



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 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.

Adapted from *The King James Bible*.
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Blackfoot

American Indian tribe

All alone, Old Man was travelling about, making things to beautify the world. He came from the south, travelling north, making animals and birds as he passed along. He made the mountains, prairies, timber, and brush first. So he went along, travelling northward, making things as he went, putting rivers here and there, with waterfalls on them, putting red paint in the soil here and there in the ground, making the world a wondrous place.

He made the Milk River (the Teton) and crossed it, and, being tired, went up on a little hill and lay down to rest. As he lay on his back, stretched out on the ground, with arms extended, he marked himself out with stones – the shape of his body, head, legs, and arms. There you can see those rocks today. After he had rested, he went on northward, and stumbled over a knoll and fell down on his knees. Then he said, “You are a bad thing to be stumbling against.” So he raised up two large buttes of water there, and named them the Knees, and they are called so to this day. He went on further north, and with some of the rocks he carried with him he built many rolling hills.

Old Man covered the plains with grass for the animals. He marked off a piece of ground, and in it he made to grow all kinds of roots and berries. He put trees in the ground. He put all kinds of animals on the ground. When he made the bighorn ram, he made it out on the prairie. It did not seem to travel easily on the prairie; it was awkward and could not go fast. So he took it by one of its horns, and led it up into the mountains, and turned it loose. It skipped about among the rocks, and went up fearful places with ease. So he said, “This is the place that suits you; this is what you are fitted for, the rocks and the mountains.” While he was in the mountains, he made the antelope out of dirt, and turned it loose, to see how it would go. It ran so fast that it fell

over some rocks and hurt itself. He saw that this would not do, and took the antelope down on the prairie, and turned it loose; it ran away fast and gracefully, and he said, “This is what you are suited to.”

One day, Old Man determined that he would make a woman and a child, so he formed them both – the woman and the child, her son – of clay. After he had moulded the clay in human shape, he said to the clay, “You must be people,” and then he covered it up and left it, and went away. The next morning he went to the place and took the covering off, and saw that the clay shapes had changed a little. The second morning there was still more change, and the third still more. The fourth morning he went to the place, took the covering off, looked at the images, and told them to rise and walk – and they did so. They walked down to the river with their Maker, and then he told them that his name was Na’pi, Old Man.

As they were standing by the river, the woman said to him, “How is it? Will we always live, will there be no end to it?” Na’pi said, “I have not thought of that. We will have to decide. I will take this buffalo chip and throw it in the river. If it floats, when people die, in four days they will become alive again; they will die for only four days. But if it sinks, there will be an end to them.” He threw the chip into the river, and it floated. The woman turned and picked up a stone, and said, “No, I will throw this stone in the river. If it floats, we will always live. If it sinks, people must die, so that they will be able to feel sorrow for each other.” The woman threw the stone into the water, and it sank. “There,” said Old Man, “you have chosen. There will be an end to people.”

Adapted from *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, by George Bird Grinnell.
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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

A long, long time ago, the Earth and Sky were one tightly joined object, just a tumble of elements in an egg-shaped cloud called Chaos. There was no order and no life, only the constantly moving swirl of Earth and Sky, endlessly rolling on, around, and over one another.

Deep within the swirling cloud, P'an Ku was forming. For 18,000 years, he slept in the center of the vortex until one day he awakened. Like a newborn chick emerging from his shell, P'an Ku slowly – very slowly – became aware of the world. When he finally opened his eyes, he was dismayed by the dark, chaotic whirl that surrounded him. Reaching out with his massive arm, the giant P'an Ku struck out at Chaos, and his thunderous blow caused the elements to shake.

Things that were heavy fell and things that were light rose. The heavy things settled into Earth and the luminous, light elements became the Sky. With his mighty blow, P'an Ku had created the Earth and the Sky as two distinct entities. He rested the Sky on his shoulders and he walked upon the Earth, ensuring the two elements would stay separated. As each day passed, the Earth grew 10 feet thicker and the sky grew 10 feet higher. P'an Ku, already a giant, also grew 10 more feet each day, able to always keep the Earth and Sky from touching. He lived like this for 18,000 more years, all three growing larger each day.

At the end of those years, P'an Ku had achieved his work, ensuring the Earth and Sky were secure in their realms and so far apart that they would never again collapse into Chaos. Finally, he laid down on the Earth to rest and peacefully died. In time, the

elements of his body were absorbed into the Earth, making it even more beautiful. His breath became the wind and clouds; his blood became the rushing rivers. His voice floated to the sky and became the sound of rolling thunder. His two eyes turned into the sun and moon, so that they might always keep a watch over the world. His hairs became the grass and trees and his sweat became the morning dew. Every part of P'an Ku became useful to the Earth. Even his bones and teeth sank deep into the soil, eventually becoming pockets of precious metals.

In time, gods and goddesses from the heavens came to visit the Earth, impressed with the flourishing natural world that P'an Ku's efforts had created.

One goddess in particular, Nu-kua, was especially taken with the Earth and enjoyed exploring all of its different habitats. She fretted, though, thinking that the Earth was missing something. More life was needed here, she thought, and she set about to make a new creature to inhabit the earth.

Nu-kua, a goddess with the body of a dragon and the face of an angel, took a mound of clay and sculpted a face very much like her own. The body, though, was a different shape, something with two arms and two legs that could more easily navigate all of the different terrains of the Earth. She set her creation upon the ground and was delighted when the clay form came to life. The little human sang and danced and made joyful sounds. Nu-kua, delighted by her handiwork, made many more of the human creatures and joined them in their celebration.

Adapted from *Myths and Legends of China*, by E.T.C. Werner.
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