

Transcript For:

The Zoroastrian World View and its Echoes in Christianity and Islam

Presented by Dr. Philip Kreyenbroek

The Rothko Chapel

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This transcript is unedited.

Dr. Philip Kreyenbroek – Zoroastrianism (Part I)

. . . And we're even more pleased with the program that has been put together. And there are a host of people that I should thank, beginning with our own staff here, and especially the person I will mention in a minute, but also MaryAnn Brunei, who's our guest tonight, who is the president of the Brunei Smothers Foundation. And that foundation and with her impetus has made this evening possible, so thank you all for coming.

The person that will introduce our speaker has been an enormous help to us, because you know, this is co-sponsored by the Zoroastrian Cultural Center in Sugar Land as well. He took us there on Sunday and we were privy to a simply wonderful talk on the subject. And he will introduce our speaker tonight, and that's Mr. Manupshah. Please come up . . . It's the best I can do with all these names.

Please turn your cell phones off, if they are not off already, and then afterwards we'll have a reception at the little house next door. Thank you.

Mr. Manupshah.

Thank you, Sissy. On behalf of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, welcome to this lecture. We have had – the Zoroastrians have had a long association with the Rothko Chapel, and I want to thank Sissy Farenthal and Casey for inviting us to be co-sponsors for this event.

We go back about 25 years with the Rothko Chapel, when Mrs. De Menil and Mrs. Droobie would permit us to have our religious functions in this beautiful chapel. I sometimes wonder if when we first came to Houston whether they even knew who Zoroastrians were. If you look up most books on world religions, you seldom find anything about Zoroastrians. Perhaps that is because we are such a miniscule community of about 160,000 . . . worldwide. But that was not always the case. The Zoroastrian religion was the religion of three great Persian empires, starting with Cyrus the Great in about 600 BC, and going through a period of some 1,100 years till the 7th Century AD, until it was felled by Islam.

But during that long period of time, the Zoroastrian religion interacted heavily with Judaism and Christianity, and of course, after Islam came, with Islam. During that interaction – during that period of interaction, Zoroastrianism has heavily influenced these other religions. Tonight to talk to us about that we have with us Professor Kreyenbroek, who is going to be talking about the Zoroastrian – the Zoroastrianism and the echoes effect in Islam and Christianity.

Professor Kreyenbroek is one of the leading scholars of Zoroastrian studies. He has authored a number of books. His latest book is called *Living Zoroastrians*, and it's about the Parces community in Bombay. He has also co-authored, along with our High Priest in Bombay, a number of books on priestly rituals and the liturgy. He is currently the Professor of Iranian Studies at Gurtengen in Germany. In addition to his studies on Zoroastrianism, Professor Kreyenbroek has also studied the Kurds and the . . . in northern Iraq. Please welcome – join me in welcoming Professor Kreyenbroek.

Professor Kreyenbroek

Can everyone hear me? Yes, I think they can. Ladies and gentlemen, first of all I would like to say that it's both an honor and a great pleasure for me to be here in this magnificent chapel. One says that, but in this case I really mean it. I'm most grateful to the organizers, to Mrs. Brunei, to Mrs. Farenthal, and all the others who have made this possible and have invited me to speak here to you to night.

It is perhaps ironic that a time when the study of ancient religions, and especially the study of Zoroastrianism, is hardly being promoted by university authorities anywhere in the west, whether in America or in Europe. There are many developments that have taken place in this field, which seem to throw a great deal of new light, not just on the history of Zoroastrianism and other Iranian religions, but on the history of religion generally, or at least on religion in the western half of the world, so to speak, starting with Iran and going west. Islam, Christianity, and so on, not Hinduism, Buddhism, and other eastern religions. I would like to discuss some of these developments with you today and their implications for our understanding of the development of religious thought in some later religions.

To do that, I'm afraid, I must bore you with a certain amount of background information, but I promise I'll be brief and will come to the main point of the talk quite soon. Ladies and gentlemen, as many of you know, most European languages, like English, Spanish, Russian, and Greek, are closely related to each other and also to the languages of northern Indian and to those of the Iranian world, such as Iran, Afghanistan, Kurdistan and Tarchikistan. Thus, for instance, brother in Persian is baroder and mother is moder. Father think of Persian, padre is pader. So you can see that some words are still very similar. Now it seems logical to conclude from this that the ancestors of all these peoples, that is the ancestors I expect of all of us here present tonight, were once part of the same group, the so-called Indo-Europeans, because their languages are spoken in India and Iran and in Europe and America, of course.

Now furthermore, since the languages of Iran and Northern India are particularly closely related, it is thought the ancestors of the Iranians and Indians, the so-called Indo-Iranians, or if you prefer proto Indo-Iranians, moved away from the main group of Indo-Europeans together as one group and continued to live as a single people for a long time indeed, before drifting slowly apart, or quickly. We don't know. One of the reasons why we think this, why we think the Indo-Iranians were together for such a long time is that they developed a characteristic common religious tradition which was so deep-rooted that many common elements can be found even today between Hinduism, the religion of India, of the Indians, and Zoroastrianism, the ancient faith of Iran, many of whose followers I'm very grateful to be able to welcome here tonight.

This Indo-Iranian religion did not yet make use of writing, so all the claims we can make about it necessarily must be speculative. But still, we can deduce a great deal from a comparative

analysis of the texts of those two great religions, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism, that sprang from this common faith. Now as in some other religions, it seems that the Indo-Iranians worshiped above all the principle of cosmic order or truth. That is in the Indian language [speaking in Indian], and ... Persian [speaking in Persian], and the ... speakers, the speakers of the sacred language of the Zoroastrians, pronounces a bit quickly, and it became “asha, asha”, and we say “asha” now. Asha represents the proper way for things to happen both in nature and in society. Asha causes spring to follow winter, day to follow night, and those who behave in accordance with the laws of their people act in accordance with asha. On the other hand, those who do not weak asha. And if asha is weak, it may not be able to safeguard the proper way of doing things, and the safety of the tribe may well be in danger.

On earth, priests therefore saw to it that the tribes’ laws and customs were obeyed, and it seems possible that the function of some of the gods of the Indo-Iranians was mainly that of guarding asha. The Indo-Iranians differentiated between two –

[Inaudible.]

Could you perhaps switch it a bit louder? I’m dependent on this thing. I could try to shout, but I have a mike. Is this better? Okay, thank you.

The Indo-Iranians differentiated between two groups of divine beings. On the one hand, there were the divas, in Iranian “divas”, a very ancient word for God. Compare dios in Latin, ... dios, and theos and ... These divas apparently behaved pretty much as the Greek gods did. They fell in love. They had all sorts of complicated family relationships, and they behaved generally as capriciously as humans, but with a bit more power. The divas had little to do with asha, and they did as they liked, and humans unfortunately had to take the consequences.

Now another group of divine powers apparently developed around asha, around this principle of cosmic order, as guardians of some of asha’s social functions. The names of that group of gods or divine beings typically defined their characteristic roles. So you get names that sound abstract, because they’re really forces rather than personalized gods. So the god Mithra, whose name meant contract or covenant, was in charge of all contracts and mutual obligations, whether between people or between men and gods. Those who broke their contracts made Mithra furious, and in doing so put their whole tribe in jeopardy. The god Ariaman, Indo-Iranian way of thinking, made sure that the trial customs were followed, and in later religions guarded weddings and hospitality. So you can see there’s a certain parallelism between the function of this group of gods, the Ahuras, or in India the Asuras, and those of priests who guarded the morals and behavior of ancient societies.

It seems possible, therefore, the ... of these Ahuras guarding Asha developed at the time when priests were particularly powerful in society. Naturally, as time went by, these Ahuras gradually

became more personalized. They acquired traits and became more like people a bit, but not so very much. The original character, which was more or less abstract, can still be clearly discerned and is very different from the Devas.

One of the typical differences between the two groups, Devas and Ahuras, was that while the Devas simply demanded offerings, notably food, drink, and praise, the Ahuras had a more reciprocal relationship with humans. We saw that Mithra helps those who honor their obligations, but in turn his strength increased. Mithra became stronger if people obeyed him by honoring their contracts. The great lord of Zoroastrianism, Lord Wisdom, Ahura Mosda, gives wisdom to people, but only to those who have prepared themselves to receive it. So in order to be able to benefit from the wisdom bestowed by Ahura Mosda, you have to be wise enough to open up to it and be in touch with the essence of Ahura Mosda. This goes across the board and is very typical for Zoroastrian thinking, particularly for the thinking of the Prophets Zarathustra.

Now like the Devas, the Ahuras also needed offerings of food, drink, and praise. And it seems likely that sessions held to welcome and befriend the gods soon developed into proper rituals, standard rituals whose name in the ancient Iranian language is *yesna* Sanskrit *yadgna*. You see closely related the languages are. And these rituals are still celebrated both in Iran among Zoroastrians and in India.

A central element of those rights are the preparation, offering of food, originally from animal sacrifice, although Zoroastrianism has long abandoned this idea of animal sacrifice, and also an offering of drink. ... Sanskrit *soma*. You'll notice that perhaps where you find an "s" in Sanskrit, you'll often find an "h" in Iranian. And also there was the recitation of songs of welcome and praise. It was believed the gods would actually come down to the place of the ritual to sit there on grass and partake of the offerings and listen to the songs welcoming them.

Now as I said earlier, this deep-rooted tradition probably developed over a long period, while the Indo-Iranians were still one people, perhaps from 3000 to 2000 BCE. It's thought that the Indo-Iranians formed part of the population of one of the first cultures in the area we know of the Sintashta Arcaim culture to the east of the Ural Mountains are a sort of watershed between Asia and Europe in present-day Russia, or the former Soviet Union. This culture flourished, we think, from 2200 until around 1600 BCE. We don't quite know, but that's the general idea. And we think that the Indo-Iranian people were part of those who took part or participated in that culture.

Now from the greater Ural – from the sort of Buddha area between Europe and Asian, the Indo-Iranians moved eastward. We don't know exactly when the two groups began to drift apart, but probably around the time of 2000 to 1500 – no, 2000 BC I think. We believe in any case that both groups moved eastward, but the proto Indians, the early ancestors of the modern Indians, were the first to settle. And they went to Margiana, the region of ... in modern Turk Ministan. It's now called ... for reasons best known to somebody. But we in Persia used to say ... And

later they went even further eastward to Bactrian, which is northwestern Afghanistan. That must have happened in the early second millennium BCE, so maybe 1900 BC.

It has been argued recently that the proto Indians were the first to develop a prosperous and partly urban culture in that Bactrian Margiana area, which is now generally referred to as Bactrian Margiana Archeological Complex, which I will refer to as the “BMAC.” I’m sure you all know what an IMAC is, or if not that, then what a Big Mac is. And this BMAC is just the Bactrian Margiana Archeological Complex. Either BMAC, which doesn’t make it much better. And since in lecturing in the university, I’m always talking about the BMAC. I’ll use that here as well. That culture probably represented the first attempt by an Indo-Iranian people at urban living. It was, by the way, fairly soon given up after a few centuries. It was the first time they tried to live not a tribal life, but to live an urban life, and it was apparently not very easy.

But in any case, we can see the developments in social life were mirrored by changes in the religion outlook among the proto early Indians, whereas the earlier religion had apparently aimed to maintain the traditional social order. In this new culture, a new god became prominent, the Diva Indra, who to quote the ancient Indian Rigveda, made all things unstable. So an ideal of stability that things remain as they always were, and now an ideal of instability, of movement, of conquest, of heroism. Indra was not banned by the laws of Asha or Urta. And he demanded huge sacrifices of animals and soma, whereas the Zoroastrian ritual involved the sacrifice of one animal and a little bit of ... So generally, he seems to have represented an entrepreneurial, might-is-right mentality rather than one honoring social harmony and tradition.

And then, ladies and gentlemen, something very dramatic must have happened, which people have not drawn much attention to insofar. The two peoples who had been apart for centuries, 500-600 years, met for the second time, it seems. In a recent wide-ranging article, Professor A. Parpola from Finland presents both archeological and theological evidence, which I think is very convincing, to show that the proto Indo-Arian civilization flourished for centuries until around 1500 BCE a wave of tribes – tribes that possessed horses and made a distinctive gray pottery – appeared in the area and eventually caused these Indo-Arian people to move on towards Indian to Panjab. Now since it’s known that this distinctive gray pottery is typical for the Iranians, Parpola logically concludes that these people must have been Iranians. We also know the Iranians had horses, were a factor in the culture – in the landscape of those days – because of their ability to deal with horses.

So we think that an invasion of Iranians caused a stir in this BMAC, in this area. Certainly what we know is that Iranian and not Indian languages have been spoken in the area concerned as far as back as our evidence allows us to gauge, which suggests that the Iranians indeed eventually succeeded in replacing the early Indians and caused many Indians to move onwards and to land in India or land which enter India. Now originally, of course, the culture of the established population was clearly superior to that of the uncouth Iranian horsemen who entered the area

from the steps. And this more sophisticated diva-worshipping culture may well have attracted the more prosperous and successful Iranians. Indeed, we can tell from the songs of Zarathustra that those people who did so and who angered him very much were his own people. They were not some other people where one could say, “Well, you know, they’re something else and therefore they worship the gods differently.” These were his own people who did things he didn’t like. And of course, we think – I think that it is possible that this elegant, perhaps, attracted the more prosperous and successful Iranians, whereas others saw it as a threat to their traditional postural way of life, which was underpinned by the laws of Asha. And as I indicated already, ladies and gentlemen, that situation, which we can now sort of gauge from the archeological and philological evidence, both from the Veda and the ancient Iranian texts, corresponds perfectly with the conditions we find reflected in the Gathas, the oldest sacred texts of Zoroastrianism, which are thought to have been composed by Zarathustra, or in Greek, Zoroaster, whom the Zoroastrians recognize as the founder of their religion.

Of course, we can’t prove this. It’s just that the two things seem to suddenly correspond, whereas formerly we couldn’t make sense of it and we thought, well, it happened in prehistory. We can’t tell. But now that we have all this information, the two things seem to come together very nicely, which may well be as long as we haven’t found some more in central Asia. Maybe there will be more discoveries and this has to be revised. But at the moment it all seems to dovetail.

Now as I say, ... evident in prehistory. There was no writing, so all we can do is to make deductions on the basis of what we find in the text. But there is text, mind you, especially the words of Zarathustra himself. Other religious states were apparently felt to be so holy that they were transmitted without writing, but with the greatest possible care for perhaps just under 2000 years. They’re still comprehensible today. Just imagine. I mean languages developed – I mean a language much older than ... was repeated syllable by syllable in priestly schools so that not a syllable would go wrong. And there are still not garbled, as one might expect today, although there was no writing until much, much later.

We know from the text that Zarathustra belonged to the priestly class, and that he was one of a fairly small elite of priests who had been trained to compose sacred utterances, sacred mantras, sacred small text, hymns. We know this because the style of the Gathas is so complex that it can’t possibly have been done by someone who was ad libbing. This was taught, for a long time, in priestly schools. And we know that only the best, the most talented people were allowed to go on to do advanced priestly studies. That was the same in India and in Iran. Zarathustra, in other words, stood in the Indo-Iranian tradition of religious scientific seers, in Sanskrit Arishi. Think of Maharishi and Iranian Arishi. Essentially, rishis had visions or auditive experiences which helped them understand and formulate religion – sorry – reality in a better and deeper way. For instance, a typical pronouncement of an arishi would have been that water and fire are really identical because fire is fed by wood, and wood needs water to grow. And then as in this early scientific religious tradition, there would be a sort of mantra defining the inter-relationship of

water and fire, and that they seem opposite, but in fact they're the same thing. This is – that early scientific thought was produced over the centuries in Iran and presumably – in India and presumably also in Iran. Thus, ... of religious insights and scientific insights accumulated with each generation of arishis building on the insights of previous ones. So that's what happened in India.

But now we come to Zarathustra and we find the same idea, but a totally different content. It went far beyond the idea that fire is really water because wood needs water to grow, or such early religious scientific insights. Zarathustra's message had a clear social implication. The gothas invoke the help of Lord Wisdom, Ahura Mosda, later ..., because the world had been turned upside down by the wick diva worshipers who behaved in a way that would be consistent with an early urban culture. For instance, they appear not to have had any respect for animals, on which the survival of tribes depended. They simply regarded them as meat. And being inexperienced in questions of urban ecology, killed as many of them as they liked and said we were doing this for Indra. Whereas pastoral people would have known, you know, you can – they weren't vegetarian or anything, but they would have known that the survival of cows is a necessity for the survival of people. That it all hangs together. In urban environments this is a guess, but I mean we see that Zarathustra talks about this sort of thing because he says in the gothas, "No proper life is possible among the wicked, for those who live rightly, for those who milk the cow." Existence, Zarathustra claimed, had been destroyed by the activities of the evil spirit. And there evil comes in and ..., who was quite as powerful as God in this world, which was completely new. I mean the gods had power and evil was just the absence of good. Here evil was not the absence of good. It was something intentional and it had to be fought.

At an earlier stage of the history of the world, the world had been spoiled by the evil spirit, and this should not be allowed to happen again at the hands of the followers – of its followers, the diva worshipers in Zarathustra's own time. Now unfortunately, at that time, in Zarathustra's time, these wick diva worshipers were far more powerful than Zarathustra and his cattle-breeding followers. Still, it's clear to Zarathustra that their way of life was not in harmony with Asha, and therefore could not be, in accordance with the wish of the great and powerful Lord Wisdom, ... I'll quote you a few texts from the Gotha so you'll get some idea how this expressed – this idea of good versus evil as an explanation for why the world is as it is. Quite different from the ancient tradition, which says the gods made the world and they did the best they could, and we've got to live with it.

Yasta 45:1 – "May not the deceitful one of evil doctrine destroy the world the second time." Implying that he'd done it a first time already. Another text: "The one of evil doctrine has ruined the world, has ruined the intention of life, the meaning of life by his own teachings. He had robbed the great power which really belongs to good thought." Another: "Yes, I shall speak of the two fundamental spirits of existence of which the virtuous one spoke thus to the evil one. Neither our thoughts nor intentions, neither our preferences nor words, neither our actions nor

conceptions, nor indeed our souls are in accord. We're quite different. We're separate. We're different intentions." But both we are intentions. It's not just evil is the absence of good. Between these two, the divas failed to choose rightly because they cannot think rightly, so that they chose the most evil thought and therefore they congregate with murderous fury through which they destroy the world. You see these massive meat-eaters, or whatever. But anyway, people who did not behave in accordance to the laws of proper order.

"But you divas, and all who worship you, all of you are the offspring of evil thinking, deceit and disrespect. Hateful too are your actions for which you have become renowned in this part of the world." Another text: "In this way you've deceived mankind out of the good ways of life and immortality." Immortality probably being the ability to continue life because the cows will have calves and so on, and one can eat one or two, but not all of them at the same time. That's my interpretation. "As you have deceived yourselves, oh divas, by evil thinking and the evil spirit himself, your action is allied with evil words. Mosda were the divas ever good rulers in any way, they together with whom the wicked priests had delivered the cow until fury, they have not been eager to prosper the cow and her pasturage with truth."

Now as a priest, Zarathustra announces that he's both willing and essentially able to do battle with these forces of evil probably as a figurehead, as a leader of his own Iranian community, which couldn't tolerate these divac things any longer. But he states he's not powerful enough to do this on his own. He absolutely needs the help of Lord Wisdom, and of a number of other forces who he begins to conceptualize. He stands in this tradition of abstract forces who are forces in their own right, but can also embodied in human life. And he now calls upon new beings. New, as far as we can tell, at his time. Good thinking. Cosmic order was known. That was Asha, which is now called best cosmic order, because it was not the only one. There was also a worst cosmic order. Proper use of power and holy devotion, and a number of others. The Goths can be understood as a tense, in fact, to make Ahura Mosda realize the gravity of the situation. It's critical. And to make him come to the aid of the righteous, led, it seems, by Zarathustra himself. When that has happened and the forces of evil have been defeated, something major will occur. The world will be made wonderful. It will be renewed and be made something called "freshah," which means perfect, wonderful, glorious.

It is then said that Zarathustra and his followers will reach an ideal state of existence when that happens, but it's not entirely clear whether Zarathustra originally expected to make the world wonderful in his own lifetime, and to live forever in this restored ideal physical world, or to go on to a heavenly existence in paradise until the world becomes freshah. The later thing, the later state of affairs, is what is believed in later Zoroastrianism, probably in the beginning it can be found in the gothas. But some passages definitely suggest that Zarathustra envisaged that his and his followers' souls would enjoy the best existence, that is paradise in heaven, until the earth was renewed, and that the individual soul will find recompense after death, which is shown by Yasna 31:20. "He who approaches the truthful one, his reward will be splendor, as opposed to weeping,

a long life in darkness, foul food, and the world woe. To that existence your views will lead you, oh deceitful one, on account of your own actions. And the same may be applied by another passage where Zarathustra says, "That man or woman, Ahura Mosda, who will grant me the things which you know to be best for the holy of existence, with those men and women I shall cross over to the bridge of the separator."

Now the bridge of the separator in later Zoroastrianism is the bridge that the soul crosses between heaven and hell. I'm sorry. Between earth and heaven on the fourth morning after death. It's also the original idea behind the Islamic concept of the ..., which is the same, a bridge that the soul crosses to heaven.

In other words, Zarathustra will lead his flock at the time of the judgment of the soul, causing them to reach paradise, unlike the evil traditional priests and rulers whose soul will recoil in horror when they reach the bridge, and to be in the hands of deceit, that is hell forever, and eat nasty food as we saw. This last passage could also be taken to mean that as an early stage of his career, Zarathustra expected the world to become perfect during his lifetime, and hoped to lead his followers to paradise himself. But I suppose that elements of both concepts were present. Perhaps Zarathustra hoped to rid the world of the diva worshipers in his own day, and expected a later figure to do the rest of the work. He probably didn't expect to do it all in one lifetime, but we don't know.

Certainly besides the judgment of the individual soul, the Goths refer to a final contest between the forces of good and evil here on earth at the end of time. Fire and molten metal are repeatedly mentioned in such context. Yasna 44:15 speaks of a time "when the two armies that have nothing on common will clash." And another text refers to a battle in which fire and molten metal play a role. "The recompense that you'll give to both parties through your pure fire and through molten iron, Ahura Mosda, will serve as a sign among the living beings of the destruction of the deceitful one and the salvation of the righteous." The Goths emphatically mention a final recompense at this point. A final one, not just for the soul, but for the whole world.

In Yasna 43:5 we find "Bad for the bad, a good reward for the good, each to be given through thy knowledge at the first final turning point of creation." Somewhere else, "When the punishment of those sinners shall come to pass and the rule of good thinking will be at hand, to be announced to those who deliver deceit into the hands of truth." That is when we're beginning to see that sinners will be punished, then finally the world may come to an end and we may all live in this ideal existence. When that whole process is completed, the world will become perfect freshah. Of course, Ahura Mosda, will play a key role in achieving this state of ..., as it is called. But Zarathustra also said, "Therefore, may we be the ones who shall make the words freshah." In other words, Zarathustra's own actions and those of his contemporaries will have a direct bearing on the last things. They will be the saviors or ...

In the later tradition, which influenced Christianity, for instance, the ... refers to the future savior who will save the world in the ... of time, at the end of time. But that Zarathustra's contemporaries are expected to be saviors in that they helped save the world is also confirmed by a gothic passage. "Yes, those men shall be the saviors of the land who will accompany the knowledge of your teaching with actions inspired by good thinking and with truth, oh Mosda. These indeed have been fated to defeat Roth." Roth is one of the great demons that the world has to get rid of.

Literally in the same text Zarathustra used ... in a context where it almost certainly refers to himself. "When will I know Mosda if you have the power through truth over anyone who threatens me? Let the solemn words of good thinking be truly told to me, for he who shall say who's a ... must know what his reward shall be." There it seems Zarathustra is pleading with Ahura Mosda to demonstrate his power, to protect the righteous, and claiming his, Zarathustra's right, to know because he is the one who will help Ahura Mosda make the world at least better.

Now one other salient point in the theology of the Goths is that Ahura Mosda is described as the origin and create of all things. There are many things I could quote. For instance, "Yes, although you are the primeval one, I realize that you are forever young in mind. When I saw you in a vision to be the father of good thinking, the real creator of truth, and the lord of all existence." He, Mosda, created truth in accord with his very intention, his very goodness, through which he has upheld the very best thinking.

And then there's a long list of which man, which one in the beginning was the father of truth during creation? Which man fixed the course of the sun and the stars? Through whom does the moon wax now and wane later? Which is thought to be found in parts of the old text, in one part of the old testament, where you have a similar sort of thing. Who did this? Who did that? Who did that? And beckon only to one answer, namely God, or in this case, Ahura Mosda.

This short examination of some aspects of the teaching of the Goths allows us to note a number of relevant points which may be connected with Zarathustra's position as a leader and spokesman of a group of traditional Iranian herdsmen who had come to settle in this area, the BMAC, where the dominant culture is that of their cousins, the early Indians, who have given up their respect for the traditional values of Asha, and now believe in the diva Inja, who is not bound by the laws of rightness, but demands as many sacrifices as he can get without guaranteeing he'll protect his devotees in turn. This is the ideology of right is might, which spells death for the way of life of the simple herdsmen whose livelihood depends on ecologically sound laws of Asha.

Zarathustra claims that this is not the will of the Ahuras, and begs the greatest of these, Lord Wisdom, to enable his servant, the pre-Zarathustra, to ensure that the wicked one shall not destroy the world a second time. Points to note are that God is the creator, and that's a notion

that seems to have become very prominent in Judaism after the Judaism was in touch with Zoroastrianism during the captivity. We'll be discussing the captivity in a minute. But one sees that before that the world just existed, and then later on fairly late text, we will get all this status of creator attributed to God in the Bible.

So also in Zoroastrianism the world, being created by the good Ahura Mosda, was essentially good because it followed his essence, but the present state of the world is not determined by God alone. His adversary, Ahriman, has ruined existence at a primeval state, and the followers of this wicked being are now doing so again. Therefore – and that was probably quite new in the history of human thought. The world is not as God wants it to be. God has created an idea world, which is for man to realize that man can't just be passive and wait for the gods to make things better. I mean man has a task. And without man, as we shall see, God cannot save the world.

In biblical terms, all religions need to explain why a good God created everything perfectly, and then the world is not perfect now. So in the Bible you get the story of the serpent who drove Adam and Eve out of paradise, but many would say that the Iranian image of two supernatural adversaries doing battle in the world as generals commanding opposing armies of men is more coherent, and in deed more powerful with us for everyone to decide. Of course, I'm not prescribing you. That means that both the history of the world and the fate of the individual soul in Zoroastrianism are determined by moral forces, not by chance or fate, or whatever. Moral considerations, moral intentions operative in the world determine how the world will go, and how this will affect all individual human beings, as well as human society generally.

Also, Zarathustra claimed, again for the first time as far as we can tell, that the world will have an end, which is not known. In India the world will go on in cycles, and another cycle, another cycle. And Zarathustra said no. There's just one time. The world had a beginning, was created, and it will have an end. And in between that it has to fulfill its function. There can be no doubt as to the outcome of the contest between good and evil, because the world inherently belongs to the good. Still, the time when the world will be made wonderful depends on man's readiness to listen to God's commands and to act as saviors of the world. The goal of history is a moral one, the salvation of the world from evil. One could almost say that man's existence and the world's existence, the world is like a refinery in the universe, slowly getting rid of evil. But it has to be a process. It's not one thing. Evil stop existing. The world is seen as this refinery sort of process, and as man is more pious, more religious, more open to the values of the good, this process can be speeded up or slowed down, depending on what man does.

So the goal of history is a moral one, the salvation of the world from evil, and man holds a key position in the scheme of things, which again is new. Man is just there, like the animals, like plants, etc. In Zoroastrianism, the only being that is capable of moral choice, is capable of being good or evil is man. In Zoroastrianism, dogs are always good. They were created by Ahura Mosda. Curiously cats are said in the later books to always to be wicked because they were

created Arhiman. Most ... I know don't believe this. But a few people say, "Oh yes, yes. We feel it. Really, cats are evil." I don't know. Other people say, "We love cats." Never mind.

Still man, no. Man can decide and he must decide, and not just to further world and to get rid of evil, but his own soul depends on it of course, because if he's been good he will dwell in the best existence. The word is now used in modern Persian, ... paradise. But if not he must eat this horrible, nasty food and cry woe all the time in the house of deceit or Hell. So he has good reason to try and choose the right side rather than the wrong one.

Now if the scenario proposed earlier with Zarathustra of the figurehead of an early Iranian revolt against dominant ideology and probably practice at the time is correct, we can see that for the first time in the history of the Indo-Iranian peoples, a group defines itself on the basis of its belief, rather than its ethnicity. In most religions, you're a Jew because you're born in the Jewish religion. You follow the Egyptian religion because you're an Egyptian, speak the Egyptian language, and therefore you worship like an Egyptian. The same was probably true for the early Germans, for the Romans, for Greeks, etc., etc.

But there were undoubtedly Iranians who did not follow Zarathustra, and were still Iranian, so it was no longer a question of just ethnicity. Suddenly there's a new phenomenon. People who called themselves Mosda-worshipping Zoroastrians, followers of Zarathustra in their confession of faith. Meaning that within the Indo-Iranian sphere at least, this was the first time that a "dina," a world view – "dina" just means the way you see the world, but that became the word for religion. It was so deeply ingrained that Hebrew took it over. The word "din" is Hebrew for religion. Later in Islam you have "din" again for religion. But as far as we can tell it began with this word "din," "dina," which meant the way you see the world. Now this is not true in Judaism, Egyptian religion, Babylonian religion, ancient Hinduism, etc., etc., etc., because what you were depended on where you were born. But not in this case. People chose to belong or not to belong to this religion, and therefore a new religious and social identity, in other words, a new religion, maybe the first religion was born.

Now what happened in the centuries between the life of Zarathustra and the time Zoroastrianism emerges in history around 500 BC – well 559 or so. We don't know exactly, but the sacred books can tell us a little bit. They tell us things like there was a lot of over-position at first, but eventually the religion spread all over, which we could have told anyway. But we can also see that the words of Zarathustra, the Goths, were apparently memorized verbatim with that great care, which must mean that he was seen from the beginning to be a very special person, because other religious texts were still transmitted freely. People knew how to compose a song. They knew what they were going to say, and they had the ability to do that ad lib, talk. They didn't need to memorize all the sacred words, but the Goths were memorized probably syllable by syllable.

Secondly, the fact that in the area of Bactra and Margiana, the Iranian and not Indian languages are now spoken, and that Indian tribes eventually moved onto the Panjob suggests that whatever movement Zarathustra led or was a part of succeeded in actually establishing its dominance in this region of the world.

Then, in the Indian tradition as we saw, each generation of Rishis was remembered and then succeeded by the next. But in Iran we don't hear of any such Rishis, either before or after Zarathustra, which must mean that Zarathustra was regarded as being far more important than ordinary seers in the collective memory of the community as it developed. Of course, there must have been seers before Zarathustra. But they were forgotten because only Zarathustra counted.

Now another very important point is that it has often been remarked that Zarathustra was not a prophet in the Old Testament sense. And that is usually said to imply, oh well, you know, a real prophet is a Jewish one, but not Zarathustra. What's not said is that he was in fact a great deal more than that, much more important. Like Jesus, he became the founder of a new religion, of a thing you could choose for yourself. Over time he came to be thought of as one who'd had direct contact with God, and had brought a direct divine message to man. In other words, where the Old Testament doesn't show us a figure whose figure was remotely similar to that of Christ, the Zoroastrian tradition evolved precisely such a model long, long before Christianity. When Moses transmitted God's message, his words didn't split the community. All Jews, whether they liked Moses, didn't like Moses, were indifferent to Moses remained Jews. I mean there was no question. It was just, you know. In the case of Zarathustra, Jesus, the prophet Mani, who wasn't very important, and of course the prophet Mohammed, we see a scenario in which a divine revelation leads to the emergence of a new social and religious identity.

How Zarathustra's message was understood in the centuries was followed can be gauged to some extent from the text of the so-called young ..., which were, as I said, transmitted freely for centuries, and eventually came to be transmitted in fixed form in Achaemenian times, that is perhaps 400 BC, maybe that is 1000 years later than the Goths. We don't quite know.

Now as the new religion spread all over the Iranian realm, one of its most striking new features was undoubtedly the belief that there will be an end to time. That until that happens, the individual soul will be recompensed in the afterlife, in Heaven or Hell, and finally that when the end of time comes, cosmic justice will fully express itself in the material world, thereby transforming the universe into one of complete perfection.

Now as the time gap separated the prophet from the belief is widened, that is as more time went by since the prophet had lived, Zarathustra's time came to be thought of as absolutely ideal. And we see that the end of time was also going to be ideal, so it would logically have to include this idea Zarathustra, or a figure representing him. But reincarnation is not known in early Zoroastrianism – I mean most forms of Zoroastrianism, so Zarathustra himself could not return

before the resurrection of all the dead, and that was too late because that happened after these things had been set in motion.

As a result of that probably a legend came into being saying that the prophet's essence, that is presumably his seed, was hidden in a holy lake, and that one day a virgin would bathe there, become pregnant, and give birth to Zarathustra's son long after his lifetime. That figure eventually came to be referred as the savior or ..., although as we saw in the Goths, the earlier text, all true believers could be ... Later the word was unique savior figure who would lead the world to perfection.

Another of the inequities which the forces of evil have inflicted upon men is death, obviously. We all die, and that is a fact seen in Zoroastrianism as the result of the evil attack by ... So the belief in a rule of cosmic justice apparently led to the expectation that those who had already fallen victim to death would be compensated in this respect as well. For had they remained dead, ... would have scored a victory, wouldn't he. He may not have been able to do everything, but he killed all our ancestors. So the reply to that was that there would be a physical resurrection. That the dead would be resurrected as they were in their ideal age. Those who died as adults would be 40, which is apparently the ideal age. And those who were children – I can't remember – 12 or so. But anyway, I mean the best age for children to be resurrected.

So both – well, I'll just quickly quote you a passage where both savior and resurrection are described in a part of the young ... So a result of a long period of development. "Ahura Mosda created many and good creatures in order that they shall make the world perfect. In order that the dead shall rise up, that the living one, the indestructible ... may come and the world may be perfect at his wish. The victorious ones among the saviors and his companions will come so that they may make the world perfect, unchanging, undying, uncorrupted, un-decaying, ever-living, ever-growing."

When Astrat Urtaf – that's the name of Zarathustra's last and greatest son. A number of saviors are later believed to have come out of this lake. But this is the last who really will make the world perfect. When he comes out from Lake Kansawia, that's the lake, he, the messenger of Ahura Mosda, he will drive evil out from the world of righteousness. He will gaze with the eyes of wisdom. He will behold all creation. He will gaze with the eyes of sacrifice on the whole material world and watching will make it indestructible. Evil thought will be overcome. Good thought will overcome it. Arhiman of evil works will flee bereft of power.

That text therefore mentions the coming of the savior as the next stage in the development of Zoroastrianism, the coming of the savior who will bring about resurrection. Furthermore, it said that there will be a final battle between the forces of good and evil, which we already saw in the Goths, leading to the beginning of a perfect incorruptible world, free from the evil influence of Ahriman. Savior, born of virgin mother, representing the founder of the faith, Zarathustra, as the

messiah. Expecting Christianity to come is in a way a representative of Christ, and Christ himself, of course, is a savior. Physical resurrection, which also know in Christianity and Islam, will take place at the end of time. Judaism is sitting on the fence. It believe in a resurrection, but it's not clear in Judaism whether it's physical or not as far as I understand it. And at the end of time, the world will become perfect forever.

Now all these essential features of the later Zoroastrian tradition are already here. But the later books, the middle-Persian texts which are more elaborate written down, well they were transmitted orally for a long time, and finally when Islam came to the lands, they were written down, because people understood after a few centuries that they wouldn't be able to go on forever. They give us a very clear picture of what was thought to be the whole genesis and history of the world.

An account in the book of creation in middle-Persian, the ..., tell us that before anything existed, when there was neither time nor movement, everything was motion is in static, ... was on high, that's Ahura Mosda was on high in omniscience and pure light. Whereas Ahriman was in the depth, in ignorance and darkness. Ahura Mosda in his omniscience knew that the evil represented by Ahriman could not be removed from the universe as long as things were motionless. He therefore created the world as an arena in which the battle between good and evil could be fought. Ahura Mosda first created his creations good, but without movement, without growth. They were still static. He then evoked or created his divine helpers, the seven ... in Zoroastrianism. Archangels as a word – I mean beings, holy beings anyway, each of whom has a special link with an element of the natural world. Ahriman then fashions a wicked counter-creation, but he soon realizes that Ahura Mosda's idea, unblemished world was far superior. He then wanted – Ahriman always wants things for himself. He's a very selfish being and he never sees the consequences of his actions. He's almost like a clown sometimes. He's always second-guessing at Ahura Mosda and getting it wrong.

Anyway, he tries to attack the world, but it doesn't work. And then the two spirits make a pact to wage war for a limited period of time. And then finally, after a long time, when Ahura Mosda has been able to create his world in an ideal fashion, Ahura and Ahriman launches a successful attack. He defiles the pure nature of all the creations. He defiles the sky, the earth the water. He dried and pounded the first plant and killed the first bull and the first man. At first Ahriman seemed to have won, and the world was dark, and all was unpleasant. But then, because of their inheritant nature, which was good, the creations began to think, "Hey, we're not having this." And they began to fight back instead. And then because of this new will, dynamism, and energy, and movement, and time come into the world, which became as we know it now, with time, a limited time, but energy, dynamism. There was movement, and they fought. The good creations fought the bad ones. The sweet water fought in sense the salty water, and so on and so forth. So that eventually night – we have night, but we have day as well. We have dark and light. We have good as well as evil. This is the world of mixture in which we now live. Eventually, when the

world has almost fulfilled its functions as an arena, and evil is really weakened, the process leading up to the renovation will begin and the world will once again become non-dynamic, timeless, and idea, but now without the presence of evil in the universe. All men will be resurrected and restored to physical life.

That process begins with the appearance of the ultimate savior, the ... , born of a virgin mother who will – and the ... will hold an assembly of all men and women where each individual who ever lived will realize their good and wicked deeds. There will then be a final judgment, which we find also, as you know, in Christianity, and those to whom sin still clings will undergo another short period of punishment in hell, but this time physically, not just as spirits. While the righteous will again enjoy the ... of paradise, but apparently also physically. That's not specifically said. Then all the metal contained in all the earth will be melted, and a river of molten metal will be formed through which all men must pass. For those who are free of sin this will be like a wonderful, luxurious bath in warm milk. But those who have a few sins, that will burn. The sins will burn in this molten metal so that they will be punished had have a burning sensation. And then all will be cleansed, all sinning is gone, and all men will meet together and praise Ahura Mosda. Ahura Mosda and the good divine beings will seize their last evil opponents and completely defeat them. But to initiate that process, the ... will first celebrate a yasna, a religious ritual, after which the divine beings will engage in the absolutely final battle, which will drive out the powers of evil forever. But ... Ahura Mosda, by definition, cannot kill his good. So he doesn't kill or destroy the forces of evil. He puts them into a bottomless pit, where they will remain forever. After that Ahura Mosda himself performs an absolutely final ritual. The mountains will be raised, the earth will become level, and all will live forever in great happiness.

Now ladies and gentlemen, those of you who know the Bible may be reminded by things like consigning the devil to a bottomless pit, by stories about the resurrection, by making all things new, seven angels, and God being with men on earth, of the Book of Revelations in the Bible, particularly of Chapters 20 and 21. In Revelations 20, we find – we also find several references to specific periods of time, which we also find in Iran, the millennium. We just had the millennium. There was a lot of interest in millennia around the year 2000. In other words, a division of history into periods of a thousand years. Revelations 20:3 says, “And he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And he cast him into the bottomless pit,” bottomless pit, “and shut him up. And he set a seal upon him that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled. After that he must be loosened a little season. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,” and then he will be definitely defeated is the implication.

Now the notion that although the efforts of men are indispensable for the salvation of the world, the future of the world has, in essence, been preordained by God from the beginning. So that one can actually predict how the future is going to be in general, not how fast it will happen. But this can also have been seen to have become part of Zoroastrian teaching long before the period of

the new testament. What happens was the following: At first Zoroastrian religion, which until then had been a faith followed, we think, by small communities. Just a community, a few houses had had one priest together and that was it. Then it suddenly became the official religion of a world empire when the Achaemenian kings came to power in 559 BCE. The Achaemenians were the kings who allowed the Jews in the Bible to return to Israel from the captivity in Babylon and to rebuild their temple after some problems, as you may remember. The first Achaemenian, Cyrus the Great, ruled from 559 to 529, is unique in the Old Testament, in that he is called God's anointed in Isaiah 45. "Thus sayeth the Lord to his anointed," to Cyrus, "whose right hand I've holden to subdue nations before him." That is incredible. There's no such qualification for anyone but Cyrus in the whole of the Old Testament, which shows the close ties between Zoroastrian Iran and the Jews, which were now getting working on and they are enormous parallels. There are enormous mutual inferences between Zoroastrianism and Judaism.

Now these Achaemenians, Cyrus and so on, were Zoroastrians, which gave that religion a special standing in the empire. Zoroastrianism never tried to convert. I mean they allowed other people to have their own religion. They allowed the Jews to have their Jewish religion. They only imposed certain – we're now discovering they imposed certain rules that the fire couldn't be made impure by burnt offerings of whole animals and stuff. The Jews could do everything, but we're beginning to discover the other kings said, "Well no, you can't defile the fire. Otherwise all religions can do what they like, because that's their religion. We're not against other religions." Zoroastrians never claimed to have been the only or the best religion. They said, "This is our religion, but some things go too far. You may not kill your grandmother and you may not defile the fire," which is okay I suppose.

So the Achaemenian kings loved propaganda. That's a feature of many Iranian kings I have to say. And the Achaemenians did it very well indeed. So what's implied in their inscriptions is that they were so good and so pious that the Ahura Mosda had to have helped them. So Duryus, an Achaemenian who ruled from 521 to 485 proclaims, "A great god is Ahura Mosda who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, who created happiness for man. He who made Duryus the king, one king of many, one lord of many." The implication of the inscription as a whole was that God has given the Achaemenians the empire because they and the religion they served were the best there was. I mean not the only one, but you know, God was very pleased with them. Which was fine as long as everything went well. But problems arose when a non-Zoroastrian foreigner, known to Zoroastrians as Alexander the Cursed, and to us as Alexander the Great, conquered the great Persian empire and put an end to the divinely instituted Achaemenian dynasty.

Now what were the Persians to make of that? Was their religion no longer good? Had God switched his allegiance to aliens? Should they all try to become Greeks? Fortunately, as usually happens in this broad and wide Zoroastrian tradition, an explanation was found. And it came to be taught that the future history of the world had not been completely left to humans, but had

been pre-ordained in essence, though not in – well, even in time. The whole system – a whole system of speculations then gradually evolves based on periods of 3000 years, which could be subdivided in people were interested in this particular period, like the period of time we live in now, rather than the early creation or so, and periods of 1000 years. Now one legend that plays an important role in the speculation was that of the deteriorating epoch, which says that our millennium will in turn see four full – or some other sources say seven periods – each less good than the other, and each associated with a metal. So the seven are gold, silver, copper, brass, lead, steel, and iron mixed with clay. Compare the book of Daniel to .31245 which speaks of a great image whose head was of gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, and its feet part of iron and part of clay. So you find iron mixed with clay precisely the same.

Now we know that the Book of Daniel in its present shape, in present form, originated well after the end of the Achaemenian empire, so that it's hard to escape the conclusion that the very coherent faith of Iran influenced Judaism and later Christianity in various ways. The world view, as we know of Christianity and Judaism is then later also found in the world view of Islam, fairly particularly in the Iranian form of Islam, Shiism, but that is a bit too much for tonight.

Perhaps the most important of these new elements was that Zoroastrianism first proposed to see history as a finite process of salvation, aiming to eliminate the inference of evil from the world. At a time when most religions view the world as the direct result of the will of the gods whom man could at best try to pacify with sacrifices, this represented a tremendous step forward. Namely, Zoroastrian teaching explained that the world is not as God would wish it to be. Thus allowing man to think about improving it without fear of offending the gods. Which, of course, is the implication if you believe that the gods made the world as they wanted it.

Secondly, perhaps even more important, it gave man the key role as an actor in his own history, thus empowering humanity, I believe, for the coming 3000 years. Compared to this fundamentally novel world view, such fairly incidental similarities between Christianity and Zoroastrianism as the birth of a savior from a virgin are relatively insignificant. But it should perhaps be noted how much easier it is to understand the need for salvation in the Zoroastrian system and a ... system, than it is in a pure monotheism, such as Judaism or Christianity. For if God is the only force informing the world, why does the world need to be saved and who from? Not mine to argue these questions, but what seems to be of key importance is the Zoroastrian view of this world is a finite stage preparing the universe for an ideal existence to come. Also, the notion that the soul lives on and the body will eventually be resurrected, as of course inferred the thought of most westerners, believers and unbelievers alike. To some extent I am sure this is also true of the concept of Heaven and Hell as recompenses for the individual's life on earth, not to mention the idea that religion is based first and foremost on a choice, a system of beliefs, a moral view of the universe, rather than being merely a system of rituals seeking to appease an unreliable pantheon.

To sum up, Zarathustra's sublime vision of the world is a place where righteousness should be made to prevail, can thus be said to have laid the foundation for an important step forward in the history of human thinking. Long centuries of development, of ... and priest communicating and seeking answers to new questions, thus adapting the religion to new phases in Iranian culture, have undoubtedly helped to formulate a system of beliefs whose coherence was to inspire large parts of the world in the following millennia. Thank you.

Thank you very much, Philip. And Philip has generously offered to answer any questions. And after that the – when the questions end, but within 15 minutes we'll go two doors down for our receptions.

PC: Thank you.

Thank you, Philip, so much.

PC: May I ask you to speak clearly, because my hearing aid helps me a lot, but can't do everything. Yes, please.

Q: Yes, this may be quite a tangent, but I'm interested in Nietzsche's interest in Zarathustra. Do you have any take on that?

PC: Yes, the received wisdom is that although Nietzsche's – well, one of Nietzsche's girlfriends was the wife of my predecessor at ... What's her name? ... if you know – I can't remember. But anyway, my institute was created for this man, Andreas, and he was married to Lou Andreas Salamay, who was a girlfriend or something of Nietzsche's. I would have thought that in this way Nietzsche's idea of this first amoral man was connected with that. I once had a student that didn't know my thesis on this. She was a Germanicist, and she said, "No, no. There's no link." But I can't imagine that. I mean Nietzsche says he's the first amoralist, and he sees Zarathustra as the first person – and he was right – to explain the whole world in terms of morality, of good and evil. And he says I want to be free. So I'd be surprised if there were absolutely no link, especially since, after all, Lou Andrea Salamay was one of his great friends, and she was married for good or evil, to this man sitting in ..., whom she visited from time to time. And then she found ... so boring that she quickly went back to Berlin to be with Nietzsche. So I think there must be a link, but it hasn't been cleared up completely yet.

Q: What is the link? Was she Zoroastrian?

PC: Lou Andrea Salamay? No. His – Andreas would have known a little bit about Zoroastrianism. He –

Q: [Inaudible.]

PC: Sorry, yes. He would know, and therefore – I mean they were married after all, so they must have occasionally talked about things like –

Q: But was she Zoroastrian?

PC: Sorry?

Q: Was she Zoroastrian?

PC: No, no. She wasn't. No, no.

Q: How does the Zoroastrian connection come in?

PC: Well, because she was married to the first ironist – well, to a great ironist, a scholar who knew about this religion. And he was mostly a linguist, but he had lots of theories and he would have known – well not everything I've said tonight, but he would have known a number of things and would have told her things like the first moralist was in fact Zarathustra. And I could imagine that Nietzsche would have known about this through her, and said, "Well, I'm the first amoralist. Not immoralist, but amoralist. I want anything to do with all this good/bad stuff." Possibly, but more than that I can't really say because opinions differ and mostly people go, "Well, we don't know." But this connection is just simply too interesting not to mention.

Q: [Inaudible.]

PC: I'm sorry. I don't know where you are. Yeah, I think I've –

Q: [Inaudible] part of the Zoroastrian empire. Is that correct?

PC: I'm sorry. ... I still can't hear you. Repeat your question.

Q: I'm so sorry. You talk of the Achaemenian kings as being part of the Zoroastrian empire. Is that correct?

PC: Yeah. Yes.

Q: ... contest Cyrus as not being a Zoroastrian.

PC: Who says that? Oh, you mean ironists and people – modern people. Okay, yes. I'm sorry, ladies and gentlemen. My ... problem is that I am deaf and I sometimes – I mean this room is wonderful, but the acoustics for my hearing aid. The question was that – to rephrase it a bit, I mean the question was were the Achaemenians part of a Zoroastrian empire. I would say the empire was Achaemenian. The kings were the Achaemenians, and they were Zoroastrian. So Zoroastrianism was the religion of the king. But then why do some historians say that this was not the case, that the Achaemenians were not Zoroastrians. I can tell you why that was, and it's very close to my heart. Because in the olden days, historians of religion had the strong feeling they knew exactly what religions were and had to be. So they had all the criteria in their minds, and they discovered that the Achaemenians didn't always do some outward things exactly as they think Zoroastrians ought to do it because modern Parsis do it that way. And then you have big lists. They didn't call the devil – they didn't use typical Zoroastrian words for this, that, and the other. They didn't bury their dead as the Zoroastrians do, but in some other way. They didn't do this the way we think they ought to have done. The answer to that is, of course, I mean they didn't know what we think they ought to have done, because I mean this is the result of further – what – well, say 300 to – well 1700 years or more of development. And we now think there is this small Parsi community who have taken one particular road, and they do it in a way that's perfectly consistent with the whole Zoroastrian tradition, but there were many more ways. There was a big Zoroastrian empire, and people did all sorts of things. I mean it wasn't this narrow path. You could only do this and not do that. Wherever you looked, when we're beginning now, that's the fascinating thing at the moment. We're beginning to find all sorts of things. I mean there was more breadth. And certainly it is simply silly for us to start decreeing to the Achaemenians what they ought to have done. All the serious arguments point to the fact – the fact that one of the ancestors of Cyrus was called Vishtaspah. Vishtaspah was the patron of Zarathustra. And that's an Avestin word, a word in the Avestin language. In Persian this would have been something like ... But suddenly not Vishtaspah. Still this man whose native language was old Persian was called after this Zoroastrian figure, etc., etc. In fact, one can see in the inscriptions and everywhere one looks that the Achaemenians were applying new insights, new Zoroastrian insights. But they were kings, they were politicians, they weren't thinking of theology all the time. So they knew there was good and evil, and that was very important, and they knew that Avestin evil is summed up by a word that in old Persian just means lying, speaking untruth, ... So they thought it was really a matter of lying. In other words, all the evildoers in the inscriptions always give a wrong name. They say they were called Peterson when in fact they were called Robinson. Then you know that he must be a bad marsh. He must be a bad person because he lies. You know in Zoroastrianism this concept of untruth is much wider than just telling a lie or saying, "Well, I'm not called Philip. I'm called Dick," or something. But as soon as anyone does inscriptions, you know, ha ha, he's bad. Things like that. So you can see that they applied a new world view and they were trying to come to grips

with it. So I think at the moment all scholars, but one, are agreed that – well maybe all scholars at the moment. I don't know, but there's one iffy one – worldwide are convinced the Achaemenians are Zoroastrians. Since I've always been so convinced, I take it that our party has now won for the time being, whatever future generations may think. But I expect it is probably kosher to think they were Zoroastrians from the beginning. Please.

Q: Yes, I'm wondering if there is a particular day of worship that Zoroastrians observed? Is it Friday? Is it Saturday? Is it Sunday? Is it none of the above. I'm curious to know about that.

PC: Yes. It's none of the above. The interesting thing in Zoroastrianism is that every month is devoted to a divine being, and every day of the month is devoted to a divine being. With every seven days a day devoted to Ahura Mosda. So a number of days are devoted to Ahura Mosda, so that you get a sort of week. But in fact, every day and every month is devoted to a specific divine being. Now if the name of the month and the name of the day coincide, you have the birthday of this being. So you have the birthday of Mithra. You have the birthday of the god – the lord – the archangel of the waters. And then people in India and in Iran go to the waters, pray to the waters, pray special prayers for the waters. When it's the birthday of fire they don't cook. Or at least many people don't cook, because fire has to rest. And they pray certain prayers. So every day is a special day, which is as even ... has noticed that Persians were so fond of their birthdays. Modern Muslims, when ... came in, of course, birthdays were forbidden because this was not Islamic. But the reason for that is that every day is special. I mean people who believe in horoscope believe you're an Aries and you're ascended to something or other. Now they have that too, but it has a meaning. I mean your month is the month of ..., good thinking, and your day of birth is the day of Now that day is very special to you, so of course you celebrate it. You go to the fire temple. This is your identity. This combination is yours, you see. So even horologists 400 BC around that – I don't know, maybe 300 something – said the only thing about Persians is they love their birthdays. They have big parties and they do this, that, and the other. And we think what a strange – with us it's mostly children. "Oh, it's my birthday," and wonderful. But I know the Parsis. We've done this survey of how people really experience religion. I mean birthdays are really important because of this. This is your identity. This particular combination, as some horoscopes. I mean it's not the same, because there is an intelligible thing behind it. Horoscopes are more – well, I believe that Venus influences my love life, and therefore I'm going to know where Venus was when I was born. Well, one can believe in that or not. But this is slightly more intelligible. Please.

Q: When you were speaking of Grace, did I understand that Grace is something that you had to – it's man's responsibility to be ready to accept.

PC: Yes.

Q: It's not something that's earned, can be earned by the sacrifices.

PC: No, exactly. I believe that's the big thing about Zoroastrianism. I have written my doctoral thesis on an angel, which I've really sort of looked at all the passages about this particular angel, divine being. That is the power of hearing. I lost my hearing while I was doing it, but that is neither here nor there. I mean the idea of ..., ... the angel ... is not. He's usually called Obedience, which again means, oh yes, Calvinism. I'm always obedient, and so on, which is not the case at all, I mean, especially for Zarathustra. He's the power of mutual intelligibility. He has to do with prayer. But in order to pray, you have to make yourself pure mentally. I mean morally. I mean you can say the prayers. If your heart's not open, it doesn't matter. Then Thrasha is both hearing of the prayers. Ahura Mosda sends him to the world to hear your prayers. But before Thrasha can come to Zarathustra, he says, "I must do a great deal. I must make myself ready to receive him." So there is – well, you could call it grace. There is this idea that all the powers in Zoroastrianism, all the ..., all the abstract beings are there in the world, have a separate objective existence, but also exist in man. There is a – before Islam came, there was Zoroastrian psychology on the basis of all these angels, you know. A man who has a lot of ... can usually hear very well, which means I haven't got it. He will be very ready to understand what's said to him. He does this, that, and the other. One who is, you know, and so on. But you've gotten ... obvious thing. So but the essence, which tends to be forgotten, which I think it's being realized now. I mean ... was talking about it in Houston the other day. It's not just the angel of so-and-so comes, and if God happens to like you, as I saw on American television just now. "If God likes you, you'll get promotion ... your boss." That's precisely the opposite of Zoroastrian morality. I mean God doesn't like – I mean God is almost a mathematical function. I mean if you ready yourself and you allow God to dwell in your being, then these being – you're then the ... They're your guests. And that is so strong that the same concept is still believed by other groups now, Kurdish groups associated with Zoroastrianism. They have the same idea that the gods become your guests. The angels. I mean gods is a bit strong. So if you ... is in my being, I can express the values and ..., the angel, can work through me. I mean man is an instrument as well as a being. His soul will go on, but his function is to be an instrument of all these forces. It's really a little bit like a refinery of sorts. It's quite complex. But basically within ourselves we have this power to use certain qualities. To open ourselves, which is why Zoroastrians have never developed a mysticism or such. It didn't need to. Mysticism means that God is also in yourself. Now in Islam, to get from a transcendent god who's up there to a god who's in here, you need a movement. You need protest. You need yes, no; yes, no. In Zoroastrianism this was taken for granted. So no obvious mystical movement developed because it wasn't necessary. It was there already. Those who were so inclined could do it. Those who didn't have the time or the

inclination for it could just hope that the Angel so-and-so would help them. So it's – both possibilities are there. But it's one of the very, very important things in Zoroastrianism that one shouldn't underestimate it. It's not just an old primitive religion, when it has all these very important – well to my mind very important – ideas of mutuality. You know, of man as a sort of – I don't know. I've just made this up now – of a mirror of the forces in the universe. I mean this is not said by Zarathustra. But you know, you can, by opening yourself up to these powers, you can sort of announce your life or do something in the world. Please.

Q: The earliest text work –

PC: The earliest?

Q: The earliest text work that you are reciting the Zoroastrian description of the religion from?

PC: The earliest – I'm sorry.

Q: Textbook, written textbook.

PC: Oh. Well, there we open a can of worms. Written textbooks, it's a problem because the interesting thing about Zoroastrianism because they had great hesitance to write things down. The sacred texts were always, until the late ... period, until maybe 500 AD, were memorized and learned by heart. Then under pressure from the Christians who said, "Ha ha! You don't even have sacred books!" Under pressure from the Manichaeans, whose – well, whose whole point of existence, "Well, we have books. We'll have books forever. Our truth will never be distorted." And these other religions, including Zoroastrianism, it's all distorted. So then the ... said, "Well, we must find a way around this." And then they discovered – they developed this brilliant new script. Before that they could write very well, but they couldn't write so that one could distinguish Avestan sound, the sound of the language – the sacred language ... All these things would be ..., as in Arabic and so on. So you could just read ... or ... or ..., but that was about it. So they then in around 500, under ..., had a script that could render all the peculiar sounds of Avestan. And then they started writing it all down, which is a major enterprise. God knows how they did it, because of course Indian priests and Parsi priests and Iranian priests have slightly different pronunciations. And that would have been true in the ancient Iranian empire as well. So they must have got priests from all over the place and decided, "Well, this is the right way to pronounce, and we'll write it down in this way." Again, one can still – I mean it's intelligible. One can write it. But before that it was the priests learned these texts. I mean everyone learned a number of texts. They couldn't learn all of them. And memorized those. And later on when the texts were no longer intelligible, they

discovered the brilliant way of translating the texts. It's impossible to do a literary translation, if you want to remember, you know, this size. I mean a book this size, you can't. But they developed a way, which I also used as a child, between Dutch and English, which I grew up. Namely, doing it literally. Translating a Dutch sentence literally into English, which is very funny. It doesn't quite work. But they – for every Avestin word they used a middle Persian word. And this sort of worked. They could understand the meaning of enormous numbers of texts and they could memorize them. Then when books came along, there would have been an enormous new development were it not for the fact that within 100 years Islam came along and people were – went into a defensive mode. First into a survival mode, and then really in a defensive mode. And then they started writing everything down, because it was realized that they could no longer afford the people who would commit to memory all their sacred knowledge, all their – well all their religious knowledge. They had universities, Greek-type universities, where they wrote and so on. But all the religious knowledge was until then memorized and transmitted. But that takes money. That takes a lot of people. So I mean the first book, if one says the Avesta is the first book, it was probably written down 500 AD. But I mean it's much earlier.

Q: ... all this existed today that you have?

PC: Oh. It's a manuscript from 1200 AD. A lot of ... -- in an old tradition that's the problem. A lot can disappear. When Alexander the Cursed came, it was told that he – we had – I mean every old tradition going on to a written phase always – we had this all along. The ... do, the ..., all the people I've known. We had this all along and we've lost it. And there's always a great cataclysmic event. In this case they say, oh, before Alexander the Cursed came, we had 12,000. Our whole avesta was written down in gold letters on 12,000 ox hides. And there were two copies of this, one here and one – anyway, two copies. And then Alexander the Cursed came, and he burned it all, except the medical and the scientific text. He stole those. And from those, of course, Greek science developed. So that it was perfectly okay for later Iranians to accept Greek science, because it was all theirs anyway, which is good. Otherwise it would have been iffy. But this was okay because it was just stolen by Alexander, who was cursed, so that was fine. But to come back to your question which I've now – sorry. I've forgotten the.

Q: That's the oldest text written, the text that you are drawing this information, that exists today?

PC: Yes. That was written down probably because of the pressures from Christians. The Christians were a great threat to Zoroastrianism, because this was a traditional religion that was simple. And you know, life got more complex. And there they came, and they had a religion that said God was three persons, and God had a physical son, and he killed

him because of our sins. It was marvelous, you know, You could really get your teeth into that. Zoroastrianism says, you know, good is good and evil is evil, and we tend to prefer the good. You know, it's fairly simple. Then the Christians said all gods and all religions say the same thing. But you've forgotten yours because you haven't got written text. We have. This was – I mean the Christians were also in the say from 200, 300 until 700 were – 650 – were the rivals, the Byzantines. So they were Christian and they were the enemy. So you can't, you know, allow the enemy to have computers and something really advanced and not have it yourself. Of course you need computers, so the religion had to be written down. But the problem was how to do it, because the writing system was perfectly adequate for everyday purposes, but not for this very difficult thing. But they did it, which is a major miracle, I mean to me. Nobody thinks about it because most scholars think, "Oh well, we have written text anyway." So that's it. But the written texts date from very late. The earliest, as I say, 1200. Zarathustra lived maybe 1200 BC, 2400 years difference between the writing down and the one we have now. Of course they written down around 500. But they did it, which is – it could be one of the major miracles. Thank you. Sorry. [Inaudible.] Sorry./

Q: It is said that the ... and the Kurds practice still a certain form of Zoroastrianism, or there is echoes of Zarathustra's message in the religion that they practice. How far is that true?

PC: Okay, yes. Well, this is a question that is again very dear to my heart. It's about the two Kurdish religions I mentioned, the Yuzidis and the Alahac, who are, again, very closely related to each other. There are very, very strong ancient Iranian influences in those religions. In fact, the ancient Iranian religions, I would say almost with a veneer of Sufi Islam. But Zoroastrian precisely not. In Zoroastrianism, the killing of the bull, for instance, is a wicked act by Ahriman. In what I think was the original myth, before Zarathustra, when there was only the will of the gods projected onto earth, the god Mithra made the first sacrifice. And by that he created the world. Whereas in Zoroastrianism this is a wicked thing, you see. This was murder and yes, the world became dynamic because of it, but it's still not good. In Yuzidism they have this bull sacrifice and they have the same mythology, but precisely not the typical Zoroastrian elements. So yes, they are cousins, but not decedents, I would say. Thank you. Please.

Q: That was my question.

PC: Oh, okay.

Please all give a hand to Dr. Kreyenbroek.

PC: Thank you so much.

A very small gift for you. Thank you very much. It's just a very small gift.

PC: Thank you so much, Patricia. Thank you so much. Thank you all of you. Thank you so much.

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