

## PREFACE

When I researched the beginning and development of written language, I came to the story of Gilgamesh. It was written in cuneiform text about 2,400 B.C. In 1872 an Englishman, George Smith, had discovered a flood story written in cuneiform text on clay tablets which had unmistakable parallels to the Noah's Ark story in the Bible. What he had found was the original flood story. The tablets contained several Mesopotamian myths which also appear in the Bible. The names of the persons involved and measurements of the boat had been changed but in essence, the Bible stories are a copy of the more ancient Mesopotamian myths. The question is, did the Jews borrow the ancient myths and include them in their sacred texts?

Genesis starts with a creation story. I discovered that most nations had their own different creation myths. Genesis ch. 3 has the unreal story of a talking snake and the lives of Cain and Abel. Then we have Noah's Ark and the great flood which we will look at later. These myths have obviously been borrowed when the Jews were held captive by King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon 586 to 538 B.C.

Because written language was not invented until 2,000 to 3,000 B.C. the stories in Genesis are either oral tradition or borrowed mythology.

We move on to the second book of the Bible, Exodus, the legend of the children of Israel escaping from captivity and slavery in Egypt. This Bible account is dependent on at least twenty acts of magic. Scholars believe that this story is fiction, that it never happened. There is no archaeological evidence at all to confirm the narrative. These books, Genesis and Exodus, form the shaky basis of the Jewish faith.

We move to the Christian religion which started as an offshoot of the Jewish religion. All the originators of the Christian movement were devout Jews. Apart from Paul, they seem, to have disappeared about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem 70 A.D. Paul created Christianity. It is a mixture of Judaism and parts of the ancient Persian religion of Mithraism, loved by Roman soldiers. The Christian doctrine was not established until the Nicene Creed was introduced in 325 A.D. The faith quickly broke into many different kinds of religious groups as it remains today.

Bible quotations have been taken from The Revised Standard Version 1989.

I am indebted to Mrs. Beverley Butler for the loan of a genuine Cuneiform clay tablet from Mesopotamia which appears on the cover.

Steve Cooper, 2002

DEVELOPMENT FROM PICTOGRAM TO CUNEIFORM

Original pictograph	Pictograph in position of later cuneiform	Early cuneiform	Classic cuneiforms (Assyrian)	Meaning
				heaven or god
				earth
				man
				woman
				mountain
				slave-girl
				head
				mouth or to speak
				food
				to eat
				water
				to drink
				to go
				bird
				fish
				ox
				cow
				barley or grain
				sun or day
				to plow

## MYTHS of MODERN RELIGION

The biography of ancient Gods begins a very long way back in human prehistory, perhaps many thousands of years before the art of writing was invented. In ancient times there would have been an almost total lack of knowledge of the laws governing the dynamics of nature. The people would wonder what caused the rain to sometimes be excessive and at other times to be absent. Calamities seemed from time to time to descend upon them which brought suffering and misery to the people and their families. Storms, droughts, plagues and many other pests could bring sickness and destroy their crops and livelihood. They would wonder what or who had the power to do such damage and why. Certainly no human had that much power over the elements.

Ancient humans would think that perhaps some unseen force or spirit was angry. Then they imagined supreme spirit controllers of these forces which they called gods. There was the sun god, moon god, storm god, the god of war and very many other gods, even a god of love and reproduction. Fear of those forces would drive them to seek a way of influencing the unseen super beings. So people began to placate those powerful gods or mystery spirit-things, whatever they were. The result was they started making sacrifices to the supposed gods.

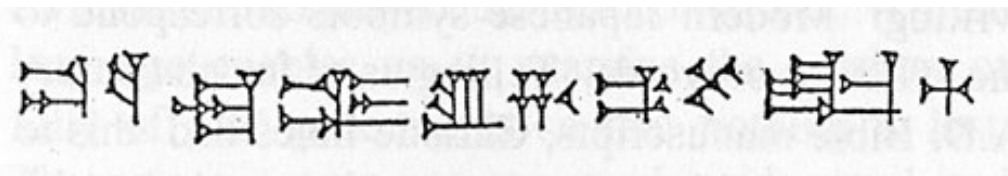
Mythology was very useful in filling a void in their understanding. It satisfied a deep need to explain questions which they had no hope of answering in any other way.

The farthest we can go back in reliable history is about the time writing was invented around 3,000 B.C. Human beings had already adopted agriculture and the domestication of animals by nine to ten thousand years B.C. We pick up the story in Mesopotamia 3,000 B.C. People were already living in complex urban societies. They had mud brick and furnace fired brick buildings. They were living in well organised social communities with complex divisions of labour. Irrigation was in use. Farmers tilled the ground to provide grains and vegetables, butchers and fishermen supplied proteins. From trees were gathered nuts and fruit. There was more than enough food for all the people.

Other members of the community were potters, stone masons, weavers, carpenters, traders, and all the other activities which constituted an ancient working society. Mining of copper and the making of bronze had already been achieved. They had a large body of priests and had built huge Ziggurats or temples for people to worship their many gods.

The people of Sumer in eastern Mesopotamia, between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, had built up a thriving trade with their neighbours. The difficulty was that they had no means of recording trade transactions other than memory. We can assume that something

like the following happened. One day a clever man or woman picked up a piece of soft clay and scratched a head of a donkey or the shape of a fish or wheat on the clay tablet then dried it in the sun. We know that something like this happened because many clay memory-aids or pictograms have been dug up by archaeologists. Gradually over many years, the pictograms changed to what is called cuneiform writing. The word cuneiform comes from two Latin words *Cuneus*, meaning wedge and *Forma*, meaning shape. The Sumerians adopted a wedge shaped stylus cut from reeds which could be pressed into the soft clay tablets instead of scratching a picture of the trade object (see example 'below). The first pictograms happened in Sumer about three thousand B.C. Sun baked clay tablets were discovered in 1850 by Austen Layard and Hormuzd Rassam. Later Rassam provided the British Museum with tens of thousands of Babylonian tablets written in cuneiform text,



The idea of recording on clay tablets was taken up by other nations including the Akkadians who lived north of the Sumerians. They had a written vocabulary of several hundred words. China still uses thousands of modified pictograms or logographic written language. Writing as we know it today, did not arrive complete and ready to use but from very small beginnings. It developed painfully slowly over hundreds of years. Tens of thousands of rectangular clay tablets, written on both sides, have been recovered from the ruins of the ancient cities and royal libraries of Mesopotamia.

Various forms of writing developed worldwide. The simplest method was invented by the Incas. They used bundles of knotted string to somehow convey a meaning. Perhaps the most isolated society to attempt writing was the Polynesians on Easter Island in the South Pacific. They scratched their symbols on pieces of wood about 200 mm by 100 mm. One copy, which I have examined, is on display in the Easter Island museum. A few other copies in existence are scattered around several museums but have never been interpreted.

The earliest forms of writing are non-phonological. Pictographic writing slowly developed into ideographic symbols or concept writing. Modern Japanese symbols correspond to the syllables of words. Telling us of fourth century A.D. Bible manuscripts, Christie Innes had this to say, "The writing was in rounded capitals with words un-spaced and practically no punctuation."

In 1928 on the northern Syrian coast at a place called Ras Shamra a farmer plowing a field disturbed a large stone which led to an ancient tomb. What he had found was part of the ruins of the ancient city of Ugarit. This resulted in a French archaeological team, under the leadership of Dr. Claude Shaeffer, excavating a huge royal palace dating from 1400-1200 B.C. They discovered two libraries of cuneiform texts in several languages. Perhaps the most exciting discovery was that of a script, which for the first time, used an alphabet of thirty characters based on phonics. It was most likely worked out by the Phoenicians or Greeks somewhere between 2,000 and 1,500 B.C. This made reading and writing very much simpler and indeed it has become the generally used medium of writing ever since.

The invention of writing was one of the greatest steps to the development of science and the enjoyment of life for mankind. Before that time the people were wholly dependent on word of mouth folk tales, myths and legends for history. Of course myths and legends must be expected to have changed over the many years due to constant repetition. Each person would tell a slightly different story.

During the thousands of years of early civilisation, nobody could read or write. Written language enables us to examine the wisdom or folly of past generations so that nothing is lost. Through our eyes we can read, understand and enjoy the wisdom of Plato who wrote about 2,400 years ago. We can learn engineering, astronomy or anything else we choose by reading books for knowledge or amusement. The art of writing was the first and perhaps the greatest step leading to the advancement of human knowledge. Archaeologists' discoveries of artifacts from graves and ruins of ancient buildings have also provided us with reliable knowledge of ancient human activity. Buried ceramics have a history which can give information, so have metal objects, glass products, instruments of war and clothing.

Writing made possible a much more accurate recording of human history. Indeed we can say that history and science blossomed as a result of the invention of writing. Pictograms were simple memory-aids representing trade products but very little more than that. Cuneiform writing became the first method of expressing ideas. The Sumerians and Akkadians established schools teaching the art of writing.

The work of reconstructing the often broken Sumerian and Akkadian tablets began before the Second World War. Dr. Samuel Kramer of the University Museum of Philadelphia, was one of the pioneers joining and reading thousands of pieces of clay tablets. The British Museum and many universities have also done a great deal of work piecing together and reading cuneiform tablets. The royal libraries of Nineveh were the first great find of tablets.

The famous laws of Hammurabi, king of Babylon, Mesopotamia, 1792 to 1750 B.C. are inscribed on a stone stela over two metres tall, now in the Louvre in Paris. They are written in cuneiform. It is a remarkable

framework of social order and dealt with the administration of justice in matters of murder, adultery, false witness and offences against the person and property,

The first purposefully written recording of history had to wait until the Greek writer Herodotus wrote the story of the war between the Greeks and the Persians in the fourth century B.C. Herodotus is therefore regarded as the father of written history. I do not know of any literature apart from cuneiform writing that goes further back than the seventh or eighth century B.C. The writings of Homer are considered an early text. According to my Oxford Encyclopedia, Herodotus believed the writings of Homer to have been written about 830 B.C. Josephus says that Homer left nothing in writing. The poems were collected afterwards from various memories and from different places.

I have an English translation of Homer's "The Odyssey" and "The Illiad". Both are full of mythical stories of their gods who had tremendous power over the people. It is amazing the power of mythology, people devoted their lives to serving their mythological gods.

## Worldwide Creation Myths

Different mythical accounts of creation were dreamed up by different people from all over the world. It was the only possible way for them to be able to explain the unknown. There was no other way to satisfy the people's curiosity. Myths are not facts. A good number of the following creation myths have been gathered from an excellent illustrated book 'World Mythology', general editor Roy Willis, Duncan Bah-d Publishers.

The first recorded myth of creation is found in "The Epic of Gilgamesh". Published by Penguin Press. We now have a recent translation by Andrew George from clay tablets dated about 2400 B.C. It tells us that there was the Mother Goddess Ninsun, the lady of the gods who first created men with the help of another resourceful god Ea. "The clay that Ea gave the Mother Goddess as the raw material from which she bore mankind, was animated (given spirit) by mixing it with the blood of a god."

A Chinese creation story tells us, Nu-Gua came down from heaven. One day she saw her own reflection in some water. She was feeling lonely so she gathered some clay and made a copy of herself. When she put the model down, it sprang to life and danced about. Nu-Gua then made a host of copies of herself, they all sprang to life, made quite a noise and danced about having fun together. Finally she taught those people how to produce children. Her husband Fu Xi became the first emperor of them all.

For the Egyptians the event that marked the beginning of time was the rising of the first dry land from the primeval waters and the lotus which rose out of the water and opened to reveal an infant god. The Sun worshipping Egyptians had many gods. In another creation myth from Egypt the god Khnum shaped animals, humans and gods out of clay on a potters wheel and breathed into them the breath of life.

The Dayak people of Borneo say that the world began with two spirits. One formed the sky and the other formed the earth. The spirits then decided to make human beings. They tried to make mankind from the sap of trees but they could not give it life. They then shaped humans from soil and brought them to life with bird-spirit cries.

In one of the creation stories of Malaysia two divinities decided to make human beings. Their first attempt using stone failed because stone was too rigid. Then they tried wood but that also failed because it rotted. For the third attempt they fashioned humankind from the earth of a termite mound which was successful.

The Tibetan and Mongolian gods created the first man and woman out of clay and breathed into them the breath of life. So did the South American god Viracocho model humans from clay and breathed into them the breath of life. The gods of several other

societies did the same. I found fifteen creation stories, including the Hebrew creation myth found in Gen. 2:7. where the gods used clay or earth to make a human model and a god breathed into it the breath of life. There are many other creation myths.

The Polynesian creation myth has Rangi the male sky mating with Papa the female earth to produce two sons, each of whom personified a division of nature. The sons needed more space to live an active life, so they succeeded in pushing the sky up and away from the earth. They then made the first female, Hine-hau-one from earth. Tane the god of forests and birds was the first-born of the sons of heaven. He fertilised Hine who bore a daughter Hine-titama. Tane took his daughter to be his wife. Hine-titama's horror on learning that her father and her husband were the same person provided the first taboo on incest.

Another popular idea is the primal egg. The Vedic hymns of India refer to a primal egg from which the first deity arose. The purpose of the deity was to make order out of disorder. Brahma of India is said to have created a young woman from his own body. They then together, started to build the human race.

There are many creation myths which start with the idea of a primal or cosmic egg. Sometimes the egg explodes to reveal a single deity or two deities in opposition to each other, one to create order and the other chaos, in another story, the egg produces both white light and blackness. White light produced joy, vitality, prosperity and many beneficent gods. The blackness brought misery, disease, misfortune, drought, pain and all kinds of demons. In Africa the idea of a cosmic egg is widespread. Egypt uses a cosmic egg in relation to snakes. China has at least two stories of the primal egg from which creation started. Creation stories are myths started by the imagination of early humans to solve questions of where did we come from, how did the human race start? There are literally dozens of creation myths. With few exceptions all nations invented stories from their own imagination which seemed to give reasonable answers to their questions.

The gods have always been feared because of the power attributed to them. All myths, including religious myths, have indefinable authors who endeavour to explain the otherwise inexplicable. It is interesting that the Hebrews followed other nations in imagining that humans were first modeled from clay. (Gen 2:7)

## The Gilgamesh Epic and the Hebrew Escape Story from Egypt

'The Epic of Gilgamesh.' was published by Penguin Press 1999. It is very early poetic tales written in Akkadian in cuneiform on clay tablets about 2,400 B.C. Andrew George has given us a recent translation of this under the same title. Gilgamesh appears in the list of Sumerian Kings as a ruler in the first Dynasty of Uruk.

In this interesting book we read of King Sargon who appears in the list of Sumerian kings as the fifth ruler of the First Dynasty of Uruk. We read a story of King Sargon. "My mother, a priestess, conceived me and bore me in secret, she put me in a basket of reeds, sealed its lid with pitch; she cast me adrift on the river from which I could not arise, the river bore me up and brought me to Aqqi, a drawer of water." Now read the story of Moses in Exodus 2: 1-10. Baby Moses was put in a reed basket, sealed with pitch and placed on the Nile river then found by the Pharaoh's daughter.

The question is, did the Hebrews borrow this story from the Babylonians when they were held captive there 586 to 538 B.C. and include it in the myth of the Hebrew escape from Egypt? The names are changed but the story of baby Moses in a reed basket on the Nile is basically the same.

There is another story from Babylon, the story of Noah's Ark, which has also been borrowed from the Babylonians. The names have been changed to make a Hebrew myth but the basic story is the same (Gen. 6: 1 to 8:22). Here is a short *precis* of the original flood story written in cuneiform in the time of Gilgamesh, several hundred years before the Hebrew story of Noah and the Ark was written.

Their gods wished to destroy mankind but preserve one devout family and the animal species. Utnapishtim the son of Uba-Tue was told to demolish the house and build a boat, to spurn property, to save life! The dimensions of the boat were to be equal. She should have a roof. The boat was to have six floors thus dividing it into seven. At dawn the carpenters, workers and materials arrived. The pitch was carried by the children. Utnapishtim set the hull in position. Her area was one acre. Into nine compartments he divided her interior. The boat was finally finished. All the living beasts and the creatures of the wild, together with everything he owned including his family was loaded aboard. He says, "I went into the boat and sealed the hatch."

At the first glimmer of dawn there arose a black cloud, "Within it was Adad the Storm God. The gods Shulla and Hanish were going

before him bearing his throne over the mountain and land. The god Errakal was uprooting the mooring poles, Ninurta passing by made the weirs overflow. All that was bright turned to darkness. Then came the deluge."

For six days and seven nights the wind blew and the deluge flattened the land. Then the deluge ended. Utnapishtim opened the hatch and looked out on to the desolation. The boat had grounded on Mount Nimush. After a further seven days, he let out a dove but it returned for there was no place to land. Then in time he let out a swallow and it also returned for there was no place to land. Finally he let out a raven but it found food and did not return. They all got out of the boat and Utnapishtim made an altar and sacrificed to his gods. "The gods did smell the savour sweet." Sumer lies between two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. There have been many floods in that area, some greater than others.

On three occasions during the Gilgamesh flood story, it was said that "as the Sun-God appointed, in the morning he will send you a shower of bread-cakes and in the evening a torrent of wheat." This story has obviously been borrowed by the Hebrews to include in the story of how the children of Israel were said to have been fed after leaving Egypt during their forty year journey through the desert! The Hebrew god was said to provide food from heaven each day, "I am going to rain bread from heaven and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day" (See Exodus 16:4 to 35). And again "When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning." (Exodus 16:8).

Are these stories also borrowed from Babylon? We should remember that Jews had been captured by King Nebuchadnezzar, taken to Babylon as slaves and held there from 586 to 538 B.C. That was hundreds of years after the Gilgamesh story of the ark had been written in Cuneiform writing. Babylon was the centre of civilisation at that time. The Hebrews would certainly have learned to write and become familiar with Mesopotamian mythology. We can feel sure that the Hebrews had borrowed this story from Mesopotamian Mythology .

Magnus Magnusson in his book 'The B.C. Archaeology of the Bible Lands' tells us "despite the mass of contemporary records that have been unearthed in Egypt, not one historical reference to the presence of the Israelites has yet been found." Later on he says "the story of the Bondage and the Deliverance is above all a statement of faith, rather than history." Extensive archaeological work by Israeli archaeologist EHezer Oren over a period of ten years failed to provide a single shred of evidence that the Biblical account of the Exodus from Egypt ever happened. The nation of Israel traversing a semi-desert for forty years would have left an extensive trail of debris including human and animal bones, pottery and implements of all varieties. No evidence

of this kind has ever been found! There has never been reliable archaeological evidence that the Israelites were ever held captive or escaped from Egypt.

The Bible story of the Hebrews escaping from Egypt starts with a whole series of magical events. First there was the copied story of baby Moses in the reed basket on the Nile. Then the talking bush which burned but was not consumed followed by the magical rods of Aaron and his brother Moses. Aaron threw his rod down and it became a snake. He took it up and it became a rod again in his hand. This is followed by ten plagues, all of which required magic, 1<sup>st</sup> All the water in the land is fumed to blood. 2<sup>nd</sup> A plague of frogs in their houses and even in their beds. 3<sup>rd</sup> Aaron stretches out his magical staff and the dust of the ground became gnats. 4<sup>th</sup> Now a plague of flies. 5<sup>th</sup> A plague of disease among the livestock. 6<sup>th</sup> A plague of boils on humans and stock. 7<sup>th</sup> A plague of thunder and hail in tropical Egypt. 8<sup>th</sup> A plague of locusts. 9<sup>th</sup> A plague of unnatural darkness. 10<sup>th</sup> and final plague; the first born of every female human and animal is said to have died in one night. None of these plagues touched the Israelites! Finally Pharaoh is said to have given his permission for the Israelites to leave Egypt. They left having 'borrowed' valuable things from the Egyptians, "and so they plundered the Egyptians." (Exodus 12:36). No thought of ethics here.

Shortly after they got to the desert, Moses counted the people. He arrived at the astonishing figure of "Six hundred thousand men on foot besides children". (Exodus 12:37) Later on Moses counts the people again and comes up with "from twenty years old and upwards, everyone able to go to war in Israel, their whole number was six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty." (Numb. 1:45-46). This constitutes an increase of 3,550 men more than the first count. Add women, children and the old and sick. The total must have been in the vicinity of two million persons.

The fairy tale magic continues. God put a pillar of cloud to lead them by day and a pillar of fire to illuminate them at night. They come to the Red Sea and Moses stretches out his magic staff and the "waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued and went into the sea after them." ( Ex. 14:21-23) How long do you think it would take to get six hundred thousand men, an equal number of women and a few thousand children over the Red Sea, plus, of course donkeys, cattle and sheep. All this while the sea is banked up upon both sides. When the Israelites got safely to the other side, Moses stretched out his magical rod and the waters came together again on the following Egyptian army, drowning them all!

The story is incredible. We come up against the immutable laws of the universe. There are over twenty individual acts of magic running in sequence in this story. Another word for this would be fiction,

certainly not history. Only fairy tales can build a story like this. Fairy tales are not facts. They can only survive in fiction or in mythology.

The fairy tale magic does not stop there. A day or a week or more later the people are thirsty with no water in sight. (Exodus 17:6) Moses strikes a rock with his magic rod and out pours enough water to satisfy about two million people and thousands of livestock! The magic goes on. A little further on the people complain that the water is bitter. They cry out "what shall we drink.....the Lord showed Moses a piece of wood, he threw it into the water and (magic again), the water becomes sweet." (Exodus 15:25). After 40 years wandering, they come to the river Jordan. The Red Sea magic is repeated "the waters shall be cut off and they shall stand in a single heap." Have you ever seen water standing in a heap?

All the thousands of Israelites, men, women and children including large herds of livestock cross over on dry land before the river returns to normal.

Having arrived at the promised land they march seven times around the nearby walled city of Jericho. A trumpet sounds, they all shout in unison and magic happens again, the walls of the city fall down! But did the walls really fall down? I lived and worked in Jerusalem for six years and nine months, and have seen the excavations at Jericho several times. The city walls did not fall down! Archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon spent years excavating the city of Jericho. She concluded that the walls of Jericho were destroyed around 2300 B.C. That is over a thousand years before Joshua is said to have conquered the Canaanites. Scholars are convinced that the whole story of the escape of the Israelites from Egypt is a figment of imagination, probably dreamed up when the Jews were held captive in Babylon.

Can you believe all those magical deeds performed by the rods of Moses and Aaron? If the story of an escape from Egypt is true, why was there a need to fill it out with magical happenings?

There is no evidence or Egyptian records of a pharaoh drowning in the Red Sea. No record of a national tragedy when, as the Bible story states, every first-born child and the first-born of livestock in the land mysteriously died one morning. There is no archaeological evidence at all that the Jewish nation ever was held in slavery or lived in Egypt. These mythical stories were

invented while the Jews were held captive in Babylon. They include ancient myths borrowed from Babylon. The Hebrews were busy myth making, building a national religion.

There is no historical proof or any other evidence backing up the stories or the persons mentioned in Genesis and Exodus, the first two books of the Bible. The sad fact is that the Jews have celebrated the Passover each year as a literal fact for over two and a half thousand years since they supposedly fled from Egypt. Nor is there any historical evidence that Moses ever existed apart from the Bible.

You will see that the first two books of the Bible are largely mythology. Several stories are taken from the myths of Babylon adapted and modified to conform to Jewish names and places. The Hebrew story of Noah and the ark appears in Genesis chapters five to ten. The rest of the book is taken up with the goings and comings of the tribe. Exodus is pure fiction supported by magic. None of Genesis can be verified. These two books form the basis of the Hebrew religion. There is good evidence that these Bible stories were invented by the Jews while they were held captive in Babylon 586 to 538 B.C.? If this is the case, what else in the Bible is manufactured or modified to support their religion? They mention the tower of Babel, which could be read Babylon Ziggurats. Then the story of baby Moses in a basket on the Nile and other Gilgamesh stories of food being rained down from heaven, night and morning and the copied story of the great flood. How much were the Jewish leaders influenced by Babylonian mythology and fitted their ancient history around it? We can also ask how much the Hebrew Ten Commandments were influenced by the laws of King Hammurabi, Eshnunna and Ur-Nammu whose writings were much earlier codes of law and part of the history of Babylon.

## The Jews Return from Captivity

The Jews returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. They had served forty eight years of captivity and slavery there. A great many of the original captives would have died and a new younger community of people would now be leaders of the nation.

The story of the return is recorded in two books of the Old Testament, (Ezra 10:3 to 44, and Nehemiah ch. 8). Many of the Jews who were not taken captive had married Canaanite people who were also of Semitic blood.

The fact that the Jews used Babylonian myths in their first two sacred texts, would indicate that they did not have a scripture until after about 580 B.C. If there was an earlier text it must have been superseded by Genesis. Probably the first five books of the Torah were also written in Babylon. The Jews had had a religion and places of worship, as did all pagans.

Ezra sent a message to all the Israelites, by order of the officials and elders, that they should gather together. If any did not come within three days, all their property would be forfeited and they themselves banned from the congregation of the exiles. (Ezra 10:8.) These were tough and arrogant measures to take. According to the story, the walls of Jerusalem city had been broken down and the Temple burned to the ground by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, when he took captives as slaves back to Babylon.

The people left behind had forgotten their religion. The Jews then, had no place to worship. Therefore they had little interest in records of Jewish religious laws, if they had any records.

Ezra and Nehemiah gathered the people together and read to them the Hebrew religious law for many days. All those who had married non-Jewish women, sent away their wives with their children. Ezra 10:3 & 11. If this is true, I would call it an extremely immoral act of ethnic cleansing.

There is nothing to suggest that the texts of the Torah were not written by the Jewish leaders while they were in Babylon or how much previous sacred texts had been modified or enlarged to fit the religion. This is the time when the whole fabricated story of Israel's escape from Egypt could have been sold to the people for the first time. Some sacred texts, like the book of Daniel and at least part of Psalms (see chapter 137) and most of the following minor prophets were new additions to their sacred texts. My Encyclopaedia Britannica states, "It is certain that before the second century A.D. the various manuscripts of the Old Testament differed very materially from one another and that the official Hebrew text was probably fixed in the second century A.D. Thereafter it was scrupulously preserved." This is a time

when the Jewish religion was restarted or added to in earnest. The other ten tribes of Israel, often called the ten lost tribes of Israel, were scattered in small groups in many countries or were absorbed into local communities.

## Divine Mythology Spreads

The Gilgamesh story of about 2,400 B.C. is a very old story. It opens a small window into the myths, fears and thinking of early civilisation and their desire to have eternal life. It shows how they sought to explain the origins of mankind and the causes of unexplainable events and things beyond their control. Events which, for them, would have appeared to be directed by gods or magical means. The very fact of the extremes of natural phenomena would make it appear to them that some superior being or spirit was trying to tell them something. Once a myth is given expression and has been accepted as fact, it tends to grow with constant telling. The more power people attributed to the gods or spirits, the less they had for themselves. When we look at the Roman Empire over a thousand years later, we see their dependence on their gods and the same drive to appease the same supposed spirit forces. The Romans were constantly making animal sacrifices and looking to their astrologers to read the possible signs and portents for success or failure. The supposed omens of life were drawn from such minor things as the flight of birds, the shape of a comet or the lay of an animal's intestines. Emperor Augustus was frightened by lightning early in life, so for the rest of his life he carried a sealskin amulet to protect himself from lightning. There are millions of people living today who still believe in magic and myths and lucky charms to the same extent as the people of five thousand years ago.

The Old Testament of the Bible is full of mythology. Can you really believe that Joshua could successfully order the sun to stand still until he had finished killing his enemies? (Joshua. 10: 12-13) or the sun could reverse ten degrees just to prove to Hezekiah that he would be cured of boils? (2 Kings 20:9-11) That Jonah could be three days in the belly of a fish and be vomited up alive and well on a dry beach? (Jonah 1: 17) Perhaps you cannot believe that Daniel's three friends could be cast into a hot furnace which killed other people, and yet come out without the hair on their heads being singed (Dan. 3:27). The fairy tale magic stories go on and on.

When we come to the New Testament do you expect a more enlightened approach than the myths of the Old Testament? You will be

disappointed. Fairy tale magic is central from the start to the finish. Mark's Gospel is generally thought to be the first to be written, 70 to 80 A.D. But Mark was not one of the original twelve disciples of the Jesus story. Nowhere in the New Testament is there a suggestion that the writers of the Gospels had direct contact with Jesus. The Gospels of Luke and Matthew were written 90 to 110 A.D. Neither of them was known to Jesus. We know that both of these writers had read Mark's Gospel because they followed the same sequence in presenting the same stories embellishing them in their own words.

The interesting thing is that Mark, the first gospel to be written, does not claim divinity for Jesus. Mark does not give a genealogy of Jesus nor any stories of his birth or boyhood. Matthew and Luke give genealogies which strongly disagree with each other and make no reliable sense at all. (Matt. 1:1-17. and Luke 3:23-38.) Matthew tells us that "Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary of whom Jesus was born". Luke tells us that "Heli was the father of Joseph" who was the father of Jesus. (Luke 3:23). Both talk about the babyhood and boyhood of Jesus but they do not even vaguely agree on one story. It is as if they were talking about two entirely different children. So what is their evidence worth or are their stories nothing more than myth making fantasies? The 25<sup>th</sup> of December had been celebrated by the pagans centuries before Christ. It marked the sun-worshippers' festival of the winter solstice. As the winter approached, the sun would appear to slow down until it seemed to stop. By the 25<sup>th</sup> of December (here would be no doubt that the sun was returning. The people could then look forward to another spring and harvest.

There never was a birthday for a Messiah or Christ. Christians took over the pagan festive days. The supposed birthday of Jesus was not fixed by the Church until the year 440 A.D.

## The Missing Man

The Romans were very careful with their records, especially with legal matters but there is no record of Jesus being judged and crucified by Pontius Pilate. Two researchers, Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy wrote a book entitled "The Jesus Mysteries." Their purpose was to find the historical Jesus. They titled the seventh chapter, "The Missing Man". They name twenty seven Pagan writers who wrote within a century of when Jesus was supposed to have lived but not one of them refers to Jesus. Then Freke and Gandy examine the Jewish historians Philo and Justus who lived about the same time as Jesus is supposed to have lived. Neither of these authors mentions Jesus. A respected Christian scholar, Origen writing at the beginning of the third century tells us that there is no mention of Jesus in the writings of Josephus. But at the beginning of the fourth century Bishop Eusebius suddenly produced a spurious version of Josephus which included a paragraph about Jesus, as follows: -

"At about this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one might call him a man. For he was one who accomplished surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as are eager for novelties. He won over many of the Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. When Pilate, upon an indictment brought by the principal men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him from the very first did not cease to be attached to him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the holy prophets had foretold this and myriads of other marvels concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has to this day still not disappeared."

This addition by Eusebius has often been used as evidence that Jesus was an historical person. No serious scholar believes that this paragraph was written by Josephus. The additions are not in the same writing style and if removed from the text, Josephus' original text runs on in proper sequence.

It should be remembered that there were no copyright laws to protect authors in those days. Anyone who held a manuscript could do what he liked with it. Indeed there is strong evidence that people have tried to up-date the original New Testament documents in conformity with their own beliefs or desires. Many believe that the Jesus stories are fairy tale myths, there are no literal truths, just fairy tale ideas of fantasy.

To be a believing Christian, we are asked to disregard the immutable laws of the universe such as gravity and the laws of physics. The Christians will expect you to believe that Jesus instantly healed the blind, the lame, the deaf, those with leprosy, fever and the paralytic. But we need to think rationally about magic. Is this fairy tale

magic? Did Jesus really feed five thousand people on five loaves of bread and two small fishes and afterwards gather up twelve baskets full of broken pieces of bread and fish which is a quantity greater than they started with? Then there are deeds of far greater magic, the turning of water into wine, the turning of a raging storm into a dead calm with a word of command by Jesus. Did he really walk on the water without sinking? The fairy story magic increases, Jesus is even said to have restored a dead woman, Jairus' daughter, back to life and his friend Lazarus, dead four days is brought back to life again. (John 11: 38-44)

But in Mark's story, Jesus denies that he is divine, he repeatedly calls himself "the son of man" which should be sufficient to cancel out the idea of a virgin birth. According to the story, Jewish religious leaders and the Roman authorities were not impressed with Jesus. He was condemned to death and crucified. The story says that Jesus was raised to life and disappeared from the tomb. No person witnessed this magical happening. He is said to have talked to his disciples and been seen alive by his followers while he was in the act of ascending to heaven.

Both the Old and New Testaments depend on mythology. Looking back I am embarrassed that I ever believed in these impossible fairy tales. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that there always was a niggling doubt. It's amazing what constant brain washing during childhood can do to one's outlook. Even today in a world with easy access to so much knowledge, millions of people close their eyes and ears to common sense. There are some educated, intelligent people lecturing in our universities who still cling on to the belief that faith in Jesus will guarantee eternal life to them in another world. They talk of being "saved" and having a personal relationship with God. Being saved suggests something to be saved from. This of course is the supposed Judgment Seat of God. Most of those people have been brain washed in childhood with statements such as "Those who do not believe in Jesus will go to hell instead of heaven". Fear of the judgment of God comes strongly into the equation.

## Fear and Faith

There are many references to fear in the New Testament. I have picked out seven applicable texts. The Greek word translated fear in each case is *phobeo*. It is a strong word which could perhaps be better translated 'terrify'. "Do not fear those who kill the body.... Rather *fear (be terrified of)* him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. 10:28), "His mercy is for those who *fear (are terrified of)* him from generation to generation." (Luke 1:50), "I warn you whom to fear; *fear (he terrified of)* him, who after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell." (Luke 12:5), "Samaria had peace and was built up, living in the *fear (terror)* of the Lord." (Acts 9:31), "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who *fears (is terrified of)* him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34-5), "Do not become proud but stand in *awe (in terror)* of God...perhaps he will not spare you." (Rom. 11:20), "Making holiness perfect in the *fear( terror)* of God." (2 Corin.7:1).

Please note that Mark, the first Gospel written, does not try to frighten its readers into a belief in an eternal hell. There are two words in the New Testament which have been translated as Hell. The first is *hades* which means the unseen world but this word was not used in Mark. The second word is *Gehenna* which is the name of a valley near Jerusalem where the city rubbish was burned. (Mark 9:43-47) The rubbish included the bodies of animals, criminals and those who had no one to bury them. This adds a different light to the illustration that Jesus was supposed to be teaching.

Fear of hell plays a strong part in influencing those who have been taught as children or believe in the Judgment Seat of God. Fear is a negative destructive force. What a poor and irrational basis on which to build a religion. Take fear out of religion and religion would soon disappear.

The Bible story of Jesus is said to be a story of love. But the story is backed up with a Christian threat of a never ending punishment in hell for not believing in Jesus. It is difficult to know which idea has the more power in winning followers, the love of Jesus or the fear of Hell! Science has taught us that doubt is a good and necessary activity in seeking truth. Religion discards the need for proof and asks us to just believe without proof. We were taught that the Bible was the inerrant word of God, now we find that at least some of it, is a copy of ancient myths of Mesopotamia.

Today, the many pagan gods have been reduced to one God. The Christian idea of a triune Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Ghost is ridiculous. It first became church doctrine in 325 A.D. at an assembly of over 200 bishops, chaired by the Roman Emperor

Constantine. There are also many agencies such as angels, devils, priests, evangelists, nuns and many more.

As J.M. Robertson says in 'Pagan Christs\* "Fear made the gods. In primitive times fear of the unknown was normal... .Magic and religion are interconnected because both have evolved from an animistic (latin; life force) view of nature." There is no proof of God or another life after death. There is no proof that there is a Heaven or a Hell.

Professor Ian Plimer, Chair of Geology, University of Melbourne, in correspondence with me states, "There is such an overwhelming volume of verifiable information from history, archaeology and even geology to show that Christianity is just another superstition clinging onto myths stolen from other cultures."

There are associations of Christian and other religions, which provide a comfortable group attraction and family feelings. The singing of hymns and friendliness of an inner group is attractive to many. If you withdraw from some churches, it is usual that you will be cut off and treated like an enemy as indeed I was. James Baldwin, an influential American Negro author of many books, brought up with a Pentecostal Church background had this to say, "There is no love in the church. It was a mask for self-hatred and despair .....Salvation stopped at the church door. When we were told to love everybody I thought it meant *everybody*. But no. It applied only to those who believed as we did."

The Bible tells us that God is love. But it can never explains how the innocent millions who have never heard the name of Jesus yet suffer from what is usually called 'Acts of God'. They suffer famines, plagues and calamities of all kinds. How can one love such an unloving God who can destroy the innocent indiscriminately? Something is seriously wrong with religion. I hear you say "what about Christian ethics and loving one's neighbour as oneself." There is a misconception that good ethics belong to the Christian religion. Not so, no one has a monopoly of good or bad. Today and for the past two thousand years, land may be the purpose of war. But religion has been the rallying flag of friend or enemy leading to tremendous discord, quarreling and even slaughter as in Ireland, East Timor, Israel and Kosovo. All these people, Jewish, Christian and Moslem worship the same God yet they have no tolerance, they hate each other. Even among the Bible-believing 'born again' Christians there is intolerance. Just look at the different brands of churches serving the same community and often standing within a stone's throw of each other. They are like exclusive clubs, fully tolerant only to those within their own group. True moral integrity and personal maturity cannot be found as a result of religion.

The idea that a God, gods or spirits. Hell, Heaven, or Satan exist, is not provable; they are assumed ideas initiated by our ancient ancestors because they, in their ignorance and fear, could find no

other explanation for natural disasters. These ideas were fed and maintained by mythology. The best that can be said for the myths of religion, is that they may give a measure of false comfort and hope to the un-emancipated.

## Life after Death

Religion declares that it can offer eternal life after death; something which never has, nor ever can be proved. A verse in the Bible says, "For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath and humans have *no advantage* over the animals; all go to the one place; all are from the dust and all turn to dust again". (Ecclesiastes 3:19) and again in (Ecclesiastes 9:5.) "The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing *they have no more reward* and even the memory of them is lost. Their love and their hate and their envy is already perished; never again will they have any share in all that happens under the sun." It does not seem that Ecclesiastes believed in another life after death.

The Christian belief in life after death and the judgment seat of God necessitates that the memory of this lifetime be carried forward to the afterlife where, it is said by Christians, we all will stand before the judgment seat of God. Rational people will agree that the human brain is the storehouse of all our knowledge, attitudes, emotions and beliefs. We die like all other living things. There are no exceptions. When we die, our mortal mental repository with its vast records of experience, knowledge, beliefs and memories must be lost and decay with the rest of our mortal bodies. There is no alternative. The gods, Heaven, Hell and good and bad spirits are myths created out of the ignorance and fear of our ancient ancestors. Today there is no reason to believe the ancient mythologies.

The thought of dying need not be at all frightening. It is rather a peaceful conclusion to a completed life. The result of dying is oblivion, an eternal sleep. All our fears will also perish with us. There will be nothing left over to carry to the supposed judgment seat of God. Nor will there be any bodies left to burn in an imaginary hell.

## Personal Integrity and Maturity

Let us talk about maturity and taking personal responsibility for ourselves. There is something of value beyond dependence on another person or religious doctrine. A truly mature person does not need a crutch to lean upon. Each of us can stand tall in the realisation that we are independent and strong in the knowledge of our own self esteem. That is a total acceptance of ourselves as persons of worth. A coming to the realisation that each of us is fully complete. That all the power and virtue to live fully and beautifully is within each of us. Alone in the world, yes, but every man and woman is a brother or a sister. So that we are alone in the company of a vast body of other friendly human beings.

There is a verse in the New Testament which says, "When I was a child I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult I put an end to childish ways." (1 Cor. 13:11). A child needs to be dependent on a parent or guardian for all of childhood but only until he or she grows up. Personal maturity and integrity cannot be found in religion, mainly because faith in religion constitutes a permanent state of childish dependence on something or a person outside the self. It robs the individual of private and personal direction and total responsibility. It also robs one of the dignity and personal rewards of integrity.

Those who are genuinely searching for reality will not be able to tolerate conflict of ideas within themselves. The time will come when you need to take courage and make a decision either to live with a niggling doubt about miracles and the immutable laws of the universe or to step out and be true to yourself. Being true to oneself results in a state known as personal unity; a way of living a socially acceptable life without inner mental conflict.

We don't need to fear those mythical gods any more. We look to science and common sense reason to answer our uncertainties. If you have enough courage, you will find you really are capable of trusting your own integrity and humanity as a person of worth in your own right-Give it a try, just trust yourself, you may be surprised how virtue becomes natural to you.

As we travel the world we find that wherever we go, people have the same hopes and needs. We all seek happiness. You and I are human animals living in a community of other human beings. We all need enough food and shelter. We all want love, friendship and respect from others. We all benefit socially and individually by showing compassion, being honest, tolerant, friendly and obeying the laws of the country. It is time to grow up and take responsibility individually for ourselves.

I began rejecting one aspect of religion after another. First to go was the creation myth then the impossible virgin birth followed by the impossible story of the resurrection of Jesus and all the miracles. Finally I rejected the whole Christian concept with the God many worship.

The evidence of maturity is the ability to stand alone without depending on religious props from outside of oneself. When a person can honestly say 'I am a person of worth in my own right and take responsibility for myself,' he or she is approaching maturity. We do not need to borrow virtue from Jesus or any one else. Borrowed virtue is pseudo-virtue. It is illogical and totally unreal to expect that virtue can be transferred to a person who has not earned it.

We can live an honest and useful life; not because we are compelled to do so but because we are people of integrity. Make no mistake about it, there are many rewards to be had from living an honourable life. Humane or social ideas will often overrule personal ambitions and become an integral part of each one of us. Maturity eliminates inner conflict. Thus we gain peace of mind, liberty, balance, strength, health and more. If you can accept that God is a myth dreamed up by our ancient ancestors out of their ignorance and fear, you will reap immediate rewards of freedom, greater vitality and the joy of living in the present as a person of worth and integrity in your own right.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I had just turned seven when my highly religious parents decided to assist at a church orphanage. For almost another seven years my brother and I lived as virtual orphans, eating the same food and obeying the same rules as all the other children. Then my father decided he wanted to establish a printing workshop in Palestine, (now Israel). He would be publishing Christian literature in Hebrew, Armenian and English. For six years and nine months I worked in Jerusalem, first as a book-keeper for a car agency and garage and then as a printer for the Government Printing Works.

I returned to New Zealand in September 1938 and continued an active relationship with the church. My brother • and I went into the printing business trading as Cooper Brothers Ltd. We specialised in Christian literature. I married and had a family.

We received a cable from my father telling us that mother had died. She was fifty seven years old. It was not the fact of her death so much as the three years of suffering in and out of hospital which affected me. I could see the printing staff through a window eating lunch. I would do anything I justly could for any one of them. But there was God, supposed to be loving and all powerful. Yet my good mother, who had given everything she had in serving her God, had to suffer and die without even seeing her three grandchildren. My mother's death became the trigger to set me on the journey of my life. For the first time, I seriously question religion and God. Was I a better employer than God? There was no love or divine justice shown to my mother. Was God without compassion and powerless or was he there at all? For the first time I was looking at God in reality. I wanted to find out the reason and I wanted an answer.

For about ten years I searched various religions and philosophies. Then, a little over the age of forty, I completely rejected religion. I resigned from the church, bought my brother's shares in the company and ceased printing Christian literature. We need solid provable, scientific reasons to believe in almost anything.

I took one of my well used Bibles down into the garden and ceremoniously burnt it. I was purposefully challenging the mythical God. My actions were inviting his retribution. But God was dead, there was no response as the fire burned up the supposed 'word of God' just like any other combustible material. I became an honest, born-again atheist. I had taken my life back and would never give it away again. I did not want the imputed virtue of a Christ. I reasoned that borrowed virtue is unjust and of no value at all. I became a person of dignity and worth in my own right.

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