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ZOROASTER THE PRIEST

By MARY BOYCE

The fact that Zoroaster was a priest, a *zaoatar*, is likely to have been of considerable influence in nurturing and shaping his spiritual life ; and in more than one study of Zoroastrianism it has been given due prominence,¹ without, however, its implications being fully explored. There seems room, therefore, for a further attempt to assess, as far as the evidence allows, the relevance of Zoroaster's priesthood for the evolution of his doctrines.

Common elements in their tradition show that the Indo-Iranians shared a devout belief in the efficacy of sacrificial offerings, and in that of prayers, praises, and invocations accurately repeated with a right intention, to draw down divine power upon earth. The evidence of the *Brāhmaṇas* ² serves to establish that there is a long common tradition behind the Zoroastrian *haoma*-ritual and the offerings to fire, a tradition whose preservation over millennia presupposes the equally long existence of a professional priesthood, able to maintain and transmit it. Moreover, the Zoroastrian scriptures, with their parallels in the Vedas, show that there are also elements of continuity in the religious literature, so that it must be assumed that the members of this priesthood were trained not only in ceremonies but also in the recital of associated texts. Already in Indo-Iranian times the rituals appear to have required the collaboration of at least two priests.³ The chief of these was the *hotar/zaoatar*, whose functions differ somewhat in the later stages of the two cultures, but who appears in both as a highly trained and qualified celebrant of major rituals.⁴

For both religions information about the training of priests comes only from relatively recent times ; but probably there was little basic change in it from antiquity down to the nineteenth century, when modern methods of education began to affect tradition. Whether he lived in 1000 B.C. or A.D. 1800, the skills which the priest had to master remained essentially the same : to learn by heart great quantities of religious texts, and to know to the last detail the rituals

¹ See, most recently, H. Lommel, 'Zarathustras Priesterlohn', in O. Spies (ed.), *Studia Indologica, Festschrift für W. Kirfel* (Bonner Orient. Studien, NS, 3), Bonn, 1955, 187-95 ; K. Rudolph, 'Zarathuštra—Priester und Prophet', *Numen*, VIII, 2, 1961, 81-116 ; H. W. Bailey, 'Saka śśāndrāmata', in G. Wiessner (ed.), *Festschrift für W. Eilers*, Wiesbaden, 1967, 137, 141.

² The importance of the *Brāhmaṇas* for a better understanding of Zoroastrianism was stressed by M. Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien*, Paris, 1963 ; but doubts about the relevance of Zoroaster's earthly existence prevented him from considering this in the light of the prophet's own priesthood. Long before, J. Darmesteter also drew on the *Brāhmaṇas* for parallels for Zoroastrianism, maintaining that 'ces théories qui paraissent subitement, en plein Brahmanisme, n'ont pas poussé tout à coup et leurs racines, serpentant sous les Védas, plongent dans le sol indo-iranien' (*Ormazd et Ahriman, leurs origines et leur histoire*, Paris, 1877, 302).

³ See M. Haug, *The Aitareya Brāhmaṇam of the Rigveda*, Bombay, 1863, 17-18, 31-2 ; V. Henry, 'Esquisse d'une liturgie indo-iranienne', in W. Caland and V. Henry, *L'Agniṣṭoma*, Paris, 1906-7, II, Appendice III, 469-70.

⁴ On the functions of the *hotar* see L. Renou, *Vocabulaire du rituel védique*, Paris, 1954, 175-6 ; Henry, op. cit., 475 f.

which they accompanied. In older times there was evidently scope also for composing texts ; but, as is well known from the comparative study of oral literatures, in order to compose orally it is necessary, not only to acquire the techniques of versification and composition, but also to have considerable amounts of earlier literature by heart.⁵ The two basic requirements may be presumed therefore to have remained constant : learning texts and mastering rituals. Both demand an exacting apprenticeship.

In living Zoroastrianism the memorizing of short basic texts begins early in priestly families, before the investiture with the *kustī* at the age of about seven. Thereafter (until recent decades) a boy destined for the priesthood went regularly for many hours each day to a priest who conducted a school for such pupils, teaching them by rote the long texts of the liturgy.⁶ To become word-perfect in these required constant application and repetition, and the schools were conducted with considerable sternness. The main rituals were separately taught, with great care, often by the boy's father or a kinsman ; and by the age of at least 15 (that of maturity in ancient Iran) he had learned the whole liturgy of the *yasna* and was trained in its celebration.⁷ To achieve this, most of his waking hours during these formative years had been concentrated on the sacred words and ceremonies.

What is known of Brahman training shows that it follows very much the same pattern, which suggests both the antiquity of the tradition, and the constancy of the circumstances which have maintained it. Among the Nam-budiri Brahmans training begins at about eight years of age, after investiture

⁵ On traditional elements in Zoroaster's own hymns see further below, p. 26, n. 25.

⁶ The old type of priests' school was called by the Parsis a *sār* (< Gujarati *niśāl*). Each long day's work was divided into two, half being devoted to learning new texts, half to revising old. The priest recited a little, and the pupil after him ; and then after repetitions the pupil withdrew to fix the words in his mind by repeating them over and over again to himself. Before the use of books as an aid, older pupils would help the younger ones at conning new material. The last *sār* in Navsari closed two decades ago, its last pupils being Ervad Edul Hiraji Kanga (now *yōždaθraḡar* in Navsari, whose father had learnt there before him) and Ervad Keresasp M. Kotwal (now *ātaš-band* at the Anjomani Ātaš-Bahrām in Bombay). This *sār* was taught by Ervad Rustamji Kharshedji Kanga (d. A.D. 1929) and his son Ervad Sohrabji, men with phenomenal memories, 'who both became blind in adult life. [Information through Ervad Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal.] In Yazd also there were priestly *ustāds* who were especially entrusted with teaching. Dastur Khodadad S. Neryosangi recalls in particular in his own boyhood Dastur Mihragan, who had himself as a boy read *Vendīdād* with Dastur Shahriyar, the *dastūr-mas* when Manekji Limji Hataria came to Iran. Late tradition even knows the name of the teacher to whom the prophet himself was entrusted at the age of seven, see the *Zarātusht nāma*, ed. F. Rosenberg, St. Petersburg, 1904, ll. 351 ff.

⁷ In his valuable biographical notes on the life of Ervad Tehmuras D. Anklesaria (see the preface to Anklesaria's *The social code of the Parsees in Sasanian times*, part II, Bombay, 1912, 29 ff.), J. J. Modi states that Ervad Tehmuras completed his training at a *sār* in Surat by the age of 11, by which time he knew not only the liturgy but also the main rituals. He was then initiated *nāvar* and *marāṭab* at Broach. After this he became assistant to his maternal uncle, a priest, and learnt more ritual from him. Modi has interesting general remarks on teaching in the *sār*, *ibid.*, 30-1. Nowadays priests' sons have religious instruction in the early morning before attending secular school ; and accordingly do not master the texts and rituals until a later age, about 17 or 18.

with the sacred thread, and boys study the Veda intensively by rote for up to six years.⁸ Teaching is given either at home, or in schools.⁹ There is a form of congregational Vedic recitation called *ghoṣam*, in which the *ghoṣi* recites four *padāni*, and the others present (as many sometimes as 100) repeat them after him thrice, quickly.¹⁰ It is suggested that the *ghoṣam* originated in teaching practices, which would indicate an old custom of the group-learning of texts. Among the Brahmins, as among the Zoroastrians, boys begin to perform ceremonies as soon as they are qualified, in association with an older priest.

The sacred office of the Zoroastrian *yasna* has for an evident purpose the continuance, strengthening, and purifying of the material world of the good creation; and its daily celebration is essential.¹¹ The intricate details of the liturgy vary according to time and season, and also according to the dedication of the *yasna*; and this requires of the celebrant constant self-discipline and alertness, despite his complete familiarity with the service. To the dedicated *yōzdaθragar* (the *zaotar* or priest of the inner rituals) the solemnization of the *yasna* is a source of spiritual strength and purity, and his chief means of serving God. For him to be unable to perform it is a deprivation comparable with that of a Catholic priest cut off from the celebration of the mass.

The present liturgy of the *yasna* is Zoroastrian, that is, although it embodies ancient elements, it is composed in accordance with the teachings of the prophet; but the rituals are shown by Indian evidence to be pre-Zoroastrian in their essential features. These are as follows:¹² the veneration of fire, with sacrificial offerings to it, which are consumed partly by the fire, partly by the priests and the sacrificer;¹³ the consecration of sacrificial cakes or bread (*puroḍāśa*¹⁴/*draonah*); the consecration of pure water; and the crushing of the stems of the *soma/haoma* plant to obtain its juice, which is mixed with consecrated water and partaken of by the officiating priests. Among the necessary ritual

⁸ See J. F. Staal, *Nambudiri Veda recitation*, 's-Gravenhage, 1961, 40.

⁹ See *ibid.* These schools, like the modern ones for Zoroastrian priests' sons in Bombay, are endowed and require fees; whereas in the small *sār*, as among the groups of pupils attached to a teacher under old Brahmin custom, there was no regular charge, the teaching being repaid by filial services and occasional gifts.

¹⁰ See Staal, *op. cit.*, 59–60.

¹¹ In an old Zoroastrian centre such as Navsari many *yasnas* are celebrated each day. Until recent decades there was also an endowed *anjomanī yasna*, solemnized daily on behalf of the community. [Information from Ervad Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal.]

¹² See Haug, *Essays on the sacred language, writings and religion of the Parsis*, third ed., London, 1884, 279 ff., and Haug (ed. and tr.), *Aitareya Brāhmaṇam*, I, 60–2; for a more general comparison, Henry, *op. cit.*, 467 ff. See also Khurshedji Erachji Pavri, 'Ancient ceremonies: additions and improvements made in them', *Dastur Hoshang memorial volume*, Bombay, 1918, 165–92.

¹³ Haug was unable to press the parallels in this case, since he was not aware of the prescriptions about offerings to fire contained in the *Nīrangistān*; see the translation by S. J. Bulsara, *Aērpatāstān and Nīrangistān*, Bombay, 1915, index, under 'Animal for dedication' and 'Sacrifice of dedicated animal', and further Boyce, 'Haoma, priest of the sacrifice', *W. B. Henning memorial volume*, London, 1970.

¹⁴ See Renou, *op. cit.*, 102.

objects are grass or herbs (*kuša*¹⁵/*barsom*) strewn for the sacrifice;¹⁶ and twigs cut from a tree (also called *kuša/barsom*), whose number varies according to differences in the ceremony.¹⁷ Among the implements which may be assumed to be ancient are various vessels for holding the liquids,¹⁸ and a knife for cutting the twigs, the Zoroastrian *barsom-čīn*.¹⁹ Both religions share the use of bull's urine for purification. In both, the service of the *yajña/yasna* can be dedicated to any god among the *devas* in India, the *ahuras* or *yazatas* in Iran.²⁰ It is ritually necessary for the service to be dedicated to an individual god, and never to the divine beings in general.²¹

Brahmanism is a ritualistic faith, and such basic observances have played their part in the evolution of its doctrines.²² Zoroastrianism is likewise a highly ritualistic religion, in which similar observances are maintained. Since these evidently existed among the Iranian peoples before the prophet, and are preserved by his church after him, it is reasonable to deduce that they were known to Zoroaster himself, and that it was in their solemnization that he was trained as priest. Nor is there cause to believe that he rejected them after receiving his revelation, for there are references in the *Gāthās*, not only to veneration of fire, but also to offerings to it, and to offerings and sacrifice in general,²³ as well as to the sacred words (*maθra*) which accompanied them.²⁴ Since solemnization of these rituals is of deep significance for the ordinary *yōzdaθragar*, it is no rash assumption to suppose that they had a profounder meaning still for Zoroaster,

¹⁵ See Renou, *op. cit.*, 57–8. *Kuša* is used for the *barhis*, on which, in connexion with the *barsom*, see in detail P. Thieme, 'Vorzarathustrisches bei den Zarathustriern und bei Zarathustra', *ZDMG*, CVII, 1, 1957, 71–5.

¹⁶ The prescription for strewing *barsom* for the sacrifice is found in the *Nīrangistān*, ed. D. P. Sanjana, Bombay, 1894, fol. 85 v, l. 11 f.; cf. the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, II.2.11 (transl. A. Berriedale Keith (Harvard Oriental Series), xxv, 1920, 143), and *ibid.*, II.2.7 (Keith, 139), where the reason for this is said to be: 'The victim has plants as its body; verily thus he makes the victim have its full body'. Cf. *Y*, XLVIII, 6; and the Old Persian practice of spreading 'the softest herbage, trefoil (τρίφυλλον) by choice' for the animal-sacrifice, Herodotus, I.132. It is noteworthy that trefoil is a fodder-crop.

¹⁷ See Haug, *Essays*, 283–4.

¹⁸ These are now always of metal in the Zoroastrian rite, but earlier were evidently of stone (as was the mortar, not used in the Indian ceremony; but on this see Henry, *op. cit.*, 474 f.). Pottery was not acceptable for ritual use. Cf. p. 28, n. 37, below.

¹⁹ By Zoroastrian prescription this knife must be metal-hafted as well as metal-bladed; see J. J. Modi, *The religious ceremonies and customs of the Parsees*, second ed., Bombay, 1937, 271.

²⁰ On the dedication of the *yajña* in modern times see J. A. Dubois, *Hindu manners, customs and ceremonies*, transl. and ed. by H. K. Beauchamp, third ed., Oxford, 1906, 513.

²¹ See Sylvain Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas*, Paris, 1898, 68 (citing the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I.1.4.24).

²² See Lévi, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

²³ For the offering to fire see *Y*, XLIII, 9 and XXIX, 7 (on which see further below); for offering in general (*myazda*), *Y*, XXXIV, 3. The recurrent word *yasna* is probably to be understood as 'sacrifice', e.g., *Y*, XLV, 10 (*yasnāiš ārmatōiš* 'devout sacrifices'). On other traditional ritual terms see H. Humbach, 'Rituelle Termini technici in den awestischen Gathas', *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft*, VIII, 1956, 74 ff.; Rudolph, *art. cit.*, 99–100.

²⁴ See *Y*, XXVIII, 5, XXIX, 7, XXXI, 6, XLIV, 14, 17. In Zoroastrianism, as in Brahmanism, 'le rite ne se sépare point de la liturgie', Lévi, *op. cit.*, p. 15. On *maθra* see further Thieme, *art. cit.*, 68 ff.

and that they provided him, as they did the Brahmans, with the basis for his own religious thinking. That this thinking was to a certain extent cast in traditional moulds is shown by the existence of very ancient Indo-European elements in the Gāthās, as well as others which have stylistic and doctrinal parallels in the Vedas.²⁵

One of the essential parts of Zoroaster's teachings is the doctrine of the beings known later as the Aməša Spəntas, who, under Ahura Mazda, have dual roles, as the personification of abstractions, and the guardians of certain physical things. It has indeed been said that the Gāthās consist of a series of meditations upon these beings; and although this is plainly not a complete characterization, it clearly has its justice. Of the many problems debated concerning the Aməša Spəntas, one of the greatest is that of the priority of their abstract or concrete connexions. Gray argued that the latter must have had precedence, since, he maintained, the evidence of comparative religious studies supports a development from original nature-gods to spiritual abstractions, and not the reverse;²⁶ but others, notably Darmesteter²⁷ and Geiger,²⁸ have shown irrefutably that the abstract nature of several of the Aməša Spəntas, particularly Aša, Haurvatāt, and Amərətāt, can be traced back to the Indo-Iranian period. It has moreover been argued that since the link between abstraction and physical thing is sometimes difficult to comprehend (as in the case of Vohu Manah 'Good Mind' and cattle), it is the physical aspect which should be regarded as secondary and in some cases analogical. What is now generally accepted is that both abstract and physical aspects are present in the Gāthās themselves, and so must be regarded as part of Zoroaster's own conception.²⁹

Yet another problem is the nature of the concrete things which are brought into relationship with the Aməša Spəntas: cattle, fire, metal, earth, water, and plants. These have been characterized as forming, together with man, the 'elements' of the physical world;³⁰ but this has been questioned because of the absence of air, and the curious order of 'cette succession hétéroclite'.³¹ The presence moreover of cattle, which 'have plants as their body' would be strange

²⁵ On the IE parallels see E. Schwyzler, *Die Parenthese im engern und im weitem Sinne* (APAW, Phil.-hist. Kl., 1939, 6), 10 f., 22, 25; H. H. Schaeder, 'Ein indogermanischer Liedtypus in den Gathas', *ZDMG*, xciv, 3, 1940, 399–408; and for further literature Rudolph, art. cit., p. 98 with nn., pp. 100–1.

²⁶ L. H. Gray, 'The double nature of the Iranian archangels', *ARW*, vii, 1904, 345–72.

²⁷ See *Haurvatāt et Ameretāt, essai sur la mythologie de l'Avesta*, Paris, 1875; and *Ormazd et Ahriman*.

²⁸ See *Die Aməša Spəntas, ihr Wesen und ihre ursprüngliche Bedeutung* (Sb. KAW in Wien, Phil.-hist. Kl., CLXXVI, 7), 1916.

²⁹ See H. Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras nach dem Avesta dargestellt*, Tübingen, 1930, 120 ff.; and on Y, XLIV, 18, further I. Gershevitch, *The Avestan hymn to Mithra*, Cambridge, 1959, 201.

³⁰ See Geiger, op. cit., 245; Gershevitch, *AHM*, 12.

³¹ See J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion de l'Iran ancien*, Paris, 1962, 200. The interpretations which identify the seven Gāthic divinities with the Ādityas, or find in them representatives of the 'trois fonctions' (neither of which has won general acceptance) are dealt with trenchantly by R. C. Zaehner, *The dawn and twilight of Zoroastrianism*, London, 1961, 49–50. On the latter theory see also Gershevitch, *AHM*, p. 48, n.

in a list of elements ; and these anomalies are merely emphasized by the use which the Manichaeans subsequently made of the term Aməša Spənta (Amahraspand) for their very different set of elements (ether, air, light, water, and fire). This late derivative usage can hardly be trusted to shed direct light on the original doctrines of Zoroaster. The probability is rather that the material things of the Gāthās are to be associated, by a more primitive form of physical analysis, with the successive creations which, according to Zoroastrian doctrine, were fashioned by Ahura Mazda to form this world, namely the sky (made of 'metal'), water, earth, plants, the primeval Bull, and man, with fire permeating all the rest. Even so the order of these creations is not parallel with the usual order of precedence of the Aməša Spəntas ; but it is understandable that in invocations the living, active creations should be set foremost, and that sky and earth, water and plants should be brought together, thus changing the formal sequence. In the *Farvardīn Yašt*, whose opening verses (1–28) are devoted to the power of the *fravašis* to sustain the world, the creations are set out repeatedly in their correct order ; and this order is remembered also in theological works, and above all in the six annual *gahāmbārs*, the great festivals which commemorate, one after another, the separate creations of Ahura Mazda, culminating in that of man, since pervading fire has no festival of its own. Fire is not mentioned either among the creations in *Yt.*, xiii ; and it is possible that the inclusion of this symbol of Aša in what is probably a very ancient cosmogony was part of the Zoroastrian reform (cf. *Yt.*, xiii, 77). In this reform the various creations are held to have a particular purpose, being brought into being by Ahura Mazda for the defeat of evil (cf. *Yt.*, xix, 10 f.). The *gahāmbārs* which celebrate them are therefore invested with moral significance, as is the daily ritual of the *yasna*.³²

Since one of the main purposes of the *yasna* is to strengthen through consecration the material world, it is to be expected that the separate creations should be represented in the service ; and this has been generally recognized to be the case with three of them, namely fire, guarded by Aša (Order or Truth), water, protected by Haurvatāt (Wholeness or Health), and plants (*haoma* and

³² On Xšaθra and the sky see Zaehner, *The teachings of the Magi*, London, 1956, 32–3. For fire 'in all creation' (*andar harwisṇ dahišn*) see *Gr. Bd.*, iii, 8, and cf. the more sophisticated *Zādspram* (ed. B. T. Anklesaria), i, 25. The phrase *xraoždīštōng asēnō* 'hardest stones', used of the sky in *Y.*, xxx, 5, is paralleled in *Yt.*, xiii, 2 by *x'aina- ayah-* 'bright metal'. As Bailey has shown (*Zoroastrian problems in the ninth-century books*, Oxford, 1943, 125 f.) the term 'metal' included, in OIr. physics, crystal, which is used in several Pahl. passages for the substance of the sky. If these are all expressions of a unified tradition, then the Gāthic verse is in harmony with the doctrine which assigns the sky to the protection of Xšaθra. In speaking of the sky as of stone Zoroaster himself was evidently using inherited IE terminology (see, most recently, H. Biezais, 'Der steinerne Himmel', *Ann. Acad. Reg. Scient. Uppsaliensis*, iv, 1960, 5–28) ; whereas the expression in *Yt.*, xiii, appears to represent the particular Iranian determination of the tradition concerned. The link between Xšaθra, lord of metal, and the sky is confirmed in the Pahl. books (see *Gr. Bd.*, iii, 16), but was evidently allowed to recede generally from prominence with the development of other theories about the heavens. It is presumably for this reason that the association of the Aməša Spəntas with the *gahāmbārs* is not stressed by later theologians ; but the fact that these festivals are holy days of obligation proves their fundamental religious importance.

the *barasman* with its leaf-tie, the wheat of the *draonah* and the pomegranate-twig) all guarded by Aməretāt (Life or Immortality). The presence of these things in the ritual, and their connexion with the protective Aməša Spəntas, is indicated in the liturgy of the *yasna*, as well as being clearly implied in the Gāthās themselves.³³ Zoroastrians are further instructed that three other physical creations are also present in the service. Cattle, protected by Vohu Manah, are represented by the animal-offerings and by the bull's hair of the *varas*, with which the *haoma*-juice is strained;³⁴ the shining metal of the knife, and also of the *māhrōy*, the mortar, and the many vessels, is guarded by Xšaθra, Dominion;³⁵ and finally the earth on whose surface the ceremony takes place, and from which the priest must never be remote in his sitting or standing,³⁶ is protected by Ārmaiti, Obedience. When in the distant past the ritual vessels were of stone,³⁷ these were presumably assigned to Ārmaiti rather than to Xšaθra, so that the goddess was then also directly represented in the ceremony, like her five companions. Thus not only are the various creations duly represented, but there is nothing seen or touched in the ritual which is not protected by one of the six Aməša Spəntas. Spənta Mainyu has no physical thing explicitly assigned to his guardianship; but in the setting of the *yasna* it seems probable that he was conceived by Zoroaster as the Bounteous Spirit of God descending upon the priest during the act of worship. This accords with the tradition preserved in the Pahlavi books that in the wider setting of life it is man, the 'seventh' creation, who is in his charge, or rather in that of Ahura Mazda himself.³⁸

The existence of these ritual connexions, so understood and interpreted by Zoroastrians themselves, both priests and laymen,³⁹ makes it probable that the ancient office of the *yasna*, familiar to him through countless repetitions, was the basic religious fact upon which the prophet meditated; and that it was

³³ See Y, xxxiv, 11; LI, 7; XLIII, 9. It is presumably because *haoma* is only one of the vegetable offerings that the deity of this plant is not invoked in the Gāthās. In the developed theology he and Aməretāt have much in common.

³⁴ See Modi, op. cit., 292; Bartholomae, *Air. Wb.*, 1735-6.

³⁵ The facultative use of fine metal rods for the *barsom* is evidently of late date. Twigs are still usually used in Iran.

³⁶ This is given as the doctrinal reason why the priest seats himself cross-legged, and why, if illness or age make this impossible for him, he may no longer celebrate the rituals.

³⁷ See above, p. 25, n. 18. That stone vessels were used at least into the Achaemenian period is shown by the mortars, pestles, and bowls of green chert found in the Persepolis treasury, see E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis*, II, Chicago, 1957, 53 ff., with pl. 23. A bronze mortar and bronze pestles were also found in the treasury, see *ibid.*, p. 9. Vessels both of stone and metal are of course mentioned in the 'Younger' Avesta.

³⁸ See *Šāyist nē-šāyist*, xv, 5 (ed. M. B. Davar, 84; cited by Gray, art. cit., 346-7); *Gr. Bd.*, iii, 12 (ed. T. D. Anklesaria, 33.15 f.; variant readings apud B. T. Anklesaria, *Zand-ākāsih*, Bombay, 1956, 38; cited by Gershevitch, *AHM*, 11); Pahlavi *Sīrōze*, I, 1 (ed. B. N. Dhabhar, *Zand-i Khūrtak Avistāk*, Bombay, 1927, 160.5 f.).

³⁹ My own attention was first drawn to this traditional interpretation by *behdīns* of the village of Sharifābād in Iran. To Irani priests the religious symbolism is naturally even more vividly present. In India, according to Ervad Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal, the symbolism is now understood only by the learned; but the traditional interpretation is preserved there also, in accord with Irani teaching.

through it, the worship solemnized to strengthen creation, that he reached an apprehension of the one beneficent Creator ; and came also to associate with its significance for the physical world deeper metaphysical truths, so that the moral nature of man became involved in this act of consecration, and the cult grew more inward and spiritual. Such an intimate connexion between Zoroaster's lofty teachings and the religious rituals helps to explain the coexistence of concrete and abstract in the Gāthās.⁴⁰ In a sense Gray is thereby justified in his thesis that the concrete must have had precedence, although some of the liturgical associations between concrete and abstract evidently existed already in the older religious tradition, and needed only to be adopted by Zoroaster into his own ethical system.

This is plainly the case with the three things first mentioned, namely fire, water, and plants. The two latter evidently derive their association with the divinities of Life and Health from amoral concepts of the Indo-Iranian past. ' Chez les Ariens de l'Inde, comme chez les Ariens de Perse, même sentiment d'admiration et d'envie inconsciente devant *l'eau qui court, l'arbre qui pousse*, témoins éternels de la force et de la santé de la nature.'⁴¹ The ritual consecration of water and plants in the Zoroastrian *yasna* is, however, moral in that it strengthens the good world created by Ahura Mazda. In Zoroaster's system moreover Haurvatāt and Amərətāt bear their part in the good life of the individual, since they represent a triumph over the sickness and death by which evil powers destroy the righteous man. They also have significance for the hereafter, ever strongly present to the prophet's mind : ' Le non-mourir peut désigner soit la longue vie terrestre, soit une vie céleste et éternelle qui suit la vie d'en bas '⁴² Aša, associated with fire, is also in origin an amoral Indo-Iranian concept, that of Order, which has evidently ancient ritual as well as cosmic significance. ' Le *rita* n'est point seulement la loi du monde matériel, mais aussi . . . du monde liturgique. L'ordre du culte est en effet une partie essentielle de l'ordre universel, qui se maintient par cette puissance autant que par celle des dieux. Le sacrifice qui par l'offrande, le soma, les hymnes, les louanges donne aux dieux la force et le courage de triompher du démon, est un des principaux éléments de l'ordre. Le foyer de l'autel où tous les jours s'allume la flamme . . . est lui aussi, comme le ciel, la *matrice du rita* (RV. x.61.6). '⁴³ This cosmic and cultic force is imbued also with morality, as verbal Truth, ' la parole conforme ',⁴⁴ and Righteousness, action conforming with the moral order.⁴⁵ Aša thus penetrates all ethical life, as fire penetrates all physical creation.

⁴⁰ cf. Molé, op. cit., 264, 265 ; H. Humbach, *Die Gathas des Zarathustra*, Heidelberg, 1959, I, 73-4.

⁴¹ Darmesteter, *Haurvatāt et Amərətāt*, 79.

⁴² *ibid.*, 41.

⁴³ Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, 14. See further *ibid.*, 284, and cf. Molé, op. cit., 207 ; F. B. J. Kuiper, ' Remarks on *The Avestan hymn to Mithra* ', *IJJ*, v, 1, 1961, 41-2.

⁴⁴ Darmesteter, op. cit., 17 ; see further Gershevitch, *AHM*, p. 153, n.

⁴⁵ For a summary of various interpretations of Rta/Aša see Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion*, 194-6 ; and, in more detail, in ' Heraclitus and Iran ', *History of Religions*, III, 1, 1963, 43-7.

The association of *Ārmaiti* with the submissive, fecund earth also appears to be old. No parallel Vedic evidence has been found, however, for a link between Dominion and metal; but the association is readily comprehensible when *Xšaθra*'s physical counterpart is identified as the sky, which dominates the lowly earth as benevolent Lordship reigns over Obedience.⁴⁶ The connexions of *Xšaθra* with the molten metal of the ordeal, with weapons which smite *daēvas* and the wicked, and with the bright coins by which great men give charity to the poor, are all evidently ancillary to this main majestic conception, which must have been particularly impressive for dwellers on the steppes of Central Asia, stretching far beneath the arching sky. *Xšaθra* thus had fittingly assigned to him the creation which dominates and encompasses all others, and which, like a fortress, holds evil trapped within the world for its own ultimate defeat.

The link of Good Mind with cattle is another association which seems particular to Zoroaster's system, and it too is at first sight perplexing; but by the cultic interpretation it ceases to be so strange. Cattle are necessarily represented at the *yasna*, for both animal-offerings and the *varas* are ritually essential. The hair for the latter is obtained from the sacred white bull, the *varasya*; and when he dies, ceremonies are no longer valid with his *varas*, and all major rituals cease until the new *varasya* can be consecrated.⁴⁷ The fact that reverence is shown for cattle by both Zoroastrian and Brahman attests the antiquity of this regard; and still to-day, even in areas where cattle are not much kept, as in Yazd, the bull and cow are very much part of Zoroastrian life, especially for the priests.⁴⁸ It is not so strange, therefore, that Zoroaster should have linked these sentient and beneficent creatures, through their tangible presence in the *yasna*, with Good Mind, the virtuous intent which both informs and makes valid the sacrifice itself,⁴⁹ and leads man in his daily life to goodness and thereby to salvation. A further symbolic sense appears attached to the cow as the spirit of the good creation, the world-soul, and perhaps even the spirit of the community of the good;⁵⁰ and this richness of implication provides fitting links with Vohu Manah, who, guarding cattle, takes precedence over all other *Aməša Spəntas*, under Ahura Mazda.

⁴⁶ cf. *Y*, XLIII, 16; XLVIII, 5. Even if one follows Bailey, *Festschrift für W. Eilers*, in separating Av. *Ārmaiti* from Vedic *arāmatī*, the concept postulated appears to be similar.

⁴⁷ See Modi, op. cit., 269–70. In the absence of an Indian parallel the antiquity of the *varas* cannot be proved; but since it is evidently the ritual vestige of a hair-strainer (cf. *Vr.*, x, 2), its ancientness is probable. Apart from the *varas*, cattle must be represented at the *yasna* by offerings of milk and of meat, butter, or fat.

⁴⁸ Even in a village where there is only one priest, and the *yasna* cannot properly be celebrated, the ritual use of *gōmēz* makes the keeping of bull or cow obligatory.

⁴⁹ See Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, 9, 248; and, recently, W. P. Schmid, 'Die Kuh auf der Weide' *IF*, LXIV, 1, 1958, 12.

⁵⁰ See G. G. Cameron, 'Zoroaster the herdsman', *IJJ*, x, 4, 1968, 261–81. The Manichaean missionaries adopted the Zoroastrian Vahman to represent their divinity the Nous, tutelary spirit of the Manichaean church (cf. *Y*, XLIX, 5), itself called, in Zoroastrian-sounding terminology, 'the flock (or herd) of the just' (*ram ardāwift*).

As well as Vohu Manah there are invoked in the Gāthās Gəuš Tašan 'Creator of the Bull' and Gəuš Urvan 'Soul of the Bull'. The latter entity is known in Zoroastrian tradition as the soul of the mythical uniquely-created Bull, with which all beneficent animals become united when they die; and these two beings are almost certainly named in the Gāthās because by ancient observance the soul of an individual animal left its body during certain solemnizations of the *yasna*.⁵¹ The bull-sacrifice, the *gomedha*, was known among Brahmans into historic times, and was made by Irani Zoroastrians, outside the *yasna*, down to the late nineteenth century. Other smaller domestic beasts, each representative of the animal kingdom as a whole, are still frequently offered up; and in India such sacrifices continue to be made in connexion with the *yajña* itself (the *agniṣṭoma*).⁵² At this great ceremony Brahmans of all the four Vedas lay aside ordinary restrictions and revert to the custom of their forefathers by eating meat; for what man himself eats, that he should offer to the gods, his divine guests, and what is offered should be partaken of in communion by the worshippers.⁵³ It has been noted that in daily life abstinence from meat is more strictly observed by Brahmans living in the hot south of India than by their northern brethren.⁵⁴ The Iranians, exposed to the winter cold of Central Asia and the Persian plateau, appear as meat-eaters throughout history (cf. Y, XLVIII, 5). They had therefore to kill animals; but by slaying them ritually they believed that they killed only the body, releasing the creature's spirit to go on high.⁵⁵ In both *yajña* and *yasna* the animal dies facing the fire;⁵⁶ and in the Brāhmaṇas this is said to be at the beasts' own demand, so that

⁵¹ On Gəuš Urvan, and the uniting with this being of animals at death, see *Gr. Bd.*, xxvi, 26 (ed. T.D.A., 166.1-2) and iii, 14 (ed. T.D.A., 35.5-6). Gəuš Tašan is a perplexing divinity; but it seems unlikely (despite the carefully reasoned arguments of Gershevitch, *AHM*, 55 f.) that he is to be identified with Spənta Mainyu. Zoroaster's followers appear to have had a good grasp on the interrelationship of the Gāthic divinities, including the subtleness of the link between Spənta Mainyu and Ahura Mazda; and Gəuš Tašan remains ritually a separate entity throughout Zoroastrian tradition. As Bartholomae says, *Sirōze*, I, 14, appears decisive on this point. See also Lommel, *Die Religion*, 178. In Irani Zoroastrianism certain sacrifices are still devoted to Gəuš Tašan and Gəuš Urvan; for the dedicatory *maṭhra* see M. R. Unvala (ed.), *Dārāb Hormazyār's Rivāyat*, Bombay, 1922, I, 263.7-10.

⁵² On the bull-sacrifice in Iran see Boyce, 'Bibi Shahrbanū and the Lady of Pārs', *BSOAS*, xxx, 1, 1967, 42-3. In India the *soma*-ceremony with animal-sacrifice is still solemnized in Kerala, the Godavari region in Andhra Pradesh, and the Tanjore District of Madras State (information which I owe to the kindness of my colleague Mr. J. E. B. Gray). The persistence of this observance in India, despite the doctrine of *ahiṃsā*, proves how strongly it is rooted in Brahman tradition. Its continuance at the heart of Iranian religion is therefore to be expected.

⁵³ See Dubois, op. cit., 511, 512; Thieme, art. cit., 78. On the old custom of killing a cow in honour of a guest see Pāraskara, *Grihyasūtra*, I.3.26 (cited by E. W. Hopkins, *Cambridge History of India*, I, 232-3).

⁵⁴ See Dubois, op. cit., 110-11.

⁵⁵ The Zoroastrian evidence on this point has been brought together by the present writer in 'Haoma, priest of the sacrifice', in the *Henning memorial volume*; for the Indian evidence see, e.g., the *Āitareya Brāhmaṇa*, II.1 (transl. Keith, p. 142). The Irani Zoroastrians continued down to the present century to eat meat only when an animal was offered in sacrifice. To kill a creature without so consecrating it would have been to commit the sin of *būdyōzadīh* 'destroying existence'.

⁵⁶ For the Zoroastrian practice see *Nirangistān*, ed. Sanjana, fol. 128 v, l. 9 f.

Agni may guide their spirits to heaven.⁵⁷ The sense of reluctant but *consenting* death is strong in both religions; in Zoroastrianism, individual death to strengthen the general world of good. That blood-sacrifice can exist at the heart of a spiritual and ethical religion, and co-exist moreover with a compassionate spirit and a profoundly-felt religious symbolism, deriving from the sacrifice itself, is amply shown by the New Testament, in which images of the good shepherd and his flock, the lost sheep, and the sacrificial lamb are woven into the fabric of the gospel teaching, at a time when actual offerings of sheep and lambs were being made at the Temple. There is no reason, therefore, to shrink from the supposition that Zoroaster also, in the remote past, accepted the sacrificial customs of his people, and derived from them deeply significant concepts and symbols.⁵⁸

The crucial passage for the above interpretation appears to be the first part of Y, XXIX, 7, *tēm āzūtōiš ahurō maθrēm tašať ašā hazaošō mazdā gavōi xšvīdēmčā hvō.urušaēibyō spantō sāsnaŷā*, which according to Bartholomae means: 'This *maθra* for fat Ahura Mazda, of one will with Aša, has created for cattle, and milk for those that crave nourishment, the Bounteous One by (his) decree'. The simplest interpretation of these words seems that *āzūiti* here refers to the oblation of fat to the fire (hence the reference to Aša).⁵⁹ It is said of the cow in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, II.3, 'As victim for Agni and Soma . . . it should be offered as fat; cattle are characterized by fat'.⁶⁰ It is probable that milk also refers here to ritual offerings, the laving of the *barəsman*-tie, and the libation to the waters, for the nourishment of plants and streams.⁶¹ Both rituals are an essential part of the *yasna*. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* also one finds dialogue between the gods and sacrificial beasts, with the animals conscious of their destiny, and submissive to it;⁶² and in a passage in the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* there is consideration of the solid and liquid (i.e. milk) offerings from the cow.⁶³ Thus it seems probable that here again Zoroaster was inspired by

⁵⁷ See, e.g., the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, II.7, transl. Keith, p. 139: 'The victim as it was borne along saw death before it, and was not willing to go to the gods; the gods said to it, "Come; we shall make you go to the world of heaven". It replied "Be it so; but let one of you go before me". "Be it so" (they replied). Before it went Agni; it followed after Agni'.

⁵⁸ The only Gāthic passage carrying any real suggestion to the contrary is Y, XXXII, 8, whose interpretation is difficult. Its connexion with Yima, who throughout Iranian tradition is held to have sinned, by disobedience, doubt, or pride, suggests that there is question here of wrong intent, of sacrifice without Vohu Manah, a *dužyašti*. On this see Bartholomae, *Air. Wb.*, 1866, and in detail Molé, op. cit., 221 ff.

⁵⁹ *āzūiti* is taken as 'oblation of fat' by Humbach, *Die Gathas*, I, 82, II, 17 (see in more detail his 'Milchprodukte im zarathustischen Ritual', *IF*, LXIII, 1, 1957, 50-1); and by Zaehner, *Dawn*, 34 with p. 325, n. 8. See also Gershevitch, *JRAS*, 1952, 178. There is no evidence for an offering of butter to the fire in Iranian ritual. The only attested oblation is of fat from a sacrificial animal. A purely figurative interpretation of Y, XXIX, 7, is suggested by Cameron, art. cit., 278.

⁶⁰ Transl. Keith, p. 136.

⁶¹ For a different rendering of *hvō.urušaēibyō* see Humbach, *Die Gathas*, I, 82. For details of the two offerings see Boyce, 'Ātaš-zōhr and āb-zōhr' *JRAS*, 1966, 100 ff.

⁶² Transl. Keith, p. 136.

⁶³ *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, x.6 (transl. Keith, p. 408 of the same volume as the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, see p. 25, n. 16, above).

actual rituals and ancient traditions, and that through these he reached lofty spiritual interpretations, which remain for us still regrettably obscure.⁶⁴

As well as the spiritual beings already mentioned, Zoroaster invokes Sraoša, Discipline,⁶⁵ and Aši, goddess of Recompense. Geiger insisted, upon what seem good grounds, that none of these Gāthic divinities can be regarded merely as a symbol, or an abstraction, or an aspect of God, but that each is an independent divinity.⁶⁶ This remains the orthodox Zoroastrian doctrine.⁶⁷ What unites these beings, under Ahura Mazda, seems to be that all are represented at the daily act of consecration, which is thus performed through them (hence no doubt, in part, the constant occurrence of their names in the instrumental case). Sraoša has his intangible representative in the liturgy itself, for he is *tanumaθra* 'having the sacred word as body'.⁶⁸ He is thus present at every divine ceremony; and it is doubtless because he is so embodied by men's prayers and hymns, and as a divinity takes these up to heaven, that Zoroaster calls him *vīspā.mazīštām* 'greatest of all' (Y, XXXIII, 5). Moreover the priest, offering an exacting worship which must be valid in thought, word, and deed, has constant need of Sraoša in his aspect of Discipline. Due Recompense should then attend upon his well-performed, well-directed labours, both here and hereafter, as she does upon those of man in his daily life (who likewise has constant need also of Sraoša); and Aši is fitly represented at the *yasna* by the gifts to the priests, the *ašōdād* of later times, the *dakṣiṇā* of Indian texts and usage.⁶⁹

It is interesting to observe in this connexion how naturally Zoroaster's great moral teaching, of the need for goodness in thought, word, and deed,

⁶⁴ The references, for example, to the 'cow in calf' lead one away from the animal-offering to the symbolism of husbandry, since no animal with young may be slain. On the spiritual symbolism of Zoroaster's cattle-imagery in general see Cameron, art. cit.

⁶⁵ See E. Benveniste, 'Deux noms divins dans l'Avesta', *RHR*, CXXX, 1945, 13-14; 'Éléments perses en araméen d'Égypte', *JA*, CCXLII, 3-4, 1954, 304.

⁶⁶ See, notably, op. cit., 104. Earlier M. W. Easton ('Some divinities of the Gāthās', *JAOS*, xv, 1893, 197-8) wrote: 'The peculiar difficulty . . . in the manner in which quality, personification, and person are considered to blend with each other, is common to all hermeneutics and depends less on the character of the special strophes than on the attitude assumed by the reader Considering the unmistakable evidence afforded by some of the passages [of the Gāthās], it is not easy to see what character could have been assigned . . . to the simple, unqualified, and monotonously repeated *asha* and *vohumano* other than that of . . . personality'. Cf. Benveniste, *RHR*, CXXX, 1945, p. 14, n. 3 (on Sraoša); Humbach, *Die Gathas*, I, 37-8.

⁶⁷ Only those Parsis who are under Western influence have come to accept the idea of the Gāthic divinities as either abstractions, or aspects of God. Orthodox priests, in India and Iran, are strongly opposed to this, and hold that they are *hōšdār* beings, with their own independent existence.

⁶⁸ Y, III, 20, IV, 23, LVII, 33; *Vd.*, xviii, 14; *Sīrōze*, I, 17. *Tanumaθra* is an epithet which Sraoša shares with only one other divinity, his great overlord Mithra (*Yt.*, x, 25); and it appears to be one of the few attributes which Mithra borrows from him, instead of vice versa. On the translation of the term see Gershevitch, *AHM*, 180-1.

⁶⁹ cf. Y, XLIV, 18; and see Lommel, *Festschrift für W. Kirfel*, 187-95; Humbach, *Die Gathas*, I, 59-61. The Zoroastrian *ašōdād*, although no part of the ritual objects, is never lacking; and in the Brāhmaṇas the *dakṣiṇā* is considered essential to the sacrifice, see Lévi, op. cit., 90-1. For Aši duly following Sraoša cf. Y, XLIII, 12.

arises from the meditations of a priest; for the validity of an act of worship depends, in Indo-Iranian tradition, not only on the right liturgical words, and the right ritual acts, but also upon the right attitude of mind.⁷⁰ Yet natural though this moral development now seems, in the light of Zoroaster's teachings, it is little apparent among the Brahmins. In their 'système de théologie net, logique, harmonieux . . . la morale n'a pas trouvé de place . . . : le sacrifice qui règle les rapports de l'homme avec les divinités est une opération mécanique . . . ; caché au sein de la nature, il ne s'en dégage que sous l'action magique du prêtre'.⁷¹ How great by contrast appears the moral stature of Zoroaster, who 'brings as offering the life of his own body, the first-fruits of good thought, deed, and word . . .'.⁷² Traces of ancient amoral attitudes similar to those of the Brāhmaṇas survive in passages of the 'Younger' Avesta; but despite the fact that the YAv. exists in later literary and linguistic forms than the Gāthās, it is probably just to regard it in part as the Zoroastrian equivalent of an *Old* Testament; for the subsequent history of Zoroastrianism suggests that the pagan elements in the YAv. were preserved through tradition and piety, rather than representing a major compromise for Zoroaster's own ethical and spiritual reform.

The other factor which, as has often been remarked, links the six Aməša Spəntas together is that they can be indwelling in man himself, and so aid him, not only in worship, but also in achieving the good life, and hence salvation. It is these two factors, immanence and representation in the *yasna*, which appear to define and distinguish the group. There are other Zoroastrian divinities (such as Arštāt, goddess of Justice)⁷³ who are both abstract and powerful, but who are not invoked in the Gāthās, any more than are such 'old' gods as Mithra or Vərəθraϥna. There is no call for Justice, or Contract, or Victory, at an act of worship; and these are moreover 'external' gods, who aid or punish rather than inform their worshippers. Among them Mithra, one of the greatest of Ahura Mazda's servants, guards from on high the rituals solemnized in honour of the supreme God;⁷⁴ and he is moreover represented at their enact-

⁷⁰ In the Brāhmaṇas there is insistence on offering the sacrifice with *śraddhā*. 'La confiance est nécessaire à ce point que, sans elle, le sacrifice est stérile', Lévi, op. cit., 113; cf. *Yt.*, x, 9. For verbal variations in the Gāthās on the theme of thought, word, and deed see Humbach, *Die Gathas*, I, 55-6. Humbach observes, *ibid.*, 73, 'Die frommen Gedanken, Worte und Werke der Menschen beim Opfer sind der Ausdruck seiner frommen Haltung im täglichen Leben'. The connexion seems justly made, but with the priority reversed. Cf. Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, 8 ff.

⁷¹ Lévi, op. cit., 9. Cf. also *ibid.*, 129 f., 152 f. On p. 152 Lévi speaks of 'la superbe indifférence morale des dieux, ou plutôt de la théologie brahmanique'.

⁷² *Y.*, xxvii, 11; cf. *Y.*, xxxiii, 14. Rudolph, art. cit., 102, has cited the Gāthic verse as proof that Zoroaster abandoned the blood-sacrifice for an ethical offering of the self; but the two are not incompatible, as Judaism and Islam both testify. The double offering remains valid throughout the history of Zoroastrianism. The *Dēnkard*, e.g., both contains prescriptions for tangible sacrifices, and enjoins: 'Everyone should make offering of himself and deliver himself to the gods', *harw kas tan ī xwēš ustofrid be kunišn ud ō yazdān abspārišn* (*Dk.*, ed. D. M. Madan, 478.22-3; cf. *ibid.*, 522.6-8).

⁷³ See Gershevitch, *AHM*, 286.

⁷⁴ See 'On Mithra's part in Zoroastrianism' *BSOAS*, xxxii, 1, 1969, 26-7.

ment by Sraoša and Aši, two of his own closest associates. Discipline 'is a natural ally of Mithra the guardian of the Contract'⁷⁵ as well as a needful attendant upon priests; and Aši is also closely connected with the great Ahura, having perhaps been conceived at one stage as Fortune waiting upon the god of war.⁷⁶ These links are probably pre-Zoroastrian, and were presumably an additional factor in keeping these two beings a little apart from the six divinities who represent creation, and who are so closely subordinated to the Creator. Both are, moreover, like Mithra himself, 'external' gods, Aši decidedly so, and Sraoša also as a disciplinary force, the chastiser of demons and 'lord of this world'.⁷⁷ The ties of Aši, their 'sister', and of Sraoša, her 'brother', with the six Aməša Spəntas are, however, close, a part of the complex criss-crossing of webs which holds the Zoroastrian pantheon firmly together.

There are thus ten divine beings, other than Ahura Mazda and his Bounteous Spirit, who are named in the Gāthās: the six Aməša Spəntas, Sraoša, Aši, Gəuš Tašan, and Gəuš Urvan. All are associated with some aspect of the *yasna*; and all are invoked in the 'Younger' Avesta as beings to be worshipped, prayers and offerings being devoted to them individually to this day. There also occurs in the Gāthās the invocation 'Mazda and the (other) Ahuras' (*mazdā'scā ahurā'nhō*).⁷⁸ The 'other' Ahuras are not named, but the term does not appear to be limited to the specific Gāthic divinities.⁷⁹ Presumably, therefore, the whole group of ahuric deities is intended, in opposition to the abhorred *daēvas*; just as, on the contrary, in the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas there is constant invocation of the *devas*, and rejection of the *asuras*. Bartholomae, translating the phrase as 'AhM. und die andern Götter', compared it with Old Persian 'Ahura Mazda . . . and the other gods (*bagāha*) who are',⁸⁰ an expression which has in turn been associated with one in the Gāthic Y, LI, 22. This verse runs, in Henning's translation, 'At whose sacrifice Ahura Mazda knows the best for me according to Righteousness. Those who were and are, those I shall worship by their

⁷⁵ Gershevitch, *AHM*, 193.

⁷⁶ See Bailey, *Zoroastrian problems*, 66 f.; Gershevitch, *AHM*, 217–18.

⁷⁷ B. N. Dhabhar (ed.), *Pahlavī Rivāyat accompanying the Dādistān ī dēnīg*, Bombay, 1913, lvi, 3; for other passages see Dhabhar, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz*, Bombay, 1932, 166–7 with notes. Sraoša is nevertheless also indwelling, being the opponent in the mind of the demon Wrath.

⁷⁸ Y, xxx, 9; xxxi, 4.

⁷⁹ In Y, xxxi, 4, the Ahuras are invoked together with Aša, and in connexion with Aši and Ārmaiti. Zaehner, *Dawn*, 39–40, identifies the Gāthic *ahuras* with the *asuras*, but supposes that, although Zoroaster invoked these divinities, 'he found them inconsistent with his own religion and therefore studiously avoided mentioning them by name'. It is wholly incredible, however, that a prophet of Zoroaster's burning faith should invoke other deities together with Ahura Mazda without holding them in reverence.

⁸⁰ DB IV.61. J. H. Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, London, 1913, p. 352, n. 2, accepting this comparison, commented: 'Provided that we limit the *Ahuras* to Mazdāh and the Six, with the other Gāthic abstractions of the same class, we do not compromise Zarathushtra's unmistakable monotheism'. But (a) the Gāthic 'abstractions' cannot all be classified together; (b) there is no evidence for such a limitation of the term *ahura* by the prophet; (c) so far is Zoroaster's monotheism from being 'unmistakable' that it needs special pleading to establish it in any strict sense from the Gāthās.

names and shall approach with praise'.⁸¹ The abrupt opening of this verse, with no antecedent expressed for the initial singular *yehyā* 'of whom', suggests that it was an occasional one, in which the prophet referred to an unnamed divinity to whom a particular *yasna* had been offered;⁸² for it seems that although Zoroaster himself concentrated mind and devotion upon the Creator, and upon those beings through whom, by worship and the moral life, man could best come to him, yet he did not reject the other divinities, subordinate to Ahura Mazda, who also oppose the powers of evil, and whose help men can obtain in their own struggles. All religious acts in Zoroastrianism are, however, first devoted to Ahura Mazda, whatever the dedication of the particular service. It seems probable that this is one of the distinguishing features of Zoroaster's reform; for it is not a rigid monotheism which should be ascribed to the prophet, but rather a striking and noble form of henotheism.⁸³

The phrase 'those who were and are' of Y, LI appears crystallized in the term the 'Immortals', or 'Bounteous Immortals', the Spēnta Aməša or Aməša Spēntas. In *Yasna Haptanhāiti*, where this expression first occurs, it is the sole term for divine beings in general, the only other word, *yazata*, being reserved for Ahura Mazda himself.⁸⁴ The same general meaning of the term is

⁸¹ See *BSOAS*, xxxii, 1, 1969, 18.

⁸² Such a particular dedication is ritually necessary, see above, p. 25, n. 21. It is presumably the occasional element in Y, LI, 22, which made it impossible for the *yēnhē hātqm* prayer, designed for general use, to be modelled on it with absolute fidelity. Henning himself had no explanation to offer for the significance of the initial *yehyā*; but he was not a scholar who allowed attempts at interpretation to distort grammar. The *yēnhē hātqm* he understood to mean: 'We shall worship those among the existing gods whom Ahura Mazda knows to be best for worship'. (Verbal communication made repeatedly during expositions of the *yašts*.) Cf. H. S. Nyberg, *Die Religionen des alten Iran*, trs. H. H. Schaeder, Leipzig, 1938, 270.

⁸³ On the general preliminary dedication to Ahura Mazda see *BSOAS*, xxxii, 1, 1969, 30, 32. When a prophet preaches monotheism in the strict sense, there are to be expected reiterated declarations of the existence of only one God, and denials of that of any other. One has only to compare the Gāthās in this respect with the utterances of the Hebrew prophets, or Muḥammad, to be struck by the total absence from them of any such declarations. The problem appears, however, to be largely one of terminology, since it is not easy to find a word to define the unique teachings of Zoroaster. The Parsis, conscious of the supremacy of Ohrmazd over all the good creation, divine and earthly, and battered by the verbal assaults of Muslim and Christian, have indeed themselves resorted to a declaration of monotheism as the best way of describing their own beliefs; but this has never led the orthodox to modify the actual doctrines of their faith, or to abandon the veneration of lesser divine beings, as practised evidently by their prophet. It is *juddīns* who have attempted to reconcile an apparent contradiction by postulating strict monotheism for Zoroaster, followed by syncretism to account for the beliefs of his followers. This has led, however, to another contradiction. It is incontestable that Zoroaster affirmed the existence of false gods, the *daēvas*, with power under Angra Mainyu to delude mankind; and yet it is supposed (against the evidence) that he denied that of their traditional opponents, the righteous *ahuras*. Thus by the monotheistic theory Ahura Mazda in his majesty is alone against a host of enemies—a strange interpretation of the doctrines of Zoroaster, with their balanced opposition of the forces of good and evil.

⁸⁴ Y, xli, 3; see O. G. von Wesendonk, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Bedeutung des Yasna Haptanhāiti*, Bonn and Köln, 1931, 45. For the general meaning of the term Aməša Spēnta in *Yasna Haptanhāiti*, see Y, xxxix, 3 and xlii, 6. Nyberg, op. cit., 280, has justly commented that from these passages it appears 'dass Aməša Spēnta hier noch eine allgemeine Bezeichnung für Götter und göttliche Mächte ohne Begrenzung auf eine bestimmte Zahl ist'. Cf. Zaehner, *Dawn*, 63.

apparent in the great prayer *yenhē hātām* and its commentary in *Y*, XXI.⁸⁵ Yet already in *Yasna Haptanhāiti* the expression appears also to be applied particularly to the seven great Gāthic divinities;⁸⁶ and this is its commonest use in the 'Younger' Avesta, though never to the total exclusion of the more general sense.⁸⁷ The frequent specialization of the term appears to be a tribute to the pre-eminence of the deities hymned by the prophet's own words.⁸⁸

It is generally agreed that Zoroaster's Gāthās can represent only a small part of the prophet's utterances. Their preservation as part of the liturgy of the *yasna* is the more readily understandable if it is accepted that they not only have their doctrinal basis in that service, but also contain repeated invocations of the divinities who are present at its every celebration. Zoroaster's wide-ranging and complex thought rises to metaphysical and prophetic heights far above the realities of the ritual, even with its vast significance for the physical world; but these realities appear to have remained constantly present to him, having become part presumably of his instinctive life and thought. That the *yasna* has maintained its place over millennia at the heart of Zoroastrianism is evidently to be attributed to the significance attached to it by the prophet himself, which has kept this act of worship, however much modified in the incidentals of liturgy or ritual, above dispute or neglect, as central to the faith he taught.

The doctrine of the dual role of the Aməša Spəntas survives strongly in living Zoroastrianism, encouraging both moral striving and a respect for the physical world. Doctrinally all other *yazatas* are grouped round these six, as their helpers or *hamkārs*,⁸⁹ so that, under Ahura Mazda, the whole religious life depends on them, the hub of its wheel. It is noteworthy that although the Irani Zoroastrians erect individual shrines to a number of *yazatas* (including Sraoša), they make none for any of the six Aməša Spəntas, who are evidently

⁸⁵ Even here the expression has been interpreted as limited to the seven Gāthic divinities, see von Wesendonk, *op. cit.*, p. 49 with n. 2, Gershevitch, *AHM*, 163 f.; but the arguments, although ingenious, appear a trifle forced.

⁸⁶ See, e.g., *Y*, XLII, 1.

⁸⁷ There are passages in the *yasna* and *yašts* where the meaning may be taken either as particular (the six with Ahura Mazda) or general. The general meaning is especially striking in some mythological passages, e.g., *Yt.*, x, 51 (the Aməša Spəntas built Mithra's abode above high Harā); *Yt.*, x, 89 (Haoma is 'priest of the Aməša Spəntas' i.e. of the gods); *Yt.*, vii, 3 (the Aməša Spəntas distribute the moon's radiance over the earth). In *Y*, i, 2, Ātar is called 'the most active of the Aməša Spəntas' and in the often-cited *Vr.*, viii, 1, the Aməša Spəntas are numbered by hundreds and thousands. In the Pahlavi books, and in living Zoroastrianism, the term is regularly applied to the 33 divine beings associated with the calendar, and to other *yazatas* as well. Geiger, *Die Aməša Spəntas*, 87 ff., while acknowledging the general use of the term, interprets the facts in the opposite way. He suggests, that is, that the term was first applied to the seven, and then occasionally extended to other *yazatas*, as (p. 88) 'eine leicht erklärliche, durch Ungenauigkeit verursachte Übertragung des Namens auf ausserhalb stehende Gestalten'. The evidence of *Yasna Haptanhāiti* suggests, however, that this 'Ungenauigkeit' is original to the term, and that its limitation was a theological development within Zoroastrianism.

⁸⁸ cf. *Gr. Bd.*, xxvi, 125 (ed. T.D.A., 180.14-15): 'Ōhrmazd and the six Amahraspands are the source of all which one calls *Amahraspand*' (*Ōhrmazd ud ān 6 amahraspand bun ī hamāg ī amahraspand gōwēd*).

⁸⁹ See, e.g., *Gr. Bd.*, xxvi.

held to be properly revered through the religious services—not only the *yasna* itself, that is, but also the *Vendīdād* and *Nīrangdīn*, since the same basic rituals recur in each of these major observances. The Aməša Spəntas are also felt to be represented in the lesser service of the *drōn* (or *bāj*), and even at the ‘outer’ liturgical service of the *āfrīnagān*.⁹⁰ They are thus constantly offered reverence.⁹¹ The fact that they are worshipped through the liturgies of the various high rituals (all embodying the Gāthās) helps moreover to account for the absence of ancient *yašts* in their individual honour. It suffices evidently that they were fittingly worshipped by Zoroaster himself, and are still so worshipped by his successors, the Zoroastrian priests.

⁹⁰ The same categories of ritual objects are used at this lesser service, although *haoma* and *varas* are lacking. Even at the *āfrīnagān*, Aməretāt is represented by flowers and fruit, and Vohu Manah by the offering of milk.

⁹¹ All six are further honoured by their special feast-days, recurring annually. There is no ground whatsoever for postulating a neglect of the six Aməša Spəntas in the practice of the later religion (*pace* Zaehner, *Dawn*, 96).