possibility of resonances between the overtly expressed order — whatever than
happens to be — and the grade sequence. In at least one instance, the impor-
tant testimonium of Celsus in Origen Contra Celsum 6.22 (to be discussed at
the end), I am convinced that such resonances exist and indeed that the
testimonium adds credibility to the interpretation of the grade structure as a
model of the cosmos in traversing which the initiate wins his freedom. In any
case, the exploration of the use of other orders in the cult is worth-while in
itself; among other things, it will open up the possibility of some remarkable
new meanings in the tauroctony, the scene of Mithras killing the bull which is
the principal icon of the Mysteries. We shall find, too, that the deployment of
planetary orders is very much more varied, subtle, and "scientific," especially
in the exploitation of the categories of learned astrology, than has been
suspected.

Apart from the Celsus testimonium, the evidence all comes from the cult's
monuments. Representations of groups of seven stars or seven altars are com-
mon enough, especially on tauroctonies, and obviously denote the seven
planets — and perhaps through their tutelary powers the grades too. But since
the objects are undifferentiated, they can tell us nothing — as yet — about
planetary orders; only that the collectivity of the planets is somehow im-
plicated in the central act which the icon portrays. Only on the monument of
Ottaviano Zeno, as we shall see, and perhaps also on the Barberini fresco, is
there a possibility of deciphering a sequence from the undifferentiated row of
altars by means of its concomitants. This leaves, then, a relatively few
monuments on which the planets are individually identifiable in the figures or
busts of their deities and in which an order can accordingly be determined.
However, one of these, CIMRM 693, will be found to provide a key of sorts to
the significance of the anonymous row of altars above the scene of the tauro-
ctony.

IV

In two instances, images of the planetary gods appear in mosaic on the
benches or floors of mithraea. These are the Ostian mithraea, Sette Sfere and

27 Seven stars: in the field of the bull-killing scene, e.g. CIMRM 368; on Mithras' billowing
cloak (thus signifying that the garment is the cosmos of which he is creator or controller), e.g.
390. Seven altars: e.g. 2264, and see the indices of CIMRM (both vols) s. "altar — seven." The
monuments in which the altars are set in a row between Sol and Luna will be discussed below. Oc-
casionally, as in 670, trees or daggers/swords alternate with the altars. The most complex relief in
this respect is 1973 (Apulum), where we find, alternating with seven altars in a row extending be-
tween Sol and Luna, eight sets of symbols, each set consisting of (l. to r.) a cap on a stick, a tree,
and a dagger, except for (i) the set on the far left — tree and dagger only, (ii) the second set from
the left — cap with stick and dagger only, and (iii) the group on the far right — cap with stick and
tree only. The number seven, so the scholium on Plato Alcibiades I 121E (= TMMM 2.54) tells
us, was considered "proper" (οκτάτον) to Mithras.
Sette Porte. They have in common the fact that only six of the seven planets are represented. The missing planet is the Sun. Since his omission is so paradoxical in the context of a mithraeum, one conjectures that he is in fact present though in another guise— as the Sol-Mithras of the tauroctony in the cult-niche. Arguably, too, the dispositions of the planetary symbols in the two mithraeae are variants of each other, the cross-wise pairings at Sette Sfere corresponding to lengthwise at Sette Porte:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SETTE SFERE</th>
<th>SETTE PORTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Sun?)</td>
<td>(cult-niche)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jupiter —— Saturn</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercury —— Venus</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon —— Mars</td>
<td>Moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These dispositions, not to mention the reduction — at least explicitly — to a set of six, are without parallel whether within or outside the Mysteries. Furthermore, unlike the Mithraic grade order, they cannot convincingly be shown to derive from any known planetary sequence. However, I shall not analyse them here, since I have argued elsewhere that they represent and celebrate actual, rather striking configurations of the planets relative to the Sun at the time of the spring equinox in A.D. 172 and again in 173, and to the best of my knowledge there is no other current theory to account for them except simple aberration. If I am correct, the arrangements are specific to particular

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28 The CIMRM numbers of the mithraeae are 239 ff. (Sette Sfere) and 287 ff. (Sette Porte); of their planetary symbols, respectively 241 and 288. I exclude from consideration the Spoleto Mithraeum (673 ff., 677) which certainly had the planetary gods painted on the side-benches. However, since only two of the figures were preserved, it is impossible to reconstruct their sequence.

29 Appreciated by R. L. Gordon in "The Sacred Geography of a Mithraeum: The Example of Sette Sfere," JMS 1 (1976), 119-165, at 140, though from a faulty perspective (see below, n. 32).

30 Bianchi, Mysteria Mithrae 32-38, esp. 34 ff., does derive them from the week-day order. But I believe that the actual arrangements in the mithraeae (especially in Sette Porte where Bianchi admits that the order is "heavily perturbed and [almost] destroyed") would not be recognizable as variants of the week-day order. Moreover, a motive for the distortion of an original week-day order is not readily discernible: why, in other words, would the designer(s) have first selected the week-day order and then scrambled it? See my criticisms in "Sette Sfere, Sette Porte, and the Spring Equinoxes of A.D. 172 and 173," Mysteria Mithrae 515-530, at 526-529.

31 In the article cited in the preceding note.

32 Richard Gordon tells me that he no longer holds the theory, advanced in his article on the two mithraeae ([above, n. 29], 140 f.), that the arrangement has to do with the thema mundi; see my "Sette Sfere ..." (above, n. 30), 516 f.