

PROF. LAWRENCE H. MILLS ON THE LOGOS CONCEPTION.

BY THE EDITOR.

ONE of the most remarkable coincidences in the history of religion is the dignity which the term "word" has acquired not only in Christianity but also in the terminology of other systems in India and Iran, and—we may add—even in distant China. The theory naturally suggests itself that we are here confronted with the transmission of thought either from the East to the West or the West to the East, but it appears that neither hypothesis is admissible and that in both regions, in the sphere of Græco-Christian thought and among the Indians as well as the Iranians, we witness an interesting instance of a parallel development. The Rev. Professor Lawrence Heyworth Mills, D. D., Professor of Zend Philology at the University of Oxford, has devoted a special book¹ to a comparison of the Logos idea of Alexandrian philosophy, with analogous terms in the Zend Avesta, and he comes to the conclusion that the Persian conception of the *Honover*, the *Vohu manah*, and also of the *Asha* cannot be derived from Philo's logos² conception nor, *vice versa*, can the logos conception have originated from Zarathushtrian sources.

The Zend Avesta contains very ancient passages. It must still retain reminiscences of the time when the Brahmans and the Iran-

¹ *Zarathushtra and the Greeks: A Discussion of the Relation Existing Between the Ameshaspentas and the Logos*. Part I. F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig. 1903-1904.

² Logos is commonly translated "word," but it means more than that. It is connected with the root from which our word "logic" is derived and it means orderly logical thought expressed in language. This same idea comes out in the Iranian term *asha* which is commonly translated "righteousness," but (like the Vedic *rita*) it means "the rhythm of nature," "the world order," especially "the moral world order," hence the translation "righteousness." *Vohumanah* is commonly translated "good thought" and *Honover*, which is the union of two words, the title of a prayer, the Ahuna vairya, a synonym which has been introduced in later writing.

ians were living together, using the same word, *Deva*, for supernatural beings; but while in India the term *Deva* never ceased to mean gods, among the Iranians it came gradually to stand for demons and evil spirits who did not deserve the honor of worship.

The ancient Iranians were virtuous husbandmen who, as says Professor Mills, preferred to worship God under simpler names than *Varuna* or *Indra*. They showed a tendency to develop a monotheistic conception of God, and the *Gathas* still retain echoes of the struggle between the pure worship of *Ahura Mazda*, i. e., "the Lord Omniscient, the author of all that is true and good," and the *Deva*-religion which appears to have been looked down upon by the adherents of the purer faith in the same way as the Israelites regarded their pagan neighbors as idolaters. The conflict is marked by a bitterness of constantly repeated feuds which finally led to the extermination of the cruder superstitious polytheism.

The sacred books of the worshippers of *Ahura Mazda* comprise a long period from the most ancient times down to modern days of *Parsi* literature, and, accordingly, there are as many phases in the development of *Mazdaism* as there are in *Christianity*. An exact knowledge of this enormous literature is limited to a small number of scholars, among whom we mention Professor Mills as one of the greatest authorities. No one is as well posted on the historic development of *Mazdaism* as he, for, in comparing *Mazdaism* with *Christianity*, we must always bear in mind the dates of the books from which we quote. The *Gathas* or *Zarathushtrian* hymns were written at an early period in remote times and reflect traits of the personal faith of *Zarathushtra*, while the *Pahlavi* books are of a much later date representing a phase in *Mazdaism* which would correspond to a similar phase in *Mediæval Christian literature*.

According to Prof. Darmesteter, there can be no doubt of an historical contact of *Zarathushtrians* with *Alexandrian culture* at a later period through some *Parsi* in *Persia* who had become familiar with *Platonic philosophy* and may possibly have visited *Egypt* in person. The most important document is a letter written by a *Parsi*, the name of which is sometimes transcribed "*Tansar*," sometimes "*Tosar*."

The author of this odd piece of literature, the alleged author *Tansar*, claims to be *Herbad* of the *Herbads*, i. e., priest of priests or chief of the religion, and he is claimed to have been the redactor of the sacred texts on which *Zoroastrianism* reposes, but if any portion of the *Avesta* could have been written at the period of *Tansar*, the implication is left that the *Gathas* themselves must have

been composed two or three centuries before, say, between 100 B. C. to 100 A. D. Hence, Mr. Mills comes to the conclusion that everything of the letter except its nucleus is entirely spurious. He says:

"Compare the Vendidad with this Letter! : — to regard the two as contemporaneous in the same locality would appear to be the ultra pointing of a sarcasm." (p. 49.)

Professor Mills devotes a careful investigation to the Tansar letter which he does not consider as genuine. On the other hand he proves the independent development of the logos idea in Greece from the first suggestion, given by Heraclitus, to Plato, further to Philo, and finally to Neo-Platonism. He shows that the Persian idea of Vohumanah is after all different from the Greek logos conception. The similarities are external and a close inspection betrays an independent origin.

The idea of a gradual personification of Asha and Vohumanah, originally mere qualities of God, is briefly sketched by Professor Mills as follows (pp. 20-21) :

"I discover *Asha* and *Vohumanah* to be first of all simply expressions for the attributes of 'truth' and 'benevolence': first as those characteristics are supposed to inhere in the supreme good Deity; and then I find them as expressing those qualities in the faithful disciple.

"After this I find that they become *also personified*, first *rhetorically*, then *doctrinally*, as *Arch-angels of God*, and later even as *his sanctified servants*, *Asha* representing in these instances *the orthodox community* and *Vohumanah the orthodox individual*. This explanation leaves them indeed very impressive and refined as *religious-philosophical conceptions*, but they seem to have been introduced in a spirit which was quite simple and without any trace whatsoever of hair-splitting dialectics. They however express in a significant manner *the activity of the Deity as directed by His justice and His love*, and by these as exerted toward His entire creation, which is declared to comprise the chief objects even of material nature. There is indeed 'an evil creation'; but with this the supreme Deity has nothing whatsoever to do, either directly or indirectly through either his Vohumanah or his Asha (except indeed to oppose and finally to overcome (?) it). It is the work of a *separate Original Spirit*, not supreme of course, but independent. *Such are Asha and Vohumanah in brief.*"

The personification of a quality of God reminds one of Philo's word "dynamis" (power). We may compare *Spenta-Mainyu* with Philo's *pneuma*, the *Amesha-Spenta*, or Bountiful Immortals.

the seven attributes of God, which might explain Philo's preference for the number "seven," etc., etc. We can follow up the similarities to some details, and yet in following the arguments of Prof. Mills, will have to acknowledge the independent origin of these notions in both Iranian religion and in Greek philosophy.

Professor Mills estimates the Zarathushtrian faith far higher than Philo's conception. In fact he says: "It would be an insult to the Avesta to compare the two." Philo's betrays a vanity and he claims that his soul or his mind had been furnished with information from God himself. Nothing so trivial appears in the *Gathas*. Professor Mills continues (pp. 204-205):

"The Avesta in the thought compared led the world of its time and place in one of the most important ideas which humanity had yet experienced. Nothing Philonian can approach it, much less this petty, but yet to some of us most interesting effect of diseased cerebral action.

"Philo's 'mind' was indeed 'speaking' to him and upon a serious subject,—a question in the theological exegesis of a passage in his Scriptures; but it concerned something of mere remote detail, a matter of little practical moment, however it might be considered. But Zarathushtra's point was vital and immediate, of the utmost critical effect to the immortal destiny of the human subject, and wholly moral. I may well fear that I do it dishonor to mention it in such a connection, or in such a tone."

The nucleus of the Zend Avesta is ancient and we find in it for the first time several characteristics of a distinctly moral character, based upon religious ideals. Professor Mills says (pp. 205-206):

"Up to the dates of those statements in the Zend Avesta men's thoughts as to future recompense, so far as they have been recorded, were all mechanical, ruthless and inconsiderate. The law of interior recompense, was perhaps not so consciously at hand in the thoughts of Zarathushtra, but his deducible ideas forecast it; subjective rewards and punishments are certainly foreshadowed.

"And this was epoch-making for the time and place, the first clear statement of such conceptions in all literature. The conscience becomes the executioner, if it indeed does not constitute the very pains of Hell; and in a corresponding sense an approving voice within fills the being with pervading peace, and it meets the saved man like a fragrant breeze to a traveller approaching home."

As to interpretations between the Iranian doctrine and the Alexandrian logos conception, Professor Mills is a little inclined to be-

lieve that Philo must have felt indirectly a Babylonian-Persian influence. He sums up his views as follows (pp. 206-208) :

"The Avesta in no sense depends upon the Jewish Greeks. On the contrary, it was Philo who was in debt to it. He drank in his Iranian lore from the pages of his exilic Bible, or from the Bible-books which were then as yet detached, and which not only recorded Iranian edicts by Persian Kings, but were themselves half made up of Jewish-Persian history. Surely it is singular that so many of us who 'search the Scriptures' should be unwilling to see the first facts which stare at us from its lines. The Religion of those Persians, which saved our own from an absorption (in the Babylonian), is portrayed in full and brilliant colors in the Books of the Avesta, because the Avesta is only the expansion of the Religion of the sculptured edicts as modified. The very by-words, as we shall later see, are strikingly the same, and these Inscriptions are those of the very men who wrote the Bible passages. This religion of the Restorers was beyond all question historically the first consistent form in which our own Eschatology appeared.

"Before the Exile the Jewish creed was very dim indeed as to Resurrection, Immortality, forensic Judgment, and all we hold most dear. The people of Ragha (Rages, etc.) whose name the Alexandrians knew so well from their Tobias, or from its sources, lived and died under the strong personal influence of these beliefs, with other elements beside them so searching that we can scarcely trust our eyesight as we read. Even the harsher features are recalled; the very Demon of the Gathas figured in the tales of Philo's youth.

"There are more traces of the doctrines named above, with Heaven and Hell, as Orthodox Christians hold to them, in the texts of the Avesta than in all the Pre-exilic Books. . . .

"I have asserted with suggested reasons that *Philo must have felt indirectly a Babylonian-Persian influence* with the conclusion that any similarities supposed to exist between his writings and the Zarathushtrian system must have been owing to ideas which made their way from that system, or from a congeries of closely connected systems of which Zarathushtrianism was a prominent unit; and I have constructed a provisional conclusion from these premises in so far as they are now presented."