



to me, in the hatred of it to ascribe it to the perfect God. It did not undertake to justify its existence under a wise Providence, as discipline, or culture. It does not anywhere say positively, "This struggle shall develop moral strength and spiritual growth." But did it not practically affirm this? Do men make it the life of their religion to war against wrong, without discovering that this resistance is after all to draw out and educate their wills by the pursuit of the ideal?

There is no failure here to recognize the strength of the foe; the cup of evil is drunk to the dregs. The tragedy of sin and penalty, the martyrdom of heroism and love, the stern conditions of victory, the inexorable mathematics of moral and spiritual cost, are acknowledged in the whole structure of the religion, in every detail of the epos and dogma of this mighty strife for the possession of the soul of man. Never does the power of Ahriman fail to prove itself in the bodily life of the righteous. Never does the weakness of Ahriman fail to be made manifest in the moral gain and growth for the whole creation, that follow on his terrible but impotent revenge. The myth is at pains to foreshow this issue by infusing into his whole conduct of the strife an element of folly and fear. Through this earlier "holy war" there runs the Iranian instinct to overpoise the past with the future, experience with prophecy; to make failure and loss the stepping stones to progress. Darmesteter, who with marvellous ingenuity has traced the whole Avestan mythology as a process of evolution from the strife of the elements, has hinted this higher spiritual meaning in a striking summary, which deserves to be quoted:—

"Thirty years Ahriman is powerless against the Bull;<sup>1</sup> three thousand years he trembles before Gayômarð;<sup>2</sup> thirty years he gnaws

<sup>1</sup> The Bull is Ahura's good creation, slain by Ahriman, from whose seed spring fertility and the human race.

<sup>2</sup> The first man, slain by Ahriman.





the bit under the spur of Tahmurath;<sup>1</sup> but at last all these perish. The stone and word of Zoroaster plunge him into hell; but Zoroaster himself must perish. According to the legend preserved by Clementine Homily, he is struck by the demon with lightning; according to Firdûsi, he is slain by the Turanians in the sack of Balkh. According as the imagination conceives the thunder-storm in view of the light which preceded, or that which follows it, the god of light dies or is victorious. But the dead god is succeeded by another; the slain is avenged by some relative, son, or brother in the myth. And the final victory is won by all the early heroes returning again; or by a descendant of Zoroaster, Caoshyañç."<sup>2</sup>

The impressive fact about this Iranian myth is that it affiliates each martyr of Ahura's gospel both to his successor and to his predecessor; so that the sacred seed proves itself immortal, and death is constantly swallowed up in necessary victory. Gayômarḍ comes from the seed of the Bull; from Gayômarḍ comes the line of heroes who fight the dragon, or slay the demons, or hold the Devil himself in curb; from their line comes the prophet with his word of doom, before which Ahriman trembles; and when, spite of all the saints, heroes, and martyrs, the earth falls under the dominion of evil,<sup>3</sup> and the rotten body of humanity dissolves, it is but to reveal the reserved health and salvation in the omnipotent virtue of their return in one high host to judgment, not one gift or glory lost, the seed of Zoroaster at their head, and the souls of all just men, the better souls of all men, to evolve and people a purified world. The nature of this affiliation will appear from an outline of the myth in its relation to ideal progress.

Yima, most blessed of men, ruler and maker of the earthly paradise, began to love lying speech, and fell.

<sup>1</sup> Mythic king of men, who chains Ahriman, and rides him as a horse over the earth; but tempted by his wife to fear, is devoured by the great enemy.

<sup>2</sup> Darmesteter: *Ormazd et Ahriman*, p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> The terrible accounts of the depravity and misery of the world before the coming of the last redeemer is believed by Darmesteter to be drawn in a large degree by the Bundeshesh writers from the Mongol and Arabian wars.





Three times did his "majesty," or bliss, take the wings of a bird and fly away. Thrice was it seized and brought back. The first who brought back the bliss of Paradise was Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, all-hearing, all-beholding, truth-protecting Sun. (For he dispels the dark.) The second was Thraëtona,<sup>1</sup> born in farthest bounds of space,<sup>2</sup> whence come the rude blasts of the storm-cloud. He delivered from these, and from the sicknesses, pains, and wants that proceed from them. He wars with the great serpent of the cloud (*Azhi-dahâka*, the Vṛitra of the Vedas), and is called the victorious. The third was Kereçâçpa, who delivered from the wild beasts, the robber, and the armed wilderness-foe; and he is called the Strong One. He is son of Thrîta, whom the Vendidâd calls the first of physicians, holder-back of sickness and death.<sup>3</sup> But Yima's bliss was physical merely. These saviours saved only the man of the senses. Yima could not meditate on the law, nor bear it to men.<sup>4</sup> His paradise was the reign of innocence and physical comfort: no cold nor heat, no disease nor death, till falsehood entered; and with that the poison of Ahriman smote the natural order, which three physical forces did what they could to restore. But they were insufficient. So in fulness of time came Zoroaster, the greater deliverer through the law that commands purity of thought, word, and deed,—the law that forces evil powers back into invisible ways, and annihilates them in their spiritual being. The Haoma-Yasht ascribes all these saving forces to the devotion of men through sacrifice of the holy plant; the Çrosh-Yasht, to Çraosha, the incarnation of the law (his body the Mâthra),<sup>5</sup> who is associated with completing the forms of religious service, as well as with glorious works of protection and punishment, carry-

<sup>1</sup> Corresponds in main with Vedic *Trita* (Indra's helper).

<sup>2</sup> Varuṇa, Vedic Varuṇa. See careful analysis of the myth, as found in *Zamyâd-Yasht*, by Westergaard (*Ind. Studien*, iii. 402-440). This Yasht was unknown to Anquetil.

<sup>3</sup> *Vendidâd*, xx.

<sup>4</sup> *Vendidâd*, ii. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Yasna*, lvi.





ing on the victorious strife of Zoroaster. No words can express the absolute trust of the worshipper in this all-mastering upholder and regenerator of the physical order, through the spirit of Ahura, arising from his dwelling on the holy mountain, that shines inwardly with its own light, and combining in himself the corporeal and spiritual worlds.<sup>1</sup>

And in the latter day, through fierce wars and portents, the spiritual, prophetic seed of Zoroaster bears other saviours (*Çaoshyañtô*, profitable ones);<sup>2</sup> and the shut doors of Yima's paradise are reopened, and men and beasts come forth to people the earth swept by the latter deluge of penal rain, till *Çaoshyañç*, "the Helper," last and greatest, brings a new book of the law, and proclaims the long battle won, and the dead are raised to judgment, and all evil thought and deed are at an end. And all through the conflict, upheld by human prayer and praise, and upholding every good aim with inconceivable reserves of power and love, hover the innumerable *Fravashis*,<sup>3</sup> the ideal souls of all living beings, from Ahura to his humblest servant and his least work, — the onward pressure of the multitudinous universe itself, gathered up into one living aspiration to the Best.

Notice here, first, the progress from material to spiritual deliverance, — destruction of outward monsters and physical woes; then deliverance from all rebellion and hatred against the good spirit, through the might of holy prophets and the supreme virtue of the holy law. Each step leads upward to the next, and the resources of the spirit are ever adequate to the need.<sup>4</sup> Notice next, that the earlier deliv-

<sup>1</sup> *Yaçna*, lvi. 9, 10; lvii. 9, 10; Haug.

<sup>2</sup> *Yaçna*, xxxiv. 13; xlv. 11; xlv. 3. Spiegel: *Erân. Alterth.* ii. 153.

<sup>3</sup> *Foxvardîn-Yashî*.

<sup>4</sup> The myth of the storm-cloud, the battle of light with the elements, has risen to the spiritual warfare of the prophet's word with the powers of falsehood, at the same time that the actors ceasing to be gods of the atmosphere, are the sons of men.





erers, including Yima, belong also to the mythology of the Vedas; but whereas in the Vedas they are immortal gods, in the Avesta all, except Mithra, are mortal men. In other words, the war which Vedic mythology placed in the superhuman world is brought by the Iranian down to the solid ground of human life. It is man, however endowed and exalted in his powers, still man, that works out deliverance for himself. Thus the Yama of the Vedas is god of the future world. Yima of the Iranians is man blessed in the present world. The destroyers of monsters in the Vedas are solar powers personified as deities, and their work stops with releasing the refreshing showers from storm-clouds that hold them back among the mountains. Thraëtona and Kereçâçpa in the Avesta, and Yima also, become saviours as men through the piety of their fathers;<sup>1</sup> and their work is ethical, restoring a world poisoned by human falsehood, and preparing the way for a spiritual law. The material and mythologic names, originally common to both races, have been wrought up into two differing forms of religious power; one of them putting man quite out of sight, the other exalting him by works worthy of a god. Religion has here become personal; its centre is the will; its energy, nerve-power; its work, practical deliverance from outward evils and inward sins by a strife that ends but in their destruction. Notice last, that through all the dualism in which evil gets such tremendous recognition, there runs the optimism of faith, that the world belongs to righteousness, and all things shall work to make good its claim. Or, to put it religiously, God will surely be ready with help at need, and appear, to save His world. Put these successive saviours of the Avestan faith beside that grand word of the Hindu Krishna (speaking for Vishnu, the all-preserving), "Whensoever virtue is enfeebled, or vice and injustice prevail, then do I become

<sup>1</sup> *Yasna*, ix.





manifest, from age to age revealed to reassure the faltering steps of right;"<sup>1</sup> or beside the Johannic doctrine of the "Word made flesh," to fulfil what the prophets and Moses lacked. It is older than either of these.

Zoroastrianism illustrates the law, that religion ever seeks to make good superior to evil, and in some form or other, logical or otherwise, insists on its ultimate triumph. Religion is man's endeavor to assure himself of this very thing; it is the promise of his ideal to countervail the ills of life and the sense of sin. But religious assurance is in general more positive in its assertion of progress and ultimate redemption for society as a whole, through its appointed means, than in affirming the best issues for the individual. And just as Christianity contemplates vast numbers of the human race as destined to become devils in eternal pain, so the Avesta makes the wicked turn into Daevas, or spirits of evil;<sup>2</sup> and one gate of this terrible dualism leads to a populous hell. Even in such dismal failures to reconcile man with the conditions of life, we must acknowledge that religion aims at justice, that its retributions are imperfect efforts for righteous ethical sequence. On the Avestan bridge of judgment, the balance hangs poised for all: the judges are Mithra, the truth; Rashnu, eternal righteousness; and Craosha, perfect obedience; and the questioning of the soul by itself is the last appeal. As in Christianity, the strict arithmetic of penalty is; clumsily enough, broken through by a gleam of at least more kindly spiritual economy, which applies supererogatory merits of saints to the cancelling of other men's sins; so, if the theory of Spiegel is correct, the virtues of good Zoroastrians are believed to be laid up in a treasury of succor (*Micvâna*), to turn the scale, at the last judgment, in behalf of those whose own repentance has not quite outweighed their misdeeds.<sup>3</sup> If,

<sup>1</sup> *Bhagavad-gita*, iv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Vendidad*, viii. 100.

<sup>3</sup> But this view is not confirmed by other writers. See, on one side, Spiegel, *Erân. Alterth.* ii. 17; on the other, Harlez, i. 265 n; Haug, *Essays*, etc., p. 389; or *Vendidad*, xix. 122.





however, this *Miçvâna*, or middle world, is rather the intermediate space between heaven and hell, where those souls are held whose good and evil are equal, it would be at all events an attempt to approximate exact justice, instead of admitting mercy.

No more than any other religion of the past which bases the future destiny of the soul upon the analogy of personal relations in this world, as shown in private emotions, or in the courts of justice between man and man, does the religion of Zoroaster reach the assurance which reconciles our actual ignorance of the future with an ideal trust in the laws of our being, the unknown as well as the known. But the statement of its limits is also that of its characteristic power and function in human history. First of great religions, it revealed the power of the personal element in the religious ideal; evolving out of man's crude sense of the strife of material nature a conception of spiritual struggle and moral prophecy through the energy of individual will, and incarnating this conception in a personal Word, around whom the great conflict of good and evil gathered so supremely that all coming faiths were destined to draw from the fountains it opened in mankind.

And not only did this affirmation of the dignity of the will assure the triumph of what the willer believed to be best, but saved him from the demoralizing effects of pure Dualism, which would have admitted no solution of the strife. A noble aspiration to unity shaped the whole system, proceeding from the necessity of the ideal will to secure an undivided ground of action, complete concentration of aim, free and simple self-development. Thus we find in the Avesta each class of objects traced to one beginning,—all waters to one source; all trees to one tree; all animals to the primal Bull; all men to one progenitor (*Gayômarç*). Hence, castes are impossible: the king is





parent of all men; the marriage rule is monogamy; the ethical law is responsibility to one personal principle of right.

#### ZRVAN-AKARANA.

ALL worship of personal Will involves Dualism, in some form, however incomplete. The power of choosing between opposites is indispensable to the freedom of will; and so long as pure will, as such, is held to be the supreme essence, the law which it is its only real freedom to obey is subordinated to its right of choice,—that is, to caprice; and the worship of will becomes the worship of miracle. This is the inevitable logic of all religions of this kind. But all religions have germs of growth out of this vicious circle. Even in Mazdeism, the typical religion of personal Will, there were intimations of this need of somewhat greater than such will; and these intimations associated themselves with its movement out of Dualism, prompting it to solve the antagonism of Ormuzd and Ahriman in a common source. This is the significance of the Zervanitic doctrine in later Mazdeism.<sup>1</sup> It was one of a series of cosmogonic efforts, deriving the world from elements of universal order, such as Light, Space, Time, Fate: and a direct result of the most important of these conceptions,—namely, that of Fate.<sup>2</sup>

Every thoughtful person must recognize universal law as master of all individual intentions or aims. The mind which has not learned that the world is governed by forces to which all wills of whatever power must conform, has had but slight experience of life. The noblest hope and desire are most closely confronted by insuperable limits. Before these primal conditions of existence, these inscrutable realities of law,—call it either cosmical or spiritual,—

<sup>1</sup> Spiegel's *Avesta*, ii. 218, note iii. xxix.

<sup>2</sup> The Parsis of the present time are not dualists; the old meaning of the *Avesta* is lost for them.





all gods must bend. Their order upholds all self-conscious being like a sea. This is the impersonal soul, the inconceivable essence, which comes to us as divine necessity, and which we must learn to hold benignant and dear forever. All great personal religions have hints and gleams of this light beyond their own, this supremacy over the objects of their worship, even when they strive to regard the two as one; because men cannot help feeling such predominance of substance over will in their own lives. The greatest of religions, the universal religion, will be characterized by enthroning it, trustingly and deliberately, above all conceptions of Divine Purpose or Will. I seek instinctive germs of this truth in every positive religion. I think I can discern how such an instinct helped Mazdeism resolve its Dualism into something like unity.

The sway of Destiny over all motion, spiritual and physical, was expressed by the Hindus in the term *Bhaga*, meaning the "allotter or giver." The word *Bakht*, from the same root, is used in the older Avesta in the general sense of celestial appointment, without reference to any personal source.<sup>1</sup> But in the later writings this idea became more distinctly associated with the movement of the stars and planets, and with the strife in which they were supposed to be engaged.<sup>2</sup> From these movements destiny was supposed to proceed, and in a more strict and positive sense than in the ordinary and wide-spread faith in astrological influences. Thus it appears that in the worshipper of free-will and choice, the movements of the heavenly bodies, even conceived as strife, were capable of awakening a reverent sense of supreme order, irreversible law, and predetermined result.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Darmesteter: *Ormazd et Akriman*, p. 319-20. Haug: *Essays*, etc., p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> *Mindkhired*, viii 17.

<sup>3</sup> Both the Chinese and the European languages use the word "heaven" to express the sense of all-controlling destiny, where a personal term seems to be less in accordance with the impression of order and law.





Now, it is easy to see how this divine and resistless march of the heavenly powers came to be identified with the flow of Time, of Boundless Time,<sup>1</sup>—its obvious condition, and its most impressive suggestion. The Greek made Cronos the oldest of gods; and it is, in a sense, our necessity to conceive of time as the all-determining, all-resolving power of Fate. Whatsoever is past recall, whatsoever must be but is not yet, the certainties of past and future alike, are offspring of Time, whereof none saw the beginning, none can foresee the end. Time is the Hindu Kālī, with the worlds strung about her neck like skulls of the dead. Time is the all-engulfing god of the Bhagavad-gītā, down whose open mouth rush the generations. Time is the one sure movement, the one inevitable path. The heavenly legions on their ordered march through boundless time and space,—those undying fires man fails to reach, yet never fails to behold; those gods of all ages, obedient to a mysterious Order beyond themselves,—might well seem to bind past, present, and future into one all-determining Fate. But if time was the ground of these celestial movements for the Mazdean, not *only* it be the parent and sure promise of all the spiritual and material glories which he expected from the triumph of his law. Even in the Vendidad it is here and there invoked, together with the Word and the self-sustaining heavens, equally with the gods themselves.<sup>2</sup> And the Mīnōkhired, at the end, sums up the accomplishment of destined good through the toils and sufferings of the past.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mīnōkhired*, x.vii. 10: viii. 17. "The things of the world are moved by Destiny, and the regular course of that which is self-created — Time, the ruler of the long ages." As it is appointed to each in every time, so it is accomplished, "so that the good which should come through those who have departed, to the creatures of Ahura, has been brought to pass."

<sup>2</sup> *Vendidad*, xix. 55. For later development of Zrvan-akarana, see Carré: *L'Ancien Orient*, ii. 379.

<sup>3</sup> It is scarcely necessary to say that by this term I but mean that imperfect form of dualism which has been already allowed as belonging to Avestan religion.





Mazdean Dualism, then, contained in itself the germs of this principle of reconciliation. No resort could have been more natural. Whatever modifications it may have received from Babylonian sources, this sovereignty of Time without bounds was the demand of personal will for a ground of confidence beyond the strife of its own free choice, or any idealization of the same. That it came through the sense of all-mastering movement in those heavenly fires which had always been the symbol of deity, simply shows that Nature inevitably brings the recognition of unity in the religious conceptions. But it was easier to escape the bonds of Dualism than the incapacity of worshipping any other than some form of personal will. And Zrvan-akarana, though a resort to an impersonal element, became no less personal than Ormuzd, and no less the centre of anthropomorphic mythology. Still the Bundehesh, as late at least as the Sassanian times, does not represent Zrvan as a person. Its first chapter either describes Ahura as "possessing endless time,"<sup>1</sup> or else the "Time of Ahura" as that which "was, and is, and is to be."<sup>2</sup> And Ahriman is said to exist for a time which shall have its end. There is no cosmogonic expression here, no hint of the origin of either from a pre-existent God.

About the same period, however, Theodore of Mopsuestia wrote that Zoroaster made *Zarouam*, ruler of the whole universe, and called him *Destiny*; and that this first god produced both Ormuzd and Ahriman (or Satan). This was the general belief of the Armenian Christian writers of that period, and shows that it was largely under the influence of Syrian Christianity that the change of Zrvan from an abstract to a personal form must have taken place. In the later Persian sects, formed under Semitic

<sup>1</sup> Mit unbegrenzter Zeit begabt. Windischmann.

<sup>2</sup> Die Zeit des Ahuramazda war, und ist, und wird sein. Justi.



and Christian relations, the Zervanites, or believers in Time as a supreme god, were especially noticed by the Mussulman writers.<sup>1</sup> But the struggle of good and evil is not to be ended by the triumph of one Will, one Person, one Lord, whatever his name, over other beings equal or inferior. For no service of a person can make free or holy; only the service of righteous principles, — of truth as truth, and good as good, not as the will of God or man. Zoroastrianism, — and, we must add, Christianity, — for want of this final step upon impersonal foundations, have been fated, with all their modifications, to revolve in the same circle of ethical weakness and limited sight. Thus the new Mazdean god, though a resort to natural order, was but an imperfect and transient *foregleam* of what only ages of science following on ages of this anthropomorphic worship could bring. Nevertheless, as such resort, it was one of those landmarks in history that indicate the path of spiritual evolution. And it is such landmarks, discernible to the careful student of comparative religion, that makes religious history of most value to us to-day.

Zrvan gradually becomes indented with other deities of similar name, but different meaning, and of Semitic or Median origin; and a mixed mythology of shreds and patches gathers about the old reconciling Time-idea, till it becomes as finite as the gods it was said to have created. Ormuzd and Ahriman reappear dressed in the patriarchal robes of Esau and Jacob; and the old Zrvan, tricked by the younger and evil-minded son, retains so little of his Time-mastery as to be obliged to grant him nine thousand years of rule in the world. Hindu legends of creation of the world through sacrificial suicide of a god, are infused among Mazdean traditions utterly opposed to their ascetic and mystical spirit. But through all changes and all syncretism of systems abides the old faith that good shall be

<sup>1</sup> See Haug's *Essays*, etc., p. 15.





triumphant at last; and that assurance, which in the beginning helped Avestan Dualism from practical failure to reconcile man with the conditions of life, maintains the like function in the latest phases of Mazdeism. It inspires the worship of Zrvan as well as that of Ahura. And therefore it is not, in either of these phases, a mere trust in personal will, but rests, in part at least, on confidence in the natural tendency of things; on the necessities of the world and of man. Nor can I hesitate to accept, as at least in accordance with the laws of evolution, the striking summary of religious systems by a distinguished Oriental scholar, which represents "all their first principles,—Time, Fate, Light, Space, as forms of One,—namely, Heaven, or the Sky, considered in its movement, or its brightness, or its extent. Ormuzd begins by being the luminous infinite Heaven. And the same principle has given the Indo-European family their Supreme God."<sup>1</sup>

A still broader generalization may be based upon that one of these principles with which our Iranian studies have thus far been most concerned. If we remember that through all the strife of good and evil which man has felt within him and beheld without, his imagination has remained loyal to that transcendent symbol the Light, in which his conscious religious life found its first inspiration, we shall assuredly be convinced that the worship of Nature is not only the natural, but the sane and sacred track of humanity.

On this track lies the real solution of Dualism, which Zoroastrianism and all the other religions of the past, with all their compensations and foregleams, have failed to accomplish. That "the fall of the race through the bad use that its earliest progenitors made of their free-will is the only solution of the formidable problem" of evil,<sup>2</sup> is

<sup>1</sup> Darmesteter: *Ormuzd et Ahriman*, pp. 336-37.

<sup>2</sup> Lenormant: *Contemporary Review*, September, 1879.





a mere Biblico-historical dogma, which does not touch the root of the matter, but simply puts it back in time, and involves it in deeper complications. If evil be what the Bible represents it, no such misuse of free-will by the first men, or the last men, can account for it. It has been said, and there is truth in the statement, that the Hebrew escaped the association of darkness with evil. His form of dualism was absorbed in the conception of a God above both light and darkness, of whom they were the products: "The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." But this noble plane of Hebrew prophecy, higher than any point reached by Chaldean, Persian, or Phœnician, does not solve the problem of evil, — the deeper dualism which no special symbol exhausts. The will of a God alone is not sufficient to answer it. Nor can any revelation of such will serve better the demand of reason in our age. Evil, physical and moral, cannot be instituted by any personal will.

Dualism is in Nature, in man; good and evil, both in the physical and ethical spheres, cannot be ignored. Their conflict is the tremendous reality, which no religion can possibly put out of sight. It is the glory of Mazdeism to have struck root in this central fact: its failure, to have ended in solutions which solve nothing. For no triumph of one personal will over another, or of one kind of willing over another, no utter extermination of half the will-power of the universe, can explain or justify the tragic hate and strife. Only when it is recognized that, behind the conflict of good and evil wills whether human or divine, — the antagonism of purpose by which character is formed and virtue enthroned over sorrow and sin, — there is in the nature of things a law that evil is the condition of good; that without the lower the higher could not be; that liberty and progress, and love and duty, and heroism and devotion, imply the existence of evil, and ripen through its





tasks; and that this necessity, in the eternal nature of things, uses all personality to serve its own uncreated law of growth, — only when this religion of Nature shall supplant the religions which ultimate in man-made divinities of Will, which they themselves must take for granted, can the dark riddle of ages be solved.





## MORALITY OF THE AVESTA.

IT might seem that little could be said for the morality of a system which insists as earnestly on the criminality of killing an otter, or dropping one's nail-parings about the house, as on the slaying of a man. Very strange results came in process of time of that complete confusion of the physical and moral worlds inherent in Iranian dualism. We can readily see that it was only logical that all the evil purpose of Ahriman should appear to be incarnated in each of his creatures, and to call for its destruction as the highest duty; and that all the goodness of Ahuramazda should be embodied in each good and helpful product thereof, and demand its preservation with equal energy. We have already seen upon what trivial associations many creatures were proved pure or impure; yet there can be no doubt that the choice was in a measure determined by real gratitude and sympathetic respect on the part of these simple tribes, whose chief interests were the protection of their settlements and the security of the products of their industry. And why should not the watchdog be made a centre of superstitious awe and jealous care by a people at that stage of progress, as the bread and wine of atonement by a more introversive religion?

"I have made the dog, O Zarathustra, with keen scent and sharp teeth, faithful to man, as a protection to the folds, — I, who am Ahuramazda. When he is sound and in good voice, no thief nor wolf can come nigh." "For the dwellings would not stand fast on the earth created by Ahuramazda, but for the dogs which pertain to the cattle and the village."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vendidad*, xiii. 106, 111, 165.





By slaying a certain kind of dog, the offender — reckless of Ahura's good purpose, and sinning against his will — "slays his own soul, and the effects of the act last for nine generations."<sup>1</sup> He who kills a trained hound excites abhorrence; and at his death no other soul can deliver him, nor will the dogs help him at the bridge of judgment.<sup>2</sup> The penalty for giving hurtful food to a pup is fifty blows with the horse-goad, and fifty with the scourge (*graoshô-charana*). Minute rules for expelling demons from different organs of the body, for purifying it from touch of the dead,<sup>3</sup> for removing menstrual uncleanness, for the disposal of exuviae like the dead hair or nails, are parts of the great struggle to cleanse the living world from the decay and death which are Ahriman's instruments. They are neither better nor worse in themselves than other forms of ritual purification, which are in the physical world what processes for sanctification are in the spiritual. This equal insistence on things external and internal, this attachment of solemn sanctions to doings in themselves thoroughly trivial, illustrates a confusion of the physical and moral spheres common to all religions, and unavoidable in the absence of physical science, which finds itself confronted down to the latest moment by a similar class of superstitions, such as praying for the removal of drought or pestilence, and expecting Providential interference with physical laws. With the Iranian, in special degree, an intense propensity to symbolism gave everything in the physical world a corresponding meaning for the spiritual. This meaning was not so much consciously applied, as immediately actualized or enacted by direct will, — a nerve-force by which mind and body were in such close *rapprochement* that they might be called the poles of one substance. All the stock phrases of the Avesta, — "pure mind and body;" "purity of thought, word, and deed;" "the beautiful body of Ahuramazda;"

<sup>1</sup> *Vendidad*, xiii. 7.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii. 21-25.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ix. 6.





"the soul of the Bull," — indicate this closeness of relation of the physical and spiritual: each is seen *in* the other, not inferred *from* it. The world is known as ethics; the will, as acts, forms, things done. Physical acts, destroying evil or preserving good things, actually enlarge the world of good. This intense concreteness of ethical passion or fire, unrestrained by prudential wisdom or physical science, explains the vast outlays of energy on things acceptable to Ahura, — in parks, paradises, dogs, irrigation, culture of the land, destruction of idols and noxious creatures, rites and pomps. Mass had essential spiritual value in these things; every insect killed, told for so much penance or moral service. The "Acta Martyrum Persarum" says that to kill flies was a sign of conversion from Christ to Zoroaster! The blows with the scourge (*graoshô-charana*), which were supposed to have been given to the back of the offender, were in fact given by him to the noxious creatures of Ahriman; and even penance was estimated in good works.<sup>1</sup>

This confusion of physical and moral, with its accompanying ritualism, does not forbid a marked degree of ethical earnestness in the Avesta. The Bible of free-will, it insists everywhere on free choice and life-long consecration to the moral war. Its root-idea is, that falsehood (infidelity to thought or faith) is radically destructive; that truth is practically creative and holy. Penalties for violation of promise or contract (*mithrô-druj*), affect not only the offender, but descend to his children.<sup>2</sup> In later times, tremendous self-imprecations were drawn up as guards against falsehood;<sup>3</sup> and we know from the Greeks what importance the Persians attached to truth. Light itself is truth. The promise must be kept, *even with an unbeliever*. The value of all outward acts was in purity of thought and upright will. The Gâthâ-ahunavaiti says: "They whose thoughts are not pure, from them the good

<sup>1</sup> Harlez, ii. 101.<sup>2</sup> *Mithr-Yasht*, 2.<sup>3</sup> *Avesta*, ii. lvii.; Spiegel.





spirit flees."<sup>1</sup> The Hâdôkht-Nask says: "The one recital of the Word which is worth all that exists, is that when the speaker forsakes evil thoughts, words, and deeds."<sup>2</sup> "Our own souls praise we, our own Fravashis praise we;" and "may you seek for what is better than the good."<sup>3</sup> This ideal ignores all differences of age, or time, or sex: "The Fravashis of all pure men and women in all regions praise we."<sup>4</sup> "We praise all the just men and women that are, have been, or shall be."<sup>5</sup> Then as for duties to others: Yima's paradise of world-innocence was where "no strife entered, nor vexation, nor enmity, nor deceit." The Vispered says: "Have ready feet, hands, wills, to do good works and avoid evil ones." "Do good, give help to the helpless."<sup>6</sup> The holiest verse (*Ahuna-vairya*), distilled substance of the Word, says: "The kingdom to Ahura, whose law protects the weak."<sup>7</sup> And this is the vow of the believer: "With purity and good-will, O Ahura, I will protect the poor who serves Thee."<sup>8</sup> He who does not pay a just debt "is a thief of the loan, a robber of what is lent to him."<sup>9</sup> In the later Mînôkhired, it is pronounced meritorious to build caravansaries.<sup>10</sup> And see the confidence in an "all-beholding, all-renewing, unsleeping Helper of the just and good:" "Mithra, grant that we may be well-wishing, of friendly mind, loved and honored, and may slay every evil desire,"—"Mithra, whom the lord of the region, the ruler of the clan, and the master of the household ever with uplifted hands call to aid; whom the poor man, devoted to the law but robbed of his goods, ever with uplifted hands calls to aid; the voice of whose weeping ascends to

<sup>1</sup> *Yasna*, xxxiv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> "Righteousness is the only true purification." — *Vendidad*, x. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Yasna*, lviii. 5, 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Fravardin-Yasht*, 144.

<sup>5</sup> *Yasna*, xli. 4, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Vispered*, xviii. 1-5.

<sup>7</sup> Roth translates the *Ahuna-vairya* differently. "Ahura has placed in this world, as well as in the better, a shepherd for those who need." (*Zeitsch. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellschaft* xxv. 20.) "Craosha has built a firm abode for the poor." — *Yasna*, lvi. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Yasna*, xxxiv. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Vendidad*, iv. 1, 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Avesta*, ii. lviii.





the stars and goes round the earth," — "Mithra, whose long arms grasp forward with strength; from far Indies to farthest West, and on the Northern stream, and at the ends of the world. The unrighteous thinks, 'Mithra sees not these evil deeds;' but I think in my soul no man on earth with hundredfold strength thinks, speaks, or does so much evil as Mithra with heavenly strength thinks, speaks, and does good."<sup>1</sup>

Craosha smites the unchaste.<sup>2</sup> The Gâthâs admonish young married couples to "clothe each other with purity, after the righteous law, and bring great joy."<sup>3</sup> The Vendidad shows its respect for pure relations between the sexes, when it makes the giving of one's sister or daughter as a pure virgin to a true believer an atonement for injuring a creature pure to Ahura, or believed to protect the husbandman's food.<sup>4</sup> Marriage with unbelievers is forbidden.<sup>5</sup> The married are of course honored beyond the unmarried; and while there are no signs of polygamy in the Avesta,—though Greek writers of a later date assert its existence,<sup>6</sup> to a limited extent, and also the Shâh-Nâmeh,—the later Pârsî writings define strictly the grounds that allow the husband to put aside his wife, and even permit him to take another to secure posterity, since increase of progeny adds strength to Ahura's hosts.<sup>7</sup> The poor, however, had but one wife. Marriage with near relatives was in high esteem, probably as keeping the clan-blood pure.<sup>8</sup> The marriage of even the nearest,—a result of the primitive veneration for ties of blood,—was, according to the Bundeshesh,<sup>9</sup> one of the three inviolable things with which Ahriman could not intermingle, the custom being derived

<sup>1</sup> *Mithra-Yasht*, 34, 84, 85, 105, 106.

<sup>2</sup> *Yasna*, lvi. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Yasna*, lli. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Vendidad*, xiv. 64-66; xiii. 169.

<sup>5</sup> *Vendidad*, xviii. 123, 124.

<sup>6</sup> Herodotus says that the Persians of his day have many wives and concubines; and Strabo adds, for the purpose of gaining children.

<sup>7</sup> *Avesta*, ii. xxxi.; Spiegel.

<sup>8</sup> *Vispered*, iii. 18; Herod., iii. 83

<sup>9</sup> *Bundeshesh*, xxxv.





from the Persians of the older time.<sup>1</sup> We do not hesitate to set this down as proof, in that age of the world, that the awe of religion centred in the family, and made all that bound its members, for present and future time, in closest union supremely sacred. The Vendidad has laws against infanticide, holding man, woman, and child alike guilty; also commanding that the father of an illegitimate child shall maintain it.<sup>2</sup> We find no definition either of marital powers (except the general command to the wife to obey the husband) or of parental rights. The Vispered calls "the mistress of the house" to the sacrifice, "the woman of pure thoughts, words, acts, irreproachable, and submissive to her spiritual teacher."<sup>3</sup>

All virtues centre in the duty of spreading the good Mazdayasnan law of purity (*Asha*),<sup>4</sup>—the profit of the world. No sin like the violation of that law; no terms of friendship with the unbeliever in it.<sup>5</sup> Mazdean morality is indeed often brought into contradiction with natural humanity, like that of other religions, by its dependence on the interests of the faith. Thus physicians, where they are uncertain about remedies, are to experiment first, not on Mazdeans, but on unbelievers. Nevertheless, not even with these shall the true believer *deal falsely*.<sup>6</sup> The sacredness of the elements made the acts of all other faiths intolerable in many ways. Yet the Persian kings for the most part were tolerant. The Iranians believed themselves a chosen people, sent to redeem the world; and this, as with the Hebrews, was but the natural climax of a vehement self-assertion of the personal will. Ahriman's temptation of Zoroaster consisted in the attempt to induce him

<sup>1</sup> Deog. Laert. and Strabo.

<sup>2</sup> *Vendidad*, xv.

<sup>3</sup> *Vispered*, iii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Vispered*, viii. 11.

<sup>5</sup> The unbelievers, teachers of evil doctrine (Karapans and Kavis), are said (*Yasna*, xxxii.) to destroy the holy words and the spirit of life; to spoil Ahura's good intent, and help the wicked who make desolate the fields, and destroy the cattle. It does not seem easy to identify these enemies, who certainly could not have been Aryans. Harlez.

<sup>6</sup> *Idih-Vasht*, i.





to curse the good Mazdayasñian law, and was defeated by his reciting the sacred formula,<sup>1</sup> the Ahuna-vairya. The Haomas, Beregnas, and the various priestly names and services by which the ritual was conducted, and in which the virtue of the law was carried, were called the "victorious remedies;"<sup>2</sup> and these organized forms of propaganda came more and more to absorb into themselves the meaning of "purity." The priests, who are hardly emphasized in the oldest Gâthas, gradually became conspicuous, and priestly purity is celebrated in hymns and prayers. They seem to have had no power except that of performing rites, and of receiving a portion of the offering; and the "pure man," as such, appears competent to religious functions in the Zoroastrian system. He is in fact pure by virtue of rightly fulfilling the religious order. The later, more strictly organized priesthood were probably of Median origin. No offering of blood to Ahura or his powers; creatures were cut in pieces, all but a part of the caul, to be carried away by the worshippers and eaten: the gods did not want the body, but the soul (the dead being impure). So says Strabo;<sup>3</sup> and this is in accordance with the Avesta. Nothing here justifies the holocaust of Persian kings, which could only have been for food; nor the burial of living men, which was in honor of deities under the earth (*Chthonioi*),—such as are recorded of Queen Amestris and others.

The service was a prayer and hymn; Haoma juice poured out; bread and fruits, use of the "holy cup." Prayers were offered for others; for the dead, for the pure, for the creatures of Ahura. So the Persians, we are told, prayed for all Persians.

Practical religious earnestness, and the wide sweep of Ahura's purpose over all exclusive ambitions, in personal discipline or positive labor, made caste impossible. The

<sup>1</sup> *Vendidad*, xix.

<sup>2</sup> *Vispered*, viii.

<sup>3</sup> Strabo, xv.





Gâthâs divide the Iranians into four classes, — priests, warriors, agriculturists, and artisans; <sup>1</sup> and these, by exercise of the duty of "the pure man," equally bring forth the Holy Word of right thought, word, and deed.<sup>2</sup> Caste was never established, in any proper sense, in Iran. The clan was developed to contain chiefs of the house, village, tribe, province, and "Zarathustra as the fifth" in some regions; as the fourth in others.<sup>3</sup> What is Zoroaster here? High priest? It may be. But there is no mistaking in the Avesta the aristocratic tone which inheres in the worship of will, even in the organization of the early Iranians; as we see in the Vispered, where is given the ritual of the Gahanbâr feasts, in honor of the six days of creation, or six seasons, six yearly feasts described in the Bundeshesh. It opens with an invitation to lords and chiefs of all kinds, typical heads of creatures, qualities, forms, every one of which is thus represented in the great dualistic war. These typical chiefs are called the "givers" of the classes in question; and so there are hierarchical orders of priests, just as Ahura has his subordinates, and these their own, in celestial descending series. In the (later) Khordad-Yasht, Zoroaster is forbidden to teach the law to any other than the priestly family (so the sentence is interpreted); but this could not have been done in the time of the Gâthâs. A striking illustration of the formulizing spirit, and its work upon the accumulated material of later ethics and ritualism, is found in the Patets, or confessional formulas, which contain anxiously minute enumerations of every conceivable short-coming, and prayers for forgiveness of every sin that could be thought of, as if everything depended on specifying every iota of desire or conscience in the liturgy, all of which indicates a long period of real ethical

<sup>1</sup> *Yagna*, xix. 17: Haug.

<sup>2</sup> Haug's translation, making appointment of a spiritual guide one of these duties, is certainly doubtful.

<sup>3</sup> *Yagna*, xix. 18.





earnestness before it could have come to this. The serious business of self-discipline seems to have haunted the Iranians of the Avesta; and the very fables of the race, it has been observed, "are free from the wild excesses of imagination, and have a severe and moral aspect."<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to deny the moral earnestness of a faith whose ceremonial invocations enumerate hosts of good men. The preservation of their names alone, in this form, is the surest evidence of long ages of pious gratitude and honor to the best.<sup>2</sup> That hero-worship, which we have affirmed to be at the root of Iranian mind, has here its perfect illustration. The "Fravashis of the pure" are the earliest type of a religion of humanity, foreshadowing the modern cultus of genius and character. Here begins the religious recognition of human personality. The Bundelesh gives as the significance of the myth which brings forth man from the seed of Gâyomard in the form of a tree, from whose leaves sprang ten varieties of men and women, the sexes inseparable from each other and not to be told apart, — that the soul being first made, and placed in the body as its instrument, lifts this by its invisible power to the upright form; and, like a tree, strives upward, that it may come to the Yazatas, or heavenly ones.<sup>3</sup> "To the progenitors of mankind Ahura said, 'Speak ye good words, do good acts, yield not to the evil ones; be perfect.'"<sup>4</sup> The destiny of men and spirits hangs on the majesty of Truth, and on the weakness and self-destruction of Falsehood. Ahriman's fatality is that he chooses a lie, and so sees nothing truly, blundering till it is too late to save himself; while Ahura, because he *is* truth, foresees the tendencies of the world, and wins the conflict before it begins.

<sup>1</sup> Harlez, ii. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Fravardin-Yasht*. The Bundelesh gathers up chronological data covering zodiacal periods with ethical and moral personages; xxxiv.

<sup>3</sup> *Bundelesh*, xv.; Justi.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxiii.





And when he foretells the issue to his great enemy, so overwhelming is the presence of Truth that Ahriman at the first third of what he hears, bends in fear; at the second, falls on his knees; at the third, flees and buries himself in darkness for three thousand years. So inestimable and imperishable is the Law of Truth embodied in its great Prophet, that the seed of Zoroaster is held under the guardianship of a million Fravashis of the Pure.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bundehesh*, xxxiii.





CSL

III.  
ZARATHUSTRA.





## ZARATHUSTRA.

IT is remarkable that a religion which represents the worship of personality in its intensest degree should have been destined to lose almost every personal record of its origin. Zoroaster is the obscurest figure in the line of prophets and messiahs.<sup>1</sup> It is even uncertain, notwithstanding Spiegel's strong impression of unity in the final form of the Avesta, whether the personal references, either in the oldest or latest parts of that work of ages, point to any one historical founder or systematizer of the faith. Such have been the fortunes of the Avesta, that not only have the greater portion of its original books (*nosks*) been lost, but the heroic traditions of the Iranian race, which might have thrown light upon its religious history, can be brought into connection therewith only by the very imperfect hints and incidental notices contained in three or four chapters. The passages in which Zarathustra is either referred to or introduced as speaking in person, which are made the most of in Haug's translation, are not of decisive importance. Even the striking passage in the *Grosh-Yasht*, which ascribes to him the authorship of the five *Gâthâs*,<sup>2</sup> does not conclusively prove historic personality; and the prophet comes before us mainly as an ideal personage. Whether calling men to repentance and choice between good and evil, or conversing with Ahura; whether in prayer, in ritual service, or in temptation; whether

<sup>1</sup> See Spiegel (*Königlich bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, January, 1867), who shows, by a complete analysis of authorities, how entire this uncertainty is.

<sup>2</sup> *Yagna*, lvi.





exalted or persecuted,—he is the official and chosen instrument of his God. The human element is absorbed in the divine function of propagator of the law through the miraculous power of the Word. He expresses no sense of humility in view of his great mission; he performs no heroic act. No sympathy is sought in his behalf. And all the apparent records of his life might easily be the constructed tradition of a body of priests. Moses, Buddha, Jesus, of whom much the same officialism is true, though in different ways, had the advantage of written records. And this is also true of Confucius, who enters no other than natural claims. But the founder of the Iranian religion could have had no aid from writing; and the Iranian Word, by whomsoever spoken, must have been committed solely to the energy of the moral idea, to the antagonism of good with evil, to the inspiration of will by a common impulse.

The name Zarathustra, at all events, cannot of itself stand for any special individual, since the numerous interpretations of it,—as “star of gold,” “star of life,” “singer of praise,” “brave camel owner,” and “seed of Venus” (Ishtar),—are becoming superseded (at least so far as they are supposed to designate such individuality) by that which explains it as the generic name of the Iranian high-priesthood, and as simply meaning “spiritual elder” or “chief.”<sup>1</sup> Following Pārsī traditions,<sup>2</sup> Haug regards *Çpī-tama*, frequently used in connection with Zarathustra, as the real or family name of the prophet. We have here another illustration of the historic law that those names by which traditional founders of religions have come down to us, are simply designations of spiritual or ecclesiastical function; such as *the Buddha*, *the Messiah* (Christ), *the*

<sup>1</sup> That the word has a superlative (*Zarathustrōtemē*), seems decisive of the question. Haug has strongly insisted on this meaning (*Essays*, etc.), p. 296; somewhat similar was the suggestion of the learned Anthony Troyer, in his notes to the *Debistan*, i. 212.

<sup>2</sup> So Ctesias; Spiegel: *Avetta*, iii. lxxvii. So Franck: *Études Orientales*, p. 222.





Zarathustra, — names perhaps given to individuals but little known, perhaps themselves merely personifications, as points of historic attachment for the religions in those earlier traditions or associations from which they sprung.

This generic quality of the name explains the great variety of dates given for the age of Zarathustra, running all the way from 6000 to 600 B.C.;<sup>1</sup> which has led scholars to suppose that there must have been two or more of the name,<sup>2</sup> — the fact being that the name is simply messianic, and employed to supply a personal centre to all obscure and yet important movements in Iranian history. Assuming Çpitama Zarathustra to have been the chief personage of the Avestan religion, this question of his age would lead into discussions that promise little satisfaction: such as where Airyana-vaêjō, his favorite region, may have been; where Pourushaça, his father, may have lived; where the Hystaspes or Vistāça, whom he is said in the Avesta to have converted, may have reigned.<sup>3</sup> Two points may be held as settled: First, the author of the oldest parts of the Avesta cannot have been far removed in date from the Vedic period, with which they are closely connected; and, second, the Greek writers<sup>4</sup> of the fourth and fifth centuries before Christ could not possibly have referred him to so remote an antiquity as many thousand years before their own day, if he had lived in the time of Hystaspes, the father of Darius I., only two hundred years previous. Only later writers, many centuries after Christ, — for

<sup>1</sup> Rapp (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgend. Gesellsch.*, xix. 21); Spiegel: *Erän. Alterth.* i. 673; Shen's *Mirkhānā*, 174; Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*; Pliny: *Natural History*, xxx. Anquetil-Duperron and Hyde were the first moderns who adopted the latter date. They are followed by Franck: *Etudes Orientales*, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley, *Lives of Philosophers*, counts six of the name, and of all nations.

<sup>3</sup> See Mövers: *Die Phönizier*, i. 259. Rawlinson (*Journal Royal Asiatic Society*, xv. 245). Roth: *Gesch. uns. Abendland. Phil.* i. 349. Harlez: *Preface to Avesta*, i. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Xanthus of Lydia, Aristotle, etc. Haug: *Lecture on Zoroaster*, 1868. Hermippus (250 B.C.) speaks of two million verses by Zoroaster: a pure impossibility, even in the credulity of tradition, if he lived only four hundred years previously.





example, all the Mahometan historians,<sup>1</sup> — place him in this Achæmenidan period.<sup>2</sup> The extravagantly early date, 6000 B.C., on the other hand, is probably constructed out of the Babylonian tradition, recorded by Berosus, that Zoroaster was the first of a line of Median kings who ruled in that city in the third millennium before Christ. The number “6000” is a round number in Babylonian chronology, and signifies, says Haug, “great antiquity.” The cosmic system of the Mazdean books places him three thousand years after the beginning of the intermixture of good and evil in the universe, six thousand years after the creation of the earth, that is, in the middle of time; of course, a requirement of the astronomico-religious myth.<sup>3</sup> The Median magi doubtless deified Zoroaster, and identified him with Zrvan-akarana (Time without bounds) in later times, if they did not originate this personation of what in the Avesta is simply a neuter term of relation.<sup>4</sup> The Avesta, however, gives as little reason for making Zarathustra a priest-king, as for supposing him the Time-fountain of Ormuzd and Ahriman. The uncertainty of the whole question of Çpitama's date is indicated by the differences between the almost equally valuable estimates of Haug,<sup>5</sup> Rapp,<sup>6</sup> Duncker,<sup>7</sup> and Harlez,<sup>8</sup> which cover a period of four hundred years between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries before Christ.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Roth: *Geschichte unserer abendländ. Phil.* i. 351.

<sup>2</sup> The confidence with which Roth (*Gesch. uns. abend. Phil.* vol. i.), speaks of this date shows how much has been done since his work appeared.

<sup>3</sup> See Windischmann: *Zoroastrische Studien*, p. 162. Roth (*Gesch. uns. abend. Phil.*, 1862, vol. i., 380-390) ingeniously argues that the Vistâspa of the Avestan Yashts was Hystaspes, father of Darius, king of Bactria, subdued by Cyrus; that on Darius's accession to the throne of Cambyses, he made Zoroastrianism the religion of the Persian empire.

<sup>4</sup> Lenormant: *Chaldean Magic* (English edition), p. 229.

<sup>5</sup> Haug: *Essays*, etc., p. 299.

<sup>6</sup> *Zeitschr. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xix. 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Geschichte des Alterthums*, ii. 317.

<sup>8</sup> *Avesta*, i. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Windischmann, *Zoroastrische Studien*, pp. 260-313, gives the fullest account of the testimonies of the ancients concerning the age of Zoroaster. See also Roth, as above.





The nativity of the prophet is another mystery. Was he Chaldean, Median, Bactrian? Here is fine hunting-ground for the Bibliolaters, Christian and Perso-Arabian. Was he not a servant of Jeremiah, or an associate of Noah or Abraham,<sup>1</sup> or even of Adam?<sup>2</sup> Whether Spiegel<sup>3</sup> and Duperron<sup>4</sup> have better reasons for placing his birth in western Iran, in contact with their favorite Semitic race, than have Ctesias in ancient, and Haug,<sup>5</sup> Duncker,<sup>6</sup> Harlez,<sup>7</sup> and Rapp,<sup>8</sup> in modern times, for regarding Bactria as his home, — certain it is that the Avesta itself, both in language and geography, is decidedly an Old Bactrian work, and speaks of the more occidental portions of the Iranian plateau as infidel or accursed. I can see no good reason for dissociating the person or the faith of Zarathustra from their Vedic connections, either in place or time.

On the whole, all speculation concerning Çpitama is confused by the fact that the Avesta itself was brought together long after its earliest portions were composed; and with such an intermingling of history and tradition, of legend and hymn, and prayer and formula and doctrine, that no biographical inference can be drawn from any portion of its books.

The development of the Zarathustrian Idea or Faith follows a similar track to that of the New Testament Christ. In the earlier parts of the Avesta, Zoroaster hears the revelation of Ahura as a man, as it rises upon him out of the sacrificial flame.<sup>9</sup> It is industrial and moral; commands agriculture,<sup>10</sup> and the choice between sin and righteousness, for life and for death; denounces the Dævas,<sup>11</sup> their worshippers and their spells. The chosen messenger

<sup>1</sup> See Harlez: *Avesta*, i. 18 n.

<sup>2</sup> *Erân. Alterth.*, i. 676, 684.

<sup>3</sup> *Essays*, etc., p. 297.

<sup>4</sup> *Avesta*, i. 17.

<sup>5</sup> *Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesell.* xix.; also Rawl. *Anc. Mon.* iii. 380.

<sup>6</sup> *Yaçna*, xxx.; Haug.

<sup>7</sup> Honors the Soul of the Earth, — the Cow. i. *Gâthâ*.

<sup>8</sup> Ernest de Bunsen: *Hidden Wisdom*, etc.

<sup>9</sup> *Avesta*. Also Roth: *Stud. d. abend. Phil.* i. 378.

<sup>10</sup> *Gesch. d. Alterth.* ii. 315.

<sup>11</sup> *Yaçna*, xxxiii.



of Ahura vows fidelity: "I have believed in thee. I will destroy the wicked and comfort the good. Grant Thou me goodness.<sup>1</sup> I will proclaim the Best. May perfect Wisdom direct me, — He whom my prayers pursue, Life of the good mind and word and deed."<sup>2</sup> He complains of desertion and neglect: "Whither shall I turn? None of the shepherds, none of the rulers, respect me. I am helpless. Look down on me while I implore thee, Ahura, to grant the comfort which one gives his friend. The wicked holds the goods of the just. Whoso works with righteousness in my cause, to him shall be given both the earthly goods and the spiritual life as a reward; for thou possessest all, who art my assurance."<sup>3</sup> "To Zarathustra Ahura commits the good of the world (settlements)."<sup>4</sup> He is the friend of Ahura, "uttering the sacred hymns (*māthra*), the laws given by my wisdom," says the Earth-Soul.<sup>5</sup> "It is said that to Āpitama Ahura granted the best good, by reason of his sincere worship, forever; and he gives the same to all who keep the words and do the acts enjoined by the holy law."<sup>6</sup> In the most of these earliest Gāthās, Zoroaster is not even a chosen prophet, but simply a man in earnest to seek the truth and proclaim it, amidst hostile bands, at the head of a few followers. But it is not easy to separate this stage from that of miracle and special messianic sense, which seems to have sprung directly from it. The story of his temptation by Ahriman<sup>7</sup> is believed by Haug to be an ancient lyric. The Evil One recognizes that this new-comer is destined to enthrone righteousness, and tries in vain to seduce him from the work appointed; but he is so baffled and dazed by the Divine Word, and Zarathustra's vow to fulfil it, that with the whole devil-troop he casts himself down into hell; nor does he ever become visible,

<sup>1</sup> *Yagna*, xliii.; Haug.

<sup>2</sup> *Yagna*, xli.; Haug.

<sup>3</sup> *Yagna*, l.; Haug.

<sup>4</sup> *Yagna*, xlv.; Haug.

<sup>5</sup> Haug.

<sup>6</sup> *Yagna*, liii.; Haug.

<sup>7</sup> *Vendidad*, ix.





either of himself or through them, afterwards, but works in darkness and unseen. This last is probably a later feature, but the temptation story itself represents a somewhat more official function in the reformer than that earliest stage which we have pointed out. Here we find little or no ritualism, no official glory, no pre-existence, no supernatural power. His relations are human, his interests domestic as well as public; his father's name is given as a Soma-saint, and the marriage of his daughter is mentioned.<sup>1</sup> The Bundeshesh doubtless goes back to this early period in reciting the names of his progenitors and children, counting three daughters and three sons, one of whom was the chief of priests, the ancestor of all later Mobads.<sup>2</sup>

Later, the Haoma-Yasht introduces Zarathustra as conversing with the personified Sacrificial Plant; learning that by preparing and offering it, the blessing of giving birth to great deliverers was received by saints of old, and by his own father last; and praying that he may obtain from it absolute power to go through the world, destroying the evil mind.<sup>3</sup> In the later parts of the Yaçna he receives the supernal formula or prayer, "which was before the worlds," and whose recitation gives eternal life;<sup>4</sup> a Word so holy that whoever leaves out any portion of it in muttering shall be cast into hell.<sup>5</sup> Here Zarathustra is spoken of as one of the five rulers or chiefs who are placed over each "region" of Iran,—probably as priest, and evidently represents the priestly authority as such.

Later still, in the Yashts, are revealed to him the twenty mystic names of Ahura, and the supernatural spells for averting evil.<sup>6</sup> He is commanded to keep their mystery a secret from all but the priests (*Zaota*).<sup>7</sup> All the divine

<sup>1</sup> *Yaçna*, i. 17; lii. 3; Hailes. But Haug translates differently. Spiegel is confusing as to this matter of the daughter.

<sup>2</sup> *Bundeshesh*, xxx. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Yaçna*, xix. 2, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ormazd-Yasht*; *Ardibahist-Yasht*.

<sup>5</sup> *Yaçna*, ix.

<sup>6</sup> *Yaçna*, xix. 12-15.

<sup>7</sup> *Khordad-Yasht*.





beings and powers by whose aid men are saved, are laid open to his spirit.<sup>1</sup> The Fravardîn-Yasht pronounces him first of priests, warriors, husbandmen; first teacher of purity, and destroyer of Dævas; in whom was revealed the whole Word, and whom the immortals desired as lord and master of the worlds; by whose birth and growth trees and streams had increase, and all creatures were made to shout for joy: "Hail, fire-priest (*Âthrava*), Çpitama Zarathustra, born for us, to offer sacrifice for us, and spread abroad the holy rite and law!" In the Hādōkt-Nask his words are treated as sovereign spells. Later still we have benedictions (*Afringâns*) on kings in his name.<sup>2</sup> The Vendidad is mainly made up of revelations to him as the mediator of truth to men. It has been truly said, that "no heathen religion is so distinctly stamped with the idea of doctrinal revelation as this."<sup>3</sup>

In the Vispered, Zarathustra is lord of earthly creatures, as Ahura of heavenly.<sup>4</sup> The rites are all formulized, the priestly functions set, the Mazdean priest is the disciple of Zarathustra,<sup>5</sup> and the services rehearse the means of salvation bestowed by Mazda, by Zarathustra, and by the chief of Zarathustras (*Zarathustrêtemô*).<sup>6</sup>

And in the still later mythology, the future saviours are his descendants. The last and greatest, Sosyosh, is miraculously born of a virgin by his inspiration. Still the veneration grew. Greek writers ascribed to him millions of verses,<sup>7</sup> covering, according to Arabic writers, a thousand ox-skins. An immense quantity of literature actually became current as his. Suidas, Pliny, and others refer to him as a great authority on natural science;<sup>8</sup> and the Pârsi traditions make him the author of the twenty-one nosks of the Avesta, of which but a small part remains. Pliny

<sup>1</sup> *Mihir and Fravardîn-Yashts*.

<sup>2</sup> Döllinger, p. 381.

<sup>3</sup> *Vispered*, vi. 6.

<sup>4</sup> See Pliny, v. 422.

<sup>5</sup> Haug: *Essays*, etc., p. 223.

<sup>6</sup> *Vispered*, ii. 6: xix. 708.

<sup>7</sup> *Vispered*, x.

<sup>8</sup> Pliny, vi. 447, 448.





records the story that "his brain pulsed so strongly on the day of his birth as to repel the hand laid upon it,—a presage of his future wisdom."<sup>1</sup> The Perso-Arabic mythologists who have, if possible, less historic sense than those of Mediæval Christendom, have surrounded him with the usual halo of supernatural phenomena, which are rehearsed with spiritual Sufi interpretations in the *Dabistân*. Torn from the womb by wild beasts, he is rescued and restored thereto by a beautiful youth, coming forth from a mountain with the Word and the Branch, who says to his mother, "Fear not, thy son shall be the prophet of the just God."<sup>2</sup> He laughs at the instant of birth, in token probably either of triumph or good-will.<sup>3</sup> The efforts of wicked kings and magicians to destroy him are thwarted by the brute creatures, to which he brings relief.<sup>4</sup> He is transported like Mahomet to heaven, subjected to supernatural bodily changes, instructed of God, without mediation of angels, in all mysteries and powers. The Sassanian saints of the Avestan faith repeat his miracles,<sup>5</sup> and the Mahometan mystics rehearse his parables with transcendental exegesis.<sup>6</sup> This idealization supplied the one form of religious tribute which Iranian will-worship lacked; namely, the pantheistic. The *Bundehesh* says the Persian Mobads all trace back their lineage through Zoroaster to Manuscihra.<sup>7</sup> All the phases familiar to our studies of the messianic idea in its development in other religions are found in the Zarathustra legend. While the older Avesta, at least, is comparatively sober in its tone, the moral interest quite absorbing the theological and even the imaginative, and the prophet, though of surpassing strength and wisdom, does not aim to violate natural laws, but to teach the dignity of labor and the holiness of truth, later tradition has carried him through

<sup>1</sup> Pliny, *l.* 135.<sup>2</sup> *Dabistan*, i. 324.<sup>3</sup> *Dabistan*, i. 216.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 364.<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.<sup>6</sup> *Bundehesh*, xxxiii.<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 220-221.





the whole catena of official signs. He leaves his native land, goes into the mountains to prepare for his mission, lives seven years in a grotto amidst mystic emblems devoted to Mithra (the type of the future cave of Mithraic rites), fasts in the desert, is tempted by a personal devil, walks on the sea, performs wonderful cures, and overrules the elements. He withdraws to a burning mountain for thirty years; comes unharmed out of the flames, exhorting to faith in righteousness.<sup>1</sup> Clement of Alexandria reports from Plato, that he returned to life on a funeral pile after having lain dead for twelve days.<sup>2</sup> The mystical oracles, brought together and inscribed with his name in the Platonic schools, have no relation to the Zoroaster of the Avesta save as indicating his ideal reputation as the father of mystery and magic,<sup>3</sup> and showing how wide a field of thought and tendency the name of a far-off Master of religious traditions may be stretched to cover. As for Mahometan and Perso-Arabic fictions about him, — from Firdûsî to Mirkhond and the Dabistân, — they have no limit nor law. I select this from the Dabistân. When Zoroaster was in heaven, he entreated of God, "Close the door of death against me; let that be my miracle." But God said, "If I close the gates of death against thee, thou wilt not be satisfied; nay, thou wouldst entreat death of me."<sup>4</sup> The mythical history of Zoroaster in the Avesta is moulded upon earlier traditions, and fully illustrates the continuity of religious ideas and forces.<sup>5</sup> As receiver of the law of Ahura, he repeats Yima (first king) and Gayô-mard (first man). As Nature hails his advent, and Ahri-man is struck with terror, so it was with his prototypes, the

<sup>1</sup> See Rapp (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xix. 34).

<sup>2</sup> Clement of Alexandria: B. v. chap. 14; Plato: *Republic*, B. x. chap. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Pliny, B. xxx., chap. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Dabistân*, i. 263.

<sup>5</sup> According to Darmesteter, he comes from the old mythology of the storm-cloud. *Orm. et Ahrim.*, p. 194.





former messengers of truth. In him the achievements of the long line of Fire-saints and heroes are re-enacted, — of Tistrya, Verethraghna, Apâm-napât, Âtar, Gayômarâd; "he is the man of the Light hidden in the Cloud." This is Darmesteter's designation of the Iranian messiahs. For in all the features of the legend he discerns transformations of the primitive Aryan myth of the storm-cloud, the nucleus of Vedic inspiration also. Thus Pourushaspa, his father, "man of horses," is the "atmospheric divinity of light," victorious in the elemental war. The powers that assail him in his infancy are the old spirits of the storm under new names. The "temptation" of the prophet by Ahriman, with its sharp interchange of words, is again the roar of the storm, mingling its strange enigmatic noises; only they are now in form of questions that may be resolved on penalty of death, or of replies that meet threat with threat, proposal with contempt, and rage with rebuff. His conversations with Ahura even, by which the law is revealed, are also the direct representatives of the thunder that rolled back and forth through the old Aryan heavens. By this ingenious appliance of evolution, all the voices of this great drama of Dualism, of whatever sort, are absorbed into the primal storm-music of the "holy mountain" of the atmosphere,<sup>1</sup> as symbolic types and historic germs of the Zoroastrian law.<sup>2</sup>

Without accepting this result in all its minute details, we at least recognize the law of historic derivation which lies at its base. Whatever obscurity covers the personality of Zarathustra, the central doctrine of his faith is traceable with certainty as far back as the fifth century before Christ, at which period Darius wrote the inscription,<sup>3</sup> — "*Ormuzd is a great God; he made the earth and the heavens; and he created man.*"

<sup>1</sup> *Vendidad*, xxii. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Darmesteter: *Orm. et Ahrim.*, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> Inscription of Mount Elvend.





It has been commonly supposed that the reformation effected by Zarathustra in the old Aryan religion, consisted in concentrating on the name of Ahuramazda the veneration before distributed among a great number of deities, especially those mentioned in the Avesta, whether as good or evil powers. The most of these Avesta gods belong also to the Veda, and probably, in one form or another, were inherited from the older Aryan stock.<sup>1</sup> A like simplification also took place in India, where all earlier deities were, by priestly authority and intellectual abstraction, absorbed into the unity of Brahma. In the latter case, however, the tendency was towards impersonality, while in Zoroastrianism it was in the direction of an intenser personal worship. A closer resemblance may be found in the change of the old Hebrew *Elôhîm* into the distincter will of Jahveh.

But there is evidently more than a mere transfer of worship from many gods to one God involved in the Zoroastrian reform. The Avesta describes a practical war against Daeva-worshippers, — men regarded as infidels, destroyers of cattle as well as souls. Their offence was, — unless the Avesta is greatly misinterpreted, — choice of leaders (*Kavis* and *Karapans*), who led their souls to ruin through falsehood and excessive use of the Soma, not with religious awe, but as an intoxicating drink.<sup>2</sup> A Puritan revival, a practical protest in the name of conscience against the degeneracies of an organized church, — if such a church can be conceived of as existing among the early Aryans, — would thus lie at the root of Zoroaster's dualistic religion of battle against wrong. But his ethical revolution was also, in Haug's view, associated with the change from pastoral to agricultural life; and it cannot be denied that

<sup>1</sup> Duncker: *Gesch. d. Alterth.*, ii. 332; Lassen, Roth, etc. But the elements of Zoroaster are, as we have seen, in the oldest Aryan mythology: so that the special direction given to these elements in his name it is a matter of no slight difficulty to determine.

<sup>2</sup> See Haug: *Essays*, etc., p. 290.





this advance in social conditions has been the secret of the most important steps of progress in the early history of man. We have already seen that Turanian nomadic tribes were among the enemies of the Iranian settlements; and their connection with "Drujas" and the worship of "Daevas" is now and then evident.<sup>1</sup> But in Haug's view these enemies of the settlement were Vedic Aryans.<sup>2</sup> When once, however, a protest of the kind suggested in this theory had taken place, then a new name of deity, a reversal in the estimate of the old gods, a reconstruction of the traditional names and legends in the new ethical interest, a fanatical intensity in the sense of personal dependence and divine favor, religious intolerance, and a warfare more or less bitter with the partisans of the older belief,—in other words, the phenomena which the Avesta describes,—became natural results. Nevertheless, as we have already shown, many of these supposed evidences of such a schism from the Vedic Aryan gods and beliefs are imaginary, and the theory itself is without sufficient grounds.<sup>3</sup>

The main difference between the Vedic and Avestan religions is, that in the latter the Vedic worship of natural powers and phenomena is superseded by a more distinctly ethical and personal interest. Ahuramazda, the Living Wisdom, replaces Indra, the lightning god; whose war against the cloud-serpent to release the fertilizing rain is supplanted by the war of good-will against evil-will. But we shall err if we suppose the new interest to be moral as distinguished from physical. Progress is not by leaps, but by continuities. The difference is that a more vigorous personal motive is transfused through the same physical forces, which are no less the objects of desire and fear in the Avestan prayers than in the Vedic hymns; and as the moral element is by

<sup>1</sup> *Fravardin-Yasht*, 38; *Yagna*, xi. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Haug: *Essays*, etc., p. 293.

<sup>3</sup> See chapter on *The Moral Sense* (Elements).





no means wanting in the Veda, its absorbing power in the Avesta is but the natural development of the older belief that the cosmos represents in its opposing forces the inward strife of the soul. In other words, the transition is from a child-life in Nature, — fitful, susceptible, unconscious, to the life of conscious will ; the first necessity of which step is that the host of elemental powers should come into relation to a Central, Creative, Inspiring Force. The earnestness of the experience demands that this Force should be Holiness, Justice, and Good-will. These were already involved in Vedic conceptions. Varuṇa, undoubtedly the original of Ahura, was the god of moral as well as of physical or cosmical limits. Agni must be invoked with pure heart; Sūrya constructs or measures out the worlds, from a desire to benefit men.<sup>1</sup> But all these and other powers are held in equal honor by the worshippers, while in Varuṇa only is the moral law strongly emphasized. A great step was taken when this old Asura was enthroned as the one and perfect ideal; when the name of God meant righteousness, and “purity of heart, word, and deed” became the “Gāyatrī” among texts. The moral impulse is more clear and emphatic in the Avesta than is the monotheistic conviction; the reaction against polytheism can hardly be called absolute. Ahura himself was not a new god, or even a new name; and his ancient laws, to which the Avesta refers its own claims, are Varuṇa's eternal paths, his all-seeing Eye, his inevitable Bond.

Ahura is the Vedic Asura who stands in the later Indian hymns for a power hostile to the gods. The Asuras are sometimes the robbers who hide the clouds,<sup>2</sup> whom Indra punishes, taking their castles and cities in the sky,<sup>3</sup> whose spoils the Aṅvins bring from far;<sup>4</sup> sometimes they

<sup>1</sup> *Rig-Veda*, i. 160-64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 1; vi. 5 (Langlois), and throughout *Rig-Veda*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*. So *Yajur-Veda*, Muir, ii. 381.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, v. viii. 1. 31. (Langlois).





are apparently the same as Dasyus,<sup>1</sup> low-born aborigines, whom the Aryas fought as unbelievers and brutes. In this sense it is erroneously supposed<sup>2</sup> that the word is formed from *a* privative and *sûra* (god),—that is, godless being;<sup>3</sup> but this is not the original meaning of Asura, which stands for the very highest form of deity, in the sense of "life-possessing," "life-giving." To Savitri, Indra, Varuṇa, the title of "great Asura" is given.<sup>4</sup> "The children of the great Asura" are "the heroes who uphold the heavens." Asura it is who "delivers from sins; who props up the sky, measures the earth, and pervades all worlds."<sup>5</sup> These descriptions of the Vedic Varuṇa might be applied with all force to the Avestan Ahura. "Prajâpati [lord of creatures]," says the Brâhmana,<sup>6</sup> "created Asuras [living powers] with his breath (*asu*). Therein is their Asura-nature. Having created them, he regarded himself as their father; afterwards he made the Pitris." Here the Asura holds a secondary position, but still one of honor.

Another legend hints the occasion of the fall of the Asuras from their high estate. The Devas<sup>7</sup> and Asuras, both descendants of Prajâpati, inherited truth and falsehood in speech. Both were alike in speaking truth and falsehood. Then the Devas chose truth, rejecting deceit; the Asuras chose deceit, rejecting truth. Then came war, till the perpetually-invading Asuras were worsted and driven away."<sup>8</sup> This is precisely the Avesta story of good and evil powers, with a change of parts. It shows also that the original attribute of supreme power, at first belonging to both names in common, was divided on the two, according to moral distinctions, as already shown.

<sup>1</sup> *Rig-Veda*, vii. vii. 4, 8 (Langlois).

<sup>2</sup> Langlois: *Rig-Veda*, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> See Weber's *Indian Literature*, Eng. p. 302. Manu. xi. 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Rig-Veda*, i. iii. 7; i. i. v. 14; iii. ii. ix. 4; viii. v. ii. 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, i. i. v. 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Taittiriya Brâhm.* Muir, i. 23.

<sup>7</sup> "The Indo-Iranian *daiva*, 'god,' Sanscrit *deva*, becomes in Zend *dæva*, 'demon.'"  
Darmesteter: *Ormuzd et Ahriman*, p. 265.

<sup>8</sup> *S'atapatha Brâhm.* Muir, iv. 59, 108.





Even in their defeat the Asuras retained their reputation as the oldest and greatest of the gods. They were said to have possessed the ambrosia (*Amrita*) lodged in the mouth of Souchna (the magician); so that whereas the dead Deva must remain dead, the dead Asura could be restored to life. Indra changed himself into an atom of honey, which Souchna ate; and then into a bird, who bore it away in his mouth.<sup>1</sup> If the *Amrita* be the same as the Soma, we may connect this cycle of legends as to the precedence of the Asuras to the Devas, with the claim of the Avesta faith to trace back its origin to the earliest dispensers of the Soma to mankind.<sup>2</sup> In such passages as this of the tenth book of the *Rig-Veda*, "the sages behold with heart and mind the bird illuminated by the wisdom of the Asura," we see that there was a better Vedic foundation for the exalted meaning given to the name Ahura by Zarathustra than the war of the Devas against the Asuras afforded. May it not lead us back to the grand significance of the word, before the Deva-worship, representing a later form of religious consciousness, had become organized with its priesthood and rites, so as to set aside the earlier and simpler conception of deity as "Living Power" or "Breath"? Or did Zarathustra recur to this earlier and simpler conception when he would protest against forms which seemed ill in accord with its ethical contents? Many such intimations in the Avesta point to the older Aryan beliefs. It retains that which was probably the oldest name for fire-priest, Atharvan, — since the *Rig-Veda* describes Atharvan as "the first who strengthened the gods by sacrifice,"<sup>3</sup> calls Agni his child,<sup>4</sup> and Manu his friend.<sup>5</sup> He is even celebrated as the first deliverer of Agni from

<sup>1</sup> Kuhn: *Die Herabkunft des Feuers und des Göttertranks*, p. 144. See Anal. of Roth in Weber's *Ind. Stud.* iii. 466.

<sup>2</sup> *Harma-Yashé, Yagna*, ix.

<sup>3</sup> *Rig-Veda*, viii. iv. vii. 10. See also *Grihya-Sûtras*, *Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.* vii. 529.

<sup>4</sup> *Rig-Veda*, vii. vii. iii. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, i. v. xix. 16.





his cradle in the hollow of the wood (by friction?).<sup>1</sup> Both the Atharvans and the Angiras — probably the oldest of the priestly orders known to the Vedic Aryans — are objects of veneration in the Avesta. The Soma, earliest of sacrificial plants and inspiring drinks, is as highly exalted in the one faith as in the other.

It may, then, be that the Iranian and Vedic religions, as we now possess them, represent the somewhat differing results of a long period of separation dating back to a much earlier time than has been supposed. In this case, the Zarathustra of the Avesta may, as some have supposed, have been but one in a long line of priests of Ahuramazda, many of whom were his predecessors. His reformatory work may have been to give radical meaning and moral power to some tribal religious schism of earlier date, or to some inherited struggle against fetichistic or otherwise degrading tendencies, — perhaps against the raiders of barbarian Turan.

That the reformation embodied in the Avesta was the work of one man is obviously impossible; there is no such claim to be found in it. Zarathustra refers his religion to older times<sup>2</sup> and a series of antecedent revelations, though none of these are represented as of equal depth and power with his own. A long course of traditions and doctrinal preparation for his work is implied; and it is assumed that all the divine personages and functions in which it centres are familiar to his hearers. Nevertheless, the vigorous protest and summons in the earliest Gâthâs, their tone of personal assurance, the detail of private experiences and conversations with deity, are signs of an individual force that cannot be mistaken. The history of the Aryan schism, in which it is now by many scholars of repute believed that the religion of the Avesta was born, is

<sup>1</sup> Langlois on *Rig-Veda*, iv. v. 15, 73.

<sup>2</sup> The references to Yima, Kereçäpa, and Thraëtona, as first propagators of the Soma sacrifice and servants of Ahura, claim primitive authority for the law.





not only utterly beyond our vision, but highly improbable. The very name Zarathustra which embodies it, is, in part at least, a generic title. But the remoteness of the spirit and purpose of Ahuramazda from that of the Vedic hymns, really indicates that with him we enter on a new phase of historic development. A gulf opens which, while it does not imply a break in the continuity of experience, yet can be likened only to that which seems to occur in a personal life, when one becomes conscious of himself, of his character, of his needs, of a purpose in living, and of a will within him capable of fulfilling the ideal which these inspire. To explain a movement like this in the life of a people, no individual priest or prophet can be held sufficient. This call to choose between two masters who are already familiar to the conscience, to whatever it may refer, proves that the movement rested on a moral experience of the most public and social kind. The earliest Gâthâs do not seem to be a full-formed system of faith; but they are the outburst of certain recognized and well-understood elements of ideal purpose, into commanding power. Whatever the immediate cause of this crisis,—whether a change of social conditions, or a new relation with outside tribes or beliefs,—the most that Zarathustra could do was to energize and direct it as a given tendency. At the time when those passages were composed, which describe a social organization in which Zarathustra was one of four or five chiefs of classes in each region, the Iranian Church must have been fully formed. But the oldest Gâthâs have little ecclesiasticism as compared with later parts of the Avesta. They have no genii, nor hierarchical series of powers; they are simply a human protest against unseen powers, believed to be evil and destructive, in the name of others held to be righteous and preservative of body and soul.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Harlez: *Avesta*, ii. 29.





One thing is certain. In Iran there grew up what India never saw,—a consciousness of world-purpose, ethical and spiritual; a reference of the ideal to the future rather than to the past; a promise of progress. Yama, the Aryan god of the future world, became Yima, a human ideal of earthly bliss in this world; and from him downward through the earthly ages flows the ever-growing stream of revelation,—saviour after saviour,—to the day when all evil is to be swallowed up, and only righteousness endure. A motive force of ideal will had entered on its way, whose impulse the world was never to lose. And this is it: that the human will in its terrible struggle with Evil, its law of death, in its twofold possibility and attraction in every sensation and every thought, is yet bound for good; that the law of the universe means its deliverance and eternal triumph; that throughout its mighty cyclic year every depth of moral night heralds the dawn of a redeeming day.





CSL

IV.

THE AVESTA LITERATURE.





## THE AVESTA LITERATURE.

THE Pārsī tradition that the Bible of their fathers was destroyed by the Macedonian, rests on no historical evidence. How much of the Avestan literature has really been lost, we shall probably never know. Even when we have dismissed Hermippus' story that two million verses,<sup>1</sup> written on a thousand parchments, were contributed by Zarathustra to human knowledge, the later claim that there were originally twenty-one books or Nosks, treating of all possible subjects of thought, savors too much of mythical predetermination to fare any better at the hands of historical criticism; although the later Pehlevī writers describe the contents of these Nosks,<sup>2</sup> of which the present Avesta is said to contain but one complete, with fragments of two or three others, the number twenty-one is probably invented to correspond with the number of words in the holiest text of the Avesta. Much of what is lost is undoubtedly commentary on older texts. What remains is made up of text, the Avesta proper, and Zend commentary. It is in an extremely confused and fragmentary condition, owing in part to the fact that it was gathered up and arranged during the storms of the Macedonian period, or else after the Parthian conquerors had added their hostile interference to that of the Greeks, amidst the revolutionary reconstruction of Persian nationality by the first Sassanian king.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to an Arab writer.

<sup>2</sup> See Haug: *Essays*, etc., pp. 1241-44.

<sup>3</sup> Third century, A.D. The Avesta was not only gathered up at this time, in all probability, but translated also, in a free way, into Pehlevī (Huzvāresh), — a language largely Semitic, used in the coins and inscriptions of that period, whose script appears much earlier, probably



Nevertheless, it seems improbable that the hands which reverently sought out and brought together the precious members of this long-lost literary Isis, would have made much important change in the ancient form and features. Subsequent political rulers of Iran, especially the Mahometan, have probably spared these old records, written in a language which they could not comprehend. What influence the Semitic races of western Iran may have exerted on the formation of these Scriptures, before even the few fragments which have come down to us reached their present state, it is impossible to say. The language of the original, which some scholars have called Old Bactrian, is of great antiquity,—differing from the Vedic Sanskrit only as one Greek dialect differs from another,<sup>1</sup> and mainly in consequence of phonetic changes. But the alphabet in which it is now written is Semitic, its signs mainly coincident with the Pehlevî, of which it seems to be an expansion,<sup>2</sup> and belongs to the Sassanian period; whether also to an earlier period is now hardly matter of question.<sup>3</sup> But wherever or however first committed to writing, the old Avesta had its origin in eastern Iran. It regards the western regions as infidel; it knows nothing of the great cities of Persia in the eighth century before Christ; and the affinities of the language alone are decisive of the question. Moreover, the Zend, the translation and commentary in Pehlevî, made either by the Sassanians, or found by them as a survival from Achæmenidan and even probably from old Assyrian times<sup>4</sup>—could not have

even in the time of Seleucida (Levy : *Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.* xxi. 445). Perhaps signs of it appear in the Achæmenidan times. The later Pehlevî writings speak of a copy of the translation of Avesta, with the Zend, as destroyed by Alexander in (the fourth century B.C.). In the Pehlevî the Semitic words were read as Iranian equivalents. See Haug : *Essays*, etc. König. bayer. Akad. d. Wissen. February, 1869.

<sup>1</sup> See Haug : *Essays*, etc., pp. 69, 70. Duncker : *Gesch. d. Alterth.* ii.

<sup>2</sup> See Bollman : *Alphabet*.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Duncker : *Gesch. d. Alterth.* ii. 381; and Spiegel (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.* ix. 178).

<sup>4</sup> Haug : *Essays*, etc. p. 140.





been considered as of equal authority with the original Avesta; since we know<sup>1</sup> that for liturgical purposes the latter was used without translation, gloss, or comment, and even without separation into books.<sup>2</sup> This is evident from the old Pārsī manuscripts, from which the studies of Burnouf, Westergaard, Spiegel, and Haug (to whom we owe our real knowledge of the Avestan language) have been made.

These studies have also shown that the oldest part of the Avesta, the five Gāthās (of which we shall speak hereafter), is composed in a language evidently older than even the Old Bactrian. But the difference is not so great as to prevent the whole book, when separated from its Zend-commentary portions, from standing by itself as a piece of unquestionable antiquity. To find the joints between these parts in each chapter is one of the great problems of modern Avestan research, and has already been pursued by Haug, whose exceedingly valuable translations have unhappily been brought to an end by his early death.<sup>3</sup>

The antiquity of the Avesta is shown by other evidences than its language. Greek authors, from the third century before Christ, down to the second century after Christ, speak of the writings of Zoroaster, the hymns and sacrifices of the Avesta, and even cite passages from the work. And their references to religious rites and customs coincide with its precepts, while the cuneiform inscriptions testify to the worship of Ahuramazda;<sup>4</sup> and in all the manu-

<sup>1</sup> From the Pārsī MSS. Origen, from Celsus, says the Avestan writings of Zoroaster were extant in his time; also Philo of Byblos. Rapp (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*), xix. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Harlez: *Avesta*, i. 75.

<sup>3</sup> The translations consulted by the author are those of *Spiegel* (German), complete; *Haug* (German and English), covering only a portion, but the most important, — more comprehensible and lyrical than *Spiegel*, as well as more biographical and practical, giving a hold on actual life; of *Harlez*, an admirable French translation of nearly all, — a man, before the others, of great clearness, candor, and learning.

<sup>4</sup> For these authorities see Harlez, i. 28-30.





scripts, some of which are four hundred years old, and all from eastern Persia, the text is substantially the same.<sup>1</sup>

Probably, as we have said, no Bible in the world is in a condition so unsatisfactory to the student of comparative religion or historical progress as the Avesta. The very name is of uncertain meaning, though the idea of revealed law, or the sum of knowledge, is evidently the main element in it. That Zend is the name of a language is an exploded error, and Zend-Avesta is a misleading word. The Avesta is the Law; the Zend is a version and interpretation thereof.<sup>2</sup> According to Masûdi, a heretic in Persia was called a *Zendik*, as adhering to a gloss instead of the original Scripture.<sup>3</sup> So the Pârsî scholars say *Avesta* and *Zend*; and doubtless the best title for the Old Bactrian compilation of these writings is *Avestan*,—that of their commentary, *Zend*.<sup>4</sup> Haug's definition of Zend, as a "gnosis," would be better if the old Persian religion, even in paraphrase, dealt at all in mystery or metaphysics. But after all, the Zend passages, so far as they are yet separated in Haug's translations, stand to the Avestan chiefly in the nature of added emphasis, or cumulative detail arising from the progress of the religion as an institution.

But to the difficulty of separating the elements of the text, and referring them to their historical order, is added the still greater difficulty of determining their original meaning.<sup>5</sup> The translator may lay his emphasis either on

<sup>1</sup> There are portions of the text that exist *only* in the Pehlevî; and mixed with these "Zend" portions are others in a still later tongue (the "Pâzend," properly modern Persian or Pârsî), which serves as their only medium.

<sup>2</sup> See Haug: *Essays*, etc., p. 68. Harlez: *Avesta*, i. 27. Whitney: *Oriental Studies*, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> Haug, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Zend Studies* (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.* ix. 698).

<sup>5</sup> Few copies are still extant. "Here is no elaborate verbal commentary, with grammatical and lexicographical resources, as in the study of the Vedas; only a translation which scholars describe as equally obscure with the text it professes to explain." Spiegel (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.* i. 244). There is also a Sanskrit translation from this by Nersengh. See Haug: *Essays*, etc., 33.





the traditional sense of the words, as determined by the successive phases of Iranian experience, or on their philological sense, as determined by their relations with the Sanskrit, the nearest sister tongue. Roth and Haug pursue the latter track. Spiegel, while inclining to the former, maintains that he has not neglected the other source of information. The appeal of both sides to Burnouf, the first great explorer of the original Avestan language, is proof of the very high merit of the scholar to whom Oriental studies, in every department, are immensely indebted for their actual scientific method.<sup>1</sup> The translations of Haug and Spiegel differ widely, as may be expected. The assumption that the whole of a literature accumulating through a long series of ages can be taken in sum as the best interpreter of its earliest products, gives Spiegel's work a somewhat suspicious aspect; yet the native commentators should doubtless receive great attention in cases of very doubtful philological decision. The story of Anquetil-Duperron's heroic pioneer work (1768-71) in opening the Avestan literature to Europe, of its inhospitable reception by Sanskrit scholars, and the very great imperfections of his French translation of these books, arising from his own total ignorance of the original, and even of the grammar of the Pehlevi version, which alone was used, — and from an almost equal ignorance on the part of his Hindu-Pârsi teachers, — are too well known to be referred to except by way of contrast with the far more trustworthy researches of the last half-century. The real help afforded at every stage of this progress by the merits, and even by the errors, of preceding scholars, is admirably

<sup>1</sup> The controversy on the subject of the two methods may be consulted in the *Jour. of the German Arch. Soc.*; and a full illustration of the extended confidence reposed by Spiegel in the whole testimony of Iranian literature, to the meaning of the oldest monuments of it, will be found in his three large volumes entitled *Erânische Alterthumskunde*, — a work which aspires to the thoroughness of Lassen's corresponding work on India, but cannot be said to equal it. The want of historical analysis and discrimination between the different epochs of literary testimony seems to me to weaken its value.





recognized in Haug's review of the whole history,<sup>1</sup>—a wonderful record of obstacles conquered, if not yet wholly removed. This achievement had hardly reached the end of its first great stage, when Roth's elaborate history of the relation of Western Philosophy to that of Egypt and Persia appeared in 1862, and the very imperfect and uncertain data of this highly interesting work, built largely on Anquetil-Duperron, are a striking illustration of the immense value of those original studies of the Avestan language which began with Eugène Burnouf. Behind the whole lies the main difficulty,—that the books themselves represent different periods in the progress of the language and the faith, and are, in all probability, the work of a long series of Mazdean priests and prophets.

The Bibles of the world are all of one description. They are the gradual deposits of the religious history of races, reaching from the deeply covered and now scarcely accessible strata of primitive or pre-historic times to their days of superficial decay or dissolution under the influences of science and ethnic communion; formations broken up, intermingled, and dislocated by the convulsions of ages; resultants of many successive reconstructions under the changing moods and phases of popular belief and the conscious interests of priestly schools; products of instincts which are not so intent on giving account of themselves to posterity or to art, as on heaping together, and adapting to present spiritual interests, all the words and deeds available for this end that have outlived generations, and borne down the precious legacy of beloved names and hopes. Nothing could possibly be conceived more unlike the infallibility and unchangeableness insisted on by their worshippers after the canons are closed, and a Bible becomes the authoritative standard of an instituted religion. These literary amalgams are for ages in-

<sup>1</sup> Literature of Pārsis.





soluble; serving only to deepen the equal blindness of the bibliolater and the iconoclast, till scientific explorers have shown the landmarks of historic construction, and referred each fragment to the special tendencies of its age and author, known or unknown. Interpreted by these, a Bible becomes at last a datum of universal history, because a true picture of the entire religious and social consciousness of the people whence it sprung, and whose ideal it represents. What Ewald and Baur and Hilgenfeld and Kuenen have done for the Bible literature of the Hebrews and Christians, Haug and Roth and Windischmann have begun to accomplish for that of the Iranians. When thus reconstructed, the sequence of parts is as natural as the growth of a flower; and how complete this metamorphosis at the touch of historical science! What man cannot do with scattered stems and leaves and flowers of a plant,—restore the order of growth and the living connection of the parts,—he can accomplish for the Bibles which have been the flowers of his past ideals after they have ceased to live, and so make them capable of enduring functions, philosophical, ethical, spiritual. The Avesta is like the rest: it is a confused heap of inspirations, traditions, legends, hymns, laws, minute ritual precepts, abstract categories and distinctions implying some intellectual refinement, mingled with outpourings of genuine religious feeling, but covered up with elaborate formulas anxiously repeated, and set with sentences that served for spells,—every form of language by which the Iranian mind could express its travail to get into right accord with Nature and the conditions of human life.

The reader familiar with the imaginative riches of Hindu literature, with the mystic ardor of the Vedic poets, will find the Avesta, for the most part, greatly wanting in these poetic elements of style. It moves in a limited order of thought and topic, abounds in formulas and ritualistic





repetitions, and has so much the appearance of a manual prepared for religious instruction and service from existing materials, that one cannot help wondering if the early inspirations of the Mazdean reformation, the Rig-Veda of this noble faith, have been lost. Yet hymns are not wanting of a high order of poetic zeal and religious feeling, and a world of myth and legend is crowded into these liturgical fragments, as rich as the Vedic, and as thoroughly human as the Greek.

1. The Yaçna (Sanskrit, *yajña*, *offering*) is made up of seventy sections of hymn, praise, and prayer; the "second part" of which, consisting of "the five Gâthâs," is the oldest portion of the Avesta, and is spoken of in the Avesta itself as composed by Zarathustra. These are books of metrical lyrics, and biographical and doctrinal relations. Here, as we have already said, is the clear and simple substance of the faith, its natural and human side, the upspringing of its prophetic power. They resemble in their relative characteristics the Gâthâs of Buddhism, which, scattered metrical sentences through the Sûtras, represent primitive Buddhism, as it existed previous to its hierarchical day.<sup>1</sup> The rest of the Yaçna is later and more liturgical.

2. The Vendidâd (*vî-dæva-dâta*, law for repelling the Daevas) contains twenty-two chapters (*fargard*) of conversations between Ahuramazda and Zarathustra, which are made up of fragmentary legends of early ages (like the Hebrew "Book of Origins" compiled in the captivity), the myths of Yima, Thraëtona, Zarathustra, etc.; prescriptions about agriculture, and the treatment of animals, regarded as pure or impure, and the recognition of things dear to the earth, as distinct from things hateful to her; rituals of purification; efficacious prayers to all powers and saints; runes for conjuring away evil powers. The moral precepts are few and far between; all exhortations

<sup>1</sup> See author's *India*, p. 646.





are to definite concrete acts, and little stress is laid upon the motive; ethics are here absorbed in legal prescriptions. It is the Leviticus of the dualist, for whom Nature is portioned off between good and evil powers, and duty consists in serving each special object according to its kind. It assumes a state of society and faith in which the period of moral spontaneity has passed into the period of conformity and routine; in which the prophet is known only as a tradition, and the priest has gathered up his garments to mingle with rite and form.

3. The Vispered is a short work, once belonging to the Yaçna, made up of highly ritualized invocations and prayers, and sums up by enumeration the whole array of visible and invisible objects for prayer and praise.

4. The Yashts (much the same in meaning as Yaçna) are twenty-four pieces, each in celebration of some special genie, on whom is poured (as in the Rig-Veda of the Hindus) equal honor with every other in his special Yasht, showing in the fulness and utterness of the worship the tendency to bring all together into a kind of pantheistic unity; at the same time, the legendary history of each is rehearsed, making these Yashts the great source of our knowledge of Iranian mythology and its connection with the heroic ages of Iran. Here, then, we have a collection something like the Homeric hymns of Greece, where each deity receives highest veneration, in his own way and sphere, from all creatures that live. We have *Ardvi-çāra*, strongest of helpers, whose aid all powers at one or another time have sought in their need or in their passion; the star *Tistrya*, rain-bringer, and his battle with the Drought,—white horse with black; *Mithra*, inspirer of a Pindaric eloquence in the poet, who can find no limit to the strength, the splendor, the all-seeing, all judging providence, and all-creating, all-delivering, and rejoicing energy of this Soul of the Sun; *Ormuzd*, who chants to



Zoroaster his multitudinous names, "coming for his help and joy;" the *Ferowers*, exhausting every conception of existence in detailed invocation of the ideal within and above the natural world.

5. The Khordah-Avesta, little Avesta, containing formulas for occasions and times, — a medley of later origin than the rest, and showing an advanced institutional stage, and at the same time a more elaborate enumeration of moral defects and special aspirations than any other portion. Note especially the Patets or confessions, which contain all the moralities of Christianity or of Judaism, mingled with the most puerile ceremonial observances, as equally binding with the inward virtues.

6. But older than these ritualistic portions of the Avesta, is the literature of the Sassanian revival of the faith. After the extinction of the Achæmenidan empire, native Mazdeism gave way, in some degree, to Hellenism and the traditions of Chaldean civilization. Under the Parthian dynasty it was still further depressed, though not extinguished: the coins bore Greek legends; the language became more Semitized than before; the Old Bactrian, in which the Avesta was composed, was practically a dead language, and the only familiar alphabet into which it could be translated was Semitic. The Sassanian revolution, however, restored the native religion. A proclamation of Khosrû Parvîz, a Sassanian king of the sixth century, reports that efforts had been made to collect the old Zoroastrian literature by princes of the Archæmenian and Parthian dynasties;<sup>1</sup> in which case the Sassanian revival must have had considerable resources at hand, and the acquaintance of the Persians with the traditions of their faith been more or less continuous from very early times. The fire-altar reappeared on the coinage; and with the renaissance of the old literature of Mazdeism

<sup>1</sup> Haug: *Essay on Pehlvi*, p. 145.





came also numerous sects, born of the complex civilization of the empire, — the confluence of Semitic, Greek, Syrian, Christian, and Persian traditions, though it is certain that neither Greek nor Christian influences are traceable in any important respect in the native literature.<sup>1</sup> Partly as a result of the renewed energy of Mazdeism, and partly as an effort to protect it against foreign religions, arose the remarkable literature to which I have alluded, only less interesting than that recovery and reproduction of the older Avesta which we owe in part to the same great epoch. It was composed in Pehlevi,<sup>2</sup> the Semitically written language of the period, largely constituted indeed of Iranian words and construction, but containing also a large Semitic element which was employed ideographically, and read in the corresponding Iranian.<sup>3</sup> And this linguistic vehicle lasted till the substitution of the modern Persian alphabet, when the "Huzvāresh" reading, as it was called, disappeared with the words to which it had been applied. The oldest specimens of Pehlevi script are found on the earliest monuments of the Sassanian kings.<sup>4</sup> This rejuvenescence of the faith blossomed into translations of the Avesta, and into doctrinal, mythical, and ritualistic writings the amount of which cannot be estimated. Haug has already given an enumeration and brief analysis of fifty works, aggregating no less than five hundred and seventeen thousand words,<sup>5</sup> all in the interest of the Zoroastrian revival, and indicating a very complete sense of sufficiency to the demands of national life and faith. The energy with which this abundant supply of creed, tradition, and institution came to the surface,

<sup>1</sup> Haug: *Essays on Pehlevi*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> The word formerly designated ancient Persian in all its forms, being originally an ethnic or geographical rather than linguistic designation, and transferred from the people and country (probably of the *Parthians*) to their national tongue, whatever that might be.

<sup>3</sup> It is Haug's belief that the Avesta itself had long existed in this language. *Essay on Pehlevi*, p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> Third century, A. D.

<sup>5</sup> Haug: *Essays, etc.*, p. 113.





after so long a period of political suppression, is evidence of great vitality, as well as grasp on the existing elements of future civilization. In fact, the substance of this religion, as already shown,—the worship of the personal will, as incarnated in the struggle of good with evil for the mastery of the universe,—was inevitably the nucleus of future religious development. It could not be escaped; it was indispensable to all existing forms of religious and social aspirations; and although a flood of physical force swept its special name and organization almost out of being, its soul passed into Mahometanism, Judaism, and Christianity, to mould these new accessions to the same essential purpose.

Whatever signs of borrowing from these systems may appear in the Pehlevî literature of Mazdeism are delusive, so far as this modern religion is concerned. In the vitality of personal and ethical will-worship, Mazdeism was the precursor, the herald, of their glory, and its influence on their development was of the most decisive and enduring character.

The Pehlevî literature of the Mazdeans was not born in a day. It represented a smouldering life under the ashes of their desolation, from the days of Alexander to the days of Ardeshir Bâbegân. The origin of most of these writings is obscure, falling either in the Parthian period, while the faith was still under a cloud, or during the Sassanian revival, when the whole glorious past reappeared with a new inspiration, which was to glow yet again through the heroic epos of the Mahometan Firdûsî. Their character is, to judge from the typical works now accessible to the Western scholar, what might be expected from the commingling of Greek, Syrian, Christian, Persian, and we must not forget to add Chaldean, civilizations in the current of that age; but all are intensely Mazdean in their spirit. A portion is analogous to the historical and prophetic





Judaism of the restoration under Cyrus, detailing the progress and sufferings of the national faith, quarrying its old traditions, and predicting its triumph. Some are controversial, indicating the large toleration enforced on it by the time, by careful confutation of other religious systems. Some are manuals in the form of conversation or instruction by its sages; some regulative of its ritual; others explore its visionary world of future reward and punishment,—like the “Ardâi-Vîrâf-Nâmeh,” which seems to stand in close connection with the early Christian “Ascension of Isaiah.” The Mînôkhired, “Spirit of Wisdom,” sums up its whole philosophy, ethics, and mythology, in the light of a metaphysical speculation foreign to the original religion, and contrasts it with other systems as the inventions of Ahriman.

Of the highest repute is the Bundehesh, a cosmogonical account of the original creation, providential history, and final purification of the world; combining the mythology of the great war of Ormuzd and Ahriman with the geography, astronomy, and natural history of the Pârsis; marked by signs of compilation from fragments of very different ages as well as religions,—some of them of considerable antiquity,<sup>1</sup> and some representing or completing the old Avestan faith by data, especially astronomical, derived from the Arabs, and in some respects correcting it,—evidently interpolations, later than the Mahometan conquest.<sup>2</sup> Especially important has been, according to some, the influence of Judaism.<sup>3</sup> But the points of mythological difference from the old Avesta, such as the story of the first human couple, with their temptation and fall,

<sup>1</sup> Haeg: *Essays*, etc., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Justi, the latest translator, puts it in or after the time of Firdûsi, tenth century, even as late as the thirteenth century. Justi relies upon these interpolations to prove very late origin.

<sup>3</sup> Carré: *L'Ancien Orient*, li. 390. Nicolas: *Doct. Rel. des Juifs*, p. 300; *Revue Germanique*, Sept. 1858, pp. 467, 468, quoted in the same.



and that of the successive periods of creation; the complicated eschatology of a destruction and regeneration of the world through fire; the doctrine of several messianic persons to appear at the latter day, and that of the unity of the first principle as *Zrvan-akarana*, which is still far from emphatic, since the dual powers of Ormuzd and Ahriman still create the world between them, — these differences are in fact natural developments of the older religion of the Gâthâs and the Yashts, when brought into close relations with the still older civilization of Chaldea, to which the analogous Jewish doctrines and legends are themselves, as we have seen, largely traceable. The resemblances to later Judaism point back to a common stock of Babylonian traditions; while those which connect Mazdeism with earlier Hebrew religion, — such as the division of creatures into clean and unclean, rules of purification and laws relating to the civil treatment of diseases, much more striking than the later analogies just referred to, — are still further removed from the probability of a Hebrew origin. The Pehlevî literature shows little of the spiritualizing tendency of that school of Judaism which had most influence in the East, — the Alexandrian allegorical school of Philo. Although Neoplatonic elements from the Greek school of Edessa are believed to be discernible in the *Mînôkhired*, the strongly pronounced religious dualism of good and evil principles, unknown to Judaism, is maintained in Mazdeism to the last. The saviours of the *Bundehesh* have slight analogy with the exclusive messianic ideas of the Jews. The Mazdean doctrine of the resurrection of the body is much older than the Jewish, which first appears in the Maccabean persecutions as a result of the national sufferings and the messianic hope expressed in the Book of Daniel.<sup>1</sup> Plutarch has a quotation which proves its existence in Persia in the time of

<sup>1</sup> See M. Nicolas: *Doct. Rel. des Juifs*, pp 343-377.





Alexander, two centuries previous.<sup>1</sup> The Jewish bodily resurrection, moreover, differed from the Persian in being confined to the righteous; and had probably no other connection with it than that of being suggested, in a general form, by its superiority, as a consolation and promise, to the traditional Semitic belief in an unsubstantial *Sheöl* as the destiny of the soul. Nor had the Jewish doctrine of resurrection of that period any resemblance to the Persian faith in final salvation or conversion of the wicked, and the entire abolition of evil desire. The Mazdean angelology, so far from being borrowed from the Jews, furnished the basis of their seven princes of the angels, and of their celestial legions of guardian spirits; while its demonology gave them their later or malignant Satan and his diabolic legions possessing human bodies and souls.

<sup>1</sup> *De Isis et Osiris*, § 47, from *Theopompus*. See chapter on "Dualism of the Avesta."





CSL

V.

CUNEIFORM MONUMENTS OF THE ACCADIAN  
AND THE ASSYRIAN.





## CUNEIFORM MONUMENTS OF THE ACCADIAN AND THE ASSYRIAN.

IT is the excellence of the physical sciences in this age of their dominion, that every step of their progress requires the continued acceptance of whatever it involves as its historical antecedents. The conditioning laws are there and here and everywhere, and not one can be ignored, since their constant process alone supplies the materials for further investigation and discovery. The materialist cannot get far enough, fumbling in his plasms and solutions by primeval details. But in the treatment of mental evolution there is still a tendency to repudiate, or at least to pass by, many earlier stages and conditions which more palpable and current interests are supposed to have made obsolete. Thus the convenience of uniformity in spelling affords excuses for a phonetic reconstruction which sweeps away the anatomy of language as useless, and utterly discards linguistic evolution. So in national history, the revolutionary passion of the Celt (a periodic access of Nihilism), which in a republic is very infectious, overrides all historical obligations and their resultant conditions, perpetually reconstructing society out of the excitements of the hour. So also we have found a Celtic contempt of historic forces and necessities in much of what is called "free religious thought," as well as in Christianity. In fact, it has been in one way or another traditionally fashionable to think of the beginnings of ideas and institutions as having only quantitative or statistical relations to their actual living results; and to count it labor well-nigh wasted





even to recover the buried witnesses, that "through the ages one increasing purpose runs." This is simply to construct history without philosophy.

But Nature has always her penalty for such loose utilitarian method. She tolerates no dropping of threads, no contempt for the careful steps which have cost her so much time and pains. When the phonetic reformer sweeps away the apparent grotesqueness of our traditional spelling, he is sacrificing also the graces of patient development; he barter away the *morale* of linguistic art; he forsakes the embodied laws of structure to gratify the caprices of a perverted pronunciation which has already set aside these, one and all. Social reconstructions *de novo* simply disorganize the elements they seek to destroy. Contempt for the "dead past," conceit of the creed that now is master, deprives living thought of universality, of sentiment, of ideal elevation, and makes a science of historical evolution impossible, starving that sense of invisible forces and uncalculated values which is the noblest educator of man.

We are products of the past as well as of the present; we are inherited fuel as well as instant fire; creatures of tradition as well as of inspiration. For all inspiration springs from resultant conditions,—as the plant is rooted in soil and climate, in geologic layer, and continental form. This must have the largest interpretation in matters of the spirit.

For it is not a fragment of the past to which we are indebted; not a person, a tribe, an epoch, or a religion. We mutilate our faculties when we base science, philosophy, or faith upon anything less than the whole process of human growth. In mind, as in matter, no forces are lost, though names pass and forms are changed. And so we may trust Nature to keep us in mind of this, ever to stir the flagging interest in the long forgotten, and prove





her dynamic atoms inexhaustible and undying. Her silent mounds cover whole arsenals of invigoration and noble surprise. In her dead bones she hides a prophetic quickening for all coming time. "Let the dead bury their dead" covers but half the truth. It is when a forgotten thought or deed rises in new and unexpected power that the soul of the living is stirred. Then the Universal proves its immortality even by what seemed to have had its day; the narrow present becomes transcendental, and expands beyond experience itself. Surprise and awe make us poetic and creative; we reconstruct old beliefs, and repair old defects. When Birs-Nimrud breaks the silence of his centuries, and Egypt speaks from her tombs, then for science, for history, for poetry, for theology, for all that Nature means, from the East even to the West the light shines that rounds the thought of man and completes the chain of his faith. Let the scholar magnify his function amidst the arrogant competitions and foolishly exclusive categories of the moment, as he rolls the stones from sepulchres that seemed to have buried forever the earlier witnesses of the spirit of man. He also is reformer, builder of the hearts and homes of ages.

Our real knowledge, according to Plato, is "reminiscence." And surely our discovery itself is but recognition. Our enthusiasm and wonder at every new thought is in finding it already familiar, of our own race and experience; in feeling at home in it, as in glad recovery of what had been lost. What is the charm of history but that the whispers of one's own genius have come back to him, as with oceanic roll, from the depths of humanity? A mystery of multiplied personality! By these delicious surprises of recognition, our own dead past becomes a living light to our feet. Is it then strange that the revival of a whole buried civilization should recast the whole thought of the time? It is the stern reticence of Nature