

# Letters

ied" because humans think with their physical brains. If the body shapes thought, then the idea of a soul is untenable, mathematics cannot be objectively true, God is not transcendent, etc. However, when it comes to human consciousness, Lakoff admits that there can be "no complete neural computational theory of consciousness."

In Part III, Michael Ruse examines the implication of evolutionary theory for the nature and limits of understanding. He explicitly addresses the question of how Darwinism may offer a basis for our understanding of ethics and ethical behavior. However, he concedes that the Darwinian position may have gaps. For example, the Darwinian cannot throw much light on some of the ultimate metaphysical questions, "specially those about ontology." (In fact, in a separate article published in *Science* 299 [2 March 2003], Ruse admits that Evolution could very well be a "secular religion.")

It is in Parts IV and V that we finally come to a positive discourse that supports the holistic, nonreductionistic view of human understanding, as one encounters in the Christian world view. Lynne Baker, in Part IV discusses how *scientism* underlies reductionism and neither our first-person knowledge (knowledge that a knower would express in a first-person sentence) nor our third-person understanding (knowledge that does not require that a knower have first-person perspective) can be reductionist.

Finally, Brian Hebblethwaite in Part V presents the importance of metaphysics and theology in human understanding and discusses their respective limits. He defines theology as metaphysics plus revelation, and argues cogently that metaphysical and theological knowledge enriches our conceptions by dealing with phenomena where science appears mute (such as art, beauty, morality, the good, etc.). After surveying a number of metaphysical and theological systems, Hebblethwaite concludes that Christianity makes "better sense of everything" in human understanding when placed side-by-side with all other world views, including the knotty problem of theodicy.

Overall, the lecture series presents a reasonable balance between the empirical-reductionist views of human understanding (e.g., Lakoff) and the philosophical-theological perspectives by Baker and Hebblethwaite, with Ruse taking an intermediate, *fence-riding* position.

The ASA reader interested in the rapidly evolving field of cognitive science, especially as it pertains to the neural-computational models, will find these lectures challenging, informative, and very thought provoking.

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## Letters

### The Flood

I am responding to Carol Hill's invitation (*PSCF* letters, September 2003) to comment on her suggestion that people conceived of "the world" more narrowly in Genesis

6-9 (the Flood) than in Genesis 10 (the Table of Nations). My comment is that, whatever the merits of this suggestion, it does not support her thesis that the flood described in Genesis is the one that took place in Mesopotamia in ca. 2900 BC. The people who lived in Mesopotamia at this time (the Sumerians) knew that the world extended beyond this region. Trade routes by the third millennium stretched all over the Middle East (see, for example, J. D. Hawkins, ed., *Trade in the Ancient Near East* [London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1977]).

A possible solution is to take *ha'arets* in Genesis 6-9 to mean "the land." However, when the word has this sense elsewhere in Genesis, the name of the land is usually given ("the land of X"). Genesis does not refer to Mesopotamia ("the land of *Shin'ar*") until after the Flood (10:10, 11:2).

I discuss the difficult problem of identifying Noah's flood in my book, *Big Bang, Small Voice: Reconciling Genesis and Modern Science* (Latheronwheel, Caithness, Scotland: Whittles, 1999). I can supply copies of this on request.

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### On the Structure of Genesis

The December 2003 issue of *PSCF* had several excellent articles that I deeply appreciated. Especially noteworthy were Carol Hill's article "Making Sense of the Numbers in Genesis" (pp. 239-51) and Dick Fischer's "Young-Earth Creationism: A Literal Mistake" (pp. 222-31). I want to make a few comments that are pertinent to both articles.

Among my books that I highly prize in my library is P. J. Wiseman's *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis*.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, this book is out of print but it contains some timely information that I want to share. Wiseman (1888-1948), though not a trained researcher himself, spent time in the Middle East in the 1920s and early 1930s and took interest in the archeological work of Sir Leonard Wooley and Professor S. H. Langdon. In short, this is what he relates in his book.

From the thousands of clay tablets found in Mesopotamia, their form was: (1) a title, (2) the body of the text, and (3) ending in a colophon that generally contained the name of the owner or scribe and some attempt at dating.

In Genesis, the colophon is indicated by the recurring phrase, "These are the generations (*toledah*) of" ... the Hebrew phrase meaning "history, or family histories, or genealogies."

Some of the conclusions on Genesis were: (1) it was originally written on stone or clay tablets in the ancient script of the time; (2) it was written by the patriarchs who were intimately concerned with the events related, and whose names are clearly stated; (3) Moses was the compiler, possible translator, and editor of the book, as we now have it; and (4) Moses plainly directs attention to the source of his information.

It becomes obvious (the assigning of chapters to the Bible in the thirteenth century) that Genesis was mis-

labeled chapter-wise because it was thought that the "toledah" colophon was designated to appear before the body or text of the assigned chapter. The ancient Mesopotamian tablets show the opposite. The colophon statement (the Hebrew "toledah") points backward to a narrative, not forward. The "toledah" therefore ends a section or chapter. Of particular interest is Genesis 1 where that chapter should actually end with Gen. 2:4, "these are the generations of the heavens and the earth ..." Now, Fischer's argument for an old earth becomes even more effective. Fischer makes the point that Gen. 2:4 supports an old-earth view because the plural (*toledah*) generations—meaning long periods of time—fit into one (*yom*) day. The same patriarch or scribe, who wrote the inspired words of Genesis 1, also wrote the "toledah" of Gen. 2:4 to end his account. The patriarch or scribe who wrote Genesis 2 started his account with Gen. 2:5.

Text ending statements ("toledah" — these are the generations) occur in Genesis:

- 2:4 ... of the heavens and the earth
- 5:1 ... of Adam
- 6:9 ... of Noah
- 10:1 ... of the sons of Noah
- 11:10 ... of Shem
- 11:27 ... of Terah
- 25:12 ... of Ishmael
- 25:19 ... of Issac
- 36:1 ... of Essau
- 36:9 ... of Essau
- 37:2 ... of Jacob

It is my hope that Wiseman's *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis* would again be published, if not by Thomas Nelson Publishers, then by another publisher who would buy the publishing rights.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>P. J. Wiseman, *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985).

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## Numbers in Genesis

I appreciated the article by Carol A. Hill in the December issue (*PSCF* 55, no. 4 [2003]: 239–51).

Another scriptural reason follows for doubting that the numbers in Genesis can be used for bookkeeping, like that Bishop James Ussher tried to do (*The Annals of the World*, 1658). Genesis 46:26 indicates that 66 people went into Egypt and lists them. However, Gen. 46:7 describes daughters and granddaughters, plural, when there is only one daughter and one granddaughter listed. Even if these plurals hadn't been used, it seems extremely unlikely that all of Jacob's descendants, save these two, were male. Not only that, no wives are mentioned by name at all, even though verse 5 and common sense tell us that wives were

included among those who went into Egypt. So 66 is not the real number, although the Bible says that it is. How can this be? Surely those who wrote down Scripture knew full well that 66 is less than 66 plus wives, daughters, and granddaughters. More important, God, the inspirer of Scripture, knew it, too. The conclusion I come to, which is the same as Hill's, is that God had other purposes than the arithmetic when these numbers were given, and, furthermore, that the arithmetic is not important.

Keep up the good work. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" Psalm 84:11 (NIV).

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## Concordism's Illusion That It Is Upholding the Historicity of Genesis 1–11

In *PSCF* Letters (June 2003: 138), I said that neither creation science's global flood nor concordism's local flood could solve the problem of the conflict between the biblical account of the flood and the findings of modern science. Since then Carol Hill (*PSCF* 55 [Sept. 2003]: 209), John McIntyre, and Thomas Godfrey (*PSCF* 55 [Dec. 2003]: 276–8) have written resisting my answer to the problem, namely that God accommodated his theological revelation in Genesis 1–11 to the now antiquated science/ history of the times.<sup>1</sup> They say they believe the history in Genesis 1–11 is accurate history that agrees with the historical/scientific facts.

This belief, though a popular assumption, is not provable from Scripture.<sup>2</sup> There is no biblical reason why God could not or would not accommodate his revelation of theology to the science/history of the times, and all the more so if he has delegated the discovery of science/history to humankind.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Jesus showed that he believed Scripture is sometimes accommodated to ingrained cultural concepts which are not merely scientifically defective, but which are morally defective (Matt. 19:8/Mark 10:5). Divine inspiration does not exclude divine accommodation.

In addition, the writers of history in the Bible regularly imply or say that they are relying upon merely human sources and never claim to have received their history *qua* history from God by revelation. Consequently, the accuracy of the historical books in Scripture is contingent upon the quality of the sources employed. That is why the history in Genesis 1–11, which gives evidence of resting in part upon earlier Mesopotamian stories and motifs, can be considered of rather poor historical worth, while chapters 12–50 regarding the patriarchs can be esteemed more highly because they apparently rest upon traditions passed down by the patriarchs themselves. The resurrection of Christ can be esteemed yet even more highly because it rests upon eyewitness accounts from that very generation.