Preflood Traditions:   
The Weakness of John Pilkey's Origin of the Nations.

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John Pilkey's Origin of the Nations (San Diego, California: Master book Publishers, 1984) is the first volume dedicated to monogenetic interpretations of world mythology in decades. Researched for over twenty years, the volume contains a wealth of archaeological and mythological material. Pilkey derives much of his methodology from "a school of historiographers who dealt seriously with Noah between 1650 and 1800" through the idea that "pagan gods such as Zeus or Osiris can be identified as ancient men" (p. 4). Among these was Jacob Bryant (1715-1804) "whose technique was a process of comparing and identifying names, often through mere similarity of sound." (p. 8) While one might question the soundness of any system utilizing mere name likenesses, Bryant and Pilkey also seek common mythological patterns. Pilkey's major flow lies in the central theme of his book. For in attempting to establish a closed system where all the major characters of early pagan mythologies correspond to the Genesis 10 family of Noah, Pilkey ignores the very real probability that many of these stories and genealogies have been carried over from preflood times.

**Pilkey's Reconstruction of Postflood History**   
According to Pilkey the mythologies of Sumer, Egypt, India, Greece and many other parts of the world are essentially records of the early Noachian family. These Genesis 10 personalities supposedly spent the first 150 years after the flood wandering through-out early Neolithic sites ranging from Egypt and Syria to India (pp. 115,126). This nomadic age ended at Babel, when the first nation states were established. Genesis 10 princes were to rule these states for the next three centuries. Members of this Noachian nobility were supposedly known by different names in the different areas where they ruled. Noah's son Shem, for example, was Brahma in India, Dardanus in Troy, Heracles in Greece, Adad in Syria, Thor among the Teutonic tribes, and possessed other identities as well. Pilkey attempts to explain the long kinglists of Sumeria by terming each dynasty a historical phase, and postulating that the Noachian princes are known by different names within each phase. Noah's son Ham thus becomes Enmebaraggesi from the first dynasty of Kish, Gurmu from the city of Lagash and Ur Nammu from the third dynasty of Ur.

**Weakness of a Closed System**   
Pilkey's reconstruction is incredibly complex, and the mythologies themselves make little mention of such a migrant name swapping nobility, but perhaps the greatest weakness of this system is that in assuming early pagan mythologies must be chronologies of the Genesis 10 "princes," Pilkey allows for no other influences. He does not consider the idea that any of these myths might have originated to explain natural phenomena, or as entertainment. With the possible exception of the preflood segments of Sumerian chronology—which he does not mention—he does not allow for the possibility that many of these myths originated in the antediluvian era. The complexity of Pilkey's system is such that it can only work where all the mythological materials encountered can be labeled postflood traditions of the Noachian family.

**Plausibility of Preflood Traditions Entering into Postflood Mythologies**   
Human tradition did not simply begin after the flood. At least 2,000 years of human existence preceded this catastrophe. Every person entering the ark carried a hundred years, or more, of preflood memories. Their world view was shaped by personalities, cultural traditions and ideas from antediluvian times. Scripture mentions little of even their family background. Nothing is mentioned of Noah's mother, or any of his uncles or aunts. Unless we accept the Jewish legend that he married Naamah, from the line of Cain, we know nothing of his wife or her family. The wives of Noah's three sons are not even recorded, except to say that they did have wives. It would seem that all manner of cultural perspectives, historical memories and ideologies that are not recorded in Scripture could have passed into postflood times.

Could these traditions have been remembered? The best answer to this is perhaps found in the world-wide extent of flood legends. If the illiterate societies of Africa, Oceania and the Americas were able to retain flood traditions for over 4,000 years, does it not seem plausible that early literate civilizations like Egypt, Sumeria, China or Greece could have preserved some preflood legends until they were written down?

Would the preflood era seem important enough to be remembered? Against the fast decreasing life spans accorded subsequent ages, Shem's 600 years must almost have seemed an immortality. But the preflood genealogy of Genesis 5 records average lifetimes of over 900 years! Does it seem plausible that as the Noachian patriarchs witnessed the quick demise of their offspring some mention might have been made of how it was in the old days?

**The Ancient View of Early Antiquity**Early literate civilizations generally looked back to antiquity as the "golden Age," and thought of their own era as decadent. The ancient Egyptians mention their first historical epoch as the time: the gods ruled upon the earth. The Chinese refer to the years before their great flood as when man reached his greatest perfection. The sages of India thought of history in terms of four ages: the first of these, the Krita age, was the most glorious—when man knew no disease and lived for 400 years; the next two ages showed a steady degeneration from this time; then came the flood and after it this present age of Kali, the darkest time of human existence. The Greeks, too, perceived human history in terms of four ages: the best of these, the "Golden Age," ended when the: first woman, Pandora, opened the forbidden box; the following, ages of Silver and Bronze showed a steady worsening of the human condition; then came the flood and this present era.

**Legends of Preflood Generations**   
Many early literate societies mentioned by Pilkey actually mention generations that lived prior to the great flood of their respective traditions. In China2 and Sumeria these traditions take the form of chronologies of ten preflood rulers. The Greek genealogies from Argos and Arcadia both mention kings living prior to the deluge.3 While the Egyptians do not possess a kinglist as such,4 this time would appear to correspond to the era when the gods ruled upon the earth. Stories of a first man, who lived before the flood, have been collected from India, the Americas, and many other places.

**Pagan Traditions of the Preflood Era and Scripture**   
These preflood traditions often sound like the preflood era of Scripture. While Genesis 3 states that Eve, the first woman, was tempted by the serpent to disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit, Pandora (the first woman of Greece) disobeyed the gods and opened the forbidden box, and Yami (the first woman of India), tempted her husband to have sex with her. Each of these women lived in a preflood chronology, and in each case their action resulted in mankind's loss of immortality. A bizarre twist to this story appears in Egypt where Isis (the first woman) gained immortality by bewitching the great god Ra with a magic serpent.5

Elsewhere we read of Cain, in the second Biblical preflood generation, who was the first farmer, the first man to set up markets,6 and the first man to found a city. These same accomplishments are attributed to Shen-nung, the second Chinese preflood emperor. Lycaon, the second preflood king of Arcadia, and Phoroneus, the second preflood ruler of Argos, are both mentioned as founding mankind's first city and Phoroneus appears to have set up markets.7 In Egypt it is Osiris, who appears not as second but rather as midway down the list of gods who ruled upon the earth, who founded mankind's first city and was the first to farm.8

Genesis 4:20-24 records how Lamech, a preflood descendant of Cain, had three sons: Jabal who herded cattle. Jubal who invented the Iyre and musical pipes (NAS) and Tubal-cain who forged implements of bronze and iron. Turning to Greek mythology we find that the great god Zeus had sons with similar accomplishments: Apollo was a herder of cattle; Hermes invented the Iyre and musical pipes; Hephaestus was a forger of metals. The Chinese believed that cattle herding, musical pitch pipes and the forging of bronze and iron all appeared during the reign of the preflood emperor Huang Ti.

**Preflood Personalities within Pilkey's Reconstruction**   
Of those characters mentioned above, Pilkey cites: Hermes (Jubal of Genesis 4:21) as Noah's son Ham; Isis (Eve) and Osiris (Cain) as grandchildren; Zeus (Lamech) and Apollo (Jabal of Genesis 4:20) as great grandchildren; Hephaestus (Tubal-cain of Genesis 4:22) and Phoroneus(Cain)9 as great great grandchildren; and we must deduce that Lycaon (Cain) is supposed to be a great great great grandson.10

Pilkey would have us believe that a great many mythic personalities, who appear as preflood characters in their respective chronologies, are in fact Genesis 10 princes. Almost the entire pantheons of Greece and Egypt are said to be Noachian, though the Greeks believed their gods appeared before the flood,11' and it seems reasonable to equate the Egyptian dynasty of gods with a preflood chronology. The only mention he makes of China's preflood kinglist is when he cites two members of it (Shun and Yao) as grandson and great-grandson of Noah, respectively.

**Conclusion**   
It can be quite reasonably argued that, in some cases, two or even more characters could be confused within one mythic character. Phoroneus, for example, appears to be like Cain in that he is the second preflood king of Argos, who founded the first city, yet he also appears like Nimrod in a myth where, at a time when mankind lost its unity of language, he became the first king. As Cain and Nimrod appear to have been the first imperial figures of their respective eras it is even possible to see where such a confusion could occur.

Pilkey's reconstruction, however, calls for a closed system where pagan mythology must be termed Noachian, and this situation clearly does not exist. A great many myths appear to have descended from preflood times. Many of these myths which do not appear in Scripture, but which are cast in preflood chronologies of their respective cultures, could be genuine traditions of the preflood earth. In addition it seems quite plausible that many stories could have originated as explanation of natural phenomena or even as entertainment.

**Origin of the Nations** nevertheless remains a valid attempt to explain world mythology from a monogenetic perspective. In part one might say that Pilkey has demonstrated the feasibility, or lack of it, of trying to explain world mythology from a Genesis 10 setting. Much of his reconstruction has to be abandoned, through lack of evidence: for simple identifications that seem plausible if it is assumed that every member of pagan mythology must be a Genesis 10 prince are obviously not valid when it is realized that anyone in the previous 2,000 years of human existence could have inspired such a character Yet one wonders how a modified version of Pilkey's methodology that took the full implications of preflood cultural memories would work? It has sometimes been said that learning is a process of making mistakes and then adapting. One can only hope that we have not heard the last from John Pilkey

**REFERENCES**

1 The flood was not mentioned in the earliest version of the four ages, that of Hesiod, before 700 B.C., but in later accounts. Deucalion, the major Greek Noah, appears in a work either written by Hesiod or shortly after his time.

2 See Roy L. Hales, Archaeology, the Bible, and the Postflood Origins of Chinese History, Creation Social Science and Humanities Quarterly, Vol. Vl, No. 2 (Winter 1983) pp. 4-9

3 See Roy L. Hales, Archaeology, the Bible and the Postflood Origins of Greek History, Creation Social Science and Humanities Quarterly, Vol. Vll, No. 4 (Summer 1985) pp. 20-23.

4 Alfred N. Rehwinkel, The Flood (St Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing house, 1951) p. 144 records a tradition where one Toth escaped the floodwaters and brought writing and all the sciences to Egypt. This would almost certainly be the god Thoth, who is one of those gods ruling prior to the pharaohs and who supposedly invented writing and all the sciences. I hesitate to embrace this tradition firstly because it is credited to the Egyptian Manetho who lived during the early third century B.C., and thus is late, secondly because all of Manetho's works are lost and I have yet to find where this particular story is cited. If we were to accept this story as a legitimate tradition, however, the dynasty of the gods was indeed preflood.

5 E. A. Wallis Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians (New York, N.Y. Dover Publications, 1969) Vol. 2, p. 108.

6 Josephus, the Complete Works (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1972) p. 28.

7 Robert Graves, The Greek Myths (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1980) Vol.1, p. 193.

8 James George Frazer, The Golden Bough (New York, N.Y: MacMillan ~ Co, 1943) p. 363.

9 Deduced because Pilkey states that Phoroneus' father Inachus was the son of Mizraim.

10 Deduced because Pilkey makes Lycaon's father Pelasqus a great great grandson.

11 In Greek chronology the Olympian gods first had to overthrow the '´old gods," the Titans. All of the popular gods—Apollo, Hermes, Hephaistos, etc.—helped Zeus in this. Mankind was supposedly formed after this. Then comes the Golden age According to one tradition Deucalion, the Greek Noah, was Pandora's grandson (Apollodorus 1.7.2).