Title: An analysis of nineteenth-century Seventh-day Adventist creationism: age of the earth in Genesis 1:1-3

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the Seventh-day Adventist view of the inorganic gap theory of the nineteenth century. Ronald Numbers maintained that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in the nineteenth century, attempted to compromise Genesis creation with the geological ages by proposing a time gap between verses 1 and 3 of Genesis 1. And this compromise was seen in articles published in the Review and Herald and the Signs of the Times in the late 1890s.

To test the truth of the Ronald Numbers’ affirmation, a page by page search was implemented on the nineteenth-century Review and Herald and Signs of the Times. The main purpose was to determine whether a shift occurred or not. If a shift did occur, a further purpose was to find out why and when this shift took place.

Some Seventh-day Adventist writers of the nineteenth century postulated an inorganic gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. The inorganic gap theory states that God created the earth in the beginning, at a time earlier than the six days of creation. God created this earth “in the beginning” only in its elementary substances and in a chaotic condition. After a period of time or gap, God brooded over the chaotic elementary substances, and the earth assumed its present globular form. Then God brought order and life to the world in six literal days.
Some proponents of the gap theory suggest that God has not revealed the length of this gap and, therefore, it is idle to conjecture. But some others suggest that the inorganic gap might have been ages in length, extending far into the past, to a time beyond the grasp of the human mind. Some of their supporting arguments are the usage of the Hebrew words bara and asah, and bereshith. The other arguments are that Lucifer was a morning star when God laid the foundation in the beginning, but later was known as a tempter when Adam and Eve were created; the angels were in existence; the first day begins in Genesis 1: 3; and Kellogg’s idea of numerous unfinished worlds such as Mars existing in the universe.