

Historical introduction note

Mithraism, the worship of the god Mithras, was the major religion of the Roman Empire. Following the battle of Milvian bridge in 312ce, the Christian religion became the main religion of Rome and Mithraism was purged out of existence. During the renovation of Wigan parish church, in the mid-Victorian era, a Romano British altar, thought to be of Mithras, was discovered under the Christian Altar. A few miles away in Appley Bridge, a statue of Cautapates, one two torch bearing attendees of Mithras, was found (the other attendee being Cautes). These finds were deemed possibly related, and would lend support to the view that Wigan Parish church was originally a 3rd century Roman Temple.

A change of direction for Mithras and his boys

The god Mithras stormed into his temple, where his divine attendees Cautes and Cautopates, had been looking after things for a few weeks:

“Come here you two! I’ll have your flaming guts for garters.”

“He is home then, when he finds out what happened, I reckon there will be a change in direction!” said Cautes

“I’ll sort this Cautes,” Whispered Cautapates. “I am the best at making excuses. Calm down boss, have a sit down I will get you a cup of Ambrosia, I’ve just brewed.”

“Never mind that,” said Mithras. “I had to go to a series of meetings with our superior, Sol Invictus, the Sun God. I leave you looking after the flaming place for a few weeks and this happens.”

“What’s that boss?”

“The Roman Empire! It is in Pandemonium!”

“I thought it was in Europe and Asia minor.” Said Cautes. Mithras gives his gormless attendee a clip across the ear.

“Come on then speak up! I’m waiting, Cat got your flaming tongues?”

“It weren’t our fault Mithras, it’s that feller, emperor Constantine! and his army.”

“Why what’s he been up to again?” said Mithras

“He were having a fight with them German tribes again, he prayed to you and ended up getting his backside kicked. He was angrier than an August wasp at a garden Party.” said Cautapates

“That’s no flaming excuse! (beat) I left you two idiots in charge with a divine decree. If there was bother, I said you could have stuck the divine boot in, you had the authority?”

“Well boss? We tried but those big hairy northern Gods was with them. Their leader was a big abusive beggar called Odin, he had this mate called Thor, he was a right aggressive nutter. He kept smiting folk with a big lump hammer, then he’d shout something about

Valhalla, it was frightening. Then there was this woman called Freya, ooh she were a bad one, she had painted her face with blue woad, and all her tattoos were spelt wrong!”

“No, they weren’t Cautapates, they were in Germanic text!” Cautes interrupted

“So that’s why I couldn’t read them, I can only read Latin and Greek. Anyroad she would have frightened Medusas mother in law, and you know what she’s like?

“Enough of your incompetent, incoherent babble and prattle Cautapates! You’re doing my head in! What happened next?” Cautes carried on

“Why, that Emperor Constantine, he had this slave who was a Christian. He suggested Constantine should to pray to Jesus and he would get sorted out no problem. Constantine asked him about the animals, he would have to sacrifice to get help. The slave said none, Jesus doesn’t go in for barbaric rituals like that. He told him, just get your lads to go to church on Sundays, get them to say their prayers, then put a few Denarii, in the collection tray on their way out. By eck lad that’s alright, said Constantine, it’s costing me a flaming fortune, sacrificing bulls and goats, all the Etruscan farmers are getting ready to revolt because of it. So, Constantine knelt down and said his prayers.”

“What happened then?

“Well, a cross appeared in front of the sun and the next minute, these two big lads materialised out of nowhere they said; We are Saint Peter and Saint Paul, I said my Nan had two Budgies called Peter and Paul, they were chirpy as well. They turned around to us and said: “You two bozo’s have been substituted for the second half.” Then Constantine called a meeting of his officers, give them a good talking to, then ordered his lads to nip to Marcus and Spencerus, for some paint, it was on special offer in the Autumn sales. He ordered them to paint Christian crosses on their shields. As soon as the paint was dry, he told the Ref to blow the whistle for the second half. Constantine’s lads got stuck into the Germans right from the kickoff!”

“What did you two do?”

“We couldn’t do much boss, we sat down and watched it, by eck, it were a cracking battle.

“How did Jesus’s lads, Peter and Paul fare against them Northern gods? Mithras enquired.

“There wasn’t just two of them, there were twelve of them, Apostles they called their selves. That weren’t all, they had two evangelists on the subs bench as well. We complained to the Ref that it was against the rules, but he wasn’t having it. The Northern gods didn’t stand a chance, Freya was the first to leg it. She shouted out, that she had left a joint in the oven at home and it needed basting, off she went in a flash. Then Odin went over to Thor and told him, he had to take over because he had an appointment at the clinic; then he did a runner. Thor battled on bravely for a bit, but when Saint Peter, broke the handle of Thor’s lump hammer with his staff, he legged it as well. The Romans then got stuck into the Germans and sent them packing back into Gaul. When the battle was over, St Paul came up to us and said, Ey up lads, it looks like you two and your Boss, are redundant.” said Cautes

“Do you realised what has happened on your watch, you pair of clowns! Because of your incompetent buffoonery and stupidity, Constantine has made Christianity legal, and the official religion of the Empire. They are closing my temples everywhere. Not too long ago,

almost every legionary and Auxiliary in the Imperial Roman Army revered me, prayed to me, made sacrifices to me and what are they doing now! they are smashing up my temples and my altars, that's what! And they are smashing up the shrines of Sol the Sun God, as well! He will give me a damned good hiding when he catches me. Honestly! I couldn't trust you with the butty van on the Appian Way, never mind with the most popular mystery religion in Rome."

"Oh eck! We are in it up to our necks! What are we to do?" Said Cautes.

"Hold on lads I have an idea, how to get out of this jam you have got me into. I don't think the news of all this will have travelled to Britannia yet, we can make at a base for Mithraism, up in the North of Britannia. We have a decent temple at Coccium, locals have started calling it by its old Brigante name Wigan, they are a rebellious lot up there. If we box clever, we can keep the old religion going up there and when this Christianity, fades out we can take over again."

"By gum boss, I think you are onto something, a change of direction for Mithraism!" said Cautapates.

"Cautes, you know all the Celestial Cloud drivers, order us a celestial cloud for Britannia A.S.A.P. don't forget to tell him, it's the wild North. We do not want the beggar turning back at Wroxeter, and us having to walk the last hundred miles." said Mithras

"I will get Bluestar most of their drivers were Barbarians, before they died. They don't mind Northerners."

The newly found calm was shattered with a banging on the temple door;

"Who is it?" Cautapates cried

"Its Carractacus from Bluestar celestial, I have a cloud booked for Mithras."

"Hold on lad, we will get our luggage!"

"Right lads where are you going?"

"To Coccium, my temple on the hill next to the fort." said Mithras

"Do you mean Wigan? It will cost double fare. Do you know its rough round there? Watch them Brigante, they'll fight their own shadows. That lot cost me my life, Queen Cartamunda, she sold me out to the Romans. I said, I'll never trust a Brigante as long as I live, and that wasn't for very long, when the Romans got hold of me."

"Carractacus, we haven't got time for all this tittle tattle, I have a temple to save now get the cloud loaded up I am in a hurry!"

"You just can't win with fares, if you don't talk to them they call you ignorant if you do they tell you to shut up!"

"He's normally alright, but he's in shock, they are smashing up his temples. said Cautapates.

The former holy trinity flew on a white cloud over the alps across Gaul to the wilds of Northern Britannia;

“Are we there yet Mithras?” asked Cautes.

“Ask that again and I’ll throw you off this flaming cloud “The river Setia is below we’ll be there in ten minutes.” They touched down at the top of Wigan hill.

“Look Mithras, there’s scaffolding was up on the temple walls and a cross was on the roof, I will take a look.” said Cautapates. He came back smiling. “They have used your altar for a foundation stone for their new Christian one, and they’ve broken up yours and Cautes’s statues, into hard core for mending the pot-holes. The foreman’s claimed mine for his garden.”

“What can we do now Mithras?”

“It’s a new direction for us lads! Carractacus, take the cloud to India, I’ve heard the Buddah’s taking on.”

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