

## **The Influence of the Zoroastrian religion on Judaism – Peter Myers, December 31, 2002; update January 27, 2004.**

David Ben Gurion on the First Persian Empire:

"1) This great empire of Cyrus was established within a very short period of time: in the 11 years which passed from the conquest of Achmetah, capital of Media, in the year 550 B.C., to the conquest of Babylonia in 539. 2) The Persian empire endured for 200 years under the rule of the Cyrus dynasty, while the empire of Alexander the Great, which was, as is known, the inheritor of the Persian empire, survived only during his lifetime, and fell apart immediately after he died. 3) Cyrus exhibited a compassionate spirit toward his enemies and a unique tolerance toward all religions; 4) He played a decisive role in the first return to Zion." [bengur-bible.html](http://bengur-bible.html).

The religion of that empire was Zoroastrianism, and it has shaped Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, Islam, Marxism and Radical Feminism.

In contrast to the positive Jewish assessment, the main Western tradition sees the Persian Empire through disparaging Greek eyes:

"Persia, the name used for centuries, mostly in the West, for the kingdom of Iran in south-western Asia. It originated from a region of southern Iran formerly known as Persis, alternatively as Pars or Parsa, modern Fars. During the rule of the Persian Archaemenid dynasty (559-330 BC) the ancient Greeks first encountered the inhabitants of Pars on the Iranian Plateau, and the name was extended. The people of Iran have always called their country Iran, Land of the Aryans."

- Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, Volume VII, Chicago, 1974, p. 890.

Alexander defeated the imperial army, and thereby inherited the Persian Empire, initiating the Hellenistic era.

The Persian Emperor was not the first to be called King of Kings: this had been a title of whichever king was head of a major empire covering much of the Middle East - Sargon had initiated the process, and Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia had taken turns for 1000 years. Conquest of the imperial army led to inheritance of its empire and, with it, this title.

The First Persian Empire is said to be the first multi-cultural empire, but its rulers had a religion universal yet exclusive - the Zoroastrian religion - whose god Mazda (Light) was so to influence Jewish thinking, that Yahweh was changed from a tribal God into a universal one. Important parts of the Jewish Bible were written or edited AFTER this Zoroastrian influence.

Zoroastrianism's apocalyptic struggle between Good and Evil (God and the Devil), was adopted by Christianity and Islam; has inspired religious fundamentalisms ever since; and bequeathed the secular fundamentalist mindset of Marxism and Radical Feminism.

Unabashed American Nazi, Professor Revilo P. Oliver wrote, "The Zoroastrian cult and all the cults derived from it can be summarized in one sentence. They replace race with a church" (The Origins of Christianity, Historical Review Press, England, 2001, p. 152): [http://www.revilo-oliver.com/rpo/RPO\\_NewChrist/toc\\_ol.htm](http://www.revilo-oliver.com/rpo/RPO_NewChrist/toc_ol.htm).

In The Religion of the Occident (Philosophical Library, New York 1959), also published as The Story of Christian Origins, Martin Larson writes,

"Zoroastrianism ... was for centuries embraced by those Caucasians known as Aryans or Iranians; and it became for them an instrument of national policy in their bitter conflicts against surrounding nomadic tribes and Semitic nations ... With the emergence of the first Persian Empire under Cyrus and its further expansion under Darius the Great Hystaspes, 521-486, the worship of Ahuramazda dominated twenty-three nations." (p. 83).

Larson notes that Ahuramazda not only had seven archangels, but he also had "the Spirit of Wisdom, his active, creative agency in the universe: a concept startlingly similar to the logos of Zeno the Stoic, Philo Judaeus, and the Fourth Gospel" (p.93).

The influence of the Zoroastrian (Median) religion upon Greece is also argued in Ruhi Muhsen Afnan's Zoroaster's Influence On Anaxagoras, the Greek Tragedians, and Socrates, and in Geiger and Windischmann's Zarathustra in the Gathas and in the Greek and Roman Classics.

Even more startlingly, Lawrence H. Mills, in his book Zoroaster, Philo and Israel Part 1: Zoroaster and the Greeks, derives Heraclitus' metaphysics - the cosmic war of opposites, and Logos (an underlying unity) as Reason embedded in Nature - from Zoroastrian inspiration.

In The Presocratic Philosophers, Kirk and Raven endorse Aristotle's opinion that Pythagoreanism was fundamentally dualistic, and write, "Zoroastrianism, like Pythagoreanism, was based upon a dualism between a good principle, Ormazd, and a bad, Ahriman" (p.241).

Also, "Zoroaster was well established as a sage by the early Hellenistic period, and Aristoxenus had stated that Pythagoras visited Zoroaster in Babylon. Of the vast mass of pseudo-Zoroastrian literature produced in the Hellenistic epoch ... A second wave of Zoroastrian literature was produced in the first two centuries A.D. by various Gnostic sects" (p.65).

Acknowledgment of the Zoroastrian influence need not undermine the Greek contribution, the experimental science and free-thinking dialectic (rational debate) not

found in Persia; it merely locates the Greek effort within the dominant Persian cultural context.

Unlike Greek freethinking, Zoroastrianism was a revealed religion like Ezra's reconstructed Judaism: Zoroaster being its Prophet, the Avesta its Bible, the Gathas its Psalms, the Zend its Talmud (commentary). In a most unusual discussion, Martin Buber in his book *Good and Evil* devotes as much attention to the Avesta as to the Bible.

Zoroastrianism, then, was the first fundamentalist religion, spread by missionaries, embraced by King Cyrus and King Darius, prepared to use war as a means of enlightenment, the first form of Internationalism. It pressed the Greeks at the gates of their cities, and within, as the above authors show.

(1) Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism Volume Two: Under the Archaemenians*  
(2) Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism Volume Three: Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (3) Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (4) Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (5) *The Zend-Avesta* (6) *The multi-racial army of the Persian Empire* (7) *Zoroastrian influence on the Pre-Socratic Greek Philosophers*

Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism Volume One: The Early Period*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1975.

Some quotes from this volume are at [zoroastrianism.html](http://zoroastrianism.html).

(1) Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism Volume Two: Under the Archaemenians*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1982.

{p. 42} Archaeological discoveries in Seistan and the ancient epics of Sumer, show that there were prehistoric links between Anshan and eastern Iran; and it has been suggested that the Achaemenians themselves were a clan of eastern Iranian origin, who perhaps joined the Persians in the southwest only in the eighth century B.C. The proselytizing of Pars from Drangiana-Arachosia, a region with a strong and ancient Zoroastrian tradition, would thus seem possible and indeed some evidence for an early religious connection with the area has been found in the dialectology of the surviving Avestan texts. This, however, may be due to these texts having been committed to writing in Pars during the Sasanian period, partly at the dictation of eastern Iranian priests; for, despite all the above considerations, it still seems more probable that the Persians received Zoroastrianism through Median mediation, hence through Raga from northeastern Iran. This is because, although they eventually gained dominance over the Medes, and although their priests were evidently full of religious zeal during both the Achaemenian and Sasanian periods, the Persians always acknowledged the claim of the Medes to the greater antiquity and authority of their Zoroastrian tradition, and never fabricated (as did other major regions of Iran) an independent claim of their own to possess the holy places of the faith.

The Achaemenians evidently had close contact with the Deiocids, as their oldest and nearest royal vassals; and Cyrus the Great is said by Herodotus to have been married to Mandana, daughter of Astyages. There is no difficulty, therefore, in supposing that they learnt their Zoroastrianism from Median sources. Missionary influences emanating from Raga may have been reinforced at this period, as we have seen by diplomatic marriages contracted with eastern Iranian princesses, and it was perhaps one such marriage which led to the giving of the first

{p. 43} Avestan name, Hystaspes/Vistaspa, among the Achaemenians. Conceivably it was also this eastern family tie which caused the Persian Vistaspa to be appointed eventually to be governor of the eastern regions.

The major political event in western Iran in the sixth century was the successful rebellion by Cyrus against Astyages, leading to the establishment of a Persian Empire in succession to the Median one; and a remarkable feature of that rebellion was that Cyrus was actively supported by numbers of the Median nobility, who thereby brought about the subordination of their own people to the Persians. The folkloric tale by which Herodotus accounts for this carries little conviction; and evidence of religious and political propaganda made beforehand on Cyrus' behalf suggests that one of the main causes may have been that Astyages held to the Old Iranian faith of his forefathers, whereas Cyrus put himself forward as a champion of Zoroastrianism, and so attracted support from adherents of the eastern religion among Medes as well as Persians.

#### Religious and political propaganda on behalf of Cyrus in Babylon

Cyrus became king in Anshan, it seems, in 558 B.C., and it was not until 550 that he finally defeated Astyages in battle. During the intervening years there is evidence of propaganda on his behalf in Babylonia, once more a great power after Assyria's downfall. Thus an oracle composed probably in 553, and delivered to King Nabonius, contains a prophecy concerning the 'Umman-Manda', in this context the Medes: 'The Umman-Manda of whom you spoke, he himself [i.e. Astyages], his land, and the kings who march beside him, shall be no more. In the third year, when it arrives, they [i.e. the gods of Babylon] have caused Cyrus, king of Anzan, to arise against him, his petty vassal with his small army: he will overcome the farflung Umman-Manda, and will take him in bonds to his own land'. This is held to be genuine prophecy, not *ex eventu*, and it suggests that there were skilful Persian propagandists at work among the priests of Babylon who had convinced them of the success of Cyrus' planned uprising.

Striking testimony to the religious import of some of their propaganda comes from the verses of Second Isaiah, that is, from chapters 40-48 of the Book of Isaiah, generally held to be the work of an anonymous

{{p. 44} poet-prophet of the Captivity. Second Isaiah speaks joyfully to his fellow Jewish exiles of the deliverance which is to come for them through Cyrus, whom Yahweh, god of Israel, addresses thus by his mouth: 'You shall be my shepherd to carry out all my purposes, so that Jerusalem may be rebuilt and the foundations of the temple may be laid.

Thus says Yahweh to Cyrus his annointed, Cyrus whom he has taken by the hand to subdue nations before him and undo the might of kings before whom gates shall be opened and no doors be shut; I will go before you and level the swelling hills; I will break down gates of bronze and hack through iron bars. I will give you treasures from dark vaults hoarded in secret places, that you may know that I am Yahweh, Israel's God who calls you by name. For the sake of Jacob my servant and Israel my chosen I have called you by name and given you your title, though you have not known me' (44.28-45.4). Further, Yahweh declares through the prophet to the Jews: 'I alone have roused this man [i.e. Cyrus] in righteousness and I will smooth his path before him; he shall rebuild my city and let my exiles go free' (45.13).

To this message of hope, Second Isaiah joined a prophecy of degradation and woe for Babylon, concerning which Yahweh proclaims to the Jews: 'He whom I love [i.e. Cyrus] shall wreak my will on Babylon and the Chaldeans shall be scattered' (47.14). 'I will lay the Chaldeans prostrate as they flee, and their cry of triumph will turn to groaning (43.14) The prophet dwells at length on the coming sufferings of the Jews' oppressors; but such prophecies do not accord with the fact that in the end Cyrus made a bloodless entry into Babylon, and ruled mildly as its accepted king. Second Isaiah also foretells that the 'toilers of Egypt and Nubian merchants' will submit to the Persian (45.14), and this likewise was not to be. These false predictions have led scholars to conclude that the Jewish prophet, like the Babylonian priests, was indeed foretelling the uncertain future when he composed his utterances.

The verses of Second Isaiah are remarkable in that in them alone, out of all the Old Testament, the term 'messiah', in the sense of an annointed deliverer of the Jewish nation, is used of a foreigner, a non-Jew. This

{p. 45} in itself appears a measure of the exalted trust in Cyrus which the unknown Persian propagandist had instilled in the prophet. To this striking usage Second Isaiah joins startlingly original theological utterances; and what seems to have been new and unfamiliar in these for Jewish ears is markedly Zoroastrian in character - so much so that parallels have been drawn between it and one of Zoroaster's own Gathas. Concerning these parallels the scholar who remarked them has observed: 'There is little absolute novelty in theological thought, so it is rarely possible to point out the absolutely first occurrence of any important idea, even in the preserved material, or to explain many chance and isolated occurrences. What can be seen clearly and what does require historical explanation is the way in which certain ideas, formerly sporadic and unimportant, suddenly find frequent expression and are made the central concerns of important works. A notorious case of this is the history of the notion that Yahweh created the world. In the preserved works of Hebrew literature it plays no conspicuous role in those which can be dated by conclusive demonstration before the time of II Isaiah. (As everyone knows, the dating of Genesis I and of the Psalms is a matter of dispute; they may be later than II Isaiah.) The notion does occur in occasional prophetic passages ..., but such occasional occurrences merely render conspicuous the prophets' usual neglect of the subject. Then suddenly it becomes one of the main themes of II Is. 40-48. But it was not necessary to II Isaiah's primary purpose, which was to prepare the Judeans for their

proximate deliverance and convince them that it was Yahweh who would deliver them. For this, all that was needed in the deity was sufficient power to perform the acts proposed. Of course, II Isaiah's conception of Yahweh as the sole, omnipotent creator God gave absolute assurance to his announcement of the impending deliverance, but it was not necessary to that announcement and cannot be derived from it. His immediate predecessor, Ezekiel, would have made the same announcement without any such cosmological framework. It is true that when presenting this idea II Isaiah several times suggests that it was no new doctrine, but one with which his readers should have been familiar from of old (40.12, 28 etc.). But innovators often claim antiquity for their innovations ... And the insistence with which II Isaiah returns to

{p. 46} this doctrine again and again indicates that he expected it to be unfamiliar to his hearers and not readily accepted or even understood by them'.

The particular Gatha which provides striking parallels for Second Isaiah is Yasna 44. This is formed as a series of questions addressed to Ahura Mazda, each with an expected answer of 'I am' or 'I do'. 'Not only is the use of such rhetorical questions a conspicuous peculiarity of the style of II Isaiah, but almost all of those particular questions which make up the cosmological part of the Gatha (vss. 35) are either asked or answered in II Isaiah, with Yahweh taking the place of Ahura Mazda'. Thus Y 44.3.1-2: 'This I ask Thee, tell me truly, Lord, who in the beginning, at creation, was the father of justice?' is echoed by Is. 45.8: 'Rain justice, you heavens ... this I, Yahweh, have created.' For Y 44.3.3-5: 'Who established the course of sun and stars? Through whom does the moon wax, then wane?' there is Is. 40.26: 'Lift up your eyes to the heavens; consider who created it all, led out their host one by one.' Y 44.4.14 runs: 'Who has upheld the earth from below and the heavens from falling? Who (sustains) the waters and plants? Who yoked swift (steeds) to the wind and clouds?'; and it is matched by Is. 40.12, 44.24 'Who has gauged the waters in the palm of his hand, or with its span set limits to the heavens? ... I am Yahweh who made all things, by myself I stretched out the skies, alone I hammered out the floor of the earth.' Further, the question to Ahuramazda, Lord of Wisdom, in Y 44.4.5: 'Who, O Mazda, is the Creator of good thought?' has for counterpart Is. 40.13: 'With whom did [Yahweh] confer to gain discernment? Who taught him how to do justice or gave him lessons in wisdom?'; and the demand in Y 44.5.13: 'What craftsman made light and darkness?' is matched by Is. 45.7: 'I am Yahweh, there is no other, I make the light, I create darkness'.

These parallels, it is pointed out, 'hardly suffice to suggest literary dependence of II Isaiah on Yasna 44. But they do suggest relationship to the same tradition'; and, given the time and circumstances, this tradition would appear to be the teachings of Zoroaster. That Ahura-Mazda is the Creator of all things good is a major Zoroastrian doctrine and 'Creator' is his most constant title, which on occasion replaces his proper name. It would seem, therefore, that Cyrus' agent stressed in his subversive talks with the Jewish prophet the majesty and might of his

{p. 47} Lord, Ahuramazda, and his power to work wonders through his chosen instrument, Cyrus; and that Second Isaiah, rooted in the traditions of his own people,

accepted the message of hope and the new concept of God, but saw the Supreme Being in his own terms as Yahweh.

It is moreover reasonable to suppose that the agent in this case was a magus, one of the learned men of Iran, who could travel to Babylon in ostensible quest for knowledge, and hold discussions there with a man of religion such as Second Isaiah without arousing suspicion. A magus who knew the Gathic teachings must have been a Zoroastrian; and the fact that he was evidently ardently and dangerously active in the cause of Cyrus seems good evidence that the Persian king was not only a believer, but one committed to establishing the faith throughout his realms if he could overthrow Astyages, an undertaking for which he needed the acquiescence of powerful neighbouring kingdoms.

#### Religious and political propaganda on behalf of Cyrus in Ionia

The Persian propagandists who thus succeeded in inspiring both Second Isaiah and the Babylonian priests with confidence in Cyrus clearly used a variety of effective approaches; and there is some evidence for the activity of yet other skilful and learned propagandists for the Persian king in Asia Minor. The cosmological teachings of Anaximander of Miletus (who seems to have flourished just before Cyrus' armies conquered Ionia) have been held to show marked Zoroastrian influences. These the philosopher assimilated to his own Greek tradition, as Second Isaiah assimilated such influences to his Jewish one; and the probability appears that he in his turn encountered a Zoroastrian priest, one so journeying in Miletus, the metropolis of Ionia - again a case of one man of faith and learning seeking out another. A scrap of supporting evidence for the presence of Cyrus' agents in the region survives in the indication that the invading Persians subsequently received a favourable oracle from priests of an Apollo shrine near Magnesia on the Meander. This helpful act Cyrus rewarded generously with a grant of perpetual privileges in the form of exemption from tax and forced labour. The grant is known from the reproduction of a letter written about half a century later by Darius the Great to Gadatas, his satrap in those parts, whom he reproaches 'in that you do not respect my disposition with regard to the gods ... For you have exacted tribute from the sacred gardeners of Apollo, and have forced them to cultivate profane ground, ignoring the

{p 48} intention of my ancestors towards the god who told the Persians the true course of events.' The 'ancestors' thus referred to, it has been pointed out, can only in fact be Cyrus (whom Darius never chooses to name, except in genealogies, in any of his recorded utterances).

Propagandists in Ionia in the Deiocid era are more likely (for geographical reasons) to have been Medes than Persians; and the data suggest that they too were Zoroastrian magi, presumably in enforced or voluntary exile, remote from the wrath of Astyages. The imprint of Zoroastrian doctrines on the works of both Second Isaiah and Anaximander shows that these priestly agents were well instructed in the theology of their faith; and it is likely that they were gifted as well as bold men, able to talk persuasively in Aramaic and Greek, and concerned to sway political events in order to gain recognition for the religion they served. As so often in the history of Zoroastrianism, developments within

Iran itself have to be deduced from the ripples which they caused abroad, but the widespread activities of Cyrus' agents undoubtedly suggest the growing strength of Zoroastrianism among the Medes and Persians in the mid sixth century B.C., and the energy and determination of its adherents.

{p. 49} In 550 Cyrus defeated Astyages in battle, probably on the plain of Pasargadae, in the north of Pars. The Median general Harpagos went over to him with a large part of the Median army. Astyages was captured, and the victorious Persians pressed on to sack the Deiocid capital of Ecbatana. After the first flush of victory, however, Cyrus set himself to rule as king of the Medes and Persians. Ecbatana remained a royal residence, Median nobles had prominent places at his court, and Median generals commanded his armies; and the subsequent history of Zoroastrianism suggests that those Median magi who had embraced the faith had a leading part, together with their Persian fellow-priests, in the religious life of the new empire.

However sincerely Cyrus may have wished to achieve power in order to establish Zoroastrianism as the religion of state, he was clearly driven also by vast territorial ambitions. For the next two years, it seems, he had to fight to subdue the kingdoms of the Iranian plateau which had been subject to Astyages. Then he turned westward and by 546, having crossed the Halys, had conquered Lydia and most of Ionia. Strabo records a tradition that the great Persian temple at Zela in Pontus had its origin in a sanctuary created in thanksgiving during these Asia Minor campaigns. This sanctuary was originally, he says, an artificial mound encircled by a wall - a manmade hill, not a building, which presumably priests and worshippers ascended for sacrifice and prayer. From this time onwards, for well over a millennium, there was a Zoroastrian presence in Asia Minor; and much of what is recorded about the ancient observances of the faith comes from that relatively well documented region.

Thereafter Cyrus turned eastward, and between 545 and 539 made

{p. 49} himself master of all the eastern Iranian kingdoms, and some Indian borderlands as well. He thus became the ruler of a number of old Zoroastrian communities. Finally came his richest conquest, Babylonia many of whose citizens were awaiting him as a deliverer - not only groups of political exiles, worked upon by his agents (of whom the Jews were but one), but also the powerful priesthood of Marduk, deeply resentful of the conduct of the reigning king, Nabonidus. In 539 - a date which was to be memorable in the annals of the Near East - Cyrus invaded the land, marched through it, and finally entered the great city of Babylon itself without resistance or bloodshed. The western territories of the Babylonian empire - Syria and Palestine to the borders of Egypt - submitted to him voluntarily; and he also occupied Susa to the east, and so at last completed the Persian domination of Elam.

Pasargadae and its monuments

The Achaemenian Empire, succeeding those of the Assyrians and Medes, and in many ways heir to both, was far larger than either. The Persians now ruled over many



kingdoms and peoples, and it was natural that Cyrus should seek to build for himself a new and fittingly majestic capital. The site which he chose was Pasargadae; and for the task he brought together an army of workmen, among them masonry and stonecutters from Ionia and Lydia, and sculptors from Babylon. ...

The palaces of Cyrus were set amid gardens and orchards within a walled precinct on the plain; and the ruins have been identified of a monumental gateway, an audience hall and a private palace. ...

{p. 51} The fireholders

One of the features of a Median manorhouse had been the hall, the centre of its life. Here presumably (as in the great houses of medieval Europe) the lord and his people sat, and meals were cooked at the wide hearth, which would have given out a comfortable warmth on winter days and nights. Even through the summer the fire would have burned there continually, blanketed when not needed under a layer of ash; and three times a day, in the pagan period, it would have received the ritual offerings. The intention of these offerings was to gratify Atar, the god of fire; and they could be made accordingly by any adult member of the household who was in a state of ritual purity. The great innovation made in this ancient cult by Zoroaster had been to appoint fire as the symbol of righteousness, before which every member of his community should pray five times a day; and down the ages in Zoroastrian households family devotions have duly taken place by the hearthside each day at the established times.

In the lofty palaces of Pasargadae there seems to have been no place for a fixed hearth, and no need for a domestic source of warmth; for the new King of kings could readily escape the cold winters of the plateau by moving with his court to one of his lowland capitals - Susa or Babylon. Yet the duty of prayer before fire is incumbent on all Zoroastrians, and cannot be performed vicariously; and it would plainly have been indecorous for him to visit the palace kitchens - the only place in royal Pasargadae where fire would have had a practical function. How this problem was solved is shown by the remains of elegant fireholders, discovered as surface finds at the site.

These fireholders were carved of white stone, with the fine workmanship of the early Pasargadae period; and fragments of two or possibly three of them have been found at three places in the southwest corner of the plain. From these fragments the fireholders can be reconstructed as consisting of a three-stepped top and base, joined by a slender square shaft. ...

{p. 62} Cyrus and alien faiths

Cyrus' tolerance towards alien faiths has been used as another argument against his orthodoxy; and there is no doubt that this tolerance was widely exercised. The earliest known instance of it, which we have already met, is his granting of privileges to the priests of Apollo near Magnesia; and richer evidence comes from Babylon. In 1879 a remarkable find was made among the palace ruins of the ancient city - a cylinder of

baked clay, damaged, but bearing 45 lines of an edict by Cyrus. A broken piece of the cylinder has since been identified, which helps to restore the text. The edict is in Akkadian, in a style which has been

{p. 63} characterized as standard scribal usage of the period; but though composed evidently by the priests of Marduk, it must have had the approval of their new overlord, Cyrus, before it could be promulgated. The text runs in part as follows: 'Marduk ... scanned (and) inspected the assemblage of lands. He found then a righteous prince, according to his heart, whose hand he took. He pronounced the name of Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan ... He made the country of Gutu and the armies of Manda [i.e. the Medes] bow beneath his feet. The blackheaded people [i.e. the Babylonians] whom he delivered into his hands, he (Cyrus) treated them rightfully and justly ... All the people of Babylon ... bent very low before him, they kissed his feet, they rejoiced in his royalty'.

In the latter part of the edict, words are put into Cyrus' own mouth: 'I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of the land of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four corners of the earth ... whose rule Bel and Nebo love ... Marduk, the great Lord, rejoices at my pious acts, and extends the grace of his blessing upon me, Cyrus the king, and upon Cambyses, son of my flesh, as well as upon all my army ... From ... Niniveh, Assur and also from Susa, from Akkad, Eshnunna, Zamban, Me-Turnu, Der, up to the land of the Gutu, to the cities beyond the Tigris ... the gods who inhabit them, I returned them [i.e. their images] to their place, and I made their habitation very great for ever. I gathered all their peoples and led them back to their abodes. And the gods of Sumer and Akkad, whom Nabonidus had brought into Babylon, at the order of Marduk, the great lord, I had them installed in joy in their sanctuaries ... May all the gods whom I have led back to their cities wish daily before Bel and Nebo for the length of my days'.

The claim attributed here to Cyrus, that he restored the dwellings of gods, is borne out by a four-line text on a tablet found at Erech, which states: 'I am Cyrus, son of Cambyses, the mighty king, [re-]builder of Esagila and Ezida'. Esagila was the great temple of Marduk in Babylon, and Ezida was Nabu's chief temple at Borsippa, to the south of that city. A long poem survives composed by a priest of Esagila on the downfall of Nabonidus, which dwells on the injustices of the Babylonian king, and ends with a curse on him, and a prayer for Cyrus; and the acceptance of the Persian king as the new ruler of Babylon was publicly de-

{p. 64} monstrated when his son Cambyses (Kambujiya), then still very young, undertook the ritual royal duties in the Babylonian New Year Festival Of 538. He was accordingly associated with Cyrus in the dating of that year (reckoned by the Babylonian scribes as that of 'Cyrus, king of the lands' and 'Cambyses, king of Babylon'.)

On the Babylonian side there was nothing remarkable in casting Cyrus in the role of the beloved of Marduk and his appointed ruler over Babylon. The victor must always be the chosen of the gods, for this was the only way to reconcile the fact of his victory with the doctrine of their power; and there is, it has been pointed out, a striking parallel from later

times when another alien king, the Seleucid Antiochus I Soter, is called the 'provider for Esagila and Ezida', and is caused to declare: 'After my heart had inclined me to (re)build Esagila and Ezida, I made by my pure hands, with choice oil, the bricks for Esagila and Ezida in the land of Khattu, and I brought them to lay the foundations of Esagila and Ezida'.

For a polytheistic Hellene there can have been no problem in accepting the pious role thus verbally assigned to him, while for Cyrus acquiescence appears to have been a matter of traditional diplomatic courtesy rather than one involving faith. Thus he not only permitted the priests of Babylon to represent him as a worshipper of Marduk, but allowed those of Ur to cause him to state that it was the 'great gods' of that city who 'had delivered all the lands' into his hand, while those of Sin claimed that it was the Moon-God who had brought about his triumph. Of his proclamations to the many exiled peoples whom he permitted to return to their own lands only one survives - that to the Jews, too insignificant a group in the eyes of the Babylonian priests to be named in the cylinder text. As preserved in Hebrew this proclamation runs: 'Thus saith King Cyrus of Persia: "All the kingdoms of the earth has Yahweh, the God of heaven, given me, and he has charged me to build a house for him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel. He is the God who is

{p. 65} in Jerusalem'. Similar proclamations, with due changes in the name of the god and the place, were made, it is assumed, to all the exiled peoples named on the cylinder text, whose temples also had been razed.

Cyrus presumably pursued this benign course for a mixture of motives, some of them pragmatic. From the earliest days of his kingship in Anshan he appears to have used diplomacy as an ally to force, and one to be preferred when possible, and his tolerant policies won him a general harvest of goodwill, and numerous practical advantages as ruler. His religion too may have strengthened a natural inclination towards constructive and kindly action. Doctrinally it is impossible to reconcile his verbal acknowledgements of alien great gods with his own acceptance of Ahura Mazda as the one true God, Creator of all; but in this he was only acting, however illogically, in accordance with the conventions of the civilizations he had subdued. Thus it has been said of the Near Eastern religions of his day: 'The belief in the universal dominion of a supreme god, the idea that a local deity, let us say Koshar of Ugarit, reigns also over Crete and Memphis, changed the formula of homage but left intact its content. A new ruler received the lordship from each universal god simultaneously, and established his relations to each god separately as before'. Cyrus probably accepted these conventions the more readily because he would inevitably himself have felt that Ahuramazda, even though Creator and Lord of all, was above all God of the Iranians, his chosen people, to whom he had revealed himself through his prophet Zoroaster, not being equally accessible to alien, 'anarya' prayers. ('Anarya', that is 'non-Iranian', is a term somewhat similar in its overtones to Greek 'barbaros'.)

Even had the instinctive beliefs of conqueror and conquered not been of this kind, it would plainly have been impossible for the Persians to impose their own religion on the numerous and diverse peoples of the ancient lands they now ruled. A parallel is furnished in modern times by the British, observant Christians in their imperial days, who never made any official attempts to spread their own religion among their 'heathen' subjects, and who would, for political reasons, have been much perturbed if the sons of rajahs and sultans who were educated in England

{p. 66} had become converted there to the 'European' faith. Yet no one doubts, on this account, the piety and orthodoxy of Queen Victoria.

Yet although the British Government deliberately refrained from proselytizing, individuals and private societies were active in trying to spread Christian beliefs; and even apart from their efforts, Christian doctrines and observances gradually became known, and had a marked influence on groups of educated Hindus, Zoroastrians and others. The parallel can still be pursued with the Achaemenian Empire; for there too, though there appears to have been no official proselytizing, individuals (like the earlier propagandists for Cyrus) evidently spoke ardently about their faith, while the beliefs and practices of the imperial court and provincial governors naturally became generally known to some extent, and influenced other men in their ideas and observances, even while these continued to adhere to their own religions.

The magi

The written records of Cyrus' reign are virtually all from foreign sources, Babylonian and Greek, and concerned largely with political events; and so the role of the magi at that period has to be inferred or pieced together from scraps of evidence. Zoroastrian magi may be supposed to have held an authoritative place at court from the time of his accession; and their influence is indeed attested in the remains at Pasargadae, where the fireholders and tombs both testify to orthopraxy. The transmission of Avestan texts by Persian priests of the Achaemenian period has been deduced on linguistic grounds, and it is certainly to be expected that an important priestly college would have been founded then in Pars itself, even though the religious authority of Raga still seems to have been recognized.

The testimony of Second Isaiah, as we have seen, suggests the presence of a Zoroastrian priest living and probably studying in Babylon; and after the conquest more Zoroastrian priests must have gone to live there, some to care for the needs of Persian officials and others, some probably simply to study further - for Babylonian lore, especially in the fields of astronomy and astrology, was to contribute largely to the development of Zoroastrian scholasticism by western Iranian priests.

{p. 67} The only actual mention of magi in a work referring to the lifetime of Cyrus occurs in the romance of Cyrus as related by Herodotus. He tells how Astyages, having dreamt an ominous dream concerning his daughter Mandana, repeatedly consulted 'those of the magi who interpreted dreams'. They expounded its meaning to him accurately and

in full, whereat he was much alarmed. However, in subsequent deliberations they decided that the omen which the dream had brought had been harmlessly fulfilled; but events proved them wrong, and when Cyrus finally revolted Astyages seized them and had them impaled.

The tale which Herodotus tells cannot be regarded as historical, but it belongs to its time in the serious regard paid in it to dreams, a regard shared by, among others, Aristotle, who held that 'when the soul is isolated in sleep, it assumes its true nature and foresees and foretells the future'. Among the magi who embraced Zoroastrianism there were some who continued to practise the interpretation of dreams, as well as other forms of divination and manticism; and they must have had many things in common with the magi who adhered to the old religion, from whom, however, they would have been divided in doctrine and also in worship (using as they must have done prayers and liturgies in the Avestan language, as well as following various different observances). Pagan priests evidently continued to exist in the land, and even with a Zoroastrian king on the throne it must have been a matter of generations before the eastern religion prevailed generally. Indeed pockets of paganism appear to have persisted in remote areas down into Islamic times. This slow progress is not surprising when one considers how long traces of pagan beliefs and practices survived in, for instance, so small and closely governed a Christian country as England. Probably also there were Zoroastrians who had recourse occasionally to old practices, such as are recorded by Herodotus and by Plutarch, some of which demanded the services of magi prepared to have dealings with the dark powers. For this too, Christian Europe can provide parallels in all too great abundance, with black masses and other rites. But just as such aberrances, when recorded, do not prove that Europe in general was not Christian, so occasional heterodox doings cannot be taken to impugn the Zoroastrian orthodoxy of the majority of western Iranians in and after the reign of Cyrus.

#### {p. 71} Cambyses in Egypt

Having performed his filial duties towards his dead father and established his own rule in the land, Cambyses set out in 525 to accomplish what Cyrus had, it seems, long planned, namely the conquest of Egypt, 'taking with him, with others subject to him, some of the Greeks over whom he held sway'. Service in this way in the imperial armies must have vied with trade throughout the Achaemenian epoch as a means of bringing peoples together and spreading customs and ideas.

Egypt was then under the rule of Psammetich III, who had just succeeded his father Amasis - a usurper who in 569 had seized the throne from Apries, the last legitimate pharaoh of the 26th (Saite) dynasty. There was considerable discontent in the land; and at Cambyses' coming some Greek mercenaries deserted to him from the Egyptian side, and the Egyptian admiral, Udja-Horresenet, surrendered the fleet without a blow. A hard-fought battle on land ended in victory for the Persians. Thereafter Memphis was taken, and Psammetich made captive.

Egyptian records show that, though pillage and disorder followed the conquest, Cambyses soon restrained his troops and tried to repair much of the damage they had

done. This was evidently part of a policy similar to that which his father had pursued in Babylon, whereby he strove to be recognized as the legitimate ruler of the land. In his efforts to present himself as rightful successor to the Saites and founder of a

{p. 72} 27th dynasty, Cambyses had as counsellor Udja-hor-resenet, who was himself the son of a priest of Sais (the dynastic city of the 26th dynasty) and a man of learning as well as active in affairs of state. He was appointed by Cambyses as his chief physician, and entrusted with ordering his court in Egypt, and (it would seem) with advising on protocol and diplomacy there.

One measure taken to legitimize Cambyses' rule seems to have been to put it about that he was the son of Cyrus by princess Nitetis, a daughter of the deposed Apries. According to Herodotus, however, Cambyses' mother was the Achaemenian Cassandane; and the chronology of the claimed Egyptian marriage would present striking difficulties, since Apries was put to death in 566 - eight years before Cyrus became a vassal king in Anshan. Nevertheless, consistent with this claim to be the true heir to the Saite pharaoh, Cambyses dated his rule over Egypt to 530, the year of his accession in Persia, rather than to 525, the year of his Egyptian conquest. He also had the mummy of Amasis taken from its resting-place in Sais and scourged, presumably 'to demonstrate that Amasis was a usurper on the throne of Egypt'. Herodotus adds that finally Cambyses ordered the body to be burned, which he says was a sacriligious command, since the Persians held fire to be a god, and therefore considered it not right to burn the dead, 'as they say it is wrong to give the dead body of a man to a god'. However, since other stories about Cambyses' wickedness have been shown to be false, it may be that this detail was no more than a particularly black slander, invented to his further detriment.

In support of his claim to be the rightful successor to Apries, Cambyses exerted himself to restore order and dignity in Sais, which had been occupied by his soldiery. He brought back its priests, restored the temple revenues, revived the cult, and presented libations for Osiris. Finally he attended in person to offer veneration to the dynastic goddess of the Saites, Neith, and to make gifts to the other gods of the city. All this is recorded in carvings on statues from Sais, which have been preserved. In one of these Udja-hor-resenet declares: 'His Majesty did this because I had enlightened him about all the useful work done in

{p. 73} this sanctuary by every king' - a statement which brings out the official and dynastic nature of Cambyses' actions. He was in fact doing as his father had taught him to do, when as a young prince he had 'taken the hand of Marduk' at the Babylonian New Year festival, and so fulfilled the ritual part assigned to a Babylonian king.

It was not only in Sais that Cambyses performed royal duties towards Egyptian cults. A stele in the Serapeum at Memphis records the death there of an Apis bull in the sixth year of his official reign, i.e. 524, and this bull was buried in a sarcophagus on which the inscription runs: 'Horus, Samtowi, king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mestiu-Re, son of Re, Cambyses, may he live for ever. He made as his monument to his father, Apis-Osiris, a great sarcophagus of granite, which the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mestiu-Re,

son of Re, Cambyses, dedicated, who is given all life, all stability, and good fortune, all health, all gladness, appearing as king of Upper and Lower Egypt'. The titles used here by the Persian king were traditional Egyptian ones; and on the accompanying stele he is shown in Egyptian royal costume, kneeling in reverence before the sacred bull.

The next Apis bull lived for over eight years, dying when Darius was king, and these facts together disprove the story transmitted by Herodotus that Cambyses, as part of a general mockery of the Egyptian gods, stabbed an Apis bull and left it to die and be buried secretly by its priests. This story appears to belong to a sustained campaign of vilification of Cambyses, which was so effective that history knows him as half-mad, cruel and irresponsible - a king who, in the words of Aeschy-

{p. 74} lus, 'shamed his country and his ancestral throne'. In fact he seems to have been a rational and statesmanlike ruler, who strove like his father Cyrus to reconcile territorial ambitions and military conquest with the reestablishment of peace and order. But with such aims went the desire for substantial tribute; and it was presumably both for this reason, and to reduce the enormous power of the Egyptian priesthood, that Cambyses issued a decree limiting the revenues and privileges of Egyptian temples, which had been exceedingly lavish under the Saïtes. It is thought to have been this action of his, together with the spoliation by his troops immediately after the conquest, which provided the basis for the legend that he destroyed temples. This legend, fostered no doubt by Egyptian priests, is not only recorded by Greeks, but finds expression in a letter written by the Jews of Elephantine in 410 B.C. - some three generations after the events. These Jews were apparently the descendants of mercenaries who had entered the service of the Saïte pharaohs and been put in charge of the fortresses of Yeb (on the island of Elephantine) and Syene, to defend Egypt's southern frontier. The letter in question concerns the destruction at the end of the fifth century 'of the temple of the God Yahu', concerning which they wrote to the governor of Judea: 'Already in the days of the kings of Egypt our fathers had built that temple in Yeb, [and when Cambyses came into Egypt] he found that built, and the temples of the gods of the Egyptians, all of them they overthrew, but no one did any harm to that temple'. In an answering letter, this Jewish temple is referred to as 'the altar-house of the God of Heaven, which was built in the fortress of Yeb formerly, before Cambyses'. The reason why it was spared harassment, it is suggested, is that the Jewish soldiers had readily changed masters at the Persian conquest, and become loyal servants of the new rulers. Moreover, their temple clearly had no rich endowments to be curtailed, for when eventually it was destroyed they had to seek help from elsewhere to rebuild it.

It is natural that the Egyptian priests should have felt bitter towards the alien conqueror, whose troops had pillaged their temples, and who himself deliberately sought to lessen their wealth and power; and the traducing of Cambyses' name appears due to this bitterness meeting and

{p. 75} being encouraged by the political hostility felt towards him by his cousin, Darius the Great - a hostility which meant that Cambyses lacked for his reputation the protection usually extended to its individual members by a ruling dynasty.

{p. 90} DARIUS THE GREAT (522-486 B.C.)

The establishing of his rule

The first year of Darius' reign was thus one of hard fighting, as each . of the lands ruled by Cyrus and Cambyses, Iranian and non-Iranian alike, strove again for independence; and it was by one of the great feats of arms in history that he and his generals succeeded in subduing them all. Egypt was the last to be reconquered; and thereafter, in intermittent campaigns, Darius extended the bounds of the Achaemenian Empire to their furthest extent, so that in the end he could proclaim: 'This is the kingdom which I hold, from the Scythians who are beyond Sogdiana, thence unto Ethiopia; from Sind, thence unto Sardis'.

For his title to rule over non-Iranians, the lesser breeds of 'anarya', Darius was content to rely on right by conquest. Thus on a surviving stele he states simply: 'I am a Persian. From Persia I seized Egypt'. But among the Medes and Persians themselves he strove in diverse ways to strengthen his claim to rule as an Achaemenian in due succession to Cyrus, the great founder of the empire. He fostered therefore the traditions of his predecessors, and maintained their pious institutions. So the daily and monthly rites were continued at the tomb of Cyrus, and the terms of Cyrus' charter to the priests of Apollo on the Meander were duly honoured. It must, moreover, have been Darius who began or adopted the royal custom of going to Pasargadae after being crowned for a religious service of initiation, during which the new king put on a robe once worn by Cyrus. This remained usage for each of his successors, being in fact first recorded for Artaxerxes II, but it is most unlikely that it was one of them who revived or instituted such an observance. For them, heirs to Darius, the founder of their line, it would have had little symbolic significance; but for Darius himself it must have been yet another way to declare to the Iranians that he ruled legitimately as the kinsman of Cyrus, and not simply as a usurper, by force of arms.

Darius further strengthened his claim to legitimate possession of the throne by his marriage to Atossa, daughter of Cyrus. He also took to wife her younger sister, Artystone, as well as an unnamed daughter of Bardiya's.<sup>7</sup> (Cambyses, Herodotus records, left no issue.) Yet another of his queens, who like Atossa had before been wedded to Cambyses and Bardiya, was a daughter of a Persian nobleman, Utana, <sup>3</sup> and it is an indication of the crosscurrents and complexities of the times that Utana was himself one of those who aided Darius in killing Bardiya.

The six noble conspirators and the six Amesa Spentas

Darius himself names the six Persians who joined with him in the assassination in the following terms: 'These are the men who were there at the time when I slew Gaumata the Magus who called himself Bardiya; at that time these men strove together as my followers. Vindafarnah ... Utana ... Gaubaruva ... Vidarna ... Bagabukhsa ... Ardumanis ... Thou who shalt be king hereafter, protect well the family of these men'. Herodotus in his



account gives the Greek equivalents of the first five names as Intaphernes, Otanes, Gobryas, Hydarnes and Megabyus. Only the sixth is different, Aspathines instead of a rendering of Ardumanis. One suggested explanation of this is that Ardumanis (who is not mentioned except in this one passage of the Behistun inscription) may have died either in the actual attack on Bardiya or soon afterwards. In the carving over his tomb Darius had himself represented flanked by six nobles; and inscriptions identify the first two as Gaubaruva and Aspacana, the latter being presumably the Aspathines of Herodotus. According to the Greek historian, Aspathines had a son called Prexaspes, and this makes it very probable that he was himself the son of the Prexaspes who was (according to Herodotus) the reputed killer of Bardiya, advanced, it would seem, into the ranks of the six in place of Ardumanis. His own loyalty to Darius was perhaps genuine from the outset, perhaps secured initially by this high honour.

Three of the six - Vidarna, Vindafarnah and Gaubaruva - are said in the Behistun inscription to have led Darius' armies during the first

{p. 92} fateful year of his reign; and Utana or Otanes, Herodotus records later commanded a Persian force which took the Greek island of Samos. Darius showed his gratitude to the six by according special privilege to them and their descendants. He also rewarded them with lavish grants of lands. Otanes received his share in Cappadocia, and his descendants held these, virtually as vassal kings, until the coming of Alexander. In Pontus too in the Hellenic period the royal family still traced its line 'from one of the seven Persians'. The tradition that there were seven great families in the realm - that of the king and six others - whose fortunes were linked by tradition, by position, and by intermarriage, became so firmly established in the Achaemenian period that the theory at least was maintained in both the succeeding Iranian empires.

The importance of this for an account of Zoroastrianism is that Darius undoubtedly exploited an accident of history for the purposes of religious and political propaganda: that is to say, he used the fact that the Persian Empire was ruled by a king who had had six noble helpers to draw an analogy between it and the kingdom of heaven, ruled by Ahura-mazda with the six great Amesa Spentas {archangels}; and thus he was able to suggest that there was a divinely inspired order and pattern in this state of affairs. That his kingship was divinely ordained he claims again and again in his inscriptions, for example in the following passage: 'Unto Ahuramazda thus was the desire, he chose me as (his) man in all the earth; he made me king in all the earth. I worshipped Ahuramazda. Ahuramazda bore me aid. What by me was commanded to do, that he made successful for me. What I did, all by the will of Ahuramazda I did'. Another passage runs: 'A great god is Ahuramazda ... who made Darayavahu king, one king of many, one lord of many'. This thought of the one god and the one king could readily be expressed in words, for there were existing patterns in Mesopotamian formulas, but the new idea of an earthly heptad as a counterpart to a divine one found expression visually. Two examples have survived, in stone and metalwork.

{p. 93} The example in stone is to be found in the carving already mentioned above Darius' tomb - a carving which was to be repeated over the tomb of every one of his successors. ...

The example in metal is provided by a pair of exquisite Achaemenian earrings, made of gold cloisonne inlaid with carnelian, turquoise and lapis lazuli. ...

This striking composition cannot, it has been pointed out, represent Ahuramazda himself with the six Amesha Spentas, since three of the latter were conceived of as female; ...

{p. 120} Orthodox Zoroastrian theology found further positive expression in Darius' inscriptions in lines which celebrate Ahuramazda as Creator of the physical world: 'A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, who created happiness for man'. A likeness has been traced between these lines and verses of Second Isaiah, which similarly exalt Yahweh as Creator; but Darius' particular praise of Ahuramazda as the Creator of 'happiness for man' is significant. According to Zoroaster's teachings the supreme Lord is the Creator only of what is good, whereas to the Jewish prophet Yahweh is the 'author alike of prosperity and trouble'. {like Shiva}

The corruptions of the Hostile Spirit in the world are acknowledged by Darius through frequent references to drauga. This word has a range of meanings opposed to those of arta, i.e. falsehood, disorder, wickedness. The similar antithesis between Avestan drug and asa, and (more faintly) Sanskrit druh and rta shows that the concepts go back to Indo-Iranian times; and sometimes indeed Darius uses the term drauga in a wholly traditional way. Thus in one inscription he prays on behalf of Persia that Ahuramazda 'may protect this country from a hostile army, from famine, from drauga'; and in doing so, it is suggested, he was seeking protection from three stereotyped evils which might assail society. In other passages Drauga appears rather as a personification, in the spirit of Zoroaster's own teachings. Thus Darius declares: 'All the countries which were rebellious, it was Drauga which made them rebellious'; and he urges his successor: 'You who shall be king hereafter, protect yourself vigorously from Drauga. The wicked, treacherous or rebellious man is defined as draujana, and Darius admonishes future kings to punish him. He also declares that Ahuramazda has borne him aid because he himself is not draujana. It seems a little strange that the concept of virtue should be thus negatively expressed ...

The positive concept of arta, in the sense of good social order, even if not expressed, was clearly constantly present in Darius' thoughts; and he was firm in his conviction that the divine will was that he himself should maintain arta by ruling over mankind. So he declares: 'When Ahuramazda saw this earth turbulent, then he bestowed it on me. He made me king ... By the will of Ahuramazda I set it again in its place'. 'Much that was ill done, that I made good. Countries were turbulent, one man smiting another. The following I brought about by the will of Ahuramazda, that no one ever smites another, each one is in his place. My law - of that they are afraid, so that the stronger does not smite nor destroy the weaker'. Since he saw himself as ruling by the will of Ahuramazda, his law was plainly identical with the law ordained by God, and so he could say: 'O man,

that which is the command of Ahuramazda, let this not seem repugnant to thee. Do not leave the right path. Do not rise in rebellion!' Should any man be so wicked, then Darius prided himself on visiting him with just retribution: 'It is not my desire that a man should do harm; nor indeed is that my desire, if he should do harm, he should not be punished'. Ahuramazda had endowed him with 'wis dom and energy', and he was able to bridle his wrath through self discipline, as a true Zoroastrian should, and so administer an even handed justice: 'I am a friend to right, I am not a friend to wrong. It is not my desire that the weak man should have wrong done to him by the mighty, nor is that my desire, that the mighty man should have wrong done to him by the weak. What is right, that is my desire'.

By such aims and actions Darius was serving not only Asa Vahista, the great Amesa Spenta who hypostatizes justice and right, but also Khsathra Vairya, who is honoured through all properly exercised author-

{p. 122} ity. The king tells us further that he disciplined and trained his own body, inviting thus the Amesa Spentas of health and long life, Haurvatat and Ameretat, into his being. Thus he declares: 'I am trained, hand and foot. As a rider I am a good rider. As an archer I am a good archer, both on foot and mounted. As a spearman I am a good spearman, both on foot and mounted. And the manly skills which Ahuramazda has bestowed on me, and which I have had the strength to use - what I have done through the will of Ahuramazda, I have done with these skills which Ahuramazda has bestowed on me'. Down the centuries Darius' successors likewise are shown by alien writers - Herodotus, Xenophon, Plutarch - to have maintained the Zoroastrian ideal of physical health and hardihood, despite the luxuries of palace life.

Devotion and good purpose, hypostatized by the other two Amesa Spentas, Spenta Armaiti and Vohu Manah, find ample expression in Darius' words, as for example in the following: 'After Ahuramazda made me king in this earth, by the will of Ahuramazda all (that) I did was good'; 'Ahuramazda is mine, I am Ahuramazda's. I worshipped Ahuramazda, may Ahuramazda bear me aid'. Whatever political element there may be in some of Darius' religious utterances (with the exaltation of Ahuramazda reflecting on the greatness of his worshipper), there is no reason to doubt the sincerity and force of the king's personal beliefs, or the soundness of his Zoroastrian theology, which he chose also to declare visually through the iconography of his tomb.

Yet although Zoroaster's teachings shape the theology of Darius' utterances, no mark of Avestan influence is to be found in their vocabulary. Persian, not Avestan, religious terms are used, with the word *baga* 'god' appearing instead of the characteristic Zoroastrian *yazata*, and invocation of 'all the gods' being made instead of only the 'bounteous' (*spenta*) divinities. Clearly in this Darius and his priests were maintaining familiar usages. Zoroastrian missionaries to Persia must have presented their prophet's teachings there in the Persian language and idiom (as Cyrus' agent in Babylon presented them, presumably, in Aramaic to Second Isaiah); and they do not seem to have felt impelled to challenge the traditional religious vocabulary. The use of *baga* as the general term for

'god' persisted for many generations in Persia (as in other parts of Iran); and still in the third century A.C. the Persian

{p. 123} high priest Kirder was able to refer to heaven by an archaic phrase as bayan gah 'place of the gods'. The collection of Avestan hymns to the yazatas received the Middle Persian title of Bayan Yat, 'Worship of the gods', and there are numerous other instances of pre-Zoroastrian usages continuing. Such differences between liturgical and ordinary vocabulary seem the more natural since the language of the holy texts, Avestan, differed markedly from the western Iranian vernaculars, and would not have been literally understood by most worshippers.

It has also often been remarked that the name of Ahuramazda's great Adversary, Anra Mainyu, is missing from Darius' inscriptions, and that it is Drauga alone who there represents the world of evil; but in the Gathas themselves the Drug is mentioned more often than Anra Mainyu, and the Hostile Spirit's name does not occur at all in the Fravarane, where it is the Daevas who are collectively abjured as 'the most Drug-like of beings'. There is nothing anomalous, therefore, in the usage of Darius' priests in this respect.

Another omission which has been a perplexity to scholars is that of Zoroaster's own name; but again this is matched by a similar reticence on the part of the Sasanian Kirder, who never uttered the prophet's name in any of his inscriptions, even though these, unlike the inscriptions of Darius, were explicitly concerned with religious matters. At that same period the Pahlavi books were full of references to Zoroaster. It would seem, therefore, that the silence of the inscriptions was peculiar to them - just conceivably, in the Achaemenian era, because the scribal traditions of Assyria and Urartu, Babylon and Elam, provided no conventional pattern for referring to a prophet in royal proclamations. It is not likely that Darius' priests would have pressed for the difficulty to be overcome, because for them the alien art of writing had little properly to do with holy matters.

Even with these omissions there is a strong religious content in Darius' major inscriptions, which through the public and general proclamation of some of the texts must have become known throughout the empire; for proof has been found that it was not only the Behistun text which was disseminated in translation, since lines have been identified from one of Darius' tomb inscriptions surviving in an Aramaic version on papyrus. This religious element in his words is consistently Zoro-

{p. 124} astrian in character, as are the ethics of Darius' utterances, with their stress on wisdom and justice, self-discipline and resoluteness in right action.

Darius' policy towards alien faiths

i) The Egyptians

In his attitude towards the faiths of the 'anarya', the non-Iranian peoples, Darius followed the tolerant, pragmatic policy of his predecessors. In Egypt he still used as his agent

Udja-Hor-resenet, who was, it seems, at Susa when Darius attained the throne. From there the king sent him back to his homeland to restore the 'Houses of Life' which were associated with the Egyptian temples-places where the holy books and inscriptions were kept, and where medicine and theology were studied. One of these was at Sais, and an inscription there describes the king, in the same terms used of Cambyses, as 'Darius, born of Neith, mistress of Sais; image of Re, whom Re has placed upon his throne'.

To make these undertakings possible, Darius restored in part the temple revenues curtailed by Cambyses; and benefactions by him towards individual temples are also recorded in inscriptions. His greatest lavishness in this respect was the building of a huge temple to Amun-Re in the oasis of El Khargeh. Traces of his activities have been found also at Abusir and perhaps at El Kab; and he gave support to the Apis-Osiris cult at Memphis, where pious graffiti were left by Persian officials during his reign. Polyaeus says that Darius offered a reward for the finding of a new Api bull, when one had died; but this story probably refers properly to Cambyses, and has merely been transferred to Darius, who not only succeeded in presenting himself to the Egyptian priests (despite his reconquest of their land) as a benefactor, but who remained in power, and so was a ruler to be praised and conciliated. Yet with Darius too tolerance depended naturally on the loyalty of his subjects, and he took measures to prevent the Egyptian priests regaining too much power. Thus documents survive containing his instructions to

{p. 125} Pherendates, satrap of Egypt, to intervene in certain circumstances in the appointment of the high priest at the temple of Khnum in Elephantine.

A statue of Darius has been found at Susa, larger than lifesize, which, being carved of local limestone, is thought to have been a copy made there by Egyptian craftsmen of an original erected in the temple of the god Atum at Heliopolis. The statue is set on a rectangular block, on whose sides are carved small kneeling figures, who raise their hands, palms upward, as if supporting the ground on which the king treads. They are identified by Egyptian hieroglyphs as representing the peoples of the empire - a familiar motif of Achaemenian art. On the folds of Darius' robe are cut equally familiar words in Old Persian, Babylonian and Elamite cuneiform; 'A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Darayavahu king'. The inscriptions continue, more specifically: 'Behold the statue of stone which Darayavahu the King had made in Egypt in order that he who hereafter shall see it may know that a Persian man holds Egypt ... I am Darayavahu ... May Ahuramazda protect me and all that has been done by me'.

Beside these orthodox Zoroastrian sentiments quite others are expressed in Egyptian hieroglyphs delicately carved on the statue and base. These declare Darius to be 'the perfect god who rejoices in Maat, he whom Atum, lord of Heliopolis, has chosen to be master of all that is encompassed by the solar orb, for he recognizes him as his son, his steward .. The goddess Neith has given him the bow which she loosens, in order that he may defeat all his enemies'. The inscriptions accord Darius a series of traditional Pharaonic titles ('perfect god' being one of them), and end by describing the statue itself as an 'image made in the exact likeness of the perfect god, master of the Two Lands,

which His Majesty had made in order that a monument of him should be set up abidingly, and that his person should be remembered beside his father, Atum ... for the length of eternity'.

Atum was a name by which the Egyptian sun-god, Re, was worshipped, and in the syncretic pantheon Re was regarded as the child

{p. 126} of Neith, goddess of Sais. The Egyptian priests taught that he had created this ordered world - that is, Egypt and the lands ruled by its Pharaohs; and that his will was that it should be governed according to Maat, the personification of a principle 'which is at once truth, justice, private morality and public order, and which is opposed to disorder in customs and institutions, and to wickedness and falsehood. This harmony is reestablished each morning when the sun drives away the powers of darkness. On the level of political life here below, it is menaced by those who plot against authority, and by the revolts and attacks of barbarous peoples. The king of Egypt is the representative chosen by [Re] to maintain order.

The Egyptian concept of Maat was thus closely parallel to the Zoroastrian one of Asa, and the relationship claimed for the Pharaoh with Re to that claimed for the Persian king with Ahuramazda. Udja-Hor-resenet doubtless expounded these matters to Darius and his priests, as he had done earlier to Cambyses and the magi of his day; and so the acceptance by the Persian king of the Pharaoh's role in Egypt, politically highly desirable, could have been shown to contain little that was actively objectionable in Iranian eyes. In cult the two peoples were far apart, a fact illustrated by the Egyptian representation of the goddess Maat as a gracious little lady, seated and wearing an ostrich plume on her head; her statue, carried in the hollow of their hands like a doll was regularly given by the Pharaohs as an offering to her 'father' Re. But Egyptian observances were enacted only in Egypt - a remote place for most of Darius' subjects; and for the Zoroastrians who saw Darius' great statue in Susa the Egyptian hieroglyphs would in any case have been no more than elegant ornamentation, and a symbol of their king's conquest of yet another foreign land. ...

{p. 127} iii) The Jews

The exiled Jews who had returned to Jerusalem in the time of Cyrus had failed to rebuild the temple there; but 'in the second year of Darius the king' the prophets Haggai and Zechariah began to urge that the work be taken in hand, and the foundations were at last laid. The Persian satrap challenged the legality of this act, and when the Jews claimed the authority of an edict by Cyrus, he wrote to Darius asking that search might be made among the royal records at Babylon concerning the matter. A memorandum of the edict was eventually found, not there but at Ecbatana, 'in the palace that is in the province of the Medes'; and Darius not only, in this as in other matters, upheld Cyrus' decree, but commanded that funds for the rebuilding should be provided out of the tribute of the satrapy, and that sacrificial animals, corn, wine and what ever else was necessary should be given to the priests in Jerusalem, so

{p. 128} that they might offer sacrifices there to their God, 'and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons'.

The king's generosity (no different in essence from that which he showed the Egyptians and the Elamites) had an obvious political ingredient, in that Palestine was strategically placed on the road from Persia to Egypt, and there was clear advantage in having the Jews as loyal and quiet subjects; but however pragmatic his motives, Darius undoubtedly gave the Jews renewed cause to feel gratitude to their Zoroastrian rulers. His orders were swiftly carried out, and the Jews finished building the temple 'according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus and Darius ... king of Persia ... in the sixth year of Darius the king'. Thereafter down the generations prayers must have gone up regularly in Jerusalem for the welfare of the Achaemenian King of kings.

{p. 188} ARTAXERXES I (465-424 B.C.) ...

Artaxerxes I and the Jews

i) Nehemiah

Palestine, part of Megabyzus' satrapy, lay strategically on the way to Egypt, and this doubtless was one reason why the Achaemenians showed an active benevolence towards the Jews. In Babylonia the 'Yahweh-alonists (those who offered their worship exclusively to Yahweh) appear to have enjoyed good relations with their Persian rulers from the time when Second Isaiah, who was one of their number, hailed

{p. 189} Cyrus as deliverer; and in the twentieth year of his reign, in 444, Artaxerxes appointed a 'Yahweh-alonist', Nehemiah, to govern Jerusalem. The Achaemenians regularly set local rulers over cities and small provinces, so that such an appointment was not in itself remarkable; but its results were to be of great significance for mankind. At that time there were syncretists among the Babylonian Jews, men who worshipped Yahweh but venerated other gods also, and syncretism appears to have predominated in Judea itself; and it was, it seems, the authority given to Nehemiah by the Persian King of kings which enabled him to gain more adherents for Yahweh-alonism in Jerusalem, and then throughout Judea, so that this became the faith of most of the inhabitants of the land, and could thereafter truly be termed Judaism. Without Nehemiah, it is suggested, the monolatrous worship of Yahweh might have remained principally a religion of synagogue-worship in the diaspora. 'The national, political, territorial side of Judaism ... was, as a practical matter, the work of Nehemiah. He secured to the religion that double character - local as well as universal - which was to endure, in fact, for 500 years, and, in its terrible consequences, yet endures'.

Zoroastrianism itself had long had this double character, being both universal in its message and yet special to the Iranian peoples. Parallels in matters of belief between the two faiths are best considered in connection with the work of Ezra; but there is a similarity in an area of observance where Nehemiah's own life seems of significance.

Before he was appointed to his governorship he had been, he says, cupbearer to Artaxerxes; and anyone who served the King of kings in such a capacity would have had necessarily to keep the Zoroastrian purity laws, so as not to bring pollution on his royal master. These laws, as we have seen, had their doctrinal basis in the belief that the good world created by Ahuramazda is under continual assault from the Hostile Spirit, Anra Mainyu, among whose weapons, it was held, were dirt, stench, blight, decay, disease and death. To reduce or banish any of these things was therefore to contribute, however humbly, to the defence of the good creation, and its ultimate redemption; whereas to come into serious contact with them was to contaminate a member of God's noblest creation, man, who thereby became unfit for prayer or worship, or the company of the pure. Down the centuries the Zoroastrian priests elaborated rules

{p. 190} in defence of both actual and ritual purity, and so created in time an iron code which raised an effective barrier between Zoroastrians and any unbeliever who did not observe it; indeed the existence of this code must have been a major factor in preventing the spread of Zoroastrianism as a coherent faith beyond the Iranian peoples themselves, since in its stringency it made demands of a kind to which it is easiest to grow accustomed in infancy. (This did not, of course, hinder the widespread influence of its immensely powerful individual doctrines.)

After years of necessary keeping of the Zoroastrian purity code (which has nothing in it repugnant to Jewish laws) it is hardly surprising that Nehemiah, although a layman, should have concerned himself in Jerusalem with questions of purity among the Jews. Nor does it seem overbold to suppose that it was Zoroastrian example, visible throughout the Empire, which led to the gradual transformation of the Jewish purity code from regulations concerning cultic matters to laws whose observance was demanded of every individual in his daily life, their setting being no longer only the Temple, but 'the field and the kitchen, the bed and the street', and their keeping a matter which set the Jews in their turn apart from other peoples, in self-imposed isolation.

ii) Ezra

Scholarly opinion is still divided as to whether it was Artaxerxes I, in 458, or his grandson Artaxerxes II, in 398, who sent 'Ezra the scribe' to Jerusalem. Ezra was, it seems, Commissary for Jewish Religious Affairs (in Biblical terms 'scribe of the law of the God of heaven'); and the Bible preserves the letter of authority given him by 'Artaxerxes, King of kings', which runs in part as follows: 'You are sent by the King and his seven counsellors to find out how things stand in Judah and Jerusalem with regard to the law of your God with which you are

{p. 191} entrusted. You are also to convey the silver and gold which the King and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel whose dwelling is in Jerusalem ... In pursuance of this decree you shall use the money solely for the purchase of bulls, rams and lambs, and the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings, to be offered on the altar in the house of your God in Jerusalem ... The vessels which have been given you for the service of the house of your God you shall hand over to the God of Jerusalem; and if



anything else should be required for the house of your God, which it may fall to you to provide, you may provide it out of the King's Treasury. And I, King Artaxerxes, issue an order to all treasurers in the province of Beyond Euphrates that whatever is demanded of you by Ezra the priest, a scribe learned in the law of the God of heaven, is to be supplied exactly, up to a hundred talents of silver, a hundred kor of wheat, a hundred bath of wine, a hundred bath of oil, and salt without reckoning. Whatever is demanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently carried out for the house of the God of heaven; otherwise wrath may fall upon the realm of the King and his sons. We also make known to you that you have no authority to impose general levy, polltax or landtax on any of the priests, Levites, musicians, door keepers, temple-servitors or other servants of this house of God'. The terminology 'the house of your God in Jerusalem' reflects that of the edict of Cyrus; and the privileges granted to the priests and other servants of the temple in Jerusalem resemble those granted by Cyrus to the priests of the Apollo-shrine in Asia Minor.

### iii) The Priestly Code and Zoroastrian influences

Jewish tradition honoured Ezra, called also 'a scribe learned in the law of Moses', by attributing to him the writing down of all the canonical books of the Old Testament, while many modern scholars associate him specifically with the 'Priestly Code', the fourth strand in the Pentateuch whose compilation is ascribed largely to the Persian period. This he is thought either to have edited himself, or at least to have imposed at this time on the Jewish community. Although it is accepted that all parts of the Pentateuch contain both pre-exilic and post-exilic materials, the latter appear most abundantly in the 'Priestly Code'; and it is here, not surprisingly, that Zoroastrian influences seem apparent.

{p. 192} To it is assigned the 'Holiness Code' (Leviticus XVIII-XXVI), which, though wholly Jewish, may owe its place and something of its emphases to the deepening interest in matters of purity. To it also belongs the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, which gives an account of creation wholly different from that in the second chapter, with its story of the garden of Eden. The first account resembles the Zoroastrian cosmogony in two striking particulars. First there is the great declaration: 'In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heaven and the earth ... And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters'. This is the only place in the Old Testament where the Spirit of God is associated with creativity; and attempts have been made accordingly to give ruah a special meaning here, such as wind or storm; but a recent commentator insists that 'to use modern terms, the Spirit is the active principle, which was wholly necessary in order to accomplish a creation. It was . . . the driving factor ... Where God was, there too his Spirit was at work'. It is precisely in such terms that scholars have sought to define Zoroaster's teachings about the Holy Spirit through which Ahuramazda is 'Creator of all things'.

Then there is the division of the acts of creation into seven stages. The Zoroastrian and Biblical stages are not identical, and in particular the creation of fire, which is the culmination of the Zoroastrian creation story, is given a less conspicuous place in Genesis, with the luminaries being set between the plants and the birds and fishes. Yet there is a broad likeness between the two cosmogonies; and since cosmogony was of fundamental importance in the teachings of Zoroaster, being linked with his doctrines

concerning the seven great Amesha Spentas and God's purpose in creating the world, it can be expected that knowledge of the Zoroastrian account would have become known to theologians of other faiths throughout the empire.

As prominent in Zoroastrianism, because vitally important for each believer, were the Gathic teachings about fate after death (with individual judgment, heaven and hell), and at the last day (with the Last Judgment, and annihilation for the wicked but eternal bliss for the saved in company with Ahuramazda in his kingdom to come upon earth). The contrast is sharp between these beliefs and the oldest layer of Jewish ones concerning the hereafter, of which it has been said: 'One of

{p. 193} the most astonishing things about Israel's religious faith is the warmth and intensity of fellowship with God which was experienced against the sombre background of a belief in nothing but the most shadowy and unsatisfactory kind of survival after death. In Amos (Ch. 9) and Psalm 139 we find the belief that Yahweh's writ extended even to the underworld of Sheol, but there is little evidence till the end of the Old Testament period that there was any belief in a blessed existence after death'. The earliest reference to such a belief has been seen in what is regarded as a post-exilic verse, Isaiah 26.19: 'But thy dead live, their bodies will rise again. They that sleep in the earth will awake and shout for joy; for ... the earth will bring those long dead to birth again'. The new hope of joy in the hereafter was thus expressly linked with the characteristic Zoroastrian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, alluded to, it seems, in Y. 30.7, and constantly reiterated as an article of faith. The teaching was duly ascribed to Zoroaster by Theopompus, who was born about 380, in the reign of Artaxerxes II. Since it and the other elements of Zoroastrian apocalyptic find their counterparts eventually in Jewish and Christian eschatology, not disjointedly but as parts of that same fixed scheme which is to be discerned in the Gathas, it is difficult not to concede to Zoroastrianism both priority and influence; the more especially since elements of Zoroaster's teachings can be traced far back in the ancient Indo-Iranian religious tradition, whereas those of Jewish apocalyptic first appear after the time of contact with the Persian faith.

{note that Resurrection is a bodily thing, whereas Reincarnation is the rebirth of the Spirit but not the body; another, new, body is used instead, with a new personality. These two viewpoints are based on divergent views of the composition of the person: body & blood in the Jewish case; body & soul or spirit in the Buddhist/Hindu/Platonic one}

A doctrine which appears to be wholly original to Zoroaster was that at the end of 'limited time' death will cease, together with its evil creator, Anra Mainyu. This doctrine too was alien to ancient Jewish thought; but it finds expression in another late verse in Isaiah, which prophesies that 'on that day' Yahweh will destroy death, 'that veil that shrouds all the peoples, the pall thrown over all the nations; he will swallow up death for ever' (Is. 25.78). In general it seems that Zoroastrian teachings, first assimilated by Second Isaiah with his proclamation of Yahweh as God and Creator, were adopted also by other prophets of the Isaianic school and make sporadic appearance in their verses, although not yet as part of an integrated system of belief. The dating of many of those verses remains controversial, and with regard to the section made up of Chapters 24-27

(from which both the above citations come) 'from the exile down to the end of the Old Testament development, i.e. the end of

{p. 194} the second century B.C., every century has been proposed as the period of its composition. Problems attend also the dating of Chapters 56-66, which some scholars assign to a single author, Third Isaiah, living in the time of Artaxerxes I, while others apportion them to some dozen different members of the Isaianic school. In these chapters past present and future are seen at times in ways which, although expressed in Jewish terms, bear striking resemblances in substance to the Zoroastrian world picture. Thus both past and present are perceived as afflicted by evil, which not only injures man but blights the whole cosmos. Salvation from this state can come only through a mighty act of judgment by Yahweh, who will 'create new heavens and a new earth'. Then his servants 'shall shout in triumph in the gladness of their hearts', whereas those who did evil, and chose what was against his will, 'shall cry from sorrow and wail from anguish of spirit', and be given over to death. The doctrine of a future lot depending on present choice is fundamental to Zoroaster's teachings, while the simultaneous announcement of happiness and misery, salvation for the righteous and suffering and annihilation for sinners, is strikingly characteristic of the Gathas but was new in Jewish utterances, although it became a prominent feature of later Jewish apocalyptic.

Although the Jews accepted the belief in heaven and hell, they rejected Zoroaster's fundamental dualistic teaching, that the power of God is limited in the present time by that of a mighty and evil Adversary, the source of all the wickedness and suffering in the world. Indeed Second Isaiah, perhaps the first Jew to have heard Zoroaster's doctrines, seems to have made this rejection explicit with the words: 'I am Yahweh, there is no other ... author alike of prosperity and trouble' (Is. 45.7). He thus adopted the Zoroastrian belief in God the Creator, but attributed to Yahweh the creation of all things, evil as well as good, regarding him as all-powerful. As then Jews came widely to accept the doctrine that Yahweh was not simply the one Being whom they as a people should worship, that is; their tribal god, but rather God omnipotent, they found,

{p. 195} it seems, an ever more urgent need to seek explanations, in the light of this doctrine, for undeserved suffering in the present life. 'The question as to why the godless so often prosper while the pious suffer was being repeatedly discussed ... in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.' It is to this period that the Book of Job is by general assent attributed.

Further, as the Jews came to venerate Yahweh as the all-powerful Creator, they appear to have felt an increasing need to acknowledge lesser immortal beings, his servants, who would bridge the vast gulf that now opened between him and his worshippers. The earliest reference to such a belief appears to be in Isaiah 24.21: 'the host of heaven in heaven'. It is generally held that Jewish angelology, which became highly developed, reflects to a large extent Zoroastrian belief in the yazatas, with the 'seven angels that stand in the presence of God' (Rev. 8.2) corresponding to the Amesha Spentas themselves. A demonology also steadily evolved, until in the Jewish apocalyptic literature of the Parthian period Satan is conceived, like Anra Mainyu, as a cosmic force, an essentially

evil being who leads his wicked hordes to trouble mankind. Zoroastrian dualism, consciously rejected, it seems, by Second Isaiah, thus came in time to influence Judaism deeply.

An interesting historic parallel to these developments is furnished by the Parsis in respect to Christianity. Those devout Zoroastrians found themselves, like the Jews before them, a tiny minority in a vast empire. Like the Jews of the diaspora they were aliens in their chosen land, and they too came to be on excellent terms with its alien rulers, the British. Like the Jews they held staunchly to their own ancestral faith; but, unknown to themselves, they were deeply influenced nevertheless by Christianity, whose doctrines and observances, although never officially propagated, became familiar in countless random ways, and were in part unconsciously absorbed.

#### Democritus of Abdera

In 449 a peace was at last negotiated between Persia and Athens, known to the Greeks as the 'Peace of Callias'. This brought a respite in hostilities, and for a few years thereafter mainland Greeks could travel more freely through the Persian Empire. One who did so was the noted scholar Democritus from Aodera in Thrace, reputedly the author of more than seventy-two learned works. He visited Babylonia to study the

{p. 196} Science of the Chaldeans'; and he is also said to have interested himself in the learning of the magi, and to have written on this. Indeed according to one tradition he had as a boy listened to the discourses of Ostanes, Xerxes' chief magus, when the Persian army halted at Abdera in 480, and had received inspiration from his words.

#### Artaxerxes I and Babylonia

Babylonia, the richest of all the satrapies, was regularly governed by an Achaemenian from the time that Cambyses first ruled it as crown prince. Darius had built a palace in the ancient royal quarter of Babylon, and Xerxes lived there as satrap before he succeeded to the throne. Artaxerxes I also spent time in Babylonia, and was the first Achaemenian king, as far as is known, to take Babylonian ladies to wife. According to the Greek Ctesias (for seventeen years physician at the Persian court), his Queen of queens was a Persian, Damaspia, who bore him his oldest son and acknowledged heir, Xerxes II. Another son, Darius, was born to him by the Babylonian Cosmartidene; and by yet another Babylonian queen he had a daughter, Parysatis. A khvaetvadatha-marriage was arranged between Darius and Parysatis.

There are numerous instances among the Achaemenians and Sas anians of kings taking foreign wives; and occasionally it is known that the wife kept her alien faith - although plainly all would have had to observe the Zoroastrian purity laws. The admixture of foreign blood in the royal line could be ignored because of the widespread ancient belief (held by, among others, Aristotle) that woman was no more than a vessel into which man cast his seed. So the child of an Iranian male could be thought of as purely Iranian. (This belief persisted down to modern times in the Zoroastrian community, and not a single

woman's name appears in the long genealogies of Parsi priests.) This conviction might seem to destroy the justification for khvaetvadatha-unions; but the basis for these was presumably in origin a desire to unite true believers, born of the same stock and with the same inheritance of faith and piety; for however much the mother's physical role might be diminished, her capacity to mould a child's thoughts and habits had to be acknowledged. Thus in the light of subsequent developments it seems very probable that Artaxerxes' Babylonian queens maintained their

{p. 197} ancestral faith and observances, and that Darius and Parysatis saw their mothers in their private quarters making their devotions before images of great Ishtar, and so learnt from them to honour the goddess in this way, although as Persians they knew her cult as that of Anahiti, Lady of the planet Venus. The likelihood that Artaxerxes would have tolerated such observances in his household is strengthened by the fact that he is recorded as having himself erected a stele to Ishtar in Babylon, as well as restoring property and estates to the priests of Marduk.

{p. 198} DARIUS II (423-404 B.C.)

Artaxerxes I died in 424, and his body, according to Ctesias, was brought from Susa to Persepolis, where it was laid in a tomb at Naqsi Rustam, beside those of Darius and Xerxes. The stereotyped reliefs were carved above and around the door; and within, as in the tomb of Xerxes, there was provision for three bodies, there being three vaults each with a single stone cist. Ctesias' account indicates that one of these vaults was occupied by the body of Queen Damaspia, who died on the same day as her husband, and the other by that of their son Xerxes II, who was assassinated after a few weeks' reign by one of his half-brothers. Darius II was then in Babylon, where he succeeded in rallying support for himself. He marched eastward, deposed and put to death the assassin, and was crowned king in 423.

The inscriptions of Darius II

Unlike his forbears, the half-Babylonian Darius II appears to have preferred the plains to the Iranian plateau, favouring his capitals of Susa and Babylon. He added no further buildings at Persepolis, and the only inscriptions of his which are known are two short ones from column bases in Susa. One of these contains a few lines derived from Darius the Great's inscription at Naqsi Rustam, with the added words: 'Saith Darayavahu the King: This palace Artakhsasa built, who was my father; this palace, by the will of Ahuramazda, I afterwards completed'. The other is even briefer: 'This palace of stone, with its columns, Daraya vahu the Great King built; may Ahuramazda, with the gods, protect Darayavahu the King'. This inscription is in Old Persian only, the other in Old Persian and Akkadian. ...

{p. 199} Darius II and the Jews

Darius II appears to have maintained his family tradition of active patronage towards the Jews. The evidence comes from a damaged scrap of Aramaic papyrus recovered from

Elephantine. According to this, in 419 the king sent an order to the Egyptian satrap Arsama (Arsames), which was transmitted by the Jew Hananiah. This order commanded the Jews of Elephantine to keep the Festival of Unleavened Bread in that

{p. 200} year for seven days. It was probably made, it is suggested, to ensure that the Egyptian authorities allowed the Jews time off to observe the feast; and the fact that the Great King troubled himself in the matter suggests continuing good relations between leaders of the Jewish community and the court at Susa. When Nehemiah's governorship of Jerusalem ended is not known; but it has been pointed out that he had a brother named Hananiah. The Hananiah of Darius' order appears in another Elephantine papyrus, as one whose sojourn among the Jews of Egypt was a memorable event for them.

In the fourteenth year of Darius, in 408, while Arsama was absent from Egypt, the priests of the god Khnum in Elephantine, in collusion it seems with the Persian governor (frataraka) of the fortress there, one Vidarnag, cut off the water supply of the Jewish garrison and destroyed their temple to 'Yahu', which had stood since before the time of Cambyses. This appears to have been an incident in one of the many Egyptian revolts against Persian rule, with the Jews, as foreigners in the service of foreigners, suffering in the course of it. The motives of Vidarnag (possibly the grandson of the man who built the brazmadana in Elephantine during Xerxes' reign) are obscure. The Jews appealed to their brethren in Palestine for help to rebuild the temple, and also addressed themselves to Bagoas, the Persian governor of Judah at that time. He wrote to Arsama in Egypt, requesting him to have the temple 'rebuilt in its place, as it was formerly', but this appears never to have been done. ...

{p. 201} The promotion of the cult of Anahiti/Anahita

When eventually Artaxerxes came to succeed his father, Plutarch (relying on older sources) says that he underwent an inaugural ceremony, performed by Persian priests, at 'a sanctuary of a warlike goddess whom one might conjecture to be Athene'. This goddess has been generally identified as the Persian divinity known to the Greeks as 'Anaitis'. Plutarch sets her temple at Pasargadae, but no traces of any such building have found there. It is possible, however, that this is simply a topographical mistake, made through a conflation of material, or present in the work of the often inaccurate Ctesias. If reliance can otherwise be placed on what Plutarch relates, then it would seem that when Artaxerxes succeeded to the throne there was already in existence somewhere in Persia proper, or perhaps Babylonia, a temple dedicated to 'Anaitis' and served by Persian magi.

Further, Tacitus records that in his own day the people of Hierocaesarea in Lydia claimed that they possessed a shrine 'dedicated in the reign of Cyrus to the Persian Diana', while coins of Hierocaesarea in the Hellenic period bore the head of Diana with the legend 'Persike'. Despite Tacitus' use of the word 'reign' it seems probable that the shrine to this divinity was founded by Cyrus the Younger ...

{end of quotes}

(2) Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism Volume Three: Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1991.

{p. 363} Zoroastrianism was regularly characterized by Greeks as the "Persian religion", as if it were an ethnic faith like the others which they encountered; but (however true this had become in part) it was in fact a credal religion, the oldest known in history. A person was not born a Zoroastrian, nor did he enter the religious community through a physical rite (such as the Jewish one of infant circumcision); but he became a Zoroastrian on attaining maturity by choosing to profess the doctrines taught by Zoroaster. Among the distinctive elements in these doctrines were: belief in God (Ahura Mazda), the one eternal Being, and in a likewise self-existing, wholly independent Spirit of evil (Anra Mainyu); belief

{p. 364} that Ahura Mazda created the world in order to destroy that Spirit; and that a struggle is being waged here and now by celestial beings, just men and the whole good creation against him and his legions, who have malignly invaded the world; that this struggle will end with the triumph of the good, which will mark the last day of measurable time and human history, this glorious moment being known as Fraso-kereti, the "Making wonderful"; belief that the bones of the dead will then be raised up, so that all humanity, with those still living, can undergo a last judgment by fiery ordeal. The wicked will be thereby destroyed as part of the cleansing of the cosmos from evil, and the earth, likewise cleansed, will be once more wholly good, as Ahura Mazda had created it. Then his kingdom will come upon it, in which the just, made immortal in the flesh, will live in bliss for ever.

Before the arrival of Zoroastrianism in the Near East none of these individual beliefs is to be found in any religion there, still less was anything like Zoroaster's coherent theological system known - a system which has been justly characterized as "strikingly intellectual and lucid", despite its archaic character and visionary base. Of all its doctrines the one that was to have the most widespread effect was probably that of a coming end to time and all natural processes, a dramatic full stop. This concept has not been traced anywhere in the world before it was taught by Zoroaster, and it ran counter to ideas about time to be found in Hellenistic philosophical and semi-philosophical texts, which are that it is infinite, differing from eternity in other respects. With Zoroaster's

{p. 365} own concept of time were bound up all his ideas about the events of the Last Day; and so important were these to him that his religion has been justly characterized as having two foci, one dualism, the other eschatology.

Among Zoroaster's eschatological ideas was his teaching about the "future body", that at the Last Day the bones of the dead will be clothed again in flesh and re-animated by the soul (which has been existing apart, in heaven, hell or limbo, according to the individual judgment passed on it at death). This doctrine of bodily resurrection, it is widely accepted, had its remote origins in the primitive belief of proto-Indo-Iranian hunters (which they shared with other ancient peoples) that the beasts which they slew would, if their bones were properly interred, rise in due course to be hunted again. This belief was

developed analogically in human terms by their descendants, and was then given a wholly ethical interpretation by Zoroaster. According to him, each created thing, animate or inanimate, possesses its own indwelling force or spirit; and Ahura Mazda created these spirits first and then clothed them in material forms - a doctrine which, though held to have contributed to Plato's theory of a world of ideas, had its own roots deep in primitive animatism. For Zoroaster, it was the second stage, that of material creation, which brought things to their perfection; and at the end of time there will be a return to that perfection, with the blessed entering into the kingdom of Ahura

{p. 366} Mazda in the ideal form of a just soul clad in an unblemished body, made immortal and undecaying. Belief in physical resurrection was also a necessary part of his concept of the Last Judgment. This he perceived analogically with the trial by fiery ordeal which was the ultimate judicial process in his own society; he saw it, that is, as taking place through the immersion in a river of molten metal of all humanity - both those still living and those revived. In this imagined universal ordeal, as in the actual individual one of his own experience, wrongdoers were expected to perish, the just to be saved by divine intervention; but at the last ordeal sinners are to be annihilated absolutely, soul as well as body, as part of making an end of all evil.

The doctrine of a universal resurrection of the dead was thus essential to Zoroaster's theology, and was linked with the fact that his future expectations were fixed upon this loved and familiar earth. It is on it, restored to its original perfection, that the kingdom of Ahura Mazda is to come; and the blessed are to live here eternally in his presence, solid flesh on solid ground. There was no question in his teachings of substantial bodies ascending through insubstantial air to dwell in a heaven above the sky (as seems to have been the belief among the Indo-Iranians before him). It was an end of history that he foretold, not an end of the world.

The importance which the doctrine of bodily resurrection attained in Christianity has given rise to a huge literature concerning it (as there is indeed concerning all major Jewish and Christian beliefs); and numerous attempts have been and still are being made to find antecedents for it in the Semitic world. These have been judged unsuccessful; but elements clearly existed in Hebrew tradition which made its adoption possible for some Jewish groups,

{p. 367} already probably in the Achaemenian period, notably the legends of the bodily ascension, while still living, of Enoch and Elijah. Similarly, expectation of a Last Day and the coming kingdom of Ahura Mazda could be assimilated to Jewish belief in the coming "Day of Yahweh", first proclaimed by Amos in the eighth century B.C. This is to be a day of judgment and retribution, in which the nations will perish because of their iniquity; but it was not seen as an end to history - a remnant at least of the Jews will be saved, and "Judah will be inhabited for ever, and Jerusalem for generation to generation", while the spirits of even the just, when they die, will still go down to Sheol.

Among all the subjects of the Achaemenians and Macedonians it is the Jews who appear to have absorbed most from Zoroastrianism; and this was presumably because of



prolonged propinquity in different regions, and because, despite profound differences, they had certain strong affinities with the Iranian religion (notably a shared conviction in the strict justice of one God). In nearly every case where there seems to have been borrowing, it was a matter of Zoroastrian doctrines being associated (as in the instances just cited) with somewhat similar Jewish ones, and being developed in Jewish ways by re-interpreting the Old Testament. In no instance, therefore, "can the end product be described as simply Persian". Yet the harmonization of these end products with earlier Hebrew thought often seems forced and lacking adequate causation within the structure of an avowed monotheism. Conversely, the monism adopted by Zurvanite Zoroastrians (probably in the fifth-fourth centuries B.C.) from the Semitic world remained intellectually irreconcilable with their own deeply ingrained dualism. The difficulties of grafting Semitic concepts on to Iranian stock, and vice versa, are palpable.

Although the impact of Zoroastrianism appears to have been felt most profoundly among the Jews, the effect of some of its doctrines can be traced widely in the Hellenistic world. The concept of an end of time now emerges also in Babylonia and was adopted here and there by Greeks, together with the belief that some major part was then to be played by fire. This latter Zoroastrian belief prob-

{p. 368} ably contributed, either directly or through certain of the early Ionian philosophers, to the Stoic teaching, formulated in the second century B.C., that at the end of each cycle of the world's existence matter undergoes conflagration, ekpyrosis, that is, is purified by being converted into fire.

Although the Zoroastrianism which the Greeks first encountered may be presumed to have been essentially orthodox, from Plato's time onward they are likely to have met the Iranian religion in its Zurvanite form. After Alexander's conquests the translation into Greek of Oriental works enabled Greek scholars to learn more of various aspects of Eastern knowledge, notably of Babylonian astronomy and astrology; and this field of learning some among them linked with "Zoroastres", whose name was explained in early Hellenistic times as meaning astrothutes, i.e. "star-priest" or "stardiviner", one who foretells the future from the stars. The Chaldeans and the magi of Babylon were confused together by Greeks as adepts of astronomy and astrology; and Zoroaster himself, stardiviner and master of the magi, came to be for them a Chaldean. Further, the respect felt for him by certain Greeks, notably those of the Platonic school, and the keen interest in the study of the heavens in Hellenistic times, combined to make him a much revered figure, even if to a large extent a misapprehended one; and he was drawn into direct contact with the Greek philosophical tradition by a claim that he had been a teacher of Pythagoras. The earliest authority cited for this is Aristoxenus, one of the most eminent of Aristotle's pupils, who wrote mainly between 320 and 300 B.C.; and he is probably its source, in so far as it was presented as a historical fact. The words which can be attributed with confidence to him on this subject are as follows: "Pythagoras went to Zaratas the Chaldean, who explained to him that every-

{p. 369} thing derives from two primordial causes: a father and a mother. And the father is light, the mother is darkness. The constituent parts of the light are hot, dry, light and

swift. The parts of the darkness are cold, wet, heavy and slow. Out of all these the cosmos is composed - from female and male. And he says the cosmos is also a musical harmony, and that this is why the sun is so harmonious in its cyclical course".

What Pythagoras is here said to have learnt from "Zaratas" (an Aramaic form of Zoroaster's name) is judged to represent in fact early Pythagorean doctrine as seen through the eyes of an early Aristotelian. The belief in a cosmic harmony was a cornerstone of that doctrine, and the idea that the cosmos was a combination of male and female also belonged to it. There is evidence also for an early Pythagorean division of existence into light and darkness, and this doctrine, together with the assigning of everything to two primordial causes, could well be held to have been learnt by Pythagoras from the Iranian seer. In one version of the basic Zurvanite myth Ahura Mazda is described as bright, Anra Mainyu as black, while Aristoxenus' colleague, Eudemus of Rhodes, reported that the magi referred to the primal unity (i.e. Zurvan) "either as Place or as Time: This then becomes differentiated into a good god and an evil spirit, as some say. According to others this is not the first stage but the primal duality is one of light and darkness". Eudemus appears to be seeking here to represent magian beliefs objectively; but Aristoxenus, to judge by Hippolytus' citation, seems concerned rather to use perceived similarities between Zoroastrian and Pythagorean teachings to enhance the authority of the latter by claiming Zoroaster, with his great reputation for wisdom, as their ultimate source. Similar use of the prophet's name came to be made without any such rational justification, and was one of the factors which brought about the large-scale creation in Hellenistic times of Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha, as is shown in the Excursus which concludes this volume.

The importance for the history of Zoroastrianism of the story of a meeting of Zoroaster and Pythagoras is that it set the Iranian prophet in the sixth century B.C. Aristoxenus, hostile to much that was taught in Plato's Academy, probably, it is thought, took pleasure in replacing the impossibly ancient dates for Zoroaster

{p. 370} proposed there (such as 5000 years before the Trojan war) with one that seemed rationally historical. The Iranian prophet was thus brought into relationship with Greek learned tradition (a relationship that was long to be celebrated in Europe). Subsequently, in the second century B.C., Apollodorus produced a refined system of chronology. Citations from his works show that when he did not know a philosopher's dates, he took an event with which he had been associated and assumed that he was then at his "peak" (acme) or prime, that is, in round numbers, 40 years old. Sometimes just this one date is given for him, he "was" at that historical moment. According to this system, Pythagoras was at his peak at the time of Polycrates tyranny in Samos, which coincided with the 2nd Olympiad (532-529); he could thus be considered to have been forty in 530, born in 570. By another rough rule, anyone who taught him would be supposed to have been at his own peak in the year of Pythagoras' birth, and hence truly venerable by the time he received him as pupil. This is attested in the case of Anaximander, another of Pythagoras' supposed masters. So in this way it could be postulated that Zoroaster was at his peak, or simply "was", in 570; that is, in terms of the Seleucid era, widely known as the "era of Alexander", which began in 312 B.C., he "was" 258 years before Alexander. This, a

formulaic calculation based on a literary fiction, is evidently the origin of the worthless sixth-century date for Zoroaster, which is recorded in these terms. This date came to be adopted in due course by Persian scholastics, who till then had lacked any precise one for their prophet; and though it never, it seems, became widely known to their community, it was transmitted in the western Iranian priestly tradition, to be a source of much confusion in the modern academic study of the history of the faith.

Developments such as these could only have taken place because Irano-Greek exchanges were made easy in the Hellenistic age by the use of Greek as a common language; and this is presumably

{p. 371} why Zoroastrian beliefs appear to have become generally more widely known than in Achaemenian times, when the religion was supported by a great imperial power. The Greeks themselves seem in the main to have made little attempt to learn Oriental languages, and in order to communicate with their new rulers their subjects had to learn Greek; and, clearly, such was the attractiveness of Greek culture that a number came to do so willingly. In Anatolia, with its long history of local Greek colonisation and influence, some Persian families had been well acquainted with the Greek language already in Achaemenian times; and there are indications that use had come to be made of it then by certain Persians for writing, for propaganda purposes, verses in the name of a Persian Sibyl. During the Hellenistic period Sibylline verses became an important channel for the dissemination of ideas, being widely, and in general respectfully, read; and longer oracles composed then by Persian Sibyllists appear to have included the first setting down in written form of major Zoroastrian beliefs.

{p. 395} The possibility of eternal damnation lent an especial terror to the Jewish development of the doctrine of a Last Judgment; and the Jewish Sibyllists, like other Jewish apocalyptists, drew on predictions by Old Testament prophets concerning the "great and awesome Day of Yahweh" to paint a fearful picture of the last times. The earliest prophecies about the Day of Yahweh had been that it will be "totally dark, without a ray of light"; and this bleakness, it was later declared, is to be brought about by "the fire of Yahweh's jealousy", which will consume the whole world, bringing "ruin and devastation ... darkness and gloom". Hence come the Sibyllist's predictions of an earth reduced to "smoking dust" and "dust ashes" in which, it seems, little will survive but the "repulsive recesses of Gehenna". This is much at variance with orthodox Zoroastrian expectations of Fraso-kereti, which are of an earth renewed and resembling a "paradise" (a Persian word for a great enclosed park) in all the freshness and beauty of

{p. 396} spring. Yet some Jews, having accepted the doctrine of physical resurrection accepted with it that of God's eternal kingdom to come on earth (which could blend with their own traditional expectation of Yahweh's rule on Zion)

{p. 397} There is some slight evidence of the Persian Sibyllists predicting the coming of the Saosyant {saviour} as one of the events of the end time. In the Avesta this World Saviour is portrayed as having priestly power, but also as a mighty warrior who would command the army of the good in the last great battle. In those days kings led their forces

in person in the field; and he also came to be thought of (as later texts show) as an invincible king. Finally, since he is to come at the end of time, he is associated in the Avesta with the raising of the dead, that is, he is seen as having divine authority.

{p. 400} The linking of creation to the end of time was a remarkable aspect of Zoroaster's teachings, with his vision of Ahura Mazda pursuing his vast ethical aim throughout cosmic and human history. Much of the strength of Zoroaster's moral theology lay in this doctrine, and in the conscious association of man with the divine powers in the struggle to defeat evil (a concept which we have seen made explicit in Commagenian inscriptions). He perceived the salvation of the world as dependent both on cosmic striving and on the sum of individual human choices; and these two conjoined aspects of his teachings - emphasis on individual responsibility and concern for the whole cosmos - made his doctrines strikingly relevant to the conditions and problems of the Hellenistic age. Old social patterns were then disintegrating with the decay of the city-state, the shifting boundaries of new kingdoms, and the mingling of peoples and cultures; and such changes, often violent and disruptive, led to the destruction of former loyalties and communal bonds, and the development at once of a wider, universalistic outlook and of focus on the individual. The Jews were susceptible to these developments, like other peoples of the time, and a new concern for the salvation of the individual rather than of the Jewish nation is a dominant motif of the Jewish Sibyllists.

{p. 401} Zoroastrian elements in Daniel, II Maccabees and Tobit

The most important Jewish writing of Hellenistic times, in that it was the only one to be accepted into the canon of scripture, is the Book of Daniel. This is in many ways a typical piece of apocalyptic literature, compiled by its unknown author for a specific purpose, namely to strengthen faithful Jews in their resistance to the religious persecution unleashed in 167 B.C. against their community by Antiochus IV. It is partly in Hebrew, partly in Aramaic, and the Aramaic contains a striking number of Persian (as well as Greek) loanwords. The contents also fall into two parts. The first (chapters 1-6) consists of edifying stories about Daniel, a wise and upright Jew with a gift for interpreting dreams, who is supposed to have lived in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar and the first Achaemenian kings. (The historical details in this part are wildly inaccurate.) It is generally agreed that these stories represent older

{p. 402} materials, originating among Babylonian Jews in the third century; and Zoroastrian elements have long been seen in them. Thus in a dream dreamt by Nebuchadnezzar there occurs the prophecy of four kingdoms, the last to be that of the Greeks; and this is to be shattered by the power of God, whose kingdom will be established in its place for ever. The pattern is that of Zoroastrian apocalyptic of the early Hellenistic age as it appears through the Sibylline Oracles and Zand i Vahman Yast; and the four kingdoms are symbolized by a statue made of four metals which are similar to those of the tree of Zoroaster's dream in the latter work, namely gold, silver, bronze (steel in the ZVYt) and iron mixed with clay.

The second part of Daniel (chapters 7-12) is concerned with visions seen by Daniel himself and interpreted to him by others. There is much diverse matter here, as in the first part, drawn, it is evident, from Babylonian and Canaanite sources; but through it all the theme persists of the four world kingdoms and the coming kingdom of God. The book reaches its climax with a prophecy imparted to Daniel by the archangel Gabriel "in the third year of

{p. 403} Cyrus king of Persia". This embodies a more or less factual account of the Syrian wars of the Seleucids and Ptolemids, conveyed in Sibylline fashion as allusive, enigmatic, ex eventu prophecy; and it culminates in the reign of Antiochus IV. That "contemptible man" (it is declared) "his mind set against the holy covenant ... will flatter with smooth words those who act wickedly towards the covenant, but the people devoted to their god will stand firm. The knowledgeable among the people will make the many understand; and for a while they shall fall by sword and flame, suffer captivity and spoliation ... for an interval still remains until the appointed time. ... At the time of the end ... the great prince, Michael, who stands beside the sons of your people, will appear. It will be a time of trouble, the like of which has never been seen since the nation came into being. At that time, your people will be rescued, all who are found inscribed in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to re- proaches, to everlasting abhorrence. And the knowledgeable will be radiant like the bright expanse of the sky, and those who lead the many to righteousness will be like the stars for ever and ever." Finally the angelic messenger says to Daniel: "But you, go on to the end; you shall rest, and arise to your destiny at the end of the days."

The essential element in the prophecy is the original Zoroastrian one of a "time of the end", "the end of the days", towards which all events are tending. This concept also informs the dreams of the older narrative part of the book, and represents a radical change from the traditional Hebrew outlook of the Old Testament. How sharp this change was can be seen by comparing the treatment of Antiochus' persecution in Daniel with that in the First Book of Maccabees, a chronicle of it and of the events that followed, written probably around 100 B.C. The author of Daniel, like the Persian apocalyptists before him, knew no parallel to the suffering of his own days. So evil was the epoch that it must be the Last Time

{p. 404} before the final defeat of the wicked. The author of I Maccabees takes a more sober view. He perceives the persecution as dreadful indeed, but not as unprecedented. "A terrible oppression began in Israel", he records, "there had been nothing like it since the disappearance of prophecy among them." Nor is there any suggestion that he saw its horrors as so great that they marked a last age.

Among other elements in the Daniel prophecy that reflect distinctive Zoroastrian beliefs is the expectation of bodily resurrection (implied rather than plainly stated), to be followed by judgment with blessedness for the just but an evil lot for sinners. These fates were expressly restricted, however, to Jews ("your people"), the alien doctrine being thus reconciled with the traditional Jewish conviction of Israel's uniqueness. Gentiles, it seems, will then simply be destroyed. It has further been deduced from the similes used

for the saved ("radiant like the bright expanse of sky ... like the stars for ever") that it was thought that they would be raised up to a life on high. Possibly there was some impact here of Greek thought, possibly it was purely a development of the Old Testament tradition of the bodily ascension of Enoch and Elijah. It was evidently Hebrew tradition which suggested that the righteous will "sleep in the dust of the earth" until the Last Day, instead of the soul undergoing individual judgment at death. This is just one of the Jewish variations on the Zoroastrian theme which are attested in the writings of this period.

Another Zoroastrian contribution to Daniel appears to be in the presence (for the first and hence only time in the Old Testament) of Michael and Gabriel, who are introduced in a way that suggests that they were familiar figures to the book's readers. The contrast between the naming of the two archangels here, and the anonymity of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:2 ("I saw the Lord Yahweh seated on a high throne ... above him stood seraphs") led Rabbi Simeon b. Lakish to deduce that the naming of angels was something which the Jews brought back with them from Babylon. The Jewish Concept of angels underwent in general a profound change in post-Exilic times; and in the literature of the Greco-Roman period they are imagined as having a hierarchy, headed by the seven archangels, four of whom stand round the throne of God. Lesser angels also have names. They carry prayers from man to God, and protect the righteous; and they are also conceived of as forming an

{p. 405} angelic army which will take part in the final war against the wicked. They further appear as the controlling spirits of natural phenomena, such as the stars and winds and the four seasons; and likewise of abstractions such as peace or healing. They are believed to be privy to the secrets of the cosmos, and are sometimes conjoined with cosmic principalities and powers. Much of this angelology, it has been said, "may be attributed to the infiltration of Iranian ideas, for it runs parallel to a remarkable degree with what we find in the Gathas and other earlier portions of the Zend-Avesta. Thus, the seven archangels have their counterpart in the Amesha Spentas, who attend upon ... Ahuramazda. ... The identification of the angels with the controlling spirits of natural phenomena accords strikingly with the concept of the fravashis and the yazatas ... The notion that angels intercede for man and that they will join in the final battle against the Evil One echoes the role of these same spiritual beings in the Avesta". Specifically, with regard to Daniel, the prophesied role of Michael as a "great prince", who will appear "at the time of the end" to aid the righteous among the Jews, has been seen as reflecting that of the Saosyant. Michael is in general portrayed as the protector of the Jewish people; but this caused controversy, since in Deuteronomy 32:9 it is expressly said that Israel has no guardian but Yahweh. Opposition to the whole new angelology was characteristic in Roman times of the conservative Sadducees, whereas the Pharisees embraced it.

The growth of this angelology, together with that of a complementary demonology, formed part of the marked tendency to dualism among certain groups of Jews in post-Exilic times; but since in itself it can be regarded as a peripheral matter, Iranian influence in this field is fairly readily admitted. With regard, however, to eschatological beliefs, including that in bodily resurrection, many Biblical scholars maintain that these are essentially an internal Jewish development, their close resemblance to Zoroastrian ones

being coincidental. Their clear emergence at the time when Daniel was composed is attributed to the sudden shock of

{p. 406} religious persecution then, with hellenizing Jews flourishing under Seleucid patronage while others faithful to their own tradition died sometimes horribly. Yahweh's justice, which was at the heart of his covenant with his chosen people, was thus not being declared here on earth, and belief in justice in an afterlife was now forced on them, it is maintained, in order to vindicate it. A similar cause - the successful harrying of Mazda-worshipping Iranians by lawless daeva-worshipping ones - appears to have been a major factor in impelling Zoroaster to his belief in judgment after death. He however, was a profoundly original religious thinker, and this doctrine formed an integral part of his theology. No great religious leader is known among the Jews of the second century who could similarly and independently have taken this doctrinal step. Moreover, the eschatological beliefs which then emerge are so close to the Zoroastrian ones, in organization as well as in details, that it is hard to suppose that the Iranian religion, long present among them, had not provided the Jews with a model in this. It also seems significant that these new beliefs caused controversy in their community for generations. As to their arising spontaneously in response to the particular troubles of Antiochus' reign, this is disproved by clear evidence that these beliefs were already firmly held by some Jews at the very outset of his persecution.

This evidence comes from the Second Book of Maccabees, another chronicle of the persecution and of subsequent events. It was composed in Greek, probably in 124 B.C. but was based on older materials, including stories of martyrs' deaths written, it is thought about 160. At the outbreak of the persecution, it is told, a family of seven brothers chose to die agonising deaths, and their mother after them, rather than break the Jewish Law; and their words of defiance are set down with, one may suppose, some faithfulness to the substance of what they said. The second brother is represented accordingly as declaring to Antiochus: "You may discharge us from this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, since we die for his laws, to live again for ever." The next brother, valiantly holding out his hands to be chopped off, is recorded to have said: "Heaven gave me these limbs ... from him I hope to receive them again"; while the fourth declared that he

{p. 407} and his brothers relied "on God's promise that we shall be raised up by him, whereas for you there can be no resurrection, no new life". (Here, as in Daniel, belief is in resurrection only for Jews.) When only her youngest son remained, the mother encouraged him too to endure the torture with these words: "It was not I who endowed you with breath and life. I had not the shaping of your every part. And hence, the Creator of the world, who made everyone and ordained the origin of all things, will in his mercy give you back breath and life, since for the sake of his laws you have no concern for yourselves. ... Prove yourself worthy of your brothers and accept death, so that I may receive you back with them." The belief here is clearly that God who makes the infant in the womb can remake the man hereafter; and this argument was one that had been used by Zoroastrian priests in support of the doctrine of physical resurrection. In the translation of a lost Avestan text Ahura Mazda is thus made to declare: "When I created

corn, that it might be scattered in the earth and grow again ... and when I created and protected the child in the mother's womb ... then the creation of each one of these was more difficult for me than the raising of the dead. For ... consider, if I made that which was not, why cannot I make again that which was?" Hence exactly the same words that are attributed to the Jewish mother could have been put in the mouth of a Zoroastrian woman in similar dire circumstances. There would nevertheless have been a radical difference in their religious convictions. Zoroastrians thus placed would have been able to believe that they were pitting their courage and endurance against the Evil Spirit and his agents, and that by dying for their faith they were not only saving their own souls but also strengthening the embattled forces of good, and so hastening in a tiny way the coming of Fraso-kereti. They would have felt convinced, that is, that they were striving together with Ahura Mazda for a common goal. The Jews were taught by their religion that all suffering undergone by his chosen people was ordained as a chastisement by Yahweh. The martyrs are represented accordingly as seeing Antiochus as only his instrument in this, and the youngest

{p. 408} brother is made to say: "We are suffering for our own sins; and if, to punish and discipline us, our living Lord is briefly angry with us, he will be reconciled with us in due course". The old belief that divine justice is administered in this life was thus not abandoned, but was joined to a new expectation of a fuller justice hereafter.

{p. 415} Zoroastrian elements in some early intertestamental writings

Tobit and I and II Maccabees, though not part of the Jewish canon of scriptures, found places in some Christian Bibles; but the great mass of Jewish writings of Greco-Roman times was not thus gathered up, but survived more haphazardly, as we have seen already with the Sibylline Oracles. Although one label given to these writings is 'intertestamental' (i.e. between the Jewish Old Testament, of which Daniel is the latest book, and the Christian New Testament), in parts one or two are in fact a little earlier than Daniel. This is true of the First Book of Enoch, known also as the

{p. 416} Ethiopic Enoch, because it survives entire only in a Ge'ez translation. This is the longest and most important of a number of writings ascribed pseudonymously to the Old Testament patriarch, who for various reasons became a dominant figure for Jewish apocalyptists. The part of it which has been identified as the oldest is a short "Ten Weeks" apocalypse. In this Enoch "predicts" in brief, general terms the course of world history, which is set out on the originally Zoroastrian pattern of ten segments of time, and ends, like Zoroastrian revelation, with judgment and eternal happiness for the good. The writer, who saw himself as living in the eighth "week", had evidently no knowledge of Antiochus IV's persecution, and his work is attributed to just before that began, probably about 170 B.C. This short text is embodied in a large compilation which, it seems, came into existence (probably then in four books, later to be five) during the remainder of the second century. In this there is a great diversity of matter with, beside visions, prophecies and admonitions, "all manner of cosmogony and cosmology, astronomy and calendar matters", in which there is "clearly a preponderance of non-Jewish material", Iranian, Chaldean, Egyptian and Greek. Other Enochic compilations are more difficult to date,



notably the puzzling Second (or Slavonic) Book of Enoch, a strange work of which it has been said that it "appears to be saturated with Iranian material". Another important text assigned to the second century is the Book of Jubilees. This, like Daniel, has a background of the Maccabean conflict, and is thought to have originated around perhaps 160 B.C. It consists of a "free reworking of earliest biblical history ... presented as a revelation given to Moses on Sinai by an 'angel of the Presence'." It survives entire only in Greek but fragments of the Hebrew and Aramaic originals of it and of I Enoch, respectively, have been found among the Dead Sea scrolls.

Among these scrolls there are also examples, in Hebrew and Aramaic, of "testaments" (i.e. last words) attributed to Biblical patriarchs. This type of composition was in imitation of the death-bed discourse of Jacob in Genesis 49, and is thought to have been developed in Hasidic circles, most probably not long before the

{p. 417} Maccabean revolt. The most important work of the genre is the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (that is, Jacob's twelve sons). Its date and transmission have been much disputed, but after the discovery of the Qumran testaments it has come to seem probable that the original work was written between 100 and 63 B.C., in Greek by a hellenized Jew. The extant text represents a Christian revision, with many interpolations and extensions, probably of the second century A.C.

The Qumran community itself, to which the Dead Sea scrolls belonged, appears on the archaeological evidence to have been founded in about the middle of the second century B.C.; and its members are generally held to be Essenes, that is, to belong to one of the two groups into which, according to Josephus, the Hasidim had a little earlier divided (the other being the Pharisees). There are diverse views about the dating of the community's original writings, of which the most notable are the Community Rule (or Manual of Discipline), Rule of the Congregation, Damascus Rule and War Rule, with the Hymns and Blessings and Curses; but one widely accepted estimate assigns them to from c. 100 B.C. down to the first century A.C. (when the community was, it appears, destroyed by the Romans), with the probability that they incorporate older materials. Their singular importance lies in the fact that, pre-

{p. 418} served in desert caves, they escaped the censorship of either Jewish rabbi or Christian theologian, and present the actual beliefs and practices, unmodified, of a Jewish sect of Greco-Roman times. Strikingly Zoroastrian elements were early recognized in these writings - so striking that a suggestion was made that the community's founders came from among Jews who had returned to Palestine from Babylon in the mid second century. Another possibility is that they had moved south at some time from Damascus; but there is no evidence to establish what the reference to that city in the Damascus Rule really means. It is also argued that the community's antecedents were wholly Palestinian. Whatever the truth may be, the Zoroastrian elements in their texts, arresting as they are, exist fully incorporated in the community's own beliefs, which, though sectarian, were profoundly, even fiercely, Jewish.

A striking feature of the Qumran community is nevertheless that theirs, against Jewish tradition, was a credal religion. Its members believed that they had received an exclusive revelation of truth from a great sage who had come among them, an anonymous figure known only as the Teacher of Righteousness, who flourished between perhaps 152 and 134 B.C. He alone, they were convinced, had been able to decipher the mysteries concealed in the Hebrew scriptures; and among his discoveries was that the end of time was at hand, and that all prophecies relating to the final age referred to the community, which he thus taught to see itself as the last in the line of Yahweh's chosen ones, a saving remnant and a refuge for righteousness. Entry into the community was for Jews only, and only after a long probation was a candidate accepted as a "man of the "New Covenant".

Apart from the claim to exclusive salvation the sect's beliefs had much in common with those found in Daniel and, less fully, in II Maccabees and Tobit. These beliefs appear also, if more sporadically,

{p. 419} namely, in all the intertestamental writings just named, which shows that in the second-first centuries B.C. there existed a body of religious convictions widely shared by fringe groups of Jews, but not found in the Old Testament. These convictions, as we have seen, were probably developed over generations by Jews living in close contact with Persians, who had gradually assimilated a number of Zoroastrian doctrines to their own cherished scriptural tradition. The intertestamental books show that their chief method of doing this had been through haggadah - stories which elaborated on narrative and ethical parts of the Bible in a way that allowed new ideas to be introduced in familiar associations. ...

One of the dominant concepts which unite these writings is that of an evil supernatural will opposed throughout history to the will of God. This concept appears undoubtedly to derive from Zoroastrianism, for which it is a basic premise, being wholly alien to the ancient Hebrew religion. Since they were profoundly loyal to that religion, the Jews who came to assimilate the Iranian belief were not, it seems, led by it to question the conflicting premise, enshrined in the Book of Genesis, that Yahweh is omnipotent. ... For this they had rich materials to hand in the abundant new lore about angels and

{p. 420} demons. So one story was told of how, among the many angelic beings created by God, there were some in a group called the watchers who wilfully chose to do wrong, and by persisting in it became wholly corrupt and implacably opposed to their Maker. These were the wicked or fallen angels, about whom much is written in the Enochic literature. According to one passage in 2 Enoch they were led by a prince, Satanail. His name derives from that of Satan, the angel "Adversary" of the Old Testament, who is there a servant of Yahweh; but in the intertestamental writings he is just one of the demonic, or potentially demonic, scriptural beings "drawn in to fill out the enlarged conception of the role of evil spirits in the cosmos". Satanail, the story goes, "fled from heaven", and therefore became a demon, "since his consciousness of righteous and sinful things changed". He dwelt in "the lowest places" (like the Zoroastrian Anra Mainyu), and it was he who tempted Eve and so made her and Adam disobey God. This act of disobedience came to be interpreted among apocalyptists as the wellspring of all human

wickedness, the first instance of malignancy in the heart of man and the first and greatest success of the Spirit of Evil, whereas in Genesis itself the act is presented rather as the cause of all human suffering, and the tempter is simply the serpent, "the most subtle of all the wild beasts Yahweh God has made".

Much use was also made of another Genesis story, that in the days of Noah, before the Flood, "the sons of God resorted to the daughters of men, and had children by them. These are the heroes of days gone by, the famous men". In I Enoch the "sons of God" become the fallen angels, and the "famous men" are transformed into "great giants", who oppressed the people. The leaders of the fallen angels are elaborately named, and are presented as wholly wicked, binding themselves to one another by a curse, and teaching humanity every form of evil. Here their chief, to whom is ascribed "all sin", is called Azazel; and before God sends Raphael to subdue him, he has corrupted the whole earth. (Azazel figures obscurely in the Old Testament in the ritual of the Day of Atonement,

{p. 423} probably, it is thought, as a demon haunting the wilderness. ...

In another chapter of Jubilees Noah prays to God after the Flood that he should not allow "Belial" to rule over the Hebrews and "ensnare them from every path of righteousness". In the Old Testament belial is a common noun meaning "worthlessness", used in connection with base or wicked persons; and as Belial, or the corruption Beliar, it becomes yet another proper name for the leader of the fallen angels. This is the case in the writings of the

{p. 422} Qumran community, and in the Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs, which often accord with them. The Qumran Covenanters cursed Belial regularly and liturgically, as Zoroastrians do Anra Mainyu; but they still did not fail to attribute his origin to God. "Cursed be Belial for his sinful purpose and may he be execrated for his wicked rule! ... Belial, the Angel of Malevolence, Thou has created for the Pit; his rule is in darkness and his purpose is to bring about wickedness and iniquity".

The Qumran texts and the 12 Patriarchs fully acknowledge Belial's might. There is the "law of the Lord and the law of Belial", and the present age is under the latter's dominion. He seeks constantly to make men stumble, and when they do, they come into his power. Not until the end of time will the Lord, together with the "armies arrayed for the day of judgment", "make war against Belial", conquer him and cast him into eternal fire. In terminology and details the descriptions are Jewish, but the grand plan is Zoroaster's; for the Jewish apocalyptists, like the great Iranian dualist, in fact saw God's power as effectively limited in the present age by that of his Adversary, and only to be fully realized through the latter's final defeat.

All this is condensed in a well-known passage of the Qumran Community Rule, which runs in part as follows: "From the God of Knowledge comes all that is and shall be. Before ever they existed, He established their whole design ... He has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and falsehood. ... The children of righteousness are ruled

by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of falsehood are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness. The Angel of Darkness leads all the children of righteousness astray, and until his end, all their sin, iniquities, wickedness and all their unlawful deeds are caused by his dominion

{p. 423} in accordance with the mysteries of God. ... All his allotted spirits seek the overthrow of the sons of light. But the God of Israel and his Angel of Truth will succour all the sons of light. For it is He who created the spirits of Light and Darkness. ... And he loves the one everlastingly and delights in its works for ever; but the counsel of the other He loathes and for ever hates its ways. ... The nature of all the children of men is ruled by these (two spirits), and during their life all the hosts of men have a portion in their divisions and walk in (both) their ways. And the whole reward for their deeds shall be, for everlasting ages, according to whether each man's portion in their two divisions is great or small. ... But in the mysteries of his understanding ... God has ordained an end for falsehood, and at the time of the visitation he will destroy it for ever."

The strikingly dualistic Zoroastrian character of this passage was remarked on by the first scholars who read it; and though their analysis did not go unchallenged, further study has in fact brought out more and more detailed Zoroastrian correspondences. Part at least of its inspiration appears to have come from Zurvanism; for according to a known Zurvanite myth, Zurvan begot two spirits, Ahura Mazda and Anra Mainyu, and he likewise loved the one and detested the other (who was not deliberately created by him, but sprang from a moment of doubt in his mind). Yet essentially, here as in Zurvanism itself, the dualistic doctrine goes back to Zoroaster, with total opposition between Ahura Mazda and his Holy Spirit on the one hand, and the Spirit of Evil on the other, dramatically presented in the Gathas. Indeed the expression "God of Knowledge" in the Qumran text has been seen as a reflection of Ahura Mazda's name, Lord of Wisdom, "cleverly Judaized as el death, a title borrowed from I Samuel 2:3" ...

{p. 427} Among the Zoroastrian elements in the heterogeneous 2 Enoch a passage has been discerned which contains an extensive treatment of the fundamental doctrine of the three times. This runs as follows: "Before everything was, before all creation came to pass, the Lord established the Aion of Creation. Thereafter He created all His creation, the visible and the invisible. After all that He created man in His image. ... Then for the sake of man the Lord caused the Aion to come forth and divided it into times and hours. ... When all the creation that was created by the Lord will come to an end, and every man will go to the Great Judgment of the Lord, then the times will perish, there will not be any more years, or months or days, the hours will not be counted any more, but the Aion will be

{p. 428} one. And all the righteous that will escape the Great Judgment of the Lord will join the great Aion, and at the same time the Aion will Join the righteous, and they will be eternal. ... Happy are the righteous who will escape the Great Judgment, for their faces will shine like the sun." Here is the characteristic Zoroastrian doctrine of a two-tiered creation, of the spirit (the "invisible") and the material ("visible") (which indeed recurs several times in 2 Enoch); and again that of the Three Times - before creation; the present

aion or age, in which good and evil contend (2 Enoch's "Aion of Creation"); and endless time to come, the Great Aion, linked with the Last Judgment. Details too accord, for in certain Pahlavi books it is said that the first thing Ahura Mazda created was finite time (zaman I kanarago-mand), which is then divided up, its main sections corresponding to phases in his struggle against Anra Mainyu. At Fraso-kereti finite time will cease, and infinite time (zaman t akanarago-mand) will stretch out unbroken. The main difference in the two treatments, it has been pointed out, is that whereas the Zoroastrian doctrine is that Ahura Mazda created finite time and this world for the purpose of defeating Anra Mainyu, in 2 Enoch the Lord does so for the sake of man. Dualism is thus in this respect obliterated and traditional Jewish anthropocentricity maintained.

This makes another passage in the same work all the more remarkable, in that in it the focus of attention is shifted from man to beast. There it is said that the Lord will judge men according to how they have treated animals, and that the souls of animals will themselves accuse at judgment day the souls of those who have fed them ill. "And he who does any kind of harm whatsoever to any kind of animal in secret ... he acts lawlessly with his own soul". This belief, characterized as "quaint" by a Christian translator of the text, appears natural in Zoroastrianism, a religion that arose at a time and place in which people still lived closely with their cattle and with other creatures, and felt a kinship with them. To protect and care for beneficent animals, one of the "good creations" of Ahura Mazda, "was for Zoroaster as strict a command for the believer as was a right attitude toward men. ... In our passage, injustice to the souls of animals created by God actually ranks

{p. 429} before injustice to men. That is an idea wholly impossible for Israel, but not striking on Iranian soil". The 2 Enoch passage includes in the caring for animals the use of particular rituals for sacrificing them (rituals which were in fact rejected in orthopractic Judaism, showing that here again it seems to be a fringe group that was concerned). This accords with the Zoroastrian doctrine that it is only by due sacrificial rites that a creature's soul is released for a blessed hereafter. Unlawful killing keeps it from there, waiting to accuse its slayer at judgment day. Another characteristically Zoroastrian point made in 2 Enoch about judgment day is that each person must then answer for himself, and himself alone: "For there a father cannot help a son, nor yet a son a father". Divine justice will be unswerving, with no intercession possible.

{end of quotes}

(3) Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979.

{p. 35} The creed

Zoroaster created a community which was united by clearly defined doctrines, shared moral endeavour, and common observances. This unity, and the conviction of his followers that all who would not accept his revelation were likely to be damned, must have been a provocation to the unconverted; and according to the tradition Zoroaster

himself met a violent end in old age from the dagger of a pagan priest. Some disaster also overwhelmed Vishtaspa's kingdom, and it seems that for a time the young faith had to struggle to survive. It evidently found the strength not only to do so, but gradually to spread among the Iranian peoples. The Zoroastrian creed, the 'Fravarane', uttered daily, appears to have taken form during those early, difficult times, and represents, it has been suggested, the declaration of faith required then of each new convert. The ancient text begins (Y 12.1): 'I profess myself a worshipper of Mazda, a follower of Zoroaster, rejecting the Daevas, accepting the Ahuric doctrine; one who praises the Amesha Spentas, who worships the Amesha Spentas. To Ahura Mazda, the good, rich in treasures, I ascribe all things good.' It is noteworthy that the word chosen before all others to define a believer is 'Mazdayasna', a worshipper of Mazda. This occurs eight times in the longer version of the creed (preserved as Y 12), and only four times is it further qualified by 'Zarathushtri', that is, a follower of Zoroaster. ...

{p. 45} Another great source of uncleanness was any flow of blood, this being a breach in the ideal physical state. This purity law pressed hard on women, for it meant that during her monthly courses every woman was ritually unclean, and was segregated and forbidden to engage in normal activities. This was undoubtedly ancient practice, widespread among the peoples of the world; but it seems that the Zoroastrian priests gradually elaborated the restrictions, which became in the end severe. Yet though the rules were harsh, women in general seem to have accepted them stoically, as their inescapable part in the cosmic struggle against evil.

{p. 46} Presumably, as in the pagan period, ceremonies were usually performed either at the priest's house or that of the man who asked for them. Early Zoroastrianism thus had no need of sacred buildings or fixed altars, and has left no traces for the archaeologist. The seven great feasts were probably celebrated either in the open, or at the house of a leading member of the local community, according to the season. Another form of corporate worship, inherited almost certainly from the pagan period, was performed by the people gathering together at certain times of the year and going up into the mountains to offer sacrifice there to the divine beings. This practice accorded perfectly with the spirit of Zoroastrianism, with worship being offered thus to the Amesha Spentas in the natural temple of their own creation; and it has been maintained by the Irani Zoroastrians down to the present day.

{p. 49} In 549 the Persians, led by Cyrus the Great, of the Achaemenian family, a son-in-law of the reigning Median king, rebelled, defeated the Medes, and founded the first Persian Empire (in which the Medes still had a worthy part). Cyrus pressed on to conquer Asia Minor, and Babylonia (whose subject territories, up to the Mediterranean coast, then submitted to him), and brought all the Eastern Iranians under his rule. Notices by classical writers suggest that at this time of their first encounter with the Greeks, in Asia Minor, the Persians were already Zoroastrians, and learning about Zoroaster from them, the Greeks naturally considered him to be a Persian prophet, and 'master of the magi'. They learnt of him, moreover, as a figure of immense antiquity. Thus Herodotus and Hermippus of Smyrna assigned him to 6000 years before the Trojan War, Xanthos of Lydia to 6000 years before Xerxes' invasion of Greece, and Eudoxus and Aristotle to

6000 years before the death of Plato. From this it is plain that the Persians told the Greeks that their prophet had lived in the remote past - information which Greek scholars then wove into their own schematic calculations.

{p. 50} ... the Avesta continued in oral transmission throughout the Achaemenian period, and indeed long afterwards, and interpolation is naturally easier in unwritten texts. Such interpolation can indeed be shown, exceptionally, to have taken place; but its rarity is a sign of the respect in which the Medes and the Persians held what they believed to be the revealed word of God.

The reasons why the Avesta was not written down at this time are complex; but one was that, though the Medes and the Persians met several systems of writing in Western Iran, they plainly regarded the alien art with suspicion (in the Persian epic its discovery is attributed to the devil). So though in due course they adopted it for practical purposes, the priests, who were the scholars of ancient Iran, rejected it as unfit for recording holy words. Under the Achaemenians the chief means of written communication was Aramaic, a Semitic language with its own alphabet, which (because the Aramaeans were great traders) was already a lingua franca in the Middle East. The early Achaemenians ordered their own Persian language to be used however, for royal inscriptions. For this, the earliest known setting down of any Iranian language, a special form of cuneiform script was evolved.

{p. 60} Achaemenian tombs and funerary sculptures show a mixture of Zoroastrian orthopraxy (with scrupulous care for the purity of the creations) with alien usages and newly adopted symbols; and this mixture demonstrates the fact that, although the Persians received Zoroastrianism as an authoritative revelation come to them from the east, yet, as a great imperial people, they set their own imprint on it in a number of lasting ways.

{p. 61} Other innovations in Zoroastrianism which can be identified as Persian innovations affected the pantheon. One was the assimilation of an alien goddess, presumably Assyro-Babylonian Ishtar, the Lady of the planet Venus, and of love and war, whose cult had absorbed that of various mother-goddesses.

{as in the case of Catholicism, a monotheistic religion can incorporate gods and goddesses from other religions, as angels, saints, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Santo Niño, etc. Buddha was included among the Christian saints as St. Josaphat:  
<http://hometown.aol.com/didymus5/ch21.html>. Judaism, too, borrowed freely from other religions, e.g. adopting the archangel Michael from Zoroastrianism}

{p. 74} Another development which can be assigned to the Achaemenian period concerned the belief in the world Saviour, the Saoshyant. This belief became elaborated into an expectation of three Saviours, each to be born of the prophet's seed by a virgin mother - an elaboration which appears to have been connected with a newly evolved scheme of world history, according to which 'limited time' (that is, the three periods of Creation, Mixture and Separation) was regarded as a vast 'world year', divided into segments of 1000 years each. This scheme, it is generally held, derived from Babylonian

speculations about the recurrent 'great years', those spans of time which perpetually repeated themselves with all the events that had taken place in them. The texts vary as to how many millennia made up the Zoroastrian world year. Some give the figure as nine (three times three being a favoured number), others as twelve (corresponding to the months of the natural year). There are, however, grounds for thinking that the original figure was 6000 years, which was increased as priestly scholars developed the scheme of these 6000 years, the first 3000, it appears, were assigned to creation, the process of mixture, and the early history of mankind. Zoroaster himself was held to have been

{p. 75} born towards the end of the third millennium, and to have received his revelation in the year 3000. A time of goodness follows, and of progress towards the ultimate goal of creation, but thereafter men will begin to forget his teachings. In the year 4000 the first Saviour, named Ukhshyat-creta, 'He who makes righteousness grow', will renew the prophet's gospel. History will then repeat itself, with his brother, Ukhshyat-nemah, 'He who makes reverence grow', appearing towards the year 5000; and finally, towards the end of the last millennium, the greatest of the Saoshyants, Astvat-ereta himself, will appear and usher in Frasho-kereti. This doctrine of the three Saviours further allowed priestly scholastics to fuse Zoroaster's message of hope with ancient Iranian traditions of humanity's descent from a gold age - that of Yima - to the sorry present (assigned to the period of degeneracy before the coming of the first Saoshyant); and it gave them scope for elaborating patterns of recurring events. The whole scheme, of world chronology and the three Saoshyants, seems to have remained, however, a matter for the learned, while the people in general (to judge from later times) continued to look and long simply for the coming of the one Saviour foretold by Zoroaster.

{end of quotes}

(4) Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1984.

{p. 1} 1.1.1.1 The Avesta

The chief source for the teachings of Zarathushtra (known to the West as Zoroaster) is the compilation of holy works called the Avesta, a name which probably means 'The Injunction (of Zarathushtra)'. The Avesta is composed in two stages of an otherwise unrecorded Eastern Iranian language: 'Gathic' Avestan (GAv.), which in its forms is close to the language of the Indian Rigveda (which is generally assigned to the second millennium B.C.); and 'Younger' Avestan (YAv.). Gathic Avestan takes its name from the chief texts to survive in this dialect, i.e. the seventeen Gathas composed by the prophet himself. Although only this part of the Avesta is directly attributable to him, traditionally the whole Avesta is held to be inspired by his teachings; and many Younger Avestan texts are presented as if directly revealed to him by God. When Zarathushtra lived the Iranians were not familiar with writing; and for many centuries afterwards they regarded this alien art as fit only for secular purposes. All their religious works were handed down orally; it was not until probably the fifth century A.C. that they were at last



committed to writing, in the 'Avestan' alphabet, especially invented for the purpose. The oldest extant ms. is dated to 1323 A.C.

#### 1.1.1.2 The Gathas

The word 'gatha' (which exists also in Sanskrit) is variously rendered as 'hymn', 'poem', or 'psalm'. Zarathushtra's Gathas are short verse texts, cast largely in the form of utterances addressed by him to Ahura Mazda; and they convey, through inspired poetry, visions of God and his purposes, and prophecies of things to come, here and hereafter. ... keys to their interpretation are provided by the Younger Avesta and the Pahlavi Zand (see below), which set out clearly doctrines often only alluded to in the Gathas. Linguistically the Rigveda, being composed in a closely related sister language of comparable

{p. 2} antiquity provides great help. The living tradition of the faith, especially in worship, is also an invaluable aid.

#### 1.1.1.3 The Gathic portion of the Yasna

The Gathas were piously preserved by being made part of the liturgy of the Yasna (Y.), the 'Act of worship', which was solemnised daily. ...

#### 1.1.1.5 The Yashts

Some of the materials of the extended Yasna were taken from the Yashts (Yt.), hymns to the lesser divine beings of Zoroastrianism. A few of these are known as the 'great yashts', because of their length, and the poetic quality and antiquity of some of their verses, which (as Rigvedic parallels show) go back in substance to the Indo-Iranian period i.e. to at least 2000 B.C.; but even such ancient materials survive in the Younger Avestan dialect, since only the Gathic texts were exactly memorised, because of their great holiness. ...

#### 1.1.1.6 The Vendidad

The Vendidad (Vd.) is a mixed collection of prose texts in late Younger Avestan, probably compiled in the Parthian period. Most are concerned with the purity laws, as a means of combating the forces of evil; and its name, a corruption of Av. Vīdāevadata, means 'Against the Daevas' i.e. the evil beings. ...

#### {p. 3} 1.1.1.12 The Pahlavi Zand

Zand or 'Interpretation' is a term for the exegesis of Avestan texts through glosses, commentaries and translations. ...

#### {p. 4} 1.1.1.13 The Zand of extant Avestan texts

Almost all extant Avestan texts, except the Yashts, have their Zand, which in some mss. is written together with the Avesta. The two were often spoken of in one phrase, as Zand-Avesta, so that at first Western scholars took Zand to be a synonym for Avesta, or to refer to the language in which the holy texts are written. Where the Avesta and Zand coexist, it can be seen how presly scholars first translated the Avestan as literally as possible, then often gave a more idiomatic Middle Persian translation, and finally added explanations and commentaries, often of ever-increasing length, sometimes with differing authorities being cited.

#### 1.1.1.14 The Zand of lost Avestan texts

Several important Pahlavi books consist largely or in part of selections from the Zand of lost Avestan nasks, often cited by name; and by comparing these with the Zand of extant texts it becomes possible to distinguish fairly confidently the translation from the paraphrases and commentaries, and so to attain knowledge of missing doctrinal and narrative Avestan works. Among these Pahlavi books is the Bundahishn (Bd.), 'Creation', which deals not only with creation and its purposes, but also with the nature of the divine beings, and with eschatology. It exists in two recensions, known as the Iranian or Greater (because longer) Bundahishn and the Indian Bundahishn. ...

#### {p. 12} 1.3.2 The teachings of Zarathushtra: the divine Heptad

1. ... For Zarathushtra God was Ahura Mazda, who, he taught, had created the world and all that is good in it through his Holy Spirit, Spenta Mainyu, who is both his active agent and yet one with him, indivisible and yet distinct. Further, Zarathushtra taught that God had made this sevenfold world with the help of six lesser divinities whom he brought into being to aid him, namely the great Amesha Spentas, 'Holy Immortals'; and they, with God himself, and/or his Holy Spirit, make up the Zoroastrian Heptad. Having aided in the task of creating the world, the Six enter as guardians into their own separate creations, being thus both transcendent and immanent. The Holy Spirit likewise enters into the 'ashavan', the just man, man being Ahura Mada's especial creation. As transcendent Beings the Six hypostatise aspects of God's own nature ...

{p. 13} 2. In the following table the names of the Heptad are set out in the order of the seven creations. The Avestan forms are given first, followed by the Pahlavi ones {omitted}, then an approximate English rendering or renderings (since sometimes no one English word can adequately represent the meaning of the Iranian form); then the divinity's creation, together with the object or objects representing it in the yasna. ...

Avestan ... English ... The divinity's creation and its representation

Khshathra ... Power, Dominion, the Kingdom (of God) ... {sky}

Haurvatat ... Wholeness, Health ... Water (Consecrated water)

(Spenta) Armaiti ... (Holy) Piety, Devotion ... Earth ...

Ameretat ... Long Life, Immortality ... Plants ...

Vohu Manah ... Good Purpose, Good Thought ... Cattle

Spenta Mainyu

Ahura Mazda ... Holy Spirit of God; God ... The Just Man (The priest)

Asha (Vahishta) ... (Best) Right, Truth, Order ... Fire

{p. 106} 10.1.2 From Greek writings of the Achaemenian period

10.1.2.1 From Herodotus' History (completed before 445 B.C.), Bk. I

Herodotus was born a Persian subject in Asia Minor c. 484. His informants on Persian religion were evidently Persian men of rank whom he knew in his homeland. ...

(1) (131) As to the usages of the Persians, I know them to be these. It is not their custom to make and set up statues and temples and altars ...; but they call the whole circle of heaven Zeus [i.e. Ahuramazda], and to him they offer sacrifice on the highest peaks of the mountains; they sacrifice also to the sun and moon and earth and fire and water and winds. These are the only gods to whom they have ever sacrificed from the beginning. ... They hold lying to be foulest of all, and next to that debt; for which they have many other reasons, but this in especial, that the debtor must needs (so they say) speak some falsehood. ... Rivers they

{p. 107} chiefly reverence; they will neither make water nor spit nor wash their hands therein, nor suffer anyone so to do.... (5) (140) But there are other matters concerning the dead which are secretly and obscurely told - how the dead bodies of Persians are not buried before they have been mangled by bird or dog. That this is the way of the magi I know for a certainty; for they do not conceal the practice. ...

{p. 107} 10.1.2.2 From Xenophon's Cyropaedia (written c. 365 B.C.)

Xenophon fought for Cyrus the Younger in his rebellion in 401 against his brother Artaxerxes II. In the 'Cyropaedia', a romance about Cyrus the Great, he appears to draw on what he learnt then about the Persians.

(1) (1.2.6) The boys go to school and give their time to learning justice and righteousness ... Further, the boys are instructed in temperance and self-restraint. ... Contenance in meat and drink is another branch of instruction.

10.1.2.3 From the Alcibiades (written some time after 374 B.C.)

A work emanating from Plato's Academy.

(1.121) When the (Persian princes) are seven years of age they are given horses and have riding lessons, and they begin to follow the chase. And when the boy reaches fourteen years he is taken over by the royal tutors, as they call them there: these are four men chosen as the most highly esteemed among the Persians of mature age, namely the wisest one, the justest one, the most temperate one, and the bravest one. The first of these teaches him the Magian lore of Zoroaster, son of Horomazes, and that is the worship of the gods: he teaches him also what pertains to a king. The justest teaches him to be truthful all his life long; the most temperate, not to be mastered by even a single pleasure, in order that he may be accustomed to be a free man and a veritable king, who is first master of all that is in him, not the slave; while the bravest trains him to be fearless and undaunted, telling him that to be daunted is to be enslaved.

{p. 108} 10.1.2.4 A citation from Theopompus (born c. 380 B.C.)

And yet even Plato brings back Armenius in bodily form from Hades to the land of the living. And Zoroaster prophesies that some day there will be a resurrection of all the dead. Theopompus knows of this and is himself the source of information concerning it for the other writers. (Citation by Aeneas of Gaza, Theophrastus, 77; text in Jackson, Zoroaster, 248; trans. in Fox and Pemberton, 109.)

10.1.2.5 A citation from Aristotle (died 322 B.C.)

Aristotle in the first book of his work On Philosophy says that the magi are more ancient even than the Egyptians, and that according to them there are two first principles, a good spirit and an evil spirit, one called Zeus and Oromasdes, the other Hades and Areimanus. (The Works of Aristotle, trans. into English, ed. D. Ross, Vol. XII, Select Fragments, Oxford, 1952, p. 7, fragment 6.)

{end of quotes}

(5) The Zend-Avesta

The Zend-Avesta is available as three volumes in the series THE SACRED BOOKS OF THE EAST, edited by F. Max Muller (volumes 4, 23 and 31, respectively).

The extant scriptures are incomplete and partly corrupted. Alexander burned the library at Persepolis when he conquered the Persian Empire; also, these texts were transmitted orally, like the Rig Veda ([rig-veda.html](#)), and only put in written form at a late stage.

The following verses show its puritanical orientation.

The Zend-Avesta Part I THE VENDIDAD, tr. James Darmesteter, Motilil Banarsidass, Delhi 1988.

{p. 181} FARGARD XVI

1. O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One! If there be in the house of a worshipper of Mazda a woman who has an issue of blood, either out of the ordinary course or at the usual period, what shall the worshippers of Mazda do?

2 (3). Ahura Mazda answered: 'They shall clear the way of the wood there, both in growing trees and in logs; they shall strew dry dust on the ground; and they shall erect a building there, higher than the house by a half, or a third, or a fourth, or a fifth part, lest her look should fall upon the fire.' {end}

The Zend-Avesta Part II THE SIROZAHS, YASTS AND NYAYIS, tr. James Darmesteter, Motilil Banarsidass, Delhi 1988.

{p. 341} {VISTASP YAST}

50. 'Do not deliver me into the hands of the fiend; if the fiend take hold of me, then fever with loss of all joy will dry up the milk of the good Spenta-Armaiti. The fiend is powerful to distress. and to dry up the milk of the woman who indulges in lust and of all females. {end}

The Zend-Avesta, tr. L. H. Mills {1887}, Part III THE YASNA, VISPARAD, AFRINAGAN, GAHS AND MISCELLANEOUS FRAGMENTS, Motilil Banarsidass, Delhi 1988.

{p. 239} {YASNA IX}

32. Against the body of the harlot, with her magic minds o'erthrowing with (intoxicating) pleasures, to the lusts her person offering, whose mind as vapour wavers as it flies before the wind, for the righteous saint that perishes, yellow H(a)oma, hurl thy mace!

{end of quotes}

(6) The multi-racial army of the Persian Empire

Martin Bernal, Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization Volume II The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick NJ 1991.

{p. 253} The Elamites inhabited Susiana - the modern Khuzistan in Iran - the plain to the east of the

{p. 254} Tigris, as well as parts of the Iranian highlands before the arrival of the Iranian speakers in the 2nd millennium BC. It is now almost certain that Elamite belongs to the Greater Dravidian language family. It is also likely that many of its speakers were 'South Indian' in appearance and therefore darker than the peoples to the west. There may even have been negro or 'negritic' types in the population. Professor Hinz, the doyen of

Elamite studies, writes about the glazed brick reliefs of Elamite bodyguards of the Persian king Darius around 500 BC:

{quote} Some guards are white-skinned and are obviously intended to represent Persians, although in Elamite garb. A second group is brown-skinned and a third is very dark, almost black. These must be Elamites from the hinterland. Even today dark-skinned men, in no way negroid, are seen in Khuzistan. {endquote}

Herodotos, writing about the same army twenty years after these reliefs, may well have been referring to upland Elamites when he wrote:

{quote} The Eastern Ethiopians - for there were two sorts of Ethiopians in the army - served with the Indians. These were just like the southern Ethiopians, except for their language and their hair: their hair is straight, while that of the Ethiopians in Libya is the crispest and curliest in the world. {endquote}

... The tradition of two Ethiopias is much older than Herodotos. In the Odyssey the Ethiopians are described as dwelling 'sundered in twain, the farthermost of men, some where Hyperion sets and some where he rises'. Thus, there were Black men, Aithiopes (the name means 'burnt face'), from Western Libya (Africa) to Eastern Mesopotamia.

{end}

## (7) Zoroastrian influence on the Pre-Socratic Greek Philosophers

There is need for recognition of Persian (Median) and Indian influence on Hellenic culture: india.html. M. L. West's book Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient is a major contribution to this.

### (7.1) The Beginnings of Greek Philosophy, by Dr. Mike Magee

<http://www.askwhy.co.uk/judaism/GreekIndex.html>

... Zoroaster is said to have travelled to Anatolia, the Asian peninsula south of the Black sea that is now Turkey, but in the seventh century BC was Ionian Greek in the West, Lydian in the centre and bordered Assyria in the east, with Persia beyond. If this is more than mere legend, it offers the possibility of a direct Zoroastrian influence on the Greek philosophy of the Ionians, like Pythagoras of Samos and Thales of Miletus. In dealing with pre-Socratic thought, A N Marlow tells us {see below} we find ourselves in an atmosphere more akin to that of the Orient than to that of the West. An indirect influence seems certain.

Pythagoras was said to have learnt from the Magi of Babylon, and the Neo-Pythagoreans' doctrines of immortality and dualism owed much to Magian belief. Plato mentions Zoroaster in Alcibiades, describing him as a son of Oromazdes - the God Ormuzd. ...

A complication is that the earliest Greek myths seem to have been similar to those of the Hindus as well as some of the Persian myths. How did Indian influence reach Greece so early? All of these peoples were Indo-European, and so the Hindu pantheon has affinities with that of the early Greeks, since both are derived from a common source. So it is often difficult to decide where the true points of contact are, but at this date contact with Persians rather than the Indians seems more likely. Radhakrishnan writes that agreements between the myths of the Greeks and the Indians indicate that:

The two peoples must have been in contact at some early period, but neither possessed any recollection of those times and they met as strangers within the Persian Empire.

The emergence of the Persians must have stimulated interest in Anatolia in northern legends. The Ionian Greeks were stimulated by Persian cosmology to think on a cosmic scale and a timeless scale. They began to see morals and nature as the strife between opposites, and the qualities of air, earth, fire and water began to be seen as "elements," though the term itself is a later invention. ...

After the time of Alexander, the way lay so open to Oriental influence and parallels with India become more frequent and less remarkable.

Philosophy is peculiarly Greek, but the lines of thought of many early Greek philosophers seem to emerge from the new cosmology of Zoroaster. ...

Asha and Vohu Manah of the Avesta are in some ways like the Logos of Philo, so, in Victorian times, some scholars thought the Gathas had been influenced by Philo. The idea of the Logos "arose from the observed regularity of natural phenomena, the rising, course decline and disappearance of the sun and other heavenly bodies, the succession of the seasons, etc," according to Rev L H Mills. ...

Asha - Truth or Order - might be regarded as the rhythm of Nature and so is quite like the Logos of Philo, a creative aspect of God. Vohu Manah is Good Thought, which might be more loosely translated as Benevolence or Grace. Asha and Vohu Manah in some ways represent the same ideas but as applied universally (Asha) and individually (Vohu Manah). In this sense, Asha has the meaning, socially or communally, of "Justice" while Vohu Manah means personal "Love" - or rather "Kindness," because it is not sexual. ...

Heraclitus might have introduced the concept of the Logos, derived from the Persian idea of "Asha" or cosmic order, and Parmenides spoke of trusting only the Logos or "Reason," as opposed to the senses or imagination. The idea of "Reason" as inherent in Nature was dear to Heraclitus. For Heraclitus, "Fire," also "Asha," was the eternal substance ... He did not consider the Logos as active or conscious. His Logos is the eternal law of motion, eternally splitting apart and pulling together. ...

Heraclitus must have been somewhat aware of the nature of the widespread Mazda worship with which his successors were so familiar, for the Persian forces which looked to Ahuramazda for victory and abhorred Angra Mainyu [or the Druj] as the author of

defeat, surged for years up to the very gates of Ephesus where Heraclitus was in his prime. Rev L H Mills ...

Antithesis is the keynote of Zarathustrianism. Rev L H Mills

... Anaxagoras introduces the idea of "Endless Time" from Zoroastrianism where it was called "Zruvani Akarani." For him, "Nous" stirred matter into motion, "Nous" being another name for Logos.

{end}

(7.2) N. Marlow, Hinduism and Buddhism in Greek Philosophy. IN Philosophy East and West 4, no. 1, APRIL 1954; pp.35-45; AT <http://www.orientalia.org/printout466.html> and <http://www.orientalia.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=466>

In dealing with pre-Socratic thought, we constantly find ourselves in an atmosphere more akin to that of the Orient than to that of the West. As the late professor F. H. Smith pointed out,(17) the apeiron of Anaximander is almost exactly the Hindu nirvikalpa, the nameless and formless, called Aditi, the unlimited, in the rg Veda. Moreover, this Aditi which is nirvi-kalpa, is ordered by the immanent rta or dharma,(18) just as in Anaximander an immanent dike ensures that all things shall eventually return to the apeiron whence they came: "From which all things take their rise, and by necessity they are destroyed into these; for all things render just atonement to one another for their injustice according to the due ordering of time." (19)

(17) Religion, Sept. 1950, p.81.

(18) RRg Veda IV.23.9.

(19) Diels-Kranz, Die Fragments der Vorsokratiker (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1951), B1.

{endquote}

(7.3) Rig Veda IV.23.9, referred to in footnote 18 above, is:

Book 4

HYMN XXIII. Indra.

7 About to stay the Indra-less destructive spirit he sharpens his keen arms to strike her.

Whereby the Strong, although our debts' exactor, drives in the distant mornings that we know not.

8 Eternal Law hath varied food that strengthens; thought of eternal Law, removes transgressions.

The praise-hymn of eternal Law, arousing, glowing, hath oped the deaf ears of the living.



9 Firm-seated are eternal Law's foundations in its fair form are many splendid beauties.

By holy Law long lasting food they bring us; by holy Law have cows come to our worship.

10 Fixing eternal Law he, too, upholds it swift moves the might of Law and wins the booty.

To Law belong the vast deep Earth and Heaven: Milch-kine supreme, to Law their milk they render. ...

{end}

My analysis of the Rig Veda is at [rig-veda.html](http://rig-veda.html).

The Rig Veda (10 Books, tr. T. H. Griffith, 1896) is online at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/index.htm>.

{end}

Alexander burned the library at Persepolis, housing the manuscripts of the Persian Empire.

Given the puritanism of the Zoroastrian religion, did its influence make Judaism more puritanical too, e.g. by strengthening the puritan Jewish "reformers" against their opponents? [jewish-taoist.html](http://jewish-taoist.html).

The Parthian Empire, rising in the 3rd century BC, was the Second Persian Empire; it made the Zoroastrian religion an established Church, which later inspired the establishing of the Catholic Church in Rome. The Parthian Empire granted refuge to Jewish agitators against Rome, influencing them once more; in 224 AD it was replaced by the Sasanid Empire, which fell to Islam in the 7th century AD.

Whereas Christianity and Islam adopted the personal Devil of Zoroastrianism, mainstream Judaism rejected dualism in divinity but secularized the devil: he becomes the Goys (non-Jews), eternal persecutors of God's People and inflictors of Holocausts: [holocaust.html](http://holocaust.html).

Sigmund Freud saw Jewish monotheism ("universalism") as derived from Egypt's iconoclastic Pharaoh Akhnaten: [moses.html](http://moses.html).

Whereas in Zoroastrian thinking, God is the Creator and the Devil is the Destroyer, the Jewish God is both Creator and Destroyer, like Shiva.

In this respect Jewish thinking remained independent of Zoroastrianism; but here are some of the similarities, many of which Judaism may have copied:

1. no images of God

2. a revealed religion with categories of sacred books: revelation, psalms, commentary (Avesta ~ Torah, Gathas ~ Psalms, Zend ~ Talmud)
3. linear concept of time, broken into sections, with eschatology & apocalyptic
4. official monotheism; lesser gods become 'angels'
5. dualism (God vs Devil ~ Jews vs non-Jews)
6. a prophet (Zoroaster ~ Moses)
7. messianism (saoshyant ~ messiah, christ, saviour) leading to a paradise on earth (not in heaven), with a resurrection of the body
8. male orientation: God is male, female menstruation pollutes
9. emphasis on ritual cleanness, pollution laws, keeping separate from outsiders, who are called pagans (in Judaism goyim, the nations)
10. no temple (Zoroastrian) cf. only one temple (Judaism)
11. missionary activity
12. fire orientation (burning bush, Mt Sinai)
13. sanctity of the number 7 (7 arch-angels, 7 days of creation)
14. ban on marrying out
15. opposition to celibacy
16. clean & unclean species of animals
17. a state religion with imperial aspirations
18. hereditary priestly tribe/caste (magi ~ levi, cohen)

What's in a surname? For some people, everything. I didn't choose mine; most people don't. For enlightened people, surnames mean little; even our personal names are chosen by our parents. Let's not get hung up over such things. Ten generations back, each of us had 1024 ancestors, but we got our surname from only one of them; who's to say that that particular one is more important than the other 1023?

I'm no Nazi; I've changed my identity, and I believe that those who thought of themselves as Jews can do so too. Welcome to the goys!

How the Torah (including the Book of Genesis) was produced by Ezra around 458 BC, with the authority of the Persian Emperor (and under the influence of its Zoroastrian religion): [bible.html](#).

Arnold J. Toynbee agrees that the Judaism we know was created in Babylon among the exiles.

He writes, "Judaism is a development of the Pre-Exilic religion of Judah that was created in and by the Babylonian diaspora and was imposed by it on the Jewish population in Judaea." (p. 486).

And "It needed the subsequent missions of Nehemiah and Ezra, backed by the Achaemenian Imperial Government's authority, to make them ruefully conform to the new ideals of monotheism" (p. 429).

Toynbee thus agrees on the pivotal role of the Persian Empire in the formation of Judaism, but, despite his encyclopedic knowledge, did not comprehend the influence Zoroastrianism, as the religion of the First Persian Empire, had on Judaism.

Toynbee on the origins of the Bible: [toynbee.html](http://toynbee.html).

Cyrus H. Gordon on the East Mediterranean Culture Common to Greek and Hebrew Civilisations: [gordon.html](http://gordon.html).

In the Gospels, Jesus complains about the Pharisees' legalism, their attention to minute detail but not the spirit of the law. Yet 'pharisee' is the same word as 'pharsee' and 'parsee', as the Persian Zoroastrians were known. Perhaps the criticisms apply to them too.

Karl Kautsky says that Christian Communism had Jewish roots. He blames Paul for the Church's rejection of the Jews, and attributes the move of spiritual centre to Rome, to the failure of the Jewish uprising of 66-70 A.D. A similar "Jewish" view can be found in Frederick Engels' writings on early Christianity: [kautsky.html](http://kautsky.html).

S. G. F. Brandon on the Jewish Revolt (against Rome) of 66-70 A.D., and how it led to the triumph of the "Gentile" faction of Christianity (Paul's) over the "Jewish" faction (James'): [jewish-revolt.html](http://jewish-revolt.html).

Mary Boyce's trilogy A History of Zoroastrianism is very expensive. Volume 1 is US\$148: <http://www.anybook4less.com/detail/9004104747.html>  
Volume 2 is out of print and Volume 3 is US\$200 to \$400:  
<http://www.anybook4less.com/detail/9004092714.html>.

To buy second-hand: <http://dogbert.abebooks.com/abe/BookSearch?an=mary+boyce>.

The Zoroastrian religion and its progeny: the ancestry of religious fundamentalism, and Marxist millennialism: [zoroastrianism.html](http://zoroastrianism.html).

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