



CREATION AND EVOLUTION

The creation narrative: an African perspective

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As a child growing up in rural northern Ghana, one of my favoured and most memorable times is after the evening meal, when all the children gathered in grandma's courtyard, sat around the fire, to listen to stories. We were told all kinds of funny, intriguing, moving and downright scary tales from traditional African folklore. These ranged from stories about the insatiable greed and foolhardiness of the hyena, the devious and crafty rabbit, the coolheaded wit of the savanna sparrow, to stories about astonishingly rare kindness and magnanimity of wild beasts.

The biblical narrative of creation as contained in Genesis 1 & 2 is not exclusive to Christianity or even a preserve of monotheistic religions. Several people groups across racial, ethnic and religious divide around the world have their own narratives or myths of creation. This is certainly true of all Africans tribes. As a teenager I heard similar myths about creation from my grandmother. My understanding of a "myth" is that of something hidden or "wrapped up". Myths can therefore be likened to wrappers or packages. One can be deceived or get carried away by the package. The real thing, however, is *buried or hidden* inside.

The myths I heard from my grandmother as a teenager were always wrapped up with drama and melodious traditional choruses. The main contents of the stories, however, were always twofold. First, they were attempts to provide explanations to the *why* questions in society. Second, every myth had a *value* to be imparted. Every story always ended with; 'that is why it is good (or not good) to do...' The myths are therefore meant as sources of *wisdom* and *guidance* for life. What the biblical narrative seeks to impart is in some ways similar to traditional African creation narratives but in other ways significantly unique.

The biblical creation narrative like that of traditional African narratives seek to assert the following truth claims; that there is a Being or Creator *before, behind* and *beyond* the created order, including human life. One implication of which is that no matter how highly human beings might think of ourselves, we are not really in-charge here, not even our lives. Another truth claim is that once upon a time, the very good/close relationship that existed between the Creator and the created order was undermined by recalcitrant humanity with serious consequences. Most if not all African creation narratives end abruptly on the breakdown in relations.

The uniqueness of the biblical narrative however lies in the offer of a way out, i.e. salvation. The biblical narrative teaches that after the breakdown in relationship, the creator is still in control, reaching out and working to bring about a new order, a new creation, a new relationship. This work has been fully accomplished in the life, works, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The biblical narrative, therefore, unlike other creation myths, teaches that in Jesus Christ, there is an offer of a new relationship with God and a new life.

Post-modern Western societies may dismiss the biblical narrative of creation as fictitious nonsense in favour of the theory of Evolution. The question however, is what values can a society draw for itself from the theory of Evolution whose basic ethos is "survival of the fittest"? The key foundational values the biblical narrative of creation teaches is our inter-connectedness as human beings and the human *inter-connectedness* to the rest of creation, as well as, our *responsibility* towards each other and the rest of the created order.

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