

origin of languages

June 6, 1975

Mr. Richard W. de Haan
P.O. Box 22
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501

Dear Mr. De Haan:

It was my privilege recently to hear a very fine radio message that you gave about the creation of mankind. I appreciated the excellent way that you presented vital truths. In the course of the message I noticed one statement that I thought I should mention to you. Although it did not affect the strength of your argument, it might draw unfavorable criticism from experts in the field of language, if repeated in later talks or booklets.

This was the statement that all the languages of humanity derive from one common source. I doubt that anyone trained in linguistics would agree with this statement. It is true that there is a large group of languages including English, German, Swedish, Russian, Italian, Greek and Sanskrit, that have so many things in common that they are considered as the Indo-Germanic family of languages. There is also a smaller group of related languages which includes Hebrew, Arabic and Babylonian. Some scholars have thought to find a relation between these two families, but this is still disputed. Hundreds of other languages show no recognizable affinity to any of these or to each other.

Personally I incline toward the theory of Professor Jaspersen. He believed that human beings possess a language-forming ability, so that even small children left where it is possible to survive alone without parents to care for them or teach them, will form a new language. If they already know a few words, this will be a basis. Otherwise the basis may come from sounds of animals or natural phenomena. In warm regions there are many languages that have little or no relation to one another.

We rejoice in the fine messages you are giving and in the outreach of your witness to the Gospel of our wonderful Saviour.

Cordially yours in Christ

President
Biblical School of Theology