

ART. XVII.—*Notes on Zarathuſtra's Doctrine regarding the Soul.* By E. W. WEST.

ON reference to the Millennial Chronology of the Bundahis (as corrected and extended in S.B.E., vol. xlvii, Introduction, § 55) it will be seen that the first millennium commenced in B.C. 9630 with the formation of the Fravashis, or primary ideas of the good creations, which remained insensible and motionless for 3,000 years. At the beginning of the fourth millennium (B.C. 6630) the spiritual body of Zarathuſtra was framed together and remained 3,000 years with the Ameſaspentas, while the primeval man and ox existed undisturbed in the world, because the Maleficent spirit was still confounded and powerless. But, at the beginning of the seventh millennium (B.C. 3630) the Maleficent spirit rushed into the creation, destroyed the Primeval ox, and distressed Gayomart, the primeval man, who died thirty years later; but Zarathuſtra was not born till B.C. 660.

Descriptive of these evils we have the second Hā, or chapter, of the first Gātha (Yasna, xxix), in which the Geuſ-urvan, or Soul of the Primeval Ox, bewails the hard fate of cattle in general, owing to drovers, robbers, and brutes who lacerate and plunder; he begs the protection of the Ameſaspentas, and an assurance of good pasture for the animals he represents.

The creator of the Primeval Ox, Ahura-mazda himself, asks Asha ('righteousness') whom it is that he has appointed to control the masters of cattle, and what benevolent ruler to prevent violence. Asha replies that the bad masters do not yet understand the future recompense they will themselves receive for kindness to their cattle, nor the future punishment they will suffer for cruel

treatment. And Vohumanō ('good-thought') adds that he has found a man, in Zarathušta the Spitāma, who will listen to their instructions and teach mankind accordingly.

As in this case we find the term *soul* applied to the representative spirit of the Primeval Ox, so in other cases we shall find the representative and responsible spirit of a human being is the soul. The *fravashi*, or guardian-spirit, is a totally distinct spiritual adjunct which every individual and object of the good creation possesses; it is a kind of primary idea, and is the spiritual counterpart of a deceased person, that is invoked, or revered, in certain ceremonies. Its duty is to protect the body which it represents.

In the Gāthas the following passages occur, regarding the soul and its responsibilities, and are here explained according to Darmesteter's translations:—

Yasna, xxviii, 4. I who give Paradise to the soul, with the help of Vohumanō.

xxxi, 20. To him who shall have wished to deceive the righteous, there come groanings hereafter, long dwelling in darkness, unwholesome food, and words of insult. Such is the world, you wicked! to which your works and religion lead.

xxxiii, 9. Ahura-mazda occasions happiness, along with Vohumanō; they do the work together perfectly, their souls being in unison.

xxxiv, 2. These are the works of the man of benevolence, whose soul has righteousness for companion.

xliv, 8. And how my soul will be able to go and find joy in both worlds.

xlvi, 7. The soul of the righteous aspires to immortality and strength, whilst the wicked will be in torment.

xlvi, 10. For all those whom I shall induce to address their prayer to you, a way over the Cinvat bridge will disclose itself.

xlvi, 11. The Karapans and Kavis are united in power to destroy the world of mortals by their evil deeds. But their soul and their conscience will groan when they arrive

before the Cinvat bridge, to reside for ever in the abode of the fiend.

xlix, 11. As to the wicked and the bad princes, of evil deeds, evil words, evil religion, and evil thoughts, their souls go to receive impure nourishment; truly they shall go to inhabit the abode of the fiend.

li, 9. With the knowledge which thou givest, among adversaries in conflict, by means of thy red fire, O Mazda! with the sign thou givest in both worlds, by means of melted metal, thou afflictest the wicked and causest the happiness of the righteous.

li, 13. Both the wicked and the righteous render an exact account of their religion; the former soul will groan before the Cinvat bridge, because he has destroyed the path of the good by his actions and his tongue. 14. From the Karapans there is no generous friendship, nor any goodness of action; they do not teach the good treatment of herds, either in their practice or in their doctrine; and their doctrine will give them, in the end, the abode of the fiend for a dwelling. 15. But the recompense, that Zarathuštra has promised to the pure, is the supreme heaven (*garō-demāna*) where Ahura-mazda first came.

The state of society described in the Gāthas is of a primitive character. Apparently scattered settlements of cattle-owners and agriculturists, under local chieftains, all subject to some central control, but the people not nomadic. The Gāthic period was evidently a time of religious revolution; the old priesthood, whether Karapans or Kavis, are always classed as evildoers and reprobates, trying to injure the reformed faith in Ahura-mazda and his attributes, the Amesāspentas; but the exact differences between the rival faiths and practices are by no means clearly explained. One man is wicked and the other righteous; one is demoniacal and the other divine; one merits hell until the resurrection and the other deserves eternity in heaven; but, except that the wicked man is disobedient, and the righteous man is obedient, to the

reformer, the reasons given for treating them differently are not always quite satisfactory, especially as the wicked are not said to be *daēvayāsna*, 'demon-worshipping,' the usual epithet for polytheists, or heathens, in the later Yasna and Vendīdād.

Regarding the fate of the soul shortly after death we have also two Hās, or chapters, both Avesta and Pahlavi, which are reported to be fragments of the Hadhaokhta Nask, but cannot be traced in the Pahlavi account of that Nask given in *Dīnkard*, VIII, xlv, 1-15 (S.B.E., vol. xxxvii, pp. 166-169). These Hās were published by Hoshangji and Haug, along with the *Book of Artā-Vīrāf* (pp. 309-316). They state that the soul remains near the head of the corpse for the first three nights after death. If it be righteous it sits calmly reciting the beginning of Yasna xliii, and feels as much pleasure as ever it did before death. If it be wicked it rushes about, reciting in despair the beginning of Yasna xlvi, and suffers as much misery as ever it had experienced during life.

At the end of the third night the righteous soul advances, through a grove of trees, with a sweet-scented breeze blowing on him from the south, and presently meets a beautiful maiden, who tells him that she is his own good religion and actions, in fact, his clear conscience; and he himself feels that he has become youthful. He then steps forth on to the heaven of good thoughts, then upon that of good words, then upon that of good actions, and finally upon the eternal luminaries, where a soul previously arrived asks him how he has come. But Ahura-mazda reproves the inquisitive soul for troubling him with questions after so hazardous a journey, and the righteous soul is supplied with nutritious food.

At the end of the third night, the wicked soul advances through terrors and stench, with a foul-smelling wind blowing upon him from the north, and presently meets his conscience in the shape of a hideous hag who upbraids him on account of his wickedness. Then, stepping on to the hells of evil thought, evil speech, and evil action,

with the fourth step he rushes into the nethermost hell, where he is jeered at by a previous arrival, who is reproved by the Maleficent spirit, and the wicked soul is supplied with impure and poisonous food.

The Cinvat bridge, easy for the righteous, but impassable by the wicked, is mentioned several times in the Gāthas, and also occurs in Vendīdād xix and the later Yasna, but is not noticed in these Hās of the Hadhaokhta Nask. The female representative of the good conscience also appears in Vendīdād, xix, 30, accompanied by dogs, to assist the righteous soul over the bridge; while the wicked soul is left to be dragged to hell by the demon Vīzareša.

According to the Pahlavi accounts, in *Mainyō-i Khirad*, ii, 114–194, and *Artā-Vīrāf nāmak*, iv, 6–v, 5; xvii, 2–27, the soul is assisted by the *yazatas* Mithra, Sraoša, and others, and the balance of its good works and sins being ascertained and settled by Rashnu, it is conducted either to heaven by the *yazatas*, or to hell by the demons, according to its deserts. But the Yashts of the particular *yazatas* do not seem to allude to these circumstances; although the ceremonies prescribed for the days following a death evidently assume the spiritual presence of these *yazatas*.

But, besides the righteous and the wicked, there is a third class of soul provided for; that whose good works very nearly balance its evil deeds. This kind of soul is kept in an inert state, till the resurrection, in the open space between the earth and the fixed stars; the place of the Hamēstagān, the “ever-stationary, or those staying together,” where they suffer only from the daily variations of heat and cold (see *Mainyō-i Khirad*, vii, 18). This species of purgatory for a fixed period is evidently mentioned in the Gāthas (Yasna, xxxiii, 1) as follows:—“As they are scrutinized, so one shall practise the laws which are of the primitive world; the justest actions of the priestly authority are for the wicked, as well as for the righteous, and for him in whom something of the false, as well as what are truths, alike prevails (?).”

The Avesta verb *hémyāsaitē*, which I have doubtfully translated by 'alike prevails,' is probably the word from which the various Pahlavi forms of the name of this purgatory are derived, such as *Hamēstakān*, *Hamēstān*, *Hamēstānik*, *Hamēstānagān*, *Ham-hastakān*, *Ham-hastānik*, and *Hamastān*. So the Pahlavi notion of 'immobility' should probably be modified, either into 'crowding together' or 'equal propensity for good and evil.'

So far, the Parsi is more certain of the immediate fate of the soul than people of most other religions; but there is still the future ordeal of the resurrection to pass through. As the chief object of this is to destroy evil, the righteous soul is little affected by the ordeal, which also concludes the torments of the wicked soul, unless it has been exceptionally wicked, in which case it has to endure three nights more of extreme torment before it is purified. Then each soul is sent to that particular grade of heaven to which its actions entitle it. The demons are destroyed by the good spirits, the space occupied by hell is annexed to the earth, and both are freed from mountains and ice, and remain imperishable for ever and ever. This is told in *Indian Bundahīś*, xxx, which is practically the same as xlii of the Iranian version; and Darmesteter, in his *Zend-avesta*, ii, p. 640, n. 138, gives a French translation of some further details from the Pahlavi *Marvels of the month Fravardīn and day Khurdat*.

Westergaard's Avesta *Fragment* iv is the original text of the last fargard of the Varštīmānsar Nask, as Darmesteter first discovered from my translation of the Pahlavi version in S.B.E., xxxvii, pp. 302-3. It contains a distinct allusion to the resurrection, and to the Airyaman supplication being used as a spell by Saošyāns, the last of the future apostles, to overcome the evil spirits, who are driven by it underground, where their bodies are completely shattered. So there can be no doubt that the resurrection was expected in Avesta times, and Darmesteter himself admits that it was a belief of the Achaemenians.

As Zarathuštra is supposed to have been born thirty years

before the commencement of his millennium, so each of the three succeeding apostles, Ukhshyaṭ-ereta, Ukhshyaṭ-nemañh, and Saošyāns, is supposed to be born thirty years before the commencement of each of the three succeeding millenniums, so as to assume priestly control at the vigorous age of thirty, when his millennium begins. According to the rectified Millennial Chronology of the Bundahis, before mentioned (p. 605), the millennium of Zarathuštra began B.C. 630; that of Ukhshyaṭ-ereta in A.D. 371; that of Ukhshyaṭ-nemañh in A.D. 1371; that of Saošyāns ought to begin in A.D. 2371; and the resurrection, at the end of his fifty-seventh year, may be expected in A.D. 2398. But, owing to the errors that have crept into the Bundahis chronology, the Parsis themselves are quite uncertain about these dates. What they know of their religious history after the Muḥammadan conquest of Persia, and what they expected for the future, in A.D. 900, may be learned from *Dinkard*, VII, chs. viii–xi, in S.B.E., xlvii, pp. 94–118.