

Belief and Ceremonies of the Followers of Zoroaster.

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THE greatest good that a Parliament of Religions, like the present can do is to establish what Professor Max Müller calls "that great golden dawn of truth" that there is a religion behind all religions." The learned professor very rightly says that "Happy is the man who knows that truth in these days of materialism and atheism." If this Parliament of Religions does nothing else but spread the knowledge of this golden truth, and thus make a large number of men happy, it will immortalize its name. The object of my paper is to take a little part in the noble efforts of this great gathering, to spread the knowledge of that golden truth from a Parsee point of view. The Parsees of India are the followers of Zoro-

astrianism, of the religion of Zoroaster, a religion which was for centuries both the state religion and the national religion of ancient Persia. As Professor Max Müller says:

"There were periods in the history of the world when the worship of Ormuzd threatened to rise triumphant on the ruins of the temples of all other gods. If the battles of Marathon and Salamis had been lost and Greece had succumbed to Persia, the state religion of the empire of Cyrus, which was the worship of Ormuzd, might have become the religion of the whole civilized world. Persia had absorbed the Assyrian and Babylonian empires; Jews were either in Persian captivity or under Persian sway at home; the sacred monuments of Egypt had been mutilated by the hands of Persian soldiers. The edicts of the king—the king of kings—were sent to India, to Greece, to Scythia and to Egypt, and if 'by the grace of Ahura Mazda' Darius had crushed the liberty of Greece, the purer faith of Zoroaster might easily have superseded the Olympian fables."

Golden Truth
from a Parsee
Standpoint.

With the overthrow of the Persian monarchy under its last Sassanian king, Yazdagard, at the battle of Nehavand, in A. D. 642, the religion received a check at the hands of the Arabs, who, with sword in one hand and Koran in the other, made the religion of Islam both the state religion and national religion of the country. But many of those who adhered to the faith of their fathers quitted their ancient fatherland for the hospitable shores of India. The modern Parsees of India are the descendants of those early settlers. As a former governor of Bombay said, "Their position is unique—a handful of persons among the teeming millions of India, and yet who not only have preserved their ancient race with the utmost purity, but also their religion absolutely unimpaired by contact with others."

Unimpaired
by Contact.

In the words of Rt. Rev. Dr. Meurin, the learned bishop (vicar apostolic) of Bombay, in 1885, the Parsees are "a people who have chosen to relinquish their venerable ancestors' homesteads rather than abandon their ancient religion, the founder of which lived no less than 3,000 years ago, a people who for a thousand years have formed in the midst of the great Hindu people, not unlike an island in the sea, a quite separate and distinct nation, peculiar and remarkable as for its race, so for its religious and social life and customs." Prof. Max Müller says of the religion of the Parsees:

"Though every religion is of real and vital interest in its earliest state only, yet its later development, too, with all its misunderstandings, faults and corruptions, offers many an instructive lesson to the thoughtful student of history. Here is a religion, one of the most ancient of the world, once the state religion of the most powerful empire, driven away from its native soil and deprived of political influence, without even the prestige of a powerful or enlightened priesthood, and yet professed by a handful of exiles—men of wealth, intelligence and moral worth in western India—with unhesitating fervor such as is seldom to be found in larger religious communities. It is well worth the earnest endeavor of the philosopher and the divine to discover, if possible, the spell by which this apparently effete religion continues to command the attachment of the enlightened Parsees of India and makes them turn a deaf ear to the allurements of the Brahmanic worship and the earnest appeals of Christian missionaries."

Zoroastrianism or Parseeism, by whatever name the system may be called, is a monotheistic form of religion. It believes in the existence of one God, whom it knows under the names of Mazda, Ahura and Ahura-Mazda, the last form being the one that is most commonly met with in the latter writings of the Avesta. The first and the greatest truth that dawns upon the mind of a Zoroastrian is that the great and the infinite universe, of which he is an infinitesimally small part, is the work of a powerful hand—the result of a master mind. The first and the greatest conception of that master mind, Ahura-Mazda, is that, as the name implies, he is the Omniscient Lord, and as such He is the ruler of both the material and the immaterial world, the corporeal and the incorporeal world, the visible and the invisible world. The regu-

Harmony and
Order Preserved.

lar movements of the sun and the stars, the periodical waxing and waning of the moon, the regular way in which the sun and the clouds are sustained, the regular flow of waters and the gradual growth of vegetation, the rapid movements of the winds and the regular succession of light and darkness, of day and night, with their accompaniments of sleep and wakefulness, all these grand and striking phenomena of nature point to and bear ample evidence of the existence of an almighty power who is not only the creator, but the preserver of this great universe, who has not only launched that universe into existence with a premeditated plan of completeness, but who, with the controlling hand of a father, preserves by certain fixed laws harmony and order here, there and everywhere.

As Ahura-Mazda is the ruler of the physical world, so He is the ruler of the spiritual world. His distinguished attributes are good mind, righteousness, desirable control, piety, perfection and immortality. He is the Beneficent Spirit from whom emanate all good and all piety. He looks into the hearts of men and sees how much of the good and of the piety that have emanated from Him has made its home there, and thus rewards the virtuous and punishes the vicious. Of course, one sees at times, in the plane of this world, moral disorders and want of harmony, but then the present state is only a part, and that a very small part, of His scheme of moral government. As the ruler of the world, Ahura-Mazda hears the prayers of the ruled. He grants the prayers of those who are pious in thoughts, pious in words and pious in deeds. "He not only rewards the good, but punishes the wicked. All that is created, good or evil, fortune or misfortune, is His work."

We have seen that Ahura-Mazda, or God, is, according to Parsee Scriptures, the causer of all causes. He is the creator as well as the destroyer, the increaser as well as the decreaser. He gives birth to different creatures and it is He who brings about their end. How is it, then, that He brings about these two contrary results? In the words of Dr. Haug:

Great Problem Solved.

"Having arrived at the grand idea of the unity and indivisibility of the Supreme Being, he (Zoroaster) undertook to solve the great problem which has engaged the attention of so many wise men of antiquity and even of modern times, viz: How are the imperfections discoverable in the world, the various kinds of evils, wickedness and baseness, compatible with the goodness, holiness and justice of God? This great thinker of remote antiquity solved this difficult question philosophically by the supposition of two primeval causes, which, though different, were united and produced the world of material things, as well as that of the spirit."

These two primeval causes or principles are called in the Avesta the two "Mainyus." This word comes from the ancient Aryan root "man," to "think." It may be properly rendered into English by the word "spirit," meaning "that which can only be conceived by the mind but not felt by the senses." Of these two spirits or primeval causes or

principles, one is creative and the other destructive. These two spirits work under the Almighty day and night. They create and destroy, and this they have done ever since the world was created. According to Zoroaster's philosophy, our world is the work of these two hostile principles—Spenta-mainyush, the good principle, and Angra-mainyush, the evil principle, both serving under one God. In the words of that learned orientalist, Professor Darmesteter, "All that is good in the world comes from the former; all that is bad in it comes from the latter. The history of the world is the history of their conflict; how Angra-mainyush invaded the world of Ahura-Mazda and marred it, and how he shall be expelled from it at last. Man is active in the conflict, his duty in it being laid before him in the law revealed by Ahura-Mazda to Zarathushtra. When the appointed time is come * * * Angra-mainyush and hell will be destroyed, men will rise from the dead, and everlasting happiness will reign over the world."

These philosophical notions have led some learned men to misunderstand Zoroastrian theology. Some authors entertain an opinion that Zoroaster preached dualism. But this is a serious misconception. In the Parsee scriptures the names of God are Mazda, Ahura and Ahura-Mazda, the last word being a compound of the first two. The first two words are common in the earliest writings of the Gāthā and the third in the later scriptures. In later times the word Ahura-Mazda, instead of being restricted, like Mazda, the name of God began to be used in a wider sense, and was applied to Spenta-mainyush, the creative or the good principle. This being the case, wherever the word Ahura-Mazda was used in opposition to that of Angra-mainyush, later authors took it as the name of God, and not as the name of the creative principle, which it really was. Thus the very fact of Ahura-Mazda's name being employed in opposition to that of Angra-mainyush or Ahriman led to the notion that Zoroastrian scriptures preached dualism.

The Theology
Misunder-
stood.

Not only is the charge of dualism as leveled against Zoroastrianism, and as ordinarily understood, groundless, but there is a close resemblance between the ideas of the devil among the Christians and those of the Ahriman among the Zoroastrians. Dr. Haug says the same thing in the following words:

"The Zoroastrian idea of the devil and the infernal kingdom coincides entirely with the Christian doctrine. The devil is a murderer and father of lies, according to both the Bible and the Zend Avesta."

Thus we see that, according to Zoroaster's philosophy, there are two primeval principles that produce our material world. Consequently, though the Almighty is the creator of all, a part of the creation is said to be created by the good principle and a part by the evil principle. Thus, for example, the heavenly bodies, the earth, water, fire, horses, dogs and such other objects are the creation of the good principle, and serpents, ants, locusts, etc., are the creation of the evil principle. In short, those things that conduce to the greatest good of the greatest number of mankind fall under the category of the

creations of the good principle, and those that lead to the contrary result, under that of the creations of the evil principle. This being the case, it is incumbent upon men to do actions that would support the cause of the good principle and destroy that of the evil one. Therefore, the cultivation of the soil, the rearing of domestic animals, etc., on the one hand and the destruction of wild animals and other noxious creatures on the other, are considered meritorious actions by the Parsees.

As there are two primeval principles under Ahura-Mazda that produce our material world, so there are two principles inherent in the nature of man which encourage him to do good or tempt him to do evil. One asks him to support the cause of the good principle, the other to support that of the evil principle. The first is known by the name of Vohumana or Behemana, *i. e.*, "good mind." The prefix "vohu" or "bel," is the same word as that of which our English "better" is the comparative. Mana is the same as the word "maniyu," and means mind or spirit. The second is known by the name of Akamana, *i. e.*, "bad mind." The prefix "aka" means "bad" and is the same as our English word "ache" in "headache."

Now the fifth chapter of the Vendidad gives, as it were, a short definition of what is morality or piety. There, first of all, the writer says: "Purity is the best thing for man after birth." This, you may say, is the motto of the Zoroastrian religion. Therefore, M. Harlez very properly says that, according to Zoroastrian scriptures, the "notion of the word virtue sums itself up in that of the 'Asha.'" This word is the same as the Sanskrit "rita," which word corresponds to our English "right." It means, therefore, righteousness, piety or purity. Then the writer proceeds to give a short definition of piety. It says that, "the preservation of good thoughts, good words and good deeds is piety." In these pithy words is summed up, so to say, the whole of the moral philosophy of the Zoroastrian scriptures. It says that, if you want to lead a pious and moral life and thus to show a clean bill of spiritual health to the angel, Meher Daver, who watches the gates of heaven at the Chinvat bridge, practice these three: Think of nothing but the truth, speak nothing but the truth, and do nothing but what is proper. In short, what Zoroastrian moral philosophy teaches is this—that your good thoughts, good deeds and good words alone will be your intercessors. Nothing more will be wanted. They alone will serve you as a safe pilot to the harbor of heaven, as a safe guide to the gates of paradise. The late Dr. Haug rightly observed that "the moral philosophy of Zoroaster was moving in the triad of thought, word and deed." These three words form, as it were, the pivot upon which the moral structure of Zoroastrianism turns. It is the groundwork upon which the whole edifice of Zoroastrian morality rests.

The following dialogue in the Pehelvi Padnameh of Buzurge-Meher shows in a succinct form what weight is attached to these three pithy words in the moral code of the Zoroastrians:

Question. Who is the most fortunate man in the world?

Safe Pilot to
the Harbor of
Heaven.

Answer. He who is the most innocent.

Question. Who is the most innocent man in the world?

Answer. He who walks in the path of God and shuns that of the devil.

Question. Which is the path of God, and which that of the devil?

Answer. Virtue is the path of God, and vice that of the devil.

Question. What constitutes virtue, and what vice?

Answer. (Humata, hukhta and hvarshta) good thoughts, good words and good deeds constitute virtue, and (dushmata, duzukhta and duzvarshta) evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds constitute vice.

Question. What constitute (humata, hukhta and hvarshta) good thoughts, good words and good deeds, and (dushmata, duzukhta and duzvarshta) evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds?

Answer. Honesty, charity and truthfulness constitute the former, and dishonesty, want of charity and falsehood constitute the latter.

From this dialogue it will be seen that a man who acquires (humata, hukhta and hvarshta) good thoughts, good words and good deeds, and thereby practices honesty, charity and truthfulness, is considered to walk in the path of God, and, therefore, to be the most innocent and fortunate man.

Herodotus also refers to the third cardinal virtue of truthfulness mentioned above. He says that to speak the truth was one of the three things taught to a Zoroastrian of his time from his very childhood.

Zoroastrianism believes in the immortality of the soul. The Avesta writings of Hadokht Nushk, and the nineteenth chapter of the Vendidad, and of the Pehelvi books of Minokherad and Viraf-nameh, treat of the fate of the soul after death. Its notions about heaven and hell correspond, to some extent, to the Christian notions about them. A plant called the Homa-i-saphid, or white Homa, a name corresponding to the Indian Soma of the Hindus, is held to be the emblem of the immortality of the soul. According to Dr. Windischmann and Prof. Max Müller, this plant reminds us of the "Tree of Life" in the garden of Eden. As in the Christian scriptures, the way to the tree of life is strictly guarded by the Cherubim, so in the Zoroastrian scriptures the Homa-i-saphid, or the plant which is the emblem of immortality, is guarded by innumerable Fravashis, that is, guardian spirits. The number of these guardian spirits, as given in various books, is 99,999.

Again, Zoroastrianism believes in heaven and hell. Heaven is called Vahishta-ahu in the Avesta books. It literally means the "best life." This word is afterward contracted, with a slight change, into the Persian word "Behesht," which is the superlative form of "Veh," meaning "good," and corresponds exactly with our English word "best." Hell is known by the name of "Achishta-ahu." Heaven is represented as a place of radiance, splendor and glory, and hell as that of gloom, darkness and stench. Between heaven and this world there is supposed to be a bridge, named "Chinvat." This word—from the

Moral Code

Believe in
Heaven and
Hell.

Aryan root "chi," meaning to pick up, to collect—means the place where a man's soul has to present a collective account of the actions done in the past life.

According to the Parsee scriptures, for three days after a man's death his soul remains within the limits of the world under the guidance of the angel Srosh. If the deceased be a pious man, or a man who led a virtuous life, his soul utters the words "Ushta-ahmai yahmai ushtakahmai-chit," *i. e.*, "Well is he by whom that which is his benefit becomes the benefit of any one else." If he be a wicked man, or one who led an evil life, his soul utters these plaintive words: "Kam nemoi zam? Kuthra nemoi ayeni? *i. e.*, "To which land shall I turn? Whither shall I go?"

On the dawn of the third night the departed souls appear at the "Chinvat bridge." This bridge is guarded by the angel Meher Daver, *i. e.*, Meher, the judge. He presides there as a judge, assisted by the angels Rashne and Astad, the former representing justice and the latter truth. At this bridge, and before this angel Meher, the soul of every man has to give an account of its doings in the past life. Meher Daver, the judge, weighs a man's actions by a scale-pan. If a man's good actions outweigh his evil ones, even by a small particle, he is allowed to pass from the bridge to the other end to heaven. If his evil actions outweigh his good ones, even by a small weight, he is not allowed to pass over the bridge, but is hurled down into the deep abyss of hell. If his meritorious and evil deeds counterbalance each other, he is sent to a place known as "hamast-gehan," corresponding to the Christian "purgatory" and the Mohammedan "acraf." His meritorious deeds done in the past life would prevent him from going to hell, and his evil actions would not let him go to heaven.

Again, Zoroastrian books say that the meritoriousness of good deeds and the sin of evil ones increase with the growth of time. As capital increases with interest, so good and bad actions done by a man in his life increase, as it were, with interest in their effects. Thus, a meritorious deed done in young age is more effective than that very deed done in advanced age. A man must begin practicing virtue from his very young age. As in the case of good deeds and their meritoriousness, so in the case of evil actions and their sins. The burden of the sin of an evil action increases, as it were, with interest. A young man has a long time to repent of his evil deeds and to do good deeds that could counteract the effect of his evil deeds. If he does not take advantage of these opportunities the burden of those evil deeds increases with time.

The Parsee places of worship are known as fire temples. The very name fire temple would strike a non-Zoroastrian as an unusual form of worship. The Parsees do not worship fire as God. They merely regard fire as an emblem of refulgence, glory and light as the most perfect symbol of God, and as the best and noblest representative of His divinity. "In the eyes of a Parsee his (fire's) brightness, activity, purity and incorruptibility bear the most perfect resemblance to the

nature and perfection of the Deity." A Parsee looks upon fire "as the most perfect symbol of the Deity on account of its purity, brightness, activity, subtilty, purity and incorruptibility."

Again, one must remember that it is the several symbolic ceremonies that add to the reverence entertained by a Parsee for the fire burning in his fire temples. A new element of purity is added to the fire burning in the fire temples of the Parsees by the religious ceremonies accompanied with prayers that are performed over it, before it is installed in its place on a vase on an exalted stand in a chamber set apart. The sacred fire burning there is not the ordinary fire burning in our hearths. It has undergone several ceremonies, and it is these ceremonies, full of meaning, that render the fire more sacred in the eyes of a Parsee. We will briefly recount the process here:

In establishing a fire temple fires from various places of manufacture are brought and kept in different vases. Great efforts are also made to obtain fire caused by lightning. Over one of these fires a perforated metallic flat tray with a handle attached is held. On this tray are placed small chips and dust of fragrant sandalwood. These chips and dust are ignited by the heat of the fire below, care being taken that the perforated tray does not touch the fire. Thus a new fire is created out of the first fire. Then from this new fire another is again produced, and so on, until the process is repeated nine times. The fire thus prepared after the ninth process is considered pure. The fires brought from other places of manufacture are treated in a similar manner. These purified fires are all collected together upon a large vase, which is then put in its proper place in a separate chamber.

Fire Temples.

Now what does a fire so prepared signify to a Parsee? He thinks to himself: "When this fire on this vase before me, though pure in itself, though the noblest of the creations of God, and though the best symbol of the Divinity, had to undergo certain processes of purification, had to draw out, as it were, its essence—nay, its quintessence—of purity to enable itself to be worthy of occupying this exalted position, how much more necessary, more essential and more important it is for me—a poor mortal who is liable to commit sins and crimes, and who comes into contact with hundreds of evils, both physical and mental—to undergo the process of purity and piety by making my thoughts, words and actions pass, as it were, through a sieve of piety and purity, virtue and morality, and to separate by that means my good thoughts, good words and good actions from bad thoughts, bad words and bad actions, so that I may, in my turn, be enabled to acquire an exalted position in the next world."

Again, the fires put together as above are collected from the houses of men of different grades in society. This reminds a Parsee that, as all these fires from the houses of men of different grades have all, by the process of purification, equally acquired the exalted place in the vase, so before God, all men, no matter to what grades of society they belong, are equal, provided they pass through the pro-

cess of purification, *i. e.*, provided they preserve purity of thoughts, purity of words and purity of deeds.

Dust to Dust.

Again, when a Parsee goes before the sacred fire, which is kept all day and night burning in the fire temple, the officiating priest presents before him the ashes of a part of the consumed fire. The Parsee applies it to his forehead just as a Christian applies the consecrated water in his church and thinks to himself: "Dust to dust. The fire, all brilliant, shining and resplendent, has spread the fragrance of the sweet-smelling sandal and frankincense round about, but is at last reduced to dust. So it is destined for me. After all I am to be reduced to dust and have to depart from this transient life. Let me do my best to spread, like this fire, before my death, the fragrance of charity and good deeds, and lead the light of righteousness and knowledge before others."

In short, the sacred fire burning in a fire temple serves as a perpetual monitor to a Parsee standing before it to preserve piety, purity, humility and brotherhood.

As we said above, evidence from nature is the surest evidence that leads a Parsee to the belief in the existence of the Deity. From nature he is led to nature's God. From this point of view, then, he is not restricted to any particular place for the recital of his prayers. For a visitor to Bombay, which is the headquarters of the Parsees, it is therefore not unusual to see a number of Parsees saying their prayers, morning and evening, in the open space, turning their faces to the rising or the setting sun, before the glowing moon or the foaming sea. Turning to these grand objects, the best and sublimest of his creations, they address their prayers to the Almighty.

Parsee Prayers.

All Parsee prayers begin with an assurance to do acts that would please the Almighty God. The assurance is followed by an expression of regret for past evil thoughts, words or deeds if any. Man is liable to err, and so, if during the interval any errors of commission or omission are committed, a Parsee in the beginning of his prayers repents for those errors. He says:

O, Omniscient Lord! I repent of all my sins. I repent of all evil thoughts that I might have entertained in my mind, of all the evil words that I might have spoken, of all the evil actions that I might have committed. O, Omniscient Lord! I repent of all the faults that might have originated with me, whether they refer to thoughts, words or deeds, whether they appertain to my body or soul, whether they be in connection with the material world or spiritual.

To educate their children is a spiritual duty of Zoroastrian parents. Education is necessary, not only for the material good of the children and the parents, but also for their spiritual good. According to the Parsee books, the parents participate in the meritoriousness of the good acts performed by their children as the result of the good education imparted to them. On the other hand, if the parents neglect the education of their children, and if, as the result of this neglect, they do wrongful acts or evil deeds, the parents have a spirit-

ual responsibility for such acts. In proportion to the malignity or evilness of these acts the parents are responsible to God for their neglect of the education of their children. It is, as it were, a spiritual self-interest that must prompt a Parsee to look to the good education of his children at an early age. Thus, from a religious point of view, education is a great question with the Parsees.

The proper age recommended by religious Parsee books for ordinary education is seven. Before that age children should have home education with their parents, especially with the mother. At the age of seven, after a little religious education, a Parsee child is invested with *Sudreh* and *Kusti*, *i. e.*, the sacred shirt and thread. This ceremony of investiture corresponds to the confirmation ceremony of the Christians. A Parsee may put on the dress of any nationality he likes, but under that dress he must always wear the sacred shirt and thread. These are the symbols of his being a Zoroastrian. These symbols are full of meaning and act as perpetual monitors advising the wearer to lead a life of purity—of physical and spiritual purity. A Parsee is enjoined to remove, and put on again immediately, the sacred thread several times during the day, saying a very short prayer during the process. He has to do so early in the morning on rising from bed, before meals and after ablutions. The putting on of the symbolic thread and the accompanying short prayer remind him to be in a state of repentance for misdeeds, if any, and to preserve good thoughts, good words and good deeds, the triad in which the moral philosophy of Zoroaster moved.

It is after this investiture with the sacred shirt and thread that the general education of a child generally begins. The Parsee books speak of the necessity of educating all children, whether male or female. Thus female education claims as much attention among the Parsees as male education. Physical education is as much spoken of in the Zoroastrian books as mental and moral education. The health of the body is considered as the first requisite for the health of the soul. That the physical education of the ancient Persians, the ancestors of the modern Parsees, was a subject of admiration among the ancient Greeks and Romans, is too well known. In all the blessings invoked upon one in the religious prayers, the strength of body occupies the first and the most prominent place. Analyzing the Bombay census of 1881, Dr. Weir, the health officer, said:

"Examining education according to faith or class, we find that education is most extended among the Parsee people; female education is more diffused among the Parsee population than any other class. * * * Contrasting these results with education at an early age among Parsees, we find 12.2 per cent Parsee male and 8.84 per cent female children under six years of age, under instruction; between six and fifteen the number of Parsee male and female children under instruction is much larger than in any other class. Over fifteen years of age, the smallest proportion of illiterate, either male or female, is found in the Parsee population."

When General Education Begins.

The religious books of the Parsees say that the education of Zoroastrian youths should teach them perfect discipline, obedience to their teachers, obedience to their parents, obedience to their elders in society, and obedience to the constitutional forms of government should be one of the practical results of their education. So a Zoroastrian child is asked to be affectionate toward and submissive to his teachers. A Parsee mother prays for a son that could take an intelligent part in the deliberations of the councils of his community and government; so a regard for the regular forms of government was necessary.

Of all the practical questions, the one most affected by the religious precepts of Zoroastrianism is that of the observation of sanitary rules and principles. Several chapters of the Vendidad form, as it were, the sanitary code of the Parsees. Most of the injunctions will stand the test of sanitary science for ages together. Of the different Asiatic communities inhabiting Bombay, the Parsees have the lowest death rate. One can safely say that that is, to a great extent, due to the Zoroastrian ideas of sanitation, segregation, purification and cleanliness. A Parsee is enjoined not to drink from the same cup or glass from which another man has drunk, lest he catch by contagion the disease from which the other may be suffering. He is, under no circumstances, to touch the body of a person a short time after death, lest he spread the disease, if contagious, of the deceased. If he accidentally or unavoidably does, he has to purify himself by a certain process of washing before he mixes with others in society. A passing fly, or even a blowing wind, is supposed to spread disease by contagion. So he is enjoined to perform ablutions several times during the day, as before saying his prayers, before meals, and after answering the calls of nature. If his hand comes into contact with the saliva of his own mouth or with that of somebody else, he has to wash it. He has to keep himself aloof from corpse-bearers, lest he spread any disease through them. If accidentally he comes into contact with these people, he has to bathe himself before mixing in society. A breach of these and various other sanitary rules is, as it were, helping the cause of the evil principle.

Again, Zoroastrianism asks its disciples to keep the earth pure, to keep the air pure, and to keep the water pure. It considers the sun as the greatest purifier. In places where the rays of the sun do not enter, fire over which fragrant wood is burned is the next purifier. It is a great sin to pollute water by decomposing matter. Not only is the commission of a fault of this kind a sin, but also the omission, when one sees such a pollution, of taking proper means to remove it. A Zoroastrian, when he happens to see, while passing in his way, a running stream of drinking water polluted by some decomposing matter, such as a corpse, is enjoined to wait and try his best to go into the stream and to remove the putrifying matter, lest its continuation may spoil the water and affect the health of the people using it. An omission to do this act is a sin from a Zoroastrian point of view. At the bottom of a Parsee's custom of disposing of the dead, and at the

bottom of all the strict religious ceremonies enjoined therewith, lies the one main principle, viz., that, preserving all possible respect for the dead, the body, after its separation from the immortal soul, should be disposed of in a way the least harmful and the least injurious to the living. The homely proverb of "cleanliness is godliness" is nowhere more recommended than in the Parsee religious books, which teach that the cleanliness of body will lead to and help the cleanliness of mind.

We now come to the question of wealth, poverty and labor. As Herodotus said, a Parsee, before praying for himself, prays for his sovereign and for his community, for he is himself included in the community. His religious precepts teach him to drown his individuality in the common interests of his community. He is to consider himself as a part and parcel of the whole community. The good of the whole will be the good—and that a solid good—of the parts. In the twelfth chapter of the Yasna, which contains, as it were, Zoroastrian articles of faith, a Zoroastrian promises to preserve a perfect brotherhood. He promises, even at the risk of his life, to protect the life and the property of all the members of his community and to help in the cause that would bring about their prosperity and welfare. It is with these good feelings of brotherhood and charity that the Parsee community has endowed large funds for benevolent and charitable purposes. If the rich Parsees of the future generations were to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors of the past and present generations in the matter of giving liberal donations for the good of the deserving poor of their community, one can say that there would be very little cause for the socialists to complain from a poor man's point of view. It is these notions of charity and brotherhood that have urged them to start public funds for the general good of the whole community. Men of all grades in society contribute to these funds on various occasions. The rich contribute on occasions both of joy and grief. On grand occasions, like those of weddings in their families, they contribute large sums in charity to commemorate those events. Again, on the death of their dear ones, the rich and the poor all pay various sums, according to their means, in charity. These sums are announced on the occasion of the Oothumna, or the ceremony on the third day after death. The rich pay large sums on these occasions to commemorate the names of their dear ones. In the Vendidad three kinds of charitable deeds are especially mentioned as meritorious—to help the poor; to help a man to marry, and thus to enable him to lead a virtuous and honorable life, and to give education to those who are in search of it. If one were to look to the long list of Parsee charities, headed by that of that prince of Parsee charity, the first Parsee baronet, he will find these three kinds of charity especially attended to. The religious training of a Parsee does not restrict his ideas of brotherhood and charity to his own community alone. He extends his charity to non-Zoroastrians as well.

Wealth, Poverty and Labor.

The qualifications of a good husband, from a Zoroastrian point

Qualifications of a Good Husband.

of view, are that he must be (1) young and handsome; (2) strong, brave and healthy; (3) diligent and industrious, so as to maintain his wife and children; (4) truthful, as would prove true to herself, and true to all others with whom he would come in contact, and is wise and educated. A wise, intelligent and educated husband is compared to a fertile piece of land which gives a plentiful crop, whatever kind of seeds are sown in it. The qualifications of a good wife are that she be wise and educated, modest and courteous, obedient and chaste. Obedience to her husband is the first duty of a Zoroastrian wife. It is a great virtue, deserving all praise and reward. Disobedience is a great sin, punishable after death.

According to the Sad-dar, a wife that expressed a desire to her husband three times a day—in the morning, afternoon and evening—to be one with him in thoughts, words and deeds, *i. e.*, to sympathize with him in all his noble aspirations, pursuits and desires, performed as meritorious an act as that of saying her prayers three times a day. She must wish to be of the same view with him in all his noble pursuits and ask him every day: "What are your thoughts, so that I may be one with you in those thoughts? What are your words, so that I may be one with you in your speech? What are your deeds, so that I may be one with you in deeds?" A Zoroastrian wife so affectionate and obedient to her husband was held in great respect, not only by the husband and the household, but in society as well. As Dr. West says, though a Zoroastrian wife was asked to be very obedient to her husband, she held a more respectable position in society than that enjoined by any other Oriental religion. As Sir John Malcolm says, the ordinance of Zoroaster secured for Zoroastrian women an equal rank with the male creation. The progress of the ancient Persians in civilization was partly due to this cause. "The great respect in which the female sex was held was, no doubt, the principal cause of the progress they had made in civilization. These were at once the cause of generous enterprise and its reward." The advance of the modern Parsis, the descendants of the ancient Persians, in the path of civilization is greatly due to this cause. As Dr. Haug says, the religious books of the Parsis hold women on a level with men. "They are always mentioned as a necessary part of the religious community. They have the same religious rites as men; the spirits of deceased women are invoked as well as those of men." Parsee books attach as much importance to female education as to male education.

Marriage is an institution which is greatly encouraged by the spirit of the Parsee religion. It is especially recommended in the Parsee scriptures on the ground that a married life is more likely to be happy than an unmarried one; that a married person is more likely to be able to withstand physical and mental afflictions than an unmarried person, and that a married man is more likely to lead a religious and virtuous life than an unmarried one. The following verse in the Gatha conveys this meaning:

"I say (these) words to you marrying brides and to you bride-

grooms. Impress them in your mind. May you two enjoy the life of good mind by following the laws of religion. Let each one of you clothe the other with righteousness, because then assuredly there will be a happy life for you."

An unmarried person is represented to feel as unhappy as a fertile piece of ground that is carelessly allowed to lie uncultivated by its owner (Vend. iii., 24). The fertile piece, when cultivated, not only adds to the beauty of the spot, but lends nourishment and food to many others round about. So a married couple not only add to their own beauty, grace and happiness, but by their righteousness and good conduct are in a position to spread the blessings of help and happiness among their neighbors. Marriage being thus considered a good institution, and being recommended by the religious scriptures, it is considered a very meritorious act for a Parsee to help his co-religionists to lead a married life (Vend. iv., 44). Several rich Parsees have, with this charitable view, founded endowment funds, from which young deserving brides are given small sums on the occasion of their marriage for the preliminary expenses of starting in married life.

Marriage a
Good Institu-
tion.

Fifteen is the minimum marriageable age spoken of by the Parsee books. The parents have a voice of sanction or approval in the selection of wives and husbands. Mutual friends of parents or marrying parties may bring about a good selection. Marriages with non-Zoroastrians are not recommended, as they are likely to bring about quarrels and dissensions owing to a difference of manners, customs and habits.

We said above that the Parsee religion has made its disciples tolerant about the faiths and beliefs of others. It has as well made them sociable with the other sister communities of the country. They mix freely with members of other faiths and take a part in the rejoicings of their holidays. They also sympathize with them in their griefs and afflictions, and in case of sudden calamities, such as fire, floods, etc., they subscribe liberally to alleviate their misery. From a consideration of all kinds of moral and charitable notions inculcated in the Zoroastrian scriptures, Frances Power Cobbe, in her "Studies, New and Old, of Ethical and Social Subjects," says of the founder of the religion:

Had Zoroast-
er Never Ex-
isted.

"Should we in a future world be permitted to hold high converse with the great departed, it may chance that in the Bactrian sage, who lived and taught almost before the dawn of history, we may find the spiritual patriarch, to whose lessons we have owed such a portion of our intellectual inheritance that we might hardly conceive what human belief would be now, had Zoroaster never existed."