

Ix4 – Flooded by Frozen Myths

Dear: Sorry for this chapter's title, but its silliness (similar to the silliness of many newspaper headlines) amuses me. What I want to do in this chapter is begin to explore another case of “the connectedness of opposites”, an exploration that'll continue during most of the rest of this “excursion” **Ix** (as well as the excursion **Yx**). The particular case to be investigated is when the enormous change called ‘writing’ caused the opposite, i.e., stagnation! Specifically, writing caused previously ever-changing, “fluid” myths to be “frozen” – in words and in time. In turn, this freezing of myths strengthened (even “solidified”) religions, because clerics could finally learn and promote the official / orthodox versions of their religions!

The philosopher David Hume (1711–76) saw it clearly, as you can see in the following quotation from his 1757 essay entitled *The Natural History of Religion*.¹ To this quote, I've added some notes in brackets, and in places, I've taken the liberty to “modernize” the punctuation.

Another cause, which rendered the ancient religions much looser than the modern, is that the former [the ancient religions] were ‘traditional’ and the latter are ‘scriptural’ [i.e., written in various “holy books” or “holy scriptures”, such as the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, etc.]... [The] tradition in the [ancient religions] was complex, contradictory, and on many occasions, doubtful – so that it couldn't possibly be reduced to any standard and canon, or afford any determinate articles of faith. The stories of the gods [i.e., the myths] were numberless... and though everyone, almost, believed a part of these stories, yet no one could believe or know the whole – while, at the same time, all must have acknowledged that no one part stood on a better foundation than the rest.

The traditions of different cities and nations were also, on many occasions, directly opposite, and no reason could be assigned for preferring one to the other. And as there were an infinite number of stories, with regard to which tradition was nowise positive, the gradation was insensible, from the most fundamental articles of faith to those loose and precarious fictions. The pagan religion, therefore, seemed to vanish like a cloud, whenever one approached it and examined it piecemeal. It could never be ascertained by any fixed dogmas and principles. And though this did not convert the generality of mankind from so absurd a faith (for when will the people be reasonable?), yet it made them falter and hesitate more in maintaining their principles and was even apt to produce, in certain dispositions of mind, some practices and opinions that had the appearance of determined infidelity.

¹ Available at http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=340&Itemid=27.

Significant from current perspectives, “the ancient... pagan religion[s]” produced few “religious fundamentalists” and terrorists. That is, before writing was invented, when myths could be communicated only orally, the resulting errors and modifications in religious communications required everyone to hold their “religious beliefs” loosely. For example, a person couldn’t be sure if the “official god” was the sun god or the son god! Consequently, ancient people were not so “up tight” about their religions. Once writing was invented, however, the myths became “frozen” in time, official “doctrines and covenants” (such as in Mormonism) could be “carved in stone” (as in Judaism), dogma was established, religious “literalists” and “fundamentalists” claimed to know “the truth”, and “unbelievers” became targets of such “extremists”, resulting in religiously motivated terrorism.

Again, in “the good old days” before writing was invented (about 5,000 years ago) myths were “malleable” (i.e., flexible, pliable, adaptable...). In those days, if you didn’t like a particular myth, a particular portion of a myth (e.g., a particular god, his son, or some other member of the god’s family), you could always introduce appropriate modifications to the myth before you passed it on! As a result, few people were “up tight” about their religion. But once myths were written, they became “sacred”, the “holy word” of the “most high”, nobody was allowed to mess with them, and the poor children of the world were indoctrinated with the nonsense that their religion’s myths were “true”.

In most of the remaining chapters of this “excursion” (and in fact, in the excursion **Yx** as well) I’ll pursue the overall goal of showing you how and why such freezing of fluid myths occurred. It’s impossible, however, for me to accomplish that goal: showing the “how” and “why” of myths is what historians pursue, and as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, there’s “no way” that I can adequately examine ancient myths from a historical perspective (because my career was in the physical sciences, not history). Nonetheless, in this and subsequent chapters (both in this excursion **Ix** and in **Yx**) I’ll at least glance at the historical perspective. In this chapter, in particular, what I want to do is at least glance at how and why the Bible’s first genesis myth was frozen in the form you know, i.e., starting with “In the beginning...” Before starting on that challenging task, however, I think I should try to provide a little background for the time when myths could be conveyed only orally and when (and why) writing was invented.

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BEFORE WRITING

In an earlier chapter (IX2), I relayed the suggestion made by many anthropologists that all religions started out as animism or shamanism; i.e., the primitive idea that spirits (of essentially everything!) were essentially everywhere. As you're probably aware, Native Americans practiced shamanism, with each tribe's religion led by the tribe's "medicine man". As well as being the tribe's principal communicator with "the spirit world", the shaman / medicine man would also be the principal repository and conveyor of the tribe's myths. In addition, the shaman would usually possess knowledge of herbs and similar that our society would classify as "illegal drugs" (hallucinogens), which were used to "enter the spirit world".

As I also mentioned in an earlier chapter, how animism might have started is unknown. Primitive people may have first concluded that spirits controlled the wind, rain, and other elements in their environment, or they may have first concluded that they possessed "souls", themselves, and then, by extension, assumed that everything in their environment was similarly controlled by its own "soul" or "spirit". And if the first step was to assume that individuals had souls, it's unknown if this assumption was derived from the understandable repulsion of the idea that people would die or from some other idea (e.g., fascination with one's own shadow and/or reflection and misunderstanding of what occurs during dreaming).

In any case, given that primitive people concluded that "the unknown" (in the forest, the sea, the dark, and especially after death) was populated with a huge number of souls and spirits (or ghosts and goblins!), it's expected they also concluded (in analogy with their own experiences) that there must be some organization for "the spirit world", with a leader similar to (but more powerful than) their own tribal leader. That is, they probably speculated that some order and organization existed in "the spirit world" similar to what existed in "the real world". This, I suspect, is the reason why the people assumed that some god ruled the spirit world, suitably dispensing "justice" (according to the god's prerogative and to the predominant law known by animals and primitive people, i.e., "might makes right").

To illustrate, below I'll provide additional descriptions of one of the gods of your easily-identified ancestors in northern Europe, namely, the god Odin (also spelled Odhinn, Othinn, Othin, Woden, Wodan, Wotan, or Woutan). In a sense, he was considered to be a "super shaman", in part because, as

* Go to other chapters *via*

“the wind god” (as well as many other titles!), he was assumed to lead the rushing of souls through the air, which was the assumed cause of the wind. The following description was written by Eileen Holland and is taken from the web site at www.open-sesame.com. I’ve added some comments in brackets [such as these], some italics (for emphasis), and some grammatical suggestions in braces {such as these}, as well as made a few minor grammatical changes.

Odin [or Woden, whom, Dear, let me remind you, you still honor every Wednesday!] is the oldest of the gods... The love goddess Frigg/Freya [whom you honor every Friday!] is usually considered his consort, but he had many wives and children: he is {the father of Thor; whence, Thursday} with {the goddess} Jord, father of Balder, Hermod, and Hod with Frigg, Vali’s {father} with Rind, and Vidar’s father with Grid. Odin created the world with his brothers Ve and Vili, from the body of the primeval giant Ymir. They created the first man, Aske, from an ash tree they found on the seashore. They created Woman, Embla, from an elm tree. [Whose names, therefore, are similar to the names Adam and Eve (and the earlier Egyptian and Mesopotamian names of the alleged, first man and woman).]

Odin is a shaman and necromancer [i.e., someone who allegedly communicates with the dead] who obtains answers from the wisest of the dead. His continual search for occult knowledge [i.e., knowledge of “magic”] led him to trade one eye to Mimir for a drink from the Well of Wisdom. His remaining eye symbolizes the all-seeing Sun; the eye in Mimir’s well symbolizes the full Moon. [So, Dear, this Odin is powerful: his good eye is the Sun; the eye he lost is the Moon – all of which, by the way, is very similar to the myth about the ancient Egyptian god Horus.]

To learn the secrets of the dead [a standard capability claimed by any shaman], Odin underwent a ritual spiritual death [also common for all shamans – and it usually meant either getting drunk or getting “spaced out” on some hallucinogen], sacrificing himself to himself [which is a rather neat trick – similar to what the Christian (and Mormon) god allegedly did!]. He pierced himself with his own spear {and} then hung himself from *Yggdrasil, the World Tree*, for *nine* days and nights. [Thereby, with the choice of *nine* rather *seven*, it appears that our easily-identified ancestors in Northern Europe didn’t spend as many nights staring at the stars – probably because of poor star-gazing weather!] He used magic to free himself, an act of spiritual rebirth... [also required of all shamans!]

Odin is all-seeing and divine but not immortal. He is said to never eat and to live on wine. [And it was therefore possibly the alcohol in the wine that sent Odin (and his shamans) into his trance.] He possesses Draupnir {Draupner}, a magic ring which produces eight new rings every ninth night. Odin dwells in Asgard, which is sometimes said to be atop *Yggdrasil {the World Tree}*. [Dear: notice this reference (and an earlier one) to “the World Tree”. Trees were special in many versions of shamanism, which probably accounts for the much-later ideas in the Bible about the

“Tree of Knowledge” and the “Tree of Life” (which, in turn, probably refer to trees whose fruit, when suitably treated, is a hallucinogen).]

His hall is called Valaskjalf {Shelf of the Slain}. He sits on his throne, Hlidskjalf, with his wife Freya {Frigg} at his side. The throne is a watch-tower from which he observes the nine worlds and sees all events, past and future. It is Odin who must face the Frost Giants at Ragnarok, the doom of the gods. He knows the wolf Fenrir will kill him then.

Odin also presides in the *great hall* at Valhalla where he feasts the Einherjar, the glorious dead. This is his private army, the souls of heroes who will fight on his side at Ragnarok. He is served in Valhalla by the Valkyries, an army of female warrior spirits who fly over battlefields and gather the souls of fallen warriors. Half of them are chosen by Odin, the remaining heroes are feasted by Freya...

Now, Dear, I'm sure you can imagine how the above description of Odin would have provided ample material for a huge number of myths that could be used to entertain your easily-identified ancestors on long rainy or snowy evenings, as the group huddled in caves or, during later centuries, assembled in “great halls”, and the tribe's shaman recited the myths from memory. Of course, no written versions of the resulting myths were available, not only because writing was unknown but also because there was no point: people knew the myths by memory – and if versions of the myths differed because memories differed, the results would have been just interesting new twists on the old tales!

THE INVENTION OF WRITING

Your ancestors who worshiped Odin, tens of thousands of years ago, were hunters and gathers. Eventually, some (brilliant!) ancestor got the idea: “Why hunt animals? Let's herd them!” Later in the development of human communities, some groups started to hobble or pen some ungulates (i.e., animals such as goats, sheep, swine, and cattle that have hooves) and to cultivate grain crops and other vegetation. In particular, archeological data show that, ~10,000 years ago (i.e., ~8,000 BCE), agricultural communities developed in fertile valleys of the Indus River in India, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia (with the lower valleys in what is now Iraq and the headwaters in what is now eastern Syria), and the Nile River in Egypt. Possibly it was the women (who probably were the principal gatherers of early groups) led in this agricultural revolution; that is, possibly it was women who “invented” agriculture.

This “agriculture revolution” of course started at different times in different parts of the world. For example, data show that corn was domesticated in Mexico ~4,000 BCE, about 2,500 years before Sidney Rigdon’s Book of Mormon and the “prophet” Joseph Smith claimed that the “new world” was first populated! In fact, the Minoan civilization of Mexico peaked in the time period from about 2,000 to 1,500 BCE, a thousand years before Rigdon/Smith assumed anyone arrived!

During the first few thousands of years of these agricultural communities (yes, Dear, *thousands* of years!), the numbers and variations of the myths concocted by these first agrarian peoples were absolutely astounding, probably including many myths about floods of their river valleys. In time, agricultural communities grew into quite large cities (e.g., by about 2500 BCE, the Mesopotamian city of Ur, identified in the Bible, had a population of ~50,000 people).² With the growth of these cities, many people became “citified”, which is the original meaning of the word “civilized” – although nowadays many of us consider city dwellers to be “uncivilized”! And eventually, with cities came writing.

Similar to so much in the universe, writing evolved. It seems to have started through the process of keeping records of counting. Of course, when people first started counting things is unknown. In fact, whether animals normally count is contentious – although it’s been fairly well established that some animals can be trained to count. According to the online book *Mathematics Illuminated* (in Section 1.2 entitled “Math at the Dawn of Time”):³

The earliest example of recorded mathematical symbols is a sequence of tally marks on the leg bone of a baboon found in Swaziland, dating to around 35,000 years ago.

With trading in agricultural and other products (as well as trades of services) that developed in cities, serious economic needs developed to keep track of the trades.

² By the way, Dear, the word ‘Mesopotamia’ is the Greek description of the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, with *meso* meaning ‘middle’ or ‘intermediate’ and with *po* the Indo-European base word meaning ‘to drink’ (as in the River Po in Italy and as in the word ‘potable’ meaning ‘drinkable’); thus, Meso-po-tamia is “the land between the rivers”.

³ Available at <http://www.learner.org/courses/mathilluminated/units/1/textbook/02.php>.

According to a Wikipedia article on the history of writing numbers,⁴ “the earliest known writing for record keeping evolved from a system of counting using small clay tokens that began in Sumer about 8000 BC”, i.e., approximately 10,000 years ago! Kelley L. Ross provides the following information in an impressive article entitled “Mesopotamian Kings”.⁵

History begins at Sumer [or at least, the (written) historical record] because the Sumerians were undoubtedly the first to have a functioning system of writing. The origins of this are now plausibly explained by Denise Schmandt-Besserat (cf. *Before Writing, Volume I, From Counting to Cuneiform*, University of Texas Press, 1992). For purposes of accounting, contracts, shipping, etc., little clay models were made of the kinds of commodities involved. For convenience, these models were then placed in clay wrappers. Then, so... the contents of the wrappers could be known without breaking them, little drawings of the models began to put on the wrappers. Soon it became obvious that the little drawings by themselves made the models superfluous. The stylization of the models had already produced a certain abstraction and stylization in the drawings, which thus became proto-cuneiform – a system already pre-adapted to representing numbers as well as concepts.

Since thousands of the clay models have been found, the evidence for the process is abundant. No such antecedents have been found in Egypt or India, where writing began soon after the Sumerian precedent. It is hard not to conclude that Sumerian influence, (with the evidence of Sumerian artifacts to prove it) sparked the development of writing in those places. Where writing developed independently elsewhere, i.e., China and the New World, Middle Eastern influence *via* Central Asia cannot be discounted on the former, while Mayan glyphs, only recently deciphered at all, had not progressed far, even three thousand years later, beyond the most basic versions of cuneiform or hieroglyphics. Nor were even the Aztecs still using the system at that level, while the Incas had no form of writing whatsoever. The achievement of the Sumerians thus represents a unique and pivotal moment in human history.

It was, of course, an enormously important (and, no doubt, difficult and slow) step to go from keeping records of agriculture products to being able to accurately communicate arbitrary ideas using symbols: it’s one level of abstraction to put a notch on your bow every time you kill an animal (or an enemy); it’s a much higher level of abstraction to convey stories about each notch on your bow using only symbols invented for writing!

⁴ Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_writing_ancient_numbers.

⁵ Available at <http://www.friesian.com/notes/oldking.htm - mesopotamia>.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING

Whereas writing is quite likely the most important invention in the history of the world (save, possibly, for the internet!), I therefore think, Dear, that I should show you some additional steps in its development. You can explore this history further by typing “history +writing” in any good internet search engine. For example, most of the following information is available at the “World History Timeline” (a web page at www.norton.com/college/history created by Thomas Percy and Mary Dickson), at the “EAWC internet Index” maintained by A.F. Beavers, and at “The Ancient World” (a book posted on the web by Frank E. Smitha at <http://fsmitha.com/h1/>).

- ~3200 BCE: The Sumerians (in Mesopotamia) developed the first pictorial-type of “cuneiform writing” (using wedge-shaped characters), recording information on clay tablets. A large number of samples of early writing on clay tablets have been found; one of the first examples is a ~3200 BCE clay tablet from Mesopotamia on which is inscribed a recipe – for making beer!
- The Egyptians followed soon thereafter (by ~3100 BCE) with their hieroglyphics also written on clay tablets. Some investigators suggest that Egyptians were the first writers, perhaps starting as soon as 3400 BCE (although, as you can see from the above quotation from Ross, this suggestion is challenged by others).⁶
- By 2500 BCE, ceramic seals were being used in the Indus Valley of India, to indicate ownership of bundles of goods.
- ~2000 – 1600 BCE: The Sumerians were conquered by the Amorites (“white skinned, blue eyed, fair haired” people from what is now Syria)⁷ who ruled from the city of Babylon (e.g., by the Amorite King Hammurabi); this is later known as the first (or the “old”) Babylonian period; the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh (which I’ll review in a later chapter of this **Ix** “excursion”) was rewritten in the Amorites’ Semitic language (from which the Hebrew language evolved).
- ~1800 BCE: According to the Bible, a group of Semitic-speaking nomads (wandering herders) later known as Hebrews (i.e., ‘wanderers’ or ‘outsiders’ or ‘trespassers’) drifted west from Mesopotamia to near the Mediterranean Sea (to Canaan) and, later, possibly to Egypt; they were allegedly led by Abraham (the “father” of the “Abrahamic religions”, which include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Mormonism); actually, though, stories about Abraham are probably myths.

⁶ Incidentally, Dear, Egyptian hieroglyphics weren’t deciphered in modern times until the early 1800s, after the Rosetta stone was discovered. I’ll give you more details in later chapters, but I’ll mention here that the discovery of (and all the newspaper reports about) the Rosetta stone is probably what stimulated the Mormon “profit” Joseph Smith to promote the ruse of translating (nonexistent!) “reformed Egyptian”.

⁷ See, e.g., <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amorite>.

- From ~1700 BCE there is evidence of Chinese writing, with some of the first records on turtle shells and ox bones.
- ~1600 BCE: The Syrians (known to the Hebrews as Canaanites) developed the first alphabet – with consonants only (as in Hebrew).
- ~1400 BCE: The Canaanites on the coastal plains of what is now Lebanon and Syria (people known to the Greeks as Phoenicians) developed the full alphabet; i.e., symbols for each sound.⁸ For a survey of the evolution of alphabets from Phoenician (to the Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Cyrillic, and Latin character sets) see the webpage entitled *Evolution of Alphabets*.⁹
- According to the Bible, sometime between about 1400 – 1200 BCE, the Hebrews returned from a ~200- to 400-year (!) stay in Egypt to Canaan; however, no archaeological data have been found to support this claim.
- ~1300 BCE: The Egyptians wrote with pen and ink on the bark of the papyrus plant.
- ~1200 BCE: Earliest known copy of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* – although portions of it were inscribed on tombs, more than 1,000 years earlier.
- ~1200 – 800 BCE: Somewhere in this time period, texts of the Hindu religion were written; these are the *Vedas*, including the *Upanishads*. As with the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the writing of the *Vedas* was “just” the recording of myths that had been retold for untold centuries.
- ~ 750 BCE: Earliest Greek books (by Homer and by Hesiod); these, too, were “just” permanent records of “the myths of old”.
- By ~400 BCE most of the Old Testament (OT) of the Bible (called the *Tanakh* in Judaism or sometimes called “the Hebrew Bible”) was written on paper from the Phoenician city of Byblos (from which the name “Bible” is derived). In addition to being a collection of myths (from Mesopotamia, Canaan, Egypt, Persia, and from the original tribe of Hebrews), retold orally for untold centuries, the OT contained an undoubtedly biased view of the history of the Hebrews following their (alleged) return from Egypt.

⁸ By the way, Dear, I would have expected that our word for the “sounds in words”, i.e., ‘phonetics’ would acknowledge the huge indebtedness of the world to the Phoenicians, but surprisingly (at least to me), my dictionary shows no relation of the word ‘phonetics’ to the Phoenicians, giving the origin of the word ‘phonetics’ as only the Greek word *phone* for ‘sound’. I had thought that, maybe the Greeks honored the Phoenicians by describing them as “the people who first recognized and created symbols for all the sounds in speech”, which later was shortened to “the Phoenicians”, but Wikipedia shot that idea down: “In fact, the word Phoenician derives from the Ancient Greek word *phoinios* meaning ‘purple’,” because the Phoenician traders basically had a monopoly on a purple dye (used to color garments)!

⁹ At <http://terpconnect.umd.edu/~rfradkin/alphapage.html>.

MYTHS FROZEN IN WRITING

Well, Dear, following the above ridiculously brief survey of writing's development, what I want to begin, now, is to show you some of the myths that were "frozen in time" by the "newfangled technology" called writing. Before I do so, however, I want to make a number of points:

- The number of myths that were "frozen in time" (many of which you can find on the internet) is "mind boggling": in the Canaan city of Elba, alone, 15,000 clay tablets have been found that reveal myths of their approximately 500 gods – and each city (of maybe 500 cities) had their own set of gods!
- I discourage you from becoming overly interested in myths! Myths are a bunch of silly old stories (much like modern-day TV cartoons) dreamt up by a bunch of old "fuddy-duds" who could barely figure out which way is up!
- Thousands upon thousands of people still devote their life's work to uncovering and studying ancient myths; I strongly encourage you not to similarly spend your life.
- Yet, you should at least have a passing acquaintance with some of the most famous myths, because they are embedded in our culture, and if you don't know something about some of these myths, you'll probably feel uncomfortable or unknowledgeable during some conversations.
- And if you choose to ignore my recommendation not to spend much of your precious time reading myths {it wouldn't be the first time that you chose to ignore... (☺)}, then the least you might do is go to original sources. To do so, I recommend that you start (and maybe finish!) at two astoundingly good websites: The Internet Sacred Text Archive (at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>) and the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/index1.htm>).

Finally, Dear, I should mention my purpose in showing you some details of specific myths. Whereas you have been indoctrinated with myths from the Bible and from the Book of Mormon since you were a baby, what I want to do is to show you the origins of some of those myths. For example, at the end of this chapter I'll be asking you to read the first part of the *Book of Genesis* in the Bible, to remind yourself of the myths of your indoctrination. In this chapter, I want to begin to show you the origins of some of those myths. And if you manage to read all the chapters in the "excursions" **Ix** and **Yx**, then when the next person tells you that the myths of your religion (or of any of the Abrahamic religions) are "God's holy truth", I hope you'll

be able to say something similar to: “Gimme a break – those myths were plagiarized from the ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians, and Persians!”

THE BIBLE’S FIRST GENESIS MYTH

To show you the origin of some of the Bible’s myths, my plan is look through the other end of the “historical telescope”. In the above (looking at a little of the history of oral myths and the development of writing), I was viewing history in the “normal direction”, with time advancing. Now, I want to look from the opposite direction, with time receding. Specifically, my plan is to address the questions: Given the existence of the Bible’s first genesis myth, how and why did it come into existence? And I trust that you see why I want to look in the opposite direction: looking forward in time, literally billions of things occurred; in contrast, I want to look backward to try to understand why and how one particular thing (the writing of the Bible’s first genesis myth) occurred. Thereby, I (and historians) increase the focus by at least a factor of a billion!

To start and as you may recall, the Book of Genesis (and therefore the Bible) starts with an “explanation” of creation, alleged to have been completed in six days. Quoting here from the New English Bible (because it’s easier to read, and to which I’ve added the italics), it starts:

In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth, the earth was without form and void, with darkness over the face of the abyss, and a mighty wind that swept over the surface of the waters...

The question that I now want to begin to address is: what was the source of this proposed “explanation” of creation?

In reality, of course I can’t answer that question (thousands upon thousands of people have wasted their lives trying to answer it!), but to start, I’ll suggest a few summary points:

- Trying to determine the origin of either this or the second genesis myth in the Bible (which I’ll get to, in the next chapter, and which conveys a story about an alleged first couple, Adam and Eve) is generally a waste of time, because all clerical “explanations” of “creation” are clearly ridiculous,
- It’s quite likely that the first genesis myth in the Bible isn’t a myth (preserved by the people) but a clerical composition (and, as I’ll be showing you in a later chapter, quite

likely the cleric was Ezra), written while reading Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Persian creation myths, and

- I'll continue, here, to delve into this silliness, because certain grandchildren (as well as literally billions of other children) have been indoctrinated with this junk ever since they were babies!

With respect to my first point in the above list (i.e., that the clerical “explanations” of “creation” in these myths are clearly ridiculous), in the next chapter I'll begin to show you that the science contained in them is so silly that it's laughable. That ancient people proposed such “explanations” is commendable, but that people living in modern times (I won't call them “modern people”) still promote such “explanations” is disgraceful!

With my second point in the above list (i.e., that the Bible's first genesis “story” isn't a myth), people who take the Bible literally would probably agree with my opinion that the first few pages of *Genesis* don't describe a myth. Literalists would claim: “It isn't a myth; it's the true word of God!” In my opinion, however, it isn't a myth, because it isn't good enough!

To see what I mean, Dear, please pause for a minute, right now, to try to retell (in your mind, to yourself) the story about Coyote and the Beaver, how the Columbia Gorge was created, and how the Nez Perce obtained crooked smiles. Do you remember that story? Now, Dear, please try to retell (in your mind, to yourself) the story about how God created the world in seven days, starting from: “In the beginning...”

Troubles?! Well, Dear, if (similar to me) you had troubles remembering the Bible's genesis myth that starts “In the beginning...” then why? How many times have you been taught the biblical “story” about how the world was created? In contrast, previously, had you ever heard the story about Coyote and the Beaver? Isn't the story about Coyote and the Beaver the kind of story that you could remember and, sitting around a campfire, could pass on to the next generation? For comparison, reconsider the story about how God created the world, as given in the Bible. Is this the type of story that could be retold around campfires, generation after generation?

I think not. I think that the Bible's creation story that starts “In the beginning...” is a “literary production”, written down by some cleric after writing had been invented. In my mind, I see some old scribe scribbling down the next line, checking to see what he had already written (for even he

couldn't remember the details!), and then pushing on, to “explain” what God did during the next day.

That's what I mean by suggesting that the first part of the *Genesis* isn't a myth – because it isn't good enough to be a myth! It's a “ritual”, to be memorized by “the initiates”. In contrast, the second (and as I'll show you, it's a conflicting) creation story in the Bible (about Eve being made out of one of Adam's ribs and so on) is something that I can imagine that could be retold around a campfire – but as I'll also show you later, the Adam and Eve myth is actually a genesis myth that the writers of the Bible “borrowed” from the myths of other cultures.

Finally, with respect to the third point made above, I should probably respond to suggestions by clerics of the “Abrahamic religions” (i.e., Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Mormonism, etc.) about how and why the Bible's first genesis myth was written. Thus, ever since you were a baby, you've been taught that God dictated the *Book of Genesis* to Moses; other children similarly indoctrinated in balderdash of the Abrahamic religions were told that God didn't directly dictate the myth to its author (commonly claimed to be Moses) but God “inspired” him to write it.

Meanwhile, if you've read the earlier I-chapters of this book, then you probably expect my response to such unsubstantiated claims: whereas the most certain knowledge that humans have been able to gain, even more certain than the knowledge that we exist (for we may all be just simulations in some humongous computer game) is that there are no gods (and never were any), therefore, both of the Bible's genesis myths (and the entire Bible and, for that matter, all “holy books”) were written just by people, without any help from any god but with imaginations unconstrained by evidence and for very “earthly reasons” (e.g., trying to set up a new priesthood). That said, I'll now turn to some likely sources of the Bible's first genesis myth.

EGYPTIAN & PERSIAN SOURCE MATERIAL

Some of the “frozen” genesis myths that almost certainly were available (in written form) to the writer (or writers) of the Bible's genesis myths were from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia. For example, in an earlier chapter in this “excursion” (namely, in **Ix1**), I already showed you a portion of the Egyptian genesis myth that starts exactly the same as the Bible's “In the

* Go to other chapters *via*

beginning...” Again, the Egyptian myth starts as follows, to which I’ve added the italics:

In the beginning, before there was any land of Egypt, all was darkness, and there was nothing but a great waste of water called Nun.

In addition, the Zoroastrian (Persian) religion’s genesis myth (which you can find on the internet by typing “religion Avesta Bundahishn”, or substitute the English word ‘creation’ for ‘Bundahishn’) specifically states (Chapter 1, line 28) in their “holy book” (known as *The Avesta*) the following six “creations” by their “prime god” Ohrmazd (or ‘O’ Mazda or Ahura Mazda, which literally means “the Lord of Wisdom”) during the first six “periods”:

Of Ohrmazd’s creatures of the world, the first was the sky; the second, water; the third, earth; the fourth, plants; the fifth, animals; the sixth, mankind.

The above, speculated series of creation events is essentially identical to the series given in the Bible’s first genesis myth, to wit:

God said, [1] “Let there be light...” [2] “Let there be a vault between the waters...” [3-4] “Let the waters under heaven be gathered into one place, so that dry land may appear... Let the earth produce fresh growth... Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to separate day from night...” [5-6] “Let the waters teem with countless living creatures... Let the earth bring forth living creatures... Let us make man in our image and likeness...”

Incidentally, Dear, if you search on the internet, you can find suggestions that the Jewish writer(s) of the Bible’s first genesis myth didn’t plagiarize the Zoroastrian’s *Avesta*, but that a Zoroastrian scribe plagiarized the Jewish version. If you search further, however, you’ll find that this suggestion is firmly rejected, even in the Jewish Encyclopedia.¹⁰ It’s correct that there are major uncertainties about when both “stories” were written (as I’ll outline in a later chapter, even the dates when Zarathustra was alive is uncertain to within ~500 years!), but meanwhile, even the Jewish Encyclopedia acknowledges that the Zoroastrian religion had a profound influence on the Jewish religion (and not *vice versa*).

Which then leads to the question: Why was this first genesis myth included in the Bible? Again you can find many speculations trying to answer that question, but if you dig deeper, I expect you’ll find that the consensus view

¹⁰ At <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=147&letter=Z>.

of historians is that it was to bolster the new Jewish priesthood. I'll show you some details in the "excursion" **Qx** and more in **Yx**; extremely briefly, a likely scenario of what happened appears to be roughly as follows.

In 538 BCE, the Persian ruler of Babylon, Cyrus the Great, gave approval to the Jewish priesthood to lead an exodus of Jews, not from Egypt to "the promised land" led by Moses (which almost certainly was just a literary production, i.e., a myth), but from Babylon back to where they had lived (the nation of Judah) before the Assyrians (under Nebuchadnezzar II) defeated them 60 years earlier, took some of them captive, and deported them to Babylon. To that end, Ezra (and other Jewish priests), apparently decided to transfer the universal attributes of the Persian / Zoroastrian god onto the relatively insignificant, Jewish tribal god (Yahweh) and then used this first genesis myth to illustrate how powerful the new Jewish god had become, creating even the entire universe in only six days!

BABYLONIAN INFLUENCES

Almost certainly, though, the Hebrew scribe who composed the Bible's first creation myth didn't have before him written versions of just the Egyptian and Persian creation myths. From archaeological discoveries that I'll reference later, we can be quite confident that the writer(s) of the Bible's Old Testament (OT) had copies of many Mesopotamian creation myths, almost certainly including the most famous, known as the *Enuma Elish* (or *Enûma Eliš*, pronounced eh-NOO-ma eh-LEESH). The "standard version" of this myth was written relatively recently (in about 1200 BCE, i.e., from about 800 years before Ezra and others put the OT together), but as I'll outline later in this chapter, some of the ingredients of this myth (dealing with the relative ranks of various gods) were "settled" at least 600 years earlier. As Victor Hurowitz wrote in his article "The Genesis of Genesis":¹¹

Scholars have disagreed over the date of the composition [of the *Enuma Elish*]. Some, like Thorkild Jacobsen, put it in the Old Babylonian period (early second millennium BCE), when the city of Babylon first gained prominence in Mesopotamia, and others, like Wilfred Lambert, date it to the time of Nebuchadnezzar I (end of the second millennium), when Babylon was again in ascendancy and the statue of Marduk was returned from its captivity in Elam.

¹¹ Available at <http://www.bib-arch.org/e-books/pdf/babylon-baghdad.pdf>.

Further, though, as I'll soon show you, some of the references to details about creation were included in written Sumerian myths from earlier than 2000 BCE – and no doubt were available in oral myths even earlier.

In what follows, I won't quote the entire *Enuma Elish*; in total it's very long; if I put it here in its entirety, it would extend for at least 10 pages! Although I won't quote it all, yet as was the case in an earlier chapter when I quoted the Egyptian genesis myth (“explaining” how *Re* created the world when there was just water “In the beginning...”), I want to show you more of the *Enuma Elish* than the part that “explains” creation, because it contains something else (dealing with the Tower of Babylon) to which I want to refer in later chapters. If you want to see the entire “poem”, Dear, then type “Enuma Elish” or “Marduk” in any good internet search engine. And although you can easily find all the following information on the internet by yourself, maybe it would be useful if I provide you with a few notes:

- The name *Enuma Elish* is apparently derived from the original words for the first phrase in this “epic poem”, namely, “When on high...”
- If you desire to read the entire myth, you should seek out more than one version on the internet; I found that some translations are much easier to read than others.
- Almost certainly, there wasn't just a single “Tower of Babylon” (mentioned in the myth). Thus, because the Babylonians (in contrast to the Egyptians) apparently didn't have a good supply of stone nearby (or didn't want to waste so much energy hewing and hauling stones!), they built their towers from bricks. But bricks (of dried mud!) aren't nearly so durable as stone, especially if the baked surface is eroded by sand storms, and then rainwater is poorly drained – turning the bricks back into mud! Therefore, it's unknown to which construction (or reconstruction) of the Tower of Babylon that the *Enuma Elish* (and subsequently, the Bible) is referring.

In outline, the *Enuma Elish* describes feuds and even wars among six generations of gods. As I'll show you soon, historians and mythologists have suggested that the (concocted!) idea of six generations of gods stimulated Persian / Zoroastrian priest(s) to assume that there were six periods of creation (as mentioned a few pages ago, quoting the *Avesta*), which then led to the silliness in the Bible about six days of creation. Possibly, however, these multi-generations of gods given in the *Enuma Elish* reflect multi-generations of invasions (which seems to have happened in the case of the Greeks and their multi-generations of gods). In any case, the cause of the mythical wars among the gods was imagined to be that the older gods wanted peace and quiet (that much I understand!); therefore, they tried

to kill the younger gods, who made too much noise – which is a rather brutal (and self-defeating?) way to gain peace and quiet!

THE *ENUMA ELISH*

In the first part of the “poem” given below,¹² the comments in “square brackets” [such as these] were added by someone else, and sometimes indicate that a portion of the original poem was lost; I’ve added a few comments in “curly brackets” {such as these}.

WHEN on high the Heavens had not been named
 Firm ground below had not been called by name,
 Nothing but ‘Primordial *Apsu*’, the Begetter, [Fresh Water]
 and ‘Mummu *Tiamat*’, She Who Bore them All [Salt Water] –
 their waters commingling as a single body.
 No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared,
 Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined.

THEN it was that the Gods were formed within them
Lahmu [‘Mr. Mud’] and *Lahamu* [‘Mrs. Mud’] were brought forth,
 by name they were called, before they had grown in age and stature.

Anshar [‘Upper Firmament’] and *Kishar* [‘Lower Firmament’] were formed,
 surpassing the others.
 They prolonged the days, added on the years.
Anu was their heir, the rival of his fathers;
 Yes, *Anu*, *Anshar*’s first-born, was his equal.

{Incidentally, Dear, as you can find in a Wikipedia article on *Anshar*,¹³ the Assyrians who wrote this myth in about 1200 BCE seem to have recognized the Akkadian god *Anshar* (which means “sky pivot” or “sky axle” and who was assumed to be married to his sister, *Kishar*) as the god *Assur*, which their ancestors had considered to be the chief god (and deity of their city *Assur*, which was located in what is now northern Iraq). In turn, *Anshar* / *Assur* may have been the constellation that the Greeks called *Orion* and the early Sumerians called *Gilgamesh*, because on the clay tablet shown below (a tablet that was excavated from the city of *Assur*) *Anshar* is shown standing on a bull, which may be depicting the constellation adjacent to *Orion* that we know by its Greek name, *Taurus the Bull*.}

¹² Dear: I’m now not certain from which website I copied this version; perhaps from <http://pages.uoregon.edu/sshoemak/102/texts/enuma.htm>; you can find many other versions!

¹³ Available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anshar>.

He {*Anu*} begot in his image *Nudimmud* [*Ea*].
 This *Nudimmud* was the master of his fathers;
 Of broad wisdom, understanding, mighty in
 strength,
 Mightier by far than his grandfather *Anshar*.
 {And we all know that “might makes right”!}
 He had no rival among the gods, his brothers.



The divine brothers banded together,
 They disturbed *Tiamat*
 [Salt Water, or the ocean],
 as she surged back and forth;
 {Maybe a reference to waves or tides.}
 Yes, they troubled the mood of *Tiamat*
 By their hilarity in the Abode of Heaven.
 {And everyone should know that no “hilarity” is
 allowed in Heaven!}
Apsu [Fresh Water] could not lessen their clamor
 And *Tiamat* was speechless at their ways.
 Their doings were loathsome to [].
 Unsavory were their ways; they were overbearing.

Then *Apsu*, the Begetter of the Great Gods,
 Cried out, addressing Mummu his Vizier:
 “O Mummu, my Vizier, who makes my spirit rejoice,
 Come hither and let us go to *Tiamat*!”

{This “Mummu his Vizier” seems strange, but as I’ll show you in later chapters (in **Yx**) he or “it” is important. As you can find on the internet, just what (in fact, the ancient Sumerians not just the later) Assyrians meant by ‘Mummu’ has troubled mythologists for at least a century. In the first verse, we’re introduced to ‘Mummu *Tiamat*’; that use of ‘Mummu’ suggests that it means, basically, “order out of chaos”; i.e., *Tiamat* was the order in what otherwise was the chaos of Salt Water. Now in the myth, we’re told that *Apsu* and “Mummu his Vizier” go to see *Tiamat*. A Wikipedia article¹⁴ states:

Mummu vizier of primeval gods Apsu, the fresh water, and Tiamat, the salt water.

An ancient Sumerian-Babylonian craftsman-god, and personification of technical skill. Mummu is also referred to as “the deep” several times in Mythological Texts. In ancient Sumerian, the word Mummu translates to “the one who has awoken”.

¹⁴ At <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mummu>.

Deity ruler of “The Ancients”, Mesopotamian purveyors of technical knowledge, mathematics and abstract concepts.

Mummu is a Mesopotamian deity present in the Babylonian creation myth. Sometimes referred to as “the son of Apsu and Tiamat”, Mummu is the third god in the primordial cosmogenous divine trinity. As the third of the first gods Mummu symbolizes the mental world, or logos.

Thus, at this point in the myth, Mummu apparently personifies (or deifies) whatever “order” that can be recognized. Such deification of “order” or “the mental world or logos” appears throughout the ancient world with many different names: to the ancient Egyptians it was the goddess *Ma’at*, to the ancient Chinese it was their principle of *Yin-Yang*, to the ancient Hindus it was *Ritam* (“right, weaved into the fabric of the universe”), to the ancient Zoroastrian / Persians it was *Asha* (“truth”), to the ancient Greeks it was the *logos* (logic), to the ancient Jews it was *Wisdom*, to the Gnostic Christians it was the goddess of wisdom, *Sophia*, and to the (now) orthodox Christians it was the Greek’s *logos* or “the word” or “Jesus”, illustrated with the wild speculation at the beginning of the Bible’s Gospel of John: “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word [i.e., Jesus] was made flesh and dwelt among us...**”}

They went and sat down before Tiamat,
Exchanging counsel about the gods, their children.
Apsu, opening his mouth, said to Resplendent Tiamat:
“Their ways are truly loathsome to me,
By day I find no relief, nor sleep at night.
I will destroy, I will wreck their ways,
So that quiet may be restored. Let us have rest!”

Well, Dear, to cut a very long story short, the kids (the rambunctious young gods) got wind of the old gods’ plan to permanently silence them, and the story tells how the grandson, *Ea* (aka *Nudimmud*), turned the tables on the old gods, first killing the freshwater god *Apsu*. Then, after a few more generations, another war broke out among the gods, culminating in the great-great-... grandson god, *Marduk* (the new chief god) killing his great-great-... grandmother (saltwater, *Tiamat*). *Marduk* then made the universe out of her carcass, and was crowned king of the gods.

Now, I’ll continue with the “poem”, but this time, I’ll quote another translation (also available on the internet), this one from *Poems of Heaven and Hell from Ancient Mesopotamia* by N.K. Sandars (Penguin Press, 1971), starting at Marduk’s crowning ceremony, when he decided to make humans (to serve the gods):

Now that *Marduk* {the new chief god} has heard what it is the gods are saying, he is moved with desire to create a work of consummate art. He told *Ea* {Marduk's grandfather, who had earlier killed his own grandfather} the deep thought in his heart:

“Blood to blood I join,
blood to bone I form an original thing;
its name is Man,
aboriginal man is mine in making.

“All his occupations are faithful service,
the gods that fell have rest,
I will subtly alter their operations,
divided companies equally blest.”

And I'd better stop you here, Dear, to try to make sure you noticed the above few lines! Notice that, in this creation myth, the new “chief god”, Marduk, made humans, so they'd serve the gods! What a hideous concept (still forcefully promoted in Islam): that people are nothing but some god's slaves! But as I'll try to make clear many times in this book, in reality, people were never made to serve any gods; instead, gods were always made (i.e., concocted) to serve the people – or at least some of the people, i.e., those in power, especially the clerics!

As for the rest of the *Enuma Elish*, below I'll skim through it relatively quickly. The main reason for my quoting it is just to show you its “explanation” for the Tower of Babylon (since this “explanation” differs from the one given in the Bible, which I'll review in a later chapter).

Ea answered with carefully chosen words, completing the plan for the gods' comfort. He said to *Marduk*, “Let one of the kindred [gods] be taken; only one need die for the new creation. Bring the gods together in the Great Assembly; there let the guilty die, so the rest may live.”

{Notice, Dear, that the ancient people who created this myth repeatedly violated the fundamental characteristic of all gods: they're immortal, i.e., notorious for not dying! This same fundamental error is also in the Bible, when Yahweh (aka Jehovah) kills all the other gods!}

Marduk called the Great Gods to the Synod; he presided courteously, he gave instructions and all of them listened with grave attention.

The king speaks to the rebel gods, “Declare on your oath if ever before you spoke the truth, who instigated rebellion? Who stirred up *Tiamat* {the great-great... grandmother, the original mother god, called “bitter water”, who I assume is meant

the mother of the oceans}? Who led the battle? Let the instigator of war be handed over; guilt and retribution are on him, and peace will be yours for ever.”

The Great Gods answered the Lord of the Universe, the king and counselor of gods {viz., *Marduk*}, “It was *Kingu* who instigated rebellion; he stirred up that sea of bitterness and led the battle for her.”

They declared him guilty, they bound and held him down in front of *Ea*, they cut his arteries and from his body they created man; and *Ea* imposed his servitude. {That is, again and according to the clerics who concocted this myth, the purpose of humans is to serve the god – and of course, what the gods don’t want belongs to the clerics.}

When it was done, when *Ea* in his wisdom had created man and man’s burden, this thing was past comprehension, this marvel of subtlety conceived by *Marduk* and executed by *Ea* – {although some skeptics among us might think that this “marvel of subtlety” was conceived and executed by the con-artists clerics!}

Then *Marduk*, as king, divided the gods: one host below and another above, three hundred above for the watchers of heaven, watchers of the law of *Anu* {i.e., *Ea*’s grandfather; *Marduk*’s great-great grandfather}; five times sixty for earth, six hundred gods between earth and heaven.

When universal law was set up and the gods allotted their calling, then the Anunnaki {the rest of the gods}... opened their mouths to speak to *Marduk*: “Now that you have freed us and remitted our labor how shall we make a return for this? {The myth maker neglected to mention what jobs that the gods earlier had to do!} Let us build a temple and call it *The-Inn-of-Rest-by-Night*. There we will sleep at the season of the year, at the Great Festival when we form the Assembly; we will build altars for him, we will build the Parakku, the Sanctuary.”

When *Marduk* heard this his face shone like broad day: “Tall Babel Tower, it shall be built as your desire; bricks shall be set in moulds and you shall name it Parakku, the Sanctuary.”

The Anunnaki gods took up the tools, one whole year long they set bricks in moulds; by the second year they had raised its head Esagila, it towered, the earthly temple, the symbol of infinite heaven. {So, Dear, at least according to this myth, the people didn’t build the Tower of Babylon; the gods did!} Inside were lodgings for *Marduk* and *Enlil* and *Ea*. Majestically he took his seat in the presence of them all, where the head of the ziggurat looked down to the foot.

When that building was finished the Anunnaki built themselves chapels; then all came in together and *Marduk* set out the banquet.

“This is Babylon, ‘dear city of god’ your beloved home! The length and breadth are yours, possess it, enjoy it, it is your own.”

When all the gods sat down together there was wine and feasting and laughter {so, Dear, in case you ever wondered, the new generation of gods isn't above a good party!}; and after the banquet in beautiful Esagila they performed the liturgy from which the universe receives its structure, the occult is made plain, and through the universe gods are assigned their places. {That is, as it as always been, the clerics even get to assign the gods to their places!}

When the Fifty Great Gods had sat down with the Seven who design the immutable nature of things, they raised up three hundred {gods} into heaven. It was then, too, that *Enlil* lifted the bow of *Marduk* and laid it in front of them. He also lifted the net; they praised the workmanship now that they saw the intricacy of the net and the beauty of the bow. *Anu* lifted the bow and kissed it, he said before all the gods, "This is my daughter." And this was the naming of the bow: "One is for Long-wood, two for the Rain-bow, three is for Starry-bow glittering above." And Starry-bow {which perhaps means the Moon, when it appears as a "bow", or perhaps means the Milky Way} was a god among gods {whatever that means!}.

When *Anu* had pronounced the bow's triple destiny, he lifted up the king's throne and set *Marduk* above in the gods' Assembly. Among themselves they uttered an execration, by oil and by water, pricking their throats, to abide its fate on pain of death. They ratified his authority as King of Kings, Lord of the Lords of the Universe. *Anshar* praised him, he called him *Asarluhi*, the name that is first, the highest name.

"We will wait and listen, we bend and worship his name! {So, Dear, it's not enough to just worship the god, you must even worship his name – which is a custom picked up by the Hebrews and a custom to which they still cling.} His word is the last appeal, his writ will run from the zenith to the pit. All glory to the son {viz., Marduk – or, later, Zeus or Jove or Mithra or Jesus} our avenger! His empire has no end, shepherd of men {as if men were just sheep – to be sheared by the priests!}, he made them his creatures to the last of time, they must remember. He shall command hecatombs {sacrifices of cattle} for the gods, they shall commend food, for the fathers, and cherish the sanctuary where the odor of incense and whisper of liturgy echo on earth the customs of heaven. Black-headed men will adore him on earth, the subjected shall remember their god, at his word they shall worship the goddess. {So, at least the Assyrians / Babylonians permitted a few goddess! In contrast, as you can confirm on the internet, archeological evidence shows that the Hebrews / Jews purged their goddess Asherah (Yahweh's consort) during the 7th Century BCE – and the Abrahamic religions have been led by male chauvinists ever since!} Let offerings of food not fail for god and goddess, at his command. {And again: what the gods don't want, the clerics consume!} Let them serve the gods, at his command, work their lands, build their houses. Let black-headed men serve the gods on earth without remission; while as for us, in the multitude of his names, he is our god."

"Let us hail him in his names, let us hail him by his fifty names, one god."

{The myth concludes with a long hymn extolling the fifty names of *Marduk*, the 34th of which is Mummu, “creator of heaven and earth”, and as mentioned in an earlier note, apparently Mummu is “the logos”, or (as translated into English versions of the Bible) “the Word”. Thus, Marduk was identified as “the Word” at least 1500 years before the Bible’s New Testament identified Jesus as “the Word”.}

In reality, of course the above mythical “explanation” is not really how or why The Tower of Babylon was built! It wasn’t built by the gods; it was just one of thousands (hundreds of thousands?) of such “temples to human ignorance and folly”, which are still being built by people today, under the “guidance” of various clerics, to “honor” various gods – and what the gods don’t desire, the clerics still continue to consume! Simultaneously, groups of clerics have been in competition with other clerical groups, snarling over the spoils, trying to outdo the others in their con games!

Yet, as silly as all such myths are, they potentially do contain some information about the people who created them and about the times in which they lived. For example, these “black-headed people” obviously knew about wine – as well as beer! Also, obviously these people “worked the lands” (were farmers) and apparently the most cherished weapon was the bow and arrow. Further, clearly these people were engaged in many wars, for they describe wars even among the gods – another example of, not the astrologer’s claim “As above, so below”, but “As below, so above”! And it seems not unreasonable to speculate that some of the wars were with people with different colored hair (e.g., the “fair-haired” Amorites), for otherwise, why would the Assyrians call themselves “the black-headed people”?

THE *ENUMA ELISH* & THE BIBLE’S FIRST GENESIS MYTH

Of more relevance to your experiences (of being indoctrinated in the Bible’s genesis myths) is the question: Did the above genesis myth (the *Enuma Elish*) influence the cleric who concocted the Bible’s first genesis myth? It’s certainly much easier to see the influence on the Bible’s myth from the Egyptian genesis myth (which starts, “In the beginning...”) and from the Persian myth (which stipulates what the alleged creator god did during each of the six “creation periods”). Consideration, however, should be given to the fact (detailed later in this chapter) that the *Enuma Elish* relied on Sumerian creation myths written about a thousand years before the best-guessed date of the above version of the *Enuma Elish* – myths repeated orally for who-knows-how-many thousands of years still earlier. Therefore,

* Go to other chapters *via*

the influence of the *Enuma Elish* on the cleric who wrote the Bible's first genesis myth may be subtler than the influence of the Zoroastrian myth.

For example, it may be that the *Enuma Elish* influenced the Bible's genesis myth only indirectly, in that it directly influenced only the Zoroastrian myth. Thus, certainly the Zoroastrian priests were familiar with the Assyrians: the Persians (and Medes) fought the Assyrians for centuries and finally, under the Cyrus the Great, the Persians defeated them, taking control of Babylon. Meanwhile, although Zarathustra had started his new religion an unknown number of centuries earlier, yet as I'll show you in later chapters and similar to the Buddha, Zarathustra was apparently more interested in morality (for the benefit of humanity) than with cosmology. I therefore expect that, when subsequent Zoroastrian priests began "codifying" the religion in their "sacred texts", they added their speculations about how their god created the world (as I quoted earlier from the *Avesta*) – quite possibly relying on the Assyrian's creation myth, *Enuma Elish*.

In any case, below for your consideration is a suggestion by an unidentified author¹⁵ of parallels between the *Enuma Elish* "creation myth" and the first creation myth in the Bible's *Genesis* (which, again, in turn was almost certainly directly influenced by the earlier Zoroastrian version, as given in the *Avesta*).

One of the two Bible creation myths [the other being the myth about Adam and Eve] was probably derived from the much older Mesopotamian creation myth *Enuma Elish*. The six days of creation in the *Genesis* myth parallel the six generations of gods in the *Enuma Elish* myth...

The *Enuma Elish* six generations of gods:

- Tiamat and Apsu (1st generation) who created
- Lahamu (2nd generation) who created
- Kishar (3rd generation) who created
- Anu (4th generation) who created
- Ea (5th generation) who created
- Marduk (6th generation).

¹⁵ Copied from http://www.meta-religion.com/World_Religions/Ancient_religions/Mesopotamia/genesis_and_enuma_elish_creation.htm. Unfortunately, it appears that the person running this website, Stas Beckman, posts sections from books whose copyrights have expired, but inappropriately, hasn't provided the names of the original authors.

Similarities Between *Enuma Elish* and *Genesis*

1st generation of gods and 1st day of *Genesis*:

From [the] start of *Enuma Elish*: When on high the heaven had not been named, Firm ground below had not been called by name, Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter, And Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all, Their waters commingling as a single body... (Apsu is the god of water; Tiamat is the god of primeval chaos and bearer of the sky and the earth.)

Genesis: In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep (or watery chaos), (*Tehowm*) while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ... And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

2nd and 3rd generation of gods and 2nd and 3rd day of *Genesis*:

Enuma Elish: ... Lahmu and Lahamu were brought forth, by name they were called... Anshar and Kishar were formed, surpassing the others... (Lahamu was the god of muddy silt and Kishar was the god of the Earth.)

Genesis: And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters”... evening and there was morning, the second day.

[Here God (*Elohim*) slices the waters into two with a sky dome to make the sky and the oceans; in *Enuma Elish*, this also parallels Marduk slicing Tiamat (*Tehowm* in the Bible) into two to make the land and sky.]

Genesis: And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas... evening and there was morning, the third day.

4th generation of gods and 4th day of *Genesis* creation:

Enuma Elish: Anu was their heir... (Anu was the god of the sky)

Genesis: God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars... (and set them in the sky dome)... evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

5th generation of gods and 5th day of *Genesis* creation:

Enuma Elish: He who begot him (Marduk) was Ea... [Ea was the god of all things of the Earth and also of cantations; when he speaks, things are made; God (*Elohim*) makes things by speaking.]

Genesis: So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good... evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

6th generation of gods and 6th day of Genesis creation:

Enuma Elish: In the heart of holy Apsu was Marduk created. He who begot him was Ea, his father... [Marduk became king of the Gods and creator of man.] Blood I will mass and cause bones to be... I will establish a savage, ‘man’ shall be his name. Truly, savage-man I will create. He shall be charged with the service of the gods That they might be at ease! [Parallel this with God... resting after creating man.]

Genesis: Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image...” evening and there was morning, the sixth day... And on the seventh day, God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.

So, Marduk made man a slave so the gods could rest; after God (*Elohim*) makes man he rests on the seventh day.

A summary of similar ideas appears in a Wikipedia article:¹⁶

In both *Enûma Eliš* and Genesis the primordial world is formless and empty (the [Hebrew] *tohu wa bohu* of Genesis 1:2), the only existing thing [being] the watery abyss which exists prior to creation (the god of Tiamat in the *Enûma Eliš*, *tāhôm*, the “deep”, a linguistic cognate of *tiamat*). In both, the firmament, conceived as a solid inverted bowl, is created in the midst of the primeval waters to separate the sky or heights from the earth (Genesis 1:6–7, *Enûma Eliš* 4:137–40). Day and night precede the creation of the luminous bodies (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, and 14ff.; *Enûma Eliš* 1:38), whose function is to yield light and regulate time (Gen. 1:14; *Enûma Eliš* 5:12–13). In *Enûma Eliš*, the gods consult before creating man (6:4), while Genesis has: **Let us make man in our own image...** (Genesis 1:26) – and in both, the creation of man is followed by divine rest.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Gen:1,1)

When Skies above (heaven) were not yet named, Nor earth below pronounced by name... (*Enuma Elish*, Tablet 1)

The ordering of the universe by the command of the creator god is a basic theme in both the Babylonian and Biblical accounts.

And God said: “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. (Gen:1, 14-15)

He Fashioned stands for the great gods. As for the stars, he set up constellations corresponding to them. He designated the year and marked out its divisions,

¹⁶ At <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panbabylonism>.

apportioned three stars each to twelve months. When he had made plans of the days of the year... (Enuma Elish, Tablet V)

The days of the week and their ritual implications from Genesis 1, 5-2, 3 can be easily compared to the Babylonian myth *The Atrahasis*. This myth which focuses on mankind's creation also describes the evolution of the weekly calendar as prescribed by the creator god Enki. Similar to Genesis the seventh day is seen as the end of the week which consists of six regular days.

Still another summary is available¹⁷ from the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance. The unspecified author of the following summary references the source as H.C. Kee, et al., *The Cambridge Companion to the Bible*, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY (1997), pp. 45 to 46. The first column of this table lists the assumed seven stages of creation, the second column summarizes the speculations that appear in the Bible, and the third column summarizes the speculations in the *Enuma Elish*.

Creator(s) of the universe	A single God, YHVH.	A God battling a Goddess.
Initial state of the earth	Desolate waste; covered in darkness.	Chaos; enveloped in darkness.
First development	Light created.	Light created.
Next development	Firmament created - a rigid dome over the earth separating the earth and heaven.	Firmament created; also perceived as a rigid dome.
Next development	Dry land created.	Dry land created.
Next development	Sun, moon, stars created.	Sun, moon, stars created.
Next development	Creation of men and women.	Creation of men and women.
Final development	God rests and sanctify the Sabbath.	Gods rest and celebrate.

Although I found the above analyses to be interesting, they don't address questions about why and how the *Enuma Elish* myth was concocted. And although I've seen nothing specifically addressing the 'why' question, I expect that the reason why the myth was concocted was to serve as a "foundational myth" for another resurgent priesthood, this time not the Jewish or Persian priesthood, but an Assyrian priesthood!

I won't go into the (complicated!) details, but if you'll dig into the history of the Assyrians,¹⁸ you'll find that, over an amazing long time (from ~2200 to

¹⁷ At http://www.religioustolerance.org/com_geba.htm.

¹⁸ For example, see the Wikipedia article at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria>.

~600 BCE) their fortunes waxed and waned. As a part of Akkadian empire of Sargon the Great (c.2270 – 2215 BCE), the Assyrians started as a kingdom centered in the city of Assur on the Tigris River in what is now northern Iraq. After the Akkadian Empire collapsed in 2154 BCE, the Assyrians grew in power, later confronting the power that developed in southern Mesopotamia and was centered in Babylon (i.e., the Amorites). During the next thousand years (!) the Assyrians were sometimes ruled by the Babylonian Empire and sometimes ruled Babylon – as well as most of the Middle East, from Egypt to Persia. It was during this period of great power (from 1365–1076 BCE) that the “standard version” of the *Enuma Elish* was written, almost certainly as a priestly production to “justify” claims that their god, Marduk was the most powerful god.

SUMERIAN INFLUENCES

But if the “why” of the *Enuma Elish* was to buttress a new priesthood, the question of “how” remains; i.e., how did the Babylon / Assyrian priests get the notion that the world was created associated with the activities of six generations of gods? Once again, I (of course) don’t know the answer to that question, but knowledgeable historians have sketched links from the creation myth of the *Enuma Elish* back to Sumerian myths recorded in writings at least a thousand years before the date usually assigned to the writing of the quoted version of the *Enuma Elish*.

For example, what follows is a summary of findings by Samuel Noah Kramer published in his 1944 book (revised in 1961) entitled *Sumerian Mythology; A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium BCE*.¹⁹

... the cosmogonic or creation concepts of the Sumerians, evolved to explain the origin of the universe... may be stated as follows:

1. First was the *primeval sea*. Nothing is said of its origin or birth, and it is not unlikely that the Sumerians conceived it as having existed eternally.
2. The *primeval sea* begot the cosmic *mountain* consisting of heaven and earth united.

¹⁹ The book is available online at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/sum/index.htm>.

3. Conceived as gods in human form, *An* (heaven) was the male and *Ki* (earth) was the female. From their union was begotten the air-god *Enlil*.
4. *Enlil*, the air-god, separated heaven from earth, and while his father *An* carried off heaven, *Enlil* himself carried off his mother *Ki*, the earth. The union of *Enlil* and his mother *Ki* – in historical times she is perhaps to be identified with the goddess called variously *Ninmah*, “great queen”, *Ninhursag*, “queen of the (cosmic) mountain”, *Nintu*, “queen who gives birth” – set the stage for the organization of the universe, the creation of man, and the establishment of civilization...

Turning to the organization of the earth, we learn that it was *Enlil*, the air-god, who “caused the good day to come forth”; who set his mind to “bring forth seed from the earth” and to establish the *hegal*, that is, plenty, abundance, and prosperity in the land. It was this same *Enlil* who fashioned the pickax and probably the plow as prototypes of the agricultural implements to be used by man; who appointed *Enten*, the farmer-god, as his steadfast and trustworthy field-worker. On the other hand, it was the water-god *Enki* who begot *Uttu*, the goddess of plants. It is *Enki*, moreover, who actually organizes the earth, and especially that part of it which includes Sumer and its surrounding neighbors, into a going concern. He decrees the fates of Sumer, Ur, and Meluhha, and appoints the various minor deities to their specific duties. And it is both *Enlil* and *Enki*, that is, both the air-god and the water-god, who send *Labar*, the cattle-god, and *Ashnan*, the grain-goddess, from heaven to earth in order to make abundant its cattle and grain...

The above outline of the organization of the universe is based upon nine Sumerian myths whose contents we now have wholly or in large part. Two of these involve the moon-god *Nanna*; they are: *Enlil and Ninlil – the Begetting of Nanna* [and] *The Journey of Nanna to Nippur*. The remaining seven are of prime importance for the Sumerian concepts of the origin and establishment of culture and civilization on earth. These are *Emesh and Enten: Enlil Chooses the Farmer-god*; *The Creation of the Pickax*; *Cattle and Grain*; *Enki and Ninhursag: the Affairs of the Water-god*; *Enki and Sumer: the Organization of the Earth and its Cultural Processes*; *Enki and Eridu: the Journey of the Water-god to Nippur*; *Inanna and Enki: the Transfer of the Arts of Civilization from Eridu to Erech*.

In later chapters (both in this “excursion” **Ix** and in **Yx**), I’ll review some of the above-mentioned Sumerian myths (as well as other Sumerian literature), but I don’t want to do it now, in part because I’m worried that the details will overwhelm you – assuming that you’re not already overwhelmed by the details I’ve already reviewed!

And if you’re not so overwhelmed, then I’ll add: the reason given in the *Enuma Elish* for why the old gods decided to kill the young gods (namely, because they made too much noise) was the same reason described in a Sumerian flood-myth for why the gods decided to eliminate humans in a

* Go to other chapters via

flood, i.e., because they made too much noise. By the way, this Sumerian flood-myth (which I'll review in a later **Ix** chapter) became the Bible's flood-myth, with the name of the main mythical character changed to Noah and with a sound moral principle mangled into nonsense about fearing God and obeying "his" laws.

But such details aside for now, Dear, I hope that, as a minimum from the above, you're beginning to appreciate the difficulties historians have in trying to trace and understand the origins of specific myths, such as the first genesis myth in the Bible. In such studies, the importance of the Sumerian myths was well summarized by Kramer, in his Chapter entitled "The Scope and Significance" of the same book as quoted above:

...it is a known fact that in the long stretch of time between approximately 3500 and 2000 BCE, it was the Sumerians who represented the dominant cultural group of the entire Near East. It was the Sumerians who developed and probably invented the cuneiform system of writing; who developed a well integrated pantheon together with spiritual and religious concepts which influenced profoundly all the peoples of the Near East; who, finally, created and developed a literature rich in content and effective in form. Moreover, the following significant fact must be borne in mind. By the end of the third millennium BCE Sumer had already ceased to exist as a political entity and Sumerian had already become a dead language, for by that time Sumer had been overrun and conquered by the Semites, and it is the Semitic Akkadian language which gradually became the living, spoken tongue of the land. Nevertheless Sumerian continued to be used as the literary and religious language of the Semitic conquerors for many centuries to come, like Greek in the Roman period and like Latin in the Middle Ages. Indeed for many centuries the study of the Sumerian language and literature remained the basic pursuit of the scribal schools and intellectual and spiritual centers not only of the Babylonians and Assyrians, but also of the many surrounding peoples such as the Elamites, Hurrians, Hittites, and Canaanites. Obviously, then, both because of their content as well as because of their age, the Sumerian mythological tales and concepts must have penetrated and permeated those of the entire Near East. A knowledge of the Sumerian myths and legends is therefore a prime and basic essential for a proper approach to a scientific study of the mythologies current in the ancient Near East, for it illuminates and clarifies to no small extent the background behind their origin and development.

THE SUMERIANS

Which then leads to the obvious questions: Well, then, if in the creation of their first genesis myth, the Jews used the myths of the Egyptians and Persian, if the Persians / Zoroastrians used the myths of the Assyrians (and Akkadians), and if they all used the myths of the Sumerians, then from

where did the Sumerians get their creation myths and why did the Sumerians bother to record their myths in writing?!

In Sumer, however, is where the road ends – or more appropriately, it’s where the road begins, because it’s where writing began. Further, as you can easily find on the internet, there is the major complication that archaeologists have not yet been able to agree on where the Sumerians came from – or even from which direction they came! Surprisingly, their language was not Indo-European, but an “agglutinative language” and a “language isolate”, with no known connection to other languages (in spite of claims by those apparently wanting to demonstrate links of their nationality to the Sumerians).²⁰

What is clear is that the Sumerians developed an amazing society – and it was amazingly durable: it continued for more than 2,000 years – and their influence continues to this day! No doubt the Sumerians had a long tradition of conveying myths orally, and maybe some of these myths came from other groups, but again, no written records are available. Nonetheless, the following seem to be reasonable speculations about why and how the Sumerians concocted and recorded their myths.

- An obvious reason why the Sumerians wrote their myths is because, for the first time in history, they could! That ordinary Sumerians were fascinated (even amazed) at the ability to transmit ideas to clay tablets and then “have the tablets speak” (!) can be seen in one of humanity’s oldest written records: a ~5,000-year-old record (which I’ll review in detail in a chapter in the **Yx** “excursion”, specifically, in **Yx14**) of a Sumerian father’s advice to his son. This *Instructions to Zi-ud-sura (or Ziusudra) from his father Curuppag (or Shuruppak), son of Ubara-Tutu (or UbarTutu)*, is especially interesting not only because it basically contains the Bible’s “Ten Commandments” (and more!), which were claimed to be written by Moses (about 2,000 years later!) but also because the son (Ziusudra) survived a flood by building a barge, who in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (to be reviewed in a later chapter in this **Ix** “excursion”) is called Utanapishtam and who in the Bible is called Noah!
- Another compelling reason for the Sumerians to record their myths in writing was almost certainly that such ideas weren’t considered to be myths! Instead, what we derisively describe as ‘myths’ were, to them, “best available science” describing how the world and people came into existence. Therefore, the Sumerians wanted this “knowledge” transmitted to their descendants accurately, not manipulated by the whims of “uneducated” storytellers. In his referenced book, Kramer again summarizes it well:

²⁰ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumerian_language.

It cannot be sufficiently stressed that the Sumerian cosmogonic concepts, early as they are, are by no means primitive. They reflect the mature thought and reason of the thinking Sumerian as he contemplated the forces of nature and the character of his own existence. When these concepts are analyzed, when the theological cloak and polytheistic trappings are removed (although this is by no means always possible at present because of the limited character of our material as well as of our understanding and interpretation of its contents), the Sumerian creation concepts indicate a keenly observing mentality as well as an ability to draw and formulate pertinent conclusions from the data observed. Thus rationally expressed, the Sumerian cosmogonic concepts may be summarized as follows:

1. First was the primeval sea; it is not unlikely that it was conceived by the Sumerian as eternal and uncreated.
2. The primeval sea engendered a united heaven and earth.
3. Heaven and earth were conceived as solid elements. Between them, however, and from them, came the gaseous element air, whose main characteristic is that of expansion. Heaven and earth were thus separated by the expanding element air.
4. Air, being lighter and far less dense than either heaven or earth, succeeded in producing the moon, which may have been conceived by the Sumerians as made of the same stuff as air. The sun was conceived as born of the moon; that is, it emanated and developed from the moon just as the latter emanated and developed from air.
5. After heaven and earth had been separated, plant, animal, and human life became possible on earth; all life seems to have been conceived as resulting from a union of air, earth, and water; the sun, too, was probably involved. Unfortunately in this matter of production and reproduction of plant and animal life on earth, our extant material is very difficult to penetrate.

It's easy to agree with Kramer that, for their time, the ideas of the Sumerians were "by no means primitive". Further, there's no doubt that the Sumerians were intelligent and inventive: they improved irrigation techniques, quite likely they invented the wheel, they constructed barges for the rivers and sailing ships for the seas, they developed storage and trade of agriculture products and traded with other groups (probably as distant as Egypt and India), they developed other professions (including metallurgy, likely starting "the Bronze Age"), not to forget their invention of writing (and their discoveries in math and astronomy).

Consequently, not only would it be unsurprising if the ideas in their myths (about how the world and people were "created") were their own creations but also, it would be unsurprising if their best students were required to read and write such myths as part of an "advanced curriculum in science"! Meanwhile, of course the sad part of it

all is that, today, children of religious fundamentalists (better described as children of nincompoops) in the Bible Belt of America (and in Utah), in Central and South America, and essentially throughout “the Muslim world” are still indoctrinated in the preposterous notion that such silly myths still represent “the best available science”!

- Still other reasons for Sumerians to record their myths in writing were advantages perceived by “power mongers”. That is, not only were “commoners” apparently impressed with the ability to preserve their thoughts (including their advice to their children) and not only did Sumerian “intellectuals” apparently consider it wise to produce written records of “best available scientific knowledge” (viz., Sumerian myths!) and to have students learn to read and write these myths, but powerful people also apparently concluded that this newfangled technology called ‘writing’ was capable of extending their powers. That is, once again (as with the use of spears, guns, and electronics), those in power saw how to use technology to control the masses! An example is the following brazen claim by the Sumerian King Shulgi who in about 2,100 BCE wrote (or had his scribe write):²¹

Now, I swear by the sun god Utu on this very day – and my younger brothers shall be witness of it in foreign lands where the sons of Sumer are not known, where people do not have the use of paved roads, where they have no access to the written word – that I, the firstborn son, am a fashioner of words, a composer of songs, a composer of words, and that they will recite my songs as heavenly writings, and that they will bow down before my words...

Of course, those who profited most from writing (besides those involved in honest economics) were the Sumerian clerics. That is, it was the Sumerian priests who apparently made the most convincing arguments that theirs were “heavenly writings” and thereby managed to get commoners to “bow down before [the clerics’] words.” The clerics therefore had student scribes preserve their culture’s myths in writing, myths that made it clear that the purpose of the people was to serve the gods – and the clerics just happened to be the collection agents for the gods! It’s known that the Sumerian priests became rich and powerful in the process, since their excesses resulted in the world’s first known civil revolution, in about 2400 BCC, led by Urukagina. Unfortunately, as I’ll show you in a later chapter (in **Yx**), Urukagina’s revolution was only partially successful.

Similar productions (freezing myopic myths in writing) of course have been the *sine qua non* of essentially all priesthoods (or clerical hierarchies), be they Egyptian, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Mormon, or whatever

²¹ Available at “The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature” of the University of Oxford at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/index1.htm>, where translations of approximately 50,000 lines of Sumerian text are available.

other perversion of reality has managed to provide clerical parasites with power and prestige. Thus, I suspect that even King Shulgi couldn't imagine what happened, after clerics became involved in "composing" their "heavenly writings": currently, more than two billion people in the world (counting essentially all Muslims, most Hindus, and a large fraction of all Christians – not to dwell on minor sects such as Mormonism) "bow before [the clerics'] words", as if their clerics' "holy books" were "answer books" that contained something other than complicated ways of clueless clerics to say "I dunno"!

For each clerical group (for each religion), details of how their myths were concocted and recorded were, of course, different. In later chapters, I'll provide you with examples in the case of Mormonism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. As an exceedingly brief (and therefore incomplete) illustration for the case of Judaism, consider the following plausible scenario for how the first genesis myth in the Bible was concocted.

Thus, Dear, imagine some Hebrew cleric (ordered to generate a "new and revised" genesis myth by his superiors, who in turn were ordered by their Persian superiors, when the Jews were in Babylon, to convert the old Jewish religion into the "true religion" of the Persians) pouring over the Egyptian text "In the beginning...", referring to the Assyrian *Enuma Elish* (which in turn was derived from Sumerian creation myths), and then checking his Persian text for what allegedly occurred during the six "periods", deciding each period was a day, and then "away he went", composing the Bible's first genesis myth. Such is the wonder of how "God's holy word" might have been communicated to the world – and how 2500 years later, certain grandchildren became indoctrinated with such nonsense!

Most unfortunately, the resulting strengthening of religions through writing (providing them with "holy books" or "sacred scripture") has caused humanity enormous harm. In contrast (as mentioned at the start of this chapter), the truly "old-time religions" relied on fluid, ever-changing myths, resulting in each such religion being held "loosely". It had to be, since no one could be certain of "the orthodox truth"! Unfortunately for humanity, when the myths were "frozen" (in writing) and clerics "solidified" the "truths" of the official, orthodox versions of their religions, people were then required to be "up-tight" about their religions, as are all "fundamentalists" (of any religion) to this day.

* Go to other chapters *via*

LOOKING BACK – AND FORWARD

In prior chapters in this “excursion”, I suggested that myths were concocted by our primitive ancestors to try to “answer” various questions that perplexed ancient people: Why can’t animals talk? Why is the mountain erupting? What is thunder? What causes floods? What are the stars? Where did people come from? Why do people die? What happens when we die? And so on. Such questions were common in all cultures, and in every case, some imaginative storyteller concocted “answers” in the form of myths. Thus, originally, our ancient ancestors observed various effects, speculated on the causes (i.e., various gods), and then made up stories about how the observed effects were linked to the assumed causes.

Thereby, although no myth was ever more than a round-about way of saying “I dunno”, yet for generation after generation, at least these myths were “fluid”, even “alive”. That is, when myths were communicated only orally, each generation of myth tellers could modify the myths as seemed appropriate: if the myths didn’t stimulate the audience, the myth maker could modify them; if the tribe experienced something new (a flood, an earthquake, a volcanic eruption, a forest fire, whatever), then the next generation of storytellers could suitably modify the old myths – or create new ones. The myth maker was therefore always challenged: to remind the tribe of its traditions, while keeping the myths entertaining and current.

In my generation, Walt Disney was one such myth maker. In your generation, Dear, many such myth makers work for the Disney Company, but others draw comic strips for newspaper, create popular music, write novels, etc. And now that I think about it, something is rather strange: when you were “a kid”, you watched at least 3 cartoons on TV per day, at least 1,000 cartoons per year, and therefore, I suspect, you’ve watched more than 5,000 cartoons during your life. In cartoons (which are just modern myths unpolluted by power-grabbing con-artist clerics) the strangest things happen: animals talk, boats fly in the air, gravity can be temporarily suspended, and so on. In response to such cartoons, you’ve at least smiled at their silliness; in many cases, you’ve laughed at their foolishness; in not even a single case, I’m sure, have you ever “believed” that one of these myths were “true”!

Unfortunately, however, ever since you were a baby you’ve been indoctrinated with the idea that the ancient “cartoons” (i.e., myths) described

in your “holy book” are “true”: your parents told you that their myths were “true”, the myths were always described by adults in your church with substantial pomp, ceremony, and seriousness, and you were even told that you’d be punished terribly, in Hell, for eternity, if you don’t believe them. Well, Dear, it just “ain’t so”: all the stories in all “holy books” are just silly stories (TV cartoons without TV and without pictures!) perpetuated by clerics to try to control gullible people. And worse, the goal of all cartoons in all “holy books” isn’t to entertain but to entrap: enormously intricate and contrived ways to indoctrinate innocent children with different ways that a bunch of dumb clerics said “I dunno” – so that, when you grow up, you’ll pay to carry the carcasses of another generation of useless clerics!

But in spite of that astoundingly sad situation, I have no doubt that, in the long run, freezing of myths caused by the invention of writing will lead to the demise of all organized religions. And with that thought, I smile at how much damage technology has already done to all religions. Here, by ‘technology’, I don’t mean (for example) technology associated with modern electronic communications (e.g. the internet) but the technology associated with the printing press! Thus, once the world’s “holy books” became widely available, more than two billion of us were finally able to see all the nonsense they contain and become “nonbelievers” (in their balderdash)! Now, with the internet, if we can manage to spread the word to others (especially to the approximately two billion people still hooked on their “holy books”), then finally we can rid humanity of the clueless – but conniving – parasitic clerics of the world.

But that’s enough (too much?) for now – save for my request for you to do a “reading assignment”. Dear: Would you please get one of your Dad’s copies of the Bible and read the *Book of Genesis* through Chapter 9 (through to the end of the story about Noah and the Flood). You have been told these stories since you were a baby; now, please read them quietly and carefully for yourself. In the next chapter, I plan to make some comment on this “reading assignment” – but of course that doesn’t preclude your own questioning of what you read! For example, what do you think about the Bible’s “explanation” for rainbows, compared with Marduk’s? Further, what do you think about having an omniscient, omnipotent god controlling this world – who’s so absent-minded that he needs to tie a rainbow around his finger (or whatever appendage) to remind himself not to flood the place again?! What stupendous silliness is behind such myths!