

FOR REFERENCE.

Alexander (S. A.), Christianity of St. Paul, 73.
 Alford (H.), Quebec Chapel Sermons, vol. ii. 1.
 Brown (C. J.), The Word of Life, 293.
 Coates (G.), The Morning Watch for Soldiers of the King, 270.
 Cox (S.), An Expositor's Note-Book, 388.
 Fraser (J.), Speeches of the Apostles, 168.

M'Cheyne (R. M.), Additional Remains, 396.
 Mackenzie (W. L.), Pure Religion, 127.
 Maurice (F. D.), Acts of the Apostles, 314.
 Paget (E. C.), Silence, 139.
 Potts (A. W.), School Sermons, 228.
 Reynolds (H. R.), Light and Peace, 53.
 Robarts (F. L.), Sunday Morning Talks, 213.
 Williams (T. L.), Thy Kingdom Come, 110.

Ahura-Mazda in the Avesta.¹

BY RASTAMJI EDALJI DASTUR PESHOTUN SANJANA, B.A., BOMBAY.

ZOROASTRIANISM is the only religion known to remote antiquity which gives man a correct conception of the Supreme Being and His relations to His creatures. Further, it is the religion which produced the idea of a pure monotheism. The *Gâthâs* (the oldest collection of hymns in the Avesta) give clear and distinct expression to the doctrine of One living personal God. The followers of Zoroaster are required to meditate on the various names and attributes, the government and will and the wonderful works of the almighty, all-wise, and all-good God. The central and all-absorbing object of faith throughout the whole Avesta is Ahura-Mazda, the creator and moral controller of all things. Manifold are the names under which the Almighty is adored, and in each one of these names nothing is embodied but what is good and holy. The faithful are called on to pronounce these names frequently and with entire devotion, and the promise is made to them that, if they keep His supreme power, wisdom, and goodness continually before their eyes, they shall thereby acquire spiritual strength to overcome all evil.

The Supreme Being is most frequently called in the Avesta by the name *Ahura-Mazda*; sometimes we find also the name *Spenta-Mainyu* or *Mainyu-Spenishta*. The latter term means 'fulness of dispensing spirit' or all-good God. *Mazda* means 'great Creator,' and *Ahura* = 'He who is life.' The shorter expression, 'He who is life' is identical with the designation 'self-existing Being.' Ahura-Mazda thus stands for the Deity and His fundamental quality of self-existence, whereby He

is distinguished from His creatures. He is also the prime cause of *Manthra-Spenta*, physical light, as well as of truth, of which light is the symbol. There are found in the Avesta many words and expressions which attribute to Ahura-Mazda human organs and capabilities, but such expressions are to be taken only figuratively and symbolically. In the name *Ahura-Mazda* we have accordingly the most indubitable evidence that the people of the Avesta and their successors, the Parsis, cherished and still cherish the belief in One supremely great and good Being.

The religion of Zoroaster requires its followers to imitate Ahura-Mazda in their moral character; it shows them the way to *Garô-nmàna*, the highest heaven, the dwelling-place of God, where they are to enjoy perfect felicity. Hence it is that the moral excellences of Ahura-Mazda are set forth so prominently in the Avesta. The latter illustrates the omnipotence, the supreme wisdom, and the infinite goodness of God by abstract notions derived from His works which surround us, in order thereby to lay more emphasis on the truth that Ahura-Mazda is almighty, all-wise, and all-good. It is for this end that we find in the various books of the Avesta so many detailed descriptions of external phenomena, the heavenly bodies, the natural elements, and other great works of the Almighty; while in all these descriptions account is always taken of the Creator. Since these natural objects stand in an intimate relation with the great sum and centre of our adoration, Ahura-Mazda, they serve as material media for extending and purifying our conceptions of Him. How can any one be content to reduce the religion of Zoroaster simply to a worship of nature, a regard paid to natural objects and their qualities and benignant

¹ Part of a paper read at the recent International Congress of Religions at Bâle. The translation is made from the *Basler Nachrichten*.

influences? In this religion Nature never appears as self-existing but always only in subordination to a higher, spiritual power. Metaphor, personification, and allegory are employed in the Avesta just as in the sacred books of other religions.

It remains now to examine the question whether traces are to be discovered in the Avesta of a *dualistic* religious standpoint. This question is answered in the affirmative by many students of the Avesta, but their conclusion appears to be based on the incorrect conception of Ahura-Mazda and Angra-mainyu contained in the works of Aristotle, Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch, Eudoxus, Hermippus, and Theopompus. Since these authors understood the Avesta texts only very imperfectly, they alleged that Ahura-Mazda and Angra-mainyu were the two deities—the good and the evil—of the ancient Iranians. We have already shown above that in the sacred writings of the Parsis the Supreme Being is called sometimes Ahura-Mazda and sometimes Spenta-Mainyu. The words *spenta* and *mainyu* stand at times merely for the holy and all-good spirit of Ahura-Mazda. *Mainyu* standing alone is a name both for this spirit of God and for the holy and good spirit of man, implanted by Ahura-Mazda in his heart. *Spenta* by itself stands for the attribute of goodness on the part either of God or of His creature, man. The compound word *Spenta-mainyu* is a predicate attached to Ahura-Mazda and also, as the Avesta texts show, to the good spirit of man. Nowhere in our sacred writings are the words *urvan* ('soul'), *daēnā* ('conscience'), *varena* ('faith'), etc., employed as predicates of the Supreme Being, but only of man.

The terms *angra-mainyu* and *dregvatō-mainyu*

are not at all the names of deities, equal or subordinate to Ahura-Mazda; they stand simply for that spirit of temptation, evil, and destruction which opposes itself to Ahura-Mazda. *Mainyu* means 'spirit,' while *angra* and *dregvant* mean 'sinful' or 'evil'; hence *angra-mainyu* and *dregvatō-mainyu* both stand for the wicked or sinful spirit in man. There are many passages in the Avesta which show that this is the meaning of these expressions, and not a single passage from which one might suppose that a super-human evil spirit is referred to. Man is thus responsible for all his evil deeds, alike moral and physical; and the teaching of Zoroaster lays special emphasis on the free determination of the human will.

Finally, I may be allowed to show with all brevity that the view so prevalent that the Parsis are *fire-worshippers* is wholly unjustified. *Mithra* or light is an attribute and symbol of Ahura-Mazda, who is pure light. The idea of omnipotence is frequently connected closely with brightness and light; for which reason and for it alone the followers of Zoroaster stand with bowed heads before the light, whether artificial or the natural light of sun, moon, or stars. Ahura-Mazda is the supreme truth, and, since light is everywhere recognized as a symbol of the truth, why should not the Avesta people and their successors recognize physical light as an emblem of the Deity, Ahura-Mazda? When we look around on the various religious systems of the world, we find that in many of them light is viewed as representative of the Almighty. If none of those religions is accused of fire-worship, why should this charge be brought against the pure doctrine of Zoroaster?

Contributions and Comments.

The Assyro-Chaldaean Sabbath.

PROFESSOR SAYCE deserves our thanks for having called attention (see the December number, p. 140b) to an Assyrian proper name which, so far as I am aware, has hitherto passed unnoticed, and for having recognized its bearing on the Sabbath question (cf. his words, 'it is worth more than a passing notice'). But he is not quite correct in his

explanation of the name in question, *ānu-vii-* (D.P.) *Ai*, as 'the seventh day is *Ā* (the sun-goddess).' In the first place, the reading is *Ai*, not *Ā*; secondly, *Ai* of Sippar is the consort of the sun-god, *i.e.* the moon-goddess, who was worshipped there side by side with Shamash. Thirdly, with the Assyrians, as is shown by a whole series of other proper names of theirs, *Ai* stood for their supreme god, being an epithet of the moon-god Assur.