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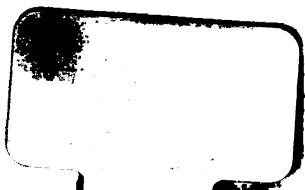
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A LECTURE
ON
AN ORIGINAL SPEECH
OF
ZOROASTER,

(YASNA 45.)

WITH REMARKS ON HIS AGE.

BY

MARTIN HAUG, PH.D.



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PREFACE.



THIS Lecture was delivered at the request of some Parsi friends before an almost exclusively Parsi audience on the 8th of October 1864 at Bombay. As many of my numerous hearers wish to possess it in a permanent form, and as it might be of some interest to others who did not hear it, I here lay it before the public. It has been revised, and even partly recomposed.

I have added some of my recent investigations into the important and difficult question about the age of Zoroaster.

M. HAUG.

Mahabaleshwar, 17th May 1865.

AMONG the different books, of which the Zend-Avesta in its present form is made up, the most conspicuous and important place is occupied by that part which is known by the name of the *Gâthas*. For they are the only portion of the sacred writings of the Zoroastrians, which contain the genuine sayings and speeches of Zarathustra Spitama (Zerdosht Sâpetman in Pehlevi), the great founder of the Parsi creed, as they were delivered to his disciples as well as to large assemblies of his countrymen and contemporaries. Before I proceed to expound one of Zarathustra's most important speeches, contained in the *Gâthas*, it will not be out of place to explain the meaning of the word *Gâtha* itself.

This term is well known in the Brahmanical and Buddhistic literatures. It denotes a stanza principally of an improvisator, in which either an historical fact is described, or a sentiment expressed, or instruction given. They were adapted for singing. The ancient Brahmans, who used to spend all their lives in the practice of the sacrificial art, often had, when tired of their monotonous and troublesome occupation, recourse to such improvised stanzas. S'âkyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, delivered his doctrines in the same form. It has given rise to the common *S'loka*.

In the Zend-Avesta the word denotes : 1, a stanza, as in Sanscrit ; 2, a collection of stanzas ; 3, the five

intercalary days, added at the end of the year, and the angels presiding over them.

In the second sense we understand by Gâthas five comparatively small collections of stanzas in various metres embodying the sayings and speeches of Zarathustra and his first disciples. They are known by the names: 1, *Gâtha ahunavaiti*; 2, *Gâtha ustavaiti*; 3, *Gâtha speñtô-mâinyus*; 4, *Gâtha Vohu-khshathrem*; 5, *Gâtha Vahistôbistis*. Since on each of the five intercalary days one of the five Gâthas is to be recited, these days are called by their names.

These five Gâthas are already in the Zend-Avesta itself ascribed to Zarathustra Spitama himself, which is not the case with any other work. Thus we read in the Serosh-Yasht, (Yasna 57, 8,) one of the most common prayers which the Parsis have to recite every evening after sunset: "who (Serosh) first repeated the five Gâthas of Zarathustra Spitama according to their metres, their sentences, with their explanations and discussions pertaining (to them)." ¹

In the 10th Fargard of Vendidad there are many verses of the Gâthas enumerated which are regarded there as sacred and most efficacious prayers, which circumstance clearly shows that they are anterior to the Vendidad.

The dialect in which the Gâthas are composed, differs from the common Zend language. This differ-

¹ That this alone is the meaning of the passage in question follows from a closer investigation into such chapters as Yasna 19-21, which contain the *âzanti* (Zend), the commentary on the three most sacred prayers which are in the Gâtha dialect, and to be regarded as Gâthas also. There we find at the end, after the commentary is finished, different questions put which are then answered. They are a kind of conversation. The dialogue form of instruction by questions and answers pervades not only the Zend-Avesta, but even the later religious literature as preserved in Pehlevi. The original commentaries on the other Gâthas (in Zend) are unfortunately lost.

ence had been already observed by priests of ancient times, as we may learn from a Zend-Pehlevi glossary ² which is still extant, but had in the course of time been entirely forgotten by the Desturs and Mobeds, till it was re-discovered by European scholars.

As regards the contents of the Gâthas, they contain partly detached verses which were put together long after Zarathustra's time, and partly continuous metrical speeches. The most remarkable feature in them is, that they never allude to ceremonies, and differ thus widely from all other books of the Zend-Avesta.

In order to show you what the real teaching of Zarathustra was, I have selected for this evening's lecture one of his speeches, which was delivered by him to a large audience. In it he expounds all the principal doctrines of the new religion which he said he was commissioned by God to establish. It consists of ten verses (the 11th is a later addition). I give here each verse in a new translation, which differs in some points from my former one as contained in my German work on the Gâthas, and my "Essays on the sacred language, writings, and religion of the Parsis" (p. 153, 154). Having been the first who critically investigated into the Gâthas, and endeavoured, by means of all the appliances of modern philology, to discover their real meaning, which was unknown for several thousands of years, no one acquainted with researches made in an entirely new field such as the Zend-Avesta, the Cuneiform inscriptions and hieroglyphics present to an European

² This is the Farhang which commences with the words *oim yek*. Here we find the forms *vé* instead of *ve* (to you), and *ne* instead of *nô* (to us), pointed out as *gâsânik*, i. e. forms peculiar to the Gâtha language.

philologist of the nineteenth century, will be surprised at finding me alter former explanations, and translations. A continued and more careful investigation enabled me to arrive at a more complete understanding of these ancient and time-hallowed records than it was possible for me to obtain when commencing these investigations beset with difficulties of all kinds. In the following I give, besides my own translation, a version of the Pehlevi commentary, and an explanation of my own. My own translation differs much from the Pehlevi from several weighty reasons, which to expound would be out of place here.

1. *All you that have come from near and far should now listen and hearken to what I shall proclaim. Now the wise have manifested this universe as a duality. Let not the mischief-maker destroy the second life, since he, the wicked, chose with his tongue the pernicious doctrines.*

In the Pehlevi this passage is rendered as follows : (a) Thus the religion is to be proclaimed ; now give an attentive hearing, and now listen, that is, keep your ear in readiness ; make your works and speeches gentle. (b) Those who have wished from nigh and far, to study the religion, may now do so. (c) For now all is manifest, that Anhuma (Ormazd) created, that Anhuma created all these beings ; (d) That at the second time, at the (time of the) future body, Aharman, does not destroy (the life of) the worlds. (e) Aharman made evil desire and wickedness to grow (spread) through his tongue.

The first sentence : "all you that have come, &c." is introductory. It clearly shows that the speaker who, from internal evidence, can be nobody else but the great personage who is known throughout the Zend-Avesta as prophet and teacher of the Ahuramazda religion, Zarathustra Spitama, is addressing a

large congregation. It bears great resemblance to another speech delivered by him on a similar occasion. (Yasna 30, see my "Essays" pp. 141-43.) His audience appears to have been a very large one, since he addressed his hearers as those "who have come from far and nigh," that is, from all parts of the country. The speech was very likely delivered in the great fire temple of Balkh (*Bakhdi* in the Vendidad, *Berekhdha* in the Gâthas) erected over the fire *atesh-i-mihir-i-burzin*, which Zarathustra was said to have brought down from heaven. After the introductory remarks, Zarathustra sets forth at once the leading principle of his philosophy, viz., *duality*, expressed by the term *dúm* ^s (*dvam*, "two" in Sanscrit). This duality is threefold, and refers to 1, the two principal spirits; 2, the two lives, viz., this life and the life hereafter; 3, the two wisdoms, viz., the knowledge acquired by study and experience, and the inborn celestial wisdom. The word translated by "the wise" is in the original *mazdâonhó*, the Mazdas, the same word which forms the second part of the name Ahura-mazda (Hormazd), the name of God throughout the Zend-Avesta. It signifies here Ahura-mazda, with the archangels, the so-called Amesha-spentas. In the same way God is spoken of in the plural in several passages of Genesis (1, 26; 3, 22; 11, 7). The meaning of the sentence is: the Wise Spirits, *i. e.* God and the archangels have manifested throughout the universe a duality, contrarieties, by which all is kept up. Everywhere there are two agents, in natural as well as in spiritual things, such as day and night, body and soul, light and darkness, human wisdom and divine wisdom.

³ The Pehlevi translator misunderstood this word altogether. He renders it by *yehabunt* "given" or "made," deriving it evidently from the root *dâ* "to give, to make"; but such a derivation is inadmissible, since the word is here inexplicable as a verbal form.

After the chief principle has been set forth in an abrupt sentence, the speaker proceeds to announce to his audience, that, since the duality of lives, (this life and that one hereafter,) has been instituted by the divine spirits, the mischief-maker, Aharman, the destroyer, is not permitted to annihilate the second, *i. e.* the future life in the other world. This destruction he wishes to bring about through perverse doctrines which he proclaims, to counteract the decrees of God.

2. *I will proclaim the two primeval spirits of the world, of whom the increaser thus spoke to the destroyer: Are we not followed by thoughts, not by words, not by wisdoms, not by doctrines, not by speeches, not by works, not by meditations, not by souls?*

Pehlevi Commentary: (a) Thus I proclaim for the first time in the world, the celestial things, the contents of the Gâthas. (b) Ormazd out of the two whose the growth is, spoke thus to Aharman. (c) Not *our* thought is my thought, *i. e.* not what thou thinkest; for I think only of increase (of good), thou thinkest only of decrease (of evil); nor are our teachings the same; for I teach only increase (good), thou decrease; nor (are our) intellects (the same); for I have my intellect (directed) towards increase, thou towards decrease. (d) Nor (are our) desires (the same); my desire is increase, thine decrease; nor (are our) words (the same); I speak increase, and thou speakest decrease; nor (are our) works (the same); for my works are increase, thine decrease. (e) Nor (is) the religion the same; for my religion are the contents of the Gâthas, and thine is witchcraft. Nor are souls of one and the same creed, those which follow my creed, and those which follow thy creed, are not of one creed.

In this verse are mentioned the two primeval spirits, *Spēñtô-mainyus* and *Anró-mainyus*; the one

makes everything thrive and spreads life, the other destroys everything. They are from the beginning, thence they are called "primeval." The same term is applied to them in another speech of Zarathustra (30, 3). "Two primeval spirits who are twins, but have their own sphere of action, are known; these are the *good*, and the *destructive* in thought, word, and deed."⁴ They are followed and surrounded⁵ by all spiritual powers, comparable to the Platonic ideas. It is to be remembered, that according to the Zoroastrian, as well as the Platonic philosophy, everything, whether it belong to the sphere of nature, or to that of the mind and spirit, has its prototype in heaven. The thoughts, words, wisdoms, &c., which are here mentioned, are to be taken in the sense of the Platonic ideas. All that men think, speak, or do, all their understanding and conception, all their doctrines, teachings and sayings, have their source in the two primeval spirits; they are, as it were, prototyped in them. All the souls (*urvānó, reván*) surround these two spirits, either before they descend into the material world, to be clothed with a body, or, after the corporeal frame has become a prey of death. On this occasion I may remark what is not generally

⁴ The Pehlevi commentary of this passage is: Thus these two spirits, Anhuma (Ormazd), and Gana-mínûi (Aharman) are first mentioned as an individual duality, that is, sin and virtue are spoken by them individually (*i. e.* the one speaks sin, the other virtue). The thought, speech, and deed of both (are) what is good, and what is bad, the one thinks, speaks, and does what is good; the other what is evil.

⁵ My translation differs here from the Pehlevi. The latter takes *nâ* as *nô, ne* ours. This interpretation would be possible, since *nâ* might be taken as a corruption of *nâo* (of us two), if *hachaiñti* "to follow" could bear the meaning "to agree." I always took *nâ* here as an enclitic particle, which is joined to the negative *nôid*, like *ne* to *non* in Latin *nonne*, and *nu* to *na* in Sanscrit *nanu*, and makes the negative sentence affirmative, just as *nonne* in Latin, and *nanu* in Sanscrit. Do they not follow? means "they follow."

known, that the Zoroastrians believe in a pre-existence of the soul, which doctrine was equally held by Plato, and the Pharisees among the Jews. The two primeval spirits *Speñtō-mainyus*, and *Anrō-mainyus*, are united in one and the same being, viz. Ahura-mazda, and represent only both sides of the divine nature, the creative and life-giving, as well as the destructive and life-taking powers. Since there is a perpetual conflict both in the material and spiritual worlds observable, a constant struggling of light with darkness, of good with evil, Zarathustra sought the source of it in the double nature of the Supreme Being. It was the most simple expedient to solve the great question of the origin of evil in the world, a problem upon which so many eminent thinkers and philosophers of all ages have been engaged.

3. *I will proclaim the primeval (thought) of this life which Ahura-mazda, who knows it, spoke unto me : for those of you who do not carry into practice my word so as I think and speak it, the end of the life will come.*

Pehlevi Commentary : (a) Thus I shall first proclaim in the world Ormazd himself as the disposer of the primitive qualities, that is, he had to define the nature of everything, (b) who gave me the knowledge of it and spoke (unto me), viz. Ormazd, (c) that those among you who do not thus carry out the sacred word, (d) as it is to be taught and spoken, (e) are subject to pain in (this) world, as well as in that (world) hereafter.

The real meaning of this verse appears to be, that the Divine commandments, as contained in the word revealed by Ahura-mazda to Zarathustra, must be obeyed, not only according to the letter, but according to the spirit which is embodied in it. Disobe-

dience will be punished with the death of the sinner, a doctrine which is quite in accordance with the laws of Moses. Obedience to the law of God by man is here regarded as the mainspring of our welfare, since it was decreed so by God from the beginning.

4. *I will proclaim the Best in this life. Mazda knows it in truth, who created it as the father of the Good Mind who is working (in the minds); its daughter is devotion, followed by good works. The Lord who is giving all (good things) cannot be deceived.*

Pehlevi Commentary: (a) Thus I proclaim in the world that *Ormazd* himself is the first *Khêtuda* (marriage of relatives). (b) He who makes *Khêtuda* knows *Ormazd* by means of good actions. (c) He works on account of his being the father of *Vohuman* (good mind), that is, he makes *Khêtuda* for keeping up the increase (the good) among the creatures. (d) Thus is *Spendarmat* the daughter of good deeds, the foundation of thinking. By making *Khêtuda* she will not absent herself. ⁶ (e) He did not deceive, that is, he did not abstain from (making) *Khêtuda*; for all are looking on what is *Ormazd's* (what is done by him), that is, on the religion of *Ormazd*; all (good) works and laws will be in it.

The Commentator has, as is apparent, grossly misinterpreted the whole passage. He tries to find in it scriptural authority for the Persian custom of marrying one's nearest relatives, sister, daughter, &c. But this practice can neither be proved from this, nor from any other passage of the *Zend-Avesta*.

⁶ *Spenta-Armaiti* is the angel presiding over the earth and agriculture. She is represented as a wandering girl, who sojourns with the industrious agriculturist, the pious *Ahura-mazda* worshipper, but leaves that one who does not till the soil and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, but subsists on plunder only. See *Yasna*, 31, 9.

The word which he interprets as Khêtuda, which is in the traditional books the technical term for marriages contracted between the nearest relatives, is *Vahistem*. This is a very common word, meaning "the best, most excellent." The Commentator was, no doubt, misled in his interpretation by the Armaiti being called "his daughter" (*i.e.* either Ormazd's or Vohumans). For a marriage between father and daughter was a Khêtuda. But the term *vahistem* has here nothing whatsoever to do with marriages. It is evidently a philosophical expression, the Platonic idea of "the good," which is the highest of all ideas, being the nearest approach to it. It is the embodiment of all that is good in the spiritual world, and created by God himself, and not identical with him, as the Platonic idea of "the good." From it the Good Mind which works in the good takes its origin. This "vahistem" is therefore called "the father of the good mind". The word which I have rendered by "devotion" is *armaiti*. It has in the Zend-Avesta, as well as in the Vedas, two distinct meanings: 1, earth, 2, devotion, piety. Armaiti is here called "its daughter," that is, the daughter or offspring of the *vahistem*, the idea of the good. This means that the devout, obedient heart of man comes from the idea of the good, through the medium of the Good Mind who is working in the human hearts. The fruit of a pious and obedient heart are good works. But all the *good works* done by man are according to this passage not wrought by man's own nature, but by the Good Mind, the Divine Spirit which dwells in him. The verse concludes with a warning to those who wish to resist the operations of the Divine Spirit in their heart, that the Lord (*ahura*)⁷ who sees all and knows all, cannot be deceived; he knows what is in the heart of man.

⁷ The traditional interpretation of *ahura* is master, lord.

5. *I will proclaim the word which the source of all prosperity spoke unto me, which is the best for men to hear. All those who give a hearing to this my word will be free from all defects, and reach immortality. The wise (God) is ruler through the Good Mind.*

Pehlevi Commentary: (a) Thus is he to be proclaimed who spoke to me. He is the most successful (teacher and judge). (b) The Gâthas are to be recited and chanted, which is the best (thing) for men, that is, that thing is good for men, which stands upon religion; (c) that I should give for it a Serosh, that is, a Destur; it should be experienced by themselves that he would give them (a Destur, a spiritual head). (d) He will come to Khordat and Amerdat⁸ to take a reward (from them). (e) Vohuman's deed comes to Ormazd to take a reward.

The Commentator refers this passage, it appears, to the institution of a spiritual head, Destur, by the prophet, who should teach his followers the reciting and chanting of the Gâthas. He also should solicit rewards for them from the angels. But this interpretation is not tenable on philological grounds.

The real meaning appears to be as follows: The prophet proposes to proclaim the word he heard from Ormazd. For he alone is meant by "the source of all prosperity" (*speñtôtémô*, literally, the most thriving). To those who are ready to lend him their ears, and carry the divine word into practice, he promises *haurvatât*, i. e. wholesomeness, freedom from defects, and *ameretât*, i. e. immortality. This implies that obedience to the word of good constitutes the welfare of our body and our soul. The promise is quite universal, for the words: *Yôichayus'cha* mean "who-

⁸ These are two archangels.

soever give hearing" &c. The verse concludes with the sentence that God is reigning by means of the Good Mind, that is, through the indwelling Divine Spirit.

6. *I will proclaim as the greatest of all things that one should be good, praising only truth. Ahura-mazda will hear those who are bent on furthering⁹ (all that is good). May he whose goodness is communicated by the Good Mind, instruct me in his best wisdom.*

Pehlevi Commentary: (a) Thus I proclaimed that among all things the greatest is to worship God (*yahân*). (b) The praise of purity is (due) to him who has a good knowledge, (to those) who depend on Ormazd. (c) I hear Spentô-mainyu (who is) Ormazd; listen to me, to what I shall speak (unto you). (d) Whose worship is intercourse with the Good Mind; one can know (experience) the divine command to do good through inquiry after what is good. (e) That which is in the intellect they teach me as the best, viz. the inborn (heavenly) wisdom, (that is, that the divine wisdom is superior to the human).

In this verse we have an injunction to be good and virtuous. Virtue is here recommended as the highest of all goods, the highest aim of human life. It can be only acquired by a true and sincere worship of God, who hears the prayers of all those who think, speak, and do right. The prophet wishes to be instructed by Ahura-mazda in his best wisdom, which is imparted by the indwelling Divine Spirit when he is asked for it.

⁹ Literally: who are good with the thriving spirit.



7. *All that have been living, and will be living, subsist by means of his bounty only. The soul of the pure attains to immortality, but that of the wicked man has to undergo everlasting punishment. Such is the rule of Ahura-mazda, whose the creatures are.*

Pehlevi Commentary: (a) This I wish for the benefit (of others) through liberality. (b) I who acquire for myself a larger stock (of good works) than those who were living and are living. (c) The pure are to enjoy immortality with (their) soul, which wishes that it should not again be cut off at the (time of the) future body. (d) And I give labour to the man (and) distress to the Darvand (wicked). (e) Thus is Ormazd the ruler of the creatures.

The verse is quite plain, and needs no explanation. It propounds man's dependency on the grace of God. All that have been and will be, owe their existence to him. But they have full freedom to choose between good and evil. Those who are pure in thought, word and deed, attain to immortality; that is, to everlasting bliss. But those who disobey God, and do what is evil, are punished for ever. To reward the good, and to punish the wicked is the law by which God governs the world.

8. *Him whom I wish to extol with my praise-songs I just now behold with (my) eye, knowing him to be the living Wise (Ahura-mazda), the reality of the Good Mind, word, and deed. Let us thus put down our gifts of praise in the dwelling place of the heavenly singers (angels).*

Pehlevi Commentary: (a) This one is to be praised (and) worshipped; this is what we ought to do; (b) for just now this is clear through the eye, that all good is from Ormazd; (c) whose deeds (and) words are in the Good Mind (proceed from it). (d) He will

know the righteous of Ormazd, the religion of Ormazd. (e) Such is that which is in the prayer, when we put it in Gorotman (paradise).

The prophet says here that he just saw with his mental eye Ahura-mazda. He appears to his mind as that being, in whom the good Mind the good Word, and the good Deed are realized. This being is to be worshipped with praise-songs, which will be garnered up in heaven and added to the stock of good works. In the traditional books we find the belief, that all works which man does in this world, are collected in the other world. The place where all the good works are put down is called *Mis'vāna* in Zend, *Hameshak-Sūt* in Pehlevi.

9. *Him I wish to adore with my good mind, him who gives us fortune and misfortune according to his will. May Ahura-mazda make thrive our progeny (and) cattle, that of the master, as well as that of the servant, by producing in them the good qualities of the Good Mind.*

Pehlevi Commentary: (a) That which is his, every thing whatsoever is known to us that it should be done with joy; (it is from him), (b) who makes us comfort and discomfort; even the comfort of the wicked as much as (he might enjoy) is from Ormazd. (c) Ormazd's constant work is this, that he might give us (something) by means of his exercise of rule. (d) He protects cattle and men, and ourselves (our men) whose furtherance I (Zertosht) am, (e) through the worship of Vohuman for the good; on account of my adoration may'st thou give the strength which is in Vohuman (the Good Mind).

It is clearly stated in this verse, that all that befalls man, fortune or misfortune, good or evil, comes from Ahura-mazda. He dispenses all according to

his will. We subsist only through him, and cannot do any good without him. The prophet prays to God that he might further the welfare of his people, by endowing them with the Good Mind, and protect their property.

10. *Him wish I to extol with the prayers of my devotion who calls himself Ahurô mazdâo (which name implies all) that he knows with his true and good mind (and that he) gives to this world immortality, and freedom from defects, which are in his possession, as two permanently working powers.*

Pehlevi Commentary: (a) This his praise we should fully consider; we should always think of him, (b) who among the other names is heard of as the wise God; (c) through whom Ardibehesht and Vohuman are enjoyed; (d) Shahrever is his, (and) Khor-dat and Ameretat. (e) And he is Spentarmat on account of her being his daughter who makes strong and powerful efforts.

The names here mentioned by the Commentator are those of the archangels. They are not regarded as separate beings, but as emanations of the power of the one God.

In this verse the prophet explains to his hearers the name by which God calls himself. This is *Ahurô-mazdâo*. *Ahura* means literally "living," but it is generally explained by the ancient commentators by "lord, master." *Mazdâo* means "the wise," generally explained as "the great wise." The explanation given here by Zarathustra himself of the name, is a theological paraphrase, which gives not the literal meaning of the name, but states only its general import. The name represents the Divine being, according to this paraphrase, in two aspects, as being endowed both with knowledge and power. His

power he manifests in the government of the world, by keeping all that is good free from defects, and restoring the life and bodies which were annihilated by death. Thus the very name Ahurô-mazdáo implies according to the paraphrase God's providence.

Let us now sum up the principal doctrines which are to be gathered from this speech of Zarathustra, and may be justly regarded as the foundation of the whole Zoroastrian creed.

1. Everywhere in the world a duality is to be perceived, such as the good and the evil, light and darkness; this life and that life, human wisdom and divine wisdom.
2. Only this life becomes a prey of death, but not that hereafter over which the destructive spirit has no power.
3. In the universe there are from the beginning two spirits at work, the one making life, the other destroying it.
4. Both these spirits are accompanied by intellectual powers, representing the ideas of the Platonic system, on which the whole moral world rests. They cause the struggle between good and evil, and all the conflicts in the world, which end in the final victory of the good principle.
5. The principal duty of man in this life is, to obey the word and commandments of God.
6. Disobedience is punished with the death of the sinner.
7. Ahura-mazda created the idea of the good, but is not identical with it. This idea produced the Good Mind, the Divine Spirit, working in man and nature, and devotion, the obedient heart.
8. The Divine Spirit cannot be resisted.
9. Those who obey the word of God will be free from all defects, and immortal.
10. God exercises his rule in the world through the works prompted by the Divine Spirit, who is working in men and nature.
11. Men should pray to God and worship him. He hears the prayers of the good.
12. All men live

solely through the bounty of God. 13, The soul of the pure will hereafter enjoy everlasting life, that of the wicked will have to undergo everlasting punishment.¹⁰ 14, All creatures are Ahura-mazda's. 15, He is the reality of the good mind, word, and deed.

As the doctrines of Zoroaster bear in several points such a striking resemblance to those of Christianity, it is a question of grave importance to ascertain the age in which he lived. There being about the age of no person who played a conspicuous part in the world's history such discordant statements as about that of Zoroaster, it will be for ever impossible to fix exactly the period when he proclaimed his doctrines, though we may succeed in arriving at an approximate date. I do not intend to discuss this difficult question here fully, which will be done in my forthcoming work "The religion of the Zoroastrians," but I will only point out its general features.

The statements about the age of Zoroaster may be brought under two heads: the first comprising those which make him a contemporary of Darius' father Hystaspes, placing him thus about 550 B.C., the second those which assign him such an early date as about 6,000 years B.C. The books of the Zend-Avesta contain nothing whatsoever about his age, since there is not in any of the books extant, a chronological statement of any kind to be found. We simply learn from them that he lived under the reign of the King *Kavá Vistáspa*, the Kai Gustasp of Firdausi's *Shâh-nâmah*, and of Parsi tradition. But when this king reigned, we have no means of ascertaining.

¹⁰ According to the belief of the modern Parsi priests, as founded on traditional books, the soul of the wicked has to undergo punishment in Hell only up to the day of resurrection.

The earliest authorities we have on the age of Zoroaster are all Greek writers. It is a very remarkable circumstance that all those Greek authors who wrote books on the Magi, at a time anterior to the Christian era, as the founder of whose creed Zoroaster was unanimously regarded by ancient writers, state that he lived at such an early period as would be equal to above 6,000 B.C. The earliest of the Greek authorities on the subject is Xanthos of Lydia, who lived 500—450 B.C., and was a younger contemporary of Darius and Xerxes. He reckons, according to the statement of Diogenes of Laerte, in the proœmium to his "Lives and Sayings of Eminent Philosophers," from Zoroaster to the time of Xerxes' expedition to Greece (about 480 B.C.) 6,000 years,¹¹ accordingly Zoroaster would have been living at about 6,500 B.C. The authority next in chronological order is Aristotle, the great philosopher and teacher of Alexander the Great. He stated according to Pliny (*Naturalis Histor.* 30, 2),¹² that Zoroaster lived about 6,000 years before the death of Plato (348 B.C.), which would bring us to about 6,350 B. C. The same statement was made by Eudoxus. Hermippus, of Smyrna, is one of the greatest authorities

¹¹ Ξάνθος δὲ ὁ Λυδὸς εἰς τὴν Ξέρξου διάβασιν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ζωροαστροῦ ἑτη ἑξακίς χιλιά φησι. Thus reads the latest and best edition of Diogenes of Laerte by C. Gabr. Cobet (Paris, Firmin Didot, 1862) which is based on a careful collation of the best codices preserved in Italian libraries. Former editions read "600 years," which has given rise to false calculations.

¹² *Eudoxus qui inter sapientiæ sectas clarissimam utilissimamque eam intelligi voluit, Zoroastren hunc sex milibus annorum ante Platonis mortem fuisse prodidit ; sic et Aristoteles.*

¹³ *Hermippus, qui de tota arte ea diligentissime scripsit, et vicinis centum milia versuum a Zoroastre condita, indicibus voluminum ejus positis, explanavit, preceptorem a quo institutum diceret tradidit Agonacem, ipsum vero quinque milibus annorum ante Trojanum bellum fuisse (Plinii N. H. 30,2. edid. Sillig), i.e. Hermippus, who wrote very diligently on this whole art (magic), and*

on the religion of the Magi among the Greeks, who lived about 250 B.C. and who studied the Zoroastrian books, was, according to Pliny, informed by his teacher, *Agonakes*, a Magian priest, as it seems, that Zoroaster lived about 5000 years before the Trojan war (1180 B.C.) which would carry us back to 6,180 B.C. The same statement was made by *Hermodorus Platonicus* (Diog. Laertii proœm, 2.). Pliny, who, it appears, did not doubt these statements in the least, makes when mentioning "another kind of magic founded by Moses, Jannes, and Lotapea, the Jews," the remark that it was many thousand years later than Zoroaster (*multis milibus annorum post Zoroastren.* 30, 2) Since this statement is taken, as it appears, by Pliny, from some author who was earlier than he, it seems that the ancient Greeks believed Moses to have been living by many thousand years later than Zoroaster.

Later writers, who lived in the 5th century after Christ, such as Agathias and Ammianus Marcellinus, mention for the first time, that Zoroaster was living under Darius' father, Hystaspes. This date clearly rests on nothing but the statement of the

expounded the two millions of verses, composed by Zoroaster, stating the titles of his works, mentions as his (Hermippus) teacher Agonaces, by whom he said to have been informed, that Zoroaster lived five thousand years before the Trojan war. This passage has been partly misinterpreted by some scholars; they made *Agonaces* the teacher of Zoroaster, whilst he is that of Hermippus. Since Zoroaster is always mentioned by Greek and Roman writers as the *founder* of magic, no teacher of his in this art could be spoken of. Besides, it is evident from the nature of the statement made in the just mentioned passage by Pliny, that Hermippus must have perused the Zoroastrian writings, which, on account of their being written in the Zend language, which a Greek could not understand without first learning it, he could not do so without a teacher. Agonaces, (as Sillig writes) or Azonaces, as others write, must have been a Parsi priest; for from times immemorial only the priests possessed any knowledge of the sacred books among the Persians.

Persians that Zoroaster lived under a king Hystaspes (Vistâspa in Persian), as may be seen from a passage in Agathias. (See my Essays on the sacred language, writings and religion of the Parsees, p. 8, 9). Since the name of Darius' father was Hystaspes (Vistâspa), and that of the king under whom Zoroaster proclaimed his doctrines, Kava Vistâspa, it is not surprising to find about 1,000 years after Darius men confound both names, and, in consideration of comparatively little being known about Kava Vistâspa to the Persians, and nothing at all to the Greeks, but much about Darius, fix the period at which the great prophet flourished, at that of Darius' father, Hystaspes.

The traditional books of the Parsis, which are preserved in Pehlevi, contain statements, to the effect, that Zerdosht (Zoroaster) lived about 300 years¹⁴ before the invasion of Persia by Alexander the Great. Accordingly Zoroaster's date would have to be placed at about 630 B.C., that is, before the time at which Darius' father must have been living.

As the opinion of those who make Zoroaster a contemporary of Darius' Hystaspes, is entirely groundless, and rests on nothing but a confusion of identical names of two widely different individuals, we have no further concern with it.

The statement of the *Ardai-Vîrâf-nâmah* is equally valueless. For it is quite incomprehensible how Greek writers of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., such

¹⁴ See the beginning of the *Ardai-Vîrâf-nâmah*: "After the religion of the holy Zerdosht had been established in the world, and set a going, the religion was up to the completion of three hundred years in its purity and men were without doubts (there were no heresies). After (that time) the evil spirit, the devil, the impious, instigated, in order to make men doubt of the (truth) of the religion, the wicked Alexander, the Roman, of Mudhrâi (Egypt), that he came to wage a heavy war against the Iranian country."

as Xanthos of Lydia, and Aristotle, could have placed Zoroaster at about 6,000 years before their time, if he had been living only in the 7th century. Besides it would be utterly inexplicable how Hermippus (250 B.C.) could speak of two millions of verses of alleged Zoroastrian origin, by which we have to understand the whole religious literature of the Zoroastrians, the original texts along with the commentaries, if he would have been living only about 400 years before his time. Such a literature requires more than a thousand years for its growth. Moreover, the close connection of the ancient Iranian religion with that of the Vedas, and Zoroaster's antagonism to the latter, necessitates us to seek the age of Zoroaster in remote antiquity, (see the introduction to my edition and translation of the *Aitareya Brahmanam*), since he must have been living at the time when the separation of the Iranians from the Indians, and the immigration of the latter into the Panjab took place, which must have occurred at about 2,000 B.C. at the very lowest figure.

This date falls, however, by more than 4,000 years short of that assigned to Zoroaster by the *earliest* Greek authorities on the subject. Although there is, as we have seen, but little discrepancy about this date among these writers, which seems to be derived not from one, but from several native sources, it is too high and remote to be credited. ¹⁵ But since

¹⁵ M. Ernest de Bunsen is among modern writers the first, and the only one who really thinks that this statement should be credited. In his very interesting and ably written work, "The Hidden Wisdom of Christ, and the Key of Knowledge" (London 1865), he asserts the identity of Zoroaster with the Adam of the Bible. But this assertion is open to grave objections. Adam is the first man, as the name itself implies, but Zoroaster lived, according to the Zend-Avesta, under the King Vistâspa, and is separated from the Adam of the Parsi scripture, who is called *Gayo-marathno* (Gayomart) by thousands of years.

it seems to rest on very ancient authorities, it deserves to be carefully examined, before it can be dismissed.

The first question is, from what source is this statement derived? If we consider that among all the Asiatic nations with whom the Greeks came into contact, the Babylonians were the only people who were possessed of annals reaching back to the remotest antiquity, we may safely attribute this date to them. The round number 6,000 seems to indicate such an origin; for the Babylonians reckoned, as we learn from the fragments of the Chaldæan history by Berosus, who was a contemporary of Alexander the Great, as preserved by Eusebius and others, past events by cycles of 3,600 (a *saros*), 600 (a *neros*) and 60 years (a *soisos*). Inquisitive Greeks of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. were, it appears, simply told by Zoroastrian priests at Babylon in round numbers, that Zoroaster lived ten *neri* = 6,000 years before their time. Now the question is, how far back is the Babylonian chronology trustworthy, and whether Zoroaster was actually mentioned in their annals.

The authenticated and fully trustworthy history of the Babylonians goes back to 2234 B.C., as may be learnt from the fragments of Berosus, in connection with a statement by Porphyrius,¹⁶ that the astrological observations which were sent by Callisthenes, the companion of Alexander the Great, from Babylon to Aristotle, went back to 1903 years before Alexander. Berosus enumerates¹⁷ after dynasties which are said to have been reigning quite in the Puranic fashion, for myriads of years, the following

¹⁶ See Simplicii Comment. 46 in libr. ii. Aristotelis de Cælo, p. 123.

¹⁷ See Berosi Chaldæorum Historiæ quæ supersunt, auctore J.D., G. Richter, pp. 61, 62.

kings with the number of years during which they reigned.

| | Years. |
|---|--------|
| The eight Median tyrants | 224 |
| Eleven other kings (the number of years is lost). | |
| Forty-nine Chaldæan kings | 458 |
| Nine Arabian kings | 245 |
| Forty-five other kings | 526 |

Phul, king of Assyria, heading the second Assyrian dynasty ruling over Babylon (747 B.C.).

If we compute the 1903 years from Alexander the Great to the beginning of the Median rule over Babylon, we have to assign 64 years to the eleven kings, the number of whose years is by chance lost in the list, in order to arrive at the year 2234 as the time of the Median conquest.

Now according to Synkellos' chronographia (p. 147 ed. Dindorf) the king who founded the dynasty of the "eight Median tyrants" over Babylon, and consequently was the conqueror of that country, was called *Zoroaster*. Since, as I have elsewhere shown,¹⁸ the name *Zarathustra* (*Zoroaster*) is no proper name, but that of the dignity of a high priest, and the founder of the Parsi creed is generally mentioned as *Zarathustra Spitama* in the *Zend-Avesta*, in order to distinguish him from other *Zarathustras*, we cannot entertain for a moment the thought, that it was the prophet himself who conquered Babylon and founded this dynasty. Were that the case, such an important event would be certainly alluded to in the *Zend-Avesta*, and the traditional reports of *Zoroaster's* life.

The Babylonian annals must have assigned a far higher date to *Zoroaster*, the founder of the Parsi

¹⁸ See my *Essays on the sacred language, writings, and religion of the Parsis*, pp. 253-54.

creed, as we can clearly see from a remark made by the Armenian historian, Moses of Chorene (450 A.D.) when reporting (1, 5) the contents of Berossus' Chaldean history. When relating, that after the great flood the earth was ruled, according to Berossus, by *Zerovan*, *Titan*, and *Japetosthes*, he adds, that Berossus asserted the identity of *Zerovan* with "Zoroaster the Magian priest, the king of the Bactrians, who was the patriarch of the Medes, (the founder of that nation) and the father of the gods."

Now in *Zerovan* every student of the Zend-Avesta, and the traditional books will recognise at once *Zarvan Akarana*, "the time without bounds," in which, according to the *Vendidad* (19, 9) the world was created by Ahura-mazda. This "time without bounds" was, it appears, made by some Zoroastrian sect, the primary cause of all existence, and even Ormazd and Aharman were regarded as having been produced by it (see my *Essays*, pp. 10, 11). How could Zoroaster be identified with this primary cause of the world? The answer is simple, if we look at the dogmatical notions the followers of his creed entertained of Zarathustra Spitama in after times. For we learn from the *Fravardin Yasht* (88-94, see my *Essays* p. 191), that he was regarded as the first priest, the first warrior, the first cultivator of the soil, that is, the patriarch and founder of all castes, as the life and master of the world, &c.

The historical Zoroaster was simply converted into a dogmatical and metaphysical being who was then placed at the beginning of creation. But when was such a transformation accomplished, and whence did he find his place into the Babylonian annals in this form? The answer to these questions lies at hand. As the authenticated history of Babylon commences, as we have seen, with the conquest by

the Medes who professed the Zoroastrian religion; there can be no doubt, that all statements about the age of Zoroaster must have been derived from the Medes themselves. The transformation of the historical into a metaphysical and dogmatical Zoroaster as the progenitor of the whole Aryan race, and the father of all deities, could have taken place only long after the Median conquest, when the real age of the prophet was entirely forgotten by his followers from want of an indigenous Aryan chronology, and wild theological speculation had taken the place of history. The only recollection preserved on the part of the Median conquerors of Babylon seems to have been that the founder of their creed lived long before the conquest. Thence theological imagination had free play, and could throw his age back to the time of creation.

That Zoroaster was living *before* the Median conquest of Babylon, may be gathered from some statements regarding the earliest settlements of the Aryans, and Ragma (in Media) in particular. Among the Aryan settlements enumerated in the first chapter of the Vendidad, Ragma is the twelfth. This is of all which are mentioned, the most western, and the only settlement which was situated in the Media of the ancients. It is called in Yasna (19, 18) *Ragma Zarathustris*, that is, the "Zoroastrian Ragma." This appellation admits of two interpretations: either as the birthplace of Zoroaster (and so it is taken by the Parsi tradition), or as a country governed, by Zarathustra or the Zarathustras, or as a town founded by them. The first interpretation cannot be entertained for a moment, since towns are generally not named by celebrated individuals born in them, but celebrated individuals by the names of places where they are born. Were Zoroaster born at Ragma, then he would

be spoken of as the Raghian Zoroaster, just as we speak of the Athenian Plato, but not of the Platonic Athens, which would mean a place either founded by Plato, or governed by him and his descendants. We must thus take the term "Zoroastrian Ragha" as Ragha, governed by the Zarathustras, or high priests. They were a kind of priest kings, since there was, as we learn from the passage quoted, no *danhupaiti* or king at Ragha, but the highest head was the Zarathustra.

Such a Zarathustra or priest king of Ragha made, in all probability, the attack on Babylon in the year 2234 B.C., conquered it, and founded the Median dynasty there. But as he was a Zoroastrian priest king, and ruled over one of the later Iranian settlements, we can neither identify him with Zarathustra Spitama, the founder of the Parsi creed, who is never spoken of as a king in the Zend-Avesta, nor place his date before that of the prophet, since *before* Spitama no Zarathustrian priest kings could exist as little as Khalifs before Mohamed-

Since there can be no doubt that from the reasons stated, we must assign to Zarathustra Spitama a date prior to the Median conquest of Babylon by a Zoroastrian priest king, the only question remaining to be solved, is, whether he lived only a short time, or long, before that event. I am inclined to believe, that he lived only about 100 or 200 years before that time, and that the conquest of Babylon was one of the last consequences of the great religious enthusiasm kindled by him. He preached, like Moses, war and destruction to all idolaters and wicked men, and said that he was commissioned by God to spread the religion of Ahura-mazda. During his lifetime, and shortly after his death, his followers seem to have been engaged in incessant wars with their religious

antagonists, the Vedic Indians, which struggle is well known in the Vedic writings as that between the Asuras (Ahura), and Devas (the Hindu gods). But afterwards they spread westward, and invaded the countries of other idol worshippers, in order to uproot idolatry and establish everywhere the "good Mazdayasnian religion." They really appear to have changed the order of things at Babylon when they conquered it, and spread a new creed; for they are spoken of by Berosus as "tyrants."

According to this investigation we cannot assign to Zarathustra Spitama a later date than about 2300 B.C. Thus he lived not only before Moses, but even, perhaps, before Abraham. If we consider the early age in which he lived, it is not surprising that the high and lofty ideas which he proclaimed, were early misunderstood and misinterpreted; for he stood far above his age. So he was the first prophet of truth who appeared in the world, and kindled a fire which thousands of years could not entirely extinguish.



