

Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* (on Zoroastrian dualism)

(Loeb Classical Library translation)

46. The great majority and the wisest of men hold this opinion : they believe that there are two gods, rivals as it were, the one the Artificer of good and the other of evil. There are also those who call the better one a god and the other a daemon, as, for example, no. 785. “ A task for many reins and rudders too ” (πολλῶν χαλινῶν ἔργον οἰάκων θ’ ἅμα).

^b The reference is to Homer, *Il.* xxiv. 527-528, as misquoted in Plato, *Republic*, 379 D. Cf. also *Moralia*, 24 A (and the note), 105 c (and the note), and 473 B. *Moralia*, 600 c, is helpful in understanding the present passage.

Zoroaster^a the sage,^b who, they record, lived five thousand years before the time of the Trojan War. He called the one Oromazes and the other Areimanius^c; and he further declared that among all the things perceptible to the senses, Oromazes may best be compared to light, and Areimanius, conversely, to darkness and ignorance, and midway between the two is Mithras; for this reason the Persians give to Mithras the name of "Mediator." Zoroaster has also taught that men should make votive offerings and thank-offerings to Oromazes, and averting and mourning offerings to Areimanius. They pound up in a mortar a certain plant called omomi, at the same time invoking Hades^d and Darkness; then they mix it with the blood of a wolf that has been sacrificed, and carry it out and cast it into a place where the sun never shines. In fact, they believe that some of the plants belong to the good god and others to the evil daemon; so also of the animals they think that dogs, fowls, and hedgehogs, for example, belong to the good god, but that water-rats^e belong to the evil one; therefore the man who has killed the most of these they hold to be fortunate.

47. However, they also tell many fabulous stories about their gods, such, for example, as the following: Oromazes, born from the purest light, and Areimanius, born from the darkness, are constantly at war with each other; and Oromazes created six gods, the first of Good Thought, the second of Truth, the third of Order, and, of the rest, one of Wisdom, one of Wealth,

^a Cf. *Moralia*, 1026 B, and Diogenes Laertius, *Prologue*, 2.

^d Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Prologue*, 8.

^e Cf. *Moralia*, 537 A and 670 D.

and one the Artificer of Pleasure in what is Honourable. But Areimanius created rivals, as it were, equal to these in number. Then Oromazes enlarged himself to thrice his former size, and removed himself as far distant from the Sun as the Sun is distant from the Earth, and adorned the heavens with stars. One star he set there before all others as a guardian and watchman, the Dog-star. Twenty-four other gods he created and placed in an egg. But those created by Areimanius, who were equal in number to the others, pierced through the egg and made their way inside^a; hence evils are now combined with good. But a destined time shall come when it is decreed that Areimanius, engaged in bringing on pestilence and famine, shall by these be utterly annihilated and shall disappear; and then shall the earth become a level plain, and there shall be one manner of life and one form of government for a blessed people who shall all speak one tongue. Theopompus^b says that, according to the sages, one god is to overpower, and the other to be overpowered, each in turn for the space of three thousand years, and afterward for another three thousand years they shall fight and war, and the one shall undo the works of the other, and finally Hades shall pass away; then shall the people be happy, and neither shall they need to have food nor shall they cast any shadow. And the god, who has contrived to bring about all these things, shall then have quiet and shall repose for a time,^c no long time indeed, but for the god as much as would be a moderate time for a man to sleep.

^b Jacoby, *Frag. Gr. Hist.*, Theopompus, no. 65.

^c The meaning of the text is clear enough, but the wording of it is uncertain.