

A Prophet Outside Israel ?

Thoughts on the Study of Zoroastrianism

J. C. HINDLEY

Zoroastrian studies have held an equivocal position in Christian scholarship. On the one hand the obvious similarities between points of Zoroaster's teaching and that of the Bible have fascinated Biblical scholars. On the other hand, the peculiar difficulties of text and language, and the formidable research required for reconstructing the permeation of Iranian ideas in ancient West Asia, have meant that Zoroastrian studies have been the pursuit of a fringe group as far as Biblical scholars go: and, not infrequently, some would say, a lunatic fringe. A recent Zoroastrian specialist has said that 'in Zoroastrian studies all things are possible'.¹ Not unnaturally, therefore, Biblical scholars and theologians have been unwilling to commit themselves on such uncertain ground.

On the basis of a very second-hand and sketchy survey of the present position in this field, I wish in this article to raise the question whether the time has not come for a far more intensive approach to this question, and a positive assessment of Zoroaster's relationship to Christianity.

ALLEGED ZOROASTRIAN INFLUENCE

During the nineteenth century the possibility of influence on Zoroaster from the side of the Hebrew prophets was much debated. The reverse view was also canvassed, and the writer has heard a distinguished teacher of Religions in India declare that the distinctive Old Testament view of God's purpose in history was derived from Persia.² The generally received opinion among Biblical and Iranian scholars today, however, would appear to be that any contact between the two cultures before the Exile must be ruled out. What we have to do with are independent lines of development. After the Exile, however, we must reckon to a greater or lesser extent with Persian influences in Judaism, and

¹ R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, p. 111 (quoted as *D. & T.*).

² E. R. E. article on Zoroastrianism. R. P. Masani, *The Religion of the Good Life*, p. 25ff.

particularly that area of Judaism in which our Lord appears to have been most at home, viz. Apocalyptic.³

This possible influence has been traced in five main items:

1. It appears to account for the rise of the 'apocalyptic' as distinct from the 'prophetic' view of history. H. H. Rowley defines the difference between them in these terms: 'Speaking generally, the prophets foretold the future that should arise out of the present, while the apocalyptists foretold the future that should break into the present.'⁴ He allows an important place to Persian thought in the creation of the new outlook, and a similar analysis is worked out in much greater detail by S. Mowinckel.⁵ The latter writes: 'The addition of Persian dualism to the Old Testament hope of future restoration transformed the latter into an eschatology, a faith and doctrine about "the last things" with a minimum of emphasis on "doctrine"'. It must however be admitted that evidence from the Persian side is scanty for the pre-Sassanid period, and in the opinion of R. C. Zaehner insufficient to form a certain judgment.⁶

2. The notion of ultimate rewards and punishments in the form of heaven and hell and of bodily resurrection seems to have come from Persia. As is well known this meets us in Jewish literature for the first time in the Book of Daniel, and in the opinion of Zaehner, 'the theory of a direct Zoroastrian influence on post-exilic Judaism does explain the sudden abandonment on the part of the Jews of the old idea of *sheol* . . . and the sudden adoption, at precisely the time when the exiled Jews made contact with the Medes and Persians, of the Iranian Prophet's teaching concerning the afterlife'.⁷ This is an important part of T. W. Manson's argument that etymologically the name 'Pharisee' originally meant 'Persianiser', and represented a consciousness on the part of the Jews of the origin of distinctively Pharisaic beliefs.⁸ Whether the thought definitely included a bodily resurrection for Zoroaster himself is more uncertain, though quite possible. At any rate the seeds of what soon became a characteristic Zoroastrian doctrine were there from the beginning.⁹

3. The most commonly asserted and best attested sphere of influence is the realm of angelology (another Pharisaic doctrine) and to some extent the development of the Old Testament 'Satan' into the Prince of Evil.¹⁰

³ W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, pp. 358-363. See, however, the contrary view in E. R. E. article on 'Parsiism in Judaism'.

⁴ *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, p. 35.

⁵ *He that Cometh*, Chap. VIII. Cf. Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, p. 368.

⁶ *D. & T.*, p. 57f.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. XXII. The essence of the argument is reproduced in the same author's *The Servant-Messiah*, p. 17ff.

⁹ J. H. Moulton, *The Treasure of the Magi*, p. 41.

¹⁰ Albright, loc. cit.; E. Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*, Chap. III.

4. Still widely canvassed is the idea that an Iranian myth of the primal man lies behind the West Asian myth of the Heavenly Man, and contributed to the concept of the 'Son of Man' as taken up by Jesus.¹¹ O. Cullmann indeed has suggested that we could even use this as a basis for speaking of our Lord's pre-existent humanity.¹² The importance of such an Iranian myth, however, has been widely rejected,¹³ and in the opinion of one of our leading Zoroastrian experts 'the Iranian Erlösungsmysterium is largely Reitzenstein's invention'.¹⁴ This theory therefore, while it may yet prove to be true, may be left out of account for our purposes. Even more doubt would seem to attach to Otto's attempt to link the 'Son of Man' concept with that of the *fravasi* in Persian thought.¹⁵

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

5. It is however with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls that the question of Persian influence on late Judaism and the New Testament seems to have taken on a new importance. There seems to be a wide measure of agreement, following the work of K. G. Kuhn,¹⁶ that the Qumran community was considerably indebted to Iranian thought. From the side of Iranian studies the relationship has been emphatically affirmed by R. C. Zaehner.¹⁷

That Qumran in its turn influenced the New Testament, or at least represents a partially syncretistic milieu out of which the New Testament writings came and to which Jesus Himself may have owed something, is being widely suggested. F. M. Cross, for example, a leading Scrolls scholar, declares that the Qumran community was a moulding force in the apocalyptic vein of Judaism out of which Christianity sprang, and proceeds to illustrate this thesis by a summary of parallels with the New Testament.¹⁸ In a valuable recent article Père Benoit warns against overestimating the significance of Qumran in our enthusiasm, or assuming it comprises the whole of contemporary Judaism. Even he, however, admits the presence of Iranian influence and, while stressing the transformation wrought by the Person of Christ, allows that

¹¹ For modern re-statements see S. Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, p. 422ff.; O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, p. 142ff.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 192.

¹³ W. Manson, *Jesus the Messiah*, p. 8ff. and Appendix D; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, p. 45. The failure to discover any part of the Similitudes of Enoch at Qumran may be important evidence against the theory. Cf. F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, p. 150 n.

¹⁴ R. C. Zaehner, *D. & T.*, p. 347.

¹⁵ *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man*, Chap. IV.

¹⁶ See *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (ed. by K. Stendahl), articles by K. G. Kuhn (p. 98), W. D. Davies (p. 164), J. A. Fitzmyer (p. 217), and especially R. E. Brown, 'The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles'. Also *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (edd. W. D. Davies and D. Daube), articles by W. F. Albright and E. Schweizer; M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 259f.

¹⁷ *At Sundry Times*, p. 143; *D. & T.*, p. 51f.

¹⁸ F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, Chap. V.

Qumran ideas played a part in the formulation of New Testament truth.¹⁹

A number of doctrines have been cited as examples of Iranian concepts which became significant for the New Testament through the medium of the Scrolls: the idea of the eschatological conflagration,²⁰ the association of sin with the flesh, the concept of the spirit in man as moral agent.²¹ But perhaps the most far-reaching and that which commands the greatest measure of assent is the type of dualism which characterizes the Fourth Gospel. We may therefore spend a little longer on this particular sphere. Obviously a case must be made out in two directions. It has to be shown both that Iranian thought influenced the Dead Sea Scrolls, and that they in their turn significantly contributed to the New Testament.

For both purposes the following key passage from the *Manual of Discipline* of Qumran should be considered:

'He created man to have dominion over the world and made for him two spirits, that he might walk by them until the appointed time of his visitation; they are the spirits of truth and of error. In the abode of light are the origins of truth, and from the source of darkness are the origins of error. In the hand of the prince of lights is dominion over all sons of righteousness; in the ways of light they walk. And by the angel of darkness is the straying of all the sons of righteousness . . . And all the spirits of his lot try to make the sons of light stumble; but the God of Israel and his angel of truth have helped all the sons of light. For he created the spirits of light and of darkness, and upon them he founded every work and upon their ways every service. One of the spirits God loves for all the ages of eternity, and with all its deeds he is pleased for ever; as for the other, he abhors its company, and all its ways he hates for ever'.²²

The similarities to the popular account of Zoroastrianism are obvious: a dualism which involves a constant struggle between a good and evil spirit, symbolized by light and darkness. Not less significant is the statement that God created the two spirits. Zoroastrian scholars appear to be agreed that the prophet can be properly called a monotheist. Certainly the idea of the 'Bountiful Immortals' or *amesha spentas* (abstractions such as Good Mind, Truth, Right-mindedness, etc.) does not appear to imperil the unity of God, any more than the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. They are 'aspects' of God which only later became 'archangels'.²³

¹⁹ Article, 'Qumran et le Nouveau Testament' in *New Testament Studies*, Vol. VII, No. 4.

²⁰ W. H. Brownlee in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, p. 42.

²¹ See the essays cited in note 16. Also cf. E. Schweizer, *Spirit of God* (Bible Key Words), p. 15f.

²² Trans. by M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 374.

²³ J. H. Moulton, *op. cit.*, p. 23ff.; R. C. Zaehner, *D. & T.*, p. 45f. Cf. N. Söderblom, *The Living God*, p. 189ff.

More difficulty attaches to the question of the origin of evil. Most scholars would affirm that the Gathic doctrine of the two Spirits does not deny a basic monotheism, though different explanations of the reasons for one spirit choosing evil are given. J. H. Moulton declared: 'I can see no evidence whatever to justify the imputation of dualism',²⁴ and suggested that rather Zoroaster was concerned with the centrality of choice: the freedom to choose good implied the eternal possibility of choosing evil.²⁵ Zaehner argues emphatically that while God may be responsible for the being of the twin spirits, he is not responsible for the evil choice by one of them: in any case the Good Spirit is not identified with Ahura Mazda (as in later developments) and the ultimate victory of the Wise Lord is beyond all doubt. The power of evil is temporary and subordinate. Hence Zaehner can say of the Scrolls passage just quoted: 'In this passage the Gathic myth is almost exactly retold in an Hebraic idiom. The identification of truth with light and error with darkness is of course Zoroastrian too, but does not necessarily go back to the prophet himself'.²⁶

The general world picture of the Scrolls then seems to be the product of a fusion of a Zoroastrian qualified dualism with essentially Jewish ideas. To this we may add the implications of a determinism which divides men into two groups, ranged under the good and evil spirits. Whether this idea developed in Zoroastrianism itself (outside the later Zurvanite heresy) appears debatable. According to E. Schweizer it crept into later Zoroastrianism under the concept of the *daena*. This is described as a man's 'spiritual religious individuality which at the same time is thought of as separated from its bearer'. It is this *daena*, representing a man in a previous existence, which makes the choice between Truth and the Lie, so that in this world a man is under the dominion of a choice already made.²⁷ These ideas, Schweizer holds, have significantly influenced the determinist passages in the

²⁴ Quoted in J. W. Waterhouse, *Zoroastrianism*, p. 62.

²⁵ Op. cit., p. 26f. Cf. N. Söderblom, op. cit., p. 212, who speaks emphatically of the prophet's 'monotheism', maintaining the dualism to originate in choice, and to be social and ethical rather than metaphysical. Earlier, M. Haug, *Essays on the Religion of the Parsees*, p. 301ff., maintained monotheism in theology and religion, to which was subordinated a dualism in philosophy.

²⁶ *At Sundry Times*, p. 141ff.; *D. & T.*, p. 43ff. Cf. J. B. Noss, *Man's Religions*, p. 440ff.—'a unique ethical monotheism'. A modern Parsi exposition stresses the supremacy of Ahura Mazda as sole creator, and interprets the Twin Spirits entirely as 'aspects of the human mind'. Dastur F. A. Bode and P. Nanvutty, *Songs of Zarathustra*, p. 30f.

²⁷ Article, 'Gegenwart des Geistes und eschatologische Hoffnung bei Zarathustra etc.' in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, p. 487. For *daena* see J. W. Waterhouse, op. cit., p. 80, who follows J. H. Moulton, and N. Söderblom, op. cit., p. 222f. Other writers, however, do not attach such importance to the *daena*, and its pre-existence is disputed. For discussion of Schweizer see W. D. Davies in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, p. 177.

Scrolls, which set man's spirit under the dominion of the two spirits of Good and Evil. (We may also recall that the peculiar Pharisaic doctrine of free will and providence was described by T. W. Manson as a natural development of Persian dualism, and so provided a further support for his view that 'Pharisee' originally meant 'Persianiser').

Schweizer's views on Persian influence at this point do not seem to have been widely accepted, and the Scrolls may here show a perversion rather than a development of Zoroastrian ideas. The general world view of the Scrolls, however, in its qualified dualism and partial determinism, has obvious parallels in the Fourth Gospel.²⁸ The contrast of light and darkness and their forces, each with its leader, and the struggle between them are an essential part of the Johannine picture. The expression 'sons of light' (John 12:36) is of course a key one in the Scrolls: moreover the sons of light of Qumran are also said to 'do the truth' (John 3:21; 1 John 1:6).

Of course, there are vital differences: the leader of the forces of light in the Gospel is Himself the Light of the world—the uncreated Logos, not a subordinate spirit: moreover, Satan, while frequently referred to in the Gospel (for example as a 'liar and the father of lies' (John 8:44)—a very Zoroastrian phrase), is never directly described in Scrolls terminology as the spirit or angel of the forces of darkness. We may however recall 'the spirit of truth and the spirit of error' in 1 John 4:6. Furthermore, some would affirm that the whole presentation of the Paraclete is illumined by the Scrolls. Thus F. M. Cross writes: 'In the cosmic struggle the heavenly accuser becomes the diabolical tempter of the sons of light, the Prince of Darkness, who is at war with the Prince of Light. The heavenly advocate becomes the Spirit of Truth, a holy spirit which testifies to truth in the hearts of those in 'the inheritance of truth'.²⁹

It must be stressed that for John the struggle is already victoriously won, whereas for the Scrolls it is still continuing and victory lies in the future. Moreover, there is no parallel to the Person of Christ in the Scrolls. His coming, death and resurrection have made all the difference, and we cannot speak of Christianity as 'an Essenism'. Nevertheless, the *terms* in which Christian truth are set out seem to owe something to a milieu akin to the Scrolls, and the formalization and prominence of these concepts cannot, I think, be explained solely by the Old Testament background as A. R. C. Leaney supposes.³⁰

The predestinarian element in the Fourth Gospel also, which I submit cannot be eliminated, seems to require more than the Old Testament doctrine of election to explain it, and would find its natural background in a similar determinist element in the

²⁸ R. E. Brown and F. M. Cross, *op. cit.* Also K. Schubert, *The Dead Sea Community*, p. 151f.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

³⁰ *A Guide to the Scrolls*, p. 95ff.

Scrolls. In John 3:19, for example, it is difficult not to endorse C. K. Barrett's judgment that 'the distinction between the two groups appears to exist before they are confronted with Christ himself'. There is equally a vein of free-will decision in the Fourth Gospel which again can be paralleled in the Scrolls.³¹ Indeed an ambiguity in this matter is one of the more striking affinities between the documents.

Perhaps the most important general statement of what was gained from the Scrolls is the observation that the dualism of the Scrolls, like that of Persia, is an ethical not a metaphysical dualism. It is in terms of this ethical dualism, not a metaphysical dualism of spirit and matter, that the Fourth Gospel presents the work of Christ: the discovery of the Scrolls would seem finally to have disposed of the idea that in the Fourth Gospel we have what may properly be described as a gnostic outlook. One recalls Bultmann's judgment: 'The cosmological dualism of gnosticism has become in John a dualism of decision'.³² The question now is whether we any longer need the reference to gnosticism.

Other parallels of thought and language can be adduced, which may extend to other parts of the New Testament. But we must conclude this section by stressing the differences. There may indeed be a self-conscious attempt to meet the Qumran beliefs.³³ Be that as it may, the differences which centre on the Person of Christ and His work are profound. Influence there may be, but there is no question of imperilling the uniqueness of Christ or the Christian faith.

A PROPHET OUTSIDE ISRAEL

The claim is a bold one. But a number of scholars have made it on Zoroaster's behalf, and by two tests it may prove to be justified: the relationship of Zoroaster to Jesus and the New Testament on the one hand, and to God on the other, seem remarkably similar to that of the Old Testament prophets.

As we have already shown, in a number of respects Jesus Himself seems to have adopted teachings which were ultimately Zoroaster's: the apocalyptic world view with the warfare between the Kingdom of God and the Prince of Evil informs much of the synoptic record.³⁴ Similarly it seems impossible to interpret our Lord's teaching on the future without reference to the eschatological hope of His glorious return as Son of Man. These ideas moreover became determinative for the hope of the Primitive Church.³⁵ Again, our Lord emphatically espoused the Pharisaic

³¹ Cf. W. F. Howard, *Christianity according to St. John*, p. 92f.

³² *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. II, p. 21. Despite C. H. Dodd's great work, the influence of Platonism or the Hermetica seems less likely.

³³ Schubert, loc. cit.; J. A. T. Robinson, 'The Destination and Purpose of St. John's Gospel' in *New Testament Studies*, Vol. VI, No. 2.

³⁴ Cf. particularly R. Otto, op. cit.

³⁵ I find it impossible to be satisfied with a purely 'realized eschatology'. Cf. the exegesis of the texts in W. G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment*, and O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*.

view of the resurrection, which is implied if not explicitly stated in Zoroaster's message.

In developing our argument two points must be remembered. We are not claiming that these doctrines would not have emerged but for Zoroaster. They are to some extent already implied in the Old Testament pattern of thought. Nevertheless it seems to be an historical fact that the impact of Zoroastrianism was the catalyst which crystallized and gave new form to the Hebrew tradition—a by no means insignificant contribution. Secondly, Jesus could not have read the writings of Zoroaster as He read those of Isaiah or Jeremiah. Nevertheless, He adopted Zoroaster's thought as it reached Him through Judaism, and (if we may appropriate some words of Mowinckel with regard to the Son of Man) 'He set his seal on that process of development and acknowledged its validity as revelation history. He also hallowed those features in it which were of non-Jewish origin.'³⁶

That Zoroaster contributed to the stream of tradition which issued in Christianity is not a sufficient reason for calling him a prophet. We must add a consideration of the nature of his encounter with God.

The evidence is complex, but many Iranian scholars are agreed that we can delineate fairly clearly the nature of the prophet's call and relationship to God.³⁷ He was called to challenge the prevailing polytheism and injustice of his day in the name of the Wise Lord. His call, he declared, came from God, and many passages of the Gathas appear to be classic examples of what modern jargon calls the 'I-thou' relationship. 'He is the friend of God' whose mission was foreordained: his knowledge of God's nature is given to him in vision, and it is significant that his continuing relationship to the Lord is expressed by a word which means 'hearkening' or 'obedience'.

We in fact appear to have the clear marks of prophetic (as opposed to mystic) experience, which would justify Söderblom's statement, 'We are concerned with a rare and fateful phenomenon in the history of religion: the prophet and the monotheism of the prophetic order.'³⁸

ZOROASTRIAN STUDY IN THE CONVERSATION WITH RELIGIONS

No doubt every position advanced so far with regard to Zoroaster and his contribution to Christianity could be disputed. For this and other reasons he has been rather cold-shouldered in recent discussions of Christianity's relations with other religions. A. C. Bouquet³⁹ clearly believes the evidence to be too doubtful to allow an assured reconstruction of the prophet's teaching. It

³⁶ Op. cit., p. 446.

³⁷ J. H. Moulton, op. cit., p. 16f.; N. Söderblom, op. cit., p. 191ff; R. C. Zaehner, *D. & T.*, p. 43f.

³⁸ Op. cit., p. 206.

³⁹ *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions*, p. 64ff. Cf. the same author's treatment in *Sacred Books of the World*, p. 104ff.

would also seem that his general theological position would tend to minimize the significance of prophetic revelation. He is therefore content to say that 'Few would refuse to see in Zarathustra one in whom the Divine Logos was at work'.

Emil Brunner, believing intensely in prophetic revelation, deals seriously with the question. But while he indicates important differences between the message of Zoroaster and that of the Old Testament prophets, it would seem a rather *a priori* view of revelation which denies that name to what was given through Zoroaster.⁴⁰

H. Kraemer recognizes the influence of Zoroaster on the form of our Lord's teaching, and this, he claims, Christian thinkers should not regard 'as a mere historical accident, but recognize the wonderful works of God'.⁴¹ He does not, however (it seems to me), come to grips with the special problem posed by the phenomenon of Zoroaster.

It is (not unnaturally) the Iranian specialists who have made the greatest claims for their prophet, and notably R. C. Zaehner, from whose book I have drawn my title. He declares that Zoroaster 'in his consciousness of the near presence of God as his friend and helper, must be accounted fully as much a prophet as the prophets of Israel'.⁴² He goes on to argue that through the doctrine of the resurrection of the body he made a vital contribution to Christian orthodoxy.

It is not my purpose to evaluate these various attitudes, nor to affirm as positively demonstrated all the theories of interrelation of which samples were given earlier in this article. Some conclusions do indeed appear highly probable, but my main purpose is to suggest that here is a field of study that needs increasing attention, not only as a part of the New Testament background, but as a contribution to our understanding of the relation of Christianity to the religions. I would suggest that in the light of the increased evidence now available it may well turn out that Zoroaster made a more significant contribution than has usually been recognized, and that if this is so, we must be prepared to accommodate this fact in our theology. I would further suggest that such a re-orientation may prove particularly important for Christian thinking in India, and would conclude this article by tentatively suggesting certain positive lines of approach open to us, *if* the general positions indicated here were to become established.

NON-BIBLICAL REVELATION

If Zoroaster was a 'prophet' we should have to accept the concept of non-Biblical revelation in a sense far more definite

⁴⁰ *Revelation and Reason*, p. 227f. This judgment of course raises fundamental issues about Brunner's theological position in this book, and possibly about his exegesis of the Gathas, which cannot be discussed here.

⁴¹ *Religion and the Christian Faith*, p. 329.

⁴² *At Sunday Times*, p. 152.

than that usually implied by the terms 'general' or 'natural' revelation. This case is not covered by a theory of the general diffusion of the Logos: for whether or not the Greek philosophers and others were inspired by the Logos, their relationship to the Biblical revelation (not to speak of their relationship to God) was quite different from that of Zoroaster. His teaching came to him by call and vision in a way unparalleled even in the most sublime of Plato's utterance about the Form of the Good; it entered the stream of revelation history far more directly, and may be found to have contributed a far more dominating current. Indeed it might be seen to have been an integral part of the *praeparatio evangelii*.

This point of view, so far from increasing a general syncretistic relativism, would appear to exalt the centrality of Jesus Christ as our final criterion. For we would be accepting precisely what He accepted and blessed. That in Zoroaster which he did not accept may be disregarded as irrelevant or contrary, though J. H. Moulton was able to say 'Zarathustra taught absolutely nothing about God which a Christian is not able to endorse.'⁴³

We may suggest further that some positive acceptance of elements of Zoroastrianism in this way would remove the suspicion that our claim for Christ as the standard is not a genuine criterion at all, but a mask for our religious imperialism. We would be here using the criterion of Christ not merely to reject everything outside organized Christianity, but to *accept* what conscientiously can be accepted.

I would further suggest that an abiding value attaches to one of the peculiar contributions of Zoroastrianism in particular—his intensely *ethical* dualism, in which the whole of man's existence, body and soul together, is called to decision and given eternal significance. This is of course in line with the whole Biblical tradition. Readers of Deuteronomy 30 did not have to be taught the significance of moral decision. Nevertheless, it would seem arguable that the type of dualism of the Dead Sea Scrolls, owing its formulation to Zoroastrian sources, did something to preserve Christianity from confusion with another type of dualism: the metaphysical dualism of gnosticism with its false type of escapist mysticism.⁴⁴ These considerations may, I suggest, be found to have an important bearing on the debate between 'prophetic' and 'mystical' types of piety.

A NON-SEMITIC PROPHET

The general division of religions into the prophetic and naturalist types has been widely accepted, and has often been

⁴³ *The Teaching of Zarathustra*, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Cf. the remarks of J. A. T. Robinson in two recent articles in *New Testament Studies* (Vol. VI, No. 2, and Vol. VII, No. 1) in relation to the interpretation of the Johannine writings against a Qumran-type of Jewish background.

correlated with a racial, or at least cultural, distinction between Semites and non-Semites. Such an analysis has perhaps made it easier for Hindu critics to claim that the Judaeo-Christian tradition is alien to this country. The occurrence of Zoroaster surely presents a striking challenge to these assumptions. Scholars are agreed that Zoroaster sprang from a religious tradition which he shared with the Indo-Aryans of the Vedas. He was an Aryan of the Aryans. Yet he was of the prophetic type. We have the phenomenon of a 'prophetic religion of revelation' springing from the same stock as the leading 'naturalist religion of self-realization'.

A striking testimony to the significance of this with regard to widely accepted trends of religious thinking in India today is found in a very recent publication by a Parsi author, Dastur Framroze A. Bode.⁴⁵ On the one hand the book contains a lengthy appendix stressing the Aryan character of Zoroastrianism and the influence of ancient Iran on India. Moreover, its interpretation of Zoroastrianism seems to stress its approximation to Vedanta. On the other hand, the author declares that 'there is no idea of the bodily resurrection of the dead in the Avesta. The Pahlavi writers under the influence of Semitic religions elaborated this doctrine'.⁴⁶

It would seem nearer the truth to say that what are popularly called 'Semitic' elements are not necessarily so. That in Zoroastrianism these very elements are to be found springing from Aryan soil. From which it would follow that the religious consciousness of man wherever it is found is capable of the 'prophetic' type of response, and that any hard and fast division into 'Aryan' and 'Semitic' types is mistaken.

THE PARSI-CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION

Parsiism today has strayed very far from the original teachings of Zoroaster. Nevertheless, modern Parsis are well aware of the likelihood that their prophet influenced Christianity. In the Festschrift for Cursetji Erachji Pavry, for example, published in 1933, F. J. Foakes Jackson contributed an article on 'The Influence of Iran upon Early Judaism and Christianity', and E. G. H. Kraeling one on 'Some Babylonian and Iranian Mythology in the Seventh Chapter of Daniel'. The claim to have influenced Christianity is made with some stress in the popular account of Zoroastrianism, *The Religion of the Good Life* (1938) by R. P. Masani, and is repeated by Dr. Radhakrishnan in his foreword to a recent translation of the Gathas by two Parsi scholars.⁴⁷ Christian writers have from time to time gladly admitted this fact, and it would seem there is everything to be gained from such a course in any honest conversation with our

⁴⁵ *Man Soul Immortality in Zoroastrianism* (Bombay, 1960).

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁴⁷ See note 26.

Parsi friends which is going to meet the real issues in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The genuine honour which a Christian can pay to the Persian prophet is a link which exists between Christianity and no other living religion except Judaism.

THE STUDY OF ZOROASTRIANISM

For all these reasons I would urge that we pay more attention to the study of Zoroastrianism than perhaps we have been accustomed to do. To avoid wearisome circumlocution, more or less doubtful hypotheses may, in this article, have received the appearance of assured conclusions. I would make no such claim. I would, however, urge that the new evidence available from Qumran and perhaps the continued progress of Iranian studies, makes it impossible any longer to relegate Zoroastrianism to the fringe of Christian interest. There would seem to be a *prima facie* case which demands close investigation, in the hope that we may get some genuinely assured results in a very complex field.⁴⁸ Whether we should forthwith press the Senate of Serampore to include the study of Zoroastrianism with Avestan and Pahlavi in the optional papers under Branch V, I leave to the reader to ponder. That we should indefinitely leave these questions to Western or Parsi scholars I am inclined to doubt.

⁴⁸ For example, extensive German work on the problem earlier in this century is given short shrift by Zaehner, *D. & T.*, p. 347. He himself, however, appears to have had second thoughts on the place of the bodily resurrection, between the publication of *At Sundry Times* (1958) and *D. & T.* (1961).