And so we return to the upper register of the Ottaviano Zeno monument. That work, it seems most probable (above, pp. 46 f.), closed on the left with the scene of Mithras shooting at the rock before which a second figure kneels. The kneeling figure, which was the only one extant when the drawing for the intaglio was made, is surrounded by stars, an element which does not occur in other examples of this scene and which suggests a special emphasis here on its celestial dimensions. The postulated meaning should now be clear: the scene functions as a symbol of the two revolutions in which those celestial bodies represented by all the other components of the register participate — and beyond that, of the soul's diexodos through those two revolutions.

IX

We return now to a paradox, noted much earlier (p. 6 f.), in the planetary order peculiar to the Mysteries, that of the grades. Why did a solar cult, in formulating a sequence linked to promotion up a hierarchy, put the Sun in the penultimate position rather than in the final and most senior? The same problem may be viewed from another angle, positively rather than negatively. Saturn's place at the head of the sequence was emphasized in the very structure of the order in that the two luminaries are together interposed in the sequence of the five other planets in the "Chaldean" order just below him (see above, p. 7):

Saturn
  Sun
  Moon
Jupiter
Mars
Venus
Mercury

Why should Saturn (it seems at the Sun's expense) be so signally honoured?

Various answers may be returned. One, that Saturn is at the top because the grade of Pater which he oversees is the senior grade, while the Sun's grade (Heliodromus) is only the penultimate, would obviously be unsatisfactory, for it merely begs the question of why these solar cultists chose to assign not the Sun but Saturn to their senior rank. More telling would be Saturn's undisputed position as the furthest and "highest" of the planets and that nearest to the sphere of the fixed stars. His tutelage of the highest grade in-

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207 Nine stars: see above, n. 101.
208 A planet's distance from the earth is technically its "height" (ὑψὸς).
timates that the Pater is he who has proceeded furthest on his heavenly pilgrimage, he who is most remote from things terrestrial and closest to things celestial. Also, but by a different type of argument, one might refer to the genesis of the grade order as a conflation of the week-day and "Chaldean" orders, deliberately so structured to allude to the twin dimensions of time and space: see above, pp. 9 ff. Saturn, as the diagram there shows, stands at the head of both contributing orders, and his position in the grade order might be seen in part as stemming from the logic of that order's design.

There is, however, a more satisfactory answer than any of the above — satisfactory because it both accounts for Saturn's promotion, if one may so call it, and at the same time ameliorates the apparent demotion of the Sun. The answer invokes an equation or proposition of identity: Saturn can be set at the head and the Sun relegated to second (or penultimate) place because *Saturn is the Sun*. Therefore, where we see Saturn we also see the Sun (and vice versa): and so, arcaneously and by paradox and enigma, it is still the Sun that we find at the head.

Now this identification of Saturn with the Sun is not something deduced from the known doctrine of the Mysteries or inferred from their iconography. Rather, it is a "fact" of exoteric "science," on which, I would claim, the Mysteries drew for the design and validation of their unique planetary and grade order. In ancient astrology it is widely attested — although not to the extent of being a routine commonplace known to all — that Saturn was the star of the Sun. From our perspective, the most important testimony is that of Ptolemy in the *Tetrabiblos* (2.3.64), for Ptolemy links the identification to Mithras-worship, though not explicitly to the Mysteries. Speaking of the inhabitants of the S.E. quarter of the world (including Persia and Babylonia), he says that they "worship the star of Aphrodite [i.e. the planet Venus], naming it Isis, and the star of Kronos [i.e. Saturn] as Mithras Helios." The earliest allusion to the identification is in the Platonic *Epinomis* (987C); thereafter we find it, *inter alia*, in the Eudoxus Papyrus (col. 5), Diodorus (2.30.3), Hyginus *De astron.* 2.42, 4.18, Servius (*in Aen.* 1.729), and Simplicius (*in De caelo*, p. 495.28-29 Heiberg).

Why Saturn should be identified with the Sun is far from obvious.²¹⁰ What can, however, be stated with certainty is that Graeco-Roman astrology made


²¹⁰ A contributing factor may have been a perceived affinity, manifested in closely similar names, between the Greek Sun god Helios and the Semitic god El equated with Kronos-Saturn: see Bouché-Leclercq (preceding note); Boll "Kronos-Helios" (prec. note), 342 f.; A. I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos: A Commentary* (EPRO 89, Leiden 1981), 180 ff.