

# Zoroaster: Struggles between Good and Evil

Zoroaster, a legendary prophet who probably lived toward the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium BCE, proclaimed a new religion based on a belief in a supreme god *Ahura Mazda* (Lord of Wisdom) who fights for truth and order (*asha*) against the forces of deceit and chaos (*druj*) led by *Angra Mainyu* (Evil Spirit). Since fire is the symbol of *asha*, Zoroastrian temples contain an eternal sacred flame, which represents the presence of *Ahura Mazda*. Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest organized religions of the world and one of the smallest, with only about 120,000 adherents in the world today.

## History

Sometime between 4000 and 1500 BCE a people speaking a proto-Indo-European language came to Eastern Iran and Northwest India. They may have come from the Steppes or from Anatolia or both (see Heggarty et al, 2023). As well as their language they carried with them a multitude of gods and a sense of cosmic order or justice. These migrants divided into those that travelled into India speaking Indo-Aryan languages such as Sanskrit, and those that came to Iran speaking Iranian languages such as Avestan. A concept of cosmic order common to both groups became known as *rta* in the Sanskrit *Vedas*, the earliest of Hindu Scriptures, and as *asha* in the Avestan *Gathas*, the earliest Zoroastrian scriptures (Schlerath & Skjærvø, 2018).

Zarathustra was a prophet in Iran who lifted one of the many gods above the others. His name perhaps meant “handler of camels” and his God was *Ahura Mazda*. The name was transliterated into Greek as Zoroaster, which could be read as

“pure star,” but this meaning was coincidental. No one knows anything for certain about the life of Zoroaster, but most scholars estimate that he lived sometime toward the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium BCE (Boyce, 1989, p 190; Nigosian, 1993, p 15; Hartz, 2004, p 20; Stausberg, 2008, p 20; Malandra, 2015), although he might have lived at anytime between 1500 BCE and the founding of the Achaemenid Empire in 550 BCE by Darius the Great. Zoroastrianism became the official religion of that empire. The Behistun monument near Kermanshah shows Darius trampling his rival Gaumata and welcoming as prisoners the kings that he has conquered.



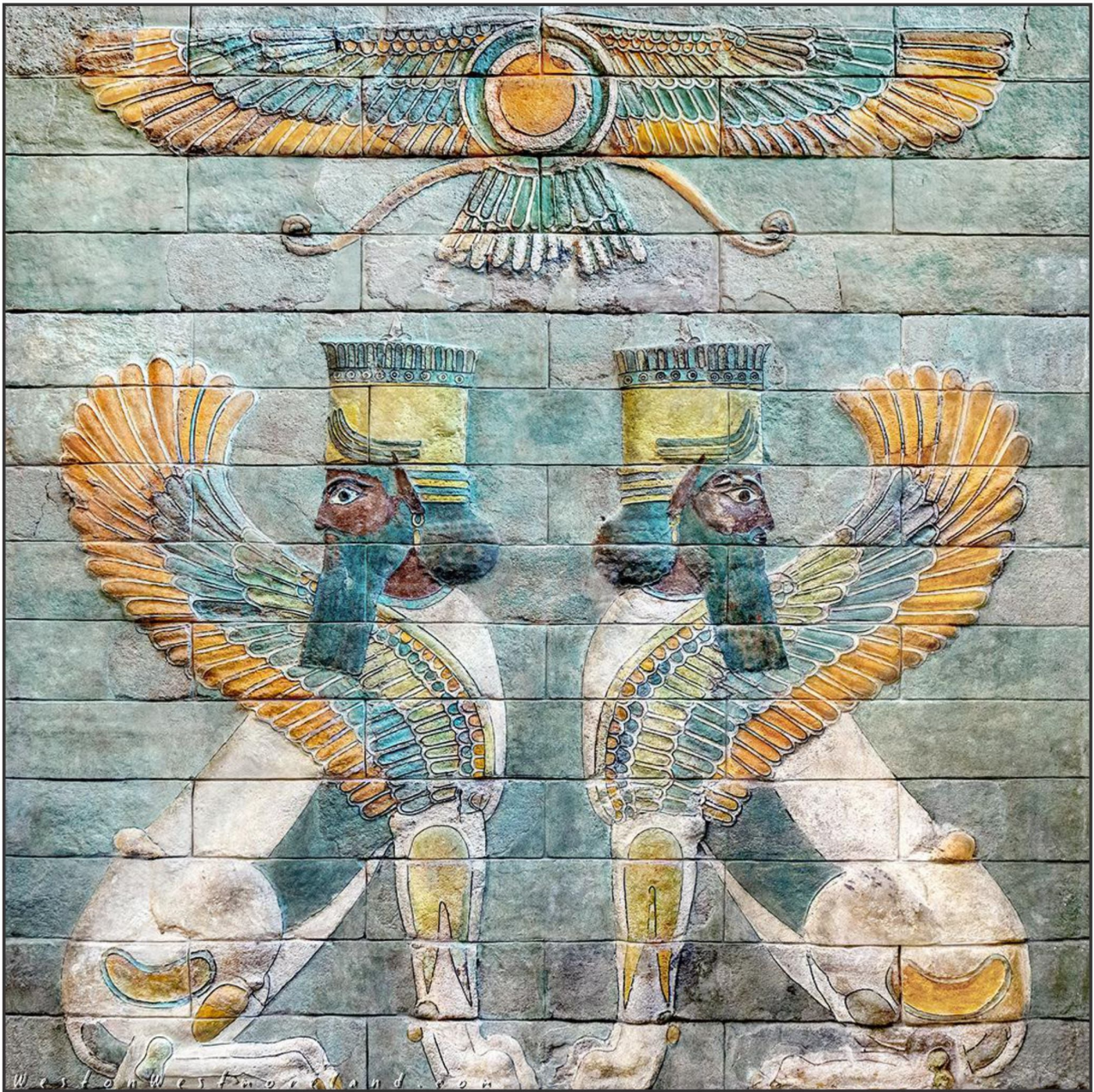
The extensive cuneiform inscription, written in Old Persian, Akkadian and Elamite, describes his conquests and affirms

King Darius says: This is what I have done, by the grace of Ahuramazda have I always acted. Whosoever shall read this inscription hereafter, let that which I have done be believed. You must not hold it to be lies.

The following map shows the extent of the Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BCE):



The following shows an enameled brick panel from the Palace of Darius created in Susa in about 550 BCE and presently in the Louvre Museum. It shows two guardian *aladlammu*, also known as *lamassu*: composite creatures with the body of a bull or lion, a human head and wings of an eagle (Ritter, 2010). This motif originates in earlier Mesopotamian empires, particularly the Assyrian. The human head represents intelligence, the bull's body strength and the eagle's wings freedom. Above the *aladlammu* is a winged disc which represents the grace of Ahura Mazda. This motif was also present in the Behistun inscription:



The Achaemenid Empire replaced the preceding empires of the Assyrians, Babylonians and Medians. In 480 BCE Xerxes, the son of Darius invaded Greece. Though the Persians were able to sack Athens, the invasion ultimately failed in the Peloponnese.

In 334 BCE Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE) invaded Persia. Over the next few years, he established his own empire stretching from Alexandria in Egypt to the borderlands of India. Upon his death, his general Seleucus I Nicator ruled over the eastern part of this region as the Seleucid Empire

(312-63 BCE). The Romans later took control of the Western part of this empire (Syria), leaving Iran to be ruled by the Parthians (247 BCE – 224 CE). The greatest of the Parthian emperors was Mithradates I, whose name meant “gift of Mithra,” and who reigned from 165–132 BCE. Then, from 224 to 651 CE, Iran became the center of the Sasanian Empire. Throughout this prolonged period of changing empires, Zoroastrianism remained as the official Persian religion (Malandra, 2015). By the time of the Sasanian empire, the Avestan language had evolved into Middle Persian (*Pahlavi*), the direct ancestor of modern Persian (*Farsi*): Ahura Mazda was now named *Ormazd*, and *Angra Mainyu* had become *Ahriman*.

The following illustration shows a relief carving at Naqsh-e Rostam from about 235 CE, showing the investiture of Ardashir I (180–242 CE), the founder of the Sasanian Empire, as the *Shahanshah* (King of Kings) by Ahura Mazda. On the right, the horse of Ahura Mazda tramples Ahriman beneath its hooves. Ahura Mazda is giving the diadem of kingship to Ardashir, whose own horse tramples the body of Artabanus V, the last king of the Parthian Empire. He holds in his left hand a *barsom* (a bundle of twigs used in Zoroastrian rituals). Ardashir wears an elaborate turban (*korymbos*). Behind Ardashir is the Zoroastrian high priest, Kartir.



In 633, one year after the founding of Islam, Muslim forces under Muhammed first invaded the western regions of the Sasanian Empire. The Empire had been weakened by prolonged conflict with the Byzantine Empire, and by fragmentation into different feuding regions. Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second Rashidun caliph continued the conquest and by his death in 644 CE most of Persia was under Muslim rule. Some of the central regions, such as the province of Khorasan, were not fully subjugated until 651 (Litvinsky et al., 1996). Although under Arab rule, Persia was able to maintain much of its culture, particularly during the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258; 1261–1517). Although Arabic became the dominant language in other areas of Muslim rule, the Persian language flourished. Ferdowski's *Shanameh*, the great epic of Persian poetry, completed in 1010 CE, retold the history of Persia from ancient times to time of its writing. Nevertheless, Islam completely replaced Zoroastrianism as the state religion (Choksy 2018).

The Muslims tolerated Christians and Jews since they were “People of the Book,” but persecuted Zoroastrians as pagan infidels. Many fire-temples were transformed into mosques and many Zoroastrians converted to Islam. Some faithful Zoroastrians retreated to inland regions of Persia, such as Khorasan. In the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, Babak Khorramdin led a brief Zoroastrian rebellion against Arab rule, but this came to naught. Some Zoroastrians decided to leave their newly Islamic land and settle in India (Hinnells & Williams, 2007). Zoroastrians had traded with the Indians of the Gujarat region even before the Muslim conquest. A Zoroastrian migration to India were described in an epic poem *Qissa-i Sanjan*, written by a Zoroastrian priest in 1599 CE. The poem recounts how the Zoroastrians sailed from the Island of Hormuz and initially settled in Diu before moving on to Sanjun and thence to Mumbai. Although the poem describes one specific migration, groups of Zoroastrians likely moved to India from Persia over several centuries, and over several routes.



A famous story is told about the arrival of the Zoroastrians in Gujarat. The local king Jadi Rana explained that his kingdom was full and showed a cup of milk filled to the brim to illustrate this problem. One of the Zoroastrian priests added sugar to the milk to show how the new immigrants could enrich the land without displacing anyone. Asylum was granted, and Zoroastrians still partake of *faloodeh* – a dessert of vermicelli, milk, sugar and rosewater – at times of celebration

Over the years, the Zoroastrian immigrants became a flourishing community in northeast India, known as the *Parsis* or “those from Persia” (Hinnells & Williams, 2007). The Parsis have maintained the rituals of their Zoroastrian forebears. Though they remain small in numbers (about 50,000 in the present day), they have contributed extensively to the economy and culture of India. About 20,000 Zoroastrians remain in modern Iran. Other smaller Zoroastrian communities exist in North America and Europe, set up by Iranian emigrants or by Parsis mercantile connections. The total number of Zoroastrians in the world is about 120,000.

### **Basic Principles of Zoroastrianism**

As in any religion, the founding texts of Zoroastrianism provide sometimes contradictory claims. This problem is exacerbated by the difficulty in interpreting the language in which these texts were written. A text entitled *The Advice Book of Zarathustra* from the Pahlavi period (probably originating in the late Sasanian dynasty but not written down until much later) begins with the following verses which summarize the main tenets of the Zoroastrian faith (Vevaina, 2015, pp 214-215; Skjaervo, 2011, pp 192-193):

The Teachers of Old, who have the foremost knowledge of the Religion, have said that, at the age of fifteen, one should know the following: “Who am I, and to whom do I belong? Where did I come from, and to where will I go back? ... And

what are my duties in the world of the living (*getig*), and what is my reward in the world of thought (*menog*)? ... Do I belong to Ohrmazd, or do I belong to Ahreman, to the gods or to the demons, to the good or the bad? Am I a human or a demon? How many are the paths, and which is my Religion?... Are the Origins one or two? From whom is goodness and badness?

I belong to Ohrmazd, not to Ahreman, to the gods, not to the demons, to the good, not to the bad. I am a human, not a demon, the creature of Ohrmazd, not of Ahreman ... My duties and obligations are to think about Ohrmazd that he is, has always been, and will always be, that he is the immortal ruler, boundless, and pure, while Ahreman is not and shall be destroyed ... have no doubt that good deeds are good for me and bad deeds bad for me; that my friend is Ohrmazd and my enemy Ahrimen; and that the path of the Tradition is one ...The one path is that of good thought, speech, and action; paradise is the light and purity and limitlessness of Ohrmazd the Creator, who has always been and shall always be. Another is the path of evil thought, speech, and action. This is the darkness, boundedness, all evil and destruction, and badness of the wicked one, the Foul Spirit, who once upon a time was not in this creation and who once in the future shall not be in the creation of Ohrmazd, but in the end will be annihilated. ...I must have no doubt about this too, that the Origins are two: the Creator and the Destroyer. The Creator is Ohrmazd, from whom all goodness and all light emanates. The Destroyer is the wicked Evil Spirit, who is all badness and full of death, wicked and deceiving. ... I have to have no doubt about these things, ... that every person is mortal; that the soul (*gyān*) is expelled and the body destroyed; that the accounting takes place at the third dawn (*sidōsh*); that the Resurrection and the Final Body will come about.

In summary: One God – Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd) – created and

rules the world according to the principles of *asha*. He and will ultimately triumph over the forces of *druj* (deceit, evil) led by Angra Mainyu. Human beings must follow the way of *asha* by means of good thought, good speech and good action. This will justify their resurrection after death.

### **(i) Asha**

The starting point for any interpretation of Zoroastrianism is the concept of *asha* (or *asa*, depending on the transliteration). This Avestan word goes back long before Zoroaster to the time when the proto-Indo-European language was being formulated. It is homologous to *rta* Sanskrit (Schlerath & Skjærvø, 2018). The meaning of *asha* is very difficult to express in a single word. Irani (1990) proposes that it contains four main ideas:

The first is the most general philosophical concept, **Truth**. The second is the cosmological implication of the **Order** underlying the universe. The third and fourth belong to the moral dimension – **Right** as the most general term of moral correctness, and **Justice** as the moral principle of the social system.

In these early times before the monotheistic reformations of Zoroaster, one of the many gods, Mithra (or Mitra), was responsible for the maintenance of *asha*. The name of Mitra combines *mi* (bind) with *tra* (causing to) to suggest covenants, oaths, truth-telling and contracts – the bases of social order and harmony. Mithra is portrayed as radiating light like the sun. Boyce (1975, p 27) describes Mithra's role:

One of the striking features of his activity is that he is concerned with upholding the great Indo-Iranian principle of *rta/asa*. This term, it is now generally accepted, represents a concept which cannot be precisely rendered by any single word in another tongue. It stands, it seems, for

“order” in the widest sense: cosmic order, by which night gives place to day and the seasons change; the order of sacrifice, by which this natural rhythm is strengthened and maintained; social order, by which men can live together in harmony and prosperity; and moral order or “truth”. In both India and Iran to possess *rta* or *asa*, to be *rtavan* or *asavan*, was to be a just and upright being; and when used of the dead these words implied that the departed was blessed in the hereafter, having attained the Paradise which he deserved.

Ahmadi (2015) proposed that *asha* in effect refers to the whole of creation, that which has been ordered, and might be expressed by the word “cosmos” which derives from the Greek *kosmein* (to arrange or to put into proper order). (“Cosmetic” has the same etymology.)

The concept that there is some underlying order in the universe, that everything is unfolding as it should, is common to many different philosophies and religions. The *asha/rta* of the Indo-European forebears is closely related to *Maat* in Ancient Egypt, to the *Dao* in China and to the *logos* in Greek philosophy. To my mind these concepts essentially indicate that the world is intelligible. There is an order behind things that we can try to understand and to follow, “a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will” (*Hamlet*, V:2)

*Asha* is the subject of a Zoroastrian prayer recited during all Zoroastrian observances (Rose, 2011a, p 24)

*Ashem vohu*  
*vahishtem asti*  
*ushta asti*  
*ushta ahmai*  
*hyat ashai vahishtai ashem*

Asha is the best good

It is happiness [or 'it is desired'],  
according to our desire, there will be  
Asha which belongs to the best Asha."

Another translation (Nigosian 1993, p 103) is

Righteousness [is] good, it is best.  
According to [our] wish it is,  
according to our wish it shall be.  
Righteousness belongs to Asa Vahista.

## **(ii) Monotheism**

Zoroaster's great contribution to human religious thought was to proclaim one God – Ahura Mazda – as the supreme creator and lord of the universe. The Jewish patriarch Abraham who may have lived sometime toward the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE is generally considered the first monotheist. However, recent evidence suggests that although Jewish monotheism had its beginnings around the 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium BCE, it was not fully formulated until the period of the Babylonian Exile in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Gnose, 1997, Chapter 2). Yahweh was initially considered as the God of the Israelites and only later evolved to be the God of the whole universe. Zoroaster probably lived at around the same time as Abraham, though both are legendary rather than historical figures, Zoroaster may have been the first prophet to preach universal monotheism, and Zoroastrianism the first monotheistic religions to survive its founder (Ferrero, 2021). The Egyptian Akhenaten (servant of Aten, 1353-1336 BCE) favored the Sun God *Aten* above all other gods, but *Atenism* did not persist beyond his brief lifetime.

Ahura Mazda was recognized before Zoroaster, though he was not as clearly defined as some of the other gods of the Indo-European pantheon, such as Mithra (god of the sun and of covenants) and Apam Napat (god of water and fertility).

Zoroaster reportedly had a vision in which he met Ahura Mazda in person, and recognized him as the supreme creator, and source of *asha*. In the religion that he proclaimed, some of the other gods were somehow subsumed into Ahura Mazda. Hymns are offered in praise of both Ahura Mazda and Mithra. Many other gods remained separate but were still considered worthy of worship (*yazata*). These were subservient to the will of Ahura Mazda (Hintze, 2014). In all monotheistic religions, the supreme God, even though omnipotent, needs other heavenly beings to facilitate his plans. In the Abrahamic religions, these are called angels.

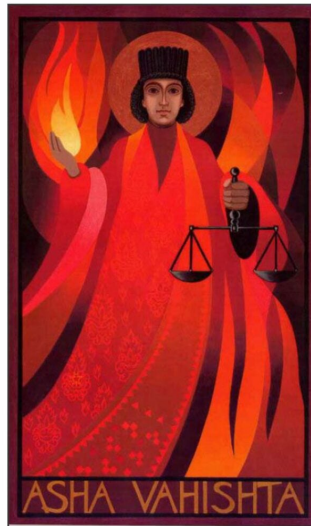
One of the earliest acts of Ahura Mazda was to create the *Amesha Spenta* (Immortal Benevolents). These are as much abstract concepts – emanations from the mind of Ahura Mazda – as actual divinities. They share some of the characteristics of the Seven Heavenly Virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, faith, hope, and charity) in Christianity and their organization is related to the Five Great Elements (*Pancha Mahabhuta*, earth water, fire, air, ether) of Hinduism. They are generally considered six in number (Stausberg, 2008, p 29) though some authors describe seven (Rose, 2011a, p 29). The following illustration shows some modern images:

## Amesha Spentas

### Beneficial Immortals



Good Mind, Animals



Truth and Justice, Fire



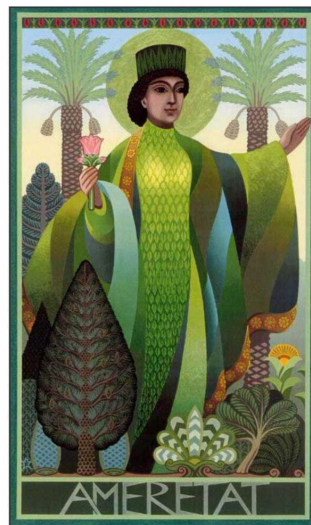
Power, Sky/Metal



Devotion, Earth



Wholeness, Water



Immortality, Plants



Holy Spirit, Humans

### (iii) Dualism

Essential to Zoroastrianism is the concept of dualism (Gnoli, 2017; Vevaina, 2015). In the Gathas (Y 30:3-4), Zoroaster reveals his vision (or dream) about the two opposing forces in the world (Ahmadi, 2013). Our incomplete understanding of the Avestan language limits our interpretation but the following is one translation:

The two primeval Spirits, who are twins, were revealed to me in sleep. Their ways of thinking, speaking, and behaving are two: the good and the evil. And between these two ways the wise men have rightly chosen, and not the foolish ones. And when these two Spirits met, they established at the

origin life and non-life, and that at the end the worst existence will be for the followers of Falsehood and for the follower of Truth the Best Thinking. (translation from Gnoli, 2017).

The two spirits are Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu. Ahura Mazda, assisted by the *amesha spenta* and the *yazatas*, supports *asha* (truth, justice, order, righteousness). Angra Mainyu promotes *druj* (lie, wrongdoing, chaos, evil) with the support of *daevas* (devils, demons).

Angra Mainyu is a spirit of destruction, incapable of creating anything, and inactive in the absence of creation. Its home is the kingdom of death. Boyce (1975, p 199) describes the spirit:

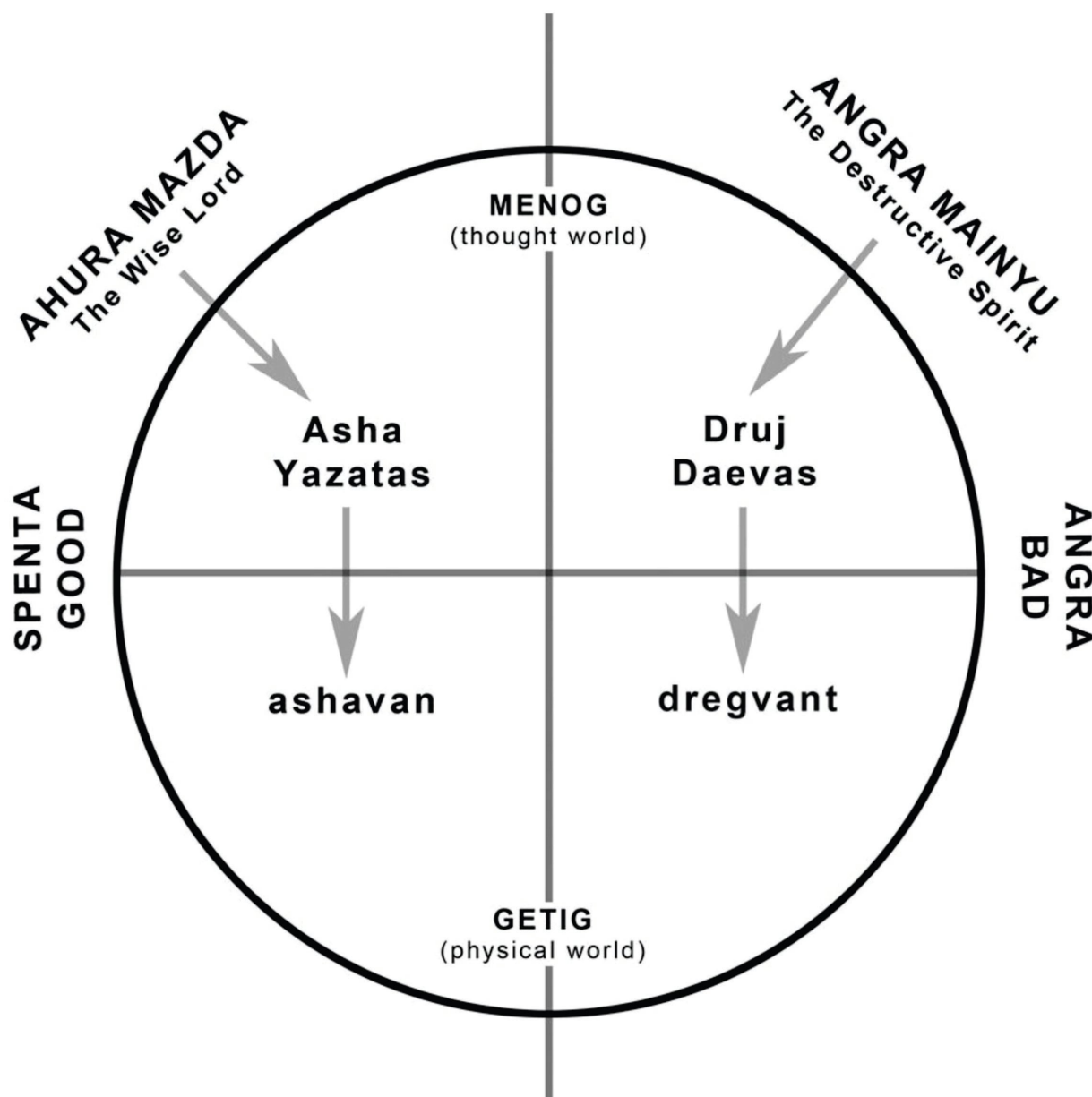
Angra Mainyu is seen both as actively malignant, a militant foe, and also as a mere shadow, a negation of good; for traditionally existence in the kingdom of the dead was characterised by a lack of substance, by a spectral quality without positive capacities, a nothingness.

Henning (1951, p 46) describes how Zoroaster's dualism supplements his monotheism, by explaining the existence of evil and suffering in the universe:

Any claim that the world was created by a good and benevolent god must provoke the question why the world, in the outcome, is so very far from good. Zoroaster's answer, that the world had been created by a good god *and* an evil spirit, of equal power, who set out to spoil the good work, is a complete answer: it is a logical answer, more satisfying to the thinking mind than the one given by the author of the Book of Job, who withdrew to the claim that it did not behove man to inquire into the ways of Omnipotence.

At the beginning Zoroastrianism proposed an ethical rather than an ontological dualism: good (*asha*, *vohu*) versus evil

(*druj*, aka), rather than spirit (*menog*) versus matter (*etig*). However, as the religion evolved, the dualism extended into the ontological as well. However, the two dualisms were orthogonal to each other. Both good and evil beings could be either spiritual or material (or both). The following is an explanatory diagram from Rose (2011b, p 27):



What is special about Zoroastrian dualism is the role played by human beings. The dualism of Zoroastrianism does not remove the basic problem of monotheism: how could an omni-benevolent and omnipotent God allow so much evil and suffering in the world. However, it does allow that human beings play a very

significant role in the fight against evil. By our choices and our actions we can help the forces of good (Nolan, 2025):

The battle between Good and Evil has been in process since Time began and will go on till the end of the world: but as the two powers are evenly matched, its outcome is uncertain. The decisive factor will be the collective action of humanity. Every man or woman is free to choose which side to join: his or her support will add permanent strength to the side chosen, and so, in the long run, the acts of Man will weigh the scales in favour of the one side or the other. Thus Zoroaster, beside his principal two powers, recognizes a third, which, though not of equal rank, holds the balance. (Henning, 1951, pp 45-46).

#### **(iv) Souls and their *Fravashi***

Each human being has a spiritual soul (*urvan*) which exists before birth and which survives the death and decay of the physical body. The *fravashi* are spiritual beings which foster, protect and preserve these individual souls (Boyce, 2015). The concept likely began in relation to the spirits that protect warriors during battle, but in Zoroastrianism, it became applicable to all living things. The *fravashi* are responsible for inserting the soul into the newborn, protecting the individual during his or her life, promoting good thoughts, speech and action, and rescuing the soul after the death of the body. Stausberg (2008, p 38) suggests that they can be considered “guardian angels.”

Various etymologies have been suggested for the word *fravashi* (Boyce 2015). The root *var* can be related to “impregnate,” or to “turn” (which with *fra*, away, could yield the idea of protection), or to “choose” (especially in the sense of confessing a faith).

The relationship between the *fravashi* and the *urvan* is not

clear. In some Zoroastrian writings they are conjoined:

The developed doctrine came to be that each *fravasi* existed from the beginning of time in a spiritual (*menog*) state; that in due course it was born, clad in a physical body, into this world; and that after death it lived once more in a spiritual state, to be re-united again ultimately with its resurrected physical body. In both the second and third states the *fravasi* tended to be identified with the *urvan*, as these concepts merged. The question then was pondered as to which, in the present state of the world, was the most powerful, the unborn *fravasi*, or that of a living person, or that of a dead one? This again suggests the theorising of priestly schools rather than a point of any popular concern. The Zoroastrian answer was that the *fravasis* of the great men of the faith, whether already dead or not yet born, were the most powerful, but that otherwise the *fjfravasis* of the living were the strongest – a doctrine which seems to reflect the profound universal instinct that it is better to be alive in the flesh in the present familiar world than to exist in any other state. (Boyce, 1975, p 128)

#### **(v) The *Faravahar***

The *Faravahar* or *Faroahar* has become a prominent symbol of Zoroastrianism. It has its origins in the winged disk that was used in Ancient Egyptian and Assyrian cultures to denote the power and protection of the sun god. In the *Faravahar*, the winged disk supports a god or person, holding a ring. In this form, the symbol first appears during the Achaemenid era.



The following are photographs of the Tomb of Darius the Great at Naqsh-e Rostam (circa 500 BCE) taken by Richard Stone. The upper photograph is the original and the lower has been enhanced to show the relief carvings. Darius stands before the sacred fire and the *faravahar* symbol floats above.



No one is sure exactly what the *faravahar* symbol means. A common interpretation is that it represents Ahura Mazda. Shahbazi (1974) argues against this since the few accepted representations of Ahura Mazda, such as the previously

illustrated relief at Naqsh-e Rostam, show him holding a *barsom*.

There are actually very few representations of Ahura Mazda. My intuition is that the supreme deity Ahura Mazda is far beyond any portrayal by human hands, and that those supposed depictions more likely represent priests in his service, or one of the *Amesha Spentas* such as *Khshathra Vairya*, who confers temporal powers on worthy human leaders.

Another interpretation of the *faravahar* is that the symbol represents the individual human soul and/or its *fravashi*. The following description is along these lines:

It represents the link between the spiritual and physical worlds. The human form in the center is encircled by a ring that represents the eternal soul. The figure's head reminds people that they have free will, a mind and an intellect with which to choose good. The right hand points upward to lead people toward Asha, the path of Truth. In the left hand is a ring symbolizing the just power of Khshathra Vairya. The figure has wings to help the soul fly upward and progress. It has a tail that serves as a rudder to help the soul balance between the opposing forces of good and evil. These forces are represented by the curved hooks on either side of the tail. The three sections of the tail, which appear as layers of feathers, remind people of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. Throughout life, the human soul is caught between good and evil, Truth and the Lie. But with the heavenly help, or wings, of Ahura Mazda, the soul may soar to eternal goodness and light. (Harz, 2004, p 9)

According to this approach, the *faravahars* depicted on the historical reliefs likely represent the the *fravashi* of the king or priest that is the subject of the carving. Shahbazi (1974) argues against this interpretation since the *faravahar* has no individuality. Furthermore, the *fravashi* were initially

considered female whereas the *faravahar* is always male.

Another possibility is that the symbol represents *Khshathra Vairya* the Amesha Spenta of righteous power, who is typically shown holding a ring or diadem.

A final interpretation, and the one that I prefer, is that the *faravahar* symbolizes the concept of *khvarenah* (or *farr* in New Persian) (Shahbazi, 1980; Boyce, 1982, pp 103-105). This is the right to rule conferred by Ahura Mazda upon those deserving dominion over their fellow men. The leader may become radiant (*hvar* means sun), and remain so if he rules in accord with *asha*. The concept of *khvarenah* has also been translated as “divine glory”

In modern times the *faravahar* has been used outside of any religious connotation as a symbol of Iranian nationalism. For example, it formed part of the coat of arms of the Pahlavi dynasty who ruled Iran from 1925 until the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

## **(vi) Eschatology**

Ultimately, Zoroastrians believe that the struggle between good and evil will be won by the forces of good, and the universe will be renewed (Moazami, 2000; Kreyenbroek, 2002; Staussberg, 2008, pp 39-42; Cereti, 2015). This is the doctrine of *frashokereti* (Avestan, making into initial state, restoration; Middle Persian *frashgird*).

When the end-times draw near, a virgin will bathe in the waters of *Kayanse*, a mythical lake that preserves the seed of Zoroaster, and will conceive the savior *Saoshiant* (he who brings strength), who will lead the forces of good. The savior is also named *Astvat-ereta* – ‘the one through whom *Asha* has bones’ (Rose, 2011b, p 44). He will defeat Angra Mainyu in battle, and will cause all who have died to be resurrected.

The Saoshyant will bring about the Resurrection, and will hold an assembly of all men and women in which they will realize their good and wicked deeds. There will be a Final Judgment and those to whom sin still clings will undergo another short period of punishment in hell (this time not as spirits but in the material body), while the righteous will again enjoy the delights of paradise. Then all the metal contained in the mountains of the earth will be melted. A river of molten metal will thus be formed, through which all men must pass; for those who are free of sins, this will be like a bath in warm milk, but those whose sins have not been completely atoned for will experience a fierce burning. All men, thus cleansed, will then meet together and praise Ohrmazd. (Kreyenbroek, 2002, p 46).

There are clear similarities between these Zoroastrian prophecies, which were most fully developed during the Achaemenid era, and the concepts of the Messiah that developed in Judaism at about the same time, and which significantly affected Christianity. Which of the prophecies came first, and how each tradition contributed to the other is not known (Hultgard in Stausberg, 2008, pp 106-110).

Mary Boyce notes that the ideas of an end-time and of a final judgement distinguishes Zoroastrianism from the prevalent idea of eternal reincarnation that is the basis of Hinduism and Buddhism.

With this belief in an end to human history Zoroaster appears to have made another profound break with pagan ideas, whereby (to judge from the Vedas) the generations of men were seen as succeeding one another remorselessly like waves of the sea. The strong sense inculcated by Zoroaster of both time and purpose, of all mankind and all *spenta* being striving towards a common end, a foreseeable goal, has been held by some to be the most remarkable characteristic of his teachings. (Boyce, 1975, p 233).

Another intriguing aspect of the Zoroastrian view of the final judgment is that it provides universal access to paradise. A logical problem in the Christian account of judgment is why an omnibenevolent God would not forgive everyone. In the Zoroastrian account, the good are quickly taken into the new world and those tainted by sin can have their evil erased by some sort of painful purification. The rewards offered in Zoroastrianism are quasi-universal:

The righteous who are barely affected by purification and those who become entirely good without impinging on their continued survival are saved and have the best outcome. Those who undergo so much change in the purification process that it is not entirely determinate whether the post-purification person is the same as the person before purification, and in extreme cases, it is determinate that a new person emerges from the process, albeit one who retains important continuities with the pre-purification individual. (Nolan, 2025, pp 49-50)

There are similarities here to the Catholic concept of Purgatory. However, access to Purgatory is only allowed to Christian believers who repent. Non-believers and those who do not repent remain eternally damned.

## **Zoroastrian Practices**

### **(i) Fire Temples**

Fire (*atar*) is an essential component of all Zoroastrian rituals and religious ceremonies:

The flame is considered to be the visible sign of Ahura Mazda's presence, the symbol of his truth (*asha*). According to tradition, fire was used by Ahura Mazda in the creation of cattle and human beings ... and fire will be used again by him when he brings about the final renovation of the

universe. (Nigosian, 1993, p 112).

In Zoroastrian fire-temples, an eternal fire was kept burning so that worshippers could at any time be in the presence of Ahura Mazda. The fire burns during the *Yazna*, a ceremony wherein the priest recites passages from the Avestan scriptures. The following shows the consecrated flame in a fire-temple in Yazd in central Iran:



The fire must be protected from pollution. Only clean and dry wood (typically sandalwood) should be placed on the fire. Priests tending the fire wear masks so that their mortal breath does not reach the flames.



## **(ii) Burial**

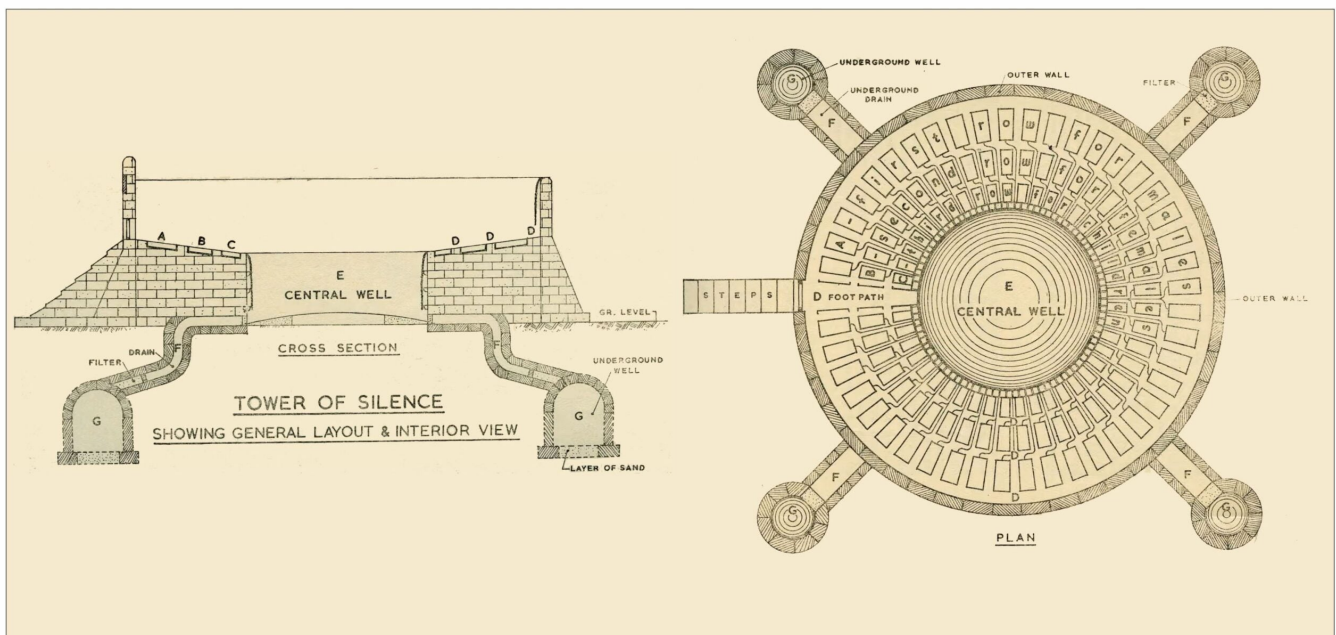
Zoroastrians did not cremate their dead for such a process would defile the fire which they hold sacred. They also did not bury their dead, for such a process would pollute the earth. They resorted to “excarnation:” leaving the corpse out for carrion birds to cleanse. In ancient times this was done in open areas of desert. After the Islamic invasion, Zoroastrians constructed specially raised buildings called *dakhma* (towers of silence) for their dead (Boyce, 1975, pp 325-330; Russell, 2013). These were generally located upon small hilltops.

After the funeral rites the corpse was taken by *dakhma* attendants and laid out on beds arranged in circles around a central pit. Male bodies were relegated to the outer circle, female bodies to the next circle and the bodies of children

were placed in the inner circle. After several days vultures will have stripped the bones of their decaying flesh. The bones are then raked into the central pit where they will be cleansed by the rains. Over time the cleansed bones will disintegrate and be washed by the rains into wells, whence their dust will return to the earth.

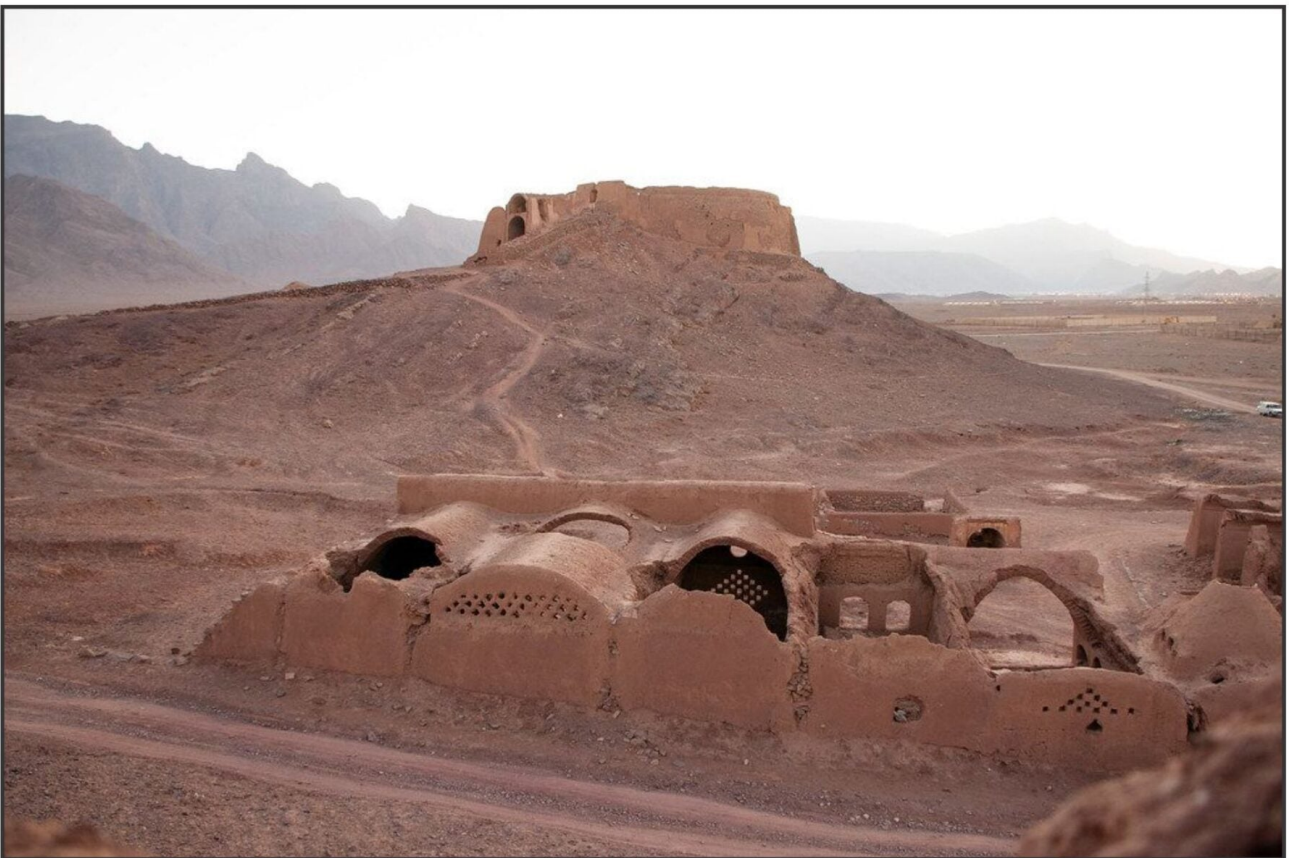
Most of the *dakhmas* in Iran have not been active since the Middle Ages. A few survived but their usage was declared illegal in the 1970s. The Parsis community in Mumbai maintained *dakhmas* in the suburbs of the city. The first tower was consecrated in 1670. With the spread of urbanization and the decline in the population of scavenger birds, these have become inactive (Karkaris, 2015).

The following diagram shows a cross-section and a bird's eye view of a *dakhma*



The following illustration shows two views of the *dakhma* at Yazd in Iran, the first from above and the second from below.

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Nowadays most Zoroastrians are buried in the ground in concrete-sealed tombs to prevent any contamination of the

earth by the decaying corpse.

## **Descendants of Zoroastrianism**

### **(i) Mithraism**

Mithra persisted as a divinity (*yazata*) throughout Zoroastrianism. He is frequently considered as co-equal with Ahura Mazda, and it is often difficult to determine whether a particular representation is of one or the other. The following is a relief sculpture from Taq-e Bostan, near Kermanshah, that was made in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE to commemorate the investiture of Ardashir II who reigned as Shahanshah from 379-383 CE. He was the brother of the Shapur the great who had reigned from 309-379 CE. The relief also celebrates the victory of the Sasanians over the Roman forces of Emperor Julian, who died on his ill-fated expedition into Persia in 363 CE.

The figure on the left represents Mithra, shining with the radiance of the sun. Mithra stands upon a lotus. This might perhaps be related to the influence of Buddhism which had spread from India into the eastern regions of the Sasanian Empire. The figure in the center is Ardashir II. There is some debate about the figure on the right. Some consider this to be Ahura Mazda who is giving the diadem of power to Ardashir. Most current interpretations suggest that it is Shapur the Great who was the Emperor before Ardashir II. At the feet of the two emperors is the defeated body of the Roman Emperor Julian.



The Roman legions fought long and exhaustive campaigns against the Parthians from 54 BCE to 217 CE, and these wars continued when the Parthians were replaced by the Sasanians. As early as the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE, Roman Legionnaires established a secret society based on Mithras, the divinity of their enemies in these Persian Wars (Boyce, 1989, pp 469-490). Mithras, the God of the Sun, was known to be never defeated (*Sol Invictus*). As such he had obvious appeal to military men. The society initiates were known as the *syndexi*, "the men who join hands" (Fear, 2022).

Unfortunately, we know little about the nature of this society or of its beliefs. Its inner workings were only understood by

its initiates, and these were sworn to secrecy. The main evidence for the society comes from the numerous temples – Mithraea – that have been unearthed throughout the Roman Empire. Each Mithraeum was constructed in a cave, or in a building made to imitate a cave. Initiates gathered there to worship Mithra and to celebrate a communal meal.

An essential part of the Mithraeum was either a fresco or a carving of Mithra slaying a bull, the “tauroctony.” The following illustration shows a marble bas-relief of the tauroctony found at Fiano Romano near Rome, and now at the Louvre museum in Paris. The carving which dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Century CE is not large: 62 cm high and 67 cm wide. The figure of Mithra wears a Phrygian cap. This type of headgear with its forward pointing tip was named after a region of Anatolia, although it was commonly worn throughout the Persian Empire. Mithras half-straddles a bull that has been forced to the ground. The bull appears in profile, with its head on the viewers’ right. With his left hand, Mithras pulls back the head of the bull by the nostrils, and with his right hand, Mithras plunges a short sword into the shoulder of the bull. Mithras turns away from the bull and looks back over his right shoulder to the Sun in the upper left. A raven is with the sun. The Moon is represented in the upper right. A scorpion, serpent, and dog attack the bull from below. The bull’s tale ends in ears of wheat.



Many have tried to interpret what is symbolized by the various elements of the tauroctony. Although there might be some astrological significance to the scorpion, snake and dog, most scholars feel that the general intent is to depict some divine act that provides for human salvation:

It appears that just like the crucifixion in Christianity, the slaying of the bull was seen as opening up a path to salvation that was previously closed. The teachings of how that path had been closed in the past and why the bull needed to be sacrificed to restore the link are tragically lost to us (Fear, 2022, p 181)

The Bundahishn, a Middle Persian Zoroastrian text, recounts how a Ahura Mazda sacrificed a bull (or ox) at the beginning of creation (Chapter 3). However, another sacrifice occurs at the time of the Final Judgment during *frashokereti*:

Soshyant, with his assistants, performs a Yazishn ceremony in preparing the dead, and they slaughter the ox Hadhayosh in that Yazishn; from the fat of that ox and the white Haoma they prepare Hush, and give it to all men, and all men become immortal for ever and everlasting. (Bundahishn, 30, 25) (also discussed in Moazami, 2000)

The tauroctony might therefore represent the longing for the end-times when men will finally become immortal. If so, the slaying of the bull in the Mithraeum would serve a similar purpose to the depiction of the crucified Christ above the altar in a Christian Church.

Mithraism came to its end when Christianity was accepted as the state religion of the Roman Empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE. The mystery religion had lasted for three centuries.

## **(ii) Mani and Manichaeism**

The prophet Mani was born in Ctesiphon (near modern Baghdad) in the Parthian Empire in 216 CE. His father was a Jewish Christian. In his youth Mani travelled to India and became aware of Buddhist teachings. He considered himself the Paraclete that Christ claimed would come to comfort his people, though the Paraclete is generally interpreted to be the Holy Spirit. He preached a new teaching that combined ideas from Zoroastrianism and Christianity. Mani was tolerated by the Sasanian Emperor Shapur I but Bahram I was a zealous Zoroastrian and persecuted the Manichaeans. Mani was imprisoned and died in 274 CE.

Manichaeism was considered a heresy by the Christian Church

and his works were destroyed. He taught a stark dualism between the good spiritual world of light and the evil material world of darkness (Widengren, 1965; Levy, 2005). He urged his followers to renounce the world so that their souls could return to the domain of light after the death of their worldly bodies. Manichaeism became widespread in the Roman Empire. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) was a Manichaean before he converted to orthodox Christianity. Much of what we know about Manichaeism comes from Augustine's writings that refute of their beliefs. Manichaeism largely died out in the Roman Empire after Christianity became the state religion in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE, but it persisted in regions of central Asia such as Bactria and in western China.

The dualistic beliefs of Manichaeism also persisted in the west in small groups of believers such as the Bogomils in Bulgaria in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century CE and the Cathars in southern France between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE.

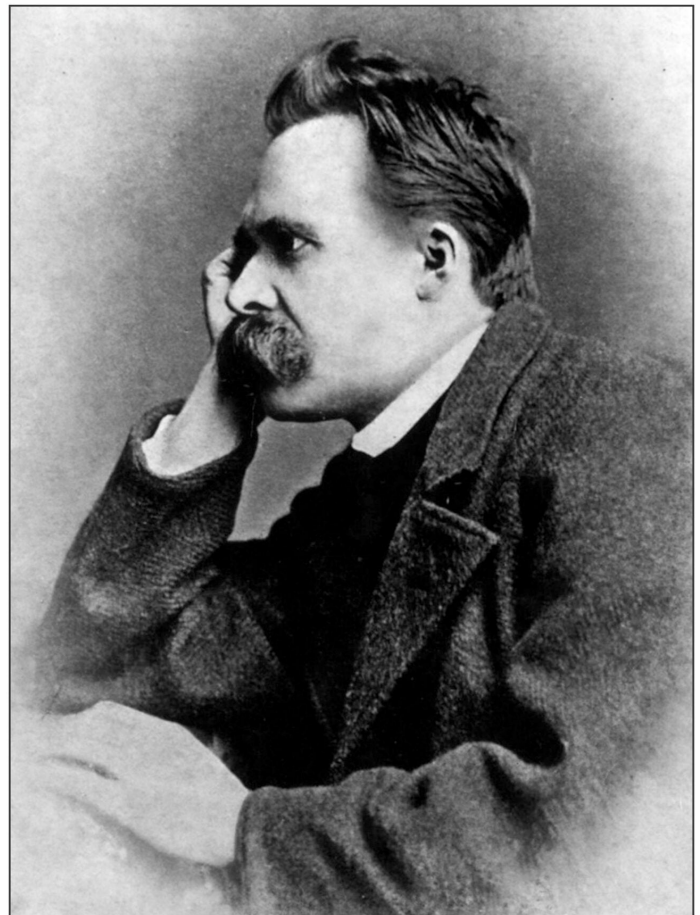
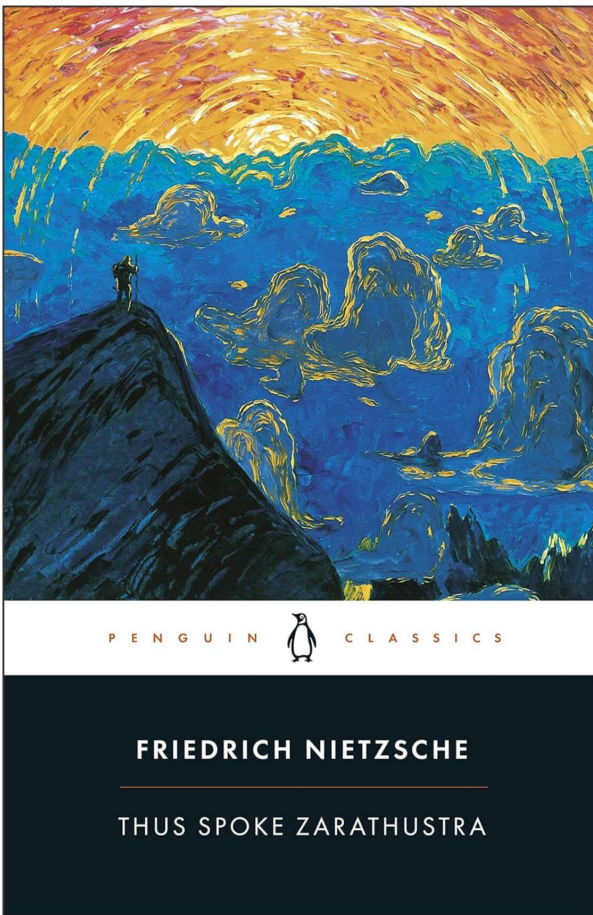
The dualism of Mani differed from that of Zoroaster in that it was "anti-cosmic" rather than "pro-cosmic" (Boyce, 1975, p 230). Mani believed that physical world was irretrievably evil, and that human souls were painfully imprisoned in their physical bodies. By renouncing all worldly desires, they could hope to be released at death back into the spiritual world – the realm of light. Zoroaster believed the physical world basically good and that, although it was now tainted by evil, it was ultimately redeemable. At the Final Resurrection, souls would be rejoined to their now perfect physical bodies.

The following illustration shows on the left a small rock-crystal seal from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century CE with a representation of the prophet Mani. This might have been used by Mani to seal his letters with wax. On the right is a manuscript fragment from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE found in Western China showing Manichaean monks.



### (iii) Thus Spake Zarathustra

Between 1883 and 1885, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) wrote what was to become his most famous book: *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Thus Spake Zarathustra). The following illustration shows a photographic portrait of Nietzsche taken in 1882 by Gustav Adolf Schultze, and the cover of the Penguin edition of the book during the 1960s with its evocative cover: *Sunset Mount Blanc* by Wenzel Hablik (1966).



For many people, their first introduction to Zarathustra comes through this book. Unfortunately, the book has nothing to do with ancient prophet or the religion that he founded.

Nietzsche was aware of the basic principles of Zoroastrianism through classic authors such as Herodotus and Plutarch, and he may have been familiar with some translations of their early scriptures. Nevertheless, the fictional Zarathustra does not proclaim the beliefs of Zoroastrianism. Rather, Nietzsche's Zarathustra wishes to correct what he (or Nietzsche) believed was his great mistakes: the distinction between Good and Evil, and the subsequent foundation of human morality (Aiken, 2003; Ashouri, 2012; Pippin, 2012).

Nietzsche describes this purpose in his autobiographical *Ecce Homo*, written in 1888, just before his mental breakdown, but only published posthumously. The following quotation about Zarathustra shares the verbose and vainglorious character of the rest of the book. The reference to shooting well with

arrows comes from Herodotus.

I have not been asked, as I should have been asked, what the name Zarathustra means in precisely my mouth, in the mouth of the first immoralist: for what constitutes the tremendous uniqueness of that Persian in history is precisely the opposite of this. Zarathustra was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the actual wheel in the working of things: the translation of morality into the realm of metaphysics, as force, cause, end-in-itself, is his work. But this question is itself at bottom its own answer. Zarathustra created this most fateful of errors, morality: consequently he must also be the first to recognize it. Not only has he had longer and greater experience here than any other thinker – the whole of history is indeed the experimental refutation of the proposition of a so-called ‘moral world-order’ –: what is more important is that Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His teaching, and his alone, upholds truthfulness as the supreme virtue – that is to say, the opposite of the cowardice of the ‘idealist’, who takes flight in face of reality; Zarathustra has more courage in him than all other thinkers put together. To tell the truth and *to shoot well with arrows*: that is Persian virtue. – Have I been understood? The self-overcoming of morality through truthfulness, the self-overcoming of the moralist into his opposite – into me – that is what the name Zarathustra means in my mouth. (Nietzsche, translated by Hollingdale, pp, 124-5)

Nietzsche had much to say in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, and his attempt to do so through the words and actions of an ancient prophet is wildly creative. However, the book is an incoherent mixture of parables and folktales, that veers erratically from parody to tragedy. Most of its ideas are better expressed in Nietzsche’s other books.

Nietzsche’s main goal was to argue against the “slave-

morality" that had taken hold of society, a morality that promoted humility rather than accomplishment, conformity rather than initiative, weakness rather than strength. He proposed that rather than doing what others want, we should achieve what we can, accept our destiny, fulfill the possibilities within ourselves, and become an *Übermensch*: "your love of your neighbour is your bad love of yourselves" (Part I:16, Hulse translation p 52). Good versus evil (*böse*) is replaced by good versus bad (*schlecht*, often used in the sense of "poorly made, shoddy"). This is a morality based on aesthetics rather than on good and evil (Poellner, 2012; Kronman, 2019).

Unfortunately, Nietzsche did not foresee what this new morality might entail. The Nazis took his ideas to heart, threw off all constraints, and tried to create a world that fulfilled what they considered their destiny (Golomb & Wistrich, 2002).

Modern man has found that world can be understood without the need to postulate a god, and that morality need not follow divine commandments. Nietzsche had famously proposed the idea that "God is dead" in his book *The Gay Science* (1882). In *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche realized the implications of this idea: "Nothing is true; everything is permitted" (Part IV: 9, Hulse translation, p 259). Ivan Karamazov voices a similar fear in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) which was published at about the same time as *Also Sprach Zarathustra*: "If God does not exist, anything is permissible."

Another concept that occurs toward the end of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* involves the circularity of time: that the world continually returns to what it once was and everything recurs:

All truth is crooked. Time itself is a circle...Must we not all have been here before – and must we not come again ... must we not keep coming back forever. (Part III:2, Hulse

translation, pp 146-147)

The idea that time is circular is common in Hinduism and Buddhism, which propose that the universe eternally recurs in cycles lasting many millennia. However, the Zoroastrianism concept of time is linear: the world is created, the world suffers through the battle between good and evil, and with the defeat of evil the world once again becomes as perfect as it was when it was created. One might suggest that this process could then repeat, but that is not really part of the Zoroastrian world view.

Nietzsche becomes reconciled to the eternal recurrence by proposing a variant of Kant's categorical imperative: that one should live one's life in such a manner that one would wish to live it in the same way when it is eternally repeated.

Nietzsche's fictional Zarathustra is both intriguing and frustrating, both charming and frightening. However he is interpreted, he is a far cry from the legendary prophet who founded a new religion based on the struggle between good and evil.

## **Conclusion**

The world is composed of opposites: good and evil, order and chaos, growth and decay, truth and deceit. Zoroaster described this state in terms of the struggle between two opposing forces. One of the appealing aspects of the religion that he founded is its optimism: good will ultimately prevail over evil. Another is the importance of humanity to the outcome of this struggle. By choosing good over evil, we can tilt the balance between the opposing forces and accelerate the final victory.

The religion of Zoroastrianism has persisted for about three millennia, although the number of its present adherents is

vanishingly small in comparison to the dominant religions of the world. Nevertheless, it remains worth our while to remember the ideas of the ancient prophet: to do as much good as we can, to contemplate the fire, and to look forward to when *asha* once again rules the universe.

*Ashem vohu  
vahishtem asti  
ushta asti  
ushta ahmai  
hyat ashai vahishtai ashem*

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## **Antisemitism**

Hatred is directed anger. Though we can claim metaphorically to hate

unconscious objects or abstractions, hatred is typically directed at another person or persons. Hatred is evoked by suffering that we perceive they caused. Since it leads to actions against these persons, hatred can also be described as

“ill will.”

Emotions can overwhelm reason. Passion is not logical. We often hate without any justification. Hatred must then be maintained by fictions that describe the evil nature of those we hate.

Antisemitism is the most enduring and most unjustified of human hatreds.

The ill will suffered by the Jewish people has lasted for thousands of years, and has led to countless crimes, the most terrible of which was the Holocaust wherein 6 million Jews were put to death by the Nazi Government of Germany (Bauer, 2001; Marrus, 1987). ;

Antisemitism has been inspired by many fictions. This posting considers the unfortunate power of some of the stories that paved the way to the Holocaust.

### **Some Simple Psychology**

Anger arises when we experience suffering, especially when we believe it to be unwarranted, and when we are thwarted from achieving what we desire, especially when we believe that we are entitled to it. Anger seeks to attack these causes: to hit out at those who strike us; to break those who obstruct us.

We tend to think of events as caused by persons. Even when forces of nature act against us we may attribute them to a divinity or a devil, or to those who worship them. Only in that way can anger find a target for its release.

Sometimes the causes of our anger are too complicated to

understand or too powerful to fight against. In these cases, we may vent our anger elsewhere and attack other human beings, while inventing plausible (though fictional) reasons for so doing.

...every instance of suffering, every feeling of displeasure, by whomsoever and in whatsoever way it may have been caused, whether it arises from the guilt or from the lawful activity of another person, or through the sufferer's own fault, or without any fault, or even without any human influence, tends to transform itself into a feeling of enmity, to direct itself against fellow-humans and if possible to express itself against them. (Bernstein, 1951, p 85)

As we were growing up during childhood, we realized – at about the age of three – that we can exert some control over our environment. We therefore created a self as the agent of this control. At about the same time we realized that the world contains other agents. These could either help us or hinder us. We became comfortable with those that helped and learned to cooperate with them. We feared the others.

The group appears to be a curious form of extension of the individual. It seems as if under the influence of the necessities of human communal life, human beings who need love and produce hate combine into new, collective and collectively selfish individualities of a higher order; directing their love inwards, their hate outward, their social instincts towards the insider, their anti-social tendencies toward the outsider. (Bernstein, 1951, p 109-110)

Those who cooperated in groups came to have similar desires and modes of behavior. They followed the same rules and sought the same goals. Those who were different became isolated. These “others” challenge our

group-identification (Chanes, 2004, p 3). In our search for where to vent our anger, we often light upon those that are different from us. Especially if these people are small in number and not inclined to violence.

While for normal group enmity a certain regularity in the mutual expression of enmity is characteristic, the antagonism between a powerful majority and a powerless minority is characterised by a onesidedness of hostile actions which is fatal for the minority. For the latter is exposed to continual attacks and must confine itself to laborious attempts to maintain its existence, without a chance to resist actively to any extent; even its passive means of defense are totally inadequate and its existence often has to rely on nothing but periodical flight from place to place. This onesided relation of

permanent attack and failing defense is called persecution.

Weak minority

groups are usually persecuted more or less emphatically.

(Bernstein, 1951, p 224)

The actual psychological mechanisms that lead to antisemitism are not

really understood. Some believe that there are personality-types that are more easily convinced to vent their hatred on minorities. The role of authority and power is undoubtedly a factor (Morse & Allport, 1952; Milgram, 1974). Those who seek power or wish to maintain it gain great support by fomenting hatred. Propaganda – invented stories – have a tremendous power. For some reason the more incredible the story the more easily it is believed (Baum, 2012). Dehumanization of the victims serves to attenuate our inherent tendency to help our fellows. (Bandura et al., 1975)

For millennia the Jewish people have allowed us to vent our hatred. For

millennia we have invented reasons for our violence.

The hostility toward a minority exacerbates the feelings that initially triggered. When persecuted, a minority does not fare well in society and often comes to appear even more deserving of denigration and oppression (Beller, 2007, p 5).

Antisemitism is not caused by the Jews but by the inadequacy of those who need to hate them.

...two psychological characteristics are present in the individual antisemite: excessive hostility and the need (and a capacity) to project one's aggression on other groups. Persons who have these traits generally suffer from feelings of inadequacy and from the feeling that their own personal borders, psychologically speaking, are easily invaded by others (Chanes, 2004, p 7)

We can perhaps conclude this section with two epigrams from Jean-Paul Sartre (1948):

If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him (p 13)

Antisemitism is not a Jewish problem: it is our problem. (p 152)

### **The People of the Covenant**

The Jews consider themselves God's chosen people. In the Hebrew

scripture Yahweh made a covenant with Abraham, and then renewed the covenant with Jacob and with Moses. The Jews were to worship Yahweh as the one true God and to follow his commandments. The Jews would then serve as an example for the rest of humanity

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles (Isaiah

42:6).

In return, the Jews would be considered special

For thou art an holy people unto the Lord  
thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people  
unto  
himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.  
(Deuteronomy 14:2)

And were promised as their home the land containing what is  
now the country of Israel

In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying,  
Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt  
unto the great river, the river Euphrates (Genesis 15:18)

לֹא תִרְצַח

לֹא תִנְאַף

לֹא תִגְנוֹב

God's covenant with the Jews was based on their keeping the  
commandments that he revealed to Moses. Rembrandt's 1659  
painting *Moses with the Tablets of the Law* shows Moses holding  
aloft the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments had been  
written. These were engraved on two separate stones (Exodus  
31:18, 32:15). In the painting, only the second tablet is  
completely visible giving the 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> commandments (Exodus  
20:13-17). These begin with: "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt  
not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal:" (Hebrew

illustrated on the right).



No one is sure what moment in the story of the tablets Rembrandt is representing. Is it when he first displays these to the Hebrews? or when he is about to shatter them on the ground because the Hebrews had been worshipping the Golden Calf while he had been on Mount Sinai with God (Exodus 32:19)?

or is it when he returns to God and brings a second set of tablets back to the chastised Hebrews (Exodus 34:1). Moses' face is shining with revelation rather than angry. Perhaps, Rembrandt has painted the moment when Moses first displays the commandments.

No group of people is perfect. However, the Jews have contributed more than their share to the human endeavor – in philosophy, science, medicine, politics, art, music, literature. And for the most part the laws that they accepted as part of their covenant with God have served them well. They are indeed an example to other people.

So why were and are they so often reviled? It is unlikely a reaction to their chutzpah in claiming to be God's chosen. In the Middle Ages this was called the *Insolentia Judaeorum*. Yet every one of the world's many religions claims to be just as special.

One defining aspect of the Jewish religion is that it is monotheistic. The first commandments state that a Jew must obey Jehovah and not even pay lip-service to any other god or idol:

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them  
(Exodus 20:2-5).

The Jewish religion thus combines the worship of one god with strict obedience to his commandments. As Prager and Telushkin (2003) have suggested, this ethical monotheism may have offended those who followed other gods. Jews refused to follow the proverbial injunction that when in Rome do as the Romans

do. For example, the outburst of violence against the Jews in Alexandria in 38 CE (then part of the Roman Empire) was triggered by their refusal to place statues of the Emperor Caligula in their temples (Goldstein, 2012).

One should respect the beliefs of others. However, respect does not mean obeying rules that go against one's own moral principles. The Jewish people's refusal to acknowledge or worship other gods has continued to the present. In particular Jews do not recognize the divinity of Jesus Christ.

In addition to the Ten Commandments, Yahweh's covenant with the Jewish people involved numerous other rules of behavior. These included strict stipulations about the types of food that they might eat and the methods in which this food should be prepared. Over the ages observant Jews have thus been unable to share meals with those of other faiths. And although some of the ancient Jewish philosophers – Hillel and Maimonides for example – were open to ideas beyond the Covenant, strict Judaism limited itself to the study of the Torah and its interpretations.

The Covenant with Yahweh thus isolated the Jewish people from the rest of humanity. They could not share the beliefs, the food or the thoughts of others. They antagonized others by their claim to be the chosen people.

So we have the idea that antisemitism is in part caused by the very character of the Jewish religion. This would explain why the Jews have been reviled by so many different people in so many different countries. The following was written Bernard Lazare in 1894. He was a Jewish polemicist who wrote the first defense of Captain Alfred Dreyfus. Yet even he thought that the Jews were partly to blame for antisemitism.

Inasmuch as the enemies of the Jews belonged to divers races; as they dwelled far apart from one another, were ruled by different laws and governed by opposite principles;

as they had not the same customs and differed in spirit from one another, so that they could not possibly judge alike of any subject, it must needs be that the general causes of antisemitism have always resided in Israel itself, and not in those who antagonized it... Which virtues or which vices have earned for the Jew this universal enmity? Why was he ill-treated and hated alike and in turn by the Alexandrians and the Romans, by the Persians and the Arabs, by the Turks and the Christian nations? Because, everywhere up to our own days the Jew was an unsociable being. (Lazare, 1894/1903, pp 8-9)

This seems so reasonable. Yet it is false. It does not explain the cause of antisemitism. It is just an excuse. It blames the victim for the crime.

### **The Crucifixion of Christ**

In the early decades of the Common Era, Jesus, a Jewish teacher from Nazareth, brought new insight to the interpretation of Jewish law. He simplified the commandments by expressing them as the need to love the Lord and to love one's neighbor as oneself. He criticized the rigid adherence to the Sabbath, and the commercialization of the Temple. He proclaimed the idea of a Kingdom of Heaven. Many of the more observant Jews were disconcerted by his teachings. The Romans were upset that he was proposing a new kingdom. Jesus was arraigned before Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, condemned and crucified.

A few days after his death and burial, the tomb of Jesus was found empty. Many of his followers claimed that they afterwards saw him in person. They therefore believed that he had been resurrected. They continued to meet and discuss his teachings. They were either tolerated by other Jews or condemned as heretics.

A learned Jew named Saul was one of those that persecuted the

followers of Jesus. However, on the road to Damascus he had a vision of Jesus that completely altered his thinking. He changed his name to Paul, and began to provide an over-arching theory about the death and resurrection of Jesus. His main ideas were that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah prophesied in the scriptures, that he died to release us from our sins, and that we shall all be saved from death by having faith in Jesus called Christ (the "anointed").

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (I Corinthians 15:3-4)

Paul's major teaching was that one could never attain salvation by following the Mosaic laws. No one is perfect. Everyone breaks the law. However, Christ offers salvation if we repent our sins and have faith in him.

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16).

Paul's letters describing these ideas are the earliest of the Christian scriptures. Written in the years 50-60 CE these predate by 20 to 50 years the four gospels, which describe the life and teachings of Jesus.

The followers of Jesus in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE differed in their opinion about his relationship to the Jews. Some thought that the message of Jesus was for the Jews; others that it was for both Jews and Gentiles. Most of Paul's teaching was directed to the Gentiles. In some of his letters he laments the inability of many of his Jewish colleagues to understand God's new covenant.

For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

(I Thessalonians 2:14-16)

Some of the gospels continued this criticism of the Jews (Crossan, 1995). This is perhaps most evident in the gospel of Matthew. He describes how the Jews forced Pilate to crucify Jesus, and willingly accepted the responsibility for his death:

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. (Matthew 27: 24-25)

The major event in Jewish history of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE was the Great Revolt of the Jews against Roman rule. This began in 66 CE and culminated in the Destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. The illustration below shows a representation in the Arch of Titus of the Romans carrying the spoils from the temple. Among the spoils is the great Menorah that once gave light to the Tabernacle.



At this time many Jews fled their homeland and settled in other countries. The Jewish people have been exiled at many times in its history – the Assyrian conquest (733 BCE), the Babylonian captivity (597 BCE), the Great Revolt (70 CE), the later Bar Kokhba Rebellion (132 CE). Though some Jews remained in Israel, most lived in the Diaspora (“scattering”) – far from the land that from the days of Moses they had considered their God-given home.

The Destruction of the Temple seemed to many Christians a divine response to the action of the Jews in crucifying their Lord. Though the Romans crucified Jesus, some of the early Christians considered the Jews responsible. The Jews were thus guilty of deicide and should be reviled and cast out from Christian society. Even if they were not guilty, they should be chastised for not recognizing the salvation offered by Christ – for staying with the old dispensation rather than following the new.

These ideas have long permeated the thinking of the Christian Church. Many of the cathedrals illustrate these concepts by contrasting sculptures of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*. The statues

on the south portail of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Strasbourg from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century CE are particularly impressive. Legend has it that these were created by a female sculptor Sabina von Steinbach, though there is no real evidence for this. Ecclesia with her crown, holds in her hands the cross and the chalice. She looks with pity on Synagoga, who is blindfolded and cannot see the truth. She holds in her hands the tablets of the law and the lance that the centurion used to bring the crucifixion to an end. The lance was shattered by the resurrection.

The following illustration shows the complete portail. Ecclesia and Synagoga are on the left and right sides. In the center sits Solomon in judgement between the old covenant and the new. Above him is Christ, *Salvator Mundi* (savior of the world). The carvings in the tympanums represent the dormition, assumption and coronation of the Virgin Mary.





The statues of Ecclesia and Synagoga are impressive examples of gothic art. Though superficially beautiful, they obscure rather than convey the truth. The feelings against the Jews that they evoke are a complete betrayal of Jesus, a Jew who

taught in the synagogues of Palestine.

One might have hoped that the antisemitism of the Christian Church would have been excised by the Reformation. But this was not to be. Martin Luther was virulently antisemitic. In his *The Jews and Their Lies* (1543, pp 39-42) he advises Christians to burn their synagogues of the Jews, their houses, and their books, prohibit their Rabbis from teaching, not allow them to travel on the highways, and prohibit them from lending money. Luther was a harbinger of *Kristallnacht*.

### **Wild Accusations**

During the Middle Ages people could not understand why life was so often brutal. An easy way to explain the various disasters was to attribute them to the Jews. If the Jews could kill God, there was no telling what other crimes they were capable of.

On Good Friday in 1144 the body of a child called William was discovered in the woods near Norwich in England. The Jews were accused of murdering the child. No credible evidence was ever found. However, a monk who had just converted from Judaism to Christianity claimed that the Jews had decided to sacrifice a Christian child to re-enact the death of Christ. Several Jews were slaughtered. William was declared a martyr. Pilgrims flocked to his tomb. Miracles occurred.

William of Norwich was the first documented case of Jews being accused of ritual murder. As the years went by similar accusations arose in multiple different regions of Europe (Goldstein, 2012). Many of these cases included the idea that the Jews used the blood of their victims to make the unleavened bread used in the celebration of Passover. This particular accusation was called the "blood libel." It makes no sense. Kosher regulations require that observant Jews never eat food contaminated with blood. Jews go to great lengths to remove blood from meat before it can be eaten.

The Christian Bible contains the Hebrew scriptures in what it calls the Old Testament. Some of these writings described how the blood of sacrificed animals played an important role in the ceremonies of the ancient Hebrews, e.g.

And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. (Leviticus 1:5).

Other ancient Hebrew writings are even more disconcerting. One of the foundational stories of Judaism is the Akedah ("binding"), wherein the Patriarch Abraham, at the request of Jehovah, takes his son Isaac to Mount Moriah to sacrifice him (Genesis 22). Although an angel stays Abraham's hand at the last moment, this fails to attenuate the story's horror. The illustration below shows Rembrandt's 1655 etching.



The Old Testament contains other stories wherein children were sacrificed. To defeat the Ammonites, Jephthah promised the Lord that he would sacrifice whatever came out of his house when he returned from battle. Jehovah gave the victory to the Israelites. When Jephthah returned home, his daughter came to

greet him, dancing and playing the tambourine (Judges 11).

There is also a suggestion that King Manasseh sacrificed his son – the wording is “he made his son pass through the fire” (2 Kings 21:6). These events and the idea that the terrible place near Jerusalem called Gehenna or Tophet was actually a site of human sacrifice are discussed at length by Stavrakopoulou (2004). The practice was banned by Yahweh speaking through his prophet Jeremiah:

And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not; neither came it into my heart. (Jeremiah 7:31).

One can perhaps imagine how such stories from the Old Testament might have allowed credulous people to accept the idea that the Jews might sacrifice Christian children and use their blood for their ceremonies. When one’s faith requires a belief in miracles, wild rumors are not easily contradicted.

The main sacrament of the Christian Church is the Eucharist, wherein the congregation partakes of bread and wine that have been especially blessed. According to the church, these had been miraculously “transubstantiated” to the body of Jesus, who was sacrificed to save the world. The sacramental bread is called the host (from the Latin *hostia* for sacrificial victim). In many places and at many times the Jews were accused of “desecrating” the host. The following illustration shows a 1469 sequence of paintings by Paolo Uccello that tell the story of the *Miracle of the Desecrated Host*. Both the full sequence and the particular panels illustrating the second and fifth episodes are shown. The paintings were on the predella to the altar in the Corpus Domin church in Urbino. The retable painting above the predella by Justus van Gent presented the *Institution of the Eucharist*.



The six episodes in the predella show

1. a woman sells a portion of the consecrated host to a Jewish merchant
2. when the Jew tries to burn the host, it starts to bleed, alerting the city guards
3. a holy procession is needed to re-consecrate the host
4. the woman is burned at the stake; she repents and an angel descends from heaven to save her
5. the Jew and his family are burned at the stake; no angel intervenes
6. two angels and two devils argue over the woman's body

As the Black Death (Bubonic Plague) spread across Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Jews were accused of poisoning wells and spreading the disease. Many Jews were condemned to death by fire for these crimes. No one noticed that Jews died from the pandemic just as frequently as their Christian neighbors. Nor that burning Jews at the stake had no effect on the spread of the disease. A half century later, Jacob von Königshofen wrote a critical history of these times. The following is his description of the massacre of the Jews in Strasbourg at the height of the Black Death in 1349:

In the matter of this plague the Jews throughout the world were reviled and accused in all lands of having caused it

through the poison which they are said to have put into the water and the wells – that is what they were accused of – and for this reason the Jews were burnt all the way from the Mediterranean into Germany, but not in Avignon, for the pope protected them there. On Saturday-that was St. Valentine's Day, they burnt the Jews on a wooden platform in their cemetery. There were about two thousand people of them. Those who wanted to baptize themselves were spared. Many small children were taken out of the fire and baptized against the will of their fathers and mothers. And everything that was owed to the Jews was cancelled, and the Jews had to surrender all pledges and notes that they had taken for debts. The council, however, took the direct cash that the Jews possessed and divided it among the working men proportionately. The money was indeed the thing that killed the Jews. If they had been poor and if the feudal lords had not been in debt to them, they would not have been burnt. After this wealth was divided among the artisans some gave their share to the Cathedral or to the Church on the advice of their confessors. Thus were the Jews burnt at Strasbourg. (quoted in Marcus, 1938, p.47)

Forces other than the plague were at play. Debt caused as much suffering as disease. As the historian notes, "The money was indeed the thing that killed the Jews."

## **Usury**

The Old Testament contains several injunctions against usury. Originally "usury" was simply any interest charged on loans. The meaning of the term has changed as the relations between religion and commerce have developed. At present, usury is generally limited to exorbitant interest.

In one of the earliest mentions of usury in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jewish people are forbidden to charge interest on loans to fellow-Jews although they may so charge strangers:

Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury (Deuteronomy 23:20).

In the New Testament usury is only occasionally considered:

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again (Luke 6:35).

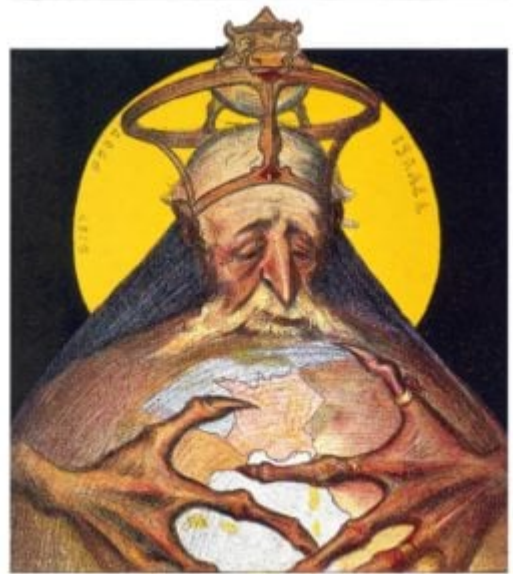
Nevertheless, the Christian Church decided early in its history that usury was a sin (Moehlman, 1934). In the council of Nicaea of 327 CE it forbade clergy to collect interest on any debts. In the Third Lateran Council of 1179, it decreed

Since in almost every place the crime of usury has become so prevalent that many persons give up all other business and become usurers, as if it were permitted, regarding not its prohibition in both testaments, we ordain that manifest usurers shall not be admitted to communion, nor, if they die in their sin, receive Christian burial, and that no priest shall accept their alms. (Moehlman, 1934, pp 6-7)

Thus for most of the middle ages it was difficult for people in business to obtain financial support for their enterprises. Jewish merchants, untrammelled by Christian prohibitions, unable to own land, and often prevented from practicing trades because of exclusively Christian guilds, gradually assume the responsibility for lending money in return for interest (Foxman, 2010). Some kings and princes found the linguistic abilities and financial connections of the Jews appealing and appointed them to their courts. However, most Jews remained poor and unrecognized – traders, shopkeepers, pawnbrokers and minor moneylenders.

In later years the Catholic Church found itself in need of capital to build its churches, and revised its doctrine on usury, founding its own lending organizations called Mounts of Piety (*Monte de Pieta*). The oldest bank in the world, the *Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena*, derives from one of these

lenders. After the Reformation, Protestants re-interpreted the scriptures and established their own investment banks.



Jewish lenders prospered and some of our current banks have Jewish roots, the Rothschild banks and Goldman-Sachs being two of the biggest. However, almost all of the world's largest banks were actually founded by Gentiles. The idea that the Jews control international banking is ludicrous. Why one should only consider the religion of a banker when he is Jewish is invidious (Foxman, 2010). One never mentions the Roman Catholic origins of the Bank of America or the Presbyterian origins of Wells Fargo. Yet Jewish bankers have long been game for hateful cartoons. The depiction of "King Rothschild" by Charles Lucien Léandre shown on the right is from the cover of *Le Rire*, April 16, 1898. Above Rothschild is the Golden Calf that was worshipped by the the idea of Mammon, the idol of wealth condemned in the New Testament:

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24).

The myth of Jewish greed has become a mainstay of antisemitic thought. Richard Wagner (1850) cannot get away from it even though he is supposed to be writing about music.

According to the present constitution of this world, the Jew in truth is already more than emancipated: he rules, and will rule, so long as Money remains the power before which all our doings and our dealings lose their force.

Even Jewish writers have been convinced of the myth

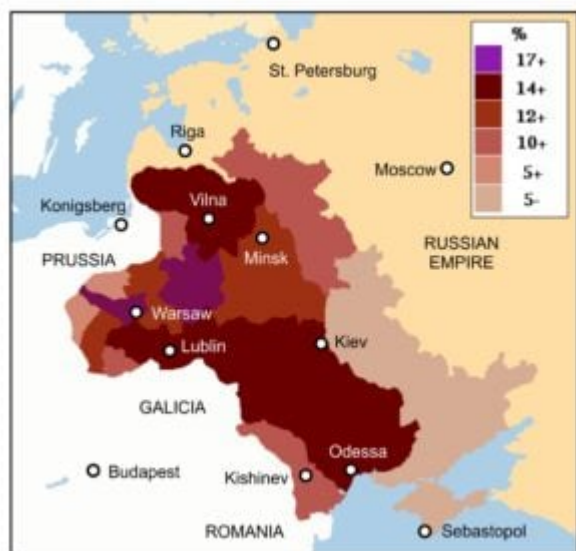
Thus, by himself and by those around him; by his own laws and by those imposed upon him; by his artificial nature and circumstances, the Jew was directed to gold. He was prepared to be changer, lender, usurer, one who strives after the metal, first for the pleasures it could afford and then afterwards for the sole happiness of possessing it; one who greedily seizes gold and avariciously immobilizes it. (Lazare, 1903, p 110).

### **The Pale of Settlement**

As the Middle Ages progressed, the Jews were expelled from many European countries: England, 1290; France, 1306; Hungary, 1349; Austria, 1421; Spain, 1492; Portugal, 1497 (Baum 2012, p. 18). Other countries required that the Jews live apart from Christians in regions that came to be known as *ghettos*, from the Venetian dialect word for “foundry” located near where the first ghetto was established in Venice in 1516. Other ghettos were later set up throughout Italy, and then in Germany and in Poland (Goldstein, 2012, p 130)

Many of the expelled Jews moved to Eastern Europe. They settled in the regions that now form the countries of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. Much of this area was then part of the Kingdom of Poland. Polish nobles welcomed the new immigrants. Many Jews were used as tax-collectors. This did sit well with some of the Eastern Orthodox Slavic people who chafed under the control of Catholic Poland. In 1648, the Cossacks in Ukraine rebelled under the leadership of Bohdan Khmelnytsky. During this war, tens of thousands of Poles and Jews were

massacred (Bacon 2003). The Eastern Orthodox Church was every bit as antisemitic as the Roman Catholic Church. Ukraine became independent of Poland and soon became part of the Russian Empire. Later Poland itself would be partitioned between Prussia, Austria and Russia and cease to exist as an independent kingdom.



The “Pale of Settlement” was set up in 1791 by Catherine the Great. This was an area in the Western regions of the Russian Empire wherein Jews were allowed to live. The term “pale” refers to the stakes that delineated the area

– the word was originally used to describe an area in Ireland under the control of the English crown. Over the years many of

the Jews in central Russia were exiled to the Pale of Settlement. As shown in the map (adapted from Wikipedia, originally created by Thomas Gun) the Jewish percentage of the population in these regions was significant. Around 1900, the Jews in the Pale of Settlement numbered almost 5 million (about half the total number of Jews in the world), and formed about 10% of the general population of the area.

The ghettos and the Pale of Settlement separated the Jews from their neighbors. Their resultant isolation of the Jews increased their “unlikeness” or “otherness.” By closing them off in localized areas beyond the reach of normal civil authorities, it also made them more susceptible to random violence.

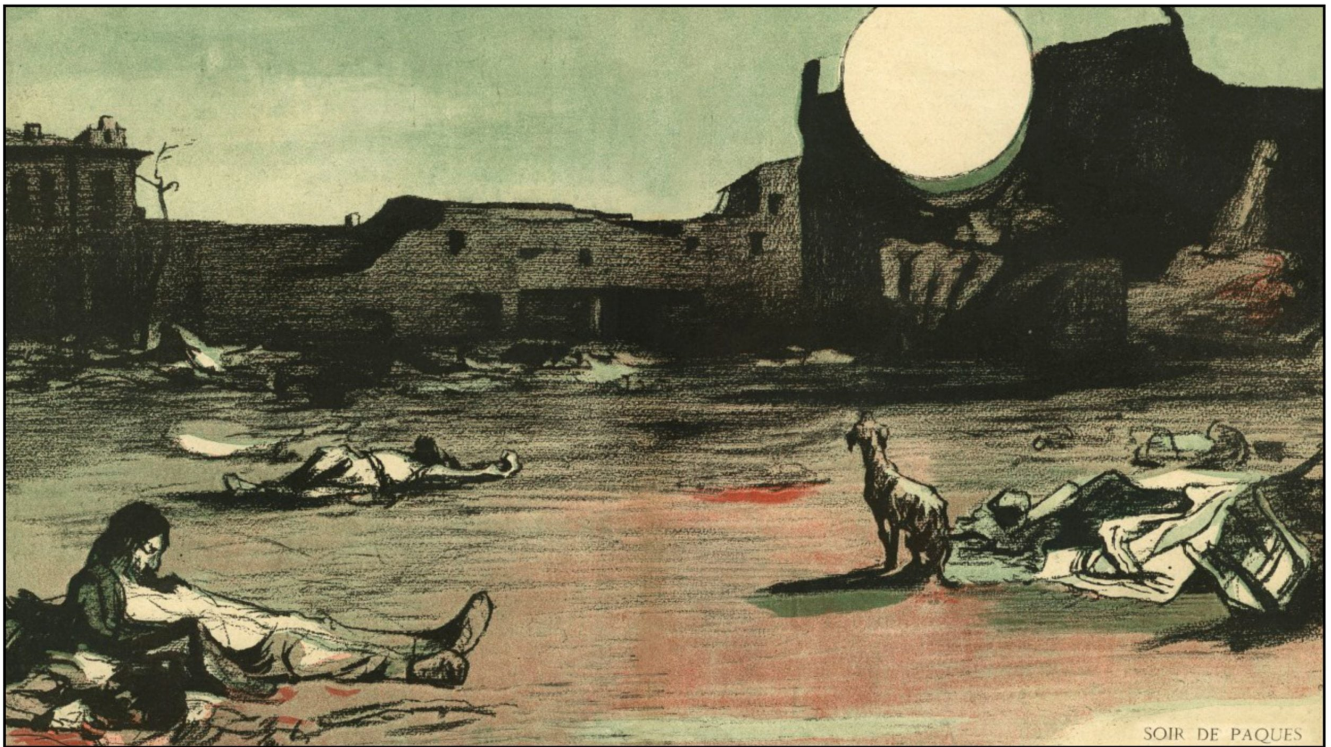
In 1881, Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in St. Petersburg by a group of revolutionaries. The group *Narodnaya Volya* (“People’s Will”) was

composed of Russian-born anarchists, but one young woman was Jewish. The new Tsar Alexander III believed that the Jews were behind the assassination and unleashed a series of pogroms in the Pale of Settlement to avenge his father's death.

The word "pogrom" derives from a Russian word for storm or devastation. Christians in a community were encouraged to murder their Jewish neighbors – killers of Christ and assassins of the Emperor. The police were ordered not to intervene. These pogroms continued into for several years. Thousands of Jews were killed.

The pogroms returned in 1903-1906 during the reign of Tsar Nicholas II. These appear to have been instigated by members of the Tsar's secret police. One political rationale for these actions against the Jews was to rally the Russian people around the Tsar and against all those that were promoting the modernization of Russia.

The first pogrom of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century began in Kishinev, Moldava (then known as Bessarabia), on Easter Sunday in 1903. A child had been found murdered, and city leaders accused the Jews of his murder. Patriotism, blood libel and deicide worked together to create a rampaging and murderous mob (Penkower, 2004). The following is an illustration from the French Journal *L'Assiette de Beurre* of April, 1903, depicting the aftermath of the Easter pogrom.



The novel *The Lazarus Project* by Aleksander Hemon (2008), which tells the story of a survivor of the Kishinev pogrom who immigrated to the United States, provides a vivid description of the violence and its far-reaching consequences. The epic poem *City of the Killings* written in 1903 by the Jewish poet Chaim Bialik to commemorate the massacre begins:

Rise and go to the town of the killings and you'll come to  
the yards  
and with your eyes and your own hand feel the fence  
and on the trees and on the stones and plaster of the walls  
the congealed blood and hardened brains of the dead.

## **The Protocols**

At about this time there appeared the first traces of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Nilus, 1906/1922). This document purported to be the secret plans of Jewish Leaders to take over the world. The protocols describe how these elders will sow dissension and confusion amidst the *goyim* and ultimately step in to rule:

In order to put public opinion into our hands we must bring it into a state of bewilderment by giving expression from all sides to so many contradictory opinions and for such length of time as will suffice to make the *goyim* lose their heads in the labyrinth and come to see that the best thing is to have no opinion of any kind in matters political, which it is not given to the public to understand because they are understood only by him who guides the public. This is the first secret.

The second secret requisite for the success of our government is comprised in the following; To multiply to such an extent national railings, habits, passions, conditions of civil life, that it will be impossible for anyone to know where he is in the resulting chaos, so that the people in consequence will fail to understand one another. This measure will also serve us in another way, namely, to sow discord in all parties, to dislocate all collective forces which are still unwilling to submit to us, and to discourage any kind of personal initiative which might in any degree hinder our affair. There is nothing more dangerous than personal initiative; if it has genius behind it, such initiative can do more than can be done by millions of people among whom we have sown discord. We must so direct the education of the *goyim* communities that whenever they come upon a matter requiring initiative they may drop their hands in despairing impotence. The strain which results from freedom of action saps the forces when it meets with the freedom of another. From this collision arise grave moral shocks, disenchantment, failures. By all these means we shall so wear down the *goyim* that they will be compelled to offer us international power of a nature that by its position will enable us without any violence gradually to absorb all the State forces of the world and to form a Super-Government. (Protocol 5)

The reader easily recognizes the confusions of the modern world. Our

natural paranoia quickly attributes this to outside agents rather than to the simple complexity of political forces. Human beings have long imagined that our lives are controlled by secret societies such as the Templars, the Rosicrucians, the Jesuits, the Illuminati, the Masons, and the New World Order (Eco, 1994, pp 132-139). *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* identified these clandestine agents as the Jews.

The protocols are a complete fiction (Eisner, 2005; Hagemeister, 2008). They were largely plagiarized from a satire against the French Emperor Napoleon II written by Maurice Joly in 1864 entitled *The Dialogue in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu* (Graves, 1921). The most widely accepted story is that a Russian exile living in France, Mathieu Golovinski, adapted Joly's satire into an antisemitic tract at the instigation of the Tsar's secret police, who wished to impugn the forces of modernization in Russia, and to whip up hatred of the Jews as a distraction from the government's problems.



Despite being proven a fiction, the Protocols have been republished over and over again. The illustration at the right shows the cover of a French Version published in 1934. The

design is loosely based on Léandre's 1898 cartoon depiction of Rothschild. The cover artist goes by the alias 'Christian Goy.' In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the Protocols are widely published in Muslim countries, where they serve to foster animus against Israel. Why do people still believe that this tract represents the truth? It is easier to believe in a simple fiction than in complex facts. The confusion of the modern world is caused by the interactions of many different political forces. It is simpler to believe it is caused by the Jews than to try to understand the real causes.

### **Rootless Cosmopolitans**

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century nationalism became one of the main forces in European politics. As the Age of Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution undermined the legitimacy of divinely ordained dynasties, the people developed the idea of a nation – a community conceived or “imagined” in three ways: shared culture, limited geographic extent, and governance by the people (Anderson, 2016). Inherent in the concept of a nation was the idea that all its citizens should have equal rights. Nationalism gained its greatest impetus from the revolutions in the United States and France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and from the later Revolutions of 1848 in Europe.

According to the ideals of nationalism, no one should be discriminated against on the basis of their religion. As part of this movement Jewish citizens began therefore to be accepted as equal participants in the new nations (Mendes-Flohr, 1996; Barnavi, 2003, pp 158-9). This emancipation occurred slowly: France in 1791; Prussia in 1812; Belgium in 1830; the Netherlands in 1834 the United Kingdom in 1858; Austria 1867; the United States in 1877 (reviewed in Wikipedia).

Although nationalism wants all its citizens, regardless of their beliefs or background to be equal, it would prefer them

to be homogeneous, all believing in the same national ideals. Yet no nation is homogeneous. The success of a nation depends on how it comes together despite its differences.

As nationalism progressed, suspicions about the Jewish people remained. This worry was presaged by the Conte de Clermont-Tonnere in a speech to France's new National Assembly in 1789. He initially proposed the principle "that the profession, or manner of worship of a man, can never be motives for depriving him of the Rights of Election." He then listed some of the arguments against giving citizenship to the Jews and declared them invalid:

It is here I am attacked by the adversaries of the Jews. That people, say they, are unsociable; usury is enjoined them; they cannot be united with us, either by marriage, or habitual intercourse; they are forbidden our meats, and interdicted our tables. Our armies will never be recruited by Jews; they will never take up arms for the defense of their country. The weightiest of these reproaches is unjust, the others are but specious.

However, he then recognized that Jews may have commitments outside of the nation in which they would be granted full citizenship. They have religious and financial ties to colleagues in other nations. They may wish to be governed by their own laws and judged according to their scriptures. They could thus be a nation within a nation. So he suggested that

you should deny the Jews every thing as a distinct nation, and grant them every thing as individuals.

This idea that Jews were still different from other citizens persisted. The very fact of the diaspora worked against them. With their allegiances to other Jewish communities in other countries, they seemed "cosmopolitan" rather than patriotic. They interfered with a nation's sense of itself. In the Middle Ages the Jew was assailed because he was not Christian. In the

Modern Age he was assailed because he was not truly French or German or Russian. In both cases he was not "one of us."

The idea of the Jews as "rootless cosmopolitans" was (and is) one of the main tenets of Russian antisemitism. It was basic to the foundation of the Pale of Settlement in Tsarist times and it continued in the socialist regime that followed the Russian Revolution. The following is a description of cosmopolitans from Vissarion Belinsky, a 19<sup>th</sup> century literary critic who promoted the idea of a truly Russian literature:

The cosmopolitan is a false, senseless, strange and incomprehensive phenomenon, a manifestation in which there is something insipid and vague. He is a corrupt, unfeeling creature, totally unworthy of being called by the holy name of man (quoted in Pinkus, 1988, pp 153-154).

Despite Soviet Russia's professed goal of the brotherhood of man, the idea of the Jew as a "rootless cosmopolitan" persisted after the Revolution. It came to a frightening culmination in the accusations against the Jewish doctors in 1952-3 (Carfield, 2002). It is frightening to note the similarity between Communist thought and the Fascist idea of *Bodenlosigkeit* (lack of "ground" in the sense of a place to have roots).

The ideas of nationhood radically changed the lives of many Jews (Arendt, 1951). Intent on proving themselves good citizens of the new nations, they relinquished some of their religious beliefs and behaviors. They became secular. Some even converted to the state religion, hoping to become "assimilated" into general society. Despite all these efforts to become involved as a citizen, the Jews continued to be considered alien. Rather than being welcomed as compatriots they reviled as pretentious upstarts.

And so many Jews began to think that the only solution was to return to Palestine to found their own new nation of Israel.

No longer cosmopolitan they would reclaim their homeland. Zionism would provide Jews with a nation wherein they were not alien (Miller& Ury, 2010).

These new developments made it even more difficult for the Jews who remained in the countries of their birth. Would a Jew support Israel against the interests of the country in which he lives? Zionism raised fears about the allegiance of the Jews, and provided an excuse to exile them from the nations they could not be part of.

So arose the idea that the Jews could never really be part of any non-Jewish nation. This concept was presented by T. S. Eliot (1934) in a series of talks about literary traditions. He describes "tradition:"

What I mean by tradition involves all those habitual actions, habits and customs, from the most significant religious rite to our conventional way of greeting a stranger, which represent the blood kinship of 'the same people living in the same place.' (p 18)

He goes on to suggest how tradition should be established and maintained:

What we can do is to use our minds, remembering that a tradition without intelligence is not worth having, to discover what is the best life for us not as a political abstraction, but as a particular people in a particular place; what in the past is worth preserving and what should be rejected; and what conditions, within our power to bring about, would foster the society that we desired. (p. 19)

And then he brings up something that is essential to any great tradition:

The population should be homogeneous; where two or more cultures exist in the same place they are likely either to be fiercely self-conscious or both to become adulterate.

What is still more important is unity of religious background; and reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable. There must be a proper balance between urban and rural, industrial and agricultural development. And a spirit of excessive tolerance is to be deprecated.

The remarks about the free-thinking Jews are strange and terrifying. They are completely out of context in a discussion of the literary traditions of the American South. They clearly reflect the antisemitism of the writer and of his time. In the years subsequent to Eliot's book, the great liberal democracies of the world refused to accept Jews fleeing from the Nazi regime in Germany for fear that they would pollute their national identities.

Although nationalism fostered the idea of governance by the people, it also promoted war in the pursuit of a nation's destiny. As Anderson (2016) has pointed out, one of the measures of nationalism's success is how easily a people will lay down their lives to defend their country. Surely cosmopolitanism is a better ideal.

## **Conclusion**

Human beings unfortunately seem to need to hate. We make an enemy of any one who is different from us. And so we revile those who gave us the Ten Commandments. We need to stop this senseless behavior. The main way forward is to learn about those who are not us. This will broaden our understanding. With understanding will come tolerance and cooperation. And we should follow ideals that refuse to be limited to one faith or to one nation.

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