

Yx7 – Potential Evils of Clerical Babble

One of the problems with growing old is the pain of remembering your mistakes. Whether you meant to or not, if you hurt or harmed someone (especially a youngster and especially without cause), you'll remember it with remorse.

About 20 years ago, my daughter reminded me of one such incident of mine, which I had totally forgotten and which happened more than 20 years still earlier. Maybe if I had been a better father, she wouldn't have reminded me!

Anyway, at the time (when my daughter was about 6 years old), I was coaching her city-league baseball team. (She was the only girl on the team.) When I was trying to explain something to the kids about a baseball's trajectory, I reportedly used the word 'gravity', and one of the kids asked:

What's gravity?

It was an intelligent question; no doubt, he asked it innocently. I should have responded in a manner appropriate to the occasion and for the questioner, with something similar to:

It's what makes everything fall.

Unfortunately, however, I went overboard – as I have a tendency to do...

In my own defense, I hasten to add that I've always been impressed by both how amazing Nature is and how little we know about her: Exactly what is an electron? What is energy? What is space? What is gravity? Also, I've always felt obliged to convey to others (especially to youngsters) my awe of the challenging wonders of Nature. And maybe I should add that, at about the same time that I was coaching the team, I was giving lectures on general relativity in my course on tensor analysis.

Actually, I don't recall my response to the kid's question: "*What's gravity?*" I expect that I tried to explain Newton's idea about attraction between masses, maybe I mentioned Einstein's idea about mass warping space-time, but apparently, I also tried to convey the mystery of gravity.

In particular and probably in response to lot of blank stares on the kids' faces, my daughter informed me that I ended my "lecture" with something similar to the following:

But I think that the real reason why everything falls toward the center of the Earth is because, at the center of the Earth, there's a huge bowl of caramel pudding, and since everybody and everything likes caramel pudding, everything tries to get to it; so, balls and kids always fall down, trying to get to the caramel pudding.

Sorry, kids, that was supposed to be a joke! My daughter informed me, however, that as a comic, I should stick to coaching city-league baseball. She said that, for years afterwards, kids (then in their teens) clung to the idea that the Earth's center was made of caramel pudding!

Which leads me to the subject of this post: the potential evils lurking in all myths, such as my myth that, at the center of the Earth, there's a huge bowl of caramel pudding. The reason that potential evils lurk in all myths is clear from Socrates' assessment:

There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance.

That is, whereas all myths are just silly stories camouflaging ignorance, with that ignorance lurks the potential for evil. Of course, the potential evil in myths needn't materialize; it depends on each listener's skepticism.

In any event, what seems obvious is that kids shouldn't be indoctrinated with any myths. Instead, they should be stimulated to be skeptical of all explanations and to seek answers themselves, applying the scientific method ("guess, test, and reassess").

With my caramel-pudding myth, I don't know how much harm I caused. I hope I didn't ruin some kid's potential to be a physicist! Who knows – maybe I helped those kids to be skeptical of what any adult tells them, e.g., using meaningless words such as 'God' and 'supernatural', misused words such as 'miracle' and 'soul', oxymoronic expressions such as "life after death" and "eternal happiness", and similar nonsense.

As an illustration of such nonsense in the Bible's Old Testament (OT), consider some of the ignorance in the myth concocted to "explain" the existence of so many languages, namely, the silly story at *Genesis 11* about the Tower of Babel.

THE TOWER OF BABEL MYTH

The use of the word ‘babel’ (meaning “a confused noise, typically that made by a number of voices”), in the phrase “the Tower of Babel” to refer to the Tower of Babylon, is generally described as “a play on words”. Actually, though, if Joseph McCabe is correct, then not only did the cleric who wrote the Bible’s Tower of Babel myth horribly pervert the moral of the original myth (which I’ll reference and outline later in this post), but he also made an ass of himself.

To see what I mean, start from the following statement by Joseph McCabe in his on-line book *The Story of Religious Controversy*:

From their scattered villages they [the Mesopotamians] looked with pride toward Babel – it is the Greeks who made the name ‘Babylon’ – or “The Gate of the God” – a name which ignorant Hebrew scribes long afterwards connected with their own word for ‘to confuse’ [babel] and turned into a myth.

Meanwhile, Webster’s *New World Dictionary* states:

Babel... [Heb. *babel* > Assyr.-Bab. *Babilu*, Babylon, lit., gate of God (? transl. of Turanian *Cadimirra*, Gate of God)]...

It therefore appears that the cleric who wrote the Tower of Babel myth essentially broke the Hebrew word *babel* into the Hebrew word for gate, *bab*, plus the identification of the Canaanite’s “chief god”, *El* (which is also one of the Hebrew words for ‘god’ or ‘lord’, which probably explains the ‘el’ in Israel, Ishmael, Emanuel, and so on). The trouble with that etymology, however, is that *El* wasn’t a name of a Babylonian god! The nearest seems to be *Bel*:

The cleverest of the clever, and sage of the gods... This name (meaning ‘lord’) is most likely referring to [the Babylonian’s “chief god”] *Marduk*.

[In Canaan, the god comparable to the Babylonian god *Bel* was *Baal*, who is mentioned many times in the OT.] Consequently, if the Tower of Babel refers to the god *Bel* (as seems reasonable), then the deconstruction should be either *Ba + Bel*, meaning the *Ba* (which in Egypt meant *soul*) of *Bel* (i.e., *Marduk*) or the breakout and the revised spelling should be *Bab + Bel*, meaning the gate of *Bel*. In either case, though, it has nothing to do with ‘babel’, i.e. “a confused noise”.

In addition, the author (or authors) of the myth about the Tower of Babel of course didn't realize that hominids lived in Africa millions of years ago, that our ancestors (the Mitochondrial Eve and the Y-chromosomal Adam) lived in southern Africa about 150 thousand years ago (150 kyrs ago), that *Homo sapiens* wandered out of Africa 50 to 80 kyears ago, that when people encounter new experiences they develop new words and expressions, and that languages commonly change even during a single generation – doncha know! Instead, the author (commonly identified as “J”) posits the following “explanation” for the existence of different languages, an “explanation” to which I’ve added some notes in brackets, in part to comment on the additional “information” in the story about the clerics’ god(s).

Once upon a time all the world spoke a single language and used the same words [which is reasonable enough, although it would be more accurate to say that the first hominids developed capabilities to make more sounds than their anthropoid cousins]. As men journeyed in the east they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar [the Mesopotamian land of the Sumerians, now southern Iraq] and settled there [which is interesting that the author is thereby suggesting that *Homo sapiens* traveled east to Sumer, but actually, the origin of the Sumerians (who seem to have arrived in Mesopotamia in about 5000 BCE) is still unknown: arguments can be found suggesting that the Sumerians came from the south, north, or further east, but I haven't seen any suggestions in the archeological literature that they came from the west, as claimed in this OT myth].

They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them hard” [Why would anyone say “Come, let us make bricks and bake them hard” – without first having a purpose?!]; they used bricks for stone and bitumen for mortar. [Incidentally, archeological data¹ show that “bitumen glue” was used at Umm el Tlel, Syria, about 32 kyrs before the first Tower of Babylon was built, in about 2000 BCE, and therefore, about 28 kyrs before the biblical Adam was allegedly created. Further, in the myth that “J” used to create his Tower of Babel myth, namely, the myth called *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*² (which I’ll quote later in this post), the shrine was built, not as was the Tower of Babylon (with clay bricks), but instead, “the people of Aratta shall bring down mountain stones from their mountains and shall build the great shrine”, similar to how, during the same time period, the Egyptians were building their pyramids.]

“Come,” they said, “let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and make a name for ourselves; or we shall be dispersed all over the earth.”

¹ See, e.g., <http://home.entouch.net/dmd/chron.htm>.

² See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enmerkar_and_the_Lord_of_Aratta.

[What a weird idea (proposed by the Jewish cleric who wrote this myth) for why the Tower was built! Because the people wanted to **make a name** for themselves? If there were only one group of people, speaking only one language, then compared with whom would these people be famous?! And why would the people think:

- 1) That a tower would stop them from being scattered,
- 2) That if they **made a name** for themselves they wouldn't be scattered, or
- 3) That there was anything wrong with spreading out?!

Something doesn't compute. How about the obvious reason (and the Babylonian's stated reason) for building the tower: as another monument to religious folly?!

[Also, notice that, thereby:

- 1) The author(s) ignored the reason for building the Tower of Babylon that's stated clearly in the Sumerian myth *Enuma Elish* (namely, a sanctuary for the gods); incidentally, that myth almost certainly would have been available to the Jewish clerics {e.g., at the Nineveh Library of Ashurbanipal (called Asenappar or Osnapper in the OT, e.g., at *Ezra 4, 10*)} just as the Sumerian flood myth was obviously available to the authors of the OT (as I outlined in the previous post), and
- 2) The author(s) ignored the reason (which I'll outline later in this post) for building the earlier sanctuary that was described in the source myth.]

Then the Lord [Yahweh] came down to see the city and tower which mortal men had built [so much for God's claimed omniscience, e.g., the ability to know all and see all from his heavenly throne!], **and he said, "Here they are, one people with a single language, and now they have started to do this; henceforward nothing they have a mind to do will be beyond their reach. [Let's hope so!] Come, let us go down there [is he again (as at *Genesis 3, 22*) talking to the other gods?] and confuse their speech, so that they will not understand what they say to one another."**

[A real nice guy, this god, thwarting human progress. And actually, there's more here, which could cause biblical allegorists a lot of trouble – if (for a change) they'd spend some time thinking critically about the Bible's myths. Thus, according to the Bible, man was made in God's image. Well, one thing that their god reportedly did (e.g., during the six days of creation) was to produce quite a bit. And now, according to this myth, man (consistent with his maker's desire) produced something, namely, the Tower of Babel. So, what's the allegorical sum of these stories? God produces, he produces a man in his image, man will therefore be a producer, man produces – and god steps in to thwart his future production, by confusing languages. Never let it be said that the god of the Bible is either just or sensible! Maybe the problem is God's reportedly "jealousy"; that is, maybe the Hebrew clerical author of this Tower of Babel myth was just copying some of Homer's ideas.

[Thus, this silly Jewish story about building the Tower of Babel reminds me of what the Greek god Poseidon (the Roman god, Neptune) allegedly said to Zeus (Roman, Jove) upon seeing the Greeks build ramparts to protect themselves on the beach from retaliation by the Trojans, as given in Homer's myth *The Iliad* (Book VII), written in about 700 BCE and to which I've added the notes in braces, {...}:

Thus did the Achaeans {i.e., the Greeks} toil {building a fortification for themselves and their ships}, and the gods, seated by the side of Jove {Zeus} the lord of lightning, marveled at their great work; but Neptune {Poseidon} lord of the earthquake {and of the oceans} spoke, saying, "Father Jove, what mortal in the whole world will again take the gods into his counsel? See you not how the Achaeans have built a wall about their ships and driven a trench all round it, without offering hecatombs {sacrifices} to the gods? The fame of this wall will reach as far as dawn itself, and men will no longer think anything of the one which Phoebus Apollo and myself built..."

So the Lord dispersed them from there all over the earth [which, of course, is silly, since humans had already dispersed "all over the earth" tens of thousands of years earlier], and they left off building the city [which is more nonsense; in particular, the (first) Tower of Babylon was destroyed basically because the clay bricks weren't structurally sound; as well, there was a host of reasons for abandoning cities (wars and their destruction, floods of the river valleys, salinization of the soil because of irrigation, etc.)]. That is why it is called Babel, because the lord there made a babble of the language of all the world; from that place the Lord scattered men all over the face of the earth. [Which, of course, is more nonsense, since different languages had developed tens of thousands of years earlier.]

An obvious question is: where did some Hebrew cleric get the ingredients for this crazy Tower-of-Babel myth? Of course, "true believers" will respond that it's not a myth but "the revealed word of God", but for those of us who still possess some sanity, the question remains. In response to that question, I don't know if the following "answer" is correct, but surely sane people will at least agree that it makes a lot more sense than claims that the source of the Bible's myth is "the revealed word of God". And since I haven't seen anyone else provide the following analysis, I'll provide a few more details than I normally would.

The Likely Origin of the Tower of Babel Myth

As I mentioned in an earlier post and showed more details elsewhere,³ the *Enuma Elish* contains an "explanation" for building the Tower of Babel (or the Tower of Babylon), namely, to provide the gods a place to feast and rest.

³ At <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Ix04FloodedbyFrozenMyths.pdf>.

The *Enuma Elish*, however, doesn't mention anything about the many languages addressed in the OT's Tower of Babel myth. But another ancient Sumerian myth addresses the building of a tower, the invention of writing, and the fact that multiple languages existed. This myth⁴ is entitled *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*. Similar to the *Enuma Elish*, it's another very long "poem"; below are quoted just a few relevant lines.

In *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, communications were allegedly improved by the King (or "lord") of Kulaba's creation of writing:

His speech was substantial, and its contents extensive. The messenger, whose mouth was heavy, was not able to repeat it. Because the messenger, whose mouth was tired, was not able to repeat it, the lord of Kulaba patted some clay and wrote the message as if on a tablet. Formerly, the writing of messages on clay was not established. Now, under that sun and on that day, it was indeed so. The lord of Kulaba inscribed the message like a tablet.

But of more relevance to the involvement of the gods, the original myth (quoted above and below, to which I've added a note, changed some punctuation, and added the italics) states that the purpose was to build a temple to Enlil (the lord of the wind and earth, father of the gods, son of the high god Anu – a forerunner of Mithra, Jupiter, Zeus, and Jesus) in which the people of many tongues would praise Enlil in a single language:

On that day when there is no snake, when there is no scorpion, when there is no hyena, when there is no lion, when there is neither dog nor wolf, when there is thus neither fear nor trembling, man has no rival! At such a time, may the lands of Cubur and Hamazi (the many-tongued) and Sumer (the great mountain of the *me* [i.e., "decrees of divine authority"] of magnificence) and Akkad (the land possessing all that is befitting) and the Martu land (resting in security) – the whole universe, the well-guarded people – *may they all address Enlil together in a single language!*

For at that time, for the ambitious lords, for the ambitious princes, for the ambitious kings, Enki, for the ambitious lords, for the ambitious princes, for the ambitious kings, for the ambitious lords, for the ambitious princes, for the ambitious kings – Enki, the lord of abundance and of steadfast decisions, the wise and knowing lord of the Land, the expert of the gods, chosen for wisdom, the lord of Eridug, *shall change the speech in their mouths, as many as he had placed there, and so the speech of mankind is truly one.*

⁴ Translation from clay tablets is available at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr1823.htm>.

Thereby, the author of this biblical myth (“J”) not only subverted he even inverted (!) a central moral of the original myth, namely, to assist communications among humans. That is, a myth with a tremendous moral, about building such a super sanctuary in which “the speech of mankind [would be] truly one” appears in the OT as a myth with an inverted, perverted moral – with the new Jewish god smashing the temple and subverting abilities of people to communicate with one another!⁵

Some Information Contained in the Tower of Babel Myth

Yet, in spite of such conspiratorial subversions and perversions, some information (albeit garbled) was conveyed in the Tower of Babel myth, e.g.,

- 1) When the Tower of Babylon existed, there were many different tribes of people in the world, who spoke many different languages,
- 2) The Babylonians (but probably not the Hebrew shepherds!) knew how to make bricks and build towers, and
- 3) When the Hebrews wandered through Mesopotamia, the Tower of Babylon had already been built.

In addition, there are a few hints about what the Hebrews thought, namely:

- 4) That the gods (at least the Hebrew gods!) were opposed to progress, and
- 5) That the Hebrews thought there were many gods.

Below, I’ll provide some comments on the above topics under the indicated subheadings.

⁵ Actually, the Book of Mormon (almost certainly written by Sidney Rigdon) perverted the myth even more. Thus, the Book of Mormon (at *Helaman 6*, 28) states:

And also it is that same being [the devil] who put it into the hearts of the people to build a tower sufficiently high that they might get to heaven.

To which I would say to Sidney Rigdon (if I could):

No, Sidney, sorry old boy – but the Babylonians didn’t build their tower to get to heaven! In fact, the Babylonians didn’t even believe in the idea of heaven! Whereas their priests had indoctrinated them with the idea that the purpose of people was to serve the gods, the Babylonians built the Tower of Babylon, “The-Inn-of-Rest-by-Night”, for their gods to feast and sleep – and of course, what the gods didn’t eat, the clerics managed to consume (just as you and your fellow con artist, Joseph Smith, Jr. managed to consume the products of those who were foolish enough to follow you).

When the Hebrews Might Have Left Mesopotamia

Certainly, the Hebrews were wrong (as certain as one can be about almost anything! – and therefore, just as certainly, the Bible is wrong) to state that all the people of the Earth were scattered from a common origin in the city of Babylon and that the diversity of languages emerged only after the Tower of Babylon was built. Yet, this myth might provide an estimate for when the Hebrews were in Mesopotamia. That the Babylonians were making bricks and building towers at the time when the Hebrew shepherds wandered by is obvious, but the problem is that, from this information, it doesn't seem possible to establish the date with any reliability.

Thus, although Babylon was established by the Amorites in about 1900 BCE, this suggests that the Hebrew shepherds wandered past Babylon some time after 1900 BCE. It's only a suggestion, though, because who knows when this myth was added to the Bible? That is, perhaps this myth refers to a more famous Tower of Babylon, built more than a thousand years after Babylon was first inhabited (i.e., built when Nebuchadnezzar was King of Babylon). Subsequently, when Ezra & co-conspirators (Ezra & C-C) put the OT together from old sources in about 400 BCE, they might have just slipped this myth about the Tower of Babylon into the *Book of Genesis*. Therefore, all that can be discerned about the Bible's Tower of Babylon myth is that the myth was created sometime between about 2000 and 400 BCE – which isn't very informative (except to reinforce the idea that the Bible's myths were created relatively late in the myth-making era).

The Hebrews' Opposition to "Progress"

Next, consider the hint that the Hebrew gods – or better, the Hebrew people! – were opposed to progress. Otherwise, why would the myth have their (chief?) god say:

Here they are, one people with a single language, and now they have started to do this [build the Tower]; henceforward nothing they have a mind to do will be beyond their reach. Come, let us go down there and confuse their speech, so that they will not understand what they say to one another.

At first encounter, this desire to thwart progress seems quite strange. But if some characteristics of this tribe of shepherds are sketched, perhaps their aversion to progress becomes more understandable. In particular, my dictionary suggests that the origin of the word 'Hebrew' is the Hebrew word *'ibhri*, meaning

one from across (the river).

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But as can be found on the internet, other peoples (particularly the ancient Egyptians) seemed to have derived the word ‘Hebrew’ from the word ‘Hiberu’, used by people who lived in Canaan (between the Mediterranean Sea in the west and the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys in the east) meaning ‘wanderer’ or ‘outsider’ or ‘trespasser’, which (of course) is one of the dominant characteristic of shepherds – and certainly the Bible leaves no doubt that the ancient Hebrews were shepherds. I expect that therein lies the key to why the Hebrews were opposed to progress (in the form of agriculture and urbanization), symbolized by the Tower of Babylon: shepherds need open grazing lands; meanwhile, farmers can’t tolerate wandering animals.

Some of the resulting friction between shepherds and farmers can be seen in Hammurabi’s law code. Hammurabi was the King of Babylon from 1795 to 1750 BCE; his Law #57 states:

If a shepherd, without the permission of the owner of the field, and without the knowledge of the owner of the sheep, lets the sheep into a field to graze, then the owner of the field shall harvest his crop, and the shepherd, who had pastured his flock there without permission of the owner of the field, shall pay to the owner twenty gur of corn for every ten gan.

I don’t know what a “gur” of corn is,⁶ or the size of a “gan”, but certainly this law reveals “friction” between farmers and shepherds – a friction that continued for most of the subsequent 4,000 years!

Another example of this “friction” (in this case, between the Hebrews and the Egyptians) is available from the Bible. This example is contained in a few lines buried in a long (almost-certainly fictitious!) story about Israel’s youngest son, Joseph, in particular, about how he enslaved the Egyptian people for the benefit of the Pharaoh (and for his own benefit). As the Bible illustrates, Joseph was not above lying, and when his father and brothers came to live with him in Egypt, he warned them (*Genesis 46, 34*):

When Pharaoh summons you and asks you what your occupation is, you must say “My lord, we have been herdsmen [probably what we would call “ranchers”] all our lives, as our fathers were before us.” You must say this, if you are to settle in the land of Goshen [in Egypt], because all shepherds are an abomination to the Egyptians.

⁶ Well, I subsequently bumped into the following: “one-half gur {about fourteen gallons}...” I found that statement at http://ragz-international.com/reforms_of_urukagina.htm.

I expect that the Egyptians had the same troubles between cattle ranchers and sheep herders that are depicted in many movies about the American West of the 1800s; I therefore expect that the aversion that the Hebrews had for “civilization” was in reaction to the animosity that farmers and cattle “ranchers” have always had to shepherds: whereas sheep (and goats) weren’t fenced and therefore could get to farmers’ crops and (cattle) ranchers’ (fenced?) range-land, the shepherds were therefore “an abomination”. Meanwhile, with every advance in civilization (such as the building of the Tower of Babylon), the Hebrew shepherds found themselves more and more confined – trapped in a dying occupation. Understandably, then, the Hebrew’s gods were assumed to assist the Hebrews in thwarting “progress”.

Hints about Why the Bible’s Myths Have Been So Persistent

Further, I wouldn’t be surprised if therein is another reason why the Bible’s myths have persisted so long – besides the expected reason, that the Hebrews borrowed so many of their myths from other people, thereby “cleansing” the myths of references to specific groups. In later posts (dealing with “the law lie”), I’ll suggest still other reason, namely, because the Bible became the Hebrews’ law book. Here, to explore another reason, I’ll outline a story from an entirely different setting.

I don’t recall the details of this story (and won’t bother to look them up, because the details aren’t relevant to the point I want to make), but in outline, the story is this. When some of the first Europeans settled in America, they conceived how valuable a little island at the mouth of the Hudson River would be and therefore asked the local Indians (or “Native Americans”) about purchasing what is now called Staten Island. Eventually they “purchased” the island from the Indians, at a total cost of a few beads, mirrors, and other trinkets.

The Europeans of course thought that the Indians were crazy, selling what was to become the heart of New York City for a few trinkets, but meanwhile, the Indians thought that Europeans were crazy: to think that anyone could own the land – when all humans should know that people can’t own land; land owns people. Of course the Indians were right: people can’t own land; people come and go, live and die, and the land goes on. But meanwhile, the Europeans got a tremendous bargain, because for next to nothing, they “bought” what the Indians didn’t understand: a legal right, backed up by police or army, to say how the land would be used.

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And so it is today: nobody buys or otherwise expropriates land (including any “holy land”); instead, by purchasing or otherwise expropriating some property, people get only police protection to use the property as desired (commonly subject to a number of community restrictions).

I therefore suspect, first, that the ancient Hebrew shepherds were similar to Native Americans: they considered all land to be their “open range”. Subsequently, they were confronted by civilizations (in Mesopotamia, Canaan, and Egypt) that had developed “property rights”; consequently, the Hebrews became “outsiders” and “trespassers”. As a result, the Hebrews were opposed to such “progress”.

And my second speculation is that maybe, here, is still another reason why the myths of the Hebrews have persisted so long. In general, it seems coded within our DNA molecules to help our children as best we can, which typically includes leaving them an inheritance. Farmers of old (and those of today) typically leave the “property rights” of their land to their children. Of course, all people also try to pass on to their children as much as they can of their understanding, their stories, their myths, and so on.

The most valuable possession that farmers could leave their children was their land. In contrast, without land to leave their children, maybe the ancient Hebrews felt that the most valuable thing that they could leave their children was their stories, i.e., their myths. Thereby, perhaps each Hebrew generation did its utmost to preserve their myths to pass them on to the next generation.

I’ll even mention a third speculation about what happened. In the main, the Jewish people apparently didn’t participate in the agricultural revolution, because thousands of years ago, as shepherds, generally they missed the opportunity to own land. Subsequently, especially during the past ~2,000 years, there have been such horrible, ignorant, and therefore evil Christian prejudices against the Jewish people (blaming people, then alive, for the “death” of a mostly-mythical Jesus, centuries earlier!).

As a result, the Jewish people (in different countries) either weren’t permitted to participate in land ownership and agriculture or, where they were, either they chose not to (because they didn’t have experience and therefore competence in agricultural) – or their “spiritual leaders” steered

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their followers away from agriculture (telling them that all agriculture was “dirty” except agriculture in the “holy land”). So, one way or another, the Jewish people became traders, merchants, and professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.). But eventually the pendulum of change swung back in their favor, because the agricultural revolution was surpassed by first the industrial and then the information revolution, in both of which, with the experiences of the Jewish people as merchants and professionals and with their long history of learning (e.g., their myths), the Jewish people have prospered.

If there’s any truth to that speculation, one has to (once again!) smile at the “connectedness of opposites” – and congratulate the Jewish people on their perseverance. In some cases, however and unfortunately, this perseverance of the Jewish people has preserved just their primitive idea about their god and the idea that they, like the Pygmies, are their god’s “chosen people” – which has made “pygmies” of the mental development of so many people.

Thereby, too, maybe one sees here the most significant moral of this story about the Tower of Babylon. It’s virtually the same as the principal moral of all myths, namely, it’s easy to dream up a story to support one’s prejudices!

Hints about Changing Ideas of Gods

But be that as it apparently is, I’ll now turn to hints in the Tower of Babel myth about changing ideas of gods, in particular, the hint that the early Hebrews weren’t monotheists (i.e., that they believed in many gods). Recall that the Hebrews have their principal (?) god say:

Come, let us go down there...

Possibly the Hebrew god (or more accurately, the cleric who wrote this nonsense) was just using the “royal we” (i.e., the author assumed that the god was speaking about himself in the plural) or he may might have been talking to some (imagined) “sidekicks” (angels or similar). Yet, there are many other references in the Bible to many gods, for example:

- In the Hebrew version of the first genesis myth, everything is created in six “periods” by “**The Elohim**”, which translated correctly means “The Gods”
- *Genesis 6, 1* states: “**In those days (before the flood), when the sons of the gods** [i.e., plural gods not just plural ‘sons’]....”

- At *Exodus 20*, 2 there is: “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt... You shall have no other god [or, the New English Bible adds as a footnote “or gods”] to set against me...” – which is an unnecessary “commandment”, if the people didn’t believe in the existence of other gods
- *Deuteronomy 8*, 19 states: “If you forget the Lord your God and adhere to other gods...”
- At *2 Kings 17*, 35 there is: “You shall not pay homage to other gods...”

Thus, the Hebrews apparently acknowledged the existence of (and even had a tendency to worship) many other gods, but at least some of Hebrews (especially the priests!) claimed that Yahweh (or Jehovah) was the special god who would protect the Hebrews (or Israelites).

Later in the Bible (about halfway through it, at *Psalms 82*, 1–7), God reportedly sentenced all the other gods to death:

God takes his stand in the court of heaven to deliver judgment among the gods themselves... “This is my sentence: Gods you may be... yet you shall die as men die; princes fall, every one of them, and so shall you.”

Then, still later in the Bible (in *Isaiah 45*, 21,22) we are led to believe that God’s death sentence of the other gods had been executed:

There is no god but me; there is no god other than I...

But the Israelites apparently didn’t really believe this, because later in the Bible (*Jeremiah 2*, 28) God reportedly said to the Israelites:

For you... have as many gods as you have towns.

Actually, it’s quite understandable why the Israelites didn’t believe that God killed all the other gods, because surely it’s the silliest idea of them all. That is, gods don’t die – they can’t! Thus, as can be found by checking a dictionary, the defining characteristic of any god is immortality – that is, gods don’t die! Oh, you can have good gods and bad gods, helpful gods and hurtful gods, beautiful gods and ugly gods, faithful gods and unfaithful gods, trusting gods and jealous gods, loving gods and hateful gods, forgiving gods and vengeful gods, but dead gods you just can’t have! Once you believe they exist, then you’re stuck with them – unless of course you stop believing in them. But even then, they don’t die; they just go “poof”!

In any case, surely one of the most inconsistent ideas of all the silly ideas in the Bible is that one god proclaimed the death of all the other gods! In his 1891 “poem”, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche agreed (with tongue in cheek!) that all the gods died – they laughed themselves to death:

With the old Deities hath it long since come to an end: and verily, a good joyful Deity-end had they! They did not “begloom” themselves to death – that do people fabricate! On the contrary, they laughed themselves to death, once on a time! That took place when the ungodliest utterance came from a God himself – the utterance: “There is but one God! Thou shalt have no other gods before me!”

And actually, as I already hinted and as I’ll show more in later posts, there’s evidence from essentially every culture that at least some people thought that “the god idea” was silly. As a single example (which seems to reflect opinions in two cultures), there’s the Old Testament’s *Psalms 14*, 1 (probably created, with help from what the Egyptian sage Amenemope wrote in the eleventh century BCE):

The impious fool says in his heart ‘There is no God’.

The derogatory nature of this statement aside, it’s doubtful if the statement would have been made if at least some people hadn’t concluded that “the God idea” was silly.

In fact, as I’ll also demonstrate in later posts, the changes in people’s ideas about “the gods” have been major, but in general, they progressed extremely slowly. As an example, for the ancient Hebrews (later called the Israelites and then called the Jewish people), the change in their beliefs just from many gods to one god didn’t occur until ~500 BCE, and even now, according to results from a 1991 survey (2500 years later!), 43% of Israelites still believe in the primitive idea that God exists.

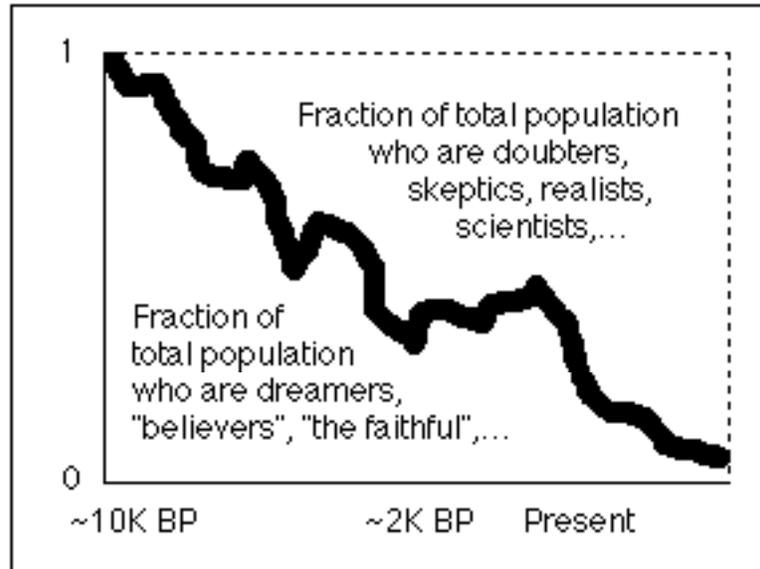
That 43% can be compared with 63% in the United States who agreed with that the statement

I know God exists and I have no doubts about it.

Meanwhile, in the more enlightened British Isles, only 23% of the people agreed with such a ridiculous concept. That is, in this regard, Americans are clearly less advanced than the Jews and Brits.

* Go to other chapters via

In contrast to all those sad statistics, by ~500 BCE, at least some ancient Greeks came to the realization that there are no gods – and never were! Thus, to change ideas from many gods, to one God, and then to zero gods took many thousands of years – and for some people, obviously the change hasn't yet occurred. I've tried to convey that idea with the crude graph (below), where please notice that, on the horizontal axis, time runs from about 10 kyears before the present (BP) out to thousands of years in the future, and that on the vertical axis, the fraction of "believers" (in clerical balderdash) falls from unity (everyone a believer in gods) to what I expect will eventually occur: with no one believing in gods, the fraction will eventually fall to zero. Thus, the evolution is from polytheism to monotheism to (the ideal!) "zerotheism".



BACK TO CARAMEL PUDDING & CLERICAL BABBLE

But returning to my Caramel Pudding and the Tower of Babel myths, from them, one can clearly see the essence of all myths – they're just speculations proposed to answer some question, such as:

Why does everything fall toward the Earth?

Because the center of the Earth is filled with caramel pudding.

Why are there so many languages?

Because God didn't like it when people built the Tower of Babylon.

But in the case of my Caramel Pudding myth, at least I can claim credit (!) for concocting the idea. In contrast, the author (“J”) of this Tower of Babel myth not only plagiarized another Sumerian myth (just as he plagiarized the Sumerian flood myth to form his Noah myth), but he changed the morals of both the myths to bolster the new priesthood, to instill in the poor Jewish people fear of the clerics’ god (i.e., fear of the clerics).

Yet, although the above Tower of Babel myth is just childish, clerical babble [viz., “[pretentious jargon](#)”] it reveals more about the clerics’ (imagined) gods, that is to say, it reveals still more about the clerics and, therefore, about the potential evils lurking in their myths. Some illustrations follow.

- The god (Yahweh) of the author (“J”) of the above (Tower of Babel) myth is certainly a pathetic little god compared with the god (Elohim) of the author (possibly “E”, but I expect it was Ezra or a co-conspirator) who wrote the creation myth in *Genesis 1* (i.e., compared with the “Persian” creator god, who zapped together the universe and everything in it during six days).

Personally, I can’t fathom how any modern human who is sane could tolerate the incoherencies in the descriptions of a god who could orchestrate the Big Bang and, yet, he needs to drop down from heaven to check out what the ancient Babylonians were doing – and then, obstructs humans from communicating with one another by creating a babel of languages. I suspect, however, that the resolution of my dilemma is to remove the adjective ‘sane’ from the description of such humans.

- The cleric who wrote the Tower of Babel myth (plagiarizing and distorting the earlier Sumerian myth) was – and in fact, all clerics are – amazingly disrespectful (and naïve) about “knowledge”. Real knowledge (e.g., Sumerian knowledge about how to make wheels spin on axles, how to build canals to irrigate fields, how to construct walls, buildings, and towers, how to record the spoken word, etc.) is gained by the scientific method (“guess, test, and reassess”). In contrast, to gain what they claim to be ‘knowledge’, clerics not only just speculate, they then “sanctify” their speculation by invoking their gods.

For example, wanting knowledge about why so many languages exist, the cleric who wrote the Tower of Babel myth proclaims that his god simply snapped his fingers (or whatever) to create different languages. Such naivety – combined with arrogance (leading to the ignorant, arrogant certainty of all clerics) stimulates scientists (and surely stimulates any thinking human) to want to grab clerics by their shoulders and just shake them, with the hope that some sense could be shaken into their feeble brains – and some sense of honesty could be retrieved from their subverted humanity.

- The cleric who wrote the above myth was obviously opposed to progress (in this case, the building of the Tower of Babylon). Similar is the case for all clerics: they seek to maintain the *status quo* (with them in power). Historical illustrations include the resistance of Jewish clerics (and Greek clerics) to Greek knowledge and Roman progress (e.g., in science, medicine, engineering, governance, laws, religious tolerance, etc.), Christian clerics causing Europe's Dark Ages, Islamic clerics causing the Muslim's Dark Ages (which continues today), and similarly today, the (in-a-way) humorous attempts of fundamentalist clerics in the US (especially Christians and Mormons) to hold their followers somewhere between a half and a full century behind mainstream American culture.

A more generous person might say that clerics appreciate their culture's accomplishments; a sympathetic person might say that clerics (like little children) are timid souls (hesitant about adopting changes); I'm of the opinion that the clerics' primary motive is to maintain their power and perceived prestige.

With progress, with more people realizing what timid, dishonest, arrogant, charlatans all clerics are, we can look forward to the day when all the damn clerics of the world will be forced to descend to the level of the rest of us, bravely adapting to change, honestly struggling to understand *via* applications of the scientific method, humbly admitting how little we've managed to learn, and (horrors of horrors for the clerics) working for a living, producing something of value for fellow humans.

And then, when the time comes for clerics to become like the rest of us, pity the poor clerics: the pain they'll feel, the remorse for all the harm that each has done (especially to children) may be unbearable.