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EDITED BY THE HONORARY SECRETARY,  
CAPT. F. W. H. PETRIE, F.R.S.L., &c.

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## ORDINARY MEETING, APRIL 21, 1879.

H. CADMAN JONES, Esq., M.A., IN THE CHAIR.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed, and the following elections were announced :—

HONORARY LOCAL SECRETARIES :—Rev. N. Hurt, M.A., Wakefield ; Rev. J. M. Mello, M.A., F.G.S., Brampton, Chesterfield.

MEMBER :—T. R. Gill, Esq., New Cross.

ASSOCIATES :—E. Beales, Esq., M.A., London ; A. M. Chance, Esq., Birmingham.

Also the presentation of the following Works for the Library :—

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| “Biblical Psychology.”                            | <i>From L. Biden Esq.</i>  |
| “Eruvin.”   | <i>From J W. Lea, Esq.</i> |
| “Antiquity of Man.” By Professor T. Rupert Jones. | <i>From the Author.</i>    |
| “Testimony of the Stars.” By Mrs. F. Rolleston.   | <i>Ditto.</i>              |

The following paper was then read by the Author :—

*THE RELIGION OF ZOROASTER CONSIDERED IN CONNECTION WITH ARCHAIC MONOTHEISM.*

By R. BROWN, Esq., F.S.A.

1. *The Classics on the Date of Zoroaster.*

ONE of the greatest, yet at the same time most shadowy, figures in the history of the earlier religion of the world, is that of Zoroaster the Magian, to whom aftertimes have united in ascribing high and mysterious doctrine in combination with occult and wondrous lore. His actual historical existence was not doubted by the Greek and Latin writers, but the time when he lived was only conjectured. Thus, Agathias, writing about A.D. 576, observes that the Persians in his day stated that Zoroaster lived in the time of Hystaspes, who, by a not unnatural error, was regarded as identical with the father

of the first Darius; and the historian adds that whenever he lived he was the Persian prophet and "master of the magic rites."\* Pliny has preserved several traditional incidents connected with Zoroaster, such as praise of a mysterious stone called *Astriotes*, "the Star-like;"† that he laughed on the day of his birth,‡ a circumstance which those who connect him with natural phenomena would probably regard as indicating the joyousness of the bright heaven or the dread exultation of the thunder-god;§ and that he lived on cheese with great austerity for twenty years,|| a statement which reminds us of the traditional and mythical austerities of Hindu saints and divinities. After referring to the general consent of authorities that he was the inventor of magic, which Pliny judiciously observes was doubtless originally connected with the healing art, the Roman writer states that Eudoxos and Aristotle placed Zoroaster 6,000 years before the time of Plato; whilst Her-*mippos* the philosopher, B.C. 250, who, of all the Greeks, most deeply studied Zoroastrianism, and who wrote a work upon it, now lost, entitled *Peri Magôn*, placed the age of Zoroaster 5,000 years before the Trojan War.¶ With this date Plutarch, in, perhaps, his most valuable tractate, agrees when referring to "Zoroastris the Magian."\*\* Masudi, the Arabian historian, A.D. 950, assigns Zoroaster a date about B.C. 600, a computation probably connected with the view that places him in the period of the later Hystaspes. From these different opinions we gain at least one important fact, that in comparatively late times the people of the country in or near which he was said to have lived still connected him with an Hystaspes (*Vish-taspa*), who, in reality, was the *Kavâ Vishtâspa*, a friend of Zoroaster, who is mentioned in the *Gâthas*.

## 2. The name "Magian."

The name "magian," whence magic and magician, occurs in both our Testaments. In the Old, the *Rab-mag*, or chief magian, is mentioned amongst the Babylonian princes of Nebuchadnezzar at Jerusalem;†† whilst in the New it is recorded that magians (*μάγοι*) came to worship the infant Jesus.‡‡ In both cases the term implies not merely "wise men," but special experts belonging to a particular country. What, then, is the derivation and meaning of the word, which

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\* *Hist.* ii. 24. † *Hist. Nat.* xxxvii. 49. ‡ *Ibid.* vii. 15.  
 § Cf. Shelley, *The Cloud*: "I laugh as I pass in thunder."  
 || *Hist. Nat.* xi. 96. ¶ *Ibid.* xxx. 1, 2. \*\* *Peri Is. kai Os.* xlvi.  
 †† Jeremiah xxxix. 3. ‡‡ St. Matthew ii. 1.

is certainly not Semitic? The Aryan and Turanian families of language have both claimed it. Thus, according to Haug and others, the term "magava" signifies one possessed of *maga*, or power, *i.e.*, spiritual or occult power; and the Magavas were the earliest followers of Zoroaster. Maghavan, "the possessor of riches," is a common epithet of the Vedic Indra, and is also occasionally applied to Agni, the igneous principle. On the other hand, Sir H. C. Rawlinson and M. Lenormant regard Magism as non-Aryan in origin, but engrafted with an Aryan religion.\* In this case the word must be Proto-Medic or Scythic, *i.e.* Turanian; and I should be inclined to connect it with the Akkadian *mach*, "very high," "supreme." Thus, in an Akkadian hymn, † translated by M. Lenormant, we read *ana zae mach men*, "God, thou art very high." ‡ Whether, therefore, the term be of Aryan or Turanian origin, it signifies almost equally one exalted by the possession of wealth, of knowledge, or of power.

### 3. *Is Zoroaster an Historical Personage? His Name.*

According to Sir H. C. Rawlinson, Zoroaster was "the personification of the old heresonym of the Scythic race." § *Zara-thushtra* or *thustra*, the Persian and Parsi *Zardosht*, the Greek *Zarathra*, *Zoroastres* or *Zoroastris*, in his theory is *Zera-ishtar*, || or "the seed of *Istaru*," the celebrated Assyrian goddess ¶ of love, war, and the planet Venus, the zodiacal *Virgo*, and whose two phases, *Istar of Nineveh* and *Istar of Arbela*, reappear together in the Phœnician (plural) divinity *Ashtaroth*, the Greek *Astarte*. M. Darmesteter, who regards Zoroaster as one of the many bright powers of heaven who fight in an almost endless strife against the powers of darkness and evil, observes, "The meaning of the name of *Zarathustra* is unknown. It is no fault of etymologies; one can count a score, and here is a twenty-first." And he proceeds to trace it to a form *zarat-vat*, corresponding to the Vedic *harit-vat*, which signifies "He-who-has-the-red (horses)," *i.e.* the sun. *Zarat-vat* would thus mean "red," or "gold

\* Vide Canon Rawlinson, *Herodotus*, i. 346, *et seq.*; *Ancient Monarchies* ii. 348; Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic*, 218.

† *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, iv. 60.

‡ *Étude sur quelques parties des Syllabaires Cuneiformes*, 12.

§ *Notes on the Early History of Babylonia*, 41; vide also Canon Rawlinson, *Herodotus*, i. 350.

|| Assyrian, *Ziru*; Heb. זִרָּו.

¶ *Istaru* means "goddess" (vide Geo. Smith, *Chaldean Account of Genesis*, 58).

colour," "and the entire name would be simply one of the thousand epithets of the bright hero"\* of the material heaven. Haug, again, connects the name with the Sanskrit *jarat*, "old," and *uttara-ushtra*, "excellent"; and points out that the superlative form *Zarathushtrôtemô*, "the highest Zarathustra," assumes the existence of several contemporaneous Zarathustras, which term would thus mean "senior, chief (in a spiritual sense), as the word 'Dastur'† does now."‡ Haug is perfectly convinced of the actual historical existence of Zoroaster, and regards the *Gâthas* (subsequently noticed) as really containing "the sayings and teaching of the great founder of the Parsi religion himself."§ He also points out that the sage's real or family name was Spitama, and that, according to the Pahlavi books, a Spitama was the ancestor of Zarathustra in the ninth generation. The word Spitama was erroneously rendered by Burnouf "holy," in which he has been followed by later writers; and the sage's full title would thus be "the Spitaman," or "Spitama, the spiritual chief." Although it may for a moment appear somewhat paradoxical, yet the question of the actual historical existence of an individual Zoroaster but little affects the present investigation; for, just as we might have had Islamism and the *Koran* without a particular Muhammed, or have (as many think) an *Ilias* and an *Odysseia* without a particular Homer, so the existence of the *Avesta* and the Parsi religion is altogether independent of that of a particular Zoroaster; and yet, so far as my own individual opinion is concerned, I certainly agree with Haug and with Mr. Vaux, when he declares, in his excellent little *History of Persia*, "I do not doubt that Zoroaster was truly a teacher and reformer, and, further, that his religious views represent the reaction of the mind against the mere worship of nature, tending, as this does directly, to polytheism and to the doctrine of Emanations. It is, I think, equally evident that such views embody the highest struggle of the human intellect (unaided by Revelation) towards spiritualism [*i.e.* a truly spiritual religion], and that they are, so far, an attempt to create a religious system by the simple energies of human reason. Hence, their general direction is towards a pure monotheism."||

\* *Ormazd et Ahriman*, 194, note 1.

† The Dasturs are the present priests of the Parsis.

‡ *Essays on the Parsis*, 296-7. Edited by Dr. West. 1878.

§ *Ibid.* 146.

|| *History of Persia*, 10. (In the series of *Ancient History from the Monuments*.)

4. *Further Classical References to Zoroaster.*

Ere turning to purely Oriental ground, a few other classical allusions to Zoroaster may be mentioned. According to Plato, in Persia it was usual to commit the heir-apparent to the custody of four chosen men, the first of whom instructed "him in the magianism of Zoroaster, the son of Oromasus, which is the worship of the gods."\* Here the sage is described as the son of his divinity, the Parsi Ormazd, the Achæmenian Auramazda, the Zoroastrian Ahuramazda. Berosus makes Zoroaster a king of Babylon and the founder of a dynasty of seven Chaldean monarchs,† a complete error; whilst Justin, copying the statement of Ktesias, court physician to Artaxerxes Mnemon, has preserved the tradition that "Ninus, king of the Assyrians, who first made war upon his neighbours," made "his last war with Zoroaster, king of the Bactrians, who is said to have been the first that invented magic arts, and to have investigated with great attention the origin of the world and the motions of the stars."‡ According to Justin, Ninus, who is a personification of the Akkadian *Nin*, 'Lord' or 'Lady,' killed Zoroaster. With this tradition Arnobius is in exact accordance, and asserts that "between the Assyrians and Bactrians, under the leadership of Ninus, and Zoroaster of old, a struggle was maintained not only by the sword and by physical power, but also by magicians [on the Bactrian side], and by the mysterious learning of the Chaldeans"§ on the Assyrian. Here Zoroaster is placed in his true abode, Bakhdhi (Baktria), and the tradition is doubtless founded upon facts, and refers to great prehistoric contests between Aryan, Turanian and Semite. In another passage,|| Arnobius sneers at some statement of Hermippos to the effect that "the Magian Zoroaster" had crossed a mysterious fiery zone; and legends existed which described him as appearing to a multitude "from a hill blazing with fire, that he might teach them new ceremonies of worship."¶ Clement of Alexandria observes that Pythagoras showed that "Zoroaster the Magus" was a Persian,\*\* and identifies him †† with "Er, the son of Arminius," who, according to the story in Plato, †† having been slain in battle, came to life again and related to his friends the destiny of the soul and its journey after death. The legendary con-

\* *Alcibiades*, i. apud Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, ii. 472.

† *Chaldaïka*, ii. Fragment, 9.

‡ *Hist.* i. 1. So Moses of Chorene, i. 6.

§ Arnobius, *Adversus Gentes*, i. 5.

|| *Ibid.* i. 52.

¶ Bryce, *Arnobius adversus Gentes*, 43, note 2.

\*\* *Stromateis*, i. 15.

†† *Ibid.* v. 14.

‡‡ *Republic*, x.

nection of such matters with Zoroaster is interesting. Ammianus Marcellinus observes that "Plato, that greatest authority upon famous doctrines, states that the Magian religion, or Magia, known by the mystic name of Machagistia, is the most uncorrupted form of worship in things divine, to the philosophy of which, in primitive ages, Zoroastres, a Bactrian, made many additions drawn from the mysteries of the Chaldeans."\* In later classical times many clumsy forgeries were attributed to Zoroaster, as to such personages as Orpheus (the Sanskrit Ribhu) and Hermes-Trismegistos (Tet-Thoth, *i.e.* Thought or Intellect); and there is still extant a work entitled *Magika Logia tôn apo tou Zoroastrou Magôn*. The younger Psellus, A.D. 1020—1105, amongst his numerous writings composed scholia on Zoroastrian literature, and gives as a Zoroastrian saying the dictum that

"The soul, being a bright fire, by the power of the Father,  
Remains immortal and is mistress of life."†

And, lastly, Ficinus, who died A.D. 1499, and who wrote a work entitled *De Immortalitate Animi*, states that, according to Zoroaster, certain aquatic and aërial demons "are sometimes seen by acute eyes, especially in Persia."‡ It would be interesting to fully analyze and compare the above and other classical and mediæval statements with Zoroaster and Magism as revealed to us by modern discovery; suffice it, however, to observe here, that on the whole Zoroaster is described as an eminent Baktrian, possessed of mysterious wisdom in matters both physical and spiritual, engaged in contests with neighbouring nations, the author of various occult works, versed in the law connected with demons and the destiny of the soul, closely associated with the reverential or mystical use of fire, connected in the legend of Er, with a resurrection or revival, and the son of Ahuramazda. His *magic* or wisdom appears as a combination of both Baktrian and Chaldean lore, and its mystic name, Mach-agistia, at once reminds us of the Akkadian root *mach*, "very-high," to which I have ventured to refer *magism*.§

\* Ammianus, xxiii. 6.

† Ψυχὴ πῦρ δυνάμει πατρὸς οὐσα φαινὸν,  
Ἀθάνατος τε μένει, καὶ ζωῆς δεσπότις ἐστί.

‡ Apud Cory, *Ancient Fragments*, 255.

§ Soudias calls Zoroastres an astronomer in the time of Ninus, who wished to be destroyed by fire from heaven, and warned the Assyrians to preserve his ashes. He mentions another Zoroastres, whom he styles a Perso-Median sage, who first established the Magian polity and lived 500 years before the Trojan War, perhaps the most reasonable date given by any



5. *Iranian Sacred Literature.*

Such being the testimony of classical antiquity respecting Zoroaster the Magian, let us next consider him and his religion as they now stand revealed in the sacred books of Iran, translated, or I may rather say in many parts deciphered, by the genius and persevering efforts of Burnouf, Spiegel, Haug, and their several followers. The protagonist in this great work was the Frenchman Anquetil Duperron, whose name must never be forgotten in the history of Zoroastrian literature; arriving at Bombay in 1754, he first revealed to Europeans the treasures of the *Avesta*. The greater part of the sacred writings of Iran has been lost, but judging by those of other countries, and from the testimony of historians, we may well believe that they were at one time of vast extent. Haug quotes the statement of Abu Jafir Attavari, an Arabian historian, that "Zoroaster's writings covered 1,200 cowhides (parchments);"\* and Hermippus estimated the verses of the sage at no less than 2,000,000.† According to the best tradition, which is supported by the sacred writings now in existence and by other references to many of the lost works, the entire canon once consisted of twenty-one books, called *Nasks*, the *Visparad* and the *Yasna*. The word *nask* is non-Aryan, and is connected by Haug with the Assyrian *nusku*. Now the Assyrian and Babylonian divinity Nabu (Nebo), the god of intellect, prophecy, and writing, is also known as Nusku; but Nusku, or rather Nuzku, was originally a distinct Akkadian divinity, whose name signified "the High" or "the height of heaven."‡ Hence these sacred books, the *nasks*, purport to be named after the god of the height of heaven, lord of intellect and writing. The *Vendidad* forms the

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classical writer. He assigns several works on Nature, Astrology, and other subjects to this Zoroaster. He also mentions a third personage, Zoromasdres, whom he calls a Chaldean and a writer on mathematics and physics. In *masdres* we have apparently the second part of the name Ahuramazda, which, if we accept the derivation from *ziru*, "seed," would give "Son of Mazda" as the meaning of the name, which would thus exactly agree with the statement of Plato that Zoroaster was "the son of Oromasus." The three personages mentioned by Soudas are doubtless identical. Diogenes Laertius says, "From the time of the Magi, the first of whom was Zoroaster the Persian, to that of the fall of Troy, Hermodorus, the Platonic philosopher, calculates that 15,000 years elapsed. But Xanthos the Lydian [B.C. 470] says that the passage of the Hellespont by Xerxes took place 6,000 years after the time of Zoroaster" (*Peri Bion*, introduction, ii.).

\* *Essays on the Parsis*, 123.

† "Hermippus qui de tota ea arte diligentissime scripsit, et vicies centum millia versuum a Zoroastre condita, indicibus quoque voluminum ejus positus explanavit." (Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxx. 2.)

‡ Vide Lenormant, *Etude*, 325.

19th Nask. The *Avesta-Zend* in Pahlavi (*i.e.* ancient Persian), *Avisták va zand*, or "Text and Commentary," consists of (1) The *Yasna*, or "Book of Sacrifice with Prayers." (2) The *Visparad*, or "All Heads," a collection of prayers. (3) The *Vendidad* (*Vidaeva-data*), or "Law against the Devas,"\* contained in twenty-two Fargards or chapters; and (4) The *Khurdah-Avesta*, or "Little Avesta," which consists of Prayers and *Yashts*, or "Invocations." The *Yasna* may be compared in point of priority and importance to the *Rig-Veda* of the Indian Aryans and the *Pentateuch*. It consists of (1) the Five *Gáthas*, or "Songs," which form the most archaic portion of the *Avesta*; (2) the *Yasna of Seven Hás*, or "Sections," written in the *Gátha* dialect; and (3) the *Later Yasna*, which is written in the ordinary language of the *Avesta*. Haug traces the form *avisták* "to *á* + *vista* (p. p. of *vic* to know"), with the meaning 'what is known,' or 'knowledge,' corresponding nearly with *Veda*."† The text of the *Avesta*, as we have it, probably belongs to the reign of Ardashir I., who in A.D. 226 put an end to the Parthian dynasty of Askh (Arsakes) and became the founder of the Sassanids. This monarch made every effort to restore the national religion, which, although tolerated, had necessarily become much depressed beneath five centuries and a half of Greek and Parthian rule. The efforts of Ardashir were successful; the old sacred writings and traditions were collected, and although many of them have been subsequently lost, yet a most important residuum has been preserved to the present day by the Parsis, who left their country for India on the Muhammedan conquest of Persia A.D. 650. The great antiquity of the writings collected by Ardashir is evident, as, amongst other reasons, in his time "the language of the *Avesta* had long ceased to be spoken, and the contemporaries of Ardashir could no more have composed a chapter of the *Vendidad* than an English gentleman of this century could imitate the Anglo-Saxon of King Alfred."‡ As to date of composition, the *Gáthas* and the *Earlier Yasna* may be fairly placed some time prior to B.C. 1200; the greater portion of the *Vendidad* cir. B.C. 1,000; the *Visparad* and *Later Yasna* cir. B.C. 900-800; whilst the *Yashts* may be placed down to cir. B.C. 400. In addition to the foregoing archaic works, there is extant an extensive Pahlavi literature, using that term to denote the language of Persia during the Sassanian dynasty, A.D. 226-641. Two Pahlavi works in particular may be men-

\* Vide *inf.* sec. 10.

† *Essays*, 121.

‡ Bleeck, *Avesta*, introduction, xi.

tioned, the *Dinkard* and the *Bundahish* or 'Cosmogony.' The former consisted of nine books, the first two of which are lost; and contains, amongst other things, the opinions of ancient Zoroastrians on traditions and customs and on various duties; the miracles of the Zoroastrian religion from the time of the first man to that of the last of the yet future prophets; details of the life of Zoroaster and an account of the contents of the twenty-one Nasks, great part of which were destroyed in the time of "the accursed Alexander," at which period there were, according to the *Dinkard*, but two complete copies of the sacred books; one of these then deposited in the royal archives at Persepolis was burnt there. The *Bundahish* contains an account of the creation, of the opposition between the good and evil powers, of the nature of the various creatures, and of the future destiny of mankind, including the Resurrection and the Last Judgment. The two latter remarkable features are, in Haug's opinion, "founded on original Avesta sources which are now lost."\* An ancient song is embodied in the account of the Resurrection, the burden of which is that although it may appear to man to be impossible that the body when resolved into its elements and scattered to the winds should nevertheless be raised again, yet that to God all things are possible. So, too, the archaic Egyptians held firmly the doctrine of the resurrection of the body,† a dogma in after-ages to provoke the laughter of the Greek, mirth melancholy to the true philosopher, since it sprang from perhaps the most pronounced and at the same time the saddest feature in his character, an intense and passionate clinging to this perishing earth life. Achilles, the Greek ideal, has fitly been made the mouthpiece for that dark sentiment:—

" Rather I'd choose laboriously to bear  
 A weight of woes, and breathe the vital air,  
 A slave to some poor hind that toils for bread,  
 Than reign the sceptered monarch of the dead."

Far different from the gloomy Homeric abode of the departed was the paradise of song‡ that awaited the justified soul of the deceased Zoroastrian.

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\* *Essays*, 313.

† *Vide* Bunsen, *Egypt's Place*, iv. 641; Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic*, 84. And authorities cited.

‡ Heaven is called *Garôdemâna*, "House of Hymns," and *Ahu vahishta*, 'the best life.' As is well known, *paradise* (*pairidaêza*), i.e. "enclosure," a place securely fenced in, is an Iranian word.

6. *Mythology and Religion.*

Such, then, are the Parsi Scriptures; their composition extended over 800 or 900 years or more, and thus, like the Vedic Hymns, they are the work of numerous individuals; and whilst possessing a kind of general unity of tone, on close examination are found to differ widely in style and religious standpoint as in language. The latest portion of the *Avesta* is replete with archaic ideas of a mythological character, a feature which applies equally to subsequent works, such as the *Bundahish*; whilst in the *Yasna*, and especially in the *Gáthas*, the mythological element is but dimly visible, and the religious element is all-important. And here let me make a remark respecting the spheres of mythology and religion. The former corresponds with the material, the latter with the spiritual portion of the universe; they rise together as twin ideas in the human mind, and at the same time the mental and the physical eye grasp, however dimly, some of the wonders of God and the Kosmos, of soul and body. Mythology did not spring from religion, nor religion from mythology. They were "two sisters of one race," widely differing indeed in value, but at first equally simple, equally pure. To give an illustration: Prof. Steinthal in *The Legend of Samson*,\* remarks, "I flatter myself that I know the particle by which was expressed the greatest revolution ever experienced in the development of the human mind, or rather by which *the mind itself was brought into existence (!)* It is the particle 'as' in the verse 'And he [the Sun] is *as* a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; he rejoices *as* a hero to run his course:' Nature appears to us *as* a man, *as* mind, but is not man or mind. This is the birth of mind. This 'as' is *unknown* not only to the *Vedas*, but even to the Greeks."† Previously, it would seem, a most gross and crude mythology had reigned supreme; every one regarded the sun as an actual bridegroom, a real hero, till one bright morning it occurred to the Psalm-writer, *à propos* of nothing in particular, that these expressions were merely similitudes. Surely a stupendous credulity must be required to enable any one to accept such a theory, which is just as true and as false as the appended statement that this wondrous "as" is unknown to the Vedic poets. Take, for instance, a hymn to Ushas, the Dawn. The hymn-writer, after comparing Ushas to a dancer, and to a triumphant maid, continues—

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\* Appended to Dr. Goldziher's *Mythology among the Hebrews*.

† Sec. xiii.

“As a loving wife shows herself to her husband,  
So does Ushas, as it were, smiling, reveal her form.”\*

Here the symbolism and simile of the Vedic poet are as clear and pure as the Psalmist's. Both are perfectly aware that sun and dawn are alike merely natural phenomena, and, lastly, there is no monopoly of the mysterious “as.” Steinthal asks, “I wonder whether I am mistaken?” I think we may safely reply that he is. Man, by the necessity of his being, applies anthropomorphisms to the phenomena of nature; from his standpoint the dawn smiles, the thunder shouts or laughs, the sun knoweth his going down, and the deep utters his voice and lifts up his hands on high. Here is no crude ignorance, no grovelling concept, but a rich and splendid vein of natural poetry, sublime because—and this is the real power of all potent thought and beautiful idea—it is practically, nay strictly, true.†

#### 7. Character and Contents of the Gâthas.

To revert to the Gâthas: their supreme age and importance in the inquiry is evidenced, (1) by the exceedingly archaic form of language in which they are composed; (2) by their being frequently quoted or referred to with the greatest respect in other sacred writings, *e.g.*, they are expressly called “the five Gâthas of the pure Zarathustra.”‡ (3) By their being the repositories of numerous ideas and forms of belief which have been subsequently elaborated; and (4) by the uniform tradition on the subject. The word is from the root *gai*, “to sing,” and they are composed in a metrical form for recitation, each verse of the first containing forty-eight, of the second fifty-five, and of the third forty-four syllables. Some of the metres naturally greatly resemble those of the Vedic Hymns. In quoting from them I use the translation of Haug, as that of Spiegel is admittedly inferior, and indeed in many passages absolutely unintelligible. The *First Gâtha* bears the following heading, in the ordinary language of the *Avesta*, and therefore added long subsequent to the composition of all five:—

“The revealed thought, the revealed word, the revealed deed of the righteous Zarathustra; the archangels first sang the Gâthas.” Here it is implied that Zarathustra

\* *Rig-Veda*, I. cxxiv. 7 (translated by Dr. Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, v. 185).

† “Hold, in high poetic duty,  
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty.”

Mrs. Browning, *The Dead Pan*.

‡ *Yasna*, lvi. 3.

received these sacred songs through angelic agency, and hence that he was the human author of them and communicated them to the world. The triad of thought, word, and deed, often appears in the *Avesta*; and is used in a somewhat technical sense, as meaning the thoughts, words, and deeds enjoined by the Zoroastrian faith. Thus in a fragment of the *Hádókht Nask*, which gives an account of the progress after death, we find four steps mentioned in the advance of the soul. The first step of the righteous he places upon good thought, the second upon good word, the third upon good deed, and the fourth and last upon the eternal lights. The account of the contrary progress of the unrighteous soul is lost, except the last clause, "The soul of the wicked man fourthly advanced with a step he placed on the eternal glooms," a calmly awful saying, which vies in solemnity with those of our own Sacred Books. The *First Gátha* forms chapters xxviii.—xxxiv. of the *Yasna*, and is to some extent a compilation of independent verses; in one place Zarathustra is spoken of in the third person, but as a rule he is the speaker throughout. In this *Gátha* are chiefly noticeable:—

- I. The theory of Agriculture as a sacred duty.
- II. The theory of the Twin Spirits.
- III. The protest against the Devas and their worship.

In the *Second Gátha* we have, in addition to various references to the foregoing subjects,

- IV. The view of Ahuramazda as the Creator.

The last three *Gáthas* which, on the whole, are not so important, also contain similar references, and a very material passage which explains Zarathustra's view of the theory of the Twin Spirits. These different subjects I shall notice in order.

#### 8. *Agriculture as a Sacred Duty.*

It is remarked of the state of things prior to the creation of human beings, and in a manner indicative of a certain incompleteness, that "there was not a man to till the ground" and the subduing of the earth is expressly assigned to the human race, not in the first instance as a toil to be accompanied by "sweat of the face," but as a high and sacred duty. So in the Greek religious-mythology, Demeter, "the Earth-mother," the earth considered in a state of orderly rule and cultivation, kosmic not chaotic, is the great patroness of Triptolemos and the other noble and nurturing heroes of civilization, who wander over the world, making all men acquainted

with the blessings and benefits of agriculture.\* And here I may appropriately notice a link in name between the Aryans, Eastern and Western. De-meter, as is well known, is equivalent to Ge-meter, "Earth-mother." Now the Sanskrit *gâus*, the equivalent of the Greek *gê*, signifies (1) cow, and (2) earth; the earth being thus regarded in a secondary sense as the fostering cow of mankind, a kind of symbolism in exact harmony with the ideas of India, Iran, or Egypt, but which the intensely anthropomorphic spirit of the Greek would have rejected with disgust. So the Ribhus in the *Rig-Vêda* are said to have renovated or cut the cow, † namely, by cultivating the soil; and in this first *Gâtha*, the *Gêush urvâ*, or "Soul of the Cow," i.e. the spirit of the personified earth, is represented as complaining to heaven, and as being informed by Ahuramazda through Zarathustra, that it was to be cut, that is, ploughed, for the good of mankind. So Zarathustra, apparently addressing a large assemblage, and unfolding his doctrines to them, declares:—

"I will now tell you who are assembled the wise sayings of Mazda,

And the hymns of the Good Spirit.

You shall hearken to the *Gêush urvâ*."

That is, "You shall duly cultivate the earth." And again we read of Armaiti, the personification of prayer, and who was in Ahuramazda, ‡ that—

"When Thou (Ahuramazda) hast made her paths that she might go

From the tiller of the soil to him who does not cultivate it.

Of these two (i.e. the agriculturist and the nomad),

She chose the pious cultivator,

Whom she blessed with the riches produced by the good mind.

All that do not till her, § but worship the Devas,

Have no share in her good tidings;"

namely, in the blessings of wealth, order, and civilization generally. The nomadic life necessarily degenerates; it

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\* For a full analysis of the mythic position of Demeter and Persephone in connection with the Eleusinian mysteries, vide *The Great Dionysiac Myth*, vol. i. 273, et seq. By the Writer. Longmans & Co. 1877.

† Vide *Rig-Vêda*, iv. Hymns 33-37.

‡ "In Thee was Armaiti" (*Yasna*, xxxi. 9).

§ Armaiti is also considered as the angel of the earth, probably because prayers, although heaven-inspired, rise from earth.

becomes by contrast more and more rude and barbarous, and is sooner or later associated with lawlessness and rapine. There are numerous indications in the *Avesta* that the Zoroastrians suffered severely from time to time from the violence of wilder neighbours, and to promote the more settled and orderly life of agriculture thus became a sacred duty. It was in fact a form of the contest between chaos and kosmos.

### 9. *The Zoroastrian Theory of the Twin Spirits.*

Without here noticing the general view respecting Persian, Magian, or Zoroastrian dualism, I will at once quote the *Gâthas*, in illustration of the Zoroastrian concept of the Twin Spirits:—

“In the beginning there was a pair of twins,  
Two spirits, each of a peculiar activity;  
These are the good and the base, in thought, word, and deed.  
Choose one of these two spirits. Be good, not base!  
And *these two spirits united* created the first (*i.e.* the material world);  
One the reality, the other the non-reality.  
Of these two spirits you must choose one.  
You cannot belong to both of them.”

Did, then, the composer of this hymn believe in the actual objective existence from all eternity of two spirits, one the personification of good, the other the personification of evil? Certainly not; and why? Briefly for the following reasons:—

I. Ahuramazda himself is distinctly stated in the *Gâthas* to have created all that is, and is spoken of as “He who created by means of his wisdom the good and evil mind in thinking, words, and deeds.”

II. These twins, called “the two primeval spirits of the world,” are styled “the increaser” and “the destroyer.” This explains the profound Zoroastrian concept; the twins are the two sides of the divine action, like light and darkness; and, as Haug well observes, are “in Ahuramazda.” So, in another passage of the *Yasna*, Ahuramazda declares, “The more beneficent of my two spirits has produced the whole rightful creation.”\*

III. In later times, when Ormazd (Ahuramazda) and Ahri-man (Angrômainyush), the “dark” or “hurtful spirit,” had, in the general belief of centuries, been pitted against each other for ages, the mind, still striving after a primitive unity,

\* *Yasna*, xix. 9.



derived them both alike from an imaginary personification designated Zarvan-akarana, "Boundless-time," a being unknown to the *Avesta*.\*

IV. The dogma of the eternal existence of evil in the past is unknown to any other archaic religious belief; and therefore the most stringent proof of the existence of such a creed must be furnished ere the fact can be accepted. But no such proof can be supplied.

V. On the other hand, the cause and origin of the later Iranian dualism is transparent. The dark spirit of Ahura-mazda, the mysterious side of Providence, which shows itself objectively in the existence of darkness, evil, pain, injuring storms, and noxious creatures, soon naturally enough, and indeed, almost inevitably, received in belief a separate existence; and, as its operations were in apparent contradiction to those of the beneficent God, an imaginary strife arose between them, a contest whose physical counterpart had long before been known to mythology.

#### 10. *The Protest against the Devas and their Worship.*

Zarathustra, like many other great men who have been regarded as founders of religions, was essentially a *reformer*; and whilst undoubtedly claiming to be able to "teach the way of God more perfectly," was far from aspiring to the invention of a new and superior kind of faith. To compare small things with great, any particular religionist who makes a mighty effect upon his age resembles, however faintly, the Founder of our Faith; who at once accepted, illuminated, and fulfilled all past true religion; protested against the degeneracy of the then present religion, and threw a blaze of expanding and intensifying splendour upon the religion of the future. Even men like Muhammed and Sakya-muni were the outcome of terrible corruptions, against which they waged war and protested with immense effect, however great may have been the subsequent failure of their systems; and the creed of Zarathustra, having as its basis-principle the grand truth of monotheism, has survived the vicissitudes of many a stormy age, and still proclaims with unshaken fidelity the doctrine of the archaic sage.† I will next consider the protest of Zarathustra and the Deva-cult. In the *Gâthas* we read:—

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\* The passage in which Zarvan-akarana is supposed to be mentioned, really reads:—"The beneficent spirit made (them) *in* boundless time" (*Vendidad*, xix. 9), *i.e.* at some time in past period.

† "The Parsis are now strict Monotheists; their one supreme deity is Ahuramazda." (Haug, *Essays*, 53.)

"Ye Devas have sprung out of the evil spirit  
 Who takes possession of you by intoxication.  
 You have invented spells, which are applied by the most  
 wicked;  
 May the number of the worshippers of the liar (evil spirit)  
 diminish.  
 What, O good ruler Mazda, are the Devas?  
 Those who attack the good existence (*i.e.* good men, useful  
 animals, etc.).  
 By whose means the priest and prophet of the idols expose  
 the earth to destruction.  
 Whoever thinks the idols and all those men besides,  
 Who think of mischief only to be base,  
 And distinguishes such people from those who think of  
 the right,  
 His friend or father is Ahuramazda.  
 This is the beneficent revelation of the supreme fire-  
 priest."

Again, he says of "the priests and prophets of idols," that,  
 "They ought to avoid the bridge of the gatherer;  
 To remain for ever in the dwelling-place of destruction."

And in the *Earlier Yasna* we find a formal confession of  
 faith:—

"I cease to be a Deva (worshipper).  
 I profess to be a Zarathustrian Mazdayasnian (devotee of  
 Ahuramazda),  
 An enemy of the Devas, and a devotee of Ahura;  
 A praiser of the immortal benefactors (*i.e.* the Ameshas-  
 pentas).  
 I forsake the Devas, and those like Devas.  
 I praise the Ahuryan religion, which is the best of all that  
 are, and that will be."

As it may be objected, *in limine*, that the Deva-cult, which  
 is admittedly polytheistic in character, was universal in Aryan  
 regions until the age of Zarathustra, it may be replied, *in  
 limine*, that Zarathustra no more invented the Ahuryan creed  
 than St. Augustine (to take a prominent name) invented the  
 Christian. And the evidence is similar in both cases; for just  
 as the Bishop of Hippo speaks with approbation of the faith  
 of many of his predecessors, and just as the name of Christ as  
 a divine personage and as God, is to be met with centuries  
 before his day; so, we find Zarathustra alluding to "sayings  
 of old" revealed "by Ahura,\* praising the ancient fire-

\* *Yasna*, xlvi. 6.

priests,\* and exhorting his adherents to revere the Angra, known in the Vedic Hymns as the Angiras, an ancient race or family peculiarly connected with religious rites even before the separation of Indian and Iranian; and so also we meet with the sacred name Ahura, as applied to the supreme Aryan divinity, even before the separation of the Eastern and Western branches of the mighty family. Thus the Ahuryan religion, the faith of the Angra-Angiras, was already ancient in Zarathustra's day. Be it also observed that Monotheism does not consist, as one might almost suppose from the manner in which it is frequently treated, in the negation of the belief in the existence of all sentient beings except God and ourselves. For, just as we, who are monotheists, accept the existence of angelic intelligences, good and evil, and of the souls of the dead, holy and unholy; so Zarathustra may have regarded the Devas as actual objective existences, as evil angels or demons, without thereby in any degree infringing on his position as the champion of monotheism. I am not inquiring what his views on the subject were, but merely wish to show that in any case they do not affect the general question, inasmuch as he certainly did not regard the Devas as true gods.

#### 11. *History of the name Asura: meaning of "Ahuramazda."*

It is one of the greatest triumphs of modern scientific research to have revealed, by means of historical and philological investigation, the primitive unity of the Aryan family, a grand fact, which, like all other *facts*, is in perfect harmony with Biblical statement. We now know that there was a time when the ancestors of Kelt, Teuton, Slav, Latin, Greek, Iranian, and Indian, dwelt together as a single nation. Then came a first and great separation, when Iranian and Indian were left together, whilst the others, impelled by the old and mysterious law of "Westward Ho," pushed forward into Erebt

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\* Vide *inf.* secs. 30-32.

† Erebt signifies "the West," and, similarly, the *Arabs* are the people in the west of Asia. "Erebos" is originally the western gloom after sunset, from the Assyrian *eribu*, "to descend," as the sun. In accordance with this circumstance, the Homeric Erebt lies in the west. The cave of Skylle looks "towards the west, (*i.e.*) to Erebt" (*Od.* xii. 81); Odysseus turns towards Erebt to sacrifice (*Ibid.* x. 528), and thence the ghosts assemble (*Ibid.* xi. 37). Aides, as King of the Underworld, is called "Hesperos Theos" (Sophokles, *Oed. Tyr.* 177); and a "westward position" was generally adopted by the Greeks when invoking infernal divinities (cf. Mitford, *History of Greece*, xxii. 2). The main entrance to Greek temples of gods

now Europe. After a time came a second separation, when the ancestors of the Aryan Indians wandered south-eastwards into the Punjâb, the region of the five or seven streams.\* Now the name Ahura, in the form Asura, is one of the most familiar, and at the same time perhaps the most interesting title in the sacred literature of ancient India. In late times the Asuras are represented as demons or fiends confined in hell, and powerless against the gods.† In the *Purânas*, their opponents are styled, by a false etymology, Suras; and they are supposed to be A-Suras, "not-Suras." In the Vedic literature of the second class, the *Brâhmanas*, the Asuras are the cunning and powerful opponents of the Devas or gods. Going back still further, to the Vedic literature of the first class, we find the Asuras described in the *Atharvaveda*, the last and latest of the Four *Vedas*, as evil and tricky beings, who are put down and whose devices are frustrated by the Rishis or Vedic seer-poets.‡ Lastly, we come in an ascending scale to the *Rig-Veda*, in the Tenth and latest book of which the Asuras are still unfavourably described as the opponents of the gods and the good. But in the earlier portions of the *Rik* there are, according to Haug, only two passages§ where the word is used in an unfavourable sense. Thus during the latter part of the long period occupied in the gradual composition of the *Rig-Veda*, the depreciation and degradation of the term *Asura* and *Asuras* went on steadily, until this principle culminated in their position in the late mythology. I will give some instances of the use of the word in a good sense, in the earlier portion of the *Rik*; and I may here remark that the translation by Wilson, which is based upon the views of that Indian Eustathios Sâyana, A.D. 1350, most

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was generally on the eastern side; for Zeus and his fellows are the Devas or "Bright-beings," who love the east as connected with the dawn, the light, and the day. But the shrines of heroes faced westward, to show that they had once been mortal and had sunk like the sun in death; for the Sun-god, the Vedic Yama, "was the first of men that died, the first who found the way" (*Rig-Veda*, X. xiv. 1, 2) to the heavenly world (vide *inf.* sec. 24. Cf. "The happy west" in the archaic Egyptian religion). The west being thus connected with the infernal divinities, some Christian writers regarded it as the special region of the devil and evil spirits. The word *erebos* has also been identified with the Sanskrit *ragas*, but this is not approved by the best authorities (vide Prof. M. Müller, *Rig-Veda-Sanhita*, i. 42).

\* "Hapta Hindu is the *sapta-sindhavas* of the Vedas, a name of the Indus country or India." (Haug, *Essays*, 230, note 3.)

† Southey's *Curse of Kehama* fairly illustrates this stage.

‡ Vide *Atharvaveda*, IV. xxiii. 5; VII. vii. 2.

§ *Rig-Veda*, II. xxxii. 4; VII. xcix. 5. In the later passage Varchin, an opponent of Indra, is styled an Asura.

famous of native commentators on the *Veda*, is by no means to be relied on in the matter.\* Thus we read †:—

“This soma † is to be distributed as an offering among the Asuras” (Haug).

“This soma is to be offered by us for the divine beings” (Muir).

Here the Asuras are simply the gods. And the title Asura is also applied to some of the principal divinities separately; to Indra, § Agni, || Savitri, ¶ to the divine diad Varuna and Mitra, \*\* but especially to Varuna, †† the archaic head and chief of Vedic divinities, and whom we meet with in the west as Ouranos, so that he was known to the undivided Aryan family. Thus investigation discloses that the name Ahura, in the form Asura, was originally used in a good sense, alike in India and in Iran, and in both countries was especially applied to the supreme divinity. This name and concept were, therefore, the common property of the Eastern Aryans ere their separation into Iranian and Indian. But the term can be carried still further back, for we find it in the Aesir, ††† the general name for the gods of the Teutons and Scandinavians, and in the Erse and Etruscan *Æsar*; §§ and hence it was the common property of the united Aryan race, their ancient and venerable appellation of the Supreme.

Next, what is its meaning? Connected with the Vedic *asu*, ‘breath,’ ‘life,’ Asura is “the Living,” the living God, the Spiritual, and, more generally, “the Divine,” as opposed to the Human. The God of Zarathustra Ahurô mazdâo,

\* “Sâyana represents the tradition of India” (Prof. Müller, *Rig-Veda-Sanhita*, Preface, xv.), and “in many cases teaches us how the Veda ought not to be understood” (*Ibid.* ix.).

† *Rig-Veda*, I. cviii. 6: “Somo asurair.”

‡ The Soma-juice, supposed to have been obtained from the plant *Asclepias* (vide Wilson, *Rig-Veda-Sanhita*, i. 6; Canon Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchies*, ii. 329).

§ *Rig-Veda*, I. liv. 3.

|| *Ibid.* IV. ii. 5.

¶ *Ibid.* I. xxxv. 7.

\*\* *Ibid.* VII. xxxvi. 2; VIII. xxv. 4.

†† *Ibid.* I. xxiv. 14. Here Wilson, under the influence of Sâyana, renders Asura “avertter of misfortune”; adding “It is an *unusual sense of the word*, but it would *scarcely be decorous* (!) to call Varunâ an *asura*.” (Vide also Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, v. 61.) M. Darmesteter remarks, “Varuna est le dieu le plus fréquemment désigné sous le nom d’Asura” (*Ormazd et Ahriman*, 47).

††† The original form of the word is *ansu* (vide Tiele, *Outlines of the History of the Ancient Religions*, 190; Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, 47, note 4).

§§ “According to Suetonius, *ÆSAR* was an Etruscan word which meant ‘God,’ *Æsar* also means ‘God’ in Erse” (Rev. Isaac Taylor, *Etruscan Researches*, 144). “Aisar means ‘gods’ or ‘spirits’” (*Ibid.* 293).

“the Ahura who is called Mazdâo,” is “the Wise-living-spirit,” or perhaps rather, “the Living-Creator.”\*

### 12. *The Devas and the Deva-cult.*

Such being the god of “the Ahuryan religion,” let us next consider the Devas and their cult. The important root *dyu*, meaning primarily ‘to spring,’ and hence ‘to shine forth,’ has become the parent of a whole tribe of famous words, e.g., Dyaus, a Vedic name for the god of the gleaming heaven, the father; called Dyaus-pitâr, the Greek Zeus-patêr, and Latin Ju-piter and Janus Pater. Juno, Dianus, Diana, are other connected names; as is the German Tiu, which survives in Tues-day. *Dyu* has also supplied the general name for God or gods, *deva*, *theos*, *deus*, *divus*, i.e. “the Bright;” so, conversely, the Vedic *a-deva* is *a-theos*, or ‘god-less.’ The Devas are, therefore, “the Bright-ones,” the divinities of the morning, the dawn, the day, the lighted and gleaming firmament. So we find the dictum,—

“The evening is not for the gods; it is unacceptable to them.”†

*Deva*, therefore, like *asura*, was originally a good epithet amongst the Aryans; and has continued to be so in India, Greece, and Italy. But just as the Hindu Aryan degraded the latter term, so the Iranian Aryan degraded the former; and in the *Gâthas* and throughout the *Avesta* it is applied to false gods and hostile demons, and at length appears in the late Persian form *dêv*, ‡ meaning a fiend or evil spirit. The name *Vendidad* signifies, as noticed, “the Law against the Devas;” and from the Zarathustrian standpoint Aryan India is pre-eminently “the country of the wicked Deva-worshipping men.”§ Now, whatever the Aryan religion in India may have been originally, it undoubtedly at a certain period was, or became, polytheistic; and it will be observed that

\* “*Mazdâo* . . . the Vedic *medhâs*, ‘wise’; or when applied to priests, ‘skilful, able to make everything’” (Haug, *Essays*, 301). Prof. Müller and Benfey agree in this connection (*vide* Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, v. 120, note). M. Darmesteter prefers to derive Ahura from an Iranian word, *ahu*, “master,” form of an Indo-Iranian *asu*, with which he compares the Greek *εὖς*; Ahuramazda would thus signify “the Very-wise Lord.” The Rev. K. M. Banerjea takes a bolder flight, and confidently connects *Asura* with *Asur*, remarking “The name *Ahura Mazda* was derived from ‘*Asur*,’ the Assyrian term for god or lord” (*The Arian Witness*, Preface, xi. Calcutta, 1875).

† *Rig-Veda*, V. lxxvii. 2.

‡ Prof. Müller has elaborately traced the forms of the root *dyu*, such as *div*, *dev*, *dâiv*, etc. (*Lectures on the Science of Language*, ii. 493.)

§ *Vendidad*, xix. 29.

Zarathustra does not proclaim the cult of the Ahuras as against that of the Devas, but the worship of *the* Ahura, Ahuramazda, as against that of the company of Devas, God against gods, monotheism against polytheism. Now Zarathustra, as noticed, was a reformer, refers to good men living ere his time, and did not invent the concept of Ahura; and therefore, so far as the investigation has proceeded, we have exceedingly strong reasons for surmising that the Vedic period was one of gradual degradation, during which, whatever may have been the superior faith or knowledge of individuals, Dyaus, "the Bright," the god of heaven, was by degrees transformed into the Devas or band of bright divinities, in disregard of that profound saying of a Chinese sage, "As there is but one sky, how can there be many gods?"\* Ere considering the Vedic religion in this connection, several points alluded to in the foregoing quotations from the *Yasna* must first be noticed.

### 13. *The Soma-orgies and the Bridge of the Judge.*

The intoxication spoken of in the *Gâtha* is that produced by the Soma-juice; the Karapans or "Performers of sacrificial rites," were accustomed in the days of feud between Indian and Iranian to prepare solemn Soma-feasts for the Indian divinities. The Kavis or Seer-priests of the Vedic Aryans then invoked a particular divinity with hymns, and the god was supposed to descend and partake of the delicious beverage. His votaries next intoxicated themselves more or less, and when sufficiently excited set out on plundering excursions. Hence the horror and abomination with which the Zarathustrians regarded these depraving orgies, which at once vastly debased the concept of divinity and ruined the peaceable and orderly agriculturist. The *Gâtha* speaks of "the priests of idols," an expression which seems clearly to imply an image-worship more or less pronounced. Prof. Müller states that "the religion of the Veda knows of no idols. The worship of idols in India is a secondary formation, a later degradation of the more primitive worship of ideal gods."† Bollensen and others are of a contrary opinion. The truth probably is, that images began to appear towards the end of the Vedic period. These idol-priests are warned to "avoid the Bridge of the Gatherer," the celebrated *Chinvat pûl*. The phrase may also be rendered "Bridge of the Judge," which seems to me to be rather the preferable

\* *Apud* Prof. Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, 195.

† *Chips*, i. 38.

reading. This bridge leads across the aërial abyss to Heaven, and all souls must essay to traverse it; but the righteous alone can succeed, whilst the wicked fall from it into Hell beneath. It is the origin of the Muhammedan bridge Al Sirât, "laid over the midst of hell, finer than a hair, and sharper than the edge of a sword," whence the wicked will fall into the abyss. The root of the idea seems simply to be that Heaven being regarded as above and Hell beneath, the soul at death rises, in the desire to reach the former. But how shall it cross the vast abyss save by some aid, which may fitly be figured as a bridge? The wicked necessarily fail, as they may not enter Heaven. The account of the soul's progress after death is highly interesting; the righteous man is assisted across the Bridge by a beautiful maiden, who is a personification of that holiness which he has chosen when in life, an unique and remarkably fine idea:

"Said Ahuramazda: after a man is dead  
At daybreak after the third night he reaches Mithra;"

apparently the solar region.

"The soul goes on the time-worn paths,  
Which are for the wicked and which are for the righteous,  
To the Chinvad bridge created by Mazda."

Here it is met by the maiden referred to.

"She the beautiful, well-formed, strong, comes.  
She dismisses the sinful soul of the wicked into the glooms.  
She meets the souls of the righteous when crossing (the celestial mountain),  
And guides them over the Bridge of the Judge"

into the heavenly regions, where they are joyfully welcomed.

"Vohu-manô ["the Good-Mind"] rises from a golden throne;

Vohu-manô exclaims: How hast thou come hither to us,  
O righteous one!

From the perishable life to the imperishable life?

The souls of the righteous proceed joyfully to Ahuramazda,

To the Ameshaspentas, to the golden throne, to paradise."\*

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\* *Vendidad*, xix.



The corresponding account in a Fragment of the *Hādōkht Nask* states,—

“On the passing away of the third night [after death],  
 As the dawn appears, the soul of the righteous man  
 appears,  
 Passing through plants and perfumes.  
 To him there seems a wind, more sweet-scented than  
 other winds,  
 Advancing with this wind there appears to him what is  
 his own religion,  
 In the shape of a beautiful maiden.  
 Then the soul of the righteous man spoke to her,  
 ‘What maiden art thou, most beautiful of maidens?’  
 Then answered him his own religion :  
 I am, O youth, thy good thoughts, good words, good  
 deeds.’”

And then the righteous soul advances the four steps to perfect consummation of bliss, the last being placed upon “the eternal luminaries.”\*

#### 14. *The Ameshaspentas.*

The soul of the righteous is said to proceed to Ahuramazda and “to the Ameshaspentas,” the Ameshaspentas of the Parsis, whose name signifies “Immortal Benefactors;” and of whom, as we have seen,† the devout Ahuryan is a praiser. These personages may be fitly introduced by a very interesting quotation from Plutarch: “Horomazes [Ahuramazda] having sprung from the purest light, but Areimanios [Angrōmainyush] from the darkness (ἐκ τοῦ ζόφου), they made war on each other: and the one [Horomazes] made six gods, the first (the god) of Good-mind (εὐνοίας). This is Vohumanō, “the Good-mind,” afterwards known as the angel Bâhman, a personification of the nature of Ahuramazda, and who, as noticed,‡ welcomes the righteous soul on its entry into Heaven.

“And the second (the god) of Truth (ἀληθείας).” This is Asha-vahista; the most beautiful truth.” *Asha*, the equivalent of the Vedic *rita*, is the universal order of things, both material as in the kosmos; and religious; as in fitting worship and ritual. Thus the term signifies order, righteousness, truth. Asha-vahista is a kind of personification of light, which is truth-revealing and displays the harmony of the All, in opposition to darkness, which is essentially ignorant and chaotic.

\* *Vide* sec. 7.

† *Sup.* sec. 10.

‡ *Sup.* sec. 13.

“And the third (the god of) Good-government (ἐὐνομίας).” This is Khshathra-vairya, “the independent sway.” The Kshatriya, or warrior caste, is the second of the four ancient Hindā castes which appear as early as the *Brāhmanas*.

“And of the rest one was (god) of wisdom.” This is Spenta-armaiti, “the perfect thought,” piety. “And another (the god) of wealth (πλοῦτου).” This is Haurvatad, “Health,” who was afterwards supposed to preside over the fruits of the earth, which spring up from the dwelling of Plutus-Pluto. “And the remaining one, the maker of the pleasures in what is beautiful.”\* This somewhat curious definition we can but apply to the remaining Ameshaspenta Ameretad, “Immortality,” in which the righteous shall enjoy the endless loveliness of God. Now these six personifications, the Good-Mind, Truth, Power, Piety, Health, and Immortality, who, together with Ahuramazda, make up the mystic number of Seven Spirits of holiness and purity, afford a striking instance of the intense monotheism of the system of Zarathustra; for they are not distinct divinities in origin, but, as their names show, merely phases of the beneficent action and perfect character of the Supreme. In later times a corresponding list of demons, such as Akem-mano, “the Evil Mind,” Taric, “Darkness,” and Zanic, “Poison,” were excogitated in order to supply Angromainyush with assistant counsellors, and to make a complete system exactly corresponding in its halves, on the principle

“Grove nods at grove, each alley has its brother,  
And half the platform just reflects the other.”

This formal and arbitrary arrangement of divinities and supernatural personages—good, bad, and indifferent—is what may be termed *pantheonization*, is purely or mainly artificial, and always marks a late phase in the religious thought of a community. In Greece the Homeric Poems paved the way for the system of Hesiod, from which the class of thinkers who culminated in Socrates and Plato ever recoiled, and which was essentially self-destructive. There is great truth, mixed doubtless with some alloy of error, in the remark of Herodotus, “Homer and Hesiod were the first to compose theogonies, and give the gods their epithets, to allot them their several offices and occupations, and describe their forms.”† But, at the same time, it must be observed that the concept of a Supreme Power associated with six other personages, the whole body forming a mystic seven, is a really archaic idea,

\* *Peri Is. kai Os.* xlvi.

† *Herod.* ii. 53.

and one which was not unfamiliar to the undivided Indo-Iranians. Areimanios, says Plutarch, sprang from the darkness, *zophos*, i.e. the west, as *zephuros* is the western wind. Hence he is identical in concept with Erebos, the gloom after sunset.\*

### 15. *Mithra*.

With the exception of Ahuramazda himself, no name is more famous in Iranian religious-mythology than that of Mithra, "the Friend," the Vedic Mitra, the divinity of beaming light, and hence the Sun-god; not by any means the solar photosphere crudely regarded as a sentient being. In the *Mithr-Yasht*, or "Invocation to Mithra," Ahuramazda declares—

"When I created Mithra, I created him as worthy of honour,  
As praiseworthy, as I myself, Ahuramazda."

Of Mithra M. Lenormant remarks that his "origin is not clearly explained in what remains of the Zoroastrian books"; but that he "seems to have sprung from Ormuzd, and to have been *consubstantial with him*." He was the "judge after death. His name, title, and high position in the Mazdean faith unquestionably belong to the most ancient phase of this religion."† Elsewhere‡ he alludes to a passage "which has much puzzled the commentators," "the two divine Mithras."§ I understand Spiegel to interpret this of the sun and the planet Jupiter, but as the sun is mentioned almost immediately after, and is styled "the eye of Ahuramazda and Mithra," I suppose rather that "the two divine Friends" are Ahuramazda and Mithra themselves. Now Mithra is almost the only divine personage besides Ahuramazda to whom, in the more archaic portion of the *Avesta*, a distinct, objective, actual, sentient existence is undoubtedly attributed. Thus we read—

"Mithra (who bestows) good dwelling on the Aryan regions,  
May he come to us for protection, for joy,  
For mercy, for healing, for victory, for hallowing,  
Mithra will I honour with offerings,  
Will I draw near to as a Friend with prayer.  
Give us the favours we pray thee for, O Hero,  
Kingdom, strength, victoriousness, sanctification, and  
purity of soul,

\* *Vide* p. 17, note †.  
‡ *Chaldean Magic*, 236.

† *Ancient History of the East*, ii. 33.  
§ *Yasna*, i. 29.

Greatness and knowledge of holiness, instruction in the holy word.”\*

The physical and mythological side of his character, which is also of great interest, I need not refer to in this connection; but it will be observed that Mithra cannot, like the Ameshas-pentas, be resolved into a mere personification of a quality or a virtue or the like, and hence in the Zoroastrian system he is not included amongst them. They are but illustrations of the character of Ahuramazda, the Supreme; Mithra, though ever working in perfect harmony with him, though so closely connected with him that M. Lenormant makes use of the remarkable expression “consubstantial,” is nevertheless also a distinct divinity, as worthy of honour as Ahuramazda himself. Mithra is not only the support, friend, and protector of the righteous, but also the constant and triumphant opposer of the Devas and of the wicked man. And, like the august concept of the Sun-god elsewhere, he is pre-eminently the judge. So in Egypt the Sun-god, as Ra and as Uasar (Osiris), is the judge of men; whilst, as Fox Talbot has observed, “The great name of the Sun in Assyrian theology was *Daian-nisi* or *Dian-nisi*,† the Judge of men; the Greek Dionysos.‡ Neither Amen, “the Hidden-one,” in Egypt, nor Anu, “the High-one,” in Assyria and Akkad, nor Ahura, “the Living-one,” in Iran, take upon themselves the function of judge of mortals; they delegate the great work to their august representative and manifestation the Sun-god.§ It is impossible not to recall in this connection various statements in our own Sacred Books in perfect harmony with this belief. Thus we are told that “the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son,”|| who “was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead,”¶ “God having appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained.”\*\* And this judge is “the Sun of righteousness,”†† “a sun and shield.”‡‡ With the later Mithra, who as Mithras in conjunction with Serapis so triumphantly invaded the Roman Empire and drove the classic gods of Greece and Italy from

\* *Mihr-Yasht*.

† From the Assyrian *danu*, judge; Heb. *dan* (cf. Gen. xlix. 16: *Dan* shall judge his people) and *nisu*, man.

‡ Vide *The Great Dionysiac Myth*, ii. 209.

§ For a consideration of the concept and position, physical and spiritual, of the Sun-god, vide *The Archaic Solar-cult of Egypt*. By the Writer. (*Theological Review*, October, 1878–January, 1879).

|| St. John v. 22.

¶ Acts x. 42.

\*\* Ibid. xvii. 31.

†† Malachi iv. 2.

‡‡ Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

the field, degrading even Jupiter himself to the rank of a mere planetary genius, I am not concerned. His mysteries, trials, tests, tortures, grades, and their contest and connection with Christianity and Gnosticism, form an exceedingly interesting study, but neither truly Zarathustrian, nor yet archaic. One Euboulos, quoted by Porphyry, wrote a history of Mithra in many books, and connected Zoroaster with his cult.\*

### 16. *Mithra and the Gáthas.*

In the Mithra of the *Avesta* the Sun-god is presented before us in his customary double aspect. Physically, he sees all things, possesses wide pastures, has a chariot and swift horses, or stands clad in gold upon the mountain-tops. But he is far more than this; he is also a mighty spiritual being, the judge, the terrible opponent of evil men and evil powers, the avenger of the broken contract† and the scourge of the liar, the bestower of reward, fame, and holiness to the soul, to whom a man may draw near in prayer as to a friend. Now, as the name Mithra does not occur in the *Gáthas* except in the sense of "contract" or "promise," the next question for consideration is, What is the connection between Mithra and the religion of the *Gáthas*? The general opinion is somewhat as follows:—"Whilst in the *Gáthas* we never find mentioned gods like Mithra and Anâhita,‡ we meet with their names in nearly every page of the later *Yasna*. Here arises the question why the author of the *Gáthas* disregarded these gods and divine beings whom it was afterwards held sinful to neglect? The *only* (?) answer is that he neither believed in them nor thought them to be an essential part of religion."§ So Dr. West observes, "Mithra finds no place in the earlier Zoroastrian scriptures, and his appearance with the other angels, in the later writings, denotes a partial lapse into idolatry."|| Although I dissent with diffidence from such authorities, yet I am compelled to do so in the present instance, and for the following reasons:—

I. Mithra occupied a position of exceedingly high honour and importance prior to the separation of Indian and Iranian.

\* Vide C. W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains*, 97; Porphyry, *Peri apochés tôn empsuchôn*, iv. 16; *Peri tou en Odusseia tôn Numphôn antrou*, 2.

† A promise or contract is called *mithra*, and to break it is "to lie to Mithra" (vide *Yasna*, xlvi. 5; *Vendidad*, iv).

‡ The classical Anaitis and the Chaldeo-Assyrian Anatu. Her case is not analogous with that of Mithra, as she sprang from an entirely different source. Mithra is a purely Aryan divinity.

§ Haug, *Essays*, 260.

|| *The Academy*, June 29, 1878, p. 583.

That position he never lost, either in the *Avesta*, or in the earlier portions of the *Rig-Veda*; whilst various other divinities were degraded either by Indian or Iranian.

II. The authors of the *Gáthas* were perfectly acquainted with the worship of Mithra, but it is never condemned by them; and as, moreover, many *Gáthas* are undoubtedly lost, it is quite possible that Mithra may have been mentioned with approval in these. The *argumentum è taciturnitate* is proved in countless instances to be one of the weakest that can be employed.

III. There are apparently several indirect references to Mithra in the extant *Gáthas*. Thus, as noticed, his name occurs in the sense of 'contract'; and, as mentioned, reference is made to the Bridge of the 'Gatherer' or 'Judge.' Now Mithra, as M. Lenormant notices, was the "judge after death"; and the customary mythologico-religious function of the Sun-god is to be the judge, guide, and conductor of souls, as the one who first passed into the unseen world.\* I think, therefore, that Mithra is the personage here alluded to.

IV. In the later portion of the *Avesta* Mithra reappears in a position of the highest honour, a circumstance which I do not regard as a "lapse into idolatry," because I do not think that his concept was originally idolatrous; this circumstance points rather to his having been regarded with unbroken respect.

V. Lastly, the authors of the *Gáthas*, who were making a great monotheistic protest, had an obvious reason for suppressing the name, lest the *nomen* should as in countless other instances, and as was subsequently actually the case here, become the *numen*.†

As M. Lenormant observes, there is doubtless a certain obscurity connected with the Mithraic concept as it appears in the *Avesta*; but I think with him, that we may without hesitation link Mithra with the most ancient phase of the Iranian religion; and, further, that a careful analysis of the archaic concept of Mithra, and especially bearing in mind his intimate relation with Ahuramazda, will make us hesitate ere

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\* *Vide* the case of the Vedic Yama, and the Hymns on the subject in the *Rig-Veda*, books IX. X. The Greek idea was similar. "Stesichoros, B.C. 632-552, sings how Halios [Helios] Hyperion's sun, went down into his golden cup and sailed away o'er ocean to the deep realms of night, to visit his beloved ones in the sacred laurel grove." (*The Great Dionysiac Myth*, i. 317.)

† Cf. Exodus xxiii. 13: "In all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth."

we pronounce the respect or reverence originally paid him to have been idolatrous. As the Homeric poems contain numerous personifications of ideas, such as rumour, terror, panic, discord, sleep, death, and the like; so, in the *Avesta*, we find disease, decay, poverty, deceit, dwarfishness, sloth, darkness, poison, represented or spoken of as personal demons; and other concepts more august such as Sraosha, the personification of the divine service; Rashnu, the personification of justice; Asha, order, physical, moral, and religious; and the Ameshaspentas equally resolve themselves, so far as actual objective existence is concerned, into thin air. But Mithra, "the mightiest, strongest, most famous, most victorious, most brilliant of the Yazatas,"\* or "beings worthy of honour," cannot be so resolved. He is neither the sun, nor the light, but the spirit of brightness and the sentient friend of man.

### 17. *Ahuramazda as the Creator.*

It remains to notice the statement in the *Gáthas* respecting Ahuramazda as the creator of all things. I have already † quoted a passage which declares that the material world was created by his two spirits, and in another place we read;—

"Armaiti came with wealth, the good and true mind;  
She the everlasting one, created the material world."

Now Armaiti, the Vedic Aramati, is the personification of Prayer or Divine Wish; and, as noticed, is "in Ahuramazda," and hence the meaning is that divine yearning tender and benevolent occasioned creation. So, again, we read:—

"That I shall ask thee, tell it me right, O Ahura!  
Who was in the beginning the father and creator of  
righteousness?  
Who created the path of the sun and stars?  
Who causes the moon to increase and wane but thou?  
Who is holding the earth and the skies above it?  
Who made the waters and the trees of the field?  
Who created the lights of good effect and the darkness?  
Who created the sleep of good effect and the activity?  
Who (created) morning, noon, and night?  
Who has prepared the Bactrian home?  
To become acquainted with these things, I approach  
thee, O Mazda,  
Beneficent spirit! creator of all beings!  
That I shall ask thee, tell it me right, O Ahura!

\* The Vedic "Yajata" and the Parsi Izad or "angel."

† Sec. 9.

How may I come, O Mazda! to your dwelling-place (*i. e.*  
Heaven)  
To hear you sing?"

The touching simplicity of the last question may almost provoke a smile, but let any Lucretius who, either in despairing incredulity or in temporary satisfaction with the water of this life, has

“Dropped his plummet down the broad  
Deep universe and said ‘No God,’  
Finding no bottom,”

commune for a moment with his own heart respecting this sacred thirst of man for the more immediate presence of divinity, this cry of agonizing intensity, “When shall I come and appear before God?” “for all men yearn after the gods.”\* Is it baseless, a mere desire for *nothing*? I would as soon believe that physical thirst was unaccompanied by an answering actuality. No sadder doom can befall a mortal than to convince himself that this, the noblest aspiration of the soul, is altogether fallacious. To such an one it may almost be said in those words of unapproachable sadness, “The fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.” That I do not exaggerate, witness the confession of the candid and most unhappy Physicus, at the conclusion of his able work, “I am not ashamed to confess that with this virtual negation of God the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness; and when at times I think of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it, at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible.”† Thank heaven that in ancient Iran we see no such “monumental melancholy gloom,” but rather a childlike confidence and simple faith that Ahura will guide through all darkness and difficulty, and that at the last, although in some almost “unimagined fashion,” his children “shall see his face.”

“Ahura who is giving all (good things) cannot be deceived  
All that have been living, and will be living,  
Subsist by means of his bounty only,  
The soul of the righteous attains to immortality.

\* Πάντες δὲ θεῶν χατίους ἄνθρωποι. (*Od.* iii. 48.)

† *A Candid Examination of Theism*, 114 (English and Foreign Philosophical Library, vol. ix.).



Him I wish to adore with my good mind,  
 Him who gives us fortune and misfortune according to  
     his will,  
 He knows with his true and good mind,  
 And gives to this world freedom from defects and im-  
     mortality;”

for He “only hath immortality.” It will be remembered that I am not speaking so much of Iranian religion generally, nor even of the religion of the *Avesta*, a work of many hands and many years, but of the religion of Zoroaster; and I think it must, upon the whole, be admitted that amongst the various phases of uninspired faith, his will stand almost second to none; and that it is distinctly and essentially monotheistic. Having now considered it in itself, I will next briefly view it in connection with Archaic, *i.e.* pre-Zarathustrian, Monotheism, and with this feature chiefly as it appears amongst the eastern members of the Aryan family.

## PART II.—THE EARLY VEDIC BELIEF.

### 18. *Various Modern Theories respecting the Nature of Vedic Belief.*

As the earliest Vedic literature is admittedly nearer in language, style, and tone of thought to the period of Indo-Iranian unity than the *Avesta* generally, or perhaps even than the *Gáthas*, it is to the *Rig-Veda*, the “Veda of Praise,” which stands at the head of the Aryan sacred literature of India, that we must, in the first instance, turn for information respecting pre-Zarathustrian faith. The *Sanhita* or ‘Collection’ of the *Rik*, consists of 1,017 *Suktas* or ‘Hymns,’ containing 10,580 *Richas* or ‘Verses,’ and is divided into ten Books called *Mandalas* or ‘Circles.’ The work appears to be the production of some 150 writers, and its composition doubtless extended over several centuries. From the nature of the human mind and from the experience we possess of other archaic sacred works, we may expect to discern in it a great uniformity of tone and a general method of treatment, combined with almost infinite variety in detail, often apparently highly conflicting, and a gradual drifting of the mind towards fresh mental stand-points; a phase which shows itself in a fluctuation in the amount of respect paid to various divinities, who thus from time to time fall or rise in the estimation of their votaries. All this we shall find abundantly in the *Rik*. There is, of course, no question that the faith of the Aryan Indian *became* practically polytheistic, although many theistic or even monotheistic features were

retained or added ; whilst pantheism, ever a late form of philosophico-religious thought, likewise appeared in its turn in a most pronounced and developed phase. But the question before us is not what archaic Indian faith had become at the end, but what it was (to go back at present no further) at the commencement, of the Vedic period. And here at the threshold of the investigation, the inquirer must not be discouraged by finding the widest difference of opinion amongst experts. The student, therefore, whilst giving all honour where it is due, will carefully retain the right of private judgment, nor consent to follow blindly the chariot of any particularly great literary conqueror. There is no absolute and inherent necessity that the best philologist should be also the best mythologist, or that the man who possesses the greatest acquaintance with the body of a work should have most truly caught its real spirit. There is, indeed, a decided *a priori* probability in his favour, but nothing more. Professor Müller, with a pardonable preference for his great study, observes, "The Veda, I feel convinced, will occupy scholars for centuries to come, and will take and maintain for ever its position as the most ancient of books in the library of mankind."\* I think the *Veda* scarcely possesses this pre-eminent claim to antiquity, but whether scholars will be thus occupied with it or not, sure I am that "for centuries to come" (should the present state of things endure so long) men will investigate with undiminished interest the archaic beginnings of religion, in connection with the supreme question of its truth, and of the reason of its existence amongst mankind. The fact that highly able inquirers have regarded the Vedic religion as polydaimonic or even lower ; as polytheistic, as henotheistic, or as monotheistic, is at first sight very startling ; but even a slight study of the *Veda* almost clears up the mystery, inasmuch as it soon reveals the principles on which the various experts acted. Thus, according to A, the Vedic Indian observing, like other savage or semi-savage tribes, a vast amount of extra-human power around, worshipped it everywhere and in anything or in everything. The principle of anthropomorphism obtained more or less, as of course, and thus the cult was polydaimonic or fetishistic. According to B, the Vedic Indian, like other Aryans, was deeply impressed by the most remarkable phenomena of nature, which he personified and adored ; hence he was a polytheist. According to C, the Vedic Indian had a wonderful sense of the greatness and goodness of the divine, but he was unable to consider the whole except in its parts ; and hence when he

\* *Rig-Veda Sanhita*, i. Preface, x.

hymned this or that phase of superhuman potency, it assumed supreme dimensions in his mind, and being, of course, personified, the worshipper thus became a henotheist, or one who adores many gods, any one of whom may be regarded in turn as the highest. According to D, the Vedic Indian originally believed in one God, whose phases of character and material manifestations by degrees became personified; whereby the original, simple and sublime idea was shrouded, and hence forgotten. And are there then passages in the *Rig-Veda* which countenance, or seem to countenance, each of these contradictory opinions? Most certainly, and hence the theories; but here, as elsewhere, let us as far as possible avoid being entangled by what I may call the tyranny of isolated texts. "It is written *again*," must be our constant motto, for the ninety-first Psalm is by no means the only Scripture that may be perverted through this most objectionable principle. What must be sought in an investigation of the *Rik* is, not simply odd passages or quotations which may be used in support of a particular theory, but broad, general principles of belief. To give an instance: no passage in the *Veda* is more familiar and perhaps more remarkable than the famous statement:—

"They call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni;  
And (he is) the celestial, well-winged Garutmat.  
Sages name variously that which is but one:  
They call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan."\*

Here, it may be said, we reach monotheism at a bound; here is an explanatory statement in the earliest portion of the *Veda*, giving the general practice and belief. And towards the close of the *Rik* we read similarly:—

"The wise, in their hymns, represent, under many forms,  
the well-winged (god) who is but one."†

I value these passages very greatly, but the argument in favour of archaic monotheism must not be allowed to rest upon them alone, or upon any other similar passages elsewhere. And we must be cautious not to strain them; thus it may be asked who is the 'Him,' the 'it,' and the 'well-winged'? It is easy to reply that the Deity is undoubtedly meant, and such very likely *may* be the case; but the great commentator Yaska, B.C. 400, applied the former passage to Agni, whilst Sayana thought that Surya, the Sun, was intended. However, ere examining the principal Vedic concepts, we may remember

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\* *Rig-Veda*, I. clxiv. 46. The translations of Vedic passages are chiefly taken from Dr. Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, and occasionally from the work of the late Prof. Wilson, continued by Prof. Cowell. † *Ibid.* X. cxiv. 5.

with comfort a statement of Professor Müller, which is not based upon any particular passage or passages, but upon a wide and careful investigation of the subject, a statement which has my warmest assent, "Like an old precious metal, the ancient religion, after the rust of ages has been removed, will come out in all its purity and brightness, and the image which it discloses will be the image of the Father, the Father of all the nations upon earth."\*

### 19. *The Vedic Divinities.*

The principle of explaining the concept of a mythologico-religious being from the signification of his name, is one which has of late been employed with the most distinguished success; and therefore a first step towards determining archaic Vedic faith is to tabulate the Vedic divinities and to notice the meaning of their names. The following are the principal personifications or divine personages of the *Rig-Veda* :—

*Aditi.* "The Boundless." "The Infinite."† "The Infinite personified" (Müller). Mother of the seven or eight Adityas: namely, Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman, Amsah, Bhaga, Daksha, Agni, and Martanda. The passages do not absolutely agree respecting the names of the Adityas.

*Agni.* The Slavonic Ogni. Lat. *ignis*. The igneous principle, which shows itself alike in the terrestrial, aerial, and heavenly flame, visible and invisible. "The Ag-ile."

*Amsah.* "The Sympathizer" (Roth). "The Sharer" (Tiele). "Portion" (Whitney). Very rarely mentioned.

*Aryaman.* "The Favourer" (Roth). "Protector" (Whitney). Closely connected with Mitra, and sometimes incorrectly identified with the Iranian Ahriman.

*Asura.* "The Living."† We often find one Asura particularly mentioned, who is called "Asura of heaven."§

*Asvins.* "The Horsemen." "The Pervaders" (Goldstücker.) Sons of Asva, the Sun in his aspect of a racer.|| "The two powers which seemed incorporated in the coming and going of each day and each night" (Müller). In the West the Dioskouroi, Castor and Pollux.

*Bhaga.* "The Distributer." "Fortune" (Whitney). The

\* *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, 67.

† *Vide* Prof. Müller's course of lectures *On the Origin and Growth of Religion*.

§ Haug, *Essays*, 269.

† *Vide sup.* sec. 11.  
|| Cf. Psalm xix. 5.

Wendic Bogu. The "name became at an early date a general designation of the gods among the Slavs."\*

*Brahmanaspati*. "The Lord of spells." A phase of Agni.

*Brihaspati*. "The Lord of prayer." A phase of Agni.

*Daksha*. "The Intelligent" (Roth). "The Power" (Tiele).

"The Powerful in will" (Lenormant). "Insight" (Whitney). "Daksha sprang from Aditi and Aditi from Daksha. Aditi was produced, she who is thy daughter, O Daksha."†

*Dyaus*. "The Shiner." "The Bright."‡ The heaven and bright heaven god, Zeus.

*Hiranyagarbha*. "Golden embryo." "The source of golden light" (Müller). A very remarkable hymn § is addressed to this divinity. The poet exclaims:—

"In the beginning there arose the source of golden-light—  
He was the one born Lord of all that is.

He established the earth, and this sky;—

Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

He who gives life, He who gives strength;

Whose command all the bright gods revere;

Whose shadow is immortality; whose shadow is death;

He through whom the sky is bright and the earth firm—

He through whom the heaven was 'stablished—nay the highest heaven.

*He who is the sole life of the bright gods;*

*He who alone is God above all gods;*

*He the Creator of the earth; He the Righteous, who created the heaven."*||

*Indra*. "The Rain-giver." The name is probably derived from *indu*, 'drop.' The Zeus Ombrios, Jupiter Pluvius, who with his thunderbolt destroys the rain-concealing demon and sets free the refreshing waters. A peculiarly Indian divinity who, from the local characteristics of the country, became almost the head of the Pantheon. If the Iranians knew him at all, which is very doubtful, ¶ they degraded him by making him into a demon.\*\*

*Maruts*. "The Crushers."†† The Storm-winds. Greek, Ares. Latin, Mars.

\* Tiele, *Outlines of the History of the Ancient Religions*, 109.

† *Rig-Veda*, X. lxxii. 14.

‡ *Vide sup.* sec. 12.

§ *Rig-Veda*, X. cxxi.

|| Translated by Prof. Max Müller in his *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, 569.

¶ *Vide Darmesteter, Ormazd et Ahriman*, 260, *et seq.*

\*\* *Vide Haug, Essays*, 272.

†† The above is the generally-received interpretation. M. Darmesteter prefers, however, to render *marat* or *marut* "man" (*vide Ormazd et Ahriman*, 164).

*Mitra.* "The Friend." Iranian Mithra.\* Nearly always mentioned in connection with Varuna.†

*Prithivi.* "The Broad Earth." Greek, *Platūs*.

*Purusha.* "The Male." The *Purusha Sukta* ‡ gives a somewhat pantheistic account of the Deity under this name. The poet says:—

"Purusha has a thousand heads, eyes, feet. §

Purusha himself is the whole (universe), whatever has been, whatever shall be.

He is the lord of immortality.

All existing things are a quarter of him, and that which is immortal in the sky is three-quarters of him.

The moon was produced from his soul;

The sun from his eye; Indra and Agni from his mouth;

And Vayu from his breath." ||

*Pushan.* "The Growth-producer." (Tiele.)

*Rudra.* "The Terrible." This personage forms an excellent illustration of the principle *nōmina numina*, and of the utter baselessness of many of the bugbears which have frightened millions of mankind for ages. His name in origin is only an adjective applied to Agni. Thus we read—

"Agni, the Brilliant, the Terrible ¶ (i.e. Rudra).

Agni, the terrible (*rudra*) king, † he golden-formed." \*\* Rudra as a distinct divinity continued to increase in importance until as Siva, "the Gracious," a euphemism for his title Sarva, "the Wrathful," he attained almost the first place in the Hindu Pantheon, becoming the Mahadeva, or "Great god," *Megas theos*. His dread consort Kali, "the Black," was merely originally one of the seven fire-tongues of Agni. In such instances as these we see polytheism developing before our eyes, many made out of one.

*Savitri.* "The Vivifier" (Tiele), "The Inspirer" (Cox). A solar phase.

*Soma.* "Intoxication" (Canon Rawlinson). Originally the moist, humid, and watery element in nature. †† Also closely connected with Agni.

\* *Vide sup.* secs. 15, 16.

† Mitra and Varuna are the subject of a recent monograph by Dr. Hillebrandt, *Varuna und Mitra* (Breslau, 1877).

‡ *Rig-Veda*, X. xc.

§ An early instance of symbolical monstrosity, a principle which has often made art hideous.

|| *Apud Muir, Sanskrit Texts*, v. 368, *et seq.* The hymn affords an exact parallel to some of the later Egyptian hymns to the pantheistic Sun-god. (*Vide The Archaic Solar Cult of Egypt.* By the Writer.)

¶ *Rig-Veda*, III. ii. 5. \*\* *Ibid.* IV. iii. 1.

†† *Vide sup.* sec. 13; *inf.* sec. 29. Soma is a liquid Agni.

*Surya*. "The Shining" (Tiele). Greek, Helios; Latin, Sol, the Sun.

*Twashtri*. "The Creator" (Lenormant). "The Maker" (Müller). A solar Hephaistos.

*Ushas*. "The Dawn." Greek, Eôs, Aüs, Auôs. Also called Ahana. Greek, Athena, "the Brilliant;" and Saranyu, Greek, Erinny, the 'running' light.

*Varuna*. "The Coverer" (Tiele). Greek, Ouranos. The God of heaven, the Asura and head of the Vedic Pantheon. After having ruled in the Oversea, Varuna in later times was degraded to the Undersea, and became an Okeanos.\*

*Vayu*. "The gentler wind." Cf. Lat. Favonius. The spirit-breath of heaven.

*Vishnu*. "The Penetrater" (Gubernatis). The Sun, as striding across heaven.

*Vivasvat*. "The Brilliant" (Roth). Heavenly light and the sun.

*Yama*. "The Twin." Cf. Lat. Gemini. The Iranian Yima, who reigned in the happy golden age of the past. By Yama and his twin-sister Yamî some understood Day and Night, or Light and Darkness. Yama is especially the western or setting sun. He reigns over the departed, for to die is but to go away; and the fathers, the elder worthies of the human race, dwell with Yama in bliss in the unseen world.

Such, then, are the principal divinities of the *Rig-Veda*. There are also many minor figures, goddesses, who play unimportant parts, for a goddess, to use an Assyrian expression, is originally merely the 'reflection' of her husband-god; ideal personifications, such as Vach, 'Voice,' Sraddha, 'Faith,' and the like; compound names for the supreme divinity, and other heterogeneous concepts; but the foregoing list contains all, or nearly all, the personages of any real importance.

## 20. *Analysis of the Vedic Divinities.*

Reckoning the Asvins and the Maruts as each one personage, the list contains twenty-nine names, from which we may at once deduct the three special phases of Agni, namely,

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\* Cf. the position of the Homeric Okeanos:—

Ἐρχομαι ὀψομένη πολυφόρβον πείρατα γαίης,  
Ὠκεανόν τε, θεῶν γένεσιν.

Brahmanaspati, Brihaspati, and Rudra. The remaining twenty-six, on analysis, appear as follows:—

I. *Phenomenal Objects.*

1. *Celestial.*

Aditi.  
Dyaus.  
Soma.  
Varuna.

2. *Aërial.*

The Maruts.  
Vayu.

3. *The Dawn.*

Ushas.

4. *Semi-solar.*

Agni.  
Aryaman.  
The Asvins.  
Indra.  
Mitra.  
Pushan.  
Tvashtri.

5. *Purely solar.*

Savitri.  
Surya.  
Vishnu.  
Vivasvat.  
Yama.

6. *The Earth.*

Prithivi.

II. *Abstractions of Deity.*

Amsah.  
Bhaga.  
Daksha.  
Hiranyagarbha.  
Purusha.

III. *The Aryan God.*

Asura.

They may also be further divided into:—

I. *Natural Objects merely so regarded.*

Aditi.  
Dyaus.  
The Maruts.  
Ushas.  
Prithivi.  
Vayu.

II. *Natural Objects connected with spiritual power.*

1. *Heat and Humidity.*

Agni.  
Soma.  
2. *The Heaven.*  
Varuna.

3. *The Light.*

Aryaman.  
The Asvins.  
Indra.  
Mitra.

Pushan.

Tvashtri.

4. *The Sun.*

Savitri.  
Surya.  
Vishnu.  
Vivasvat.  
Yama.

III. *Forms of Deity.*

1. *General.*

Asura.

2. *Abstract.*

Daksha.  
Hiranyagarbha.

3. *Connected with Light.*

Amsah.  
Bhaga.  
4. *Pantheistic.*  
Purusha.



21. *Natural Objects merely so regarded.*

In the present day, when knowledge and research have so vastly extended, and when whole books are written on single divinities, it is of course utterly impossible in a brief paper to give anything like a complete representation of the facts, or a full justification of the views adopted. But it is quite possible to indicate a general method of treatment, and, I venture to add, to advance very strong arguments in its favour. Nor is further investigation either into the researches of original students, or by such students themselves, likely, in my judgment, to turn the monotheistic position here adopted. We have a number of names, an apparent polytheism, but in origin a real monotheism. To begin with Infinite Space, Heaven, Earth, Dawn, Wind, and Tempest, six of these twenty-six figures: as far as I am aware there is no passage in the *Rik* which necessarily implies that any one of them was regarded by any poet as an absolutely sentient being of divine nature. As to Aditi, the infinite, she is of course in one point of view mother of everything and of every personage which infinite space contains; but she is no real divinity, being essentially a mere negation, the not-bounded, and space itself is mainly unsubstantial extension. Heaven and earth, again, broadly regarded as the two halves of the all, heaven being all that is above, and earth all that is below, are, anthropomorphically speaking, father and mother of men and things in many a kosmogony; but, as in the case of Aditi, and as in that of the Greek Ouranos and Gaia, this is a mere figure of speech. Thus, the ancient song of Dodona ran, "The earth sends forth her fruit, therefore call the earth mother." Dyaus, in the East, is but a name; in the West he is the true god-father, Zeus. Conversely, Ouranos in the West is but a name; in the East he is the true god-father, Varuna the Asura. Dr. Muir is of opinion that epithets of "a moral or spiritual nature" are applied to the Vedic Dyaus and Prithivi, but such terms as "innocuous, beneficent, wise, promoters of righteousness," by no means necessarily contain such an implication. Thus, for instance, the righteousness spoken of is merely kosmic order; of which heaven and earth are, of course, the two great supporters. The wisdom of heaven is no more than that of the physical sun who "sees all things," and therefore is said to know all things. Beautiful hymns are addressed to Ushas, the dawn; but there is little, if anything, in them which a modern poet might not have written, and there is not a tittle of evidence to show that the ancient poet regarded Ushas otherwise

than a modern Aryan bard would do.\* Chateaubriand writes :—

“The dawn peeps in at the window, she paints the sky with red ;  
And over our loving embraces her rosy rays are shed.  
She looks on the slumbering world, love, with eyes that seem divine ;  
But can she show on her lips, love, a smile as sweet as thine ?”†

There is no mystery here ; simply a constant working of the anthropomorphic principle. And so the Vedic Ushas, daughter of the sky, sister of night, bride of the sun, mistress of the world, kinswoman of Varuna, divine, immortal, golden-hued, as we have seen, smiles upon the earth ; and to her, to the region whence all drawn-light springs, go holy souls after death.‡ Again, Vayu, the wind, touches the sky, and is swift as thought ; he does not occupy a prominent position in the *Rig-Veda*, but is very closely connected with Indra, as ruling the middle region. The Maruts are a troop of winds, sometimes said to be twenty-seven in number, sometimes a hundred and eighty. They attend and aid Indra, the god of the bright heaven, who drives away darkness by storm. Thus, this group of divinities, on examination, disappear absolutely, not merely to ourselves, but to the Vedic Indian. They stand confessed as the ordinary phenomena of nature, and nothing more.

## 22. *The Forms of Deity.*

Twenty personages remain. Let us next take the group of forms of deity. Daksha is merely a personification of intelligence, or intelligent will, which will, as noticed,§ even produced infinite space. Whose will? That of the Asura. Amsah, whose name very rarely occurs, is the “sympathizer,” or “sharer.” But who sympathizes with mankind, or divides amongst them the good things of existence save the Asura? That Bhaga, “the distributor,” is merely another of his names is evident ; amongst other reasons, from the fact that Bhaga became a general name for God amongst the Slavs, and therefore belonged to the period of Aryan unity. He who is Amsah is Bhaga, and both, as noticed, are Adityas. Hiranyagarbha and Purusha are later philosophical concepts of God ; they are therefore identical with each other and with Asura.

\* *Vide sup.* sec. 6.

† *Apud* Victor Hugo, *The History of a Crime*, iii. 27.

‡ *Rig-Veda*, X. lviii. 8.

§ *Sup.* sec. 19.

Lastly, there is Asura, and here at length, amid this world of shadows, we "touch earth." The Asura is God.

### 23. *The Sun.*

So far all has been simple ; we have examined twelve names and found one divinity. But it is far from my intention to attempt to free the Vedic Indians from the charge of polytheism ; as a body they certainly were or became polytheistic, and we can easily see how and why. The time to which our attention is turned is *the commencement of the Vedic age*, and we observe how numbers of the gods resolve themselves into simile. But others are of a different character. We next come to natural objects connected with spiritual power ; and here is the stronghold of Vedic polytheism. And yet even here the evidence of previous monotheism is almost, if not quite, as strong. To take first the sun and the sun-god : Savitri, Surya, Vishnu, Vivasvat, and Yama are each the sun. For mankind, however, there is but a single sun ; they are, therefore, really identical : it is possible that there *may* have been a time when they were regarded as five distinct, objective, sentient personages or solar gods. But there *must* have been a time when the one had not yet become five, for thus to divide and classify requires an elaborate mental effort, and a corresponding period for its development. This division of the sun and of the sun-god is familiar. Thus in Egypt we find the diurnal and nocturnal sun ; Ra, the mid-day sun ; Kheper, the prolific sun ; Haremakhu, the horizon sun ; Tum, the setting sun ; Mentu, the rising sun ; Fenti, the climbing sun ; Atumu, the chthonian sun ; Harpakrut, the new-born wintry sun ; Aten, the power of the solar disk ; Uasar (Osiris), the suffering sun, and the like. The Vedic sun proper is Surya, whose name reappears in the Greek helios and the Latin sol ; and as these are simply names of the solar photosphere and not of the solar divinity, we may fairly conclude that Surya in origin similarly signified the physical sun, just as Ushas means the dawn. Surya, in the Hymns, is the son of Aditi, the son of Dyaus, the husband of Ushas, and the eye of Mitra, Varuna and Agni, expressions which require no comment. In Savitri the solar power rises higher. Savitri is an Asura ; he is especially praised by Varuna, Mitra, and Aryaman, with whom he works in harmonious concert ; he is the lord of all creatures and the bestower of immortality ; he is the sender of blessings, is prayed to deliver his votary from sin,\* and to convey

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\* *Rig-Veda*, IV. liv. 3.

the holy soul to the abode of the righteous.\* He is pre-eminently the god of golden lustre, and as a matter of course is sometimes distinguished from Surya, and sometimes identified with him; Surya, speaking generally, being the body, and Savitri, the spirit, of the sun. Altogether, Savitri in position and general concept very closely resembles the Iranian Mithra; and hence we are not surprised to find him identified with Mitra.† Vishnu, "the Penetrater," is the sun from whose heat nothing is hid; who, forcing his way up from the under world, crosses heaven in three strides and penetrates again into the hidden region.‡ Vivasvat, "the brilliant," is a minor solar phrase.

#### 24. Yama.

Savitri, who can free from sin and who conveys the soul after death to bliss, glides into Yama and becomes identical with him. In India, as in Egypt, the sun received different names during the different portions of his career; and Yama, as connected with the death of man, and of the sun, and with the unseen world, is associated with the setting sun, and hence with the west. His name, "Twin," is mysterious. Prof. Roth considers him a representative of one of the original pair of mortals, but this view Prof. Müller rejects. Had the *locus* been Egypt, I should have been inclined to regard the twins as the sun nocturnal and diurnal, but here there is not sufficient authority for such an opinion. I have already mentioned other conjectures.§ In the ninth and tenth books of the *Rig-Veda* Yama is prominently introduced in connection with the doctrine of a future life and the state of the fathers, the departed worthies of the human race. In the *Atharva-Veda* we read:—

"Reverence ye Yama, the son of Vivasvat,||  
The assembler of men (in the unseen world);  
Who was the first of men that died,  
And the first that departed to this (celestial) world."¶

And this is but the slightly later echo of the *Rik*,—

"Worship with an oblation King Yama, son of Vivasvat,

\* *Rig-Veda*, X. xvii. 4.

† *Ibid.* V. lxxxii. 4.

‡ *Vide* the explanation of the Vishnu-myth by the ancient commentator Atharvabha, a predecessor of Yaska (*apud* Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, iv. 64).

§ *Sup.* sec. 19.

|| The western sun is the son of the brilliant mid-day sun.

¶ *Atharva-Veda*, XVIII. iii. 13.

The assembler of men, who departed to the mighty streams,\*

And spied out the road for many.

Yama was the first who found for us the way.

This home is not to be taken from us.

Depart thou, depart by the ancient paths whither our early fathers have departed.

There thou shalt see the two kings,† Yama and the god Varuna,

Meet with the fathers, meet with Yama, in the highest heaven.

Throwing off all imperfection go to thy home.

Become united to a body, and clothed in a shining form." ‡

According to the *Atharva-Veda*, "death is the messenger of Yama, who conveys the spirits of men to the abode of their forefathers."§ Here, then, is the august figure of the sun-god dwelling in celestial light, in the inmost sanctuary of heaven,|| with the Asura Varuna and the elder worthies of the human race. In the sun-god we met with a second undoubted divinity.

### 25. *The Semi-solar Light Gods.*

I pass on to the semi-solar light gods. Aryaman, "The Favourer," one of the Adityas, is seldom mentioned, and generally with Varuna and Mitra, of whom he is a phase. The favourers of man are the Asura of heaven and the kindly sun-god. The mysterious Asvins are emanations of the bright gods, and have been defined as "the two powers which seemed incorporated in the coming and going of each day and each night."¶ Indra, the god of the bright heaven and slayer of the monster of darkness, is a purely Indian divinity, unknown even to the period of Indo-Iranian unity; he is another aspect of Varuna-Dyaus, whom he to a great extent superseded, and affords a good example of the polytheistic advance. He was certainly regarded as a distinct personage; but as he is not pre-Vedic, the circumstance is immaterial to the monotheistic position. Mitra, the Iranian Mithra, is a veritable divinity, belonging to the period of the Indo-Iranian unity. I shall notice him further when speaking of Varuna, with whom he is

\* 'Επ' Ὀκεανοῖο ῥοάων (II. iii. 5).

† I think it quite possible that originally "the Twins" were Varuna and Yama-Savitri. Cf. "the two divine Mithras" (*sup. sec. 15*).

‡ *Rig-Veda*, X. xiv.

§ Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, v. 303.

|| *Rig-Veda*, IX. cxiii. 7.

¶ Prof. Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, ii. 53. 77.

almost invariably associated in the Hymns, and, as mentioned,\* he is identified with Savitri. Pushan, "the Growth-producer," is a phase and name of the sun-god. Pushan guides on journeys and to the unseen world, aids in the revolution of day and night, is an Asura, knows all things, presides over marriage, and conducts the souls of the departed. He is Yama-Savitri. Tvashtri is a personification of skill in divine workmanship, an Indian Hephaistos. We still meet with no absolute separate divinity except the Asura and the divine solar and light-god, whose names are numberless; he is in reality the Savitri-Yama-Mitra-Pushan. So far as I am aware, Savitri, Pushan, and Tvashtri are purely Indian appellations; whilst Yama and Mitra belong to the earlier period.

### 26. *Varuna.*

Prof. Müller has remarked that an "advantage which the Veda offers is this, that in its numerous hymns we can still watch the gradual growth of the gods, the slow transition of appellations into proper names, the first tentative steps towards personification;" and that "the feeling that the various deities are but different names, different conceptions of that Incomprehensible Being which no thought can reach and no language express, is not yet quite extinct in the minds of some of the more thoughtful among the Vedic bards."† This Being is especially mirrored in the Vedic Varuna, whose name belongs to the period of Aryan unity, and who is identified by many with the Varena of the *Vendidad*. Varuna is "the Coverer," "the Encompasser," the all-surrounding, all-space-filling. He is pre-eminently *the Asura*‡ and the King (*Raja*), king of the universe, king of all that exists, king of gods and men, universal monarch, far-sighted and thousand-eyed. He made the revolving sun to shine, the wind is his breath, he witnesses man's truth and falsehood; through him it is that though all the rivers run into one ocean yet they never fill it;§ his laws are immutable, and they rest upon him as on a mountain. He has fashioned and upholds heaven and earth, and dwells in all worlds,—

"Lives through all life, extends through all extent,  
Spreads undivided, operates unspent."

He is frequently celebrated alone and frequently together with Mitra, and between the two the closest harmony exists.

\* *Sup. sec. 23.*

† *Lectures on the Science of Language*, ii. 454.

‡ "The epithet *asura* is frequently applied to Varuna in particular."

(Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, v. 61.)

§ Cf. *Ecclesiastes* i. 7.

Mitra, on the other hand, is hardly ever hymned alone. Varuna and Mitra together are styled sun-eyed, kings, strong, terrible (*rudra*), divine (*asura*), upholders of the earth and sky, placers of the sun in heaven, guardians of the world, awful divinities, haters of the lie, acquainted with heaven and earth, lords of truth and light who made wise the simple, and avengers and removers of sin.\* In a word, Varuna is the Asura, God Almighty; and Mitra is the high and holy Sun-god, ever in the closest union and harmony with him. Varuna can only be beheld in beatific vision:—

“When I have obtained a vision of Varuna,

I have regarded his lustre as resembling that of Agni.”†

As Sir G. W. Cox well observes “a pure monotheistic conviction is pre-eminently seen in the following prayer:”‡

“Let me not yet, O Varuna, enter into the house of clay,

Have mercy, almighty, have mercy.

If I go along trembling like a cloud driven by the wind,

Have mercy, almighty, have mercy.

Whenever we men, O Varuna, commit an offence before  
the heavenly host,

Whenever we break thy law through thoughtlessness,

Have mercy, almighty, have mercy.”§

And here we may inquire, Is Varuna, the Asura, identical with Ahuramazda? Windischmann thought not, and Prof. Spiegel seems inclined to agree with him; but, on the other hand, Profs. Roth and Whitney are strongly in favour of the identity, which certainly is not denied either by Prof. Müller or Dr. Muir; whilst in my opinion, the recent researches of M. Darmesteter|| demonstrate their unity beyond reasonable doubt. With the degradation of Varuna, the gradual process by which he was at length reduced to complete insignificance, I am not here concerned.

### 27. *The Ameshaspentas and the Adityas.*

As Ahuramazda stands at the head of six divine personages, the Good-mind, Truth, Power, Piety, Health, and Immortality, the whole forming a sevenfold aspect of the One; so, Asura-Varuna stands at the head of six personages, the Friend, the Favourer, the Sympathizer, the Distributer, the Intelligent,

\* I omit for brevity references to texts in support of each of these statements. † *Rig-Veda*, VII. lxxxviii. 2.

‡ *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, i. 331.

§ Translated by Prof. Müller in his *History of Sanskrit Literature*, 540.

|| *Ormazd et Ahriman*, 1877.

and the Personified Fire, a corresponding group though not perhaps quite so severely monotheistic. Mithra, excluded by an intensity of monotheism from the Iranian Seven, appears amongst the Vedic Seven,\* but alike in both regions the gods, when traced to their origins, resolve themselves into Ahura and Mithra, Asura and Mitra.

28. *Martanda, the eighth Aditya.*

In *Rig-Veda*, X. 72, we read :—

“ Let us celebrate with exultation the births of the gods.  
In the earliest age of the gods, the existent sprang from  
the non-existent.”

And after mentioning Aditi as the daughter of Daksha, the poet continues :—

“ When ye, O gods, like devotees, replenished the worlds,  
Then ye disclosed the sun which had been hidden in the  
ocean.

Of the other sons who were born from the body of  
Aditi,

She approached the gods with seven, but cast away  
Martanda.

For birth as well as for death she disclosed Martanda.”

The important *Satapatha-Brahmana*† thus comments on the foregoing passage :—“ Aditi had eight sons. But there are only seven whom men call the Aditya deities. For she produced the eighth, destitute of any modifications of shape (without hands and feet, etc.). He was a smooth lump.”‡ Roth and Darmesteter render Martanda “ Bird,” in which case we should have the familiar myth of the Phœnix, the solar bird ; but the preferable derivation is from *mrityu*, “ death,” and *anda*, “ egg,” the name thus signifying “ the Egg of Death.” Prof. Müller renders Martanda “ Addled Egg,” but I do not think that such imperfection is intended. Martanda

\* For instances of the recurrence of the number seven, vide *The Great Dionysiac Myth*, ii. 225, *et seq.*

† *Brahmana* signifies, “ That which relates to prayer, *brahman*.” The *Brahmanas* form the second portion of Vedic literature, each of the four Vedas being divided into *Sanhita*, *Brahmana*, and *Sutra* or “ Band.” The *Brahmanas* are founded upon the *Sanhita*, and the *Sutras* mainly upon the *Brahmanas*. The chief object of the latter “ is to connect the sacrificial songs and formulas with the sacrificial rite. We find in them the oldest rituals, the oldest linguistic explanations, the oldest traditional narratives, and the oldest philosophical speculations.” (Weber, *History of Indian Literature*, 2nd edit. 1878, p. 12.)

‡ *Apud* Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, iv. 15.



differs from his seven brethren in two respects, in form and in being subject to death. Now his seven immortal brethren are of divine form, and it is undoubtedly implied that the divine form is also more or less anthropomorphic; but Martanda is an egg, a circle,\* a lump without hands and feet, in a word, the solar photosphere, the golden egg of the heavens, which dies daily.† Martanda is, as it were, thrown out by Aditi from the company of the gods and the splendours of the invisible world, into the inferior, visible, and material world, to live and die daily in the sight of men. He is thus a type of the humiliation of the divine nature by its alliance with material form and subjection to death; and so the converse of Yama, in which we see the human nature raised to the divine and perfected. An even the glorious sun himself, protagonist of materiality, when disgraced by idolatry becomes to us as it were Martanda, an addled egg; even as that venerable relic the Brazen Serpent became Nehushtan, for "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens."‡

### 29. *Soma*.

The Vedic divinity Soma affords an excellent instance of the process by which the human mind constantly converts into obscure mysterious things in themselves exceedingly simple. Soma is (1) a plant, the juice of which was largely used in connection with religious ritual; § and (2) the principle of humidity, which shows itself in rain, sap, dew, and otherwise. In illustration of this, it may be observed that in several passages of the *Atharva-Veda* Soma is identified with the moon; and it is stated that "the Sun has the nature of Agni, the moon of Soma;" that is to say, the sun is igneous, the moon humid. The moon is the night-queen, and the night is the time of growth (symbolized by the increasing moon),|| dew and humidity generally. Thus Apollo is Sauroktonos, "the lizard-slayer," ¶ for the lizard was a symbol of humidity

\* Plato's commendation of the circular form in the *Timaios*, may be accepted except so far as a tangible sentient divinity is concerned. Such a god must be more or less anthropomorphic, and will yet be the *χαρακτήρ* and *εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀόρατου*.

† The egg-sun is familiar in Egypt (*vide The Archaic Solar Cult of Egypt*. By the Writer). In the frontispiece to *The Great Dionysiak Myth*, vol. ii., I have given a Hellenico-Egyptian representation of the winged sun, Dionysos Psilas (*vide Pausanias*, iii. 19), supported by the twin serpents of plenty.

‡ Jer. x. 11.

§ *Vide sup.* sec. 13.

|| One of the Akkadian names of the moon is Enzuna, "the Lord of Growth." Cf. Deut. xxxiii. 14: "The precious things put forth by the moon."

¶ Pliny, xxxiv. 8.

because supposed to live upon the dew. We can therefore easily see the process by which Soma or humidity generally became identified with the moon, the queen of humidity. Soma is the Iranian Haoma, the Omômi of Plutarch,\* and the whole of the ninth book of the *Rig-Veda* is devoted to its praise; illimitable power, benefit, and efficacy being ascribed to the personified King Soma, the Asura. Now, after making all due allowance for the wonder and delight which may have been produced in the human mind by wine (using that word in a general sense), and also for man's appreciation of, and thankfulness for, moisture in its various forms, there still remains something unexplained and mysterious in the intensity of the Soma-cult and in the apparent extravagance of the Soma laudation. But the great idea behind these lower ones involves man's yearning for continued existence, and the line of thought is as follows:—Moisture, drink, wine of heaven, water of life, renews the face of the earth, man and nature in the present physical and visible state of things. But man is to live hereafter in another and a higher world; then must there be some subtle *nektar*, some elixir of immortality, which, when procured, shall be in him as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. This is the true Soma, of which the other is but the shadow, nor can it be too highly praised, too ardently desired. This view alone enables us to understand such aspirations as the following:—

“Where there is eternal light, in the world where the sun  
is placed,  
In that immortal imperishable world place me, O Soma.  
Where life is free, in the third heaven of heavens,  
Where the worlds are radiant there make me immortal.  
Where there is happiness and delight, where joy and  
pleasure reside,  
Where the desires of our desire are attained, there make  
me immortal.”†

And this poetic prayer we might transcribe in words more familiar:—May He who is the light of light,‡ dwelling in the world, whose sun goes not down, whose service is perfect freedom, in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore, clothe our mortal with immortality in the third§ heaven of heavens.¶ Speaking elsewhere of Dionysos as Theoinos, I have considered

\* *Peri Is. kai Os.* xlv.

† *Rig-Veda*, IX. cxiii. 7.

‡ “The Deity who is, as an ancient Christian lamp attests, Φῶς φῶρός.”  
(W. R. Cooper, in *Faith and Free Thought*, 246.)

§ 2 Cor. xii. 2.

¶ 1 Kings viii. 27.

the Vedic Soma, the Iranian Haoma, the Assyrian "water of life, the drink of the gods," the living water of Egypt, the mead in the halls of Odhinn, and the bowls of wine in the Garden of Delight of the *Koran*, and in summing up the phase of Bakchos Theoinos, I observed:—"We recognize reverence for the principle of humidity, without which all is parched and sterile, when earth pants and gasps under the influence of the burning Typhon, the scorching dog-star of ruin, the choking, rain-restraining Vedic snake, or the consuming Athamas. Opposed to these are the all-fostering Okeanos, the rivers, symbols of the force and flow of life, the beloved Zeus-rain, and Dionysos lord and first cause, not only of wine, but of the whole humid nature.\* But, secondly, and distinct from the foregoing train of thought, is the yearning for immortality coupled with the idea that as ordinary food and drink sustain ordinary mortal existence, so superhuman nourishment, 'angels' food,' will sustain, or is required to sustain, the immortal life, which it is possible for some at least to become possessed of."†

### 30. *The Physical Agni.*

A single Vedic divinity remains for examination, Agni, who stands in the front rank, and whose importance at once appears by the fact that no less than fifty-three out of one hundred and ninety-one hymns of the first book of the *Rik* are addressed to him either solely or with others. But Agni, who is seen in the West as *ignis*, a name, not a god, is a vast and difficult concept. We may, therefore, say with the Stranger in Plato's *Sophistes*, "The object of our inquiry is no trivial thing, but a very various and complicated one. This is a very questionable animal—one not to be caught with the left hand, as the saying is."‡ Agni appears in almost as many aspects as Osiris, and therefore the question for consideration is, What concept of Agni will include all other narrower and derivative concepts, and hold true throughout their divergent modifications? Working from the known to the unknown, from the obvious to the obscure, we notice Agni in his first and simplest phase as ordinary terrestrial fire; and as such he is described in the hymns with great power and variety of imagery. Thus, he is the son of the ten fingers and of the two sticks,§ wriggles like a serpent, cannot be

\* Plutarch, *Peri Is. kai Os.* xxxv.

† *The Great Dionysiac Myth*, ii. 111.

‡ R. W. Mackay, *The Sophistes of Plato*, p. 89.

§ As to the "Suastika," a word which, according to some, is equivalent

suckled by his mother, is butter-fed, and wind-driven, sees through gloom, has blazing hair, a golden beard, sharp weapons, and burning teeth, is footless and headless, thousand-eyed, thousand-horned, all-devouring, roars like thunder, like the wind, like a lion, bellows like a bull, has a hundred manifestations, and is the youngest of divinities, because constantly produced.\* These physical epithets and characteristics require no explanation; but what a world of simile and symbolism is involved in them, leading to subsequent trope and metaphor still more obscure, and thus to mythologico-religious mystery. So the web of mythology is woven, and here we behold its pristine simplicity. And now let me ask, With what mental feeling did these Vedic Indians regard the Agni which they produced day by day? Did they crudely *worship* the mere flame in fetishistic imbecility? To believe this would be to give the lie direct to every noble passage in the *Veda*, even to the very existence of these hymns, for no fetish worshipper would ever have produced a single strophe. Be fetishism ancient as well as modern, or modern only,† that the Vedic poets were infinitely superior to such grovelling concepts is as certain as any fact in history. Let those who are compelled by the necessities of theories of evolution, physical and mental, persistently endeavour to degrade archaic man. Freethought, truly so called, is warped by no such trammels; and, whilst fully admitting that the Deity might, in the abstract, have worked by evolution as well as in any other way, believes that there is no real evidence He has done so, and that the whole theory is "not proven." And yet I would remark, in passing, that a man cannot fairly be made answerable for the follies of his extreme followers; and that I respect the caution and wonderful powers of observation of a Darwin, as much as I despise the baseless dogmas of a Haeckel. The Indian Aryan, then, may not have known that heat was but "a mode of

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to *sv̄ iari* "as the sign of good wishes," 卍, *vide* Schliemann, *Troy and its Remains*, 101, *et seq.*; Waring, *Ceramic Art in Remote Ages*, plates xli.-xliv. It appears equally in Akkad. "The ideograph +, with the determinative of wood, certainly appears to contain the elements of the primitive fire-stick." (Mr. St. Chad Boscawen in *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vi. 281.) The investigation into the pictorial meaning of the ordinary Assyrian cuneiform which, through the archaic Babylonian, still in numbers of instances directly or indirectly *represents* the object or idea signified by the word, is a study of the highest interest, and one which promises very important results.

\* Cf. Yavishtha-Hephaistos *i.e.* Juvenis.

† *Vide* Prof. Max Müller's Paper, *Is Fetishism a primitive form of Religion?* (Macmillan, June 1878.)

motion," but he certainly did know that flame was but flame. And why, then, did he so reverence it, for its physical aspect does not fully explain his respect? Because he knew that the mere ordinary earthly flame, born so mysteriously, is but the last and lowest link in a wondrous chain, which includes all fire, aerial and celestial, all light, all heat, and hence all life; a chain which descends from the abode of "those primeval heats whereby all life has lived," from the dwelling-place of Him who is "a consuming fire." And this aspect of Agni will explain why the different divinities are identified with him, and also his varied parentage. Thus, he is the son of heaven and earth, because they, regarded as the two halves of the all, necessarily include the sum total of igneous effulgence. He is the son of Dyaus alone, for he manifests himself in the visible sky, in lightning, and in the sun. He is produced by the dawn, a time when, as an old English poet tells us, "The light shoots like a streak of subtle fire." He is produced by Indra between two clouds, struck together like the sticks on earth. He is made by the gods, yet conversely he is also their sire; for without Agni how could mortals know aught of the bright Devas, or how could they even exist? Lastly, he is the son of Daksha and Aditi, that is to say, he is the manifestation of the Supreme Spirit throughout space. Whatever produces or occasions light and heat is the sire or mother of Agni; and the result is real consistency accompanied by an apparent contradiction.

31. *Agni, a Combination and Manifestation of the Vedic Divinities.*

Let us next notice how the Vedic divinities are identified with and combined in Agni. We read:—

"Thou Agni, art Indra, thou art Vishnu, the wide-stepping,

Thou, Brahmanaspati, art a priest.\*

Agni, when kindled, is Mitra; Varuna is Javatedas,"†

*i.e.* "All-possessing," a frequent epithet of Agni.

"Thou, Agni, art born Varuna, †

Thou art Aryaman in relation to maidens;

In thee, son of strength, are all the gods.‡

Thou, Agni, art the royal Varuna,

Thou art Aryaman, thou art Tvashtri,

\* *Rig-Veda*, II. i. 3.

† *Ibid.* III. v. 4.

‡ *Ibid.* V. iii. 1, 2.

Thou art Mitra, thou art Rudra ;  
 As Pushan, thou cherishest those who offer worship.  
 Thou art the divine Savitri, thou art Bhaga.\*  
 Thou encompassest the gods as the circumference the  
 spokes (of a wheel).”†

By the sacred radiance of Agni

“ Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman, and Bhaga shine,‡  
 and through him they triumph,§ for he is the

“ Immortal sustainer of the universe, exempt from death.||

Whatever other fires there may be,

They are but ramifications, Agni, of thee.¶

By thee, Agni, Varuna, and Mitra and Aryaman are ani-  
 mated.

So that thou hast been born comprehending them all,  
 Universally in all functions,

And encompassing, as the circumference the spokes\*\*

Agni is associated with heaven and earth,

As (a husband with) one only wife.††

I, Agni, am the living breath of threefold nature,

The measure of the firmament, eternal warmth.‡‡

I offer praise to Agni, the creator, the first.§§

He who has hidden darkness within light.

He has spread out the two sustaining (worlds) like two  
 skins :

Vaisvanara comprehends all energy.|||

A steady light, swifter than thought,

Stationed among moving beings to show (the way) to  
 happiness.¶¶

Agni knows all that exists,\*\*\*

Appropriates the prayers addressed to the Eternal  
 Creator.”†††

Elsewhere a poet exclaims,—

“ May our sin, Agni, be repented of;”††††  
 and Agni, who is styled Asura, is besought to preserve from

\* *Rig-Veda*, II. i. † *Ibid.* V. xiii. 6. ‡ *Ibid.* VIII. xix.  
 § *Ibid.* I. cxli. 9. || *Ibid.* I. xlv. 5. ¶ *Ibid.* I. lxix. 1.  
 \*\* *Ibid.* I. cxli. 9. †† *Ibid.* III. vii. 4. ††† III. xxvi. 7.  
 §§ *Ibid.* V. xv. 1.  
 ||| *Ibid.* VI. viii. 3. Vaisvanara signifies “ He who is beneficial to all,”  
 like Mitra, “ the Friend.” ¶¶ *Ibid.* VI. ix. 5. \*\*\* *Ibid.* III. xii. 4.  
 ††† *Ibid.* I. lxxii. 1. On this passage Wilson observes, “ This looks as if  
 a first cause were recognized, distinct from Agni and the elemental deities.”  
 (*Rig-Veda-Sanhita*, i. 190.) †††† *Ibid.* I. xcvi. 1.

sin.\* I have already† quoted the celebrated passage where Agni is said to be a name of the One, and is identified with Yama. As throughout this Paper I have as much as possible avoided, though by no means ignored, the mythological element, I shall not quote here any of the numerous passages which treat of the physical functions of Agni in connection with the Devas. But, on the foregoing extracts, we may observe that the identifications are not to be regarded as implying a strict and absolute monotheism, as if there were really only one god, Agni; what they undoubtedly show is that all the divinities are of the same igneous nature, and that Agni who, in his lowest manifestation is ordinary earthly flame, in his highest is identical with Varuna himself, is the Asura, ultimate source of all light, heat, life and energy. Agni as the ritual-fire, is a priest and sage, messenger and link between God and man, and bears to heaven the prayers addressed to the Eternal Creator. How clearly in these Hymns we see the struggle between monotheism and polytheism; the poets are apparently inconsistent and contradictory, there is but One and yet there are many; there are many, but yet they are merely names of the One. Again and again through the increasing clouds of ignorance and error, the supreme form of the Asura of heaven breaks forth upon His children like the blue sky of His abode.‡

### 32. *Agni the highest Manifestation of Divinity.*

It is stated that,—

“The gods formed Agni for a threefold existence.”§

According to the great commentator Yaska, B.C. 400, and his predecessor Sakapuni, this triadic existence refers to the igneous principle—(1) on earth, (2) in the air, and (3) in the sky, as fire, lightning and sun. In another passage Yaska observes:—

“Owing to the greatness of the Deity, the one Soul is lauded in many ways. The different gods are members of the one Soul. It is soul that is their car, steeds, weapon,

\* *Rig-Veda*, VI. xv. 12.

† *Sup.* sec. 18.

‡ Prof. Müller observes that Vedic poets, Zoroastrian worshippers, Hebrew prophets, and Homeric singers “had no name for that which is the sky’s own peculiar tint, the sky-blue, the cœruleum.” (*Contemporary Review*, May, 1878, p. 230.) I do not feel sure of this. The *blue*, formerly *bleue* sky, is the *blew-en* or blown sky, from which the clouds are driven, so that the vault of heaven appears. In Assyrian the same ideograph stands for *samu*, “blue,” and *samu*, “sky;” therefore in Mesopotamian regions, blue = sky colour.

§ *Rig-Veda*, X. lxxxviii. 10.

arrows, soul is a god's all. There are three deities according to the etymologists; Agni, whose place is on earth; Vayu or Indra, whose place is in the atmosphere; and Surya, whose place is in the sky. These receive many designations in consequence of their greatness or from the diversity of their functions."\*

Yaska had before him the interpretations of Sakapuni and Aurnavabha, two very ancient and famous expounders of the *Veda*, so that he was well-acquainted with archaic tradition; and Dr. Muir observes on the passage that,—

“Agni, Vayu or Indra, and Surya appear to have been regarded in the time of Yaska as the triad of deities in whom the supreme spirit was especially revealed.”

And, according to Yaska, even these three “agree in one,” and are merely protagonistic manifestations of the only Soul or Spirit. But by this time the One Spirit has become semi-panteistic. According to a passage in the *Atharva-Veda*,—

“Agni becomes Varuna in the evening, rising in the morning he is Mitra;

Becoming Savitri he moves through the air, becoming Indra he glows in the middle of the sky.”†

Agni is thus,

“That light whose smile kindles the universe.”

Highest and brightest manifestation of divinity,

“Ignis ubique latet, naturam amplectitur omnem.”

And according to the *Avesta*,—

“Son of Ahuramazda, giver of good, the greatest Yazata,”‡ and it is in this connection that Zarathustra styles himself “the supreme fire-priest,” § the priest of the Iranian Atash or Atar.¶ Lastly, Agni, like Yama, conveys to bliss the soul of the righteous after death :—

“When thou hast matured him, O Jatavedas,

Then send him to the fathers.

As for his unborn part,¶ do thou kindle it with thy heat;

Let thy flame and thy lustre kindle it;

\* *Apud Muir, Sanskrit Texts*, iv. 160.

† *Atharva-Veda*, XIII. iii. 13.

‡ *Khurda-Avesta*, xi.

§ *Sup.* sec. 10.

¶ “Atar et ἀθήνη sont deux formations de la même racine. Il est impossible de séparer *Atar* du védique *athar*, et entre *athar* et ἀθήνη il y a, quant à la racine, le même rapport qu’entre la racine *manth* (dans *pramantha*) et la racine *μανθ* dans *προμηθεύς*.” (Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahri-man*, 34, note 3.)

¶ The germ of immortality.



With those forms of thine which are auspicious convey it to the world of the righteous."\*

### 33. *The Essence of the Vedic Divinities.*

Such, then, are the Vedic divinities; from being few they become many. In various passages thirty-three gods are alluded to, but, according to others, there are one hundred and eighty Maruts alone; and elsewhere it is said that three thousand three hundred and thirty-nine gods have worshipped Agni. Thus Pantheons extend. As time goes on, other important figures appear upon the stage; Brahmâ, a personification of "the magic power hidden in the sacred word and in prayers;"† Siva,‡ Krishna,§ but these are not Vedic divinities, and therefore do not concern us. Goddesses also play an important part, a sure sign of degeneration; the miserable doctrine of the transmigration of the soul, entirely unknown to the *Rig-Veda*, makes its appearance to the torment of mankind; and, after many a weary age, including the reaction of Buddhism and its suppression, we reach a vague and atheistic pantheism or a grovelling superstition; a truly remarkable instance of mental evolution, although at the same time undoubtedly a *descent* of man. And, amid the crowd of shadowy forms that make up the group of Vedic divinities, where do we find reality save in the Asura, Varuna, Mitra, Surya-Savitri, Yama, and Agni? And these, again, resolve themselves into God, the sun-god, and the universal spirit of divinity. They are all known elsewhere; alike in name (Ahura, Ouranos, Mithra, Helios, Yima, Ognî) and in reality.

### 34. *The Law of Circle.*

Thus we can see how, long ere the days of Zoroaster, there

\* *Rig-Veda*, X. xvi.

† Tiele, *Outlines of the History of the Ancient Religions*, 125.

‡ Siva, "the Gracious," is merely a euphemistic appellation of Sarva, "the Wrathful." And Sarva, in turn, is merely an epithet of Rudra considered as the Mahadeva (Megastheos) or "Great god." And Rudra, "the Terrible," is as noticed (*sup. sec.* 19), merely an epithet of Agni. Thus much out of little. The Hindu Trimurti, Brahmâ, Vishnu, and Siva, is a modern philosophical concept, arbitrarily attached to these names. (*Vide* Tiele, *Outlines*, 153.)

§ Krishna, "the Black," "the hidden sun-god of the night" (Tiele, *Outlines*, 145), is undoubtedly a very ancient mythological figure, but probably non-Aryan in origin. The nocturnal sun is a remarkable feature in Egypt and Akkad, and the dark colour harmonizes with the complexion of those dusky races who were subdued by the lighter Semites and Aryans. Shem is probably connected with the Assyrian *sâmu*, "brownish," and Japhet (יָפֶֿתֿ) with *ippu*, "white," *ippatu*, "white race." (*Vide* Rev. Prof. Sayce, *Assyrian Lectures*, 145.)

existed a practical monotheism, to which he endeavoured to return, as good men in all ages have looked back wistfully to a "higher, holier, earlier, purer church." It is easy to deny this great fact on the ground that we everywhere encounter numbers of figures of divinities; but a careful analysis of these shadows will resolve them into their kindred air, and the result will be the same, whether the process is applied in Vedic India, or in Iran, Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, or Greece. Nor does this principle obtain in Aryan regions only. Prof. Sayce affirms\* that Babylonian and Akkadian religious mythology is essentially solar; that is, that we shall meet again with Mitra and Savitri and Yama and Agni, under other names indeed, but veritably the same personages in reality; and M. Chabas, who is well-entitled to speak for Egypt, says that "the Egyptian doctrine revealed to the initiated the unity and incomprehensibility of God, while the multitude was abandoned to the cult of material symbols."† And these moderns have been anticipated by an ancient writer, who has left it on record that—

“ Πλούτων, Περσεφόνη, Δημήτηρ, Κύπρις, Ἐρωτες,  
 Τρίτανες, Νηρεὺς, Τηθύς, καὶ Κυανοχαίτης,  
 Ἐρμῆς θ', Ἡφαιστός, τε κλυτὸς, Πάν, Ζεὺς τε, καὶ Ἥρη,  
 Ἄρτεμις, ἠδ' Ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων, εἰς Θεὸς ἔστιν.”

The theory of an archaic monotheism has been objected to on the ground that the instance of Plato and the other philosophical Greeks of the great ages shows that the monotheistic idea is the culmination and end, not the beginning of human thought. But the reply is obvious. Doubtless it required the intellectual might of a Plato to free the human mind from the meshes of a long-established polytheism, but there is no evidence that any such powers are needed for the original reception of the simple truth that "there is one God, and none other but He." Monotheism is simpler than polytheism, even as

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\* "The more the Babylonian mythology is examined, the more solar is its origin found to be; thus confirming the results arrived at in the Aryan and Semitic fields of research." Except Anu and Hea, "the great deities seem all to go back to the Sun" (*Trans. Soc. Bib. Archæol.* ii, 246, note). We are thus, it will be observed, left with a triad, namely (1) Anu, Akkadian Ana, "the High" God: called Zi-Ana, "Spirit of the heavens"; Pater. (2) The Sun-god; Potentia. (3) Hea, the lord of wisdom and of the deep, called Hea-Ana, Gk. Oannes, "the god Hea," Mens.

† *Records of the Past*, x. 6. "There may be truth in the assertion that the esoteric religion of ancient Egypt centred in a doctrine of divine unity, manifested through the heterogeneous crowd of popular deities." (Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, ii, 322.)

one is simpler than numbers. And the Platonic age affords us an illustration of that mysterious Law of Circle, which rules alike in nature and in thought. The heavenly bodies, circular in form, constantly describe their circling movements; the sun has his zodiac, and *annus* the year is but *annulus*, a ring. Eternity is fitly symbolized as a serpent, tail in mouth, and "He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth," has, from remote antiquity, been described as a circle whose centre is everywhere, and its circumference nowhere. Nature abhors a straight line as she is said to abhor a vacuum, and Nature is "the earliest gospel of the wise;" poetry, philosophy, religion are essentially cyclic, and history repeats itself.\* Human progress is no straight line of continuous advance. The world-poet saw this when he spoke of "the whirligig of time," and told us that "our little life is rounded." And the great truth is "an anchor of the soul," for it assures us that as from God we come, so to God we shall return. The poor, blind, stumbling world, at whose ignorance heaven winked, despised by chosen nations and peculiar people, still dreamed of its divine Asura, still chanted that archaic song heard amid the oaks of Dodona, "Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus will be. O great Zeus!"† or raised the piteous cry, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer." And in the latest days of the old-world of heathenism, "a pagan suckled in a creed out-worn," could yet so distinguish substance amid shadow and reality from illusion, as, addressing the Asura of heaven by a name known centuries earlier on the banks of the Indus, and grasping the grand principle of circle, to exclaim:—

"O Thou whose power o'er moving worlds presides,  
Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides!  
From thee, great Zeus! we spring, to thee we tend,  
Path, motive, guide, original, and end!"

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\* Thus the philosophical Thucydides is satisfied if his history "is judged useful by those who may desire an accurate knowledge of the past as a clue to that future which, in all human probability, must repeat or resemble the past." (Prof. Jebb, *Greek Literature*, 108.)

† *Pausanias*, x. 12. "There is little or no trace of mythology in this" [song]. (Prof. Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, ii. 482.) As Prof. Jebb well observes, "There was a time when they [*i.e.* archaic men] had begun to speak of the natural powers as persons, and yet had not forgotten that they were really natural powers, and that the personal names were merely signs." (*Greek Literature*, 16. Vide *sup.* secs. 6, 21, 30.)

THE RELIGION OF ZOROASTER CONSIDERED IN CONNECTION  
WITH ARCHAIC MONOTHEISM.

*Synopsis.*

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## ADDITIONAL NOTES.

P. 253.—*Earliest Notice of the Avesta.*

The earliest historical notice of the Avesta occurs at the close of the Median version of the Behistun (*i.e.* Baz-istan, "Place of the god") Inscription of Darius Hystaspes, cir. B.C. 516. This Inscription, which is about 400 feet from the ground on the rock of Behistun, near the western frontier of Mada (Media, *i.e.* "the country"), and contains more than 1,000 lines of cuneiform writing, concludes:—

"And Darius the King says:—

'I have made also elsewhere a book in Aryan language, that formerly did not exist.

And I have made the text of the Divine Law (Avesta), and a commentary of the Divine Law, and the prayer, and the translation.

And it was written, and I sealed it.

And then the ancient book was restored by me in all nations, and the nations followed it.'—(Translated by Dr. Oppert in *Records of the Past*, vii. 85, *et seq.*)

Darius thus made a translation of the *Avesta* from the original Baktrian into the Persian of the Achaemenian period.

P. 256.—*Dialect of the Gáthas.*

For an account of the linguistic peculiarities of the *Gáthas*, vide Prof. C. de Harlez, *Manuel de la Langue de l'Avesta*, 105, *et seq.*

P. 259.—*Non-reality.*

Expressions such as "non-reality," "nonentity" (*Rig-Veda*, X. cxxix. 1), and the like, when occurring in archaic poetry, are used in a physical, not in a metaphysical sense, and refer to what may be called Primitive Negative Concepts (*vide* Dr. Hyde-Clarke, *Researches in Pre-historic and Proto-historic Comparative Philology*, 21, *et seq.*). Amongst these are Woman, *i.e.* Not-man, Night, Darkness, Black, Evil (Not-good), Not (*i.e.* nought), Death, Dream, Shadow. The reappearance of heaven and earth after the darkness of night is regarded by the Vedic poets as a sort of re-creation, a rescue from the realm of non-reality.

P. 264.—*Asu-Asura.*

"The root *as*, which still lives in our *is*, existed in its abstract sense previous to the Aryan separation. The simplest derivation of *as*, to breathe, was *as-u*, in Sanskrit, breath; and from it probably *asu-ra*, the oldest name for the living gods." (Prof. Müller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, 191-2.) Prof. de Harlez gives in his Lexicon, "*Anhu* (*ah*, être + *asu*). 1. Monde. 2. Maître, chef"; and "*ahru* (*ah* + *asu*), être, vie, monde, —maître, chef." The Vedic *s*, except sometimes in a final syllable, appears in the language of the *Avesta* as *h*; *e.g.* Soma, Haoma; Asura, Ahura.

P. 265.—*The Deva and Ahura Cults.*

M. Julius Jolly has recently remarked that "the theory of a religious schism, which was supposed by Dr. Haug to have brought about the separation of the Iranians from their Indian neighbours, has been entirely dis-posed of by M. Darmesteter's researches, and the revolution theory has been replaced by an evolution theory." (*Academy*, February 1, 1879, p. 102.) I greatly admire M. Darmesteter's very able work (*Ormazd et Ahriman*) but am unable to come to any such conclusion. Haug has probably pushed his views on the matter too far, and three of the demons of the infernal council of Ahriman, *i.e.* Saurva, Andra, and Naonhaithya, in all probability are not identical with the Vedic Shiva or Siva, Indra and the Nasatyas or Asvins. But thus much granted, the conclusion by no means follows. The remarkable career of the words *deva* and *asura* appears to be regarded by M. Darmesteter as "an accident of language." But to say that such and such a circumstance *happened* to occur is a re-statement of the fact, not an explanation. Moreover, M. Darmesteter's theory depends upon the negation of an historical Zoroaster, a negative which is incapable of demonstration. Haug's views are in the main accepted by Bunsen, Max Düncker (*Geschichte des Alterthums*), Lenormant (*Manual of the Ancient History of the East*), and Justi (*Handbuch der Zendsprache*), and are not denied by Prof. Spiegel.

P. 276.—*The name "Avesta."*

Dr. Oppert observes that in the Behistun Inscription, clause li. "the Persian affords us the true origin of the word *Avesta*. It is *Abastā*, the Divine Law; it is explained by the Assyrian *Kinat*, the laws." (*Records of the Past*, vii. 107, note 1.)

P. 281.—*The Connection between Agni and Soma.*

As to the very intimate connection between Agni and Soma, who sometimes form a dual divinity, Agni-Shomau, and represent two variant yet constantly intertwining phases of the Visible-external in its relations with the Invisible-external, *vide* M. Abel Bergaigne, *La Religion Védique d'après les Hymnes du Rig-Veda*, tome premier, 11-235.

P. 292.—*The Unanthropomorphic Sun.*

As Martanda, the Vedic egg-sun, is "a smooth lump, destitute of any modifications of shape," so in the Egyptian *Funereal Ritual*, cap. xlii., we read of the justified and triumphant Usarian, or follower of Osiris, who has been made like his lord, the Sun-god, that,—

"He is in the [Solar] Eye and the [Solar] Egg.  
 He is the Day for race after race of men.  
 He is the Germ emanating from the firmament.  
 He is the Golden Ape of the gods *without hands or feet*.  
 He goes forth, the Ape goes forth" [on his celestial path].

The CHAIRMAN.—I am sure all will join in thanking Mr. Brown for his very interesting paper : it is now open for any one to offer remarks thereon.

Rev. Dr. RULE.—I have read Mr. Brown's paper as carefully as possible, and should be glad if he would instruct us as to some conclusions, towards which the particulars we have in his paper do not in my opinion lead us. The cry certainly is not piteous wherewith the Hebrew acknowledged God to be his father,—“father of Abraham”; and here I cannot exactly understand why we should limit our recognition of the Godhead to Zeus. With regard to Zoroaster, I believe the main doctrine of that author was that of duality—that of two gods, a god of darkness and a god of light. We have a book which contains a distinct historic reference to this idea. We have in that book the name of a person distinctly known in history, whose successor Darius, son of Hystaspes, waged war against Magism, which was associated with Zoroastrianism. We find there a doctrine against that duality, and I think we have materials there, which are distinctly historic, and the account of God which we have, is not imbued with the vague superstitions of heathenism, but it is distinctly stated at the very beginning of the Bible and is historically continued all through as *revealed monotheism* as proved by all prophecy,—prophecy fulfilled, associated and linked in with the general history of the whole world. It does appear to me, whilst anxious to second the vote of thanks to Mr. Brown for the great pains he has taken with this paper, that we should be anxious inquirers into Revealed Truth. I think if we were to take some firm basis in regard to this great subject of monotheism whereon to rest our researches, we should obtain some place on which to rest our inquiry. I think, however, that Mr. Brown's paper has tended to furnish us with a very striking illustration of an undoubted proof, that none, by searching, can find out God ; and that those historians who have searched have most singularly failed, and have deprived us of any idea that the notion of Professor Müller, which is adopted very warmly by Mr. Brown, will ever be realized. The words are these, and I think more distinctly than in any other part of the paper, they express the conclusions arrived at at the foot of page 278 :—

“However, ere examining the principal Vedic concepts, we may remember with comfort a statement of Professor Müller, which is not based upon any particular passage or passages, but upon a wide and careful investigation of the subject, a statement which has my warmest assent, ‘Like an old precious metal, the ancient religion, after the rust of ages has been removed, will come out in all its purity and brightness, and the image which it discloses will be the image of the Father, the Father of all the nations upon earth.’”

Now, it does seem ungrateful—very ungrateful—to forget that Divine Revelation and the coming of Christ into the world have not thrown the rust of ages upon the ancient truth, but have rather removed the rust of ages and brought life and immortality to light, and that whatever great change in the world has taken place in religion since the time of Zoroaster, must be attributed to that Divine interpretation which we find recorded in the Bible. Therefore, I should be glad if we could be conducted by Mr. Brown to a

more definite conclusion than that with which he has favoured us, and I trust that he will accept my strictures in the spirit of courtesy and kindness in which I have intended to give them.

Mr. ENMORE JONES.—I am sorry that I have not been able thoroughly to study the paper, and would ask the author whether he could favour us with his idea as to when Zoroaster really lived? The last speaker has referred to revelation. Before he spoke, I had in my mind the fact that there is a book called Job, which contains a clear statement as to the Great One God, and therefore I felt anxious to know whether Job was first or Zoroaster.

Mr. BROWN.—On page 253 I give as a conclusion that as to date, the composition of the Gáthas may be fairly placed at some time prior to B.C. 1200, and Zoroaster may be put from 1500 B.C. to 1200 B.C.

Mr. JONES.—There seems at any rate to be a vagueness about the date, whereas if we take Job, as a book of itself, it has a clear and definite idea given in it of the Creator 2,300 B.C.—say one thousand years before Zoroaster; and it has this advantage, that it contains a series of historical incidents. I think it is very important that in searching amongst the ancients for the philosophy of the ancients, we should not forget the vital knowledge we have through the Scriptures. We have the Jewish Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures; and they both certainly teach us that there is one God, that He is *the* one God, the Creator, the Preserver, and Governor, not only of all the countries of this world, but of the universe. I must say it struck me that in the history we call our Scriptures, we have a much clearer narrative there of the workings of the Deity in nature than we have in Zoroaster, or in any other teacher. I think that the principles which have guided the Institute ought to be kept clearly before our minds.

Mr. J. E. HOWARD, F.R.S.—I should like to make a few observations as to the age of Zoroaster and his religion. I do not wish to put aside the very well-intentioned observations of those who have preceded me; but I think there is another aspect of the question, to which they have not perhaps given as much attention as they might have done. I refer to the very interesting abstract which this paper contains of the doctrines of Zoroaster. And suggest that it becomes the duty of our missionaries and those who are in contact with the Parsees in India, to make themselves acquainted with the religion which they have there to combat; otherwise they might be placed under a great disadvantage. Perhaps it may be known to some here, that a great controversy took place on the occasion of one of the Parsees being converted to the Christian faith, when the Parsees took up many popular ideas, and showed that theirs verged very much on the Zoroastrian religion. For instance, that popular hymn—well, I cannot call it that,—but that translation of an old Roman verse—

“Vital spark of heavenly flame!  
Quit, O quit, this mortal frame.”

That is entirely, though unintentionally, Parseeism. This controversy shows that, at all events, the Christians who come in contact with these doctrines



ought to know very well what they are about ; I trust that the writer of this paper has no intention to depreciate Christianity by those expressions which have been noticed by previous speakers. The great idea which he endeavours to bring out, that monotheism is really at the bottom of this religion, is no doubt correct. The question as to the age of Zoroaster is a very difficult one, and I confess that I cannot get at the bottom of it. I have studied the very elaborate examination, by Dr. Chwolson, of St. Petersburg, of Eastern authorities respecting this matter ; and he seems to prove that the change in the religion of Persia is from Sabaism to the religion of Zoroaster. Early idolatry began, according to the Eastern authorities, with Tammuz. Dr. Chwolson says (i. p. 347) that we know almost nothing of the religion of the old Persians, and that it would not be correct to identify that which prevailed in the northern provinces with the peculiar Persian religion. In Bactria and Media the religion of the *reformer Zoroaster* was prevailing long before Cyrus ; but the old Persians were probably no adherents of the religion of Zoroaster, but, as the geographer Dimesqui asserts, were Sábians. "In early days men worshipped God and the angels whom He sent" (vol. ii. pp. 606, 459, 206), but Tammuz endeavoured to lead his sovereign into idolatry,—to worship the heavenly host ; and to consider the stars, and particularly the planets, as the gods and directors of mankind ; who governed everything that took place on earth. The result of this was that, according to the tradition, Tammuz was put to death by his sovereign ; and his bones were ground in a mill, and scattered to the winds. He was put to death in a very cruel way ; and in consequence of his death all the gods came together at a temple in Babylon, and spent the whole night in weeping and bewailing the death of this prophet ; and then betook themselves to their respective homes all over the world. This gave occasion to the ceremony of weeping for Tammuz, which is alluded to in our prophets. They kept up that festival, with this peculiarity about it, that the women were not allowed during its course to have anything that was ground in a mill, because the bones of Tammuz had been ground in a mill. Now, this was a world-old institution. [According to Mr. Boscawen, "the god Tammuz is evidently the Dumzi," the son of life, "to seek whom Ishtar descends into Hades." The deification of Tammuz, and the complication with, perhaps, a solar myth, seems engrafted on the original story. More light will probably be thrown on the obscurities of the subject. In the meantime, the tradition strongly indicates that, before the introduction of idolatry, a purer religion prevailed. The attempt to restore this is perhaps to be attributed to Zoroaster. Is it not probable that he is identical with Búdâsp ? (confounded with Buddha) ; of whom Masudi relates that he came from India, travelled through Sind, Segestân, and Zabulistân, and again to Kermân ; until at last he came to Persia, everywhere giving himself out as a prophet, and maintaining that he was one sent from God, and a mediator between Him and his creatures. This took place, according to some, in the reign of the Persian king Thamûrath according to others, in the time of the King Jemschid.—Chwolson, vol. .

p. 208.] I hope that the subject will be again taken up by some member of the Institute.

Mr. MACDONELL.—I am much pleased to hear the remarks of the last speaker. I think that two of the previous speakers have not done sufficient justice to this remarkable and interesting paper, one that evidently contains the result of very great information and research,—a paper that ought not to be treated in a light manner. It is full of other persons' thoughts, and containing authorities that are not within the reach of most people. It gives extracts from literature of a most interesting character, and quotes novel and beautiful poetry. Now, it seems to me that the paper is not open to the observations made by the first speaker. So far as I can gather from the statements that were made, there was no such feeling as he referred to running through the paper at all. On the contrary, frequent allusions were made in the paper by which we were reminded of the superiority of the Scriptures. So far as I understand the paper, it goes to show that, even in early times, there was a groping after some form of monotheism. This of itself would be a most valuable result. Having said so much in praise of the paper, may I be permitted to put one or two questions to the lecturer? I was curious to see what opinion the lecturer had arrived at as to the precise age at which Zoroaster lived. At page 247 he states that Endocos and Aristotle placed Zoroaster 6,000 years before the time of Plato, and Hermippos placed the age of Zoroaster 5,000 years before the Trojan war; while another authority, Masudi, gives another date, namely B.C. 600. Mr. Brown himself arrived at a fourth opinion, which was somewhat different. With respect to the ground upon which he arrived at that opinion, or, in fact, the grounds upon which he has arrived at any of his opinions, I think there is room for further enlightenment. It is one thing to know when Zoroaster lived, and it is another, almost as important, to know whether he lived at all; and I think this is fairly open to doubt. At page 248 we have the opinion of Sir H. Rawlinson, to the effect that Zoroaster was "the personification of the old heresonym of the Scythic race." At the same page we have the opinion of a learned foreigner, M. Darmesteter, who regards Zoroaster as "one of the many bright powers of heaven who fight in an almost endless strife against the powers of darkness and evil;" and at page 249 we have the statement of Mr. Brown himself that the question whether Zoroaster lived or not is of comparatively little importance. Then, further on, it is said that Zoroaster might be regarded as the founder of a religion and as one who was essentially a reformer; and, if so, I suppose that at some time or other he lived. I should like to know from Mr. Brown whether there are any solid grounds for believing that Zoroaster was an historical personage, or whether Zoroaster is merely the name in which were included a vast number of religious reformers and teachers, perhaps of different ages? There is another remark I should like to make. I would venture to ask whether the method of inquiry pursued by the lecturer in the latter portion of the paper is a method of inquiry that is likely to result in really sound conclusions? It seemed to me that the mode of reasoning which he followed was one which

might lead to false conclusions. He took up a divinity named Agni, and endeavoured to find the various forms under which that divinity was expressed and discovered. He found a constant reference to fire, and then grouping the various descriptions together, he arrived at the conclusion that Agni was the God of fire. Now I think this is a dangerous way of reasoning. Suppose that 5,000 years hence some person with the same means of reasoning with respect to our society, as Mr. Brown has with respect to ancient Persia, should get information with respect to ghosts that have been seen in the 19th century, and putting all together should ask himself what there was in common? Mr. Brown has found that by common consent Agni in all respects was fire. What would a person considering the question of ghosts 5,000 years hence find? He would observe that they were always seen robed in white, and probably conclude that the idea of a ghost in the 19th century, by common consent, was inseparably connected with white calico. (Laughter.) Such a course of reasoning strikes me as rather dangerous, and I would suggest that Mr. Brown should state what portion of his paper he really considers conjecture, and what portion he considers as sound and based upon undoubted evidence. I think that there are two elements in the paper we have heard to-night, and that the valuable element which I have referred to is of no small extent. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. D. HOWARD.—I think the subject of the paper well worthy of careful consideration, for it involves the whole question of early religions. There is a certain school of thought which tells us with all the boldness which modern scientists alone can command, especially when they are not quite sure of their subject, that man is an improving subject, and that man's religion in the beginning was not monotheism. It does seem to me that the more we study the early histories of religious thought, the more profoundly we are convinced that there is no truth whatever in this conception. I should not venture to enter into the question as to how far Zoroaster was responsible for the dualism in which his followers indulged; but still it is most interesting to find that at that early age you have a reformer appealing not to progress, but to antiquity. He does not appeal to the growing intellect of man, but he appeals to antiquity. He looks back to monotheism, not forward; and I say that from this point of view we cannot too carefully consider this ancient record. It is still more interesting to find the same monotheistic idea running through the religious books even of those he opposed. It is, indeed, true that there is a school of thought which goes to those books to find the origin of the Old Testament revelation. We may study Plato to see what the lights of the Greek mind were, and we may study St. Paul without thinking that St. Paul borrowed from Plato, and it seems to me that we may well study the longings of the human mind for a purer religion, that purer religion being monotheism; and we shall find that in the past and better ages the religion of our fathers was monotheism. Any one coming fresh to the confused thoughts and to the muddled ideas of the books we have been considering, will all the more value the ideas contained in the book of Job, and it is interesting to find in that book those allusions to kissing the hand to the sun, which was the very

beginning of that nature-worship which has degenerated into that horrible and barbarous system which we now see practised in India. Then, again, it is interesting to watch those attempts at reformation that are not founded upon revealed religion, but on human intellect. Another thing which renders the Zendavesta and Persian thought a matter of interest, is the amazing influence the Persian thought had on early Christian thought and on the speculations of the Gnostics.

Rev. J. JAMES.—I should be glad to say a word or two in the same direction that has been pursued by the last two speakers; namely, that I do not see in the paper the slightest tendency to disparage the revelation we have in the Bible. On the contrary, every reference to the Christian faith in this paper is a loyal and warm tribute to the doctrines of the Gospel. I wish also to say that I look upon the paper as a very valuable contribution to the true philosophy of Religion. As has been observed by the last speaker, it seems to be a valuable contribution to the argument, that the degraded forms of religion which are found in all the heathen nations of the earth are not aboriginal, but descendants from an original higher height, and that that higher height is the highest height of monotheism. One passage has been referred to as an objectionable one, but which I must say, in my opinion, is a very valuable thought. It is Max Müller who says, "like an old precious metal, the ancient religion, after the rust of ages has been removed, will come out in all its purity and brightness, and the image which it discloses will be the image of the Father, the Father of all the nations upon earth." True, the Gospel supplies us with religion free from rust; but what we want is to see that that rust which has grown upon the earlier and purer forms of pagan faiths is capable of being rubbed away, and that underneath we shall find tokens if not proofs of an aboriginal religion, which is a faith in the one God. I wish to join in the thanks to the author of the paper for his valuable contribution to this important argument. I should like to know, with reference to the passage in Greek given in the paper, where the words are taken from. The words are these:—

“Πλούτων, Περσεφόνη, Δημήτηρ, Κύπρις, Ἐρωτες,  
Τρίτωνες, Νηρεὺς, Τηθύς, καὶ Κυανοχαίτης,  
Ἐρμῆς θ', Ἡφαιστὸς τε κλυτὸς, Πάν, Ζεὺς τε, καὶ Ἥρῃ,  
Ἄρτεμις, ἡδ' Ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων, εἰς Θεὸς ἴστιν.”

Mr. BROWN.—I believe the passage is quoted in Athenæus, and I think it has been attributed to Hermesianax.

Mr. J. FERGUSON (Ceylon).—Seventeen years' residence in the East has led me to think that one important point in the preparation for missionary work is a knowledge of the religious beliefs of the people among whom Christianity is to be taught, and a sympathy, so far as possible, with precepts and doctrines not distinctly evil in their tendency. I believe our most successful missionaries in the East have been those who have not only learnt the language of the people amongst whom they have laboured, but who have been enabled to translate their sacred and other notable books, and

thus to obtain the sympathies of the enlightened among the natives. I think that this paper will be particularly valuable to Christian teachers going to work in Northern and Western India, and Persia, and I hope that it may pass through the hands of our more enlightened fellow-subjects in India. I think the value of such papers as this is very great to missionaries going to the East, who ought to get an idea of the religions they are about to controvert.

Mr. R. W. DIBDIN.\*

Captain F. PETRIE.—We all know that it is unfortunately too common a thing in these days to find people instituting such inquiries as Mr. Brown has, with a very small portion of those abilities which he has brought to the task ; such inquirers are unhappily only too eager to publish to the world the results of their investigations, which being imperfect, and generally very incorrect, naturally give false impressions ; it is amongst the writings of such inquirers that the advocates of infidelity find weapons ready forged for their use. I think we may congratulate ourselves that the subject of inquiry in the present paper has been taken up by Mr. Brown, for few in England have had the training to enable them to investigate it with such understanding.

Mr. BROWN.—I have to thank the meeting for the attention they have given to my paper, and, at the same time, to say a few words on one or two points which seem to require a reply. Dr. Rule has said that the Hebrew cry was not piteous, I did not say that it was ; but that the words were spoken in that piteous way in which enlightened man would speak. He doubted whether the conception of Zoroaster was monotheism, and remarked that it was mere duality ; but he did not allude to the opinions of the latest investigators on this point, and he quoted the Scripture, “Canst thou by searching find out God ?” I would answer by another passage of Scripture—“You shall find Me if you seek Me with your whole heart.” Mr. Jones followed, and seemed to hope that I had not intended to degrade Christianity.

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\* Mr. Dibdin has sent the following report of part of his speech :—“I cannot at all agree with the statement to be found in Section 6 of the paper, where the author says :—‘And here let me make a remark respecting the spheres of mythology and religion. The former corresponds with the material, the latter with the spiritual portion of the universe ; they rise together as twin ideas in the human mind, and at the same time the mental and the physical eye grasp, however dimly, some of the wonders of God and the Kosmos, of soul and body. Mythology did not spring from religion, nor religion from mythology. They were “two sisters of one race,” widely differing indeed in value, but at first equally simple, equally pure.’—If by religion Mr. Brown means revealed religion, it seems to me that the best that can be said of mythology is that it is a debased distortion of it, and to call it ‘equally pure’ with it is certainly not the manner in which the Hebrew prophets alluded to the mythology of their times.”—(It seems desirable to mention that the author of the paper has used the word “religion” in its strict sense.—Ed.) “The author strives very hard to show that the Gáthas did not teach the existence of two spirits, one of good and the other of evil ; but the passages quoted by himself in Section 9 seem rather to confirm the popular view of the teaching of Zoroaster.”

Certainly not. I can yield to no man present in my respect for Christianity and the Holy Scriptures. The object of this paper is their defence, and I should have thought it almost unnecessary to point it out. I am glad to find that other speakers have relieved me from the charge. This paper was not written merely for persons who accept Holy Scripture. It is a paper intended for the whole world. The object of this society is to set forth the truth of religion, and in doing so it must start from a common basis. It is no good appealing to people on grounds which your opponents disavow. You must say, "I will look at the question from your own point of view": that is the basis of this paper, and that is why extracts from the Scriptures are not more introduced, as the second speaker appeared to wish. The object is to show that the statements of the Bible are supported by history. We believe the Bible to be inspired; but, at the same time, we are not on that account to neglect the teachings of nature. We should make a threefold cord that cannot be easily broken. This paper, I trust, may be examined by people who have not a belief in Holy Scripture. If it only has the effect of bringing them to a more careful study of these questions, it will lead towards the truth. Mr. Howard has alluded to Tammuz as a prophet. I think that he will find that Tammuz is the Assyrian Dumuzi, and that the women who wept for him wept for the setting sun. One gentleman has alluded to the great differences of opinion which exist as to the age of Zoroaster. I have given all the different opinions as to the age of Zoroaster, not because I follow them, but because I wish to give something like literary completeness to my paper. The highest authorities, who have devoted many years to this subject, place him at B.C. 1400, or 1300, and they educe this from the progressive state of the language. That is the chief means of fixing his date. As to the evidence, that is also comparative. You cannot call direct evidence of the original fact whether there was such a man or not, but I will read you a letter which I have received from Professor Sayce, of Oxford:—

"I am altogether of your way of thinking in regard to the historical personality of the Iranian prophet. The character of Zoroastrianism seems to me to postulate an individual founder, just as much as Christianity, Muhammedanism, or Buddhism."

One gentleman has objected to my analysis of the Vedic Agni, and asked how it was that he was fire? We have the word "ignis," and we know that "ignis" means "fire." As to mythology and religion, my meaning is simply this, that mythology is the result of man's childlike and simple considerations of the world around us. If I may quote from a passage in a note on page 302 of the essay, I would say,—

"Prof. Jebb well observes, 'There was a time when they [*i.e.* archaic men] had begun to speak of the natural powers as persons, and yet had not forgotten that they were really natural powers, and that the personal names were merely signs.'"

That, I take it, was the simple primitive origin of mythology, and that is

what I mean by calling it the younger sister of religion. The great point which this paper aims at is, to show that mankind began well. That is our fundamental doctrine as Christians. However the book of Genesis may be understood, it certainly lays down most precisely that man began well. If that position can ever be turned, and it can be shown that man began badly, or as a being evolved out of some lower form of life, with no knowledge of God or of religion at all, but that he was a creature moving about in a world half-realized, then the position of Christianity would be turned ; but I am as certain of the fact as that I am here, that this can never be shown, and that the position of Christianity is impregnable. It is my wish to set forth that as far as we can extend our researches into these early records side by side with the Bible, we find them in perfect harmony with the Biblical statements. I am exceedingly obliged to the meeting for the manner in which they have listened to my paper, and especially to Mr. James for his kindly remarks.

The meeting was then adjourned.