Fifteen Years On From Atlantis (of the West)

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In 2003, my book, Atlantis of the West – the Case for Britain's Drowned Megalithic Civilization, was published. It was actually a second edition of The Atlantis Researches, published in 1995. The new name was chosen by the publishers as they thought it might sell more copies in UK and USA, but the original subtitle, "The Earth's Rotation in Mythology and Prehistory", gives a better idea of what it was really about. In 2005, my follow-up, Under Ancient Skies, was published [1]. This is perhaps less well-known than its predecessors but, in many ways, I was happier with its content. In the same year, I gave a talk at the SIS Autumn meeting on the subject of catastrophism around 3100 BC, its causes and effects [2].

I offer this short review article to summarise the theories because, although in the years since publication I have done very little new work, the ideas in the books keep appearing in various places - some by people independently coming to similar conclusions; others citing my own ideas third-hand without knowing from where they originated. I had hoped that my books might move the debate forward from the 1950s science of Velikovsky, Hapgood and others, onto more modern evidence – yet still I see books and TV series about catastrophist subjects that seem to be little more than marketing concepts to profit from mystery themes. My work has been out-there a long time, so any author who does not cite it now is guilty of poor research, even if all they wish to do is to debunk it.

So, how might I summarise the original theories without missing something vital? Not easy, because true research is complex. It isn't just a case of pointing to three stars in Orion's belt and then padding it out to make a book. So let me begin by highlighting the case for a mid-Neolithic crisis around 3100 BC, for which there is a growing cache of evidence from many disciplines. Some other investigators prefer a date of 3200 BC, but we mean the same thing [3]. From both scientific and ancient sources, we may see a convergence here:

Atlantic/Sub-Boreal climate changes	3300-2900 BC
Sea-level changes worldwide	3200-3000 BC
Greenland high-acidity event	3250 BC
Tree-ring low-growth event	3199 BC
Mesopotamian/ Biblical Flood	3100-2800 BC
Indian Calendar Era (Kaliyuga)	3102 BC
Mayan Calendar Era	3113 BC
Egyptian First Dynasty	3110 BC
Sahara Desert climate changes	3000 BC?
Radiocarbon tree-ring date corrections	1000-3000 BC?

I add Plato's story of Atlantis to this list because it is an account, presented as history, of a catastrophic submergence around the beginning of the Egyptian state. This would place it at somewhere before 3100 BC; not at 11,000 years ago – a fabulous antiquity which arose only because the Egyptian priest included a dynasty of long-lived demigods before the dynasties of real kings (as is found on the Palermo Stone). This is one example of what I called a "mythological fossil" – a detail preserved within a legend that can be taken out and separately analysed using quantitative science.

Another example was that very precise statement in Plato's story that the ancient kings gathered "every fifth and every sixth year alternately" (not, you will note, a vague "every five or six years"). This suggested to me that they were using a calendar; so, I set out to see if such a calendar would be accurate. In *Under Ancient Skies* I showed that it indeed does work. There is a pre-Roman Gaulish calendar called The Calendar of Coligny that appears to academic analysis to be a quite hopeless attempt by the Druids at a 5-year lunisolar cycle. However, when you combine it with an alternating 6-year cycle then it becomes potentially more accurate than the Gregorian calendar. It was this detail which convinced me that Druid astronomy must have been a survival from

the megalithic society of Atlantic Europe. Once you are open to this possibility, then, many other pieces of evidence drop into place to support it, alas too many to go into here. So how much more of the story of a mid-Neolithic catastrophe might eventually prove to be true?

Another way to examine a Neolithic flood event is to look for the geophysical evidence that it must leave behind. Whatever simplistic mechanism might be proposed to cause 'the great flood' or to sink a large landmass then it must have worldwide effects that result from the fact that the Earth rotates on its axis. If land and sea move, then the Earth's rotation would wobble and the poles would migrate. The mathematics that describes this motion is well known to specialist geophysicists and astronomers. My assertion was that such numerate academics set little value upon catastrophist theories or upon myths as evidence, and they do not recognise the evidence that is before them.

The phenomena known as the Chandler Wobble and the nearly-diurnal wobble, if excited by sufficient force, would give rise to seven-year rhythms in the climate. This interval occurs in many ancient sources and is another of those mythological fossils that we can examine. The most obvious example of course is the Biblical Joseph story. Although many people have written to me over the years about the various theories in my books, not one has picked up on this. I thought some might seize on it as proof of the Bible and such, but surprisingly, no.

These climate variations would arise because the 14-month Chandler wobble as modified by the other mode would combine with the 12-month seasons to give 7-year climate rhythms that decay after about 20 years; a very simplistic summary, since there are other longer-term effects, such as changes in the figure of the earth (the geoid). A pole shift would cause a pattern of long-term land and sea-level changes. My own theory suggested submergence along the Atlantic coasts and apparent rising of land further east. Incidentally, one piece of evidence that I did not pursue was the apparent uplift of land in central Asia since about 3000 BC that has resulted in the shrinking of the Caspian and Aral Seas and the rivers of that region as described by ancient writers – a book theme itself for someone.

I also touched upon whether these changes in the Earth's rotation might cause a permanent shift in both the axis-tilt (obliquity) and the length of the day, in addition to a geographical pole shift. Although I presented the evidence, I remain less convinced of this aspect. The problem is that while a pole shift could arise by movements within the Earth, changes to the axis tilt and diurnal period require a quite enormous external force to be applied. It is this which makes conventional academic opinion so sceptical and rightly so.

Nevertheless, if we look at the construction of the Mayan, Chinese and Indian calendars they show a belief in a former year of 360-days and cycles of 60 and 432 days that would be needed to track a real nutation of the axis. Another pointer is the calibration of radiocarbon dates that becomes necessary before 1000 BC to bring them into line with tree ring dates. This suggests a varying magnetic field after about 3000 BC; but why should this be so? The magnetic field is generated by the daily rotation of the Earth's iron core; and why should this have changed? My theory was that a nutation of the axis (the nearly-diurnal or core wobble) persisted through the next two millennia* and explains the need for the additional calendar devices. It also offers a reason why Neolithic monuments in the third millennium BC appear to be astronomically aligned.

One last thread in my research was that by looking at references to solar and lunar eclipses in ancient sources and the retro-calculated variation in delta-T then any postulated impact disturbance could not have occurred since the second millennium BC; and that the modern solstice alignments of Neolithic monuments (Stonehenge, Newgrange, etc) would not be valid if the causal event occurred any later than about 3100 BC.

Whatever may have caused the mid-Neolithic crisis could have been no ordinary comet or asteroid impact or else its effects would be obvious. Direct evidence for an impact event has yet to be found; there is no 'crater'. A solar comet of the mass required to affect the Earth's rotation would have to be so large that it should have caused a mass extinction. So my conclusion was that it must have been something very small and travelling very fast; perhaps a piece of supernova debris; or some phenomenon of new physics that we do not yet understand.

Without direct evidence, the case for a mid-Neolithic event requires the appreciation of a pattern of evidence across many disciplines [4]. Single-subject experts do not see this and do not pursue it. It is all too easy to

dismiss such evidence without proper scrutiny, even though it bears no relationship to the 1950s ideas that sound like just so-much phlogiston to modern ears. Minds may be more open to catastrophism now than twenty years ago but there remains a long way to go.

Notes and References

1. Paul Dunbavin, *The Atlantis Researches: the Earth's Rotation in Mythology and Prehistory*, Third Millennium, 1995; *Atlantis of the West: The Case for Britain's Drowned Megalithic Civilization*, Constable & Robinson (Carroll & Graf in USA), 2003; *Under Ancient Skies: Ancient Astronomy & Terrestrial Catastrophism*, Third Millennium, 2005.

2. Report on Autumn Meeting, 2005, C&C Workshop 2005:3, p. 2. The following unpublished papers were intended for SIS: P. Dunbavin, '*Updating George F. Dowell*', 2006; '*Plato, the Neolithic Calendar and the Evidence for Catastrophism*', 2006; '*Akhenaten, Eclipses and the Chronology of the Egyptian XVIII Dynasty*', 2006. **

3. A range of useful catastrophist books and research papers, including the above, is listed by William I. Thompson in Celestial Catastrophism - Bibliography and Handbook. http://www.creationism.org/books/BibliographyCelestialCatastrophism.htm.

4. http://www.sis-group.org.uk/news/piora-oscillation.htm

***Errata:** the word 'decades' that appeared in the original journal has here been corrected to 'millennia'. The Chandler wobble lasts for decades; the core-wobble, once triggered would persist much longer.

Citations:

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