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BY

JIVANJI JAMSHEDJI MODI, B.A. (1877),

*Fellow of the University of Bombay (1887), Dipl. Litteris et Artibus  
(Sweden, 1889), Shams-ul-Ulama (Government of India, 1893), Officier  
D'Académie (France, 1898), Officier de l'Instruction Publique (France, 1902).*

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## The Divine Comedy of Dante and the Virâf-nâmeh of Ardâi Virâf.

[Read 26th February 1892. The Hon'ble Sir Raymond West in the  
Chair.]

This paper is intended to give a few points of striking resemblance between Dante's account of his visit to the other world, as given in his Divine Comedy, and that of the visit of the Persian Dastur Ardâi Virâf, as given in the Pahlavi Virâf-nâmeh.

### I.

The circumstances under which Dante wrote his Divine Comedy are well known to many. Therefore, I will not dwell upon them here, but proceed to describe the circumstances under which Ardâi Virâf is said to have made his pilgrimage to the other world.

According to the three introductory chapters of Virâf-nâmeh, after the overthrow of the ancient Irânian monarchy by Alexander the Great, there was a good deal of disorder and scepticism in Irân. This was the result, it is said, of the foolish conduct of Alexander, who burnt the religious literature of the country and put to death many of its spiritual and temporal leaders. Alexander is, therefore, spoken of in the Pahlavi book in question as the "gazaçtê Alexieder," *i. e.*, the cursed Alexander. This state of disorder and scepticism continued, with some short intervals, for a very long time. At last, in order to put an end to this state of affairs, a few religious and god-fearing men met together in the great fire-temple of Âtash Farobâ. They discussed the question very freely, and unanimously came to the conclusion, that they must take some measures to put an end to that state of disorder in matters of religion. They

said : " Some one of us must go to, and bring intelligence direct from, Divine Intelligence." They resolved upon calling a general meeting of the people to elect a properly qualified person for the divine mission. The people met and selected, from among themselves, seven men, who, on account of their great piety and on account of the purity of their thoughts, words, and deeds, were best qualified for divine meditation. These seven then selected from among themselves the three best, who again, in their turn, selected from among themselves one by name Ardâi Virâf who belonged to the town of Nishâpur. Virâf, before submitting to this selection of himself, wished to ascertain what the sacred divination was about his election. As in the choice of Mathias, as the last Apostle, he desired to determine by lot the sacred divination. He said : " If you like, draw lots for the (other) Mazdayaçnâns and myself. If the lot falls to me, I shall go with pleasure to that abode of the pious and the wicked, and I will carry faithfully this message and bring a reply truthfully " (Ch. I.). The lots were drawn thrice, and they fell to Virâf. Virâf then retired to a quiet place, washed himself, put on a new clean set of clothes and said his prayers. He then drank three cups of a sacred somniferous drink in token of " Hûmata, Hûkhta, and Hvarshta," *i. e.*, good thoughts, good works, and good deeds. The somniferous drink and the deep and divine meditation soon threw him into an unusually long sleep which lasted for seven days and nights. The place of his retreat was guarded from interference by several pious men. Virâf rose from this meditative sleep at the end of the seventh day, and then described to his anxious hearers his vision of his visit to the other world.

We are not in a position to fix the exact date when Virâf lived, but this much can be said with certainty that he lived at some period between the reign of Shapur II. and the Arab Conquest, *i. e.*, between the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the seventh.

From a literary point of view, there can be no comparison between the Divine Comedy and the Virâf-nâmeh. Dante's work is considered to be a masterpiece of Italian poetry. Virâf-nâmeh has no claim to any literary excellence. In the Divine Comedy, it is the heavenly pilgrim himself who records the vision of his imaginary visit to the next world in his best poetic style. The Virâf-nâmeh, though it describes the vision in the words of the pilgrim himself, is the work of somebody else, who narrates in simple prose, what he supposes to be a great event in the religious history of the country.

The arrangement in the description of their respective visions is well nigh the same. Both the pilgrims at first make their own observations on what they see in their heavenly journey. They then put questions to their guides, asking information on what they see, and the guides give an explanation. The questions of Virâf to his guides have, in many cases, assumed a stereotyped form. For example, his question to his guides in his visit of Hell is the same. "Denman tan meman vanâs kard mûn rôbân avin pâdâfarâs îdrûnet," *i.e.*, "What sin has this body, whose soul meets with such a punishment, committed?" The questions of Dante are variegated.

The times, when both Virâf and Dante wrote, were times of great disorder in their respective countries of Irân and Italy. It was religious disorder, which followed the change of dynasties, that led to the vision of Virâf. It was political disorder, which had its reflex in the spiritual life of the country, that influenced the strains of the Italian poet. We have referred above, to the religious disorder in Persia at the time when Virâf lived. We will describe here, in the words of Mr. Herbert Baynes, the state of Italy at the time when Dante wrote.

"The Church and the World were at open warfare, so that society was split into at least two factions, the Papal adherents and the Imperialists . . . The chaos of outer relations had its reflex in the spiritual life of those times . . . Society had lost its ideals. Righteousness had given place to expediency. Hence the prophet of his age had to sing to eager listeners a message of awful grandeur, of life-long significance. He could not but show them the Hell in which they were living, the Purgatory through which, as he believed, it was possible for them to go, in order that, by repentance, they might reach the Paradise prepared for the redeemed."<sup>1</sup>

## II.

Now, coming to the subject proper of our paper, we find that both Virâf and Dante undertook their heavenly pilgrimages after great hesitation, and after great many doubts about their fitness for such a great work. As we saw before, Virâf, before submitting to his selection, wished to ascertain what the sacred divination about his selection was. It was only after determining by lot, that he undertook the divine mission (Ch. I.)<sup>2</sup>. In the case of Dante also, we find

<sup>1</sup> *Dante and his Ideal*, by Herbert Baynes (1891), pp. 11-14.

<sup>2</sup> The numbers of the chapters are according to Dr. Hoshangjee and Dr. Haug's text.

a similar expression of doubt about his fitness for the great mission. When Virgil offers to take him to the other world, he says:—

“ Test well my courage, see if it avail,  
Ere to that high task I am sent by thee.

But why should I go? Who will this concede?  
I nor Æneas am, nor yet am Paul;  
Worthy of that nor I myself indeed,  
Nor others deem me. Wherefore, to this call  
If now I yield, I fear me lest it be  
A journey vain.

(*Hell*, C. II., 11—36.)<sup>1</sup>

Both Dante and Virâf make their heavenly pilgrimages, when in the grasp of profound slumber. Virâf's sleep lasted for seven days and nights. Dante does not tell us for how many days did his vision last. He merely says that he was sleep-opprest.

“ How I there entered, can I not well say,  
So sleep-opprest was I in that same hour  
When from the true path thus I went astray.”

(*Hell*, C. I., 10—12.)

Both went through all the parts of the other world, but the order of their visits to these parts is a little different. Virâf first went to the Hamistagân, which somewhat corresponds to the Christian Purgatory, and then to Paradise, and lastly to Hell. Dante first went to Hell, then to Purgatory, and lastly to Paradise.

Both had two persons as their guides. Virâf had for his guides, Sraôsb, the messenger of God, and Âtar, the angel presiding over fire. Dante had Virgil and Beatrice for his guides. Sraôsb and Âtar accompanied Virâf through all the three regions, but Virgil accompanied Dante to Hell and Purgatory, and Beatrice to Paradise. The guides of Virâf offer their kind services to him in following words (Ch. V.) : “ Come on, we will show you Heaven and Hell, and the light and splendour, rest and comfort, pleasure and cheerfulness, delight and joy, and fragrance that are the reward of the righteous people, received in Heaven. We will show you darkness and distress, misery and misfortune, pain and grief, disease and sickness, terror and fright, torture and stench, that are the punishments of various kinds, which

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<sup>1</sup> I have followed Dr. Plumptre's translation, notes, and commentary in these quotations from Dante.

the evil-doers, sorcerers and sinful men undergo in Hell. We will show you the place of the righteous and that of the unrighteous. We will show you the reward of those, who have good faith in God and Archangels, and the good and evil, which are in Heaven and Hell." Compare with this, the words of Dante's guide, Virgil, with which he offers to be the leader of Dante in Hell.

"Wherefore for thee I think and judge 'tis well  
 That thou should'st follow, I thy leader be,  
 And guide thee hence to that eternal cell,  
 Where thou shalt hear sharp wails of misery,  
 Shalt see the ancient spirits in their pain,  
 For which, as being the second death, men cry:  
 Those thou shalt see who, in the hope to gain,  
 When the hour comes, the blest ones' happier clime  
 Can bear the torturing fire not yet complain.  
 To these would'st thou with eager footsteps climb,  
 A soul shall guide thee worthier far than I."

(*Hell*, C. I., 112—122.)

Both Virâf and Dante find in their guides, persons, who feel offended by their past conduct, and who, before leading them forward in their heavenly journey, taunt them for their past offensive deeds. Âtar, the guide of Virâf, taunts him for neglecting and not taking proper care of fire, over which he (Âtar) presides (Ch X.). Beatrice, the guide of Dante, taunts him for neglecting her and not keeping her memory green. (*Purg.*, C. XXX., 121-140.)

Three steps led Virâf to the top of the Chinvat Bridge<sup>1</sup>, where the departed souls part, to go to their respective destinations of Heaven, Hell, and Hamistagân. Three steps led Dante to the portal of the Purgatory. (*Purg.*, C. IX., 93-102; Virâf, Ch. IV.) The three steps which Dante had to pass over, were made of polished marble, rugged stone, and fiery porphyry, which symbolized the three elements of penitence, *viz.*, contrition, confession, and satisfaction. The three steps of Virâf were those of "humata, hukhta, and hvarshta," *i. e.*, good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

The guides of Virâf welcomed him, and taking hold of his hand led him on for the three steps. So did the guide of Dante.

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<sup>1</sup> The Chinvat Bridge of Virâf corresponds to the Sirat of the Mahomedans, the Wogho of the Chinese, and the Giöföll and Bifröst of the Scandinavians.

“ O'er the three steps my Guide then led me on  
With all good will.” (*Purg.* C. IX., ll. 106-107.)

It is over this Chinvat Bridge, that according to Virâf, Mithra, the judge, holds his court, and judging the actions of the departed souls, sends them to Heaven, Hell or Hamistagân. Dante gives to his judge Minos, a seat in the second circle of Hell. Dante's Minos only judges the souls of wicked persons. This bridge, which leads to the Hamistagân, is situated on the top of a mountain. We find Dante's Purgatory also situated on a mountain. (*Purg.*, C. III., 3, 6, 14.)

According to both the pilgrims, the utmost punishment, that the souls there suffer, are the extremes of temperature, nothing else. The guides of Virâf, speaking to him on this subject, say : “ Their punishment is cold and heat (resulting) from the movement of the atmosphere and no other evil” (Ch. VI). The guide of Dante says to him:—

“To suffer freezing cold and torturing blaze  
Bodies like this doth Power Supreme ordain,  
Which wills to veil from us His work and ways.”

(*Purg.*, C. III., 31—33.)

### III.

Both go direct from the Purgatory to their first Heaven. The heavens of both Dante and Virâf receive their names from the heavenly bodies, though their numbers differ. Virâf has four heavens. Dante has ten. The heavens of Virâf are Setar-pâyâ (*i.e.*, of the star pathway), Mâhâ-pâyâ (of the moon pathway), Khorshed-pâyâ (of the sun pathway), and Garotmân. Dante has the following ten heavens—the heavens of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Fixed Stars, the Primum Mobile, and the Empyrean.

The last Heaven of Dante is the seat of the Almighty God, just as Garotmân, the last Heaven of Virâf, is the seat of Ahura Mazda. Dante saw the divine presence of God in a brilliant point:—

“I saw a point so radiant appear,  
So keenly bright, it needs must be the eye  
Should shrink and close before its brightness clear.”

(*Parad.*, XXVIII., 16—18.)

Virâf also hears His voice and sees Him in a light. (Ch. CI., 11.)

Both see in Paradise, the departed illustrious men of their respective countries. Dante sees there men like Thomas of Aquinas, Albert of Cologne, and Charles Martel. Virâf sees men like Zoroaster, King Vishtâsp, Frashaôster, and Jâmâsp. Both see in Paradise the first father

of man. Dante sees and converses with the soul of Adam. Virâf sees the *farôhar* or the spirit of Gayomard, the Zoroastrian Adam.

Both have the grades of their heavens rising in importance in proportion to the meritoriousness of their acts. Virâf reserves the higher heavens for the good and just rulers of the land, for devout worshippers warriors who fight for a just cause, men who destroy noxious creatures that do great harm to mankind, men who add to the prosperity of their country by irrigation and fresh plantations, and women who are possessed of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds and who are obedient to their husbands. Dante sees in his higher heavens, theologians, martyrs who have met with death while fighting for a good cause, righteous kings, and men who are devoted to pious contemplation.

Both see in Paradise the souls of the pious and the virtuous in brilliant glory. Virâf saw the "Light which is called the highest of the high." "I saw," says he, "the pious on thrones of gold and in gold embroidered clothes. They were men whose brightness was the same as the brightness of the sun" (Ch. IX., 4). Compare with this that which Dante saw in the highest of the highest heavens:—

"Their faces had they all of living flame,  
Their wings of gold, and all the rest was white,  
That snow is none such purity could claim."

(*Parad.*, XXXI., 13—15.)

Both are rewarded in Heaven for their sacred pilgrimage. St. Bernard asks for salvation on behalf of Dante from the Blessed Virgin:—

"He who stands here, who, from the lowest pit  
Of all creation, to this point hath pass'd  
The lines of spirits, each in order fit,  
On thee for grace of strength himself doth cast,  
So that he may his eyes in vision raise  
Upwards to that Salvation noblest, last."

(*Parad.*, C. XXXIII., 22—27.)

Compare with this, the words, in which Virâf is offered immortality by the souls of the departed virtuous, who welcome him to Paradise: "O holy one, how hast thou come from that perishable world of troubles to this imperishable world free from troubles. Taste immortality, for here you will find eternal pleasure." (Ch. X.)



St. Bernard, who had, during the last part of Dante's journey to Paradise, taken the place of Beatrice, takes Dante at the end of his journey to the Blessed Virgin. Sraôsh and Âtar, the guides of Virâf, take him to the seat of the Almighty.

Both have to communicate their heavenly experiences. At the end of his journey, Dante prays for strength and power to communicate to men, what he saw in his heavenly tour :—

“ Oh Light Supreme, that dwellest far away  
 From mortal thoughts, grant Thou this soul of mine  
 Some scant revival of that great display,  
 And to my tongue give Thou such strength divine,  
 That of Thy glory at the least one beam  
 May to the race to come in beauty shine.”

(*Parad.*, XXXIII., 67—72.)

At the end of Viraf's journey, Ahura Mazda asks him to communicate to his countrymen what he saw in the other world. Ahura Mazda says : “ O pious Ardâi Virâf, messenger of the Mazdayacnâns ! thou art a good servant ; return to the material world. Tell exactly to the world what thou hast seen and learnt. I, Ahura Mazda, am with thee. Say to the wise that I recognize and know everyone who speaks the truth.” (Ch. CI.) Then with regard to the particular errand, for which Ardâi Virâf had made his pilgrimage to the next world, he sends the following message through him to his co-religionists : “ O Ardâi Virâf ! say to the Mazdayacnâns of the other world, that the way of piety is the only way, and that is the way of those of the primitive faith. The other ways are not the proper ways. Follow only that path of piety. Turn not from that path in prosperity or adversity or under any circumstances. Follow good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. Continue in the same religion which Zoroaster has received from me and which Vishtâsp has promulgated in the world. Follow the just law and keep away from the unjust one. Bear this in mind, that the cattle will be reduced to dust, the horses will be reduced to dust, the gold and silver will be reduced to dust, and the body of man will be reduced to dust, but he alone will not be reduced to dust, who praises piety and performs meritorious deeds in this world.”

Having spoken of a few points of similarity in the Persian and Italian pilgrims' visions of Heaven, we will now speak of Hell.

## IV.

Before entering into Hell, both come across words which give them an idea of the hopelessly miserable condition of the place. Dante reads those words on the gate of Hell; Virâf hears them from his guides, as the utterance of a sinful soul, that has just entered into Hell. The characteristic words of despair which Dante reads are: "Ye that pass in, all hope abandon ye." (*Hell*, C. III., 9.) Those which Virâf hears are: "Val kudâm zamk vazlûnam va-mûn pavan panâh vakhdûnam?" *i.e.*, "To which land shall I go? Whose protection shall I take?"

On entering into Hell, the guides of both the pilgrims hold them by their hands to give them courage and carry them in safety. Virâf says: "Sraôsh and Âtar caught hold of my hand so that I went on without any danger" (Ch. XVIII., 1, 2). Dante says:—

"Then me, his hand firm clasped in mine, he brought,  
With joyful face that gave me comfort great."

(*Hell*, C. III., 19.)

Both find their hells in the form of an abyss immeasurably deep. Virâf found it like a "pit whose bottom would not be reached by 1,000 cubits. And even if all the wood in the world were put on fire in the most stinking and darkest Hell, it would not give out any smell. And although the souls of the sinful there, are as close to one another as the ear is to the eye, and although they are as many in number as the hair on the mane of a horse, they do not see, nor hear the sound from one another. Everyone thinks that he is alone." (Ch. LIV., 3—8.) Dante describes the depth of his Hell in a similar tone:—

"And with mine eyes thus rested, I to see  
Turned me, stood up, and steadfast gazed around,  
To know the region where I chanced to be.  
In very deed upon the brink I found  
Myself, of that abyss of direst woe,  
Where thunders roar, of groans that know no bound  
Dark was it, deep, o'erclouded so below,  
That though I sought its depths to penetrate,  
Nought to mine eyes its form did clearly show."

(*Hell*, C. IV., 4—12.)

Both have to cross a river, and that a large river, before they go further into Hell. The river of Virâf was formed by the great number of tears shed after the death of a person. The guides ask Virâf to advise the people of the world, not to lament too much for the death of a departed soul, but to submit to it patiently, as to a command from God. Mark again, that the river spoken of by Dante is Acheron, and it is also, as Dr. Plumptre says, "the stream of lamentations" (Vol. I., p. 16n, 71).

Both find a number of souls waiting on the other side of the river. Virâf says: "I saw a large river as dark as the gloomy Hell. There were many souls and spirits on that river."

Both ask their guides as to what those rivers are, and what the souls waiting on their shores. Virâf asked: "What is this river, and who are these people that are waiting in a distressed mood?" (Ch. XVI.). This was what Virâf saw and said before he entered into the portals of Hell. Compare with this, what Dante saw before he entered into the first circle of Hell:—

" And when I further looked on that drear seat,  
On a great river's bank a troop I saw,  
Wherefore I said, "O Master, I entreat  
That I may know who these are, what the law  
Which makes them seem so eager to pass o'er;  
As through the dim light they my notice draw."

(*Hell*, C. III., 70—75.)

Dante's guide replies:—

" My son, . . . .

Those who beneath the wrath of God have died,  
From all lands gather to region dark,  
And eager are to pass across the tide."

(*Hell*, C. III., 121—124.)

Both divide their hells in a number of parts, and both see, the last of all, in the deepest Hell, Satan, the author of Evil. Dante sees Lucifer in Guidecca, the last of the four concentric circles of the tenth circle. Virâf sees Ganâk-Mino in the last of the different parts of Hell.

On entering into the place of the wicked ones, Virâf found a cold wind blowing. A more striking wind than that he had never

seen in the world. Compare with this what Dante says of the cold in that part of Hell, where he saw Lucifer :

“ How icy cold I then became and numb,  
 Ask it not, Reader, for I cannot write;  
 All language would be weak that dread to sum.”

(*Hell*, C. XXXIV., 22—25.)

When Virâf goes near Satan, he hears him taunting the sinful souls that had fallen victims to his evil machinations, in the following words:—“ Why were you eating the food supplied to you by God and doing my work? You did not think of your Creator, but acted according to my dictates.” Dante sees Lucifer punish Judas, Brutus, and Cassius, who, following his evil temptations, had turned out great traitors.

Though most of the punishments in the hell of Virâf are Persian in their character, and those in the hell of Dante are retributive, according to the notions of the mediæval theology of Europe, there are a few, that are common in the visions of both. For example, serpents play a prominent part in the punishments of both. The seventh Bolgia in the hell of Dante, where robbers are punished, is the Bolgia of serpents. According to Virâf, unnatural lust, oppressive and tyrannical misrule, adultery, misappropriation of religious property and endowments, and falsehood are visited with punishments by the sting of dreaded and terrible snakes.

Again, the eating of human skulls and brains is a punishment common to the hells of both the pilgrims. According to Virâf, fraudulent traders who used false measures and weights were made to eat human brains and blood (Ch. LXXX.). So were men, who had got rich by dishonest means and by stealing the property of others, punished in Hell by being made to eat human skulls and brains (Ch. XLVI.). An unjust judge, who gave his decisions under the influence of bribes, is made to slay in Hell his own children and eat their brains (Ch. XCI.). In Dante, we find a victim punish his offender by eating his head and brains. We find that Count Ugolino, who was put into prison on the strength of false accusations of Archbishop Ruggieri, and was there compelled by the pangs of starvation to eat the flesh of his own children, punishes his calumniator Ruggieri in Hell by eating his head and brains (*Hell*, XXXIII.).

The seizing and tearing and flaying of the souls of the sinful by

ferocious animals is also a common punishment in the hells of Virâf and Dante. It is the fierce Cerberus, that does all this in the hell of Dante (Hell C. VI., 12—18.). It is the Kharfastars (*i. e.*, the noxious animals), the smaller ones of which are as high as mountains, that do all this and annoy the souls of the sinful in the hell of Virâf (Ch. XVIII.).

The suspending of sinful persons with their heads downwards is another punishment common to both (Hell, C. XIX., 22 ; XXXIV., 14; Virâf, Ch. LXIX., LXXIV., LXXIX., LXXX., LXXXVIII.). In Virâf's vision, it is the dishonest judges and traders and seducers that suffer this punishment. In the vision of Dante, it is the Simonists that suffer it.

Another punishment, common to the visions of both, is that of covering the bodies of sinners with heavy metals. According to Virâf, a faithless wife meets the punishment of having her body covered over with heavy iron (Ch. LXXXV.). According to Dante, a heavy mantle of lead is the punishment that a hypocrite meets with in the sixth part of the eighth circle of hell.

The twisting of the different parts of the body is another punishment common to the hells of both. In the eighth circle of Dante's hell, it is the soothsayers that meet with this punishment. In Virâf's hell, it is the cruel masters, who exact too much work from their beasts of burden without giving them adequate food, that meet with this punishment (Ch. LXXVII.).

Again, heavy rain and snow, hail stones, severe cold, and foul smells are punishments common to the hell of both the pilgrims. According to Dante, it is a glutton who meets with the punishment of being pelted with rain (C. VI., 53, 54.). According to Virâf, those who demolish bridges over rivers, those who are irreverent, those who speak an untruth and perjure themselves, and those who are greedy, avaricious, lusty, and jealous, meet with these punishments (Ch. LV.).

Virâf gives a general picture of Hell in the following words (Ch. XVIII.):—

“I felt cold and heat, dryness and stench to such an extent as I never saw in the world nor heard of. When I proceeded further, I saw the voracious abyss of Hell, like a dangerous pit leading to a very narrow and horrible place, so dark that one must hold (another)

by the hand, and so full of stench that anybody, who inhales the air by the nose, struggles, trembles, and falls . . . The noxious creatures tear and seize and annoy the souls of the wicked in the Hell, in a way, that would be unworthy of a dog."

Compare with this, Dante's description of the third circle of hell (C. VI., 8—15):—

"——eterne, curst, cold, and working woe,  
Its law and state unchanged from first to last;  
Huge hail, dark water, whirling clouds of snow  
There through the murky air come sweeping on;  
Foul smells the earth which drink this in below,  
And Cerberus, fierce beast, like whom is none,  
Barks like a dog from out his triple jaws  
At all the tribe those waters close upon."

Adultery, cheating, misrule, slander, avarice, lying, apostasy, fraud, seduction, pederasty, sorcery, murder, theft, rebellion, and such other moral sins are seen by both the pilgrims as punished in Hell.

#### V.

Now, the question remains, what is the origin of these two visions? Though the date of Virâf is older than that of Dante, the visions of both seem to come directly from different parents. Though there are many points of resemblance between the two, yet the vision of Virâf is thoroughly Zoroastrian, and that of Dante thoroughly Christian. Their different parents may have a common ancestor, of whom little is known, but there seems to be no direct relation between the two. It is not our province to speak here on the source or sources, from which Dante directly drew his visions. As to the visions of Virâf, though a great part of the details is original, the main features about the destiny of the soul in the other world have their origin in the *Avesta*. The fifth and the seventeenth chapters of the *Virâf-nâmeh* are, as it were, a clear and amplified version of a portion of the nineteenth chapter of the *Vendidad*. These chapters are based on the very doctrine of the future destiny of the soul after death, as believed by the ancient Zoroastrians.

The visions of Virâf were made known to the European world of letters by the English translation<sup>1</sup> of Mr. J. A. Pope in 1818. This

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Geo. Maddox of Madras has published in 1904 "a rendering in prose-verse" of this translation under the title of *The Ardai Viraf Nameh, or the Revelations of Ardai Viraf*.

was an imperfect translation, not of our Pahlavi Virâf-nâme, but of a Persian version of it which was to a certain extent mutilated by some foreign elements. This imperfect translation of the Persian mutilated version led some to believe that the visions of Virâf were derived from the Christian source of Isaiah's Ascent. But the late Dr. Haug, who was the first to write upon this subject, and whose learned presence in our midst as the Professor of Sanskrit in the Deccan College had greatly helped and encouraged Iranian studies, has clearly shown that this was not the case. M. Barthélemy, in his excellent translation (*Livre d'Ardâ Virâf*, Introduction, p. XXVII), wherein he has dwelt upon some of these striking points of resemblance, agrees with Dr. Haug and says: "Rien ne justifie les tentatives faites pour montrer que les visions de l'Arda Viraf dérivent de celles contenues dans l'Ascension du prophète Isaïe, car elles n'ont entre elles aucune relation historique."