



BEHDĪN

BEHDĪN (Av. *vaṇuhī daēnā*, Pahl., *weh dēn*) “the Good Religion,” i.e., Zoroastrianism, or one of its adherents, in modern usage, specifically of the laity. In the *Gāthās*, Zoroāstra calls his religion or vision (*daēnā*) good or best (Y. 44.10, 53.1, 4); it is subsequently further qualified as “Mazdā-worshipping” (e.g., *Sīrōzag* 1.24, *daēnayā vaṇhuyā māzdayasnōiš*), or as “Ahuric” (*āhuirī-*) and “Zoroastrian” (*zaraθuštrī-*); in Pahlavi, *wehdēn* seems to have come to denote a believer, for the religion is often called *wehdēnīh*, with the addition of the abstract nominal suffix (e.g., *Šāyest nē šāyest* 7.6, 9.4). The religion is variously called *weh dēn ī pōryōtkēšān* “the Good Religion of the Ancient Sages,” *dēn ī rāst ī weh* “the true Good Religion,” etc. The term *hudēn* “of Good Religion” is used as an equivalent to *wehdēn*. *Wehān* “good men” in most contexts appears to mean “Zoroastrians” (in the prayer (*Čiθrām buyāṭ*) it is in apposition to *dahmān* “believers”). In the *Persian Rivayats* (tr. Dhabhar, p. 439), the Good Religion, or the community of its adherents, *Behdīn*, is considered the equivalent of *Ērān* “Iranians.” In opposition to Zoroastrianism are the other faiths, which are characterized as *jud dēn* “other religion,” *akdēn* “evil religion” (Av. *aṃa daēna*, of the *daēva*-worshippers, *Vd.* 18.19), or *wattar dēn* “worst religion”; in the *Āfrīn ī Zarduxšt*, the monster-tyrant Dahāg is the exemplar of the latter. According to *Vīdēvdāt* 4.44, all things should be shared with one who is *hamō.daēna-* “of the same religion,” while *Dēnkard* 6.55 decrees that *dēn andar hamdēnān uskārīšn* “the Religion is to be studied among those of the same religion”; the goods and wisdom of the community are to be kept within it. According to *Pursišnīhā* 46 (ed. K. M. JamaspAsa and H. Humbach, Wiesbaden, 1971) “a man who is of evil religion or a non-Iranian”



(*mard-ē akdēn ayāb anēr*) cannot be accounted righteous (*ahlaw*), i.e., justified, at death, however close his relations may have been with *wehdēnān* in life. Although the theological texts appear to erect a fence around the Good Religion, *Dēnkard* 3.172 also preaches propagation of the faith, for when all humans confess the *Wehdēn*, evil will be destroyed and *hamāg xwārīh* “entire felicity” will reign on earth. In present-day Parsi usage *behdīn* denotes a lay member of the community as opposed to the priesthood (*athornān*).

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