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1915.

568TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN THE SMALL HALL, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, ON MONDAY, APRIL 19TH, 1915, AT 4.30 P.M.

T. G. PINCHES, ESQ., LL.D., M.R.A.S., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read and confirmed.

The SECRETARY announced the election of Mr. John Lee and Mr. J. Norman Holmes as Associates of the Institute.

The CHAIRMAN introduced the Rev. James Hope Moulton, M.A., D.Lit., D.C.L., D.D., D.Theol., Greenwood Professor of Hellenistic Greek, and Indo-European Philology, Manchester University, and invited him to deliver his address on "The Zoroastrian Conception of a Future Life."

THE ZOROASTRIAN CONCEPTION OF A FUTURE LIFE. By the Rev. Professor JAMES HOPE MOULTON, D.Lit., D.C.L., D.D., D.Theol.

THE Parsees, the modern exponents of Zoroastrianism, are a small community, less than 100,000 in number, who are to-day mostly concentrated in Bombay and its neighbourhood. They found a refuge in India centuries ago, having been driven out of Persia, their own country, by the murderous hordes of invading Islam. The faith for which in Persia they had bravely endured a bloody persecution, to preserve which unsullied the faithful remnant of them were ready to leave their own land and go forth into the unknown, is almost as old as Judaism, and for loftiness and purity of doctrine towers high above all non-Christian religions with that same exception alone. It is, as its Founder left it, absolutely monotheistic, free from any unworthy views of God, earnest and practical, and untainted by asceticism; and if in later times it fell below its Founder's too lofty ideals, and became corrupted with ritualistic puerilities and a worship of saints and angels which seriously compromises monotheism, it may be doubted whether it goes beyond the corruptions of Christianity in many of the more superstitious corners of modern Europe. The Parsees to-day are the most enlightened and progressive community among the natives of India, charitable and public-spirited, and free from

all the ethical shortcomings which are chargeable upon Hinduism and Islam alike. They refuse to accept proselytes; and they do but little to cultivate intensively a faith which in its primitive purity might be made a real power for the uplifting of its people. They tend to religious indifference, and a great many of them know but little of their own heritage. Under the stimulus of Western interest in and study of their ancient faith, they are improving in this respect; but secularism of practice is a conspicuous peril among them, as it is in the nominally Christian communities of the West.

So much of introduction seems demanded, but I pass from it with relief, inasmuch as I can here only speak at second hand: I have never been in India, and have studied the early history of this great religion to the practical exclusion of its later developments. Before I pass to the special heading of this paper, I must add a few words of summary to explain my presuppositions. I do not set these down as objective facts in all cases, for the evidence has been very differently read. The arguments by which I support my own reading have been set forth, first summarily in a little book in the "Cambridge Manuals" series, *Early Religious Poetry of Persia*, and then with considerable elaboration in my Hibbert Lectures on *Early Zoroastrianism*. The latter work contains a translation of the primitive classics of Zoroastrianism, the *Gáthás* or Hymns of Zarathushtra, together with a few Greek texts which contain valuable information for our purpose. To this book I may perhaps refer any present who wish to know on what authority I make sundry statements which are necessarily dogmatic in form because of lack of time.

I shall keep to the original name of the prophet whom the Greeks and Romans called Zoroaster. Most people probably know the name Zarathushtra from the title of a notorious book by Nietzsche, who took this name in vain, as he took others that are holier. I need not inform you that Zarathushtra himself never sat for his portrait to Nietzsche, and that if you have read *Also sprach Zarathustra* you will find nothing in this paper to remind you of that rather fascinating but eminently mischievous book. The time of Zarathushtra's mission is much disputed. Parsee tradition dates him 660 to 583 B.C., but opinion seems to be strengthening in favour of an earlier time; and we shall probably be not far out if we conceive of him as dating back to the tenth century or so. He was possibly a native of Media, but his prophetic activity was much further east; and the seclusion of his labours in a region very far from

the beaten tracks of ancient civilisation is the best explanation of the practical absence of reliable traces of his teaching till a much later date than sundry theorists have assumed. His Hymns (Gathas) are very scanty in extent and extremely difficult of interpretation, but we must refer every problem of Zoroastrianism proper to their arbitrament. For the bulk of the Avesta, of which the Gathas are much the oldest part, presents us with a most obvious declension from Zarathushtra's teaching in every particular. This deviation comes in two well-marked stages. First, after some short prose pieces in the archaic dialect of the Gathas, comes the mass of the verse Avesta, the *Yashts* and the later *Yasna*. Here we have, in metre and in thought and style, what is closer than anything in the Avesta to the kindred hymns of the Rigveda, though the Gathas are in a dialect much nearer to the Sanskrit. The religion presumed here is virtually Vedic. The old polytheism professed by the united people, who (perhaps about the middle of the second millennium) divided into Indian and Iranian, has returned, now that the mighty force of the Prophet's personality has been withdrawn. During the fifth century (as I believe) a new force began to work with the coming of the Magi, a sacred tribe in Media, who had made a bold bid for political power during the reign of Cambyses, but were put down by the warrior Aryans under the great Darius. They seem to have set themselves to win spiritual power by way of compensation; and in a couple of generations, perhaps, they had made themselves the indispensable priests of a religion very different from their own. They adapted to it their peculiar ritual and priestcraft, developed its theology along new lines, and completed the canon of the Avesta by adding prose books containing ritual, cosmogony, and other elements which we cannot identify, since so small a part of the original Avesta has come down to us.

I have thought it necessary to describe in brief the stratification of Avestan religion and religious documents, because without this basis I cannot discuss the relation of Zoroastrian eschatology to other eschatologies which interest us more closely. I proceed after this preface to take up the specific doctrine mentioned in the title of this paper.

With one very notable exception, all the characteristic and valuable elements in Zoroastrian eschatology come from Zarathushtra himself, and are to be derived from his own Hymns. There is no doubt that he worked up inherited material, developed into doctrine what had been mere mythology, tacitly ignored what did not fit into his highly abstract and spiritual

system, and made much of every suggestion that carried possibilities of higher use. The recognition of this does not alter the claim of our great prophet to have been the creator of a majestic and highly ethical system whereby a future world should redress the uneven balance of the present world. I will reserve for a while my comments on the amazing fact that a Gentile prophet of so early a date should have soared so high into the mysteries and seen Truth so clearly.

I have said that Zarathushtra used traditional mythology. Not a few elements in the machinery of his doctrine of the Hereafter can be recognised as inherited myth, partly by parallels known from kindred systems, and partly by the patent fact that they are picturesque excrescences upon the system, never logically worked out, and only retained so far as they can be used to illustrate and enforce ideas wholly independent of them. The eschatology which Zarathushtra inherited was almost entirely mythical in its basis. The religion of the Aryans—I use the word in its strict sense, of the tribes which divided into Iranians and Sanskrit-speaking Indians—was mostly a worship of nature powers; and its Hereafter was built up of myths in which the daily miracle of the new-risen Daystar played a large part. Zarathushtra's basis was wholly ethical. The Problem of Evil was central in all his thought: it was forced upon him by personal experience, during his sufferings at the hands of brutal nomads who raided the cattle and took the lives of his peaceful agriculturists. His was the problem of the 73rd Psalm, the problem with which all Europe is wrestling in these days of war: Why is brute force allowed so often to triumph over justice? Why is "Right for ever on the scaffold, Wrong for ever on the throne"? Those who fairly face that question must either sacrifice Theism—to which a good and a just God is essential—or take refuge in a Theodicy. Zarathushtra believed so firmly and passionately in God that he caught the vision of a world "in which dwelleth Righteousness," enthroned for evermore.

To understand Zarathushtra's Hereafter, therefore, we must understand his doctrine of Good and Evil. His name for God, which had been most naturally assumed to be of his own coining—it is remarkably characteristic of him—has now been proved centuries older than his time. *Ahura*, "Lord," the Vedic *Asura*, was still in the Gathas the title of spiritual beings, abstractions who are really part of the hypostasis of God. To this was added the attribute *Mazdāh*, "Wise"; and in Western Iran, upon the old Persian inscriptions of Darius and his successors, the com-

bination is fused into one word, *Auramazda*, the *Ormazd* of later days and *Oromazdes* of the Greeks. The "Wise Lord" was for Zarathushtra Creator of all things, beneficent, all-knowing. The massy heavens are His robe, and infinite space His dwelling. In the beginning we read,

"The two primeval Spirits, who revealed themselves in vision as Twins, are the Better and the Bad in thought and word and action. And between these two the wise once chose aright, the foolish not so."*

The two spirits are expressly called *Twins*, but the term is not developed: it was later Mazdeism that found a parent in "Endless Time." Nor are we told what was the relation of the "Better Spirit" to Ahura Mazdâh. Strict logic should equate them; but whatever the later writings of Parseeism may do, the Gathas never suggest any such equality between Ahura Mazdâh and the Evil Spirit as the name *Twins* suggests. Are we to say that the whole verse is a detached philosopheme about Good and Evil and how they are differentiated, the one the simple negation of the other, a yes and a no that are linked like twins? This would release us from the necessity of bringing Mazdâh into express relation with the statement which quite impersonally sets forth the genesis of evil. Such a consideration gains weight from the generally unobserved fact that Zarathushtra never *names* the Evil Spirit. A casual epithet, "enemy," is once applied to him, and this is taken up and turned into a proper name in the Later Avesta, where *Angra Mainyu*, "Enemy Spirit," crystallises into one word, like *Auramazda*, and gives us the ultimate *Ahriman*, the Greek *Areimanios*. But as far as the Gathas go his name might have been *Aka Mainyu*, "Bad Spirit," for that does occur twice! In the Gathas Evil is far more often called *Druj*, "Falsehood"; but there is less personification than we find in John Bunyan's thumbnail sketches of a virtue or a vice. Abstraction was of the essence of Zarathushtra's processes of thought.

In this paper I am not concerned with delineating Good and Evil in themselves, but with describing their present relation and future destiny. Parseeism is generally credited with being "dualistic." If we confine the epithet to the system of the Magi, with its mechanically balanced antitheses of white and black, I have no objection. But in the Gathas I can see no

* *Yasna* 30³. (I quote the Gathas from my own version in my Hibbert Lectures.)

more dualism than in the New Testament. Evil begins with the deliberate choice of a free agent, who thereby constitutes himself the enemy of the Good Spirit: he is the complete opposite of him in everything. I may quote the stanza where the epithet "enemy" is used:—

I will speak of the Spirits twain at the first beginning of the world, of whom the holier thus spake to the enemy:
Neither thought nor teachings nor wills nor beliefs nor words nor deeds nor selves nor souls of us twain agree.*

The fight between the two Powers ranges over the whole field of thought, word and action, and never ceases. But Zarathushtra never betrays an instant's questioning as to the result. He wistfully prays, in the hour of defeat and oppression, that he may have some token of God's favour in this life:—

Shall I indeed earn that reward, even ten mares with a stallion and a camel, which was promised unto me, O Mazda, as well as through thee the future gift of Salvation and Immortality? †

Over and over again we hear the ringing note of certainty as to the ultimate triumph of the good cause and the ruin of all who embrace the evil, however confidently they may shake their mailed fist here. There is no sort of equality between the two Powers. As a merely speculative point, we might have to admit that Mazda has his omnipotence limited during the present æon. Zarathushtra might have answered man Friday's question, "Why God not kill debbil?" by saying that He *cannot*, till the hour comes. Christianity says rather that He *will* not, since Evil is not to be destroyed by force, but by love. Both agree in declaring that He will destroy it at the set time. "In vain doth Satan rage his hour": if he does not know that he fights vainly, it is only because ignorance is one of his attributes, as the antithesis of the Wise Lord. This, however, is a touch characteristic of the Magian dualism, which is so much concerned to make the attributes of Ahriman exactly balance those of Ormazd, that it has to enfeeble the Evil Spirit lest he should usurp faculties of Ormazd. It is Magianism also which fixes an exact term for the strife. The conflict is a gigantic game of chess, with a black piece equal and opposite to every white one. And the formula is, as Mrs. Maunder

* *Yasna* 45².

† *Yasna* 44¹⁸.

excellently put it, "White to play, and mate in so many millennia." Zarathushtra is not interested in such precision. He takes Evil very seriously indeed, and finds it anything but an "ineffectual angel" of darkness, to be rendered impotent by words of a Gatha muttered as a spell, and by the killing of frogs and ants. The weapons of his warfare are prayer and pure thought, words of truth, and the simple husbandman's industry. Nor does he think of millennia: he clings to the hope that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and he will see it. Zarathushtra accordingly began where the Apostles began ten centuries later. It is of the nature of enthusiasm to see a distant landscape very near and clear; and it is a condition of humanity, if it sees the future at all, to see it foreshortened, the far away mountain peak and the near hill melting into one outline. We have realised this especially in the recent keen discussion on the eschatology of the New Testament. But there is a suggestive contrast between the paths of the two religions when the flight of time dimmed the brightness of the Advent Hope. Zarathushtra left no successors who could catch up and wear his mantle. His followers called him Lord! Lord! and gave him worship which would have horrified him unspeakably; but they could not do the things he bade them, for these were too simple and too high for them. When the promise of the End was deferred, and all things continued as they were from the beginning of the Creation, the Magi devised an elaborate system of world-ages, which fix the Renovation for the year A.D. 2398. We need not laugh at them: they were wiser than some prophets of our own, many of whose dates for the End have come and gone already. But we may compare instructively the very different course taken by Christianity when "the fathers fell asleep," and still the Promise of the Advent was delayed. The very delay taught new lessons, and the Church took up new conceptions of work to be done. It was one example among many of the fact that Iran had but a single isolated Prophet, while Israel and Christianity had a "goodly fellowship" in bright succession.

It is time to describe more in detail the "Great Consummation" as it revealed itself to Zarathushtra. The destiny of individuals comes later: it was indeed for him only an appendage of the universal event. As in the New Testament, but still more conspicuously, the Day comes with Fire. Fire is throughout the Parsee system the special symbol of God's holiness. Its particular form was that of a great flood of molten metal, let loose upon the universe. The righteous, as

later fancy put it, would pass through the flood as through warm milk, but the wicked would be burnt up. The Evil Spirit and his hosts would be destroyed, and his realm purged. The figure is an example of the use of mythology, of which I spoke just now. The fire was an unmistakable survival from Aryan antiquity, and Zarathushtra's use of it is characteristically incomplete; the machinery of individual judgment, as we shall see, is altogether inconsistent with it. But this figure and that alike illustrated the thought Zarathushtra meant to drive home; and he cared little enough whether the figures were congruous with one another. What mattered for him was that men should be induced to fight manfully on the side of Asha, the Right, in confidence that the end of the campaign would be the eternal victory of God over evil of every kind.

The human agents of the "Renovation" are called *Saoshyantō*, "they who will deliver"; and Zarathushtra unmistakably means himself and his immediate helpers, King Vishtâspa and the noble brothers Frashaoshtra and Jâmâspa. As I said just now, the consummation was expected within the Prophet's lifetime. When that generation passed away, the term had to change its meaning; and the Saoshyants became a succession of three miraculously born sons of Zarathushtra, to appear at intervals of a thousand years, the last of whom was to usher in the End.

At this point we necessarily pass from the universal to the individual. What was to happen to the wicked when at last slow Vengeance overtook them? There are, I suppose, just three possibilities which come within the range of our human thought—which is not equivalent to denying the possibility of a fourth, inconceivable to our faculties as a fourth dimension of space. They may be annihilated or reduced to unconsciousness at death, or at some time after death; their punishment may end after an interval in restoration, or it may go on for ever. Among these there is no sign that Zarathushtra himself thought of any but the last. When later Parsee speculation pictured hell itself purified and added to the universal realm of Mazdah, it may conceivably have built on lost Gathas. We are not obliged to demand consistency in this matter: the imagery used will quite naturally vary with the practical lesson which a prophet is urging at the moment. Even in the New Testament the upholders of each of the three doctrines—Conditional Immortality, Universalism, Eternal Retribution—have been able to find texts which *prima facie* support their particular view. But in our extant Gathas Zarathushtra is perpetually

insistent that the "followers of the Lie" shall be to all time dwellers in the "House of the Lie," tormented there eternally. It is hardly likely that it ever occurred to him to be tender towards those who not only refused his gospel, but savagely persecuted his converts. For him God is Righteousness and Truth, but His Fatherhood, hating nothing that He has made, lay below this great prophet's horizon. He was accordingly less perplexed than we with the problem of retribution: the enemies of humanity had earned their doom, and he can even take fierce delight in the contemplation of it. If later Parsee thought, under the impulse of Magian systematising, figured the Molten Metal as destroying hell, it was not tenderness towards Ahriman and his followers, but only a logical development of the requirement that the victory of Ormazd must be complete. The eschatology of the Pahlavi texts* is frankly universalist, except for the very worst sinners, who have turned themselves into demons and share the fate of Ahriman and his hosts. All this seems to be without warrant in the Gathas and is best interpreted as the outcome of Magian ideas.

We return to the Gathas to notice another conspicuous feature in the imagery of judgment. This is the "Bridge of the Separator," over which the dead have to pass. Originating probably in a primitive conception of the Milky Way as the path of souls, the idea was developed mythically; and Zarathushtra found it in possession as a bridge which shrank to a knife-edge width when the wicked essayed to cross, and expanded to a broad highway for the righteous. In this form it survived through later mythology, and was borrowed by Islam as Al-Sirât's Arch. It spanned the abyss, into which the wicked fell. But we may be certain Zarathushtra never meant it to be a real test. The "Separator," whose office was closely attached to it, was a judge of conduct. Later doctrine probably kept up the spirit of the Founder's idea when it pictured the righteous judges of souls occupied in weighing the merits and demerits of each soul before it traversed the Bridge, which thus becomes superfluous except as a picturesque and impressive emblem. It is at the Bridge that the remorse of the sinner is to come to a climax; but that is clearly because he stepped upon it as a newly-doomed man. Zarathushtra gives us no account of the actual happenings at the Bridge, nor does he stay to describe it. That may be simply because it was a

* See it presented in *Dhalla Zoroastrian Theology*, pp. 291 ff.

familiar picture which he retained, not a crucial conception of his own thought. Nor does he bring the Bridge into any relation with that other inherited emblem of the Molten Metal. We might conjecture that he thought of the latter as an ordeal, by which the Separator did his work. The Pahlavi theologians separated the two altogether, removing the Molten Metal to the future Renovation, when the damned will return from ages of penal suffering, to be finally cleansed by the burning flood. Zarathushtra in his Hymns is not compiling a treatise, and we must not press his silences too far. But it does not seem that we should solve the inconsistency in this way. The Bridge and the Metal are only imagery for him, and we need not drag them into system, any more than we should try to paint the imagery of our own Apocalypse of John.

I may leave at this point the special doctrine of Retribution, and turn to the principles governing the Judgment as a whole. I referred just now in a sentence to the Weighing before the Bridge. This was an old Iranian idea. In Persian jurisprudence a culprit was always supposed to be judged on the balance of his whole record, being acquitted if his good deeds outweighed the bad. Since, moreover, the idea was ethical, we should expect to find Zarathushtra accepting it. In that case we should regard the "Separator" as essentially a Judge of souls, like Minos, Aeacus and Rhadamanthys in Greek mythology, whose work it is to divide the good from the bad. The Iranian tradition was ready with the names of the triad of angels who preside over the weighing. The chief of them was the Light-genius Mithra, who in the Later Avesta takes a rôle which Zarathushtra himself might have warmly approved. But in the Prophet's day Mithra was the chief divinity of savage nomads who oppressed the settled agricultural population, and Zarathushtra will not acknowledge him: indeed, as I personally believe, he made him chief of the *Daevas*, the old Aryan nature-powers whom the reformer dethroned and made into demons. The "Separator" before the Bridge was none other than Mazdaha. This appears from Zarathushtra's declaration to his chief lieutenant, Jamaspa. In Paradise, he says:

I shall recount your wrongs . . . before him who will separate
the wise and the unwise through Righteousness (*Asha*),
his prudent counsellor, even Mazdaha Ahura.*

* *Yasna* 46¹⁷.

That Mazdah is to "judge the world in righteousness" is what we should expect Zarathushtra to teach; nor is it less in keeping that he is himself to plead before the Judge, the advocate of his faithful followers, and accuser of those who wronged them. A vivid anthropomorphic figure pictures the Judge as pointing to each man his destiny:

Of thy Fire, O Ahura, that is mighty through Righteousness, promised and powerful, we desire that it may be for the faithful man with manifested delight, but for the enemy with visible torment, according to the pointings of the hand.*

The Fire—that is, in this context, the Molten Metal—is to follow the sentence, as the first element in the execution of Mazdah's decree. Or, as suggested above, it may be a figure describing the supreme test, independent of the Weighing, and associated with the "pointings of the hand" as the declaration of its result.

There is one curious sequel of the Weighing which has been proved to go back to Zarathushtra himself. The soul was adjudged righteous or wicked according to the balance of merits and demerits in thought, word and action. Pahlavi theology insisted very strongly on the nicety of the balance: the estimation of a hair—to be more exact, an eyelash—was enough to determine the issue of heaven or hell. But what if the scales exactly balanced? For this case a limbo was provided, called *Hamistakan*, in the Later Avesta *misva gātu*, "the place of the mixed." Here, they said, in a place located between earth and the first heaven, souls would feel the alternations of cold and heat due to the seasons, until the Renovation brought their dubious position to an end. There are two stanzas in the Gathas which allude to this middle state, but without naming or defining it. The idea has been taken up in the Koran (Sur. 7), and (for once) decidedly improved upon. If we knew more of Zarathushtra's own system, we might be able to say that he had not only recognised the biggest of all problems of the Future, but even done something towards its solution. But if he did, posterity ignored his contribution. No one who knows Zarathushtra's sign manual will find it on the Parsee *Hamistakan*.

One other dogma of later Parseeism, partially rooted in the

* *Yasna* 34⁴.

Gathas, must be named in connexion with the Weighing of Merits. Zarathushtra taught that men can lay up treasure in heaven :

And this, O Mazdah, will I put in thy care within thy House
—the good thought and the souls of the righteous, their
worship, their piety and zeal, that thou mayst guard it,
O thou of mighty dominion, with abiding power.

Upon this foundation the Pahlavi Rabbinites built the more dubious dogma of a treasure-house where were stored the supererogatory good works of the saints, for the benefit of those whose credit was inadequate. How this doctrine was squared with that of Limbo is not clear : the saints, as spiritual millionaires, might surely have spared of their superfluity enough to empty Hamistakan, when the weight of an eyelash was enough to do it for each one !

The deepest thought of Zarathushtra as to the future state is that each man's destiny is determined by his own self. Of the " future long age of misery, of darkness, ill food, and crying of woe ! " the prophet says :

To such an existence, ye followers of the Lie, shall your own
self bring you by your actions.*

And again—

Their own soul and their own self shall torment them when
they come where the Bridge of the Separator is, to all time
dwellers in the House of the Lie.†

Zarathushtra called heaven sometimes " the Best Thought." He anticipated Marlowe and Milton in the truth which the Satan of *Paradise Lost* enunciates—

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

The centrality of this doctrine in the Gathas enables us to put Zarathushtra's own seal on the most beautiful thing in the Avesta, the fragment on the passing of the righteous soul,‡ on which I wish there were time to linger. The climax of it comes when the soul, flying away to the South on the morning of the

* *Yasna* 31²⁰.

† *Yasna* 46¹¹.

‡ The *Hadhokht Nask*, generally known as *Yasht* 22. I have given a free verse paraphrase of this text at the end of my *Early Religious Poetry of the Persians*.

fourth day, meets a lovely damsel wafted towards him on a fragrant south wind.

Then spake to her with question the soul of the righteous man :
What maiden art thou, fairest in form of all maidens that
ever I saw ?

Then to him replied she that was his own self : O youth of good
thoughts, good words, good actions, good self, I am the self
of thine own person.

She tells him that by worship and almsgiving he had made her ever fairer and more adorable. The fragment is imperfect when it comes to describe the passing of the wicked soul : it is, one fears, not probable that literary feeling forbid the author to spoil a gem ! But Pahlavi books come to the rescue and tell us that the wicked soul, as it fled to the cold and demon-ridden North, was met by its own self as a hideous old hag. Every detail is duly reversed in the characteristic Magian way. But in both parts of the picture, if in the mechanically balanced strokes of the brush we recognise a Magian painter, the conception of the *Daenā* or Self as creator of destiny goes back to the genius of Zarathushtra.

The story of the destiny of the soul must be rounded off with a glimpse of the heaven into which the righteous enters : we began this survey with the hell wherein the wicked abides his punishment. The next stanza in the fragment just described tells us that the soul stepped successively into the Good Thought Paradise, the Good Word, the Good Deed, and finally to the Endless Lights. There Ahura Mazda bids them bring him "spring butter," the nectar and ambrosia of the Parsee heaven. This is all in the spirit of the Gathas, where heaven is variously called the House of Song, the Best Thought, the House of Good Thought, the Kingdom of Good Thought, the Best Existence, etc. And if only in antithesis to the description of the House of the Lie quoted above, we may picture Zarathushtra's House of Song to be a place "of bliss, of light, of dainty food, and singing of joy."

What then about the body ? It is here that the great gulf fixed between Zarathushtra and the Magi is most apparent. Those who know nothing else about the modern Parsees know how they dispose of their dead. The corpse of a good man is the most unclean thing in the world : it represents the victory of the Death-fiend over a creature of Mazda. Hence it must never touch the sacred earth or waters, but be devoured by

birds of prey. Herodotus tells us that here the Magi differed from the Persians, for the latter covered the corpse with wax and buried it. This answers both to the silence and the obscure speech of the Gathas. These have no hint that a corpse polluted the earth. On the contrary we read that Aramaiti, the archangel of Piety, who presides over the earth, "gave continued life of their bodies, and indestructibility."* Earth, then, is so charged with life-giving potency that she will at last give a body to those who sleep in her bosom. There is nothing more to be got out of the Gathas here, but later Parseeism develops very elaborately the stages of the final Resurrection, when the hitherto disembodied souls will receive new bodies and enter the life of the new world, all except those sinners who have made themselves into veritable fiends. There are many other features of later speculation which would repay mention, but my time has gone, and I must only deal briefly with one subject of special importance to us.

It is an obvious consequence of the facts and dates presented that Zarathushtra's was the earliest voice to preach an ethical doctrine of immortality, unless Egypt can make good a counter-claim. It is, moreover, a doctrine to which Christianity itself would not wish to offer any protest. We have much, very much, to add from the teaching of Him who brought life and immortality to light out of the mists of reverent intuition in which even a prophet's apocalypse left the great hope of mankind. But it is a very wonderful thing that one solitary Eastern thinker should have travelled so far at least six, and more probably ten, centuries before the day when all graves were opened by the emptying of one. We rather tend to break out with Joshua's exclamation, when jealous for the sake of Moses. We are so accustomed to think of Israel as on the mountain-top to catch the first rising of every new light in religion, that we can hardly understand how immortality should have been unthought of till the Old Testament canon was nearly closed. Nor is this all. There have been many scholars—not, however, among Zoroastrian specialists, but exclusively, I think, from the camp of Old Testament study—who have urged that contact with Zoroastrianism gave the first impulse to the doctrine in Israel. I have always been attracted by the idea, which gives a new wealth of meaning to the opening verses of *Hebrews*, and to that great phrase in which Paul

* *Yasna* 307.

tells us that the Christian Church is the heir of all the ages.* But more than twenty years' study of early Zoroastrianism has for me reduced near the vanishing point any possibility that the Jews in the Captivity could have come in contact with the pure teaching of Zarathushtra, which alone was lofty enough to contribute anything to Israel's spiritual riches. In Babylon and Media they could meet with Magi who appealed to Zarathushtra's name. But I cannot find that in that age the real teaching of the Gathas was well enough understood to stand out above the kind of doctrine which the priests taught. Archaic in language, extremely difficult and ambiguous even to modern scientific research, the Gathas were a sealed book, even for the men who faithfully transmitted their words as potent charms against the devil.

But the comparison of this great thinker's divinely guided intuitions suggests one final reflection. Zarathushtra threw himself upon God's justice, and thence deduced another world as the only answer to the question whether the Judge of all the earth must not do right. Those who came before him had deduced Immortality from God's power, and the analogy of Nature. But even Zarathushtra's was not the highest way; and all experience tells us that the way is even more important than the end when men set out in quest of Truth. Immortality had yet to be deduced from the Love of God, and the realising of that love was a far more important element in Israel's training than the very hope of heaven could be. So it was that when earthly power and glory had long vanished, and the oppressed people of God could no more even call the land of promise their own, the saints who wrote the later hymns in the Book of Psalms came to realise and teach that God Himself is more than enough to satisfy man's need, and that if He can be addressed by man as "my God," man cannot be left by Him to extinction in the grave.† Hence it is that Zarathushtra's sublime faith is to-day held, and held imperfectly, by a few myriads who will not accept a proselyte, while the faith of Israel prepared the first missionaries of a religion which claims to bring the ultimate truth to the whole world.

* 1 Cor. x, 11, "unto whom the tribute of the ages has come as our inheritance." (So I translate, on the lexical evidence of papyri and inscriptions of later Greek.)

† May I refer to my Fernley Lecture, *Religions and Religion* (London 1913), pp. 75-79, for an expansion of this argument?

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the discussion, desired to express the thanks of the Meeting to Professor Moulton for the important paper to which they had all listened with so much interest and profit.

MR. WALTER MAUNDER: I should like to take the opportunity of expressing my thanks to Professor Moulton for his paper, both on behalf of the Meeting, and on my own personal account, and I should also like to thank him in your name for his ready consent, when I approached him about a year ago, to come and deliver this address on this day.

Some three or four years ago, Professor Moulton gave me my first introduction to the Persian sacred books, by asking me my solution of an astronomical problem arising out of a reference in the Bundahis. I first of all read Professor Moulton's charming little book on the *Early Religious Poetry of Persia*, and then he lent me the Bundahis, of which, as the Meeting will have learnt from the paper read here a week ago, my wife made much greater use than I was able to do.

There is one point about the Zoroastrian faith to which Professor Moulton has alluded in his paper, which seems to me of fundamental importance. About a year ago, I was talking with one of our Associates, an eminent surgeon in the Indian service, who, by his skill, has been able to confer great benefits upon leading members of all the principal faiths of India, Parsees, Sikhs, Mahometans, Hindus, and in that way has come into a more intimate and friendly relation with all of them than perhaps anyone else of whom I know, and I was telling him that, from certain astronomical references that I had come across in some of the Parsee books, I had concluded that at one time in the distant past, the Zoroastrian faith had prevailed in the Panjab, but that, so far as I knew, there was no record of Zoroastrianism being driven out of the Panjab, though it must have been. My friend replied, "Zoroastrianism and Hinduism cannot tolerate one another; one of the two must go down, for there is this fundamental difference between them: the Zoroastrian believes in the Resurrection, but the Hindu looks for Re-incarnation." The difference is fundamental, because faith in the Resurrection means that we look for eternal life as the

gift of God; a belief in Re-incarnation, the doctrine of Karma, means that we expect, little by little, through countless ages, to improve ourselves and to earn our reward.

The Rev. J. J. B. COLES felt that the paper to which they had listened that afternoon was a distinct contribution to the comparative study of religions. It was helpful to note that every system of theology, ethics, or philosophy had come to grief; there must be some underlying scientific reason. There were now only about 100,000 Parsees left, most of them in or near Bombay; what has been the cause of the deep decay of Parseeism? Those who had been in India, as he had been for ten years, would have no difficulty in suggesting the cause. The Parsees to-day were among the great commercial leaders of India, and when a religious people take to commercial pursuits and money-making, their religion becomes corrupted. This was the way that the religion of Israel had become corrupt, and it is a proof of the inspiration of Holy Scripture that no other nation has preserved as their own sacred books a record which so utterly condemns their own conduct. The indifference to their exalted doctrine, which we note in the Parsees of to-day, is due to their commercial spirit. The covenant made by God with Noah was for the purpose that men might not congregate in great cities, but should spread themselves freely over the whole world.

Professor LANGHORNE ORCHARD thanked Professor Moulton for his paper. The interpretation which the Greeks gave to the name Zoroaster, "Living Star," was most appropriate to him, for he was a light for his time. As to the date of Zoroaster, he must concur with Mrs. Maunder rather than with Professor Moulton. Nothing invalidated the arguments by which she assigned him to the seventh century B.C. Zoroaster's great work was that he taught that the character of a man determined his destiny. One implication from the paper he did wish to traverse, namely, that the doctrine of immortality was unknown to the Jews until shortly before the closing of the canon of the Old Testament. Our Lord had shown clearly that the doctrine of immortality was contained in the revelation made to Moses at the burning bush, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The creed of Zoroaster was a noble one, but he could add nothing to the Jewish and Christian religions, for these came direct from GOD.

The Rev. JOHN TUCKWELL wished to join in the expression of thanks to Professor Moulton for his very interesting paper. At the same time he could not help thinking that very little value could be attached to Zoroastrianism as a spiritual force in the world. A religion which has no propaganda and accepts no proselytes, and has no Personal Saviour, has no hope to give to our poor fallen humanity, and however high its founder may soar in his ethical system, only mocks us in our distress and the sooner it perishes off the face of the earth the better.

He was afraid he must differ from the Professor in one point. He tells us "that we can hardly understand how immortality should have been unthought of till the Old Testament canon was nearly closed." It would be strange were it true. For his own part he did not understand how any religion could exist without the three essential fundamentals—a Supreme Being or superior beings of some sort, immortality, and a future judgment. Every other intelligent nation of antiquity had its doctrine of immortality and it would be incredible if Israel, the most spiritually enlightened of them all, did not possess it. But what did the expression about being "gathered unto their fathers mean"? It could not mean buried in the same grave. Again, in Isaiah liii, the Messiah sees of the "travail of His soul" after He has been dead and buried. And when our Lord encountered the Sadducees, He found the doctrine of immortality in the Old Testament and said, "Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."

Mr. JOSEPH GRAHAM wished to take the subject in another direction. He thought it was not fair to the paper to treat it as if it were balancing Zoroastrianism against Christianity. Christianity was complete, and as Christian men we knew all about it. But from the beginning of the world, God, Who is no respecter of persons, but accepts those in every nation that fear Him and work righteousness, has revealed Himself to such as were able to bear it. Christ is the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and where we find evidences of such light outside Christianity, and Judaism, we might well acknowledge it with thankfulness and give to Christ alone the glory.

Miss ANNIE IRWIN had listened to the paper with deep interest. She had herself lived in India and worked among the Parsees, and thought she could give two reasons for the decay of Parseeism. The

first was that their prayers and religious books were in a dead language, so that the ordinary people could not follow and understand them. The second cause was that the Parsees had adopted many Hindu customs, though they differed from the Hindus in their beliefs, yet, perhaps for political reasons, they had adopted certain Hindu practices.

A MEMBER said that there was one lesson that we might learn from the afternoon's paper, namely that we ought not to build fresh temples for religious systems that had proved themselves to be failures. These systems might indeed be first steps to a knowledge of God, but we had received a higher revelation and he thought it was waste of time to discuss them.

Mr. J. O. CORRIE said that Zoroastrianism lacked one thing. The absence of sacrifice indicated a deficiency in the sense of sin. This accorded with Ahura Mazda being the All-Wise, rather than the All-Holy.

The CHAIRMAN regretted that Professor Moulton had not been able to remain till the close of the Meeting: he was obliged to return to Manchester that evening, and had had to leave to catch his train. All would have wished to hear his answer to the discussion.

With reference to the doctrine of Immortality, that was certainly believed in by the Jews and other nations at an early date. The Babylonians and Assyrians held, some two thousand years before Christ, that there was a life after this present existence. It was not certain what they considered to be the means for attaining thereto, but the principal thing seemed to be faithfulness to the god whom a man worshipped.

We were far from knowing all the details of the Babylonian theory of immortality, but he who acquired it had the unspeakable joy of the Deity's unending companionship in the world beyond the sky. Apparently, also, that faithful servant of his god had to be buried in due form, and his grave had to be cared for.

Whilst always recognizing, as we all did, the immeasurable superiority and perfection of the Christian religion, we ought not to indulge that feeling of contempt for past religious systems which we find exemplified (for example) among the Mohammedans. It has been recorded that they called the antiquities which they dug up for us in Babylonia and Assyria "rubbish of old unbelievers,"

forgetting that they owed their existence to those "unbelievers," who were, in fact, their forefathers. Let us, then, have tolerance for the beliefs of those ancient peoples who, not having our advantages, developed faiths in many respects admirable, and let us remember the good they did in their generation.

The Meeting passed a unanimous and hearty vote of thanks to Professor Moulton, and adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

LECTURER'S REPLY.

I need comment but briefly on the discussion, most of which I have had the disadvantage of only reading in print. I should explain that I could not acknowledge as a "doctrine of immortality" the belief in a Sheol where men had "no remembrance" of God. I fully accept the view which Old Testament scholars seem generally to advocate now; and in the book referred to on p. 247 (footnote) I have tried to show how the incomparable loftiness of Israel's ultimate conception of the Future Life was the consequence of its late arrival along the road of a fruitful but sorrowful experience.

The date of Zarathushtra is a problem on which I naturally do not expect my *ipse dixit* to suffice. But Professor Orchard will find in my Hibbert Lectures a very full discussion. The necessary brevity of my delineation is no doubt responsible for the curious infelicity by which one member accused Zoroastrianism of a deficient sense of sin. Deficiency of course there is if the Gospel is the standard. "Holiest" happens to be the commonest epithet of Mazdah, if the usual translation is right.

I might say that I add this postscript after receiving a call to go to Bombay for a year and study the Parsees at close quarters. When I return I shall be better able to appraise the contributions of speakers who have been in India.