

Zoroaster

ZOROASTER, one of the great teachers of the East, the founder of what was the national religion of the Perso-Iranian people from the time of the Achaemenidae to the close of the Sasanian period. The name is the corrupt Greek form of the old Iranian Zarathushtra (new Persian, Zartusht). Its signification is unknown, possibly meaning "Golden Light," and / or "Feeble Camel" from the prefixes (Zara / Zarat) and suffixes (Thustra / Ushtra).

Evidence of his life.

Zoroaster was already famous in classical antiquity as the founder of the widely renowned wisdom of the Magi. His name is not mentioned by Herodotus in his sketch of the Medo-Persian religion. It occurs for the first time in a fragment of Xanthus, and in the Alcibiades of Plato, who calls him the son of Oromazdes. For occidental writers, Zoroaster is always the Magus, or the founder of the whole Magian system. They sometimes call him a Bactrian, sometimes a Median or Persian. The ancients also recount a few points regarding the childhood of Zoroaster and his hermit-life. Thus, according to Pliny, he laughed on the very day of his birth—a statement found also in the Zardusht-Nāma—and lived in the wilderness upon cheese. Plutarch speaks of his intercourse with the deity, and compares him with Lycurgus and

Numa. Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch's contemporary, declares that neither Homer nor Hesiod sang of the chariot and horses of Zeus so worthily as Zoroaster, of whom the Persians tell that, out of love to wisdom and righteousness, he withdrew himself from men, and lived in solitude upon a mountain. The mountain was consumed by fire, but Zoroaster escaped uninjured and spoke to the multitude. Plutarch, drawing partly on Theopompus, speaks of his religion in his Isis and Osiris. He gives a faithful sketch of the doctrines, mythology and dualistic system of the Magian Zoroaster.

As to the period in which he lived, most of the Greeks have already lost the true perspective. Hermodorus and Hermippus of Smyrna place him 5000 years before the Trojan war, Xanthus 6000 years before Xerxes, Eudoxus and Aristotle 6000 years before the death of Plato. Agathias remarks, with perfect truth, that it is no longer possible to determine with any certainty when he lived and legislated. "The Persians," he adds, "say that Zoroaster lived under Hystaspes, but do not make it clear whether by this name they mean the father of Darius or another Hystaspes. But, whatever may have been his date, he was their teacher and instructor in the Magian religion, modified their former religious customs, and introduced a variegated and composite belief."

He is nowhere mentioned in the cuneiform inscriptions of the Achaemenidae, although Darius and his successors were without doubt devoted adherents of Zoroastrianism. The Avesta is,

indeed, our principal source for the doctrine of Zoroaster; on the subject of his person and his life it is comparatively reticent; with regard to his date it is, naturally enough, absolutely silent. The thirteenth section, or Spend Nask, which was mainly consecrated to the description of his life, has perished; while the biographies founded upon it in the seventh book of the Denkart (ninth century A.D.), the Shāh-Nāme, and the Zardusht-Nāma (thirteenth century), are thoroughly legendary—full of wonders, fabulous histories and miraculous deliverances.

Under all circumstances we must imitate the ancient authors in holding fast to the historic personality of Zoroaster; though he—like many another name of the dim past—has failed to escape the fate of being regarded as a purely mythical creation (for instance, by Kern and by Darmesteter, in the Sacred Books of the East). According to Darmesteter, the Zarathustra of the Avesta is a mere myth, a divinity invested with human attributes, an incarnation of the storm-god, who with his divine word, the thunder, comes and smites the demons. Darmesteter has failed to realize sufficiently the distinction between the Zoroaster of the later Avesta and the Zoroaster of the Gāthās. It cannot be denied that in the later Avesta, and still more in writings of more recent date, he is presented in a legendary light and endowed with superhuman powers. At his appearing all nature rejoices (Yasht, 13, 93); he enters into conflict with the demons and rids the earth of their presence (Yasht, 17, 19); Satan unsuccessfully approaches him as tempter to try to make him renounce his faith (Vendidad, 19, 6).

The Gāthās alone within the Avesta make claim to be the ipsissima verba of the prophet; in the rest of that work they are put into Zoroaster's own mouth (Yasna, 9, 1) and are expressly called “the Gāthās of the holy Zoroaster” (Yasna, 57, 8). The litanies of the Yasna, and the Yashts, refer to him as a personage belonging to the past. The Vendidad also merely gives accounts of the dialogues between Ormazd and Zoroaster. The Gāthās alone claim to be authentic utterances of Zoroaster, his actual expressions in presence of the assembled congregation. They are the last genuine survivals of the doctrinal discourses with which—as the promulgator of a new religion—he appeared at the court of King Vishtāspa.

The person of the Zoroaster whom we meet with in these hymns differs toto coelo from the Zoroaster of the younger Avesta. He is the exact opposite of the miraculous personage of later legend—a mere man, standing always on the solid ground of reality, whose only arms are trust in his God and the protection of his powerful allies. At times his position is precarious enough. He whom we hear in the Gāthās has had to face, not merely all forms of outward opposition and the unbelief and lukewarmness of adherents, but also the inward misgivings of his own heart as to the truth and final victory of his cause. At one time hope, at another despondency, now assured confidence, now doubt and despair, here a firm faith in the speedy coming of the kingdom of heaven, there the thought of taking refuge by flight—such is the range of the emotions which find their immediate expression

in these hymns. And the whole breathes such a genuine originality, all is psychologically so accurate and just, the earliest beginnings of the new religious movement, the childhood of a new community of faith, are reflected so naturally in them all, that it is impossible for a moment to think of a later period of composition by a priesthood whom we know to have been devoid of any historical sense, and incapable of reconstructing the spiritual conditions under which Zoroaster lived. So soon as the point of view is clear—that in the Gāthās we have firm historical ground on which Zoroaster and his surroundings may rest, that here we have the beginnings of the Zoroastrian religion—then it becomes impossible to answer otherwise than affirmatively every general question as to the historical character of Zoroaster. Yet we must not expect too much from the Gāthās in the way of definite detail. They give no historical account of the life and teaching of their prophet, but rather are, so to say, versus memoriales, which recapitulate the main points of interest, often again in brief outlines. They are more of general admonitions, asseverations, solemn prophecies, sometimes directed to the faithful flock or to the princes, but generally cast in the form of dialogues with God and the archangels, whom he repeatedly invokes as witnesses to his veracity. Moreover, they contain many allusions to personal events which later generations have forgotten. It must be remembered, too, that their extent is limited, and their meaning, moreover, frequently dubious or obscure.

The Person of the Prophet.—As to his birthplace the testimonies are conflicting. According to the Avesta (Yasna, 9, 17), Airyanem Vaējō, on the river Dāitya, the old sacred country of the gods, was the home of Zoroaster, and the scene of his first appearance. There, on the river Darejya, assuming that the passage (Vend., 19, 4) is correctly interpreted, stood the house of his father; and the Bundahishn (20, 32 and 24, 15) says expressly that the river Dāraja lay in Airan Vej, on its bank was the dwelling of his father, and that there Zoroaster was born. Now, according to the Bundahishn (29, 12), Airan Vej was situated in the direction of Atropatene, and consequently Airyanem Vaējō is for the most part identified with the district of Arrān on the river Aras (Araxes), close by the north-western frontier of Media. Other traditions, however, make him a native of Rai (Ragha). According to Yasna, 19, 18, the zarathushtrōtema, or supreme head of the Zoroastrian priesthood, had at a later (Sasanian) time, his residence in Ragha. The Arabic writer Shahrastānī endeavours to bridge the divergence between the two traditions by means of the following theory: his father was a man of Atropatēne, while the mother was from Rai. In his home tradition recounts he enjoyed the celestial visions and the conversations with the archangels and Ormazd which are mentioned already in the Gāthās. There, too, according to Yasht, 5, 105, he prayed that he might succeed in converting King Vīsh-tāspa. He then appears to have quitted his native district. On this point the Avesta is wholly silent: only one obscure passage (Yasna, 53, 9) seems to intimate that he found an ill reception in Rai. Finally, in the person of Vīsh-tāspa, who seems to have been

a prince resident in east Iran, he gained the powerful protector and faithful disciple of the new religion whom he desired— though after almost superhuman dangers and difficulties, which the later books depict in lively colors. According to the epic legend, Vīsh-tāspa was king of Bactria. Already in the later Avesta he has become a half-mythical figure, the last in the series of heroes of east Iranian legend, in the arrangement of which series priestly influence is unmistakably evident. He stands at the meeting-point between the old world and the new era which begins with Zoroaster. In the Gāthās he appears as a quite historical personage; it is essentially to his power and good example that the prophet is indebted for his success. In Yasna, 53, 2, he is spoken of as a pioneer of the doctrine revealed by Ormazd. In the relation between Zoroaster and Vīsh-tāspa already lies the germ of the state church which afterwards became completely subservient to the interests of the dynasty and sought its protection from it.

Among the grandees of the court of Vīsh-tāspa mention is made of two brothers, Frashaoshtra and Jāmāspa; both were, according to the later legend, vizirs of Vīsh-tāspa. Zoroaster was nearly related to both: his wife, Hvōvi, was the daughter of Frashaoshtra, and the husband of his daughter, Pourucista, was Jāmāspa. The actual rôle of intermediary was played by the pious queen Hutaosa. Apart from this connection, the new prophet relies especially upon his own kindred (hvaētush). His first disciple, Maidhyōimāongha, was his cousin: his father was, according to the later Avesta, Pourushaspa, his mother

Dughdōvā, his great-grandfather Haēcataspa, and the ancestor of the whole family Spitama, for which reason Zarathushtra usually bears this surname. His sons and daughters are repeatedly spoken of. His death is, for reasons easily intelligible, nowhere mentioned in the Avesta; in the Shāh-Nāmeḥ he is said to have been murdered at the altar by the Turanians in the storming of Balkh.

We are quite ignorant as to the date of Zoroaster; King Vīshṭāspa does not seem to have any place in any historical chronology, and the Gāthās give no hint on the subject. In former times the assertion often was, and even now is often put forward, that Vīshṭāspa was one and the same person with the historical Hystaspes, father of Darius the First. This identification can only be purchased at the cost of a complete renunciation of the Avestan genealogy. Hutaosa is the same name as Atossa: but in history Atossa was the wife of Cambyses and Darius. Otherwise, not one single name in the entourage of our Vīshṭāspa can be brought into harmony with historical nomenclature. According to the Arda Vīrāf, 1, 2, Zoroaster taught, in round numbers, some 300 years before the invasion of Alexander. The testimony of Assyrian inscriptions relegates him to a far more ancient period. If these prove the name Mazdaka to have formed part of Median proper names in the year 715 B.C., Eduard Meyer (vide Ancient Persia) is justified in maintaining that the Zoroastrian religion must even then have been predominant in Media. Meyer, therefore, conjecturally puts the date of Zoroaster at 1000 B.C., as had already been done by Duncker. This, in its turn, may be

too high: but, in any case, Zoroaster belongs to a prehistoric era. Probably he emanated from the old school of Median Magi (plural, Maga), and appeared first in Media as the prophet of a new faith, but met with sacerdotal opposition, and turned his steps eastward. In the east of Iran the novel creed first acquired a solid footing, and subsequently reacted with success upon the West.

Zoroastrianism.—Zoroaster taught a new religion; but this must not be taken as meaning that everything he taught came, so to say, out of his own head. His doctrine was rooted in the old Iranian—or Aryan—folk-religion, of which we can only form an approximate representation by comparison with the religion of the Veda. The newly discovered Hittite inscriptions have now thrown a welcome ray of light on the primitive Iranian creed. In these inscriptions Mitra, Varuna, Indra and Nāsātya are mentioned as deities of the Iranian kings of Mitani at the beginning of the fourteenth century—all of them names with which we are familiar from the Indian pantheon. The Aryan folk religion was polytheistic. Worship was paid to popular divinities, such as the war-god and dragon-slayer Indra, to natural forces and elements such as fire, but the Aryans also believed in the ruling of moral powers and of an eternal law in nature. On solemn occasions the inspiring drink soma (haoma) ministered to the enjoyment of the devout. Numerous coincidences with the Indian religion survive in Zoroastrianism, side by side with astonishing diversities.

The most striking difference between Zoroaster's doctrine of God and the old religion of India lies in this, that while in the Avesta the evil spirits are called daēva (Modern Persian div); the Aryans of India, in common with the Italians, Celts / Gauls, and Letts, gave the name of dēva to their good spirits, the spirits of light. An alternative designation for deity in the Rig-Veda is asura. In the more recent hymns of the Rig-Veda and in later India, on the other hand, only evil spirits are understood by asuras, while in Iran the corresponding word ahura was, and ever has continued to be, the designation of God the Lord. Thus ahura-daēva, dēva-asura in Zoroastrian and in later Brahman theology are in their meanings diametrically opposed.

Asura-daiva represent originally two distinct races of gods (like the Northern Aser and Vaner)—two different aspects of the conception of deity. Asura indicates the more sublime and awful divine character, for which man entertains the greater reverence and fear: daiva denotes the kind gods of light, the vulgar—more sensuous and anthropomorphic—deities. This twofold development of the idea of God formed the point of leverage for Zoroaster's reformation. While in India the conception of the asura had veered more and more towards the dreadful and the dreaded, Zoroaster elevated it again—at the cost, indeed, of the daivas (daēvas), whom he degraded to the rank of malicious powers and devils. In one Asura, whose Aryan original was Varuna, he concentrated the whole of the divine character, and conferred upon it the epithet of “the wise” (mazdāo). This culminating stage in the asura-conception is the work of

Zoroaster. The Wise Lord (Ahurō Mazdāo—later Ormazd) is the primeval spiritual being, the All-parent, the Father who was existent before ever the world arose. From him that world has emanated, and its course is governed by his foreseeing eye. His guiding spirit is the Holy Spirit, which wills the good: yet it is not free, but restricted, in this temporal epoch, by its antagonist and own twin-brother (Yasna, 30, 3), the Evil Spirit (angrō mainyush, Ahriman), who in the beginning was banished by the Good Spirit by means of the famous ban contained in Yasna, 45, 2, and since then drags out his existence in the darkness of Hell as the principle of ill—the arch-devil. In the Gāthās the Good Spirit of Mazda and the Evil Spirit are the two great opposing forces in the world, and Ormazd himself is to a certain extent placed above them both. The Holy Spirit is made directly equivalent to Ahura Mazda, the “Wise Lord”, Ormazd; and then the great watchword is: “Here Ormazd, there Ahriman!” The very daēvas are only the inferior instruments, the corrupted children of Ahriman, from whom come all that is evil in the world. The daēvas, unmasked and attacked by Zoroaster as the true enemies of mankind, are still, in the Gāthās, without doubt the perfectly definite gods of old popular belief—the idols of the people. For Zoroaster they sink to the rank of spurious deities, and in his eyes their priests and votaries are idolaters and heretics. In the later, developed system the daēvas are the evil spirits in general, and their number has increased to millions. Some few of these have names; and among those names of the old Aryan divinities emerge here and there, such as Indra and Nāonhaitya. With some, of course—such as the god of fire—the connection with

the good deity was a priori indissoluble. Other powers of light, such as Mitra the god of day (Iranian Mithra), survived unforgotten in popular belief till the later system incorporated them in the angelic body. The authentic doctrine of the Gāthās had no room either for the cult of Mithra or for that of the Haoma. Beyond the Lord and his Fire, the Gāthās only recognize the archangels and certain ministers of Ormazd, who are, without exception, personifications of abstract ideas. This hypostasization and all-egotization is especially characteristic of the Zoroastrian religion. The essence of Ormazd is Truth and Law (asha, akin to the Vedic rita): this quality he embodies, and its personification (though conceived as sexless) is always by his side, a constant companion and intimate. The essence of the wicked spirit is falsehood: and falsehood, as the embodiment of the evil principle, is much more frequently mentioned in the Gāthās than Ahriman himself.

Zoroaster says of himself that he had received from God a commission to purify religion (Yasna, 44, 9). He purified it from the grossly sensual elements of daēva worship, and uplifted the idea of religion to a higher and purer sphere. The motley body of Aryan folk-belief, when subjected to the unifying thought of a speculative brain, was transformed to a self-contained theory of the universe and a logical dualistic principle. But this dualism is a temporally limited dualism—no more than an episode in the world-whole—and is destined to terminate in monotheism. Later sects sought to rise from it to a higher unity in other ways. Thus the Zurvanites represented Ormazd and Ahriman as twin sons

proceeding from the fundamental principle of all—Zrvana Akarana, or limitless time.

Ethically, too, the new doctrine stands on a higher plane, and represents, in its moral laws, a superior civilization. The devil-worshippers, at their sacrifices, slay the ox; and this the daēvas favour, for they are foes to the cattle and to cattle-breeding, and friends to those who work ill to the cow. In Zoroaster's eyes this is an abomination: for the cow is a gift of Ormazd to man, and the religion of Mazda protects the sacred animal. It is the religion of the settled grazier and the peasant, while the ruder daēva-cult holds its ground among the uncivilized nomadic tribes. In an old confession of faith, the convert is pledged to abjure the theft and robbery of cattle and the ravaging of villages inhabited by worshippers of Mazda (Yasna, 12, 2).

Zoroaster's teachings show him to have been a man of a highly speculative turn, faithful, however, with all his originality, to the Iranian national character. With zeal for the faith, and boldness and energy, he combined diplomatic skill in his dealings with his exalted protectors. His thinking is consecutive, self-restrained, practical, devoid of everything that might be called fantastic or excessive. His form of expression is tangible and concrete: his system is constructed on a clearly conceived plan and stands on a high moral level; for its time it was a great advance in civilization. The doctrine of Zoroaster and the Zoroastrian Church may be summarized somewhat as follows:

At the beginning of things there existed the two spirits who represented good and evil (Yasna, 30, 3). The existence of evil in the world is thus presupposed from the beginning. Both spirits possess creative power, which manifests itself positively in the one and negatively in the other. Ormazd is light and life, and creates all that is pure and good—in the ethical world of law, order and truth. His antithesis is darkness, filth, death, and produces all that is evil in the world. Until then the two spirits had counterbalanced one another. The ultimate triumph of the good spirit is an ethical demand of the religious consciousness and the quintessence of Zoroaster's religion. Ormazd later reveals to Zoroaster the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer, known as the Ahunwar, which Ormazd spoke to paralyze, prophesize, and overcome the evil spirit, Ahriman. Thus, the Ahunwar is the most important prayer of Zoroastrians and is similar in its cosmic theme, spiritual message to the believer, and practice in the religion as the Lord's Prayer revealed by Christ is to Christians.

The evil spirit with his wicked hosts appears in the Gāthās much less endowed with the attributes of personality and individuality than does Ahura Mazda. Within the world of the good Ormazd is Lord and God alone. In this sense Zoroastrianism is often referred to as the faith of Ormazd or as Mazdaism. Ormazd in his exalted majesty is the ideal figure of an Oriental king. He is not alone in his doings and conflicts, but has in conjunction with himself a number of genii—for the most part personifications of

ethical ideas. These are his creatures, his instruments, servants and assistants. They are comprehended under the general name of ameshā spentā (“immortal holy ones”) and are the prototypes of the seven ameshaspands of a later date. These are similar to the seven spirits of Yahweh described in the Bible's Old Testament and the Revelation of Saint John the Divine in the Bible's New Testament. Per Zoroastrianism, these seven emanations of The Creator are—(1) Vohu Manō, good sense, that is, the good principle, the idea of the good, the principle that works in man inclining him to what is good; (2) Asha, afterwards Asha Vahishta, the genius of truth and the embodiment of all that is true, good and right, upright law and rule—ideas practically identical for Zoroaster; (3) Khshathra, afterwards Khshathra Vairya, the power and kingdom of Ormazd, which have subsisted from the first but not in integral completeness, the evil having crept in like tares among the wheat: the time is yet to come when it shall be fully manifested in all its unclouded majesty; (4) Ārmaiti, due reverence for the divine, verecundia, spoken of as daughter of Ormazd and regarded as having her abode upon the earth; (5) Haurvatāt, perfection; (6) Ameretāt, immortality. Other ministering angels are Gēush Urvan (“the genius and defender of animals”), and Sraosha, the genius of obedience and faithful hearing; (7) Spenta Mainyu, the Holy Spirit, The Creator directly or perhaps centrally, Ahura Mazda.

As soon as the two separate spirits (vide Bundahishn, 1, 4) encounter one another, their creative activity and at the same time their permanent conflict begin. The history of this conflict

is the history of the world. A great cleft runs right through the world: all creation divides itself into that which is Ahura's and that which is Ahriman's. Not that the two spirits carry on the struggle in person; they leave it to be fought out by their respective creations and creatures which they sent into the field. The field of battle is the present world.

In the center of battle is man: his soul is the object of the war. Man is a creation of Ormazd, who therefore has the right to call him to account. But Ormazd created him free in his determinations and in his actions, wherefore he is accessible to the influences of the evil powers. This freedom of the will is clearly expressed in Yasna, 31, 11: "Since thou, O Mazda, didst at the first create our being and our consciences in accordance with thy mind, and didst create our understanding and our life together with the body, and works and words in which man according to his own will can frame his confession, the liar and the truth-speaker alike lay hold of the word, the knowing and the ignorant each after his own heart and understanding. Ārmaiti searches, following thy spirit, where errors are found." Man takes part in this conflict by all his life and activity in the world. By a true confession of faith, by every good deed, word and thought, by continually keeping pure his body and his soul, he impairs the power of Satan and strengthens the might of goodness, and establishes a claim for reward upon Ormazd; by a false confession, by every evil deed, word and thought and defilement, he increases the evil and renders service to Satan.

The life of man falls into two parts—its earthly portion and that which is lived after death is past. The lot assigned to him after death is the result and consequence of his life upon earth. No religion has so clearly grasped the ideas of guilt and of merit. On the works of men here below a strict reckoning will be held in heaven (according to later representations, by Rashnu, the genius of justice, and Mithra). All the thoughts, words and deeds of each are entered in the book of life as separate items—all the evil works, etcetera, as debts. Wicked actions cannot be undone, but in the heavenly account can be counterbalanced by a surplus of good works. It is only in this sense that an evil deed can be atoned for by a good deed. Of a real remission of sins the old doctrine of Zoroaster knows nothing, whilst the later Zoroastrian Church admits repentance, expiation and remission. After death the soul arrives at the *cinvatō peretu*, or accountant's bridge, over which lies the way to heaven. Here the statement of his life account is made out. If he has a balance of good works in his favor, he passes forthwith into paradise (*Garō demāna*) and the blessed life. If his evil works outweigh his good, he falls finally under the power of Satan, and the pains of hell are his portion for ever. Should the evil and the good be equally balanced, the soul passes into an intermediary stage of existence (the *Hamēstakāns* of the Pahlavi books) and its final lot is not decided until the last judgment. This court of reckoning, the *judicium particulare*, is called *ākā*. The course of inexorable law cannot be turned aside by any sacrifice or offering, nor yet even by the free grace of God.

But man has been smitten with blindness and ignorance: he knows neither the eternal law nor the things which await him after death. He allows himself too easily to be ensnared by the craft of the evil powers who seek to ruin his future existence. He worships and serves false gods, being unable to distinguish between truth and lies. Therefore it is that Ormazd in his grace determined to open the eyes of mankind by sending a prophet to lead them by the right way, the way of salvation. According to later legend (Vendidad 2, 1), Ormazd at first wished to entrust this task to Yima (Jemshīd), the ideal of an Iranian king. But Yima, the secular man, felt himself unfitted for it and declined it. He contented himself therefore with establishing in his paradise (vara) a heavenly kingdom in miniature, to serve at the same time as a pattern for the heavenly kingdom that was to come. Zoroaster at last, as being a spiritual man, was found fit for the mission. He experienced within himself the inward call to seek the amelioration of mankind and their deliverance from ruin, and regarded this inner impulse, intensified as it was by long, contemplative solitude and by visions, as being the call addressed to him by God Himself. Like Mahommed after him he often speaks of his conversations with God and the archangels. He calls himself most frequently manthran (“prophet”), ratu (“spiritual authority”), and saoshyant (“the coming helper” or alternatively “savior”)—that is to say, when men come to be judged according to their deeds.

The full contents of his dogmatic and ethical teaching we cannot gather from the Gāthās. He speaks for the most part only in

general references of the divine commands and of good and evil works. Among the former those most inculcated are renunciation of Satan, adoration of Ormazd, purity of soul and body, and care of the cow. We learn little otherwise regarding the practices connected with his doctrines. A ceremonial worship is hardly mentioned. He speaks more in the character of prophet than in that of lawgiver. The contents of the Gāthās are essentially eschatological. Revelations concerning the last things and the future lot, whether bliss or woe, of human souls, promises for true believers, threatenings for disbelievers, his firm confidence as to the future triumph of the good—such are the themes continually dwelt on with endless variations.

It was not without special reason—so Zoroaster believed—that the calling of a prophet should have taken place precisely when it did. It was, he held, the final appeal of Ormazd to mankind at large. Like John the Baptist and the Apostles of Jesus Christ, Zoroaster also believed that the fulness of time was near, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Through the whole of the Gāthās runs the pious hope that the end of the present world is not far distant. He himself hopes, with his followers, to live to see the decisive turn of things, the dawn of the new and better aeon. Ormazd will summon together all his powers for a final decisive struggle and break the power of evil for ever; by his help the faithful will achieve the victory over their detested enemies, the daēva worshippers, and render them impotent. Thereupon Ormazd will hold a *judicium universale*, in the form of a general ordeal, a great test of all mankind by fire and molten

metal, and will judge strictly according to justice, punish the wicked, and assign to the good the hoped-for reward. Satan will be cast, along with all those who have been delivered over to him to suffer the pains of hell, into the abyss, where he will henceforward lie powerless. Forthwith begins the one undivided kingdom of God in heaven and on earth. This is called, sometimes the good kingdom, sometimes simply the kingdom. Here the sun will forever shine, and all the pious and faithful will live a happy life, which no evil power can disturb, in the eternal fellowship of Ormazd and his angels. Every believer will receive as his guerdon the inexhaustible cow and the gracious gifts of the Vohu manō. The prophet and his princely patrons will be accorded special honor.

History and Later Development.—For the great mass of the people Zoroaster's doctrine was too abstract and spiritualistic. The vulgar fancy requires sensuous, plastic deities, which admit of visible representation; and so the old gods received honor again and new gods won acceptance. They are the angels (yazatas) of New Zoroastrianism. Thus, in the later Avesta, we find not only Mithra but also purely popular divinities such as the angel of victory, Verethraghna, Anāhita (Anāitis), the goddess of the water, Tishrya (Sirius), and other heavenly bodies, invoked with special preference. The Gāthās know nothing of a new belief which afterwards arose in the Fravashi, or guardian angels of the faithful. Fravashi properly means “confession of faith,” and when personified comes to be regarded as a protecting spirit. Unbelievers have no fravashi.

On the basis of the new teaching arose a widely spread priesthood (āthravanō) who systematized its doctrines, organized and carried on its worship, and laid down the minutely elaborated laws for the purifying and keeping clean of soul and body, which are met with in the Vendidad. To these ecclesiastical precepts and expiations belong in particular the numerous ablutions, bodily chastisements, love of truth, beneficial works, support of comrades in the faith, alms, chastity, improvement of the land, arboriculture, breeding of cattle, agriculture, protection of useful animals, as the dog, the destruction of noxious animals, and the prohibition either to burn or to bury the dead. These are to be left on the appointed places (dakhmas) and exposed to the vultures and wild dogs. In the worship the drink prepared from the haoma (Indian soma) plant had a prominent place. Worship in the Zoroastrian Church was devoid of pomp; it was independent of temples. Its center was the holy fire on the altar. The fire altars afterwards developed to fire temples. In the sanctuary of these temples the various sacrifices and high and low masses were celebrated. As offerings meat, milk, show-bread, fruits, flowers and consecrated water were used. The priests were the privileged keepers and teachers of religion. They only performed the sacrifices (Herodotus, book one, 132), educated the young clergy, imposed the penances; they in person executed the circumstantial ceremonies of purification and exercised a spiritual guardianship and pastoral care of the laymen. Every young believer in Mazda, after having been received into the

religious community by being girt with the holy lace, had to choose a confessor and a spiritual guide (ratu).

Also in eschatology, as may be expected, a change took place. The last things and the end of the world are relegated to the close of a long period of time (3000 years after Zoroaster), when a new Saoshyant is to be born of the seed of the prophet, the dead are to come to life, and a new incorruptible world to begin.

Zoroastrianism was the national religion of Iran, but it was not permanently restricted to the Iranians, being professed by Turanians as well. The worship of the Persian gods spread to Armenia and Cappadocia and over the whole of the Near East (Strabo, book 15, 3, 14; book 11, 8, 4; 14, 76). Of the Zoroastrian Church under the Achaemenides and Aeracides little is known. After the overthrow of the dynasty of the Achaemenides a period of decay seems to have set in. Yet the Aeracides and the Indo-Scythian kings as well as the Achaemenides were believers in Mazda. The national restoration of the Sasanids brought new life to the Zoroastrian religion and long-lasting sway to the Church. Protected by this dynasty, the priesthood developed into a completely organized state church, which was able to employ the power of the state in enforcing strict compliance with the religious law-book hitherto enjoined by their unaided efforts only. The head of the Church (Zara-Shushtrōtema) had his seat at Rai in Media and was the first person in the state next to the king. The formation of sects was at this period not infrequent (vide Manichaeism). The Mohammedan invasion (636), with the

terrible persecutions of the following centuries, was the death-blow of Zoroastrianism. In Iran itself few followers of Zoroaster are now found (mostly in Kerman, Yazd, and Tehran, and sparsely among Pahlevani-speaking Kurds). The Parsees in and around Mumbai and the Gujarat of India strongly hold by Zoroaster as their prophet and the ancient Zoroastrian religious usages, as their contemporary doctrine preaches a pure monotheism and the Zoroastrian creed of "good thoughts, good words, good deeds" (hukta, humata, hvarshta) constituting Zoroaster's conscientious, self-selecting moral code, as anciently revealed in the Gāthās.