

What about the Gap Theory (a.k.a. the Ruin and Reconstruction Theory)?

As early as 1812, Thomas Chalmers [1780-1847], evangelical professor of theology at Edinburgh, proposed a gap of as many millions of years as geology then demanded between Genesis 1:2 and 1:3. He argued that initially there had been a Pre-Adamic age that had been destroyed by a flood and that the strata and fossils found today were the remains of this former world. The Earth was said to have remained “unformed and unfilled” for millions of years; then the biblical account continues with the restored Earth. In 1812, the 1769 King James Bible then in use had the command “replenish the earth” in Genesis 1:28, and at that time “replenish” simply meant “fill.” Years later, the word “replenish” came to mean “fill again” and now left the impression that the Earth had once been filled with life, then became empty and required to be filled again. This change in word-meaning became a fortuitous and powerful argument for the Gap Theory. Later translations of the KJV correctly gave “fill the earth,” leaving no place for a gap.

The theory today is argued from the fact that in Genesis 1:1 the word “created” is from the Hebrew word BARA and means “created ex nihilo” – that is, created from nothing. Then, in Genesis 1:7, 16, 26, etc. the Hebrew word ASAH is used, meaning to make from pre-existing material. Here it is argued that a re-creation had taken place. However, Gesenius and other Hebrew scholars have pointed out that the two words, BARA and ASAH, are interchangeable in their contexts. Another proof text is the Hebrew words, TOHU WO BOHU used in both Genesis 1:2 and in Jeremiah 4:23. The Jeremiah passage is correctly translated “without form and void” since it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. However, in some of the older Bibles, the passage in Genesis 1:2 was often translated as “without form and void” but is now usually given as “unformed and unfilled” – that is, it had never been formed in the first place. This avoids the possibility of a pre-Adamic age but, in any case, Genesis 1:14-19 tells the reader that the sun was not created until the fourth day, so there would be no sun to sustain life in that preAdamic age!

The Gap Theory is not only one from silence but has the further problem that destruction of the pre-Adamic world by God places the responsibility for introducing sin and death upon Satan and is thus not a consequence of Adam’s sin [Romans 5:12-19]. The Gap Theory also introduces millions of years into the history of our Earth whereas Exodus 20:11 and 31:17 clearly state, “in six days [YOM] the Lord made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day He rested.”

The Gap Theory was promoted by G. H. Pember [1876], then, from 1909 onwards, was slipped into the notes to the Scofield edition of the KJV. It was also promoted by Dake’s Annotated Bible. Commentators Henry Thiessen [1949], Grey Barnhouse and Arthur Custance [1970] as well as radio Bible teacher J. Vernon McGee and TV evangelists Jimmy Swaggart and Benny Hinn also promote this theory.