

# DUALISM IN THE DENKARD

Dr. Kersey Antia, Mar 20, 2020

It needs to be recognized that the cosmic dualism depicted in the Pahlavi texts of the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D. is not the ethical dualism expounded in the Gathas circa 1200-1800 B.C. Unfortunately however the western scholars as a rule have come to describe Zoroastrianism as basically dualist since Pahlavi dualism does indeed display many though not all the characteristics of typical dualism, though most scholars stop short of classifying its dualism in the same rank as that of Manichaeism which is overly dualistic. However, they would not think of equating the teachings of Christ, Moses or Buddha with what some of their followers proclaimed 2000 years or so later. In view of Zoroaster's prehistoric times it becomes even more complicated as his teachings could be liable to be misjudged, misunderstood or misinterpreted by its own followers over time and also liable to be influenced by alien ideas over time.

Above all, scholars have not taken into consideration the political, polemical reasons for the unforeseen and urgent thrust upon them needed to develop it.

Many scholars find it differing substantially even from the Sasanian dualism. I for one wonder if the Sasanians were even aware of various myths on which it was since I have never come across such myths. It is not surprising therefore that one of the best Parsi scholars, Avesta of Pahlavi, B. J. Anklesaria, compared them to mythical stories after making their translation which is acclaimed as one of the best.

The Zoroastrian priests were suddenly and summarily called upon by their new alien despots to defend their faith against their absolute monotheism the world had not hitherto even heard of and they had no choice but to come up with showing some vulnerable premises in it as best and as quickly as they could even though not only their resources were fast dwindling but also their numbers had more than halved by then as I have noted in this context and they were surely under no illusion that to the victor belongs the truth and so they would not in any way be able to win an edge over the masters. Despite it all, they made as good an attempt to portray already their two and a half-millennia old monotheistic beliefs as best as they could, albeit in their medieval mode they were accustomed to. It is not too hard to see the real essence of what they were telling their alien rulers they had never had before: how can a good God create evil and tolerate evil to spread in the world except by the principle of Free Will and so on as Dastur Adurfarnbay does in the *Denkard* V, 23-24. In so many ways he describes Ohrmazd as

completely in charge of the universe and the creation and Ahriman or the opponent as “moving from place to place,” and “running about without intent and purpose,” “he was not seeking something in particular that he came to the border of this essence of light. So the opponent has no purpose and his acts are those of an idiot:” “As he had happened upon Light in unawareness, he had to be counted as something of a different essence.” “He is full of hatred, lust, greed, envy, shame, etc., etc.---his lawless nature, his foolish struggling and the combination of all these.” He is incapable of “doing” anything “In the end he will not be able to return through time, which will then be limitless.” Ohrmazd “does not allow him (Opponent/Ahriman) inside any power”, meaning he has not power over his movements. Ohrmazd let him in “because it benefited his creatures and because the Opponent would be tested in sectioned time ---- the extent to which he would suffer pain from us in the mixture, the visibility of all kinds of victories by the gods, and the fact that he would not be capable of returning to the struggle ----are all exposed in this *Denkard* ----there was a reason to let him in (the universe)”. It is by that same power of God that he will be cast out and fall back into the Emptiness, – completely defeated, helpless, completely crippled, --- having had his struggle cut off, and without hope.” “He will not be able to return. Also, he is completely bound in ---in terror and dread by chains and ropes.” Thus, Ahriman represents both the evil tendencies in humans and the need to chain and overcome them as to be like God (Yasna 34) especially during the Mixture Period when the good and the evil vie with each other to succeed. As I have already noted, at the root of the Pahlavi dualism lies the Gathic message in an albeit garbled medieval manner.