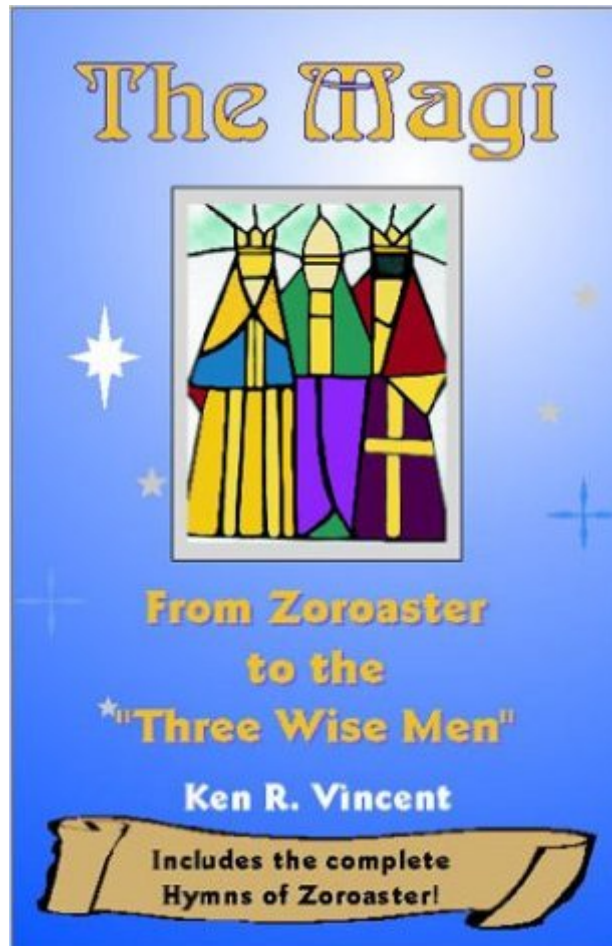


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The Magi: From Zoroaster To The "Three Wise Men"



Synopsis

Do you know why Zoroastrian priests are on your Christmas cards? In *The Magi*, Dr. Ken Vincent shines light on a topic previously known mainly to scholars; he provides the layperson searching for Christian origins an extremely readable but thorough exploration of a religion which predates Christianity by hundreds of years. This easy-to-read introduction highlights the parallels between Zoroaster and both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament and shows the use of Zoroastrian imagery in the Dead Sea Scrolls. An appendix includes an English translation of the complete hymns of Zoroaster.

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Customer Reviews

Ken Vincent holds an Ed.D. from the University of Northern Colorado and teaches psychology and psychology of religion at Houston Community College. He has studied Zoroaster since his youth and is a respected friend of the Houston Zoroastrian community.

Introduction We here respectfully remember All pious men and women Of all the World, All that are and were and are to be . . . Old Prayer of the Magi One of the most enduring and endearing images of Christmas is that of the Magi. Have you ever wondered who the Magi were and just why they were motivated to travel from afar to honor the Savior of the Christian faith? Why was it important to the author of the Gospel of Matthew to include the Magi in his story of those who came to acknowledge the Holy Birth? Why are our memories flooded with children in Christmas pageants

costumed as camels and kings? The search for the identity of these Magi is the key to opening a startlingly refreshing insight into our Christian roots, little-known and unappreciated except by scholars. Although the language of the religion of the Magi echoes brilliantly throughout the New Testament, most Christians remain woefully ignorant of its source. Once the most widespread religion in Western Civilization, Magian ideas lie only vaguely concealed under subsequent Western religious thought from the first century to the present. According to Joseph Campbell, the obscure religion of the Magi, known as Zoroastrianism, is the primary religious heritage of the Western world. Magi is the Greek word for Mobeds, a term still used for Zoroastrian priests. The religion of the Magi is one of Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds; the Golden Rule is in the teaching of the Magi, and the greatest sin is to lie. Good humans are needed by God in the fight to overcome evil. The belief that people who are more good than evil go to Heaven, expressed in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and James of the New Testament, in Jewish writings, and in the Koran, comes to us from the religion of the Magi and from their prophet, Zoroaster. Ideas of Heaven and Hell, as well as angels and devils, come into Judaism and Christianity through the influence of the religion of the Magi. The basic concepts of Zoroastrianism sound immediately familiar: God/Satan, Good/Evil, Light/Darkness, Angels & Archangels/Archdemons & Demons, Death/Judgment, Heaven/Hell, Resurrection of the body and the Life Everlasting. While taking a required religion course as a freshman at Baylor University in the 1960s, I was first introduced to the teachings of the Prophet Zoroaster, who lived at least six hundred years before Jesus. I absorbed myself in his revelation and was impressed by the dramatic similarities between his experience with God and those experiences of God more familiar to me from my own Judeo-Christian background. More pointedly, I was moved by the beautiful language of his hymns and their highly ethical teachings. Since that time, my entire life has been spent exploring the Zoroastrian faith in books and libraries. Several years ago, I had the good fortune to form treasured friendships with members of the Zoroastrian community in Houston, and I have had the privilege of being present in their homes, at their meals, at their prayers, and at many of their ceremonies and gatherings. This book is written to acquaint Christians with their unquestionable kinship to the ancient religion of the Magi and to fill in the gap of knowledge regarding its profound influence on Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Bahai. More importantly, I want to ensure that when Christian and Zoroastrian children look at the brightly-clad Magi in the creches at Christmastime, they can appreciate the powerful ideas that both of their religions embrace. Finally, I think it is time to say a belated thank you to the Magi, not just for their gold, frankincense, and myrrh, but for the concepts and ideals which live vividly in both Zoroastrianism and Christianity today. Note: In the many matters of dispute among scholars over

the religion of the Magi and its more than twenty-six-hundred-year history, my preference has been for the opinions of modern-day followers of the religion. In matters of translation, preference has been given to clarity and comprehension.

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