



photo credit: www.kdhamptons.com

Monticello

Home of Thomas Jefferson



photo credit: Bruno Barbey

Mausoleum of Cyrus the Great

Built ca. 530 BC *

JEFFERSON AND CYRUS

HOW THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF AMERICA, IN THEIR OWN WORDS, WERE INSPIRED BY CYRUS THE GREAT

SYNOPSIS OF UPCOMING BOOK

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Though twenty-three centuries apart in time, continents apart in space, their systems of republican and monarchical government ostensibly diametric opposites of each other, the Founding Fathers of America and the founders of the Iranian state were close in the realm of ideas - ideas that underlie systems of governance vying to institute liberty and justice among mankind. America's Founding Fathers were avid readers of Cyrus the Great's biography, the *Cyropaedia*, written by a student of Socrates, Xenophon, being the masterpiece among his works. Leaders at any age stand to benefit from inspiration, which plants its seeds for later manifestation and realization. The *Cyropaedia* describes Cyrus's traits of character that made him into the ideal ruler. It is an exposition of timeless qualities of leadership. Such inspiration that the Founding Fathers drew from Cyrus, amidst all the ancient and modern sources they were exposed to, was because they found his ideas and aspirations resonating with their own inmost beliefs, values and convictions. The *Cyropaedia* has served as the World's manual of leadership, for Alexander, Scipio, Cicero, Caesar, Machiavelli who read and drew inspiration from it, to the US Founding Fathers and on to our own times. In the estimation of Peter Drucker, widely recognized as the father of modern management science, the first book on leadership, *Cyropaedia*, remains the best book on leadership. His biographer and student William Cohen reports: "Despite all the books published on leadership by well known academic researchers and successful CEOs, Drucker never altered his opinion. Xenophon was still the best."¹

Plato and Xenophon were the two main students of Socrates whose works are extant and through whose works, aside from other minor fragments, Socrates is known. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and many others over the course of history held Xenophon in far greater esteem than Plato, for Xenophon's clarity and forthrightness and for the application of philosophy to practice.

There is perhaps no more fitting appellation for Thomas Jefferson than the *Apostle of Americanism*, as he has aptly been described. In characterizing the place of Jefferson in the American ethos the late Gore Vidal stated to National Public Radio:

"If there is such a thing, which I think there is and others perhaps do not, as an American spirit, then he is it. . . . And it still goes 'round; it still inspires, and it is still the essence of whatever spirit we still have and that we once had, indeed."²

Long before the ancestors of Americans and Europeans emerged from the dark ages, their older cousins had established a state hither East which they named, after themselves, *Aryana*, denoting 'the *Land of Aryans*'. In the course of time the term *Aryana* underwent phonetic changes to evolve to today's *Iran*. The term "Aryan" had no physical connotations prior to its re-adoption in Europe as a self-designation in the 19th century. Originally, in Old Persian, it simply meant *noble*. In Sanskrit, ancient cousins of the Iranians in India also referred to themselves as "Aryan". In their language it also means *noble*. In the language of their distant cousins in far west Europe, Old Irish, its cognate *eire* likewise means *noble*.

In due course, in the southern and warmer reaches of *Aryana*, in a region called *Parsa*, being roughly at center of today's *Persia*, arose Cyrus who created and with his successors for over two centuries maintained the World's first multi-national, multi-lingual multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic *Unity of States*, much as the United States to-day. Cyrus was also the gentile *Savior* of the Jews, and other nations and tribes hitherto in a state of captivity or slavery. In the Bible, in Isaiah 45, Cyrus the Great is *Messiah* to the Jews, a rendition in English of the Hebrew *mashiah* which comes to us because the Greeks and Romans largely lacked the sound represented by the digraph "sh". Cyrus fulfilled the function of *Anointed of the Lord*, which later Jesus came to fulfill.

Our central link between the Founders of America and Cyrus and his successors, the *Cyropaedia*, is augmented by accounts of the Bible and other sources, including inscriptions remaining of Cyrus's successors, such as those that Darius commissioned to be hewn '*in Aryan*'³ and in other languages. The discovery and decipherment of inscriptions extant of Cyrus himself postdates the American Revolution. The proclamation of freedom on the Cyrus Cylinder, inscribed on a small clay tablet from ca. 537 BC, has been taken on a tour in the US on loan from the British Museum. A replica of the Cyrus Cylinder is kept at the Security Council in the United Nations and is regarded as the world's first draft, or the first charter, of human freedom and human rights.

Jefferson made it requisite for students seeking to enter the University he founded, the University of Virginia, the ability to find their way around the works of Xenophon and classical authors in the

original Greek or Latin. Xenophon describes Cyrus in this respect and how he was perceived by his followers:

“His own temperance and the knowledge of it made others more temperate. When they saw moderation and self-control in the man who above all others had licence to be insolent, lesser men were the more ready to abjure all insolence of their own. But there was this difference, Cyrus held, between modesty and self-control: the modest man will do nothing shameful in the light of day, but the man of self-control nothing base, not even in secret. Self-restraint, he believed, would best be cultivated if he made men see in himself one who could not be dragged from the pursuit of virtue by the pleasure of the moment, one who chose to toil first for the happy-hearted joys that go hand-in-hand with beauty and nobleness.”⁴

The morals practiced and preached by Jefferson reflect how the account of Xenophon may have inspired him. In a letter to his grandson Francis W. Eppes in 1816 Jefferson wrote:

“Never suffer a thought to be harbored in your mind which you would not avow openly. When tempted to do anything in secret, ask yourself if you would do it in public. If you would not, be sure it is wrong. . . . Whenever you feel a warmth of temper rising, check it at once and suppress it, recollecting it will make you unhappy within yourself and disliked by others.”⁵

When in Paris, Jefferson, at the invitation of America’s friend Lafayette, came to exercise an influence on the French Revolution in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. Early on as US minister to France, Jefferson, sent a collection of books in two crates to James Madison, his close friend and political lieutenant, on the various forms of government and pertinent histories and philosophies known then, ancient and modern⁶. Jefferson continued that practice, sending books to Madison as well as his predecessor Dr Franklin and others. Madison was pleased and grateful to Jefferson for his selections. When it came time in 1787, Madison had made himself most knowledgeable in the subject of governance and ready to lead the Philadelphia Convention, which he planned successfully to lead to the formation and adoption of the U.S. *Constitution*. Madison managed to persuade George Washington, initially reluctant and not knowing what was in the plans, to attend, which assured the attendance of all others.

Along with the *Declaration of Independence* of the United States, the *Federalist Papers* have since served as an aid to first ratify then interpret the Constitution. Central to this collection has been Federalist Paper No. 10, authored by Madison, published in 1787, the year most delegates from the colonies agreed on the new Constitution. Titled *The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection*, the distinction there is clearly drawn by Madison between a

crude democracy such as that in ancient Athens, where a mob tried and executed Socrates by forcing him to drink poison, and a *Republic*, which the founders meant the United States to be. The Founding Fathers ensured the term 'democracy' as understood then would be absent from the Constitution.

Madison wrote a treatise showing the failures of prior forms of government, in which he exempted that of the Persians. In the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon contrasts other forms of government with that of Cyrus, in words that at any point in time over the course of history seem as fresh and relevant as though written just days prior:

“We have had occasion before now to reflect how often democracies have been overthrown by the desire for some other type of government, how often monarchies and oligarchies have been swept away by movements of the people, how often would-be despots have fallen in their turn, some at the outset by one stroke, while those who have maintained their rule for ever so brief a season are looked upon with wonder as marvels of sagacity and success . . . As long, therefore, as we followed these reflexions, we could not but conclude that man is by nature fitted to govern all creatures, except his fellow-man. But when we came to realise the character of Cyrus the Persian, we were led to a change of mind.”⁷

Thus Madison writes in Federalist Paper 51 (1788):

”Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths.”⁸

John Adams stated much the same as Madison, as in his dialogue with John Taylor, a critic:

“Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.”⁹

The separation of church and state and freedom of religion under Cyrus is augmented by records of his successors such as Darius. Cyrus's rule was secular, as related in the *Cyropaedia* and other classical sources, in contrast to that of the Babylonians and others before him. In this respect records of ancient Iran had caught Thomas Jefferson's attention. In his extensive studies in various fields of knowledge and inquiry, and in his initial process of developing as an intellectual, then progressing to a polymath, Jefferson made notes of passages in the various books he read that were of interest to him, passages he manifestly knew he wanted to refer to again, much the same as scholars reading innumerable books do today but use copying machines and cameras. His collection of notes became Jefferson's *Commonplace Books*. He, as scholars today, did not record

what he already knew or was obvious, but made note of what was new but appealed to him, for later reference. The separation of church and state were of keen interest to Jefferson and to others in his age including Voltaire, whose great work on history, *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations*, was standard reading for intellectuals in the Age of Enlightenment, going through no less than 27 editions at the time. Note no. 852 in Jefferson's *Literary Commonplace Book*, which he took from Voltaire's *Essay on the Manners and Spirit of Nations*, indicates his interest in the issue of separation of church and state. It is in the aftermath of invasion and forcible conversion of Iran to Islam. The Magi, who the gospel of Matthew reports went bearing gifts to find the infant Jesus, were the priests of Zoroastrianism. Jefferson made this note:

“Then that ancient religion of the Magi fell, that the conqueror Darius had respected, as he never disturbed the religion of conquered peoples. The Magi regarded their religion as the most ancient and the most pure. The knowledge that they had of mathematics, astronomy and of history augmented their enmity toward the conquerors the Arabs, who were so ignorant. They [the Magi] could not abandon their religion, consecrated for so many centuries. Then most of them retreated to the extremities of Persia and India. It is there that they live today, under the name Gaurs or Guebres.”¹⁰

Gaur, or *Guebre*, is a derogatory term in Islam, likely deriving from Arabic *kafir* meaning infidel,¹¹ referring to Zoroastrian, an adherent of the pre-Islamic religion of Iran.

As to the period in which Jefferson may have been influenced by this, the chief authority on Jefferson's *Literary Commonplace Book*, Gilbert Chinard of France, who became a professor at Johns Hopkins and eventually at Princeton, has worked out the range of dates for Jefferson's notes in said book writes : "it seems that we may assume with reasonable certainty : that the bulk of the *Commonplace Book* represents the notes taken by Jefferson on law, political science, and religion during his formative years." That is to say the years from about the early 1760s to the early 1770s when Jefferson was 20-35 years in age, preceding his authorship of the *Declaration of Independence*, *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* as well as the sole book he has left behind, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1981).

Jefferson drafted the *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* in 1777, which through Madison's close collaboration with him was later enacted into law and became established as a cornerstone of the Bill of Rights in the US Constitution. Initially, in 1779-82, Jefferson's statute for Religious Freedom encountered opposition in the Virginia legislature since it deprived vested interest of their privileges. Later, while Jefferson was ambassador to France, he worked closely with his longtime friend and fellow Virginian Madison on the issues of concern during the formative stages of the revolutionary government, their letters coded such that the British would not be able to spy on them along the route. Madison managed to gather the support of minority sects and get the statute passed through the Virginia legislature ca. 1786. With the encouragement and support of

Jefferson he also made it part of the First Amendment in the Constitution. The prevalence and usage of the phrase *separation of church and state* to-day in modern English and in other languages in and outside the US is traceable back to that statute. The freedom and full civil rights that minority sects, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, and members of numerous other faiths as well as atheists enjoy under US law to-day is directly attributable to Thomas Jefferson's *Statute for Religious Freedom in Virginia* which led to the separation of Church and State in the US Constitution.

The underlying, recurrent theme in the *Cyropaedia* and nearly all of Xenophon's works is virtue. As stated aptly by George Cawkwell of Oxford University, the *Cyropaedia* is "a delineation of virtue as embodied in the person of the founder of the Persian empire."¹² The traits of character of Cyrus in the *Cyropaedia* derive from Zoroastrianism. *Virtue* was what Revolutionary America ran on. America's founders saw virtue as essential to the formation and subsequent development and preservation of the Republic they were founding. They repeatedly beseeched its practice, their own record replete with it. Thomas Jefferson advised his nephew Peter Carr in 1785 : "from the practice of the purest virtue you may be assured will derive the most sublime comforts in every moment of life, and in the moment of death."¹³ We find similar terms in Cyrus's will and final address in *Cyropaedia*. One of his successors, Xerxes son of Darius, inscribed ca. 450 BC, how he worshipped the Wise Lord and righteous virtue/cosmic order, and whoso should worship these truth and happiness forever shall be his, both while living and when dead¹⁴.

George Washington, upon ending his second term as President (1797), in a letter advised his brother in-law: "Without Virtue and without integrity, the finest talents and the most brilliant accomplishments can never gain the respect or conciliate the esteem of the truly valuable part of mankind."¹⁵ Benjamin Franklin preached much the same.

John Adams adored Xenophon, whom he referred to as "my favourite author, that ancient and immortal husbandman, philosopher, politician and general."¹⁶ Adams, further, related to Jefferson how he had gone over the *History of Persia* in two volumes (1815) by British Ambassador Sir John Malcolm, looking further for Cyrus, but to his disappointment found none. Malcolm in the early 1800s had arrived in Iran with a retinue of five hundred, his mission mainly to counter French influence under Napoleon. He was assigned to the post by Lord Cornwallis who, subsequent to his defeat at Yorktown by America and France in 1781, was now made the Governor-General (viceroy) of India and in 1792 was created 1st Marquess Cornwallis.

John Adams persuaded his son, John Quincy Adams, later to be President, to read the *Cyropaedia* at a young age, though this pressure, as is often the case in the relationship between parents and children, may have had the opposite effect from what John Adams wished.

In coming to know the character of Cyrus the US Founding Fathers found it appealing to their own ideals, and beliefs. It becomes manifest that Jefferson and Cyrus in particular, were kindred spirits. One recognized this kinship and became inspired by the other. The result was entered into history.

The Founding Fathers, not knowing initially whether their experiment would be successful, sought a proven model that validated their ideas by virtue of its success in the past. The model with ideals that Jefferson felt closest to their own was that of ancient Iran. Thus Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum, who with his team, and colleagues at the Sackler Museum and elsewhere, has vied more than any other scholar to bring the message of the Cyrus Cylinder to the world, aptly remarked to the BBC:

"The story of Persia – Iran – is part of the story of modern United States."¹⁷

Secular and sacred literature from the twin pillars of Western Civilization, the Graeco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian, corroborate the virtues and form of government of Cyrus and the Persians. As Xenophon describes in the *Cyropaedia*, the qualities of leadership Cyrus possessed transcended nationalism, sectarianism and partisanship. In doing so Xenophon, who may be regarded as the secular counterpart to Second Isaiah, gives us the secular definition of Messiah. Cyrus was able to draw together disparate peoples and nations, from various parts of the then known world, many of whom were situated so far apart that they did not know or could not meet each other, some of whom were at odds, some at war with each other, and a host of other tribes "whose very names defy the memory of the chronicler." Xenophon's testimony tells of Cyrus's soft power:

"It is obvious that among this congeries of nations few could have spoken the same language as himself, or understood one another", and yet "all they asked was to be guided by his judgment and his alone."¹⁸

The philosophy, traits and qualities of Cyrus were a result of Zoroastrianism, the pre-Islamic religion of Iran. The admiration felt for Cyrus and his popularity was not only the case in his time, but as has been aptly noted by many scholars, continued through history and onto our time. Often leaders from across the political spectrum have identified with Cyrus, ranging from US President Truman to Prime Minister Ben Gurion of Israel, and in Iran itself from the late Shah to those who overthrew him, such as Ahmadinejad.

In our day we have been witnessing the evolution of the United States, partly by manifest destiny, partly by default, toward fulfilling much the same role in the World that Cyrus and his successors had realized the need for and fulfilled. We see the nations of the World looking to America for

leadership. We see immigrants from many parts of the world come to America to live under the Constitution for their intuitive trust in it and the American leadership that derives from it.

Yet Persians have been regarded more or less as barbarians in the West, mainly based upon other Greek sources. Among the Greeks, the term 'barbarian' was used to refer to people speaking a language other than their own, a usage that reflected the influence of Egypt. Herodotus reports : "The Egyptians call all men barbarians who do not speak the same language as themselves."¹⁹ Thus term that has come down to us as applied to Persians is rather a misnomer. The Greeks themselves regarded the Persians in a different way, because the first great empire established by the Persian Achaemenids probably for the first time in history enunciated a secular code of laws, the laws of the king. So the legal framework which the Persians initiated was secular, and may have been copied by the Romans later. This is an essential consideration for people who are studying history, because the Persians not only instituted their secular law, but asked the Egyptians, the Hebrews and others to codify their own law books relating to domestic law, civil law and religion. But above them all was the secular law of the king. This separation of church and state has always been a feature of the Persians and their culture, but not so of the other cultures of the Near East and of Egypt too; for them church and state work together and could not be separated. Throughout history the Persians have always insisted upon separation of church and state, where they complement and bolster each other but one is not above the other. Thus Nizam al-Mulk the vizier, nearly a thousand years ago, said: "kingship and religion are like two brothers; whenever disturbance breaks out in the country, religion likewise suffers."²⁰ Thus Iran was not barbaric but, quite the contrary, the builder and promoter of civilization. The Caliphate of the Arabs and down to Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader today, have maintained the opposite, always keeping church and state together. The older, native heritage represents the beliefs and values of the Iranian people today, and is in dire need of expression in the form of government for the sake of world peace and for Iran's own sake.

Several years ago, a friend of the authors, Cyrus Kar, began a project to produce a documentary for his namesake, Cyrus the Great, for which we have acted variously in the capacities of consulting scholars and donors. One of the findings of Kar during his research was that two editions of the *Cyropaedia* formed part of Thomas Jefferson's library.²¹ Later, we found other works dealing with Iran in Jefferson's library such as *The Persian Expedition* and *Oikonomicus*.

But as his library contained more than 6400 others, what was the significance of a few books on any topic ? A recent, brilliant work of scholarly forensic analysis by Julian Raby, Director of the Freer and Sackler Galleries and colleagues, revealed Jefferson's keen interest in the *Cyropaedia*. Of Jefferson's two copies of the *Cyropaedia* that have survived, one is an edition from 1767, having the original Greek on the left and the Latin translation on the right, on each opening, and he set

about comparing the two. Raby observes : “What’s extraordinary is that he scratched out one line . . . The particular passage that was crossed out is a problematic passage in the manuscript . . . it is quite clear that Jefferson himself must have been collating line by line between his earlier edition and this later edition.”²²

In a meeting with one of us at the Library of Congress’ Rare Books division, this has been validated by another feat of forensic analysis by the Chief Curator of Rare Books, Marc Dimunation, who found the ink consistent with Jefferson’s other markings.²³

Caroline Winterer of Stanford University reports of copies of the *Cyropaedia* in the libraries of Benjamin Franklin as well as Adams and Jefferson, and how Jefferson wrote to a friend in 1787 seeking books which included an edition of the *Cyropaedia* in Italian,²⁴ indicating his having read the originals and perhaps other editions, but still interested in the Italian translation perhaps for clarification of some fine points.

Neil Macgregor, Director of the British Museum, reports that Scottish intellectuals of the Age of Enlightenment had consulted the *Cyropaedia*. From their midst had come Thomas Jefferson’s Scottish mentor, William Small, at the College of William and Mary in the early 1760s. Jefferson later expressed his deep gratitude was to William Small, and regarded him “as a father”²⁵.

Wm. Scott Harrop of the University of Virginia reports: “Family letters provide further hints of Jefferson’s high regard for Xenophon and the *Cyropaedia*. In early 1803, Anne Cary Randolph wrote to “Dear Grand Papa” that her brother, Jefferson Randolph, was busy “translating the history of Cyrus by Xenophon,”²⁶ the ‘history of Cyrus’ being the *Cyropaedia*.

Cyrus and the Persians were Zoroastrians, the ethical religious belief system conceived in Iran and taught by Zarathustra. Today the beliefs and values of Zoroastrianism survive among the people of Iran in the form of persianized Islam, with its chief tenets fundamentally different from those of orthodox (Sunni) Islam. That difference is seen more among the people and their culture, than the politics. Zoroastrianism also survives, albeit in small numbers, in its own right in Iran, India and around the world. Though perhaps not immediately perceived by outside observers of Iran, due to the absence in politics today of Persian culture and values, in the ideals of Cyrus and Zoroaster persist among the people. This is partly because “the Persians were Persians first and Moslems afterwards” (Richard Frye, 1951).²⁷ The preponderance of what is reported of Iran in the media in the world is about the politics. Though little known or covered by the media, the fact has not escaped the attention of astute visitors, such as Dr. R. S. Morton, that “The Iranians who accepted the Mohammedan religion did not altogether forsake their loyalty to Zoroastrianism, for they subtly developed a type of Islam which embodies many of the ancient religious ideas.”²⁸

Centuries after the invasions of Iran and the forcible conversion to Islam, which began in the 600s AD, groups of Iranians emigrated to India, much as the Pilgrims to the shores of America, and have there been called *Parsees*, or Persians. Their population is estimated at over one hundred thousand. There are also Zoroastrians in Iran itself, their numbers being smaller than those in India. There are a few thousand in the US, in Canada, in Europe and smaller numbers in other countries. While conversion of Moslems to Zoroastrianism or any faith is prohibited within Islamic countries, regarded as apostasy and punishable by death, there have been modern conversions outside the realm of Islam. One example is Charles D. Poston (1825-1902) 'Father of Arizona', who, upon travelling to visit the Parsees in the 1860s and learning about their religion, adopted Zoroastrianism. Poston noted that "the great Zoroaster had promulgated the sublime laws announced to him by the "Bright shining essence of light" for the government of mankind"²⁹.

Zoroastrian ethics may be simplified in the motto of the Zoroastrian religion: *Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds*, of which the latter count the most, for it is easy to speak words, but hard to accomplish deeds in the building and making a better world. The application and implementation of this religion as the effective means for man in each generation of producing an honest livelihood, without appropriating from others, directly or indirectly, became agriculture and the foundation of settlements. Agrarianism came to form, in practice, the core of Zoroastrianism.

Of the works of Xenophon, Jefferson also possessed others, one of which, *Oikonomicus*, rendered into English as an 'essay in estate management', has an account of Cyrus the Great's successors in this regard. In those days in fourth century BC, leaders and emissaries from various nations went to Persia to seek aid, economic, political or military, as we see heads of state today journey to the United States. In a Socratic dialogue in Xenophon's *Oikonomicus*, Socrates reports how to the astonishment of the Spartan leader, Lysander, who had gone to seek aid from the Persians in Sparta's long conflict with Athens, the Peloponnesian war, Lysander found the Persian nobility proud to garden with their own hands. These traits are traceable to Zoroastrianism. Likewise, Jefferson wrote, the culture of the soil was the most pleasant. He proclaimed how "those that labor in the earth are the chosen people of God."³⁰

Washington, Jefferson, Madison were Southerners and planters, and even Dr. Franklin the scientist regarded farming as "the most honorable of all Employments, in my opinion, as being the most useful in itself, and rend'ring the Man most independent."³¹ Washington was in full concurrence with them, so much so that the agrarian tradition in America became embedded more than ever before and formed the economic base of the United States. The ideology of agrarianism went further, and became incarnate in the South to such an extent that in the industrial age and its confrontation with the North the South became handicapped.

The socio-economic system that the Americans who lived at the time of the Revolution inherited and the one that the Persians brought into being differed markedly in some respects, in particular in regards to the labor force. Due to the establishment and entrenchment of slavery in the Colonies from the time they were still under the British Empire, the provisions Jefferson had incorporated into his initial draft of the Declaration of Independence that would lead to the abolition of slavery were vetoed and redacted when it came under review by others. But it was recognized that the issue would be left for another day, another generation. As the economic system which utilized slavery had the weight of history behind it, it was difficult to transform, and the day came to be the Civil War.

In many plantations, as Jefferson's Monticello, the 'slaves' were effectively part of the family in which there existed a spiritual bond between the members. This is evident from a number of signs. When Jefferson would arrive home, the slaves would gather around him in jubilation. When British troops took over and laid waste to Monticello in June 1781, destroyed its crops and killed its domesticated animals, leaving Jefferson along with other expenses he would incur in the Revolution in debt for life, the slaves had the chance to free themselves. But they not only chose to stay and hide, but protected Jefferson's treasures in the basement. They remained loyal to Jefferson, who had been forewarned and left the plantation. He returned to find the results of the scorched-earth policy.

The teachings of Zoroaster found their first large scale implementation in practice by Cyrus. Thus, as it is held in Zoroastrianism that it is the human being who is capable of embodying the spirit of God, *Spenta Mainyu* (rendered into English approximately as *Holy Spirit*), then to enslave human beings was tantamount to constraining and penning the spirit of God. Iran, in contrast with ancient as well as modern empires, was the only major empire not built by slave labor, but paid and voluntary labor. Cuneiform tablets extant from the Persian Empire (ca. 550-330 BC) and preserved and studied at the University of Chicago under Matt Stolper show records of wages paid. In addition, these ancient tablets show women as well as men in supervisory positions, and such advanced social nets (whether for 500 BC or now) as a year's worth of maternity pay.

The past experiences of Parsees in India, of being persecuted, further enabled them to sympathize with those in need. Being in an environment free to practice their religion and having a strong work ethic, the Parsees were able to prosper. While they began as refugees centuries ago, in the 1800s and since they were able to practice philanthropy in India and around the world. This included aid to the Sanitary Commission in the American Civil War, as reports Alfred Martin:

“As for the generosity of the Parsees, it is unrivalled, extending far beyond the limits of Bombay. It went to Russia at the time of the Crimean War, when Florence Nightingale described the Parsee community as “the salt of the Bombay community”. It went to France in 1859, when the terrible inundations necessitated the supplementing of local aid by foreign

help, and the Parsees were among the first to respond and among the most liberal of the contributors. It went to the United States at the time of the Civil War, our Sanitary Commission receiving a handsome remembrance from the followers of Zoroaster in India, sent, they said, because of their sympathy with the suffering soldiers and the Cause of Freedom and union.³²

The aid that was sent by Parsees was intended for the victims of both sides in the Civil War but was fated to end up in the industrial, well organized North with its more developed infrastructure and lines of command and communications. Prior to the Civil War in a broader sense they served the country as a whole or, as appropriate, belonged to the individual states. But during the war in large measure they fell under the control of the North, which had the means to further develop and unify them. The agrarian South had fewer such means and was thus unable to plan and organize its logistics as well to stay even with the North. Thus the South lacked a sanitary commission or supply lines on a par with the North. In a battle in which a relatively inexhaustible supply of materials, machines as well as intellect, predominant in the North, were arrayed against limited supplies and strong spirit in the South, the latter would not have the staying power and the outcome was predetermined.

Jefferson, in his embassy to France and in many respects, was the successor and heir to Benjamin Franklin, senior-most among the first tier of the Founding Fathers, to whom Jefferson referred as the 'immortal Doctor Franklin'. Jefferson became a polymath, much as Benjamin Franklin was. When Jefferson served in Paris as ambassador (1785-89), he found Benjamin Franklin as the most respected man in France, foreign or native. Earlier, when Ben Franklin had been in London (1757-1775), he found the *Avesta*, the corpus of holy books of Zoroastrianism. It was just a year after it was published in Paris by Anquetil-Duperron (1771), a French scholar of the Orient who had spent about six years among the Parsees in India learning about their faith, and together with the Parsees translating the *Avesta* into French.

Franklin's intuition into the *Avesta*, nearly a century before the 'brilliant young German philologist',³³ Martin Haug, made the discovery that it was the Gathas within the *Avesta* that were the words of Zoroaster himself and among the oldest parts of the *Avesta*, is remarkable. Among all the matters, scientific and political that occupied Franklin, he had reached a conclusion to be reached later by scholars, as stated in his letter to the president of Yale University Ezra Stiles:

“Dear Sir : There is lately published in Paris a work entitled *Zend-Avesta* . . . I have cast my Eye over the religious part; it seems to contain a nice morality, mixed with abundance of prayers, ceremonies, and observances. If you desire to have it, I will procure it for you. There is no doubt of its being a genuine translation of the books at present deemed sacred,

as the writings of Zoroaster, by his followers; but perhaps some of them are of later date, though ascribed to him.”³⁴

Franklin ends the letter to Stiles saying how Henry Marchant “understanding you are curious on the Subject of the Eastern ancient Religions, concludes to send you the Book.”³⁵ Henry Marchant was then visiting Franklin from Rhode Island, having been referred to Franklin by Stiles.

Jefferson, as with fellow Founding Fathers, being Deists, Unitarians and products of the Age of Reason and then of Enlightenment, took it upon himself to go through the Bible and produce an edited version of the New Testament bereft of what was seen then as its miracles and mythology which had gone unquestioned by many over the ages. The mythology, on the other side of the spectrum, troubled intellectuals, leading many to adopt the *‘irreligion of thinking men’*. This edited edition of the New Testament, the Jefferson Bible, is a rational and self-consistent version of the Bible resonates with Zoroastrianism and is one thinking men would have little reason to reject. Jefferson had meant to carry out the same task for the Old Testament, but it being a long undertaking, and his attention needed to numerous other projects and issues, Jefferson lamented how he lacked the time to do so, wishing others would. Zoroastrianism as taught by its prophet (and in its later sacred literature that maintain consistency with his teachings), is a rational belief system appealing to intellectuals, once its starting dogma of the existence of the Wise Lord is accepted. The Jefferson Bible and in particular its ethics correspond to and parallel the teachings of Zoroastrianism.

President Harry Truman, coming from humble origins, was a self-educated man. The Hebrew Old Testament ends with the decree of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem and restore the Jews to their home. As regards biblical history Truman knew the significance of Cyrus when he declared "I am Cyrus, I am Cyrus" in response to Jewish elders gathered in New York to thank him for establishing Israel as a state.³⁶

The prophet Second Isaiah, regarded universally and continuously since then as the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, extols and names Cyrus not only as Messiah but also as the Lord’s *Shepherd* (44:28), a term which in Psalms 23:1 is intended by David to mean the Lord Yahweh himself.³⁷

The Old testament ends with the recognition of Cyrus by Yahweh and the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. David Ben Gurion, principal founder of the modern state of Israel, wrote of the ending of the Old Testament: “Beyond question Cyrus was deserving of these eulogies.”³⁸

Cyrus and his fellow Persians acted as saviors of the Jewish nation then, as the US has in our day. The Persians assigned to the province of *Yehud*, a Jewish governor, Nehemiah, from among the Jews. They restored Israel as a state, and enabled the return of the Jews to what had been their homeland, from which they had been uprooted (597-587 BC). The Persians maintained it under their protection as the Persian province of *Yehud*, in similar manner as the US has done for Israel to-day.

Joseph Gaer, Founder & Director, Jewish Heritage Foundation, explains:

“The Persians called the people of the Kingdom of Judah *Jehudis*, from which we get the word *Jews* . . . The Persians were friendly towards the Jews, and their king, Cyrus, permitted them to return to their land and rebuild their kingdom. And because the Persians were so friendly, the Jews studied the Persian religion, and learned many things from them . . . A much more important belief that the Jews borrowed from Zoroastrianism was their changed conviction about the coming of the Messiah . . . From the Persians the Jews learned that they, too, awaited a *Saoshyant*, a Redeemer. But the Redeemer of the Persians was not to be just a national hero who would bring glory and power to the Persians. Their *Saoshyant* would redeem all of mankind from the powers of the Evil Spirit. The Jews, too, began to think of their Messiah, their Redeemer, as more than just a national hero who would restore the Jewish kingdom to its glory . . . By the time the Jews returned to Palestine and, with the help of King Cyrus, rebuilt their Holy Temple in Jerusalem, their religion had greatly changed.”³⁹

The last words in the Hebrew Bible (II Chronicles 36) read: “Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.” Initially the Jews would not return, for their homeland had become but a wasteland after fifty years of captivity in Babylon, much as it had been in many parts of Palestine prior to 1948. Thus they had long given up hopes of return, and married among the local population in Babylon. Upon being freed by the Persians, they sought to establish a lobby at the Persian court to further their interests. In our day Jewish lobbies such as AIPAC in Washington are but a re-creation of the Jewish lobby at the Persian court.

Implementing the decree of Cyrus, successive Persian administrations led, financed and provided security and supplies for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and fully restored nationhood to the Jews. Arabs and others sought to undermine the process. Nehemiah (ch. 6) complains of how Sanbalat, Tobiah and Geshem the Arab sought to prevent the project of reconstruction of Judah. The Jews, sensing the reservoir of good will and generosity in the Persians, became covetous. They did not wish to see the Persians helping others and sought the destruction of Babylon. The Persians’ impartial and even-handed policy which derives from Zoroastrian teachings

and in turn appears in the Bible as *the Laws of the Medes and Persians which altereth not* (Daniel 6:8, 12, 15), led the Persians to establish peace and justice between nations. The Persians constructed the temple for other Jewish sects, such as the Samaritans, as well. Babylon, as well as Jerusalem and other cities and states, flourished under Persian rule.

The Persian king, the Bible reports, decreed the collection and publication of Jewish law and the books that came to constitute the Bible, a task which was carried out ca. 440 BC by Persian Jews led by Ezra. While the Persians had the full power to exert their will, their decrees such as for the return of the Jews to Jerusalem did not compel subject people or their own civilians to do the work of implementing these decrees. Rather, in respecting individual liberty, they sought volunteers for the implementation. It was part of the ideology and practice of humane power. Although militarily and economically Persia under Cyrus was the sole superpower on earth, it was soft power and humanity that won over and ruled most of the nations. As shown by Forrest McGill, Chief Curator of the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, this was celebrated in European art centuries ago in the form of depiction of a lamb on Cyrus the conqueror's flag.

The unity of states and system of government that Cyrus founded, known as the *Achaemenian* empire, endured from about 550 to 330 BC. During this period, marriages occurred between Persian men and Jewish women. In the ancient world, as men conducted the battles and some were lost in battle, their numbers were reduced below that of women in society. Thus it would be common for a man to have several wives, or several women would be dependent on one man.

Jewish women had entered Persian harems, the epitome of which is the story of Esther the Jewish Queen of Persia from the Bible. The Aryan tradition of descent was patrilineal, while the Semitic tradition was matrilineal, and there being no conflict as to heritage, the children were legitimate heirs on both sides, accepted and loved. They inherited beliefs from both parents, both traditions. Arnold Toynbee, world historian, University of London, summarizes the consensus of scholars on the Persian Empire and Judaism: "it deliberately maintained complete religious toleration Consequently there was an active intercourse between local religions in and after the Achaemenian Age, and Zoroastrianism eventually had a great influence on Judaism, just because it was not propagated by force. The origins of Zoroastrianism and Judaism in their present form, and of Christianity and Islam too, can be traced back to the religious ferment in the First Persian Empire."⁴⁰ The now aryanized Jews, having the blessing, support and backing of their paternal ancestors formed the polity of the new moral, messianic and spiritual faith that came to be known as Judaism, from which in due course emerged a number of sects, including Christianity. Although Solomon, David, Moses and Abraham predated the new religious beliefs in Judaism, they would assume roles in a largely retroactive sense in the broader context of the new Judaism. But in their

time their religion did not have these newly acquired tenets and was not referred to as Judaism. Today we refer to it retroactively as Judaism.

In recent times in the West, Zoroaster, or to use his Persian name *Zarathustra*, has been known, through the work of Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, and through the same source been unintentionally misunderstood. His depiction of Zoroaster, he explains, is the precise opposite of what Zoroaster was and taught. As Nietzsche clarified in his autobiography *ecce homo*, or how he, philosophically, became who he is, morality, what Zarathustra taught, was what Nietzsche, through his logical analysis sought to nullify. A more apt title for Nietzsche's work would have been *Thus Not Spake Zarathustra* as he explains :

“I have not been asked, as I should have been asked, what the name of *Zarathustra* means to me, in my capacity as the first immoralist; for what distinguishes this Persian from all others in the past is the very fact that he was the exact opposite of an immoralist. *Zarathustra* was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the essential cycle in the working of things. The translation of morality into the realm of metaphysics, as force, cause, as end in itself, is his work. . . . The self-overcoming of morality through truthfulness, the moralist's self-overcoming of himself into his opposite— into me—that is what the name *Zarathustra* means to me.”⁴¹

Long before the emergence of written law, codes of regulation, and their interpretation, application and implementation in practice, the moral law was what people depended on in their relations and transactions in society, and even afterwards morality could not be codified. Thus to the present day a common commitment in society to moral standards and values has played a large role in bringing about greater peace and justice in society. Nietzsche, through a mechanistic argument, concludes to discard morality, without successfully having or showing a replacement for it in society. Nietzsche's ideology was later adopted and practiced by the Nazis, who ruled their own country and subject nations in stark contrast to how Cyrus ruled. Nietzsche's ideology and its implementation by the Nazis was also a parody of how in the U.S. the Founding Fathers devised and ran the government of the United States. With the contradictions and conflicts Nietzsche had to cope with, it would not be a surprise that he became insane and committed suicide in 1900, and much the same fate befell those who implemented Nietzsche's theory – Hitler and his ministers.

This becomes evident when we proceed further and look at a diametric opposite of Judaism, Germany and its ideology as implemented before and during WWII. After World War II and the fall of the Nazi regime, of the two top ethnologists of the state, Alfred Rosenberg and Hans Gunther, Rosenberg was found guilty of planning and promoting the extinction of the Jews at the Nuremberg trials and along with others executed for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Gunther, while promoting the culture, preservation and advancement of Nordic peoples and their purity of thought and spirit, had not sought to do so at the expense of extinction of others. This is in part because he was inspired by Joseph Arthur, Count Gobineau, who regarded the Jews as an

intelligent people. Besides Cyrus and Darius, we see from Jefferson's notes how Jefferson also showed a keen interest in the government of ancient Anglo-Saxons. Gunther regarded the Germans, as many other populations, as ethnically diverse. He saw the natural aptitude of the Nordics for leadership, their welcome by other peoples and the resultant drive of the leaders and followers toward imperialism, as the cause in the end of decay among Nordic peoples and Nordic classes in ancient societies. His opinion in this regard casts doubt as to whether he of his own will supported the idea of a Third Reich. But what Gunther and those espousing similar ideology look past, is that at each such juncture in history and ensuing period when disparate cultures came together and assumed their respective roles in society, that synergy led to great leaps forward made in the arts and sciences and in fact in large measure this constituted the process of development of world's civilization as we know it today. At the end of World War II, after a detention of about three years during which his role was investigated, Gunther was exonerated and set free. Prior to the war he had written with deep convictions regarding Zoroastrianism, alternatively referred to as Mazdaism (after *Ahura Mazda*, the Wise Lord):

“In Zarathustra's teaching that lofty ethical sense characterizing the old Persians rises to sublime heights . . . Mazdaism, which this great religious founder brought his people, is important for the understanding of the Nordic spirit . . . This is the first self-conscious religious creation in history -- long before Buddha and the oldest Jewish prophets -- and also the earliest to give an ethical meaning to the whole world process and to the State, and to look on man as playing a part in this far-spread ethical system through his behavior. Zarathustra's teachings are set forth in the Gatha songs of the Avesta . . . Thus for the first time in the world's history a conception had arisen of a positive religion, which spread over the whole earth in the form of ethical systems of various kinds. And thereby the conception of culture was at one stroke brought into the world, clear-cut and with deep foundations. Mazdaism is the loftiest religious creation that has been produced by the peoples of Nordic origin . . . The more Mazdaism discloses itself to research, the clearer do we see the true greatness of the Persians and their culture, which stands as an equal beside that of Greece and of Rome, while ethically it is above them. Gobineau it was who first pointed out how little our 'general education' knows of Persia compared with its real importance.

. . .

The Persian people to-day still shows (Gobineau was the first, too, to stress this) characters which set it apart from the peoples around. "These "Iranians," according to the descriptions and statements of nearly every traveller, and on the evidence of their literature, have a mentality such as we only find among Europeans. They are the only people in their area open to receive culture, and are marked off by this from all their neighbours in spite of their Islamic mask and of their backwardness to-day. They are the descendants and natural heirs of the old Iranians, on whose culture the whole of Islam has battered, and still batters to-day,

without being capable -- it and its Arabic and Turkish protagonists -- of creating anything new from out of itself.'⁴²

Just as the Thirteen Colonies then needed the help of a sympathetic great power, France, to succeed in their quest to be free and be able to express their values in government, so do Iranians to-day. But contrary to what some have suggested or offered, the Iranian people do not need military aid, or military intervention, which would in fact run counter-productive to that purpose, not to mention to peace, regional and world stability. Rather, the bona fide, steadfast moral and political support of the US and its encouragement of allies is what is needed and what would fulfill that purpose. Moral support, the dissemination of truth, and words followed by serious diplomacy can accomplish what cannot be achieved by way of arms.

* * *

Overleaf: Bios, acknowledgments, footnotes and references

THE AUTHORS



PHOTO SOURCE: KASHI & NIRVANA ANOOSHEH

Richard Nelson Frye has researched and taught the history of Iran, the Near East and Central Asia at Harvard University for over six decades, where he earned his PhD in History and Philology in 1946, and has been Aga Khan Professor Emeritus of Iranian Studies. Referred to *a pro pos* as “dean of the world’s Iranists”, he needs little or no introduction to experts in the field. He was born in Alabama in 1920. His parents had emigrated from Sweden in the early 1900s. He is married, and has had four children. Dr. Frye was a founder of the Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) at Harvard University. Fluent in Persian, Turkish, Arabic, German, Russian, French, Italian and knowledgeable in other living and extinct languages, he has lived and worked in Iran, Afghanistan, and other areas of Iranian culture, such as Tajikistan, and has conducted research and taught in Germany and other countries. His work has covered the spectrum of Iranian cultural studies and his books and articles over the years have served as reference works on the subject. Some of the professors in this field today were his students. In recent years he has delivered lectures before audiences in Iran (in Persian) and in the US, advocating the separation of religion and state in Iran, expounding its underlying basis in history and literature since 550 BC, through late antiquity and medieval times.

Afshin Zand grew up in Iran, where his father was working closely with American engineers and technicians employed and settled with their families in Khuzestan as colleagues and neighbors building a TVA (*Tennessee Valley Authority*) complex. He developed a lifelong passion for history and philosophy during family visits to numerous nearby archeological sites, influenced by his father’s interest, from whom he also inherited a love for formative America. After about five years his family moved back to Tehran where his father taught at a branch of Harvard Business School, *Iran Center for Management Studies*, whereupon during his sabbatical at HBS (1975-76) and Afshin & family’s first year in the U.S., he was given an honorary MBA. At age 15 Afshin had been sent to England to complete his high-school education. He then joined his family in coming to the U.S. and studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he earned the BSEE. To fulfill his life-long passion in history, he pursued studies in cultural history as student of Dr. Frye in 1985-1993 at Harvard University. Thereafter they worked together closely for a number of years. His studies and research were inter-disciplinary and included pre-Islamic history, Persian literature, Zoroastrianism, Judea-Christianity, biblical history, comparative religion, linguistics and Indo-European studies and later extended to Islamic and contemporary history. His studies were carried out as non-degree professional development and fulfilled the requirements for PhD and beyond. His focus was the causality of historical events, transformations. After a number of years when Afshin was more active in the high technology sector, the authors resumed collaborating on cultural history and holding lectures from 2003 onward. Since then Afshin became motivated to research American history and form of government. He conducted part of this research during his several trips to the homes of Jefferson, Washington, Madison, Adams and for Franklin American Philosophical Society, as well as at associated libraries, archives and research institutions.

The authors may be reached at their emails given above, or via <http://www.richardfrye.org/contactus.html> Their research, of which this is a summary, is articulated in greater depth and breadth in their upcoming book, *Jefferson and Cyrus*. A more extensive biography of Dr. Frye may be found at: <http://richardfrve.org/biographies.html>

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* FOOTNOTE TO THE PHOTOS ON COVER

Although Jefferson's beloved Monticello (www.monticello.org) near Charlottesville, Virginia designed by himself needs little introduction, the mausoleum of Cyrus the Great built ca. 520 BC may need some illumination. Alexander admired Cyrus and was an avid reader of the *Cyropaedia*. The ancient Greek historian Arrian (ca. 140 AD), nicknamed "Young Xenophon", was the author of the *Expeditions of Alexander*. Quoting from one of Alexander's companions, Aristobulus, who was Alexander's advisor and military engineer, Arrian reports of the tomb of Cyrus:

"The tomb was in the royal park at Pasargadae : a grove of various sorts of trees had been planted around it; there were streams of running water and a meadow with lush grass."⁴³

Plutarch (ca. 85 AD) reports of Alexander's visit to the tomb of Cyrus:

"Having discovered that the tomb of Cyrus had been rifled, he put to death the perpetrator of the deed, although the culprit was a prominent Macedonian native of Pella, by name Polymachus. After reading the inscription upon this tomb, he ordered it to be repeated below in Greek letters. It ran thus:

"O man, whosoever thou art and whencesoever thou comest, for come I know thou wilt, I am Cyrus, who won for the Persians their empire. Do not, therefore, begrudge me this little earth which covers my body."

These words, then, deeply affected Alexander, who was reminded of the uncertainty and mutability of life."⁴⁴

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