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Colin McLarty*, colin.mclarty@case.edu. *Hilbert and the origin myth of modern mathematics.*

One small puzzling proof by David Hilbert in 1888 became the paradigm of modern axiomatic mathematics, and Hilbert knew its importance. With time the affair grew into an origin myth, a titanomachy where new gods defeat the old, and specifically Hilbert defeats one Professor Paul Gordan who is known today for rejecting Hilbert's proof and calling it "not Mathematics but Theology!" In fact Hilbert found his proof in conversation with this very Prof. Gordan and Gordan supported it from the start. The talk traces the growth of the legend over 60 years from the original proof until the story was canonized in no less than three versions by Eric Temple Bell. (Received September 11, 2008)