

## Zoroastrianism

by Annie Besant

A Convention Lecture at the 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Theosophical Society

First printed in 1897 in the book Four Great Religions

Reprinted in booklet form in 1935, 1959

The Theosophical Publishing House 1959

**[Page 3]** ONE of the differences which are continually arising between occult knowledge and the oriental science which has of late years been growing up in the West, is the question of the age of the great religions. When we come to Buddhism and to Christianity the difference is limited to the question of a century or two. But with regard both to Hinduism and Zoroastrianism, there is an entire conflict between orientalism and occultism — a clash which does not seem likely to cease: for most certainly the occultists will not change their position, and the Orientalists, on the other hand, are likely only to be driven backward stage by stage with the unveiling of ancient cities, with the discovery of ancient monuments. And this is a slow process. Hinduism and Zoroastrianism go back into what history would call "the night of time", Hinduism being the more ancient, and Zoroastrianism the second religion in the evolution of the Āryan race.

I propose to look at the changes of opinion through which Orientalists have passed, in order to show you how they are gradually being forced backwards, disputing, we may say, every inch of the ground, century after century, as the growing evidence points to an ever greater antiquity. Then I will take up the occult testimony **[Page 4]**, and see where that places the religion of the Iranian Prophet.

Some writers, we find, on glancing over their works, place this prophet — called Zoroaster sometimes, and more lately Zarathushtra (and I must ask the pardon of my Parsî brethren, as I may be committing the most flagrant mispronunciations, for I am absolutely ignorant of the Avestaic language) — as late as B.C. 610. That would make him about contemporary with the Buddha and with Plato — a position resting on Muhammadan authority, and, if ever seriously entertained by European Orientalists, now at least entirely renounced. Dr. L. H. Mills — looked upon as one of the greatest European authorities, who made the standard translation of the Gāthās and published with it the various other authoritative translations — in dealing with this question of antiquity relies on the evidence of language, a point on which I shall have something to say a little later. He says that the Gāthās are written in a tongue which is evidently related to the Vaidik Sanskrit, the Gāthās being "long after the oldest Riks". [*Zendavesta*, Introduction p 37. Sacred Books of the East, xxxi]. Now the *Rig Veda* is put by him at the preposterously late date of only 4,000 years before Christ; and basing himself on that date he puts the Gāthās at B.C. 1000, and possibly as far back as 1500 B.C. So that we have got from 610 B.C. to 1000 B.C. or even 1500 B.C. as our first backward step. But Dr. Mills says that they may be much older — as, in truth, they are. In his later work, writing in 1890, he says: "I have ceased to resist the conviction that the latter limit [B.C. 1500] may be put further back.**[Page 5]** If they antedate the worship of Mithra . . . there is no telling how old they may be.

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

The decision of criticism is to refrain from conjectures too closely limiting their age." [*A Study of the Five Zarathushtrian ( Zoroastrian) Gāthās*, with Pahlavi translation. Narosangh's Sanskrit Text and the Persian text translated, and a commentary. Introduction, pp xix, xx].

Then we come to the view taken by the German savant, Dr. Haug, and we find that he contends for a greater antiquity, basing himself on the destruction of the library of Persepolis by Alexander, in 329 B.C. He argues that, in order that such a vast library, such a mass of literature, should have been gathered together, you must assume a greater antiquity, to give the mere time necessary for the writing and the gathering of the books. The writing was completed, he thinks, about 400 B.C. It is not possible, he says, at the very latest, to put the time of Zoroaster after 1000 B.C., and he regards 2800 B.C. as a more likely date, while he may be very much older. [*Essays on the Parsis*, by Martin Haug, Ph.D, Trüb's Oriental Series, p 136]. Dr. Haug further remarks: "Under no circumstances can we assign him a later date than B.C. 1000, and one may even find reasons for placing his era much earlier and making him a contemporary of Moses. Pliny, who compares both Moses and Zoroaster, whom he calls inventors of two different kinds of magic rites, goes much farther and states that Zoroaster lived several thousand years before Moses". [*Ibid.* p 299].

So we are gradually getting backwards, from 610 B.C. to 1500 B. C. from 1500 B.C. to 2800 B.C and **[Page 6]** possibly very much earlier may be the first proclamation of the famous truths by the Prophet. Greek testimony, however, which is available — and it is valuable as being much more ancient than the views of our modern Orientalists — throws the date, once more, very much further back. Aristotle, for instance, places the date of the Prophet at 9600 B.C., putting it 6,000 years before the time of Plato, and we may say generally that this is the view which is taken by the Greek historians. Somewhere about 9,000 years before the Christian era would be the date assigned by them to the teachings of the Prophet. [*Essays on the Parsis*, by Martin Haug, Ph.D, Trüb's Oriental Series, p 298]. The discoveries now being made by European Archaeologists are very much helping the contention which pushes the beginnings of the religion further and further back; for inasmuch as we have to connect this Zarathushtrian tradition with the tradition of Chaldea, with the tradition of Nineveh, and of Babylonia, the late researches in those districts throw some light upon the question. You may remember that only a month or two ago in *Lucifer*, in a comment on an article by H. P. Blavatsky, I mentioned some of the very latest discoveries which are being made in the country over which this religion once ruled unchallenged. We find there the history of that land, preserved in cuneiform writing, traced back to at least 7,000 years before Christ, and probably, the discoverer says, to 8000 B.C. This cuneiform writing is now under process of translation, and it is possible that when that translation is published, evidence, which even European science will accept, may be available, **[Page 7]** corroborative of the antiquity of the religion of Zoroaster.

Occultism, in any case, throws the beginnings of His teachings far far back, age after age behind all these dates. Occultists have two kinds of records on which they rely. First, the great Brotherhood has preserved the ancient writings — the writings themselves, taken away at the time when they were written; these writings are stored in underground temples, underground libraries, where no enemy can find them and where no injury can touch them. There, millennium after millennium, the knowledge of the world is gathered in its written form, and there are people to-day, men and women to-day, who have been permitted to set eyes on many of these ancient writings — writings, the very knowledge of which has passed from the world of profane history, writings in the ancient sacerdotal language, different from anything which the most ancient of the races now knows. That is not the only record on which the Occultist depends: he depends also on those imperishable records written, as we sometimes say, in the

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

Ākāsha itself ; meaning by that that there is a subtle medium which, to use a physical analogy, records like a sensitive plate every event that happens, even in its minutest details — the photograph, as it were, of the evolution of man, correct down to the very tiniest incident, and which at any time may be referred to, at any moment may be read, by those who train themselves for the study, who are willing to undergo the discipline necessary for such a research. Thus the record can be verified by each successive inquirer; we [Page 8] have the testimony of expert after expert who studies these most ancient records, and who sees not mere written characters but the events of the past, moving in living accuracy before him, moving as they occurred, instinct with life. The events of the history behind us thus live in the past of time.

According to those records, this religion which in modern days is called Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Parsîs, is, as I said, the second of the religions of the Āryan stock. The Iranians — coming forth from the same cradle-land as the first family, but spreading westwards over that vast extent of territory which includes not only modern Persia but the realm of ancient Persia — were led in their first migration thither by their great Prophet Zoroaster, who held to them the same position that Manu held to the whole original Āryan race. He belonged to the same mighty Brotherhood, and was a high Initiate of the same great Lodge, taught by the same Teachers, the Sons of the Fire. Many of you will have read in those most ancient records from the *Book of Dzyan*, given in the *Secret Doctrine*, [*Op.cit.* by H P. Blavatsky, i, Stanza iv, 1]. of the Sons of the Fire, who were the Instructors of all the great Initiates, called in Their turn, the Lords of the Flame. He came as a teacher at the beginning of this Iranian sub-race, to give them the ancient truths in a form fitted for a civilization that was to grow up amongst them; in a form fitted for the type of mind which was to develop amongst them, suited to train, to evolve, to develop them, just as other faiths were given to other peoples with the same object and on similar lines. From that mighty Teacher — whose date [Page 9] runs backward to a time at which every Orientalist would laugh in scorn — from Him came down a line of prophets that superintended the earlier development of the Iranian people. And here let me remind you that, when we are speaking of such a line of prophets, it by no means follows that each prophet is a separate individual, for the same soul often re-incarnates time after time in the same office, as you know well enough from your own ancient records. Such men as, say, Veda Vyāsa, had not one birth only upon earth but many births, for those men are always living in touch with earth, They are always superintending the spiritual evolution of mankind, and They come forth from time to time, from age to age, manifesting in a body of the time at which They appear, the same great Teacher, the same liberated Soul, the same mighty Instructor, over and over again taking the same name, as though to suggest the spiritual identity to the deaf ears of men. And tracing down this line of prophets, or this Prophet, we begin to see where the Greek tradition comes in, and we understand that the Zoroaster spoken of by Aristotle 9,600 years before what we call the time of Christ (dated of course by him from Plato, not from Christ) was seventh of this name from the original Zoroaster, and not the first Zoroaster as the Greeks supposed, and as I imagine too often many of the modern Parsîs are willing to believe. He then was seventh in the line of teachers who came to revive and reinforce the teaching when it was sinking downward and was menaced with overthrow. Still later than that there was another Zoroaster, about the year 4000 before Christ, who again revived [Page 10] the ancient teaching, again repeated the essential truths, giving them forth again with divine authority, and by means of that sacred fire which is the symbol of Deity, and which is in truth the voice of Deity. As we study this succession of prophets we see that from this ancient religion came what is called the " great science," the " Magic " of the Chaldees. We understand that the Magi of antiquity were teachers and priests of this same ancient faith, and — if, for a moment, I may startle the modern mind — that when more than 20,000 years ago the Chaldean sage stood on the roof of his observatory and marked and recorded the passage of the stars, that man was one of the comparatively modern descendants of the long line of the Magi, one of the comparatively modern representatives of the ancient lore of the Zoroastrian faith.

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

Let us, then, go backward and look at the teaching in the light of its earlier form, even although we have only its later recensions so far as scholarship is concerned ; and we shall find that even in its later recensions the ancient truths are recognizable though hidden; and that though many of these truths have been distorted in the modern form, have been materialized, have been degraded, still the occultist may recognize them; still he may point them out to those who follow this ancient religion, and may pray the modern Parsîs, in the name of their ancient Prophet, the divine Initiate who founded their faith, to rise above modern materialism, to rise above the too petty limits of modern Orientalism, and to claim their rightful dignity as one of the most ancient of the world's religions. Let them link themselves to the immemorial occult tradition, and not [Page 11] degrade themselves by accepting every passing suggestion of European scholarship.

Let it be remembered, as we shall find proved by language presently, that these ancient Iranians were Āryan and not Semitic. That is one of the points on which dispute has arisen, and in a moment I will show you how the language bears out the occult contention. We admit, of course, in much later days a Semitic intermixture. But the Iranians came from the Āryan stock, and are really a sister race of the Āryans south of the Himalayas.

The first Zoroaster, in teaching again the essential principles which are the foundation of every faith, and in each faith are apt to be overlaid by later accretions, blended philosophy and religion in a remarkable way. Coming to found a civilization which had its own peculiar features, which was essentially agricultural in its character, which was permeated through and through with the idea of the practical side of life, which was intended to train men practically in a noble faith and sublime morality, He did not give a metaphysical philosophy and an exoteric religion, linking the two together. But He interblended the two, so that it is well-nigh impossible to give an account of each separately. A better idea of the whole is obtained by following His method, and by studying the philosophy and the religion as a single system. Having foresight of the special civilization that was to grow up, He gave an immense amount of astronomical science interwoven with the philosophy and the religious teaching, and He gave that astronomical science — so necessary for people engaged in agriculture — in its occult form, and [Page 12] not in its poor dwarfed modern presentation. To Him the stars were not mere masses of matter, revolving by blind unconscious laws around dead unconscious suns. To Him the planets around the sun, and the mighty stars in the highest heavens, were but the bodies of spiritual Intelligences, whose will was their guiding law and whose knowledge ensured the stability of the universe. He taught astronomy not as of dead matter and soulless energy, but as of living Intelligences, moving in changeless order, because guided by perfect wisdom and unswerving will. He taught astronomy as the living occult science of spiritual wisdom, expressed in the material universe, the lowest form of its expression. Out of the teaching of religious philosophy and of science there grew up the ethic which down to the present day is the glory of the Zoroastrian creed. A perfect practical purity is the key-note of that morality, purity in every action of the personal life, purity in every relation to external nature, honouring external elements as the manifestations of the divine purity, guarding, as it were, their spotless cleanliness as a homage to the Life wherefrom the whole proceeds. We shall find as we go on that these are the salient points of His teachings, but ere I take them up one by one I must glance at this question of the language, for we need to understand that question to some extent if we are to trace the teachings through the different books that at present are in our hands.

I have said that the language in its oldest form, the language of the *Avesta*, justifies the occult statement of the antiquity of the Zoroastrian faith; for by the testimony — and I am quite willing to take it when [Page

13] it supports the occult view — by the testimony of European Orientalists, this Avestaic language, even as it is to-day in the latest recensions, is an Âryan dialect and is allied to the Sanskrit of the Vedas. There is not time, and it would be a little outside the subject, to say anything of the changes which you will know occurred in the development of Sanskrit in this country, the changes which are noticeable between the Sanskrit of the Vedas and the classical Sanskrit of later days; but the *Avesta* is allied to the early, to the Vaidik Sanskrit [Essays on the Parsîs, p 70], and that Sanskrit, as our German doctor tells us, is an elder sister of the Avestaic language. [Ibid p 40]. Not only is this similarity clearly and distinctly marked in the words that are used, but the similarity goes far beyond the words themselves. These ancient Gâthâs, or hymns, are written in metres that are closely allied to the metres of the *Sâma Veda*. Their rhythm, their feet, the evident method of their chanting, is a very close ally of the rhythm, of the feet, of the chanting, which still exist amongst the Hindus. So that we find on looking at them that this mark of antiquity is upon them, and as we throw back, despite the Orientalists, the antiquity of the Vedas, the antiquity of Hinduism, we carry back also with us the antiquity of the Zoroastrian faith, linking the two together in our defence as they were linked together in their earlier days in the far past of the two great peoples. So again, if I may for a moment take the occult record, the chants are the same. Those wonderful chants of the ancient world, which. [Page 14] have their results in the invisible, those chants that control the lower intelligences and that rise up to the higher in the language of colour and of music — these Gâthâs were chanted in that same archaic svara, and though lost by the priests of modern Zoroastrianism, the echoes are still recoverable from the Âkâshic records. Turning now — for the survey is necessarily hasty — from the language of the *Avesta* to that much contested word "Zend," which some say is a language while others say it is a commentary — how far does European scholarship throw light upon the question? They say, some of them — and here I fear modern Parsîs tend to agree with them — that Zend is nothing more than a modern Pahlavi translation and commentary on the ancient writings. The word is certainly constantly applied simply to that translation, made under the Sasanian dynasty in comparatively modern times. But I am glad to see that some European scholarship rejects that contention, and declares that the Zend is the original commentary written in the language of the *Avesta*, and is therefore thrown back again to the ancient times, to the times of the language allied to the Sanskrit of the Vedas, Dr. Haug says that from the " use of the denomination *Avesta* and *Zend* by the Pahlavi translators, we are fully entitled to conclude that the *Zend* they mentioned was a commentary on the *Avesta* already existing before they undertook their translation; and as they considered it sacred, this *Zend* was probably in the same language as the original *Avesta* . . . Originally it (*Zend*) meant the commentaries made by the successors of Zarathushtra upon the sacred [Page 15] writings of the prophet and his immediate disciples. These commentaries must have been written in nearly the same language as the original text, and as that language gradually became unintelligible to all but the priests, the commentaries were regarded as part of the text, and a new explanation, or *Zend*, was required. This new *Zend* was furnished by the most learned priests of the Sasanian period, in the shape of a translation into Pahlavi, the vernacular language of Persia in those days; and in later times the term *Zend* has been confined to this translation". [Essays on the Parsîs, pp 120, 122]. The contention that *Zend* was a commentary is to a large extent shown to be true, if once more we turn to the occult testimony instead of to the testimony of modern scholarship. For we find, and here we may take the evidence of H. P. Blavatsky — who was writing of that which was within her own knowledge from her own study under the Teacher, under her Guru — that this commentary, the original *Zend* of the Iranians, was a commentary written in a language derived from that ancient sacerdotal language to which I alluded in the beginning of this lecture. For there is a language known to all occultists, not a language of letters, as letters are understood in our modern tongues, but a language of signs, of symbols, of colours, of sounds, which rings out in music as well as shines in colour, and which takes its own forms, which every Initiate can recognize and translate into the lower languages of the intellectual world. It has sometimes been called the *Zenzar*. It has sometimes been called the *Deva-Bhâshâ*. H. P. Blavatsky says of *Zend*: [Page 16] "It means, as in one sense correctly stated, ' a commentary or explanation' ; but it also means that which the Orientalists do not seem to have any idea

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

about, viz., the 'rendering of the esoteric sentences,' the veil used to conceal the correct meaning of the Zend-d-zar texts, the sacerdotal language in use among the Initiates of archaic India. Found now in several undecipherable inscriptions, it is still used and studied to this day in the secret communities of the eastern adepts, and called by them — according to the locality — *Zend-zar* and *Brahma* or *Deva Bhāshā* . . . The Zend text is simply a secret *code* of certain words and expressions agreed upon by the original compilers, and the key to which is but with the Initiates". [*The Theosophist*, IV article on Zoroastrianism, commencing on p 224]. Many names have been given to the language; names matter not, for they vary with every tongue; but the essential thing is that such a language exists, that it is known to-day as it was known a million years ago, that people learn it now as they learnt it then, that occult instruction is given in that language, and not in the clumsy sounds articulated by a physical tongue, and that from that language truths are translated into the most ancient intellectual tongues derived from it. The Vaidik Sanskrit is the most ancient intellectual echo of that archaic language, and the Zend of the Iranian has the same root, comes from the same fount. Later on, when we come to the Pahlavi translations we find there that we are within what is generally called historic time. " Pahlavi" is now used only to denote " the written language of Persia during the Sasanian [Page 17] dynasty, and to the literature of that period and a short time after", [*Essays on the Parsis*, p 81. The Sasanian dynasty flourished from A.D. 226 to A.D. 653, when it was swept away by the Muhammadans] but in earlier times it was used generally for ancient Persian. Here we have Semitic words, traces of the Semitic influence, and it is contended that these run backwards to some 600 years before the time of Christ. [*Ibid* p 81]. That matters not, for 600 years before the time of Christ is a modern time for an occultist. He is dealing with millennia and not with centuries, and this sign of Semitic influence in the later time has absolutely no influence on his judgment as to the origin of the ancient faith. We must pass from this question of language, which might well be worked out at greater length and which leads to many other matters of interest, to one other disputed point of importance, too much overlooked. The Chaldean tradition, as it is preserved through the Grecian nation, is of vital interest, although it be at present ignored, as I understand, by the modern Zoroastrianism. This Chaldean tradition which comes through Greece, may roughly be said to have arisen as follows. In the time of Alexander it is admitted that there was a vast library at Persepolis, but as you know he burned it either in drunkenness or in revenge. Hence he is constantly called " the accursed Alexander" in all the later writings belonging to the faith of Zoroaster. Now, there is evidence that at the time of the burning there were two complete sets of the whole Zoroastrian literature. One of these sets [Page 18] was in the library and was burnt by this " accursed Alexander". The other set was taken possession of by the Greek conquerors, and by them was translated into Greek. Little of this survives, but fragments of it remain in the *Nabathoean Agriculture*, in the quotations made from it by Neo-Platonic writers, who speak of the *Oracles of Zoroaster* and of the teachings of that Prophet. These traces of the ancient teaching, preserved in the literature of the Greeks, strengthen and corroborate the acknowledged Zoroastrian tradition. Why then should not this assistance be accepted in the struggle to substantiate the antiquity of the religion ? Why should not modern Pārsîs take the evidence which comes down to them through this other line, since the two lines are found to blend into one? These fragments preserved by Greek authors, borne witness to in the literature of the Greek nation, these fragments still breathe the ancient spirit, and corroborate the teachings which Zoroaster in the past has given.

Let us now turn to the literature itself, and consider our documents. First comes the *Yasna*, of which the most ancient part consists of the Gāthās, the archaic hymns, the teachings which came from the mouth of the great Prophet Himself. They are now five only in number, and, as accepted in the present day, are mere fragments, but they are dignified, sublime and grand, bearing testimony to the nobility of the ancient teaching. These form the first part of the *Yasna* ', the second part consists of prayers and ceremonies — prayers addressed to the supreme Deity, prayers equally addressed to the mighty Ones who stand below Him, forming the spiritual hierarchy. For ancient [Page 19] Zoroastrianism knew nothing of that modern

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

materialism which tries to place God at one pole of the universe and man and his world at the other, with a mighty gap of bare and empty space between them. In Zoroastrianism, as in every other ancient faith, there was no gap in the universe, no empty space, no place where there were not living Intelligences, no place where spiritual beings were not working; from man near the base of the ladder to the supreme God at its head, there were ranged Intelligences growing higher and higher, diviner and diviner, and all these were objects of adoration — a fact to which the whole literature of Zoroastrianism bears testimony. After the *Yasna*, with its two parts, we have the *Visparad*, a collection of invocations, of preparatory invocations to be used before other prayers and sacrifices. These two, the *Yasna* and the *Visparad*, may be regarded as holding the position in Zoroastrianism that is held by the Vedas in Hinduism, Below these there comes what was once a vast mass of literature of which only, alas! the names for the most part survive. There is one book complete, and some few fragments of the remainder, out of a list of twenty-one great treatises, of which the contents, roughly outlined, are also on record — the 21 Nasks, they are called. These deal with sciences of every kind, with medicine, with astronomy, with agriculture, with botany, with philosophy, with the whole range in fact of sciences and laws; they hold the position held by the Vedānga in Hinduism. I lay stress on these analogies, because they so much strengthen our position as to the antiquity and the dignity of this ancient faith. Of these only one [Page 20] book survives in its entirety, the *Vendidad*, the book of laws affecting the preservation of purity alike in external nature and in man. Next we have the *Khordah Avesta* or little *Avesta*, consisting of Yashts (invocations) and of prayers, for the use of the laity rather than of the priests, many of them the prayers used daily by the modern Parsîs. It is a mixed collection — some of the fragments very ancient, some of comparatively recent date. After the burning of the library of Persepolis came a period of five hundred and fifty years of anarchy and tumult, and it was only at the close of this period that, under the Sasanian monarchs, the surviving fragments of Zoroastrian literature were gathered together. Little marvel that but fragments remained, fragments of a once glorious whole, like pieces of mosaic rent from their bed where they formed part of a great and intelligible picture. Only those who can recover the picture can see where each fragment fitted in, and can thus judge of the original beauty of the whole.

I have explained rather at length — considering the time at my disposal — though very briefly in reality, these preliminary details, because to most people they are almost unknown, and yet, unless they are known, it is impossible to appreciate the weight of evidence by which the antiquity of the philosophy and the religion themselves are sustained. And we may also say that it is necessary to see where the gaps in the evidence occur, to appreciate how much has been lost, how fragmentary are the Scriptures remaining in our hands, and how imperfect must therefore be any statement of the [Page 21] philosophy and the religion drawn from them alone. Enough, however, remains, to substantiate the proposition that Zoroastrianism is at one with occult teaching on all important points, save one. In the Scriptures, as accepted by orthodox Parsîs reincarnation is not found; it is taught in the fragments preserved by the Greeks, and in the *Desatir*, a book containing much occult truth, but none of these are regarded as authoritative.

Let us now turn to the philosophy and the religion themselves, and as there has been, most unfortunately, a materialistic reaction, under European influence, it is necessary to quote verse by verse from the received Scriptures in order to establish the ancient occult teachings.

At the head of the manifested universe stands Ahurā-Mazdāo, sometimes translated as the living Wisdom, sometimes as the Lord of Wisdom, sometimes as the Wise Lord. The cuneiform inscriptions have Aûramazdā, the Sasanian Aûharmazda, and the modern Persian is Hôrmazd or Ormazd. [Essays

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

on the *Parsis*, p 302].

He is the Supreme, He the Universal, the All-pervasive, the Source and the Fountain of Life; He, in the Zoroastrian religion, holds the same position as the manifested Brahman of the Upanisads, who came forth at the beginning, the One, the source of life to man. He is described over and over again in the different Scriptures, not so fully in the Gāthās — though there also in part — as in some of the prayers and invocations. Let us take two specimens to show what is the description given of this mighty Being, in order [Page 22] that you may realize how sublime is the conception, how lofty this idea of the primeval God. In the *Ormazd Yasht*, He proclaims His own qualities, something the same way as Srī Krishna does in the 10th Discourse in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. He proclaims His names, the names which describe His attributes. He says: " I am the Protector, I am the Creator, I am the Nourisher, I am the Knowing, I am the Holiest Heavenly One. My name is the Healing . . . My name is God, My name is Great, Wise One; My name is the Pure ... I am called the Majestic . . . the Far-seeing ... I am called the Watcher . . . The Augmenter," and so on through a list of seventy-two names. [*Ormazd Yasht*, Trans from Prof Spiegel by A H. Bleek]. Let us listen to the description of Him in the words of the great Prophet Himself: " He, (Ahura-Mazda) first created, through His inborn lustre, the multitude of celestial bodies, and through His intellect the good creatures, governed by the inborn good mind. Thou, Ahura-Mazda, the Spirit who art everlasting, makest them (the good creatures) grow. When my eyes behold Thee, the Essence of Truth, the Creator of life, who manifests His life in His works then I know Thee to be the primeval Spirit, Thou, Mazda, so high in mind as to create the world, and the father of the good mind". [*Gāthā Ahunavaitī*, Trans by Dr Haug] Ahura-Mazdāo is revealed as threefold, and we read in the *Khordah Avesta*: "Praise to Thee, Ahura-Mazda, three-fold before other creatures". [*Op cit*, vii *Qarsēt Nyâyis*, I Spiegel]. Notice this " three-fold " for it is of vital importance. It joins this Zoroastrian [Page 23] conception of the First Being to the threefold or triple Brahman who is so familiar to us in the Upanishads, and it also explains His emanating two principles which exist in Him, and a third completing the Trinity, two principles which too often have been placed as opposing principles, making the Zoroastrian teaching essentially dualistic instead of essentially monistic as it is. But before taking up that point we must recognize that according to the ancient teaching there was behind and beyond Ahura-Mazdāo the One, the Unknowable, that Boundless Time who by Orientalists in Europe is denied, knowing not the occult teachings. They argue that the idea of Boundless Time, as the source of Ahura-Mazdāo is founded on a grammatical blunder, instead of its being, as it is, an attempt to convey the occult truth of the One Existence, unknowable to human faculties. But although they contest it, they admit the antiquity of the teaching; they must admit that the testimony of ancient days is at one with the occult teaching. If we take the Greek evidence, it speaks with no uncertain voice as to what was taught, Plutarch says: "Cromas-des [Ahura-Mazdāo] sprang out of the purest light", [*Essays on the Parsis*, p 9] Damascius writes: "The Magi and the whole Aryan nation consider, as Eudemos writes, some Space, and others Time, as the universal cause, out of which the good god as well as the evil spirit were separated, or, as others assert, light and darkness, before these *two spirits arose*". [*Ibid*, p 12]. Theodoros speaks of " the nefarious doctrine of the Persians, which Zoroastrades introduced, [Page 24] viz that about ZOROUAN, whom he makes the ruler of the whole universe, and calls him Destiny; and who when offering sacrifice in order to generate Hormisdas, produced both Hormisdas and Satan". [*Essays on the Parsis*, p 12]. Very interesting is this blundering account of a controversialist, especially his reference to the occult teaching of the primeval Sacrifice. This again comes out in a " Refutation of Heresies " in the fifth century A. D. by Euzvik. "Before anything, heaven or earth, or creature of any kind whatever therein, was existing, Zeruan existed. . . . He offered sacrifices for a thousand years in the hope of obtaining a son, ORMIZ by name, who was to create heaven, earth, and everything therein". [*Ibid* p 13]. Dr. Haug, who clings to the grammatical blunder theory, nevertheless acknowledges: "That this doctrine of *Zarvan Akarana* was commonly believed in Persia, during the times of the Sasanians, may be distinctly seen from the reports quoted above (pp.

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

12-14)". [*Op cit* pp 309-310]. Apart from all occult testimony that is enough to establish that Zarathushtra taught the ancient doctrine of the One Existence, unmanifested, from which the manifested came forth. And when we further read of a primeval sacrifice, performed by God Himself, from which Ahura-Mazdão was produced, we know by the hint, so dark to the many but so clear to the few, that the primary Sacrifice, the limitation by which manifestation was rendered possible, was also taught by Zarathushtra, as it is known to every student of occultism, and is hinted at over and over again in the [Page25] Scriptures of the world. H. P. Blavatsky says "Ahura-Mazda (Asura-Mazda) himself issued from Zero-ana Akerna ' Boundless (circle of) Time,' or the unknown cause. The glory of the latter is too exalted, its light too resplendent for either human intellect or mortal eye to grasp and see. Its primal emanation is eternal light, which, from having been previously concealed in Darkness, was called to manifest itself, and thus was formed Ormazd, the ' King of Life.' He is the ' first-born ' in Boundless Time, but like his own antetype (pre-existing spiritual idea), has lived within Darkness from all eternity". [Article on Zoroastrianism, *The Theosophist*, IV, p 224].

To the occultist, knowing that Zarathushtra was a member of the Brotherhood, there can of course be no doubt as to His teaching on this fundamental truth; but for others the external testimony ought to be sufficient, and the fact that the opposing view is merely the idea of Europeans, ignorant of the ancient lore.

Let us now return to the threefold Ahura-Mazdão, and His unfolding in order that creation might be; we learn that from Him duality proceeded, Spentō-Mainyush and Angrō-Mainyush, two principles that had their root in Him, but that were unfolded in order that a manifested universe might be brought into existence. The words "good" and "evil" are used to describe these two principles, but they are not the best words of description; the key is given in the most ancient Gāthās. Good and evil may be said to only come into existence when man in his evolution develops the power of knowledge and of choice; the original [Page 26] duality is not of good and evil, but is of spirit and matter, of reality and non-reality, of light and darkness, of construction and destruction, the two poles, between which the universe is woven and without which no universe can be. The second phrase, "reality and non-reality," is used by Zarathushtra Himself in the proclamation of this fundamental truth, for we read in the *Gāthā Ahunavaiti*, that the Prophet declared, standing by the sacred Fire — we will in a few moments see the significance of a declaration made standing by the Fire — "In the beginning there was a pair of twins, two spirits, each of a peculiar activity"; He goes on to say: "And these two spirits united created the first (the material things); one the reality, the other the non-reality". [*Essays on the Parsis. Yas. xxx 3, 4, Trans by Dr Haug*]. There is that primary duality, Sat and Asat, exactly the occult teaching, that from the One the duality unfolds, in order that the many may proceed. The One created the reality and the other the unreality. The Prophet goes on to say that the one or the other of these must be followed; of these two " spirits" you must choose one, just as in all ancient teachings it is said that we may choose either spirit or matter; call them, if you will, good and evil, but good and evil are not the fundamental names, it is the spiritual or the material between which the choice of man is made. Various names are given to these two showing how they were understood in the ancient days. In *Gāthā Ushatavaiti* (Yasna xlv) it is said: "All ye who have come from near and far, should now listen and hearken to what I shall proclaim. Now the wise have manifested this universe as a duality.[Page 27]... I will proclaim the two primeval spirits of the world, of whom the increaser thus spoke to the destroyer". [*Op cit*, 1, 2]. There, are two names again that give us the clue to the secret, the " increaser" and the destroyer," the one from whom the life is ever pouring forth, and the other the material side which belongs to form, and which is ever breaking up in order that life may go on into higher expression. As though to impress this on the people, it is said that the so-called evil spirit is the death by which the body of men is struck away; the destruction of form means the

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

passing on of life into higher conditions — not the work of any evil power, but the liberation of the soul, and therefore a part of the divine manifestation of the universe. They are also spoken of as "the two masters", as "the two creators," and we find it declared that the mighty Intelligence Srosh worshipped these "two creators who create all things". [*Op cit, Yasna, Ivii, 2*] Surely this great One would not worship evil, though He might reverence the duality in the divine nature. As though to set the question at rest, They are spoken of as "my two spirits" by Ahura-Mazdão Himself. [*Op. cit Yasna, xix, 9*]. Dr. Haug fully grasps this idea and remarks: "They are the two moving causes in the universe, united from the beginning, and therefore called 'twins' (*Yêmã, Sans. Yamari*). They are present everywhere; in Ahura-Mazda as well as in man. . . . We never find Angro-Mainyush mentioned as a constant opponent of Ahura-Mazda in the Gāthās, as is the case in later writings. . . . Such is the original [**Page 28**] Zoroastrian notion of the two creative spirits, who form only two parts of the Divine Being." [*Op. cit., pp. 303-305*]

A little more difficult, perhaps, to trace, more covered over by a change that came in later times, there is a third person in this primeval Trinity: Ahura-Mazdão, who is the first and from whom all proceeds; the second with the duality which is ever the mark of the second Person in the manifested Trinity; the third, the Wisdom, the primeval Wisdom, or Mind, by which the world was made. This is Armaiti, of whom it is written: "To succour this life (to increase it) Armaiti came with wealth, the good and true mind; She, the everlasting one, created the material world". [*Op. cit., Gāthã Ahunavaiti, 7*]. In later days Armaiti became identified with Her creation, and was worshipped as the Goddess of the earth, but of yore She completed the Trinity.

Next in order come the hierarchies of the heavenly Intelligences, led by the seven great Spirits, the Ameshaspentas, the seven presiding Gods; sometimes Ahura-Mazdão is placed at Their head as one of Them; sometimes They form the lower septenary and above Them is the higher Triad — a conception familiar to every Theosophist, who knows that the universe is a decade represented by the lower seven and the higher Three, as in the Sephiroth of the Jewish Kabbalah. The seven Ameshaspentas, if Ahura-Mazdao be omitted, are: Vohüman, the Good Mind; Asha Vahishta, the Best Holiness; Kshatraver, Power; Spendarmad, Love; Haurvatât, Health; Ameretâd, Immortality; and [**Page 29**] Fire, "the most helpful of the Ameshaspentas". [*Yasna. i, 6. Trans by Spiegel, P 26*]. To These prayers are continually addressed, hymns are continually chanted to Them, the whole liturgy is permeated by Their worship; and yet some oriental scholars — followed in this by only a small minority, I am glad to say, of modern Parsîs — have materialized Them into mere attributes of God, instead of the living Intelligences by whom as it is said in the Gāthās, the worlds were made and are sustained.

Dr. Mills degrades Them into mere attributes, and in his translation always thus treats Them, though occasionally forced into very untenable positions by this modern shrinking from the recognition of invisible Intelligences everywhere. Let us see if They can be taken as mere attributes:

"Yet the most bounteous Mazda Ahura, and Piety with Him,  
And Asha the settlements furthering, Thou Good Mind and Thou the Dominion,  
Hear ye me, all! and have mercy".

[Gāthã ii,(Yas xxxiii) Trans by Dr Mills p 127].

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

The " qualities," here spelt with capitals, are some of the Ameshaspentas, Spendarmad, Vohûman and Kshatraver, and the plural "ye," as well as the phrase, " hear ye me, *all!*"

is a curious way of addressing a God and His qualities.

" Doctrines, Ahura, and actions, tell me which are the best ones, Mazda,  
And the debtor's prayer of the praisers; tell me this with the Truth and the Good Mind,  
And by Sovereign Power and grace bring on this world's perfection." [Page30]

The Pahlavi has: "Do Thou, therefore, O Aûhar-mazd, declare to me that which is the best word and deed, and do ye give that which is Thy debt, O Vohûman, and Thine, O Ashavahisht, for this praise, for through your sovereignty, O Aûharmazd, the completion of Progress is made manifestly real in the world .at will". [*Op cit*, pp 152, 153].

"Thus I conceived Thee, bounteous, Ahura-Mazda,  
When with the Good Mind's help, obedience neared me,  
And asked of me: "Who art thou? Whence thy coming?" [*Ibid*, p 165]

— a curious proceeding for a quality.

"These your favours first ask I thou, Ahura! Asha! and grant too thine, Aramaiti!" [*Ibid*, p 343].

Many more passages might be cited from the Gâthâs, did space permit. Then take this from the *Yasna Haptanhaiti*, admittedly one of the oldest parts of the *Yasna*, after the Gâthâs: We worship Ahura-Mazda the righteous, master of righteousness. We worship the Ameshaspentas (the archangels), the possessors of good, the givers of good. We-worship the whole creation of the righteous spirit". [*Essays on the Parsis*, page 171]. The *Visparad* begins: "I invoke and proclaim to: the Lords of the Heavenly, the Lords of the Earthly" [*Op cit*, Trans by Prof Spiegel, p 5]. [Page 31] and so on through a long list of Gods. Again: " We make them known: To Ahura-Mazdâ, to the holy Sraôsha, to Rashnu the most righteous, to Mithra with large pastures. To the Ameshaspentas, to the Fravarshis of the pure, to the souls of the pure, to the Fire, the son of Ahura-Mazda, and to the great Lord."\* [*Op cit*, xii, 18, 19, p 18]. The *Yasna* bears its testimony: " I invoke and proclaim to: The creator Ahura-Mazda, the Brilliant, Majestic, Greatest, Best, most Beautiful, the Strongest, most Intellectual, of the best body, the Highest through holiness; who is very wise, who rejoices afar, who created us, who formed us, who keeps us, the Holiest among the heavenly. I invoke and proclaim to: Vohûmano, Ashavahista, Kshathra-Vairya, Spenta-ârmaiti, Haurvat and Ameritât; the body of the cow, the soul of the cow, the fire (the son) of Ahura-Mazda, the most helpful of the Ameshaspentas." [*Yasna*, i 1-6, Trans by Prof Spiegel, p 26].

But the *Yasnas* are full of worship, worship of the highest Gods, of Mithra, [*Mihir Yasht, Essays on the Parsis*, p 202] of the Goddess of the waters, [*Abân Yasht, Ibid.* p 197] of Srosh [*Yasna*, Ivii, *Ibid*, p 189] —

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

one of the mightiest of the great Intelligences — of the sun, moon, and stars. [*Yasna*, iv 39 Trans by Spiegel, p 42]. In fact, the whole fabric of Zoroastrianism must be destroyed, if the worship of the Gods is to be wrenched out of it in deference to European materialism. In it, as in Hinduism, the Gods are everywhere, and as the [Page 32] worshipper ascends, he worships loftier and loftier Intelligences, till he reaches Ahura-Mazdão, of whose will they are the agents, by whose life they are sustained.

We now come to the Fire, the supreme symbol of God, the symbol of divine life, that which is called the Son of Ahura-Mazdão, the sacred symbol most revered by the Zoroastrians of to-day. As we might expect, we find prayer after prayer addressed to the Fire, worship addressed to the Fire in the plainest, the clearest and the most explicit terms, the Fire which is declared to be the most helpful of all the spiritual Intelligences, the Fire which is the most friendly, coming down from Ahura-Mazdão and acquainted with all heavenly secrets. "Happy is the man to whom thou comest mightily, Fire, son of Ahura-Mazda. More friendly than the most friendly, more worthy of adoration than the most worthy of honour. Mayest thou come helpfully to us at the greatest business. Fire, thou art acquainted with Ahura-Mazda, acquainted with the heavenly. Thou art the holiest of the same (the fire) that bears the name Vâzista. O Fire, son of Ahura-Mazda, we draw near to thee". [*Yasna*, xxxvi, ii 4-10. Trans by Prof Spiegel, p 96].

What is the Fire ? Ever, in every religion, has fire been the symbol of the supreme God; Brahman is fire; Ahura-Mazdão is fire; the Jews worship their God as a pillar of fire, and the Christians proclaim, " Our God is a consuming fire." Everywhere fire has been and is the supreme emblem; for He who is glory is revealed as fire; it blazes out from That which "is dark by excess of light," and the whole universe is but the [Page 33] outcome of the living flame. Oh! if I could show you Zarathushtra, the mighty One, as He first spake to the people, and taught them the truths that the Fire had revealed to Him, the Sons of the Fire who sent Him to the earth to teach those truths to the people. Picture Him standing by the altar, speaking of what the Fire revealed to Him. Remember what is said in one of those "Oracles" which reproduce the early traditions: "When thou beholdest a sacred Fire, formless, flashing dazzlingly throughout the world, Hear thou the voice of the Fire."As Zarathushtra spake, there was at first no fire at the altar at His side; there was sandalwood in fragrant heaps, there were perfumes, but no fire. As the Prophet stood there He held a Rod — of which every occultist knows, a Rod, a copy of which was used in the Mysteries — filled with the living fire of the upper spheres, and with the twining fire-serpents round it. As he raised that Rod, pointing it to heaven, through infinite space, through the vault of the blue sky, the heavens burst into fire, and lambent flames played on every side; cleaving the air, some of these flames darted downwards and fired the altar at His side, and the living fire wreathing round Him made Him a mass of flame, as He spake " the Words of the Fire", and proclaimed the everlasting truths. That was how Zarathushtra taught in the ancient days. And He gave the hymns of fire, that could call it down from above — the compelling mantras, the words of power — and century after century, millennium after millennium, the fire that blazed on the Zoroastrian altar in the fire-temple was no mere mingling of material flames. Ever from above, from the heavens; the sacred fire was called down from the [ Page 34] fiery Âkãsha; at the word of the priest, that fell upon the altar, and there blazed as the living symbol of God. When the lower priesthood had to act, when the higher one was not available for the service, then they were given the rod of fire in which the electric fire was ever flashing, the living flame, and as they touched the altar-fuel with that rod, the heavenly fire blazed out.

Even now, see how the tradition has come down, in the very ceremonies by which the fire is lighted on the new altar. To-day there is still a faint echo of the ancient truth, although the power has departed and

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

no Parsî Dastur can summon fire from on high. Fire is gathered from all the different sources in the town wherein the sacred flame is to be lighted, but the fire is not used as it is gathered from the earthly fuel; for the officiator places above the gathered fire an iron tray heaped with sandalwood, and holding it high above so that material contact shall not be, the fire below lights the fuel, and a second fire leaps up; nine times over that ceremony is repeated, until the very essence of fire, as it were, is gathered — pure for the pure, and worthy to be the symbol of the divine. Further, they seek to have the electric fire, the fire of lightning, flashing down from heaven, and as they are now unable to call it down for themselves, sometimes even for years they have to wait before the last fire is gathered, sometimes for years to be patient ere that fire may be mingled with the others, that burn upon the sacred altar. Before that sacred Fire every Zoroastrian bows, and in the Zoroastrian home, when sunset falls, a fragment fire is carried through every room in the gathering dusk, emblem of the purifying, the protecting power of the Supreme. [Page 35]

We must now hastily glance at the way in which man is regarded, that we may understand his place in the hierarchy of Intelligences. In him are the two principles — spirit and matter — as in all else, and he can side with the one or the other. All the ethic is based on the idea that he shall throw himself on the side of the pure, battle for the pure, maintain the pure. It may be that the later view of Angrô-Mainyush as the enemy was an attempt to stir man into active conflict against evil, to make him feel he was fighting the battle of the "good spirit " against the " evil spirit ". To be in everything actively on the side of purity is a personal duty. The Zoroastrian must keep the earth pure, must till it as a religious duty; he must perform all the functions of agriculture as a service to the Gods, for the earth is the pure creature of Ahura-Mazdão, to be guarded from all pollution. The air must be kept pure. The water must be kept pure; if anything unclean, like a corpse, falls into the water, the good Zoroastrian must remove it, that the pure element may not be fouled. Hence also the objection to burning a dead body, as polluting the fire by the touch of the unclean. Therefore is the body reverently carried to the Towers of Silence, and in that guarded place, open but to the heavens, it is laid, that the vultures may swiftly devour it, and no pure element may thereby be soiled.

Passing from that purity of external nature, with which a Parsî must not only passively but also actively associate himself, we come to that famous axiom of their religion: "Pure thoughts, pure words, pure deeds." That is the constantly reiterated rule of the [Page 36] Zoroastrian life — and we notice that the three are placed in the occult order — repeated in his daily prayers, insisted on at every turn. The first words of the *Khordah Avesta* form the Ashem-Vohû, the most sacred formula ever repeated: " Purity is the best good. Happiness, happiness is to him — namely, to the best pure in purity." [*Op cit* Translated by Professor Spiegel, p 3]. When Ahura-Mazdão is answering Zarathushtra as to the recital of the Ashem-Vohû, He declares that the recital of the Ashem-Vohû that is worth all the good things created by Himself is " when one forsakes evil thoughts and evil words and evil deeds". [*Hodokht Nask, Essays on the Parsis*, p 29]

Between the ages of seven and fifteen, the child must be initiated, and then is put on him (or her) for the first time the kusti, or sacred thread, and the sûdrã, or white linen shirt, both emblems of purity. The kusti is made of seventy-two threads of lambs wool, and is wound thrice round the waist, signifying the good thoughts, words and deeds incumbent on the wearer; it is knotted twice in front and twice behind. Truthfulness, chastity, obedience to parents, hospitality, industry, honesty, kindness to useful animals, are virtues on which special stress is laid, and charity is made an essential part of religion. It is to be wise charity, and bestowed on the deserving; especially are recommended — helping the poor, helping those to marry who cannot afford to do so, helping to educate the children of those unable to perform this duty

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

for themselves. Ervad Sheriarji Dadabhai Barucha says: "Just as certain virtues are said to [Page 37] be the peculiar attributes of the four classes of the people, and highly becoming to them, so certain vices are specially to be shunned by them. For the priestly class, hypocrisy, covetousness, negligence, slothfulness, attention to trifles and unbelief in religion are peculiarly unbecoming. The warrior must be above oppression, violence, breach of promise, encouragement of evil, ostentation, arrogance and insolence. The husbandman must fly from ignorance, envy, ill-will and malice; and the artisan must avoid incredulity, ingratitude, rudeness and slander (Mainyo-i Khart, lix)". [*Zoroastrian Religion and Customs*, p 31] It is interesting to notice that when Ahura-Mazdão proclaimed " the righteous (Ahuna-Vairya) both spiritual and earthly," the Ahuna-Vairya had three lines — the four classes, the five chiefs, and a conclusion. The classes were the fourfold order of priests, warriors, agriculturists and artisans, [*Yama*, xix 17, *Essays on the Parsis*, p 188]] another mark of the close kinship of the Iranians with the first Âryan sub-race.

Other of these marks are interesting: the sacrifice of the Homa, worshipped as fervently and extolled as highly in the *Homa Yasht* [*Essays on the Parsis*, pp 176-185] as in the *Sama Veda*; the names of the priests — the âtharva (atharvan), the Zaota (Hotã), and the identity by function of the Rathwi with the Adhvarya; milk, ghee, holy water, sacred twigs, are all used in certain ceremonies; Parsis, like Hindus, have their prayers for the dead, at stated intervals. In truth, the two faiths are sister faiths, only invasion, oppression and exile have shattered the [Page 38] younger faith to such an extent that much of its ancient birthright has been lost.

The seven principles of the human constitution are clearly mentioned in *Yasna*, LIV, I: "Bodies together with bones, vital power and form, strength and consciousness, soul and Fravarshi". [*Op cit*, Translated by Prof Spiegel, p 120]. The first three are dense and etheric bodies with Prãna; strength is Kãma, consciousness is Manas, Urvan, translated soul, is Buddhi, and Fravarshi is Âtma. "Every being of the good creation, whether living or deceased or still born, has its own Fravarshi," says Dr. Haug. [*Essays on the Parsis*, p 206]. But this hardly gives the full idea of the word, as it is expounded in the *Fravardin Yasht*, in which Ahura-Mazdão declares that everything good is maintained by their splendour and glory. They are called the strong guardian-angels of the righteous," and evidently represent the Âtmã, and in many cases the Âtmã when Manas and Buddhi have been merged in it.

After death, the soul passes into the intermediate world, " the time-worn paths which are for the wicked and which are for the righteous," [*Vendidad*, Fargard, xix, 29, *Essays on the Parsis*, p 225] spoken of by Ahura-Mazdão as " the frightful, deadly, destructive path which is the separation of the body and soul, [*Hadokht Nask*, Yt xxii, 17 Ibid p 222] Kãmaloka. The soul of the righteous meets a beautiful maiden, the embodiment of his good thoughts, goods words and good deeds; he crosses the "bridge of judge " safely, and reaches heaven. But the soul of [Page 39] the wicked meets a hideous hag, the embodiment of his evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds, and he fails to cross the bridge and falls into fire.

Again much is left untold, much is too briefly, too baldly, described; yet enough has been said to justify the occultist when he bears witness to this ancient religion, the second of the Fifth Race religions, that it springs from the primeval source, that its Prophet was one of the Divine Initiates, that it comes down from the past, millennium after millennium, and is but poorly represented by the comparatively materialized Zoroastrianism of to-day. The study of its Scriptures might revive it; the old knowledge might again be breathed into it; these concessions to European criticism and European materialism might be repudiated by every Zoroastrian as no part of his ancient, of his glorious faith. O my Parsi brothers! your Prophet is

## Zoroastrianism by Annie Besant

not dead. He is not perished: He is watching over the religion that He founded: ever seeking to raise it from its present degradation, to give it back its lost knowledge, its lost powers. What nobler work for the Zoroastrian of to-day than to permeate his brethren with the ancient fire, to relight its blaze on the spiritual altar of their hearts ? What nobler work than to study his own Scriptures, and to go forth and teach the ancient learning with the authority and power that can only be wielded by a man of the same faith with those he addresses. The Fire is not dead; it is only smoldering on its ancient altars; white-hot are the ashes, ready to reburst into flames. And I dream of a day when the breath of the great Prophet Zarathushtra shall sweep again through His temples, [Page 40] fanning the ashes on the altars of those ancient fanes, and every altar shall flash into fire, and again from heaven the answering flames shall fall, making the Iranian religion once more what it ought to be, a beacon light for the souls of men, one of the greatest religions of the world