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Dear Rabbi Linnerbaum,

Enclosed are the articles by
Prof. Shaked & Allan Williams of London
Univ - School of Oriental Studies. Hope
they are of use to you.

I look forward to seeing you
next week.

Best wishes,

E. J. J. J.

INFLUENCE OF ZOROASTRIANISM ON JUDAISM

Shaul Shaked

(During the preparation of this script, Professor Shaul Shaked, Chairman of the Department of Iranian Studies, Jerusalem University, was contacted, as he is a major scholar in the field of comparative religion.)

The problem of the contacts between Zoroastrianism and Judaism is one that has occupied scholars of both religions ever since Zoroastrianism became known in the West. Quite a few of the scholars who contributed a great deal to the study of Zoroastrian religion and the civilization of ancient Iran were attracted to this topic because they were intrigued by the problem of what Judaism and, as a consequence, also Christianity, owe to Iran.

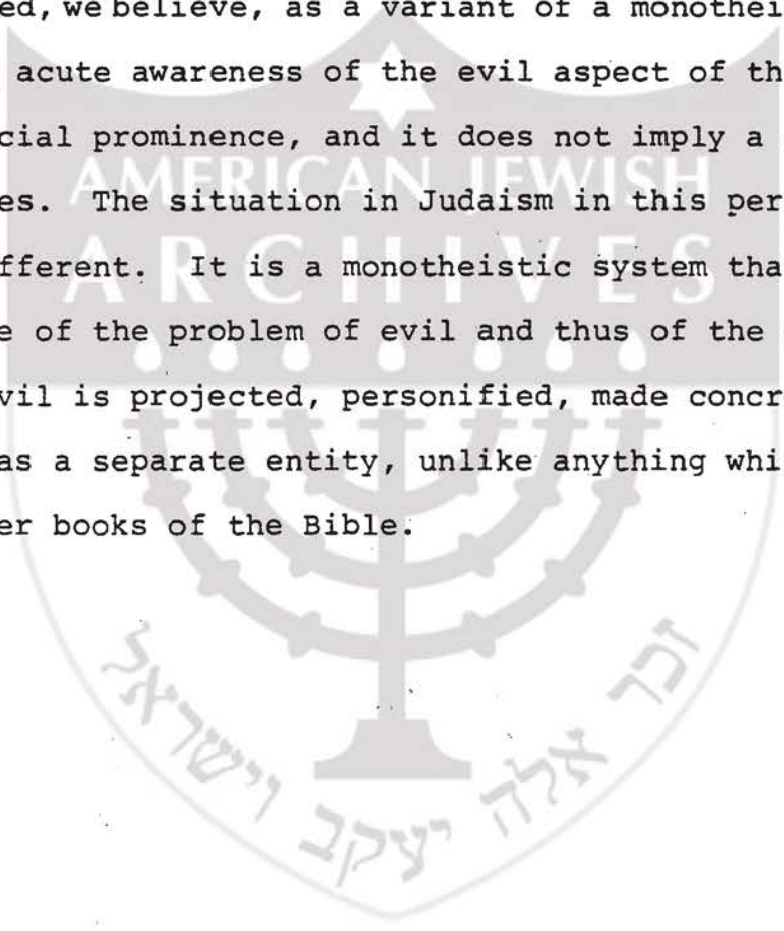
The position nowadays is that scholars of Iranian generally tend to assume that Iran had a great deal of influence on Judaism and Christianity, while scholars of Judaism often try to explain Judaism in terms of its own internal development rather than in terms of an outside influence. Here we come to the crux of the problem. Judaism experienced a very profound, far-reaching series of changes in the period from about 200 B.C. to about 100 A.D. During the Babylonian exile (in the sixth century B.C.) a part of the Jewish community of Judea went to Babylonia and some of their descendants returned to Jerusalem, under a special permission granted by the founder of the Persian empire, King Cyrus. After this series of events there follows a period in which the internal developments in this Jewish community are almost entirely lost to us and there are no historical or literary documents from which we may gain some understanding of what was going on. And then,

when this community emerges again, into the light of day, we have a new kind of religion which stands in quite a strong contrast to the earlier books of the Bible. This latter period is the time during which the latest books of the Bible and those not included in the biblical canon, the Apocrypha, were composed. Profound changes had taken place by this time in the religious perception on the Jewish Community and it is the task of the historian of religion to try and explain why this was so, what had happened, and what would the causes for these changes be. These changes are in two or three main areas, if we confine ourselves to the religious sphere only. There emerges a conception of angels and demons, which becomes very prominent and occupies considerable space in the later Jewish books; there comes into light a conception of eschatology which becomes one of the major themes of this later Judaism and for which there is very little which corresponds in the biblical books. At least in some parts of this Jewish literature one notices a strong emphasis on dualism, which is expressed by a concept of cosmic battle between an angel of God and an evil prince. This idea comes up in the same two divine powers, of the Qumran scrolls as well as in a book like the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. It was this dualistic aspect that has pointed towards Persia as a possible source of influence. We are dealing with a period which followed a long period of Persian domination over Palestine; during this period both Palestine and Babylonia, where the two major Jewish concentrations existed, formed part of the Persian empire and were under Persian administration.

The most obvious field in which the contact of Persia with Judaism left its mark is that of language. Jewish books of the period we are discussing, both in Hebrew and Aramaic, contain considerable layers of words of Persian origin. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls brought this question again to the public mind. In the Qumram writings some of the elements which suggest Persian influence are quite prominent. One of these elements is dualism. In these writings there is a formulation of a dualistic position which is as clear and sharp as can be found anywhere in Jewish literature. Early Christianity which seems to have had close ties with Jewish circles connected to Qumram, also absorbed similar ideas as part of its Jewish heritage.

The Iranian conception of dualism and the Jewish dualistic expressions are not really the same system. The Jewish system is basically monotheist, it never entirely goes over to the dualistic position even when it emphasizes the aspect of strife and cosmic battle; Zoroastrianism, in contrast, is the classical religion of dualism. Alongside and opposed to Ahuramazda there is a conception of an Antagonist, a spiritual being most often referred to as the other party, the opponent, Ahriman, the Evil Spirit. Being essentially a negative concept, a non-deity, a destroyer, we have clear statements in the Sassanian period, to the effect that Ahriman does not exist. It is as important to believe in the non-existence of the demons as it is in the existence of the Gods. At the same time, in a sense, Ahriman is there,

because his repudiation is a central point in Zoroastrianism. How are we to explain this contradiction? We have here a conception of a negative power which is bent on destruction, and whose whole essence is the disruption of the cosmic order. Is Ahrimana deity? He is only an entity of the non-material world of menog. Dualism may be defined, we believe, as a variant of a monotheistic system, a strong and acute awareness of the evil aspect of the world is accorded special prominence, and it does not imply a conception of two deities. The situation in Judaism in this period is not that much different. It is a monotheistic system that becomes acutely aware of the problem of evil and thus of the dualistic position. Evil is projected, personified, made concrete, and is represented as a separate entity, unlike anything which we have in the earlier books of the Bible.



OF ALL THE SONS OF ASIA: ZOROASTRIANISM AND WESTERN CULTURE

Alan V. Williams

Thirty years ago Professor Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin began his introduction to this translation of Zarathustra's Sacred Hymns:

Of all the Sons of Asia, Zarathustra was the first to be "adopted" by the West. His doctrine reached Greece some four centuries before that of Christ was received there. (1)

He adds, it appears somewhat as an afterthought:

It was known to Plato, to whom it must have meant a great deal. (2)

Yet in 1982 many still find these words surprising. Who was this first "adopted" son? Do his descendants live on among us? What has been their contribution to our Western civilization?

Zoroaster's religion (we shall use here appropriately, the Greek form of the Persian Zarathustra) is of all the great religions of the world the least known, the least written about, and the least studied in the universities of the world.

Duchesne-Guillemin's next words are therefore all the more surprising:

Neither the voice of Buddha nor that of Confucius was to carry as far as Europe for a long time to come, and so Zoroaster was the only one to represent the ancient Asiatic wisdom. (3)

In spite of this the West generally has only the vaguest notions of the religion of the ancient Iranian prophet, and no awareness at all of the vast debt it owes to this the world's first revealed religion.

In the spirit of post war optimism J.L. Cranmer-Byng, the editor of the popular "Wisdom of the East" series of titles (in which Duchesne-Guillemin's was published) states in his

Editorial note that his books "Shall be ambassadors of good will between East and West", and is confident "that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true Spirit of Charity"

Yet, though the Series includes no less than seven Indian, eleven Islamic and fifteen Chinese titles, there is only one title representing Zoroaster's great religion.

Despite this apparent lack of public awareness, the scholars and students of Zoroastrianism in the universities of the western world pursue their studies with vigour in the teeth of the enormous problems and frustrations that beset the field. The problems include that of establishing a certain date for the prophet; the lack of material remains for the ancient period of the faith, and, not least, the difficulty of translating texts in an ancient language and from an ancient culture imperfectly known to modern scholarship. Yet what we do know from a study of the texts and of the history of the cultures over which Zoroastrianism was influential bears witness first to the great originality of its Prophet, second to a noble religious tradition which was the state religion of three major royal dynasties, and third to an otherwise unrecognized source of considerable influence upon the three pillars of western civilisation: the Judaic, the Christian and the Greek heritages. Thus, in one of the most recent accounts of Zoroastrianism Professor M. Boyce of the University of London is able to state, as a result of searching and rigorous scholarship:

Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the revealed world religions, and it has probably had more influence on mankind, directly and indirectly, than any other single faith. In its own right it was the state religion of three great Iranian Empires, which flourished almost continually from the sixth century B.C. to the seventh century A.C. Iran's power and wealth lent it immense prestige, and some of its leading doctrines were adopted by Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as by a host of Gnostic faiths . . . today external forces have reduced the Zoroastrians

themselves to tiny scattered minorities, living mostly in Iran and India; but beliefs first taught by their prophet are still subscribed to by other peoples throughout the world. (4)

It is the purpose of this paper to provide some examples of the contribution made by these venerable Sons of Asia, the Zoroastrians. References to fuller discussion of the material and of the scholarly problems raised are given in the notes. In particular I have given attention to the very full and meticulous treatment of Zoroastrianism in the series of volumes currently emerging from the pen of Professor Boyce in London (A History of Zoroastrianism, E.J. Brill, Leiden/Koln, Vol. 1 1975, Vol II 1982, other vols in preparation). (5)

Zoroaster is now thought to have lived some three and a half thousand years ago. Problems of dating are virtually insurmountable given the paucity of evidence, but there is some general agreement among scholars that Zoroaster must have lived before the migrations of the Iranians south from the South Russian Steppes to the area now known as Iran. (6) The working hypothesis of much modern scholarship is that Zoroaster lived among the Iranians of the north-east in Khwarezima (Choresmia) in modern Soviet Central Asia, ca. 1700 - 1500 B.C. and not later than 1200 B.C. Zoroaster's words are the Gathas, the 'Hymns', addressed to Ahura Mazda, "Lord of Wisdom"; like other prophets after him, he conveys this to those of his people who would listen to him. The Gathas are sonorous and enigmatic outpourings cast in the Gathic Avestan language. The language and often actual contents of the Gathas have similarities to the Rigveda of Ancient India. Yet, so early in the history of man, these Gathas speak not of a multitude of inscrutable divine forces and cosmogony all in the language of archaic mythology, but rather what is heard is the voice of the prophet Zoroaster addressing his Lord, Mazda "Wisdom" in lament over man's plight, in search of inspiration, and, principally, in celebration and proclamation of his all-important vision and conception of

the divine reality, Ahura Mazda. Zoroaster proclaims this vision not in mere theology or metaphysics but in the living articulation of experienced realities -- through his revelations of God.

The vision is of a Wise Lord, who has created seven great divine forces in the Universe: the Holy Spirit (Spenta Mainyu), Good Mind (Vohu Manah), Truth that is Best (Asha Vahishta), Good Rule (Khshathra Vairya), Holy Piety (Spenta Armaiti), Perfection (Haurvatat), and Immortality (Ameretat). These, with Ahura Mazda, oppose the force of evil, Angra Mainyu "the Hostile Spirit", who has attacked, and continues to plague, the universe. Zoroaster's realization has within it the great ethical teachings of the prophets of other faiths that followed him. An example of a dialogue with God in the Gathas is the following:

Yasna 43.5 But I have already realized Thee to be holy, Lord
of Wisdom,
When I saw Thee to be the First One at the creation of
the world,
And when I saw that Thou didst determine actions as
well as words to have their prizes,
Namely evil for the evil, a good reward for the good
(Each to be given) through Thy skill at the final
turning point of Creation.

6 But at this very turning point in which I exist,
Thou, the Wise One, hast come into the world with
They Holy Spirit and with the Rule of Good Mind,
Through the action of which the creatures allied
with Truth do prosper,
To them does Piety announce the judgements of Thy will,
Thou, whom no one is able to deceive.

7 And I have already realized Thee to be holy, Lord
of Wisdom,
When he (the Holy Spirit) attended me with Good Mind
and asked me:
"Who are thou? To which side dost thou belong?
How, this day, wouldst thou begin to explain
These revelations among thy creatures and thine own?"

8 Then I said to him first: "I am Zoroaster.
If I were able, I would be a true enemy to the
Deceitful One (Angra Mainyu)

But a strong support to the Truthful One (Ahura Mazda)".
That, while I continue to praise and eulogize Thee,
Wise One,
I would begin (to explain) the endeavours of Him
who rules at His wish. (7)

Zoroaster is unique in history as being the only prophet to have been trained as a priest in the religion of his father and forefathers. His religious message is, it is said, the result of his long contemplation of the nature of Man and of the world, and his purpose is insistently soteriological throughout -- he is concerned above all with the salvation of Man and the healing of the world. His teachings may be summed up under twelve principal headings:

- 1) God, Ahura Mazda "the Lord of Wisdom", is Creator of all life, all existence (i.e. all that is). He is wise, omniscient, first, eternal, supremely good, powerful, and in particular the Lord and friend of Man.
- 2) There are two fundamental spirits now at work in the universe, namely that of Good, the Holy Spirit, and that of Evil, the Hostile Spirit. The Hostile Spirit is forever irreconcilably opposed to God and to all that is good, since evil originates from a radically different source, from Angra Mainyu.
- 3) To enable him to rid the universe of evil Ahura Mazda first fashioned a number of Yazatas "beings worthy of worship", who are spiritual, immortal, and entirely good by nature. The principal among them are the seven divine beings (Amesha Spentas) mentioned earlier.
- 4) Man who is created by God has a distinguished role as protector of the creations. Each of the Amesha Spentas guards one of the seven creations; by choosing righteousness and truth, and by acknowledging and incorporating the virtues and qualities represented by the Amesha Spentas Man is the follower of truth and vanquisher of the Lie (the Evil One).

- 5) Each man is judged at death according to his actions, good or evil.
- 6) The reward of virtuous, meritorious action is happiness in heaven with Ahura Mazda.
The fruit of evil action is misery in Hell.
- 7) This world in its present state is created for a purpose and is not eternal. Once the forces of evil are annihilated, then the world is 'healed' (made wonderful, renovated) and is perfect for eternity under the laws of Ahura Mazda.
- 8) A cosmic saviour will come who will help bring about the end of this world and the 'making wonderful'.
- 9) At the end of time (this world) there will be a resurrection of all the dead.
- 10) The resurrected dead will all be judged -- the wicked to be annihilated, the good to live.
- 11) The Kingdom of God will then come on earth.
- 12) The followers of Truth, the righteous, will enter this kingdom as a garden and will dwell there happy forever.

This set of principles, so reminiscent of major elements of Jewish, Christian and Islamic thought, is superimposed on Zoroaster's concept of the three times:

- 1) a primeval time in which the two opposing spirits were entirely separate; all was in stasis; Ahura made created things only in prototype. This is called the time of creation. This is then attacked.
- 2) a time of mixture (this world) of relative existence. The Hostile Spirit has invaded the world with his evil forces. The world is the battle-ground between the forces of good and evil. Good will prevail, but only eventually and with the utmost assistance of all good men.
- 3) a time of separation -- the final judgement and separation of evil from good. The Hostile Spirit, his minions, and those who have acquiesced to evil, are all destroyed once and for all.

These are the main features of Zoroaster's religion, most of which are explicit in his Gathas (a few are clarified only in later, though still ancient, tradition). It is quite certain, however, that all these features of Zoroastrianism were established as orthodox long before contact with the Jews in the reign of Cyrus. As is well known to all students of ancient history and of the Old Testament, Cyrus the Great, the Achaemenian, Zoroastrian, King of Kings, entered Babylon, liberated the Jews from exile and allowed them to return to Jerusalem with permission to rebuild the temple there. Cyrus is ever after regarded with great favour by the Jews -- for had not Yahweh, God of Israel, spoken through his prophet Isaiah?

I alone have roused this man (Cyrus) in righteousness and I will smooth his path before him, he shall rebuild my city and let my exiles go free. (Isaiah 45.13)

and:

He whom I love (i.e. Cyrus) shall wreak my will on Babylon and the Chaldeans shall be scattered. (ibid 47.14)

and also

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 know me. (ibid) 45.4)

Scholars of the Bible are surprised to find that only in II Isaiah (Isaiah 40 - 48) is the term "messiah" applied to a non-Jew, 'in the sense of an annointed deliverer of the Jewish nation'. What is more striking is that Second Isaiah, written at the time of this close association of Iranian and Jew, introduces ideas which have no precedent in Jewish thought, but which are strongly Zoroastrian in character. (9) The most important new element in the Jewish scripture is that here for the first time Yahweh is celebrated as Creator. Morton Smith has said of this:

In the preserved works of Hebrew literature it (i.e. the notion of Yahweh as Creator of the World) plays no conspicuous role in those which can be dated by conclusive demonstration before the time

of II Isaiah Then suddenly it becomes one of the main themes of II Is. 40 - 48 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 And the insistence with which Isaiah returns to 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. (10)

Morton Smith does not conclude that there has been any direct literary dependence by II Isaiah on the Gathas, but points out that the two 'do suggest relationship to the same tradition'. (11)

M. Boyce supposes that the connection between the two religious traditions was made by a magus and Zoroastrian in the service of Cyrus the Great who was active in the cause of Cyrus in 'subversive talks with the Jewish prophet'.

Though the Jews had been granted permission to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem by the decree of Cyrus recorded in the book of Ezra VI. 3 - 5, they had not done so, and it was in the reign of Darius the Great (522 - 486 B.C.) that this was undertaken, at the expense of the Persian Satrapy.

II Isaiah had belonged to a group of Jews who are termed "Yahweh-Alonists" (worshipping only Yahweh). In the reign of Darius' grandson Artaxerxes I (465 - 424) another Yahweh-Alonist, Nehemiah, was appointed governor of Jerusalem by the Persian king. Morton Smith has summed up the significance of this appointment:

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. (12)

According to the book of Nehemiah (II.1) he had been a cupbearer to Artaxerxes. It has been pointed out as a highly significant fact that

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. (13)

Bearing this in mind, Prof. M. Boyce argues that it is hardly surprising that Nehemiah later concerned himself with questions of purity in Jerusalem, and suggests that

it was a 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(14)

It is another personality, however, who is thought to have been responsible for the most important instances of cross-fertilization from Zoroastrianism to the Judaic tradition -- Ezra, who is accredited with the compilation of the 'Priestly Code' (the fourth strand of the Pentateuch). The Priestly Code contains much 'post-exilic' material; in particular it contains Leviticus 18 - 26, the 'Holiness Code' of purity laws, and Genesis I, both of which are strikingly reminiscent of Zoroastrian religious themes: a strict code of purity, and divine creation in seven successive stages (in Genesis, "days"). Several other themes become prominent for the first time in the post-exilic Jewish scriptures:

- 1) contrasted with the old, Jewish belief in the underworld of Sheol, and a merely shadowy existence after death, the belief in a blessed existence after death is found earliest in 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.

This verse alludes both to hope for the future
and to the final resurrection of the dead.

- 2) at the end of this world, death will cease,
together with the force of evil. Yahweh will
then 'swallow up death forever' (Isaiah 25.8).

3) in III Isaiah (56 - 66) the three periods of Zoroastrian sacred history are suggested, in Jewish terms: past and present are full of evil, which blights all the cosmos; only by the great act of Judgement by Yahweh is there hope of salvation; God will 'create new heavens and a new earth'. See Isaiah 65, vv. 12, 14, 17. (15)

4) cross-fertilization seems to have occurred in one instance whence its result is conscious differentiation and dissimilation on the part of the Jewish author. Indeed Second Isaiah, perhaps the first Jew to have heard Zoroaster's doctrine, seems to have made this rejection (i.e. of dualism) explicit with the words:

I am Yahweh, there is no other . . . author
alike of prosperity and trouble. (Isaiah 45.7) (16)

God as Creator, said II Isaiah, is Creator of all, and is all-powerful. This is of course fundamentally different from the Zoroastrian belief, for in Iran Ahura Mazda is the one true God, but he is never held responsible for evil -- the work of the evil Hostile Spirit.

5) Jewish angelology and demonology reflects Zoroastrian belief in yazatas and daevas ("demons") (first in Isaiah 24.21). In later Jewish apocalyptic writings Satan is conceived as an essentially evil cosmic force.

These and other doctrines were all adopted by Jewish religion in the post-exilic period.

Under the rule of the great Parthian (Arsacid) dynasty of Iran (248 B.C. - 224 A.C.) Iranian influence extended all through the Middle East and Zoroastrianism is reflected in particular in contemporary Jewish works. Prof. Boyce has explained how Christianity was affected:

So it was out of a Judaism enriched by five centuries of contact with Zoroastrianism that Christianity arose in the Parthian period, a new religion with roots thus in two ancient faiths, one Semitic, the other Iranian . . . but again, as in Judaism, they lost some of their logic and coherence by their adoption into another creed; for the teachings of the Iranian prophet about creation, Heaven and Hell and the Day of Judgement, were less intellectually coherent when part of a religion which proclaimed the existence of one omnipotent God, whose unrestricted rule was based not on justice but on love. They continued nevertheless, even in this new setting, to exert their powerful influence on men's strivings to be good. (17)

Such explanations of Iranian influence might be thought to be exaggerated or biased, coming from scholars of Iranian civilization, yet conclusions no less far-reaching in their implications have been made by Christian scholars of the Old and New Testaments as eminent as Matthew Black, editor-in-chief of Peake's Commentary on the Bible (18):

The religion of ancient Israel, in post-exilic as in pre-exilic times, was the product of its history . . . The main orientation of the Jewish mind in this period was towards a supernatural and extra-mundane salvation. The origins of this religious development are to be traced ultimately to Persian influence. No discoveries in recent years have altered the judgement of C.W. King and G.F. Moore on this question: 'Now it was from this very creed (of Zoroaster . . .) that the Jews derived all the angelology of their religion . . . the belief in a future state; of rewards and punishments, the latter carried on in a fiery lake; the soul's immortality, and the Last Judgement -- all of them essential parts of the Zoroastrian scheme, and recognised by Josephus as the fundamental doctrines of the Judaism of his own times.' (The Gnostics and their Remains, London 1887, 120) The eschatology of Judaism has an unmistakeable affinity to that of the Zoroastrian religion in the separation of the souls of the righteous and the wicked at death, etc. The resemblances are so striking that many scholars are convinced that this whole system of ideas was appropriated by the Jews from the Zoroastrians

When the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is professed among Jews we may be sure that we have a foreign importation . . . The whole eschatological scheme . . . of the Last Judgement, rewards and

punishments, etc., within which immortality is achieved, is manifestly Zoroastrian in origin and inspiration. (18)

The influence of Judaism upon Christianity is of course too well known to merit discussion here; it is sufficient to say that because the Christians inherited so many major strands of thought from the Jews they appropriated for themselves doctrines that were derived originally from contact with Zoroastrians. If anything, it may be said that Christianity gave these oriental teachings greater prominence in their system of belief than had the Jews. Reasons for this great correspondence between the religion of Rome and the religion of Persia are, e.g.:

1) that Christians generally give greater attention than do the Jews to the prophecies and preachings of the book of Isaiah (wherein are, supposedly, the early borrowings from Cyrus's Iran) because Christ is seen as coming so much in fulfillment of Isaiah's words.

2) as has been mentioned above (p. 11) Christianity arose in the Parthian period when Iranian influence was well established throughout the Middle East.

3) the Sasanian dynasty of Iran was for a long time the bitter enemy of Rome which had of course made Christianity its state religion under the Emperor Constantine. Christianity then became a missionary force to be reckoned with by the Zoroastrians. Contact and correspondence between the two religions was thereafter always fraught with mutual suspicion and polemic. It is doubtless true, however, that the power and influence of Iran, both specifically religious and also its general cultural and artistic traditions, found their way through the Middle East to the Roman Empire. Not least, peoples formerly very receptive of Iranian influence who converted to Christianity brought into their new faith elements of their older beliefs and customs.

4) last but not least, by way of example, St. Augustine, the father of the Western Christian Church, was in his youth a Manichaeon. Manichaeism, though dualistic and derivative of

many Zoroastrian religious traits, was in fact heretical and quite opposite in spirit to Zoroastrian orthodoxy. Therefore by fiercely rejecting and denying Manichaeian doctrines in, e.g., The City of God and The Confessions, Augustine sometimes expresses himself unwittingly in ways that are strongly reminiscent of Zoroastrian orthodoxy.

In history there has been a conflict between adherents of the two faiths as they appear to preach two radically different views of the world: Christianity characterised as ascetic -- looking exclusively toward the next world; despising this world, 'the flesh', riches; holy poverty -- Zoroastrianism seen as a religion of this world, where the Kingdom of God will eventually come. In fact, however, those movements of Christianity that have revolted against the central authority of Rome and the doctrine it stood for, in particular the Protestant movement of recent centuries, arrive at a non-ascetic world view and, in particular, a work ethic, not unlike those of Zoroastrianism.

It is unnecessary in a brief essay on Zoroastrian influence on Western religious traditions to take into account the considerable body of doctrines central to the Islamic religion which correspond to those Zoroastrian concepts we have mentioned above. It is, as in fact is every section of this essay, properly the subject of a full length study. Suffice it to say that the Zoroastrians are acknowledged in Muslim scripture as 'People of the Book' (Ar. ahl al-kitab), i.e., as belonging to an acceptable (though non-Muslim) scriptural tradition. It is significant that this 'acceptability', though qualified, is granted in the Quran, and Zoroastrians are distinguished, with Jews and Christians, from 'infidels' (pagans, idolators, e.g. Buddhists, polytheists, etc.). (19)

In regard to the influence of Iranian religion on Greek thought I shall concentrate on the period of cross-fertilization with the Ionian philosophers of Miletus (ca. 550 - 480 B.C.). This influence is believed to have come across in a mild form during the Median period preceding the Achaemenian dynasty.

The problem of establishing and proving a causal connection through direct influence from Iran to Greece is one that "seems . . . repeatedly to rise anew like the Phoenix from its ashes . . ."

(20) M.L. West has recently written a substantial study of the connection between early Greek philosophy and the Orient, in which he devotes part of a chapter reviewing the attempts by Western scholars to prove or disprove causal connections between Iranian and Greek thought (21).

The parallels between the Iranian religion and the various systems of philosophy of the early Ionian philosophies are particularly striking in their common interest in cosmology and cosmogeny. It is thought, for example, that Thales (floruit 585) might have had contact with Zoroastrian priests (22) especially in light of his principle (sadly preserved only through reports of later writers such as Aristotle) that all things are full of gods; in spite of the apparent crudity of Thales' cosmology, i.e. that water is the material cause of all things, as M.L. West says:

What raises Thales' system to the rank of 'philosophy' is that he eliminates the possibility of arbitrary intervention that is pre-supposed in the personalization of divinity. If it was he who said 'gods are everywhere', he meant that nature is no inert mass but full of living forces. (23)

Of this new development in Greek thinking, it has been said that it "conceivably reflects the Zoroastrian teaching that the Amesha Spentas are both transcendent and yet also immanent in their 'creations'." (24)

Again, the philosopher Anaximander seems to have had close contact with a source of Zoroastrian thought because of his doctrine, in particular, of the "Boundless" Divine, hitherto unmentioned in Greece and breaking with previous Greek religious ideas associated principally with the theogony of Hesiod (25). Anaximander's concept of the "Boundless" (apeiron) divine is

virtually equivalent to the Zoroastrian "Boundless Light" in which Ahura Mazda abides. The Iranian doctrine is regarded as earlier and primary because its basis is founded in the eschatological conceptions of the most ancient Zoroastrian texts. West again explains:

Coincidence is excluded. Anaximander's conceptions cannot be derived from Greek antecedents, and to suppose that they chanced to burgeon in his mind without antecedents, at the very moment when the Persians were knocking at Ionian doors, would be as preposterous as it was pointless.

The most striking parallel with Iranian thought, however, among the early Greek philosophers and the one that has for centuries now inspired this phoenix to rise up from its ashes, is in the fragments of Heraclitus. There is a considerably stronger connection with Persian religion in Heraclitus than in any of the other Ionians. As has often been pointed out, as long ago as the first centuries of the Christian era, Clement of Alexandria attributed to Heraclitus "a doctrine of purification by fire of those who have led evil lives", and said that he took it from "barbarian philosophy" (27). In his chapter "Heraclitus and Persian Religion", West deals systematically with some twelve areas of doctrine common to both systems of thought:

1) Fire Though there are considerable differences in the use and understanding of the element fire in the two systems (fire for Zoroastrians is principally the symbol of Asha 'Truth', for Heraclitus the world is called a fire because it expresses his doctrine of the universal process of change) nevertheless West says, "I believe that Heraclitus would not naturally have turned to fire without some particular stimulus. Such a stimulus could have been given by observation of the extraordinary status accorded by the Persians to fire." (28)

2) Right, Truth (Asha/Dikē) An important principle in both systems. For Heraclitus truth and falsehood over actions as well as words (as in Zoroastrianism). West cites a fragment, "workers

and witnesses of lies' ($\psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\acute{\epsilon}\omega\nu\ \tau\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\tau\omicron\nu\epsilon\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \mu\acute{\alpha}\epsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\varsigma$), to demonstrate a similarity with Avestan dragvant, 'follower, worker of the Lie'. (29)

3) The Wise (Ahura Mazda, to sophon) Heraclitus' concept of 'The Wise' is the one supreme divine, Zeus himself. Other gods exist but The Wise is greatest. This is virtually equivalent to the Zoroastrian Lord of Wisdom Ahura Mazda (30).

4) The divine watches men all the time in both systems (31).

5) Death Both Zoroastrian caution in disposing of corpses, and repugnance at the defilement engendered by the dead body are reflected strongly in Heraclitus' "The body itself becomes a revolting thing, not fit to be burned or buried but only to be cast out." (32)

6) The soul's history after death. (33)

7) The Hero Spirits The 'hero spirits' of Heraclitus resemble the Fravasis in Zoroastrianism. (34)

8) Hades (Angra Mainyu) The Greeks, besides identifying Ahura Mazda with Zeus, identified Angra Mainyu with Hades (35).

9) Strife In both systems the present world is in strife in the opposition of principles, both in moral and physical antagonism (36).

10) Great Year From what appears to be contact with a Zurvanite version of Zoroastrianism, Heraclitus' doctrine of the Great Year corresponds to Zoroastrian 'Time of the Long Dominion' (37).

11) The Resurrection "Heraclitus' guardian spirits behave in an un-Greek way when they 'stand up' from the dead. Resurrection of the dead is a typically Zoroastrian doctrine."

12) There are parallels in the rejection of anthropomorphism and, generally, the radical nature and style of religio/philosophical innovation and expression in both systems, given the milieu in which they are pronounced. (39)

All of the above factors suggest a personal not a general contact with the Magi, as is argued by West and Boyce.

West's challenging conclusion to his study is that Iranian influence was "an ambrosia plant that produced a permanent enlargement where it touched." (40)

I shall not consider here the complexities of the second period when Zoroaster's doctrines had an influence on Greek thought. Because of the sheer bulk of the extant writings of Plato and the proliferation of the philosophy of the Academy in the following centuries, the ultimate significance of Zoroastrian influence is extremely difficult to assess. The influence may have been profound and lasting, but though we can point to contacts (in, e.g., Eudoxus) and actual reference to Zoroastrian ideas (e.g., the bad and good world-soul in the Laws), the Iranian contribution to Western philosophy, ethics and religion through Plato is difficult to establish.

The influence of Zoroastrianism generally upon the religious and philosophical development of the ancient world is seen in the three traditions which themselves form the foundations of Western culture: the Judaic, the Christian, and the Greek. In writing of the Ionian philosophers, M.L. West concluded his book with a statement we shall apply to all these three traditions in our own conclusion:

It was now that they learned to think that good men and bad have different destinations after death; that the fortunate soul ascends to the luminaries of heaven; that God is intelligence; that the cosmos is the living creature; that the material world can be analysed in terms of a few basic constituents such as fire, water, earth, metal; that there is a world of Being beyond perception, beyond time. These were conceptions of enduring importance for ancient philosophy. This was the gift of the Magi. (42)

We may add this is what we may be sure of as the religious heritage of ancient Iran alive in the Zoroastrian religion.

Footnotes

- (1) The Hymns of Zarathustra, by J. Duchesne-Guillemin, transl. from the French by Mrs. M. Henning, London 1952, p. 1.
- (2) ibid.
- (3) ibid.
- (4) M. Boyce, Zoroastrians, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1979, p. 1.
- (5) For fairly recent accounts of the reaction of the West to Zoroastrianism and in Zoroastrian studies, see J. Duchesne-Guillemin's The Western Response to Zoroaster (Ratanbai Katrak Lectures 1956, Oxford 1958) and La religion de l'Iran ancien, Paris 1962 (Eng. transl. K.M. Jamasp Asa, Bombay 1973), ch. VI "Histoire des études"; it is likely that these will be superseded by forthcoming volumes of Prof. Boyce's History, as Prof. Zaehner's Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism (1961) has been superseded by her first two volumes.
- (6) See A History of Zoroastrianism (HZ), vo. I, part one, for discussion of the date and location of Zoroaster.
- (7) Translation based on that of S. Insler, The Gathas of Zarathustra, Acta Iranica III.1, E.J. Brill, Leiden/Köln 1975, p. 61 ff.
- (8) M. Boyce, HZ II, 44, and n. 17a.
- (9) M. Boyce, HZ II, 45 refers to the comparative study by Morton Smith, "II Isaiah and the Persians", Journal of the American Oriental Society 83, 1963, 415-21. The parallel is drawn with Yasna 44 of the Gathas: see M. Boyce, loc. cit., for a resumé.
- (10) M. Smith, art. cit., 418-9.
- (11) M. Smith, loc. cit.; generally on this subject see M. Boyce, HZ II, ch. 3.
- (12) Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament, New York 1971, 150.
- (13) M. Boyce, op. cit., 189.
- (14) ibid. 190.
- (15) ibid. 194 and n. 75
- (16) loc. cit.

- (17) M. Boyce, Zoroastrians, 99
- (18) M. Black, "The development of Judaism in the Greek and Roman periods (c. 196 B.C. - A.D. 135)" in Peake's Commentary on the Bible, ed. M. Black and H.H. Rowley, London 1962, p. 696 (sec. 607a-b).
- (19) For a brief discussion of the Iranian contribution to the great Islamic system of thought, see J. Duchesne-Guillemin, La religion de l'Iran ancien, ch. V, "Iran et Islam", pp. 354-367.
- (20) J. Duchesne-Guillemin, East and West, N.S. 13, 1962, 198 = Hist. of Religions 3, 1963, 34.
- (21) M.L. West, Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971; see esp. ch. 6, "Heraclitus and Persian Religion", pp. 165-202; and also ch. 7, "The Gift of the Magi", pp. 203-242, for a review of the various Ionian philosophical theories and for West's theory of how Zoroastrian influence came across to Greece.
- (22) M. Boyce, HZ II, 154.
- (23) op. cit., 213.
- (24) M. Boyce, loc. cit.
- (25) ibid 155-6; W. Jaeger, The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers, Oxford 1947.
- (26) op. cit., 97.
- (27) Clement, Strom. 5.9.4, cited in West, op. cit., 164.
- (28) op. cit., 173.
- (29) ibid. 178.
- (30) ibid. 180.
- (31) ibid. 180.
- (32) ibid. 152, and n. 1.
- (33) ibid. 184.
- (34) ibid. 185-188.
- (35) ibid. 189, and n. 1.
- (36) ibid. 189f.
- (37) ibid. 190f.
- (38) West, op. cit., 192.

(39) See, with references, ibid. 193.

(40) ibid. 242.

