

The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3

Part I: Introduction to Biblical Cosmogony

Bruce K. Waltke

Until about a century ago, most persons living within Western culture found their answer to the question of cosmogony in the first words of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But today their descendants turn more and more to encyclopedias or other books on universal knowledge. There, both in text and in picture, an entirely different origin is presented. In place of God they find a cloud of gas, and in place of a well-organized universe they find a blob of mud. Instead of beginning with the Spirit of God, the new story begins with inanimate matter which, through some blind force inherent in the material substance, brought the world to its present state during the course of billions of years. This substitution of matter for spirit accounts for the death of Western civilization as known about a century ago. Why has the new generation turned from the theologian to the scientist for the answer to his nagging question about the origin of the universe? In a provocative work D. F. Payne addressed himself to this question.¹ He concluded that the switch came about because of a threefold attack on the first chapter of Genesis during the latter half of the last century.

CHALLENGES TO BIBLICAL COSMOGONY

First, there came the challenge of the scientific community. In the wake of Charles Darwin's revolutionary hypothesis of

1 D. F. Payne, *Genesis One Reconsidered* (London: Tyndale Press, 1962).

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a series of articles first delivered by the author as the Bueermann-Champion Foundation Lectures at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon, October 1-4, 1974, and adapted from *Creation and Chaos* (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974).

evolution to explain the origin of species, the majority of the scientific community fell in with Darwin's hypothesis against the Bible. They believed they could validate Darwin's theory by empirical data, but they thought that they could not do the same for the Bible.

The second challenge came from the comparative religionists who sought to discredit the biblical story by noting the numerous points of similarity between it and ancient mythological creation accounts from various parts of the Near East being studied at that time. If Darwin's work, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, was the bellwether for the scientific challenge, Hermann Gunkel's work, *Schopfung und Chaos*,² persuaded many that the Hebrews from their entrance into Canaan had a fairly complete creation myth like all the other ancient cosmogonic myths. But in Israel's story, according to Gunkel, Yahweh took the place of the pagan hero gods. According to his view, the Hebrew version of creation was just another Near Eastern folktale, which was improved in the process of time by the story transmitters' creative and superior philosophical and theological insights.

The third challenge came from literary criticism. The case was stated most persuasively by Julius Wellhausen in his most influential classic, first published in 1878 and still in print under the title, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*.³ Here he argued that there were at least two distinct accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 and that these two accounts contradicted each other at various points.

This threefold challenge radically altered the shape of theological education throughout Europe and America. The position of most of the educators at the turn of the century is tersely caught in this pronouncement by Zimmern and Cheyne in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*:

It may be regarded as an axiom of modern study that the descriptions [note the plural] of creation contained in the biblical records, and especially in Gen. 1:1-2:4a, are permanently valuable only in so far as they express certain religious truths which are still recognized as such. To seek for even a kernel of historical fact in such cosmogonies is inconsistent with a scientific point of view.⁴

2 Hermann Gunkel. *Schopfung und Chaos* (Gottingen: Vanenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921).

3 Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957).

4 *Encyclopaedia Biblica*. s. v. "Creation."

Payne observed, "By the year 1900, therefore, many people had been educated to believe that the Bible's statements about creation were neither accurate, inspired, nor consistent."⁵ No wonder the sons of the fathers turned their backs on their heritage as they sought to answer the question, "How did the world originate?"

The purpose of this series of articles is not to reappraise the apology for the biblical account of creation. But it seems imprudent to address oneself to this subject without taking note of the debate between reaction and evolution.

Perhaps the author can best state his position by a personal anecdote. Last spring, through the mediation of one of his students, who was both a premedical and a theological student, the author was requested by his student's professor in a course on genetics at Southern Methodist University to give a lecture defending the creationist viewpoint. The thesis the author presented was that evolution is a faith position that cannot be supported by empirical data. In the field of genetics, for example, it can be demonstrated that microevolution takes place but it cannot be demonstrated that macroevolution has occurred. To illustrate, it is well known that the varieties of gulls inhabiting the northern hemisphere between North America and Western Siberia interbreed with one another in the middle of the ring, but those at the end of the ring do not interbreed. Therefore, by a strict definition of species, it appears almost certain that by natural selection distinct species arose on this planet. But what cannot be proved -- and this is essential if the theory of general evolution is to stand -- is that one of these species of gulls is superior to another, that is, that it has a new functioning organ with a genetic capacity to carry it on. To this writer's knowledge there is no observed instance of the development of a cell to greater specificity. G. A. Kerkut, professor of physiology and biochemistry at the University of Southampton, concluded:

. . . there is the theory that all the living forms in the world have arisen from a single source which itself came from an inorganic form. This theory can be called the General Theory of Evolution, and the evidence that supports it is not sufficiently strong to allow us to consider it as anything more than a working hypothesis.⁶

During the questioning session that followed the lecture, the basic thesis was accepted by both professor and students, but their next question was, "Why should we accept your faith position instead of ours?"

5 Payne, *Genesis One Reconsidered*, p. 5.

6 G. A. Kerkut. *Implications of Evolution* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1960), p. 157.

Now the author is not suggesting that by this one experience he has refuted the hypothesis of evolution, but he is maintaining that all answers which attempt to explain the origin of the universe are essentially faith positions. The question that the LORD asked of Job is asked of every man: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (38:4) Since science is the systematic analysis of *presently*, observed processes and their phenomena, science cannot and ought not attempt to answer the question of the origin of the universe. The answer is beyond the range of empirical proof.

IMPORTANCE OF BIBLICAL COSMOGONY

But it may be asked, "What difference does all this make?" It is important because the question of cosmogony is closely related to one's entire world view. Someone has said that our world view is like the umpire at a ball game. He seems unimportant and the players are hardly aware of him, but in reality he decides the ball game. So likewise one's world view lies behind every decision a person makes. It makes a difference whether we come from a mass of matter or from the hand of God. How we think the world started will greatly influence our understanding of our identity, our relationship to others, our values, and our behavior. Because the question of cosmogony is important for understanding some of the basic issues of life, intelligent men throughout recorded history have sought the answer to this question. Just as the knowledge of the future is crucial for making basic choices in life, so also the knowledge of beginnings is decisive in establishing a man's or a culture's *Weltanschauung* ("world view"). No wonder the Bible reveals both.

Because of man's limitation as a creature, he must receive this knowledge by revelation from the Creator. Moreover, because of the noetic effects of sin, he needs to be reborn before he can comprehend that revelation.

The Christian faith rests on God as the first Cause of all things. God has created man a rational creature, and while the Christian's faith does not rest on rationalism, he should be able to validate and defend his position. Therefore, we applaud and encourage those engaged in apologetics.

Ancient myths died at just this point; they could not be believed because there came into man's experience too much contradictory evidence. As long as the world view assumed by the myth satisfactorily accommodated the apparent realities of the

objective world, it served as a plausible explanation of things and gave a cohesive force to the community. But when that world view slipped radically out of line with the general experience of "the way things are," it ceased to be effective, Mary Douglas, in her work *Purity and Danger*,⁷ made the helpful analogy that myth and ritual are like money in providing a medium of exchange. As the test of money is whether it is acceptable or not, so primitive ritual is like good money so long as it commands assent.

It is precisely because of this incongruity between myth and reality that the old liberal myth of man's self-progress died. Anderson rightly observed:

It is worthy of note that contemporary poets give expression to a sense of catastrophe. . . . As Amos Wilder points out, poets like John Masefield and Alfred Noyes, Vachel Lindsay and Edwin Markham, even Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson, and many others who reflected the buoyant optimism of the nineteenth century doctrine of progress, no longer speak to our situation. Where are the Browning clubs or the Tennyson circle?⁸

They are gone because man can no longer believe in his own self-made Utopia.

Orlinsky made this point well when addressing the symposium of the annual meeting of the American Learned Society in 1960:

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the earlier part of our own twentieth, are not unfairly labeled by historians as the age of reason, enlightenment, ideology, and analysis -- in short, the age of science. In this extremely exciting epoch, man began increasingly to reject, and then to ignore the Bible, the revealed Word of God, for more than two thousand years preceding, as the ultimate source of knowledge by which the problems of society could be resolved. Man began to depend upon his own powers of observation and analysis to probe into the secrets of the universe and its inhabitants.

Rationalists, political scientists, economists, historians, philosophers, psychologists -- the two centuries preceding our own times are full of great minds who grappled with societal problem, and proposed for them solutions of various kinds. . . . If only reason prevailed in man's relations to his fellowman -- the kind of universal peace and personal contentment that religion had been promising humanity for over two thousand years would finally come to pass.

7 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 128.

8 Bernhard Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos* (New York: Association Press, 1967), p. 13.

Alas, this has not come to pass. If anything the opposite seems to prevail. Ever since World War I in the teens, the world depression of the early thirties, the rise of fascism in Europe, the horrors of World War II, the cold and hot and lukewarm wars of the past decade and a half, increasing unemployment and automation, and the rather frequent recessions, it has become ever more clear that reason alone was unable to bring our problems closer to solution. And so, people have begun to come back to Holy Scripture, to the Bible.⁹

In a word, the challenge has failed, and its alternative hypothesis has left the world spiritually bankrupt. We are reminded of Simon's answer when the Lord asked the Twelve if they too would leave Him: "To whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

But unfortunately, when we turn to the theologians we discover that those who study the Scriptures have not as yet established a consensus of opinion regarding the meaning of the first two verses of the Bible. In this series of articles the author hopes to familiarize his readers with the positions advocated and to defend his own conclusion.

ASSUMPTION UNDERLYING BIBLICAL COSMOGONY

Four assumptions underlie the method used in this series.

1. The validity of the philological approach used by the rabbis of Spain during the ninth century A.D. is assumed, in contrast to the mystical approach employed by their French peers.

2. The historical method of interpretation will be employed as faithfully as possible. Through the tools at our disposal, we must work our way back into the world of the biblical authors if we hope to understand their message.

The biblical authors themselves make it abundantly plain that they were a part of their world, and that they originated out of the nations of their time and place. For example, concerning the list of nations in Genesis 10, Eichrodt observed:

The list of nations in Gen. 10, which is unique in ancient Eastern languages, includes Israel, proudly conscious though it is of its preferential historical position, in the general context of humanity. No claim is made for Israel of any fundamentally different natural capacity or "inherited nobility" which set it apart from the rest of the nations.¹⁰

9 Harry M. Orlinsky, "The New Jewish Version of the Torah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82 (1963): 249.

10 Walther Eichrodt. *Man in the Old Testament*. trans. K. and R. Gregor Smith (Chicago: H. Regnery. 1951), p. 36.

One of Israel's earliest creeds begins with this humble confession: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there" (Deut. 26:5).¹¹ Ezekiel deflates the pretentious pride of his fellow countrymen by reminding them, "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite" (Ezek. 16:3).

These notices of their common origins with the other peoples of the ancient Near East went by largely unnoticed until one day in 1872. At that time George Smith, a young Assyriologist employed as an assistant in the British Museum, was sorting and classifying tablets excavated from Nineveh about twenty years earlier. In the course of his work he was struck by a line on one of the tablets. He later wrote of this epoch-making moment:

Commencing a steady search among these fragments, I soon found half of a curious tablet which had evidently contained originally six columns. . . . On looking down the third column, my eye caught the statement that the ship rested on the mountains of Nizir, followed by the account of the sending forth of the dove, and its finding no resting place and returning. I saw at once that I had here discovered a portion at least of the Chaldean account of the Deluge.¹²

But that was not all. Included among the religious texts from Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh was the Babylonian creation myth known as *Enuma Elish* (after its opening words "When on high") -- a relatively late version of an ancient myth which dates back to at least the First Babylonian Dynasty (ca. 1830-1530 B.C.), whose greatest king was Hammurabi (ca. 1728-1686 B.C.). This myth was first published by George Smith in 1876 under the title *The Babylonian Account of Genesis*.

It was on the basis of Smith's work that Gunkel wrote his most influential work on creation and chaos in the Old Testament. Though few will be enamored with Gunkel's clever analysis, no serious student of Scripture today should give less attention to this material than that given by Gunkel.

3. Having analyzed our material by the philologico-grammatical approach, we must attempt to classify and systematize it. The texts of the Old Testament bearing on cosmogony may be grouped into four divisions: (a) texts describing the creation under the figure of

¹¹Gerhard von Rad considered this the first of all biblical creeds. See *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1957), 1: 127-28.

¹²George Smith, cited in Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 217.

Yahweh's combat with the sea monster; (b) Genesis 1; (c) texts from the wisdom school bearing on creation, namely Psalm 104, Job 38, and Proverbs 8; and (d) the use of creation by Isaiah as he addressed the exiles in Babylon.

4. Any given text must be interpreted within the realm of Old Testament thought. Eichrodt's words are pointed but well taken:

In deciding, therefore, on our procedure for the treatment of the realm of OT thought, we must avoid all schemes which derive from Christian dogmatics -- such, for example, as "Theology-Anthropology-Soteriology," "*ordo salutis*," and so on. Instead we must plot our course as best we can along the lines of the OT's own dialect.¹³

In a word, we must try to extrapolate from the Old Testament itself its unifying concepts and interpret the texts bearing on cosmogony within those categories.

CREATION AND THE RAHAB-LEVIATHAN THEME

In several passages of the Old Testament, reference is made to God's conflict with a dragon or sea monster named as Rahab, "The Proud One," or Leviathan, "The Twisting One."¹⁴ At least five of these texts are in a context pertaining to the creation of the world, and it is for this reason that these are considered in this series on creation. An understanding of these passages will aid in understanding the Genesis creation account. For example, in Job 26:12-13 we read: "He quieted the sea with His power, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab. By His breath the heavens are cleared; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent." In Psalm 74:13-17 it is recorded: "Thou didst break the heads of the sea-monsters in the waters, Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan; Thou didst give him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. Thou didst break open springs and torrents; Thou didst dry up ever-flowing streams, Thine is the day, Thine is the night; Thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast established all the boundaries of the earth; Thou hast made summer and winter,"

Three questions may be asked about these passages: Who are the monsters? How are we to interpret references to them in the Old Testament? What is the significance of these references? These questions pertain to identification, interpretation, and significance.

13 Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*. trans, J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961). p. 33.

14 Rahab is referred to in Job 9:13; 26:12; Pss. 87:4; 89:10; Isa. 30:7; and 51:9. Leviathan is mentioned in Job 3:8; 41:1; Pss. 74:14; 104:26; and Isa. 27:1.

IDENTIFICATION

To identify Rahab and Leviathan. Wakeman turned to the mythological lore of the ancient Near East.¹⁵ After analyzing twelve myths from Sumer, India, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Canaan, she concluded that in spite of their great variety, all the battle myths are, as she put it, "about the same thing." Her analysis showed that at the core of the myths three features were always present: (1) a repressive monster restraining creation, (2) the defeat of the monster by the heroic god who thereby releases the forces essential for life, and (3) the hero's final control over these forces.¹⁶

These myths of the ancient Near East identify Rahab or Leviathan as an anticreation dragon monster.¹⁷ Interestingly, the biblical texts that refer to Rahab or Leviathan imply these same three features found in these other mythical cosmogonies.

Job 3: 8 makes it clear that Leviathan is a repressive, anti-creation monster who swallows up life. Job said: "Let those curse it who curse the day, who are prepared to rouse Leviathan." Summarizing the context of this verse, Fishbane concluded:

The whole thrust of the text in Job iii 1-13 is to provide a systematic *bouleversement*, or reversal, of the cosmicizing acts of creation described in Gen. i-ii 4a. Job, in the process of cursing the day of his birth (v. 1), binds, spell to spell in his articulation of an absolute and unrestrained death wish for himself and the entire creation.¹⁸

In several passages this repressive anticreation monster is associated with the sea. For example, Psalm 89:9-10 reads: "Thou dost rule the swelling of the sea; when its waves rise, Thou dost still them. Thou thyself didst crush Rahab like one who is slain; Thou didst scatter Thine enemies with Thy right arm." Isaiah 27:1b reads, "He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea." Job 26:12-13 and Psalm 74:13-17, cited earlier, also associate this monster with the sea, as do Psalms 89:10; 104:26; and Isaiah 27: 1.

The other two features, viz., the destruction of the monster and the controlling of life forces by the destroyer, are also seen in several of the biblical Rahab-Leviathan passages. For example,

15 Mary K. Wakeman, *God's Battle with the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973).

16 Ibid., pp. 4-6.

17 Cf. the conflict between Apsu and Tiamat and between Ea and Marduk in the Chaldean myth "Enuma Elish." See E. A. Speiser, "The Creation Epic," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ed. James P. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 60.

18 Michael Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23-26 and Job III 3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971): 153.

Isaiah 51:9 states that Yahweh cut Rahab in pieces and pierced the dragon, and Psalm 89:10 mentions that Yahweh crushed Rahab and quelled the turbulent sea associated with the dragon.

Gordon's study of leviathan in both the Bible and the Ugaritic texts puts the case beyond doubt.¹⁹ He convincingly demonstrated that the myth about Rahab-Leviathan belongs to the mythology of ancient Canaan.

INTERPRETATION

Having established that Leviathan in the Canaanite mythology is a dragon resisting creation, we must raise the hermeneutical question whether the inspired poets of Israel meant that Yahweh actually had a combat with this hideous creature or whether this Canaanite story served as a helpful metaphor to describe Yahweh's creative activity. If we assume that the biblical authors were logical -- and they were that and far more -- then we must opt for the second interpretation of these references. The poets who mention this combat also abhor the pagan idolatry and insist on a strict monotheism.

Job, for example, protested his innocence by claiming: "If I have looked at the sun when it shone, or the moon going in splendor; and my heart became secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, that too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, for I would have denied God above" (Job 31:26-28). Isaiah, who stated that Yahweh hewed Rahab and pierced the dragon (Isa. 51:9), also wrote, "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel. . . : 'I am the first, and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me'" (Isa. 44:6). Similar words are stated later by Isaiah: "That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me; I am the LORD, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these" (Isa. 45 :6-7).

Allen stated the issue well when he concluded, "The problem. . . is not one of borrowed theology but one of borrowed imagery."²⁰ The biblical prophets and poets, who were accustomed to clothing their ideas in poetic garb, elucidating them with the help of simile, and employing the familiar devices of poetry, were

19 Cyrus H. Gordon. "Leviathan: Symbol of Evil," in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*. ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 1-9.

20 Ronald Barclay Allen. "The Leviathan-Rahab-Dragon Motif in the Old Testament" (Th. M. thesis. Dallas Theological Seminar, 1968). p. 63.

not, to be sure, deterred from using what they found at hand in Israel's epic poetry, McKenzie observed:

It does not seem possible any longer to deny the presence of mythological allusions in the Old Testament. They appear almost entirely, as far as present research has shown, in poetic passages, where they add vividness and color to the imagery and language. They do not, on the other hand, permit one to affirm the existence of creation myths among the Hebrews, corresponding to those of Mesopotamia and Canaan. Gunkel's brilliant attempt to do this was a conspicuous failure. The creation accounts of the Bible were studiously composed to exclude mythological elements. The fact that such allusions were freely admitted in poetry indicates no more than this, that the Hebrews were acquainted with Semitic myths. Where these are cosmogonic myths, the work of the creative deity, or his victory over chaos, is simply transferred to Yahweh; other deities involved in the myths are ignored. In no sense can it be said that the Hebrews incorporated "mythopoeic thought" (to borrow a word from Frankfort) into their own religious conceptions; they did, however, assimilate mythopoeic imagery and language.²¹

It is inconceivable that these strict monotheists intended to support their view from pagan mythology, which they undoubtedly detested and abominated, unless they were sure that their hearers would understand that their allusions were used in a purely figurative sense.

A study of the texts in which the Rahab-Leviathan emblem is found shows that the biblical authors used it in one of three ways. First, as seen in the texts considered thus far, they employed the figure to describe God's creative activity in the prehistoric past.

Second, the symbol of Yahweh's victory over the dragon is used as symbolic of Yahweh's victory over Pharaoh and Israel's enemies in the historic present. They were particularly fond of using Rahab as a nickname for Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. Rahab evoked appropriate feelings of Yahweh's victory in creating Israel by destroying the oppressive tyrant and drying up his restraining sea. In Isaiah 30: 7 the prophet, referring to Egypt, wrote, "Therefore I have called her Rahab who has been exterminated." Later when Isaiah calls for the second exodus, this time from the oppressive Babylonian, he commands: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not Thou who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not Thou who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a

21 John L. McKenzie. S. J., "A Note on Psalm 73 (74); 13-15," *Theological Studies* 2 (1950): 281-82.

pathway for the redeemed to cross over?" (Isa. 51:9-10) As Anderson observed: "It was then that Yahweh slew the monster Rahab, separated the Great Deep (*tehom rabbah*) so that the people could pass through (44:27), [and] rebuked the rebellious Sea (Yam; 51:10)."²²

Third, whereas Yahweh's poets used the symbol of Rahab to depict His triumph at creation in the prehistoric past, and the prophets employed the story for His victories over Israel's political enemies in the historic present, the apocalyptic seers used it to portray Yahweh's final triumph over the ultimate enemy behind all history, even Satan, in the posthistoric future. Thus in Isaiah we read: "In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, with His fierce and great and mighty sword, even Leviathan the twisted serpent; and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea" (Isa, 27: 1). More clearly John says in his apocalypse: "And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him" (Rev. 12:7-9).

SIGNIFICANCE

In all these passages, the literary allusions to Yahweh's defeat of Rahab serve to underscore the basic thought of the Old Testament: Yahweh will triumph over all His enemies in the establishment of His rule of righteousness. Negatively, the allusion serves as a polemic against the gods of the foreign kingdoms. Not Baal of the Canaanites, not Marduk of the Babylonians, not Pharaoh of Egypt, but Yahweh, God of Israel, author of Torah, triumphs. As the Creator of the cosmos, He triumphed at the time of creation; as Creator of history, He triumphs in the historic present; and as Creator of the new heavens and the new earth, He will triumph in the future.

22 Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos*, p. 128. Incidentally, it may be noted that in contrast to Moses' rod which turned into a serpent (Exod, 4:3). Aaron's rod turned into a dragon (Exod. 7:12). It was Aaron's draconic rod that swallowed the draconic rods of the Egyptians. The point of the incident is now clear: The rod is a symbol of rulership, and God thus demonstrated that His kingdom would swallow up Pharaoh's kingdom. Moreover, God indicated that He would subsume its powers within His own dominion. The psalmist accordingly looked forward to the day when Egypt will be incorporated into Yahweh's rule: "shall mention Rahab and Babylon among those who know Me" (Ps. 87:4).

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

Dallas Theological Seminary
3909 Swiss Ave.
Dallas, TX 75204
www.dts.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu