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Charles Taylor replies:

Mr Tompkins seems to overlook the fact that my article is not a scientific argument but a linguistic one. It sets out to ask what the original Bible says in view of conflicting translations. The 'confirmation' I ventured in my abstract was based on the context in Psalm 104: 9.

The question is, when did God set a boundary the water could not cross? Not at Creation, because the boundary was subsequently crossed at the Flood. So I figured it must refer to the Flood, since before then the water had not exceeded its bounds. Also, my title contains a question mark and nothing is said to be 'inviolable', as Tompkins

suggests. These statements in the Psalms are of a general nature and mean simply that there is a brake on the water levels. There's no guarantee that the littoral communities won't suffer minor flooding here and there or now and then. I just don't see what all the fuss is about, expressed in such an elaborate way.

My article arose from viewing the movie 'The World that Perished'. I just wonder how many readers have seen it and compared the Scripture quoted there with what they find in their favourite versions? That's where the real controversy lies and it is, I repeat, a linguistic argument.

I do not wish to refute in detail the linguistic points made in the Kulikovsky letter, not that I have no answers but because (a) the semantics of Hebrew words are subject to disagreement among scholars, and (b) Kulikovsky's use of Latinate categories ('nominative', 'accusative' and such) for Hebrew is naive and inappropriate.

I would also point out that what he calls 'argumentum ad numerum' does not concern numbers of versions but numbers of reputable scholars. There's no logical fallacy but rather a warning to tread carefully in the light of considerable scholastic support for the view I have suggested.

I have no need to reply to any scientific points raised by Brenton Minge because my article was intended to be expository and linguistic. My unfortunate expression 'rolling plains' was intended to indicate undulating country without many rugged crags and cliffs, such as you find in Siberia today. I remember flying over those smooth and rounded mountains years ago.

I have no objection to a mountainous earth before the flood. However, the verse in Psalm 104:8 'appears' to suggest tectonic change. Note my question mark in the title, which my critics continually overlook, as if I am somehow laying down geologic laws. My prime purpose was to arrive at a correct translation of the verse and then see any possible implications for geology, in which I am no expert. I could not overlook the quote from *The World that Perished* and

the fact that many Bible scholars translate 'mountains rose, valleys sank'. Evolutionists don't want to believe that our earth could be radically different before and after the flood. My earliest creationist book, *The Oldest Book in the World* (especially page 56) goes into this, so my article should not surprise those who read my books. I believe God did a radical thing at the Flood. I would therefore expect mountains to rise and valleys to sink, to prepare for God's second world order.

Brenton Minge says I ignored his four points, but No.1 is only a relative matter. Mountains are always higher than plains. No.2 is geological and I am not equipped to comment. In No.3 I ask, who ever claimed uplift (or dropdown) was 'widespread' or whether it happened during or after the 'Flood'? No.4 is a matter for hydrologists and I have no right to comment. My main point was linguistic and I maintain that the normal translation for 'ya 'alu hatiym; yerdu beqa 'oth' is 'mountains rose, valleys sank'. Some Bibles may mislead by saying 'the mountains rose ...' but the text doesn't involve every last mountain or valley. But it does suggest that the 'Flood' was very much more than masses of water. It was a mabbul (Hebrew) or a kataklusmos (Greek), and I'm angry with those who want to play it down. That's how evolution began in Europe, through the French philosophes.

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The coal-mass nonproblem

A number of critics of the Bible have alleged that there is too much coal in the earth's crust to have been formed in the Flood. Two German creationists, the late Gerard Schonknecht and Dr Siegfried Scherer, have tacitly accepted the

sceptical arguments that all the requisite vegetation could not have been alive on the land surface at the same time.¹ They then went on to propose that there had been large floating ecosystems comprising arboreal lycopods, supporting their contentions with evidences from the morphology of the plant life itself.² During the Flood, these *in situ* floating forests would have been washed into basins, which would have supplemented the vegetal material available for coal from forests growing on land.

Many years ago, I examined the same skeptical allegation, and proposed a different solution.³⁴ The biblioseptics, as it turns out, had actually set up a straw man. Contrary to their assumptions, the vegetation living at the start of the Flood had not been the only source of carbonaceous material which had eventually transformed into coal. A large amount of carbonaceous material must also have accumulated in the 1650 or so years between the Creation and Flood, in the form of peat. I showed that one cubic metre of peat has more organic carbon than a considerable quantity of vegetation. With only a small fraction of earth's land surface underlain with peat, and much of this peat reworked and deposited during the Flood, the requisite quantity of carbon for the earth's coal (and also oil) would have been readily met. And this does not even take into account the inorganic sources of carbon, which are demonstrated to exist.

The evidence for floating forests, presented by Scheven, and Schonknecht and Scherer, is certainly worthwhile to include in any Flood model, if only because of the morphology of the plant structures. However, it is not necessary to include the existence of floating forests as a solution to a nonexistent problem. As discussed in my above-cited study, land-dwelling forests combined with peat accumulation are sufficient to account for the total inventory of organic carbon stored in coal. Thus Schonknecht and Scherer's study actually serves to demolish the biblioseptics' mythological carbon-nonproblem a second time over.

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'Dawkins' weasel revisited'

While I heartily agree with Dr Truman's overall conclusions in the above article,¹ I must point out that there is an error in his understanding of the way Dawkins' algorithm works.

Truman's explanation of the algorithm is as follows:

*'Simply envision 28 rings each with every letter of the alphabet and a blank space stamped on each ring, next to each other on a metal cylinder held horizontally. Spin all the rings one after the other or at the same time. Note the rings which show the characters or spaces facing you which match the target sentence. Spin the remaining unsuccessful rings until all the letters match the target.'*²

The results of one 'run' of this algorithm are shown in Figure 1 as published in Truman's article.³

Note that in this instance I have highlighted in bold only letters which differ from those in the same positions in the sequences directly above any particular sequence (except for the starting sequence) and that these may not necessarily relate to the target sequence at all. The number of mutations refers to the number of letters which are different to those at the same positions in sequences directly above any particular sequence, so for example, 22 letters in trial #4 are different from those in trial #3. The reason for this will become clear shortly.

GOAL:	METHINKS	IT IS LIKE A WEASEL	
STARTING:	WDLTMNLT	DTJBKWIRZREZLMQCO P	
TRIAL #1:	SEE SNXD	ETHAIYGSWCWVFCQCQMZ	23 MUTATIONS
TRIAL #2:	FEIQGNIC	ATZTLMMXLTKKGGVBWIL	24 MUTATIONS
TRIAL #3:	ESNWNJE	YTNVQJZKIFUYDYQYUIL	22 MUTATIONS
TRIAL #4:	OWEVNLO	BTBW ARZDKNYEWRGBYL	22 MUTATIONS
TRIAL #5:	NESBANZF	YTMHUXGXJXXLQWFZGAL	22 MUTATIONS
...			
TRIAL #40:	METHINKS	IT IS PIKE AEWECSEL	22 MUTATIONS
...			
TRIAL#164:	METHINKS	IT IS LIKE A WEASEL	3 MUTATIONS

Figure 1. The results of one run of a Dawkins-type simulation performed by Truman.¹