



# The Gap Theory

by Darrel Kautz 1988, reprinted 2008

The view of origins known as the “Gap Theory” is an attempt to harmonize the long ages of evolution with Genesis 1:1-2. It originated in 1814 with Dr Thomas Chalmers of Edinburgh University, Scotland. The theory was popularized in the *Scofield Reference Bible* of 1917, and is advocated today by such men as Arthur Gustance and R. B. Thieme Jr.

In its classical form the Gap Theory “proposes a complete and perfect creation of both universe and earth in Genesis 1:1, a ruin of the earth during a chronological gap between 1:1 and 1:2, and a subsequent recreation beginning with Genesis 1:3.” **1**

In its more fleshed-out form, the theory may be expressed as follows. “In the far distant dateless past, God created a perfect heaven and perfect earth. Satan was ruler of the earth which was peopled by a race of ‘men’ without any souls. Eventually, Satan, who dwelled in a garden of Eden composed of minerals (Ezek. 28), rebelled by desiring to become like God (Isa. 14). Because of Satan’s fall, sin entered the universe and brought on the earth God’s judgment in the form of a flood (indicated by the water of 1:2), and then a global ice-age when the light and heat from the sun were somehow removed. All the plant, animal, and human fossils upon the earth today date from this ‘Lucifer’s flood’ and do not bear any genetic relationship with the plants, animals and fossils living upon the earth today.”**2**

The credibility of the Gap Theory has been explored in depth by Weston Fields in his book *Uniformed and Unfilled*. On the basis of a detailed analysis of the linguistic and grammatical features of Genesis 1:1-2, Fields concludes that the Gap Theory, with its stress on ruin and restoration, is not exegetically possible. Genesis 1:2a consists of a noun clause which is explanatory to the main verb of 1:1; that makes 1:2a a description of the earth as it was created originally, and not how it became subsequent to creation. The “and” or “now” (Hebrew *waw*) at the beginning of 1:2 is copulative or connecting in function, not a word denoting sequence; it describes a state contemporaneous with the action of 1:1. “The grammar of verse two forces us to say that the earth was *created* unformed and unfilled, while the Gap Theory alleges that it should say the earth *became* unformed and unfilled *after* (perhaps centuries after) it was created! It is grammatically impossible.” **3**

Followers of the Gap Theory insist that the verb *hayeta* in 1:2a must be translated as “became” or “had become” instead of “was” — “Now the earth was formless and empty.” However, that verb is a copulative; it connects the subject (earth) with the predicate (formless and empty). “It is the mistranslation of this word which has, perhaps, added more to the ranks of gap theorists than any one factor” **4** The use of the pluperfect tense (had become) for the meaning of *hayeta* would postulate an unformed and unfilled earth even before the earth was created!

There is nothing in the words “formless and empty” which point to a scene of judgment — some evil state brought about by the fall of angels. Those words simply depict the condition of planet earth when it was first brought into existence in its *unfinished* state and prior to its completion on succeeding creation days.

Gap theorists appeal to Isaiah 45:18 in support of their view; that text states, in part, that God did not create the earth to be empty but to be inhabited. They assert that since the earth in Genesis 1:2a was *tohu* (formless), that then the earth must have become that way *after* the initial creation. The earth could not, it is affirmed, have come from the hand of God in the condition described by the word "*tohu*." The reasoning, however, is fallacious.

The Gap Theory is devoid of linguistic and grammatical support. Genesis 1 portrays only one creation, not two creations. Neither is there any trace of sin, Satan, or judgmental destruction in that chapter. Creation, in all of its parts, was judged by the Creator Himself as being *exceedingly good* (Gen. 1:31). There were no imperfections at all in nature — as there are today in consequence of the events of Genesis 3. *LSI*

**References**

Fields, Weston, *Unformed and Unfilled* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976), p. 7

Ibid., pp. 85-86

Ibid., p. 88

Ibid, p. 88.