

THE "TANGLED" TONGUE†

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In this paper the author attempts to relate, on the basis of his experience, a condition—dyslexia—to the fact that some of the world's languages are written in different directions from others. He believes that human beings are "pre-programmed" (visually and mentally), some to be able to learn one language more easily, some another. The dyslexic seems to be suffering from a mixture of this built-in information, and thus to have trouble, particularly in reading.

There are many people who have difficulty expressing themselves in their own language, despite the fact they may have clear, mental understanding. In childhood, these individuals may have difficulty learning to read, and it usually carries over into adulthood, manifested there by slowness in reading. Also, there may be a tendency to reverse certain letters or numbers as they attempt to read or write. Investigators from several professional fields of interest, such as optometry, education and psychology, all agree that there is not necessarily a correlation between intelligence and the presence of these characteristics. The condition described here is usually referred to as dyslexia.

As an optometrist, I became interested in the above phenomenon several years ago because I regularly examined people who displayed these problems, particularly young boys around the age of 9 or 10. These children are often brought to the eye doctor because the teacher, parent or school psychologist suspects the child may have a seeing disorder (and sometimes this is true). But more often than not, the child will have good eye and visual health, insofar as clarity of seeing and absence of pathology is concerned.

A common side effect associated with the reading difficult is called mixed-dominance. That is, the person will prefer to "sight" with the right eye but will be left-handed, or vice versa. Or, they may be able to do things pretty efficiently with either hand, and consequently, the parents and the child often aren't sure about their dominant handedness.

In addition to the eye-tracking and reading problem, these same persons may have difficulty enunciating certain words too, so, speech therapists are often involved in the overall treatment program of the dyslexic individual.

Optometrists who specialize in the therapy end of dyslexia are called developmental optometrists. As the name implies, these O.D.'s are interested in the sequential development of children's learning processes. Basically, they believe every person is designed to go through several stages of growth patterns, the success of each stage being dependent on the completeness of the previous stage in order for the end result to be good and "normal". It is thought that certain stages of development will have been missed completely, or were not carried out to completion, in those persons who display the characteristics of dyslexia. Based on this assumption then, the treatment provided to the "patient" centers

around having him perform certain tasks (in an accelerated manner) which are designed to fill in the missing "gaps" of the person's growth stages.

Because of my involvement in visual training and developmental optometry over the past few years, I generally agree with the above (admittedly very elementary) introduction to dyslexia from the optometric viewpoint. To me, the rationale is logical and the treatment works when performed by an optometrist who knows what he is doing. Obviously, the results will depend upon the severity of the condition, the intensity and duration of the treatment program and the degree of commitment and involvement by the patient personally.

Is Dyslexia A Disease?

I am convinced that dyslexia is not a medical problem in the classical sense of a disease, and therefore, it would be of little value for me to talk about all the things which I think dyslexia *isn't*.

A Little Background, From My Study During the Past Four Years

I may lose some of my readers at this point, not because you won't be able to understand what I'm saying, but because of the nature of the subject matter. However, if you'll "hang in there", when you've finished reading this short story, you'll know and understand the "ins and outs" of dyslexia better than most—I really believe that! Not because of my personal superior knowledge and training in the field, but because I believe I've made a discovery and I wish to share it with all interested persons. It has helped me and it will help you, especially if you are personally affected by dyslexia or know someone who is. Stay with me now.

For the past four years, I have become intense in my belief that the Holy Bible is, in fact, *the* perfect book of knowledge, containing God's Wisdom for understanding all mankind's pertinent ills and that it gives instructions on how to deal with them. I have searched the Scriptures carefully and regularly and my belief becomes increasingly solid and sure as I read, learn and *apply* the Biblical teachings and principles to my own life. (During the past two years, I have written a booksize commentary on the books of Revelation and Daniel and other portions of apocalyptic Scriptures. These prophecies are not pertinent to this study; I mention this only to give you an idea of the depth of my sincerity that the Holy Scriptures are an *absolutely* accurate "word-picture" of God, man and their interrelationships.)

When I was doing these studies, I was not looking for

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some Biblical answer to the question about dyslexia. But quite by "accident", I found something very interesting.

The Languages

The problem of dyslexia is actually and merely a language barrier. In other words, something is hindering the proper handling of symbols, mental word formation and word order within the affected individual. Perhaps if we understood languages better, I've thought, maybe we would better understand why certain persons show difficulty working with the particular language to which they are exposed as a result of their birthplace. It was probably this kind of thinking that made me somewhat sensitive to two passages of Scripture in the Bible, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament.

Genesis 11

Genesis is the first book of the Bible and, as its name implies, it is a book about beginnings. I am confident that it is no mere coincidence that we find the explanation in this book concerning the beginnings of our languages. This is not going to be an in-depth study of the Bible, but I do want to include a few verses so that you have right before you the main Biblical message which I believe relates to the topic of dyslexia.

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar: and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven: and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, behold, the people is one, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their languages, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel: because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:1-9).

Now, if you aren't well acquainted with the King James Version of the Bible, I suggest you re-read the above passage several times until you get the gist of what is being explained to us. Here's what I see: A "great" leader by the name of Nimrod was leader of the above-described people on planet earth at the time, and as the Scriptures indicate, everyone spoke the same language then! I realize this seems incredible to imagine now, but try to accept it as fact—at least for the time being. Secondly, these people were obviously agreed to

build a "stairway to heaven". We can't possibly know how awesome this edifice might have been, though absurd to think they believed they could please God with their personalized method of reaching heaven by their own planning. It was this exercise of self-will which caused God to come and confuse the "tongues" that they might not be able to understand one another. Notice that the passage says that their languages were confounded and the people were then scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. I believe the incident was instantaneous and supernatural; the way God often displayed His sovereignty and magnificent power in the early days of recorded history.

I imagine the occurrence was something like this: On a certain day, all the workers came together to do their usual jobs of construction, one man shouts an order to those under supervision, and none of them understood a word the man had said!

They began to speak to one another to express how ridiculous the boss sounded, only to learn that perhaps their friend didn't understand him either! Would this be confusing? I'd say so! Under those conditions, I know that I would quickly disperse and look for someone who could understand me. Obviously, some of the persons would have been given the same language, these would have congregated together and set out for their eventual, God-given destination in an effort to get away from this apparent "madness". And thus began the languages, which have continued to this day—although obviously undergoing constant changes over the centuries.

What Had God Done?

The people who previously spoke and wrote the same language were suddenly given a whole new way of speaking and writing, and it was genetically-engineered right into their minds! The new, written symbols were as different as the sounds of each new speech. Some of the languages were written from left to right, some were written from right to left and some were written vertically. And right along with this change of the printing systems, the eye-tracking and mind-understanding systems of each person was made to naturally follow the new order of things, so that they could cope in this new environment. Why am I so sure of this explanation?

The Eye-Movement Phenomenon

Before I learned of the above Scriptures and interpreted them the way I've just explained, I had learned of a very interesting ocular characteristic which occurs in the eyes of dyslexics. Motion pictures were made of the face of "subjects" as they attempted to read English literature—which is written from left to right of course. The investigators often observed that the person's eyes would occasionally drift from right to left instead of left to right as should be the case. This occurred often enough that it was reported as an ordinary incident in those individuals who have trouble learning to read English. This discovery told developmental optometrists that there seems to be a natural ocular motion from left to right in individuals who *easily* learn the English language. When you think about it, this is ex-

actly what would be expected. There's nothing absolutely correct about left to right printing or vice versa, it's just "the way it is" for a particular language. However, some folks are better "prepared" for one way than the other and if you happen not to be born in an environment which you are best "suited" for, then you're bound to have some trouble. The resultant problem has been called dyslexia.

My "Prize" Patient

After my optometric training and Biblical understanding began to merge, I developed a "theory" of my own. It seemed logical to me that if a person displayed an ocular motion from right to left rather than left to right, that he would be an ideal candidate to study a language which was written in the direction of his natural, eye-movement tendency. I presumed that such a person would excel in this situation. For about two years, I used this concept as I explained dyslexia to concerned parents or those persons who were affected themselves.

Recently, a patient came to me to be fitted for contact lenses and also to consult me about her dyslexia. I referred her to an optometrist who does more of the actual therapy than I do but she wanted me to explain my understanding regarding her condition. (This girl knew nothing of what you've read thus far prior to coming to see me.) Before I had gotten very far into my discussion, she interrupted me and said, "I think you should know something before you go on." I stopped and she explained that it was very difficult for her to do her college reading assignments, although she was obviously very intelligent and a good learner in other respects. Then she said, "You know what though, I took a course in a language which reads from right to left and I excelled." I nearly fell out of my chair! "Praise the Lord", I thought. Needless to say, I became very excited and she became tickled at my obvious joy, although not fully understanding why I was so elated. I asked her to explain thoroughly. She had taken Hebrew. (Strangely, I had always used Hebrew as my example postulation when explaining my understanding to patients!) She said even her teacher was awed by the ease and swiftness with which she grasped the language.

In spite of my excitement, this came as no surprise to me, for I already knew this would be the case *if* my presumptions were right. I believe God confirmed my convictions and the correctness of the analysis by sending me an example exactly according to "specifications". My conclusion is that the only reason she has difficulty with English is because she was not precisely "genetically-programmed" for this system of communication. Then, to cap it all off beautifully, she said her ancestry was Jewish! Obviously, this added further credibility to this idea of being mentally "programmed" for a particular language.

How Does the Mix-Up Occur?

It's really very simple. Ever since God scattered the people away from Babel, there has been a gradual, international tendency to return to oneness of thought and desires, centering around selfishness. Let's face it.

That's the truth. People have mixed national and racial backgrounds through marriages and if one of the parents happens to be "engineered" for English, the children may inherit some of the tendencies from that parent and if the other parent is "engineered" for Hebrew, let's say, then the children may tend to develop a blend of dominances, resulting in confusion under some circumstances, especially in the areas of reading. So, on and on and on, this process has continued throughout the ages, from Babel till the present time. Consequently, the end result is that some children have the condition called dyslexia.

A very reasonable question may come to your mind right about now. Since God put a stop to man's efforts in trying to reach heaven through his tower-building experiences (having stopped him by creating many languages and dispersing the people), has He ever shown us His plan of entering the Kingdom of God (heaven)? This question and the answer lead us to the New Testament.

Acts 2

Searching the Scriptures from cover to cover will reveal only two pertinent passages in the Bible which give significant information about languages as to the reason for their existence. We have already covered one, Genesis 11, the other is found in the second chapter of Acts. Again, I quote:

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they (i.e., the apostles) were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, whercin we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya and Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, what meaneth this? (Acts 2:1-12)

Once again, I ask you to read the Scripture passage several times so that you really learn the essence of what is being taught in the verses. I believe these are the main points to understand:

The Messiah, Jesus Christ, had ascended back to God the Father a short time (fifty days) prior to the incident described in the above 12 verses. Prior to leaving, Jesus had told His disciples to go to the "upper room" and

wait till they received power from on high—this was a place where the disciples and the Lord often gathered for prayer and communion. That's the time-setting. Then the disciples were in the "upper room" when the loud noise occurred. The Power of the Holy Spirit was being sent to the apostles and He (the Holy Spirit) "indwelt" each one there. They actually saw "tongues of fire" over each other's head as it enveloped them. The result was that each of them began to speak in languages that they never knew and they were doing it effortlessly as a result of supernatural, God-given ability.

Immediately, they had power they had never experienced before and they went about Jerusalem teaching and preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people who had come from abroad (where they had been dispersed to by God) to the Pentecost Festival. (See Jn. 16:13 for the promise of the Holy Spirit Who would come after Jesus had ascended back to the Father). God had "staged" this scene (i.e., the Pentecost timing) in order that there would be many people from all surrounding countries to hear the "Good News" which the apostles began to spread concerning Jesus of Nazareth. The people from neighboring countries were awed by the abilities of the men to speak clearly to them in their own native tongue. The apostle Peter (who had denied he even knew Jesus Christ the day before His crucifixion) went out that day and preached with such conviction, fervency and power, that 3000 people became believers in the Lord Jesus that day. Peter was no longer restrained in his commitment to Christ, for he had received new power from God to help him overcome his lack of boldness.

Now, Let's Tie the Two Loose Ends Together— Babel and Pentecost

The situation with Nimrod and his followers at Babel occurred around 2500 B.C. God had dispersed the people into all parts of the world, giving them different natures and languages, to the extent that it would keep them "occupied" and somewhat divided, while God worked out His plan of salvation and redemption for mankind; that is, God stalled man temporarily through the languages and dispersion of the people, then gave His revelation of how to get to heaven—but not by climbing up a man-made ladder!

God called Abraham around 2000 B.C. and started laying the ground-work of His plan of salvation. It would be given to those who would *believe* in His plan. Then, God raised up the nation of Israel and through them, and the prophets who spoke God's messages to them, God wrote His Own strategy for us to read and learn—the Bible.

The Old Testament clearly prophesies the coming of the Messiah, first as a suffering servant, taking the sins of believing mankind upon Himself (see Isaiah 53) then later, to return as Lord and King of His resurrected saints (true followers of Christ). The Bible declares that Jesus fulfilled every Old Testament prophecy relative to God's requirements for mankind's access to heaven. Jesus became "the door", the Bible says; Jesus became God's "tower" to heaven, if you will. And after Him, there would be no other provision. Jesus' last words ut-

tered on the cross were, "IT IS FINISHED". He was not simply saying that His life was about to end in death. He *meant* that God's plan of redemption was FINISHED.

Immediately after Jesus died, the veil in the Temple at Jerusalem was torn from the top to the bottom (indicating that it was not done by human hand); the symbolism was that God's "gateway" to heaven was opened at last.

Then at Pentecost, God revealed more information about His plan to gain entrance into His Kingdom. He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell believers so that they might have new power to assist them in their faith, belief and service in Christ's Church. God's "proof" of what I'm saying was that Christ's disciples could speak in foreign languages—without prior training! Their ability to do this represented the beginning of a *reversal process* of that which had begun thousands of years earlier at Babel when the languages were given to hold man "in check" while God introduced *His* program. Therefore, Pentecost became the "antithesis" of what happened at Babel. More simply stated, Pentecost brought the *healing* of Babel. This is not to say that Pentecost erased all the languages (obviously); but God's "picture" began to emerge more clearly at that point. In the early Church years, believers often "spoke in tongues" (other languages) right after they had trusted in Jesus for personal salvation; it was a "sign" to unbelievers which God allowed for the purpose of creating interest in the unbeliever to the testimony of the new believer.

I find it very interesting to note that the Bible was begun in the language of Hebrew through Moses, and today, it seems to be understood and preached, chiefly, by English speaking people. I do not believe it to be a mere coincidence that English speaking nations are also mainly responsible for broadcasting the Gospel of Christ into a spiritually-darkened world right now; and, that most of the Bible translating into other languages is going forth from America. I don't say this out of prideful patriotism; it is a statement of plain fact.

The False "Pentecost"

What happened at Pentecost was a far cry from that which fallen man (under the inspiration of Satan) is trying to accomplish today. The Bible clearly teaches that Satan will be given the privilege of building an earthly empire over which he will finally reign as "god" for a brief period. (This is to be before Christ returns to reign as rightful King). One of the biggest problems Satan has in establishing his "throne" is the language barrier. His method is to "mend" the god-caused, multiple languages in the world, using speeded up methods through computer and other technological advances, the purpose of which is quickly to translate language information from one group of people to another. These man-made methods of "erasing" the language barrier is a spiritual repetition of the man-made Tower of Babel; that is, man is still trying to solve his own problems and attempting to bring in peace on earth through *self* effort.

The above statement is not to imply that we, as Chris-

tians, should not use technology to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We should use every means available to us, so long as we can maintain truthful, Biblical teaching, without compromising it. If it becomes necessary to “water-down” the message of God’s Word, then we must make our decision—in advance—to be willing to proclaim the truth regardless of the cost, even if it means our lives!

A Concluding Statement About Dyslexia

You may be wondering (understandably) what happened to my topical subject, after having read the last few paragraphs. I included those thoughts because I see the whole “picture” of languages, Babel, Pentecost, Satan’s delusions, and dyslexia, all tied in together.

The dyslexic has become a very SPECIAL person to me. I definitely don’t see his “problem” in the usual sense. I have learned that the dyslexic holds a great key to understanding why we have different languages. It tells me how much God truly loves us and how patient He is as He teaches us how He deals in the affairs of mankind. I praise God that He has made me see real beauty through a situation that is so often—erroneously—thought of as tragic. This is another example of how differently God thinks than does mankind. It reminds me of a description of another person revealed in Scripture:

... He hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him (Isaiah 53:2)

Christians will recognize this as a prophetic statement about the Lord Jesus. Read the verse again, and then recall and contrast what it says with what Christ actually did for us as He sacrificed His life, taking upon Himself the total sin penalty.

My advice to parents, teachers and others interested in the dyslexic, is to love and respect him; try to see him through “God’s eyes”. I really know how trying and exasperating it can be at times as you train and give guidance to the dyslexic; just remember this, he/she is very special to our Creator God.

Somehow, I think the apostle Paul may have been alluding to just such a situation when he wrote:

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. (1 Corinthians 1:27)

Postscript

I feel a need to further clarify and emphasize a particular point about my hypothesis concerning dyslexia. It may seem that I’m saying that the whole answer to the difficulty in the dyslexic’s reading ability lies in his particular eye-tracking “engineering” not being exactly right for the language he’s trying to learn. It’s not quite that simple. Languages are not only different because of the direction they are written, of course. The whole word-order varies from language to language. For instance, in English, the adjectives, adverbs and other descriptive parts of a sentence are physically located in different positions relative to the subject and objects of a sentence as compared, say to French (even though

both languages read from left to right). What I’m saying is, if we oriented English from right to left on a page of literature, it would not necessarily help the dyslexic a bit. His whole sentence structuring ability (“genetically-engineered”) is confused. This would explain why a child may learn another language, such as Hebrew, quicker; even the shapes and designs of the letters appearing more “natural” to him.

It has been about three months since I wrote *The “Tangled” Tongue*. Since then, it was published by the Southwest Radio Church in their monthly edition of *The Gospel Truth* and also broadcast throughout the world on the radio from their headquarters in Oklahoma City, OK. This has resulted in a significant number of responses which have added confirmations to the thesis. I’d like to share two examples with you.

A local mother told me that I had answered a mystery for her concerning her daughter. She had always noticed that her child’s sentence structure was clearly German, even though she had never been exposed to that language. (The parent had studied German previously.) However, there is close German ancestry!

Another case was told me about a family living in Denver, Colo. The parents’ son (age 13) has severe dyslexia. They had been puzzled by the fact that his “dyslexia” went away in the preparations for his barmitzvah. (The barmitzvah is a religious service which requires a child to learn a significant amount of Hebrew.) The family was of Jewish descent!

These and other reports coming in are substantiating and adding credibility to what has been “discovered” and set forth the THE ‘TANGLED’ TONGUE. I become increasingly convinced that we have a realized truth at hand. We were advised to expect increases in understanding some of God’s mysteries, through the prophet Daniel approximately 2500 years ago:

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (Dan. 12:4.)

I praise God for sharing His Wisdom with us in these days of rampant ungodliness. Here’s what the Lord said concerning the differences in mankind at the time of the end, only a few verses after the above quote:

Many shall be purified, and made white, and tested, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. (Dan. 12:10.)

The Serpent’s Snare

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sical mimicry of the cobra’s head, this also must have been a fortuitous mishap.

Evolutionary development demands trial and error. The odds of error are multiplied by the complexity and interrelationships of the necessary trials; consequently the permutations involved in this plant’s characteristics would be infinitesimal. It seems equally ridiculous to impute either reason or randomness to this singular stalk, yet there is evidence of intelligent design. The only rational answer is a Divine Intelligence.