

Replenishing the Earth

by Henry M. Morris*

Although the "gap theory" is not as popular as it used to be, there is still a significant body of Bible expositors who teach that this theory is the best way to deal with the alleged long ages of Earth history. For example, the Scofield Bible says in its note on Genesis 1:1:

The first creative act refers to the dateless past, and gives scope for all the geologic ages.

Then, its note on Genesis 1:2 says that the statement that the earth's initial aspect was "without form and void," means that ". . . the earth had undergone a cataclysmic change as the result of a divine judgment."

Finally, Scofield's note on Genesis 1:11, dealing with the geologic effects of this supposed pre-Adamic cataclysm, claims that this will solve the problem of the fossils. "Relegate fossils to the primitive creation, and no conflict of science with the Genesis cosmogony remains."

Dr. Scofield was wrong about that, of course, but his explanation was tremendously influential in his day—and still is with many people.

Another very influential writer was Clarence Larkin, whose 1920 book, *Dispensational Truth*, was widely promoted as "the greatest book in the world" on dispensationalism. With reference to the gap theory, he said in his book that:

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. Gen. 1:2 (*Dispensational Truth*, p. 22).

Larkin goes on to suggest that the "human" inhabitants of that original creation died in the pre-Adamic cataclysm, with their disembodied spirits probably becoming the demons that plague the present world.

But then he comments on God's command to Adam and Eve to "*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*" (Genesis 1:28) as follows:

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. (Ibid., p. 34).

Larkin, along with numerous other expositors, thus has taken God's presumed

*Henry M. Morris is Founder and President Emeritus of ICR.

command to “replenish the earth” as proof that there were pre-Adamite beings of some sort in that original world. This idea seemed to allow for adequate time to accommodate the geological ages demanded by evolutionists.

But as it happens, “replenish the earth” was simply a misleading translation, though it was commonly taken as one of the main proof-texts of the gap theory. A better translation would have been simply “fill the earth,” leaving no intimation that there had been a previous population of pre-Adamites destroyed in the assumed cataclysm.

Admittedly, “replenish” is a permissible translation of the Hebrew, *mâlê*. Both “fill” and “refill” are legitimate translations since the translators had a choice to make in translating God’s mandate as given to Adam.

As a matter-of-fact, in the King James Old Testament, *mâlê* was translated “replenish” or “replenished” only seven times. In six of these instances, “replenish” was indeed a more appropriate rendering than “fill.” The most obvious is at Genesis 9:1, in which God told Noah to “replenish the earth” after the Flood.

But what about God’s previous command to Adam? Why did the translators decide to use “replenish” there when “fill” would seemingly have been more appropriate? Did these good men have some reason to think there just might have been a pre-Adamite population and therefore it would be on the safe side to use the alternate meaning “replenish”?

This question becomes more relevant when we note that they always elsewhere used “fill” or “filled” or “full” or some such variation except when it was obvious that “replenish” was a better choice.

It turns out that they translated *mâlê* by “fill” no less than 33 times, by “filled” at least 73 times, by “full” some 97 times,

and even by “fulfill” or “fulfilled” at least 27 times.

So why did they not use “fill” instead of “replenish” in connection with the vitally important dominion mandate recorded in Genesis 1:28? That was the first time *mâlê* was used in the Bible, and it was surely important to get it right there! Did they actually have some reason to think they should at least allow the possibility of pre-Adamites in this beginning chapter of God’s Book?

We cannot really probe into the thinking processes of men who lived almost 400 years ago, but it does seem possible that this could have been a concern. It was well-documented in my book, *The Long War Against God*, that the concepts of long ages and evolution have been vital components in the Satanic warfare against God since the very beginning.

But the King James period was a time of strong Biblical convictions as well as great scholarship among Christian leaders, and the 54 or so “learned men” whom the King appointed to produce an “authorized” translation of the Bible was surely the most capable and dedicated body of scholars ever to undertake such a task.

As most readers of my own books know, I have continued to use the King James Bible, although I do have many other English versions and refer to them from time to time. In spite of the occasional archaic expressions in the KJV, it is—in my judgment, at least—still the most reliably accurate English translation as a whole, as well as the most beautifully written and spiritually most powerful, of all the hundreds of versions that have been published.

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek, of course (some in Aramaic), and there had already been a great many translations into other languages, including many into English, well before the King James translation was

commissioned. The original “autographs” (by Moses, Paul, etc.) have all disappeared, so now we only have copies of copies to study. Bible scholars have labored diligently to compare and evaluate these various hand-copied manuscripts to arrive as closely as possible to the original text. Although there are still a few unsettled questions, the general accuracy of the King James is quite secure.

Nevertheless, the King James translators, as competent and dedicated as they were, never claimed to be infallible in their translation. They could not help being influenced by their times.

They were all a part of the state church, for example, under the authority of the king. Their commission required them to adhere to the official ecclesiastical terminology of their connections. That is, they were told to use the word “church” instead of the probably more literal translation “congregation” and also simply to transliterate a certain Greek word, using “baptism” instead of its proper translation “washing” or “immersion.” Thus, it seems reasonable to explain their use of “replenish” instead of “fill” in Genesis 1:28 by some such background influence. These men were not divinely inspired like Moses and Paul, but they were devoted and sincere Bible-believing Christian scholars, highly competent in what they were doing, earnestly desiring to honor God and His inerrant Word. They produced the version which has stood the test of 400 years of time, and been the Bible used to under-gird the greatest missionary advance worldwide since the ministry of the apostles themselves. I still believe it is the best we have in English.

It may not be perfect, but it comes close. The few questionable translations, especially “*replenish*” in Genesis 1:28, can be noted in any relevant expositions. In any case, that verse should not be used,

as it has often been in the past, to justify the gap theory of Earth history.

The main purpose of the gap theory has obviously been to try to accommodate the assumed astronomic and geologic ages of cosmic and Earth history in the Biblical framework of divinely revealed history. The latter clearly speaks of six literal days in which “*the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is*” (Exodus 20:11).

In any case, the gap theory will not work, either geologically or theologically, and should be abandoned by those still using it. No geologist, Christian, or non-Christian, could accept it. It assumes that the geological ages took place in the alleged gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 and that they were terminated by a great global cataclysm leaving the earth “*without form, and void.*”

But any such cataclysm would completely negate the principle of uniformitarianism on which the geological ages were erected by the geologists in the first place. The gap theory would thus supposedly accommodate the geological ages (along with the evolutionary history of the earth and its inhabitants which are based on them) by destroying the evidence for them!

As far as Biblical theology is concerned, it would place all the fossil remains of the animals of the pre-world, as well as the assumed pre-Adamites, either in the geological ages or the cataclysm which terminated them before sin brought death into the world. But that did not happen until Adam and Eve brought sin and God’s “curse” on the world (Romans 5:12, etc.). Even Satan did not sin until after the six days of creation, because at that time, everything was still “*very good,*” including the hosts of heaven (Genesis 1:31; 2:1).

Those who still advocate the gap theory may have good intentions, but the theory is wrong and is a dangerous compromise. It should be abandoned. 

Why Did God Give the Rainbow Sign?

by John D. Morris, Ph.D.

Noah and his family had just come through an unimaginably frightening experience. Perhaps they had never even seen a storm, and certainly no one had ever seen one like this. It would have been indelibly impressed on their memories. During the Flood, the winds incessantly howled, the thunder continually pealed as the Ark pitched and rolled in the waves. Earthquakes shook the planet without stop, sending pulsating tsunamis in every direction. Underwater volcanoes and the spreading “fountains of the great deep” (Genesis 7:11) heated the water surrounding the Ark, making life on board almost unbearable. And the never ceasing rainfall so pelted the Ark’s roof, it was like being under Niagara Falls.

This was not merely a category 5 hurricane of today. Creationists have begun to speculate on the nature of “hypercanes,” storms dozens of times greater than present hurricanes as the primary Flood character. Surely, the world before the Flood fully “perished” (II Peter 3:6) under the Flood’s onslaught.

As Noah and his family stepped off the Ark they entered a world totally unfamiliar to them. The geography had all changed. Plant and animal life had been devastated. Weather patterns were chaotic. Gone was the pre-Flood stability they were accustomed to.

Consider that the world was “broken.” To the extent that we enjoy relative stability now, they had none then. It would perhaps have taken several centuries for Earth to settle down to the pseudo-equilibrium in which we now live. Remember that the jet streams must be stabilized. The ocean currents must find their

“paths of the seas” (Psalm 8:8). The continents must halt their rapid horizontal movements and cease their vertical rebounding. In particular, the oceans must give up their excess heat, which drove such violent storm patterns.

It was into this unstable world Noah and his family was placed. No doubt earthquakes were common. Of necessity they lived in tents, for buildings could not be made stable. Wood was in short supply and rock structures were the least safe.

Rainfall continued its intensity, with swollen streams and violent storms. Calculations show that the ocean’s heat would take at least 600 years or so to dissipate, and that during this period the “Ice Age” dominated. Job lived soon after the Flood, and his book contains more references to ice and snow than the rest of the Bible put together. Up until perhaps the time of Abraham the world was a dangerous place. Continual catastrophes dominated their lives.

No doubt they needed reassurance that there would never be another Flood like the Great Flood of Noah’s day, for it must have seemed they were still in it. Thus it was out of God’s grace and mercy that He instituted this beautiful reminder of His protection. And every time they saw a majestic rainbow it would remind them of the security they have in Him. And what a blessed thing it is to rest in that certain knowledge. ☪



© 2006 by ICR • All Rights Reserved

Single Copies 10¢ • Order from: **INSTITUTE FOR CREATION RESEARCH**

P.O. Box 2667, El Cajon, CA 92021 • Available for download on our website (www.icr.org).