

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

The Medes And The Persians

As we have seen, it was certain Elamite (Iranian) tribes which brought about the final downfall of the Sumerian states, by the conquest of Ur and Isia about 2000 B.C., and paved the way for the rise of the Semitic Dynasty of Babylon. The Elamites were expelled by Hammurabi of Babylon in the eighteenth century B.C. but other invasions followed, their final expulsion taking place the middle in the seventeenth century B.C. when a group of tribes moved south and settled in the country under the rulership of the Medes. During this period Assyria held sway over Iran. King Cyaxares of the Medes (from 625 to 568 B.C.) finally destroyed the power of Assyria, after which he extended the boundaries of his kingdom as far as Asia Minor.

Very little is known of the prehistoric tribes of Iran (Persia) but they are generally termed Caucasians or Caspians. As early as 5000 B.C. this prehistoric people were already dwelling in villages on the plains of Iran.

The Elamites of Susa were very early in the land. Archeological research has shown that Sumerian culture before the Flood was, in its beginnings, akin to that of the Elamite (old Persian) culture of Susa. The Flood which

destroyed the civilization of Sumeria is dated at about 8,000 B.C.; this agrees quite closely with occult chronology.

Approximately 5000 B.C., five hundred years after Abraham, an Indo-Aryan migration began to enter Iran. But it was not until 900 B.C., the Solomonic era in Palestine, that the Iranian tribes who gave their name to the land established themselves in community settlements.

Iran means homeland of the Aryans. The Iranians included Medes, Persians and several other tribes. The Medes settled in western Iran, the Persians south of them. Knowledge of both these tribes is gleaned from Assyrian inscriptions.

Sixty years after the downfall of Ninevah, Cyrus, King of Persia, led a successful revolt against the King of Media and created a new world empire which was to stand for centuries to come.

After establishing his capital in Media, Cyrus led his united army to the conquest of Lydia. By 546 B.C. he had conquered Armenia, Asia Minor and all Greek colonies along the Mediterranean coast. He then continued his conquests eastward. In 539 B.C. he besieged and captured Babylon, where he first displayed to the world that great tolerance and breadth of vision which characterized Persia and her

Zoroastrian kings until the decline of both at the end of the Arian age.

In view of the long period during which Persian tribes were in intimate contact with Chaldean and Assyrian civilization, it should occasion no astonishment that Persian culture was strongly permeated with Chaldean influences, or that the astronomical theosophy which was the glory of Chaldea was raised in the Persian Mysteries to a superlative degree of wisdom and beauty. The Persians were eagerly receptive to every good thing from whatever source it might come. It was not until the close of the Arian Age in early Christian centuries that this ancient record was tarnished by bigotry and intolerance. Nor should one be surprised to learn of the similarity between Persian and Hebrew Scriptures since both drew so much of their inspiration from the same source, The basic elements of Christianity were plainly evidenced in Zoroastrianism.

Indeed, Christianity bears an Iranian signature from first to last — from the story of beginnings, when her people were part of the Fifth Root Race before it was dispersed to become many nations; when the Elamites invaded Ur and caused the migration of Terah and his clan to Harran, and the migration of Abraham and his clan to Canaan; when Cyrus, the great King and lordliest of men, founded the first world empire upon a broad basis of tolerance and respect

for freedom of thought, and aided the Hebrew exiles to return to Palestine with their Book of Books; and again during the centuries of spiritual decay which marked the end of the Arian Age, when Mani appeared and rescued esoteric Christianity from near oblivion and gave it an extended life of more than a thousand years until a new Messenger, symbolically named Christian Rose Cross, bore it farther along the path of centuries.

With Cyrus there arose in Persia the magnificent Zoroastrian religion which could have arisen only under the protection of a noble, spirited and wise leader. The Hebrew and the Persian Bibles belong to this period when an Initiate-King ruled upon the throne of a world empire. For the first time East and West were bridged, making it possible for Indian wisdom to infiltrate that of Greece.

Cyrus governed his empire wisely. He encouraged subject peoples to retain their own religions and, in accord with this policy, he permitted the Hebrew exiles to return to Palestine and rebuild their Temple. Cyrus also granted them many additional privileges and the Hebrews recognized him as a friend, a fact reflected in chronicles of the period wherein Cyrus is invariably pictured in a most favorable light. He was even looked upon as the prototype of the Messiah by some devout Hebrews.

Not all of the exiles immediately returned to Palestine; instead, a number continued to serve at the Persian court. Some of these were later leaders and prophets of the Restoration, without whose aid the Temple could never have been rebuilt. For this reason the century following the return of the exiles was dark with peril.

Monarchs succeeding Cyrus extended and consolidated the Persian Empire, which reached its zenith with the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses, son of Cyrus. Seven years after the death of Cyrus and following the reigns of Cambyses and the usurper, Smerdis, Darius the Mede ascended the Persian throne.

At this time the official tongue of the Empire west of the Euphrates was Eastern Aramaic, the "tongue of the Chaldeans," which exiled Hebrews adopted and made official in Palestine upon their return thither. It was already the commercial tongue of both Palestine and Egypt. Hebrew was thus displaced to become the language of the Hebrew Mysteries, while Aramaic continued in popular use until the time of Christ. Mani wrote his Scriptures in Aramaic in the third century A.D.

Authorities differ as to whether Zoroaster, the Wonder-Sage of Persia, appeared in history during the reign of Darius or of Cyrus, or even earlier. One account has it that he met his death in 583 B.C., only three years after the

downfall of Jerusalem and at the beginning of Judah's captivity. In a book detailing the life of Zoroaster — translated by Anquetil du Perrou, the Frenchman to whom the world is indebted for the discovery of the Zend Avesta — it is stated that the Persian Mystic lived for a time in Babylon where he taught philosophy, and that during this time the celebrated Grecian Sage, Pythagoras, was among his pupils. According to Hebrew legend Ezekiel taught both Zoroaster and Pythagoras.

An analysis of Hebrew literature of that period reveals, however, a marked distinction between the Hebrews under the influence of Cyrus at Babylon and those under the influence of Darius at Ecbatana, and under the latter's successors. The Babylonian ideal was clearly that of a world Messiah; that many of the returning exiles adhered to this ideal is shown by the tolerant spirit of the Book of Jonah and the Book of Ruth. Both of these plead for racial tolerance from their kinsmen of the Restoration, the one by showing God's mercy to Ninevah and the other by showing that David's great ancestress, Ruth, was an alien.

The second group of exiles preached a doctrine of racial and religious exclusiveness. In the course of time this caused their Messiah ideal to revert to the primitive concept of a national hero of the Jews, whose work for humanity at large was secondary to his patriotic function as leader of

the Jewish nation. The esoteric significance of this development will be discussed in a later chapter.

According to Dr. Rudolf Steiner, Zoroaster first appeared secretly in Babylonian Schools. According to Parsi tradition he was a Mede, and it was under the rule of the Median King Darius that Zoroastrianism became the state religion of Persia. As invariably happens in such cases, any religion raised to sole power in a nation tends to lose its spiritual purity. Associated with courts and nobles, with wealth and might, it becomes more and more exclusive, less and less responsive to the needs of the racial group and of humanity at large. Soon special privilege sets in and deterioration is inevitable.

Zoroaster himself was not the source of the extreme fanaticism and bigotry of the later Zoroastrian priesthood. This is shown by the persistence of certain esoteric doctrines attributed to him — doctrines that flow forth, not to Persians alone but to all men. Their God is the God of mankind, the Divine Father of multitudes. Thus, many centuries later, Prodicus the Gnostic claimed to possess the Secret Books of Zoroaster; and when holy Mani was sent forth by the Brotherhood of Light, he also laid claim to these Secret Books — which he combined with the New Testament, calling himself the Apostle of Jesus Christ!

Chaldean cultural influence permeated every phase of Persian life. The cosmos was portrayed symbolically in Chaldean ziggurats and Temples, and an astronomical motif was also everywhere in evidence. The city of Ecbatana in Media was built on the plan of the solar system. It was encircled by seven walls, each painted a different color; within the inmost circle stood the palace and treasure house, filled to overflowing with gold and precious stones. The halls of columns and the porticoes were of cedar and cypress covered with silver plate. Armed soldiers guarded every gate in each one of the seven encircling walls, so that the privacy of the king was inviolable.

The Persians believed that Ormuzd created the Genii which preside over the first six signs of the Zodiac — Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo — and that the soul under these was fortunate. But Ahriman created the rulers of the other six signs—Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces — and that the soul became aware of evil under Libra. In other words, the soul entered the Realm of Darkness with the sign following the Autumn Equinox and returned to the Realm of Light at the Spring Equinox. (*Morals and Dogma*, p. 490)

Christ of the Ages

Cyrus the Persian bowed to the ancient customs of Chaldea. At his ascension to the throne he did not neglect

to take the hand of God in the ancient Temple of Bal Marduk at Babylon; and he also ruled from Babylon. Darius the Mede ignored Chaldean custom. He did not take the hand of God at Babylon and he ruled from Ecbatana. Babylon, Susa and Ecbatana continued to be the administrative and commercial capitals of the Empire. Persepolis was the religious capital, where every spring a glorious festival was celebrated in the Zoroastrian manner.

Despite nationalization of the Zoroastrian religion under Darius, it continued to evidence the Chaldean influence from which it had drawn nourishment for so many centuries. Indeed, so thoroughly was Magianism interpenetrated by Chaldean astronomical theosophy that it is impossible to comprehend the former without a knowledge of astrology, the foundation whereon it rests. It is necessary, therefore, to pause for a reconstruction of the esoteric theory of astronomy in order to perceive what it is that sets the Christ apart from all other world Teachers, and wherein He is unique.

That stellar Bible, the Zodiac, reveals the Mystery of Salvation as it was known to the Magi and as it is still known to esotericism of our own time because of a phenomenon called by astronomers "the precession of the Equinoxes; the point at which the Sun crosses the celestial equator each spring in its passage from south to north

appears to move backward through the constellations of the Zodiac at the rate of one degree in seventy-two years, or through one sign of the Zodiac in about 2,160 years. During this zodiacal age of 2,160 years, world Teachers appear at intervals of approximately five hundred years. The thousand-year point is more important, however, since it marks the apex or middle point of an age, its culmination. The terminal quarter of the age is usually a time of cultural decay, while the stirrings of a new beginning are visible simultaneously. Thus, during the last five hundred years of the Arian Age the Christ came to release a fresh impulse into the life of humanity that would prepare it for a new culture, since the Persian, Greek, Roman and Celtic civilizations were falling into decay.

There are twelve constellations of the Zodiac, so the Sun's precession through the twelve requires approximately 25,000 years. This is called a Great Sidereal Year. Only once in 25,000 years does the first degree of the first sign of Aries coincide with the Vernal crossing. This last occurred about 500 A.D. when the Vernal Equinox preceded from the first degree of the constellation Aries into the last degree of the constellation Pisces.

Hence, a new Sidereal Cycle began at that time. That great Sidereal Year which came to its close about 500 A.D. belonged to Taurus and was followed by the Great Sidereal

Year of Aries. The poet Virgil referred to it when he wrote of the cycle of the ages which now was to run its course anew, for Roman astrologers knew that this critical point was at hand.

Aries is the sign of the Savior, of the Divine Shepherd, and it marks the beginning of things. Dante declared that the world was created when the Sun stood in Aries. Aries rules the head. As in the normal course an infant comes into the world head first, so in a spiritual birth the head (intelligence) must lead the way. Similarly Aries, as the Head of the Divine Man of the Zodiac, opens each new departure in evolution.

It has been claimed that renowned Teachers appear several times in each age, in every nation and among every people without exception, according to the need. They are always bearers of Wisdom, establishers of a new culture and civilization. In the words of Mani:

Wisdom and deeds have always from time to time been brought to mankind by the messengers of God. So in one age they have been brought by the messenger called Buddha to India, in another by Zaradusht to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon this revelation has come down, this prophecy in this last age, through me, Mani, the messenger of the God of Truth to Babylonia.

But there is always one Master Teacher for the entire Zodiacal age; and there is one Supreme Teacher for each Great Sidereal Year. The difference between the Teacher of the age who interprets and personifies its spirit and that One who comes at the beginning of a Great Sidereal Year is this: the latter is a Cosmic Messiah, whose influence affects the entire solar system of which our earth is a part. The Christ comes not to the earth only. He comes to the whole solar system, even to its furthest boundaries — not, indeed, that He appears in physical form upon other planets, but His Being, His Presence, makes Himself felt in such manner as is comprehensible to beings on each planet.

Not all renowned Teachers are Avatars. Avatars are few and far between. They are distinguishable from other Teachers by the cosmic reach of their Being and the universality of their Message.

The Man of Nazareth was an Avatar in a special sense. Other world Teachers belonged to the particular sign of the Zodiac ruling the equinoctial age at the time of their appearance. Therefore, they represented the spirit of the age. The Lord Christ, although He came as the Divine Shepherd of Aries, is Lord of all the Zodiac and of all ages. Hence, His words: "I am the light of the world" and I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it

more abundantly." He will surrender His kingdom to the Father alone, at the end of the Great Sidereal Year of Aries.

The Cosmic (archangelic) Christ appears but once during a planet's evolution. He comes at that point where life upon the planet turns back toward God, where the prodigal again seeks his Father's house. He is unique among all the world Avatars, and this is the secret of the Persian Mysteries. To no other ancient people was this verity more plainly or immediately revealed than to the Wise Men of Persia.

— ***Corinne Heline***