would likewise result in a full verification of the above statement quoted from H. P. Blavatsky. Surely, the day can not be far distant when this will not only be privately acknowledged but also publicly proclaimed by all serious students of human history.

13. *Commentary on the Timaeus*, p. 260. 14. *Isis Unveiled*, II, p. 99. 15. Cotlerius ad *Clement. Recog.*, V, 544, quoted in Lobeck: *Aglaophamus, Regimontii Prussorum*, 1829, p. 346. 16. CLXX, 197 quoted in Lobeck *ibid.*

Although professedly merely a partial survey of the Greek Mystery teachings has been attempted, it seems necessary before closing to sound a note of warning. As in modern times the true Theosophical teachings have been perverted and travestied by persons who have dared to use the sacred word Theosophy as a cloak for their own selfish interests, so undoubtedly in ancient times the true teachings of Orpheus were befouled and bespattered by cranks and mountebanks. If desired, this could be easily proved by quoting from the pages of Plato who is the severest castigator of the *pseudo*-Orphism because of the very fact that he was himself a *true* follower of Orpheus. Thoroughly conscious of the existence of the counterfeit and the false in both ancient and modern times, it has been the aim of these studies to outline only the teachings of true Orphism in so far as those teachings can be gleaned from the extant ancient sources. Under the guidance of the modern Theosophical teachings an attempt has been made to point out some of the secrets of the Greek Mysteries — secrets, which have been so carefully preserved, free from harm throughout the ages.

There are, of course, many other secrets which can be discovered by the student who shall push on his researches under the guidance of that master-key of Theosophical teaching, *The Secret Doctrine* of H. P. Blavatsky.

The testimony of the great and the good throughout all antiquity attests with wonderful unanimity the nobility of the ancient Mysteries and the bliss of the Initiates.¹⁷

In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, the poet declares:

Blessed is he among man who is given these rites to know.¹⁸

Pindar sings:

Happy who these rites hath kenned
Ere beneath the ground he goeth,
Well he knoweth of life's end;
Well its God-given source he knoweth.¹⁹

Plato states:

Whoever goes uninitiated to Hades will lie in mud, but he who has been purified and is fully initiate, when he goes thither, will dwell with the gods.²⁰

Isocrates, the orator, in speaking of the Goddess Demeter says:

17. *Studies in Orphism*, III, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 1, July 1912, pp. 45-56.
18. v. 480. 19. *Threnoi*, frag. 137 Bergk, Conington's translation. 20. *Phaedo*, 69 c.

She gave us two most excellent gifts: the fruits of the field that we might not live like beasts and the rites of initiation that the Mystics might have a sweeter hope both as regards the close of life and as regards all eternity.²¹

Similarly upon the tombstone of an ancient Mystic of Eleusis we can still read verses to the following effect:

In truth a noble secret
The Gods in th' Mysteries proclaim:
Mortality is not a curse
But a blessing all happy is death.

And Plutarch explains in a passage reminiscent of Plato:

To die is to be initiated into the great mysteries. . . . It is there that man, having become perfect through his initiation, restored to liberty, really master of himself, celebrates, crowned with myrtle, the most august mysteries, holds converse with just and pure souls, and perceives with pity the impure multitude of the profane or uninitiated ever plunged or rather sinking of themselves into the mist and the profound darkness.

In *The Frogs* of Aristophanes the Chorus sing:

O, happy, mystic chorus,
The blessed sunshine o'er us
On us alone is shining
 In its soft sweet light!
On us who strive forever
With holy, pure endeavor,
Alike by friend and stranger,
 To guide our steps aright.²²

In *The Bacchae* of Euripides the poet thus describes the bliss of initiation:

O, happy to whom is the blessedness given
To be taught in the Mysteries sent from heaven,
Who is pure in his life, through whose soul the unsleeping
 Pleasure goes sweeping.²³
Oh, blessed he in all wise,
 Who hath drunk the Living Fountain,
 Whose life no folly staineth,
And his soul is near to God;
 Whose sins are lifted, pall-wise,
 As he worships on the mountain.²⁴

21. *Panegy.*, 28. 22. vv 455-459, Roger's translation. 23. vv 72-75, Way's translation. 24. vv 72-75, Murray's translation.

In antiquity as well as in modern times the aspirants seeking the sacred knowledge of Theosophy were warned that the " Path " was no primrose-strewn pleasure promenade. This is shown by the following Oracle from Apollo at Delphi which has come down to us :

A road there is, and a road it is of the Blesséd Gods,
 And by those whom the Gods love will that road be trodden —
 A road of many pathways, pathways marvelous past utterance,
 But all alike of them upward climbing, and all alike of them
 Rough with many a ruggedness, and all of them asking endlessly,
 Of those who tread them, toiler's action and toiler's achievement,
 And where at the first this road opens itself out, at the forefront of it
 Stands a portal not light and airy, as though it led easily
 To some pleasance of liking and luxuriousness, but massive and frowning,
 Barred and banded with brass, grim and unyielding.²⁵

In the course of our study we have tried to distinguish between the mythical and the historical Orpheus, the magical bard of poetical legend and the early religious reformer of the Greek Mysteries. We have also seen that Orphism taught religious verities identically similar to those today promulgated by the modern Theosophical Leaders, H. P. Blavatsky, W. Q. Judge, and Katherine Tingley — the fundamentals of the Wisdom-Religion. Furthermore, it was shown that the teachings in regard to the Cosmos and in regard to Man present many very striking analogies because of the parallelism which exists between the Macrocosm and the Microcosm. An exposition was also given of the Greek teachings in regard to the two worlds or diacosms, the material or phenomenal world and the immaterial or noumenal world, which were evolved by emanation from the Absolute Deity, " the Thrice Unknown Darkness," in accordance with a sevenfold plan of evolution. This gave rise not only to the seven Heavenly Hierarchies but also to the Seven Principles in Man. The characteristic features of the typical Greek mystery drama, the Zagreus-myth, were also examined by the help of statements made in *The Secret Doctrine* of H. P. Blavatsky, reinforced by many quotations from the Classical authors. Lastly, one entire study, (No. VI) was devoted to the consideration of the Orphic teachings in regard to the origin and destiny of the human soul.

It is worth noting that the two periods within historic times in which Orphism was especially active, namely the sixth century B. C.,

25. Eusebius, *Prep. Evang.*, ix, 1, Canon Harper's translation.

and the beginning of the Christian era, are, religiously speaking, two of the most important epochs now known. The sixth century B. C. seems to have been a period of a great spiritual awakening for it gave birth to Pythagoras and Epimenides in Greece, to Jeremiah and Eze-kiel in Israel, to Confucius in China, and to Gautama in India.

The secrecy of the teachings of the Mysteries was most carefully guarded until the beginning of the present era. Thus St. Clement of Alexandria says:

Those who instituted the Mysteries, being philosophers, buried their teachings in myths so as not to be obvious to all.²⁶

And again:

Hipparchus, the Pythagorean was expelled from the school because he was guilty of writing down the teachings of Pythagoras in plain language and a tombstone was erected for him as if he had died.²⁷

Beginning, however, with the Neoplatonic school of Plotinus and his successors in the third, fourth and fifth centuries of our era, many of the primeval teachings were expounded more openly. Therefore the Neoplatonists today are among the most important sources of our knowledge of Orphism but this is in itself no indication whatsoever that the teachings in question are of a comparatively recent origin although some hasty modern scholars have dogmatically and illogically affirmed it to be so. The ancients themselves knew the true situation far better than these pseudo-savants. Therefore, antiquity itself is persistent and unanimous in declaring the Mysteries to be "Wisdom old as time."²⁸



LAY up the only treasure; do good deeds; practise sobriety and self-control; amass that wealth which thieves cannot abstract, nor tyrants seize, which follows thee at death, which never wastes away nor is corrupted.

This is the sum of all true righteousness: treat others as thou wouldst thyself be treated. Do nothing to thy neighbor which hereafter thou wouldst not have thy neighbor do to thee. — *Mahâbhârata*

26. *Strom*, v 9. 27. *Ibid.* 28. *Studies in Orphism*, III, THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH, III, 1, July 1912, p. 52.