

not at some time have been a flood potentially dangerous to humans in the vicinity. . . .

"All in all, then, from the purely geologic point of view we should expect independent flood traditions to have arisen almost anywhere in the world at almost any time, engendered by flood catastrophes stemming from perfectly natural causes, and of all the possible causes of floods, only tsunamis are capable of giving rise to flood legends in widely separated places at the same time. Although many different floods are required to account for the many traditions known, there is no reason to be surprised that flood traditions from all over the world may bear notable resemblances to one another. For when we come right down to it, there are only two basic ways in which people can survive a flood: by getting above it, or by riding it out on some floating object. Thus there are legends in which the survivors take to high ground or climb exaggeratedly tall trees, and there are legends in which the survivors float to safety in an ark, a canoe, a chest, or what have you. In most flood traditions a vessel is the means of salvation, and that too is not surprising, In view of the fact that the water depth is often exaggerated to the point where everything is submerged and there would be no other way to account for anyone's being saved to carry on the human race Nevertheless it is undeniable that many flood traditions in widely separated parts of the world do show similarities in detail, highly reminiscent of the biblical deluge, which cannot be explained entirely by the general similarity of floods and the general similarity of human reactions to floods.

"There are only two ways in which the story of Noah's flood, whatever its local source, could have been spread around the world: by diffusion, as the people to whose culture it originally belonged migrated to new lands, or by transmission, which requires contact between at least one narrator and one listener from different cultures.

". . . it seems quite natural that certain details of the biblical story should turn up all over the world. For more than nineteen centuries missionaries have been carrying it to every corner of the earth. . . . Missionaries have always been among the first to brave the wilderness to bring the Gospel to primitive peoples, and in many instances they were the first to take down the legends of the people among whom they worked. In other cases, however, the legends were collected by ethnologists and others who came well after the missionaries. Because it often was the missionaries who first devised written forms of obscure languages, it is impossible to prove whether a flood story really predates the missionary influence or whether it is just Noah being given back with local color.

"The British anthropologist Sir James Frazer, and others before him, notably the German geographer and anthropologist Richard Andree, compiled flood legends from all parts of the world and examined them for evidence of local origin versus transmission. To try to cite them all would fill a sizable volume and be very repetitious withal. So let us examine just a few typical examples from all over, in the light of their geologic setting. . . .