

ZOROASTER IN GNOSTIC LITERATURE

Dr. Kersey Antia, Mar 6, 2020

The name of Zoroaster has been popular throughout the ages and it often pops up in Gnostic circles. For instance a *Book of Zoroaster* is cited in the *Apocryphon of John* 19, 6-10 as an authority for its correlation of bodily passions with Archonic angels. The Coptic text Zoroastrians explicitly represents the seer Zostrianos as Zoroaster whom it regards as one of the earthly representations of the heavenly Seth. As a matter of fact, Zoroaster was often identified with Seth or Baruch. Mani also represented Zoroaster as the manifestation of the Apostle of Light. Such a link between Seth, (or Baruch), Zoroaster and Jesus had become popular in Gnostic and Christian circles and may have inspired a Syriac Christian text, the *Prophecy of Zardusht*. Only two versions of it are still extant but both do not provide the source for it which however may be much older. It portrays Zoroaster as predicting the coming of Christ and fully supporting Christ's mission, declaring "I and he are one." Many writers interpreted such a prophecy as an opportunistic tendency towards linking Zoroastrian and Christian eschatologies on the basis of the quintessential Zoroastrian prophecy for in the coming of the Saoshyant, Savior/Messiah, "born of a virgin mother", thus encouraging Zoroastrians to see in Jesus the fulfillment of their eschatological aspirations and prophecy and thus inducing them to adopt Christianity as a fulfillment of their own faith as has been done often in modern times, as reviewed by me elsewhere. Since Nestorian evangelists such as Theodore Bar Konai or Solomon of Basra are associated with the survival or revival of this ancient text, its evangelical intentions are quite obvious, but its roots may lie in a more ancient Gnostic text, the "Prophecy of Zardusht" apparently being a "cosmetic adaptation" of it. John C. Reeves sees it as such, (*Heralds of that Good Realm* Leiden, Brill, 1996, 126-29) and in a personal communication dated October 28, 1997 he regarded it "actually as a Christian forgery (at least in its present form)." Nevertheless, it somehow indicates a subconscious awareness of the stark similarity between the two faiths, as elaborately established by Mary Boyce in her various writings.