

St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, the Benedictine philosopher Pererius in the 16th century, Dionysius Petavius in the 17th century, and J. G. Rosenmuller and J. A. Dathe in the 18th century.¹²

William Buckland

Following the revitalizing of the gap view of Genesis one, several other theologians and churchmen began to use this and similar methods of reconciling the geological and Biblical records. One of these men, William Buckland, soon took the lead in trying to give recognition to the objective observations of geology, and yet not to do violence to the Scriptures. Buckland was a devoted leader in the Church of England, but also was an accomplished geologist, and well known for his geologic field research. He also held the position of Professor of Geology at Oxford for more than a decade and lectured widely on the subject.¹³ He, along with his contemporary, Cuvier in France, strongly upheld the evidence of a universal Biblical Flood and of the very recent creation of man, but found many difficulties in the custom of trying to fit nearly all the sedimentary deposits of the earth into the Flood period. Buckland therefore adopted the view of Cuvier, that the contrasting strata of the sedimentary records represent a series of several epochs of time and catastrophic events in the past, with the final catastrophe being the Biblical Flood.¹⁴ Cuvier, being an accomplished vertebrate zoologist and paleontologist, had noticed the stratigraphic evidence for definite time distinctions between different levels of fossils. In his *Discours sur les révolutions de la surface du globe* (first published in 1812), Cuvier emphasized the fact that "in stratigraphic successions, fossils occur in the chronological order of creation; fish, amphibia, reptilia, mammalia--the older the strata, the higher the proportion of extinct species. No human fossils have turned up anywhere."¹⁵ Thus Cuvier found strong evidence for long periods of time prior to the creation of man, at the same time strongly opposing evolutionary theory and insisting on the accuracy of the Biblical account of the recent origin of man.

As for the point in the Biblical record at which the epochs of time occurred, Cuvier held that these were either synonymous with or included in the six days of creation set forth in Genesis one. For a time, Buckland accepted this same view, but later began to favor the position of Chalmers; namely, that the earlier epochs of time, and the catastrophes between them, occurred during the long period which the first verses of Genesis at least seem to allow prior to the six-day creation period.¹⁶

The work of Cuvier and Buckland made possible the recognition of sufficient time for the accumulation of the vastly extensive geologic deposits, and gave a reasonable explanation for the great contrasts between the types of fossils which usually existed in the successive strata in a given locality. It also formed a rather impressive series of arguments against the pure uniformitarianism¹⁷ which had recently been set forth by James Hutton, and was soon to be elaborated by Charles Lyell. Thus Buckland and Cuvier were hailed as heroic scholars who were willing to defend the sacred Scriptures,