

MISCELLANEOUS.

AVESTA IS VEDA; THE INSCRIPTIONAL DEVA IS NOT 'DEMON.'

To the Editor of The Open Court:

Allow me to thank you for the very full, able and impartial notice of my book on *Zarathushtra, Philo, the Achemenids and Israel*, which appeared in *The Monist* for April.

This will accomplish of itself much of the object I had in view in writing the work, for half of our battle lies in merely stating what is brought up for discussion. Most quick-witted people will see a good deal in that alone.

I am glad to notice that Dr. Gray opposes me in one vital particular, for it is refreshing to meet with such an opponent.

I see that he will not allow fully my main contention, for I find him inclined to allow of Semitic influence even upon the early Avesta. Upon some points of Semitism he already knows a great deal more than I, for I have only had time to "skim" in Assyriology, though I have been a sort of Hebraist for fifty years with all the rest. I must, however, stoutly rally to my point, and even push my defence into an attack.

With me Avesta is pure Veda, or at least nearly so, and *vice versa*, as Professor Oldenberg said in a few kind words on my translation of one Gāthic chapter into Sanskrit in Roth's *Festgruss*, "Zend is nearer Sanskrit than Greek is near to Greek." (See his *Vedic Religion*, page 27, note.)

All the Amesha Spēda are in the Rik (see *Z. P. A. I.*, page 464) though not gathered into Seven, nor so especially consecrated. If Babylon affected Gāthic Avesta, then it must have been the father of Aryan India as well. I cannot see any loophole for an admission of Semitic influence, if the Gāthas are all reformed Rik—or rather a reform of the Rik's original—far up in North Iran, which original was also their, the Gāthas', own parent. It is of course not at all impossible that civilization may first have focused on the Euphrates, and that, if so, it may, nay it must, have shot out rays on every side not excepting North and Eastern Iran, and through this the far-east land beyond the Indus; for note well that all Indian mental life moved to its home practically through Iran. But if Babel really had any serious influence upon the vast Indian intellect with its rich incomparable results from the early Rik to the "Friendly Counsel," it must have been of the utmost rudimental character. India compared with Babylon! Who would seriously attempt it, at least at our present stage of information?

Such influences, mutual or original, on the one side or the other, were ante-pre-historic, if one might be pardoned for such a monster, to do justice

to a point. No, I firmly read all my Gâthic Iranianism as pure Aryan, with the Indian as its full brother or full sister, both having come from one identical home, having been once absolutely as much one as Italian and Spanish were one in the Latin, if indeed that comparison is any longer sound.

Gâthic Avesta with all its lost books,—for every lore postulates lost portions,—is to me absolutely clear of foreign elements, and the Gâtha is a book of the Veda, or *vice versa*. Nothing Semitic of equal date and circumstances has ever touched it in the historic or in the pre-historic periods. Semitic influence of a past myriad years, if it ever existed, is a quantity totally negligible; Gâthic is quasi-Vedic.

One more point which I must have put too dimly, for Dr. Gray has passed it over:

Of course my suspicion that Cyrus's God of Heaven is Deva is only tentative, but where would science be if we hushed up every thought? My "God of Heaven as Deva" was indeed a snap-shot, but it carried with it something that all will notice, for it links on at once with my view that Zoroastrianism had points of wide divergence from the Daric Inscriptional.

I must have stated it somewhere:—indeed I was very remiss if I did not make a point of sharp indenture with it. *Deva* is of course "demon" in Avesta, old or later, but it is not "demon" with any certainty in Daric Inscriptional, for in fact it does not occur, and I meant to hold that up sharply as the very apex of my thought. Deva was unfortunately "demon" in Avesta, and throughout all genuine Persian literature, but—and here is the gist of the matter—it *may* not have been "demon" in the Daric as I ought to have more emphatically noticed. It is strange indeed that with so much call for the Devil, Darius and his successors do not in their Inscriptions give "the Daeva of Daevas," or any other daeva as "demon" in the universal Avesta sense, though we have the Druj to satiety at least in her works, and she was first daughter of the Avesta, chief deva-devil.

Did then the South Mazda-worship hold at all to that perversion of the glorious word for "God," the "shining sky," for that was the first sense of Deva? And while pondering this I was suddenly struck with Cyrus's "God of Heaven"; see Chronicles and Ezra the first. Did Cyrus mean to translate Daeva in this expression—which seems all Exilic—in the same sense as that in which the vast multitudes of India would unanimously have translated it; for *deva* with them was "God" alone, not "demon"; and if he did so intend, then *ipso verbo* he, Cyrus, held to the Indian and original view in spite of North Persia. With him then that one blot on Avesta did not exist in his form of Mazda-worship; for some reason he erased it,—doubtless not for a personal reason, for such things are never personal;—his party or his public, nay his entire South Persia, or Persia proper, may not have been tainted with this relic of a remorseless fight. The Gâthic struggle was such that the Gâthic party took the very name of God, and made it "demon," doubtless because their opponents continually flaunted it—excited enemies are apt each to praise God for every victory on their side. All North Persia swarmed with Zoroastrianism, centering at Ragha, and every mail in his new post, for he, Darius, first originated our postal systems, brought news from the Zoroastrian center, while official political documents came continually tumbling in from that town with its surrounding province—; but on this one signal disgrace of Median Mazda-worship Darius may have been free from all complicity, and Cyrus's

"God of Heaven" may here give us the clue. I emphatically term this a conjecture, as may be seen by referring to my book. If it be not actually verified, it should at least "stir up thought"; as indeed it has so far done; and this is what we need.

Finally I thank my reviewer for apologizing for my brevity toward the close. In fact this had its most natural of all mechanical causalities; for both my time and my money were very scant. As is known, I am driving a fierce race with my "latter end," pushing on with pen and with paper-mill in fullest fury to finish before my chance is over. I have already made up some little for the scant treatment of the last pages; see *The Monist* for January pre-saging the number for July, where I actually compare Avesta with Daniel and Revelations verse by verse.

Let me, in closing, again express my thanks to my reviewer. He has in fact forestalled my friendly appreciation by his own kindness to me,—but, as one of the "aged" I may be pardoned if I allow myself to add a word of heartfelt commendation.

Dr. Gray is, as I understand, still somewhat young, but he has less of the vapor of his age about him than any scholar yet known to have attained his present position under similar circumstances.

So far as I am capable of judging, he is radically sound, though a little too much spread out in his field of literary action, which peculiarity has indeed, in part at least, its obvious explanation in the fact that he is not yet a settled professor, at least, so I regretfully suppose. One does not like to predict the future; but I am of the opinion that this brilliant man will, if he has a fair chance of it, live to be recognized as one of the keenest and most useful scholars that even the land of Whitney has produced.

LAWRENCE H. MILLS.

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MAN A CREATOR.

If man can truly be said to have been created in the image of God, he ought to evince his divinity by imitating the creator in deeds of creation, and this, indeed, has long been recognized as the worthiest occupation of man. The poet, the artist, the inventor, in fact all original thinkers and leaders, produce new forms, new devices and contrivances, new thoughts and higher ideals. Indeed it seems as if the world were the mere raw material purposely left unfinished so as to enable man to exercise the divinest of his qualities, his creativeness. The imperfections of nature appear from this point of view as if made on purpose so as to offer man the opportunity of accomplishing this ambitious task and building up a human world above the natural. A late Latin proverb characterizes the pride of the inhabitants of the Netherlands in this line:

Deus creavit mare sed Batavus litora fecit.

"God created the ocean, but the shores have been made by Batavians."

The creativeness of man appears to acquire a special resemblance to God's own work, when it extends to the procreation of new species, and this has actually been accomplished of late by Dr. Nilsson, the Director of the Swedish Agricultural Station at Svalöf, and our reputed countryman Luther Burbank, of Santa Rosa, California. However meritorious these undertakings are, they remain exposed to the criticism of the narrow-minded, and so we need not be