

**M0005961: Wellcome Historical Medical Museum display: "The Origin of the World by Creation Out Of Primeval Water", key to map of the world, accompanying text**

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## THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD BY CREATION OUT OF PRIMEVAL WATER

The subject matter of the accompanying Distribution Map is the belief resulting from a *FUSION OF TWO CONCEPTS*:

- (a) THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD BY CREATION AS OPPOSED TO GROWTH.
- (b) PRIMEVAL WATER AS THE ORIGINAL CONDITION OF THE UNIVERSE.

Both (a) and (b) are very widely known independently and in combination. Their union, though more limited in distribution than either simple concept, is nevertheless the most widespread Cosmogonic Myth of the Creation type.

### A VARIETY OF CREATIVE METHODS

is embraced by the formula

### ORIGIN BY CREATION OUT OF PRIMEVAL WATER

The KEY TO THE MAP reduces them to a few main types which are described in ascending order of complexity, from the primitive belief of the *Australian Arunta* to the spiritual concept of creation by the FIAT of the Creator:

### GENERAL REMARKS ON THE TYPES

For the most part, examples of each type occur in various parts of the world; the one exception is the myth of the *Fishing up of Islands*, which is not found outside the Pacific, a possible instance of the influence of environment on myth.

The map clearly shows a link in cosmogonic belief between the Near East and North America, i.e.,

In the Mesopotamian Region is found

### DUALISM, THE STRUGGLE OF GOOD AND EVIL

In North America the commonest cosmogonic myth is

### DIVING FOR THE EARTH

COMBINED ELEMENTS OF THESE TWO MYTHS are found among the *Siberian peoples*, the *Finnish races*, and, in general, in the form of folk tales, in countries where *Byzantine cultural influence* prevailed.

#### NOTE

This section is concerned solely with cosmogonies of the type described above. Other beliefs may, and frequently do co-exist among peoples holding one or more of the beliefs outlined here; beliefs similar to those dealt with here, but not involving the pre-existence of water or a creative act (eg. many World-Egg Cosmogonies) are equally outside the scope of this section.