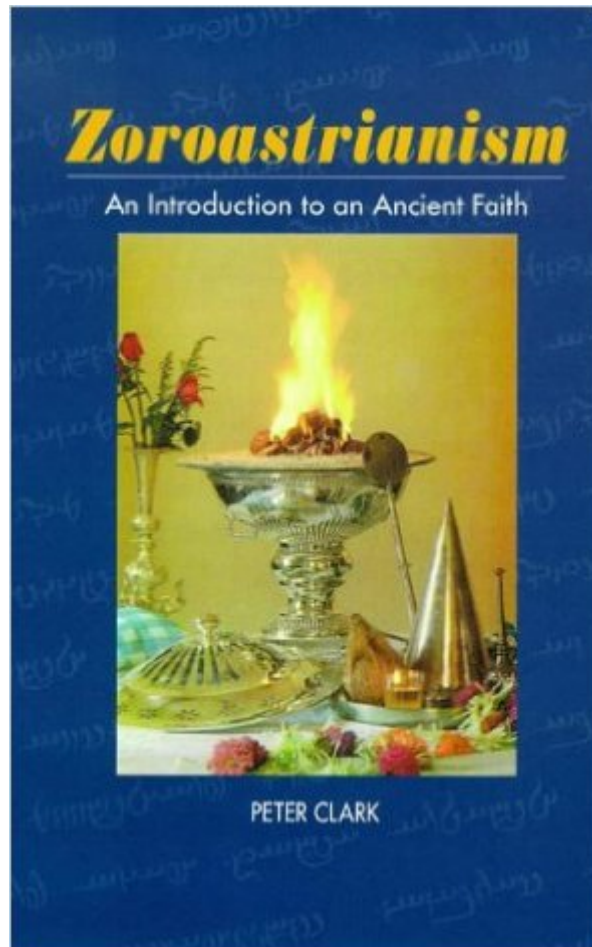


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Zoroastrianism: An Introduction To An Ancient Faith (Religious Beliefs & Practices)



Synopsis

This introduction to Zoroastrianism assumes no prior knowledge of the faith. It is presented as a living faith with a coherent theology and a persuasive ethic of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is, hands down, the best systematic presentation of the Zoroastrian world-picture that I've ever read. It brings together the Gathas, the priesthood, the Yasna Liturgy, cosmology, and culture to show Zoroastrianism as a living faith in all its glorious complexity. Dr. Clark does a wonderful job explaining terminology and open debates. He thoroughly documents all of his sources for those interested in digging deeper. The only flaw I found with his work was that he was, in some ways, too enamoured with his subject. Sometimes he almost loses his scholarly objectivity, especially when comparing Zoroastrianism to other living religions, Christianity in particular. One example will suffice: Late in the book he notes that Christian missionaries used "unfair" tactics in their analysis by comparing the Vendidad quite unfavorably (read the book and you'll understand) with the Gospels and arguing from that that Zoroastrians should convert to Christianity. Dr. Clark remarks something to the effect that "of course a fairer comparison would be to compare the Vendidad not with the Gospels, but with Leviticus". Actually, his desire to present Zoroastrianism in the best possible light as a viable contemporary tradition has lead him to "lose it" here. It is imminently fair and reasonable

to compare the Vendidad to the Christian Gospels and not to Leviticus because Christianity (except for some real fringe groups) doesn't claim Leviticus has any normative authority over Christians in the same sense that the Zoroastrians claim the Vendidad is authoritative over them. Comparing Vendidad to Gospel *is* comparing apples to apples. Other than this and a couple other "Come on!" moments, the book was quite informative. It's refreshing to read a book by a scholar who is passionately devoted to his subject. If you would like to learn more about the Ashavan community or about the Gathic faith, this is the book to read!

While the title of this book is "An Introduction" it goes into great detail and for me, reading this book, was in fact a colorful journey into a world that, as a Christian, is startlingly familiar. My favorite chapter would have to be "The Two Existences and the Problem of Evil", where the Spiritual and Material worlds are discussed with such freshness that it is as though you are just discovering them for the first time. Clark's description of the Zoroastrian Creation Myth is also fascinating - and it is nothing like Genesis 1!

For anyone who has never heard of this religion or has a passing interest, this is an ideal book, portable and easy to read and not too technical. I could have done with a bit more on theology, liturgy and religious practices but that would have made for a bulky tome which might not suit the needs of a casual observer. Jim.

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