PRISM

A publication of the Division of Humanities • Pacific Lutheran University • Spring 2001 • Volume XIV

Creation, Evolution, and the Meaning of Life

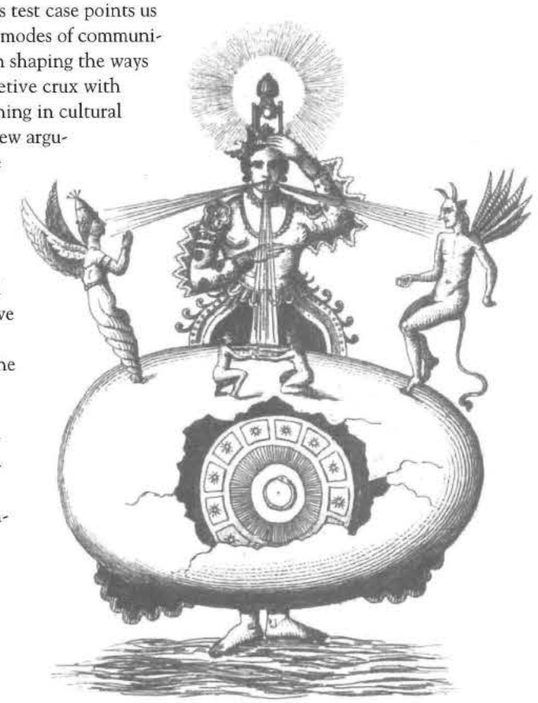
Creation and Chaos: Then and Now

by John Petersen

HOW CAN WE READ A BIBLICAL TEXT TELLING THE STORY OF CREATION? ANCIENT ISRAELITE REFLECTIONS ON THE meaning of creation posed problems that continue to stir up controversy for new generations of readers. Whether we look at the ancient issue of creation vs. chaos or the modern chaos of creation vs. evolution, the bewildered interpreter may easily wonder if there is any way out of the mess. The very topic has probably spawned more ancient myths of origins and generated more modern religious divisions than any another religious topic in history. The majestic opening lines of the Bible thus present the modern interpreter with a major test case for reading and interpreting.

With over a century of hostile exchanges over the meaning of the first lines of the Hebrew Bible, ranging from outright dismissal as obsolete and irrelevant to literal acceptance of word-for-word historicity, contemporary discussion has often been dominated by strident statements at the extreme ends of the interpretive spectrum. Careful reading discloses that the colorful allusions and accounts of creation in the Bible avoid the scientific issues in the modern creation vs. evolution controversy and its debate about how the world came into being, a finding that is disheartening to some. However, others find it reassuring that the ancient writers were concerned with more pressing religious and ethical matters.

Although fraught with argument and dispute in modern times, this test case points us back to the ancient texts themselves. Through their powerful imagery, modes of communication, and dynamic values the texts themselves have a crucial voice in shaping the ways to construct meaning and sense. The topic of creation poses an interpretive crux with several layers to unpack: how to read ancient texts, how to derive meaning in cultural and literary context, how to sort out the differences between old and new arguments, how to find a worthy frame of interpretation, and how to derive old religious values in a way that is meaningful to later cultures.



The first step in our interpretive process involves returning to the world of the ancient Near East, to consider creation in its early cultural and literary context and to hear ancient writers speak through their own words. Divesting ourselves for a while of some of the cultural trappings of our technological sophistication and scientific questions, we attempt to let old texts and writers speak through their own words and thought forms to probe some of the mysteries of life. Lacking some of the presumption of modern dogmatists who feel confident in stating just how, when, and why God acted, these gifted writers responded with awe and admiration for the marvels of the universe and expressed their wonder when they discussed creation. We leave the battlefield of interpretive controversy over modern scientific arguments and join ancient cultures on a different and more basic battlefield, the search for a meaningful world in which to live and for meaningful human life in that world.

continued on page 3

Contents

A Word from the Editor

In January of 2001 the distinguished philosopher of science Michael Ruse visited Pacific Lutheran University. In addition to visiting with students and faculty, Ruse delivered a lecture on the subject of his recent book *Can A Darwinian Be A Christian? The Relationship Between Science and Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 2001). In his lecture Ruse, an agnostic, argued that Darwinism and Christianity are compatible, but that the compatibility is not simple. It is not always easy for a Christian to be a Darwinian, and vice versa. Difficult problems exist that might lead a Christian to reject modern science, or a Darwinian to reject Christianity. For example, how is one to reconcile the extraordinary amount of pain that is present in nature with the idea of a loving God? And how is the Augustinian idea of an immortal soul that exists as a distinct substance separate from the body to be reconciled with contemporary neuroscience? These are provocative questions, and they are at the core of humanistic studies. Reflection on such questions lead the *Prism* editorial board to select the theme of "Creation, Evolution, and the Meaning of Life" for the current issue.

The contributors to this year's *Prism* bring their training, reflection, and experience to life with clarity and passion in a set of distinct contributions. John Petersen explores the meaning, value, and contemporary relevance of Hebrew creation myths. As Petersen notes, these myths continue to "confound and amaze" while providing insight regarding questions of meaning and purpose. Keith Cooper challenges the pedagogical value of staged "creation vs. evolution" debates orchestrated by adherents of "creationism." He argues that such debates lend themselves to a facile understanding of complex issues regarding the relationship between science and religion and between reason and faith. As Cooper reminds us, a liberal education worth receiving is one that involves respectful dialogue across disciplinary boundaries. Finally, Claudia Nadine provides us with a welcome reminder of the diversity and richness of the world's creation myths. Focusing on the cultural and religious traditions of West Africa, Nadine explores a cyclical and ongoing conception of creation in which this world and the realm of the dead remain in fluid communication. She challenges us to consider the implications of such a view for our own conceptions of meaning and value.

Each of these essays is provocative in its own way. We invite you to engage the questions they raise on your own terms. If you find yourself discussing these ideas with friends and colleagues, then our efforts will have been worthwhile.

Denis Arnold for the Prism *Board*

From the Dean:

If one were to look for overarching themes that have served as a common thread throughout centuries of university life, the topic we now label "science and religion" would assume a prominent role. Tug on that thread and a number of disciplines begin to vibrate; moreover, it hints as the sort of interdisciplinary connections that are of special interest at PLU today.

There have been several approaches to higher education since, and including, Plato's Academy, but modern universities trace their heritage mainly to the Church-sponsored universities of medieval Europe. There the relationship between *fides* and *scientia* was of central concern, leading both to the complex integration of secular learning and Christian theology of Thomas Aquinas and to the emergence of a skeptical counterpoint that contributed to the development of modern science. (Aquinas, by the way, had a view of the compatibility of faith and reason that would assist greatly in the brouhaha among Christians of various stripes about creation and evolution. One historian of

continued on page 9

Creation and Chaos: Then and Now (continued from page 1)

Early myths from Egypt and Mesopotamia probed the mystery of cosmic and human origins by demonstrating that creation was not just a past act, but a dynamic power that continued to influence their lives. For the writers of these myths the method of creation was not important, but the continuing power of the god(s) who created the world was awesome. So dominant was the creator god for them, that after battling watery gods of chaos, and acting through masturbation, thinking, or speech (just a few of many suggested modes of creation), this deity came to rule the world. And because this creator ruled as king, he determined the destiny of people and became the main god for people to worship. These myths not only told fascinating tales to recite at the campfires, they also articulated ancient beliefs about how the world operated.

Throughout their history the Israelites recognized the compelling influence and appeal of the surrounding cultures, including the powerful imagery of their creation myths. Their acquaintance with these people and their tales of origin was not coincidental, for the Israelites came from Mesopotamia, spent some hundreds of years in Egypt, and then settled in Canaan. Their journeys before finally settling down and becoming a nation gave them intimate, day-to-day contact with these three geographic areas of the ancient Near East, along with their cultures, myths, and accounts of creation. However, their traditions proclaimed that their own God was known through a series of redeeming actions in their history. Their national story began with the call of an old Amorite couple and continued with the adventures of that family. Through the deliverance from slavery in Egypt, acceptance of a way of life and relationship with this God at Sinai, and occupation of a territory for living in southern Canaan, they experienced the activity of a powerful God who considered them important and worked with them through the events of their history.

But what about creation and a creator god? What did their God of history have to do with creation? And what did the old myths of origins have to do with their national story? Creation and redemption are separate theological topics today, the first describing the divine relationship with the world and the second presenting the divine relationship with people throughout history. The Israelites discussed their experience of the second relationship; but they had no experience of the first, making it a unique topic for theological reflection. One of the major dilemmas and tasks for the ancient Israelites evidently was how to relate the role of their historical God of deliverance to the old myths of creation, or vice versa. And in struggling to relate these two traditions they joined their mythic forbears in probing the mysteries of life in their world. Admitting for now the gap between the myths of origin and the historical stories of this one people, to which we shall return, let us consider the Israelite accounts of creation in their cultural context. Some of the similarities and differences between these accounts and the myths of surrounding cultures actually suggest ways in which creations stories link up and provide a theological basis for introducing their own national story.

Creation and redemption are separate theological topics today, the first describing the divine relationship with the world and the second presenting the divine relationship with people throughout history.

The power of creation and its related mysteries for the Israelites become apparent in the many texts that tell the story or allude to its significance. The manifold ways of entering the creation discussion reveal the richness of Israelite thinking and the power of the topic for them. Three of their major models of creation deserve some elaboration, the first in Job, the Psalms, and elsewhere; the second in Genesis 1:1-2:4a; the third in Genesis 2:4b-3:24.

Ancient Israelite writers most commonly talked about creation in terms and imagery similar to those of the Mesopotamian creation myths. In the first model they retold the familiar, dramatic battle of God with the watery dragons of chaos (Psalms 74:12-17; 89:8-13; Job 26:7-13; and many more passages), recalling the battle of Marduk with Tiamat and her host of serpents. Both sets of texts, biblical and Babylonian, portray the threat of the powers of chaos, showing that only a powerful god of creation could overcome the watery challenge and create the world. The setting of the biblical accounts returns to the primordial waters; the style is the poetry of myths; and the characters are God and the watery dragons of chaos. These mythic fragments even recount the two-act drama of creation: (1) God's stunning victory over the serpents, and (2) the initial stages of laying out major structures of the universe, thereby capturing all the energy and raw power of the Mesopotamian myth. The creative actions lay out a few paired

structures of life: springs and torrents, day and night, luminaries and sun, and summer and winter.

In the well-known second model, the 7-day story in Genesis 1:1-2:4a, a rich liturgical tradition offers a hymn of praise that elaborates the careful planning and execution of a step-by-step progression leading to the population of the cosmos, in a slightly more detailed structure. Two parallel three-day sequences complete the task: (1) light, dome separating air from water, and land and vegetation—laying out the background elements, and (2) lights, birds and fish, and animals and fish populating the three areas of background. The setting is similar to the mythic fragments; however, the waters are inert and powerless. The style is poetic free verse (somewhat hymnic), and there is only one active character, the creative Lord, joined in stages by all the creatures that come into being (including the sea monsters, which are created). In this new version, everything in the world receives a meaningful place in the overall structure.

The paradise story of Genesis 2:4b-3:24 constitutes a third model which similarly includes mythic references: to the idyllic garden, the rivers of paradise, the tree of life, and the serpent with its appeal for immortality. The setting is a beautiful garden, perhaps more a quality of living than a location, for the Garden of Eden translates as a garden of delight, portraying harmonious and caring relations between all those present. The style is story form, and the characters are the artistic creator and the personally sculpted human creatures, along with the rivers, animals, and flora that populate the garden. In a beautiful, primeval setting people live peaceably and relate openly.

These Israelite versions of creation pick up mythic language and imagery to enhance the power of their story, but in the new ethnic context they serve a new purpose. The writers transform the changing mythological terms and themes, sequences of creative acts, genres and styles, and images of divine power, and portray a new reality. They transform the old battle language with new visions of divine power and creativity. The mythic fragments in the Psalms and elsewhere begin the break with the old myths. The battle was never in doubt, the Israelite God swept the battlefield and proceeded immediately to the main task at hand, beginning the creative process. The challenging waters of chaos were rechanneled for useful purposes, never again to challenge the creative power of God. Further, if there were such a battle before the creation of the world (should anyone decide to take such a story literally) only the Lord their God had the power to pull off such a glorious victory. For there was only one God and one creator.

Even though mythic imagery fills the background of the six creative days in Genesis 1, the poets break the power of the old myths. Tiamat (Hebrew "tehom," English "deep") and the pre-existing waters of the old Babylonian myth appear as the primordial backdrop before God begins to create (Genesis 1:2, 6-7), as do the feared Mesopotamian sea monsters (Genesis 1:21). But they are not divine, serving only as part of the stage setting for the dramatic display of divine creativity. There is only one creator. This God acts on the watery deep of Genesis 1 through the effortless creativity of divine speech to plan and carry out a series of dramatic acts climaxing in the first men and women, similar to God. In the second account in Genesis God artistically forms the pre-existing earth into a freely sculpted creature and breathes in life to create a person. From then on the continuing story of Genesis 2 and 3 portrays a caring God intimately involved with the fortunes of the human pair, breaking the old mythic Mesopotamian view of remote, preoccupied deities.

The diversity of biblical versions itself presents interpretive tasks for the modern reader seeking to sort out what the writers and texts were trying to communicate. Why might they have used mythological imagery and language of their day, especially from neighboring cultures, to tell their stories of creation? What place do humans have in these stories? Are they similar to the miserable wretches of the Mesopotamian myth, created from the blood of a rebellious god, Kingu? Or do they have any status as worthwhile beings with some hope for living meaningful lives? And how are later readers from different cultures and time periods to understand these varying accounts? As the literal facts of historical records, as allegories of timeless truths, as parables of religious relationships, or as some other form of communication?

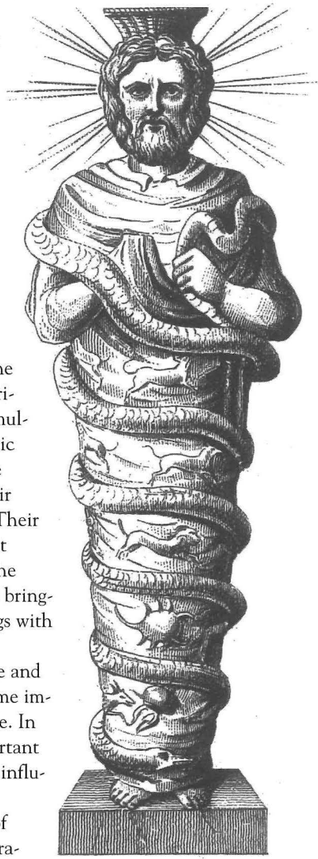
The divergent biblical accounts and manifold images actually suggest important responses to these questions. Since the Israelites knew the gods and myths of their neighbors, the temptation for many was to accept these gods and worship them as the powerful gods of creation and the universe. They were well acquainted with the Canaanite fertility god Baal and his mistress Asherah and often were seduced by the multisensory appeal of the fertility rites. So how would they respond to the religious threats of Marduk and the other well-known mythic gods of creation? The foreign gods and myths presented direct a theological challenge. If they were to avoid speaking of creation, the temptation might be for their people to accept their Lord as God of time and history and Marduk as God of creation and the world, a working dualistic theology that was unacceptable. But by speaking of creation to an Israelite public who knew all the creation myths and images of the creation battle, even with their God as the sole creator, what language could they use?

The Israelite writers ran the theological risk of using a variety of terms and a multitude of images, including the language of the old myths. Beginning with the words of the myths, they boldly declared that their Lord was the God who defeated the dragons of chaos. Appropriating the most authoritative imagery of the ancient world to portray raw power, they declared that only their God could have exercised the raw power necessary to subdue the dragons of chaos. And they declared this again and again, in prose and poetry, in hymns and laments, and in prophecy and wisdom texts. Let no Israelite reader think that any other god could accomplish this herculean task. The muzzling and subjection of the watery dragons of chaos could only be the work of the one God of Israel. But this declaration was only the beginning of their transformation of creation talk in the ancient world.

To probe the mystery further, they piled up additional images and powerful portrayals of the mystery. The verbs in the stories carry the freight of their new message. In the Job and Psalms, God stilled, struck, pierced, divided, broke, crushed the dragons and then cut, dried up, stretched out, spread, established, and fixed in creating the world. In Genesis One God spoke, separated, called, made, set, and "created," a verb uniquely portraying divine activity. In Genesis Two God formed, breathed, planted, grew, and shaped. The images suggest division into basic elements of life: fighting, controlling, designing, structuring, and speaking, as well as fashioning artistically through the redeployment of existing materials, especially in the creation of people. What better way to maneuver through the assorted creation images of the ancient world than to transform the language of the myths into praise of the God of Israel? Whatever status and meaning the old battle with the dragons of chaos had, literal or figurative, actual or symbolic, the witness of the battle became a witness to the holy and awesome power of the God of Israel. The last verse in the Job version (26: 14) preserves some of the reverent distance for the divine wonder:

"These are indeed but the outskirts of the divine ways;
and how small a whisper do we hear of God!
But the thunder of divine power,
who can understand?"

What are the implications of the Israelite choice of language and imagery to discuss the meaning of creation? How do their theological decisions impact the tasks of the modern reader to understand their various accounts of creation? The writers' broad range of language and expression suggests important avenues of reading that indirectly relate to the questions modern readers raise. Their variety of expression in articulating the modes and manners of creation indicate that they did not write or read any of these versions literally. If they were to take any of these creation accounts literally, they probably would have said the battle with the dragons of chaos was closest to what actually happened. They used the battle setting and defeat of the dragons as the one common way of describing creation. But then they would immediately go on to say that such a literal reader is missing the point. The variations in setting, literary style, creative sequence, and theological emphasis permit no mechanical, literal reading or interpretation. The method of creation, the *how*, was not the point of any of the stories; therefore, they felt free to tell of many *how*'s. The point of argument and their affirmation was about the *who*. Their creation talk and texts metaphorically portrayed the story of their Lord; the multitude of verbs and images pictured the poetic artistry and dramatic power of their creative king. And therefore the stories couched their message in the language of awe and praise. Their deity was not a mechanical monster, the first cause of philosophy, or the watchmaker of the deists. This God was an artist designing and bringing into being a meaningful world and beings with lives worth living.



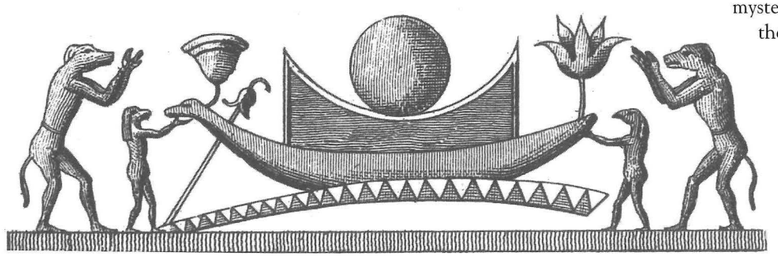
Further, through the figurative language and stories of creation, these writers affirmed some important views of the status and role of people. In Genesis 1 they declare that people are important and worthwhile. In direct contrast with the influential Mesopotamian creation epic, priestly writers affirm in several ways the goodness of people as created. They receive an administra-

tive role in supervising the created world. Being created last, which turns out to be most important in all creation, they appear after all the other structural elements and living creatures have come into being. They are the only ones created in the image and likeness of God, giving them a special relationship and similarity to the God of creation.

However, the depth and genius of Hebraic thought appears in the correlation of Genesis 1 with Genesis 2. In the stories of the garden, we see the earthiness and commonness of people, creatures who come from the earth and return to the earth. They are also creatures who can enjoy the harmony and meaningful relationships of life as it originated or mess up themselves and all their connections with others. Together, these divergent portrayals do not allow people to slip into a simplistic view of human life, one that would say the human life is simply good and blissful or simply a problematic struggle. Rather, both are true. People are important and worthwhile, can accomplish awesome feats, and feel the joy and ecstasy of being alive. But also, people can live as wretches and dregs of creation, act destructively to themselves and others, and feel the pain, sorrow and despair of life. The power of these contrasting realities shows how people experience both sides of life. People know and feel the power and drama of their polarized existence; human living itself poses the questions of who we are and propels the search for meaning and fulfillment. The mystery of creation turns to the mystery of human life, and the biblical accounts probe both mysteries.

For the ancient Israelite poets and writers, the stories of creation were a natural prelude to their national story. In fact, they installed it as the first chapter in their story of God's actions in history to bring about a meaningful life for all people. So rather than merely state that their God acted in their history and leave the creative work to Marduk of the Babylonians or Ptah of the Egyptians, they boldly appropriated some images ascribed to these foreign gods and shaped them by their own revolutionary vision. They declared that the real power behind the creation of the world came from the God of both creation and history. This was the God who intervened in their lives and gave them the opportunity to become a people. In related theological innovations Israelite writers enlivened the drama of deliverance with mythic battle metaphors (Exodus 15:4-13; Psalms 77: 11-20; 89: 6-18; 114; Isaiah 51: 9-11), combined the two planes of divine activity into a seamless sequence of creation and redemption (Psalms 33: 6-19; 93; 136:4-22; Isaiah 44:24-45:13), and employed the imagery of creation to advocate justice and mercy in relations between people (Psalms 19; 33:4-9; 97; 149; Isaiah 40: 21-31; 41: 17-20; 45: 18-24; Job 40:6-41:34; Proverbs 3:19-35; 8: 22-36).

These stories continue to confound and amaze. Although all readers can appreciate the intriguing stories and moving poetic imagery of creation, these ancient texts were not designed to answer all questions of all times. The biblical accounts of creation open up an avenue of reflection and insight beyond the chaos experienced then and now, a world not subject to the chaos of the ancient myths and a language of creation not dominated by the chaos of modern controversy. Our modern questions concerning the actual origins of the universe and the beginnings concerning human life may remain open to scientific exploration and hypothesizing. The *how*'s of our modern inquiry come from a different age and mentality, not resolved by biblical texts written for a different purpose. The old creation myths focused on the operations of the world and the gods that made it work. The biblical reflections on the age-old topic offer new insights on larger questions of meaning and purpose. By transforming the mythic imagery and creating new idioms for discussing the divine role in history, the Israelite poets proclaimed a new reality for the people of their day, with implications for later readers. The world is a habitable place. People are worthwhile and important. And people struggle and probe the mystery of their own lives. For the Israelites, the sequel to the magnificent drama of creation and their understanding of the ongoing struggle for meaning continued in their national story.❖



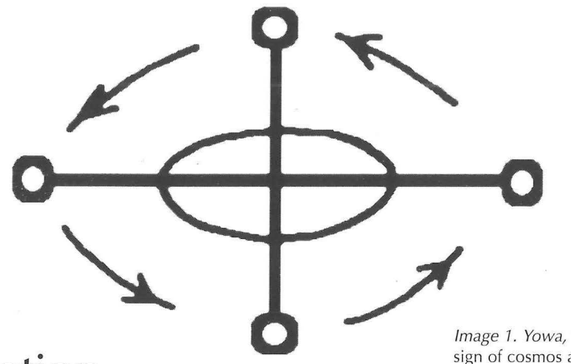


Image 1. Yowa, the Kongo sign of cosmos and the continuity of human life

On West African Creation

by Claudia Nadine

Écoute plus souvent
Les Choses que les Êtres,
La Voix du Feu s'entend,
Entends la Voix de l'Eau.
Écoute dans le Vent
Le Buisson en sanglots:
C'est le Souffle des Ancêtres.[1]

— from "Souffles ("Breaths") by Birago Diop

FOR MOST AMERICANS, WEST AFRICA IS AN ABSTRACTION—ONE POINT OF THE TRIANGULAR slave trade taught in high school history classes. Few have visited the continent's westernmost point off of Senegal, Goree Island, where millions of captured souls disembarked to the "new world."[2] Ironically, given this tragic history, Senegal is famous throughout the continent for its hospitality, *teranga*. In Wolof, an African language spoken by nearly 85% of Senegalese, regardless of ethnicity, the response to *jërë jëf* ["thank you"] is *nokobok* [literally, "we share"].

According to West African cosmological traditions, creation is an ongoing process in which life and death share fluid communication. During community gatherings (e.g., meetings, meals, funerals), the ritual pouring of libation for the ancestors evokes such understanding of the communicability between worlds. Not only does the libation provide symbolic nourishment but also it links the living more directly with the ancestors, invoking their shared presence and power.[3] Such connections further reflect the importance of *la gent* (the group with whom one resides) rather than the individual. Sharing responsibility for each action, the ancestors protect us and we protect them.

In the Kongo[4] cosmogram above, the horizontal axis (conceived as water) represents permeability between *le monde des vivants* [the world of the living] and *le royaume des morts* [the kingdom of the dead]. These respective hemispheres distinguished as *ntoto* ("earth") and *mpemba* ("white clay") are transected by a vertical axis with "Dieu" *le soleil* and Renaissance *la lune* at either pole. The intersecting axes form a crossroads, or literally "turn in the path," between the ancestors and the living.

Conceived like the sun, life "begins" in the east, rises to its apex at noon, sets in the west and then, effectively reflected in the midnight moon, returns to rise again. In other words, life constitutes a cycle, where death signifies merely a transition in this ongoing process "between" two intersected worlds. The kingdom of the dead, called *kalunga*, refers to its being complete (*lunga*) within itself and to the wholeness of a person who understands the ways and powers of both worlds. Life on earth reaches its peak at noon, which is associated with the north and maleness, and continues in the land of spirits through midnight, associated with the south and femaleness. In mirror image to noon, midnight is considered the peak of otherworldly strength.

1. "Listen more often to / Things than Beings, / The Voice of Fire is heard, / Hear the Voice of Water. / Listen in the Wind to / The sobbing Bush: / It's the Breath of the Ancestors" (author's translation).

2. I am grateful to the Fulbright organization and to The University of Alabama for supporting my travel to Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire.

3. The absent living can also be invoked by calling them three times. In the opening of Senegalese novelist Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* (Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1986), the narrator Ramatoulaye invokes her best friend living in the USA: "Aïssatou... Je t'invoque... Amie, amie, amie! Je t'appelle trois fois" (7-8).

4. Kongo refers to the Bantu-speaking peoples of Congo, Zaire, and Northern Angola.

The game of Awalé, which we saw being played especially in Côte d'Ivoire,[5] will provide a succinct illustration of West African cosmos. Generally believed to have been invented by the Egyptians, Awalé—the name given by the Akan ethnic group—developed throughout Africa and Asia under various names. Its longstanding popularity is in part attributed to its educative and recreative value: it teaches problem-solving strategy through complex principles of mathematics. Accordingly, the rules are relatively simple but the game is difficult to master. A provisional analysis will show that it also implicitly teaches about creation and the meaning of life.

The gameboard for Awalé consists of twelve cups carved into a piece of wood and forty-eight *pions* or seedpods initially divided equally among the twelve cups. Two players sit with the board between them and someone arbitrarily begins. (When the game was explained to us, the question of "who starts?" seemed entirely irrelevant—clearly, origins are less important than to a "Westerner." Further, it was clear that Africans learn by watching. The rules were written down and published solely for tourists.) Players can also function in teams, with one person serving to move the pods. The object of the game, in effect, is to capture the greatest number of seedpods from one's opponent. In itself, this objective would not seem much different from checkers; even chess sacrifices pawns or pieces of lesser value in order to "save the king."

But the originality of Awalé lies in the circular movement of board plays and the identity of the game pieces. Although my "territory" is in front of me, I move freely throughout that of my opponent, since each play moves in counterclockwise fashion. Accordingly, what used to be mine becomes my opponent's, and conversely. Since all the *pions* resemble each other, the notion of ownership is dynamic and based on play rather than fixed by color or position on the board. In this way, the players constantly shift sides even while physically positioned on respective "sides" of the board itself. (In chess, an analogy would be something along the lines of capturing pieces, irrespective of black/white ownership.)

In the context of the Kongo cosmogram, the game illustrates the conceptual framework of circularity and community, the focus on *la gent* rather than on the individual self. The spherical seedpods themselves reiterate the cyclical nature of life and death; seeds grow into plants which give seeds, and the process begins anew.[6] The single piece of wood into which the hemispheric cups are carved preserves the integrity of the whole, evoking the interconnected realms of the living and the ancestors. Likewise, the hinge along which the gameboard closes represents the symbolic axis between *ntoto* and *mpemba*. At bottom, players who master the game symbolically master the circular movement (of human souls) between two worlds.

In *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Vintage, 1984), Robert Farris Thompson suggests a related connection between African cosmology and healing. Initiates to the Lemba society of healers stood on a variant of the cosmogram, chalked on the ground, to symbolize their mastery: "'To stand upon this sign,' Fu-Kiau Bunseki tells us, 'meant that a person was fully capable of governing people, that he knew the nature of the world, that he had mastered the meaning of life and death.' He thenceforth could move about with the confidence of a seer, empowered with insights from both worlds, both halves of the cosmogram" (109-10). Among francophone West African *guérisseurs*, such healing power is intimately connected with faith. Religious belief in West Africa, characterized by syncretism, flows through three principal circuits: tradition, Christian, and Islam. Whether the influence is Christian or Muslim, African traditions remain central to daily rituals.

One such ritual is offering a proverb when saying goodbye: "We give you only half the road, so that you will return." We learned this proverb from the Associate Director of the *Institut national de formation sociale* (INFS) [National Institute of Education] in Côte d'Ivoire, a country also known as "the land of immigration." (Unlike the Senegalese, for whom the Wolof language unites the majority of the population, Ivoirians together speak sixty different African languages and so resort to French in order to communicate.) This Ivoirian proverb works because the speaker presumes a round trip; half of the road will get you to your "destination" and the other half, preserved by the speaker, will bring you back. Have we begun to return, or are we, from a Western linear perspective, finding ourselves halfway to an impossible destination?

In the collective repository of the Western world, Africa primarily functions as an image of poverty and disease that assures Westerners of our contrasting wealth and prosperity. As such, Africa remains a feminized, largely mythic "place" in American discourse. Epithets drawn from literature and elsewhere suggest this subordinate yet essential function. Africa is the "cradle of humanity," our Mother continent of origins. "She" is characterized as needing our help, our illumination: Freud named her the "dark continent," while Joseph Conrad's hero explored the "heart of darkness." French writer Arthur Rimbaud's pursuit of the "unknown" eventually led him to give up his short-lived career as a poet-seer and relocate to Africa. But we don't need Africa to validate ourselves; we need Africa to learn that other ways of being, thinking, and expressing one's humanity are valid. Like Africans, we need to honor our ancestors, our *present* past, and recognize the reality of human unity.

In considering our common future, we might wonder if the diversity of human souls can endure in the face of "globalization." Arguably, the term *globalization* describes the gradual spread, from one land or continent to another, of systems, customs, values, languages, and so forth that at first belong to a single, dominant culture. It is essentially hegemonic and assimilative and as such strongly implies, if not requires, a sort of flattening or erasure of difference. When we seek to educate our students, ourselves, about the diversity of the world, are we speaking *for* others, through a dominant discourse of the "best" and "first" nation? When and how do we learn to hear the plurality of voices from Africa? Are academic scholars, irrespective of discipline, also potential colonizers, staking claims on discursive territories? As we consider Africa and diverse "third-worlds" across the globe, how might we share the happiness of these materially impoverished but culturally affluent lands and welcome the rich syncretism of religious traditions? ❖

5. Ivoirians are emphatic about claiming this French name for their country and just as emphatically reject "Ivory Coast"—which the international anglophone media continue to use.

6. Other pions traditionally used in Awalé include cerises de café [fresh (red) coffee beans], the pits of certain fruits, and so forth.

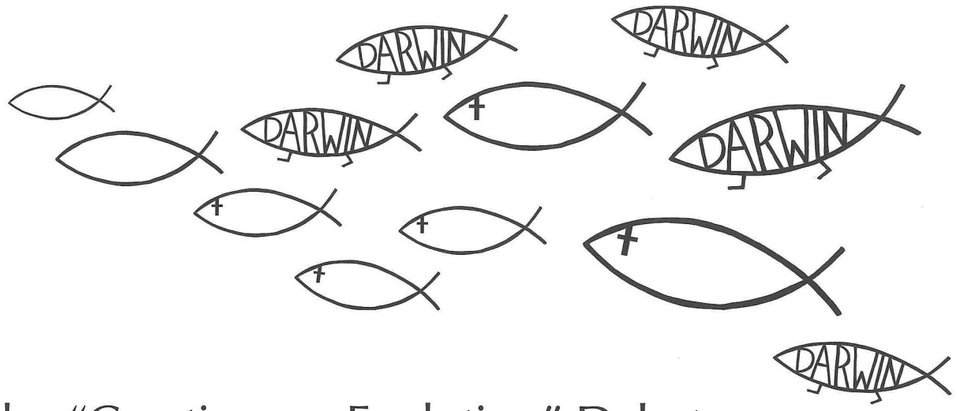
From the Dean, continued from page 2

science has summarized it in this way: "Revelation, properly interpreted, and reason, properly applied, will never conflict.")

Even the Galileo affair, so trumpeted by many as driving a wedge (at last!) between superstition and true learning, could if carefully studied contribute to our thinking about connections between religion and science. A committed churchman, Galileo was caught up in the swirls of Catholic reaction to the Protestant reformation, and the resultant tightening of controls on the interpretation of scripture that moved biblical hermeneutics away from a healthy relationship with the best of human knowledge. He also showed some of the arrogance that is occasionally associated with scientific advances, and for which discussion about religious values can be a partial antidote, thinking that on the basis of limited – and decidedly inconclusive – empirical data, people should jettison the only viable scientific account of how things move (that of Aristotle's physics). Yet his bravery in pursuing novel understandings of creation, and his willingness to think that we had not yet understood the mind of God, serve as examples of how we still must approach the scientific enterprise.

This is the 14th year of *Prism*, and a quick perusal of the mastheads of previous issues shows what a collaborative effort it has been. Nineteen faculty have served on the editorial board, ably assisted by the division's administrative associate (for the past ten years, Susan Young) and with the guidance or, usually, benign neglect of four different deans. *Prism* has served to educate, to inform, to question, occasionally to challenge or frustrate, and always to intrigue. It reveals the intellectual vitality of Humanities faculty, a vitality that has seemed only to increase these past few years, despite the press of other demands on our time. As the division looks forward to the transition to a new dean, with Barbara Temple-Thurston having been selected by her peers to assume that office this summer, permit me to express what a pleasure and a privilege it has been to serve as dean for the last six years. As much as I am glad for term limits, and look forward to returning to the classroom full-time, I will miss some – some! – of the activities associated with this position, including working with talented colleagues on quality projects such as *Prism*.

Keith Cooper, Dean of Humanities



Defusing the "Creation *vs.* Evolution" Debate

Keith J. Cooper

Of the myriad issues contained under the rubric of "science and religion," one of the most contentious in the second half of the twentieth century concerned creation and evolution. As Ronald Numbers recounts in his 1992 book The Creationists, around the middle of the century (largely in response to court decisions about the separation of church and state), Conservative Christians in the U.S began claiming that what they termed "creation science" was on a par scientifically with the theory of evolution and deserved to be taught in public schools alongside evolution. The message was often spread through highly publicized and entertaining "debates" between scientific creationists and science professors.

Probably the most noted creationist writer and debater has been Duane Gish of the Institute for Creation Research. When student leaders invited him back to PLU for a February 24, 2000, debate with Richard McGinnis of the Department of Biology, administrators urged them to include a third speaker. Keith Cooper of the Department of Philosophy was an obvious choice, given his background in philosophy of religion, philosophy of science, theology, and the history of science. What follows is a slightly revised version of his remarks at that event.

SIX DAYS AGO, I WAS ASKED BY THE ASPLU CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR TO PARTICIPATE IN TONIGHT'S EVENT. (That means that tomorrow is the seventh day—and I am definitely going to rest!) I was pleased to have been asked. In April 1998, when Dr. Gish visited our campus for a similar event (in which Dr. McGinnis was also a participant), I was the moderator for that debate. Frankly, I found it just about as unhelpful as I had thought it would be, and was rather dismayed to learn that a repeat performance had been scheduled. So I was glad to accept the offer to complicate tonight's session by providing a third perspective. Important intellectual questions are usually messy, requiring a great deal of care.

Let's begin with a passage from Scripture. (It will be taken out of context, of course, but perhaps there is something fitting about that.) I read from the New Testament book of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 19:11-15.

> And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul . . . . Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits [in order to drive them out] . . . . But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"

I trust the relevance of this passage is obvious. A *third* speaker at a "Creation *vs.* Evolution" debate—a debate where you have just heard speakers defend the two sides of the announced topic? Perhaps we should say with the evil demon, "Creationism I know; and evolution I know; but you, this third guy standing up there, who are you?" I am glad to be here tonight as Door #3 (a better image would be the third leg of the stool, lending stability) because the less this resembles a typical debate, the better.

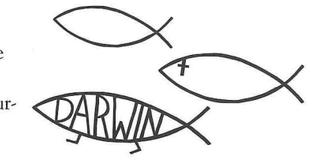
Creationists love the debate format; no doubt there are a variety of reasons for that, some of them quite noble, but there is also a pattern over the years of their mining from tapes and transcripts suggestive or controversial sound bites to use in future debates and in their publications, however misleading or unfair that use may be. There also tend to be extremely experienced speakers from the creationist side, such as Dr. Gish represents tonight, who have mastered a huge amount of material which they fling in the air like radar-jamming confetti deployed against scientists typically inexperienced in the medium of debate and unpracticed in the wide range of sciences explored. If you remember nothing else of what I have to say, I hope you will remember that you attended a "Creation *vs.* Evolution debate" on the PLU campus and someone on the program complained that the very structure of the event was not conducive to generating light rather than heat.

I am not up here, however, to *defend* the third alternative of "theistic evolution." Though it is one I am strongly inclined to hold, at least to a significant extent, I think there are more important things for me to say tonight. I would like to provide some context for understanding what the two previous speakers have been talking about, pointing to crucially important matters that tend to get either ignored, or else glossed over in an egregiously inadequate way. I hope to bring these matters into your line of sight so that you might think about them further in the months and years to come.

I chose to begin with a reading from the Bible because there is an important sense in which religion *is* relevant here, despite the way the topic was worded to focus on the scientific adequacy of two opposing perspectives. There was a shift in creationist tactics in the second half of the twentieth century, from saying scientific data are fully consistent with the creationist view taught in the Bible (and so pose no threat to faith), to saying that those data strongly support creationism – a very significant shift, actually, and so far as I can tell one made for strategic and political reasons and not because of any reassessment of the strength of the evidence for creationism. A central part of what I have to say tonight is that complete isolation of scientific, religious, and philosophical issues is not possible. That is not to say that the standard distinctions between those disciplines collapse, nor is it to claim that evolutionary theory is really religion in sheep's clothing. It's just that our intellectual curiosity about, and scrutiny of, the world around us tie together into large, overarching packages, and so it would be a disservice to those new to the conversation to pretend that the issues are neatly contained.

Half the battle may be taking care with the terms we employ. By "creationism," I will mean the threefold understanding that (a) the earth is relatively young – young enough so that evolution could not have occurred, and perhaps as young as 10,000 years; (b) humans are not descended from other species by the evolutionary process of "descent with modification," a process tracing itself back to the origin of the first simple life forms; and also – though not mentioned by Dr. Gish, it seems to me it must be included – that (c) the geologic column, since it is not the result of geological processes over an immensely long period of time, and the fossil record, since it is not the leftover traces of a gradual development in physiological complexity and variety, must be the result instead of some incredibly powerful catastrophe, perhaps even requiring that not only the environment but the very laws of nature then operating were very different from what they are today . . . you know, some grand catastrophe like a huge flood that inundated the entire earth and nearly destroyed all life.

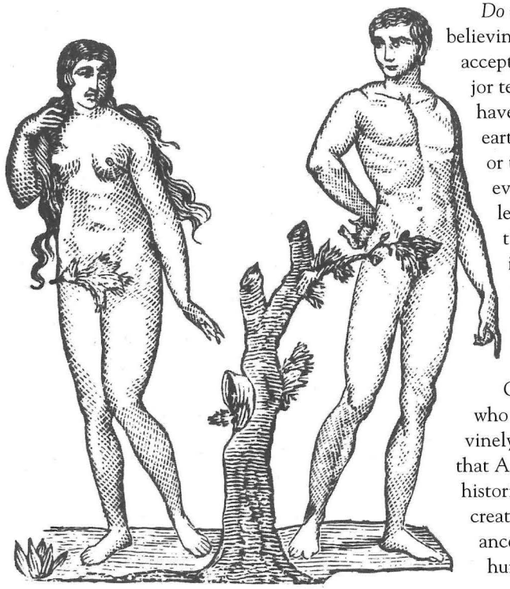
If that is "creationism," then my very **first** point – an extremely straightforward but absolutely essential point – is that "Creation *vs.* Evolution" is a misleading title for a debate. There is creation; there is evolution; and there is creation*ism*. To think that the earth is billions of years old, or that humans are the result of descent with modification from other forms of life, is to reject creationism but not belief in *creation*. The standard logical fallacy known as "false dilemma" involves claiming that there are just two alternatives, and then scaring you off from one option so forcefully that you run straight into the arms of the remaining one without noticing the other choices available. When creationists encourage their listeners, especially Christians uninitiated in the issues and naïve about science, to think that there is a stark and simple choice to be made, they are being either sloppy or disingenuous. And when scientific notables such as the late Carl Sagan intone that, now that we know there are "billions and billions of stars," no thinking person could continue to embrace traditional religion with its superstitious and quaint picture of the universe, *they* are being either sloppy or disingenuous. Neither group has taken seriously the variety of ways, both historically and in recent decades, that persons of faith have thought about the natural world.



Let me put it this way: both groups tend not to *argue for*, but simply to assume, that those fish symbol medallions you see on many cars have it right – that Darwin stands in opposition to traditional Christian faith. (And I can tell you, for what it's worth, that the attempts to argue for that position I know of have been pretty darn bad.) You may remember the one about the graffiti that read: "God is dead, signed Nietzsche"; below which someone had written, "Nietzsche is dead, signed God." There is little that would be more harmful to discussions about creation and evolution than simply to substitute Darwin's name for Nietzsche's.

A **second**, related point is that, although belief in special creation was the dominant position for most of the history of the Christian church (to the extent that people bothered to think about

those things), it simply is not the case that those today who wish to remain as close as possible to the historic Christian faith, or to hold a high view of the inspiration and reliability of the Bible as the Word of God, should automatically adopt the creationist viewpoint. Please note that I am *not* saying that no intellectually respectable Christian could be a creationist in the sense I have described. But allow me to use my own biography for a moment: both the college and the seminary from which I graduated required faculty to sign a statement of faith affirming the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. But my Old Testament professors had no problem with the scholarly consensus that the Genesis flood was local, not global, and were adamant that Genesis 1 does not teach a recent, six-day creation. To my knowledge, none of the science professors at my *alma mater* were young-earth creationists. (They may have been "progressive creationists," who hold that, while evolution accounts for most of the history of life on this planet, God needed to step in from time to time, most notably at the origin of life and in the creation of human beings, to provide something that natural processes could not.) And, in general, I witnessed there an appreciation for mainstream scientific activity and intellectual exploration, not a fear that reason might mislead the faithful, and not a retreat into intellectual or spiritual enclaves where one was protected from dangerous worldly ideas.



Do not think that Bible-believing Christians **must** accept any of the three major tenets of creationism I have identified: a young earth, a universal flood, or the rejection of an evolutionary process leading from fish to reptiles to mammals. That is not a true picture of the conceptual landscape. *Do not think* that those who confess Jesus as Lord, God incarnate, and who see the Bible as divinely inspired, **must** hold that Adam and Eve were historical creatures specially created by God and the ancestors of every other human. That is not a true picture of the conceptual landscape. And *do not think* that scientists are, by virtue of their training, inclined to reject traditional Christianity, or that Christians are best advised to have nothing to do with mainstream science, or that there is an inevitable slippery slope from taking science seriously to adopting an evolutionary viewpoint to giving up the doctrines of God's creation, providential care, or offer of salvation, and then to a disvaluing of human life or a rejection of normative moral values. That also is not a true picture of the conceptual landscape.

If you would like to learn more about the breadth of positions on these issues that have been held by Christians historically, or about non-creationist positions taken seriously today, you might go online and look for the website of the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA), an organization begun in 1941 by evangelical Christians who worked as scientists and who wanted to think carefully about the relationship between their faith and their chosen careers, but who soon found creationism as I have defined it untenable. And there are plenty of good books to consult written by Christians who are not creationists, including some published by evangelical presses such as InterVarsity Press and Eerdmans. (Note that these are books coming from conservative Christian publishers, and often written by scholars teaching at Christian colleges whose faculty are expected to adhere to orthodox Christian doctrines.) One of the unfortunate consequences of so many of these so-called "debates" between creationists and evolutionists is that they encourage those who attend to have the reductionistic and utterly mistaken notion that the options are limited to two starkly-stated extremes.

Let me now switch gears. My **third** point is that creationists have done us a great service by pressing several important points about the nature of science. Here are five:

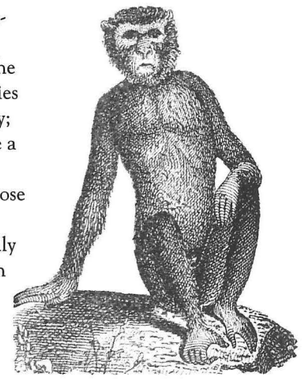
1. Popular conceptions that science provides us with complete certainty are simply mistaken. Any activity that involves "inductive" reasoning will have theories that outrun the evidence; or to put it the other way around, the data will always underdetermine the theory. So long as we are working with a stringent sense of "proof," whereby proving something means providing conclusive and unassailable reasons that definitively rule out all other contenders, scientific activity does not provide proof of anything.

2. Radical changes in scientific understanding have occurred in the past, and we can not rule out similar revolutions in the future. Supposed quacks sometimes become kingpins in science, and claims on the scientific fringe may not properly be dismissed simply for that reason.
3. Strictly speaking, there are theories of origins that empirical science cannot either prove or disprove. Here is a famous example from twentieth-century philosopher Bertrand Russell: what evidence can you bring forth to disprove the claim that the entire universe is just five minutes old? Don't appeal to your memory of having eaten dinner, or to the partially-digested contents of your stomach, let alone to the fossil record or pictures from the Hubble telescope: all that is how things were at the very beginning, just five minutes ago! Whatever good reasons we have to reject that view—and believe me, we *do* have such reasons—our confidence does not arise from just going out and looking around.
4. Scientific practice is not philosophically neutral. One of the most important books published in the last third of the twentieth century was philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which despite its excesses made a convincing case for there being a framework of commitments and beliefs within which normal science operates. (It is Kuhn who's to blame for that horribly overused word, "paradigm.") That is not to say that scientists who hold an evolutionary viewpoint do so solely because of those philosophical influences – to say that would involve a gross misuse of the discussion within contemporary philosophy of science; but opponents of creationism cannot rightly complain that their pure scientific activity has been compromised by non-scientific components.
5. Belief in evolution can, and often has, slid from acceptance of a scientific account of the workings of the physical universe to a larger philosophical, or even religious, commitment to Naturalism. If it is true that all humans have religious impulses toward some object of ultimate concern, then it would not be surprising that many scientists have sought to enlist the results of science for their personal agendas – and good scientists ought to want to watch for such an illicit slide, and to resist that temptation.

Unfortunately, in creationist writings these worthwhile points are often so tangled up with less credible claims about the nature of science that they do not receive the attention they deserve. For example, the mere fact that there are alternatives to standard biological and geological theories which have not been absolutely ruled out by the evidence, not conclusively disproven, provides absolutely no reason at all to think that those alternatives are plausible, let alone as well supported as the mainstream theories and so deserving of inclusion in a public school classroom. High-minded calls for "balanced treatment" and cries of censorship when creation-science theories are not given equal time simply beg the question of whether creationist positions hold any plausibility for those not already committed to a particular reading of the Bible.

> *Now it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an [unbeliver] to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these [scientific] topics.*
>
> —*Augustine*

To take another example, the move from saying that complex scientific theories cannot be directly falsified by empirical observations to saying that science really rests on unprovable faith commitments is misleading at best, and more likely deliberately obtuse. Ronald Reagan once employed an effective campaign tactic in Texas with his remarks that shucks, after all, everyone knows that evolution is *just* a theory. That sort of comment is incredibly misleading. Yes, evolutionary theory is theory – it is not the mere reporting of observable facts; it is not a generalization simply "read off" the evidence; it is not capable of empirical proof if you mean by "proof" ruling out any possibility of being mistaken. But all that is merely to note that evolutionary theory is *theoretical* and *explanatory* in nature, an attempt to explain why things are the way we observe them to be. Explanatory theories about gravity will never be anything but theory; the germ theory of disease is and always will be a theory. None of that speaks to the question of whether there are good reasons for thinking those theories true, and it would be philosophically naïve to make the leap from being less than fully proven to being taken merely on faith. Once in a while creationist accounts of scientific method are careful and interesting, but those are the rare exception. On the whole, it will do little good to try to learn how science works by reading creationists.



Finally, any discussion of creationism needs to confront the relationship of creationist views to specific religious beliefs. I don't have time now to discuss, and reject, the claims commonly made by opponents of creationism that it fails to be science because it is based on the Bible, or because its proponents are motivated by a religious agenda, or because it appeals to a creator. But it *is relevant* that no one in the twentieth century who knew anything about geology would have thought that the earth was just 10,000 years old without having read Genesis. It *is* relevant that no one in the twentieth century who knew anything about the fossil record would have thought that it was the result of a single cataclysmic flood without having read Genesis. And it *is* relevant that no one who took Genesis to be God's Word, and who wanted to fit her scientific commitments to whatever Genesis taught, would have become a creationist without having a particular understanding of how to *interpret* what she read there.

In each of those cases, today's creationists exhibit a historical discontinuity with discussions that have gone on within the Church. Galileo wrote in the early 17th century that "The Scriptures were written to tell us how we go to heaven, not how the heavens go," and the vast majority of educated Christians in the past hundred years have not seen Genesis as teaching either a recent creation, a six-day creation, or a global flood. Christian geologists made their peace with an ancient earth some 200 years ago. The recent creationist movement is just that – recent – *not* a return to the faith of our fathers.

In fact, if you really want to be faithful to the perspective of the early Church fathers, you might consider this passage from St. Augustine in his fifth-century work *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*:

> "Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of the world, about the motion and orbit of the stars and even their size and relative positions, about the predictable eclipses of the sun and moon, the cycles of the years and the seasons, about the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones, and so forth, and this knowledge he holds as certain from reason and experience. Now it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an [unbeliever] to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn" (1.19.39, trans. John Taylor; from D. Lindberg and R. Numbers, *God and Nature*).

Dr. Gish would, of course, vehemently deny that that the view he represents involves vast ignorance, or that *he* is the one "talking nonsense" about the natural world. But there is no question that one significant result of the modern creationist movement is that many unbelievers have laughed with scorn at the foolishness of those silly Christians. For us to be able to focus on the really important questions regarding the relationship between science and religion, between reason and faith, things need to change. Never having another debate of this sort at PLU would be a great start.❖

Recent Humanities Publications

Alicia Batten

"Mithra," "Isis," and "Serapis" in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, David Noel Freedman, et al., eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

Each of these brief articles focuses upon a divine figure central to ancient cultic life. The worship of Isis originated in Egypt, but she became one of the most popular divinities in the Greco-Roman world. Likewise, Mithra, although his origins are complex, became associated with the mystery cult of Mithraism, which was a chief rival to Christianity in the first few centuries of the common era. Serapis also came from Egypt, and reflects the syncretism of the Hellenistic age as he was sometimes represented as Zeus Serapis and acquired healing powers similar to those of Asclepius. With the emergence of Christianity as the religion of the empire, however, the worship of these gods and goddesses virtually disappeared.

Megan Benton

Beauty and the Book: Fine Editions and Cultural Distinction in Modern America (Yale University Press, 2000).

This book is a cultural history of the unparalleled craze in the decade or so that followed the First World War for limited edition, fine books—books that appealed less for their textual content than for the beauty, craftsmanship, extravagance, or status of the edition. The clamor for fine books, I argue, expressed anxieties and desires that resonated with particular force during that pivotal era in American history. For those who mourned that the world was succumbing to cultural "massness," the fine book became an emblem of beleaguered traditional values and the social hierarchies that gave them meaning. Lavishly designed to recreate the look, feel, and spirit of books from past centuries, fine books affirmed a genteel preindustrial ideal, and—through their craft-based forms, classic or "serious" texts, costliness, and emphatically limited edition sizes—they imparted elite social distinction and cultural difference.

Roberta Stringham Brown

"A *Canadien* Bishop in the Ecclesiastical Province of Oregon." *Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Historical Studies*, 66 (2000): 34-55.

Biographical interpretation of A.M.A. Blanchet, Bishop of Walla Walla (1846-1850) and of Nesqually (1850-1879), the original See of the Archdiocese of Seattle, based upon author's translation of correspondence. Addresses how Blanchet's experience as priest in French Canada and involvement in the *Patriote* Revolts of 1837 provided skills for confronting anti-Catholic and anti-Native American sentiments among settlers in the Oregon Country, and eventually for constructing a Catholic presence in the Washington Territory.

"Catholic Ecclesial Presence in the Columbia Region," *Canadian Society of Church History, Historical Papers* (2000): 154-165.

Background of Bishop A.M.A. Blanchet and relations with other francophone Catholics in the Oregon Country, including Oblates of Mary Immaculate and Sisters of Providence.

"Salesian Images of Immanence." In *Salesian Insights*, edited by William C. Marceau. (Bangalore: Indian Institute of Spirituality, 1999): 98-104.

Introductory analysis of texts by baroque mystical writer, St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622). Using the interpretive lens of Gilles Deleuze's *Le Pli*, proposes that the author's textual imagery unfolds from a single, non-dimensional stroke inflecting in labyrinthine fashion upon itself to create allegorical and spiritual levels of meaning.

Tom Campbell

Review of *The Amateur: An Indepenent Life in Letters*, by Wendy Lesser. *Literary Annual* (July 2000): 10-13.

Review of *Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen: Reflections at Sixty and Beyond*, by Larry McMurtry. *Literary Annual* (July 2000): 817-820.

Review of *The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky: Unexpurgated Edition*, ed. Joan Acocella. *MacGill Book Reviews/EBSCO Host* (May 2000).

Patricia O'Connell Killen

"The Geography of a Religious Minority: Roman Catholicism in the Pacific Northwest." *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 18.3 (Summer 2000): 51-72.

Argues that the particular social and cultural ecology of the Pacific Northwest shapes the way individual and institutional religiousness are constructed and maintained and uses examples from the history of Roman Catholicism in the region to describe a regional style of religious practice and institutional operation.

"Writing the Pacific Northwest into Canadian and U.S. Catholic History: Geography, Demographics, and Regional Religion." *Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Historical Studies*, 66 (2000): 91-94.

Argues that a combination of historical factors, biases in the historiography of the religious history of North America, and the peculiar dynamics of religion in the social ecology of the Pacific Northwest account for the absence of attention to the Pacific Northwest in most histories of Catholicism and Christianity in North America.

With Bernard J. Lee, S.M. et al. *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities*. NY: Paulist Press, 2000.

Reports on the largest empirical study of small faith communities in the Roman Catholic Church ever undertaken. Explains the attraction of these groups to various age cohorts, reports on the attitudes and practices of their members on a range of religious and social issues, and suggests ways that small faith communities function as a venue for the formation of Catholic life and practice that bridges mid-twentieth-century ethnic communities to the post-modern world of the twenty-first century.

With Christine Taylor. "The Irish in Washington State." In *The Encyclopedia of the Irish in America*, edited by Michael Glazier. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000: 161-165.

Surveys the history of the Irish in what is today's Washington State and shows how the experience of the Irish here cannot be explained using the dominant interpretive categories of Irish-American history–neighborhood, parish, and union.

"Faithless in Seattle? The WTO Protests," *Religion in the News*, 3.1, (Spring 2000): 12-14.

Analysis of national and international news coverage of the WTO protests in Seattle in November/December 1999. Locates the coverage and the protests in the larger historical and social ecology of religion in the region.

Claudia Nadine

"JE est une phrase: The Subversion of Rimbaud's 'Being Beauteous'" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 42.2 (June 2000): 177-200.

This article analyzes how Rimbaud's prose poem subverts oppositional language itself by presenting a female body as already disintegrated, as is the language it implicitly represents as a signifying system. I argue that, through this disintegrated body, the poem *performs* a displacement of the signifying system of language rather than refers to it. Instead of relying on a reducible symbolic meaning, Rimbaud's prose poetry transforms the sign to an expansive semiotics that privileges the rhythmic and sonorous properties of language. In so doing, it critiques cultural opposition and hierarchy through an alternative logic that operates at the presentational level of the signifier.

"Transforming poetry: the allegory of cultural studies" *French Cultural Studies*, xi (2000): 219-234.

Through a dual analysis of Abel Ferrara's 1995 film *The Addiction* and Baudelaire's poem "Les Métamorphoses du vampire" I seek to demonstrate how poetry is the body through which the quotidian is realized. In juxtaposing poetry and philosophy, through the figure of the vampire, my analysis suggests a model for pedagogical change in structures of social power, as represented by the academic institution, which might rejuvenate subjects and students of culture. It illustrates a shift away from a paradigm of mastery and toward subversive process, a shift consonant with learner-centered approaches.

Douglas E. Oakman

"Galilee." *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, David Noel Freedman et al., eds. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000.

PRISM

Contributors

Prism is also on-line. Visit *http://www.plu.edu/~prism*

Prism, the Humanities magazine at Pacific Lutheran University, expresses the scholarly viewpoints or deliberations of Humanities faculty, and occasionally others by invitation, while also announcing publications and achievements within the division.

Recent Humanities Publications

This article examines the prehistory, historical geography, and recent scholarly discussion of that small Palestinian region of great importance in the emergence of early Judaism and Christianity.

"Economics of Palestine." *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Craig Evans and Stanley Porter, eds. InterVarsity Press, 2000.

This article treats the subject in four parts: 1) Palestine as a Region of Mediterranean Adaptation, 2) Agrarian Society and the Bible, 3) Economics and Jesus, 4) Economics and the New Testament. Economies of the biblical periods were always political-i.e., controlled by and benefiting small, powerful elite groups. Jesus opposed exploitation, but his radical economic values were only partially sustained among the commercial groups who composed the New Testament.

"Models and Archaeology in the Social Interpretation of Jesus." *[Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by The Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina]*, John Pilch, ed. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000.

Explicit macrosociological models are necessary for the social understanding of first-century Galilee and Jesus of Nazareth since social-scientific models highlight how politics was a primary social variable. Jesus' non-elite proclamation of the kingdom of God was not just about religion, but implied a thorough restructuring of first-century Palestinian society.

Donald P. Ryan
The Complete Idiot's Guide to Biblical Mysteries. New York: Macmillan, 2000.

A popular survey of many of the various mysteries and controversies of the Bible including such topics as Biblical artifacts, unusual people and animals, miracles, apocryphal documents, etc.

"Basketry, matting and cordage." Donald B. Redford, ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

A summary of the role of fiber technology in ancient Egyptian culture.

"The Valley of the Kings"; "A Village in Time"; and "The Tomb Robbers of Ancient Egypt: Desecrators of the Dead." *Calliope*, September 2000.

Three articles pertaining to the theme of Deir el-Medinah, the ancient Egyptian village of royal tomb artisans.

PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY
Division of Humanities
Tacoma, WA 98447-0003

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Tacoma WA
Permit No. 416