

The Gap Theory: A Review and Grammatical Critique

From Cosmos to Chaos, and Cosmos Again

“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” **Yahweh to Job, Job 38:4-7**

The Gap Theory, as known among and designated by Bible teachers, students and some scholars, proposes that an indeterminate period of real time, constituted of millions, if not billions of years, existed between Genesis 1 verse 1, and Genesis 1 verse 2. Many Bible-believing Christians have held to this theory of the Genesis creation account. As paleontological science began to assert itself upon the understanding of human origins during the early 1800s, a science that proposed millions, if not billions, of years for the development of life on this planet, Christian scholars and teachers began to propose different ways of looking at the Genesis account. *First*, they offered the idea of progressive creation; that is, that one day in the Genesis account equaled an age of millions of years. Such a theory, and those like it, is obviously at odds with the plain language of Genesis’ opening chapter (i.e., days one, two, three, etc., solar days after the fourth day, and the Sabbath day). But *second*, other fundamental Christians, in order to reconcile the presumably immense periods of time inferred from earth’s geological strata and the death indicated by the fossil record, suggested the novel idea that between the Bible’s two opening verses a unspecified period of time existed, a “gap” that could accommodate the fossil and geological evidence.

Adherents to the Gap Theory

Though earlier proposed by the Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847), Bible scholar G.H. Pember (1836-1910) adopted the Gap Theory. He wrote: “The beginning [Genesis 1:1] refers, of course, to the first existence of that with which the history is concerned, the heaven and the earth.” [1] He later contrasted Genesis 1 verse 1 with verse 2 with these remarks:

It is thus clear that the second verse of Genesis describes the earth as a ruin; but there is no hint of a time [i.e., the gap] which elapsed between creation and this ruin. Age after age may have rolled away, and it was probably during their course that the strata of the earth’s crust were gradually developed. Hence we see that geological attacks upon the Scriptures are altogether wide of the mark . . . *There is room for any length of time between the first and second verses of the Bible.* [2]

Earliest editions of *The Scofield Reference Bible* also popularized the Gap Theory among Bible-believing Christians during the first half of the 20th century. Before stating that Genesis 1:3 (*Let there be light . . .*) **does not imply** “an original creative act,” that study Bible notes:

The face of the earth bears everywhere the marks of a catastrophe. There are not wanting intimations which connect it with previous testing and fall of angels. **[3]**

So into a millions-of-years-time period between Genesis verse 1 and verse 2, the Scofield study Bible placed the fall of angels and the death and destruction evidenced by the fossil record in earth's strata. During most of the previous century, *The Scofield Reference Bible*, with its advocacy of both the Gap Theory and Dispensationalism, influenced many fine Bible teachers who in turn taught God's Word to thousands of other believers. **[4]** The Gap Theory was (is) viewed as a sort of mediator to reconcile any conflict between the literalness of the Genesis record and the “assured” assertions of evolutionary-geological science. But is the Gap Theory an accurate reflection of what the Bible, in its original Hebrew language teaches? Or is it a convenient insertion of a time gap between the opening verses of Genesis, an insertion that is grammatically and semantically unsupported and therefore intrudes upon the meaning of the Hebrew text? This question this paper will attempt to address.

Issues

In my understanding, several linguistic and grammatical issues need to be explored to see if the biblical Hebrew language validates the belief that a time period of millions, if not billions, of years resides between Genesis 1 verse 1 and verse 2. In this analysis and in order, we need to look at the words “In the beginning” (One compound Hebrew word, *bére'shiyth*). As the prophet Moses communicated, was the beginning **absolute** or **relative**? **[5]** *Second*, the word “created” needs to be understood (Hebrew, *bara*). Can it mean to create out of nothing, *creatio ex nihilo*, or does it mean to fashion out of something? *Third*, the conjunction “and” needs attention (Hebrew, *waw*). Is the sense of the conjunction circumstantial and explanatory (i.e., “**now** the earth was without form and void”) or disjunctive (i.e., “**but** the earth became without form and void”)? *Fourth*, the verb “was” needs to be understood (Hebrew, *hayâ*). Does the verb communicate the sense of “was” or “became”? And *finally*, the meaning of the phrase “formless and void” (Hebrew, *tohû wawbohû*), especially as it relates to the verb “was,” needs to be identified. Does the phrase “formless and void” necessarily imply the emergence of evil and a corresponding divine judgment that follows the creation statement of Genesis 1 verse 1?

The interplay of these linguistic and grammatical features all bear upon whether or not the Hebrew text communicates that a real time period existed between Genesis 1 verse 1, and verse 2. We proceed to unpack the linguistic-grammatical features of these two verses to see if they teach there's a gap between Genesis' opening verses.

“In the Beginning”

There are those like ancient Rabbis Rashi (1040-1104) and Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164), who suggest that Genesis 1:1 is a subordinate statement to the following acts of creation narrated in Genesis 1:3-2:25. In other words, the attention of the opening verses of Genesis ought to be more focused upon God saying, “Let there be light!” than “In the beginning God

created . . .” A modern edition of the Jewish Torah evidences this emphasis as it translated Genesis’ opening verses like this:

*When God began to create the heaven and the earth—the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. [6] (Emphasis added. Also see *New English Bible* and *Good News Bible*.)*

As the translation indicates, the beginning envisioned (“Let there be light”) is relative (i.e., “when”), not absolute. But for syntactical-grammatical reasons, the Jewish commentator Umberto Cassuto (1883-1951) informs us that if verse 1 were subordinate to the rest of the creation account beginning in verse 3, verse 2 would have been constructed differently. [7] He therefore concludes that verse 1,

. . . is an independent sentence that constitutes a formal introduction to the entire section, and expresses at the outset, with majestic brevity, the main thought of the section: that in the beginning, that is, at the commencement of time, in the remotest past that the human mind can conceive, God created the heavens and the earth. [8]

The Definite Article “the”

Others argue that for lack of a definite article “the” (Hebrew, *he*) prefacing the word “beginning” (Hebrew, *re’shiyth*) in the Hebrew text, the Genesis author was not envisioning an explicit beginning, (i.e., “In **the** beginning,” as English translations phrase it). This indicates that the Pentateuch’s narrator (whom Jesus stated was Moses, Mark 10:2-9) did not view “beginning” as absolute, as **the** beginning, but as **a** beginning.

However, this objection crumbles in light of Isaiah 46:9b-10a, where the Lord declares to Israel, “*I am* God, and *there is* none like me, declaring **the end** from **the beginning**.” (Emphasis added.) In verse 10a, the Hebrew text places the word “beginning” in the emphatic position, before the word “end,” an emphasis not preserved by English translations. When combined with the preposition “from” (Hebrew, *mêm*), the clause literally reads: “declaring **from beginning** (Hebrew, *mêm + re’shiyth*) **end**.” So as spoken by the Lord through the prophet, the beginning is viewed to be as absolute as the end, even though no definite article marks either one of those real time occurrences. [9] In short, the definite article is not needed to mark “the beginning” to have been definite or absolute.

The Preposition “in”

In contrast to arguments that Genesis 1:1 records a relative beginning, we note that in one compound word (preposition + noun) the verse literally states, “**In beginning**” (Hebrew, *bêt + re’shiyth*). Among other uses, the preposition “in” (Hebrew, *bêt*) can apply “to [definite] time” (i.e., “And they [the Philistines] afflicted and crushed the sons of Israel that [i.e., “in (*bêt*) that year”] year,” Judges 10:8, NASB). [10] So when the preposition *bêt* is combined with the root word “beginning,” there can be no doubt that Genesis 1:1 communicates “the very first and initial [and absolute] act of the creation of the cosmos.” [11] So as communicated by the clause

which opens Genesis, “**the** beginning” is absolute, not relative. [12]

At a point before time, nothing existed. By creating something out of nothing, the transcendent God *Elohim* began time, matter and space. Out of nothing He brought the material universe into existence (i.e., *creatio ex nihilo*). This simple yet profound statement regarding the subject of origins is foundational to everything else in the Bible. If Genesis 1 verse 1 is viewed to be anything other than an absolute beginning, then matter is king. And pantheism and nature worship, a worldview held among eastern religions, results. And if “the beginning” recorded in Genesis 1 verse 1 is not absolute as regards the natural universe we inhabit, then is “the beginning” begun by the Christ (John 1:3, 10; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; and Hebrews 1:2) also relative and not absolute? The answer to this question looms large over the doctrine of the Christ.

“God Created”

“God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The word Hebrew word *bara*’ (create) “may mean ‘ex nihilo, but it may also mean ‘to fashion or make of existing material.’” [13] Obviously, if in Genesis 1:1 the word create means to “make,” then any beginning envisioned was not absolute, but relative to whatever material may have preexisted God’s formation of the heavens and the earth. But if *bara*’ can mean to “create out of nothing” then the beginning pictured was absolute. So what is the sense of the word *bara*’ in Genesis 1:1?

A couple of points argue that Genesis 1:1’s beginning was absolute. *First*, *bara*’ is used exclusively to describe the activity of God when He creates and/or constructs something new. Although there are other verbs which may be employed to describe acts of creation (i.e., in Isaiah 45:18, Hebrew words *bara*’, *yatsar*, *’asah* are used one after the other; and Genesis 14:19, *qanah*), “*bara*’ distinguishes itself by being used exclusively of God.” [14] To Israel the Lord later rehearsed His absolute creation of all things when He said: “I *am* the Lord that maketh (*’asah*) all *things*; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.” (Isaiah 44:24, KJV). *Elohim* is the absolute God, and therefore any beginning begun by Him is absolute. And *second*, the verb *bara*’ is telic; that is, it finds meaning in the consummation of a process (like high school graduation), and therefore can only refer “to a completed act of creation.” [15] That God began and ended creation could only be true if His creation was absolute and out of nothing. **Note:** in general, gap theorists, unlike Unger, agree with creation science that the beginning pictured in Genesis 1:1 is absolute, not relative. [16]

A Gap: Before Genesis 1:1

Whereas, to accommodate the geological ages, most gap theorists put “the gap” between Genesis 1:1 and 2, Merrill F. Unger (1909-1980), a well-known Old Testament scholar who taught at Dallas Theological Seminary, uniquely placed “the gap” before Genesis 1:1. For “cogent reasons,” he stated that Genesis 1:1-2 pictures “a *relative* rather than an *absolute* beginning.” [17] To him the geological ages and the catastrophic events inferred the fossil record belonged to a time frame *before* Genesis 1:1. “The chaos [pictured in Genesis 1:2]” states Unger, “was the result of God’s judgment upon the originally sinless earth.” [18] To him, Genesis 1:2 describes “the earth’s condition [one of ruin] when God began to recreate it.” [19] God had to recreate the heavens and the earth because before it was “the theater where sin

began in God's originally sinless universe in connection with the revolt of Lucifer (Satan) and his angels (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:13, 15-17; Rev. 12:4)." [20] In his view, like those advocating a post-Genesis 1:1 gap, a pre-Genesis 1:1 gap is necessitated in order to reconcile "the earth's great antiquity and man's comparative late appearance on earth." [21]

A Gap: *Between* Genesis 1:1 and 2

Whereas to accommodate the geological ages Unger put "the gap" before Genesis 1:1, gap theorists place it *between* Genesis 1 verse 1 and verse 2. They want to distance the statement of absolute creation in verse 1 from the chaos they infer to be evident in verse 2. They do so by rendering a translation of verse 2 something like this: *But the earth became formless and void*. Thus what is described as beginning in verse 3 (*Let there be light*.) becomes "a divine makeover" of creation. The Genesis record is one which states original creation (verse 1), the ruin of that creation by Satan and his hosts (verse 2), and reconstruction of creation (verse 3 and following). That's why the Gap Theory is often referred to as the ruin and reconstruction theory. The question therefore becomes, do the syntax and semantics of the Hebrew language justify such a scenario? No, they do not, and here's why.

The Conjunction Waw: Connective or Disjunctive?

The word "and" (Hebrew, *waw*) normally connects "both words . . . and sentences." [22]

The connective/circumstantial/consecutive sense of *waw* between verse one and two is obvious for three reasons. *First*, it fits the category in which the *waw* ("and") is normally used. The *waw* connects the former statement with the following. *Second*, given that the last word of verse 1 is *earth* and the first word of verse 2 is *earth*, the connective-consecutive sense of *waw* is obvious. Elohim "created . . . the earth" *and* "the earth was." And *third*, the verbs of both verses (verse 1, "created," and verse 2, "was") occur in the *qal* stem (i.e., simple, straightforward action) and the perfect tense (i.e., a completed action or state of being). What was completed in verse 1 was also viewed as completed in verse 2. Additionally, the *waw* consecutive frequently "couples two verbs in such a manner that the first, indicating the *general* character of the action [God created], receives its closer definition in the second [now the earth was] . . ." [23] Regarding this, John Sailhamer states that, "the conjunction at the beginning of 1:2 shows that 1:2-2:3 is coordinated with 1:1 rather than appositional." [24] This grammar strongly suggests that verses 1 and 2 belong together, and what the *waw* has joined together gap theorists ought not to separate. Thus, the NIV translates verse 2 as follows: "**Now** the earth **was** formless and empty" (Emphasis added, Genesis 1:2). [25]

The Verb Hayâ: "Was" or "Became"?

Proponents of the Gap Theory point out that the verb "was" (*hayetha*) could also be translated "became." After its original and pristine state of creation, the earth changed into chaos. In the aftermath of divine judgment, earth "became" a wasteland. But the coordinating tenses (both perfects) in verses 1 and 2 indicate that the description of verse 2 attends that of verse 1. Had the narrator desired to separate the state of the earth as described in verse 2 from verse 1, he might have employed an imperfect form of the verb *hayâ* indicating that the earth had become something that God was going to correct during the subsequent days of creation. [26] But in order to definitively serve notice that the earth that "was" *became* formless and void, the writer could have (should have) inserted a preposition to mark the change.

Oops! A Missing Preposition

To signal that an original and pristine creation of Genesis 1 verse 1 became something different in verse 2, Moses could have placed the Hebrew preposition *lamed* (Hebrew, *le*) before the words “without form and void” (Hebrew, *tohû wavbohû*). As the earth had changed to become something different from what God created in Genesis 1:1, the addition of this preposition would have indicated the “result of a transformation or change.” [27] The *lamed* would have marked “a transition into a new state or condition.” [28] This construction would have marked out that for some unspecified reason the earth had moved toward becoming other than originally created in verse 1 (i.e., it *became* without form and void.). An outline of Hebrew syntax observes that insertion of the preposition *le* in such a construction “is very common with the verb *hayah* [i.e., “was,” Genesis 1:2, KJV] in the meaning ‘become’.” [29]

An example of the preposition *lamed* marking such change can be observed when God took a rib from Adam’s side and made a “[*le’ishshah*] woman” (Genesis 2:22). The *lamed* (*l* + Masoretic vocal *shewa*) highlights that God made Adam’s rib into something other than another rib, into a woman. Another example is seen when Isaiah indicts those who set arbitrary moral standards. “Woe unto them” the prophet said, “that put [exchange] darkness for [*le*] light, and light for [*le*] darkness; that put bitter for [*le*] sweet, and sweet for [*le*] bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20). Though common in the Old Testament, no such preposition marks it out that earth became anything other than what God originally created in Genesis 1:1. The absence of the prepositional marker indicates that verse 2 should therefore be taken as explanatory of or circumstantial to verse 1. As Dr. Ross notes: “The construction at the beginning of verse 2 rules out a sequence between verses 1 and 2, making a translation of ‘became’ for the verb improbable.” [30]

To my understanding then, verse 2 describes the circumstances involved in God’s original creation. “The clauses in Genesis 1:2 are taken in a neutral sense, implying only raw materials from which God formed the earth as we now know it.” [31] Unformed and unfilled, time, matter and space were a chaos of emptiness and darkness before God organized, energized and filled the mass (dark matter?) He brought into existence in Genesis 1:1.

Creation: “without form, and void”

As gap theorists understand them to be, troubling words reside in Genesis 1 verse 2. They are “without form, and void” (Hebrew, *tohû wabohû*), “darkness” (Hebrew, *hoskek*) and “the deep” (Hebrew, *tehôm*). Because of their negative connotations elsewhere in the Old Testament, the words do not seem appropriate in describing something God just created. As Pember wrote of the word *tohû* (i.e., vain, a waste place, empty, chaos): “This word . . . cannot . . . be descriptive of the earliest condition of the earth.” [32] Therefore, because verse 2’s description of earth does not fit a template of God originally creating “good” (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31), gap theorists find cause to separate *the chaos implied in verse 2* from *the cosmos inferred in verse 1*. Certainly, God would not create a primordial mess like verse 2 describes. As the Lord spoke through Isaiah (in a verse Pember cites as evidence to support the Gap Theory): [33]

For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, **he created [*bara*] it not in vain [*tohû*]**, he formed it to

be inhabited: I *am* the Lord; and *there is* none else” (Emphasis added, Isaiah 45:18).

So the Gap Theory can not only be viewed as an attempt to coordinate the geological and Genesis records, but also to exonerate God as having created anything like the chaos pictured in verse 2. Ironically, this is inferred despite the fact that earlier in the same chapter the Lord states:

I *am* the Lord, and *there is* none else, *there is* no God beside me . . . I form [*yatsar*] the light, and create [*bara*] darkness: I make [*’asah*] peace, and **[I] create [*bara*] evil [*rà*]: I the Lord do all these *things* (Isaiah 45:5, 7).**

In light of the statements in this same chapter, are we to view the prophet’s assessment of creation (that the Lord “created [*bara*] it not in vain [*tohû*,” Isaiah 45:18) to be in conflict with the Yahweh’s statement (“I . . . create [*bara*] evil [*rà*,” Isaiah 45:7)? **[34]** I don’t think so. **[35]** Fact of the matter is, Isaiah 45:18 provides commentary, as we shall see, on the meaning of the word “vain,” on the primal conditions Genesis 1 verse 2 describes.

An Uninhabited Wilderness

To begin with, “formless and void” (Hebrew, *tohû wabohû*) is a hendiadys; a figure of speech which describes the condition of earth by using two words. Additionally, the repeated words are similar in sound, a figure of speech known as *paronomasia*, or rhyming words. **[36]** The words have been variously interpreted to mean, “formless waste,” “void and vacant,” or “unformed and unfilled.” In comparison to the word *tohû* (twenty occurrences), the word *bohû* is rare in the Old Testament (three times), and occurs in combination with *tohû* (Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 34:11; and Jeremiah 4:23). Thus, as they sound similar and occur together, the words’ meanings may interface. And to discover that meaning, we go back to Isaiah 45:18 to see how the prophet explains the meaning of *tohû*.

The prophet stated: “For thus saith the Lord that created [*bara*] **the heavens** . . .” This statement obviously alludes to Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (NASB). In continuing the allusion, the prophet states that God “formed” (*yatsar*), “made” (*’asah*) and “established” (*kûn*) **the earth**. Then as regards the Lord’s creation of the earth, Isaiah states in two phases: “[the Lord] created [*bara*] it not in vain [*tohû*]” and “he formed [*yatsar*] it to be inhabited [*yashab*]” (Isaiah 45:18). **[37] NOTE:** It’s obvious in the text that antonym “inhabited” is appositional (an explanatory equivalent) to the word “vain” (*tohû*). Simply put, the Lord did not create the earth to be uninhabited (Genesis 1:2) but to be inhabited (Genesis 1:11-12, 20-28). **[38]** In this context, there is no implication that *tohû* needs to refer to divine judgment. It simply means “uninhabited” (Compare Deuteronomy 32:10; Job 12:24; Psalm 107:40; Jeremiah 4:23-27.).

The meaning of *tohû* also provides clue to the meaning *bohû* because the words are combined by a conjunction “and” (*waw*), they sound alike, and they feed off from each other. So the very Isaiah text which Pember used to evidence the Gap Theory teaches quite the opposite. This example may explain why Cassuto opined that, “it is profitless to compare other passages in

which either of the words *tohu* or *bohu* occurs” since these other passages are “only an allusion, without further explanation” of Genesis 1 verse 2. **[39]**

Genesis’ Literary Structure

So the phrase “formless and void” serves with Genesis 1 verse 1 as a prelude to the creation account and gives no indication that divine judgment has occurred. In the literary flow, the phrase indicates that as regards planet earth, *Elohim* was about to form the unformed and fill the unfilled. As W.H. Griffith Thomas (1861-1924) observed:

It is noteworthy that . . . adjectives “formless” and “empty” seem to be the key to the literary structure of the chapter. The record of the first three days refers to the heaven and earth receiving their “form,” and the record of the last three days to the filling-up of their “emptiness.” **[40]**

In Genesis 1 verse 1, *Elohim* created the substance of the universe out of nothing. Genesis 1 verse 2 provides commentary on the state of the earth, the condition of which God was going to rectify during the subsequent six days of original creation. During the first three days of creation God created light, by a firmament separated the terrestrial from the celestial, and caused the appearance of dry land. Darkness and the deep no longer ruled the planet. God had begun to “form” and “fill” the earth that we inhabit.

Summary

The first three verses comprise a unified and magnificent introduction to the beginning of the heavens and the earth, the emphasis of that beginning falling upon the earth in verse two which was originally “formless and void.” As Cassuto describes the flow of Genesis’ introductory verses:

Just as the potter, when he wishes to fashion a beautiful vessel, takes first of all a lump of clay, and places it upon his wheel in order to mould it according to his wish, so the Creator first prepared for Himself [He created His own matter out of nothing.] the raw material of the universe with a view to giving it afterwards order and life. In this chaos of unformed matter, the heaviest materials were naturally at the bottom, and the waters which were the lightest, floated to the top. This apart, the whole material was an undifferentiated, unorganized, confused and lifeless agglomeration. It is this terrestrial state that is called *tohu* and *bohu*. **[41]**

In the Genesis description of creation the Hebrew language does not communicate that there existed an unspecified period of time between Genesis 1 verse 1 and verse 2. Though he inserted his gap of time before verse 1, Old Testament scholar Merrill Unger (1909-1980) did write that, “In forming a unit, verses 1 and 2 must not be separated from verse 3, for they constitute an introduction to what transpired during the seven days.” **[42]**

As has been shown, indicators show this to be the case. *First*, the conjunction “and” which prefaces verse 2 is continuative, not adversative. Verse 2 describes the condition of earth

contemporary with, not subsequent to, verse 1. [43] The earth “was formless and void.” It did not, for reason of divine judgment, “become” so. *Second*, no preposition (Hebrew, *le*) prefaces the phrase “formless and void” to signal a change that earth had become in that condition. In the Hebrew, this preposition, when combined with the verb “to be,” is commonly used to indicate that something changes into something different or opposite. And *third*, the word “void” (Hebrew, *tohû*) as indicated in Isaiah 45:18 means, as it does in other Old Testament passages, “uninhabited.” As Genesis 1 verse 2 states, *Elohim* did not create earth, unlike other bodies in our solar system, to be uninhabited. So subsequently God created plant, ocean, animal and human life to inhabit earth. In straightforward language, this is what the opening of Genesis states. Insertion of a chaotic time period between Genesis verse 1 and verse 2 to *accommodate* the geological ages of evolutionary science, *explain* the ruin of this planet by Satan and his hoard of fallen angels, and *account* for the rise of ancient mythologies is arbitrary. In short, the grammar does not support the gap. Genesis’ six days of creation is not a record of God’s “make over” of a previously ruined creation.

Conclusion

Among contemporary Christians there’s a lot of conversation going on about worship. But as we know, worship cannot occur in a vacuum. Certain truths need to be acknowledged in order for worship to be genuine. Jesus has told us that those who would worship must worship “the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:26). One of the great truths to be acknowledged in genuine worship is that *God is the Creator*, and that we are His creatures. When this truth is infringed upon (Read Romans 1:19-25.), then men become unthankful and vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart having become darkened (Remember God said, “Let there be light” and Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.”), they proceed to exchange the “glory of the incorruptible God” for “an image made like to corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.” So when humans deny the Creator, their worship, no matter how much passion they might gin up, becomes void. One of the great ironies current among contemporary evangelicals is that though they are passionate about worship they are not equally embracing of the truth that God is the utter and absolute Creator. Rather, they either flirt with or/and embrace, more or less, the science of evolutionary theory. God is kind of a creator (small “c”). They worship without truth. Unlike the creatures in Heaven—they’re called creatures because in the presence of the Creator they know their creatures—many contemporaries do not believe the first words of Scripture, “In the beginning God created . . .” But in Heaven, as the following scene indicates, they do.

And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for **Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.**” Emphasis added, John, Revelation 4:9-11, NASB

ENDNOTES

- [1] G.H. Pember, *Earth's Earliest Ages: and Their Connection with Modern Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Buddhism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1975): 28.
- [2] Emphasis added, *Ibid.* 32.
- [3] Rev. C.I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible: The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments, Authorized Version* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1909): 3, Footnotes 4 then 3.
- [4] In addition to Pember (1836-1910) and C.I. Scofield (1843-1921), gap theorists have included Ethelbert W. Bullinger (1837-1913), Clarence Larkin (1850-1924), Arthur Pink (1886-1952), Harry Rimmer (1890-1952), M.R. DeHaan (1891-1965), Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895-1960), Finis J. Dake (1902–1987), and Jimmy Swaggart (1935-). Currently, belief in the gap theory is experiencing a revival through the teachings of Thomas Horn, L. A. Marzulli, Chuck Missler, Chris Putnam and others.
- [5] It's been said that no one is in a position to criticize the Creation because no one was there when it happened. So if nobody was around, how did Moses know about it? Fair question . . . My belief is that just as the biblical prophets were able to predict events hundreds, even thousands of years ahead of themselves, so God revealed to Moses His account of origins to counteract the pagan mythologies. In other words, Moses served as a prophet in reverse. He "predicted", to use an oxymoron, the past.
- [6] *The Torah: The First Five Books of Moses* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962): 3.
- [7] In general, Cassuto tells us that in the continuing narrative of verse 2, the verb "was" (*hayah*) would either preface "earth" (i.e., "was the earth without form and void") or have been eliminated ("and the earth without form and void"). See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part I: From Adam to Noah* (Jerusalem, Israel: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1961): 19-20.
- [8] *Ibid.* 20.
- [9] Literally, the Hebrew word order of Isaiah 46:10a reads: "declaring 'from' beginning end," something English versions (declaring the end from the beginning) do not indicate. The word order "from beginning" (*mêm + re'shiyth*) emphasizes an absolute beginning like that of Genesis 1:1, despite the absence of the definite article "the" (Hebrew, *he*).
- [10] Francis Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979): 88: l.5.
- [11] William White, "ro'sh, 2097e," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, R. Laird Harris, et al., Editors (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980): 826.
- [12] "The primary meaning is 'first' or 'beginning' of a series." *Ibid.*
- [13] Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Volume I (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981): 5. Unger illustrates his point: "Man, for example, was not created out of nothing, but out of the dust of the earth (1:26; 2:7)."
- [14] Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, with Cathi J. Fredricks (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001): 59. Ross also notes that, "The word *bara'* is used exclusively for the activity of God . . ." Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988): 728.
- [15] Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis*, 58, footnote 15.
- [16] Waltke does not affirm that Genesis 1 verse 2 is part of the record of God's absolute

creation of this planet. He writes: "Chronologically, this must describe the state of the earth prior to verse 1, as it would be a contradiction to represent the creation as formed cosmos and the earth as unformed." See *Genesis*, 60. With all due respect, verse 2, as I see it, is not a contradiction but a description of the special created mass and substance of which the unformed and unfilled earth was a part.

[17] Unger, *Commentary*, 5.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Brown, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 252: 1.

[23] *Ibid.* 253-254: 2.b.b.

[24] John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992): 82. Sailhamer then illustrates the coordinate and explanatory role of the conjunction (*waw*) from Genesis 2:4-5 where Moses described: "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven. Now [*waw* consecutive] no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted."

[25] I am aware that the NIV proposes a marginal translation "became."

[26] The imperfect indicates "incomplete action, whether in the past, present or future." See Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001): 130.

[27] Andrew Boling, "1063 *le*," *Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Volume I, 463.

[28] Brown, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 512.

[29] Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1967): 53.

[30] Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 721.

[31] *Ibid.* 718.

[32] Pember, *Earth's Earliest Ages*, 32.

[33] *Ibid.* After citing Isaiah 45:18 as proof to the point that the Lord did not create earth a *tohu*, E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913) deduces: "Therefore it [i.e., the earth] must at, and after some subsequent period of unknown duration, have fallen into ruin which the second verse [Genesis 1:2] declares and describes." See E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1968 reprint of 1898 edition): 252.

[34] Such mixed word occurrences may explain why Cassuto states that "it is profitless to compare other passages in which either of the words *tohu* or *bohu* occurs." Cassuto, *Genesis*, 22. Word meanings are not ironclad throughout the Old Testament, but rather their semantics must be ascertained by the surrounding context and grammatical syntax. For example, *bara'* can mean to create out of something already extant (Isaiah 41:20), or as in Genesis 1:1, to create out of nothing.

[35] Ortland comments: "Isaiah is not saying that God sins. That's our problem. But the strategies of God include within their scope everything that happens as God pursues his redemptive purpose in this world. Evil is not outside God's control. He uses it without being dirtied by it." See Raymond C. Ortland, Jr., *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005): 299.

[36] See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 307-308. According to Bullinger, the poetic rhyming words may synonymous or of varied signification. If so, then to discover the meaning of *tohu* is to elucidate in part a corresponding meaning of *bohu*, and vice versa. Thus, if *tohu* means “uninhabited,” then so also might *bohu* nuance a shade of that meaning.

[37] Note again the rhyming (*paronomasia*) words *yatsar* (formed) and *yashab* (to be inhabited).

[38] Youngblood observes: “But Isa 45:18 . . . goes on to say that God ‘formed (the earth) to be inhabited,’ thereby assuring the readers that *tohû* was not his ultimate purpose in creation” See Ronald F. Youngblood, “thh, 2494,” *Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Volume II, 965.

[39] Cassuto, *Genesis*, 22.

[40] W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946): 29.

[41] Cassuto, *Genesis*, 23.

[42] Unger, *Commentary*, 5.

[43] “Verse 2 in the Hebrew is apparently circumstantial to verse 3.” See *Ibid.* 5.