

## THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF LANGUAGE

### I. HUMAN LANGUAGE BEGAN WHEN GOD CREATED ADAM AND EVE.

**Language has existed from the eternal past in association with God Himself, Who is the Word.** According to John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word [Gr. *logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Language therefore was with God and existed before man. Human language began when God made man in His image and created in man the ability to speak. Before the creation of man, word-speaking had been an attribute unique to God Himself.

**During the seven days of creation, God the Word spoke all things into existence,** a fact reiterated again and again in Genesis 1:3-26. Eight times the spoken Word of God rang throughout the universe to accomplish the creation of the cosmos and all that is in it:

"**And God said,** Let there be light ... **And God said,** Let there be a firmament ... **And God said,** Let the waters under the heaven be gathered unto one place, and let the dry land appear ... **And God said,** Let the earth bring forth grass ... **And God said,** Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven ... **And God said,** Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature ... **And God said,** Let the earth bring forth the living creature ... **And God said,** Let us make man in our image ..."

God culminated His creation with spoken words to the man and wife He had blessed with language: "**God said** unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply ... **And God said,** Behold, I have given you every herb ... and every tree ... for meat" (Genesis 1:28-29).

The creative power of the Divinely spoken Word is a mystery. Rationalists attempt to circumvent its power with naturalistic stories of how the universe began. Secret societies such as the Freemasons make empty promises to the faithful of illuminating this mystery. Though God has not revealed how His Word works, the New Testament as well as the Old bears witness to its power.

Indeed, to the Greeks of John's day the term *logos* especially signified the spoken power of God. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "the apostle John ... appropriated a favorite Stoic philosophical term - the *Logos* - as a title for Jesus Christ. A Greek philosopher named Heraclitus first used the term *Logos* around 600 B.C. to designate the divine reason or plan which coordinates a changing universe" (Richardson, 1984, p. 24; Talbert, 2001, pp. 159-160).

Heraclitus' belief in the coordinating *logos* was in fact a residual memory of the Genesis history of creation, a history which at one time had been known among all peoples of the world. By the time of the Greeks, paganism had corrupted most terms for deity, and this memory was vanishing. *Logos* was one of the few remaining uncorrupted terms.

Tragically, man in his fallen state avoids knowing God, even as Adam and Eve in the Garden hid their faces from Him. Yet the Divine origin of language means that God gave language to man to speak with him. Language gives us access to the Creator of the universe! The unregenerate world denies this

purpose, of course, for it points to the very God they avoid. A secondary purpose for language is for speaking with other men, the very basis of human civilization. Linguistics, the study of language, is fascinating because it testifies to the origin and history of language as recorded in the Bible, as we will now see.

### II. ALL PEOPLE SPOKE ONE LANGUAGE BEFORE BABEL.

Genesis 11:1 states that before the dispersion from Babel, "[T]he whole earth was of one language and of one speech." At first glance, this passage seems to be repeating itself. Aren't *language* and *speech* the same thing? The answer is that in the Hebrew, *language* refers to "phonology" or the basic phonetic sounds called phonemes, and *speech* signifies "vocabulary," words made of phonemes joined like links in a chain. Genesis 1:11 is not redundant after all.

Before God confused the languages at Babel, all people used the same basic sounds (phonemes) in words (vocabulary) common to everyone. After Babel, the vocabularies differed among language groups, but the same "deep structure" - the thought processes responsible for producing phonetic sounds - remained the same for all languages. **The common "deep structure" is what makes translation between languages possible.**

**Linguists acknowledge the "deep structure" similar to all languages.** Farb (1975, pp. 362-363) observed:

"[T]he thousands of languages of the world are a lot closer to each other already ... than most people realize. It is understandable that the idiosyncracies of languages should fascinate us, but in the process we have gotten into the habit of exaggerating the differences, while ignoring the uniformities. Out of the multitudes of possible language systems, human beings communicate with each other in an extraordinarily limited number of ways. Despite apparent differences, **languages are very much alike. They are, in fact, but variations on a common structural theme.** I realize that this statement encounters the prejudices of everyone who has attempted to learn a foreign language. Yet children everywhere, who are just beginning to speak their own language, employ very similar strategies."

MIT linguist Noam Chomsky reached a similar conclusion. "Chomsky holds that the grammar of a language is a system of transformational rules that determines a certain pairing of sound and meaning. It consists of a syntactic component [word order], a semantic component [word meaning], and a phonological component [the way phonemes are joined to form words]. The surface structure contains the information relevant to the phonological component, whereas the deep structure contains the information relevant to the semantic component, and the syntactic component pairs surface and deep structures. Hence, it is merely the phonological component [the order of phonemes in words] that has become greatly differentiated during the course of human history, or at least since the construction of the Tower of Babel" (Stent, 1975, p. 1054).

Not all linguists agree with Chomsky's idea that a "syntactic component" links surface structure with deep structure, but there is general agreement that a deep structure exists. **This deep structure strongly indicates a common origin for all languages** rather than an evolutionary origin of distinct languages at different places and times. Yet Farb (1975, pp. 268-269) and most other linguists "despair of ever finding" the "well-springs of speech," denying the history in Genesis which would unlock the mystery for them. Anthropologist Ralph Linton (1955, p. 9) bluntly said decades ago, "We know absolutely nothing about the early stages in the development of language ..." This self-imposed ignorance continues to prevail. Even to Stent (quoted above), the Tower of Babel is only a fanciful metaphor for an origin whose details are hidden in the fog of an evolutionary past.

### III. HUMAN LANGUAGE COULD NOT HAVE EVOLVED FROM ANIMAL SOUNDS.

A popular modern myth is that human language is like animal communication, just more advanced. Yet despite their ignorance of language origins, most linguists agree that **human language is distinct from animal sounds**. In other words, most linguists believe that human language must have evolved from animal sounds in some mysterious way, yet also acknowledge that there is an unbridgeable gap between animal sounds and human language. **This gap signifies that language could not have evolved from animal sounds.**

Evolutionist Chomsky (1972, pp. 67, 68) states that **"human language appears to be a unique phenomenon, without significant analog in the animal world.** ... There is no reason to suppose that the 'gaps' are bridgeable. There is no more of a basis for assuming an evolutionary development of 'higher' from 'lower' stages, in this case, than there is for assuming an evolutionary development from breathing to walking ..."

Evolutionists continue to search for the link between animal sounds and human speech but have not found it. Decades ago, evolutionist George Gaylord Simpson (1966, p. 476) realized that this is another missing link: **"[H]uman language is absolutely distinct from any system of communication in other animals.** That is made most clear by comparison with other animal utterances, which most nearly resemble human speech and are most often called 'speech.' Non-human vocables are, in effect, interjections. They reflect the individual's physical or, more frequently, emotional state. They do not, as true language does, name, discuss, abstract, or symbolize."

In the same vein, Linton (1955, pp. 8, 9) observed: "In his ability to communicate man differs even more from other animals than he does in his learning or thinking. ... In this respect, humans are truly unique." Farb (1975, pp. 9, 256) concluded: "But humans alone possess the capacity to speak languages of such richness that linguists are still unable to describe these languages fully. ... **Speech is not merely some form of improved animal communication; it is a different category all together** that separates human beings, inhabiting the far side of an unbridgeable chasm, from the beasts."

### IV. HUMAN LANGUAGE COULD NOT HAVE EVOLVED FROM PRIMITIVE LANGUAGES.

Another modern myth is that some languages are advanced but others, especially in the third world, are primitive. Just as the link between animal sounds and human speech is missing, however, so is any tie between modern speech and alleged primitive ancient languages. **Even the most ancient languages were complex.**

Linguist Robert Claiborne (1983, pp. 25, 26) has speculated that "[The] first human languages must surely have been far simpler than any modern tongue," but then acknowledges that among the peoples of the world today there is no sign that such simpler tongues once existed: "Time and the facts have been ... unkind to the obviously racist theory that primitive languages can be found in 'darkest Africa' or some other equally remote region; **every human language that has been studied has a vocabulary in excess of twenty thousand words** - about the number that Shakespeare used, and far more than we find in the Bible."

Linguists have also refuted the idea that children learning to speak are retracing or recapitulating the evolutionary history of the language from a primitive to an advanced stage. This erroneous concept was a product of Haeckel's "biogenetic law" that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. "In fact, the child is not evolving or inventing primitive language but is learning a particular modern language, already complete and ... different from any possible primitive language" (Simpson, 1966, p. 477).

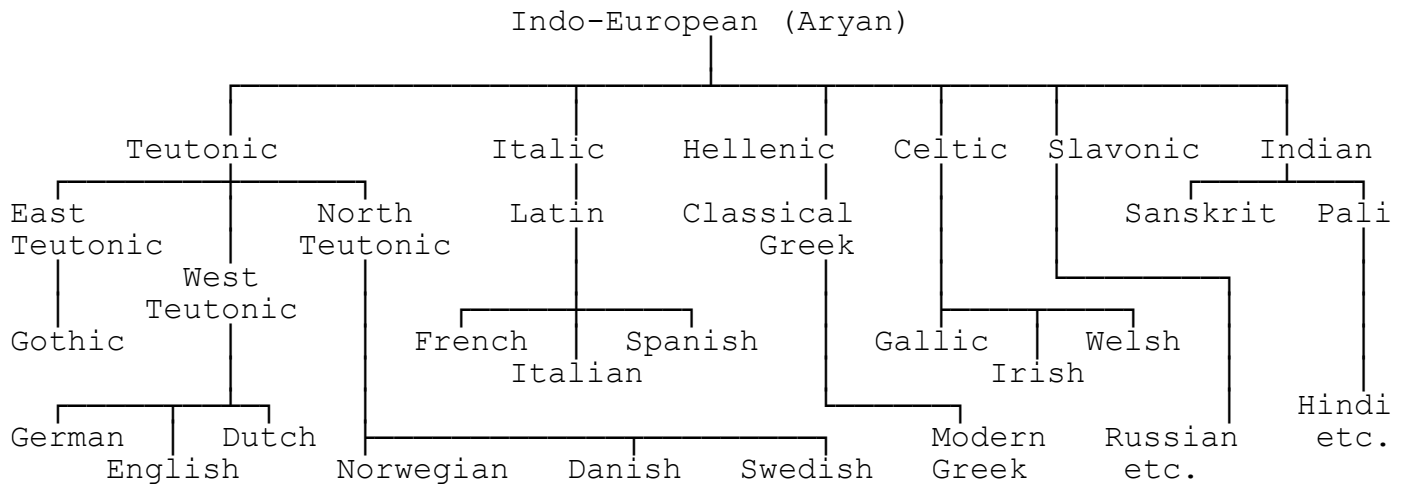
**As modern linguistics has grown as a science, theories of language evolution have been disproved one by one.** The facetious names of these theories demonstrate their low credibility in the linguistic community: (1) the Bow-Wow theory that man imitated the sounds of nature; (2) the Ding-Dong theory that man put into words the harmonic "ring" of objects; (3) the Pooh-Pooh theory that language began with emotional ejaculations; (4) the Yo-Heave-Ho theory that language began from the grunts and groans associated with labor; (5) the Sing-Song theory that language began with the rhythmic chants of early humans; and (6) the Ha-Ha theory that language evolved out of laughter. After discussing these discredited ideas, Farb (1975, p. 266) bemoans, "Obviously, something happened in evolution to create Man the Talker. But what was it?"

### V. LANGUAGE DIVISIONS BEGAN AT THE TOWER OF BABEL.

Various lines of evidence confirm the Biblical history of linguistic confusion at Babel, located some 50 miles south of modern Baghdad, Iraq. One of these evidences is the meaning of the word "Babel" itself. According to scientist/theologian Henry Morris (1976, pp. 266-267, 277-278):

"The immediate descendants of Noah ... all spoke the same language, the same as had been spoken by man in the antediluvian period. It is possible that this was a Semitic

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language (perhaps even Hebrew), since the proper names of men and places in the pre-Babel period all have meanings only in Hebrew and its cognate languages. ... The word 'confound' is the Hebrew *balal*. ... [The] name 'Babel' was connected with this word 'balal.' The name thus meant 'confusion.' It is not unlikely that the very sounds emanating from the confused throngs at Babel (like the unintelligible sounds of babies) became the name of the city in the minds of those who left it. ... Thus, in the ages following, the very name Babylon would come to mean to all peoples 'the city of babbling, or confusion.'

**"It was later that those who remained in Babel tried to upgrade the meaning by claiming that it meant 'Bab-el,' the 'gate of God.'** Its true nature, however, is revealed both by the original record in Genesis 11 and the very sound of its name!"

There is additional evidence that all the different languages of today began at one geographical site, identified in the Bible as Babel. The thousands of languages spoken today have proliferated from a small group of older now extinct languages, and these older precursors came from an even smaller number of primeval languages. In fact, **languages belong to one of three major groups:** (1) the Indo-European tongues; (2) the Semitic tongues; and (3) the Oriental and African languages. **These three groups correspond to Noah's three sons who survived the Flood.**

Indo-European tongues were spoken by descendants of Japheth dispersing from Babel. The term "Semitic languages" shows that these were the languages of Shem's progeny as they dispersed, and Ham's descendants spoke the Oriental and African languages.

In other words, **common ancestral languages exist for all modern ones.** English, for example, comes from the Teutonic tongue which also gave rise to languages including German, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish, a language group called the Germanic languages. The now extinct Teutonic came from even more ancient Indo-European roots.

**English is thus an Indo-European language with similarities to other Germanic languages.** For instance, English "sing" is German *singen*, Dutch *zingen*, Swedish *sjunga* (the *j* sounds like *y*), and Danish *synge*. English also has likenesses with non-Germanic languages that are Indo-European. The English "three" is Latin *tres*, French *trois*, and Greek *treis* (Alexander, 1969, pp. 38, 39).

Latin, an Indo-European tongue, has in the last two millennia produced the Romance languages French, Spanish, Italian, and Romanian. Other ancient roots besides Teutonic and Latin, all derived from Indo-European, have produced other modern languages. The chart above shows some of the relations (Alexander, 1969, p. 40): Knowledge of these linguistic relations had been lost and was re-discovered only in the 1800s.

As Alexander (1969, pp. 37, 39) says: "One of the far-reaching discoveries of the 19th century was that many languages show resemblances in their structure, and that these features are to be explained, not by a process of borrowing but by descent from a common ancestor. ... It is difficult to say when or where the parent language from which these are descended - primitive Aryan or Indo-European - was originally spoken, except that it was some time before 2000 B.C., possibly 3000 or 4000 B.C."

Despite Alexander's ignorance of where Indo-European was first spoken, the timing he suggests agrees very well for the Biblical date of the Tower of Babel. In other words, **not only does the common ancestry of languages point to a single geographic origin, but the timing of this origin also agrees with the Biblical chronology for Babel.** According the Bible, Nimrod built the Tower of Babel sometime between 3000 and 2000 BC (Gen. 10:8-10, 11:1-9).

Today no one speaks Indo-European and no written records exist of its alphabet and vocabulary. In fact, the "Indo-European" of secular linguistics may not have been a single language at all, but a group of similar tongues that God at Babel imposed upon the families descended from Japheth.

Genesis 10, the so-called "Table of Nations" which lists the seventy peoples dispersing from Babel, is organized by family groups. Genesis 10:2-5 lists the dispersing descendants of Japheth, suggesting that perhaps all the "Japhethites" spoke similar languages. Likewise, descendants of Ham (Gen. 10:6-20) and those of Shem (Gen. 10:21-31) perhaps spoke similar languages initially.

Knowledge of what the Japhethite speakers called their Indo-European tongues has been lost. "Indo-European" is a modern term signifying secular recognition that **Indo-European speakers populated Europe and India. This is the same geographical area settled by Japheth's descendants according to Gen. 10:2-5** (Henry, 1992, pp. 91-92).

In the chart on the previous page, the tongues closest to Indo-European are the archaic languages in the top row such as Teutonic, Italic, and Hellenic. From these ancient roots, linguists have attempted to reconstruct Indo-European as a single tongue. Reconstructed Indo-European words reveal details about the lives and activities of the speakers. Words for "oak" or "birch," for example, show that these people lived among and used these trees. Further, **the reconstructed scenario agrees with the conditions which would have been experienced by Japhethites migrating from Babel and settling into Europe.** As Claiborne (1983, p. 34) states:

"Not all [Indo-European words] have been reconstructed with equal certainty, but collectively they provide a clear picture of the Indo-Europeans' natural environment: deciduous forest or open woodland, of the sort that stretches in a broad belt between the lands ... from the Atlantic east to the Urals. ... (This description, of course, refers to the *original* vegetation of these regions, which today has mostly been replaced by cropland, pasture, or plantations of fast-growing evergreens such as pines.)"

After the Flood, climate in European latitudes was wetter and warmer for several centuries than it is now. This milder climate persisted until well after the dispersion from Babel and has been revealed by Indo-European vocabulary reconstruction:

"[The Indo-Europeans] began moving north from a region of mixed woodland and grassland into one of dense deciduous forest [i.e., from the south into Europe]. The lowland areas were often boggy (the climate ... was both moister and warmer than at present)" (Claiborne, 1983, pp. 47-48).

As Indo-Europeans migrated throughout Europe, "they could expand the more easily because over much of Europe *there was almost nobody to oppose them* - a fact attested to by both ecology and archeology" (Claiborne, 1983, p. 40). Thus as the Bible states, the people migrating from Babel were moving into previously unsettled territory, and "of them was the whole earth overspread" (Gen. 9:19).

This is a shocking conclusion for the evolutionary model which claims humans have been evolving and migrating over the globe for the last 3 million years. This is why Claiborne italicized the words "there was almost nobody to

oppose them" in the quotation above. **In fact, there was actually no one at all to oppose the first wave of migrants from Babel.**

**Linguistic reconstruction of Indo-European words confirms the Biblical history of the migration from Babel in a wonderful way.** Conditions of moister and warmer climate, a practically empty continent, and dispersion from south to north match the Genesis version of early post-Flood history and Japhethite post-Babel dispersion.

## VI. LANGUAGE IS BECOMING SIMPLER OR "DECAYING."

The evolutionary model calls for language to grow in complexity over time. This requires that simpler languages have existed from which complexity could grow. As mentioned earlier, however, no primitive language exists. Farb (1975, p. 11) states, "Despite what many people still believe, **no such thing as a 'primitive' language has yet been discovered.** Every language communicates what its native speakers need to communicate in their kind of society."

Evolutionists may still believe in "primitive" cultures, but not in primitive languages: "Even the peoples with the least complex cultures have highly sophisticated languages, with complex grammar and large vocabularies capable of naming and discussing anything that occurs in the sphere occupied by their speakers. **The oldest language that can reasonably be reconstructed is already modern, sophisticated, complete** from an evolutionary point of view" (Simpson, 1966, p. 477).

Alexander (1969, p. 41) describes "primitive Indo-European" as a "highly developed and complex language." Thus "primitive" Indo-European was not really primitive. **"Primitive Indo-European" is an oxymoron. So is the more general term "primitive language."**

Indeed, "[The] simplicity [of a language] has no relationship to the simplicity or complexity of the society that uses such a language. Both English and Chinese, spoken in complex and long-established societies, have relatively simple grammars, while Navaho grammar is so complicated it is virtually impossible to master unless you learn it in childhood" (Claiborne, 1983, pp. 8-9).

**The evolutionary attempt to link so-called primitive societies with primitive languages is a failure.** "Charles Darwin concluded that the speech of the Indians at the southern tip of South America was barely human; but a more recent study of one of these peoples, the Yahgan of Tierra del Fuego, revealed a vocabulary of about 30,000 words. ... A typical Yahgan, Aztec, or Sioux speaker probably uses about 10,000 words in everyday speech, [a similar] magnitude [to] the 7,000 different words used in the King James Bible" (Farb, 1975, p. 12).

However, the situation for the evolutionary model is even worse than this. Not only has there been no primitive language. The fact is that **older languages were generally more complex than modern ones.**

Linton (1955, p. 9) concluded, "The so-called primitive languages can throw no light on language origins, since **most of them are actually more complicated in grammar than the tongues spoken by civilized peoples.**"

**Rather than evolving, language has been doing the opposite:** "The evolution of language, at least within the historical period, is a story of progressive simplification" (Baugh, 1957, p. 10). But the "historical period" is the only time of which we have any knowledge, and really the only one that has existed. The concept of "pre-history" is a fiction.

Further, simplification is not evolution. "Language evolution" is another oxymoron. According to Elgin (1973, p. 44), the reality is that, "**The most ancient languages for which we have written texts - Sanskrit, for example - are often far more intricate and complicated in their grammatical forms than many contemporary languages.**"

**The more complex a language, the richer its expression of ideas.** The shades of meaning expressed in the multiple words for "love" in Biblical (koine) Greek, versus the approximate meaning of the one English word, is a familiar example. On the other hand, simplification makes a language easier to use when shades of subjective meaning are not critically important, as in business and commerce. Thus simplification aids the spread of a language among non-native users because they find it easier to learn. For example, Latin had complex features that English does not have:

"[The relatively complex Latin word forms, or inflections] were useful, since they showed which pronoun or adjective referred to which noun. Moreover, they enabled the Roman writer or orator to juggle the word order in various ways for the sake of emphasis, euphony or simply showing off, without muddying his meaning. **From the standpoint of a foreigner trying to learn Latin,** however - as millions of Roman subjects had to do - **the multiplied inflections were inevitably confusing.** ... In the English sentence, by contrast, the word order [syntax] is much less flexible, because position rather than inflection rules" (Claiborne, 1983, pp. 13-14).

As English has experienced simplification, it has become more nearly a one-world language than any other tongue since before Babel. Some three-fourths of the world's population uses English as the primary or secondary language, and about 90% of all scientific papers are in English. Farb (1975, p. 360) comments:

"English does possess certain characteristics that have aided its growth as the world's major language. ... It is amazingly succinct and direct, as was shown by a meticulous count of the number of syllables needed to translate the Gospel According to St. Mark into various languages:

Language	Number of Syllables
English (King James Bible)	29,000
Teutonic languages	32,650 (average)
French	36,500
Slavic languages	36,500 (average)
Romance languages	40,200 (average)
Indo-European languages	43,100 (average)

And its grammatical apparatus is quite simple and orderly - in contrast, for example, to a language like Russian with its three genders, six cases, and confusing pronoun system."

## VII. WHAT DOES THE "DECAY" OF LANGUAGE MEAN?

As mentioned above, English derives from the Teutonic tongue, dialects of which were used by the Teutonic Angles and Saxons in England by about 900 AD. From the Angles comes the name England ("Angle-land"). Recognizable English began to appear after the Norman conquest of England in 1066 with the development of Old English. Old English was an amalgamation of Norman French with Anglo-Saxon dialects. It is barely readable today.

The English of Chaucer's time (1300s) is called Middle English and somewhat resembles today's English. The English of Shakespeare and the King James Bible is considered Modern English. **In each of these phases, English has become increasingly simpler. Modern English has continued this trend.** For example, the pronouns *thou*, *ye* and *thee* used through the 1600s have given way to uniform use of the pronoun *you*. English is easier to use because of this simplification.

However, this simplification has also resulted in a loss of meaning conveyed by the pronoun *you*. Before the loss of *thou*, *ye*, and *thee*, the verb *to see* would have been conjugated as follows:

	Singular	Plural
First Person	I see	we see
Second Person	thou seest	ye see
Third Person	he/she seeth	they see

Of course, the verb endings *-est* and *-eth* have also disappeared along with *thou* and *ye*. In this older scheme, all six pronoun cases were each unique. *Thou* was the second person singular form distinct from the second person plural *ye*. Now *you* covers both cases. In the old system, *thee* was the singular direct object form of *you*: "I say unto thee" (one person) versus "I say unto you" (a group of two or more people).

These distinctions are sometimes significant. The King James Bible renders Jesus saying to Nicodemus in John 3:7, "Marvel not that I said unto *thee* [singular], *Ye* [plural] must be born again." Jesus tells Nicodemus alone (*thee*) that not only he, but all the world (*ye*) must be saved to enter "the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). This usage of *thee* and *ye* in John 3:7 matches the singular and plural forms in the original Greek.

The original Greek teaches that salvation through Christ alone is the universal requirement to enter heaven. It is not just for those in Christian cultures who have heard of Christ. This distinction is lost in newer translations using only the pronoun *you* to cover both singular and plural cases. The NIV renders John 3:7 as, "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'" In this translation, Jesus'

imperative to be born again seems to address only Nicodemus.

But this does not match the meaning of the original Greek, for Jesus addressed this imperative to the entire world, knowing that His words to Nicodemus would eventually be heard and read worldwide.

But aren't such concerns trivial? Isn't it obvious that all people need salvation in Christ alone? Apparently not, for various televangelists, including Joel Osteen, Billy Graham, John Hagee, Pat Robertson, and Carlton Pearson, have been claiming on the *Larry King Show* and other public venues that salvation through Christ is unnecessary for peoples ignorant of Christ and His offer of salvation (Dager, 2005, pp. 1, 14-21). Jesus' plural command, "Ye must be born again," is a simple refutation of this heresy.

The loss of *thou*, *thee*, and *ye* demonstrates that in linguistics, the **"decay of language" refers to a decrease in the precision of meaning conveyed by the language.** With such decay, word meanings generally become more ambiguous and more vague. Politicians exploit these ambiguities to make speeches that appear to make promises opposite their real agendas. Adolf Hitler, for example, was a master at exploiting linguistic ambiguities to mask his intentions.

**The decay of language is a loss in the information content of words.** This decay can be thought of as an "informational entropy" which increases the disorder or chaos of ideas the language conveys. **Speakers can compensate for verbal ambiguity with extra words to clarify the meaning of an utterance.** For instance, Bible versions such as the Phillips translation attempt to bring out the nuances inherent in the original Greek by using multiple English words with overlapping, less precise meanings.

#### VIII. LIKE LANGUAGES, ALPHABETIC SYSTEMS HAVE "DECAYED."

Languages and systems of writing are intimately related since languages are written as well as spoken. The oldest systems of writing were *pictographic*, using pictures to convey information about things and ideas. Related to pictographs are *ideographs*, symbols used to convey abstract concepts such as hope, fear, and joy. Modern alphabets developed from ancient pictographs and ideographs. Some alphabets in use today are the Latin alphabet used in the West, the Greek alphabet, and the Cyrillic alphabet used in Russia and some Slavic countries.

**A common myth is that modern alphabets are more advanced than ancient pictographs and ideographs. This is not true. Alphabets are simpler forms which carry no inherent information.** The most ancient pictographs and ideographs carried concrete information and ideas immediately comprehensible to any person of normal intelligence. With an alphabet, the sound (information) carried by each letter must be learned.

Further, many words are spelled non-phonetically with letters having no relation to the sounds pronounced. Thus English *ewe* is pronounced *you* (which is also non-phonetic!), and French *oui* (yes) is pronounced *wee*.

Chinese pictographic/ideographic writing is the major surviving non-alphabetic system. **Amazingly, Chinese symbols depict recognizable aspects of Biblical history which all peoples had experienced before leaving Babel:**

"[The] ancient picture writing of the Chinese language embodies memories of man's earliest days. The characters when broken down into component parts time and again reflect elements of the story of God and man recorded in the early chapters of Genesis. **Man and Woman, the garden, the institution of marriage, the temptation and fall, death, Noah's flood, the tower of babel - they are all there** in the tiny drawings and strokes that make up the Chinese characters" (Kang and Nelson, 1979, p. ix).

Over the millennia since the dispersion from Babel in about 2500 BC, Chinese characters have experienced relatively slight modification (Kang and Nelson, 1979, p. 5). Thus the modern pictograph for *garden* is a square intersected by a cross. The square is a plot of land; the cross spreads in four directions, signifying the "four heads" of the river which watered the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:10).

This one example might appear to call to mind the Biblical history only by coincidence, but similar resemblances cut across the entire spectrum of Chinese characters. The pictograph for *boat* shows eight people in a vessel. This was the number of survivors in the Flood (Gen. 7:7, 10:1; 1 Pet. 3:20). If this symbol is not a memory of Flood history, why couldn't the pictogram show five people, or ten. Why eight?

The character for *tower* combines several pictographs and ideographs giving the idea of "men of one speech who united to undertake the building of a tower made of bricks of clay or grass" (Brammer, 1986, p. 3). **The Tower of Babel was the last such tower attempted by a linguistically unified mankind.**

**Memory of the building of Babel in Chinese characters is another evidence that this was a real historical event,** not a myth or metaphor. It is easy to see why the earliest Chinese symbols would have incorporated memories of the creation, the Flood, and Babel. These events had affected all mankind and were known to all, making the original symbols immediately intelligible to anyone. With time, the biblical history was forgotten, rendering the information in pictographs and ideographs meaningless, and forcing the change in most places to easier-to-write but more abstract alphabetical systems.

The evolutionary view with its denial of biblical history in Genesis is especially blind to the original meaning of the Chinese characters. **Evolution tends to ridicule pictographs as having no practical use.** They are supposed to have been only primitive precursors to alphabets. Precursors they were, but primitive they were not.

The highly advanced oldest languages used the most complex and information-packed pictographic systems. The simpler languages of today generally use simpler alphabetical writing.

## IX. SEVERAL TYPES OF LINGUISTIC DECAY HAVE OCCURRED THROUGHOUT HISTORY.

**One type of decay process is "character abstraction." This is the process of replacing pictographs and ideographs with alphabets.** The result is that we now use letters with no real meaning other than the arbitrary sounds we give to them. There is no reason why the symbol "b" should have the sound we give to it except that everyone has agreed that this is the sound it should have.

**All languages began with pictographic/ideographic systems;** most such systems were long ago replaced with alphabets through linguistic change or by conquest. Egyptian hieroglyphs were eventually replaced by the semi-pictographic and simpler demotic script (Ceram, 1986, pp. 124-125). The Roman alphabet replaced the demotic when Rome conquered Egypt in 30 BC in the Battle of Antium. The Latin alphabet also displaced Mayan ideographs when Spain and Portugal conquered Latin America in the 1500s. Even modern Chinese characters are more abstract than the oldest surviving examples of Chinese writing, "oracle bone" specimens. Further, the Chinese government currently is forcing rapid character abstraction:

"Only in the past few decades have actual changes been fostered in Chinese writing in an attempt to simplify the characters and make reading and writing easier. These modifications completely destroy the pictographic aspects of the language. Therefore in the near future the classical Chinese characters may be as dead as ancient Latin or Greek" (Kang and Nelson, 1979, p. 23).

**Another decay process in language is the loss of inflections.**

For example, "In the oldest stage of English the adjective had numerous endings. ... A glance at the verb reveals the same contrast [e.g., loss of the *-est* and *-eth* suffixes mentioned above], though the simplifying process has not gone quite so far. ... The noun shows a parallel process of reduction [e.g., loss of gender cases]" (Alexander, 1969, pp. 23-24).

**Vestiges of feminine and masculine genders in English survive.** Ships are sometimes still referred to as "she." Until the women's liberation movement, hurricanes were also "feminine." The purpose and meaning of such inflections has been lost. There is no logical reason for *table* in French to be feminine, *la table*. **Originally, inflections presumably carried useful information enabling precise writing and speaking:**

"Another difference between Latin and modern English is that the former employed 'grammatical gender.' ... Grammarians have speculated that it may once have had some special semantic or syntactic function, but those days, if they ever existed, were long gone in Roman times; the three noun genders [feminine, masculine, and neuter] had become signposts to linguistic ghost towns" (Claiborne, 1983, p. 13).

**Like the pictographic systems, once the purpose and meaning for inflections was forgotten, many were**

**gradually dropped.** The information they had once conveyed was lost forever. The ultimate reason for dropping "the great mass of inflections in ancient and modern languages" is that they had become "unnecessary baggage which the language [had] to carry" (Alexander, 1969, p. 27).

**A third process of language decay is loss of phonetic spelling.** Words not following even simple alphabetical rules carry no information whatsoever except what we subjectively impose on them. In English "during the last few centuries, while the sounds of speech have changed considerably, the spelling has been only slightly modified and even then not always for the better. The result is a continuously increasing lag between the spelling and the sounds it is supposed to represent" (Alexander, 1969, p. 31). Well known examples of this process are words like *though* and *through*, in which the *gh* centuries ago was pronounced as a Germanic guttural.

**A fourth process of language decay is the growth of a huge vocabulary with ill-defined overlapping meanings among words.** This is a difficulty even with common words. As Claiborne (1983, p. 5) observes, there is "a longtime propensity among English speakers for making the same 'word' serve several different functions. Thus 'love' means something we feel, but also something we do - not to mention a zero score in tennis ..."

Making one word serve multiple functions might seem to lead to a shrinking vocabulary, but English in fact has roughly half a million words (Alexander, 1969, pp. 27-29), one of the largest vocabularies of any language. The English vocabulary is still growing. Indeed, Alexander (1969, p. 32) characterizes English as a language in which "simplicity of form and inflection is combined with an almost too abundant vocabulary ..."

The invention of printing in the mid-1400s, by making spelling and grammar more uniform, led to a general slowing of the pace of linguistic change. Further, the decay of language is not always inevitable. Christian and scholar Noah Webster (1828) labored to return the spelling of many English words to a phonetic basis. His spellings became standard in the United States but not in Great Britain and its colonies. In fact, certain British words have departed from phonetic spelling in relatively recent times. An example is the British change in spelling of the word *center* (mostly phonetic) to *centre* (non-phonetic).

## CONCLUSIONS

Human language is distinct from animal sounds and could not have evolved from them. Neither do simpler precursors exist from which modern languages could have evolved. Ancient languages in fact were generally more complex than modern ones, so language is "decaying," not evolving. **Linguistic "decay" refers to a decreasing ability of language to convey precise and unambiguous information in its words.** Types of decay include loss of inflections and loss of phonetic

spelling. Ancient pictographs and ideographs were more information-laden than alphabetic writing. Rather than being primitive, pictographs were advanced. The transition to alphabetic writing is therefore another decay process.

The confusion of languages at Babel was a real historical event occurring about 2500 BC. Evidence for it includes (1) the fact that "Babel" originally meant "confusion"; (2) the existence of languages in three groups (Indo-European, Semitic and Oriental/African) corresponding to Noah's three sons who survived the Flood; (3) the evident origin of distinct languages at one geographical place; (4) the similarities between a reconstructed Indo-European vocabulary, and the conditions experienced by Japhethites dispersing from Babel; and (5) memory of the building of Babel preserved in Chinese ideographs.

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