CONTENTS:

Frontispiece. The Philosopher Adrift. Murato Tanryô. .......................... 385

Our Own Religion in Ancient Persia. Prof. L. H. Mills. ...................... 385

Christianity as the Pleroma. (Concluded.) Editor. ......................... 405

Hazing and Fagging. (Illustrated.) Editor. ..................................... 430

Some Epigrams of Goethe. Translated by the Editor. ....................... 438

Mars Dux and Mar(u)duk. C. A. Browne. ...................................... 444

Peacemakers in Trouble. ......................................................... 445

Professor Mills and the Parsi Community. .................................... 446

The Philosopher Adrift. ......................................................... 447

Notes. .................................................................................. 447

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A MONTHLY MAGAZINE


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CONTENTS:

Frontispiece. The Philosopher Adrift. MURATO TANRYÔ.    PAGE
Our Own Religion in Ancient Persia. PROF. L. H. MILLS. 385
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Hazing and Fagging. (Illustrated.) EDITOR. 430
Some Epigrams of Goethe. Translated by the Editor. 438
Mars Dux and Mar(u)duk. C. A. BROWNE. 444
Peacemakers in Trouble. 445
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The Philosopher Adrift. 447
Notes. 447

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Frontispiece to The Open Court.
OUR OWN RELIGION IN ANCIENT PERSIA.

ZOROASTER (ZARATHUSHTRA) AND THE BIBLE.*

BY PROFESSOR MILLS.

[This essay, in its original form, was delivered twice as a public lecture before distinguished audiences in Oxford some years ago. It was soon after, or soon before, printed in the Nineteenth Century Review of January, 1894, also in its shorter form; and later, with the consent of the editor of that review and of the author, it was translated into Gujarati,—whether by Mr. Palanji Madan or not, the writer is not now certain, though he is under the impression that it was this scholar who translated it. He had previously translated the Gāthā portion, that is to say, one-half of the XXXIst volume of the Sacred Books of the East into Gujarati in, say, 1889, and I take especial pleasure in expressing my acknowledgments for that distinguished piece of work here, in America, where the translator could hardly have expected that his name would become known. That translation of this essay into Gujarati was published by the Trustees of the Sir J. Jejeebhoy Translation Fund of Bombay in a large edition. The late very distinguished editor of the Review mentioned seemed gratified that the article was to be thus reproduced in an Oriental language, and he also later gave permission to the author to insert it in a volume of Miscellaneous Pieces upon Zarathushtrianism, which it is hoped will be soon forthcoming. (The lecture has also just lately been translated into Italian by a talented author entirely upon his own suggestion and initiative, and will soon be issued in that form.) Those who may happen to compare this lecture with either its original in the Review, or in its Gujarati translation, will notice at once that it is somewhat enlarged, and also that I seem to have altered my opinions to some degree as to one of the essential points, since I delivered the piece first, and since I gave it to the eminent periodical. This however is more apparent than real, although I have certainly felt, and somewhat pointedly the necessity for putting the possible, or probable, independent origin of our Jewish immortality in a clearer light. Readers will also easily recognize the later insertions, which may be printed in this present edition, from the difference in the stylistic flow of the language as a later and to some extent a more pointed animus imparts greater pungency and vivacity to one’s mode of expressing oneself.]

MANY interested but necessarily hasty readers of the Zend Avesta overlook the fact that in the ancient documents comprised under that name we have works of many different ages; and even scholars eminently endowed with the critical faculty as applied to

* See the Nineteenth Century Review of Jan. 1894, the title Zoroaster having been applied to the article by the Editor.
other specialties sometimes fall into a similar error, and ignore a characteristic which the Avesta possesses in common with nearly all other writings of its description; for they sometimes turn over its pages without perceiving, or seeming to perceive, that from leaf to leaf matter comes before them made up of pieces nearly or quite dissimilar, and sometimes separated as to the dates of their authorship by many hundreds of years. They are accordingly apt to make themselves merry over absurdities which prevail in the later but still genuine Avesta, as if they were peculiar to the original Zoroastrian writings.¹

But the author or authors of the earlier Avesta had no immediate or certain connection with the superstitions of later centuries; and as to these quaint myths and trivial ceremonials which are preserved in the later Avesta, are we not apt to exaggerate the disadvantages which they bring with them? How can their presence affect the value of the nobler elements in these relics of ancient faith?

We are pained to read them, but analogous superfluities survive in many modern systems. And indeed some of the later passages in the Zend Avesta which describe the battle with the Demon of Putrefaction, and which might seem to some of us most grotesque, were hardly superfluities, for they showed a sanitation which it would be better for us to follow rather than condemn.² In tracing the following analogies, which for brevity’s sake I take for the most part from the genuine, but still later,³ Avesta, I shall leave out these grotesque details generally, abandoning them as rare morsels to the collector of ancient bits. What is here intended is to call attention to the little-known, though long since reported fact, that it pleased the Di-

¹ It is even not uncommon to speak or write of the Avesta as if it were identical with the later Zoroastrianism, the revived system of Sasanian times, which is however as different from both the earlier and the later Avesta as the lives of saints are from the New Testament records.

² Consciously or unconsciously they anticipated much modern theory on this subject, and led the way in the most practical of all sciences—disinfection.

³ The original and earlier Avesta consists of the Gāthas, the original hymns of Zoroaster and his immediate associates or followers. They are most dissimilar to the rest of the Avesta and still more so to the apocryphal Zoroastrianism. They were carefully translated by me in the Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXXI, so long ago as October 1887, and their Zend, Pahlavi, Sanskrit, and Persian texts were edited and the first three translated by me with a Commentary in my Study of the Gāthas, some 650 pages, 1902-94 (F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig). They may be provisionally placed at about 700 to 900 B. C.; but, if they antedate the cults of Mithra, Haoma (Soma), and of the sun, moon, etc., etc., all of which they totally ignore, they must be centuries older. The remaining parts of the Avesta are of different ages, say from 600 to 300 B. C., while, as in the case of every other ancient book, spurious additions of an indefinitely later origin occur here and there. Some writers, while holding the Gāthas to date at about 700 B. C., put even vigorous parts at a thousand years later, quite an irrational suggestion.
vine Power to reveal some of the fundamental articles of our Catholic creed first to Zoroastrians, though these ideas later arose spontaneously and independently among the Jews; secondly I wish to emphasize the peculiar circumstances of this independent origin among the Jewish tribes of the Exile; and thirdly I wish to show that the Persian system must have exercised a very powerful, though supervening and secondary influence upon the growth of these doctrines among the Exilic and post-Exilic Pharisaic Jews, as well as upon the Christians of the New Testament, and so eventually upon ourselves.

After this brief preface, let me proceed at once to cite the documentary facts, only remarking that they are practically uncontested by any persons whose views are worth considering,—while the original passages could even be sufficiently learned by any apt scholar in the course of a very short time.

To begin with our excerpts from the Sacred Book of the Iranians, let us first trace the connection where it seems least obvious, that is, as to the nature of the Deity. Ahura Mazda, the Living Lord, the great Creator (or possibly the Wise One), has a most Bountiful, or most Holy Spirit, who is sometimes identical with Him.

Yasna xxviii. 1:

With hands outstretched I beseech for the first blessing of Thy most Bounteous (or holy) Spirit.

See also Yasna i. 1:

I invoke, and I will complete my sacrifice to Ahura Mazda, the Creator, the radiant, the glorious, the greatest and the best, the most firm, who sends His joy-creating grace afar, who made us and has fashioned us, who has nourished and protected us, who is the most bountiful (the most holy) Spirit.

In the seven Bountiful (or holy) Immortals (the Amshaspends of literature) we have a union which reminds us of the Sabellian Trinity (Yasht xiii. 82):

We sacrifice to the redoubted guardian spirits of the Bountiful Immortals who are glorious, whose look itself has power (their look produces what they wish), who are lofty and coming on to help us, who are swiftly strong and divine, everlasting and holy, who are Seven,* and all of one thought, and of one word, and of one deed, whose thought is the same, whose word is the same, and whose deeds are the same, who have one Father and Commander, Ahura Mazda; each of whom sees the other’s soul revolving good thoughts, thinking of good words, contemplating good actions, whose abode is the Home of Sublimity (or Song), and shining are their paths as they come down to us to offering.

* About B. C. 700-900 or greatly earlier.

* Literary confusion—; the word should be six, without Ahura.

Say B. C. 300-100, or —?
While they are thus unified, Ahura Mazda being included within their number, they are yet separate. Vohu Manah is the divine benevolence, the good mind of the Deity, likewise alive within His saints, and later personified as a separate archangel, while even in the Gâthas it represents the holy or correct citizen. Asha the Vedic Rita, is the divine Order, the symmetry and perfection in the ritual and the soul, and at the same time a poetically personified archangel. Khshahtra is His sovereign power realized in a kingdom of righteousness, and yet also poetically personified. Aramaiti, our piety, the Active mind, the inspiring energy of the Deity first thought of as the "ploughing of agriculture," and from this latter called the "earth" in both Veda and Avesta, as against the theft-murder schemes of the raiding Turks. She is also in figurative conception God's daughter, and this even in the Gâthas, where the only other similar relation made use of in this manner is that of "Father," for the Fire is "God's Son" only in the later Avesta.

She is also implanted within the minds of the faithful as a divine inspiration. Haurvatât is God's Perfection as consummated through His foregoing Truth, Love, Power and Vital Energy, while the name is borrowed, or promoted from the Haurvatât "wholesomeness," i. e., the "success" of man. It was God's completeness like that of man's as reflected in the body's health, then soon perfected in their weal of soul and mind as well as of body, an idea evidently necessary to the roundness of the scheme; while Ameretatât is their Immortality, Death's absence, a veritable victory over it began in its long postponement to old age here, which last was indeed the original point of the word, but continued in eternal Deathlessness in a future state.

From the second to the seventh they are personified thoughts sent forth from the mind of God to ennable and redeem His people. That the general description of such an important conception as this, lying as it does at the logical root of Zoroastrianism, should have become known to the Jews of the Captivity and to their descendants before the date of some, if not of all, the Exilic Prophets, is scarcely less than certain. The Greeks themselves heard of them, and in their deepest and purest sense, before the date of Daniel; see the invaluable passage in Plutarch, evidently reproducing the ideas of Theopompus, also cited by me elsewhere. If the priests of Cyrus conferred to the smallest degree with those of Ezra, then not only the Gnostics felt its influence, but the pre-Christian and Christian theology. And in the Book of Tobit, which also contains prominently the name of an Avesta demon, we have an allusion to these
seven Spirits (chap. xii. 15). So also in Zechariah (iv. 10) we have the seven which are as the eyes of the Lord, and which run to and fro throughout the whole earth; and this is further expanded in Rev. v. 6:

And I saw in the midst of the throne a lamb standing as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

How sublime this all becomes when we look at it in the light of separate unassisted and unarrested growth.

[Negative arguments drawn from the absence of the named "Seven," also from the absence of the name of Angra Mainyu from the Inscriptions are the mistakes of non-experts; as each is equally absent from large portions of the Avesta, and no inference can be drawn from their absence from the Inscriptions, while the prominence of the ideas, at least as expressed in the names of the Amesha-spends, is illustrated by the fact that two of them are combined in the name of the Emperor Artakhshatra, which is Asha (Arsha) plus Khshathra, while, as I have just noticed, the name of the large Eastern province, which we call Harachosia (sic), or Arachosien, is purely and simply Harauvati on Behistun and on N. R.; that is to say; it is the Av. Ha(u)rvatát, Sanskrit Sarvátati, the fifth Amesha-spand; see also Arminia, adj. Armenia, which recalls Aramati, the fourth Amesha.

Mithra and Anahita too seem to have stepped bodily out of the Avesta, while the Demon Druj under the other Avesta form of drauga = draogha = "the Lie," is present, but occurs most prominently under its verbal form, etc. Many turns of speech are strikingly common to the Avesta and the Inscriptions.

We must also never forget that the Achæmenian Inscriptions, while extensive as sculptured writings, are yet necessarily very circumscribed when regarded as "literature."

Then as to the attributes of God more definitely considered. He is our Creator (see above), and perhaps also, in a theological sense, sovereign (Yasna xxix. 4) in S. B. E. xxxi, and in the Gathās):

The Great Creator is most mindful of the utterances or commands which have been fulfilled beforehand hitherto by demon-gods and by men, and of those which shall be fulfilled by them hereafter. He, Ahura, is the discerning arbiter, so shall it be to us as He shall will (see also Y. xxxi. 14'). He is omniscient (see Y. xxxi. 13, 14'). He is our lawgiver (Y. xxxi. 11') and teacher (Y. xxxi. 5; Y. xxxii. 13'). He will establish a kingdom (Y. xxviii. 4'). It is for the poor (Y. xxxiv. 3'). "What is your kingdom, what

* These passages may be placed at about 700 to 900 B. C.
are your riches, that I may become your own in my actions with the righteous order, and thy good mind, to care for your poor?” (Y. liii. 9). O Mazda, Thine is the Kingdom, and by it Thou bestowest the highest of blessings on the right-living poor.” It is endangered, and yet in the end victorious. It has a propaganda (Y. xxxi. 3). "With tongue of thy mouth do thou speak, that I may make all the living believers.” God is our friend, protector, strengthener, and unchangeable (Y. xxxi. 7). “These, O Spirit, mayst thou cause to prosper, Thou who art for every hour the same.” He is our Judge (Y. xlii. 4). There is a day or period of judgment (Y. xliii. 5, 6). “Yea, I conceived of Thee as Bounteous, O Ahura Mazda, when I beheld Thee as supreme in the actions of life, when, as rewarding deeds and words, Thou didst establish evil for the evil, and blessings for the good by Thy great virtue in the creation’s final change. In which last changing Thou shalt come, and with Thy bounteous Spirit, and Thy sovereign power (see also Y. xliv. 19).”

Then as to the description of Satan; while criticism casts its doubt upon the presence of Satan in the serpent of Genesis, we gather from the Genesis of the Avesta that the Scriptural reptile may well be recognized as that old Serpent the Devil. A serpent tempts in Genesis, and the consequence is sin and the expulsion from Eden. In the Vendidad, the Evil Spirit opposes every good object of creation, and the implied consequence is an expulsion.

Vendidad 1. Ahura Mazda said unto Zarathushtra Spitama:

I, O Zarathushtra Spitama, made the first best place, which is Airyana Vaêjah; thereupon Aŋgra Mainyu (the Evil Spirit) created a counter creation, a serpent in the river, and frost made by the demons.... The third place which I, Ahura Mazda, made the best was Moîru; thereupon Aŋgra Mainyu (the Evil Spirit) created a counter creation, which was backbiting and lust.... The fifth place which I, Ahura Mazda, made the best was Nisâya; thereupon, in opposition to it, Aŋgra Mainyu (the Evil Spirit), full of death, created a counter creation, which was the curse of unbelief.... As the seventh best place I, who am Ahura Mazda, created Vaêkereta.... thereupon, in opposition to it, Aŋgra Mainyu (the Evil Spirit), full of death, created the evil fairy who clave to Keresaspa.... As the ninth place, I, who am Ahura Mazda, created Khnefita as the best.... thereupon Aŋgra Mainyu (the Evil Spirit) created a counter creation, the inexpiable deed of Sodomy etc.

These memorable fragments must have struck the attention of every learned scribe who heard them; and they must have been constantly repeated in greatly varied forms. They may well have helped to mould Jewish and Christian expressions.

Then the Asmodeus of the Book of Tobit (iii. 8, 17) is positively the Aeshma-daêva of the Avesta, and Aeshma was the wrath-demon of invasion (see Yasna xlviii. 7, etc.). The apparent and superficial variations between the Zoroastrian and the Jewish conception of the

6 These passages may be placed at about 700 to 900 B. C.
7 About 500 to 300 B. C.; so certainly in its main prior elements.
relation between the Deity and Satan are, of course, to be expected, but we should not allow their approximating resemblance to blind our eyes to the real difference.

[It would be a clumsy history of philosophy which would allow the present noble monotheism of the Persis to cheat us of the speculatively precious element of dualism as it exists in their genuine writings. Whether the ideas which lay at the root of the doctrine of dualism were true or false, and whether the Jewish pre-Christian thought was infected with them or not, that post-Christian dogma was filled to repletion with diabolic demonism, though this was obviously still under the power of the exorcising Saviour, and therefore perhaps not an item within a true Dualism strictly speaking in the Zarathushtrian sense; but I very seriously raise the question whether the Jewish writers of the Old Testament earlier or later at all really believed that their Jahveh Elohim was (sic) the creator of either Satan, or of Baal, or of any of the Demon-Gods. We know indeed that they accredited the existence of these latter as a matter only too emphatically real, and by no means uninterruptedly regarded them as being altogether creatures of the imagination; see the frequent comparison of them with Jahveh Elohim. But when, and in so far as, they thus believed them to be really existing beings, in how far did they then suppose the Jahveh Elohim to have been their original creator, either bringing them into existence as being holy in their nature before a fall like Satan's, or causing them to arise as being originally of evil character? The question is very serious. The foolish relief offered us by the doctrine that Jahveh Elohim, as God the Father, was not responsible for the fall of beings whom He foresaw would become evil when He created them, is no longer available, and could not have long continued to satisfy any sober-minded sage. But if the leading Jews in large numbers thus in due sequence unconsciously or openly rejected the view that God created the Evil Gods of their enemies—directly or indirectly, in any shape or chain of causality or responsibility whatsoever; then the ancient Israelites were in verity, though they were not consciously, dualists, not far indeed from the type of Zarathushtra;—they held to the existence of a Being, or Beings, who was, or who were, originally evil, and so, to an original evil principle, which is dualism—and that dualism remains one of the most interesting suggestions which have ever been presented, and one indeed which, in its elements, if not in its detail, is still unconsciously but largely followed.]

\[What is the present advancing pessimism (so called) but the recognition of the original necessity of evil co-existing with good? The Avesta merely\]
A fall of man is included in the successive expulsions above related, but we have also in the original Avesta which was written still earlier than the Vendidad a fall of man, or of spiritual beings, distinctly stated (Y. xxx. 3):

Thus are the primeval spirits which, as a pair, each independent in his actions, have been famed of old, as regards a better and a worse, as to thought, as to word, and as to deed, and between these two, the demons, or their worshipers, could make no righteous choice since theirs was deception. As they were questioning (in their hesitation) the Worst Mind approached them that he might be chosen. Thereupon they rushed together unto the Demon of Rapine, that they might pollute the lives of mortals.9

As to Soteriology, a virgin conceives. It is not, however, to produce Zarathushtra, but the restoring Saviour of the latter age; nor does she conceive without seed although she is still a virgin. She conceives from the seed of Zarathushtra, which has been miraculously preserved.

The details, which show a gross deterioration from Gâthic times, are presented in their rounded form only in the Bundahish, which is perhaps more than a thousand years later than the date of the original passages in the genuine but still later Avesta. "Zarathushtra approached his wife Hvôv....the angel Neryosangh received the brilliance and strength of that seed, and delivered it with care to the angel Anâhid, and in time it will blend with a mother. Nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine myriads of the guardian spirits of the saints are intrusted with its protection" (see the Bundahish, S. B. E., vol. v, p. 144). It is preserved in the Lake Kâsava till, at the end of the earthly cycle, a maid Eretât-fedhri bathing in the lake will conceive from it, and bring forth the last Saoshyant, or Saviour, while two of his predecessors are similarly engendered. These several items are likewise present in a scattered state in the ancient but still comparatively later Avesta. In Yasht xiii. 142, we read:

We worship the guardian spirit of the holy maid Eretât-fedhri, who is called the all-conquering, for she will bring him forth who will destroy the malice of the demons and of men.10

While in Yasht xix. 92, we read that

Astvatetera (the Saviour of the Restoration) will arise from the waters of Kâsava, a friend of Ahura Mazda, a son of Vispataurvi, the all-conquering, personified what so many of us now accept. Compare even the sublated dualism of Fichte and Hegel, which they, strange to say, may have derived unconsciously through Schelling, Jacob Boehme, and the Gnostics from the Avesta. This remark is suggested by one of Hau's, and confirmed in conversation with a leading specialist. The passage in brackets is an enlarged note.

9 B. C. 700-900, or earlier.
knowing the victorious knowledge which will make the world progress unto perfection.\textsuperscript{10}

And in Yasht xiii. 62, we learn that 9,999 spirits of the faithful watch over the seed of Zoroaster.\textsuperscript{11} That we have here the hope of a \textit{virgin-born Redeemer} admits no doubt. Whether such intimations, repeated under various forms, came from the hint of the Israelitish prophets or \textit{vice versa} is of course a question, but that Zoroastrian or Mazda-worshiping Magi, if they came from the East to honor the virgin-born babe of Bethlehem, were familiar with them is certain. And as they expected a virgin-born Saviour themselves it is but reasonable to suppose that this pious hope may well have lain at the foundation of their divine call to discover him who was born “King of the Jews.” Then as to the \textit{Temptation}. If our Lord approached that great event in the spirit of wide humanity, one would surmise that He felt some sympathy with sages who had gone before Him in similar signal encounters; and there exists a temptation of Zoroaster of which He may have known through supernatural cognition, and to which for color that of Heracles, for instance, bears no comparison. The myth containing it doubtless expresses in its fragments what was once a real struggle, which, if it in any sense saved Zoroastrianism, was one of the world’s crises. Zoroaster is besought by the Evil One to abjure the holy Mazdayas-nian religion, and to obtain a reward such as an evil ruler got (\textit{Vend. didâd xix. 43})\textsuperscript{12}:

He shouted, and shouted forth again, he Añgra Mainyu, the evil spirit who is full of death. He pondered, and he pondered widely, the demon of the demons, and he thus said, he who was the evil-minded Añgra Mainyu, “What! will the demons be assembled in an assembly on the top of Arezura,\textsuperscript{a} they the wicked, evil-minded?... They rushed and they shouted,\textsuperscript{b} they, the demons. wicked, evil-minded, and with the evil eye: “Let us assemble in an assembly on the top of Arezura, for born indeed is He who is the righteous Zarathushtra of the house of Pourushasha. Where shall we find destruction for Him? He is the demon’s wounnder, He is the demon’s foe.\textsuperscript{c} He is Druj of the Druj (a destroyer of the destroyer). Face downward are the Demon-worshipers, prostrate is the death-demon,\textsuperscript{d} and down is the Draogha of the lie.”

But (\textit{Vend. xix. 1}) a rally is made. Añgra Mainyu, the evil spirit, coming from the north region of the North, orders the Lie-demon to assault and slay the holy Zarathushtra now no longer just born but

\textsuperscript{10} B. C. 300-500; but the repetition of this myth argues its long previous growth through centuries.

\textsuperscript{11} Compare this drivel with the grandeur and simplicity of the Gâtha, \textit{S. B. E.} xxxi, pp. 1-194.

\textsuperscript{12} Say about 300(?). The footnote signs expressed in letters refer in each case to the corresponding analogy in note 17.
in the vigor of his age. The assault is at once repelled by prayer, sacrifices, and the fervent recital of the creed. The demon, frustrated, returns to Aṅgra Mainyu. She says:

O baneful Evil Spirit, I see no death for Him, for glorious is the righteous Zarathushtra.  

Zarathushtra, seeing through their thoughts, says (within himself):

The Demons plot my death, they, evil-doing as they are.  

He arose, he went forth uninjured by their plan and the hardness of their words. And Zarathushtra let the Evil Spirit know:

O evil-minded Aṅgra Mainyu, I will smite the creation made by demons; I will smite the Nasu (putrid demon); I will smite the evil fairy (that seduced the early sages), till the Saviour is born victorious from the waters of Kāsava, from the utmost region of the East.  

And Aṅgra Mainyu answered, and shouting as he spoke:

Slay not my creatures, holy Zarathushtra. Thou art Pourushaspa's son, for from thy birth have I invoked (thee). Renounce the good religion of those who worship Mazda. Obtain the reward which Vadhaghan, the murderous (ruler), gained.  

And Zarathushtra answered:

Never shall I abjure the good faith of those who worship Mazda; (no), let not my body, nor my life, nor my senses fly apart.  

And to him then shouted the Evil Spirit of the evil world:

With whose word wilt thou thus conquer? With whose word wilt thou abjure? With what weapon as the best formed wilt thou conquer these my creatures?  

And Zarathushtra answered:

With the sacred Haoma plant, with the mortar and the cup, with the word which God pronounced. With these my weapons (will I slay thee), they are best. With that word shall I be victor, with that word shall I expel thee, with this weapon as the best made, O evil Aṅgra Mainyu. The most bounteous Spirit forged it; in boundless time he made it; and the Bountiful Immortals gave it, they who rule aright, who dispose (of all) aright.  

And Zarathushtra chanted:

As the higher priest is to (be revered and) chosen, so let the lower chief (be one who serves) from the righteous order, a creator of mental goodness, and of life's actions done for Mazda, and the kingdom is to Ahura, which to the poor may give their nurture.  

A blessed quarter.  

First aor. mid.  

Other translators introduce an “if” to gain a better meaning, “Not if my body, nor my life, nor my senses fly apart.”  

The texts cited are all of them metrical, hence the rhythm of the renderings.
Here we may well introduce the closing verse of the chapter (xix. 147): 17

The demons shouted, the demons rushed, the evil-doing and the wicked; they rushed and they fled to the bottom of the place of darkness; that is, of frightful Hell.8

Few Medo-Persian subjects in the streets of Jerusalem being presumably Mazda-worshipers, like their emperors, here lingering in the Persian subject city soon after, or long after the Return, could have failed to know this striking myth; and none who knew it could have failed to tell it, if creeds were at all discussed.

The religion is subjective. Holiness is prayed for as well as the outward reward (Y. xxviii. 6); and Avesta is the document here:

O Asha, Angel of the Holy Law, when shall I see thee, knowing the Good Mind and Obedience, and finding the way to Ahura (or “Ahura’s throne”)?

We now come upon something which has the strongest claims upon our attention. Whereas much else in Zoroastrianism may present the analogies of an older but still sister religion, we have as to one great particular what all must acknowledge to be in a special sense a prior revelation in the Persian Bible. I fear we too little realize how very uncertain the doctrine of a future life was in the minds of pious Jews, even at the time of our Lord. The Sadducees, as we understand, believed in neither “angel, nor spirit, nor resurrection,” and the Sadducees shared the power with the Pharisees; in fact, they seemed to have possessed greater social prestige, and several princely high priests were of their clique. It seems to many of us most curious that the sect among the ancient people of God, which especially claimed the title of purists and sticklers for the ancient Pentateuch, should have been absolute disbelievers in what are now widely regarded as the fundamental principles of religion. If such a state of things existed at the time of our Lord, when both the doctrine of immortality and that of resurrection had long been familiar as theories, what must have been the condition of opinion on these subjects while the influence of the Pentateuch, in which these doc-

17 For detailed analogies, which are not close, recall perhaps  (a)“the exceeding high mountain”; (b)“cried with a loud voice; My name is Legion”; (c)“Art thou come hither to destroy us?” (d)“Death and Hell shall be cast into the Lake that burneth”; (e)“The Holy One”; (f)“was led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil”; (g)“And the Devils besought Him,” etc.; (h)“I know Thee Who Thou art”; (i)“All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me”; (j)“I will give Thee this authority”; (k)“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God”; (l)“It is written”; (m)“Get thee hence”; (n)“The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God”; (o)“Him only shalt thou serve”; (p)“Then the Devil leaveth Him”; “into the abyss.”
trines were not distinctly revealed at all, was as yet not affected by
the large addition to canonical Scripture made later? And first as
to immortality in itself considered.

Heaven and Hell were chiefly mental states, especially in the
earliest Avesta (Y. xxx. 4):

The two spirits came together at the first, and determined how life at the
last shall be ordered for the wicked (Hell), the worst life; for the holy the
best mind (Heaven).

Rewards and punishments are self-induced (Y. xxxi. 20):

And this, which is such a life as your own, O ye vile, your own deeds have
brought you (Y. xlvi. 11): Cursed by their souls and selves, their being's
nature, for ever in the Home of Lies their bodies rest.18

In Vendidad xix. 30, the soul is met on its arrival after death
at the Chinvat, or Judge's, Bridge by a female form accompanied
with dogs,19 and in Yasht xxii. we learn who this female was. It was
none other than the believer's conscience. The figure presents the
typical features of female attractiveness; she is beautiful, she is
noble, and in the flower of her youth. "What maiden art thou," he
asks her, "who art the most beautiful of maidens that ever I have
seen?" And she, who is his conscience, answers: "I am verily, O
youth, thy conscience, thy good thoughts, and words, and deeds, thy
very own." But he asks her, "Who hath desired thee hither with
his love, coming with thy majesty, thy goodness, and thy beauty,
triumphant and an enemy of grief?" And she answers: "Thou hast
loved me and desired me hither, O youth, even thy good thoughts,
and words, and deeds. For when thou sawest idol-worship....thou
didst desist, chanting the Gāthas, and sacrificing to the good waters
and to Ahura Mazda's fire, contenting the righteous saint who came
to thee from near and from afar. It is thus that thou hast made me,
who am lovely, still more lovely, and me who am beautiful hast thou
made still more beautiful, and thou hast made me who am beatified
still more beatified....through thy good thoughts, and words, and
deeds." (Here we may observe, in passing, the same element of
pleased surprise which we have in the sublimer Matthew xxv. 37;
the soul is incredulous: "When saw we Thee a hungered and fed
Thee?" and the answer is, "Thou hast fed and lodged Me," so here
there is surprise; "who hath desired thee hither with his love?" And
the answer is, "Thou hast; for thou didst content20 the righteous man
coming from near and from afar.") As the soul proceeds further,

18 The earlier Avesta. "Sadducees" were named from one Zadok, but the
name means "just."

19 Related to Cerberus.

20 The later Zoroastrianism explains "lodged and entertained."
it passes the Judge's Bridge and comes before the golden throne, where the Good Mind is seated (Vend. xix. 31). He rises to meet the soul, and welcomes it: "When didst thou come hither from that perishable world to this imperishable world?" and the saints who have passed away before him ask him the same: "How long was thy salvation?" Then said Ahura Mazda, "Ask him not what thou askest of that cruel way which is the dividing of the soul and body" (Yasht xxii.). And the first step, as he advances, places him in the entrance of the threefold Heaven, which is again the Good Thought, and the second step places him in the Good Word, and the third in the Good Deed.21 Then the soul passes on contented to the souls of the saints, to the golden throne of Ahura Mazda, and to the golden thrones of the Bountiful Immortals, and to the abode of Sublimity (or Song), even to the home of Ahura Mazda and the other Immortals22 (Vend. xix. 33). A corresponding evil spirit awaits the wicked; a hideous female is his conscience, the wicked and Aŋgra Mainyu mock him, and he rushes at last into the Hell of evil thoughts, and words, and deeds.

Few scientific theologians will deny that the doctrine of immortality was scarcely mooted before the later Isaiah, that is, before the Captivity, while the Zoroastrian scriptures are one mass of spiritualism, referring all results to the heavenly or infernal worlds. As to the unending futurity of the Zoroastrian heaven, if such a point needs proof, recall the epithets which describe its features; "for ever and ever" of itself suffices.23 And this phrase, together with many similar ones, renders it incontrovertible that Ameretatâ—Immortality—as one of the six personified attributes of the Deity, did not represent long life alone, but never-dying life.

Corporeal resurrection seems to be placed after the reception of souls into Heaven as if they returned later to a purified earth.

As to this doctrine,—which is, properly speaking, as of course, not identical with that of "immortality," but which may be fairly said to be closely associated with it,—aside from the constant implication of it throughout, we have in Fragment IV, "Let Aŋgra Mainyu, the evil spirit, be hid beneath the earth, let the Daēvas disappear, let the dead arise, and let bodily life be sustained in these now lifeless bodies."24 And, in Yasht xix. 83, we have resurrection

21 A perhaps misunderstood echo of this is Rev. xxii. 11: He that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still; and he that is filthy let him be filthy still.

22 About B. C. 300.

23 Discussed by me elsewhere.

24 These passages may be placed within three centuries B. C.; the date of the Gāthas alone is fixed at 700-900 B. C.
together with millennial perfections. "We sacrifice unto the Kingly Glory which shall cleave unto the victorious Saviour and His companions, when He shall make the world progress unto perfection, and when it shall be never dying, not decaying, never rotting, ever living, ever useful, having power to fulfil all wishes, when the dead shall arise, and immortal life shall come, when the settlements shall all be deathless." Contrast this with the earlier Scriptural passages, void as they are of any genuine statement of this essential dogma. Compare these then with statements which appear after the return from the Captivity, a captivity during which the tribes had come in contact with a great religion in which the passages cited describe a predominant tendency. What do we find in them? First, we have the jubilant hope expressed by the later Isaiah: "Let thy dead live, let my dead body arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the shades." And then the full statement in Daniel: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." And yet God's people, as we have seen above, had not fully accepted the meaning of this language even at the time of Christ. We draw the inference—the religion of the Jews was originally Sadduceic.

Such then are the historical literary facts,—uncontested for the most part, the great mass of them (see above), and also uncontestable; and this, whatsoever may be their possible, or impossible, exterior historical connection, or disconnection, with the Hebrew theology, or our own. The points deduced from them clearly show that they contain the very most essential elements of "our own religion" in its advanced, if still formative, condition, from the date of the Captivity or before the time of Christ, and after the Restoration from the Exile. Let us collect the points for our convenience from the copious citations made above. First of all there was $A(r)sha$ the Holy Law of Truth as to thought, word and deed, this being, however, rather a universal "persuasive principle" than a "doctrine." Next to this was God's Unity; then His Creationism of all Beings; then an Angelic Host, of both exalted and inferior Spirits; then His Sovereignty—Divine Omnipotence—which includes Omniscience; then His Benevolence—God's love—(His justice is included within the first); then His inspiring energy (compare the Holy Ghost)—with the result of Universal Weal, for the Righteous; then Deathlessness, which is God's Eternity and man's Immortality. A Judgment follows, both individual and general, which takes place—first in the judged man's soul, then in everlasting happiness in
various detail in Heaven, or upon a renewed and purified earth. A
Millennium of terrestrial Perfection ensues with a restoring Saviour
who is to be "Virgin born," and, perhaps a "Seventh Heaven" cor-
responding to the Seven Immortals. For the evil, a corresponding
Hell exists in equal grades, with the most pronounced Satan of all
literature. These are, as I need not repeat, the vital essentials of
our own religion as it existed in its earlier stages in the Exilic
period during and after the Captivity, and before Christ, being
conspicuously manifested in the orthodox Pharisaism, while these
elements existed in the Persian documents for unknown previous
ages; see the Veda everywhere. It can now be more plainly seen
why I used the expression "Our Own Religion in Ancient Persia."
Contrary, however, to many acute and able searchers, I hold that
the two forms of this same religion were originally each of separate
origin; see again above and below.—each being a regular sponta-
aneous and parallel development from unchanging universal laws,
proving the original Man-Unity, and strongly supporting the view
that it was impossible to prevent the origin and development of
similar ideas, entirely aside from all borrowing of them from one
nation to another. But while I hold that these parallel views arose
from "parallel development" having been caused by the disastrous
afflictions of the Captivity, I lay no illogical straw in the way of
those who hold to the view that the doctrines were, under God,
taught directly to the Jews by their Persian protectors. In fact I
would strenuously repeat, and with emphasis, what I wrote in 1894.
viz., the principle, that any, or all of the historical, doctrinal, or
hortative statements recorded in the Old or the New Testament
might, while fervently believed to be inspired by the Divine Power,
be yet freely traced, if the facts would allow of it, to other religious
systems for their mental initiative;—that the historical origin of
particular doctrines or ideas which are expressed in the Old or the
New Testament does not touch the question of their inspiration,
plenary or otherwise; that for instance as St. Paul freely discloses
his mental peculiarities, and (as to citations) quotes a poet of his
youth, so our Lord himself also reveals a mental constitution, and to
a certain degree expressed, as all others express them, the convictions
and enthusiasms which he has absorbed from earlier associations.
And still more than this, unless we are prepared to accede to a
docetic heresy, doubting the very reality of our Saviour's human
nature, every sentiment of veneration ought to induce us to trace,

25 Further citations on the contents of the Vedas will be given later in
another article by the author on "Veda and Avesta."
if it be possible to trace them, not only the fountainheads of His human convictions but the supplying rills of His expression. If we carefully study the genealogy of His body, with how much greater earnestness should we examine that of his mind! For it was His thoughts, humanly speaking, and sometimes His earlier ones, which not only constituted a part of His momentous history, but, of course, also actually determined His career. In the source of His thoughts, therefore, the great motives of His subsequent history are to be sought for. Recall, for instance, what I also have just alluded to above in the citations as to the recorded experiences of the Persian Saint; as, for instance, He was gathering up his resolves for such a mental scene as that described in the fourth chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel, in which he purposed to meet in one decisive encounter a spiritual power which, as He believed, was threatening His creation, if there had been anything memorable of a similar kind in the experiences of prophets of kindred religions, and if they were known to Him by the exercise of a supernatural insight it does not seem to me to be at all deniable that such preceding “temptations” (as He revolved them, with all that they signified) influenced Him. If He possessed that larger intellect which could see over the trivial paraphernalia of superstition, and look at the soul struggling in its sincerity for spiritual life, and for the spiritual lives of many who revered it, then if He were a man beyond the common measure, this must have moved Him. It would seem, therefore, to be a very pious act to search diligently for everything which Christ hallowed by His notice, and it would seem a very mistaken religious sentiment which would arrest one in such a course.

The most obvious place to search for the doctrines and opinions amid which our Lord grew up, has been, of course, the Jewish literature of His period, and of that which preceded His appearance. This has been examined to a considerable extent, and much of the greatest interest has been brought to light. The theologies of Egypt should be also examined as well as those of Greece and Rome. From India we have what seem a throng of rich analogies from the Buddhist Scriptures, but our highest authorities upon the subject are, or were, inclined to doubt the possibility of the historical later connection. There remains then this ancient Persian theology; and here, as we have seen, the later historical connection, amounts, at one stage of it at least, to historical identity,—it is as such, I believe, universally recognized. Cyrus took Babylon, say, about the year 539 B.C., and with it the Jewish slave colony, whose inhabi-

26 See the Talmud article by Dr. Deutsch. (Remains, 1874.)
tants continued to be Persian citizens till the Achaemenian power broke. Jeremiah, foreseeing this future invasion of the dominant and restless Medo-Persian, thundered his anathemas against his Semitic Babylonian oppressors in view of it; the “Kings of the Medes” were to avenge him, and in due course did so, and later sent the Jewish people back from their captivity, rebuilding the Holy City when it had become a “heap,” decreeing also the restoration of the Temple, the later Isaiah speaking in most astonishing terms of this restorer. The Book of Nehemiah discloses further scenes with Persian monarchs; section after section of the Bible dates from their reigns, while Magian priests, who were of the religion of Cyrus, came later to do honor to the Son of Mary, and one of the last words uttered by Christ upon the Cross was in the Persian tongue. The fact that Cyrus may have coquetted politically with the Babylonian priesthood, if it be a fact, is one which redounds somewhat to his credit and corroborates our argument. How much better that he should show some respect to the religion of his fallen enemies who now became fully acquiescent in their submission, than to crush them all wholesale with the usual slaughter. Were it even true that he was accurately depicted upon a stele as present at the worship of one of their chief deities, this would be but one proof the more of his considerate courtesy. He did not conquer to annihilate.

Whether the precise form of Mazda worship present on the Inscriptions was that of Zoroaster exactly or not is just at this point of our inquiries again a question which we need only glance at, as it is of little moment. It seems likely, indeed, that it was an especially original form of Mazda worship. But whether this were the fact or not, it must have possessed the main features which have been more or less preserved to us in the Zend Avesta. The word Mazda (strictly -dah), meaning “the Great Creator,” or “the Great Wise One,” is an especially well-adapted name for God, much more so than our own name for Him, being the name used for Him by that great Mazda worshiper, who, under the providence of God, determined the entire later history of the Jewish people. For had Cyrus, the Mazda worshiper, not brought the people back, the later prophets

27 The word “Magian” is with little doubt Avestic; the Maga was “the Holy Cause,” occurring repeatedly in the Gāthas; the changed suffix ṭ in Maga is of no importance, and the o of the Avestic moghu results from epanthema, cf. vohu for vahu, Sk. vasu; gh also = Gāthic g. Maga, as being pre-Gāthic by centuries, may have been carried down to Akkad by Turanians, cf. Y. 46, 12.

28 Luke xxiii. 43.

might not have spoken at Jerusalem, nor might Jesus have been born at Bethlehem, nor taught in the region. Indeed, the influence of the Great Restorer and his successors over the city was so positive that in the opinion of even popular religious writers Jerusalem was for a considerable period after the Return in many respects “a Persian city.” Many indeed have been the erroneous statements made by well-meaning tyros in Christian pulpits, as by myself too, once among them, with regard to the “impossibility” of all later connections between our great doctrines and analogous truths once held by nations foreign to the Jews who may yet have been brought into connection with them; and the fervent novice may well be pardoned if, in his first sincere efforts, he is too decided in a negative sense; but in men of maturer years let us hope for better things. For surely—to be sentimental, if only for a moment,—let us recall that the first object of religion next after the suppression of unlawful violence or appropriation should be the suppression of inaccurate statement, and to deny without any effort to become an expert what every expert knows to be the truth is, so it seems to me, to commit a crime in the name of Christianity for which Christianity will be one day called upon to account. It is therefore to help the Church against well-furnished gainsayers, and to re-establish her character for conscientious investigation, that Christian specialists in Orientalism have given the best years of their life,—to save the endeared religion which once inculcated every honorable principle from continuing herself to be the victim if not the agent of that most sinister of equivocations known as “pious fraud.”

My procedure is thus, I trust, now clear to all. The connection between Persia and Israel has been found to approach identity, as was only to be expected, from the fact that the two nationalities, if indeed the Jewish could really be called a nationality, were parts of the same empire for close on, or more than two (?) hundred years. And this being a fact unquestioned a posteriori, so the doctrinal analogies were as probable a priori as presuppositions, as they have been proved to be historically actual through our Oriental research. And with this, note the unparalleled expressions of theological sympathy. If we have found a pictorial sculpture representing Cyrus as worshiping in a Babylonian temple, a sort of political manifesto,—and, if we regard this as showing clearly a strong leaning toward the Babylonian Baal-worship, what shall we say as to the astonishing language of this same Cyrus, with that of Darius, and Artaxerxes

80 To emphasize such a point should be hardly our secondary object throughout such discussions as the present.
recorded in our Bibles, re-reading also what the Jewish prophets and historians have left written in response to it.

I hardly think that anything of their kind approaches these extended statements in the history of literature, as an expression of religious identity of feeling between two peoples similarly situated, or even more closely connected, certainly not at their date; that is, not, when all the other circumstances are held in view. Recollect that the Bible is beyond all other documents regarded as hyper-sacrosanct, and by nearly, or quite one-third of the human race,—even skeptics as to its detail acknowledging harmoniously its un-speakable influence,—then re-read attentively what the Bible records of its own great Jewish-Persian emperors.

This then is our view: During the shock and sorrows of the Captivity God’s people turned their thoughts from earth to Heaven,—just as we often do,—for the eventualities had proved that the temporal rewards so persistently promised to the righteous, had in some way, and for the time being, proved illusory. Then came their Deliverer with his thronging hosts, and with a change in their immediate circumstances which might well have reassured them that the Psalmist had indeed “never seen the righteous forsaken”; see above. And also that very same enormous event, which might well have convinced them that this world should at last show them better times as a reward for their fidelity, actually itself brought with it the same settled and worked-out doctrine of another life which the Jews had just acquired, but which had been believed in from their birth by those same large masses recruited from all parts of the Iranian empire, while priests of this Immortality accompanied every battalion, or made many groups of them for each corps, with an illustrious King of Kings at the head of all of them, who never dictated a word for an Inscription without attributing every victory to the “Life-Spirit-Lord, the Great Creator, Auramazda”; see Bahistūn and elsewhere. What wonder then, as I have already implied, that the Jews listened to the unconscious expressions of their new-formed friends, whose fire altars at times glowed at evening everywhere, and that, listening, they began the more to vye with these Persian fellow-believers in the hopes and fears of what was now the common Faith,—and so the doctrine grew. While the more conservative party amidst the Jews, that of the Zadokians, (the Saddu-ccees) clung with aristocratic tenacity to the old simplicity, and opposed this growing Zoroastrianism of the masses;—yet the new views, adapted as they were to appeal to the feelings of an afflicted humanity, prevailed, having first concentrated themselves in a sect
which termed itself, or which was termed by its indignant predecessors *Pharisees, Farsees, Persians,*\(^{31}\) hardly "separatists," "dividers."\(^{32}\) So that, at the time of Christ, it could be said, and upon His own authority, that "the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's seat," and it was from Him "who lived a Pharisee" that our own future hopes were chiefly handed down to us.

To sum up the whole matter in a single word, I would say, as if speaking from the orthodox point of view, that while the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are unrivalled in their majesty and fervor, constituting perhaps the most impressive objects of their kind known to the human mind, and fully entitled to be described as "inspired," yet the greatly more widely-extended, and as to certain particulars, long prior religion of the Mazda worshipers was supremely useful in giving point and body to many loose conceptions among the Jewish religious teachers, and doubtless also in introducing many good ideas which were entirely new, while as to the doctrines of immortality and resurrection, the most important of all, it certainly assisted and confirmed, though it did not positively originate belief.

But the greatest and by far the noblest service which it rendered was the quasi-origination and propagation of the doctrine that "virtue is chiefly its own reward," even in the great religious reckoning, and "vice its own punishment."

The time is now past, let us hope for ever, when the Christian apologist recoiled from recognizing the very important services which have been rendered to the holy faith by peoples foreign to the Jews. And surely no one will look askance at the happy fact that not only a small nation to the west of the Jordan held to those great truths on which rest our hopes beyond the grave, but that the teeming millions of Persia also held to them in successive generations *long earlier than the prophets.* These considerations entitle their ancient lore to our veneration and investigation. It now lies open not merely to the laborious specialist but to the intelligent student, and it is to be hoped that from the mass of human energy devoted to so much that is trivial, some effort may be spared for the study of this rich and influential monument of the past which holds such a conspicuous place among the records of our own religious history.

\(^{31}\) The modern name of the original Province of Persia is *Farsistan.*

\(^{32}\) It is bad etymology to trace words to an abstract.