

*vis* the pre-scientific enterprise of Paul's time, is just another type of application of the intellect upon the bits and bobs that make up the world. In other words, the scientific data will reveal the miraculous essence and history of the natural world.' But, as I pointed out in my paper, general revelation would then only be accessible to scientists with advanced training and therefore it ceases to be 'general'.

Kay goes on to argue that because 'God made the world in one way, and one way only', then 'this will be signatored through the entire created order because it *has* happened this way. These indelible vestigia inform us of this unique history and, in this sense, scientific data are revelatory'. Kay then cites the work of various Christian thinkers and argues that their conclusions are evidence that such scientific data are revelatory. But again, this 'revelation' was not made known to all people in all places throughout time, and therefore, by definition, is not general revelation! Secondly, if scientific data is indeed revelatory, then why do so few scientists accept that the world was created by a personal God? Why aren't the overwhelming majority of scientists committed Christians? Most scientists think creationists (of any sort) are quacks and imbeciles. When presented with evidence of creation or a young Earth they routinely explain it away, ignore it, or reject it out of hand. But if scientific data was revelatory, as Kay insists, then surely the existence of God and His creation of the universe would be acknowledged by *all* scientists—even if not all of them choose to become Christians. That is clearly not the case. Thus, Kay's reasoning does not stand up to reality, and only reinforces my point that human beings' rationality is inhibited and we are all prone to erroneous thinking.

Kay asserts: 'If the world is ancient, then all, or the vast majority of, data will indicate that. If the world is young, then, likewise, the data will unambiguously or sufficiently point to this.' However, this is a particularly naïve position to take. Data is just

that—data. It does not speak for itself. It must be interpreted, and interpretation implies that we make assumptions that may be correct or incorrect. For example, everyone can see the rock strata and the fossils, but what do they indicate? This data can be explained scientifically in accordance with the set of assumptions comprising the foundation of the old-earth scenario. It can also be explained scientifically in accordance with the set of assumptions comprising the foundation of the young-earth scenario. This is where the special revelation of Scripture comes in. It allows us to determine which scenario is founded on the right set of assumptions. Scripture tells us that the earth is relatively young and that there was a catastrophic global flood that destroyed all living creatures on the land.

Kay states that he finds it impossible to believe that 'a presuppositionalist would really suggest that one data set, representing one unique history, could logically and empirically be comfortably accommodated by two disparate worldviews'. Again, since I am not a presuppositionalist his beliefs and objections about my consistency with presuppositionalism are irrelevant. Nevertheless, I have showed above how the same data can indeed be accommodated by two disparate worldviews.

Kay also posits that my epistemological grounding 'shoots itself in the foot' because it is not drawn from Scripture. On the contrary, my epistemological grounding *is* Scripture! In fact, Kay's criticism seems more applicable to himself since it appears that Kay's epistemological grounding is actually 'human reason'.

In conclusion, it seems to me that Kay has not read my paper carefully enough. I do not hold many of the views he attributes to me, so his criticisms and objections are against a straw-man.

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## Linguistics: soft science a 'soft target'

None of the linguistics which has appeared in recent issues of *Journal of Creation* has convinced me, and as a creationist I am biased in its favour. I think I see some tendency to regard the academic discipline of linguistics as a 'soft target' for creationism that can be attacked without specialist knowledge.

There are many lay ideas about language which seem common sense, but they do not stand up to the scrutiny of proper study.<sup>1</sup> The most tempting of these is that there is some kind of directionality in language change. If language change is going in one direction only, in some sense, then arguments might eventually be mounted that languages can only be a few thousand years old, on the grounds that modern languages do not show evidence of hundreds of millennia's worth of unidirectional change. For example, if language change always made a language simpler, it could be argued that modern languages are not simple enough to be hundreds of millennia old.

This idea is expressed in French's recent article as follows:

'The oldest ancient languages man has studied, such as Latin ... are much more complex than any languages spoken today... . Languages become simpler over time by use—they never become more complex.'<sup>2</sup>

And in Duursma's: 'Linguistic theories are unable to adequately explain ... the sophistication and consistency in ... ancient Sanskrit and Greek.'<sup>3</sup>

I take the latter quote to mean that (a) languages are always becoming both simpler (less 'sophisticated') and more irregular (less 'consistent') and that (b) no language could ever have been complex and regular enough to be the precursor from say 100,000 years ago of Sanskrit and Greek.

There are three deep problems with such an idea. Firstly, concepts such as 'simpler' and 'more regular' are simply

too vague to base further arguments upon. Academic linguists do discuss the possibility that some change makes a language simpler, but always with the understood caveat looming large in the background that it is not at all clear what simpler means. Observations about a language becoming simpler are all very well as a possible extension of someone's main point about a change in a language, but they are just not strong enough to become the foundation of arguments about the age of languages. The idea that a language, or a feature of a language, is simple or complex is an impression, not an analytical result, and might well be an illusory impression.

Secondly, the simplicity and regularity of a whole language can never be measured because no one has a big enough brain to know everything about one language. One 'department' of English, the verb morphology, appears to be becoming more regular and simpler (with caveats that these are not clear claims), as forms such as *burnt*, *dreamt*, *leapt*, *shone*, *lit*, etc. die out, and are supplemented by only a small number of new irregular forms such as *snuck*. But no one can give a guarantee that in parallel with this change, some other 'department' of English is not becoming more irregular or more complex. English certainly added a new grammatical category, the modal verbs, between Chaucer and Shakespeare: the addition would seem to make that 'department' more complex rather than simpler, insofar as such observations have meaning.

Duursma and French, being English-speaking learners of Latin and similar languages, are naturally struck by the 'department' of these languages that seems more complex than its equivalent in English, namely the morphology. No one can even gain an impression of the complexity of all 'departments' of, say, Latin, including syntax, semantics, discourse, phonology and vocabulary: but to take one syntactic 'department', Latin has one auxiliary verb and no true modal verbs, while English has three auxiliaries and nine modals.

Thirdly, consider the 'language birth' issues associated with pidgins and creoles. There are documented

cases of an unstable pidgin becoming stable, as happened to Tok Pisin in the late nineteenth century. This process could be described as an increase in regularity. Secondly, it is well known that pidgins can turn into creoles: this always involves the addition of subordinate clauses to the grammatical inventory, often along with other enrichments which are increases in complexity if anything is.

Thirdly, creoles can decreolise and become 'normal languages'. This process is arguably partly completed in the case of Jamaican Creole, for example; and the theory that African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a decreolised language or dialect, which would ultimately be descended from a pidgin, is perfectly tenable. (As is well understood in linguistics, the social and educational stigmas associated with languages or dialects such as Jamaican Creole and AAVE are irrelevant to a strictly linguistic view of their grammatical fabric, however relevant they may or may not be to educational policy).

It is thus more than likely that if we had the right kind of historical records in sufficient depth, we would find that some proportion of 'normal languages' originated as unstable pidgins, via stabilisation, creolisation, and decreolisation. Spanish, for example, originated when Rome conquered the Iberian Peninsula. Conquest situations can give rise to a pidgin based on the conquerors' language (cf. West African Pidgin English), so Spanish could be the decreolised descendant of a Latin-based pidgin.

Thus it is clear that language change simply cannot be unidirectional. Languages can be 'reduced' from 'normal languages' into unstable pidgins, and languages can equally be 'enriched' in the opposite direction.

In summary, in answer to the ideas in the above quotations, a well-informed uniformitarian would have three solid lines of defence. Complexity and regularity in a language are ill-defined impressions and may be illusory; even as impressions, the impressions are never valid across a whole language; and the ancestors of Proto-Indo-European may

have undergone untold cycles of pidginisation and decreolisation.

This is not to say that the uniformitarian view offers any very worrying evidence *against* creationism. What little is known about ancient languages such as Proto-Indo-European is broadly equally consistent with the uniformitarian or the creationist timescale.

It is not impossible that the solid lines of defence just mentioned could be eroded by well-informed, original contributions to the understanding of decreolisation and other language change processes. With adequate research, some creationist linguist might succeed in demonstrating that, say, Proto-Indo-European shows some feature that could not have arisen through language change of any kind, and must have been present *ab origine*. This would make the uniformitarian timescale less likely. What I object to are sweeping claims where in reality there are only unresearched and rather remote possibilities.

I want to see us annoying our enemies, not amusing them.

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## References

1. A good feel for the gap between lay and scientific views of language can be grasped by reading: Bauer, L. and Trudgill, P. (eds.), *Language Myths*, Penguin Books, London, 1998. It is aimed at the general reader.
2. French, M., The origins of language: an investigation of various theories, *Journal of Creation* 18(3):24–27, 2004.
3. Duursma, K.J., Reply to letter, *Journal of Creation* 17(2):66, 2003.

## K.J. Duursma replies:

Having read Mr Crookston's letter, it seems right to submit a brief reply. I agree with Mr Crookston that linguistics can be seen as a soft target. Linguistics is a relatively new field, and perhaps it is relatively easy to enter it. While I personally do not claim to know all there is to know about linguistics, I did study the subject as part of my degree course and I raised a few questions to the linguistic community at large. It is

in my opinion unwise to suggest that academic writing needs to be limited to post graduate authors. Most self-respecting journals have clearly defined policies that review materials prior to publication, and *Journal of Creation*'s peer review system is no exception.

I understand that Mr Crookston is unhappy with a few points raised in my article.

He objects quite rightly to the view that suggests that languages tend to become simpler. I continue to hold that the Proto-Indo-European language is superior in sophistication and consistency. However, I do not agree that the trend is for languages to become simpler. In fact, I would argue that usually languages tend to become less consistent, and therefore more complex. English is a good example. While learning English at high school in The Netherlands, we consistently struggled with irregular verbs, exceptions to rules, etc.

Mr Crookston points to the issues related to pidgin and Creoles. He is right in pointing out that there have been pidgins which have become stable, and it could be argued that this is evidence of inconsistency leading to consistency. However, to my knowledge none of these languages have the sophistication and subtlety in the grammar as the Proto-Indo-European language.

I agree with Mr Crookston that Language direction is not uniform. However I still hold that language changes we observe today cannot properly explain the consistency and sophistication of the Proto-Indo-European language. Mr Crookston's objections have failed to persuade me otherwise.

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## Problems with 'Searching for Moses'

This letter is in response to the article about finding Moses in archaeology.<sup>1</sup> I have many problems with the paper. First of all, Sir Flinders Petrie is

often referred to. He was a very early archaeologist and by all current standards a terrible one, so stop referring to him as if he was THE authority. Most of his findings have been discounted or revised by later archaeologists who were much more competent in the field. Secondly, if you move the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty forward 350 years, you have to move the rest of them forward by the same increment as well. This would place the New Kingdom (the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasties) existing from roughly 1200 BC to 950 BC. This creates a huge problem because the New Kingdom dynasties exerted control over all of the Southern Levant from Egypt proper to Aram, which completely encompasses Israel. This presence is very well documented in the findings of Ami Mazar in Beth Shean. In fact that city during the New Kingdom was the seat of Egyptian power in the northern reaches of their empire. There is a governor's palace there in which many important artifacts were found, the most important of which was the Seti I stele. In any case, the Bible never talks about the Israelites being completely conquered by the Egyptians and being under Egyptian control for a period of 300–350 years until the time of Solomon. Israel's chief enemies at this time were the Philistines in the South and the Canaanites in the North, as is well documented in the book of Judges and other places as well.

We also have the Merneptah stele which is dated to 1207 BC. This stele reveals that Israel was in the land at that time and that he fought them. That doesn't contradict David Down's argument, except that Merneptah was a pharaoh of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Now how can a 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty king be carving a stele if he is in the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty?

And lastly, the pyramids were built by the 3<sup>rd</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> dynasties of Egypt in the Early Bronze age and the Old Kingdom of Egypt. These dynasties existed from 2500–2200 BC. Before Abraham there may have been Semitic people there, but they were not Israelites. And contrary to David Down's statement about the generally accepted time of their construction, no prominent archaeologist with any credibility in the field would agree with that statement. They would

agree with what I said.

Basically, while the finds are nice, trying to change the chronology to fit the Exodus in with the right Egyptian dynasty by changing the chronology creates so many problems that it is preposterous and impossible to justify the consequences of the change. Therefore, it is not the Egyptian chronology that needs to be changed. You just need to find a better explanation. I am a Christian and a student studying Archaeology at Wheaton College. I too do not know the answer to this discrepancy, but I do know what the answer is not. And it is not what was proposed in 'Searching for Moses'.

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## References

1. Down, D., Searching for Moses, *Journal of Creation* 15(1):53–57, 2001.

## David Down replies:

I would like to point out to J.D.A. that I did not invent this revised chronology. It was first proposed by Dr Velikovsky fifty years ago and has been accepted by some other scholars since then. It is presently being taught at Cambridge University by England's top archaeologist, Lord Colin Renfrew.

Yes, it does mean that other dates have to be reduced and that includes the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, but that is a bonus because it brings Thutmose III down to the time of Solomon and Rehoboam and identifies him as the Shishak of 1 Kings 14:25. I would like to invite J.D.A. to come with me on my annual visit to Egypt next April and I would be glad to point out to him the items Thutmose took from the temple at Jerusalem. They are clearly depicted on the wall of his shrine at Karnak.

As for Bethshan, Dr Ami Mazar is a very good friend of mine and I worked with him in his excavations at Bethshan. He holds to the traditional dates but these are by no means set in concrete. There is no question that Egypt controlled Bethshan, but J.D.A.