

# 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.

*Reviewed by Kenell J. Touryan, Chief Technology Analyst at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Golden, CO 80401.* ✦



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### 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.

P. G. Nelson  
25 Duesbery Street  
Hull, HU5 3QE  
England  
P.G.Nelson@hull.ac.uk

### 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-