

Zoroaster: A Witness Against Pauline Dogma

(Dr Amtul Qudoos Farhat)

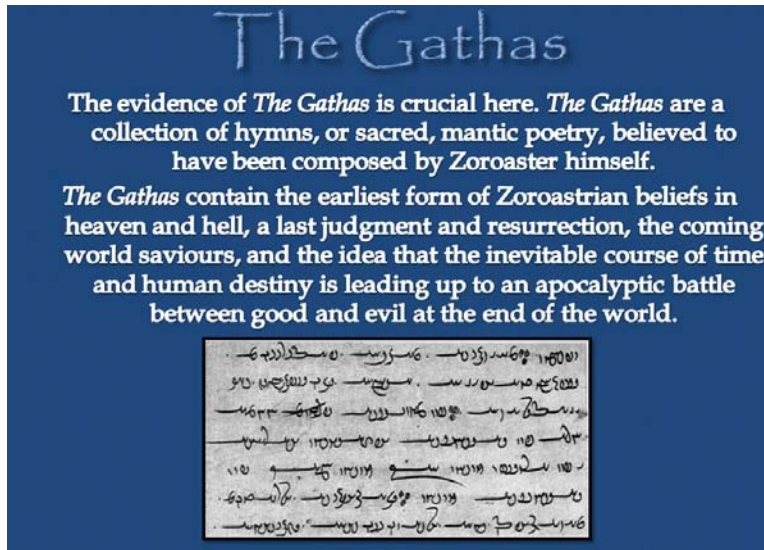
INTRODUCTION:

Trinity, the Original Sin and Atonement are the main elements of Pauline Dogma. Trinity means God is triune in nature with equal partnership of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the Triune godhead. The Original Sin according to Pauline philosophy is inherited by every human being from the time of Adam and Eve when they 'sinned'. Atonement is an automatic privilege available to followers of Jesus Christ thanks to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.



The teachings of Zoroaster stood for the unity of God and rejected the notion of the Original Sin and Atonement.ⁱ He taught that all humans are born on the nature of God and therefore are without any inherited sin. He also believed that human beings are born with free will through which they shape their destiny. By making wise choices through good actions, good thoughts and good words (path of Asha) they can find everlasting happiness or else become victims of Satan (Angra Mainyu or Ahraman) and remain unhappy and miserable. The ultimate life and fate of human beings depend upon how they guide their free will and what sort of choices they make.

This article provides some of the links to support Zoroastrian teachings against the Pauline Doctrines.



Zoroastrian holy books include Zend Avesta/Avesta, Gathas and Dasatir

GOD OF ZOROASTER:

Zoroaster's teachings are centred on one God called **Ahura Mazda** (meaning **Wise Lord**) who is the highest and alone is worthy of worship. He, according to the Gathas is the creator of heaven and earth; i.e., of the material and the spiritual world. He is the source of the alternation of light and darkness, the sovereign lawgiver, and the very centre of nature, as well as the originator of the moral order and judge of the entire world. The kind of polytheism found in the Indian Vedas (Hindu scriptures) is totally absent.ⁱⁱ

And:

“Ahura Mazda is Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Impossible for a normal human being to conceive, Unchanging, the Creator of everything and the source of all the goodness and happiness in the world. This supreme God is worshipped and his prophet is Zoroaster. Zoroaster is not worshipped but his directed path of truth and righteousness (*asha*) will lead men and women to God. ...



He (Ahura Mazda) is surrounded by six or seven beings, or entities called Amesha Spentas, “beneficent immortals” (like angels of monotheistic religions). The names of the Amesha Spentas frequently recur throughout the Gāthās and may be said to characterize Zoroaster’s thought and his concept of God”ⁱⁱⁱ

The role of these Beings is explained as follows:

“Zoroaster taught that Ahura Mazda (Who is also given many other names) was the one true God and the nature-gods or Daevas (devils) his people worshipped were false gods. Ahura Mazda reveals himself to man through six modes (called archangels by Western scholars). Three were masculine and three were feminine in nature. Together with Ahura Mazda they compose seven sources of reality. The masculine immortals are Asha (knowledge of the law of God), Vohu-Mana (love), and Kshathra (loving service). The three feminine immortals are Armaiti (piety), Haurvatat (wholeness or perfection) and Ameretat (immortality)”^{.iv}

MONOTHEISM OR DUALISM:

The fact that Ahura Mazda stands for God in a strictly monotheistic sense is apparent from the Dasatir (a work of the Zoroastrian sect of *ishraqiyyun* or the Illuminationists, written in an invented language) which describes following qualities of Ahura Mazda: “He is One. He is without an origin or end. He has no father or mother, wife or son. He is without a body or form. Nothing resembles Him. Neither the eye can behold Him, nor can the power of thinking conceive Him. He is above all that you can imagine. He is nearer to you than your own self.”^v

Several verses of Avesta praise Lord in a monotheistic fashion. Yasna calls Him Lord Creator (Yasna 31:7 & 11, 44:7, 50:11, 51:7), Most Mighty (Yasna 33:11, 45:6), Beneficent (Yasna 33:11, 48:3) and Bountiful. (Yasna 43:4,5,7,9,11,13,15, 44:2, 45:5, 46:9, 48:3).^{vi}

The Dualism in Zoroastrianism is a minor misconceived idea due to conceptual presence of Angra Mainyu or Ahriman or Satan who is said to reside in hell. Combating the goodness he is God’s adversary and a destructive spirit that introduces the evils of death, sickness, etc into

God's pure and beautiful world. This dualism is twofold – cosmic and moral. There is the cosmic dualism between God (Ahura Mazda) and the Angra Mainyu. There is also a moral duality that points towards the inherent good and evil sides of a human being. ^{vii}

BBC Religion website explains this cosmic and moral Dualism as follows:

*“Cosmic dualism refers to the ongoing battle between Good (Ahura Mazda) and Evil (Angra Mainyu) within the universe. It is important to understand that Angra Mainyu is not God's equal opposite; rather that Angra Mainyu is the destructive energy that opposes God's creative energy. This creative energy is called *Spenta Mainyu*. God created a pure world through his creative energy, which Angra Mainyu continues to attack, making it impure. Aging, sickness, famine, natural disasters, death and so on are attributed to this. With cosmic dualism we have life and death, day and night, good and evil. One cannot be understood without the other. Life is a mixture of these two opposing forces.*

*Moral dualism refers to the opposition of good and evil in the mind of mankind. God's gift to man was free will; therefore man has the choice to follow the path of Evil (*druj* - deceit) or the path of Righteousness (*asha* - truth). The path of Evil leads to misery and ultimately Hell. The path of Righteousness leads to peace and everlasting happiness in Heaven”.*^{viii}

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica Dualism in Zoroastrianism is incorrect. It states:

“His (God) position is often referred to as a dualism but this is incorrect. Zoroastrians believe that there is one universal and transcendent God, Ahura Mazda. He is said to be the one uncreated Creator to whom all worship is ultimately directed..... Though Zoroastrianism was never, even in the thinking of its founder, as aggressively monotheistic as, for instance, Judaism or Islam, it does represent an original attempt at unifying under the worship of one Supreme God.”^{ix}

According to Wikipedia:

“Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic religion which was once one of the largest religions on Earth, though the early Zoroastrianism is often regarded as Dualist..... By some scholars, the Zoroastrians ("Parsis" or "Zartoshtis") are credited with being the first monotheists and having had significant influence in the formation of current, larger world religions”.^x

Ahmadi Muslims view Zoroaster as a Prophet of God and describe the expression of Ahura Mazda, the God of goodness and Ahraman, the God of evil as merely referring to the coexistence of forces of good and evil enabling humans to exercise free will.

Hadhrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad; the second successor of the Promised Messiah (as) writes that Zoroaster was the prophet of God and anyone who believes in the Holy

Prophet Mohammad (Pbuh) must also believe in all previous prophets of God including Zoroaster. Previous books, including books of Zoroastrianism and Judaism mention the verse "In the name of God the merciful and beneficent" just as it is mentioned in the Holy Quran." ^{xi}

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (the fourth successor of the Promised Messiah(as)) in his book *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge & Truth* supports these views and relates Zoroaster as Prophet of God and describes his concept of God as similar to the concepts in Judaism, original Christianity and Islam. He explains how the doctrine of Duality is not accepted by all Zoroastrians. He writes: "There are those, though small in number today, who strongly defend the cause of Unity within Zoroastrianism. Most of these Unitarians must have been powerfully pulled towards Islam as it entered Persia. It should be remembered that apart from duality and the consequent fire worship, the rest of the Zoroastrian faith is much closer to Islam than to any other faith."^{xii}

Explaining the nature of Angra Mainyu, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad writes:

"One can safely deduce from an in-depth study of Zoroastrianism that what was later referred to as an independent God of darkness, was only identical to the concept of a devil found in traditional religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It seems that at some stage the followers of Zoroaster began to misunderstand his philosophy of good and evil, and took them to be the manifestation of two independent, conscious supreme beings that coexisted eternally. This is the essence of the Zoroastrian concept of dualism. A second glance at Zoroastrian philosophy can lead a careful observer to the conclusion that it is only a matter of different terminology which creates a false parallax between them".^{xiii}

He further writes:

"The role ascribed to **Satan** in other religions is ascribed to Ahraman in Zoroastrianism. Most likely the adherents of Zoroastrians of later ages got the concept of Satan mixed up with the idea of an independent god of evil, believed to be the supreme master of the forces of darkness. This one blunder on their part led to yet another blunder. Ahraman, the 'God of Evil', is portrayed as sharing eternity with the One and Only Supreme Creator."^{xiv}

According to other school of thoughts, Zoroastrianism should be regarded as quasi-dualistic, rather than wholly dualistic, since it predicts the ultimate triumph of Ahura Mazda^{xv}

Amidst all these concepts there is no proposition of a Triune Godhead aligning Zoroaster or Seven Spirits at par with Ahura Mazda and that refutes the Pauline Dogma of Trinity.

ZOROASTRIANISM AND THE INHERITED SIN:

There is no concept of inherited sin in Zoroastrianism. According to Zoroastrianism, man is born in a pure and sinless state and has complete freedom of will to co-operate with good or

evil and shape his destiny. It is possible for man to choose the path of righteousness (path of Asha given by Ahura Mazda) and achieve perfection in this life. Zoroastrians bear in mind that the teachings of Christianity were corrupted as it is evident from the following extract:

“The Parsis will bear in mind, that immediately after the days of the apostles of Christ, the inspired teachers of Christianity, many of the ministers and members of the professedly Christian Church, became corrupted both in their doctrines and practice, and this because of their neglect of the testimony of God..... We admit that St. Augustine was the first who brought this strange notion of original sin into credit.”^{xvi}

Human beings are born sinless and have spiritual nature as it is evident here:

“ There is no concept of inherited guilt or *original sin* in *Zoroastrianism*; if there were it would imply an imperfection in Ahura Mazda. On the contrary, the complete perfection of Ahura Mazda is demonstrated....”^{xvii}

Zoroastrians also believe that:

“Human beings have spiritual nature. The guardian spirits were created as human beings on the material plane of earth. From them were created the first primeval man whose seed produced first man and woman called Mashye and Mashyane. All the races of humanity have descended from them in due course of time”^{.xviii}

Even though the story of Adam and Eve is narrated in Zoroastrianism, it is without any mention to inherited sin or punishment to humanity. In the article *History of the Doctrine of Original Sin taken from C. G. Bretschneider's Manual of Dogmatic History*; Professor Henry Cowel writes:

“The doctrine of Zoroaster concerning the fall, bears some resemblance to the Mosaic account, yet differs from it very widely. According to Zoroaster, heaven was pledged to the first human pair on condition that they persevered in virtue, and would not worship any demons. At first, they were virtuous; but Ahriman (Satan) caused a demon to suggest to them evil thoughts, as e.g. whether he himself was not the Creator of the world. Through their belief of this lie, the first pair became like Ahriman, wicked and wretched. They went out to hunt and found a white goat whose milk they ate and found it very stimulating, but it was a poison to their bodies. The demon now gave them fruits which they ate and thereby lost a hundred fold of blessings and reduced themselves to a single one. Immortality, Zoroaster does not ascribe to the first pair. Of original sin and its punishment, death, he says nothing”^{.xix}

Also that “Ahura Mazda created man as good and only after being tempted by Aherman is likely to fall to evil. Contrary to this Christianity believes that God created man in His own

image; but by disobedience Adam sinned. And the original sin is found in all subsequent generations of man."^{xx}

ATONEMENT IN ZOROASTRIANISM

Zoroastrianism is the religion of Free Will. Unlike Pauline Christianity it never promises salvation or forgiveness to its followers through acceptance of Zoroaster or as a result of being a Zoroastrian alone. Zoroaster never promised to take their sins upon him.^{xxi}

"Zoroaster based his law on the eternal distinction between right and wrong. His law was therefore the law of justice, according to which the supreme good consists in truth, duty and right. Zoroaster taught providence, aimed at holiness, and emphasized creation. He maintained that salvation was only wrought out by an eternal battle between good and evil. The whole religion of the Zend-Avesta revolves around the person of Zoroaster, or Zarathustra. In the Gathas of the Yacna, the oldest of the second books, he is designated "the pure Zarathustra, good in thought, speech and work." Zarathustra only is said to know the precepts of AhuraMazda (Ormazd), and that he shall be made skillful in speech."^{xxii}

ZOROASTER NOT A SAVIOUR; EVERY PERSON IS HIS OR HER OWN SAVIOUR:

As quoted above, Zoroaster was not a saviour for everyone who followed him. He taught that every person is his or her own saviour. Prominent historian Israel Smith Clare in his book; *The Unrivalled History of the World: Ancient oriental nations*; explains it as follows:

"Humata,hukhta, hvarshata – "good thoughts, good words, good deeds, it is these that lead us to salvation." A significant and a noble phrase! If salvation is to be taken in a truly moral sense it must mean salvation from sin. He – and he only – who has attained to good thoughts, good words, good deeds is saved. And no one can do my good deeds for me nor think my good thoughts for me; they must be my very own. For, righteousness is a matter of the will, and no one can will righteousness for me, and in my place. And so the Zoroastrian Catechism asks: Then according to the teaching of our religion there is no saviour for one other than himself? And answer is of course not. Every man is the architect of his own fortune. He is his own saviour." Zarathustra has an honoured place, indeed. He is the great prophet who first revealed from God to man to true religion; and as such his picture is in most Parsee homes, but in no further sense is he regarded as a saviour."^{xxiii}



Three Central elements in Zoroastrianism: Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta ("Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds")

The Pahlavi Commentary; according to *the Sacred Books of the East: the Zend-Avesta by Friedrich Max Müller*; expressly distinguishes three sorts of atonement which include Patet or cleansing (Taubah and Istaghfaar) financial sacrifices and by the Sraosharana (Divine Inspiration). For some sins there is no atonement in this world:

..... "the atonement by money (khvastak), the atonement by the Sraosh6-£arana, and the atonement by cleansing. This third element of atonement is strictly religious. It consists in repentance, which is manifested by a vowal of the guilt and by the recital of a formula of repentance, the Patet. The performance of the Patet has only a religious effect: it saves the sinner from penalties in the other world, but not from those here below: it delivers him before God, but not before man. When the sacrilegious cleanser has repented his sin, he is not the less flayed and beheaded, but his soul is saved. Yet, although it has no efficacy in causing the sin to be remitted, the absence of it has power to cause it to be aggravated.

Thus far for sins that can be atoned for. There are some that are anaperetha, 'inexpiable,' which means, as it seems, that they are punished with death here below, and with torments in the other world"^{xxiv}

THREEFOLD PATH OF ZOROASRIANISM3:

Zoroaster explained the path of goodness (Asha) and path of adversary (Druj). Zoroastrianism path of Asha is active participation in life through good thoughts, good words, and good deeds to ensure happiness and to keep chaos at bay. This active participation is a central element in Zoroaster's concept of free will.

Man will reap what he sows since he has been endowed with free will and power to choose. It does not reflect the Christian philosophy that a man is atoned by Grace and not by his works.

The accountability and reward is exactly what the Holy Quran teaches:

And every soul will be fully rewarded for what it did. (Al-Quran 39:71)

... Every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned, and they shall not be wronged. (Al-Quran 3:26).

Beware of the Day when every soul shall find itself confronted with *all* the good it has done and *all* the evil it has done. (Al-Quran 3:31).

Many other verses of the Holy Quran deliver the same message (6:71, 10:55, 13:34, 13:43, 16:12).



'So let all the deeds he doeth be henceforth good, O Zarathushtra! a full atonement for his sin is effected by means of the Religion of Mazda.'

(ZEND AVESTA: VENDIDAD
(English): Fargard 3. the Earth)

Therefore Zoroastrianism is closely related to Judaism and Islam where accountability and individual's judgment is the main principle. Concept of Satan, angelology, demonology, a deliverer, future life, Paradise and judgment in Zoroastrianism support the accountability process.

ⁱ *The Zoroastrian Diaspora: religion and migration:* By John R. Hinnells; p: 575

ⁱⁱ <http://knol.google.com/k/zia-shah/zoroaster-a-witness-against-pauline/1qhnhcumbuy/316#>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.all-art.org/world_literature/zarathustra1.htm

^{iv} http://urantiabook.org/archive/readers/601_zoroastrianism.htm

^v http://theunjustmedia.com/Islam/Non-Muslim/introduction_to_zoroastrians.htm

^{vi} http://saif_w.tripod.com/interfaith/general/god/inzoroastrianism.htm

^{vii} <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/religion/zoroastrianism.html>

-
- ^{viii} <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian/beliefs/dualism.shtml>
- ^{ix} <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/390101/monotheism>
- ^x <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monotheism#Zoroastrianism>
- ^{xi} *The Long Commentary of the Holy Quran Vol 1, p16-17 & P142* <http://www.alislam.org/quran/tafseer/?page=16®ion=T1>
- ^{xii} http://www.alislam.org/library/books/revelation/part_2_section_5.html
- ^{xiii} http://www.alislam.org/library/books/revelation/part_2_section_5.html
- ^{xiv} http://www.alislam.org/library/books/revelation/part_2_section_5.html
- ^{xv} <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/society/A0862071.html>
- ^{xvi} *The Pársí religion: as contained in the Zand-Avastá* By John Wilson; p:374
- ^{xvii} *Zoroastrianism: an introduction to an ancient faith* - Page 42 by Peter Clark
- ^{xviii} <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/zoroastrianism/beliefs.asp>
- ^{xix} *The Oberlin quarterly review, Volume 3*, By Oberlin College, p: 350; *Article xvii; History of the Doctrine of Original Sin* <http://books.google.ca/books?id=77gRAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- ^{xx} *A Comparative Study of Religions*; By Y. Masih; p:44
- ^{xxi} <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/zoroastrianism/beliefs.asp>
- ^{xxii} *The Unrivalled History of the World: Ancient oriental nations* By Israel Smith Clare; SECTION IV.—ZOROASTRIANISM AND MAGISM. page:250
- ^{xxiii} *Cultural and Religious Heritage of India: Zoroastrianism* By Suresh K. Sharma; p:62
- ^{xxiv} *Reference: The Sacred Books of the East: The Zend-Avesta, pt. 1, The Vendiad* By Friedrich Max Müller; page: xcix