
November 1989 "BASIS", newsletter of the Bay Area Skeptics

Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet
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Editor: Kent Harker

BAS CHALLENGE

[For over eight years, BAS has offered \$11,000 for a successful demonstration of any paranormal phenomenon under properly controlled circumstances. Some of those whom we have tested include a tarot reader, a man alleging psychokinetic powers of ancient Chinese "I-chi", a man who alleged his dog could do arithmetic and communicate with the dead, and a woman who claimed she had psychic powers. We have made specific challenges to the Bay Area's best-know psychic, Sylvia Brown. Ms. Brown flatly rejected the challenge and hurled epithets of Hitlerian motives in BAS!

The eleven thousand dollars is unclaimed, so show this challenge to a psychic.]

We are Bay Area Skeptics (BAS), a group willing to test paranormal claims. We are committed to learning the truth about psychic powers, whatever that truth may be.

We hereby issue the following challenge to any and all psychics and psychic researchers in the Bay Area: Show us just one psychic power, of any kind, that can be demonstrated to be real under properly controlled scientific test conditions. Claims of psychic powers are abundant -- but we want to see somebody who can actually demonstrate genuine (i.e., under controlled conditions) ability in telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, paranormal healing, or any other alleged psychic power.

If you claim to be psychic, it is to your advantage to accept this challenge: first, because of the monetary reward, and second, because of the recognition and prestige you will achieve as the first person to successfully demonstrate such powers under scientifically controlled conditions to a group of knowledgeable skeptics.

Various persons associated with Bay Area Skeptics have offered a total of \$11,000 to any person who can demonstrate any psychic power under properly controlled scientific test conditions. Furthermore, James "The Amazing" Randi has for decades offered \$10,000 for proof of any psychic power performed under properly controlled conditions. That sum has recently been increased to \$100,000. Bay Area Skeptics will promptly report to Randi anyone whose powers seem worthy of testing. In both cases, the conditions of the test will be arranged in advance with the person claiming

psychic ability. Testing will not begin until there is mutual satisfaction that the arrangements and test protocol are fair and unbiased.

Think of the enormous recognition that would be given to the first person to convince outspoken skeptics that psychic powers are real! Think also of the tremendous benefit to science and humanity if the existence of miraculous powers for healing and transmitting knowledge could at long last be proven! Think how much fun it would be to make skeptics eat crow!

There are probably few other places in the United States where the number of alleged psychics, and the degree of belief in psychic powers, is as high as it is here in the Bay Area. We challenge psychics to demonstrate that their claims are scientifically valid. We challenge psychics to set aside their anecdotal stories and self-serving client testimonials for a laboratory setting. If you think you have genuine psychic powers, the advantages of accepting this challenge are considerable.

Note: The BAS challenge is open, for practical and economic reasons, only to those normally working and residing in the Bay Area. If you are outside the Bay Area, consideration may be given on a case basis. We may be reached at:

Bay Area Skeptics
Attn.: Challenge
4030 Moraga Street
San Francisco, CA 94122.

INFORMATION FOR THOSE SEEKING TO PURSUE THE CHALLENGE OF BAY AREA SKEPTICS

If you are interested in being tested on your psychic claim, please submit a letter which must include the following statements to qualify:

- A precise statement of your claim.
- Specifics of what you would do in a scientific test.
- Specifics of what you would consider to be scientific proof of your claims. (Results must be beyond chance expectations.)
- A statement that you understand and agree that all of the proceedings are to be considered on the record -- either side is free to publish what has transpired.
- A statement in writing that you understand and agree in advance that the test is mutually satisfactory, or there will be no test.
- A statement that you understand and agree that failure to concur with the specifications of the test shall not constitute grounds for any legal action.

Your claim must be:

- CLEAR: Statements like "You might have had heart trouble." are not clear.
- UNDERSTANDABLE: A statement such as "You have to get more centered." is not understandable.
- SPECIFIC: Statements like "You have now or within the past three years had some involvement in a relationship or an investment." are too vague.
- LOGICAL: If you claim that "A" will happen, and if "A" does not happen, then you have failed to substantiate your claim.
- TESTABLE: Statements like "You will be upset within the next few months." are not testable.
- SIGNIFICANTLY ACCURATE: Your performance must be accurate beyond what would be expected by chance.
- DEMONSTRABLY PSYCHIC OR PARANORMAL: For example, some psychics predicted that the Democrats would run a woman for Vice President in 1984. Many political analysts made the same prediction.

We look forward to your reply.

NO HARM DONE?

by Joseph Garber

The "Ramparts" section in the August "BASIS" discusses the use of a flashing light goggle system to "synchronize the brain." The resulting effects, you state, are less than useless. Unfortunately, there may be more to the story than that.

A few months ago I was introduced to a young entrepreneur who was seeking funding for a rather off-beat project. During the course of our meeting I observed that the chap seemed to be suffering from some physical discomfort. I inquired about his condition, and learned that he had for the past several months been undergoing a strenuous physical rehabilitation program. Moreover, his movements were stringently constrained by a back brace.

When I asked about the cause of his problems he said that late in 1988 a friend persuaded him to experiment with a goggle "system" that, in concept, sounds similar to the one described in "Ramparts." The purported psychic benefits of the "system" piqued his interest. He decided to give it a try. Therefore one evening he lay down in bed, donned the goggles, put on the earphones, and turned the "system" on.

He awoke late the next afternoon dazed and in considerable anguish. Apparently the stroboscopic effect of the goggles had been to induce in him what was subsequently diagnosed as an epileptic seizure -- or something very similar (he claimed never to have been subject to epilepsy in his life). The seizure was sufficiently intense, and the muscle contractions sufficiently violent, that physical damage resulted. As of April of this year, he had not fully recovered from the episode.

It seems to me that while New Age nonsense quite clearly is frivolous and very often callously fraudulent, it also can on occasion be quite hazardous. Faith healers, psychic surgeons, food faddists, and medical quacks, despicable though they are, leave in their wakes people whose health is no worse than it was to begin with. Practitioners whose ministrations actually INDUCE illness are in a class alone. Welcome to the Age of Aquarius.

EDITOR'S CORNER

In late July of this year, the ever-alert eyes of John Taube spotted a booklet titled "Is There a REAL Spirit World?" and sent it to me. (John is a kind of human "early warning" radar system.)

The twenty-five page publication is put out by the Worldwide Church of God in Pasadena, a well-funded organization founded by the late Herbert W. Armstrong. The church's publishing has been the mainstay of the ministry: millions are spent annually on printing and distribution to every country in every major language. Armstrong soon built Ambassador College on the grounds of his Pasadena headquarters. His TV and radio propaganda originate from there where he ruled with imperial power until his recent death.

In an attempt to provide evidence for tenets of the belief, Armstrong's ministry has often co-opted material from an unlikely source: the New Age (or, as the illusionists Penn and Teller prefer, the "newedge"). It is a case of using the tune but changing the lyrics.

Skeptics find all this channeling stuff just so much hoey. Armstrong and company find proof of other-world communication, just through the wrong people: the devil's minions. The booklet has five chapters: "Channeling: What is it," "Communication With the Dead?", "Is There a Real Spirit World?", "The 'Spirit Guides' of Channelers," and "Dreams, Dreamers and the Spirit World."

For the answer to the question posed by the first chapter title, the authors asked Dr. Thelma Moss, a UCLA parapsychologist. They asked the wrong person. Randi would have given a more straightforward answer. The second chapter, authored by Keith Stump, has some particularly interesting statements that went off in my head. Stump's first paragraph ends with the question, "Can a person 'make contact' with dead relatives and friends, or famous

persons in history?"

Stump goes on to correctly identify the origin of modern spiritism, the notorious Fox sisters in late March of 1848. The original story was that their house was haunted, but soon the spirits were found to follow the Fox sister wherever they went. The youngsters (preteens) were able to contact spirits on the other side of the astral plane, ask important question (like "Is aunt Ruthie happy?") and a cooperative spirit would respond with mysterious raps. The raps were coded: the number of raps corresponded to the numerical equivalent of a letter of the alphabet, or other times the alphabet would be called letter by letter until a rap came, signaling that that was the correct one. Yes-no questions were coded two for no, three for yes.

Since the spirits apparently have material knuckles with which to rap, is it unreasonable to presume that they have larynxes with which to speak, for a much greater economy of effort? Whatever.

After the death of Kate Fox, an elderly, contrite Margaret Fox confirmed how the whole charade had worked. The girls had perfected a technique whereby they could slip big-toe joints in somewhat the same manner as snapping ones fingers, except that the joint would thump against a shoe sole and resonate through the floor or other hard surface. (The spirits were inexplicably silent when suspicious investigators perched the sisters' shoeless, outstretched legs on cushions.)

They became so adept at it that they learned they could do it with other toe joints. Since any apparent movement to produce the sound was not discernible, some of the most prestigious investigators - - Sir William Crookes, for example -- at a loss for a prosaic explanation declared the Fox sisters' spiritual contacts to be genuine. The early credibility of the Fox sisters was based heavily upon their ages: How could or would mere children be so audacious as to tempt the credulity of sophisticated adults?

For years the sisters enjoyed wealth, prestige and acclaim as a result of their demonstrations. People from all over the world courted their favor and sought the advice of spirits contacted through their mediumship. Many clients whose relationships and problems had been left unresolved by the death of a friend or relative found settlement of the inner conflicts through Kate and Margaret, thus affording a self-justification for the deceit.

Stump asserted that there were many well-researched cases in which mediums were found to be genuine. He declared that there were "well-documented cases of spirit photography" while acknowledging that there are mostly frauds. In no instance did he give references -- or even mention any names of the principals -- for any case he cited except the Fox sisters.

Curious why Kate and Margaret were the only specific names given, I phoned Stump in early August. I identified myself and the

affiliation I was representing for the call, and to my surprise he knew about CSICOP and claimed to be a subscriber to the "Skeptical Inquirer"!

He assured me he had all the resources and references to the cases he wrote about and said he would be happy to send them to me. Since he had written the chapter some two years earlier, he said it would take him a few days to assemble everything, but he promised he would get the information to me very quickly. In early September I sent him the following letter (edited slightly):

Dear Mr. Stump:

I spoke with you nearly a month ago on the phone about a selection you did for the publication, "Is There a REAL Spirit World?", specifically, the article "COMMUNICATION WITH THE DEAD?"

I'm sure you have been very busy, and you may have forgotten the assurance you gave me that you would shortly send me the references you did not include in your article. I asked specifically for the cases in which "There are serious mediums . . . who have stood up under the most RIGOROUS scrutiny of investigators. [p 7]" It would be nice to even know a name behind these alleged miracles. Inclusion of references should be the minimum standard when such extraordinary events are alleged.

Your approach to "spirit photographs" suffers the same omissions. You acknowledge that "A large percentage . . . have been shown to be bogus. . . ." Your next paragraph, however, asserts that "others have stood up to the tests of investigators." again without so much as a hint of which others or by what investigations.

Since you are familiar with the work of CSICOP, you know about the many offers of money for a successful demonstration of some psychic phenomenon under controlled conditions. (BAS has an \$11,000 offer.) There are many hundreds of thousands of dollars awaiting such an event. I find it difficult to understand why those alleging such incredible powers should not be pleased to make us skeptics eat our words and take our money at the same time.

If paranormal advocates are too genteel to humiliate us and take filthy lucre, it could be arranged to do the testing very privately and then donate the winning money to a charity of their choice -- maybe to the Worldwide Church of God.

I can't imagine that the Worldwide Church of God is interested in anything less than the truth. I can't imagine you would want to do anything to promote untruth coming from frauds or from the deluded, even if the latter are of the "self" variety. Because of your responsibility to your readers and to the truth, I can't imagine you would offer as proof any material evidence that hasn't passed the most rigorous scientific tests of validity.

You used the example of the Fox sisters as proof of mediumship. You

are aware that they are confessed frauds. The Bar Association of New York City hired the Academy of Music hall on the evening of 21 October 1888 for an announcement by Margaret Fox Kane: (1)

There is no such thing as a spirit manifestation. That I have been mainly instrumental in perpetrating the fraud of spiritualism upon a too-confiding public many of you already know. It is the greatest sorrow of my life. . . . When I began this deception, I was too young to know right from wrong.

One year later she recanted her confession, leaving us to decide which time she was lying. With the great humiliation one would suffer, I wonder what motive could cause one to declare oneself a fraud other than to unburden a heavy conscience. Apparently she found that it was easier to make a dishonest buck. Her lifelong experience had taught her that her believers are long on credulity and very short memory.

A year later she knew her confession would fade into oblivion, hastened by charges that she was coerced to make it. (When she made the confession, the only coercion came from a seared conscience that evidently abandoned her a year later.) At the very least, insofar as your article is concerned, I should think that prudence would require that a case as controversial as hers must not be among examples of spirit contacts, let alone the ONLY specific example you chose to cite. If the Fox sisters are your star witnesses, I would judge that the credibility of your whole case stands upon toothpicks in sand at best.

Finally, you acknowledge that fraud and deceit are the norm in this spiritism business. In your last paragraph you spear your readers with a false dichotomy: "There remain certain manifestations for which no entirely satisfactory explanation has been offered -- other than ACTUAL SPIRIT CONTACT." In other words, if there is a residual 1% that cannot be explained by some KNOWN method of flummery we are forced to put the case in the spirit-contact genre. We would be pleased to offer you other possibilities.

A version of this letter will appear in print, and I offer you space for up to a 2,500-word rebuttal in our newsletter. I hope to hear from you as you promised. Sincerely, (signed)

As of the date of publication there is no response, and my phone calls have not been returned.

What a shame that the readers of that booklet have little chance of learning about alternate viewpoints on the question. Paranormal blather is spread about the land as widely as oxygen: one has only to breath to get it. One must spend money or go to a BIG library to find skeptical critiques.

Reference:

1. "A Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology". Kurtz (editor). 1985.

US VS. THEM

The scientific creationists have declared war on the classroom. The normal course of what goes into the schools is the result of a consensus backed by the best and most current evidence. The fundamentalist creationists have chosen a revolutionary way to circumvent -- and subvert -- the normal scientific process: the courts.

One of their mainstay positions is that there is a clear dichotomy between evolution and creation: one is either a satanically inspired, Marxist evolutionist or a fundamentalist creationist. From information polls about personal beliefs, that us-them mentality pitches about 80% of the people who believe in some form of divine creation off the narrow fundamentalist ledge firmly into the camp of atheistic satanists.

We know such thinking is asinine, but it is reassuring to hear the same from those in what is clearly a middle ground. This sentiment was recently expressed in a thoughtful and incisive letter from Rev. H. James Hopkins, published in "The San Francisco Examiner". Rev. Hopkins pastors the Lakeshore Baptist Church in Oakland. "BASIS" spoke with Rev. Hopkins and he gave his permission to reprint here his letter:

PASTOR FOR SCIENCE

As one who has very fundamentalist religious roots but has moved to accept a much more moderate theological outlook, I am very much aware of the accuracy of your article entitled "Creationists fight for textbooks."

Indeed, "the issue of whether the belief of creationism should be taught side by side in California science classes with the theory of evolution is decidedly unsettled." I am reminded of this every time I visit the church of my parents. There the war against the "infidel evolutionists" is waged with great passion and regularity.

However, those entrusted with developing curricula for our state's public schools should not be pressured into calling ancient statements of belief "science." The biblical story of creation is a profound religious statement. People of faith still comb it for stirring truths and practical insights into the ways of God with the world. To use it as a scientific text is to misunderstand its intent and to misunderstand its applications.

Science has a vital job to do in inviting our students to explore, appreciate, appropriate and conserve the wonders of the cosmos. This is a big enough job to do without trying to burden scientists

and teachers of science in the public schools with the job of interpreting religious truth. I urge our state Board of Education to let the scientists do their work with joy and I encourage all churches to do their work with joy. The Board of Education needs to know that many professing Christians do not expect them to do our work for us.

LETTERS

[From Dr. Terence Hines, associate professor of psychology at Pace University in New York:]

I must take issue with part of Bob Steiner's "The Blood Readers" piece in the August 1989 "BASIS". He says that the claim that "Big Mafioso" have blood type O is nonfalsifiable. While the claim is certainly very silly and almost certainly wrong, it is certainly NOT nonfalsifiable. It may, in fact, be very difficult to falsify, but that does not make it NONfalsifiable.

Many, many (most?) hypotheses in science are difficult to falsify (one needs lots of fancy equipment and training to do so), but that does not make them NONfalsifiable! The point of nonfalsifiability is that there is no CONCEIVABLE evidence that would show the hypothesis to be wrong. As Steiner himself demonstrates with his example of the survey of "Big Mafioso," it is easy to conceive of data that would show this particular hypothesis to be wrong.

The issue of nonfalsifiability and pseudoscience is a very important one so it's vital to be clear.

STEINER REPLIES:

Professor Hines has raised some interesting points. First, we have substantial agreement on the concept of falsifiability:

1. The issue of nonfalsifiability and pseudoscience is a very important one.
2. It is vital to be clear on the issue.
3. If the claim I addressed were MERELY extremely difficult to falsify, that would not make it nonfalsifiable.

For the benefit of all of us, a brief review of the principle of falsifiability seems to be in order. A brief summary and one example should suffice. I can think of no better source than the writings of Karl R. Popper. It is he who first put forth the excellent concept of falsifiability. After detailing the considerations, he offers the following conclusion:

One can sum up all this by saying that **THE CRITERION OF THE SCIENTIFIC STATUS OF A THEORY IS ITS FALSIFIABILITY,**

OR REFUTABILITY, OR TESTABILITY.

He gives the following example: (1)

Astrology did not pass the test. Astrologers were greatly impressed, and misled, by what they believed to be the confirming evidence -- so much so that they were quite unimpressed by any unfavourable evidence. Moreover, by making their interpretations and prophecies sufficiently vague they were able to explain away anything that might have been a refutation of the theory had the theory and the prophecies been more precise. In order to escape falsification they destroyed the testability of their theory. It is a typical soothsayer's trick to predict things so vaguely that the predictions can hardly fail: that they become irrefutable.

Now we have one of the criteria of falsifiability: If the subject to be addressed is so vague and so imprecise as to be untestable, it is nonfalsifiable.

The issue is clear. The assertion that most of the "Big Mafiosi" have blood type O is: nonfalsifiable per Steiner, and falsifiable per Hines. In order to address the issue, we must analyze the assertion.

The word "most" is no problem. I accept that to mean "more than 50%."

"Blood type O" causes no problem. Science has clearly identified that.

That leaves us to deal with the words "Big" and "Mafiosi."

"Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary" defines "Mafioso" as follows: n. pl. -si: a member of the Mafia or a mafia.

Please note that a mafioso may be a member of either THE Mafia, with a capital "M", or A mafia, with a lower-case "m." From that we conclude that the plural, "mafiosi," may be members of THE Mafia . . . or of A mafia . . . or both . . . or members of several mafias . . . which may or may not include THE Mafia.

In the same dictionary, we find the definition of "Mafia" to be:

n. 1: a secret society of political terrorists 2: a secret organization composed chiefly of criminal elements and usu. held to control racketeering, peddling of narcotics, gambling, and other illicit activities throughout the world 3: (often not cap): a group of people of similar interests or backgrounds in a particular field or enterprise. [Would members of Congress satisfy this requirement? How about the Boy Scouts? Astrologers? Bay Area Skeptics?]

"The Oxford Illustrated Dictionary" defines "mafia" as:

n. 1. (in Sicily) Spirit of hostility to the law and its ministers prevailing among a part of the population; also, those who share in this spirit (not, as often supposed, an organized secret society). [Would the hippies of the 1960s have qualified under this definition?] 2. Secret international criminal organization.

From this point, if we could pin down what the "mafia" is, which we cannot, we would have to decide with a degree of certainty worthy of science whether secretaries and bookkeepers are "mafiosi." How about lawyers and accountants? What about government officials who take payoffs? What about the street gang of teenagers running drugs in the schools? How about the preteens who stand on the sidelines and simply admire and share the spirit of hostility of those teenagers?

How about non-violent, non-revolutionary, philosophical anarchists? Are those silent, law-abiding, non-violent persons also "mafiosi," based upon their beliefs, upon which they take no action? Would they still be "mafiosi" even if they never speak of their beliefs? How would you identify them?

I submit that the numerous AND CONTRADICTIONARY definitions of "mafia" make it IMPOSSIBLE, even in theory, to state with any degree of certainty who are "mafiosi." The concept is so vague and so imprecise that any claim about such undefinable persons is untestable, irrefutable, and nonfalsifiable.

Having established that we cannot possibly, even in theory, identify who are the "mafiosi," we must now determine whether we can identify who are the "BIG mafiosi." Then we must see if we can perform blood tests on them.

That leads us to a very interesting conjecture. Would it be a more difficult task to define, identify, find, and take blood samples from the "big mafiosi" than it would be to simply define in a clear, non-contradictory manner who are just plain-old mafiosi? The answer is No. There are not degrees of difficulty beyond impossible.

Reference:

1. Popper, Karl R. 1963. "Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge". New York: Harper & Row. 1963. p. 37.

[Who says there is an intellectual conspiracy among skeptics? We are no harder on "outsiders" than we are on ourselves. It is probably safe to say there will be round II to this matter. -- Ed.]

DEGREES OF FOLLY: PART VIII

by William Bennetta

Parts I through VII of this article have described the continuing effort by the ICR Graduate School (ICRGS) to gain reapproval, from the California State Department of Education, as a source of advanced degrees in science and in science education. The ICRGS is an arm of the Institute for Creation Research, a fundamentalist ministry that promotes the religious pseudoscience called "creation-science." The founder and president of the ICR is Henry Morris, a preacher and former engineer who poses as an expert in geology, biology, paleontology and various other fields in which he has no detectable credentials.

In Part VI, I told that the Department had sent a committee of examiners to the ICR, in early August, to make a new assessment of the ICR's operations. Four of the committee's five members are scientists from campuses of the University of California or the California State University. The fifth, evidently selected by the ICR, is from a Bible college in Ohio.

In Part VII, I told of the reaction by Henry Morris and his associates to the committee's visit: Foreseeing that the committee would declare the ICRGS defective and unworthy of approval, and that the chief of the Department, Bill Honig, would follow the committee's judgment, the ICR men tried to win sympathy from the press and the public. On 31 August they held a "news conference" to denounce Honig and to distribute a fiercely misleading account of their transactions with his Department, but they achieved only modest success. Most news organizations apparently recognized that the ICR men's only "news" was their own desperation.

The examining committee has not yet submitted its report, nor has there been any other substantive development, during the month since I wrote Part VII, in the ICR case per se. The ICR men have not been idle, however, and in September they mailed a new batch of religious pamphlets to their followers. One of those pamphlets merits special attention from anyone who is interested in the ICR case or in creationism, and I shall tell about it here. W.B.,
13 October

NOAH'S STAND-IN

By definition, creationism is a fundamentalist political movement that seeks to impose onto the population at large, by political means, a body of religious beliefs that revolve around the creation stories in the King James version of the Holy Bible.

The creationists' most conspicuous efforts today are directed against science: They strive to suppress science education in the public schools, to undermine the public's understanding and appreciation of science, and to censor science itself. Their

ultimate goal is to abolish science altogether and to replace it with a pseudoscientific system for affirming biblical narratives and beliefs. That system is "creation-science."

Because the creationists' campaign against science and science education is so prominent, and is so large a part of their current program, the implications of creationism in other realms are often overlooked. Yet those implications are strong and clear -- and nowhere clearer than in the creationists' assiduous denigration of all religious traditions and supernatural beliefs but their own: Any other beliefs are denounced as an evil frauds or are patronized as degenerate vestiges of biblical truths that are known, in proper form, to fundamentalists only.

For an example of how creationists scorn other religious traditions as mere corruptions of biblical lore, consider this: They have announced that the Australian aborigines' Dreamtime stories are simply defective recollections of events recounted in the Book of Genesis, and that the aborigines colonized Australia after the time of Noah's flood. (The announcement was made in 1986 in "Ex Nihilo", a creationist magazine.

A year later, it was properly noted in "The Bumbling, Stumbling, Crumbling Theory of Creation Science", a booklet issued by the Catholic Education Office in Sydney. The booklet's author, Barry Price, commented: "Surely it must be close to blasphemy to dismiss the aspirations, hopes and religious history of a proud people as `racial memories of Creation and the Tower of Babel!'"

Or consider an unsigned article in the September 1989 issue of "Back to Genesis", one of the monthly bulletins published by the ICR. Here is the whole article, verbatim; the ellipses appear in the original:

DID YOU KNOW . . . that the Havasupai Indians living in the Grand Canyon believe this Canyon originated as a result of a flood?

. . . "Before there were many people on earth there were two gods: Tochapa of goodness, and Hokomata of evil. Tochapa had a daughter named Pu-keh-eh, whom he hoped would become the mother of all living. Hokomata, the evil, was determined that no such thing should take place, and he covered the world with a great flood. Tochopa [sic], the good, felled a great tree and hollowed out the trunk. He placed Pu-keh-eh in the hollowed trunk, and when the water rose and flooded the earth, she was secure in her improvised boat.

"Finally the flood waters receded and mountain peaks emerged. Rivers were created; and one of them cut the great gushing fissure which became the Grand Canyon.

"Pu-keh-eh, in her log, came to rest on the new earth.

She stepped forth and beheld an empty world.

"When the land became dry, a great golden sun rose in the east and warmed the earth, and caused her to conceive. In time, she gave birth to a male child. Later, a waterfall caused her to conceive, and she gave birth to a girl. From the union of these two mortal children came all the people on the earth. The first were the Havasupai, and the voice of Tochopa [sic] spoke to them and told them to live forever in peace in their canyon of good earth and pure water where there would always be plenty for all. . . ."

This is, of course, a recognizable (albeit distorted) version of the worldwide Flood of Noah's day. It adds more evidence to support the fact that all peoples are descended from Noah and have a common cultural background.

The "creation-scientists" promulgate such absurd stuff in the service of their "two-model" doctrine, which starts with the declaration that there are only two possible views of "origins." One view comes from literal readings of the Bible; the other comes from natural science; and the two are opposed in a kind of zero-sum contest, so that any evidence supporting the first must be an indictment of the second.

To sustain that nonsense, creationists must ignore, twist or trivialize all the other views of "origins" that exist now or ever have existed. If they were to admit that there are more than two views, their "two-model approach" would collapse, and all their arguments for teaching biblical beliefs in public-school science classrooms would become arguments for teaching religious ideas from countless other sources as well. That is not what the creationists want. They want the schools to propagate fundamentalist beliefs only, as the only ones that deserve to be taken seriously.

So they disdain the aborigines' Dreamtime lore as an ersatz Genesis, and they represent the aborigines themselves as unfortunates who cannot recall what really happened back at Babel. They turn Pu-keh-eh into an ersatz Noah, turn her hollowed tree into an ersatz ark, and turn the Havasupai into people whose faulty memories have substituted a matriarch for a nautical patriarch.

In the same way, they dismiss any number of other myths as debased versions of biblical tales -- false versions that are unworthy of inclusion in any consideration of "origins" but that somehow, while being false, show that the Bible is true.

When we see that creationism and "creation-science" entail the systematic denial or denigration of most of the world's religions, cultures and cultural history, we see how broad the social implications of creationism really are. Those implications must be publicized and apprehended more widely, especially among public-

school officials and teachers. Far too many educators -- misled by too many mindless newspaper stories about "evolution" -- imagine that the creationists despise science alone, and that teachers of history or social studies or literature have nothing to worry about. That is wrong.

MOSES'S GENES

The September "Back to Genesis" also offered a revelatory one-page piece by Henry Morris's son John, who is the ICR's administrative vice-president and "full professor of geology." Prof. John's headline asked: "Do The Difficult Questions Have Answers?" His text said that they surely did, and he gave ten examples. Here, in full, are the five that I found most engaging:

2) Where did God come from? The Bible reveals God as self-existent. This is a basic assumption of Christianity, but all the facts of nature support the validity of this assumption.

3) Where did Cain get his wife? Adam and Eve had "sons and daughters" (Genesis 5). Such unions were a genetic problem by the time of Moses, but were not a problem so soon after Creation.

4) Human color differences? Genetic studies have shown that all humans have the same color, although some have more of the skin-coloring agent than others.

5) Where did the races come from? All humans are descended from Noah's family. Isolation of language groups following the dispersion at the Tower of Babel caused certain characteristics to be expressed which best fit the local environment.

6) What about the dinosaurs? The Bible reveals that land animals were created on Day Six of Creation Week. There is much evidence that humans and dinosaurs have lived at the same time.

I read Prof. John's Q-and-A effort in several ways. It is a reliable sample of the breezy pronouncements that pass for "science" at the ICR. It is a compelling index to the intellectual condition of the ICR's audience. And most importantly, it is a declaration about the fate of the ICR's "graduate school": To me, it says that the ICR men have decided against making any serious attempt to save that "ministry," and that they already have written the school off. Let me explain:

If Bill Honig denies the school's application for reapproval -- as the ICR men, by their own accounts, expect him to do -- then their only real hope will lie in a lawsuit. I have speculated, in Part VII of this article, that the ICR men will not go to court; and Prof. John's most recent performance has convinced me that my

speculation was right. I cannot imagine that anyone who expected to sit on a witness stand and pose as a "scientist," and who expected to be questioned by well prepared adversaries, would today be publishing claims about Moses's genes and Fred Flintstone's pets.

S.B.190 BECOMES LAW

S.B.190, State Senator Becky Morgan's bill for reforming the regulation of unaccredited schools that operate in California, was signed into law by Governor George Deukmejian on 1 October. A summary of the law's provisions will accompany the next installment of "Degrees of Folly."

THE BIBLE BELT BECKONS

If the ICR men fail to obtain Bill Honig's reapproval of their "graduate school," and if they want to remain in the science-degree business, they may move their operation to another state.

On 8 September, I called Donald Drake, who is the acting vice-president of Tennessee Temple University, a Bible college in Chattanooga. Rumor had it, I said, that Tennessee Temple already had offered the ICR a new home. Was the rumor right?

"There has been interaction about it," Drake replied, "but I can't define it any more than that. My understanding now is that [the ICR men] are going to stand and fight it out in California. But if that doesn't work, I'd be very excited to see them come here. I think they would have a much more cooperative relation with our state than they've had in California. -- W.B.

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CATASTROPHISM: TRUE OR FALSE

Remember Immanuel Velikovsky's "Worlds in Collision" and the slew of imitators who followed? How can we forget these Wagnerian views of the cosmos? They certainly took a normally lively debate about cosmology to new levels of absurdity. What makes this sort of view appealing? Where does it stand now? Who are the new proponents? More important, how do scientists deal with questions of cosmology?

Come and hear Dr. David Morrison, CSICOP fellow and head of the Space Science Division at NASA Ames Research Center bring us up to date.

Dr. Morrison is the author of 8 books and over 100 research papers (the recent most popular of which is "Cosmic Catastrophe," co-authored with Clark Chapman). He has an asteroid (2410-Morrison) named after him -- fitting because his primary research is asteroids and planetary satellites using the techniques of optical and infrared astronomy. David is an investigator on the Voyager, Galileo, and comet rendezvous missions.

Join us and at the same time have a look at the recently remodeled Morrison Planetarium kindly put at our disposal by the staff.

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