



*The fire temple at Yazd, Iran, wherein is housed the most sacred of Zoroastrian fire, the Atash Behram.*

*Courtesy of Petr Adam Dohnálek.*

## CHAPTER 10

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# ZOROASTRIANISM

*Zoroastrians and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints both believe in a strong sense of divine control which will end in victory over an evil personage.*

**Z**oroastrianism is an ancient faith which arose in Persia (contemporary Iran). The number of Zoroastrians in the world today is not clear. It was held in the twentieth century that there were only 100,000 to 150,000, but recent studies have called that estimate into question, and the site we have been using for populations of the various religions now says the number of Zoroastrians may be around 2.6 million.<sup>1</sup> This number seems much too high, however. The Zoroastrian population is not the only thing difficult to assess. Zoroastrian history and theology are also obscure at times because sacred texts were destroyed by invading peoples such as the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and the Muslims. Thus, as we seek to understand Zoroastrian origins and history, our knowledge is limited by the loss of many of these sacred texts. Given that limitation, we will still be able to see the strength and power of this historic faith. Despite its small size, Zoroastrianism is important not only for its own beliefs but also because of its impact on Judaism, Christianity,

and Islam, all of which were in contact with the faith at various points in their histories. Much of what follows is based on S. A. Nigosian's book *The Zoroastrian Faith: Tradition and Modern Research*.

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— ORIGINS —

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SCRIPTURES

The scriptures of Zoroastrianism are the major source of knowledge for both the history and theology of the faith. Consequently, we will begin with them. Their overall name is the Avesta, which has two primary parts. The first part includes a portion known as the Gathas, which may date back to Zoroaster (or Zarathustra), the founder of the faith. In addition, there is much literature that is used in worship, as well as writings that deal with the major theological themes of the faith. The second part contains material for use in personal worship. The primary difficulty with the Avesta is that it arose over a period of more than a thousand years, thereby making it hard to determine what Zoroaster himself believed versus what later believers of the faith held. The existing texts, however, are our principal source for the content of the Zoroastrian faith.

FOUNDER

The founder of Zoroastrianism was a man named Zoroaster (Latin, Greek) or Zarathustra (Avestan). When he lived is debated. Nigosian states that there are various streams of thought. One is that he lived between 1500 and 1000 BCE. Another group of scholars places Zoroaster between 900 and 400 BCE. Clearly, there is no agreement as to when he lived, and Nigosian suggests that with all the conflicting opinions, the traditional dating of the sixth century BCE is as acceptable as any other.<sup>2</sup>

Nigosian stresses that very little is known with certainty about Zoroaster.<sup>3</sup> We do know that he was born into a religious environment that was similar to the Aryan religion we have already encountered in the Hindu chapter. Not only did the Aryans migrate into India, but they also moved into Persia and Greece and finally as far north as the Scandinavian countries. The Aryan religious environment was rich with a variety of gods, and consequently, so was that of the Persians. Apparently, Zoroaster prepared to become a priest, but

around age thirty he began to have visions and to develop a deeply personal relationship with the god Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord). Out of those experiences he gained a desire to spread his faith but found this a very difficult task. He finally found a patron in King Vishtaspa, who accepted the faith, which then spread through his kingdom. Some authors suggest that Zoroaster participated in two wars to defend Zoroastrianism and died in the second while officiating at the fire altar, but this is difficult to confirm.<sup>4</sup> The above account marks the broad outlines of Zoroaster's life.

Latter-day Saints will see some interesting points of contact between Zoroaster and Joseph Smith. Both men began their work in an established religious environment, and both had visionary experiences that led them to challenge the existing religion. Zoroastrians see Zoroaster's death as a martyrdom, and certainly Latter-day Saints view Joseph's death in precisely that way. Both of these great religious leaders seem to have sealed their testimonies with the loss of their lives.

Zoroastrianism became the religion of Persia under the Achaemenid dynasty (559–330 BCE), with priests known as magi, and was practiced by such great rulers as Cyrus the Great, Xerxes, and others. Greek culture influenced Persia with the coming of Alexander the Great in 331 BCE, and this was followed by the influence of Parthians from eastern Persia, who ruled from 250 BCE to 226 CE. The Parthians were eventually defeated by the Sassanids of Old Persia, who reigned from 226 to 651 CE themselves, finally being defeated by Muslim armies. Zoroastrianism grew and was modified through these periods of political change.<sup>5</sup> Today the two largest communities of Zoroastrians are found in Iran, the land of its origins, and in India, where Zoroastrians are known as Parsis (Persians).

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## — ZOROASTRIAN PRINCIPLES —

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### *ZOROASTER'S THEOLOGY*

On the basis of his visions and relationship with Ahura Mazda, Zoroaster condemned the Persian deities that were being worshiped, defining them as evil spirits and followers of the Lie. Followers of Ahura Mazda, the supreme God, were to follow Truth,

of which Ahura Mazda was the father. It was Ahura Mazda who was the supreme being, the creator of all things, the bringer of all good and life. He was also the father of Good Mind and Right Mind. It is unclear whether Zoroaster viewed these as attributes of Ahura Mazda which could be conveyed to his followers or as beings like angels. Ritually, Zoroaster adopted fire as the representation of Ahura Mazda and Truth.

The heart of Zoroaster's thought focused on the freedom of choice that human beings must exercise. The soul was a battlefield between good, represented by Ahura Mazda, and evil, reflected in Angra Mainyu, who was coeternal with Ahura Mazda but not coequal. Humans were charged with the responsibility of making moral choices between good and evil, but they had a natural affinity for the good. At the end of this life, they would be judged at the "bridge of the judge," where the good would be sent to heaven and the evil to hell. In Zoroaster's mind, there was no doubt at the cosmic level about the outcome of the battle between good and evil. Good, Ahura Mazda, would be the winner over a much weaker foe. Ultimately, there would be two ages—the present age, in which the struggle between good and evil was played out in the human heart, and the future age, in which Ahura Mazda would reign alone.<sup>6</sup>

The above concepts resonate with Latter-day Saints. For them, free agency is an eternal principle which cannot be abrogated. Human beings use their free will to choose between right and wrong and to stand on the side of their Heavenly Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, who represent that which is good. In addition, Latter-day Saints hold that human beings are pure upon entry into this earthly life. They are not contaminated with anything like original sin, and until they reach an age of accountability, they remain blameless before God. In contrast to Heavenly Father, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost stands Satan, who is constantly working to draw humans into the dark and evil side of life. He has, however, been defeated in Jesus' life, suffering, death, and Resurrection. So Satan's end is sure, but he is like a dragon which has been beheaded yet which continues to thrash about and still does great damage. In neither Zoroaster's nor Latter-day Saint thought is evil equal to God. Rather, it is something that exists because God permits it to exist for a time but is fully defeated in the end.

*DEVELOPMENTS AFTER ZOROASTER*

During Zoroaster's life, it seems that Ahura Mazda was clearly viewed as the supreme deity in the universe. Although he was opposed by the evil force, Angra Mainyu, there was no question of equality between them. However, with the rise of the Achaemenid dynasty mentioned above, there were changes injected into the religion, the most obvious being the reintegration of the old Aryan gods that Zoroaster had so clearly rejected. Thus, the magi, or priests, were serving other gods along with Ahura Mazda. This revised religion became that of the Sassanids. During their time, there were about forty-five angels or subdeities who also were being worshiped.

One of the principal developments was that the doctrine of evil was augmented. Angra Mainyu was no longer a relatively weak entity opposing Ahura Mazda but became the archenemy of humanity who was almost coequal with Ahura Mazda. He also became subordinate to another demonic figure who created all evil things.

Among Latter-day Saints, Satan is clearly an evil force opposed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. In no way, however, is there any question of coequality, and Satan certainly did not participate in creation. Moses 4:23–25 makes it clear that even the thorns and thistles which make human life hard are part of God's creation, not Satan's work. The Father and the Son organize all life and nonlife.

*ON THE GOOD SIDE*

*Ahura Mazda.* According to Nigosian, Ahura Mazda "is self-created, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, invisible, and beyond human conceptualization."<sup>7</sup> He is the supreme ruler and is all-knowing, so nothing is hidden from him. He created both the heavenly and earthly realms and gives material and spiritual blessings to those who follow him. He guides humankind, and consequently, those who seek the good need to follow his guidance. He also forgives those who make mistakes, and in the end he will redeem even the wicked. It was these secrets of creation, life, and death that Ahura Mazda revealed to Zoroaster.<sup>8</sup> Everything that is good is a creation of Ahura Mazda. He creates nothing that is evil or disgusting. Ahura Mazda works in the universe through Good Spirit, which does not seem to have an existence apart from Ahura Mazda.

*Holy Immortals.* Besides the material realm, Ahura Mazda also created six spiritual powers or spiritual beings—Good Mind, Best Righteousness, Desirable Kingdom, Holy Devotion, Health, and Immortality. These are the Holy Immortals. Nigosian states, “Ahura Mazda created the [Holy Immortals] to aid him in his work. . . . Each has a specific character and an assigned sphere to act on behalf, or as agent, of Ahura Mazda. . . . Each [Holy Immortal] fulfills a twofold function: on the spiritual side each represents, or personifies, some specific virtue; and on the physical side each presides over some material object as its guardian spirit.”<sup>9</sup>

Hence Good Thought, who is chief of the Immortals, personifies Ahura Mazda’s thought and wisdom and will establish the kingdom of God when directed to do so by Ahura Mazda. Interestingly, married persons possess more of Good Thought than those who live a celibate life. In the physical realm, Good Thought guards the animals.

Best Righteousness personifies God’s law and moral order while guarding fire. Desirable Kingdom personifies the royal powers of God, such as might, majesty, and sovereignty. In the physical realm, he guards the sky, protects warriors, and presides over metals. Holy Devotion is female and personifies immovable faith. She also guards the earth and protects herdsmen and farmers. Health and Immortality stand together, since both are the reward for a righteous life. Both are feminine. They are to bring help, pleasure, and joy to those who follow Ahura Mazda. At the physical level, Health guards water, and Immortality guards vegetation. In addition to the Immortals, there are lesser divine beings. All six of the Immortals and the lesser divinities are worshiped along with Ahura Mazda, thus removing any sense of pure monotheism from current Zoroastrianism.<sup>10</sup>

In Latter-day Saint thought, there is nothing equivalent to the Holy Immortals or the lesser divinities. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost compose the Godhead, but there are no secondary deities. Messengers (angels) may be sent from heaven to earth, but these are either spirits waiting to assume an earthly existence or persons who have already lived on the earth. There is no sense in Latter-day Saint thought of beings created solely to serve in the heavenly court.

*Fravashi and the human being.* “[Fravashi] are the celestial originals of terrestrial duplicates—the double of every heavenly

and earthly being or element.”<sup>11</sup> They lived with Ahura Mazda well prior to the creation of anything. All persons, the natural world, and even the elements—that is, every entity created by Ahura Mazda—have their own Fravashi. The Fravashi provides guidance and help to persons. It functions much like a guardian angel. “This Fravashi is the higher double of the individual and acts as a divine voice, a guardian spirit, and a true guiding friend.”<sup>12</sup> Even when a person sins, the Fravashi remains pure and unsullied, and though it warns a person, that individual alone is responsible for his or her actions. At a person’s death, their Fravashi returns to the presence of Ahura Mazda and lives as the representative of the person or entity of which it is the archetype. It is not equivalent to the soul or the body which make up an earthly person.

#### ON THE EVIL SIDE

*Ahriman.* There is a dark side to the force in Zoroastrianism. Evil, or Ahriman, has an independent existence, is uncreated, stands against Ahura Mazda, and in later Zoroastrianism is almost equally powerful. For every good thing created by Ahura Mazda, Ahriman creates the opposite. Thus nothing evil arises from Ahura Mazda, and nothing good arises from Ahriman. Therefore, Ahura Mazda is wholly good and Ahriman is wholly evil. Consequently, “the phenomenal world consists of pairs of conflicting opposites: light/dark, truth/falsehood, health/sickness, rain/drought, pure/impure, good creatures/noxious creatures, life/death, heaven/hell.”<sup>13</sup> Snakes, frogs, scorpions, lizards, and any other obnoxious creature are the products of Ahriman’s work. He also creates the thistles and weeds that make human life miserable. His whole goal is to create pain and suffering and misery in the world. The one thing that Ahriman is not, however, is all knowing. Therefore, he does not know that he and his work are doomed and will be overcome by Ahura Mazda. There may be some parallel to this in Moses 4:6 regarding Satan, where we read, “And Satan put it into the heart of the serpent, (for he had drawn away many after him,) and he sought also to beguile Eve, *for he knew not the mind of God*, wherefore he sought to destroy the world” (emphasis added). Even though Latter-day Saints believe that Satan had once stood in the presence of God, this text would suggest



that he never understood the Father's intent in creating the world and sending people into it.

*Angra Mainyu.* The opposite of Good Spirit, through which Ahura Mazda works, is now Angra Mainyu (Hostile Spirit or Evil Spirit), the demon of all demons, through which Ahriman works his evil in the world, be it in the moral realm or in the natural world.<sup>14</sup> He stands in absolute opposition to Good Spirit. He is the cause of all suffering and pain. He is surrounded by six "arch demons," which are opposites of the six good spirits. They drive away anything that is good, be it good thoughts, desires, hopes, or dreams. Their tools are lies and counterfeits of that which is good. They try to draw humans to make choices for evil rather than good, and they are assisted by a swarm of lesser demons at the earthly level. There is a cosmic combat between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman that works itself out at the level of the created world and in the heart of every human, since all have to make choices between good and evil. Humans will be judged in the end by how good their thoughts, words, and deeds were during their lives. In the end, all evil will be destroyed.

There is much here upon which Latter-day Saints may reflect. They certainly see Satan and his minions at work in every corner of this world, seeking to bring misery and suffering to the human family. As in Zoroastrianism, it is incumbent upon individuals to choose between good and evil and not to succumb to the enticings of these demonic forces. It also calls to mind 1 Nephi 13 and 14, which deal with the great and abominable church. In 1 Nephi 14, we see a cosmic conflict between the church of God and the church of Satan, there being only two "churches." This is comparable to the above noted cosmic combat between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. Similarly, this cosmic conflict spills over onto the earth, where it manifests itself as the great and abominable church. The marks of this church are materialism, sensuality, and opposition to the church of God. These marks are to be found in all human organizations to one degree or another. They are even found among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where too many members are drawn to the materialism and sensuality of the world in their searches for monetary gain, approval of the world, and pornographic titillation. The difference between Zoroastrian and Latter-day Saint

thought, however, is that in Latter-day Saint theology, for all the apparent power of evil, its source is not equal in power to God and his power. It exists in the world only by God's permission, and God uses it to shape and hone the Saints as they choose the right.

#### *AFTER DEATH*

When persons die, their souls stay near the body for three days, during which they contemplate all their thoughts, words, and deeds—both the good and the bad. Those who were good are comforted by angels, and those who were bad are assaulted by demons. On the fourth day, souls move to Chinvat Bridge (Bridge of Judgment), which spans hell and leads to paradise. There, souls are judged by three deities and then sentenced to either hell or paradise.<sup>15</sup> The souls that are good are met by a beautiful maiden who represents their good consciences, and they move easily across the Bridge of Judgment to paradise to await the general Resurrection. Those souls who were evil will be met by an ugly hag personifying their bad consciences, who leads them to the bridge, which rotates to present a knifelike edge from which they fall into hell, there to be tormented until the Resurrection. For those who have an exact balance between their good and evil deeds, there is an intermediate place for them until the Resurrection. There is no suffering here except that associated with seasonal temperature changes.<sup>16</sup>

For Latter-day Saints, life after death includes a variety of gradations immediately after death, as it does in Zoroastrianism. Those persons who attained the age of accountability and who followed Christ and received the saving ordinances of the gospel will enter paradise to await the Resurrection. From there they will be called to teach the gospel to persons in other areas of the spirit world who have not yet had the opportunity to know Jesus or receive saving ordinances under priesthood authority (D&C 138). This region of the spirit world seems to have a spectrum of people within it. There is a region of the spirit world known as hell, where those who die in their wickedness are sent, but they are not immune to the missionary efforts of those in paradise. Most of the spirit world might be comparable to the intermediate place in Zoroastrian thought or to purgatory in Roman Catholic theology.

THE LAST DAYS—THREE THOUSAND YEARS

Zoroastrians believe they are living in the final times of this world. The final three thousand years of the earth's existence began at the time of Zoroaster's birth. At the end of each successive thousand years, a savior figure will be born to progressively elevate the human population. Thus there are three savior figures, each being a son of Zoroaster, since some of his seed was preserved in a lake in Persia in which a maiden would bathe every millennium and become impregnated. At the end of the third thousand-year period, the human family will have overcome all evil, and those living at the time of the Resurrection will join those who are already resurrected.<sup>17</sup> Both heaven and hell have levels, or degrees. There are three degrees in the heavenly realm *prior* to the Resurrection in the regions of the stars, the moon, and the sun. The good soul passes successively through these until reaching the highest heaven.

At first blush, the immediate reaction of the Latter-day Saint to this last assertion concerning three levels in heaven is to see a close parallel to their own thought, especially with the tie to the stars, moon, and sun. But if we look more closely, we see that the correlation is not as close as it seems. While there are three levels of heaven in Zoroastrianism, they exist *before* the Resurrection, while Latter-day Saints talk about three degrees *following* the Resurrection and Final Judgment. Secondly, the good soul passes through all three levels in Zoroastrianism to arrive at the highest level, while among Latter-day Saints the basic assumption is that there is not progression between the degrees of glory.

We also see in Zoroastrianism a sense that they are now living in the "last days." This is now the third thousand-year period, running roughly from about 1500 CE to 2500 CE, if we assume that Zoroaster was born in the sixth century BCE. However, it seems that Zoroastrians believe that when the end does come, humanity will have progressed to a level approaching perfection, whereas for Latter-day Saints, humanity will have reached a state of warfare and degeneration prior to Christ's Second Coming and the Resurrection of the dead.

RESURRECTION

On the day of Resurrection, the earth, the fire, and the sea will all give up their dead, and bodies and souls will be reunited. For

three days, evil persons will endure extreme punishment in hell, while the good individuals will spend three days in bliss. Those in the intermediate realm will continue in their neutral way. Then a river of burning liquid metal will engulf all the resurrected. To those who were righteous, it will feel like warm milk, but to the wicked it will be excruciatingly painful according to their sinfulness until all evil is burned out of them. Ahriman and his followers either will be thrown by resurrected beings into outer darkness to hide forever,<sup>18</sup> or there will be a huge final battle in which Ahura Mazda's followers will be triumphant and Ahriman and his followers destroyed.<sup>19</sup> After this, all people—the good and the newly refined ones with their evil now gone—will live in a newly created universe. Adults will remain forever forty years old, and children will be forever fifteen. In other words, Zoroastrians hold a doctrine of universal salvation.

For Latter-day Saints, the Resurrection is not a one-time event but a process. Some persons were raised at the time of Jesus' Resurrection, and others have been already raised, like John the Baptist, Peter, James, and Moroni, all of whom appeared to Joseph Smith. At the time of Jesus' Second Coming, the righteous will join Christ, and those dead who are either celestial or terrestrial in nature will be raised.<sup>20</sup> During the Millennium following Jesus' return, people will die and be instantly resurrected. At the end of the thousand years, the Resurrection of the unjust will take place, at which time the Final Judgment will occur and persons will be placed in one of the three degrees of glory. In one sense, salvation is almost universal, if by that we mean that few will go to outer darkness and not receive a degree of glory. If, on the other hand, we mean that salvation is exaltation in the celestial kingdom, then salvation will be far from universal.

### —WORSHIP AND RITUALS—

There are a variety of rituals and rites in Zoroastrianism, some of which are quite complex. Here we will deal with the most prominent.

#### *INITIATION*

The initiation ceremony of both boys and girls occurs between the ages of seven and eleven in India and between twelve and fifteen

in Iran.<sup>21</sup> The boy or girl receives a white undershirt symbolizing purity, with a pocket in the front for symbolic good deeds. They also receive a sacred cord, which is worn around the waist and is composed of seventy-two threads, symbolizing the chapters in the Yasna, one of the sacred texts. Part of the ceremony is the reciting of a faith statement and committing oneself to the precepts encompassed therein. It states:

I profess myself a Mazdean, a follower of Zarathustra, opposing the demons, accepting the doctrine of Ahura, one who praises the beneficent immortals, who worships the beneficent immortals. I accredit all good things, those that are indeed the best, to Ahura Mazda the good.<sup>22</sup>

Upon initiation, a boy or girl becomes an adult responsible for keeping the faith. The cord is tied and untied several times a day, each time reminding persons that they live before Ahura Mazda.

The obvious corollary to the Zoroastrian initiation is the baptism of boys and girls at the age of eight in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At this time, the young people become accountable for their actions insofar as they understand right and wrong, but they receive no symbols which they carry or wear. They are, of course, dressed in white at the time of their baptism as a symbol of purity, and they receive through the laying on of hands the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is invisible. They do receive these ordinances as a product of having covenanted (much as Zoroastrian young persons) with their Heavenly Father that they “are willing to bear one another’s burdens . . . to mourn with those that mourn . . . and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [they] may be in, even until death, that [they] may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that [they] may have eternal life” (Mosiah 18:8–9). The physical symbols for Latter-day Saints come later in life, when they go to the temple. There they receive their temple garments, which are worn under their clothing. These have markings which remind the wearers of further covenants they have made and promises they have received in the context of temple worship. Clearly, the temple garments have some parallel to the sacred undershirt worn by Zoroastrians.

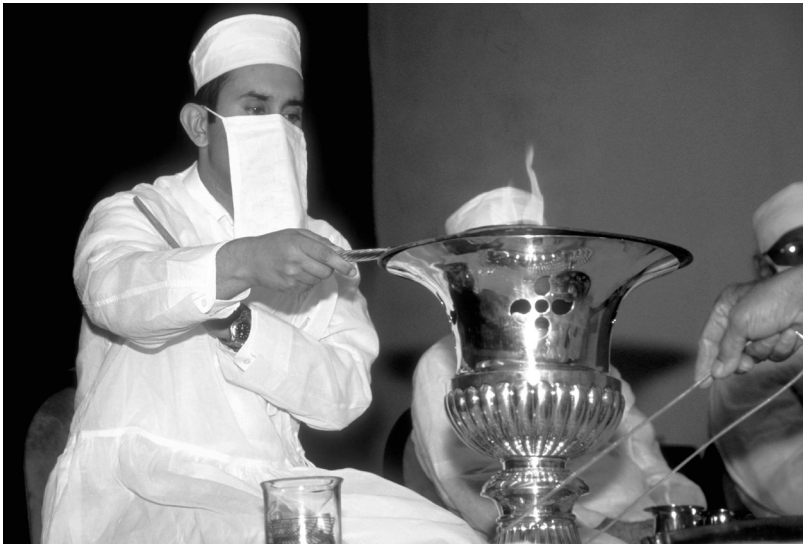
*THE FIRE TEMPLE*

Fire is the symbol of Ahura Mazda, and Zoroastrians worship before it, but they do not worship the fire itself. It is sacred because of what it represents. Great care is taken to keep it pure. John and David Noss give us a look into the fire temple:

The worshipers come individually, at any time they wish. Inside the entrance each washes the uncovered parts of the body, recites the Kusti prayer in Avestan, and then, putting off shoes, proceeds bare-footed through the inner hall to the threshold—no further—of the fire chamber, where a priest accepts an offering of sandalwood and money and gives in return a ladleful of ashes from the sacred urn, which the worshiper rubs on the forehead and eyelids. Bowing towards the fire, the worshiper offers prayers (but not to the fire, for it is only a symbol), and then retreats slowly backward and with shoes replaced goes home.<sup>23</sup>

*TOWERS OF SILENCE*

To Zoroastrians, both the earth and fire are sacred and pure because, as creations of Ahura Mazda, they are good. They are not to be polluted, and a dead body is highly polluting. Thus, traditionally



*Priests perform a sacred fire ceremony. Fire is the symbol of Ahura Mazda.*

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*Tower of silence, Yazd, Iran. Dead bodies were once placed in these towers to avoid polluting either the earth or fire. Courtesy of Petr Adam Dohnálek.*

a body would never be cremated, nor would it be buried. How then does one dispose of a dead body? The answer to this lies in the towers of silence.

After the body has been washed and dressed in clean clothes, the sacred cord is tied around the waist. There are a variety of rituals, but finally the body is carried from the house to a tower of silence. This is a round tower set on a hill made of stone, with a stone bottom, having three internal levels with niches in each level in which bodies can be laid. The upper level is for men, the middle level for women, and the lowest level for children. The whole tower is open to the sky. The corpse bearers bring the body from the house to the tower and lay it in a shallow depression. They then slit the clothing, thereby baring the body. They leave, and within thirty minutes all that is left are bones because vultures have stripped the body of all flesh. The bones are left to bleach in the sun and then finally are placed in a central pit to disintegrate. Since Iran has not permitted the use of the towers for forty years and in many other places Zoroastrian populations are small, there is another mode of disposal. In these cases, stone boxes



shield the earth, and then the body is placed in a lead coffin inside the stone box. Both are then covered with earth, thereby protecting the ground from pollution.

From a Latter-day Saint perspective, God can reunite the body and spirit of a person at the time of the Resurrection, no matter what has happened to it (i.e., whether it is buried, consumed by fire, buried at sea, eaten by vultures, or lost in an explosion). However, given the option, and out of respect for the body which is created in the image of God, burial is the most common and approved means of dealing with the dead. The bodies are dressed in temple garments and temple robes and are buried following a funeral service. Some countries today require cremation, and in those instances, the bodies of Latter-day Saints are burned after being dressed in temple garments and robes.

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## — WOMEN —

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The basic stance within Zoroastrianism is that women have equality with men before Ahura Mazda, although women cannot function as priests. Women's positions have always been tied to cultural norms, and their primary role has been that of wife and mother, as in most other cultures. Laws of purity impact women with considerable force because both menstruation and childbirth make the women ritually impure, requiring periods of separation and purification before normal daily life can be resumed. With the coming of Western influence, Zoroastrian women are entering the job market and making their mark on a more equal basis with men.

Within the Latter-day Saint community, women are equal to men before God, and there is not such an emphasis on ritual purity. However, their most sacred role that no man can fill is that of wife and mother. They give birth to new lives and bring those children up in the nurture of a Christian family. No one can take their place. Like Zoroastrian women, Latter-day Saint women do not hold the priesthood, but they share in it with their husbands, which is a step beyond Zoroastrianism. Like their Zoroastrian sisters, many Latter-day Saint women hold positions of great responsibility in the secular world, but nothing replaces their natural role of wife and mother within the divine economy.



— CONCLUSION —

There are commonalities between Zoroastrianism and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In both, there is a strong sense of divine control which will end in victory over an evil personage known as either Ahriman or Satan. It would appear that Ahriman, at least in later Zoroastrianism, has greater power than does Satan, but be that as it may, he and his followers will be cast out or destroyed. In Zoroastrianism, there are many nonhuman heavenly beings that function at various levels within the divine structure, thereby giving a multiplicity of gods, which is not found in Latter-day Saint thought. The Godhead in Latter-day Saint theology is composed of three individual persons, all of them divine, united in a social trinity that functions together as one. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost together control all things with their creative and sustaining powers. As with Ahura Mazda in Zoroastrianism, they too will be victorious in the end over all that is evil, for nothing evil can dwell in their presence.

— NOTES —

1. “Major Religions of the World Ranked by Number of Adherents,” Adherents.com, last modified August 9, 2007, [http://www.adherents.com/Religions\\_By\\_Adherents.html](http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html).
2. S. A. Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith: Tradition and Modern Research* (Buffalo, NY: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 16.
3. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 17–18.
4. David S. Noss and John B. Noss, *A History of the World’s Religions*, 9th ed. (New York: Macmillan College, 1994), 391.
5. Noss and Noss, *History*, 396.
6. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 21–24.
7. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 71.
8. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 72–73.
9. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 75.
10. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 74–80.
11. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 82.
12. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 83.
13. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 85.
14. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 85.
15. Noss and Noss, *History*, 400.
16. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 92.
17. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 94.
18. Noss and Noss, *History*, 402.

19. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 95.
20. Douglas L. Callister, "Resurrection," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992) 3:1223.
21. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 99.
22. Nigosian, *Zoroastrian Faith*, 100.
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