It is well known that in many of the lower cultures myth and ritual are rather two parts of one phenomenon than two separate phenomena. The relation of certain types, at least, of myth to cult has been well expressed by R. Pettazzoni 1): “La recitazione dei miti delle origini è incorporata nel culto perché è culto essa stessa e concorre agli scopi per cui il culto è celebrato, che sono quelli della conservazione e dell’ incremento della vita”. Many researchers are of opinion that a parallel state of things is to be found in the Semitic-speaking cultures at a much higher level than that of the peoples discussed by Pettazzoni. It is therefore a reasonable question to ask, whether or not any such phenomenon is to be found in the classical civilisations of Europe, those of Greece, Rome and Etruria.

In trying to answer this question, we are obliged to limit ourselves to the Greeks. It is as certain as any negative historical proposition can ever be that Rome had no myths, at least none of a kind which could possibly associate themselves with cult. Here and there, at most, we find a story of the doings of the gods which is not palpably a borrowing from a Greek original, with or without change of names; we are told, for instance, that Juppiter sent a warning dream to testify his disapproval of an accidental uitium in his games 2), and there are tales of other divine warnings, of miracles of Vesta, and so forth; but there is not a single native story professing to explain how things began, why Juppiter, Mars and Quirinus are anciently associated, when and how Ceres taught men to grow corn, what her relations are to Tellus Mater, why certain priests must be patricians, or any other of the hundred problems corresponding to those explained, no doubt to the satisfaction of those who heard the stories,

1) R. Pettazoni, Miti e Leggende I (Torino 1948), Prefazione, p. x.
2) Livy, II, 36.—I cannot find in Rome even the minimal amount of myth postulated by Fr. Bömer, Ahnenkult u. Ahnenglaube im alten Rom, (Leipzig u. Berlin, Teubner, 1943), 95, „Wenn die Römer einen Diovis pater verehrten, dann wüssten sie, warum er pater war” u.s.w.
by Greek myths which often are of quite venerable antiquity, although others show signs of having been invented in comparatively recent times for reasons often political. It will hardly be claimed that such stories have any intimate connection with ritual; but plainly, where no other tales exist at all, no myth-ritual complex can ever have been. Etruria we are obliged to leave out of count from sheer lack of material. The Etruscans may, probably did, have a mythology; but as we are ignorant of their language, and even if we were not, possess no documents in it save the Agram mummy-bands and a number of inscriptions generally very short and merely recording the death and burial of someone, we are left with a little information transmitted through Latin concerning their divination and a few other matters, and a quantity of art-monuments, often incapable of certain interpretation with no accompanying text, and very seldom yielding anything but illustrations of well-known Greek tales, or pictures of the other-world to which the inhabitants of the tombs on whose walls the paintings are preserved were going. Little good can be done by erecting frail structures of hypothesis on so untrustworthy a foundation.

We must confine ourselves, therefore, to Greece. Here we have stories in abundance, preserved in all manner of texts, a good deal of information about ritual, and some few documents which give us an idea of how the stories were regarded by the more enlightened and articulate Greeks of various ages. At first sight, we have a tolerable case for the close connection of some of the myths with religious ceremonies. It is not uncommon for a scrupulous author to hint at a τερδεσ λόγος which his own feelings or those of his readers forbid him to tell 3). This, one might imagine, means that these λογοι actually form part of the rites in question, and as the ritual was secret, the myth, forming part of it, was not to be told save to the initiate. A kind of support for such a view may be got from the most famous of all mysteries. At Eleusis, we have some right to say that a kind of sacred drama was performed, perhaps in the shape of a mimetic dance, and that it showed some part at least of the moving tale of the rape of Kore and the wanderings of Demeter in search of her.

3) To take instances from one author only, I may cite Herodotos II, 47, 2 (pig-sacrifice in Egypt), 51, 2, 4 (mysteries of the Kabeiroi).