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THE PARSEE RELIGION.

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READ BEFORE THE LIVERPOOL LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,
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LIKE a soldier suddenly called to perform his movements before a body of veteran officers, after having given up his military habits for several years, I feel embarrassed and awkward on being required to read a paper before a learned society such as this, after having been, for the past six years, unused to the habits of thought, reading, and composition, necessary for such a task. I have endeavoured, however, to do what I could, under the circumstances, and as far as my limited leisure permitted.

I will first give some account of the present state of the knowledge of the Parsees about their religion. The priests are a separate caste, and the priesthood is thus hereditary. As a body, the priests are not only ignorant of the duties and objects of their own profession, but are entirely uneducated, except that they are able to read and write, and that, also, often very imperfectly. To read and write they must learn, as they have to prepare by rote a large number of prayers and recitations, which, in the performance of their usual avocations, they are required to recite. Their work chiefly consists of reciting certain prescribed prayers on various religious occasions; to go to the fire-temple or sea-shore, and say a prayer for anybody that chooses to give a halfpenny; and to depend upon charities distributed on various joyous or mournful occasions. They do not understand a single word of these prayers or recitations, which are all in the old Zend language.

From the state of their education and knowledge, they are quite unfit for the pulpit; nor do they aspire to it, or seem to

have any notion of the necessity of such teaching. The Parsees have, therefore, no pulpit at present. Far from being the teachers of the true doctrines and duties of their religion, the priests are generally the most bigoted and superstitious, and exercise much injurious influence over the women especially, who, until lately, received no education at all.

The priests have, however, now begun to feel their degraded position. Many of them, if they can do so, bring up their sons in any other profession but their own. There are, perhaps, a dozen, among the whole body of professional priests, who lay claim to a knowledge of the Zend Avestá, the religious books of the Parsees; but the only respect in which they are superior to their brethren is, that they have learnt the meanings of words of the books as they are taught, without knowing the language, either philologically or grammatically. They have been taught certain meanings for certain words, and they stick to them as a matter of course. I doubt much whether any one of them has a clear notion of what grammar is, and as to a liberal education, they never had it, and do not, in consequence, understand the necessity of it.

Such being the state of knowledge of the religious guides and teachers among the Parsees, it may be easily conceived what could be expected from a layman. The whole religious education of a Parsee's child consists in preparing by rote a certain number of prayers in Zend, without understanding a word of them; the knowledge of the doctrines of their religion being left to be picked up from casual conversation. Under these circumstances, a Parsee has not much opportunity of knowing what his creed really is; the translation, besides, of the Zend books, in the present vernacular of the Parsees, being of very recent date. But, unfortunately, this translation is a constant subject of dispute among the dozen would-be learned priests alluded to before. This shameful want of the means of religious education, and its slight extent among the Parsee children, have of late attracted the attention of the community, and efforts are being made to supply the deficiency.

In my ignorance of the Zend language, I cannot do more than depend upon this translation, though considered to be somewhat imperfect. But, for the purposes of a paper like this, the object of which is to give a general outline of the doctrines of the Parsee religion, I think these materials will suffice.

The traditional number of the books of the Zend Avestá is twenty-one, of which there are only three extant, and parts of two more, viz., the Yazashné, the Vandidád, and the Khordeh Avestá, and a part of the Visparad, and Vistásp Nusk.

There is a dialogue, in the vernacular, appended to the Khordeh Avestá (small Avestá), which, I think, gives a sufficiently accurate outline of the present belief of nearly the whole of the orthodox body. I do not know of a certainty who its author is. It has been composed more than a quarter of a century ago, when English ideas and education had not made much progress; and is, therefore, I think, the more valuable, as a faithful representation of the belief of the general mass.

The Khordeh Avestá is a collection of prayers addressed to God and several angels, and it is some of these prayers, the preparation of which by rote, forms the staple of the religious education of the Parsee child. At the end of this book is appended the dialogue, in the vernacular; and intelligent priests, masters, and parents, that could read, welcomed this aid, imperfect though it is, and a little irrelevant.

The subject of the dialogue is thus described:—

“A few questions and answers to acquaint the children of the holy Zarthosti community with the subject of the Mazdashná religion (*i. e.*, of the worship of God). Dialogue between a Zarthosti master and pupil:—

Ques. Whom do we, of the Zarthosti community, believe in?

Ans. We believe in only one God, and do not believe in any besides him.

Ques. Who is that one God?

Ans. The God who created the heavens, the earth, the angels, the stars, the sun, the moon, the fire, the water, or all the four elements, and all things of the two worlds; that God

we believe in—Him we worship, Him we invoke, and Him we adore.

Ques. Do we not believe in any other God?

Ans. Whoever believes in any other God but this is an infidel, and shall suffer the punishment of hell.

Ques. What is the form of our God?

Ans. Our God has neither face nor form, colour nor shape, nor fixed place. There is no other like Him; he is Himself singly such a glory that we cannot praise or describe Him; nor our mind comprehend Him.

Ques. Is there any such thing that God even cannot create?

Ans. Yes; there is one thing which God himself even cannot create.

Ques. What that thing is, must be explained to me.

Ans. God is the creator of all things, but if he wish to create another like Himself, he cannot do it. God cannot create another like Himself.

Ques. How many names are there for God?

Ans. It is said there are one thousand and one names; but of these one hundred and one are extant.

Ques. Why are there so many names of God?

Ans. God's names, expressive of his nature, are two, "Yazdan" (omnipotence), and "Páuk" (holy). He is also named "Hormuzd" (the highest of spirits), "Dádár" (the distributor of justice), "Purvurdegár" (provider), "Purvurtar" (protector), by which names we praise him. There are many other names, also, descriptive of his good doings.

Ques. What is our religion?

Ans. Our religion is, "Worship of God."

Ques. Whence did we receive our religion?

Ans. God's true prophet—the true Zurthost [Zoroaster] Asphantamán Anoshirwán—brought the religion for us from God.

Ques. Where should I turn my face when worshipping the holy Hormuzd?

Ans. We should worship the holy, just Hormuzd with our

face towards some of his creations of light, and glory, and brightness.

Ques. Which are those things?

Ans. Such as the sun, the moon, the stars, the fire, water, and other such things of glory. To such things we turn our face, and consider them our "kibleh" (literally, the thing opposite), because God has bestowed upon them a small spark of his pure glory, and they are, therefore, more exalted in the creation, and fit to be our "kibleh" (representing this power and glory).

Ques. Who was this true prophet, the true Zurthost?

Ans. The son of Porospé, who was the son of Pétéraspé, was the excellent Zurthost Ashphantamán Anoshirwane—chief of the wise, and the king of the learned—the worshipper of God. Him did God exalt over all mankind, admitted to his own presence; and by him did God send us his good Mazdashná religion. *He* has been our prophet.

Ques. Have we had any other prophet after Zurthost?

Ans. No; we should remain attached with sincere faith to the religion brought by him.

Ques. Among the creation of Hormuzd in this world, which is the most exalted, and which the lowest?

Ans. The great prophet is the most exalted, and that prophet is the excellent Zurthost—none is higher than he; the height of dignity culminates in him, because he is the most beloved and honoured of God. The servant of all is iron.

Ques. What religion has our prophet brought us from God?

Ans. The disciples of our prophet have recorded in several books that religion. Many of these books were destroyed during the Alexandrian conquest, the remainder of the books were preserved with great care and respect by the Sassanian Kings. Of these again the greater portion were destroyed at the Mahomedan conquest by Khalif Omar, so that we have now very few books remaining, viz., the Vandidad, the Yazashné, the Visparad, the Khordeh Avestá, the Vistasp Nusk, and a few Pehlvi books. Resting our faith upon these few books, we now

remain devoted to our good Mazdiashná religion. We consider these books as heavenly books, because God sent the tidings of these books to us through the holy Zurthost.

Ques. What other books had we during the times of our kings?

Ans. Innumerable on all subjects of learning, but the enemies of our religion and sovereignty translated them in their own languages, and thus, after usurping our wisdom, destroyed our ancient Persian and Pehlvi works.

Ques. In what king's time did our prophet live?

Ans. When a just and God-worshipping king, by name Gushtàshp [Hystaspes] the son of Lohorósp reigned. When Jámásp was the sage, and Rustam the great warrior, did our prophet bring the Mazdiashná religion from God. He performed many miracles, and refuted the sages of Greece and India by such miracles; then the King Gushtáshp, the sage Jámásp, and the sages of Greece and India, believed in the religion brought by Zurthost and accepted it.

Ques. Are our prophet's miracles recorded any where?

Ans. Long accounts were recorded in our ancient books, of which we have some portions extant. The wise and learned Greeks of the time had also recorded the miracles and wisdom and truth of our prophet, but their ignorant successors have, from envy, altered and misrepresented those records. Notwithstanding this, there are still some evidences in the old Greek books.

Ques. What religion prevailed in Persia before the time of Zurthost?

Ans. The kings and the people were worshippers of God, but they had, like the Hindoos, images of the planets and idols in their temples. This religion is now designated the Poriódakesi, which appears to be a mistake, for it seems the religion of the Persians before Zurthost, was called Farsandaji Kós, and its followers Farsandaji Kisán, while it is those that adopted Zurthost's religion, were called the Poriodekesians.

Ques. Whose descendants are we?

Ans. Of Gayomars. By his progeny was Persia populated.

Ques. Was Gayomars the first man?

Ans. According to our religion he was so, but the wise men of our community, of the Chinese, the Hindoos, and several other nations, dispute the assertion, and say that there was human population on the earth before Gayomars.

Ques. What commands has God sent us through his prophet, the exalted Zurthost?

Ans. Many are those commands, but I give you the principal, which must always be remembered, and by which we must guide ourselves:—

To know God as one; to know the prophet, the exalted Zurthost, as his true prophet; to believe the religion and the Avestá brought by him, as true beyond all manner of doubt; to believe in the goodness of God; not to disobey any of the commands of the Mazdiashná religion; to avoid evil deeds; to exert for good deeds; to pray five times in the day; to believe in the reckoning and justice on the fourth morning after death; to hope for heaven and to fear hell; to consider doubtless the day of general destruction and resurrection; to remember always that God has done what he willed, and shall do what he wills; to face some luminous object while worshipping God.

Ques. If we commit any sin, will our prophet save us?

Ans. Never commit any sin under that faith, because our prophet, our guide to the right path, has distinctly commanded “you shall receive according to what you do.” Your deeds will determine your return in the other world. If you do virtuous and pious actions, your reward shall be heaven. If you sin and do wicked things, you shall be punished in hell. There is none save God that could save you from the consequences of your sins. If any one commit a sin under the belief that he shall be saved by somebody, both the deceiver as well as the deceived shall be damned to the day of “Rastá Khez,” (the day of the end of this world). * * *

Ques. Have any persons endeavoured to deceive the people by offering to intercede for them and to save them?

Ans. Some deceivers, with a view of acquiring exaltation in this world, have set themselves up as prophets, and going among the labouring and ignorant people, have persuaded them that, "if you commit sin, I shall intercede for you, I shall plead for you, I shall save you;" and thus deceive them, but the wise among those people know the deceit. They do not, however, dare to speak their mind for fear of the deluded multitude. Our prophet needed no exaltation here, he was exalted before God, and he told us the true command, "you shall receive according to your deeds." There is no saviour. In the other world you shall receive the return according to your actions.

* * * Your saviour is your deeds, and God himself. He is "Bakhsháyandé," (the pardoner), and "Bakhsháyazgar," (the giver). If you repent your sins and reform, and if the great judge consider you worthy of pardon, or would be merciful to you, He alone can and will save you.

Ques. Why are God and his prophet addressed in the rude singular "thou," instead of the polite plural "you?"

Ans. Because God is only *one*, and there is none like Him, and there is only *one* prophet.

Ques. What are those things by which man is blessed and benefitted?

Ans. To do virtuous deeds, to give in charity, to be kind, to be humble, to speak sweet words, to wish good to others, to have a clear heart, to acquire learning, to speak the truth, to suppress anger, to be patient and contented, to be friendly, to feel shame, to pay due respect to the old and young, to be pious, to respect our parents and teachers. All these are the friends of the good men and enemies of the bad men.

Ques. What are those things by which man is lost and degraded?

Ans. To tell untruths, to steal, to gamble, to look with wicked eye upon a woman, to commit treachery, to abuse, to be

angry, to wish ill to another, to be proud, to mock, to be idle, to slander, to be avaricious, to be disrespectful, to be shameless, to be hot-tempered, to take what is another's property, to be revengeful, unclean, obstinate, envious, to do harm to any man, to be superstitious, and do any other wicked and iniquitous action. These are all the friends of the wicked, and the enemies of the virtuous.

Such is the religious knowledge which the Parsees of more than a quarter of a century ago endeavoured to communicate to their children, or at least wished them to be taught, but I do not think that even this dialogue had been, till very lately, made a necessary part of the child's religious education. From one question quoted, not quite bearing upon the Parsee religion, but evidently meant for a reason against Christianity, it may have struck the reader that this dialogue was perhaps written under the pressure of the efforts of Christian missionaries to convert Parsee youths.

It remains, however, to be seen how far the doctrines and injunctions taught in this dialogue are authorised by the *Zend Avestá*, and what other doctrines are taught in them. The best thing I can do, I think, is to give here a series of extracts from the translation of one of these *Zend* books, sufficient to give a faithful general notion of the doctrines and morality of the Zoroastrian religion.

I have given extracts from only one of the books, as I have not had time enough at my disposal to study and extract from the others. This book, the *Yazashné*, is divided into seventy-two chapters called "*Há*." Of the first "*Há*," I give an abstract of almost the whole, as from it will be at once obtained some idea of the peculiarities of this religion :—

"The great judge, Hormuzd, full of glory and brightness, I invoke. The highest, the all-virtuous, the greatest, the strictest, the all-wise, of the purest nature, the holiest, lover of gladness, the invisible among the invisible, the increaser. He

created our soul—He moulded our body—He gave us existence. Him I invoke, and complete this Yazashné. Good conscience, high piety, love of excellence, high and perfect thought, Khordad and Amardad, the sheep and their souls, the fire of God, all other angels that reach us, the time of day, which is exalted by holiness, the early dawn—all these I remember or invoke in this Yazashné. The morning angels ‘Sawang’ and ‘Vis’ that are exalted by holiness, the angel ‘Meher,’ the lord and guardian of the forest of thousand ears and ten thousand eyes, gladness and comfort, the noon time of day and its angels, ‘Furádádáre’ (Fasé) and ‘Jand.’ The afternoon time of day and its angels, ‘Furádádáre Vir,’ and ‘Deh,’ exalted by holiness. The angel ‘Burzo,’ of the source of water, and the waters created by God. The night time of day and its angels, Furádádáre Visp,’ ‘Hujivas,’ and Zurthosturotum,’ the holy souls of men and women, the year that is spent in virtue and excellence, and the great and brave, created by God, beautiful and victorious. [I know not who is meant here—the translator puts in the angel ‘Behram.’] The time after midnight and its angels, ‘Berej,’ and ‘Numan,’ exalted by holiness, the angel ‘Surosh,’ the prayerful and victorious, and the promoter of things in the world, the just ‘Rashné,’ and ‘Astad,’ the bestower of freshness to creation—all these I invoke or remember, and complete this Yazashné. The months that are exalted by holiness, the six Ghumbars (the feasts of the seasons, which are all named). The year, exalted by holiness, the chiefs that are great by holiness, the three and thirty that surround the ‘Howanim,’ that are shown by Hormuzd and communicated by Zurthost. [I cannot tell what these are; the translators apply this description to the thirty-three implements of the ceremonial.] The holy, high, and immortal angel ‘Meher,’ the king of cities, the stars, the bright star ‘Tester,’ the moon, and the glorious sun, rider of the fleet horse, created by God, and the ocean of light—all these I invoke or remember, and complete this Yazashné.” All the angels of the thirty days of the

month, of the twelve months, of the five "Gathas" (the intercalary days), are each then invoked by their respective names, in their order.

"The glorious fire, created by God, the water that is created by God, all the vegetable creation of God, the holy and high angel 'Marespund,' whose justice is not of the wicked 'dews' (the evil spirits); such is also the justice of Zurthost—the long-enduring ways of the good Mazdashná religion (religion of the worship of the almighty)—these I remember or invoke, and complete this Yazashné.

"The holy mountain 'Hoshdostar,' created by God, all mountains created by God, the glory of the 'Kayanian' kings of Persia, created by God, the glory of the holy priests, created by God, the good angel 'Arsesung,' of great intelligence and wisdom, glorious, and bestower of benefits, created by God, the virtuous, the good, prayerful, and holy men, and the angel 'Daham,' of high thought—all these I invoke or remember, and complete this Yazashné.

"This place, and cities, and forests, and places of comfort, and water, and land, and trees, this whole earth, the sky, the holy wind, the stars, the moon, the sun, the God-created immeasurable light, all the holy angels, and all pure creation that is exalted by holiness, I remember or invoke, and complete this Yazashné.

"The *highest Lord*, who is all purity, the Lord of the days, of the months, of the year, of the Ghumbars, Him I invoke at this early dawn, and complete this Yazashné.

"The holy and powerful departed soul of the 'Poriodakesi,' my own soul, all the angels of both worlds, created by God, who are exalted by their holiness, the five times of prayer of the day and their angels—all I invoke or remember."

This first "Há" ends with the following prayer:—

"If I have by thought, word, or deed, intentionally or unintentionally, not kept thy commands, and thereby saddened thee, I invoke thee in this invocation, I pray to thee, and praise thee, and beseech thee for thy pardon."

A somewhat similar prayer is made to all the angels, and then follows:—I learn the Zurthosti religion, the worship of God, which is different from that of the dewes (the evil spirits), and is like the justice of God.

In the above extracts, I have not repeated the words “I invoke,” and “remember,” as often as they do actually occur in the original, and I have said “I invoke or remember,” by which I mean that all spiritual objects are invoked, and all material ones remembered.

The next five chapters are almost in the same strain and style, with several additions among the objects of invocation and remembrance, such as “light proceeding out of God himself, the soul of the prophet made an ‘Izad’ (angel) by God: God, the creator of all things, of light, the eternal, the omnipotent.”

In the course of these six chapters, as also in many others, God and the angels, and the various objects of creation, are addressed in various ways, such as “I love,” “I honor,” “I praise,” “I remember,” “Consider holy,” “I gladden,” “I invoke.”

“Há 7.—I accept, and am glad to do deeds of virtue. May I receive the reward for piety through your bounty. O great and wise Lord, the reward that is due to the religious, may I and mine receive; that reward may thou give from thy stores of bounty in such a way, in this and the spiritual world, that I may be exalted; and may I live for ever and ever under thy all-holy leadership and all-virtuous protection. I understand ‘honwar’ exalted, and truth-telling exalted. I praise the virtuous, the good, and the prayerful.”

“Há 8.—O God, in thy creation, those that are virtuous and follow thy commands, to them give thou water and fruit, and over all good things of this world, such as they desire, give them command. May the aspirations of the holy be fulfilled. May the wicked and the evil-doers be disappointed, and be swept away from the creation of the holy creator.

“I, that is Zurthost, of the Hormuzdi and Zurthosti religion, I rise up before all the others, of the streets, and of the towns,

and of the cities, and with highly good thoughts, highly good words, and highly good deeds, pray for freedom and ease to the community of holy men—to the wicked I pray for hardship and destruction.”

Há 9 contains a dialogue between Zurthost and the angel Hom. I do not know what the duties of this angel are. He is described by Zurthost, in his personal interview with him, as the destroyer of death, and created holy. In reply to Zurthost's inquiries he names four persons who prayed to him, and obtained the desire of their prayers, in having sons born to them of glorious names and deeds. The four persons are, 1st. Vingham, the father of the great Jamshed, during whose reign there was no death. 2nd. Athwian, the father of the great Faredoon, the vanquisher of Zohac, the tyrant and scourge of mankind. The 3rd, the warrior Sam, the father of the great hero, Kershasp, who destroyed the dragon, Sarronny, full of poison and destruction, and of the holy and pious Ornakhsh; and the 4th, Porosusp, the father of you holy and just Zurthost. Zurthost, then, praises him as exalted in the presence of the great God, by his virtuous and holy deeds, and prays to him to assist him in destroying all that is evil and wicked, and to bestow on him the power of doing good. “The first request I make, O Hom, the destroyer of death, is, may I attain the abode that is full of rest and glory, reserved for those that are holy. The second request I make of you, O Hom, the destroyer of death, is, may my present body enjoy good health. The third request I make, O Hom, the destroyer of death, is, may I live a long life. The fourth virtue I ask from you, O Hom, the destroyer of death, is, may I do like those, who, with courage and gladness, pursue, in this world, the path of righteousness, and destroy whatever is evil. The fifth virtue I ask, O Hom, the destroyer of death, is, may I do as those brave men, who, in battle, fight gloriously to destroy oppression and wickedness. The sixth virtue I ask from you, O Hom, the destroyer of death, is, may I know, beforehand, the intrigues of the enemies, the attack of the

thieves and the wolves ; teach me to thwart the evil designs of the wicked, the impious, and the deceiver.”

Hom is then described as the inspirer of courage and strength in the warrior and his steed ; the bestower of children and good husbands, the inspirer of wisdom to the student of learning, the disappointner of those rulers who wish destruction to the worshippers of God, the just, the distinguisher of good from evil, &c. “The king and the ‘durwesh’ of good conscience are equal before your eyes.”

The 10th and 11th Há are also in praise and description of the power and duties of Hom. In one place, the person praying, or Hom, I cannot tell which, says—“I am among those of virtuous thoughts, and not among those of wicked thoughts. I am among those of virtuous words, and not among those of wicked words. I am among those of virtuous deeds, and not among those of wicked deeds. I am among the obedient performers of God’s commands, and not among the disobedient. I am among the holy men, and not among the sinful.

12th Há, in which, as in several other places, is enjoined to protect and take care of the helpless sheep ; and after a general prayer for the good and against the wicked, ends thus—“I (the person praying) am of the religion of “the worship of God. I praise that religion, and declare it before the wicked, and praise it with good conscience, virtuous words, and virtuous deeds,” &c.

From the 12th to the 18th Há, are invocations and acknowledgements of the power and goodness of God, the greater and smaller angels, all things spiritual and material in creation, the thirty angels of the days of the month, &c., &c., as in the first seven Há’s.

From the 19th Há, I give more extracts : Zurthost asks God—“Tell me, O great invisible God, the creator and promoter of all creation, what were thy words before the existence of the heavens, before the waters, the world, the harmless sheep and other animals, before the trees, before the glorious fire,

created by thee, O Hormuzd, before the holy man, before the wicked spirits of dull reason, before all thy creations in the world, and before all the good and holy things created by thee—what were thy words?” God replies thus—“O supentaman Zurthost, those words were the parts of ‘Honwar’—those that I have told you; these were my words before the heavens, before the waters,” &c., &c. [The parts of the “Honwar” are explained by the translator to mean the twenty-one books or parts of the religion of God, promulgated by Zoroaster.] “O supentaman, whoever shall learn or repeat, without wearying, these parts of ‘Honwar,’ shall attain a hundred times greater superiority than by learning or repeating any other holy words. Him shall I pass over the ‘Chinwad Púl’ (the bridge in heaven over which the souls pass on the fourth morning after death), and admit him to the paradise of the holy that is full of glory. Whoever shall forget these holy words shall have his soul kept at a distance from the glorious paradise, at the same distance at which his soul shall be from his body, at a distance of the whole length of the world. Before I created the heavens, before the waters, &c., I created Khurshed (the sun) to give light to the universe. The great body of the holy men that have been, that are, and that will be, is so holy on account of obeying the commands of God, and having done other good deeds. Whoever shall study and meditate much upon the words of the ‘Honwar,’ and recollect them, and act according to them, after death shall attain to everlasting exaltation. All the days of the holy man are with thoughts of truth, words of truth, and deeds of truth. The high priest is he who is learned in the religion, and whose whole life is devoted to the promotion of righteousness in the world.

Há 20—Whoever tastes the pleasure of righteousness which is above all other pleasures, and walks in righteousness, shall be perfectly holy; he is virtuous, who walks in virtue among the holy men, and is true to them.

Há 24—The righteous are immortal.

Há 30—He who knows God through His works reaches him.

Há 31.—Zurthost asks—‘What is the reward to the holy and good from your bounty, and what is to become of the heathen and the wicked?’ Hormuzd replied—‘On the day of reckoning the wicked shall be destroyed (I am not quite sure of the word which I have translated destroyed); those that are hostile to the virtuous—to the harmless animals and men—those that tell untruths and do wicked actions, shall not receive the reward of life from Hormuzd. He only shall receive the reward, at the time of reckoning, who in his heart believes in God, and does not injure the promoters of holiness. To speak true words is true excellence. He who leads the holy man astray, there is bewailing and moaning for his soul after death, and for a long time, his soul has to live in the abode of darkness, to suffer great hardships—that dark abode which is for the wicked; your evil deeds shall draw you to it.’

Há 33—Zurthost says—‘The wicked are punished according to their thoughts, and words, and deeds. Better it is that they be introduced to a taste of learning. O Hormuzd! give them a desire for wisdom, that they may become the promoters of holiness. Give me, O Hormuzd, the two desires, to see and to self-question.’

Há 34—‘O Hormuzd, I worship thee, and in the heavens, also, I shall worship thee much. What, O Hormuzd, is thy will, what thy worship, and what is thy invocation?’ God replies—‘See and adorn holiness—learn my ways of holiness with a good conscience.’ ‘Tell me, O Hormuzd, the ways of good conscience.’ ‘To be glad with the religion of the good, with virtuous deeds, and with holiness.’

‘For holiness and purity, I ask the aid of Ardibeshest (angel of fire); for pure thoughts, I ask the aid of Bahaman, and I ask Sharever’s aid. I worship thee, O Hormuzd, above all others—I invoke thee above all others. All virtuous thoughts, all virtuous words, and all virtuous works flow from thee. O Hormuzd, I invoke thy pure nature, above all others.’

‘By my deeds may I (says Zurthost) exalt and honour thy

name. Under the protection of thy great wisdom have I acquired wisdom ; may I reach thee ; may I always be firm in thy friendship, and in holy deeds.’”

Há 44 contains a series of questions from Zurthost to God, among which occur the following, and in which the interrogation implies the reply—“If not thou :”—

“O wise Hormuzd, I ask of thee, what is the greatest exaltation in this world? How can any, who wishes benefit to himself, be holy, promote virtue, be the beloved of Hormuzd among the creations. O wise Hormuzd, I ask, who is the creator and promoter of holiness? How have the revolutions of the sun and moon been created? How does the moon wax and wane? O Hormuzd, give me the knowledge of these? O Hormuzd, I ask, who has made the earth stand unsupported? Who has created the waters and the trees? Who has created the air which flows of itself with such force? Who has created Bahaman? Who has created the receiving of light and of darkness? Who has created the times of the day, and the time of reckoning and judgment? Who has created the desire to be exalted through virtuous thoughts? Who has created the affection that the child receives from the father? O Hormuzd, I hope more from thee than from all others. Thou art the promoter of all goodness—the holy Hormuzd—Thou art the creator of all creation.

“Say to me—How may my soul attain to the gladness of both worlds? How may I impart purity to this religion that the virtuous and wise may learn greatness, and Bahaman (good conscience), and Ardebehest (high virtue), enter their hearts and abide there ; and, in the treasures of religion, exalt truth above all?

“What is the high religion? The reply—That which promotes my holiness and truth with good thought, word, and deed.

“O Hormuzd, give me thy wisdom and treasure that I may rejoice. O wise Hormuzd, whoever is holy questions himself ; whoever is wicked rejects this my religion that benefits. How

do the evil-disposed suffer annihilation, who do not subject themselves to self-reflection through Bahaman (good conscience)? When is the time of resurrection and final judgment? How can one deserve the reward of ten young horses and camels? Thou gavest to Khordad and Amardad this reward—this reward thou givest to the truth-speaker. Who are those sinners whose end is destruction? O Hormuzd, why may not these sinners become virtuous? Who will destroy them? The reward of the unholy, of the deceivers, of the outragers of justice, and the destroyers of the harmless animals, shall not be like that of the holy and virtuous.

Há 45.—To those that are conscientiously religious, and are promoters of religion, God is friend, brother, and father.

Há 46.—May all men and women of the world become my followers, and become acquainted with thy exalted religion, that I may rise in thy praise and in thy religion with prayer; and pray with a pure conscience.

Whoever accepts Zurthost's religion, praises it, and meditates on it, and studies it much, to him God gives a place in the other world, and in this world Bahaman (good conscience) gives him exaltation. Sinners of wicked thoughts, wicked words, and wicked deeds, of wicked doctrines, have to their souls presented bitter and detestable food in that well-known and permanent house of the wicked spirits.

Há 51.—I bless all good men and women that have been, that are, and that shall be. May they enjoy for ever and ever the invisible treasure, according to their desire. May water, and sheep, and vegetation, afford all comfort to them. May the inflictions of evil spirits and evil men never approach them.

Há 55.—O Mazdiashnans! desire to invoke the pure Surosh."

This Surosh is described to be the guardian and protecting angel of this world. He protects men from the evil spirits of hell, and of Mázandaran, from all that is evil, anger, and injustice, &c.

"Há 56.—I invoke the benefit and success of prayer: to

arrive at prayer is to arrive at a perfect conscience: the good seed of prayer is virtuous conscience, virtuous words, and virtuous deeds. May our prayers be efficacious in thwarting the inflictions of wicked spirits and wicked men. May I love prayer to Hormuzd, for that prayer is joy to me. I resort to prayer, I invoke prayer. Prayer to thee, O Hormuzd, is the giver of excellence, holiness, success, and high exaltation—it is the act of virtue. May the fold (of sheep) of the people of this street not diminish—may virtue not diminish—may the strength of the holy men not diminish—may not Hormuzd's justice diminish—may the good and exalted holy souls arrive here—may the virtue of the virtuous endure, and may wickedness vanish. In this house—may obedience prevail over disobedience, peace over quarrels, charity over hard-heartedness, good thoughts over bad thoughts, words of truth over words of lie, piety over sin.

Há 59.—I enjoin on earth, and in heaven to study the 'Honwar.' I enjoin holiness on earth and in heaven; that to pray much to Hormuzd is good, I enjoin in heaven and on earth. I enjoin the holy and the virtuous, and the prayerful, on earth and in heaven, to punish the evil spirit and his works, which are wicked and full of death—to punish the thief and the tyrant—punish the magicians of cruel intentions—punish the breakers of promise, and those that induce others to break their promise—to punish the harassers of good and holy men—to punish the evil thoughts, words, and deeds of the sinful."

Hás 62 to 64.—The angels of fire and water, and other angels are prayed to for several sorts of benefits and blessings; among others, a son who would help and protect him, and be a worthy man—who would not wish ill to anybody—who would not hurt anybody with any arms—who would not seek revenge, nor do harm.

I now arrange some of these extracts under different heads, as inferences derived from them. To avoid repetition, I shall not, under each head, give all the texts corroborative of it.

The Parsees believe in only one God, the creator of all.

“ 1st Há.—The great judge, Hormuzd, of glory and brightness, the highest, the all-virtuous, the greatest, strictest, the all-wise, of the purest nature, the holiest, lover of gladness—invisible to the invisible, the increaser—He created our soul—He moulded our body—He gave us existence. Há 34.—I worship thee, O Hormuzd, above all others, I invoke thee above all others, all virtuous thoughts, all virtuous words, and all virtuous works, flow from thee. O Hormuzd, I invoke thy pure nature above all others. By my deeds may I exalt and honour thy name. Under the protection of thy great wisdom have I acquired wisdom. May I reach thee. May I always be firm in thy friendship and in holy deeds.”

In Há 44 several extracts relate to this subject, especially God as the creator of all, ending in “Thou art the Creator of all Creation.”

In a prayer to Hormuzd (Hormuzd Yasht) occurs this—“My name is the Creator of all.”

Zurhost worships God not only in this world, but in the heavens also—Há 34, “O Hormuzd, I worship thee, and in the heavens, also, shall I worship thee much.”

The Parsees believe in the existence of angels, created by God, with powers to aid and benefit mankind in various ways, and to be the superintending spirits of the various parts of creation. The chief among these are the angels of good conscience (Bahaman), and of high piety (Ardebehsht); the former is also the protecting angel of the harmless animals, and the latter the angel of fire.

“ 1st Há.—I invoke good conscience, high piety, love of excellence, high and perfect thought, Khordad and Amardad; all other angels that reach us; the angel ‘Meher,’ the lord and guardian of the forest, of thousand ears and ten thousand eyes of gladness and of comfort.” Many other extracts can be made to deduce the above inference.

The various parts of creation are praised, or remembered, or considered holy, &c.

The first seven Há's contain many texts illustrative of this.

“The fire created by God, the time of day, the early dawn, the waters created by God, the year that is spent in holiness, the moon and the glorious sun, the ocean of light, the stars, the immeasurable light, the mountains and the trees, the forest, the sheep, and the harmless animals;” in short, nature, in her various parts and phenomena, is sometimes praised, sometimes remembered, sometimes described as holy.

As far as I have seen, there is no text in which any lifeless material object without intelligence or spirituality is invoked for assistance or benefit. Such prayers are always directed to intelligent spirits or angels, and to God above all, and as the Creator and Lord of all.

The Parsee believes in the immortality of the soul, and in rewards and punishments after death.

“Há 7.—O great and wise Lórd, the reward that is due to the religious, may I and mine receive; that reward mayst thou give from thy stores of bounty in such a way, in this and the spiritual world, that I may be exalted, and may I live for ever and ever under thy all-holy leadership, and all-virtuous protection.

“Há 8.—May the aspirations of the holy be fulfilled, may the wicked and evil-doers be disappointed, and be swept away from the creation of the holy creator. The righteous are immortal.”

Extracts from Há 31 bear on this point.

Notwithstanding the abhorrence of evil and evil-doers, the Parsee is made to wish that the wicked may be converted to virtue.

“Há 33.—The wicked are punished according to their thoughts, and words, and deeds. Better it be that they be introduced to a taste of learning. O Hormuzd, give them a desire for wisdom, that they may become promoters of holiness.

“Há 44.—O Hormuzd, why may not these sinners become virtuous?”

The Parsee rests his pardon on the mercy of God, and his reward on the bounty of God.

“ Há 1.—If I have by thought, word, or deed, intentionally or unintentionally, not kept thy commands, and thereby saddened thee, I invoke thee in this invocation, I pray to thee and praise thee, and beseech thee for thy pardon.

“ Há 7.—May I receive the reward for piety through your bounty.”

The morality of this religion is comprised in the three words, pure-thought, pure-word, and pure-deed ; and holiness, virtue, prayers, &c., are praised and exalted, and inculcated in many places.

“ Há 7.—I praise the virtuous, the good, and the prayerful.

Há 19.—The high priest is he who is learned in the religion, and whose whole life is devoted to the promotion of righteousness in the world.

Há 20.—Whoever tastes the pleasure of righteousness, which is above all other pleasures, and walks in righteousness, shall be perfectly holy. He is virtuous who walks in virtue among holy men, and is true to them.

Há 34.—What, O Hormuzd, is thy will, what thy worship, and what thy invocation? God replies—See and adorn holiness—learn my ways of holiness with a good conscience.—Tell me, O Hormuzd, the ways of good conscience.—To be glad with the religion of the good, with virtuous deeds, and with holiness.

Há 56.—May the virtue of the virtuous endure, and may wickedness vanish. In this house, may obedience prevail over disobedience, peace over quarrel, charity over hard-heartedness, good thoughts over bad thoughts, truth over words of lie, and piety over sin.

Há 59.—I enjoin on earth and in heaven to study the ‘Honwar.’ I enjoin holiness on earth and in heaven. That to pray much to Hormuzd is good, I enjoin in heaven and on earth. I enjoin the holy, and the virtuous, and the prayerful, on earth and in heaven, to punish the evil spirit and his works, which are wicked and full of death—to punish the thief and the tyrant—punish the magicians of cruel intentions—to punish the breakers of promise, and those that induce others to break their

promise—to punish the harassers of good and holy men—to punish the evil thoughts, words, and deeds of the sinful.”

Truth is particularly inculcated.

“ Há 7.—I understand truth-telling exalted.

Há 19.—All the days of the holy man are with thoughts of truth, words of truth, and deeds of truth.

Há 31.—To speak true words is true excellence.”

The Parsee believes in the necessity and efficacy of prayer.

“ Há 56.—I invoke the benefit and success of prayer. To arrive at prayer is to arrive at a perfect conscience; the good seed of prayer is virtuous conscience, virtuous words, and virtuous deeds. May our prayers be efficacious in thwarting the inflictions of the wicked spirits and wicked men. May I love prayer, O Hormuzd, for prayer is joy to me. I resort to prayer, and I invoke prayer. Prayer to thee, O Hormuzd, is the giver of excellence, holiness, success, and high exaltation; it is the act of virtue.

Há 59.—To pray much to Hormuzd is good, I enjoin in heaven and on earth.”

The study of the religion is considered most meritorious; and the holy word (the Zend Avestá) is said to have been created by God before all creation. Extracts from Há 19 all refer to this subject.

“ Há 44.—What is the high religion? That which promotes holiness and truth with good thought, word, and deed.”

Há 19 declares “Honwar” (the word of God) to have been created before the heavens, before the waters, before all creation; and that whoever studies them without wearying shall attain to the paradise of the holy, which is full of glory.

“ Há 59.—I enjoin on earth and in heaven to study the Honwar.”

The Parsee religion is for all, and not for any particular nation or people.

“ Há 46.—May all men and women of the world become my followers, and become acquainted with thy exalted religion. Whoever accepts Zurthost’s religion, praises it, and meditates

on it, and studies it much, to him God gives a place in the other world; and in this world Bahaman (good conscience) gives him exaltation."

The Parsee religion contains no propitiating of the devil. There is not a single reference to the thoughts, or words, or deeds of evil spirits, without wishing destruction or reformation to them.

"Há 1.—I learn the Zurthosti religion, the worship of God, which is different to that of the Dewes (the evil spirits), and is like the justice of God.

Há 8.—May the wicked and the evil-doers be disappointed, and be swept away from the creation of the holy Creator.

Há 12.—I am of the religion of the worship of God, I praise that religion and declare it before the wicked, and praise it with good conscience, and virtuous words, and virtuous deeds.

Há 44.—O Hormuzd, why may not these sinners become virtuous?

Há 33.—The wicked are punished according to their thoughts, words, and deeds. Better it be that they be introduced to a taste of learning. O Hormuzd, give them a desire for wisdom, that they may become promoters of holiness."

The Parsees are called by others, "Fire Worshipers," and they defend themselves by saying that they do not worship the fire, but regard it and other great natural phenomena and objects as emblems of the divine power. To me it appears that the imputation, on the one hand, is wrong, and the defence, on the other hand, a little overshot. Though the Parsee "remembers, praises, loves, or regards holy," whatever is beautiful, or wonderful, or harmless, or useful in nature, he never asks from an unintelligent material object, assistance or benefit; he is, therefore, no idolator, or worshipper of matter. On the other hand, when the Parsee addresses his prayers to Hormuzd, or God, he never thinks it at all necessary that he should turn his face to any particular object. He would say, and does say, his "Hormuzd yasht" (prayer to Hormuzd)

anywhere whatever without the slightest misgiving. Again, when he addresses the angel of water, or any other but that of fire, he does not stand before the fire. It is only when he addresses the angel of fire that he turns his face to the fire. In short, in addressing any particular angel, he turns his face to the object of that angel's guardianship as his emblem. But, in his prayers to Hormuzd, he recognises, or uses, or turns his face to no emblems whatever. Since fire only could be brought within the limits of a temple—any of the grand objects of nature (as the sea, the sun, &c.) being unavailable for this purpose—the temples naturally became the sanctuaries of fire alone, and hence has arisen the mistake of the Parsees being regarded as “Fire Worshippers.”

This much is clear in Há 30—“He who knows God through his works reaches him;” but I do not recollect meeting with any text enjoining a Parsee to turn his face to any particular object as an emblem of God; though he is directed, as in the above text, to rise from Nature to Nature's God.

I do not recollect meeting with a text, that “the Evil Spirit is cœval with God.” In one place Há 19, all wicked spirits are spoken of as having come into existence after a certain event—“Tell me, O great invisible God, the creator and promoter of all creation, what were thy words before the existence of the heavens, before the waters, * * before the wicked spirits of dull reason, before all creation,” &c. Whether these wicked spirits include or not the well-known Harimàn among them, I cannot tell. It is generally supposed that Hormuzd and Harimàn are good and evil principles. I do not think that I have met with any text that supports this theory, as far as Hormuzd is concerned, or in which the good principle is personified. Hormuzd is distinctly “The intelligent living Creator,” as far as I can gather, and not a mere personification of the principle of good—a Creator distinct from his creation, either material, moral, intellectual, or spiritual.

In the Yazashné, scarcely once even is Harimàn mentioned. Harimàn, not by this very name, but by the name of Angare

Meniús is mentioned in the Vandidad as having, to thwart Hormuzd's good works, produced several evils. This Angare Meniús is rendered in the Gujarati translation, Gana Minó, which, I think, means the "sinning angel," though I am not quite sure of it. I am not at present able to say more about the age, or nature, or meaning of Harimàn; but one thing is clear, that evil will have an end.

"Há 31.—On the day of reckoning all the wicked shall be annihilated."

At the end of the Yazashné is given a list of God's one hundred and one names. Whether all have their authority in the Avestá I cannot say. Among them occur the following—The Almighty, Omniscient, Omnipresent, the Lord of the Universe; without beginning and without end: the beginning of all—the end of all; the greatest without a like, without rival, &c.

The language of these one hundred and one names, as far as I can judge, from my limited knowledge of the modern Persian, is not Zend.

These extracts are, I think, sufficient to give a general idea of the character and doctrines of the Parsee religion; but it must be remembered that I am not well qualified to speak with any authority on the subject. I have received at third hand the extracts I have given. The original Zend is translated into Pehlvi, from the Gujarati translation of which I have given in English. This Gujarati translation is considered rather imperfect, and in several places it is so confused that I have omitted giving some more extracts, simply because they are ambiguous or unintelligible.

I have avoided giving any opinion on, or discussing any of the doctrines. I give the extracts as faithfully as my hurried reading has permitted, leaving it to the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Besides the Yazashné, from which the preceding extracts are given, there are only three or four other books considered by the Parsees as a portion of their original religious books.

But priestcraft acting upon ignorance has not failed to do its usual work, and has left a legacy of a few books which the Parsee has no reason to be thankful for. Many ceremonies and notions have thus been introduced, and the reformers of the day contend that all those ceremonies and notions that have no authority in the original Zend Avestá ought to be abolished and disavowed. Of course the old orthodox Parsees and the Priests do not like this at all.

When I read the Old Testament many years ago, I was very much struck with parts here and there that almost described the present belief and practices of the Parsees. I have not had time at present to go over the whole book again, but I just turned over its pages to select some of these passages.

I do not know whether the offering of sacrifices is an institution in the Parsee religion—it is not the present practice. Chapter XI of Leviticus concerning what beasts may, and what beasts may not be eaten, what fishes, what fowls, and what creeping things are unclean; the command to wash the clothes in touching the dead carcasses of unclean animals, to break the earthen vessel, and consider everything touched as defiled, &c., may be taken as a fair description of what the orthodox Parsees at present believe and observe. This belief being now rather traditional, I do not know whether it goes into the details of the unclean and clean animals, as in verses 13 to 22.

Chapter 12 on the purification of women after child-birth, with the exception of the circumcision, of the three-score and six days for the purification of blood on the birth of a daughter, (which is also 40 days among the Parsees,) and the offerings, is almost all applicable to the Parsees.

Chapter XV on the uncleanliness of men and women in their issues, and cleansing them, with the exception of being unclean until the even, and the offerings, is applicable to the Parsees, and is of present observance among them.

Chapter XVIII on unlawful marriages and lusts is observed by the Parsees; marriage among cousins is recommended, and the Parsees are entirely monogamists. I have an impression

that among the Parsees there is an ordinance by which a man of blemish is not allowed to become a ministering priest.

In the Book of Psalms there are passages which strike as similar to the extracts given before from the Yazashné.

At the commencement I gave some account of the present imperfect knowledge of the Parsees about their own religion, I do not however mean to blame them much for it. A handful of persecuted exiles living in a foreign land, surrounded for 1200 years by idolatry, and persecuted at times by religious fanaticism, it is rather a matter of surprise, as with the Jews, that the Parsees have preserved their national type and character, and their original worship. Though they have not altogether escaped contamination, and have adopted many superstitious ceremonies and notions of the Hindoos, they have always recoiled from degenerating to the worship of idols, and have tenaciously clung to the idea that they were worshippers of the invisible Hormuzd. Believing in the existence of Angels and their delegated power to assist and benefit man, the Parsee centres his prayers and his hopes above all, on Hormuzd, the Lord of the Spirits; his whole morality is comprised in three words—pure thought, pure words, and pure deeds; his reward depends upon his fulfilment of these injunctions, and his pardon on the will and mercy of God.

Mr. DADABHAI said that no member need feel any delicacy in putting any questions to him on the subject of the paper, for he would be very happy to answer them.

Dr. IHNE said he had brought with him a French work, by M. Ménant, containing an excellent digest of the Parsee Creed, which, according to it, was briefly as follows:—"There is one God, He is eternal, there was nothing before Him, and all things are by Him. The universe was *truly* created by Him, and is not an emanation from Him, but, since the creation, has been distinct from the Creator. Creation is composed of spirits and matter. Matter is inert, but spirits are capable of morality. The world of spirits is double. Hormuzd is chief of the spirits of good, for eternity. Ahrimán is chief of the spirits of evil, only for time which passes. Both were created by the Eternal, and will endure for the eternity which follows. Souls are all sisters from the beginning, deprived of the body at death, to find it again at the hour of resurrection, then never to be separated from it again—they

were eternally pre-existent. The guilty will be punished, the just rewarded—both by God. Punishment will only last as long as the principle of evil (Ahrimán) endures. The Zend authority is from God, and dogmatic. Hormuzd established religion for all mankind, and not for some only. It will be one day preferred by all mankind, and thus be universal both as to time and space.” This creed, it is to be observed, is derived from the sacred books, and not from the present belief of the Parsees.

The Rev. C. D. GINSBURG said that, having read a German translation of the Zend Avestá, it agreed with the summary Dr. Ihne had read. He remarked that some of their doctrines were also believed by the Jewish sect of Cabbalists. No other people (except the Jews) believed in the resurrection of the body. In the Zend Avestá it was affirmed that both the principles of good and evil were created by the Great Existence, and were not eternally pre-existent, and that every man has both these principles reflected in him.

Mr. DADABHAI said that the creed, as given by Ménant, is derivable from all the extracts he had read, with the exception of the question of the origin of Hormuzd and Ahrimán. That given by M. Ménant is the prevalent theory; but, as far as his reading of the Gujarati translation of the original Zend text went, he had not been able to confirm the story of the creation of Hormuzd and Ahrimán by Time without bounds (Zurwan Akarné), which implied that they were eternal only for *future* time; but he would not speak with confidence on this point.

Mr. CLARK observed that in Guizot's edition of *Gibbon's History*, the original principle is called *Time Without Bounds*, and existed from all eternity. The two created principles were both good at first, but Ahrimán became apostate. There were many analogies in the Zend books with the early books of the Bible; for example an institution is mentioned identical with that of tithes. The ancient Persian religion was one of forms and ceremonies, but that of Zoroaster rather one of morality.

Dr. COLLINGWOOD said: We are indebted to the well-known enlightenment and liberality which distinguish the Parsees in general, and my friend Mr. Dadabhai in an especial manner for the very interesting exposition we have heard of the received doctrines of their religion; and we are, moreover, freely invited to discuss the subject. Mr. Dadabhai stands before us not as a Parsee defending his faith, but simply as a member of this society giving an unvarnished account of what he finds in his sacred books, unencumbered by any theory of his own. But the Zend Avestá also contained much more of an apparently fabulous nature, upon which I would wish to make some remarks. There is a remarkable similarity traceable between all the religions existing before the Christian era, which, I believe, arises from the fact that all those religions, excepting the Jewish, were originally of a purely astronomical origin. Man is in all ages religious, and, as I formerly showed at some length before this society, the heavenly bodies received his first and earliest worship; and the religion of Zaratost was derived from the prevailing forms of worship. At a very early period the *origin of evil*, was a question which agitated mankind, Whence *good* comes, says one, we know—but whence is evil? It cannot come from heaven—for it is not

possible that the same being, whether good or bad, can be the author of both. Hence arose the necessity of supposing two principles always opposing one another. These principles were early associated with the physical phenomena. *Light* was good—*darkness* evil; *summer* was the distributor of benefits, which *winter* was always undoing and destroying. But it was the *Sun* which produced light, and covered the earth with verdure in summer, and his absence which bound it up in winter; and thus this luminary became early personified as the great principle of good, and his struggles and alternate mastery over, and conquest by, the evil principle, were symbolically described in the battles of the gods and giants—of Ouranos and Typhon, of Osiris and Typhon, of Hormuzd and Ahrimán. The very name of Hormuzd signified, according to the best authorities, *the great principle of light*; and the astronomical character of the early Persian fables may be illustrated by one incorporated in the Zend Avestá. Hormuzd made six deities, which represented virtues; whereupon, Ahrimán made six of a malevolent nature. Hormuzd raised himself three times higher than his wont, and decorated the heavens with stars, appointing Sirius sentinel over them. Again, Hormuzd created twenty-four gods, which (says the fable) he enclosed in an egg. Ahrimán did the same, and these broke the first egg, and thus good and evil became intermixed. Now, all this evidently relates to the constellations—the six good deities were symbolical of the six zodiacal signs, between the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, when the sun was in power. The six evil ones were, of course, the six winter signs. Hormuzd raising himself three times his height above the earth, meant his elevation above the spheres of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, which would bring him to the pure ether—the region of the stars. The twenty-four gods were the twenty-four northern constellations, six zodiacal and eighteen extra-zodiacal; for, before Hevelius formed constellations from the *stellæ informes* there were but eighteen constellations in either hemisphere. And the twenty-four gods of Ahrimán were, of course, the remaining twenty-four southern or winter constellations. The equinoxes showed the term of duration of power of these great opposing principles; and whether we regard the Persian statues of the bull (Taurus, the vernal equinox) being destroyed by the scorpion (Scorpio, the autumnal equinox), or the fable of Jupiter (the sun of summer) losing his thunderbolt (power, vigour) in winter, as related in the Dionysiac of Nonnus, the meaning is the same. The sun, indeed, was personified with different attributes, according to his position in the zodiac. Thus, the vernal sun was the beardless, youthful Apollo; the autumnal, the bearded, aged Æsculapius, son of Apollo, with a serpent twisted round his staff, or even round himself. This serpent was the great serpent of the heavens, which stretched its length beside the three autumnal constellations of Libra, Scorpio, and Sagittarius, and into whose folds the sun appeared to descend in autumn. Hence the explanation of the well-known mythical Hindoo figures of Vishnu, *conquered* (in autumn), enveloped in the folds of the serpent, and *triumphant* (in spring), with the serpent raised aloft in his arms. And thus we can understand the enigma uttered by the oracle of Apollo at Claros, in Ionia, which said “I am Jupiter Ammon in spring, and black Pluto in winter.”

Dr. IHNE said, the astronomical explanation might be very well applicable to the religion which prevailed before Zoroaster as it was to other ancient religions, but that introduced by him was entirely spiritual and moral—that he may have retained some of the institutions of the old faith, but the peculiar characteristic of the Zoroastrian faith was its spirituality and high morality, as must have been seen from the extracts read.

Dr. COLLINGWOOD replied that he by no means intended to imply that it was not so, and he was glad that Dr. Ihne had given him an opportunity of making himself better understood. The religion of Zoroaster was singularly refined and purified from the more ancient grossness.

The Rev. C. D. GINSBURG agreed with Dr. Collingwood in the astronomical nature of the ancient religions.

In answer to questions from various members, Mr. DADABHAI said the Parsees were at present, to some extent, fatalists; but this was one of the corruptions which had crept in through their intercourse with the Hindoos. They were monogamous; and their sacred books did not degrade woman below man, though it was only lately that their women had been allowed to mix in society. With regard to the *worship of fire*, which was brought against them, they regarded fire as the purest and best symbol of the Deity, and that one of His works which could be most conveniently isolated and circumscribed; hence, they had sacred fires in the temples, towards which they turned when addressing their prayers—not to it, but to the god of which it was the symbol. The injunction is to turn their face to anything that is glorious, as the sea, the sun, &c. Such is the explanation often given by the Parsees. I have given, however, in the body of the paper what appears to me to be the true state of the case. They would not abuse fire, nor extinguish it unnecessarily, nor use it in a contemptuous manner. Hence, the Parsees do not smoke. Their estimation of all other natural objects, such as water, trees, &c., being quite equal to that for fire, they would not do anything which they consider as abuse or defilement of them; also, they would never spit, nor throw any dirty thing upon them.

The PRESIDENT, in conclusion, said that the interesting paper and discussion they had heard more and more convinced him that God was not without witnesses in all countries and in all ages. He called upon the society to give an unanimous vote of thanks to Mr. Dadabhai, which was carried by acclamation.

