

others of its truth. He was born about 500 B.C. (?), and at an early age retired from the world, it is said for thirty years, for meditation and for prayer, during which time he composed those books of his teaching whose fragments remain a priceless treasure to this day, collected in the Zendavesta, the sacred book of the Parsees. His creed was simple and comprehensive, but he doubtless taught with it laws, ceremonies and restrictions, much as were given with that other eastern faith which it so much resembles in many ways; and to these the priestly caste has added much in the succeeding generations. He taught that there was one Almighty Power—a deity existent from all time and for eternity, who created two spirits, Ormuzd and Ahriman. each of whom was also a creating force. Ormuzd was the beneficent and Ahriman the malevolent power, and between them and their followers raged, and has raged since their beginning, a constant warfare. Zoroaster taught that at length Ormuzd should prevail and for a season, before the end of all things, peace should reign on the earth. The great teacher is supposed to have received this knowledge from Ormuzd himself, with whom he was for a space in heaven. He taught that there is a heaven and a hell, and for our actions, good or ill, shall be judged to all a meet reward of happiness or of sorrow, each one upon his merits. Ormuzd told him also to “teach the nations that my light is hidden under all that shines; whenever you turn your face to the light and follow my command, Ahriman [the evil spirit] will be seen to fly. In this world there is nothing superior to light.” Hence it is that fire, though not worshipped by the true Parsee, is held in reverence by all. In their temples the sacred fires, the first bright seed of which was originally brought by Zerdusht from heaven, are constantly kept burning, and from this fact the Parsees have gained the name—a misleading one for the true followers of their prophet—of Fire Worshippers. But with that strange, sad decay that seems the inevitable fate of all religions, corruptions entered their pure faith, until the Monotheistic Parsee, the worshipper of one Almighty Power, degenerating,