

# The Gap Theory

## The Missing Link Or Added Information?

Imagine a student who, writing a twenty-page paper, only included two sentences in that paper. When pressed by the professor as to why this should be an acceptable practice, the student responds that there is a twenty page gap between the two sentences, so there really is no problem of length. In any respectable institution, that student would fail the paper. Yet, in the debate regarding the origins of the universe, there are those who would contend that this is indeed the advantage the Bible student has when interacting with the claims of uniformitarian science.

The nature of the origin of man, the earth, and the universe is the single most contentious issue in the debate between Christians and non-Christians, and even between Christians themselves. The basic issue concerns what God intends the reader of Genesis to know about the world and the way in which it began. There have been several theories suggested to answer this question, many of which will be discussed in detail later. One of these theories is what is known as the Gap Theory, also known as the Ruin-Reconstruction Theory.

### A Definition of the Gap Theory

The Gap Theory, in a sine qua non definition, teaches that there is a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 of an indeterminate amount of time. However, this is not enough of a definition, as there are several positions that would hold to this idea. For example, some theologians, in what has been erroneously termed by some as classic (traditional) creationism,<sup>1</sup> or more appropriately, the “soft gap theory,” have taught that all of typical creationism has been right except that there does exist an indeterminate, but dormant, gap in Genesis. Gorman Gray has written, “Earth lay in total darkness ... for an undefined length of time before the first day until God began to clear the envelope of thick darkness.”<sup>2</sup> Old Testament Scholar John Sailhamer has also written in favor of this view in his books, including *The Pentateuch As Narrative* and his commentary on Genesis in *The*

<sup>1</sup> Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe* (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway Books, 2010), 90. I write “erroneously” because this particular author claimed that this view was the traditional view of the church for most of church history, which is patently false. See the later section in this paper on the history of the Gap Theory.

<sup>2</sup> Gorman Gray, *The Age of the Universe: What Are the Biblical Limits?* (Washougal, WA: Morningstar Publications, 1997).

*Expositor's Bible Commentary*. While this view is problematic, especially in the light of Exodus 20:11, which states, “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth,”<sup>3</sup> indicating that all of creation happened during the original creation, this view is not the focus of this paper.

Rather, this paper will concern itself with the Ruin-Reconstruction version of the Gap Theory. Weston Fields, a prominent critic of this theory, has written, “This postulation of an interval *must* not be construed into or confused with the classical form of the Gap Theory.”<sup>4</sup> He goes on to summarize the classic Gap Theory (or Ruin-Reconstruction Theory) position,

In the far distant dateless past God created a perfect heaven and perfect earth. Satan was ruler of the earth which was peopled by a race of “men” without any souls. Eventually, Satan, who dwelled in a garden of Eden composed of minerals (Ezekiel 28), rebelled by desiring to become like God (Isaiah 14). Because of Satan’s fall, sin entered the universe and brought on the earth God’s judgment in the form of a flood (indicated by the water of 1:2), and then a global Ice Age when the light and heat from the sun were somehow removed. All the plant, animal, and human fossils upon the earth today date from this ‘Lucifer’s flood’ and do not bear any genetic relationship with the plants, animals and fossils living upon the earth today.<sup>5</sup>

Lest anyone believe this is an inaccurate representation, George Pember, an advocate of the theory, has written,

There is room for any length of time between the first and second verses of the Bible. And again; since we have no inspired account of geological formations, we are at liberty to believe that they were developed just in the order which we find them. The whole process took place in pre-adamite

<sup>3</sup> All Scripture Taken From The *NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE*, © Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960,1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, 1995. Used by permission.

<sup>4</sup> Weston Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled* (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2005), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Fields, 7.

times, in connection, perhaps, with another race of beings, and, consequently, does not at present concern us.<sup>6</sup>

To summarize the essentials of the Ruin-Reconstruction theory, several points should be highlighted. First, Genesis 1:1 speaks of God's original creation. Second, there is a gap of an unknown length between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Third, during this time, God's world was populated by plants, animals, and a pre-adamic, human-like race under the authority of Satan and the angels. Fourth, through Satan's rebellion, God destroyed this original creation by a flood. Fifth, and finally, Genesis 1:3 speaks of God's new creation.

The Gap Theory should be distinguished from other theories of origins. First, the naturalistic Evolutionary Model of origins. This model holds, because it outright rejects a literal interpretation of Genesis and believes that the way the world functions now is the way it always has in the past, that the earth and universe were formed billions of years ago, and life arose sequentially from non-life. Second, the Evolutionary Creation (theistic evolution/literary framework) Model. Those who hold to such a model teach that Genesis is to be interpreted topically, mythologically, or theologically, rather than historically. Thus, there can be reconciliation between modern science claims and Genesis. Third, the Day-Age (with the Progressive Creation) Model. These teachers believe that the days of creation were either 24 hour days separated by long periods of time or that the days themselves were long periods of time. Many in this view reject biological evolution while accepting old earth estimates. Fourth, the Young-Earth Model. This belief is that Genesis is to be interpreted historically and that, while not intending to be a scientific treatise on cosmology, and while intending to teach theological truth as well, teaches that God historically created in six, twenty-four hour days roughly six thousand years ago.

### The History of the Ruin-Reconstruction Theory

Though it can be seen quite readily that the vast majority of Christian thinkers from the early to medieval church saw Genesis as being a complete account of the beginnings of creation<sup>7</sup>, there have

<sup>6</sup> George H. Pembers, *Earth's Earliest Ages* (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), 28.

<sup>7</sup> For a thorough summary, see James R. Mook's chapter on the church fathers in Terry Mortenson, "'Deep Time' and the Church's Compromise: Historical Background," in *Coming To Grips With Genesis: Biblical Authority And The Age Of The Earth*, ed. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2008), 79–104.

been those who have suggested a gap between these verses. Men such as Caedmon, King Edgar, Hugo St. Victor, Thomas Aquinas, Pererius, and Dionysius Petavius all showed traces of the idea that there may indeed be a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Cademon even taught that God created angels to dwell on the earth, but as a result of their fall, punished them and put new creatures on the earth. Although these theories do suggest a gap, and maybe even a time of the reign of angels, they do not yet reflect the full thinking of the Ruin-Reconstruction Theory.

Origen, the church father from the second century, has written, "It is certain that the present firmament is not spoken of in this verse, nor the present dry land, but rather the heaven and earth from which this present heaven and earth that we now see afterwards borrowed their names."<sup>8</sup> Yet, even here, the context of Origen has demonstrated that he spoke not of a separate creation, but of a developing creation.

There have also been stories of other worlds even in Judaic and Christian traditions. For example, a Jewish legend posited, "This world inhabited by man (is not) the first of things earthly created by God. He made several worlds before ours, but He destroyed them all, because He was pleased with none until He created ours."<sup>9</sup> Further, the Aramaic Targum Onkelos, written in the second century A.D., has been used to support the ideas as well. But, as Weston Fields points out<sup>10</sup>, these statements are not rooted in Biblical theology. While there certainly is value in historical research, non-inspired sources cannot dictate the meaning of the Biblical text.

The clearest beginnings of the Ruin-Reconstruction theory are to be found in the writings of Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers, who wrote during the 1700-1800's A.D. Hoping to bring the six-day biblical creation account together with the growing old age estimates of modern scientists, including James Hutton, George Cuvier, and Charles Lyell, he postulated this position. He has written, "Should, in particular, the explanation that we now offer be sustained, this would permit an indefinite scope to the conjectures of geology-and without any

<sup>8</sup> Origen, "Origen De Principiis," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 5th ed., vol. 4, 10 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012), 289.

<sup>9</sup> Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1912), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled*, 15.

undue liberty with the first chapter of Genesis.”<sup>11</sup> Continuing to develop the idea, men like Johann Kurtz, in the *History of the Old Covenant*, William Buckland in the *Bridgewater Treatises*, George Pember in *Earth's Earliest Ages*, Cyrus Scofield in the *Scofield Reference Bible*, and Arthur Custance, the most well-known advocate and author of *Without Form And Void*, wrote to further flesh out and develop the theory.

During the 1800-1900's, many believed this theory to be the orthodox view. It was widely used in liberal settings and conservative settings alike. Bernard Ramm has written,

The gap theory has become the standard interpretation throughout hyper-orthodoxy, appearing in an endless stream of books, booklets, Bible studies, and periodical articles. In fact, it has become so sacrosanct with some that to question it is equivalent to tampering with Sacred Scripture or to manifest modernist leanings.<sup>12</sup>

Further, men like Clarence Larkin, Arthur Pink, Donald Grey Barnhouse, Oral Roberts, J. Vernon McGee, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Henry Thiessen, John Walvoord, Allen Ross, and Benny Hinn have advocated this theory in some form. A telling example includes Pastor Ted Haggard. In an internet rebuttal of Richard Dawkins, who had interviewed the pastor at his church on evolution and faith, Haggard claimed,

I've never been interested in (the debate over evolution and the age of the earth), because it made no difference to me and the reason is because I am a gap theory guy. I believe that there's a big gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. So I have no problem with dinosaurs. I have no problem with archeology. I have no problem with the different ones who say the earth is millions of years old. I have no problems with a pre-adamic race. I think there is no issue there.<sup>13</sup>

It was precisely because of his belief in the gap theory that Haggard believed he was exempt from the origins debate. Though not all advocates of this

<sup>11</sup> W. Hanna, ed., *Select Works Of Thomas Chalmers*, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1855), 149–50.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View Of Science And Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 135.

<sup>13</sup> Ted Haggard, *Ted Haggard on Richard Dawkins.*, n.d., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UM4bq9ypAdY>.

theory have held it for the sake of compromise, it can be demonstrated, as has been shown, that the Ruin-Reconstruction theory itself began as a reaction to the uniformitarianism of its day. But does this theory truly provide the ultimate solution to the debate? Does it stand up to both exegetical and scientific scrutiny? In this paper, the arguments for the Ruin-Reconstruction theory will be presented and explained, followed by an assessment of the arguments.

### Arguments for the Ruin-Reconstruction Theory

As the controversy primarily concerns the first two verses of the Bible, it is no surprise that Genesis 1:1 is where the arguments begin. It is universally accepted that this verse shatters atheism, polytheism, and pantheism. It boldly declares, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” They have not always been here. The universe, including time, matter, energy, is not eternal. Further, the universe was not begun by a plurality of gods, nor did it create itself. It was created by the one true and living God. On these points, all the major Christian theories agree.

The issue, however, arises over the word used for “create” in this verse. The word, in Hebrew, is בָּרָא, transliterated as “bara”. While this word is simple enough, the issue becomes complex when one considers a parallel text in the Law in Exodus. In its context, Exodus 20:11 is used to support the Ten Commandments, specifically the fourth commandment: honor the Sabbath. It states that God created the heavens and the earth in six days. Many non-gap theologians point out that this text says the entire universe was created in six days, believing this to be the end of the issue altogether. However, the advocate of the Ruin-Reconstruction position quickly points out that there exists a discrepancy. Whereas Genesis uses the word “bara” for create, Exodus uses the word אָשָׂא, transliterated as “asah.” These theologians emphasize this difference.

According to the traditional theory, Genesis 1:1 represents the original creation of the world, while Genesis 1:3 and Exodus 20:11 discuss a re-creation. Though some have supposed a gap before Genesis 1:1, on the basis that “bara” can mean, “to form, fashion by cutting, or shape out,”<sup>14</sup> this view does not stand up to scrutiny because the stem of the word is in the Qal format. When in the Qal, “bara” always

<sup>14</sup> F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. (Oxford University Press, 1968), 135.

means simply “create.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, the gap for this theory must be after Genesis 1:1. It is then reasoned that this gap begins in verse one, includes verse two, and ends in verse three.

Supporting this idea is the fact that, in texts like Exodus 20:11, the word “asah” is used. While the word is usually translated as “made,” Ruin-Reconstruction advocates insist that the word does not denote an original creation, that is, creation ex nihilo (meaning “out of nothing”). Rather, it speaks of a re-creation. As Arthur Custance has written,

If we allow that the basic meaning of the Hebrew verb “asah” is not creation, but rather the giving of a new role to something already in existence, then we have plenty of illustrations throughout Scripture of the use of this verb in this sense.<sup>16</sup>

Echoing this idea, P.W. Heward has written more fully,

Exodus XX,11, is a difficulty only if, and when we wrongly assume that “make” = “create.” But this ignores the perfect distinction of these very words in the Hebrew text. The six days are associated with the making, by the Holy Spirit, which is not synonymous with “creation,” but may, as we have seen, follow. Hence, not only is the difficulty removed, by the Holy Spirit’s deliberate choice of another verb may rather be confirmatory that we are on the right track.<sup>17</sup>

In support of this meaning of “asah,” these theologians often refer to the fact that, lexically, “asah” is described as meaning “to do, to make, to accomplish, to complete.”<sup>18</sup> Further, the fact that “bara” is not used again until Genesis 1:21 and 27, in which God creates new life forms is very telling. Every other instance in which the text teaches that God “made” something, for example, in Genesis 1:7 (the expanse), 1:16 (the lights), the word “asah” is

used. The question must thus be asked: why would Moses use different words for the idea if he wasn’t trying to communicate different concepts?

A second primary text is Genesis 1:2, which states, “The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.” This verse is interpreted by Ruin-Reconstruction theorists to teach that, after God’s original creation in Genesis 1:1, God destroyed the first creation and would begin again after billions of years. As John Means has written,

The first verse describes the creation of all things. An immense interval, of which no account is preserved, succeeds, before the scenes described in the second verse. During this interval the earth passed through the various changes which geology indicates. There were successive creations and destruction of plants and animals, the remains of which appear in the rocks.<sup>19</sup>

This interpretation is based off of three primary arguments. First, the “and” at the beginning of the verse indicates that the verse is sequentially after verse one. Second, the text indicates that the world became formless and void; it was not created that way. Third, the text uses the idea of darkness to indicate prior judgment.

In building the case for this first argument, those who hold this theory show that the “and” of the first comes from the Hebrew ׀, transliterated as “waw.” It carries with it several meanings, depending upon the form in which it is found. When found in the waw consecutive, it is translated as “and,” indicating sequences.<sup>20</sup> An example of this usage would be, “Johnny went to the store and he went home.” There is an implied “then” to the end of the word. This waw consecutive is clearly used throughout the chapter to demonstrate the sequential nature of what God was creating.

In regards to the second argument, that the phrasing of the verse is better translated, “the earth became formless and void,” the focus becomes on the words “was,” “formless,” and “void.” This word for “was”, in Hebrew, is the word הָיָה, transliterated as “hayeta,” which is taken from the root הָיָה, transliterated as “hayah.” This word is the Hebrew word meaning “to be.” In the arguments of the Ruin-Reconstruction theory, it is emphasized that this

<sup>15</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Brill Academic Pub, 1958), 147.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Custance, *Without Form and Void* (Classic Reprint Press, 2008), 179.

<sup>17</sup> P.W. Heward, “And the Earth Was without Form and Void,” *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, 1946, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 2003), 876.

<sup>19</sup> John O. Means, “The Narrative of the Creation in Genesis,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* XII (1855): 323..

<sup>20</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 139.9

word, in the Hebrew *qal* stem, in which it is found here, can be translated as “became” or in the pluperfect as “had become.” The earth had come to be the way it was; it was not created this way. Though the normal word usage is that of “to be,” Arthur Custance has written,

Now, in the translating, it is quite customary to equate the Hebrew verbal form (*haya*) with the English “to be,” but it has been recognized by Hebraists for many years that the equation is not strictly valid. In English, being is a kind of static concept, things simply “are” this or that. When we say “The man is tall,” we are not speaking of a dynamic event but a more or less static situation. . . Yet, in spite of this possession of the verb (*haya*) with its supposed sense of “being,” Hebrew would not think it necessary here and the verb “is” would therefore not be represented in the Hebrew.<sup>21</sup>

Another very influential writer, Clarence Larkin, wrote in support of this idea when he said in his book on Dispensationalism,

The creation of the "Original Earth" was in the dateless past. It was doubtless a most beautiful earth, covered with vegetation and inhabited with fish and fowl and animal life, and probably with human life. How long it continued in this condition we are not told, but an awful catastrophe befell it — it became "FORMLESS AND VOID," and submerged in water and darkness.<sup>22</sup>

In terms of the word “formless,” it is translated from the Hebrew word *תֹהוּ*, transliterated as “tohu.” It can be translated as either “formlessness” or “confusion.”<sup>23</sup> Ruin-Reconstruction theorists emphasize this second definition, arguing that it is the normal way the word is used. Thus, the original creation of God had been brought to a state of confusion after its destruction.

Finally, the word for void, *בְּהוּ*, transliterated as “bohu,” is also contested. It’s only essential meaning is that of emptiness.<sup>24</sup> However, in connection with

the *waw* consecutive, the significance is that the world “became empty.”

Agreeing with this understanding, C.I. Scofield has written, in his famous *Scofield Reference Bible*, “Jeremiah 4:23-26, Isaiah 24:10, and Isaiah 45:18 clearly indicate that the earth had undergone a cataclysmic change as the result of a divine judgment. The face of the earth bears everywhere the marks of such a catastrophe.”<sup>25</sup>

In Jeremiah 4:23-26, God is pronouncing a coming judgment on the people of Israel and Judah. It states,

I looked on the earth, and behold, *it was* formless and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and behold, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens had fled. I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its cities were pulled down before the LORD, before His fierce anger.

So devastating will this judgment be that God compares the result to that of creation. It is pointed out by the Ruin-Reconstruction Theory that Jeremiah 4:26 connects the emptiness of creation to the judgment of God. This is the same way, it is thought, in which Genesis 1:2 came to be formless and void.

Isaiah 24:10 is often cited to support this idea as well. This verse states, “The city of chaos is broken down; every house is shut up so that none may enter.” The word for chaos here is “tohu.” Thus, it is reasoned, that the state of the earth was not simply without form in Genesis 1:2, but that it had been brought to a state of chaos.

Isaiah 45:18 states “For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it *and* did not create it a waste place, *but* formed it to be inhabited), “I am the LORD, and there is none else.” In a Young Earth Creationism model, Genesis 1:2 describes the beginning of creation as beginning with “tohu.” But since the verse clearly states that God did not create the world in chaos (*tohu*), the world of Genesis 1:2 cannot be the beginning of creation, but the result of a previous one.

The third argument is that the text describes the world as being covered in darkness. Though not all Ruin-Reconstruction theorists would use this argument, enough of the leaders do, warranting a discussion. There are numerous examples in God’s

<sup>25</sup> C.I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1945), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Custance, *Without Form and Void*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth or God’s Plan and Purpose in the Ages* (Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 22..

<sup>23</sup> Baker and Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 1214.

<sup>24</sup> Baker and Carpenter, 121.

Word to testify that it often uses the term “darkness” for sin, corruption, and evil. For one example, 1 John 1:5, speaking of God Himself, states, “that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” In the Old Testament, Isaiah 45:7 states that God is, “The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.” Bruce Waltke has written, “This state of darkness, confusion, and lifelessness is contrary to the God of light and life; the God of order.”<sup>26</sup> Genesis 1:2 is then understood to be a euphemism for the judgment that had encompassed the earth because of its sin.

Genesis 1:3-27 contain no significant controversy as both Young Earth Creationists and Ruin-Reconstruction theorists agree that the present world was created in six literal, twenty four hour days. However, in regards to Genesis 1:28, there are again arguments to be sorted. When God gives Adam the divine job description, He tells Adam to “fill the earth.” However, in the King James Version of the text, the word, in Hebrew מִלֵּא, but transliterated as “mala,” is translated as “replenish.” If this is the correct translation, than it would be entirely reasonable to teach that Adam was repopulating the earth after it had been destroyed. Clarence Larkin has written, “In the words *“replenish the earth”* we have unmistakable evidence that the earth had been peopled before it was thrown into a chaotic condition, and that its inhabitants in some way had been destroyed.”<sup>27</sup>

In support of this idea, Noah, in Genesis 9:1, was told to fill (“mala”) the earth after the flood. In this case, Noah was being instructed to repopulate the earth. There appears no linguistic reason to differentiate between the word uses.

The next issues surround Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:11-17. There are two arguments to be made. First, that these texts place the timing of Satan’s rebellion before the creation of the modern world. Second, that Ezekiel specifically describes Eden differently than Genesis.

Regarding the timing of Satan’s rebellion, Isaiah 14:12-17 does not give the exact timing, but does give several descriptions. First, he is named “Lucifer” in verse 12 and described as having fallen from his throne. This passage also, in Isaiah 14:14, describes the essence of his rebellion as a desire to be like God.

Thus, Isaiah 14:15-17 describes him as incurring judgment and humiliation.

Ezekiel 28:11-17 also describes the fall of Satan. Before his fall, the text declares that Satan was in the garden itself (Ezekiel 28:13) and it agrees perfectly with Isaiah 14 in ascribing pride as the reason for his fall (Ezekiel 28:17). Further, this garden, contrary to the plants and animals of Genesis, was filled with the splendor and beauty of precious stones (Ezekiel 28:13).

Because of this difference, Ruin-Reconstruction theorists teach that this was an Eden from the previous creation. Further, the advantage of the Gap theory is that it makes sense of how Satan, as an angel, could tempt Adam and Eve in the Garden in Genesis 3, namely, because he was already fallen. Expressing a somewhat agnostic view, Lewis Sperry Chafer describes this option when he wrote, “It makes little difference whether this is a reference to a primal Eden or the Eden of Genesis, chapter 3. Satan has been in both.”<sup>28</sup>

Moving to the New Testament evidence, Matthew 25:34, Luke 11:50, John 17:24, Ephesians 1:4, Hebrews 4:3, 9:26, 1 Peter 1:20, and Revelation 13:8, 17:8 all contain a reference to the foundation of the world. Using Ephesians 1:4 as a model, the text states, “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.” The argument to be found here is that while the Greek word καταβολή, transliterated as “katabole,” can mean “foundation,” its more classical use, and its use in the LXX, is “disruption.”<sup>29</sup> In fact, it is from this word that the modern word “catastrophe” is built, as the word is a combination of the words “down” and “casting.” It then is argued that these texts speak post gap.

The final key text is 2 Peter 3:1-8. Speaking to scoffers who are doubting the Lord’s return because of the uniformity of history, Peter writes in verses 5-6, “For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.” Ruin-Reconstruction theorists use this text to support the idea of Lucifer’s flood. J. Sidlow Baxter wrote “The flood to which geology bears witness is that of Genesis 1:2. It is to this also that 2 Peter 3:5 refers.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1976), 41.

<sup>29</sup> Culance, *Without Form and Void*, 175–177..

<sup>30</sup> J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore The Book*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 41–42.

<sup>26</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *Creation and Chaos* (Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974), 58.

<sup>27</sup> Larkin, *Dispensational Truth or God’s Plan and Purpose in the Ages*, 34.

In a similar fashion, Custance wrote that those who hold this theory, in reference to this text, “believe (it) applies more appropriately to the event under discussion (the Genesis 1:2 flood) than it does to the Flood of Noah’s day.”<sup>31</sup>

The last, though foundational, argument for the Ruin-Reconstruction theory is that something must account for the presence of fossils and the geological formations of the earth. Ruin-Reconstruction theorists, unlike some other views, are able to maintain a belief in a literal six day creation only about 6,000 years ago, are able to deny that the mechanisms proposed by evolution can account for the diversity of life, and are able to give an account for the history of these extinct creatures appearing in the fossil record. C.I. Scofield has written, “Relegate fossils to the primitive creation, and no conflict of science with the Genesis cosmogony remains.”<sup>32</sup> In answering even the charge that this view has death before sin, George Pembers has written,

For, as the fossil remains clearly show, not only were disease and death-inseparable companions of sin-then prevalent among the living creatures of the earth, but even ferocity and slaughter. And the fact proves that these remains have nothing to do with our world, since the Bible declares that all things made by God during the three days were very good, and that no evil was in them until Adam sinned.<sup>33</sup>

When considered in a cumulative case, the Ruin-Reconstruction theory is exegetically based and offers the Bible student a system of reconciling modern science with a biblical theology, taking away doubts and inconsistencies that might lead a person to walk away from the faith. Further, it answers questions about the timing of Satan’s fall that many other models fail to answer. In light of this evidence, many believe this is a very attractive theory.

#### **An Evaluation of the Ruin-Reconstruction Theory**

Proverbs 18:17 aptly states, “The first to plead his case *seems* right, *until* another comes and examines him.” In this portion of the paper, the arguments for the Ruin-Reconstruction theory will be examined and assessed.

The first argument to be considered is the argument that, due to the usage of both “bara” and “asah” to describe the creation of the world, it is best

to hypothesize two separate creations. In assessing this argument, it must be noted that it is true that these different words are used. Upon a survey of Genesis 1, “asah” is used in Genesis 1:7, 11, 12, 16, 25, 26 and 31, while “bara” is used in Genesis 1:1, 21, and 27. Yet, the argument seems to rest most significantly on a strict dichotomy between the word uses. If it can be demonstrated that these words are often used interchangeably, the force of this argument decreases significantly. Such is the case, for example, in Genesis 1:26-27, which states,

Then God said, "Let Us make (“asah”) man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created (“bara”) man in His own image, in the image of God He created (“bara”) him; male and female He created (“bara”) them.

That “bara” can be used for things not created ex nihilo can be seen from Isaiah 65:18, in which God created (“bara”) Jerusalem. There is no sense in which Jerusalem was created ex nihilo. That “asah” can be used for ex nihilo creation can be seen in its use in Nehemiah 9:6, when the Levites leading worship state “You alone are the LORD. You have made (“asah”) the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it.” No one, including those of the Ruin-Reconstruction Theory, would suggest that God refashioned heaven. Whatever Moses had in mind, he is not bound by a strict dichotomy.

The second argument to be considered is the argument concerning Genesis 1:2, that the earth actually became a chaotic and empty state because of the darkness of sin; it was not created that way. While a waw consecutive added to the “hayeta” at the beginning of the verse would indicate sequence, making the verse state “And the earth became...,” this waw is not a waw consecutive; it is a waw disjunctive. Weston Fields has written, “Consequently, it is not difficult to identify the type of waw used as the first letter in Genesis 1:2. It is not connected to a verb; it is not pointed with a patah; and it does not have the dages following.”<sup>34</sup> This is significant because, while a waw consecutive demonstrates progression, a waw disjunction on a circumstantial clause, which Weston Fields, Merrill Unger, and H.W.F. Gesenius all confirm,<sup>35,36,37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled*, 82.

<sup>35</sup> Fields, 79.

<sup>36</sup> Merrill F. Unger, “Rethinking the Genesis Account of Creation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 115 (1958): 28..

<sup>31</sup> Custance, *Without Form and Void*, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible*, 4..

<sup>33</sup> Pembers, *Earth’s Earliest Ages*, 34–35..

simply adds detail to information already given, rendering the verse, “Now, the earth was formless and void.” H.W.F. Gesenius has written, “The noun-clause connected by a waw copulative (disjunctive) to a verbal-clause, or its equivalent, always describes a state contemporaneous with the principle action....”<sup>38</sup>

In understanding this construction, it is helpful to consider a parallel passage. The situation in Genesis 1:1-3 is identical with Genesis 13:1-3, which states,

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him. Now (waw disjunctive) Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold. He went (waw consecutive) on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai.

Moses does not communicate in verse 2 that Abraham, after going up to Egypt, “became” rich, but that, in light of the verse before, he “was” rich. When he writes verse 3, he returns to a consecutive usage. These verses are exactly parallel with Genesis 1:1-3.

In terms of the words, “formless” and “void,” to be sure, those who espouse this view are correct that the words can be, and have been, translated as “chaos” and “empty.” But must they? Despite the possibility of these meanings, “tohu” can legitimately be translated as “formless” or “without form,” depending on the context in which it is found. Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter list “formless” as the first meaning of the word.<sup>39</sup> Job 26:7 uses the word to state that God “stretches out the north over empty space (tohu) and hangs the earth on nothing.” Isaiah 29:21 uses the term to describe unformed or “meaningless” accusations and arguments.

Though Jeremiah 4:23 is cited as evidence that the earth became this way due to judgment, this misses the point Jeremiah is making. He is not saying that the original creation was a result of judgment, but that Israel’s desolation will bring it back to the same formless and empty state as creation.

Further, despite the claim that Isaiah 45:18 states that God did not create the world as chaos, this ignores the fact that God did not create the world “to be chaos,” but, much like a room gets more messy

before it becomes clean, God was in the process of creating.

Thus, the word usage is dependent upon the context. Read with “formless” in mind, the idea is that when God created the world ex nihilo, it had not yet been formed and it was empty of life. In light of the previous point about the waw, the context gives no indication that “chaos” is the preferred translation. Even if it did, the most that could be said is that the earth was chaotic and empty. But that is certainly no grounds for a second creation! Without the waw consecutive, the argument has lost its significance.

Finally, in terms of Genesis 1:2, though “darkness” has been used as a euphemism for sin, evil, and corruption, the context of this word usage compares darkness to the light created on day one. Thus, the darkness seems much more likely to simply be the absence of light. And although God did not call the darkness “good,” He did not specifically call the firmament “good” either.

The third argument to be considered is that Adam, like Noah, was told to replenish the earth’s population, indicating that it had been full at one point. First, it needs to be noted that only the King James Version translates the word as “replenish.” The New King James does not even translate the word in this manner. This is because word usages change over time and this King James word no longer means the same thing as it did at the time it was written. In support of this, Carl Wieland writes,

The key to unravelling the apparent confusion is the fact that languages continually change. Quite simply, the usage of this word has changed since the KJV appeared some 400 years ago (1611). Back then, people were more likely than nowadays to say things like ‘I am *replete* with happiness’, which is just another way of saying ‘I am *full* of happiness’. And *replenish* (fill) is the verb form of the adjective *replete* (full). People reading the KJV in earlier times would have likely understood *replenish* to mean exactly what the Hebrew word means, i.e. *fill*.<sup>40</sup>

Further, that the same word can be used multiple ways (already seen in the first argument) is obvious. For example, suppose a wife says to her husband “Please go to the store and get peanut butter.” However, upon returning from the store, the husband realized he forgot the peanut butter, being distracted

<sup>37</sup> Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, trans. Arthur Ernest Cowley (Dover Publications, 2006), 489..

<sup>38</sup> Gesenius, 453.*Ibid.*,

<sup>39</sup> Baker and Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 1214.

<sup>40</sup> Carl Wieland, “Replenish the Earth,” Creation Ministries International, <http://creation.com/genesis-1-28-replenish-or-fill>.



by the new type of barbeque sauce. The wife then tells him again, "Please go to the store and get peanut butter." In this scenario, the same word, "go," is used for both the first trip to the store as well as the return trip. The context, not the individual word, determines the meaning.

The fourth argument to be considered is that the Ruin-Reconstruction theory optimally describes the fall of Satan in a way that other models cannot, giving an answer for when he fell, how he tempted Adam and Eve, and how Eden can be described in such vastly different ways. If true, this scenario would fit the text. However, it is not necessary to the text. Further, because of the nature of Satan's fall and the evil of the creation, sin occurred before the fall of Adam and Eve. Yet, the whole of the New Testament proclaims that Christ's death is a remedy for the sin of Adam and Eve. The student is left with the same problems as with most views, namely, death and suffering before sin or sin without atonement.

There have been other views that make sense of Satan's fall without holding to two creations. One such position is that Satan fell when he tempted Eve. This act was the sense in which he sought to be like God by leading mankind to serve him rather than the Lord. This view has the advantage of placing all sin as beginning in Genesis 3, giving a definite time for Satan to be in the Garden and then to tempt Eve. Further, there is no need to see the two descriptions in Genesis 1-3 and Ezekiel as mutually exclusive. Rather, they appear to be complementary.

The fifth argument to be considered is that the New Testament passages dealing with the phrase "foundation of the world" are better translated as "disruption." Yet, this is not only unjustified, it is also anachronistic. Harold Hoehner, in his commentary on Ephesians, has written,

The noun is rarer and later than the verb, but with the same basic meaning "to throw down." The verb is used of "throwing down" seed in the ground (sowing), of "throwing down" seed in a female (conception), or of the notion of giving birth to a new idea (person's thought). It is used of stones being thrown down for the foundation or the starting point of a building.<sup>41</sup>

In short, the word itself, especially at the time it was being used in Paul's day, does not necessarily

denote "disruption," but the setting, or "throwing down," of a starting point; a foundation.

The sixth argument to be considered is that 2 Peter 3:5-6 better describes Lucifer's flood than Noah's flood. However, the only flood Peter ever names is Noah's, and he does so in 1 Peter 3:20 and in 2 Peter 2:5 to describe the mechanism of judgment. In reference to the "world at that time," Peter is not connecting the flood to Genesis 1, but stating that the world in the day the flood came was destroyed.

The seventh, and final, argument to be considered is that the fossil record is best relegated to a previous creation with no connection to the present day forms of life. While this approach seems convenient, it runs into an immediate problem. Ken Ham has written,

If all, or most, of the sediments and fossils were produced quickly in one massive worldwide Lucifer's flood, then the main evidence that the earth is extremely old no longer exists, because the age of the earth is based on the assumed slow formation of earth's sediments. Also, if the world was reduced to a shapeless, chaotic mess, as gap-theorists propose, how could a reasonably ordered assemblage of fossils and sediments remain as evidence?<sup>42</sup>

Those who first developed this idea were largely ignorant of the fossils themselves, as were most people living in the 1800's, assuming that the creatures of today have evolved to a point that they bear little to no resemblance to the creatures fossilized in the past. However, in modern times, fossils have been found that are nearly or actually identical to the creatures of today. For example, horseshoe crab fossils that evolutionists suggest date some 450 million years ago are essentially identical to the horseshoe crabs that are alive and well today.<sup>43</sup> In the worldview of the Ruin-Reconstruction theory, there should be no carry over, as God started over with creation after destroying the previous one. As a result of this discrepancy, there appears to be no advantage offered by this theory in regards to the fossil record, only a disadvantage.

### Conclusion

There is no competition between the Ruin-Reconstruction Theory and the Young Earth

<sup>42</sup> Ken Ham, ed., *The New Answers Book*, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2006), 55.

<sup>43</sup> David Sadava et al., *Life: The Science of Biology*, 9th ed. (W.H. Freeman & Company, 2009), 683. *Life: the Science of Biology*, Pg. 683.

<sup>41</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 177.

Creationism Theory regarding our current world. Both agree that it was formed in six literal days. Both agree that this creation was probably between six and ten thousand years ago. The task for Young Earth Creationists in regards to the Ruin-Reconstruction Theory is to show that our current creation is the only creation discussed in the text of Scripture. Could God have created other worlds before the current one? Yes, He most certainly could have. However, is there solid evidence that He has done so in the pages of the Bible? As this paper has attempted to show, no, there is no solid evidence.

When the dust settles, the Ruin-Reconstruction Theory appears to be unable to provide solid exegetical or scientific arguments to substantiate its claims. Paul Enns has aptly written, “The Gap Theory is not built on exegesis but is rather an attempt to reconcile the Bible with the views of science.”<sup>44</sup> Though earlier in history it might have appeared to be a good solution to a growing scientific consensus, time has tested the theory found it wanting. It has become another painting on the museum wall of testimony to the failed nature of compromise and concession to the secular worldview. Christians ought to stand firm on the plain truths of God’s Word. Concerning the nature of this compromise, Terry Mortenson has written,

The sad irony of all this Christian compromise over the past 200 years is that in the last century, the truth of Genesis 1-11 has been increasingly vindicated, often by the work of evolutionists who scoffingly reject God’s Word.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, IL.: Moody Press, 2014), 303. *The Moody Handbook Of Theology*, Pg. 303.

<sup>45</sup> Mortenson, “‘Deep Time’ and the Church’s Compromise: Historical Background,” 101.

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