



Book of Genesis

The Judeo-Christian Tradition

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

And God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

And God said, “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters were called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth. And it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind. And God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night. Let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years, and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth. And it was so. And God made two great lights – the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars, also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that

it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.” And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.” And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind.” And it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind. And God said, “Let us make man in my image, after my likeness. And let man have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female, He created them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. And have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you, it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat.” And it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.



Blackfoot

American Indian tribe

Old Man, the Creator

He was out there, traveling all over and making things. Old Man. He had been south and was on his way north. He created the birds and animals as he went. He made prairies, always traveling north, and mountains.

They say that first he made timber and brushlands. He put red paint in the soil, and he formed rivers and waterfalls. He was making the world that stands here today. He formed the river called Milk, the Teton. Then he went across it.

He was getting tired. So he climbed a hill, and he lay down to take a rest.

Old Man stretched out on his back on the hill. He lay his arms straight out from his shoulders. He had stones to outline himself, marking him from his head to his feet. Those stones are right there where they marked him, even today.

After a good rest, Old Man again headed on to the north. He stumbled once and fell. There was a knoll there; it brought him to his knees when he tripped.

“You are something bad to be stumbling on,” said Old Man.

He raised two buttes there, large ones. And he named them the Knees, which they are still called today.

He went on. And he carried more rocks. These he used to make Sweet Grass Hills of Montana.

Old Man decided one day that he would make a mother and her child. He formed them out of clay. He molded the clay in the shape of humans. And he spoke to them.

“You will be people,” he said. He covered up the

clay shapes and went away.

Next morning, Old Man went to the place, taking the covering off the shapes. They seemed to have changed just a little. The morning after that, the shapes had changed some more. And the next day, they were different still.

On the fourth morning, Old Man went over and looked at the shapes that were images of people now.

“Rise up. Walk,” Old Man told them. And they rose up and started walking. They, the woman and child and their maker, walked to the river.

“My name is Na’pi,” he told them, which means Old Man.

The woman looked at the water and said to Old Man, “Tell me, how will it be? Will we live always? Will there be no end to our living?”

“Well, I haven’t ever thought about it,” Old Man said. “We’ll have to decide. Let me take this buffalo chip and throw it in the river. If it floats, then people will die. But they will die for only four days. Four days after they die, they will live once again.”

Then, Old Man said, “If the buffalo chip sinks, then there will be an end to people’s lives.”

He threw the chip in the water. It floated.

The woman bent down and picked up a stone.

“No,” she said. “Let me throw this stone in the river. If it floats, we live forever. But if it sinks, we will feel sorry for one another because we all must die.”

The woman threw the stone in the water. It sank.

“So, you have chosen,” said Old Man. “There will be an end to people.”



Ugandan Tale

The Creation of the World

Kabezya-Mpungu, the highest god, had created the sky and the earth and two human beings, a man and a woman, endowed with Reason. However, these two human beings did not, as yet, possess Mutima, or Heart.

Kabezya-Mpungu had four children, the Sun, the Moon, Darkness, and Rain. He called them all together and said to them, "I want to withdraw now, so that Man can no longer see me. I will send down Mutima in my place, but before I take leave I want to know what you, Rain, are going to do."

"Oh," replied Rain, "I think I'll pour down without cease and put everything under water."

"No," answered the god, "don't do that! Look at these two," and he pointed to the man and the woman. "Do you think they can live under water? You'd better take turns with the Sun. After you have sufficiently watered the earth, let the Sun go to work and dry it."

"And how are you going to conduct yourself, Sun?" the god asked.

"I intend to shine hotly and burn everything under me," said his second child.

"No," replied Kabezya-Mpungu. "That cannot be. How do you expect the people whom

I created to get food? When you have warmed the earth for a while, give Rain a chance to refresh it and make it grow fruit. And you, Darkness, what are your plans?"

"I intend to rule forever!" was the answer.

"Have pity," cried the god. "Do you want to condemn my creatures, the lions, the tigers, and the serpents, to see nothing of the world I made? Listen to me. Give the Moon time to shine on the earth, and when you see the Moon in its last quarter, then you may again rule. But I have lingered too long; now I must go." And he disappeared.

Somewhat later, Mutima, or Heart, came along, in a small container no bigger than a hand. Mutima was crying, and asked Sun, Moon, Darkness, and Rain, "Where is Kabezya-Mpungu, our father?"

"Father is gone," they said, "and we do not know where."

"Oh, how great is my desire," replied Mutima, "to commune with him. But since I cannot find him, I will enter into Man, and through him I will seek God from generation to generation."

And that is what happened. Ever since, all humans born contain Mutima, a longing for God.



P'an Ku

A Chinese Creation Tale

In the beginning, Earth and Sky were one, and the one was called Chaos. Nothing had taken shape, all was a dark, swirling confusion, over and under, round and round. For countless ages, this was the way of the universe, unformed and unilluminated, until from the midst of Chaos came P'an Ku. Slowly, slowly, he grew into being, feeding on the elements, eyes closed, sleeping a sleep of 18,000 years. At last, the moment came when he woke from his sleeping. He opened his eyes: nothing could he see, nothing but darkness, nothing but confusion. In his anger, he raised his great arm and struck out blindly in the face of the murk, and with one great crashing blow he scattered the elements of Chaos.

The swirling ceased, and in its place came a new kind of movement. No longer confined, all those things which were light in weight and pure in nature rose upwards; all those things which were heavy and diseased sank down. With his one mighty blow, P'an Ku had freed sky from earth.

Now P'an Ku stood with his feet on earth, and the sky rested on his head. So long as he stood between the two, they could not come together again. And as he stood, the rising and the sinking went on. With each day that passed, earth grew thicker by ten feet and the sky rose higher by ten feet, thrust even farther from the earth by P'an Ku's body, which daily grew in height by ten feet also. For 18,000 years more, P'an Ku continued to grow until his own body was gigantic, and until earth was formed of massive thickness and the sky had risen far above. Thousands of miles tall he stood, a great pillar separating earth from sky so that the two might never again come together to dissolve once more into a single Chaos. Throughout long ages he stood, until the time when he could be sure that earth and sky were fixed and firm in their places.

When this time came, P'an Ku, his task achieved, lay down on earth to rest, and died. And now he, who in his life had brought shape to the universe, by his death gave his body to make it rich and beautiful. He gave the breath of his body to form the winds and clouds, his voice to be the rolling thunder, his two eyes to be the sun and moon, the hairs on his head and beard to be the stars, the sweat of his brow to be the rain and dew. To the earth he gave his body for the mountains and his hands and feet for the two poles and the extremes of east and west. His blood flowed as the rivers of earth and his veins ran as the roads which cover the land. His flesh became the soil of the fields and the hairs of his body grew on as the flowers and trees. As for his bones and teeth, these sank deep below the surface of earth to enrich it as precious metals.

And so P'an Ku brought out of Chaos the heavens in all their glory and the earth with all its splendors.

But although the earth was beautiful, it still seemed to lack something, something which would make it less empty and dull for the gods who came down from Heaven to roam over its surface.

One day, the goddess Nu-kua, whose body was that of a dragon but whose head was of human form, grew weary of the loneliness of the earth. After long thought, she stooped and took from the ground a lump of clay. From this, she fashioned with her dragon claws a tiny creature. The head she shaped after the pattern of her own, but to the body she gave two arms and two legs. She set the little thing back on the ground, and the first human being came to life and danced and made sounds of joy to delight the eyes and ears of the goddess. Quickly, she made many more of these charming humans, and felt lonely no longer as they danced together all about her.