

Oral Versus Written Tradition

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There is no guarantee that human errors and omissions will not be made even when scriptures are committed to writing. Just stray examples cited here should validate such possibilities. For instance, I ran into two such cases simply by chance in “The Hebrew Bible and Qumran” (edited by James H. Charlesworth, Bibal Press, Texas, 2000, pp. 16-17 and 132-33). It also explains how such errors can often occur, such as when the scribe misses a line, or many scribes work on the same text over many generations, or due to oversight (parablepsis) which can occur when two lines have similar beginnings (homoioarkton).

Harmonious Relations Between Judaism and Zoroastrianism

In his paper “scripture Versus Contemporary Needs: A Sasanian Zoroastrian Example,” *L. Rev.* 153, 2006, (*CAPDOZO Law Review*, Vol. 28il, pp.153-169), Yaakov Elmen sees such cultural exchanges leading to “Shades of Rabbinic Judaism” in Sasanian priests relaxing even the strictest rules regarding the observance of menstruation mandated by the Verdidad and even allowing women to go for religious training, to tend a fire or perform the Yasne (Yazishn) ceremony even when menstruating (Avestan *Herbedestan* 5.4-5 and 22.1-5). He notes that “this trope of narrowing the basis of disputes between authorities is well-known from rabbinic literature as Avaraham Goldberg has pointed out in *EHQUERET Talmud I* 135, Y. Zusman and David Rosental, editors, 1991.

DUALISM IN CHRISTIANITY

The attention enjoyed by the Satan in Christianity is quite evident, as observed by Richard Woods: “ In the specifically religious arena, charismatic Catholics, pentecostal Protestants and fundamentalists of all persuasions, from Jesus Freaks to Bill Graham and Key 73.” However, he seems to believe that Pope Paul VI has heightened this phenomenon as he saw “strange new possessions by the devil all around him” as the

Pontiff was perceived by many as “countering theological tendencies which minimized Satanology.” (pp. 11-12). In the New Testament Woods sees a developed notion of Satan as a single, supreme spirit of evil, the tempter and the accuser and notes that with the exception of 2 and 3 John, “every work in the New Testament mentions the devil in no uncertain terms.” “The Devil”, The Thomas More Press, 1973, p. 69).

While Woods does not trace the origin of the concept of Satan to Persian influences, the facts as he provides clearly attest to it, such as when he observes that “The huge military organization of later Christian demonology is not present, not even in Chapters 12 and 20 of Revelation, the most detailed account of the devil's persecution of the church in the new Testament. Nor is there here any reference to the creation and fall of the angels, despite the identification of the “red dragon” with the serpent of Genesis, Satan and the devil. The cosmic conflict portrayed is accepted by most scholars as a reference to the devil's attempt to destroy the infant church.”

What he observes further supports the general view of scholars that it was the books of Enoch that introduced Persian notions about the Devil/Satan in Christianity: “The great stories of Satan's test, his sin, the struggle against the faithful angels, and the defeat of Satan and his followers is actually located *outside* scripture, primarily in the books of Enoch. That, of course, does not make them false. Just nonscriptural.” (p. 70).

Even so, being an external influence, unlike the Persian doctrine, “Christian doctrine is not very specific about the devil and the demons. But from the statements of the councils, particularly the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the Council of Trent in 1545, and the First Vatican Council in 1869, several important teachings emerge. First, the devil exists. Although never explicitly defined and finding no mention in the creeds, the devil is included in the creation of the angels, whose existence *was* defined by both the Fourth Lateran and the First Vatican Council (Denz. 428, 1783). Likewise, the Fourth Lateran Council declared that since God created all things good, the devil and the demons became evil of their own accord” (p. 71), which is so analogous to the unambiguous Zoroastrian (Yasna 30.6, etc.) that the devil (Daevas) chose to be evil.

As Woods notes, the very mission of Jesus Christ was to destroy the power of Satan. “The New Testament is specifically insistent on this: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8;

cf. also, John 12:31; Heb. 2:14; Col. 1:13; 2:15). This is confirmed by the creeds and councils, even though explicit mention of Satan is never made, the reason for which remains a fascinating mystery to me.” (p. 72).

As Woods points out, “the devil and the demons are in no way equal to God,” as in the Manichaean and the Albigensian scriptures or as “occasionally echoed in the fervent exhortations of extreme right wing fanatics.” Such a notion is clearly laid down in the Zoroastrian scriptures such as in Yasna 30 and 45 and even in the much later texts as often held by me in various writings.

“The opinion, suggested by Origen at the beginning of the third century, that the devil and his angels would eventually repent and be reconciled to God was condemned by the Synod of Constantinople in 543 (Denz. 211). Revived a century ago by Victor Hugo and Papini, and more recently by the young members of the Process Church of the Final Judgment, this idea has no real scriptural basis.” (p. 73).

What Woods notes further unwittingly draws another parallel with Zoroastrian belief in the distinct separateness between the good and the evil (Yasna 30.3). Woods further notes that “the devil cannot create, he can only destroy” (p. 131), which is so expressly stated in the Zoroastrian texts a millennium and a half before Christ.

Peter J. Awn, writes about the Yezidis in an Appendix to his Book, “Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1983. pp. 196-8). He too lays no claim to definitiveness and sees it as only one step leading to a thorough analysis of the Iblis tradition in Islamic mysticism. He sees the need for more research for obtaining an accurate picture of Iblis' role. He finds the Yezidis involvement with Iblis even more extensive than that of the Ismailis. Although much of their theology belies the fact, he posits they have developed from Sunni Islam.

Their scripture is no longer the Quran but consists of texts known as “*The Book of Revelation* and *The Black Book*. But they “do not in any way play the prominent role in Yezidi religious life as does the Qur'an in Islam.”

Their most revered saint was the Sufi *Shaykh* 'Adi Ibn Musafir who laid down Yezidi theology (1162 C.E.). His tomb at Lalesh is the focal point of the community's pilgrimage. Shaykh 'Adi proclaimed the total transcendence of the Good God; yet He it is who created Iblis/Ash-Shaytan, which, however, represents Islamic and not Zoroastrian tradition.

According to Awn, “The transcendent Creator God, moreover, is passive and disinterested in sustaining the every day functioning of the universe. He has, therefore, an alter-ego who performs these executive functions called Malak Tawus, Peacock Angel. Who is this Peacock Angel? None other than Iblis/Ash-Shaytan who has been restored to his previous glory after his fall from grace, which, however, created an impression, because of the prominence of Malak Tawus in the Yezidi system that the Yezidis are devil-worshippers though quite the opposite is true because they deny the existence of evil and Hell. The chief angel who faltered has been restored through his loving devotion to the God of Goodness. His redemption therefore proves that evil is not an enduring metaphysical reality. As a matter of fact, the Yezidis are not even supposed to say the name Iblis/Ash-Shaytan and therefore he is known only as Malak Tawus.

Hell and evil are not perceived as a permanent state of damnation which may be sound Zoroastrianism but their belief in successive reincarnations for eventually attaining the state of perfection does not. He agrees with Massignon that the Yezidis drew much inspiration from the life and teaching of Al-Hallaj. Shaykh 'Adi and the Yezides believe that both Al-Hallaj and Iblis were pardoned because of their love and single-minded dedication to God. The Yezidi pantheon has seven sinjaq, bronze (or iron) peacocks, the seventh represents Al-Hallaj, who is regarded as an eschatological figure who will return at the end of time to purify the world when the final apocalypse will occur.

Al-Hallaj is also deeply involved in popular Yezidi lores. The injunction against the Yezidi women using narrow-necked jars that gurgle when drinking from it is linked to a Hallajian legend. After he was put to death, Al-Hallaj's body was burnt and the ashes were cast into the river. When his sister came to the river and drew some water to drink, she became pregnant with Al-Hallaj himself. Thereafter women refrained from using such jars as its gurgling sound being the voice of Al-Hallaj may make them pregnant.

ENOCHIC ROOTS OF THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY

While discussing the Qumran community it is essential to examine its Enochic roots, which fortunately is very aptly done by James H. Charlesworth (editor) in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Vol. One, (Princeton Theological Seminary,

Biblical Press, Texas, 2000, pp. 67-92). Enochic literature is seen as a non-conformist priestly tradition vis-a-vis the Zadokite Judaism which held that disruptive forces of evil and impurity are not unleashed but caged within certain boundaries and are controllable to the extent the human beings do not trespass them. The Enochic ideology is directly opposed to it as it saw the origin of evil as well as impurity (which Zoroastrianism too links with evil) in rebellious angels. While Zadokites denied such a notion as they held that the Satan was a member of the heavenly court, Enochic Judaism ultimately led to "the creation of the concept of the devil" (p.69), thereby removing the control of evil forces from human control unlike in Zadokite Judaism.

Initially at least, "Enochians were an opposition party within the Temple elite, not a group of separatists" (p. 70). But "By claiming that the good universe created by God had been corrupted by an angelic rebellion and by disregarding the Mosaic covenant, Enochic Judaism made a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the Second Temple and of its priesthood" (p. 71).

The Enochic book of Jubilee introduced a special doctrine of election which identified evil with impurity (not unlike in Zoroastrianism) leading to a strict and almost dualistic theology, which in turn may have become the closest link to the Qumran texts" (p. 75). Eventually the Enochians became the Essenes, "as the chosen among the chosen" as declared by the proto-Epistle of Enoch (I Enoch 91: 1-94: 5; 104:7-105:2) and without betraying their loyalty to the people of Israel, they developed a separate society and identity within Israel (p. 78).

Dualism seems to be the response of the Qumran community when it later felt alienated from both Jewish society as well as from their Enochic parent movement, though it retained the idea of predestination emphasized in the book of Jubilee and abandoned any notion of the freedom of human will. (See J. Duhaime, "Dualistic Reworking In the Scrolls from Qumran, Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 1987, pp. 32-56).

However, the Epistle of Enoch sharply criticizes the Qumran doctrine of individual predestination (p. 82), which may at first sight seem rather surprising since the Enochic tradition had from its very origin consistently held that "human beings are victims of evil." However, its goal was "to absolve the merciful God from being responsible for a world that the Enochians deemed evil and corrupted." They tried to

allow the two contradictory concepts the Scylla of an absolute determinism and the Charybdis of an equally absolute anti-determinism to somehow co-exist. But opting for either one of it would render the entire Enochic system into “the condemnation of God as the source of evil or as the unjust scourge of innocent creatures,” (p.83). The Epistle of Enoch “had a lasting impact in shifting the emphasis from the ancient myth of the angelic sin to the mechanisms through which evil surfaces within each individual, and therefore, to the possibility of controlling the emergence of evil and resisting its temptation. Its end-result is viewed as its “greatest success” since it provided an alternative to the Qumran doctrine (p. 84).

The devil, Belial placed “seven spirits of deceit” in every human soul which interact against the seven Godly spirits in each soul, (p.85) which also could have been taken as it was from a Zoroastrian text.

“The distance of the anthropology of the Testaments (of The Twelve Patriarchs) from the Qumran doctrine of the spirits could not be greater,” since the former claims that “God is not the source of both the good and evil spirits,” (p. 85), which may also echo Zoroastrian influence scholars generally detect in the Enochian doctrine.

The Similitudes of Enoch written in the first century BCE, most probably after the Enochites parted from Qumran, vehemently emphasizes “human responsibility.” It assigns centrality to the figure of the messiah “that was unknown in the previous Enochic tradition and would remain foreign to the Qumran Community,” apparently because of its insistence on predestination (p.88). The Enochic tradition makes it explicitly clear that “the merciful and just God cannot be directly involved in any manifestation of evil, from its origin and spread to its final destruction,” (p.89), a concept straight from Zoroastrian dualism, as it were. Enochian Judaism allowed the Satan to rebel and allowed the human being to choose between good and evil and emphasized the freedom of God to bring deliverance, since “evil is against God's will.” Literary evidence leaves no doubt that the Enochic doctrine with “its persistent influence in Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism shines in comparison with the grim isolation of the Qumran stream” (pp. 91-92). Such a development with Judaism leading to the spread of Enochic concepts that are generally, if not uniformly, confirmed by scholars as evincing many Zoroastrian beliefs may well explain how they entered Judaism even after the post-exilic era.