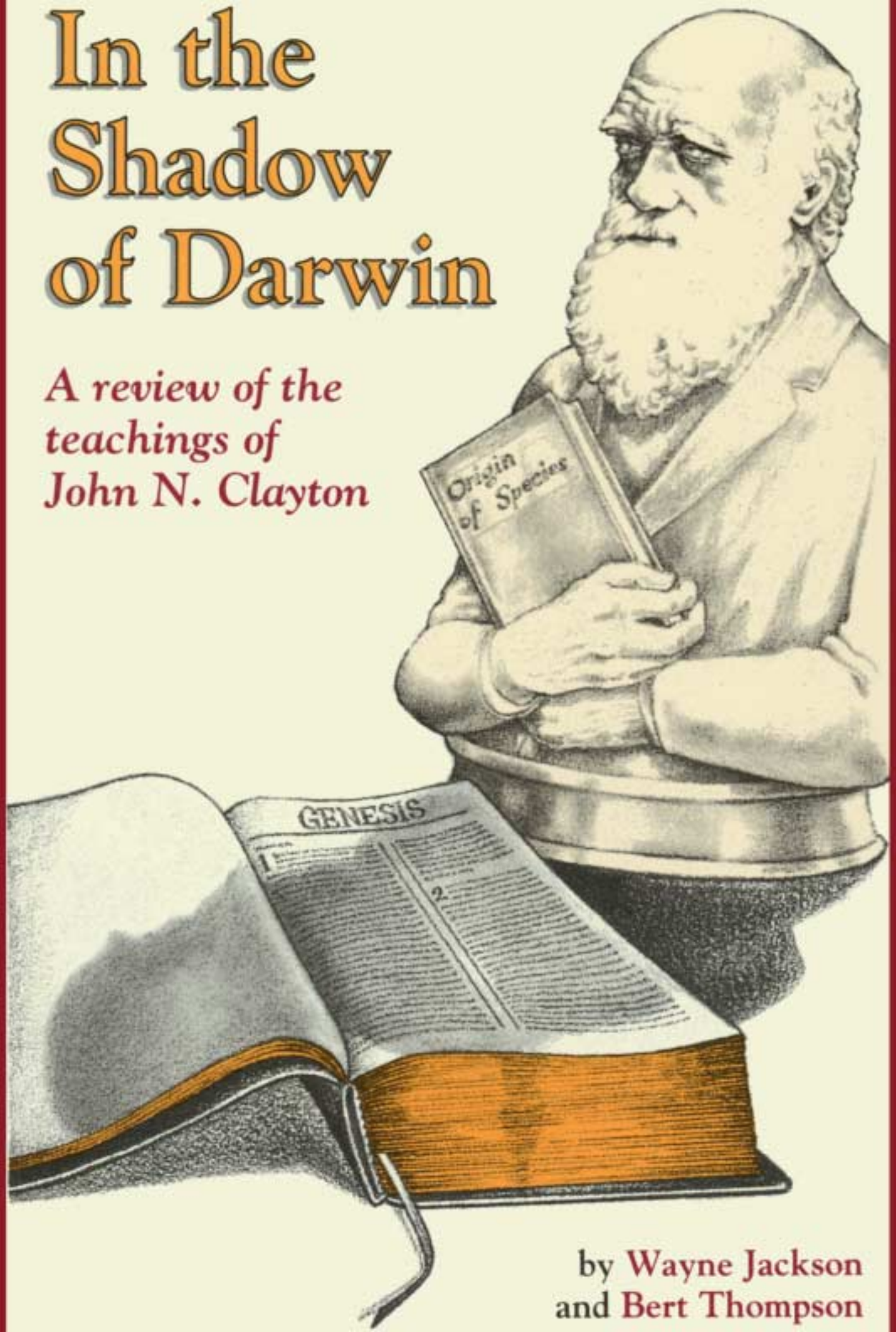


# In the Shadow of Darwin

*A review of the  
teachings of  
John N. Clayton*



by Wayne Jackson  
and Bert Thompson

**IN THE SHADOW OF DARWIN**  
**[A REVIEW OF THE TEACHINGS OF JOHN N. CLAYTON]**

by

**Wayne Jackson, M.A. and Bert Thompson, Ph.D.**

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## PREFACE

One of the most widely traveled speakers in the church in the field of Christian evidences is John N. Clayton of South Bend, Indiana. Brother Clayton generally is busy several weekends of each month throughout the year with his “Does God Exist?” program, which operates under the oversight of the elders of the Donmoyer Avenue Church of Christ in South Bend, Indiana. In addition to his public lectures, John edits a bimonthly paper, also titled *Does God Exist?*, with a circulation of some 29,000+ readers. He is a prodigious producer of a variety of materials, including audio and video tapes, correspondence courses, etc. While all of this truly would be wonderful if brother Clayton were teaching faithfully the truth pertaining to Christian evidences, the sad fact is, John propagates a host of errors that are so foreign to the plain teaching of the Bible, and so damaging to the faith of both young and old alike, it has become imperative that a thorough exposure of his teachings be made.

We do not write on these matters lightly. It is a serious thing to oppose a brother in Christ. Our opposition to brother Clayton’s teachings is fueled neither by a personal vendetta nor by any other ill-conceived motive. Rather, our opposition is due to the fact that—and we say this as kindly as we know how—in our judgment there are few in our great brotherhood who have taught more error, on more topics, more frequently, than John Clayton.

We do not make such a statement from a position of ignorance. While some (and this would certainly include many of John’s supporters) have only a cursory knowledge of what he teaches, we have spent well over a decade-and-a-half seriously studying the teachings of this brother. We have read his periodical, viewed his films, listened to his audio tapes, examined his correspondence courses, attended his lectures, read his books, and even met with him personally to discuss his doctrinal positions. When we say we believe that no one in the brotherhood knows the teachings of John Clayton as well as we do, it is not intended as a boast, but rather as a plain statement of fact. We have invested hundreds of hours in an exhaustive study of John’s teachings. This will be evident to the reader as the contents of this review are examined.

The book you now hold in your hands is not the first of its kind. John Clayton began his “Does God Exist?” program in 1969. By the early 1970s, a number of brethren already had begun to discern serious errors in his teachings on a number of important points. Accordingly, they corresponded with John, seeking information, asking for clarification, etc., in areas on which they knew John to be wrong. We have in our files copies of letters to John that date as far back as 1972—letters from sound brethren who saw the direction in which John seemed to be headed, and who wanted to try to do something to prevent his apostasy. As the years passed, it became quite clear to those involved in what came to be known as “the Clayton controversy” that John not only had no intention of repenting of his many erroneous teachings, but was becoming even more “solidified” in those positions. Finally, after many years of trying to communicate with John in an attempt to help him see the errors of his way, one by one brethren found themselves being told by John that he no longer would correspond with them on these matters.

It became clear that John was not to be dissuaded from the course he had set for himself. It became equally clear that many in the brotherhood were willing to support and/or endorse John only because he billed himself as a “former atheist.” [It was popular—and in many circles still is—to find someone who could boast of being a “former skeptic,” “former denominationalist,” etc., and therefore possessed a special appeal that could be used to draw an audience.] The point we are making is that in many instances the people inviting John to speak had little or no knowledge of what he actually believed and taught. All they knew was that he was a “former atheist” who could draw a crowd. That, apparently, was enough.

Adding to John’s popularity were two other factors. First, John was practically alone in his area of instruction. Others who had gone before him in teaching Christian evidences (e.g., Dr. Russell C. Artist, former chairman of the biology department at David Lipscomb University) were either in retirement or rapidly approaching it. John virtually had the field to himself, and he rapidly took good advantage of it to build quite a following. Second, those of us in the churches of Christ, by everyone’s admission, had done a poor-to-pitiful job in the past of teaching in the areas of Christian apologetics and Christian evidences. As a result, John’s message—wrong though it was—fell on untrained ears. Since John is quite a good public speaker, and since he was being billed as a “former atheist,” the **messenger** overshadowed the

**message.** Many people either heard what they wanted to hear, or simply had not been taught well enough to know that what they were hearing was wrong; subsequently John's popularity grew. Unfortunately, as his popularity increased, so did the amount of erroneous teaching that he propagated.

Pleas for John to change—even pleas made by those whom he considered his friends—fell on deaf ears. He made it clear that: (a) he was not one to accept graciously constructive criticism; and (b) he had a great disdain for those who felt themselves smart enough to try to teach him anything. In a letter to Jon Gary Williams of LaVergne, Tennessee, John wrote:

In the Bible belt, I have found that nearly half of the preachers trained in many of our preacher training schools do not encourage what I understand the whole New Testament church to be about. Preachers are given "canned" answers to specific points of view quoted from other preachers, or authorities in the field.... I seriously question whether the Church as the Lord intended it even exists in many communities in that part of the country... (1975f, p. 2).

Some among us felt that perhaps the brotherhood could be likened to a "sleeping giant" in regard to John Clayton. That is to say, if the alarm were sounded, the "giant" would awaken, examine the facts, and realize that the hour was much later than anyone at first had suspected. We were certainly to be counted among the number of concerned brethren who had faith in that "sleeping giant." As we spoke with others who shared our concern, the idea was conceived of putting together a compendium on the erroneous teachings of brother Clayton, in the hopes that our great brotherhood **could** be warned, and that brother Clayton **could** be turned from his errors. We were encouraged by a great number of brethren to pursue this course of action. Over a period of several years, our offices were deluged by letters and phone calls from sincere people who were greatly concerned and deeply grieved about the teaching that had come to be known simply as "Claytonism." We genuinely felt that the time had come to speak out.

Subsequently, we authored a series of fourteen articles that first appeared in the religious journal *Words of Truth*, edited by the late Bobby Duncan and published by the Sixth Avenue church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama. Those articles appeared during the dates of May 11 through August 10, 1979. Later, in September of that same year, those articles were reprinted in a thirty-two-page book titled *Evolutionary Creationism—A Review of the Teaching of John Clayton*, the immediate popularity of which took us by surprise. Ultimately, over 10,000 copies were distributed free of charge. The impact this review had on John's program is something that only he and God know. But it quickly became evident that the book was alerting brethren who previously had been ignorant of these matters. We began to receive reports of cancellations of John's program at various congregations, as well as reports of congregations that had planned to invite him, but, upon seeing the review, thought better of such an idea. So devastated was John's program that he immediately published a two-page letter, which received wide distribution, attempting to counter the impact of the book. [His letter, however, did not address any of the book's facts; it merely made personal attacks upon its authors.] Eventually, in January of 1980, John was forced to prepare an audio tape (*A Response to Evolutionary Creationism*) attempting to rebut the review.

*Evolutionary Creationism* never went out of print. However, it has been over a decade since it was first published, and much additional material has come from John Clayton that, we believe, necessitates a revision of the original work. Those familiar with the first review will no doubt be shocked at some of the revelations contained in this newly revised version. Whereas we had hoped that brother Clayton's errors would have been corrected, exactly the opposite has occurred. His errors have increased not only in number, but in the nature of their seriousness as well. This claim is documented in great detail in the pages that follow.

We truly regretted having to write the first book reviewing John's erroneous teachings. But, scripturally speaking, we had little choice. Such passages as Jude 3, Galatians 2:4-5, 2 Timothy 4:1-3, and 2 Peter 2:1ff. make it clear that we are to contend earnestly for the faith, and that we must oppose error (even publicly, if need be). We regret having to publish this revision as well. But brother Clayton continues to spread his erroneous teachings—in some areas unchecked. We simply cannot remain silent and allow the propagation of such errors to continue unopposed.

It is a mild understatement to say that writing a book such as this is a most unpleasant undertaking. Only the authors actually can know just how unpleasant it really is. A person would have to be spiritually deficient, it seems to us, to enjoy such a task. We certainly have not enjoyed it. But we deemed it abso-

lutely necessary. Our prayer is no different now than when we published the first edition of this book in 1979—that John will come to a deeper faith in the Bible as God’s Word, renounce the error in which he has become so entrenched, and join hands with those who respect the authority of the Word of God.

We ask that you carefully and prayerfully consider the documented evidence introduced here. Compare brother Clayton’s teachings with the plain, uncomplicated statements of Scripture. We believe you will see that John’s teachings are seriously at odds with the Bible and, for that reason, must be opposed.

Wayne Jackson and Bert Thompson

## ADDENDUM

Brother Clayton often has argued that his critics speak from ignorance because they have not attended his weekend seminars, and therefore are unable to judge whether his teachings are correct or incorrect. We therefore would like to point out here that we **have** attended his seminars (Bert Thompson has attended three; Wayne Jackson has attended one). Furthermore, it matters little whether or not one attends even a single seminar because it is an easy matter to listen to John’s audio tapes, view his video tapes, subscribe to his periodical, and read his many writings. Such works are readily available for a careful perusal by any interested party, and such works speak for themselves, independent of the seminars.

Additionally, we would like to make this point. For well over a decade we tried to set up either private or public meetings with John, to discuss his peculiar ideas. But time after time, John abjectly refused such a meeting. Several brotherhood lectureship directors invited him to discuss his teachings on their programs, but he declined. Editors of journals published debate propositions, but again he refused. More than one eldership wrote to us, and to John, offering to provide a place for a meeting, airfare for all parties concerned, and even an honorarium for John. Still he declined. Finally, however, the opportunity for such a meeting presented itself. Joe Orvelo, one of John Clayton’s strongest supporters and a minister with the church of Christ in Manteca, California (where John was scheduled to hold a weekend seminar) mis-spoke himself and suggested that John gladly would agree to meet. As a result—after more than a decade of being unsuccessful in getting John to agree to a meeting—we finally had stumbled upon a situation in which brother Clayton simply had no choice but to meet with us. That discussion occurred on July 20, 1991. You will find references to it throughout this book, as well as comments on the positions that John defended in that meeting. [There is an interesting sidelight to the Manteca meeting. In the spring of 1991, when word began to spread that the Manteca church, under the dominating influence of Joe Orvelo, had secured the services of John Clayton for a summer seminar, great consternation swept through many of the churches in the San Joaquin Valley. Accordingly, a petitionary letter was sent to the Northside church in Manteca, urging these brethren to refrain from injecting brother Clayton’s liberal influence into this area. The letter was signed by **twenty-five** regional gospel preachers! Tragically, Joe Orvelo was able to dissuade most of his brethren from considering the wishes of sound brethren throughout north/central California. As an aftermath, however, a number of faithful saints left the Manteca church.]

[AUTHORS’ NOTE: The reader will notice the use of the literary abbreviation “[sic]” throughout this review. While most will be familiar with its usage, some may not. Perhaps, therefore, an explanation is in order. Whenever this abbreviation is employed, it is a writer’s method of explaining to the reader that there is a mistake, an error, or an improper concept **in the material being quoted**. The abbreviation “sic” is from the Latin meaning “thus so,” and when placed in brackets within the text, informs the reader that the mistake, error, or improper concept is **not that of the person doing the writing**, but that of the person being quoted. It is not deemed proper, especially in critical reviews, to “correct” such mistakes, errors, or improper concepts; rather they simply are identified for the reader by the literary device [sic] as they are throughout this book.]

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In February of 1969, John N. Clayton of South Bend, Indiana started traveling the lecture circuit with his presentations on the existence of God (1977a, p. 8). One of the most popular of his lectures was, and is, “Why I Left Atheism,” the lesson he normally uses for his sermon at worship services on Sunday mornings during his weekend program. That lesson has been published both in written form (in a booklet by the same name), and in audio tape format. In the booklet, first published in 1968, John explained that from the earliest days of his remembrance he was taught “that there is no such thing as God—that anybody that believed in God was silly and superstitious and ignorant and had simply not looked at the evidence.” His mother would ask him, “Do you really believe there’s an old man, floating around in the sky, blasting things into existence here upon the earth?” As a consequence, John became a confirmed atheist. He studied the Bible, he says, “for the explicit purpose of finding scientific contradictions in it.” He argued with religionists frequently and attempted (with some success) to “break” their “faith.” He confessed that he conditioned himself to lie and steal, for “after all, there was no God.” However, through the influence of a young Christian girl, whom he later married, he renounced his atheism and during his junior year at Indiana University became a Christian. Later, he moved to South Bend and identified with the Donmoyer Avenue church of Christ, where James Boyd was the local evangelist.

In order to understand how John got to the point, theologically, where he is today, it is necessary to know something of his educational background. John received the B.S. and M.S. degrees from Indiana University, and then in 1971 earned another M.S. degree from Notre Dame. His major area of study was in Earth sciences—a **field almost totally dominated by evolutionary thinking**. During the early years of his Christian life, John received all of his education from those who were either outright unbelievers, or from those who advocated theistic evolution and hence rejected a literal approach to the Genesis account of creation. In a letter to Jon Gary Williams on August 1, 1975, John boasted: “**I have some 160 hours in geology and evolution** from Indiana and Notre Dame and Montana State Universities, and I feel I know my content fairly well” (1975e, p. 2, emp. added). And, John himself has admitted, “I have never attended a private school operated by the Church of Christ” (1977b, p. 4). So far as we are able to determine, our brother never has received **any** Bible instruction from conservative Bible scholars who advocate a literal view of the entire creation in six days as taught in Genesis. We say this, not to suggest that one must be formally educated to have a correct concept of creation, but rather to give you an idea of the kind of training (and the source of that training) that John sought out—especially in light of his claim that he is a “specialist” (to use his own words) in Bible/science matters.

Furthermore, on numerous occasions John has objected to those who speak or write in areas in which they have neither formal training nor adequate knowledge. For example, in an article titled “Intellectual Integrity and Faith,” he said: “We would like to suggest some guidelines to help in evaluating the writings of those in the field of Christian evidences, evolution, and related fields.... Are those making the presentation trained in the field they are speaking in or are they arguing in a field in which they have had no training?” (1983a, p. 15). John frequently “instructs” in matters that are involved intricately in theology, and does not hesitate to pontificate that “the Greek says...” or “the Hebrew says...” when the truth of the matter is, he cannot read a single line of either. He has no training whatsoever in what should be the most important field in which he speaks weekend after weekend—the Bible.

While John bristles at those who, in his estimation, speak on issues that lie outside their areas of expertise, he does not hesitate to do so when it suits his specific agenda. This becomes a very real problem for John because he often ventures into areas having to do with biblical teaching. His smattering of biblical knowledge simply is not enough to provide him with a base from which to expand. One example comes to mind. In the Preface of this book, we mentioned that we met privately with brother Clayton on July 20, 1991 to discuss the issues that divide us. During that three-hour meeting, we asked John to take his Bible and turn to Nehemiah 9:6 so that we could examine this passage as it relates to some of his theories regarding certain Hebrew words and their use in the Genesis creation account [more will be said about this later in the appropriate section of this book]. John picked up his Bible, paused for several sec-



onds, fumbled the pages, turned to the “Index” in the front of the book, and ran his finger down the listing to see how to locate the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. We hesitate to introduce a matter of this nature, but we feel it is absolutely necessary in view of brother Clayton’s claim to be a biblical scholar.

John has complained vociferously that “there are many today who are not mature enough to be publically [sic] speaking for the Church” (1978a, p. 7). As the evidence that you are about to examine will indicate quite clearly, John Clayton is just such a person. As a result of the fact that John’s formal training was derived at the feet of those who either did not believe in God in the first place, or who had little respect for God and His inspired Word, and because he has had no biblical training, John eventually came to a point where he formed his own **private theology**—a theology that bears little resemblance to Bible teaching in a significant number of areas. The documentation for this statement is the essence of this review, and substantiates the fact that John simply is too unsound in his own faith to be instructing others in the complex areas in which he now involves himself.

First, John himself has admitted that he “does not identify with any one theology” (see Francella, 1981). That statement was made in 1981. Four years earlier, John had published an article titled “I’m Disillusioned” (1977a, pp. 6-10), in which he provided ample warning that he viewed himself as being on a slippery slope in regard to his own theological viewpoints. He complained that “the Church of Christ has acquired so many denominational practices and attitudes it is in danger of losing its restoration identity,” and that he was “frustrated and disillusioned.” Nevertheless, he elected to remain in the fellowship of churches of Christ because “the Church of Christ is still the closest thing to the 1st Century Church available on earth today.” In his 1968 booklet, *Why I Left Atheism*, John stated: “I guess in a real sense you could say that I’m still looking. I’m still trying to find that true church” (1968a, p. 10). In his 1990 correspondence course lesson, “The Logic of the Church,” John wrote: “In these lessons, we are not supporting any church (small c is deliberate), we are supporting the Church that the Bible describes. Whether that Church exists on the earth today is a point we will get to later in our discussion” (1990l, p. 2, parenthetical comment in orig.). So far as we are able to determine, that point was left hanging. The question never was specifically addressed subsequently. Apparently now, over a quarter of a century after John suggested that he was “still looking” for the “true church,” he has yet to find it—which is why, when pressed, he is forced to admit that he doesn’t identify with “any one theology,” i.e., he does not have a consistent doctrinal position.

Second, the result of John’s ignorance of basic Bible issues is disastrous, both for him and for those whom he attempts to teach. His lack of understanding of the most basic hermeneutical and exegetical principles, and his desire to accommodate the biblical text to evolutionary geology, have led him to adopt the personal, frequently contradictory theology in which he is now so deeply entrenched. Some have attempted to defend brother Clayton by reminding his critics of the tremendous “good” he does in helping people believe in God. No one among us would deny that there is **some** good in John’s teachings. But that is hardly the point. After all, rat poison is 99% “good.” It is only the 1% poison that kills the rat. What “good” John accomplishes will be more than negated by the tremendous harm he does in teaching people so much error. We will have accomplished little if we “convert” the atheist or agnostic, only to fill the church with those who are theistic evolutionists, or who think that the church of Christ is only “the closest thing” available to the true church.

It is because John Clayton has propagated, and continues to propagate, such serious errors as these—covering a plethora of issues in areas of both science and the Bible—that we invite your attention to the chapters which follow. They tell a story that is incredible. And some, no doubt, will have difficulty believing what they read for that very reason. However, every statement from John will be fully documented. John’s constant complaint has been that his critics have “misunderstood” him or have taken his comments “out of context” so as to make him say something he really did not mean to say. We assure you that we have **not** misunderstood John. Surely a man who has two master’s degrees can write so that the average person can understand what he is saying. The problem is—we understand **exactly** what brother Clayton is teaching. Nor have we taken his statements out of context, all of his disclaimers to the contrary notwithstanding. You be the judge. Read what is to follow, and as you do so, ask yourself this question: Could **all** of this be the result of simply a “misunderstanding,” or of something having been “taken out of context”?

## CHAPTER 2

### JOHN CLAYTON ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

“...I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see.”

—Joseph Smith Jr., 1963, p. 9

“...God **came into being** before time began...”

—John Clayton, 1977e, p. 154

“...from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God”

—Psalm 90:2

### ON PROVING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

John’s writings contain some good material on the existence of God, but the overall force is greatly weakened by a sort of “theistic agnosticism” that pervades the whole. It is an attitude which suggests that although we may confidently “believe” that God is, the concept **cannot be proven absolutely**, hence, **cannot be known with certainty**. In discussing God’s existence, John wrote:

The most basic problem in the philosophical context is the point that **there is really no such thing as absolute truth or proof from a purely logical standpoint**. Since definitions of what is meant by reality and assumptions of what physical reality really is can always be challenged **the absence of absolute proof can be defended**. You cannot prove to me that you exist, for I can deny the use of sight by optical illusions or various other problems in interpretation (1990a, pp. 5-6, emp. added).

Clayton says that many people today are “demanding absolute proof in an area where absolute proof is no more accessible than it is in any aspect of our lives. You cannot absolutely prove to me that you exist...” (1990a, p. 188). We would respectfully suggest that any person, who feels that his **own existence** is an unprovable proposition, really does not need to be touring the country lecturing on the existence of **God**.

In his taped response to the first edition of this book, John made a feeble attempt to work himself out of this obviously erroneous position. We think the reader deserves to see his explanation:

What we’re dealing with in this discussion is the question of rationality, of rational arguments. The context of the book [*The Source*—WJ/BT] at this point is that if somebody is dishonest enough to deny the reality of evidence, to deny the reality of anything’s existence, then they perhaps can deny the existence of God. I’m not saying that I question my own existence, which is what Wayne Jackson says at the bottom of the paragraph. I’m saying that if somebody says to me, “Well, you can’t prove to me God exists” and then he is also willing to say that he cannot prove he exists—if they’re willing to be that ridiculous (and I’ve run into people on college campuses, I’ve had many philosophy professors whom, when I say, “Do you believe you exist?” say “I don’t know”), well, if somebody’s going to say they don’t even know whether they exist or not, then I think it’s a little difficult to try and deal with them on the existence of God, at least in terms of providing evidence. So if you look at the definition of absolute truth and if you look at the context, and if there had been any attempt to really look at what was being said here, I think you would see the point being made (1980a).

How does the above “explanation” somehow negate John’s statement that “there is really no such thing as absolute truth or proof”? How does it explain his statement that “the absence of absolute proof **can be defended**”? The answer is, of course, that it does not. If John wanted to say simply that some wild-eyed college philosophy professor doubts his own existence, then why didn’t he just say so? John did not say that. He said that “absolute truth” and “absolute proof” **do not exist**. And, he said that this position **can be defended**. John’s attempt to extricate himself from the positions he has taken in print on these matters has not succeeded.



## ON THE “ORIGIN” OF GOD

John has admitted, of course, that he has had to resort to “speculation” on occasion to offer answers to his readers. In the October 1979 issue of his periodical, he stated: “Not everything we have written in this publication has been biblical—some of it has been our own speculation...” (1979a, p. 8). Certainly, one would not disagree with that assessment! It is interesting, however, to see exactly where such speculation leads. Note these statements from John about the so-called “origin” of God. (1) “There is a leap of faith in nearly everything we do, and there are some questions relative to God, **His origin**, His plan, and His methods that cannot be totally comprehended by any of us” (1990a, p. 188, emp. added). (2) “God is love and the absence of love is hate, so **when God came into being before time began** hate also was intrinsically in existence” (1977e, p. 154, emp. added). Add to these two statements John’s speculation on the origin of evil. He suggests, “Evil has existed **from before the beginning** as a natural consequence of God’s existence” (1978a, p. 4, emp. added).

These are not merely radical statements; they belie an abysmal ignorance of the most basic biblical concepts concerning the nature and existence of God. Every Bible student knows that **God has no origin**. The Scriptures plainly teach that God is an eternal Being (Psalm 90:2, et al.). But Clayton affirms that there was a time when God “came into being.”

In the February 1977 issue of his *Does God Exist?* journal, John penned an article by the title of “How Can I Know Who Is Right?,” in which he presented nine different criteria to be used by the reader in judging matters relating to the Bible. Number two in that list was this: “If carried to its logical end, is the teaching going to make God foolish, illogical, **self-contradictory** or stupid?” (1977c, p. 5, emp. added). Comparing John’s statements regarding “God’s origin” with biblical statements regarding **God’s eternity**, brings to view a clear contradiction indeed. On the one hand, we are told that God “came into being before time began” (John Clayton). On the other hand, we are told that God is eternal—“from everlasting to everlasting” (the inspired psalmist). One would be hard pressed to present a more contradictory picture of God.

## ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AND EVOLUTION

John frequently is given to indefensible overstatement. For example, note this statement from his book, *The Source*: “Even if you did evolve from totally nonliving inanimate matter, the question of God’s existence would not be affected in the slightest” (1990a, p. 137). In his tape, *Evolution’s Proof of God*, brother Clayton asserts: “As a matter of fact, when we get into the subject of evolution, the subject is really irrelevant to the existence of God. There really is no relationship between the two subjects” (undated).

The Bible claims to be the Word of God, and can be proven to be so. In that wondrous Book, we are told of a God “who cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). In that same Book, we also are instructed on the origin of the Universe and all that it contains. Those matters are quite clear. God, through the written Word, has revealed that we were specially created by divine fiat; we did not evolve from inanimate matter. Suppose, however, that brother Clayton’s statements are true. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that we **did** evolve from inanimate matter. John would have you believe that such a circumstance would not affect the existence of God, and that the two events bear no relationship one to the other.

If it were the case that we evolved from inanimate matter, then God’s Word is wrong in its information on these matters. God, in effect, would have lied to us, and therefore the **God of the Bible** does not exist. The obvious implications are: (a) the Bible is now made to be null and void as God’s Word; and (b) since the teaching of the Bible on this topic is incorrect, its teaching on the existence of God may well prove to be erroneous as well.

How, in the name of common sense, can John expect anyone cognizant of the Word of God to believe him when he says that “even if you did evolve from totally nonliving matter, the question of God’s existence would not be affected in the slightest”? The two are **intricately related**. There is a connection between **Creator** and **creation**! John somehow would like to separate God’s existence from belief in evolution so that his personal brand of theistic evolution can be accepted in good conscience by those who believe in God. But for those who accept the Bible as the inerrant, inspired Word of God, it is evident that what John is advocating denigrates both God and His Word.

## CHAPTER 3

### JOHN CLAYTON AND THE BIBLE'S INSPIRATION

"If evolution were true it would reduce the Bible to being non-literal but it would not reflect upon the Word of God"

—John Clayton, 1979c, p. 3

One of the most important areas in any discussion on Christian evidences obviously centers on the Bible and whether or not it really is what it claims to be—inspired of God. Through the years, John Clayton has had a great deal to say on this topic. Unfortunately, much of it is erroneous. In the September 1975 issue of *Does God Exist?*, he wrote: "It seems to the writer that the concept of inspiration is, that God saw to it that His **ideas** were conveyed by the writers, but their own style and **expression technique** was [sic] allowed" (1975b, p. 8, emp. added).

While it is true that stylistic peculiarities are evident within the divine writings, it is not true that God merely gave the writers "His ideas" and thus left the **expression** of those ideas to their own techniques. Human beings do not receive ideas apart from words. This concept is an affirmation of the false notion known as "thought" inspiration, and is a denial of the proper concept known as **verbal** inspiration. David wrote: "The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his **word** was upon my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). Paul similarly affirmed that the message he proclaimed came "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Corinthians 2:13).

That John does not have a good grasp of the concept of verbal, plenary inspiration is evident from an article he authored in the November/December 1986 issue of *Does God Exist?*. Under the title of "The Meaning of Biblical Inspiration," he wrote: "Another view of the inspiration of the Bible is known as that of 'plenary inspiration.' The word 'plenary' means 'God-breathed'" (1986a, p. 12). W. Terry Varner, editor of the journal, *Therefore Stand*, wrote John a very kind letter on December 27, 1986 to disagree with John's unorthodox definition of "plenary" as "God-breathed." Terry correctly pointed out that the word "plenary" does not mean "God-breathed." Rather, the word plenary means "full, complete, or absolute." On January 7, 1987 John wrote a heated response to Terry, in which he stated that not only did the word "plenary" mean "God-breathed" as he had written, but that he had no less than six sources that stated such. John indicated that he would be interested in seeing Terry's sources. On January 29, 1987 Terry wrote a second letter to John, sending him the information he had requested, from major reference works, documenting that plenary did, in fact, mean "full, complete, or absolute," just as Terry had stated in his first letter. He also sent documentation from similar reference works demonstrating that the expression "God-breathed" is a translation of the Greek term *theopneustos*. He asked John for the six sources that supposedly supported John's definitions of these words.

On February 3, 1987 John wrote Terry, and capitulated on what should have been an obvious point to begin with—that the word "plenary" does, in fact, mean "full, complete, or absolute." John eventually wrote a "correction" for *Does God Exist?*, in that he acknowledged his mistake (1987e, p. 12a). Interestingly, Terry never received the six sources that John said he could produce to document his erroneous view. But the obvious question is this: How could a man who styles himself a "specialist" in **Bible-science** matters not know, after years of study in this area, one of the most fundamental concepts concerning biblical inspiration—the very definitions of the words relating to inspiration? And what of those six sources? Had they been a mere fabrication?

This was not John's first encounter with controversy over the Bible's inspiration. In both the 1976 and 1978 editions of his book, *The Source*, John had made the following unbelievable statement:

**I do not contend that it can be conclusively proven to 20th Century Americans that the Bible is inspired**, because the Bible writings have been written over a period of 4,000 years, in at least three languages and several cultures. This variability of background leads to cultural and linguistic difficulties that allow differences of opinion to creep in. There are countless examples of such difficulties (1976a, p. 89; 1978b, p. 79, emp. added).

This is an incredible statement, in light of the following information. First, the Bible was written over a period of some 1,600 years, not 4,000. Second, John's charge that linguistic and cultural changes have negated the Bible's absolute claim that it is the inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17) is atrocious, and can be refuted quite easily. The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew (a fractional portion is in Aramaic). However, approximately two-and-a-half centuries before Christ, the Old Testament was translated into Greek. Christ frequently quoted from this Greek version, known as the *Septuagint* (cf. Matthew 4:10; 15:8-9). He called it "scripture" (John 19:36), and elsewhere declared that "the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). The point is—faithful translation does not destroy inspiration. Third, while cultural transitions may make the interpretation of some passages rather difficult, such problems certainly do not militate against the infallible proofs that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God. If one cannot prove that the biblical documents are inspired, there is no way to establish the deity of Jesus Christ, for we are totally dependent upon the sacred writings for the proof of the Lord's divine nature. What a dangerous doctrine this is!

Though John alleges that he believes in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, it is clear that he needs to do some serious study in this particular area. In a letter to the editor of the *Rocky Mountain Christian* magazine in March 1979 John made this amazing statement: "If evolution were true **it would reduce the Bible to being non-literal but it would not reflect upon the Word of God**" (1979c, p. 3, emp. added). How could a man who purports to be a teacher of the Word of God make such a statement? If evolution is true (and John here clearly is speaking of organic evolution), and we therefore have evolved from inanimate matter, the Bible is not just "non-literal"—it is absolutely false! The Lord's testimony concerning the creation would be erroneous (cf. Mark 10:6, et al.), and thus His deity would be impeached. This is a most serious matter.

Interestingly, in the 1990 edition of *The Source*, John conspicuously omitted the passage (quoted above) in which he affirmed that it could not be "conclusively proven" that the Bible is inspired, and that the Bible was produced over a period of 4,000 years. It is not difficult to understand why he would omit it, of course. It has caused him much grief over the years, as people sought an explanation for its meaning. During a presentation on July 19, 1991 at Manteca, California, a seminar participant asked John if the Bible had, in fact, been written over 4,000 years, as he claimed, or over a period of 1,600 years, which is actually the truth of the matter. Here is the exchange, transcribed directly from audio tapes.

Questioner: "Was the Bible written over 4,000 years?"

John's answer: "Well, that's a question I don't think I can give an intelligent answer to."

Questioner: "Yes you can—don't you know if it was 1,600 or 4,000? There's a lot of difference."

John's answer: "I find writings that say that Moses, that some of the earlier writings of Moses were 1,500 B.C.—OK, well, 1,500 B.C. plus 1990 puts me at 3,400. Now if Job was written earlier than Moses, then you might have to add something to it. That's the reason I took that number. At 3,400, you know, I don't find anything in the Bible that says this is the exact date that Moses wrote this down, so I prefer not to nail a date down."

Questioner: "Since you used 1990, in other words you're saying the Bible was still being written up to 1990?"

John's answer: "No, I'm saying the period of time, how long an age the Bible has been written."

Questioner: "That's not what your quote said. You said it was written over a period of 4,000 years. Is that true or false?"

John's answer: "The period of time that it covers is over 4,000 years."

This exchange—rather, John's response during the exchange—is unbelievable. Here is a man who travels the country almost every weekend teaching on the Bible, and he stands before an audience to defend an obviously erroneous statement which affirms that the Bible was written over a period of 4,000 years. There is a vast difference in saying that the Bible writings **cover** a period of 4,000 years, and in saying that the Bible **was written** over a period of 4,000 years. It is no secret that the Bible was written over a period that stretches from approximately 1,500 B.C. to roughly A.D. 100 (or, a period of 1,600 years).

The same questioner who asked John about the 1,600 vs. 4,000 year writing period of the Bible also asked him about his contention that it could not be proved conclusively that the Bible was inspired. John's response, in part, was as follows:

The point that was trying to be made by this, and I think the point is fairly obvious, is that in our world today we are not convincing everybody that the Bible is inspired. How could there be much question about that? We have thousands and thousands and thousands of people who don't believe the Bible, and who are not following it. And my point was that there's a reason for this. The reason is that we live in a complex society—you heard the quote—we live in a complex society. We live in a society where there's a lot of different values. We're not saying that there's anything wrong with the proof, but what we are saying is that realistically we live in a very complex world, and it is very, very hard to convince people the Bible is the Word of God.

Read the quotation from *The Source* again, and then compare it with John's explanation above. The quotation says one thing, and his attempted explanation addresses an entirely different point. He did not answer the real issue. He said there were "countless difficulties" having to do with the Bible's languages, translation, etc. that resulted in him being unable to prove conclusively that it is inspired. His emphasis was on the **nature of the Bible**, not the **nature of society**. The original statement said absolutely nothing about our "complex society." The quotation spoke about the Bible itself, not about the world around the Bible. John's weak attempt to relieve himself from a serious difficulty was quite unsuccessful. It is little wonder, then, that he removed the quotation from later editions of *The Source*.

One thing can be said about all of this. When a man is as popular as John Clayton, and yet so clearly lacking in basic knowledge, it does not bode well for the future of the church.

## CHAPTER 4

### JOHN CLAYTON'S VIEW OF JESUS

"...in Mark 2:23-24...Jesus violates the seventh day command...."

—John Clayton, 1991b, pp. 21-22

"I always do the things that are pleasing to Him [God]"

—Jesus, John 8:29

John Clayton's views on the life and teaching of Jesus deserve careful examination. The following examples will provide documentation for such a statement. In the January/February 1991 issue of *Does God Exist?*, brother Clayton reviewed a book by the title of, *And in the Seventh Day*, authored by Guy Robbins. John's comments on the book were as follows:

Our other book this month explores in detail a question that has always bugged me and which I have never really felt I had a good understanding of. The concept in question is in reference to what does it mean to say that God "rested" on the seventh day? This question gets into all kinds of things in both the New and Old Testaments. The fact that the **seventh day never has an end** has always enticed me to consider the implications of that fact. The incident in Mark 2:23-24 **where Jesus violates the seventh day command** is related to this question (1991b, pp. 21-22, emp. added).

Apart from John's incorrect allegation that the **seventh day never has ended** (an argument frequently employed in an attempt to prove the Day-Age Theory), John specifically charged that Christ **violated** the Sabbath. The implication of this statement is horrendous. If the Lord violated the Sabbath law, He sinned, for it is a sin to transgress the law (1 John 3:4). We know, of course, that this cannot be the case since the Scriptures explicitly affirm that Christ never sinned (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5). It thus is clear that, contrary to our brother's charge, Jesus never violated the Sabbath.

If brother Clayton had put a bit more study into this passage in Mark's gospel (2:23-24), he would not have been "bugged." First, this context does not even remotely suggest that the seventh day of creation never has ended, and John will not find any support here for the notion that a creation-week "day" could be equivalent to a long period of time. Second, not even the Pharisees, on this occasion, accused Jesus **personally** of violating the Sabbath. These Jewish leaders asked: "Why do they [the disciples] on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?" (Mark 2:24). Christ then responded by revealing their own inconsistency with reference to strict Sabbath observance. If they did not condemn David, who clearly violated the law on one occasion (cf. Matthew 12:4), why would they now condemn the disciples who, after all, were doing nothing more than serving Him Who is "Lord of the Sabbath," which the law authorized (Matthew 12:5)? Jesus clearly said that these disciples were "guiltless" (Matthew 12:7). Brother Clayton has committed a monumental error in charging that Jesus "violated" the Sabbath.

This instance—in which a careless statement from John would imply that Jesus sinned—is not the only mistake he has made in such a matter. In the February 1978 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John wrote an article titled, "What Did Jesus Feel?," in which he made the following statement: "As Jesus led His life and conducted His ministry He was repeatedly provoked and tried. People undoubtedly offered him money. He was **sexually seduced** on numerous occasions" (1978c, pp. 12-13, emp. added).

During John's weekend seminar in Manteca, California a querist asked him about this quotation. The questioner was quite specific when he asked, "Have you ever written that Jesus was 'sexually seduced' on numerous occasions"? John immediately and angrily **denied** ever having made such a statement, and he lashed out at the questioner, suggesting that even to raise such a question was slanderous. It was only when we spoke up and offered to read his exact quotation verbatim that he finally confessed to having made the statement. He then tried to defend it by claiming that all he had meant by his "sexually seduced" allegation was that Christ had been **tempted** with sexual feelings during His earthly life. It became very clear that John had not forgotten his original article after all. He even claimed, almost as an afterthought, that he had published a **retraction** of his irresponsible statement. The audience became painfully aware that, in a moment of intense public pressure, John had lied. There simply is no other way to characterize the situation.

Significantly, this was not the first time brother Clayton had been asked about this point. After the original article was published, we wrote John's elders and requested an explanation for this blasphemous statement. While John's elders did not reply, he did. He provided an obscure definition of "seduced" that he felt justified his position, and he considered the matter closed. However, listen to this statement from an article John wrote in the August 1981 issue of *Does God Exist?*: "It is not honest to use a term that you know different people understand differently" (1981a, p. 10). Ironically, the title of the article from which that statement is taken was "Let's Have Intellectual Integrity."

But that was not the end of the matter. During our meeting with John on July 20, 1991 we brought up the matter of the "sexually seduced" statement, and his falsehood of the previous evening. He reaffirmed his explanation regarding his unique usage of "seduced," and again made the claim of a published **retraction**. We asked John **where** the retraction had appeared, for we certainly could not recall ever having seen it (and it is not something that we likely would have overlooked). He said that he could not remember exactly where it had been published, but that he happily would send us a copy of it. After the meeting was over, we wrote him and requested a copy of his retraction. It never arrived. We then wrote a second letter. The copy of the alleged retraction still did not arrive. It appears that the "retraction story" was a ruse—a spur of the moment ploy to deliver himself from a charge that he could not answer. To this very day, the promised "retraction" regarding Jesus' alleged seduction has yet to appear.

John's view of his Lord could do with some serious improvement. If he is correct in his assertions, we are, to use Paul's words, of all men "to be most pitied." If Jesus did violate the Sabbath law, or if He truly was "sexually seduced," then He was a sinner, His deity is impeached, and His mission to Earth was a failure. Our hopes of inheriting heaven are dashed. However, we may take comfort in the fact that the **apostle** John is correct, not "the other" John.

## CHAPTER 5

### JOHN CLAYTON AND DOCTRINAL ERROR

“I have never been able to be comfortable with the position that a person who rejected God should suffer forever....”

—John Clayton, 1990b, p. 20

#### ON THOSE BEING LOST WHO NEVER HAVE HEARD THE GOSPEL

We have documented elsewhere in this book that John does not hesitate to speculate on matters of which he is ill informed. It also should be noted, however, that on occasion he likewise refuses to speak where God has spoken. Examples abound. In an article on “The Logic of Heaven and Hell” (1985a, p. 9), John asked the question: “How is God going to send the innocent native of Africa or India who never had the opportunity to hear the Gospel to eternal Hell?” John could have used this opportunity to teach about the sinful and lost condition of all men, and the fact that no accountable person is “innocent,” thus stressing the importance of taking the Gospel to all men. Instead, however, John replied: “Those who try to answer this question make an error. None of us know [sic] how God will handle this kind of situation.” In an earlier article, “Man’s Accountability,” John had commented on the same kind of situation by stating, “Second, we are assuming that God’s judgment is fully understood by us. I do not know how God is going to take care of situations like this” (1979b, p. 7). It would have been a simple matter, of course, to quote passages such as Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23 to assist the reader in understanding that all men have sinned and therefore are lost until they have accepted the grace of God through their obedience, but John avoided that altogether. Where the Bible provides an answer, John often refuses to do so. Or, where the Bible provides an answer that is not in keeping with John’s private theology, he simply ignores the biblical information and offers in its place his own personal (and usually erroneous) speculation.

#### ON FELLOWSHIPING THOSE IN DOCTRINAL ERROR

Apparently, it does not conflict with John’s private theology to participate with those who are in doctrinal error within the church. Likely few reading this review will need to be convinced of the many egregious errors of those involved in what has come to be known as the “Crossroads Movement.” During the 1970s and 1980s, the Crossroads church of Christ in Gainesville, Florida did untold damage to the church as a whole as a result of its false teachings and unscriptural methodology. Entire congregations were swept away into complete apostasy; families were divided; churches were split; and the brotherhood at-large found itself having to deal with the results of such atrocities. Yet during the dates of September 27-28, 1986—at the very height of the controversy—John Clayton presented one of his weekend seminars for the so-called “mother church” in Gainesville (see *At The Crossroads*, 1986). According to the article, “Reporting What God Has Done,” which appeared in the October 5, 1986 issue of the Crossroads bulletin, “the Seminar on Evolution and the Existence of God conducted by John Clayton last weekend was a tremendous success.” John moves freely among various groups, regardless of their religious orientation or doctrinal stance.

It also is of particular interest to note: (a) those whom John feels comfortable in recommending; and (b) those with whom he associates. For example, in the September/October 1985 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John informed his readers of a new publication by the name of *Image* magazine. He commented that: “Attractively printed in color, this 36 page magazine has a positive objective and is edited and printed by brethren we know to have a positive concept of God and the Church. Reuel Lemmons and Denny Boultinghouse are the editors” (1985c, p. 17). This says volumes about John and his doctrinal stance. *Image* magazine and its editor, the late Reuel Lemmons, were both known for serious compromise of biblical truth. During his tenure as editor, *Image* produced articles arguing that **baptism for the remission of sins is unnecessary for salvation**, that **instrumental music in worship is acceptable** to God, and so on.



In fact, *Image* and its editors/writers were prime movers in the so-called “unity meetings” of the 1980s between members of the churches of Christ and Independent Christian Church [ICC]. Brother Lemmons had no compunction whatsoever in supporting the false teachers from the ICC. He spoke on their lecture programs, promoted those programs (and others like them) in the pages of *Image*, and so on. So did most of his staff writers. John labels such compromise as a “positive view of God and the Church.” We do not.

On several occasions John has run articles by, or highly recommended, Donald England of Harding University, who is widely known for his false teachings on Genesis. Dr. England is the one who developed the compromising “Non-World View” in his book, *A Christian View of Origins* (1972). In fact, in the June 1977 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John ran an article titled “The ‘Non-World View’ of Genesis,” for which he gave credit to Dr. England. In that article, John said this of Genesis 2: “...it has a different **non-historical** purpose” (1977f, p. 7, emp. added).

John also has recommended the book, *God’s Time Records in Ancient Sediments*, by Dan Wonderly. In the August 1978 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John produced a review of Wonderly’s book in which he stated: “The thing that makes this book unusual is that it is an accurate scientific examination of the geological record of the history of the Earth written by a man who believes in God and accepts the Bible as His word. Other works comparable to this are either atheistic in their approach or written by creationists who are ignorant in geology....” And just what is Mr. Wonderly’s “accurate scientific” approach to these matters? John explains this statement by discussing the four appendices in the back of the book. The first appendix, says John, “espouses Mr. Wonderly’s theological position on the age of the Earth which is the ‘day-age theory.’ While he doesn’t support his view in this area, he has done an excellent job of supporting that interpretation” (1978g, pp. 7-8). That last sentence is incomprehensible. How can a man **not** support a view **while supporting** the interpretation?

Wonderly’s book is a compendium of old-Earth progressive creationism, in which John delights. Wonderly accepts, in its entirety, the standard evolutionary geologic timetable, as does John, which is why John says “we recommend this book highly.” It says a great deal about a man when he consistently recommends publications, and the men who produce them, that are well known to teach false doctrine.

Anyone aware of conditions within the church today knows that the “restoration principle” is under heavy assault from a progressive breed of liberals who advocate a so-called “new hermeneutic,” the ultimate design of which is to form an alliance with denominationalism. One of the leading influences in this insidious movement is Cecil Hook of New Braunfels, Texas. Hook has written four books that advocate everything from the acceptance of sprinkling for immersion, to the observance of the Lord’s Supper on Wednesday, to the use of instrumental music in Christian worship. He is widely known for his vicious attacks against the church of Christ.

In his book, *Free to Speak*, brother Hook has an essay titled, “Evolution or Revolution.” In this irresponsible production Cecil argues that Paul’s restrictions on woman’s role in the church assemblies (cf. 1 Corinthians 14; 1 Timothy 2) were based upon “social traditions” and thus were not “universal.” With reference to the matter of salvation, Hook boldly asserts: “He [God] accepts the individual, **as he is, where he is**, when that person resolves to follow the Savior to a nobler life and commits himself to the life of faith and obedience” (1986, p. 35). Note the language please, that God accepts the sinner as he is, where he is, and as soon as he has resolve in his heart. He may not understand one thing about baptism at this point, but God will accept him because of the condition of his attitude. That is as foreign to the New Testament as it can be. And the case of Cornelius (Acts 10) is eloquent refutation of this sectarian theory.

What does this have to do with John Clayton? In the September/October 1990 edition of *Does God Exist?*, brother Clayton reproduced Cecil Hook’s article in its entirety (see Hook, 1990, pp. 17-20). There was no word of censure; rather, it was published with obvious endorsement. Apparently Cecil has his hook in John! Perhaps now we can understand why John has no problem participating in denominational programs where female worship leaders are employed (see documentation below). And can you believe that he printed Hook’s “where he is, as he is” assertion **unchallenged**? Why would he do such a thing—unless he endorses that sentiment?

### ON MODERN-DAY “PRIVATE MIRACLES”

In 1987, Jimmy Jividen of Abilene, Texas published an excellent book, *Miracles—From God or Man?* In the book, brother Jividen advocated the correct, biblical position that miracles have ceased. They served their purpose in the first century (i.e., to confirm the genuineness of the Gospel message and its messengers), but no longer are needed, or possible, in the present era.

In the May/June 1987 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John highly recommended the book, but then pointed out that “the only weakness in the book is in dealing with individual relationships to God in asking God’s **miraculous** help in individual lives.... The question of how God does act in individual lives in personal ways was left a little vague to me, but that is an area that can only be described as editorial quicksand, and **leaving it a little open** may be the best way to handle it” (1987a, p. 21, emp. added).

By his statement, brother Clayton has revealed that he understands neither the nature nor the purpose of biblical miracles. First, as to their nature, the miracles of the New Testament never were strictly personal and private events. In his famous *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, Thomas H. Horne noted that one of the criteria for determining a genuine miracle is “that it be **instantaneously and publicly performed, and before credible witnesses**” (1841, 1:98, emp. added). His lengthy discussion of this point is valuable indeed. Second, the purpose of miracles in the first century was not primarily to bestow personal benefits; rather, signs were to confirm the reception of inspired revelation (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:2-4). Is the Lord revealing divine truth to individuals today? Should this issue be left “a little open”? If John Clayton has documentation which establishes that God’s “miraculous help” is being given in individual lives today, we certainly would be happy to see it. The truth of the matter is that brother Clayton is seriously in error on this point. The case of modern-day miracles—even those in the private lives of individuals—has not been left “a little open.” Either miracles have ceased, or they have not. The New Testament affirms that they have.

On February 26, 1988 Rick Popejoy, evangelist of the church of Christ in Rawlins, Wyoming, wrote John to ask him about this point, among others. Rick posed eleven very simple questions, and asked John to please provide whatever answers to them he felt were appropriate. Question number eleven was: “Do you believe and teach that the Bible does, and thus that we should, ‘leave it a little open’ as to ‘asking God’s miraculous help in individual lives’” (1988, p. 2)? One could think that such a question would be answered quite easily. However, John’s response in his March 9, 1988 letter was: “Your sentence does not have a subject, and as a result of that I cannot answer it” (1988b, p. 2). John was so preoccupied with what he perceived as a grammatical flaw that he preferred not to answer the question at all.

In light of the fact that John had previously written that he **did** advocate leaving this matter of private miracles in individual lives “a little open,” why could he not just say so? Perhaps the reason was that John did not want the truth of the matter to get out. You see, John was scheduled to appear at a Bible camp in Wyoming, and brother Popejoy was writing to ask about his views on a number of matters before offering his support for that upcoming visit. It appears that John thought the better part of wisdom was simply to avoid the issue rather than answer it directly. As this book demonstrates, this ploy is not unfamiliar to him in other areas where he has been questioned in a similar fashion.

### ON THE ULTIMATE ANNIHILATION OF THE WICKED

In the September/October 1990 edition of *Does God Exist?*, John Clayton reviewed a book authored by Edward Fudge. In the book, *The Fire That Consumes*, Fudge argues that the final destiny of the unrighteous will be **total, everlasting extinction** (a doctrine similar to that taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses). Clayton’s statements about the book were these:

One of the most frequent challenges of atheists during our lectures is the question of the reasonableness of the concept of hell. Why would a loving, caring, merciful God create man as he is **knowing** that man would sin, reject God, and be condemned to eternal punishment? I have had to plead ignorance in this area because I had no logical answer that was consistent with the Bible.... I have never been able to be comfortable with the position that a person who rejected God should suffer forever and ever and ever (1990b, p. 20, emp. in orig.).

Clayton describes Fudge's book as "an exhaustive, scholarly study of the subject of hell," and confidently affirms that it "will open many new viewpoints to any thinking reader" (p. 20). John concludes by saying, "**I recommend this book highly** to the serious student of the Bible who is not afraid to have some traditions challenged" (p. 21, emp. added).

Of further interest in this regard is the fact that in the 1990 edition of his book, *The Source*, John recommends Fudge's volume as one that contains "reasonably accurate scientific material" (1990a, pp. 190-191). At his weekend seminars, John makes available a written handout in which he recommends certain books from which he believes seminar participants might benefit. Fudge's book is included on that handout. And in the 1991 edition of the *Teacher's Guide* that accompanies his *Does God Exist? Christian Evidences Intermediate Course*, John offers the following suggestions to the teacher. First, in his comments on lesson number four, he says: "Some authors like Edward Fudge suggest that hell is a spiritual death which, like the gas chamber, is the ultimate penalty. *The Consuming Fire* [sic] by Fudge is worth reading along these lines, but is very deep and does not answer all the questions that this author has and probably that your students have about hell. I would not bring this up in class, but it is likely to come up" (1991a, p. 21). Second, in his comments on lesson number six, John comments that "one approach that is **very useful**, although somewhat controversial, is Edward Fudge's book *The Fire That Consumes*. Fudge deals with the subject of this lesson and takes the position that hell is the destruction of the soul. Whether you agree with that point or not, Fudge does grapple with the issue involved in this lesson" (1991a, p. 25, emp. added). Why recommend exclusively Fudge's study on this topic? Why characterize the book as "very useful"—unless, of course, to express obvious agreement with it?

After his public recommendation of Fudge's unscriptural position, once again brother Clayton received a number of serious inquiries. In our meeting with him on July 20, 1991 we, too, asked him about it. He said that he was only "investigating" the possibilities that the book raised, and that he was not certain that he would accept Fudge's position himself. An odd thing to say, **after** you've "highly recommended" the book, and listed it as containing "reasonably accurate scientific material." One cannot but wonder, first, just what **scientific** material this book might contain on the total annihilation of the soul. And second, if brother Clayton is only "investigating" the possibilities that are raised in the book, and has not yet accepted its conclusions, what kind of recommendation might he make for a volume whose conclusions he **has** accepted? What is higher than "highly recommending" a book? We know of no instance where John has recommended a work that examines the issue of eternal, conscious punishment of the wicked.

After our meeting with brother Clayton in July 1991 (and, no doubt, after he had received a considerable number of inquiries from others who were questioning his position), he published a small tidbit on this controversy in the "News and Notes" section of *Does God Exist?* for September/October 1991. After complaining that there had been a "lot of emotional criticisms by extremists" to Fudge's book, Clayton tells his readers that what he considers the **first** "academic rebuttal" to Fudge's position is now available. He then recommends a series of articles by Alan Gomes, published in the *Christian Research Journal* (summer 1991) as an "alternative" to Fudge's volume (1991d, p. 12a). The suggestion that Gomes' articles represent the "first academic rebuttal" of the annihilation position with which Clayton is familiar is nothing short of astounding. There have been **numerous** important debates, definitive books, and scholarly articles over the past century that have addressed this theme. Those works were authored by both denominational scholars and those of the restoration movement. The fact that brother Clayton is aware of none of these, and recommends no reading material at all that affirms the biblical concept of an eternal hell of suffering for the wicked, is quite telling. Concerning John's recommendation of the articles by Gomes, one cannot help but wonder whether even this tiny concession ever would have seen the light of day in Clayton's journal—had it not been for the questioning that we, and others, pressed on this point.

Can there be any real question as to where Clayton stands on this matter? While he claims that he is "only investigating" Fudge's claims, he is "highly recommending" the book, even going so far as to suggest that it contains "reasonably accurate scientific material" and offering it as a "reasonable alternative" that is "very useful" to the teachers who instruct our children. The fact is, there is every indication that brother Clayton is much enamored of Fudge's heretical views. David Hinds, while a senior Bible major at Freed-Hardeman University, wrote Clayton, asking why he recommended Fudge's book as containing

“reasonably accurate scientific material.” On September 4, 1990, John responded by suggesting: “I think if you could prove what he [Fudge] is attempting to prove, it would be a tremendous help in the Christian Evidences area. It would give us a way of answering the challenges and questions that skeptics raise concerning the validity of the whole biblical system of accountability” (1990n, p. 1).

Bertrand Russell, the famous British agnostic, once wrote an essay, “Why I Am Not A Christian.” One of the reasons he presented for his stance was that Jesus taught eternal punishment for the wicked. Fudge has attempted to remove this objection by denying that Christ taught that there is eternal suffering for those who die lost. And John Clayton thinks that it would help our apologetic endeavors immensely if Fudge’s “reasonable” and “very useful” theory is true. Can there be any doubt where his sympathy lies?

### ON FELLOWSHIPING THOSE IN DENOMINATIONALISM

John has absolutely no hesitancy about working with, and fellowshiping, those in denominationalism. Admittedly, this is a bit odd considering statements he has made in the past. For example, in a letter on July 3, 1975 to Jon Gary Williams, brother Clayton spoke harshly about denominational groups and said: “I believe we need to be aligned with Jesus Christ and the Bible, and not with any group such as these.... And, **I frankly could not support in any way, any denominational group** even though they may hold truth in certain areas” (1975a, p. 1, emp. added). Yet during the dates of November 26-27, 1982 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination held its ICYC (Indiana Christian Youth Convention) lectureship in Indianapolis, Indiana. John was advertised on the widely circulated program as being one of the keynote speakers, along with, for example, **Linda Kay Mirante, youth director** of the Markle Church of Christ (a Christian Church group). John spoke once on Friday evening, November 26, and twice on Saturday morning, November 27. During the Saturday sessions, the program listed these participants along with John: **Scripture Reading—Nancy Carter**, Hammond, Indiana; **Prayer—Mary Confer**, Portland, Indiana. Did John know beforehand that he would be participating in a denominational program? Did he similarly know that he would be participating along with women “youth directors,” women “Scripture readers,” and women “prayer leaders”? Indeed he did. The program had been published well in advance of the actual convention. Did this bother John Clayton? Not in the slightest. The injunctions of 1 Timothy 2 seemingly mattered little.

It hardly is surprising, then, to see John speak approvingly of denominationalism, and use unscriptural terms to do so. In the July 1977 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John had an article by the title of “Beware of ‘Mother Jones,’” which dealt with reports in the magazine, *Mother Jones*, about allegedly illicit genetic research being carried out at universities around the country. John reported on his efforts to see if this were true at his alma mater, Notre Dame. His conclusion was that the report was false. How did he know this? He said he had spoken both to students and to faculty members. And, he said, “**The Reverend Theodore Hesburgh**, President of the University, also denied that any such activity was taking place at the present time” (1977d, p. 15, emp. added). It is difficult indeed to imagine a faithful member of the church of Christ speaking of a Catholic priest as “Reverend,” yet John had no compunction whatsoever in addressing Notre Dame’s president as such. If one were to pick up a well-known religious paper published by members of the churches of Christ (e.g., *Gospel Advocate*, *Firm Foundation*, etc.), and the author of one of the articles in that particular issue spoke approvingly of “Reverend” Hesburgh in the denominational world, it would be a clear signal that: (a) the author did not understand basic Bible principles (such as those laid down by the Lord Himself in Matthew 23:9) that forbid attaching religious titles to men; or (b) the author fully understood exactly what he was saying, yet **intended** to say what he said, regardless of whether or not it was correct biblically.

If John can fellowship, with impunity, those in denominationalism, then why can his “converts” not do likewise? The answer is, of course, that the Bible has circumscribed our sphere of fellowship (something John seems never to have fully grasped). We cannot fellowship the “unfruitful works of darkness” (Ephesians 5:11). Denominationalism—in any form—is unknown to and unauthorized by the Word of God. As such, it is sinful. It is one thing to be invited into a denominational group and be given *carte blanche* to teach the first principles of the Gospel to people who desperately need to hear them. None among us would stand opposed to such. But it is quite another thing to simply present an antiseptic lesson

on God's existence, creation, or any other such topic. Those in religious error do not need to hear evidence for God's existence; they already believe in God. They do not need to hear evidence for the accuracy of the creation account; many "creationists" will be lost because, while believing in creation, they lived their entire life in the error of denominationalism. Again, these are concepts that brother Clayton seems not to have grasped—which is not at all surprising, considering his limited exposure to sound Bible teaching through the years.

### ON THE USE OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP

In the March 6, 1979 issue of the *Firm Foundation* (edited at that time by Reuel Lemmons), John Clayton authored an article under the title of "Can We Be United?," in which he raised the question regarding the use of instrumental music in Christian worship. Although he advised against the use of the instrument on the grounds of unity, he added: "The New Testament passages which deal with the question of music all refer to singing (see Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) **although some passages might be able to be done with an instrument, especially if the instrument supplements singing instead of replacing it**" (1979h, p. 4, emp. added).

This statement (which also was published in the December 1978 issue of *Does God Exist?*) was quoted in the first edition of this book reviewing John's teachings. When he produced his taped response to that review in January of 1980, John had on that tape a segment dealing with this point. During a two-minute discussion, he said, in part:

We wrote an article on the problem that we're having in achieving unity with people who believe the same as we do on most things, but have some **minor differences**. And specifically we're dealing with members of the church of Christ that are using the instrument of music. And we have a lot of musical churches of Christ—by that I mean instrumental music churches of Christ—in this area. As a matter of fact, I think probably five out of every six congregations in this area which wear the name "Church of Christ" use the instrument of music. And I've had a lot of experience in discussing it with them and I've found that quoting passages like Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 doesn't convince them because they say, "But we can do those things with the instrument." And so what I showed was another approach, another way of reaching them, another way of helping them. Now that was the purpose of the article. And you see you get a completely different picture when you look at this [the quote above—WJ/BT]. He implies that I don't believe that we shouldn't use the instrument of music, and that's just a very ignorant view of what we believe and what we have tried to teach (1980a, emp. added).

So, John says that he merely was discussing some of the "minor differences" that separate the church of Christ and the Christian Church. And, he suggests that his discussion was but "another approach" or "attempt to reach them." One cannot help but wonder, then, if we could not begin to reach more Methodists if we concede that some New Testament passages allow for sprinkling in conjunction with immersion. Or, perhaps we could convert Catholics by suggesting that Mary may be worshipped as long as she doesn't become a substitute for Christ?

Is the use of instrumental music in worship to God nothing more than a "minor difference"? John says it is. Is compromise a legitimate form of outreach to those we are attempting to teach? John believes it is. And just what are those New Testament passages that allow the use of instrumental music as a "supplement" to singing? John avers that "some parts of some passages" allow for such, but he conspicuously avoids mentioning just which parts of which specific passages he has in mind.

During one of his seminars (in Manteca, California on July 19, 1991), John was asked about this quotation by a person in the audience. Naturally, you would expect John to provide the same explanation as the one you've just read. However, he did not do so. In 1980, John attempted to **justify** his assertion that "some passages" might permit the use of the instrument in Christian worship. It was merely a "minor difference" between the churches of Christ and the Christian Church—just his "attempt to reach" them. However, in 1991 his explanation of the statement was radically different. The latest rationalization alleges that his 1979 comment was merely a representation of what **someone else** (who endorses the instrument) might say. In 1980, it was **his** position; a decade later, it represented an **opponent's** position.

Here is the record. John told his questioner: “The article that I wrote was dealing with how do we discuss this with somebody who believes the instrument should be used. And the statement you just made [the above quotation—WJ/BT] **is the kind of statement that they might offer.**”

Now which is it? When John wrote the original article, in which he stated that “some passages might be able to be done with an instrument,” was it: (a) an effort to reach those in the Christian Church by finding common ground over “minor differences;” or (b) a mere restatement of what someone defending instrumental music might say? **Both answers** to the same question **cannot be correct!** There is no other way to characterize this squirming except to say that it is deceitful.

We suggest that even a cursory examination of John Clayton’s teachings will provide evidence that something is seriously amiss. The error to be found therein is merely a symptom of what actually is a much worse disease. What will it take for the “sleeping giant,” which is our brotherhood, to see just how extreme brother Clayton is in his numerous false views—and to stop using him as a result of his serious doctrinal errors?

## CHAPTER 6

### MISCELLANEOUS CLAYTON ERRORS

“The amazing thing about this newest concept of evolution...is that it agrees beautifully with the description given in the Bible.”

—John Clayton, 1990a, pp. 163-164

**N**o one ever will be able to level a charge of **consistency** against John Clayton. They never would be able to make such a charge stick. The vast amount of available evidence that shows him to be incredibly **inconsistent** is simply far too weighty. Consider, if you will, the following examples.

#### JOHN CLAYTON AND ERIC VON DANIKEN

Most people are probably at least vaguely aware of Eric Von Daniken’s heretical views that man originally came to Earth as an astronaut, via some sort of space ship from a distant galaxy. In his book, *The Source*, John Clayton refers to Von Daniken’s theories (and similar ones) and then, amazingly, says: “...whether the ideas suggested by these individuals **are true or false**, the whole subject is of **no consequence** to our problem” (1976a, p. 33, emp. added).

Think for just a moment about how radical that statement really is. John affirms the position that if men did arrive here on the Earth from outer space, that is of “no consequence.” The inspired apostle Paul strongly disagreed. He affirmed in 1 Corinthians 15 that Adam, the first man, “is of the earth, earthy” (verses 45,47; cf. Genesis 2:7)—not from some other planet in a far away galaxy. The place of man’s origin may be of no consequence to brother Clayton, but it certainly was to the inspired writers of the Bible.

#### JOHN CLAYTON AND IMMANUEL VELIKOVSKY

One of the most frequent complaints we hear about the teachings of John Clayton is that they are **so confusing**. A reader (or listener) may think John said one thing, only later to discover a statement that says exactly the opposite. The sad facts of the matter are: (a) the scenario as just described is not uncommon; and (b) John **does** make, more often than not, conflicting and erroneous statements. It hardly is surprising that people come away confused. It would be almost impossible not to. Here is just one good example.

John frequently has made references in his writings to the renowned evolutionary catastrophist, Dr. Immanuel Velikovsky. In the September/October 1984 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John spoke of Velikovsky as the man “who suggested catastrophic influences of an astronomic nature on the earth.” And, John went on to observe that “Velikovsky was apparently **wrong** in most of his ideas” (1984a, p. 9, emp. added). Exactly one year later, John reiterated that point in an article titled “More Evidence for Catastrophism” in the September/October 1985 issue of *Does God Exist?*. He wrote: “While Velikovsky’s ideas were **mostly incorrect**, he did awaken many people to the possibility of major catastrophes having shaped the Earth” (1985b, p. 15, emp. added).

Taking these statements at face value, the reader certainly would come to the conclusion that Velikovsky’s ideas were “apparently wrong” and “mostly incorrect.” Not so, according to John. In the November/December 1990 issue of his journal, he made the following incredible statement: “As it turned out, many of Velikovsky’s ideas **were true**” (1990c, p. 4, emp. added). Somewhat ironically, the title of the article in which John made this comment was “Credibility, Flexibility, and Truth.”

What is the poor reader to believe? John categorically states that Velikovsky’s ideas were “mostly incorrect.” Then he says that many “were true.” It appears that John is stretching his credibility and flexibility a bit thin. Little wonder those who are exposed to his materials come away so confused.



## JOHN CLAYTON ON WHY GOD CREATED MAN

As every astute Bible student knows, the Scriptures are basically silent on the reason (or reasons) behind God's creation of mankind. Except for some passages which suggest that man was created for God's glory (e.g., Isaiah 43:7), the Word of God does not address this issue specifically. That, of course, is not enough to prevent John Clayton from addressing it. Rather than have someone ask him about this, and simply say, "I'm sorry, but the Word of God is silent on that particular issue," John has invented his own private theology, which is doled out as if it were God Himself speaking on this topic.

In the book, *Evidences of God, Volume I*, John published an article on "The Origin of Satan." In that article, he wrote: "It is at this point that we can see the purpose in creating man. God now **needed a means of demonstrating** to his whole spiritual creation **that his way was superior** and that He was mightier than Satan. To simply destroy Satan would not have proved anything about His system. A vehicle was needed to clearly show the fallacy of following evil's way" (1977e, pp. 154-155, emp. added).

Once again, we ask you to reflect seriously on this line of reasoning. First, John is speaking where God has not spoken. God nowhere in His Word explains what you have just read. Second, think of how utterly degrading this is to man. If John is correct, mankind is little more than a guinea pig in a cosmic experiment to prove that God is mightier than His adversary, Satan. Third, John suggests that God "needed" a means of demonstrating His superiority, and that to simply have destroyed Satan would not have "proved" anything. Surely the thoughtful reader will ask these questions: (a) how could anyone suggest that God **needed** to demonstrate this; and (b) **to whom** did he **need** to prove anything? In Paul's beautiful sermon on Mars Hill, he specifically spoke of the God Who is not "served by men's hands, as though he **needed** anything" (Acts 17:25).

Why can't John simply accept what the Bible has to say, or accept the silence of the Scriptures when such is appropriate, without having to fabricate elaborate, yet unscriptural, scenarios?

## JOHN CLAYTON—THE "SPECIALIST" AND HIS SCIENCE

In a letter to Jon Gary Williams on September 9, 1975 John Clayton touted his credentials to instruct brother Williams on scientific matters with these words: "I am a **specialist** in this field..." (1975f, p. 2, emp. added). Shortly before the first edition of this review was published in 1979, we received a letter from James Boyd, former evangelist of the Donmoyer Avenue church of Christ in South Bend. Brother Boyd was the man who baptized John and who, for a number of years, had been one of his closest friends and strongest supporters. In that letter, dated February 26, 1979, James made it clear that, due to John's continued propagation of error on so many different topics, he no longer could offer his support to the Does God Exist? program. In his letter, however, brother Boyd also offered this piercing assessment as he sadly noted: "John was and is long on science, but short on Bible" (1979, p. 1). To brother Boyd's assessment we would add that of Dr. Russell Artist who, after an intense study of John's materials said: "John is not only short on Bible, but is very inaccurate in some of his basic approaches to science as well."

The statement made by brother Boyd indicating that John is "short on Bible" is one that we will document elsewhere in this review. For the present, we would like to examine John's claim to be a "specialist" in scientific matters, and concentrate on Dr. Artist's statement. While there are numerous examples that could be offered, we would like the reader to consider the following telling tidbits.

(1) In John's taped lecture, *Evolution's Proof of God*, he makes the following statement: "The very first mammal that we know anything about was the *Archaeopteryx*—a bird" (undated). This is an amazing statement. **Birds are not mammals**. Any standard biology textbook will substantiate this (see Simpson, et al., 1965, pp. 796ff.). It is inconceivable that a man trained in the sciences could make such an error. Birds are birds, not mammals.

(2) In *The Source*, John makes the following statement in regard to what he calls the "forest" of evolution. He says this is the idea that "life may have started in a number of different places upon the Earth." While the atheist would say that it all happened accidentally, the creationist, according to John,

could claim “that God started life in different places suited to fit the environment of that place. Life then, would evolve differently in each of those different environments, no matter what form life had when it started.” He continues:

The amazing thing about this newest concept of evolution, which does a much better job of fitting the fossil evidence and **conforms nicely to all the other evidence used to support organic evolution**, is that **it agrees beautifully with the description given in the Bible**. The only place in the Bible where the word kind is given anything approaching a definition is I Corinthians 15:39 when the writer identifies four kinds of flesh. He enumerates these as the flesh of fishes, birds, beasts (mammals) and men. A comparison of this description to Genesis 1 shows exactly the same terminology (1990a, pp. 163-164, emp. added).

Those familiar with John’s views on Genesis 1 are aware that he advocates what has been called the “Modified Gap Theory,” which states that such creatures as bacteria, worms, insects, reptiles, amphibians, etc. came into existence in some remote period prior to the creation week of Genesis 1. He also believes that, in addition to the groups mentioned above, **all other** life forms (warm-blooded) “evolved” from the four basic kinds mentioned in I Corinthians 15:39, which he classifies as **phyla** (1968d, p. 1).

Here is the point of all of this. John’s use of scientific terminology is unorthodox and frequently unstable. For instance, in his *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*, he classifies fish, birds, and mammals as **different phyla**, whereas the standard biological system puts them all in a **single phylum**—Chordata. John is not one to be bound by standard conventions, of course, so he merely “invents” his own terms as he feels the need. This is what we mean when we suggest that he is careless in his science, to say nothing of his theology.

In his taped response to the first edition of this review, John offered a brief comment on his classification of fish, birds, and mammals as different phyla. He observed:

Although I would have to admit that perhaps we should have spelled out our words there a little more carefully in lesson 5 [of the *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*—WJ/BT] because you could pull it out and perhaps misunderstand it, although we’ve never had anybody do it up until now, I am not suggesting that birds, fish, and mammals are different phyla. What I’m saying is that the word “phyla” is probably the closest taxonomic group biologically to the word “**kind**” in the Bible (1980a, emp. added).

This is a most interesting admission. John specifically stated in the correspondence course lesson under discussion that birds, fish, and mammals **are not** in the same phylum. Now he says he wasn’t really saying that, but he admits that when he did, he was wrong.

Aside from that, however, John’s statement as to the identification of “phyla” is quite revealing. First, observe that he concedes that birds, fish, and mammals are **not** different phyla. Second, note that he makes the bird/fish/mammal phylum virtually **equivalent** to the biblical “kind.” This is absolutely amazing. According to the Bible, representatives within “kinds” **interbreed and reproduce themselves**. This is repeatedly affirmed in Genesis 1. Thus, according to John, fish, birds, and mammals—being of the same kind—**are biologically related**. Exactly what does one call the scenario that argues that fish, birds, mammals are related? Evolution, of course!

(3) John often displays a desperate lack of understanding of the most fundamental scientific concepts and terminology. For example, throughout his writings he continually speaks of a “biological **specie**,” when, in fact, there is no such thing. In the October 1979 issue of his *Does God Exist?* periodical, he published an article under the title of “Man-Made Ape Hybrid Created” in which he commented that “This is not a new **specie** of ape.... It is not a new **specie**, because it cannot produce fertile offspring.... There are many, many species of apes, but only one **specie** of man” (1979d, p. 4).

In the November 1979 issue of *Does God Exist?*, he noted that he was speaking to some people at the Smithsonian Museum about a certain fossil when he asked, “Wouldn’t it be just as reasonable to believe that this was a varied reptilian **specie**...?” (1979e, p. 2). We can almost imagine the grimace on the face of the Smithsonian staff members. Why? As every scientist knows, there is no such word as “specie” in science. Dr. George Gaylord Simpson, the man known affectionately as “Mr. Evolution” among the world’s scientists, explains: “Species [is] identical in singular and plural; ‘specie’ means ‘coin’ and has no application in biology” (1965, p. 502). John had just asked the Smithsonian staff if it wasn’t possible that

the fossil under discussion could have been a varied reptilian **coin!** If the reader thinks this is a picky matter, we would simply remind you that our only motive in mentioning it is to demonstrate that brother Clayton really does not have the scientific expertise that he claims to have. He has boasted: “I can speak with authority from a scientific standpoint!” (1975e, p. 1). But can he?

(4) John’s **scientific** terminology isn’t the only thing that could do with some improvement. Time and again he has referred to the literal or non-literal nature (as the case may be) of the biblical record with statements such as these.

(a) In the July/August 1990 issue of his bi-monthly journal, *Does God Exist?*, brother Clayton penned an article titled “One Week Creation—Of God Or Of Man?,” which was a stinging rebuke of those who accept God’s Word that He created everything in six, literal days. Interestingly, one of the major headings in the article was “One-week Creationists Deny the **Literacy** of the Hebrew.” Throughout the article, John spoke of the “literacy” of various Hebrew words and how their “literacy” should be accepted (1990i, pp. 7-9).

(b) This is not a singular happenstance. In his taped lecture, *Evolution’s Proof of God*, John reminds the listener that “we need not compromise the **literacy** of the Genesis record” (undated).

(c) In lesson seven of his 1990 *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*, John observes that: “The attempts of liberal theologians to compromise the **literacy** of language and remove any specific meaning is an unfortunate compromise—and one that is completely unnecessary” (1990h, p. 3).

What he **means** to say, of course, is the **literalness** of the Hebrew, the **literalness** of the Genesis record, or the **literalness** of the language. The word “literacy” is used in describing the ability of a person to read, whereas the word “literalness” is used in describing something of a non-figurative nature.

How is it possible that a man who is a self-proclaimed “specialist” in Bible-science matters is unaware of elementary facts such as the ones mentioned above?

## CHAPTER 7

### JOHN CLAYTON'S DELIBERATE MISREPRESENTATIONS

“There is a great deal of material [in *Discovery*—the monthly journal on Bible and science for kids] that is very dubious and sometimes just plain wrong.”

—John Clayton, 1990d, p. 15

“...we did not offer any serious criticisms of the magazine *Discovery*...”

—John Clayton, 1990e, p. 1

**D**uring the 1970s and 1980s, it was not uncommon to hear a lot of discussion about Jimmy Lovell and his journal, *Action*, which he published to distribute news about the World Bible School (WBS) program in which he was so actively engaged. Brother Lovell was known for the ability to offer pithy statements, many of which made him every bit as famous as his work with WBS. But perhaps none of those statements stuck in the minds of those who knew him like his comment about his good friend and fellow editor, the late Reuel Lemmons. Jimmy once said of Reuel: “He can speak or write with equal force on either side of any issue.” Of course he meant it in a complimentary fashion, but a statement of that nature certainly is no compliment.

Of no man could brother Lovell’s statement be spoken more accurately than John Clayton, who is famous for his ability to say whatever fits the moment. If he is among people he knows happen to believe in a global Flood, and he is asked if **he** believes in a global Flood, the answer always will be, “Yes, I do.” But, if he happens to be on a university campus, or amidst a group of fellow geologists, and he is asked if he believes in a global Flood, the answer is likely to be quite different.

This is why it is very difficult for someone to pin down John on a point of doctrine. When you catch him in a particularly devastating error, he always can claim, “Oh, that is taken out of context.” He then will produce a passage elsewhere in his writings where he has taught virtually the opposite on the matter under discussion. He does believe in the Modified Gap Theory; he doesn’t believe in the Modified Gap Theory. He does subscribe to the Day-Age Theory; he doesn’t subscribe to the Day-Age Theory. There was a global Flood; there wasn’t a global Flood, etc. When there is a track record of this nature, character becomes an important issue. And though we detest having to deal with this particular element of the Clayton controversy, it absolutely must be done.

No one likes to think he has been told a lie. Christians, especially, revolt at the very idea. Furthermore, we do not cater to the idea of one man calling another man dishonest. Somehow—even if it is true—it offends us. Nevertheless, we simply do not know any other way to speak of brother Clayton except to say that he has been dishonest on a number of occasions.

### JOHN’S STORY OF HIS CONVERSION

In his book, *Why I Left Atheism*, John relates the story of his conversion. He explains how that, prior to this event, he had reached a state of deep depression. He said: “I have sat on the edge of my bed with a 22-caliber rifle between my legs, trying to have enough guts to pull the trigger” (1968a, p. 8). He went on to explain how he eventually renounced his atheism and during his junior year at Indiana University was baptized in Bloomington, Indiana. Sometime later, John moved to South Bend and identified with the Donmoyer congregation where James Boyd was the local preacher. Brother Boyd has recalled that in the late 1950s he was approached by John Clayton with a request for baptism. John felt that he had not understood the Gospel properly at the time of his “first baptism,” hence, that baptism was invalid. And so, John requested that he be rebaptized—a request to which brother Boyd graciously acquiesced. (see Boyd, 1979, p. 1).

Here is the puzzling thing about all of this. When John wrote the booklet, *Why I Left Atheism*, about a decade after his **second baptism**, he dated his conversion from the **first baptism**! Here is that record: “I came forward, understanding that I now believed totally and completely in God. I recognized that I needed to start a new life, and be willing to tell people that I accepted the existence of God and believed that Jesus is his Son. I also realized that I was totally and completely lost in my sins, and that I needed to be baptized to have forgiveness as the Bible commanded” (1968a, pp. 13-14). We mention the foregoing events for this reason. It is less than honorable for John to tour the country lecturing dramatically on his conversion from atheism to Christianity while in college, all the while concealing the fact that he had **repudiated** the authenticity of that initial “conversion.” Without a doubt, the first “story” has a more sensational ring, but is this an honest approach?

After the publication of the first edition of this review, when John prepared his audio-taped response to it, he included a lengthy discussion at the beginning of the tape, dealing with this matter. He seemed quite distressed by the knowledge that the conflicting stories of his “conversion” were becoming widely known, and apparently felt that he needed to “explain” to readers and audiences (if he was going to retain any credibility with them) why he had used this deliberate misrepresentation. John’s rejoinder was that he had been young and confused, and influenced by some around him to the point that he felt the need to be rebaptized. But in his taped response, he also made the following comments.

It is true that the incident as he [Wayne Jackson] described it did occur.... Now when we wrote the book, *Why I Left Atheism*, and I was trying to explain to people why I became a member of the church, and what I did to be saved, we were directing the book at the atheist, at the skeptic, at the non-believer. That book’s not intended for members of the church. It’s intended for somebody who doesn’t know what they need to do to be saved—someone who’s an atheist, someone who’s an agnostic, and who has been convinced to study about God, and about the importance of becoming a Christian.

Now to put all this business about my insecurity and about being sure and especially when I’m not all that convinced I was erroneous in my first baptism would be simply to add another stumbling block to the person. It would defeat the purpose of the lesson. Now I’m accused here, you’ll notice, of being dishonest. You’ll notice on page four he knows “the story has a more sensational ring, but is this an honest approach?”—in other words, the implication is, it isn’t. Well, I don’t believe it’s dishonest. I think it’s important to present the Gospel as simply as one can. And this lesson that we’ve tried to present to people has resulted in a number of people becoming Christians (1980a)

John acknowledges that the incident as described in the first edition of this book (explaining the misleading story of his first baptism) “is correct.” He **was** using the “more sensational” story of his conversion, even though he knew that it was not representative of what actually happened. But does John think this is in any way dishonest? No, of course not. Why? Because he has used this inaccurate story to “convert” people to the Gospel. His point is that if people actually knew the truth, they wouldn’t be nearly as impressed. So, why not just give them the story **as if it were true** (who’s to know it’s not)? Just “present the Gospel as simply as you can”—even if you have to be dishonest to do it. The end justifies the means.

When a man this unethical, and this doctrinally loose, is as popular as John Clayton, it is not a pleasant commentary on the church of our day. Surely, if brethren knew the full story of this man’s dishonesty, they would be appalled! To use the words of James Boyd, the man who baptized John: “I am afraid his ‘much learning’ has fed an already over-exerted ego.... He is dangerous in the cause at this point. I must oppose aloud his advances among us, and do” (Boyd, 1979, p. 2).

### JOHN’S RESPONSE TO THE FIRST EDITION OF THIS REVIEW

(1) In September 1979 we released for distribution the book, *Evolutionary Creationism: A Review of the Teaching of John Clayton*. In the March 1980 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John had a news item under the title of “Response To ‘Evolutionary Creationism.’” In a single paragraph, he told his readers about the existence of our review, and stated that “because of its widespread distribution we have decided to

make a response to it. That response is a 60-minute cassette tape going through the book point by point to clarify the misconceptions we feel the book leaves” (1980c, p. 15).

Toward the beginning of the tape, John made this comment: “**Although we didn’t receive the book until it had been out for a long period of time**, the book has I’m sure influenced people who don’t know us and haven’t heard our material” (1980a). Please notice John’s complaint that he hadn’t received a copy of *Evolutionary Creationism* “until it had been out for a long period of time,” which seems to indicate that we did this behind his back.

That is not true. As we noted previously, the material in the book first appeared in the publication, *Words of Truth* (during the dates of May 11 through August 10, 1979). *Evolutionary Creationism* was published in September of that same year. And **on the very day** that it came from the printer, Bert Thompson personally mailed John a copy. A few days later, when Wayne Jackson received the book (mailed to him from the printer), he, too, mailed John a copy, being unaware that Dr. Thompson already had done so. In reality, then, John received not one, but **two** copies of the book within days of its release.

We have in our possession a photocopy of a letter that John wrote to Bobby Duncan in which he acknowledged having received the review book. That letter is dated **September 14, 1979**, which is less than two weeks after the release of the book. John wrote: “Mr. Jackson sent me a book last week containing a series of attacks on our positions.... This book does not even remotely present what we are teaching or what we believe” (1979f, p. 1).

John writes a letter to Bobby Duncan, admitting that he had received from Wayne Jackson a copy of *Evolutionary Creationism*—less than two weeks after its publication. Yet in his taped response, he complains that he had not even seen a copy of the book “until it had been out for a long period of time.” Eventually, however, his dishonesty is discovered, just as it was in the distorted story about his conversion.

(2) Toward the beginning of his taped remarks, John made the following comment:

We have never been privileged to meet with these people. They—neither one of these men—they have never come, at the time the book was written, neither of them had ever been to a lecture series, and I’m cutting this tape on January 28, 1980.... Bert Thompson has attended part of a series, although he didn’t let me know that he was there when he was there and even though there were 6 or 7 hours we could have talked he never offered to meet with me, so there’s just been an extremely limited amount of contact (1980a).

These statements are completely untrue. Bert Thompson **had** attended one of John’s seminars (in Richardson, Texas in October 1977). And John knew that, because Bert introduced himself to John, they spoke briefly, and afterwards corresponded for a lengthy period of time. In fact, all of that was reported in the first edition of *Evolutionary Creationism* as follows:

Because brother Clayton could not (or would not) answer my questions, I set about trying to locate the answers in his writings, audio-tutorial tapes, workbooks, etc. In addition, in October 1977, I traveled from College Station, Texas (my home at the time) to Richardson, Texas (a suburb of Dallas) to hear brother Clayton’s seminar on *Does God Exist?*. This was approximately a 4-hour trip, one-way, but was the closest seminar which brother Clayton would be holding in our area for some time. Because I had to be back in College Station to teach my Sunday morning class on Christian evidences at the A&M church of Christ, I was unable to stay for brother Clayton’s Sunday lectures on “Why I Left Atheism” and “God, Man, and Caveman.” I did, however, secure tapes of the two lectures and a booklet brother Clayton has authored titled *Why I Left Atheism*, which is a script form of the oral lesson. Upon arriving at the seminar, I made myself known to brother Clayton. We spoke briefly and cordially, and I listened to his presentation.

Upon returning home, I received a short note from brother Clayton, thanking me for my attendance at the seminar. I responded with a note back to him on October 26, 1977 (his note to me was dated October 24). This began what was to be a lengthy series of correspondence between brother Clayton and me (Jackson and Thompson, 1979, p. 21).

Had John simply “forgotten” this when he made his response tape on January 28, 1980? Indeed he had not. When we noted earlier that we could prove John’s statement was false, we meant it. Here is that proof. At the **beginning** of his taped remarks, John said that Bert Thompson “didn’t let me know that he

was there....” But, **toward the end of that same tape**, listen to John’s admission: “I’d like to give you a little background about Mr. Thompson. I really have never met this man, except to shake hands with him once.... I gave a program in Richardson, Texas and he came to it....” First, John says that he never has met either one of us. Then John says that Bert Thompson came to a program, but didn’t even let him know he was there. Then John admits, on the same tape, that in fact, he **had** met Bert Thompson, and that Dr. Thompson had, in fact, attended one of his seminars and had introduced himself to John. Why does brother Clayton have so much trouble simply telling the truth?

### JOHN’S “REVIEW” OF *THE COLLAPSE OF EVOLUTION* BY SCOTT HUSE

In the July/August 1988 issue of *Does God Exist?*, brother Clayton reviewed a book, *The Collapse of Evolution*, by creationist Scott Huse (1988a, p. 20). John made it clear in his review, after some derogatory remarks about other creationists like Henry Morris and D. James Kennedy, that he had no use for Huse’s book because it had the same kinds of “errors made by many creationists.” He then explained why he believed the book was not worthy of his recommendation, and in so doing offered several “quotes” from Huse’s book. On page 38 of the book, John said, Huse stated that “species cannot change.” But that statement is nowhere to be found anywhere on that page or in the immediate vicinity. Huse **does** quote Charles Darwin as stating that “...we cannot prove that a single species has been changed.” John took the quote from Darwin, and twisted it to suggest that creationist Huse believed in the “fixity of species” concept. Yet Huse believes nothing of the kind. The “quote” attributed to him by John wasn’t even there.

And that is just the beginning. John attributes the following quote to Huse’s book, page 34: “All sedimentary rocks are produced by moving water.” Again, the quote is simply non-existent. On that page, the author does say: “...consider the fact that about 3/4 of the earth’s surface is covered with sediments or sedimentary rocks which were originally deposited under moving water.” Nowhere does Huse state, or even hint at, the fact that “all sedimentary rocks are produced by moving water.” Clayton just fabricated the quote.

There is still more. John says that Huse’s book (page 35) contains the following quotation: “The flood caused most sedimentary deposits....” Again, this quotation is imaginary. It exists nowhere on that page, or in the immediate vicinity. Huse does offer sufficient evidence to show the truthfulness of such a statement. But, of course, John cannot accept that, because it destroys his scenario from evolutionary geology, so he simply invents a quotation and then falsely attributes it to Huse.

In the March/April 1983 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John said that a person should “try to present the opposing view as **accurately and honestly as possible**. It is this writer’s opinion that most of those who are involved in the creation/evolution controversy are not doing this” (1983a, p. 12). Strangely enough, the article from which this quotation is taken was titled “Intellectual Integrity and Faith.” Eliphaz’s words in Job 15:6 come to mind—“Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I.”

### JOHN’S ATTACK ON *DISCOVERY*

One of the works of Apologetics Press is the publication of *Discovery*, a monthly journal on Bible and science that is intended to strengthen the faith of our children. The paper began in January 1990 and soared to well over 8,000 subscriptions within just a few months. In the July/August 1990 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John ran the following under his “News and Notes” section:

There is a new children’s magazine published by **Apologetics Press** that we are getting a lot of mail about. It is called *Discovery* and is available for \$8.00/year. There is a great deal of good material in the publication and it is a GREAT idea, but unfortunately there is also a great deal of material that is very dubious and sometimes just plain wrong. We have written an article on this that we may print someday in this journal, but those who want the information now may send a stamped self-addressed envelope and we will be happy to send it to you free of charge (1990d, p. 15, emp. in orig.).

When a person sent the stamped, self-addressed envelope, John sent a two-page document that was a vicious attack upon *Discovery*. It contained so many misrepresentations and falsehoods that those of us



associated with the work of Apologetics Press prepared a printed response, which was mailed to anyone requesting it. [See the Appendix of this book for the complete text of our response to John's attack upon *Discovery*.] We also sent one to John, even though he did not bother to send a copy of his attack to us.

Here is the interesting thing about all of this. The elders of the church of Christ in Marlow, Oklahoma (who had subscribed to *Discovery* for the children in their congregation) saw a copy of the two-page sheet being circulated by John, and recognized it for what it was—an unfounded, irresponsible attack. However, rather than become upset, they decided instead to take action. So, the two elders (E.H. Howard and Don Singleterry) wrote John, and us, and asked the three of us to come to Marlow, at their expense, to discuss these matters. They even offered to pay John an honorarium, so he could hire a substitute teacher, and still have ample funds left over.

On September 25, 1990 John wrote the elders a letter, declining their generous offer, with these words: "First of all, we did not offer any serious criticisms of the magazine 'Discovery,' and in fact, only pointed out that there were some scientific difficulties in some of the material they presented" (1990e, p. 1). This is a most unusual statement, as we are sure you will agree, for this reason: John's two-page attack upon the magazine arrived under the title of "More Damage from Scientific Creationism" (1990f). And he really expects people to believe him when he says that he "offered no serious criticisms of the magazine"?

### JOHN'S DISHONEST CLAIMS CHALLENGED BY OTHERS

(1) Elsewhere in this book, we documented the controversy between W. Terry Varner, editor of *Therefore Stand*, and brother Clayton in late 1986 and early 1987. John had written an article on "The Meaning of Biblical Inspiration" in which he stated that the word "plenary" meant "God-breathed." Terry, knowing that to be false (the word plenary means "full, complete, absolute"), wrote John to ask him to correct this error. John shot back a hot letter, informing Terry that he had no less than six sources that would confirm what he had written as being true. John's comment was: "Incidentally, the definitions that I gave for those terms are the ones that are in the materials that I have that have been printed on Biblical textural [sic] criticism by **six** different sources—yours apparently are different than mine and that is an interesting difference. I would like to know the sources of your information" (1987c, p. 1, emp. added).

Brother Varner wrote a three-page letter to John on January 29, 1987, in which he provided John with voluminous documentation from a variety of highly respected resource books that proved his point about the definition of the word plenary. Then, he asked John to please send him the **six different sources** that John had claimed were in his possession, disputing this definition. And what did brother Varner receive? Not one thing. To this very day, John repeatedly has refused to send those "six different sources" that allegedly establish his case.

(2) During late 1991 and early 1992, Buddy Grieb of Carrollton, Texas carried on a lengthy correspondence with John in regard to some of his unorthodox teachings on Genesis 1. In a letter to brother Grieb, dated January 14, 1992, John said:

I am simply asking that we treat Genesis 1:1-3 as what it was written to be, a historical account. Traditionalists treat it as a summary. I want to let it speak as a history of everything that happened from the creation of matter up to the time man and "his world" were made and created.... The 35 years I have studied this have been with top Hebrew scholars both in and out of the Church. They agree my position is linguistically valid **if** you take the account literally (and many of them don't) (1992a, p. 1, emp. in orig.).

On January 29, 1992 brother Grieb wrote John, and said: "I would be very much in your debt if you would be kind enough to send me a list of the Hebrew scholars (conservative and liberal—in the church and out of the church) you have had the opportunity to study Genesis 1 & 2 with. Or, at least some of them. I need to study the grammatical reasons for your saying Genesis 1:1 is 'unrelated to the rest of chapter 1'" (1992, p. 1).

On February 4, 1992 John wrote to brother Grieb with these words: "I have to deny many of the requests you made in the rest of your letter. To do what you requested would require three or four hundred hours of work and there is absolutely no way, with me teaching school full-time, traveling 25 weekends a year giving lectureships, and trying to handle 2,000 pieces of mail a month, that I can devote that kind of

time to the kind of question you have asked” (1992b, p. 1). How could it take John three or four hundred hours just to compile a short list of some of those “famous Hebrew scholars” with whom he has allegedly studied? How many could there be?

## CHAPTER 8

### JOHN CLAYTON: NON-CREATIONIST/THEISTIC EVOLUTIONIST

“...evolution and the Bible show amazing agreement on almost all issues...”

—John Clayton, 1990a, p. 135

“In many areas we find that the Bible and the beliefs of those who hold that man is solely a product of evolution are identical.”

—John Clayton, 1968e, p. 2

When we receive letters from others who have corresponded with John Clayton, as we frequently do, it is not unusual to find a common thread running through almost each and every letter. That common thread usually is worded something like this: “John Clayton is very evasive; it’s difficult to pin him down on anything.” Truer words never were spoken. What most people have yet to figure out is that **this is not by accident!**

John often has stated that he does not want to be “put into a box.” Granted, at times it is very difficult to know exactly how to categorize him. That, of course, is exactly how he wants it, because being in such a position allows him to move freely within, between, or among people advocating a variety of positions.

One reason it is difficult to comprehend exactly what John does believe on a certain issue is because of his unorthodox vocabulary. He has a bad habit of just making up words as he goes, or of redefining them to suit his own purposes. In this regard, one cannot help but be reminded of the statement from *Alice in Wonderland*: “When I use a word, it means just what I want it to mean, neither more nor less.” Slippery though he may be, certain characteristics about John **are** discernible. We would like to examine a few here.

#### JOHN CLAYTON: NON-CREATIONIST

If there is one thing John **does not** want to be called, it’s a creationist. To him, that is practically a dirty word. In fact, in the February 1982 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John had an article titled “Let’s Stop Confusing ‘Creation’ With the Creationist Position” in which he stated: “I always wince a little when someone asks me if I am a ‘creationist.’ Frequently, I am introduced as a ‘creationist’ because it is well known that I am a believer in God and support the integrity of the Biblical record” (1982a, p. 2).

John not only “winces” when someone calls him a creationist—he flatly denies it. Here is an interesting turn of events. In the Summer 1981 issue of the humanist journal, *Creation/Evolution*, there appeared a letter to the editor from Dr. Garvin Chastain, an evolutionist who had heard John lecture in Boise, Idaho. Dr. Chastain wrote to complain about John’s “unorthodox science” (a criticism we, ourselves, have leveled on occasion). In the next issue of that particular journal, John had his response to Dr. Chastain’s letter published in the “letters to the editor” section. John was quick to chastise Chastain for calling him a creationist. Clayton wrote: “I am not a member of the creationist movement” (1982b, p. 48). And, to make certain that his point was not missed, John went on to admit that in the series in Boise, “one of the questions that we did deal with pointed out the **errors involved in the creationist positions.**”

Incidentally, when brother Clayton wrote, “I am not a member of the creationist movement,” he was telling the truth. Actually, he is a member of the “theistic evolutionist” movement. In the book, *Evolution and Faith*, edited by J.D. Thomas, there is a section written by John Clayton (1988c, pp. 201-210). In the author’s biographical sketch, there is a listing of various organizations in which brother Clayton maintains “active memberships” (pp. 219-220). One of these is the American Scientific Affiliation. Exactly what is the ASA? A brochure distributed by this organization states that it is: “A fellowship of Christians in the sciences committed to understanding the relationship of science to the Christian faith.” The brochure further describes the rather open-door policy of the organization: “...some ASA members oppose evolution for its supposed philosophical connotations, while others accept it as a scientific theory for its alleged explanatory power. These legitimate differences of opinion among Christians who have studied both the

Bible and science are freely expressed within the Affiliation in a context of Christian love and concern for truth.” A minute sampling of the literature published by this organization vividly reveals its members’ inclination toward the philosophy of evolution. This is the group with which brother Clayton feels comfortable, and in which he maintains an “active membership.”

Perhaps that is why John, in the 1991 edition of his *Does God Exist? Christian Evidences Intermediate Course Teacher’s Guide*, reminds the teacher that: “There are countless books on this subject [the origin of man—WJ/BT], but we strongly suggest you **stay away from those that are produced by the creationist groups. The thrust of their materials is different than ours....** I would avoid creationist vocabulary in this lesson” (1991a, p. 28).

John is certainly correct in one point. The “thrust” of creationist materials **is** different from his. Whereas creationists are not afraid to be identified as such, John is. It would destroy his ability to intermingle with, and fellowship, progressive creationists, theistic evolutionists, and the like. Whereas creationists happily teach such things as a literal, historical creation account in Genesis, John does not. Whereas creationists eschew theistic evolution, John revels in it. Whereas creationists uphold the legitimacy of the Lord’s statement that man and woman have been on the Earth “since the beginning of the creation,” John refuses to do so. Little wonder he “winces” when someone calls him a creationist.

### JOHN CLAYTON: THEISTIC EVOLUTIONIST

That, of course, raises the interesting question of what, exactly, John really is. We support the view in this book, just as we did in the first edition, that John is a type of theistic evolutionist. He popularizes and propagates his own peculiar version of this false doctrine. At times he is so adept at disguising it that many people do not realize what he is peddling. But, his disclaimers to the contrary notwithstanding, John Clayton is a theistic evolutionist, pure and simple. The following documentation substantiates that claim.

If a person will sift **carefully** through John’s materials, it will become apparent that he advocates theistic evolution more ardently than at first meets the eye. We find it of interest that while many of our own brethren either cannot (or do not want to) see this elementary fact, John’s evolutionist friends have absolutely no trouble recognizing it. For example, one well-known evolutionist is a gentleman by the name of Tom McIver. And, giving credit where credit is due, Mr. McIver is nothing if not thorough. He has published an annotated bibliography on the creation/evolution controversy that is, without a doubt, the best in the world. It took him years to collect and compile the information, which eventually was published in a large hardback book. Occasionally, Mr. McIver writes for the humanist magazine, *Creation/Evolution*. His articles always are quite lengthy and filled with heavy amounts of documentation. He apparently is a voracious reader, and is able to sift through mountains of materials quite effectively.

In the Fall 1988 issue of *Creation/Evolution*, Mr. McIver authored a 23-page article titled “Formless and Void: Gap Theory Creationism,” which was a brilliantly written history of the Gap Theory from its very earliest beginnings to most recent times. On page 22 of his article, McIver devoted a long paragraph to John Clayton. He obviously was quite familiar with John’s materials, as was evident from the conclusions he drew in his article. Among those conclusions (and remember, this man is an evolutionist) were these: “[Clayton] argues that the Genesis order of creation is the same as the geological record (**reinterpreting some of the Bible terms**) but also maintains that there were long ages before the six days of creation.... **Clayton’s hybrid scheme thus allows for** some day-age interpretation and also, perhaps, **some theistic evolution** in addition to its modified gap theory” (1988, p. 22, emp. added).

If even our evolutionist foes recognize that John is teaching theistic evolution (using “reinterpreted” Bible terms) via his Modified Gap Theory, one wonders why our own brethren cannot recognize it. If we may paraphrase the Lord, sometimes the “sons of this world” are more perceptive than the “sons of light” (Luke 16:8).

There are, of course, more direct evidences at hand for those willing to examine them. For example, in the September/October 1984 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John published, approvingly, an article titled “Monism, Belief, and Scientific Explanations” by Pepperdine biology professor Norman Hughes. In his article, Dr. Hughes wrote:

It is unfortunate that so many believers seem to have accepted an idea that has grown out of philosophical monism: the idea that there is either a naturalistic explanation (discovered by man and therefore understandable by man, i.e., “scientific”) for a natural event, or there is a supernatural explanation (not known or understood by man, except to whatever degree divine revelation may have enlightened him for the same event). This brief essay is an attempt to set forth the thesis that such a choice is neither necessary nor beneficial. In fact, the essence of the dualism of Scripture is that **the believer can accept both natural and supernatural explanations at the same time....** The idea that to whatever extent one accepts **evolutionary explanations**, to that degree one has eliminated God’s role in the creation of life is an idea based on a fallacy (1984a, p. 16, emp. added).

Is Dr. Hughes advocating theistic evolution? Indeed he is. And one does not have to read between the lines to come to that conclusion, because Dr. Hughes himself has provided the answer. First, in a letter to the editor of the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, Dr. Hughes wrote the following: “I am a theist—I believe in God and in Jesus Christ as His revelation to humankind. I am an evolutionist—I find many biological phenomena which are not explainable except by the theory of evolution. But please, don’t call me a theistic evolutionist!” (1986, p. 282). One wonders exactly what it is Dr. Hughes would like to be called, if not a theistic evolutionist. Perhaps he would prefer “evolutionary theist.”

Second, after reading the article by Hughes in John Clayton’s September/October 1984 *Does God Exist?* journal, Wayne Jackson wrote Dr. Hughes to ask him about the article that Clayton had printed, and to ask if he was, in fact, a theistic evolutionist. In a letter on November 23, 1984, Dr. Hughes graciously responded.

I do insist again that the basic thesis of the article is valid, i.e., that one can hold both a naturalistic and a supernatural explanation for the origin and the continuation of natural phenomena at the same time.... As a scientific theory, organic evolution has a number of weaknesses, but at the same time, it provides explanations for certain natural phenomena which I could not otherwise explain. To the extent that I find evolutionary theory useful, I have no hesitancy in using it (1984b, p. 1).

Hughes confirmed his advocacy of theistic evolution in the article that John Clayton published in the September/October 1984 issue of *Does God Exist?*. And, as an aside, Dr. Hughes complained that John had reprinted the article from another source, without permission, and without giving the original source. What was that source? It was *Mission* magazine! In the December 1984 issue of the journal he edits, the *Christian Courier*, Wayne Jackson wrote an article documenting the above facts. It was titled “A Pepperdine Professor and Evolution” (1984, pp. 29-31).

That is not, however, the end of the matter. From October 1985 through January 1986, Ken Chumbley (who was at that time a minister of the church of Christ in Mathis, Texas and a dear friend of John’s) was involved in lengthy correspondence with brother Clayton. When brother Chumbley read the Hughes article, he wrote John to ask why he had published an article that defended theistic evolution in such a blatant fashion. On November 27, 1984, John sent a three-page rebuke to Ken, in which he wrote:

It is impossible for me to conceive how anyone can read Norman Hughes’ article and assume that it is an apology for theistic evolution.... Your comments are the same as those who [sic] have been heaped upon me, and I resent such accusations because they fail to try to understand the point being made. If we do not adequately define terms, we continue to provide fuel for the atheists to destroy young people’s faith (1984c, p. 2).

Dr. Hughes says, “I am a theist, and I am an evolutionist.” Now what, pray tell, does that make him if not a theistic evolutionist? John says he can’t “conceive how anyone can read Norman Hughes’ article and assume” that it is defending theistic evolution. What does John think it **is** defending, if not theistic evolution? Dr. Hughes plainly admits that he is a theistic evolutionist, and “insists that the basic thesis of the article [theistic evolution] is valid.”

The question is, if John Clayton did not agree with the article teaching theistic evolution, why did he print it? And the answer is that John agreed with it, because his position is the same as that of Dr. Hughes—theistic evolution. In fact, notice what John says to the prospective teacher of his *Does God Exist? Christian Evidences Intermediate Course*: “If someone wants to believe in a theistic evolutionary position, I would suggest you **sluff it off as a possibility** and wait for them to mature in their belief when they have studied more of the evidence” (1991a, p. 29).

Who in his right mind, presented with a youngster in the process of accepting the false theory of theistic evolution, would simply “sluff it off”—unless, of course, that person believed that theistic evolution was, in fact, “a possibility”? How can John Clayton, in light of this kind of hard-core evidence, say—and expect anyone to believe him—that he is **not** a theistic evolutionist?

### JOHN CLAYTON: THEISTIC EVOLUTIONIST (ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE)

Does John Clayton believe in, and advocate, theistic evolution? Let him answer that question as he speaks through the various materials he has authored.

(1) In his correspondence course lesson on “The History of Man on Planet Earth,” brother Clayton affirms: “In many areas we find that the Bible and the beliefs of those who hold that man is solely a product of evolution are **identical**.” Later, in discussing man’s development upon the Earth, John raises this question: “How has man changed during the time he has been upon the Earth? **It is here that the Biblical and evolutionary concepts part paths**” (1968e, pp. 2,3, emp. added). The implication is as clear as it can be. Prior to the commencement of man’s “changes,” apparently “the biblical and evolutionary concepts” walked in the same **path**. And, as we demonstrate elsewhere in this book, at times our brother is vague even about the condition of early man.

(2) John stated in the August 1975 issue of *Does God Exist?* that “The most basic problem in the picture, is the feeling of many believers and nonbelievers alike, that evolution is alien to the Bible and belief in God. Historically, this has been true of the dark age religionists, but it was never true of the Bible and should not be characteristic of the Church today” (1975c, p. 2).

(3) In *The Source*, brother Clayton suggests:

If we look carefully at the issues about which we are talking, however, we can find that evolution and the Bible show **amazing agreement on almost all issues** and that **one is not mutually exclusive of the other**.... To say that evolution has all the answers from inanimate matter to man is to violate the evidence and to take an extreme position. **To suggest that evolution is false, devious, and opposed to the Bible is equally extreme** (1990a, p. 135, emp. added).

John constantly is complaining that his critics, in reviewing his teachings, either misquote him, partially quote him, or quote him out of context. We mention this for the following reason. When our brother is confronted with such radical quotations as those given above, he quickly retreats, suggesting that all he means by the word “evolution” is “change within recognized groups” (like, for example, the development of dogs and wolves from a common ancestor). This needs to be discussed.

One must take notice of how John himself uses the word “evolution” (as in the quotation, given above, where he says some err in believing evolution has “all the answers from inanimate matter to man”). It is impossible for his statement to be a reference merely to variation, because variation does not deal with “inanimate matter to man.” Only **organic** evolution deals with that topic. We intend to show that **John’s writings, cumulatively considered, reveal that he means far more than mere variation by his use of the word “evolution.”**

No true creationist denies that there has been **variation** within the basic kinds that God initially created, as taught in Genesis. In 1960, the renowned British evolutionist, Dr. G.A. Kerkut, published his famous work, *The Implications of Evolution*, in which he defined the **two** theories of evolution (1960, p. 157). The first of those theories he termed the **Special Theory of Evolution**. It states that while living things do undergo change, that change always is within very strict and very narrow “phylogenetic boundaries.” This is what we call simply **variation**. No one—creationist or evolutionist—disagrees with this concept. The second theory of evolution that Dr. Kerkut defined and described is what he termed the **General Theory of Evolution**. It is the General Theory that teaches what we today call “organic” evolution—the idea that all life has arisen from a single, or very few, common ancestor(s) in the ancient past.

John delights in using the word “evolution” as **he** wants to use it, to mean what **he** wants it to mean. When he does so, he then can vacillate sharply when asked exactly what he means by his use of the term. If someone chastises him for advocating belief in evolution, he quickly falls back onto the definition of the Special Theory, and complains that his critics don’t understand, or have misquoted, him.

However, we would remind John of his own words in this regard, when he said: “It is not honest to use a term that you know different people understand differently” (1981a, p. 10). Yet John is just as likely to use the word “evolution” in a way completely different from that in which most people would use it. We offer the following illustrations as proof of our point.

On April 15, 1983, Michael McFarland (then of Corpus Christi, Texas) wrote to John, trying to sort out exactly what John meant by his continued use of the word “evolution” at one of his recent seminars (which Mike had attended). On May 4, 1983, John wrote the following to brother McFarland: “The word ‘evolution’ as defined in most biology books is an unfolding type of change. We spent fifteen or twenty minutes in the lecture giving examples of unfolding types of change—potholes in streets, people growing from children to adults, new varieties of dogs, horses, cattle, roses, etc.” (1983d, p. 1).

Is it true that “most biology books” define evolution as simply “unfolding type of change” when discussing evolution for the students’ benefit? As everyone knows, of course, such a statement is **not** true. Biology books do not try to convince students of what Dr. Kerkut called the “Special Theory of Evolution.” Students already know that. Biology textbooks, when they speak of “evolution,” discuss what Dr. Kerkut called the “General Theory of Evolution”—i.e., **organic** evolution. John would have us believe (for his own purposes, so that no one can accuse him of advocating belief in theistic evolution) that he’s just using the word as “most biology books” do. But “most biology books” present **organic evolution as fact**. His assertion is ridiculous.

But when he is backed into a corner, this is the way he tries to work his way out. For example, when one minister took issue with him because he had published an article defending theistic evolution, John wrote back a letter that would burn asbestos. In his letter, he said that he was “simply trying to get people to understand that when [Dr. Carl] Sagan says ‘evolution is a fact’ he is talking about the kind of evolution which involves changes for instance that have produced the cockapoo and pekapoo from ancient dog-like ancestors, he is not talking about the theory of evolution” (1984c, p. 2). Knowing that Dr. Sagan was one of the world’s foremost atheistic evolutionists, and a man who had devoted his entire professional life to the promulgation of organic evolution, who would believe such a statement? When Dr. Sagan spoke of evolution, he was **not** speaking merely about “variation” as Clayton asserts. Dr. Sagan did not distribute his famous *Cosmos* television series to tout the kind of evolution that produces just Cockapoos or Peka-poos.

John Clayton knows that. Notice this statement from John’s book, *Evidences of God, Volume IV*: “In the COSMOS series, Dr. Carl Sagan almost totally based the persuasive pitch of his case on the chain of being [another term for organic evolution—WJ/BT]. Using clever animation, he showed facial changes and body changes **in a chain from a fish to man**” (1987d, p. 3, emp. added). In the *Cosmos* series, what kind of change did Dr. Sagan discuss? John plainly tells you—fish to man. What kind of evolution is that? It is **organic** evolution, pure and simple. John writes to one preacher and tells him that Sagan is talking only about the kind of “evolution” that produces Cockapoos and Pekapoos. But all along he knows quite well that such is not the case, because he has written the exact opposite elsewhere. Indeed, “it is not honest to use a term that you know different people understand differently”—to use John’s own words.

In *The Source*, brother Clayton introduces what he calls his “forest of evolution” interpretation of all living things. He avows that this is the idea “that life may have started in a number of different places upon the Earth.” And, he says, it “does work.” John explains:

The amazing thing about this **newest concept of evolution**, which does a much better job of fitting the fossil evidence and **conforms nicely to all the other evidence used to support organic evolution**, is that **it agrees beautifully with the description given in the Bible**. The only place in the Bible where the word kind is given anything approaching a definition is I Corinthians 15:39 when the writer identifies four kinds of flesh. He enumerates these as the flesh of fishes, birds, beasts (mammals) and men. A comparison of this description to Genesis 1 shows exactly the same terminology (1990a, pp. 163-164, emp. added).

The foregoing paragraph is truly radical. Brother Clayton maintains that such creatures as bacteria, worms, insects, reptiles, amphibians, etc., came into existence in some remote period prior to the creation week of Genesis 1, possibly in a “gap period” between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2; or else, “they may have



evolved from basic forms that God created.” John argues that none of the Hebrew words in Genesis 1, which characterize the various life forms, possibly can include the creatures mentioned above. So, he concludes, either they were created prior to the creation week, or else they evolved from other life forms since that time. However, this is just not the case, and closer study would have saved John from this unjustified theory. Professor Harold Stigers writes:

The categories of various animals: cattle, *behemah*, creeping things, *remes* and wild animals, *hayath-ha-ares*, perhaps are not intended to be exhaustive; the words pertain more to certain characteristics... The creeping things are the reptile, the worm, the amphibian, etc. Other classifications have been made, and may be made, but the terms are capable of quite wide interpretation. All subclasses are included (1976, p. 61).

Dr. J.S. Morton notes that: “Animals are classified in Scripture according to simple characteristics that give quick recognition. For example, animals are classified as creeping crawling, flying, and so forth. Man classifies on the basis of what he terms an evolutionary scale. This is based chiefly on detailed external features; little attention is paid to the chemical complexity of most animals” (1978, p. 154).

We shall have more to say later of Clayton’s advocacy of the Modified Gap Theory. But here let us note that John believes that in addition to the groups mentioned above, **all other** life forms (i.e., warm-blooded) “evolved” from the four basic kinds mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:39. Whereas the hardcore theistic evolutionist contends that all organic life has evolved from a single source (or a very few sources), and that by direction of God, John Clayton teaches virtually the same thing. All cold-blooded life was created before the creation week (or has evolved since then), and all warm-blooded creatures (except man) have evolved from four basic originally created kinds. That is theistic evolution. Call it what you will; it still is theistic evolution. Again, however, brother Clayton has involved himself in another of his many contradictions. As per the quote above, fish, birds, and mammals are **different** “kinds.” Remember, though, elsewhere John affirmed that fish, birds, and mammals are of the **same** phylum, which he **equated** with “kind” (1980a). This brother is in a state of total confusion.

In connection with his four-kinds theory, our brother says: “This model would say,” for example, “...that the mammals have come about from one source...” He then adds: “We do not wish to have you accept this because we have said it is true. Obviously it could effectively be charged that our position is biased and prejudiced” (1968d, p. 2). John believes that all mammals (man excepted) have evolved from a common source. Mammals would include everything from whales to bats, or mice to monkeys. In *The Source*, he suggests that the “ape family” possibly evolved from “some **primitive rodent**” (1976a, p. 170, emp. added). John also has no problem in accepting that amphibians evolved from reptiles, or vice versa. In a letter to Michael McFarland in August of 1983, John said: “If a reptile did change to or from an amphibian [sic], it would not negate the Bible” (1983c, p. 1).

Numerous other statements by brother Clayton reveal his evolutionary bias. For instance, he says, “The tree shrew, his ancestors and relatives” are “known to be the **first sure mammals** on this planet” (1976b, p. 3, emp. added). [NOTE: In his taped lecture, *Evolution’s Proof of God*, John says that “the very first mammal that we know anything about was the *Archaeopteryx* —a bird.” Apart from the fact that a bird is not a mammal, which statement are we to believe? Was the very first mammal a tree shrew, or was it *Archaeopteryx*?] Actually, the expression “first sure mammal” has a very clear implication. Was there a time when non-mammals became “semi-mammals” that, eventually, became “sure-mammals”? We do not see what other conclusion can be drawn from that type of language. Brother Clayton just cannot keep from slipping occasionally, and revealing his true conviction regarding evolution.

John also has stated that “links do exist between fish and other forms” (1990a, p. 164). Even most evolutionists are unwilling to go that far, however. Raup and Stanley, two leading evolutionary scientists, have stated: “Unfortunately, the origins of most higher categories are shrouded in mystery; commonly new higher categories appear abruptly in the fossil record without evidence of transitional forms” (1971, p. 306). In his 1980 taped response to the first edition of this review, brother Clayton addressed this point. Here is his attempted explanation:

Links do exist between fish and other forms—that’s right. We have walking catfish, we have fish that can estivate (which means get down in the mud and survive for long periods of time when the water dries up), we have even fish in South America that can climb trees, and these are linkages in a sense, and that’s the

context we were talking about, that the evolutionist can certainly do more there to try to support his theory than in other areas. So we are just talking about evidence again (1980a).

Since when is a fish that can “get down in the mud and survive for long periods of time when the water dries up” a “link” between a fish and some other form? And when John speaks of a fish that can “climb trees,” or a “walking catfish,” exactly what **kind** of “link” does he intend to imply? Is he suggesting that these are some kind of “transitional form”—fish on their way to creatures that actually can walk, or that can actually climb trees? If not, then why does he use these particular examples as “links”? Links **between what**? Fish and amphibians? That is precisely the claim of evolutionists!

In his taped lecture, *Evolution's Proof of God*, John also has suggested that “algae and lichens were the first things to be in existence” (undated). Even though it is true that evolutionists would accept that general conclusion, many are more reserved in their dogmatism than brother Clayton. Dr. R.G.E. Murray, one of the world's foremost microbiologists and a major contributor to the “microbiologists' Bible,” *Bergey's Manual of Determinative Bacteriology*, has observed: “The fossil record, although indicative of microbial life long ages before recognizable forms of life appeared, **is not able to tell us anything of the order of appearance** and thus contribute to phylogeny” (1974, p. 7, emp. added). Once more, brother Clayton has gone even farther than the full-fledged evolutionists.

John also teaches, just as the evolutionist does, the alleged existence of what often are called “vestigial organs.” In his taped lecture, *Evolution's Proof of God*, for example, he suggests: “At one time in your life you had a tail. At one time in your life you had what essentially were gill slits....” In speaking of the “vestigial” wisdom teeth which he suggests that humans possess, John stated: “Back in the days when man was cracking bones to get his food out of the bone marrow actually of animals he used those back teeth to break bones.” And, he believes that “the appendix, although we might get some argument here because of its good blood supply, is viewed by most people to be a vestigial organ. Our appendix doesn't serve any immediate useful function that we can tell.... Hair in our country, for the most part, is purely decorative.... Hair is essentially vestigial” (undated).

John's assertion that at one time in our lives we have gill slits is totally untrue, and smacks of the false concept of embryonic recapitulation. Even rabid evolutionists no longer teach that the human embryo possesses gill slits. However, one biology textbook explains: “Actually, these gills are alternating ridges and furrows on the right and left sides of the neck. They **never** develop into gills. They remain covered by a thin membrane and **never** have a respiratory function” (Moore and Slusher, 1974, p. 434, emp. in orig.). The human embryo never has “gill slits.”

When John prepared his taped response to the first edition of this book, how did he address our criticism on this point? Here is an exact transcription of his remarks: “I have said in those lectures and said in the tapes that these are **essentially** gill slits, not that they **are** gill slits.” Well now, doesn't that clear it up nicely? To the person hearing John's tapes, or his lectures, what does it mean when he says that the human embryo “essentially” has gill slits? May an honest person then correctly believe that the embryo has gill slits? How has John's “explanation” (and we use that term loosely) corrected his error?

John's comment that the human appendix is vestigial also is false. And we have known this information since the early 1960s when Dr. Robert G. Taylor, a specialist in internal medicine, published the efforts of his research on this topic. He noted: “The function of the thymus and the human appendix are beginning to be understood in the 1960s.... The tonsils and the appendix help us to prevent germs from entering the system” (see Nelson, 1967, pp. 196-197). Today it is difficult to convince a pediatrician to perform an appendectomy on a young child because, although we do not fully understand all we would like to about the appendix, we do know it plays a vital role in our body's defense system, especially in the young. To say that it is vestigial is simply untrue. This is yet another example of where John is willing to go even farther down the evolutionary road than the committed evolutionist.

And how, in his taped response to our first book, did John answer the charge that he was in error? Listen carefully:

The next one is a discussion of vestigial organs, and I'm not sure what needs to be said there. The statement in number “C” was a statement that is taken out of the filmstrip we use on that particular area, and in the filmstrip both the appendix and human hair are considered vestigial.... But the filmstrip that I have which is put out by the Singer Sewing Machine Company, the SVA materials that are designed for the

BSCS blue version materials, do list the appendix and human hair as vestigial structures. And I think it's important to realize that many evolutionists consider it that way. I frankly agree with him [Bert Thompson] that modern evidence has shown (and if you've seen our lectures you know we have pointed out that this is a relatively new discovery) that the appendix in fact **probably** is not a vestigial organ. But you still see it both ways in the books. So this is a very important area (1980a, emp. added).

How does John defend his teachings which state that hair and the human appendix are vestigial? Well, he says, the filmstrip he uses teaches that they are. And the BSCS blue version biology textbooks (written by evolutionists to promote evolution) teach that they are. And "many evolutionists consider it that way." So, it's good enough for John! Then, almost as an afterthought, he does get around to admitting that yes, we now have evidence which disproves all of that. But, he says, the evidence is a "relatively new discovery." How can John call evidence that has been in existence since the early 1960s "new"? And, if he does agree that hair and the human appendix no longer are considered vestigial, why is he still using the filmstrip and BSCS biology textbooks which teach that they are? As with each of John's other attempted "explanations" of his erroneous positions, this one leaves much to be desired. The insightful reader likely has noticed that John conceded only that the appendix, for example, "**probably** is not a vestigial organ." Why not just admit that he has taught error, and correct it?

John does not confine his belief in evolution merely to the Earth, either. In the July/August 1983 issue of *Does God Exist?*, he asked, in speaking of God: "Did He create full-grown galaxies and stars and 'fling' them into space? The evidence suggests that He created hydrogen either exclusively or at least dominantly and caused that hydrogen to be positioned in such a way that it could become stars and galaxies and planets" (1983b, pp. 3-4). Apparently when God said in Genesis 1:14-18 that He created the Sun, Moon, and stars that is not correct. What He **should have said**, according to brother Clayton, is that He created hydrogen, which then **evolved** into the Sun, Moon, and stars.

## CHAPTER 9

### JOHN CLAYTON'S VIEWS ON...

"...the Bible does not maintain positively that [there] was a worldwide Flood."

—John Clayton, *Questions and Answers: Number 1*, taped lecture

"Does the Bible maintain positively that the flood...was worldwide?" "Yes."

—John Clayton, 1988b, p. 1

### THE DAYS OF CREATION

**B**ecause John is so adept at speaking with equal force on either side of an issue (and often does), it is difficult to quote him without someone thinking that you have misrepresented him. Every time you offer documentation for one of his positions, it is an easy matter for him, or one of his supporters, to introduce statements that seem to be saying exactly the opposite. Nowhere is this more of a problem than in John's views on the days of creation as recorded in Genesis.

John is on record, in numerous places, as suggesting that he **does** believe the days of creation to be twenty-four hour days. For example, in his *Does God Exist? Christian Evidences Intermediate Correspondence Course Teacher's Guide*, John wrote: "There are several ways that the days of Genesis can be handled. Some feel that the days of Genesis 1 are God days and not man days. **Our position has always been that they probably were 24-hour days...**" (1991a, p. 37, emp. added). In his taped lecture, *Questions and Answers: Number 1*, John stated: "I don't see any necessity of denying that the days of Genesis 1 were 24-hour days" (undated). And, in a personal letter to Rick Popejoy, John said: "It has always been our position that the days of Genesis were literal 24-hour days" (1988b, p. 2).

Could these statements from John be any clearer? If you were to suggest to someone that John **does not** believe the days of Genesis were 24-hour periods, what would they think? Likely, they would accuse you of misrepresenting his position. And, if all they had were the quotations above, admittedly, they would appear to be correct in that assertion.

However, the above quotations tell only half the story. If you want to know what John **really believes**, you have to dig a little deeper. Notice, for example, this statement from his taped lecture, *Questions and Answers: Number 1* (yes, it is the same tape as above, in which he said he accepts the days as 24-hour periods): "I believe it is totally inconsequential as to whether or not the days of Genesis were literal 24-hour days or not. It isn't until the fourth day until the sun and moon were established as chronometers. **There were no days, seasons, etc.—at least as we know them—before the fourth day**" (undated, emp. added).

On September 5, 1975, John wrote a letter to his elders at the Donmoyer Avenue church of Christ in South Bend, Indiana. The following statement is from that letter.

I believe you have copies of the teacher's guide, and if you will notice in that guide that we did not espouse either the day-age theory, or the gap theory. We did point out that **those theories are more consistent with the record** than other theories denominations have advanced, but we would remind you that we did not accept any of those theories, and have simply tried to get people to realize that the Genesis account is not a detailed historical account (1975g, p. 1, emp. added).

John believes that the Day-Age Theory and the Gap Theory **are more consistent with the biblical record than anything else**, but then he says he hasn't "espoused" those theories!

In the 1976 edition of *The Source*, John discussed the time element involved in Genesis 1. He listed four theories that, in his judgment, have attempted to explain the chronology of this biblical text. He identifies the theories as: (1) The Gap Theory; (2) The Day-Age Theory; (3) The Anti-Science Theory; and (4) The Deception Theory. After a brief discussion of each, he writes: "The last two are impossible to logically accept." Of the Gap Theory and the Day-Age Theory, he notes that in spite of "inconsistencies in these theories," they "can be more easily justified in terms of the language of Genesis 1" (1976a, pp. 146-147).

And so, John can deny an association with the Day-Age Theory if he wishes, but he is perceived—even by his devoted followers—as advocating it. The following is a typical example of the testimony we have received regarding this matter over the years. In October 1977, Bill Nicks, the preacher for the Highland View church of Christ in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, wrote a letter to Wayne Jackson in which he stated:

We have a brother in the congregation, a good brother I believe, who has heard all of John Clayton's tapes. This brother is a worker at the Oak Ridge plant, and thinks scientifically, although he is not classified as a scientist. He has accepted the idea of the days one through three [in Genesis 1] being other than a 24-hour period, thus perhaps millions of years (1977, p. 1).

If John believes in a creation week of literal days, his friends and admirers do not seem to know it. His critics certainly do not know it. Who, then, does? Consider this statement from John on his position:

The first indication of regularity in time and the first establishment of chronometers for man is recorded in Genesis 1:14. "God said,...and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:" God established the two lights for man's measurement of the changing times around him. **Prior to that time, there were no such regularities** if we take the passage literally. The fossil record supports this point of view with numerous indications that our chronometers are relatively recent in their function and that some period of time may have taken place prior to their establishment (1978d, p. 6, emp. added).

Before proceeding, we would like to raise three incisive questions. First, if the first three days of creation were not literal days, what does the phrase "evening and morning" mean (Genesis 1:5,8,13)? Second, if Moses uses "days" in Genesis 1 to denote vast eons of time, what would "years" denote (Genesis 1:14)? Third, is the expression "six days" in Exodus 20:11 to be understood in terms of "three **epochs** and three **days**?" John simply does obeisance to the evolutionary time-scale.

In the 1976 edition of *The Source*, John specifically states: "In the next several verses [following Genesis 1:1—WJ/BT] we see the Sun, Moon, and Stars made useful for the measurement of time. Notice that God says that the **days, years, etc.** as we know them **were established at this point**. It is obvious that prior to this time, sunrise, sunset, and the normal phases of the moon were not visible from the Earth, if indeed they existed at all" (1976a, p. 116, emp. added).

One would have to have help to **misunderstand** these statements. John clearly states that the days of Genesis were **not** literal, 24-hour days, at least prior to the fourth day. But, try asking John in a public situation if this is indeed his position, and he'll deny it. Here is just one example. After a Friday evening lecture in Manteca, California on July 19, 1991, there was a question/answer session. A member of the audience asked John about his view on these matters. Here is the exchange that occurred:

Questioner: "You spoke about the creation week, and you said that there were no days, as we know days, before the fourth day. My question would be...." [John Clayton interrupts]

John: "I'm sorry, but I didn't say that."

Questioner: "Oh, you didn't say that?"

John: "No."

Questioner: "In some of your writings?"

John: "No."

Questioner: "OK, so you don't believe that the fourth day was the first day?"

John: "No. No!"

Questioner: "Well, then, the creation week is a 7-day period?"

John: "That would be my understanding. Yes!"

How would any honest person view the above comments by John? He **has** written that there were no days prior to the fourth day. Yet he categorically denies it publicly.

Also of interest is this point. In the July/August 1990 issue of *Does God Exist?*, he ran an item under the "News and Notes" section, advertising the availability of a written critique that he had produced re-

garding *Discovery*, the children's journal on Bible and science published by Apologetics Press. On page two of his critique, John made it clear that he was offended when he examined *Discovery* and "came across an article on the days of Genesis 1, criticizing those who are not convinced about the length of those days" (1990f, p. 2).

In the *Discovery* article under discussion, we had made an argument showing that the days of Genesis 1 had to be normal, solar days. We made a point so simple that a fourth-grader could understand it (the median age at which *Discovery* is aimed). Yet John was offended by our statement that the days of Genesis 1 **are 24-hour days**. The question is obvious: if John agrees with us that the days were, in fact, 24-hour periods, **why would he be offended at our statement of that fact?** The answer is obvious. John **does not** agree that the days of Genesis were 24-hour periods.

Note this, too, if you will. E.H. Howard and Don Singleterry (elders of the church of Christ in Marlow, Oklahoma) saw John's criticism of *Discovery* and wrote him about it on September 20, 1990. He responded to their letter on September 25, 1990, and suggested: "...we have **never** taken the position that the creation week was not a 6-day literal week" (1990e, p. 1, emp. added). Can you believe that? This is nothing less than simply telling a lie. Call it what you will—it is still lying.

### THE GLOBAL FLOOD

John's position on the Flood of Genesis 6-8 is no less easily deciphered. He vacillates back and forth so often between stating that he believes in a **global** Flood, and stating that he believes in a **local** Flood, that what he says literally depends on the audience to whom he is speaking. For example, John has written: "Was there a flood, or is the Biblical account a myth? **Was the flood global or local?** When did the flood take place, if it did occur? Was the flood caused by a natural event such as the collapse of a canopy-covering the Earth once had, or perhaps a magnetic reversal, or was the flood a miracle of God not explainable in scientific terms. **I must in all honesty confess that I do not have answers to these questions which can be dogmatically made and defended**" (1975d, p. 2, emp. added).

He goes on to say that he is inclined to believe that the flood was global but that one of his problems has been "the total lack of evidence for such an event" (1975d, p. 3). What about the biblical evidence? Does it count for nothing? It is one thing for a biblically unlearned and immature person to have honest doubts—we will pray for him and teach him. But it is an entirely different matter to turn such a one loose to sow doubts throughout the entire brotherhood!

In the March 1979 issue of the *Rocky Mountain Christian* magazine, brother Clayton stated: "We are accused of not believing the flood is global. This is in fact a deliberate falsehood. We have stated repeatedly that it is our opinion, based upon biblical and scientific evidence, that the flood was global.... The statement that we do not believe in a global flood is simply not true" (1979c, p. 3).

In a letter to brother Clayton on February 26, 1988 Rick Popejoy asked John this question: "Does the Bible **maintain positively** that the flood in Genesis 6,7, & 8 was worldwide (i.e., global or universal)?" (1988, p. 1). In his letter of March 9, 1988 to brother Popejoy, John responded to the question with a one-word answer: "**Yes**" (1988b, p. 1). But it was no accident that brother Popejoy worded his question the way he did. He asked: "Does the Bible **maintain positively**" a global Flood. The wording that Rick used came directly from a comment by John Clayton in which he had stated that "the Bible **does not maintain positively** that this was a worldwide flood." In his taped lecture, *Questions and Answers: Number 1*, John stated:

...**There is no way geologically of supporting the idea that there was a worldwide flood....** On the North American continent, for example, there is no place, no real conclusive evidence that there has ever been a flood over this continent.... You cannot go to geology and find evidence to support the idea of the worldwide flood... **The Bible does not maintain positively that this was a worldwide flood....** It seems to me plausible that **possibly the flood was confined to the known earth at that time** (undated, emp. added).

Does John Clayton believe in a global, universal, worldwide flood, or not? And what about his point that "the Bible does not maintain positively that this was a worldwide flood"? First, let us observe that this is a point John tries to make whenever possible. In the July 1980 issue of *Does God Exist?*, he stated: "What people are really asking is whether it is reasonable to believe that the flood covered the whole

globe. While it is this author's conviction that it did, it would not negate the biblical account if it didn't" (1980b, p. 9, emp. added).

Second, let us observe what the Bible clearly teaches on this important point when it says that the great flood of Noah's day "prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered" (Genesis 7:19). In the New Testament, Peter confirmed that the ancient world "overflowed with water" (2 Peter 3:6); he even used the flood as a type of the coming judgment of the world (cf. Matthew 24:38-39). But brother Clayton is not sure at all that it happened this way. Instead, he must wait to see whether "science" can prove it; then, he will accept it.

One last point bears on this issue. As has already been mentioned in this book, on July 20, 1991 we finally were able to meet with brother Clayton to discuss items such as these, and many others. Prior to that meeting, we had prepared overhead transparencies that contained some of the quotations above. We asked John about these discrepancies. John squirmed and (naturally) claimed that each of the quotations had been "taken out of context." We said that there would be an easy way to settle this matter once and for all. We then handed John a 3x5-inch note card on which the following statement had been written: "I, John N. Clayton, believe positively that the Flood of Genesis 6-8 was worldwide (i.e., universal, global)." Below this statement there were two lines, one for John's signature, and a second for the date. We asked John to sign this card, as conclusive documentation regarding his exact position on the Flood. After a moment's hesitation, he signed the card and handed it back to us. It is now in our possession. It will be interesting, to say the least, to see what statements John makes from this point forward regarding his belief about a global Flood.

If John Clayton had the integrity to admit that he has taught these erroneous ideas across the years, but that he has altered his views, and now is teaching consistently the truth on creation/evolution issues, this book never would have seen the light of day. All of us have grown in our understanding of the Bible. When we grow out of a particular error, though, we need to be honest enough to say: "Yes, I taught that, but I was wrong, and today, I teach differently"—and then demonstrate a consistent pattern of teaching.

But that is not the case with brother Clayton. He flip-flops back and forth on a variety of crucial matters—all the while claiming that he never has taught anything but literal creation days, a global Flood, etc. The fact is, our brother does not hesitate to say one thing today, and another tomorrow, whenever he finds himself in a bind, and yet, incredibly, he simply will claim, "I have never believed anything but...." The most amazing thing about the entire affair is the fact that he thinks he actually can get away with it! This reflects a very serious character problem.

## AGES OF THE PATRIARCHS

John has made it clear that he questions the divine record regarding the great ages of the patriarchs as recorded in Genesis. There is no question, of course, that the Bible **does** record great ages for certain men and women of old. Adam, we are told, lived 930 years (Genesis 5:5). Methuselah lived 969 years (Genesis 5:27). And so on. The question is whether John accepts these ages as correct. He does not. Notice his reasoning for **not** accepting the ages as given.

In the September 1978 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John says: "One final difficulty that this relates to is the attempts made by some to nail down specific historic dates to Biblical events of great antiquity. **The ages of men in the past cannot be answered with great accuracy**" (1978d, p. 9, emp. added).

**Why** can the ages of men in the past not be answered with accuracy? On April 8, 1987, Mike Christensen, a member of the church of Christ in Laramie, Wyoming, wrote brother Clayton to ask about several unorthodox statements he had seen in John's written materials. In his letter, brother Christensen asked John specifically about the ages of the patriarchs. Here is how John answered the question in his letter of April 20, 1987: "It is a fact that there is **no scientific evidence** that people lived to be hundreds of years old. It may just be that we haven't found the right bones, but most bones of ancient men turn out to be twenty or thirty years of age and none have [sic] been found, to my knowledge, older than eighty years old. For this reason, I have tried to point out that there are many possible ways in which the extreme age of Methuselah might be explained..." (1987f, p. 2, emp. added).

John cannot bring himself to accept the great ages of the patriarchs because there is "no scientific evidence." Since "science" cannot prove that a virgin birth has ever happened, should the biblical record

of Jesus' virgin birth be dismissed as well? In the June 1978 issue of *Does God Exist?*, in an article titled "The Question of Methuselah," John discussed the biblical reports of great ages for men in the past, as compared with man's life expectancy today. He suggested: "The first possibility is that God miraculously changed man's life expectancy. There is no discussion of such a miracle in the Bible, but many miracles occurred during the creation which are not recorded in Genesis I. This may well be the answer, **but since no skeptic would accept it** we'll consider some other possibilities" (1978e, p. 11).

John's point is that "since no skeptic would accept it," he must find some other answer. This is incredible. First John suggests that because there is "no scientific evidence," the great ages of the patriarchs must be questioned. Second, he says that since "no skeptic would accept" the biblical record on these matters, "other possibilities" need to be explored. What a sad commentary on how John views God's inspired Word. It brings to mind the statement of noted scholar Edward J. Young in his book, *Studies in Genesis One*.

What strikes one immediately upon reading such a statement is the low estimate of the Bible which it entails. Whenever "science" and the Bible are in conflict, it is always the Bible that, in one manner or another, must give way. We are not told that "science" should correct its answers in the light of Scripture. Always it is the other way around (1964, p. 54).

Perhaps the reader is wondering exactly what "other possibilities" brother Clayton will explore in order to "explain away" these old ages for the patriarchs. John has developed his own private theology for alleviating this particular "problem." He says:

The guess that appeals to this writer is that the methods of measuring age are not the same today as they were when men lived so long. We know that some primitive people measure their age not from the time of their birth, but from the time they produce offspring, or are accepted as an adult in the community in which they live. We also know that many cultures use the moon as a measure of age (such as many American Indian tribes). If Methuselah were measured on such a system his age would be 80 years, plus the time till he became a father. This doesn't change anything as he would still be phenomenally old—especially for the day in which he lived, but it would give a **modern comprehension** of how such an age was calculated (1978e, p. 12, emp. added).

This "solution" is not new. Actually, F.A. Filby discussed this idea in his 1970 book, *The Flood Reconsidered*, and said: "This we reject completely, as not only can it be shown to be absolutely wrong, but it makes more difficulties than it solves. Enoch, we are told, had a son, Methuselah, when he was sixty-five. If we divide by twelve he had a son when he was 5.4 years old!" (1970, p. 21).

But what, exactly, does Dr. Filby mean when he says that this system of adjusting the ages of the patriarchs "can be shown to be absolutely wrong"? Let us offer the following explanations, and it will become clear why brother Clayton's exegetical manipulation is in error.

John has stated that "James 4:14 and other passages like it refer to man's life as a vapor or a fleeting wisp—here for a very short time. If Methuselah lived 969 years (Gen. 5:27) **this description seems a bit strained**" (1976c, p. 6, emp. added). Apparently John is unable to place a verse in its proper context. To take James 4:14 and try to make it apply to the Old Testament patriarchs is "a bit strained." Further, note just how wrong John's private theology is when compared with plain statements of Scripture.

(1) The Bible makes a clear distinction between years and months, completely eliminating John's suggestion (see above) that perhaps men's ages were counted via "moons" (i.e., months), not years. In Genesis 8:13 it is recorded: "And it came to pass in the six hundred and first **year**, in the first **month**...." Moses apparently understood the difference between a month and year.

(2) The Bible also specifically presents men's ages **before they sired offspring**, thus also eliminating John's idea that men's ages were not calculated prior to that event. Genesis 12:4 says: "And Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran." Yet this was **before** the births of Ishmael and Isaac.

(3) The Bible also presents compelling evidence to eliminate John's idea that men's ages somehow should be divided by 12 in order to arrive at an accurate figure for the number of years they actually lived. Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born (Genesis 16:16). Divided by 12, this means that the patriarch was just over 7 years of age at the birth of his first child, and Sarah was just under 6½ when she first gave birth! Further, Abraham must have died at the "good old age" of a shade over 14 (Genesis 25:7-8)!

Notice, too, this remarkable statement from Moses' pen. In Genesis 47:9, Jacob, speaking to Pharaoh, said, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have been



the days of my life, and **they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers** in the days of their pilgrimage.” Notice the point that Jacob is making. He is 130 years of age, yet he states that even at this great age, his days have not reached “the days of the years of the life of my fathers.” If he was 130 years old, and yet he had not reached the age of some of the patriarchs that preceded him, think how old “his fathers” would have been.

Isn't it remarkable how well the biblical record fits together? And isn't it wonderful that it can be trusted and accepted, without the kind of “slight of hand” tricks on which liberals have to rely in order to make their false theories palatable?

### EARLY MAN'S “IGNORANCE”

John's view of early man is not the most complimentary that we have ever seen. He asserts that “man has been in a constant state of evolution” (1976a, p. 133). Primitive man, he suggests, was much smaller than modern man, and likely had more body hair than we possess: “Body hair certainly is not necessary to keep us warm, but we can imagine that our ancestors in glacial climates probably profited from body hair as a protection against many elements in the environment in which they lived” (1976a, p. 138).

Concerning Adam, John has written: “This writer sees no need to view Adam as a highly advanced and sophisticated individual. God had to make the first clothes man wore so he wasn't very advanced” (1978f, p. 2). When one suggests that early man was small, hairy, and so backwards he couldn't even clothe himself, he would not have to go much further to agree completely with the evolutionary picture.



Figure 9-1 John Clayton's Representation of “Early Man” (1990h)

Clayton would have us believe that Adam was so “ignorant” that he didn't even know how to make his own clothes. However, when the Genesis account says that God “made” Adam and Eve coats of skins, that does not necessarily imply that the Lord actually manufactured the garments. The Hebrew term can denote that which one “appoints to be done” (see Jacobus, 1864, 1:128; see also Spence and Exell, no date, 1:72). Thus, God may have said: “Adam, you and Eve get busy and make your own clothes.” The text does not indicate that they were so “ignorant” that God had to take care of this for them.

It also must be noted that Adam was different (i.e., better) than we are in another way, a point that brother Clayton conspicuously omitted from his discussion. As author David C.C. Watson has observed, not only did Adam have to name all of the animals, but he also **had to remember what he called them**. Watson explains how Adam could have accomplished this remarkable feat: “Adam was a better man than we are, so he had a better mind. He was better because he was perfect—without sin. Sin not only spoils our bodies, by disease and decay; it also spoils our powers of learning, memory, imagination and invention” (1976, p. 56). Professor John Davis stated in his classic work, *Paradise to Prison—Studies in Genesis*: “Adam's intellectual capacity probably surpassed ours; he was able to name all the animals which inhabited that early environment (vv. 19,20). This silences the argument that Adam was some type of

primitive man groping for self-identify and self-consciousness. God created him with a complete, unhindered intellect” (1978, p. 82).

The noetic effects of sin must not be ignored in this discussion. Adam, prior to his breaking of God’s covenant law, was without sin. He **was** perfect. God had endowed him with the knowledge (information) he needed to carry out his assigned tasks. He possessed language, for example. And even evolutionists are quick to admit that language is a sign of the highest possible intellect because it always, without exception, must be **taught and learned**. Who taught Adam the language he used to communicate with God? We suggest that Adam was endowed initially with considerable innate knowledge.

Furthermore, the Bible makes it clear that Adam possessed enough information to till and care for the Garden (Genesis 2:15). Additionally, one of the commands given to Adam and Eve by God was that they were to “subdue the earth” (Genesis 1:28). How could God give them such a command, knowing that they were too ignorant (i.e., did not possess enough information) to carry it out?

In the Winter 1992 issue of *Archaeology and Biblical Research*, Dr. David Livingston, associate editor of that journal, authored an article titled “Was Adam A Cave Man?” Dr. Livingston introduced an impressive argument, based upon studies in Genesis 4, which demonstrated that “arts and industry had already developed during the very lifetime of the first man and woman—Adam and Eve were still living—as well as Cain” (1992, p. 5). How wonderful it would be if brother Clayton would sit at the feet of, and learn from, conservative scholars, instead of drinking at the stagnant pools of liberalism.

The “hidden agenda” behind John’s suggestion that Adam was ignorant is simply to adapt the biblical record to the evolutionary scenario. He attempts to leave himself a “way out” by observing that Adam was not “stupid”—only “ignorant.” If these men and women were as ignorant as John seems to think, how, then, do we explain such things as the great ark-building episode of Genesis 6, or the innate ability of these early peoples to locate ores deep within the Earth, extricate those ores, smelt them, and turn them into “every cutting instrument of brass and iron” (Genesis 4:22).

There is simply no way, respecting the teaching of the Bible as God’s Word, that John’s statements regarding early man can be defended. This is just one more example of how his love for, and devotion to, the evolutionary scenario has clouded his thinking and influenced him to accept and teach error.

## CHAPTER 10

### JOHN CLAYTON ON THE AGE OF THE EARTH AND MAN'S EXISTENCE ON IT

“Probably the most convincing argument for dating methods is that they do work.”

—John Clayton, 1990a, pp. 130-131

“Dating methods are based on assumptions that are increasingly dubious, and sampling and analysis techniques are prone to error.”

—John Clayton, 1990h, p. 6

If there is one thing that John Clayton absolutely must have to make his private theology work, it is an old Earth. One hardly can accept the standard geological timetable, as John ardently does, if the Earth is young. The age of the Earth, and the time of man's existence on it, therefore have become major points of contention between John and his critics. On more than one occasion, John has criticized severely denominational creationists who advocate a young Earth because, he says, these people have a “vested interest” in such a concept—that being, of course, their desire to accept various millennial views. In the 1991 edition of his *Does God Exist? Christian Evidences Intermediate Correspondence Course Teacher's Guide*, John commented on this point:

We would encourage you to stay away from various creationist material in this lesson, as that material has a **vested interest** in proving the earth to be young.... Creationists have traditionally maintained the idea that the earth is necessarily young according to the Bible. One of the main reasons for this view has been that a huge percentage of creationists are of a **millennial theological view**... (1991a, pp. 32,33, emp. added).

What John does not want widely known is that he has a “vested interest”—**in an old Earth**. This, of course, he has attempted to deny. In a letter to the editor of the *Rocky Mountain Christian* magazine in March 1979, John lamented: “I have been accused of believing that the Earth is 6 billion years old. What I have pointed out is that the Bible does not give the age of the Earth. I have taken the world view that espouses a nonworld time reference” (1979c, p. 3). In a letter he wrote to Dr. Basil Overton, editor of *The World Evangelist*, John said: “As a matter of fact, I have **never maintained that the Earth is of great antiquity**” (1978h, p. 2, emp. added). And, in his 1991 *Does God Exist? Christian Evidences Intermediate Correspondence Course Teacher's Guide*, John wanted the instructor to know: “...we are not saying the earth is necessarily old, we are just saying it is not necessarily young” (1991a, p. 33).

Each of the above statements from John regarding his position on the age of the Earth is false. He does not want to be identified clearly with the “old Earth” position because of its strong connection with organic evolution. He therefore does everything possible to avoid being labeled as one who advocates an old Earth. But, it is not difficult, when **all** the facts are in, to see that John does advocate the evolutionary view of Earth chronology. Consider the following evidence.

(1) In his taped lecture, *Questions and Answers: Number 1*, John has stated: “It is my personal conviction that probably **the earth is very, very old—much, much older** than the 6, or 7, or 8, or 10,000 years that some people would like to attribute to it” (undated, emp. added). John tells people in his 1991 *Teacher's Guide*, that “we are not saying the earth is necessarily old,” all the while knowing he is on record as stating that it is “very, very old—much, much older than...10,000 years”? Is this honest?

(2) In lesson eight of his 1990 *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*, under the title of “When Did God Create Man?,” John explained to the student that “God has the patience to accomplish the earth's creation and all that is in it over a period of billions of years. God also has the power to create the earth two seconds ago—with you reading this document, the memory in your head, all of man's history and artifacts in place and functioning. The evidence is that you have been here more than two seconds. **The evidence is that the earth and man have been here more than 6,000 years**” (1990m, p. 5, emp. added).

Exactly what “evidence” is it to which he is alluding? If this matter is researched carefully, the answer can be found in John’s writings. For example, in *The Source*, he addressed the matter of astronomic dating methods, and wrote: “Thus it is possible to calculate how long the Sun has been involved in its present kind of thermonuclear reaction to arrive at the amount of fuel it now has left. This figure turns out to be just over 4.5 billion years—**another indication of the age of our system**” (1990a, p. 130, emp. added). It certainly would be interesting to hear John explain how “it is possible to calculate” that the Sun has been burning 4.5 billion years. Such a calculation is impossible to **prove** scientifically. But brother Clayton **believes** it to be true because he is committed to evolutionary chronology.

(3) In *The Source*, John also discussed stromatolite growth patterns, and suggested: “This is the main method used in establishing the idea that life began on the Earth some **1.3 billion years ago**.... Probably **the most convincing argument for dating methods is that they do work**” (1990a, pp. 130,131, emp. added). But then again, let us hear the testimony of “the other” John Clayton: “Dating methods are based on assumptions that are increasingly dubious, and sampling and analysis techniques are prone to error” (1990h, p. 6). What are we to believe? Do the methods work, or are they “prone to error”? And, exactly where, in the Genesis record, do you suppose John would fit this “1.3 billion years”? He denies believing in the Gap Theory; he says he does not endorse the Day-Age Theory. Just how, then, can the 1.3 billion years be accommodated?

(4) In an article titled “More Evidence for Catastrophism” in the September/October 1985 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John addressed such phenomena as asteroids hitting the Earth in the distant past. He noted:

Now a new study has produced more support for astronomical influence on the Earth’s story.... Measurements of our movement and speed around the galactic core suggest that at regular intervals of 33 million years (based on size and speed), we cross the galactic equator. A University of Chicago study by David Raup and John Sepkoski of the Geophysics Department suggests that at approximately 30 million year intervals, mass extinctions of life forms occur on the Earth. One might question the validity of both types of dating, but the fact that the two events occur congruently is hard to attribute to coincidence... (1985b, pp. 15,16).

John speaks approvingly of the dates employed by evolutionists. He believes that the 4.5-billion-year figure that has been calculated for the age of the Sun is “an indication of the age of our system.” He acknowledges that the dating methods used by these evolutionary scientists “do work.” And, he speaks with frivolous abandon of such figures as “33 million years” and so on, acknowledging that the derivation of these dates certainly would be “hard to attribute to coincidence.” One wonders what else John would have to do to get someone to understand that he believes in a multi-billion-year-old Earth?

But where does man fit into this picture, according to brother Clayton? Again, John does not want anyone to “put him in a box” on these issues, and so he says one thing on one occasion, and exactly the opposite on another. For example, in lesson four of his *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*, he wrote: “Any attempt to ascribe a specific or even a general age to either man or the Earth from a Biblical standpoint is a grievous error” (1968c, p. 3). So, when asked about where man fits into the overall picture of Earth history, John simply says: “I have no way of telling where man’s beginning should be on the chart” (1968b, p. 35).

One would think then, after reading such statements, that John simply does not know where, in the history of the Earth, man’s origin actually fits. But of course, such is not the case. Again, when **all** the facts are considered, John’s position becomes crystal clear. Examine the following statements, all documented from John’s writings.

(1) “Clearly man has become the dominant form of life on the Earth **only in modern time**...” (1968b, p. 35).

(2) Man “is a **very recent new-comer** to this planet” (1968e, p. 2, emp. added).

(3) “Birds, mammals, and **man** are mentioned; and **all of these are recent additions to the Earth geologically**” (1977g, p. 151, emp. added).

(4) “At an early stage in the earth’s history, marsupial mammals were apparently the dominant forms of life. **Placental mammals, like us, are relative newcomers to the earth** compared to the marsupials” (undated, *Design’s Proof of God* [taped lecture], emp. added).

(5) “Why is it that man has not speciated while monkeys have? What explanation(s) exist? Answer: **Man’s origin is too recent** for enough genetic differentiation to have taken place to speciate us” (1991a, p. 40, emp. added). The implication of the foregoing is crystal clear. Brother Clayton is suggesting that, given enough time, man would evolve further, and even differentiate into various species. [NOTE: Species are defined as groups that are so genetically different they cannot mate and produce fertile offspring.] In the past John has taught that ancient humans were significantly smaller in size, much more hairy than they now are, and considerably less advanced. This latest allegation is but an extrapolation of his conviction concerning the changing status of man—given sufficient time. It is difficult to believe that anyone would have a hard time understanding the nature of this speculation.

Moreover, there is another implication in the quotation above. According to Genesis 1:24-27, Earth’s “living creatures,” such as “beasts” and “cattle” (i.e., wild and domestic animals) were made on the sixth day of the creation week. This would include mammals like monkeys. Elsewhere, brother Clayton has conceded that mammals came into existence on the sixth day (1990g, p. 5). Man also was made (or created) the same day (Genesis 1:26-27). Since monkeys and men came into existence on the same day, how can brother Clayton claim that **man’s origin is much more recent than the monkey’s**—unless he believes that the sixth “day” represented a vast era of time? Our brother has impaled himself again.

These kinds of statements from brother Clayton could be multiplied many times over. By way of summary, then, exactly **what** does John Clayton believe regarding the age of the Earth and the existence of man on that Earth? All of the above information can be condensed into the following accurate assessment: (a) John believes in a multi-billion-year-old Earth; (b) he accepts the standard geological timetable, as presented by evolutionists; (c) he therefore believes that man, as the evolutionary scenario and timetable both teach, is a “relative newcomer” to the Earth.

But how, one might ask, does John avoid the plain statements of Scripture to the contrary? Shortly, we shall investigate those statements. But before we do, let us offer a brief analysis of how John tries to avoid them. [NOTE: John’s advocacy of the Modified Gap Theory is discussed elsewhere in this review.]

Perhaps the clearest and most concise statement of exactly what John is trying to advocate is found in his 1991 *Does God Exist? Christian Evidences Intermediate Correspondence Course Teacher’s Guide*, where the following comments are found: “It would be our suggestion that the most accurate understanding of the days [of Genesis—WJ/BT] is that verses 1-3 are untimed and undated and could contain the whole pre-history of the earth, and that the creation week is a literal week but deals only with man and his world” (1991a, p. 37).

In other words, in Genesis 1:1-3 there was a **pre-creation**, and what follows in Genesis 1:4ff. is the “rest” of what God created. Much of this gets into John’s Modified Gap Theory (defended in his book, *The Source*). Since that will be addressed in detail later, the main point we would like to make here is that the only way John can advocate consistently his views on these matters is if he somehow can rid himself of the material in the biblical genealogies. These genealogies are the proverbial “thorn in his side,” and he knows it. Because the genealogies are so specific, and because they (and other verses that we shall shortly discuss) tie man to the beginning the world, John has had to devote considerable time and effort to explaining why the information presented in the genealogies is unreliable for chronological purposes. Before presenting a refutation of his positions on the items mentioned above, therefore, we would like to present and discuss his position on the biblical genealogies.

John knows that unless he somehow can get people to ignore the message of the genealogical material presented in the Bible, he cannot succeed in getting them to accept his views on the creation account. He therefore has suggested: “There is no way to answer the question of man’s antiquity precisely. The Bible does not give a date for Adam and cannot be used to calculate even an approximation that has credibility. **The genealogies in the Bible were designed to show descendancy, not chronology. They contain gaps and jumps which make them unusable to determine the age of man**” (1984b, p. 13, emp. added).

John also has stated: “It is important to realize that **biblical genealogies are not complete, order dependent, or written for chronological purposes.... The purpose is to show descendency, not chronology....** The purpose of the genealogy is clearly not to establish age” (1990m, pp. 4-5, emp. added). In what is perhaps his clearest position on the biblical genealogies, John has written:

Another well-recognized problem is the fact that the technique of writing genealogies did not require them to be complete. Even when a genealogy **sounds** complete and specific, it frequently is not. A good example of this principle is found in Matthew 1:17 when we read “Now there are 14 generations from Abraham to David, and 14 generations from David unto the carrying away into Babylonian captivity, and 14 generations from the Babylonian captivity unto Christ.” It would appear that 42 generations are involved from Abraham to Christ, but we know this is not true. There are at least four individuals that Matthew has omitted in his genealogical listing—Joash (2 Kings 11:2), Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:34), Ahaziah (2 Kings 8:24,25), and Amaziah (2 Kings 14:1). There are other examples like this which can be given in other genealogical sequences.... The Israelite culture simply did not record genealogies as we do today, and this means that any attempt to use a genealogy to calculate the age of the Earth—or even the age of man—is doomed to failure (1980d, pp. 6-7, emp. in orig.).

These are the positions held by John Clayton. They are opposed to plain statements of Scripture. Please examine the following.

(1) John suggests that the genealogies are so full of gaps as to make them useless in chronological matters. How did John know that Matthew omitted Joash, Jehoiakim, Ahaziah, and Amaziah? The only reason he knew that information is because the Bible itself provided it for him—filling in the very gaps that he says make the genealogies useless. As Dr. Arthur C. Custance correctly commented:

We are told again and again that some of these genealogies contain gaps: but what is never pointed out by those who lay the emphasis on these gaps, is that they only know of the existence of these gaps because the Bible elsewhere fills them in. How otherwise could one know of them? **But if they are filled in, they are not gaps at all!** Thus in the final analysis the argument is completely without foundation (1967, p. 3, emp. added).

Edwin Theile, the man who unlocked the mystery of Old Testament chronology, declared: “We know that God regards chronology as important, for He has put so much of it into His Word” (1977, p. 7).

During his seminar in Manteca, California John was asked how he could argue for a vast age of the solar system since the Earth, and the solar system, came into existence the same week as the human family. Further, since the genealogical records of the Bible indicate that mankind has been here for only a few thousand years, and not billions, this would suggest that the solar system was not billions of years old.

Brother Clayton responded by claiming that the purpose of the genealogies was merely to reflect a line of ancestry, and not to establish chronology. A follow-up question was asked: “Why, then, were **numbers** included in those ancient accounts?” The establishment of generational lineage could have been accomplished quite readily without any need to include chronological data regarding the patriarchs.

What followed was truly sad. John launched into a disoriented, rambling discussion concerning the figurative use of numbers in the Bible, even appealing to the book of Revelation (as if that had anything at all to do with Old Testament chronology). Clearly, he was rattled and had no earthly idea about how to respond to the question. The question still stands unanswered.

(2) Here is another extremely important point that John has overlooked. The Bible **is** concerned with chronology. If someone believes that the Bible is not interested in chronological matters, let them spend some time studying the lineages of the Hebrew kings in the Old Testament. James Jordan has noted:

Chronology **is** of concern to the writers of the Bible. From this perspective we should be **surprised** if the Bible did not include chronological data regarding the period from Creation to Abraham, especially since such data can now be obtained from no other source. That chronology is of concern to the Bible (and to its Author) can also be seen from the often difficult and confusing chronology of the Kings of Israel. Thus, we find that it is the intention of the Bible to provide us with chronology from Abraham to the Exile. Some of that chronology is given in summary statements...but some is also given interspersed in the histories of the Kings. Is it therefore surprising or unreasonable that some should be given along with genealogies as well? (1979/1980, p. 21, emp. in orig.).

John Clayton wants people to believe that the Bible is not concerned with chronology so that he can insert his own into the biblical text. But the genealogies clearly prevent that. Indeed, those genealogies provide such tremendous protection for the text that there simply is no way around the message they tell. That message is this: **man has been on the Earth since the beginning of the creation, and that “beginning” was not very long ago!** The proof which establishes that statement as true is as follows.

(3) Concerning Adam and Eve, Jesus declared: “But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them” (Mark 10:6; cf. Matthew 19:4). Christ thus dated the first human couple from the creation week. The word in the Greek for “beginning” is *arché*, and is used of “**absolute**, denoting **the beginning of the world** and of its history, the beginning of creation.” The word in the Greek for “creation” is *ktiseos*, and denotes “**the sum-total of what God has created**” (Cremer, 1962, pp. 113,114,381, emp. in orig.).

Unquestionably, then, Jesus placed the first humans at the very dawn of creation. To reject this clear truth, one either must contend that: (a) Christ knew the Universe was in existence billions of years prior to man, but, accommodating Himself to the ignorances of that age, deliberately misrepresented the situation; or (b) the Lord Himself, living in pre-scientific times, was uninformed about the matter (despite the fact that He was there as Creator—Colossians 1:16). Either of these allegations, of course, is blasphemous.

(4) Paul, in Romans 1:20, affirmed the following: “For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse.” The apostle declared that **from the creation of the world** the invisible things of God have been: (a) clearly seen; and (b) perceived (from *noéo*, used of rational, human intelligence) so that some would be without excuse.

**Who** observed and perceived these things that were made from the beginning of the world? If no man was there for billions of years, because man “is a relative newcomer to the Earth,” who was observing—with rational, human intelligence—these phenomena? An amoeba? A dinosaur? Without question Paul was contending that **man** has existed since the creation of the world and has enjoyed the capacity to observe and comprehend the truth which says that a Creator stands behind the creation; accordingly, those who refuse to glorify Him as Creator are without excuse. We might also add that it is inexcusable for one who professes to believe the Bible as God’s inspired revelation to ignore such verses as these, in clear deference to theories of evolutionary geology.

(5) In Luke 11:45-52, the Lord rebuked the rebellious Jews of His day and foretold the horrible destruction that would come upon them. He charged them with following in the footsteps of their ancestors and hence announced that upon them would come “the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world.” Then, with parallelism characteristic of Hebrew expression, Christ rephrased the thought by saying, “from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah.”

Jesus thus placed the murder of Abel back near the “foundation of the world.” Granted, Abel’s death occurred some years after the initial creation, but it was close enough to that creation for Jesus to state that it was associated with “the beginning of the world.” If the world came into existence several billion years before the first family, how could the shedding of human blood be declared by the Lord to extend back to the “foundation of the world”?

(6) Brother Clayton, on more than one occasion, has suggested that there is no evidence as to how long Adam and Eve were in the Garden, and that untold years may well have elapsed during that time period. He has written: “Every evidence we have biblically indicates that mankind’s beginning in the Garden of Eden **was not a short period** which involved one man and one woman” (1980d, p. 5, emp. added). While the Bible does not give a **specific** time as to how long they were in the Garden, we know it was not long. This is revealed by the fact that Christ, referring to the curse of death upon the human family, said that the devil “was a murderer **from the beginning**” (John 8:44).

(7) John has suggested that Adam and Eve **had** to have been in the Garden a long time because after they came out, it was said of Cain that “he builded a city” (Genesis 4:17). And, John opined, that is something “which you cannot do with you and your wife” (1980d, p. 5). The language in the text under consideration, however, does not indicate a modern, twentieth-century city as John imagines. The Hebrew word is broad in meaning, and may refer to anything from a large, sprawling city to a mere encampment.

Literally, it means “place of look-out, especially as it was fortified.” As Willis has observed, in commenting on Genesis 4:17: “However, a ‘city’ is not necessarily a large, impressive metropolis, but may be a small unimposing village of relatively few inhabitants” (1979, p. 155). This was a Bedouin city, probably composed of tents. And, as everyone will admit, two boy scouts can erect a tent, so likely Cain and his wife were able to accomplish such a task as well.

(8) John has suggested that man is a “recent addition” to the Earth. Isaiah implied exactly the opposite when he asked, “Has it not been told you **from the beginning**? Have you not understood **from the Foundations of the earth**?” (40:21). Apparently Isaiah and John Clayton did not derive their information from the same source.

We feel that the above information is sufficient to show the error of John’s teachings on the age of the Earth and man’s existence on it. More will be said about related matters in the section of this book on his Modified Gap Theory.



## CHAPTER 11

### JOHN CLAYTON ON THE GENESIS ACCOUNT

“Genesis 2 is not a historical account.”

—John Clayton, 1979c, p. 3

“Now it [Genesis 2] is historical, and it is historically correct. But it is not primarily a historical document the way Genesis 1 is.”

—John Clayton, 1980a

Without a doubt, one of the most critical, if not **the** most critical, areas in the controversy over John Clayton’s teachings has to do with his unorthodox view of the Genesis account of creation and those matters throughout the remainder of the Bible related to it. A man’s attitude toward the Genesis record will affect his attitude toward every other area of Scripture. G. Richard Culp was correct when he remarked: “One who doubts the Genesis account will not be the same man he once was, for his attitude toward Holy Scripture has been eroded by false teaching. Genesis is repeatedly referred to in the New Testament, and it cannot be separated from the total Christian message” (1975, pp. 160-161).

We believe the evidence clearly establishes that this is exactly what happened to John Clayton. He set out, early in life as a babe in Christ, to force the Genesis account of creation to conform to his own private theology, which was based on the erroneous instruction he had received at the hands of infidels and theistic evolutionists who had no respect for the Word of God. In so doing, he ultimately changed his views toward a multitude of other critical passages of Scripture, and the end result has been ruinous. He now believes, and advocates that others believe, false concepts that have as their logical consequences: (a) denigrating the deity of Christ (as does his statement that Jesus “violated the Sabbath”); (b) impugning the nature of God (as he does when he suggests that “evil existed **before God began**”); and (c) ignoring biblical concepts of New Testament worship (as he does when he suggests that “some passages might be able to be done with an instrument”).

Rather than set aside his evolution-based presuppositions, John has chosen instead to nurture them. The price he has paid in so doing has been high indeed. He now finds himself so caught up in his own false teachings that he will not listen to a conservative approach to the Bible. He therefore continues to sow the seeds of compromise, all the while becoming more and more entrenched in his own private theology—a theology unknown to and unauthorized by the Word of God.

#### GENESIS AS “NON-HISTORICAL”

The seeds of what eventually would grow into John’s system of compromise were sown more than a decade-and-a-half ago. In the October 1976 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John penned an article by the title of “‘Flat Earth’ Bible Study Techniques.” In that article, which was a scathing rebuke of all of God’s people who dared to accept the Genesis account at face value, John declared that any view which held that Exodus 20:11 was speaking of a creation accomplished in six literal days was “a very shallow conclusion” which, according to him, was “inconsistent with the Genesis record as well as with other parts of the Bible” (1976c, p. 5). He even went so far as to suggest that if a person actually believed Exodus 20:11 meant what it said—that God created the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them in six days—it was comparable to teaching the old, antiquated view that the Earth was flat!

Some among us were not willing to let that kind of accusation go unanswered. During the years that followed, many in the brotherhood pressed the issue. Finally, such pressure led John to attempt a defense in his own behalf. In a letter to the editor of the *Rocky Mountain Christian* magazine, John attempted to remove himself from the troublesome position in which he found himself because of his earlier statement.

Yet all he accomplished was to make the matter worse. In his own defense, he said: “I have been accused of not believing in Exodus 20:11. What I have pointed out is that Exodus 20:11 is a quote of Genesis 2 and **Genesis 2 is not a historical account**” (1979c, p. 3, emp. added).

Now John found himself in **really** hot water with many brethren who hardly could believe what they were reading. Here was a man traveling around the country, attempting to teach people on the Genesis account of creation, and he didn’t even believe a portion of that account was **historical!** Likely, none among us ever will know the amount of static he received from concerned brethren after making such a statement. At any rate, when he eventually released the audio tape in which he responded to the first edition of this review, he tried to redeem himself, but once again did more harm than good. Listen to his statement:

First of all, I believe Genesis 1 is a literal, historical account. Its purpose is to tell us the history of the earth. But I do not believe that Genesis 2 is that kind of historical document.... Now it is historical, and it is historically correct. But it is not primarily a historical document the way Genesis 1 is, in my view (1980a).

Genesis 2 is historical, and historically correct, but it is not primarily a historical document? This statement by John then led him to offer a discussion on the difference between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. In speaking of Moses, he said: “**Only an idiot would write a history and then re-write it—and especially re-write it backwards.**”

It matters not how John tries to rationalize all of this. The implication of his statement is clear: if both Genesis 1 and 2 are the same kind of literal, historical narrative, then an idiot’s mentality is reflected! Here, in summary form, is John’s argument.

(1) If Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are the same kind of literal, historical documents, then they are contradictory and reflect an idiot’s mentality.

(2) But they are not really contradictory (hence, not idiotic) since they are not the same kind of writing; Genesis 1 is literal history, Genesis 2 is not.

(3) Since Genesis 2 is not a literal, historical account, if Exodus 20:11 is taken from Genesis 2 (as John wrongly assumes it is), then it is not literal history either.

(4) But Exodus 20:11 **is** based on Genesis 2 (his wrong assumption).

(5) Therefore, Exodus 20:11 is **not literal history** and we are not obliged to believe that the creation occurred in six, literal, historical days.

John continually attempts to teach people in this way. In the June 1977 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John said: “This is, incidentally, why the order of life in Chapter II is different than in Chapter I—it has a different **non-historical** purpose” (1977f, p. 7, emp. added).

From the biblical perspective, however, the Mosaic affirmation—that in six days Jehovah made the heavens, the earth, the seas, and everything in them (Exodus 20:11)—is a clear reference to Genesis 1, **not Genesis 2**. And so, if Exodus 20:11 is based on Genesis 1 (which it is), and if Genesis 1 is literal history (which Clayton admits), then Exodus 20:11 is a literal, historical account—and the entire creation was accomplished in six, literal days. Our brother is hopelessly entangled once more. If Genesis 2 is not historical, these questions are appropriate.

(1) Did God literally form Adam from the dust of the ground?

(2) Was the Garden of Eden a real, historical place?

(3) Was there an actual tree of knowledge of good and evil?

(4) Did Adam really name all the animals?

(5) Was Eve really made from Adam’s side?

If Genesis 2 is not historical, none of these questions can be answered with certainty. This is nothing short of rank modernism and a careful reader, studying thoroughly brother Clayton’s writings, easily can see how he has been influenced by it. Observe, for example, the following comparisons:

“...we should never have to feel that we must defend Genesis 1 and 2 on scientific grounds. The basic theme of these articles is not the how and the what of creation, but the who and why.”

Genesis “was designed to tell all men that God created things. Not when, or how, or where, or why, but simply that God did it.”

The first statement was made by John Newpher, a liberal theologian of the Lutheran Church, who denies that the Genesis account is literally true (1963). The second statement is from John Clayton (1978i, p. 11). Where is the difference between the two sentiments?

One of John’s most serious errors, of course, is his failure to recognize that an account may be presented **out of chronological sequence** and yet still be **literal and historical**. Acts 10, regarding the outpouring of the Spirit upon Cornelius, is not totally chronological in arrangement (cf. Acts 11, especially verse 4), but who would deny that it is **literal history**? Similarly, the fact that Genesis 2 is not arranged from a strictly chronological viewpoint **has nothing to do with the fact that it is literal history**.

### JOHN’S “MODIFIED GAP THEORY”

Since, as we have established, brother Clayton believes that the Earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old (1990a, p. 130)—the standard evolutionary estimate—he must, in some fashion, accommodate the Genesis creation account to this concept. Accordingly, John has invented what is now commonly known as the “Modified Gap Theory” (see: Thompson, 1977, pp. 192-197; McIver, 1988, p. 22). Here is basically how this unusual twist on the standard Gap Theory works. John imagines that:

Genesis 1:1 is an undated verse. No time element is given and no details of what the Earth looked like are included. It could have taken place in no time at all, or **God may have used eons of time** to accomplish his objectives. **I suggest that all geological phenomena except the creation of warm-blooded life were accomplished during this time**. There was no way God could have described amoebas, bacteria, virus [sic], or dinosaurs to the ancient Hebrew, and yet these forms of life were vital to the coal, oil and gas God knew man would need. Thus God created these things but did not describe them just as He did not describe a majority of the 110 million species of life on this planet. Changes took place in the Earth (but no gap destruction) until God began the formation of man’s world with birds, whales, cattle and man in the literal days of Genesis (1976a, pp. 147-148, emp. added).

John has worked on this concept for well over twenty years. As he has done so, he has modified it in order to make it fit whatever data happen to be in vogue at the time. In lesson number nine of his 1990 *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*, John elaborated on what all of this means.

Not only does the first verse give us the creation of celestial objects, but of a **functional earth** itself.... By the end of Genesis 1:1 there was a functional, living, working earth. If you had stood upon the earth at this point in time, you would have recognized it. Let us once again remind you that how long God chose to use to accomplish this creation is not revealed in this passage.... It is very possible that a living ecosystem operated in Genesis 1:1 to produce the earth. Bacteria may have swarmed in the oceans and giant plants may have lived in great swamps. Dinosaurs may have roamed freely accomplishing their purpose in being. The purpose of all of this would have been to prepare the earth for man. This living ecosystem would have produced the coal, oil, gas, and the like, as well as providing the basis of man’s ultimate food supply! (1990g, pp. 3,4).

Thus, in capsule form, John is saying that when the Bible says God created, what it really means is that, over eons of time, God “prepared” an Earth for man. And He did not create **everything** to exist on that “first” Earth. For example, there were no warm-blooded creatures, according to John’s Modified Gap Theory. And, since man is warm-blooded, naturally, he wasn’t there either. John wrote: “I submit to you that Genesis 1:1 is not a summary verse. It is a record of God’s action which produced an Earth ready for man’s use. I further submit for your consideration that **some time may be involved in this verse and that natural processes may have been used** as well as miraculous ones to prepare the Earth for man” (1982c, p. 5, emp. added).

Clayton also explained why man was not a part of this original creation, according to his theory: “The week described in Exodus refers to the week described in Genesis 1:5-31. The week in Genesis 1:5-31 describes the creation of man and a few forms with which man is familiar, but it is **not** a total description of every living thing that does [sic] or ever has existed on Earth” (1976c, pp. 5-6, emp. in orig.). Exodus 20:11 explicitly affirms that **everything** that was made by God was completed **within the six days** of the initial week. Brother Clayton begs to differ. He asserts that many things had been created (over a vast epoch of time) long before the creation week ever started. And he expects intelligent brethren to believe him when he denies teaching a modified form of the Gap Theory. Since, as we have already discussed above, John does not believe that Exodus 20:11 refers to all of the creative activity of God, but instead refers only to that which occurred in Genesis 1:5-31, he has suggested that Moses “**avoids** the creation question and concentrates on his own purpose” (1976c, p. 5, emp. added). Placed into chart form by Clayton himself, the Modified Gap Theory looks like this:

CREATION			JUDGMENT				
	RESOURCE ECOSYSTEM		CHRONOMETRY SET UP			ETERNITY	
EARTH SUN MOON	AMOEBIA BACTERIA WATER PLANTS		GEN. 1:14-19	GEN. 1:20-28	ADAM		NOW
MATTER STARS GALAXIES ETC.	DINOSAURS ETC.			CREATION WEEK			CHRIST
				BIRDS WATER MAMMALS MAMMALS MAN			
PRECAMBRIAN	MESOZOIC		CENOZOIC ±				

Figure 11-1  
Summary of  
John Clayton’s  
Modified Gap  
Theory

### A RESPONSE AND REFUTATION

Before we offer a response to, and refutation of, the unbiblical view being es-

poused by brother Clayton, let us make the following two observations. First, look carefully at John’s chart (see above). Notice that according to **his** theory, the “creation week” does not commence until Genesis 1:14ff. Since this section of Genesis 1 has to do with the events of day **four** and afterward, brother Clayton’s “week” of creative activity has only **three days**. There is no such thing, however, as a three-day “week.”

Second, John does not like being saddled with any label that identifies his false views for what they are. He bristles at being “boxed in,” to use his own words. But because his Bible knowledge is so limited, he finds it difficult to refute the charges leveled against him. Therefore, in attempting to skirt the issues, he has sometimes been known to answer charges that have not even been made. The story surrounding his Modified Gap Theory provides a good example of this very thing.

In the first edition of this review, we called attention to brother Clayton’s Modified Gap Theory, and showed why it was patently unscriptural. When he produced his taped response to our review, since he could not answer our charges, he simply answered a charge no one had thought to make. He says, “You’ll notice that I’m accused of advocating both the Gap Theory and the Day-Age Theory there, and of course neither one of those am I advocating.... But I would like to emphasize that I do not in any way, shape, or form embrace the Gap Theory” (1980a).

Well of course he doesn’t accept the **standard** Gap Theory. No one ever said that he did. The charge against him was that he accepted the **Modified** Gap Theory (in fact, he is the one who invented the theory in the first place, in his book, *The Source*). The standard Gap Theory suggests that during the alleged time

interval between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, the Earth was destroyed during a battle between Satan and God. John is on record as stating that he does not accept that so-called “gap destruction.” We never said that he did. But we did charge him with advocating and defending the Modified Gap Theory. And that charge stands.

That has not, however, kept him from attempting to use this same argument against others who challenge him. One particular example is worth considering. During late 1991 and early 1992, Buddy Grieb corresponded extensively with John. Buddy specifically asked about John’s Modified Gap Theory. On January 14, 1992 brother Clayton wrote Buddy a very pointed letter, in which he stated: “I don’t believe you understand our position, even yet.... There is **no gap!**” (1992a, p. 1, emp. in orig.).

**No gap?** Surely brother Clayton doesn’t think that people are going to believe that, especially in light of the evidence that is available. Listen to John as he speaks on his tape, *Evolution’s Proof of God*: “In Genesis 1:2 I’m told by the Hebrew scholars that the most accurate reading is that the earth ‘became without form and void’ and some have suggested that maybe **a tremendous number of years passed between the first part of Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2**” (undated, emp. added). John went on in the tape to defend that position. We wonder: what would a normal person call that “tremendous number of years” between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2? A “gap” perhaps?

Also, John says he’s told by the “Hebrew scholars” (try asking him for the names of those scholars; brother Grieb did, and John refused to provide them) that the “most accurate reading [of Genesis 1:2] is that the earth **became** without form and void.” Old Testament scholar Harold Stigers has explained why this is not true:

The construction of “became void,” etc. is not justified by Hebrew syntax. When the verb “to be” (*hayah*) is to be constructed as “became,” the addition of the prepositional lamedh is required with the following word to provide this meaning, and this preposition is absent here (1976, p. 49).

Incidentally, according to John’s theological scheme, during those eons of time prior to the “creation week,” God was **building up** a “resource ecosystem” by the use of amoebas, bacteria, water, plants, dinosaurs, etc. (see his chart on Genesis 1:1). However, at other times, when attempting to establish his Modified Gap Theory, brother Clayton has contended that the “most accurate reading” of Genesis 1:2 is that the Earth “**became** without form and void” (see quote above). Which is it? Was the Earth **generating**, or **degenerating**, during this period? It cannot be both. John’s attempt to deny that he advocates the Modified Gap Theory has failed. And, his attempt to buttress his private theology with so-called “Hebrew scholars” likewise has failed.

In the paragraphs above, you may remember that we quoted John as saying that in Exodus 20:11 Moses “**avoids** the creation question and concentrates on his own purpose” (1976c, p. 5, emp. added). We would like to address that point here. John has been extremely careless in making such a comment. The purpose of Moses’ statement was not **merely** to establish the Sabbath law; it also was an **explanation as to the why** of the Sabbath. Why observe one day in seven? Because in six days God created the Earth and its creatures, and on the seventh day rested! To say that Moses here “avoids” the creation question is erroneous. The divine writer did not avoid a reference to the **Creator**; “Jehovah” is specified. Nor did he avoid referring to the Lord’s **action**; he noted that God “made” these things.

John’s Modified Gap Theory flatly contradicts Exodus 20:11 and Genesis 1. For example, John has argued that the creation of fish (cold-blooded creatures) occurred in Genesis 1:1, whereas according to Moses, they were created on the **fifth day** (Genesis 1:20-23). The Genesis record states that creeping things (which would include both insects and reptiles) were brought into existence on the sixth day (1:21,24), but John’s Modified Gap Theory places them in the time period before the creation week. Our brother just rearranges the Genesis record to fit his own private theology, which is formed from evolutionary presuppositions.

## CHAPTER 12

### CLAYTON'S NEW VOCABULARY

“The word *asah* refers to processes that involve change in things already created but do not involve the process of bringing something from nothing.”

—John Clayton, 1990i, p. 7

“You [Jehovah] have made [*asah*] heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts...and the host of heaven worships you.”

—Nehemiah 9:6

**T**he only way that John can hold to his Modified Gap Theory, and his personal brand of theistic evolution, is to convince people that **his way** of translating Genesis is the **correct way**. He has been attempting to do just that for over thirty years. And in order to succeed, he absolutely must give people a **new vocabulary**. This is the case with many false teachers. They realize that they never can reach the masses by using correct, biblical terminology. So they invent new terms, or offer drastic reinterpretations of the old ones, so that they can make their concepts palatable.

We find this interesting, because John has little use for those people who speak “outside their field of specialization.” He is on record as stating, in fact, that “when a person is quoted as an authority, he or she should be trained in the field he/she is quoted in” (1981a, p. 12). He has gone into print, urging people to ask, “What are the credentials of the person making the claim? Is he working in a field he is qualified to work in? What is his reputation and is he working for or with a group that has a vested interest of some kind in the work he is doing?” (1983e, p. 5). Then, John laments that some people attempt to make their data conform to their conclusions, instead of the other way around. He even admits that “the same kind of problem and the same lack of credibility exists in religious teachers and lecturers.... **We sometimes see the meaning of Greek and Hebrew words deliberately distorted to support a preconceived religious idea**” (1983e, p. 3, emp. added).

If a man ever were asked to provide a perfect description of himself, he could not do better than John has done here. First, not only does he have no formal Bible training (as we have documented previously), but he has admitted: “I personally could not get up on my soap box and maintain this because I am not a Hebrew scholar and **I’m not qualified in this**” (undated, *Questions and Answers: Number 1* [taped lecture], emp. added). Second, if someone were to ask John about the credentials which **he** possesses that allow him to instruct others on Greek and Hebrew, what do you think his answer might be? If they inquired about whether or not he was “working in a field he is qualified to work in,” how do you think he would respond? Third, **John is the man** who has “**deliberately distorted**” the **Hebrew and Greek words of the Bible to “support a preconceived religious idea.”** Here is the documentation behind our claim.

In article after article, John has tried to explain why people need a new vocabulary. Anyone doubting that should examine his articles in the following *Does God Exist?* magazines: October 1976 (pp. 2-7); December 1977 (pp. 7-10); May 1979 (pp. 2-5); January/February 1989 (pp. 4-7); November/December 1989 (pp. 12-14); July/August 1990 (pp. 5-12); and January/February 1991 (pp. 6-10). We would like to examine this new vocabulary, and explain why it is both unnecessary and unscriptural—and therefore should be rejected.

John’s entire Modified Gap Theory, with its accompanying off-beat theistic evolution, rests upon the interpretation of two Hebrew words found in Genesis 1. Those words are *bara* and *asah*. Here is what John has said about them, and why they are so important.

In the Hebrew culture and in the Hebrew language there is a difference between something being created and something being made. The idea of creation involves a miraculous act on the part of God. It is not something that man can do, nor is it something that can occur naturally.... The Hebrew word used in Genesis 1 to describe this process is the word *bara*. As one might expect, this word is not used extensively in the Bible, in fact, it is only used in verses 1, 21, and 27 in Genesis. The other concept in the Hebrew culture and in the Hebrew language that is used in reference to things coming into existence in-

volves the process of producing something naturally. The idea is that something came into existence because of planning, wisdom, and intelligence, but not as a miraculous act of God. Many times acts of men are described in this way. The Hebrew word *asah* is the main Hebrew word translated this way in Genesis 1. It is vital to a proper understanding of Genesis that these two words not be confused because much understanding is lost and considerable contradiction with the scientific evidence is generated when the words are not distinguished from each other (1991c, pp. 6-7).

John also has written: “We have pointed out that the Hebrew word *bara* normally means to create something out of nothing while the word *asah* usually implies the re-shaping of something that was already in existence.... the normal use of the word *bara* and the normal use of the word *asah* are distinctly different and this difference is important in one’s interpretation of Genesis 1” (1979g, pp. 2-5). Exactly why is this distinction important to John? Examine this summary, and it will become clear.

(1) God initiated the Big Bang, and the Universe developed according to evolutionary theories (1991c, p. 8).

(2) The initial creation (*bara*) included such things as the Sun, Moon, Earth, stars, etc. (1991c, p. 8). As we have discussed already, John would put certain living creatures in this period of “pre-history,” including such things as dinosaurs, bacteria, etc., but no warm-blooded animals or man.

(3) Sometime after the initial creation, God then began to form and make (*asah*) things. As Clayton has written: “It is important to recognize that this process of creating...is described in Genesis 1:1-3. Verse 4ff deal with something all together different—the making, forming, and shaping of the created earth. Creation does not occur again until animal life is described in verses 20 and 21” (1991c, pp. 8-9).

(4) Beginning in the time period called Day 5, according to John, God began to make new things (1991c, p. 9), which presumably would include marine life, birds, and man, but would exclude light, oceans, atmosphere, dry land, planets, stars, moons, and beasts of the field—all of which supposedly were “created” (*bara*) in Genesis 1:1.

(5) Man’s spiritual part then was created (*bara*) in God’s image (1:27), and his physical part was formed (*yatsar*, not *bara*) from the dust of the ground (1991c, p. 9).

(6) By the end of Genesis 1, God’s “creating” and “making” were completed, but “there is no indication in the Bible that the seventh day ever ended” (1990i, p. 11).

The scenario involved in what you have just read is necessary, from John’s viewpoint, in order to make his Modified Gap Theory work. Here, now, is what is wrong with all of this.

First, John’s distinction of the alleged difference between *bara* and *asah* is completely artificial, and he has admitted that this is the case. In the May 1979 issue of *Does God Exist?*, he stated: “**Because there are a few isolated exceptions where the context seems to indicate that the word *bara* or *asah* has been used in a different way than the application we have just discussed, there are those who maintain that one cannot scripturally maintain the applications of these words as we have presented them in reference to Genesis 1. The Hebrew language, as most of us recognize, is a language which can be interpreted only in its context**” (1979g, p. 4, emp. added).

In lesson seven of his *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*, John similarly was forced to admit: “Some may object to this superliteral interpretation of *bara* and *asah* by responding that there are exceptions to the usages I have described in the previous paragraphs. **Such a criticism is valid** (1990h, p. 3, emp. added).

Second, the “few isolated exceptions” as John calls them turn out to be neither few nor isolated. Furthermore, they obliterate his artificial distinction in regard to these two words. The truth of the matter is that *bara* and *asah* often are used **interchangeably** throughout the Old Testament, and do not always have the strict interpretation that John has attempted to place on them. Notice the following.

(1) John has written: “As one might expect, this word [*bara*—WJ/BT] is not used extensively in the Bible, in fact, it is only used in verses 1,21, and 27 in Genesis” (1991c, pp. 6-7). This statement is completely untrue. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* cites no fewer than 11 instances of *bara* in the book of Genesis. Five minutes’ worth of research would have prevented such an inaccuracy. Additionally, *bara* and its derivatives occur 40 times in the Old Testament (apart from Genesis). In over 30 instances, it means “create, shape, form, or fashion.”

(2) John insists, according to his new vocabulary, that *bara* **always** must mean “to create something from nothing” (1990i, p. 7). John—not knowing any Hebrew, by his own admission—once again has erred. Noted scholars Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary, *The Pentateuch*, correctly observed:

When *bara* is in the Qal (Kal) stem in the Hebrew, as in Genesis 1:1, it always means to create, and is only applied to a divine creation, the production of that which had no existence before. It is never joined with an accusative of material, **although it does not exclude a pre-existent material unconditionally**, but is used for the creation of man (v. 27, ch. v. 1,2), and of everything new that God creates, whether in the kingdom of nature (Numbers 16:30) or of that of grace (Exodus 34:10; Psalms 51:10, etc.) (1971, 1:47, emp. added).

There is clear evidence that John knows that his efforts to make *bara* represent **only** that “which has been created from nothing” are incorrect. Genesis 1:27 is the passage that reveals the error of his interpretation: “So God created (*bara*) man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” If John is correct in his assertion that *bara* can be used only to mean to “create something from nothing” (as in his quotation above), then the obvious conclusion is that in Genesis 1:27 God created man and woman **from nothing**. But, of course, that conflicts with Genesis 2:7, which specifically states that God formed man from the dust of the ground.

How has John tried to fix his obvious error? He has suggested—in keeping with the goals of his new vocabulary—that Genesis 1:27 **really** is saying that when God “created” (*bara*) man, He actually created not man’s body, but **his soul** from nothing. This explanation, however, is wrong, and easily is shown to be so by a simple reading of the text. Genesis 1:27 tells the reader **what** was created—“**male and female** created he them.” Do souls come in “male” and “female”? No serious Bible scholar ever would assert such. Souls are spirits, and as such are sexless, (e.g., as Jesus said angels were—Matthew 22:29-30). Yet John’s interpretation would imply male and female souls.

(3) Taking the creation passages at face value and in their proper context, it is obvious that no distinction is made between the act of creating and the act of making. For example, God’s activity during this first week is described in terms other than creating or making. This includes the phrase, “Let there be,” which is used to usher in each new day and the things created in that day. Also, note that God “divided” the light from the darkness, and He “set” the light-giving objects in the expanse of the sky. How would John’s “new vocabulary” deal with these matters?

(4) There is ample and compelling evidence that the words *bara* and *asah* are used **interchangeably** throughout the Old Testament. John, of course, adamantly denies that this can be the case. He has stated that “it is difficult to believe that there would be two words used to convey the same process” (1990i, p. 7). Think seriously about his objection for just a moment. Why is it difficult to imagine that a writer would use two different words to describe exactly the same process? Writers commonly employ different words to describe the same thing(s), thereby providing “stylistic relief”—a grammatical construct which avoids the needless repetition that occurs by using the same words again and again. For over a hundred years, conservative scholars have made a similar point to proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis, arguing that there is no reasonable way to dissect the Old Testament on the basis of the words *elohim* (“God”) and *yahweh* (“Lord” or “Jehovah”).

The Bible writers often employed different words to describe the very same thing(s). For example, if one reads casually through the four Gospels, he will find that Christ was killed, crucified, and slain. Where is the real distinction? The New Testament writers often spoke of the church, the body, and the kingdom, which everyone acknowledges are the same thing. Where is the distinction? Why does John find it so difficult to accept that different words can be used to describe the same thing or event?

Furthermore, the Scriptures are replete with examples which prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that *bara* and *asah* **are** used interchangeably. For example, in Psalm 148:1-5, the writer spoke of the “creation” (*bara*) of the angels. Yet when Nehemiah addressed the creation of angels, as he did in Nehemiah 9:6, he employed the word *asah* to describe it. In Genesis 1:1, as John has admitted, the text speaks of God “creating” (*bara*) the Earth. Yet again, when Nehemiah spoke of that same event (9:6), he employed the word *asah* to do so. When Moses wrote of the “creation” of man, he used *bara* (Genesis 1:27). But one verse before that (1:26), he spoke of the “making” (*asah*) of man. Moses also employed the two words **in the same verse** (Genesis 2:4) when he said: “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were **created** [*bara*], in the day that Jehovah **made** [*asah*] earth and heaven.”



John has suggested that the Earth was **created** (*bara*) from nothing in Genesis 1:1. But Moses said in Genesis 2:4 that the Earth was **made** (*asah*). John is on record as stating that the use of *asah* can refer **only** to that which is made from something already in existence. Does he then believe when Moses speaks of the Earth being “made” that it was formed from something already in existence?

And what about Exodus 20:11 in this context? Moses wrote: “For in six days the Lord made [*asah*] heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day.” John says that speaks only of God’s “forming” from something already in existence. But notice that the verse specifically speaks of the **heaven** and the Earth and the **sea and all that in them is**. Does John therefore contend that God formed the heavens from something already in existence? Exodus 20:11 speaks of everything made by God in the six days of creation. Yet even John has admitted that “creation (*bara*) does not occur again until animal life is described in verses 20 and 21.” How can this be? Moses specifically stated that God “made” (*asah*) everything in the creation week. Now John says there was “creation” (*bara*) going on in that week. Even John Clayton admits that there are times when the two words describe the same events during the same time period! To our knowledge, one verse with which brother Clayton never has dealt is Nehemiah 9:6.

Thou art Jehovah, even thou alone; thou hast made [*asah*] heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon, the seas, and all that is in them, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

When we met with him on July 20, 1991, this was one of the major points of discussion. We asked him how, in light of what he taught on *bara* and *asah*, Nehemiah could employ the word *asah* to speak of the creation of such things as the heavens, angels, the Earth, and other such entities that John says could have come about only through a *bara*-type creation? John was stunned. He could offer no suitable answer. The following quotation from Weston W. Fields in his classic work, *Unformed and Unfilled*, explains why.

While the passages in Genesis cited by one of the lexicons...mention only the making of the firmament, sun, moon, stars, and animals, it must be carefully marked by the reader that in Nehemiah 9:6 the objects of God’s making (*asa*) include the **heavens**, the **host of heavens**, and the **earth**, and **everything contained in and on it**, and the **seas and everything they contain**, as well as the **hosts of heaven** (probably angels).

Now this is a very singular circumstance, for those who argue for the distinctive usage of *asa* throughout Scripture must, in order to maintain any semblance of consistency, never admit that the same creative acts can be referred to by both the verb *bara* and the verb *asa*. Thus, since Genesis 1:1 says that God **create** (*bara*) the **heavens** and the **earth**, and Exodus 20:11 and Nehemiah 9:6 contend that he **made** (*asa*) them, there must be **two distinct events** in view here. In order to be consistent and at the same time deal with the evidence, gap theorists must postulate a time when God not only “appointed” or “made to appear” the **firmament**, the **sun**, the **moon** and **stars**, and the **beasts**, but there also must have been a time when he only **appointed** the **heavens**, the **heaven of heavens**, the **angels** (hosts), the **earth**, **everything on the earth**, the **sea** and **everything in the sea**!

So that, while *asa* is quite happily applied to the firmament, sun, moon, stars, and the beasts, its further application to **everything else contained in the universe**, and, indeed, the universe itself (which the language in both Exodus 20:11 and Nehemiah 9:6 is intended to convey) creates a monstrosity of interpretation which should serve as a reminder to those who try to fit Hebrew words into English molds, that to strait-jacket these words is to destroy the possibility of coherent interpretation completely! (1976, pp. 61-62, emp. in orig.).

What a brilliant assessment. In this one quotation, Dr. Fields has described John Clayton just as if he were addressing the very issues John has propagated (he wasn’t—he actually was addressing the arguments of the famed Gap theorist, Arthur C. Custance, whose materials are similar in many ways to John’s). And, not only has he **described** John’s views, but he also has shown how **erroneous** they are. *Bara* and *asah* simply cannot be put into “strait-jackets.”

(5) Dr. Fields mentioned that trying to make *bara* and *asah* refer to completely separate acts makes a “monstrosity of interpretation.” That is exactly what John Clayton’s attempted usage of these words has accomplished. Remember that John has stated plainly that at the end of Genesis 1:1 there was a **fully functional** Earth in existence, complete with various kinds of life teeming on it. It remained that way for eons of time, he has suggested. If that is the case—based on his *bara/asah* argument, how would he explain the following problem?

John teaches that the “heavenly bodies” (Sun, Moon, stars, etc.) were a part of the *bara*-type creation of Genesis 1:1. But Exodus 20:11 specifically states that they were “made” (*asah*). Are we to believe that they were **both** “created” and “made”? Yes, that is exactly what John has advocated. Listen carefully to his own words:

Applied in this literal sense to Genesis 1, one would find that the **heaven and earth** were brought into existence miraculously in Genesis 1:1. This would include the sun, moon, stars, galaxies, black holes, nebula, comets, asteroids and planets.... Verses 14-19 would not describe the creation of the sun, moon and stars, but the reshaping or rearranging of them to a finished form (1989a, p. 6).

How were the Sun, Moon, and stars (“created,” John says, in Genesis 1:1) assisting the Earth in being “fully functional” when they themselves had not even been “rearranged to a finished form”? Is anyone really listening to what John Clayton is saying? One could not have a fully functional Earth without the Sun and Moon, of course. Yet by his own admission Genesis 1:14-19 speaks of God doing **something** to those heavenly bodies. Bible scholars for centuries have accepted that it is in these verses that God is described as bringing the heavenly bodies into existence. But no, says John that’s not true. They were in existence from Genesis 1:1, but they had not yet been “rearranged to a finished form.” That would not occur until billions of years later. How, in the name of common sense, could these **unfinished** heavenly bodies have been of any use to a **functional Earth**? How could the Earth be “functional” unless the Sun, Moon, and other planets were “functional” as well? And if they were “functional” in Genesis 1:1, why “rearrange” them?

John is on record as stating: “...when we look at those places where the word ‘make’ is used, the context leaves absolutely no doubt about what the intention of the author is for that passage” (1979g, p. 5). We could not agree more. There is **absolutely no doubt** about how Moses and the other Bible writers employed these words. They used them just as any author would employ them—interchangeably.

## CHAPTER 13

### “THOSE GENESIS WORDS”

The view that “the entire creation took place within six days...is a very shallow conclusion...and...is inconsistent with the Genesis record as well as other parts of the Bible.”

—John Clayton, 1976c, p. 5

“The creation week is unrelated to the creation of matter, the creation of the ‘heaved up things,’ or to the creation of the earth.”

—John Clayton, 1991b, p. 9

“There is no need to force dinosaurs into the creation week.”

—John Clayton, 1990j, p. 16

“...for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is...”

—Moses, Exodus 20:11

**T**he words that we have discussed previously, *bara* and *asah*, are the two words that are most critical to the success (or failure) of John Clayton’s Modified Gap Theory. However, they are by no means the **only** words involved in his compromise of the Genesis account of creation. In this section, we would like to give close attention to several of the other words that John frequently has attempted to “reinterpret” in order to make his peculiar brand of evolution appear respectable.

As we begin, note this quotation from brother Clayton, which is being introduced in order to show you **why** he must “reinterpret” a number of words in the Genesis record.

Perhaps the greatest area of confusion in the creation question is in the mode of creation God used in the beginning. Everyone recognizes that “Fiat Creation” and “direct making” took place during the events described in Genesis I. Few seem to realize that “indirect causation” must have taken place then and still does.... It is **absolutely necessary that “indirect causation” have taken place throughout the creation....** May we embark on one bit of **speculation** that is relevant at this point? This discussion may be the answer to the question of how the dinosaurs and other ancient forms of life fit into the Genesis account. **All available reputable scientific evidence indicates that dinosaurs lived long before Adam.** Is it not possible that God’s creative techniques in Genesis 1:1 include all three modes of creation? He created matter out of nothing and made that matter into the various heavenly bodies we see, and then made and shaped a functional Earth. Since no time element is stated in Genesis 1:1 **it seems to this writer that a great deal of time** may have been involved.

As God “created” the Earth He not only spoke matter into existence, but furnished it by using dinosaurs and other natural processes as He does today. Since no Hebrew word in Genesis 1:20-28 can consistently include these animals, if I am forced to fit them into Genesis I would include them as a tool God used to create and prepare the Earth for man. If more scientific evidence becomes available, or if my understanding of God’s Word is altered this speculation may have to be modified or discarded, but at the present time **we believe it is the most consistent explanation available** (1977h, pp. 9-10, emp. added; see also 1987b, p. 2).

Before we summarize the essence of what brother Clayton is saying in the previous paragraphs, let us call attention once more to the inconsistency that is characteristic of John’s theoretical scheme of creation events. In the second paragraph above, our brother argues that the early Earth (prior to the creation week) was furnished by “dinosaurs” in preparation for man’s eventual arrival. Dinosaurs are implied, he argues, back in Genesis 1:1. He bases this upon the fact that, in his opinion, there are no words in Genesis 1:20ff. that could describe dinosaurs. This was what he wrote in 1977.

However, in 1988, when he authored an appendix in the book, *Evolution and Faith*, edited by J.D. Thomas, former chairman of the Bible department at Abilene Christian University, he wrote the following in connection with a discussion of Genesis 1:20: “The Biblical record identifies the **first animal** to appear upon the earth... ‘And God said, let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life....’ Clearly the indication was that the **first animals upon the earth** were water creatures. That point could not be argued” (1988c, p. 205, emp. added). Can anyone explain this obvious contradiction? Dinosaurs cannot be implied in Genesis 1:1 if the “first animals on earth” do not appear until Genesis 1:20. Observe the following points relative to the paragraphs above.

(1) It is **absolutely necessary** that God be seen as using “indirect” creative processes; He **cannot** be viewed as having used divine fiat to create everything.

(2) This “indirect causation” took **a great deal of time**.

(3) Reputable **scientific evidence** indicates that men and the dinosaurs **could not have lived together** on the Earth.

(4) **Speculation** then forces the conclusion that no Hebrew word, or words, in Genesis can encompass what God said He did in creating living organisms. Thus, **speculation** leads to the conclusion that various creatures **must** have existed prior to God’s creative activity of Genesis 1:3ff. (i.e., His activity during the “creation week”).

The above points provide the gist of why brother Clayton **must** provide new, and different, definitions to a variety of words in Genesis. First, he has to find a way to allow for millions or billions of years, as required by the geologic timetable to which he pays homage. Thus, he speculates that there was a “great deal of time” involved in God’s creative activity. Second, in order to foster this concept, he teaches that it is **absolutely necessary** that “indirect” (read that as “slow”) processes occurred. Third, he says that he is driven to these conclusions by “reputable **scientific evidence**”—**not the biblical evidence**. And fourth, he suggests that in order for all of this to be true, it is essential to understand that the Hebrew words which Moses used simply could not be viewed as speaking of everything God created—they must be “reinterpreted” in some way to fit John’s private theology.

In the sections that follow, we will respond to these points, one-by-one, and show the tragic error inherent in John’s self-proclaimed speculation. We also would like to suggest, as kindly as we know how, that if John would abandon his dependence on evolutionary theories, and simply take God at His Word on these matters, all of this “straining at the gnat and swallowing the camel” would be completely unnecessary. But then, John takes pride in the fact that he is different. In the March/April 1992 issue of *Does God Exist?*, he wrote: “I have always thought that some of my understandings were unique and exciting in my study of the Hebrew in Genesis 1” (1992c, p. 13). “Unique”? Indeed. “Exciting”? Hardly.

Unfortunately, John has made it clear that he has no intention of altering, or discarding, his positions. The quotations from his *Does God Exist?* journal, presented above, date from 1977. More than two decades now have passed, and if anything, John has become **even more entrenched** in these false theories. Why? Perhaps Dr. William D. Matthews expressed it best when he observed that: “Many a **false theory** gets crystallized by time and absorbed into the body of scientific doctrine **through lack of adequate criticism when it is formulated**” (1959, p. 159, emp. added). If only someone had taken John aside when he first started forming these strange theories and taught him “the way of God more accurately” (as Priscilla and Aquila did Apollos in Acts 18:26), perhaps all of this false teaching on his part never would have occurred.

### JOHN’S POSITION ON “THE HEAVENS”

In order to get the “fully functional” Earth that his Modified Gap Theory requires—and to get it all packed into Genesis 1:1, John has to calculate a way to allow that Earth, once created, to sustain itself. Of course, without the Sun and Moon, that would be impossible, since: (a) the Sun provides the light and energy the Earth requires; and (b) the Moon exerts control over certain earthly functions (like ocean tides). So, John has reinterpreted the Hebrew word for “heavens” in Genesis 1:1. In an article titled “Word Studies in Genesis 1:1,” John explained how this can be accomplished.

The Hebrew word that is chosen here is the word *shamayim*.... The word *shamayim*, literally means **heaved up things**. It is interesting to note that the concept may very well involve the process by which things were put in the position they are today. One of the most obvious facts about the creation itself is that we live in an expanding universe. If in fact, the heaven was comprised of heaved up things, it is logical to believe that the heaving would still be evident in the creation itself (1989b, pp. 13-14, emp. in orig.).

At this point, we once more must call attention to what has become a standard feature in this review—namely, another of brother Clayton’s contradictions. In the paragraph above, John says that *shamayim* in Genesis 1:1 “may very well involve the process by which things were put **in the position they are today**” (emp. added). If that is the case, then what was the process of verses 14ff., wherein John argues that the Sun, Moon, etc. were “made” (*asah*)—that is, became operative in their present forms. The luminaries cannot have assumed their current operational status **both** in Genesis 1:1 and in 1:14ff. John needs to settle on one position or the other. If he would abandon his infatuation with evolution, the problem would be remedied quite easily.

John has explained that “the word *shamayim* literally means heaved up things and refers to everything that is in the sky in the way of astronomical bodies. This is the normal use of the word and certainly is consistent with the concept of this first verse” (1990i, p. 8). Now, with his reinterpretation scheme in place, John is well on his way to establishing how his Modified Gap Theory might be possible. **If he can simply redefine the word “heavens”** as used in Genesis 1:1 to mean literally “everything that is in the sky in the way of astronomical bodies,” that obviously would include the Sun, and he then could proceed to find a way to redefine the word used for “Earth” to make it appear as fully functional (which, as you are about to see, is exactly what he does).

The basic problem with all of this is that the Hebrew term *shamayim* does not mean **heaved up things**. In his writings, John never has provided a single documented reference for his definition of the word *shamayim*. However, the standard Hebrew lexicons **do** offer a variety of definitions for the word in Genesis 1:1, which is translated in the English as “heavens.” According to Davidson’s *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, the Hebrew word *shamayim* is derived from an unused root (unused because it always occurs in plural form) which is similar to the Arabic word meaning “to be high.” Davidson offers the following definitions for *shamayim*: “to be high, soaring on high, heaven, the heavens, height” (1970, p. 723a). Hence, if anything, the heavens are “those things up high” (see also Brown, et al., 1979, p. 1029b).

It is likely (though not certain, since John does not provide any documentation for his sources) that brother Clayton’s unorthodox definition is derived from the origin of our **English** word “heaven.” Even so, “heave” and “heaven” are derived from two entirely different old-English words. However, no reputable Hebraist ever would define a **biblical** term on the basis of the **English** word’s supposed etymology.

There is no support in the original language for John’s concocted definition of *shamayim* as the “heaved up things,” which allegedly represent “all astronomical bodies.”

### JOHN’S POSITION ON “THE EARTH”

Once John, in his own mind, has gotten the Sun, Moon, and other astronomical bodies safely in place, he then must turn his attention to getting the “fully functional Earth” that his system must have in order to be true. Here is how he accomplishes that.

The last word that we would like to consider in this analysis of Genesis 1:1 is the Hebrew word chosen for earth. The word that is used in Genesis 1:1 for earth is the word *erets*. This word is used extensively throughout the Old Testament, but **most of the cases** are clearly in situations where the earth was **functional**. In Genesis alone the word is used in verses 1,2,10,11,12,15,17,20, 22,24,25,26,28,29 and 30. If one looks at the numerous other uses throughout the Old Testament, one sees that it is a very common term that seems to apply specifically to a functional working earth (1989b, p. 14, emp. added).

Roughly a year later, in addressing this same topic, John went on to observe:

The word *erets* meaning earth is used numerous times in the Bible **always** in reference to a functional planet. There is no way that the word *erets* could possibly be interpreted as a ‘blob of spinning gook’ anywhere in its use throughout the Old Testament. To say that it means that in the first verse of Genesis is to grossly misrepresent the normal use of the word (1990i, p. 8, emp. added).

John somehow must get a “functional, working earth,” and so he reinterprets the Hebrew term *erets* to mean exactly that. In 1989, he suggested that in **most** instances in the Old Testament *erets* means a functional Earth. In 1990, he stated that *erets* **always** means a functional Earth. But that same year, he made an interesting observation in lesson nine of his *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*. In attempting to find support for his views on plate tectonics (the idea that there was in the distant past a single continent that later broke apart), John remarked: “Verses 9 and 10 imply that the water was in one place (or bowl) and **the land** (*erets*) was in another. This suggests there was a single land mass and a single body of water early in the earth’s history” (1990g, p. 5, parenthetical items in orig., emp. added).

As John correctly observed, the word for “land” is the Hebrew *erets*, but it does not mean a “fully functional, working Earth.” Rather, it is speaking simply of “land”—as distinguished from water. John says the word **always** is used of a functional Earth. Yet, by his own admission, that statement is untrue.

The term *erets* is defined by reputable lexicons as: “earth, land, ground, country” and similar terms (see: Davidson, 1970, p. 48a; Brown, et al., 1979, pp. 75b-76a,b). The term does not **necessarily**, or **always**, mean a “fully functional earth.” That definition is without a semblance of scholarly support. Alders, in his commentary on Genesis, stated:

...it is likewise true beyond doubt that “the heavens and the earth” do not there [Genesis 1:1] refer to the present, organized universe as it appeared after the creative work described in Genesis 1 was completed. How the universe became what it is today is described in detail in verses 3-31. “The heavens and the earth” in verse 1 are thus a designation of the essence of the world before the detailed forming and ordering, which is described in the rest of the chapter, took place.

We can conclude then that the term “the heavens and the earth” in verse 1 refers to the **substance** of the universe. We can also say it in this way, that Genesis 1:1 describes the creation of the substance from which the entire universe was formed (1981, 1:52-53, emp. in orig.).

Eminent Hebrew scholar, Dr. Walter Roehrs, has commented on the expression “heaven and earth” in Genesis 1:1: “**Heaven and earth** is a comprehensive term to denote everything that we call universe, including the raw materials that God shaped into a cosmos” (1979, p. 17, emp. in orig.). Professor Harold Stigers has observed regarding Genesis 1:1: “God brought matter into being, connoted the heavens and the earth, and then out of an undistinguished mass, shaped it by separate, successive, progressive steps into a habitation for man...” (1976, p. 50). Highly respected Hebraist, Kyle M. Yates Sr., has stated that “earth” as used in Genesis 1:1,2 is a description of the planet “in its unfinished state,” i.e., “waste, void, dark” (1969, p. 3). There is absolutely no lexicographical support for Clayton’s assertions relative to the meaning of *erets* in Genesis 1:1.

One other item bears examination here as well. John has prepared, and often circulates (especially at his seminars) a sheet titled “Genesis Sequence,” which is a chart showing what Hebrew words are used in what verses, and what they allegedly mean. As one looks down the left side of the chart, one cannot help but be struck by the fact that John goes from Genesis 1:1 to Genesis 1:3. In other words, **Genesis 1:2 is conspicuously missing** from the chart and its attendant discussion. Why?

We suggest that John has a very good reason for omitting verse 2 from his discussion. It is in Genesis 1:2 that Moses provided a commentary on the state of the Earth after its initial creation. In that verse, Moses specifically stated: “And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep...” The phrase, “waste and void” is the translation of the Hebrew term, *tohu wabohu*.” What is the meaning of this phrase? Hebrew scholar John C. Whitcomb explained:

“Without form and void” translate the Hebrew expression *tohu wabohu*, which literally means “empty and formless.” In other words, the Earth was not chaotic, not under a curse of judgment. It was simply **empty of living things** and without the features that it later possessed, such as oceans and continents, hills and valleys—features that would be essential for man’s well-being. In other words, **it was not an appropriate home for man** (1973, pp. 69-70, emp. added).

Little wonder, then, that John prefers to omit Genesis 1:2 from his discussions. To do so would be tantamount to admitting that the Earth **was not, and could not have been**, “fully functional.” While it may not have been a “spinning ball of gook,” neither was it a “fully functional, working earth.”

### JOHN’S POSITION ON THE DINOSAURS

It is no secret by now that John does not believe Exodus 20:11 is to be taken as a literal statement of what God did in the creation. According to that passage, the Earth, the heavens, the seas, and **all** that is in them came into being in six days. John revolts at such a suggestion, because he sees its clear and obvious implications. If that is the case, the standard evolutionary geologic timetable is not worth the paper on which it is written. Our brother thus seems determined to force the biblical record into agreement with the evolutionists’ timetable. In the September/October 1983 issue of *Does God Exist?*, he wrote: “Geology has shown the Genesis record to be accurate in every checkable detail...” (1983f, p. 13).

Of course, the **facts** of geology and the testimony of Genesis are perfectly consistent. But when John uses the term “geology,” he means “geology” as he learned it—at the feet of evolutionists at Indiana University and Notre Dame. It is with **evolutionary geology** that John is enamored. And the evolutionary interpretation of geology, as reflected in the standard geologic column, is woefully at variance with the Genesis record. Nonetheless, brother Clayton would force a marriage between the two, violating the Genesis account numerous times in the process. But note some of the conflicts between the biblical record and common evolutionary theory.

The Genesis record teaches that birds were created on the fifth day of the creation week and that creeping things (which would include both insects and reptiles) were brought into existence on the sixth day (1:21,24). The evolutionary scenario teaches that birds developed long after insects and reptiles—a theory that John accepts. Genesis notes that fruit-bearing trees were created before fish (1:11,20). Evolution suggests that fish evolved long before fruit-bearing trees.

Genesis speaks clearly of a universal, global Flood (6-8). According to John Clayton, the geologic record clearly is incapable of establishing that fact. John stated in his taped lecture, *Questions and Answers: Number 1*: “**There is no way geologically of supporting the idea that there was a worldwide flood....** On the North American continent, for example, there is no place, no real conclusive evidence that there has ever been a flood over this continent.... **You cannot go to geology and find evidence to support the idea of the worldwide flood...**” (undated, emp. added).

John is so intent on doing obeisance to the standard evolutionary geologic timetable that nothing will stand in his way. His position on the dinosaurs is a case in point. John has stated that if a person believes dinosaurs are described in the biblical text, that person believes a “myth” (1990j, p. 14). He also is on record as stating: “It is ludicrous to suggest that man cohabited with the dinosaurs in an *Alley Oop* kind of world” (1991a, p. 37). And, in his 1990 publication for children, *Dinosaurs—One of God’s More Interesting and Useful Creations*, he wrote: “Man could not have lived in a world full of dinosaurs, so by the time God created Adam the dinosaurs were gone” (1990k, p. 14).

It is imperative to John that he convince people that dinosaurs and humans could not have existed at the same time. To suggest that they did will elicit a comment like this from brother Clayton: “The position that dinosaurs and humans existed at the same time on the earth makes assumptions that most Bible students are not willing to make” (1990c, p. 3). But **why** is this so? Let John explain: “The result of insisting that dinosaurs are contained in passages like Job is that **one is forced scientifically to find some evidence** that humans and dinosaurs lived at the same time” (1990j, p. 16, emp. added). Yet he immediately dismisses any evidence that might suggest this.

The **real** reason that John cannot stomach the idea that dinosaurs and men were contemporaries is that “science” (by which he means evolutionary science) does not teach it. John repeatedly portrays such an attitude. If “science” cannot establish it, then we cannot in all good conscience accept it. And where does that leave the Christian when it comes to biblical miracles such as floating axe heads, city walls crumbling at the trumpet’s call, the virgin birth, the resurrection, etc.? Science affirms none of these. Yet we, as faithful Christians, accept them all the same.

He has suggested: "If dinosaurs existed 200 million years before Adam and Eve, it does not present any problem to a literal understanding of the Genesis record" (1968b, p 16). When asked about the descriptions of certain creatures in the Bible that reasonably could fit a general description of a dinosaur (the word dinosaur derives from two Greek words meaning "terribly great lizard"), John comments in one of two ways. As most Bible students are aware, both Job 40 and 41 have descriptions that easily and accurately could be applied to dinosaurs or dinosaur-like animals. But, John says, the first problem with such an idea is that the "language is poetic, not scientific" (1991d, p. 9). That is an interesting comment, especially since John does not speak kindly of those who would try to pawn off biblical statements as "poetic." In the June 1977 issue of *Does God Exist?*, he had a "Special Book Review" of a work titled *The Bible Story of the Creation* by Mary Alice Jones. In that review, he wrote:

The one negative aspect about the book is the choice of one word which occurs repeatedly throughout the book and which, in this reader's opinion, tends to reduce the effectiveness of the book considerably. Throughout the book from cover to cover, the author refers to the Biblical account as "the Poem of Creation." The **use of the word "Poem"** (in this reviewer's context at least) **tends to put the account in something other than literal context....** To this reviewer, **any time the word "poem" is used it means that much of the language is allegorical and symbolic** (1977i, pp. 4-5, emp. added).

When someone **else** uses the word "poem," it means that which is "allegorical and symbolic"—something "other than literal." But when John Clayton uses it, **then** it's acceptable? He complains because another author says the account is "poetic," then turns right around and calls the language in Job 40 and 41 "poetic." That aside, the fact is, though we recognize that the book of Job is a form of poetic literature, that does not mean that it cannot contain literal descriptions of actual creatures. In Job 39 there are discussions of literal "wild goats," "the ostrich," "the horse," and "the hawk." Will brother Clayton dismiss these as being real creatures under the guise that the "language is poetic, not scientific"?

The second problem John sees is that the Hebrew words (here we go again!) will not allow for such a translation. John noted that:

In Job 40:15 and 41:1, for example, there are references to two animals called *behemoth* and *leviathan*. ...these words cannot be bent to include dinosaurs. *Behemoth*, for example, refers to a very large **mammal** never a reptile. A word very close to this word is used in Genesis 1:24 where **all** translations render it cattle. Those who force *behemoth* to mean dinosaur in Job seriously violate the normal meaning of the word.... The word *leviathan*, incidentally, can refer to a reptile. Since the description indicates the creature is an ocean-going creature in Psalms it seems unlikely that it can refer to a land-going dinosaur. An examination of all Jewish literature shows that a crocodile is usually, if not always, what the word refers to (1991e, p. 9, emp. in orig.).

John asserts that *behemoth* "refers to a very large mammal." Exactly where did he get that interesting bit of information? The plural form "behemoth" generally is defined simply as "great beast." There is nothing in the word which demands the inference that it was warm-blooded, suckled its young, etc. The word is generic, and as such its meaning must be determined by the context in which it is found. The crucial question is, therefore: what does the context of Job 40 indicate about this amazing creature?

(1) The word *behemoth* occurs with certainty only one time in the Hebrew Old Testament (see Harris et al., 1980, p. 93). In form, *behemoth* is the plural of *behema*—the Hebrew word for "beast." However, *behemoth* is used in a singular sense in Job 40:15, indicating that a specific animal is being described. Some writers have suggested that this word appears in two other passages (see Brown, et al., 1979, p. 97a). In Psalm 73:22 the psalmist called himself foolish, ignorant, and "as a beast [*behemoth*] before Jehovah." Isaiah 30:6 speaks of "the burden of the beasts [*behemoth*] of the south." If these verses indeed refer to *behemoth*, neither is specific enough to reveal the nature of the animal mentioned.

However, Job 40:15-24 is very explicit in its description of *behemoth*. A particular animal obviously is in focus. The creature thus described was herbivorous, massive in size (with extremely long muscles and bones), had a noteworthy tail, dwelt near water, and was fearless. But what was this creature?

Some have argued that it was either an elephant or a hippopotamus. While the habitat may be fitting, there are difficulties with this view. First, and perhaps most obvious, neither of these creatures possesses a noteworthy tail. Second, the *behemoth* is said to be "chief of the ways of God." If this phrase is taken to



indicate size (which is reasonable), it would rule out the hippo since at its full size it is but seven feet high. Although an elephant may be twice as tall as a hippo, it still is dwarfed by the dinosaurs, some of which reached heights of up to three stories and weights of over 110 tons. While it is inappropriate to be dogmatic, it is not at all impossible that the animal described in Job may well be a dinosaur (like, for example, *Brachiosaurus* or *Apatosaurus*). John's assertion that *behemoth* can only be a mammal is completely unfounded, either by the term's definition in the original language or by its usage in the biblical text.

(2) The other word with which brother Clayton takes exception is *leviathan*. Of its six occurrences in the Hebrew text, the ASV transliterates the term every time. In Job 41, an extensive description of the creature is provided. John has suggested it is nothing more than a crocodile. While there may be some similarities between the *leviathan* and the crocodile, the differences are so numerous as to dismiss the serious possibility that these two creatures are one and the same. Job 41 indicates that "his sneezings flash forth light...out of his mouth go burning torches, and sparks of fire leap forth. Out of his nostrils a smoke goeth...his breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth forth from his mouth" (verses 18-21). Even if one conceded the possible use of figurative language in this context, it would not negate the fact that a literal animal is under consideration—an animal that has many traits different from that of the crocodile. Yes, it very possibly could have been a dinosaur-like reptile, unless one is convinced (according to the evolutionary propaganda line) that dinosaurs and men could not have lived at the same time—a position to which our brother wholeheartedly subscribes!

The text in Job 41 also indicates that "when he raiseth himself up, the mighty are afraid; by reason of consternation they are beside themselves.... He beholdeth everything that is high: he is king over all the sons of pride" (verses 25,34). But the crocodile is not much more frightening when he stands than when he sits, since his legs are so short. How could it be stated of a crocodile that he "beholdeth everything that is high"?

Another portion of the description given in Job 41 is this: "If one lay at him with the sword, it cannot avail; nor the spear, the dart, nor the pointed shaft.... Clubs are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the rushing of the javelin. His underparts are like sharp potsherds" (vss. 26,29-30). Although the hide that covers a crocodile's back admittedly is thick and difficult to penetrate, this certainly is not true of his belly. The crocodile is most vulnerable to spears and javelins on his underside; hence, it could not be said of him that "his underparts are like sharp potsherds."

It also is said of the *leviathan* that "He maketh the deep to boil like a pot.... He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary" (vss. 31-32). The *leviathan* causes such commotion in the water that he leaves behind a churning wake; contrastingly, the crocodile is a stealthy swimmer.

Brother Clayton admits that the word *leviathan* **can** refer to a reptile. The possibility, then, that the creature of Job 41 is a dinosaur-like reptile cannot be dismissed out-of-hand.

### JOHN'S POSITION ON THE "CREEPING THINGS"

Another word that has given John a great deal of trouble—because it does not fit well with his Modified Gap Theory—is the Hebrew word *remes*. Genesis 1:25 says: "And God made the beasts after their kind, and everything that creepeth [*remes*] upon the earth after his kind, and it was so." John's suggestion, concerning the word *remes*, is that:

The normal meaning of this word is that it refers to a rapidly moving backboned animal. This is a rather general definition, but if one turns to Genesis 9:3 one sees this word used in reference to animals that ancient Hebrews could eat. They could not eat reptiles and so it would appear it refers to things like sheep and goats in this passage. The only way one can come to any other conclusion is to take the very inconsistent position that the Hebrew writer used the same word to describe two radically different animals. Honesty demands that we recognize that a writer is going to be consistent in his use of common words (1990j, p. 15).

In response to these statements, we offer the following comments.

(1) The terms “creeping things” and “creepeth” occur 29 times in the Old Testament. However, in not a single instance in which the word *remes* is used is a **specific** creature described.

(2) *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* makes it clear that the word *remes* conveys the idea of anything that has the motion of creeping, crawling, etc. (Brown, et al., 1979, pp. 942b-943a). H.C. Leupold, in his classic work, *Exposition of Genesis*, defined *remes* as:

...from the root meaning “to move about lightly” or to “glide about.” “Creepers” almost covers the term, however, “creeping things” is too narrow, for it does not seem to allow for bigger creatures like reptiles. “Reptiles” again is too narrow, for it does not allow for the smaller types of life. Everything, therefore, large or small, that moves upon the earth or close to the earth, having but short legs, may be said to be included (1942, 1:83-84).

(3) John has complained that *remes* is the word used in Genesis 9:1-3, and that in this passage the Jews were told they could eat *remes*. However, he says “that would exclude things like reptiles, most insects, and the like” (1991a, p. 38). This simply is not true. In Leviticus 11:21-22 the Hebrews were told that they could eat any creeping, winged, legged creature (e.g., grasshoppers, locusts, beetles, etc.). This includes a lot of insects. The word *remes* then, does not necessarily “exclude most insects.” In Leviticus 11:20, *sherets* is used to describe certain animals. This word describes “teeming, swarming, creeping things” (see Harris, et al., 1980, 1:957). *Sherets* and *remes* are related terms. Compare Genesis 1:20 (“moving creatures”—*sherets*) with Genesis 1:21 (“living creature that moveth”—*remes*). The word *remes* is used to describe the movement of those animals under the category of *sherets*. So, God said “Let there be moving creatures [*sherets*],” and He created creatures that moved by creeping (*remes*). *Remes* (a noun) includes reptiles and most insects (*sherets*) because they *remes* (a verb).

(4) Davidson, in his *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, defined *remes* as “reptile; that which moves on the earth; ...any land animal, in opposition to fowls...” (1970, p. 685b). *Remes* is used in a variety of ways in the Bible. In Genesis 9:3, it refers to the entire realm of living, moving creatures in contrast to plants. Clayton has asserted that it refers in this text to sheep and goats, and cannot include reptiles, etc., since the passage authorizes the eating of *remes*, and yet the Hebrews could not eat reptiles. John’s mistake here is due to the fact that he apparently does not understand that eating sanctions were not imposed until the institution of the Mosaic system—**which came centuries later**.

To restrict the meaning of *remes*, as brother Clayton does, is clearly erroneous. T.C. Mitchell of the British Museum noted that *remes* “is unlikely to correspond exactly to any modern scientific category, referring rather to all creatures which appear to the observer to move close to the ground” (1974, p. 274).

Once again our brother has demonstrated that he is not competent to comment upon the original language of the Old Testament. John’s suggestion that *remes* likely is referring to “rapidly moving back-boned animals” like goats or sheep could not be more wrong than it is. There is no support in the word *remes* for his Modified Gap Theory.

## APPENDIX

### JOHN CLAYTON ATTACKS *DISCOVERY* APOLOGETICS PRESS STAFF

In January of 1990, Apologetics Press mailed its premier issue of *Discovery*. Since that time, the popularity of this Bible-science magazine for kids has literally exploded. The impact that it is making has exceeded the wildest dreams of those who conceived this effort. A flood of mail arrives at our offices weekly, expressing heartfelt thanks for the noble work that is generating faith in the hearts of thousands of precious children. It seems almost incredible that there should be those who, professing loyalty to the Bible, are nonetheless so base as to attempt to discredit this valuable teaching tool, which has been so badly needed for so long. Alas, however, such actually has happened.

In the July/August 1990 issue of *Does God Exist?*, John N. Clayton, a high school teacher from South Bend, Indiana, wrote an article attacking *Discovery*. Clayton, a self-proclaimed “specialist” in biblical/creation matters, travels on weekends promoting his own peculiar brand of theistic evolution under the guise of building faith in God. His false teachings have been thoroughly documented for well over a decade (see Jackson and Thompson, 1979). It is known rather widely that Clayton uses every possible opportunity to fight genuine Bible/science creationism. Thus, he wrote as follows:

There is a new children’s magazine published by **Apologetics Press** that we are getting a lot of mail about. It is called *Discovery* and is available for \$8.00/year. There is a great deal of good material in the publication and it is a GREAT idea, but unfortunately there is also a great deal of material that is very dubious and sometimes just plain wrong. We have written an article on this that we may print someday in this journal, but those who want the information now may send a stamped self-addressed envelope and we will be happy to send it to you free of charge (1990d, p. 15, emp. in orig.).

We have received a copy of the article that John Clayton is circulating, and would like to offer our comments upon it as follows.

(1) John begins by telling how he has avoided controversy with fellow-believers across the years because he did not want to stir up trouble. While this sentiment appears quite noble, the fact remains that there is more than a decade of documentation available which reveals that John has generated controversy virtually everywhere he has gone. He hardly has been passive. He militantly argues for his compromising and controversial views through his public lectures, bimonthly bulletin, tapes, books, and other materials. “Avoiding controversy” is not a hallmark of John Clayton’s life; **causing** it, is.

(2) John criticizes *Discovery’s* articles against evolution, asserting that there is really no conflict between creation and evolution. Rather, he says that “Evolution assumes creation and tries to explain changes in things already created” (1990f, p. 1). No theistic evolutionist could have said it better. Of course, one should not be surprised to hear such a statement from John he is on record as stating: “If we look carefully at the issues about which we are talking, however, we find that evolution and the Bible show amazing agreement on almost all issues and that one is not mutually exclusive of the other.... To suggest that evolution is false, devious, and opposed to the Bible is equally extreme” (1976a, p. 130).

(3) Brother Clayton further contends that “the age of the earth is not a biblical topic.” One must understand that this statement is made due to the fact that our antagonist has wholly adopted the evolutionary chronological scheme of things. And he does not deny this. Hear him:

I have no way of telling where man’s beginning should be on the chart. Clearly man has become the dominant form of life only in modern time, but where Adam and Eve fitted into this picture is unclear (1968b, p. 35).

Birds, mammals, and man are mentioned; and all of these are recent additions to the Earth geologically (1977g, p. 151).

At an early stage in the earth’s history, marsupial mammals were apparently the dominant form of life. Placental mammals, like us, are relative newcomers to the earth compared to the marsupials (undated, *Design’s Proof of God*, taped lecture).

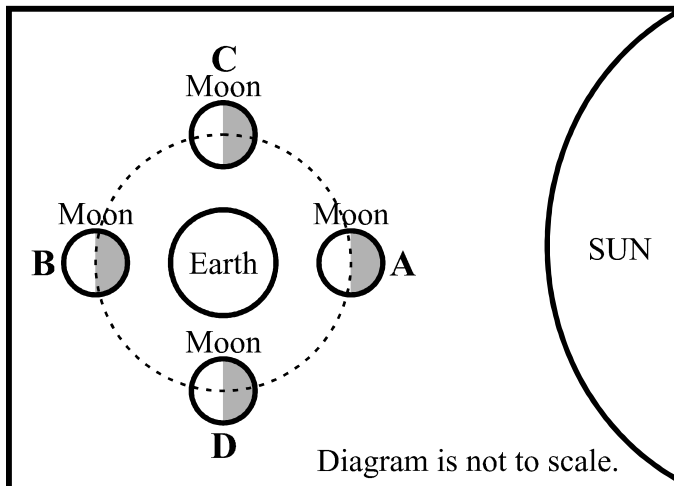
The fact is, if the Bible addresses the chronology of humankind (which it most certainly does by means of the genealogical records from Christ back to Adam), and if the Scriptures affirm that the Earth and humanity came into existence the same week (which it most certainly does in Genesis 1 and Exodus 20:11), then the Bible **does** address the **relative** age of the Earth! As he has done so frequently, however, John attempts to suggest that somehow the concept of a young Earth is designed solely to accommodate the denominational idea of premillennialism. In doing this, he ignores plain statements of Scripture and implies that the publishers of *Discovery* are sympathetic to the premillennial viewpoint, which he knows they do not accept. [NOTE: The May 1985 issue of *Reason & Revelation*, the monthly journal on Christian evidences published by Apologetics Press, was on “Premillennialism and Biblical Creationism,” and offered an in-depth rebuttal of the premillennial concept.] He thus reveals his lack of knowledge in both the Bible and sectarian dogma, and abandons a sense of fair play.

(4) John suggests that misinformation of the type allegedly contained in *Discovery* has “the potential of destroying the faith of young people.” What, then, shall we say to these malicious charges?

### CLAYTON’S CHARGES

Clayton has introduced about a half-dozen alleged errors from *Discovery* that he feels undermine the value of this work. Let us candidly consider these.

(1) First, the charge is leveled that in the initial issue of *Discovery*, a mistake was made regarding how people from Earth view various phases of the Moon. John tries to leave the impression that **he** jarred us into reality on this mistaken point, and that we immediately wrote him a letter of apology. But the real facts tell a completely different story. There **was** a factual mistake made in an article that dealt with the Moon (in the January 1990 issue). However, as soon as this error was detected, we immediately destroyed all remaining copies of that issue, and then reprinted it. Simultaneously, we prepared a correction for the very next issue of the journal (February 1990). The truth of the matter is that John’s letter to us never even mentioned the Moon-phase mistake. One wonders if he even caught it until **we** called it to **his** attention. Our corrective procedure was in progress long before we received any letter from him (and we repeat—his letter did not even mention our mistake). Furthermore, it is not without significance that brother Clayton, in his article attacking *Discovery*, refers to the “magnitude of this error” on our part, and then he makes the same kind of mistake! In his review, he includes a graphic showing the four phases of the Moon as viewed from the Earth. Yet in his chart, in all four phases, he has the **dark side** of the Moon facing the Sun (see his diagram, reproduced below).



John lamented in his article about how atheists and skeptics “have a field day” with such errors, and how that these errors allow atheists to “destroy the faith” of our young people. We certainly hope that John Clayton’s incorrect diagram will not “destroy the faith” of many young people. And we pray that skeptics and atheists don’t “have a field day” circulating Clayton’s inaccurate graphic.

(2) Next, John criticizes a *Discovery* article which argued that the days of the creation week were literal days. This hardly should be surprising, since, as we have often pointed out, John is a strong advocate of the Day-Age Theory (see his *Questions and Answers: Number 1*

[taped lecture], undated; 1976a, p. 116; 1978d, p. 6). We made an argument showing that the days of Genesis 1 had to be normal solar days. We made a point so simple that a fourth-grader could understand it (the median age at which *Discovery* is aimed). Yet, for reasons known only to him, brother Clayton made no attempt to answer the argument set forth in our article. He merely suggested that he was offended by it.

(3) John ridicules the idea that “baby dinosaurs” could have been on the ark. What are his stated objections? He simply says, “...it stretches credibility infinitely thin.” That hardly is a convincing rebuttal. But again, it comes as no great surprise that this objection should be raised by John. In the Teacher’s Manual to his *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*, he is on record as affirming: “If dinosaurs existed 200 million years before Adam and Eve it does not present any problem to a literal understanding of the Genesis record” (1968b, p. 16). And, in his 1990 publication for children, *Dinosaurs—One of God’s More Interesting and Useful Creations*, he plainly states: “Man could not have lived in a world full of dinosaurs, so by the time God created Adam the dinosaurs were gone” (1990k, p. 14). The only reason he has for opposing the idea that dinosaurs (in some form) were on the ark is that he has imbibed, in its entirety, evolutionary chronology, and thus believes that these creatures became extinct millions of years before man arrived upon this planet. Listen to his statement in the book on dinosaurs for children: “Before the creation week, God created and prepared the earth for man. Dinosaurs were probably a part of this preparation. At the end of the first verse of Genesis the earth was ready for man’s presence” (1990k, p. 14). Thus, John attacks *Discovery* for presenting the biblical view of what God said He did (Exodus 20:11), and instead opts for his Modified Gap Theory, as clearly presented in his book, *The Source* (1976a, pp. 147-148). While it is clear that Clayton’s attack on *Discovery* is devoid of biblical reasoning, it is equally evident that he has absorbed evolutionary ideas extensively.

(4) The fourth charge is an attempted refutation of the evidence, discovered by William J. Meister in 1968, of fossilized trilobite impressions in the print of a human sandal. If this evidence is true, it completely destroys the so-called “geologic timetable,” and at the same time demolishes the theory of evolution. The truth is, John has completely accepted evolutionary geology; in fact, he was trained in this area by evolutionists. He thus summarily rejects any and all evidence that argues against evolutionary chronology. In this case, he attempts to explain the sandal prints as “solution marks” which are the result of erosion. But what actual evidence does he introduce? Absolutely none! His mind seems to have been made up in advance. Award-winning scientist, Dr. Melvin C. Cook, upon examination of these trilobite/sandal prints, stated that “no intellectually honest individual examining this specimen can reasonably deny its genuine appearance.” Photos of the prints are reproduced in *Why Not Creation?*, edited by the famed rose geneticist of our generation, Dr. Walter Lammerts (1970, pp. 188-189). The reader can judge for himself.

(5) Since brother Clayton does not believe that dinosaurs were upon the Earth at the time of the Flood, he obviously does not endorse the idea that these huge creatures may have become extinct due to the fact that they could not survive the post-Flood, radically altered climate. Rather, once again he opts for the standard evolutionary explanation that there was “an asteroid collision at the time the dinosaurs became extinct,” which, according to those evolutionists who framed the theory, occurred millions of years before man evolved. Evolutionist and Nobel laureate, Luis Alvarez, first championed this theory, which even today is highly controversial and has many knowledgeable opponents in the evolutionary community (see Hoffman, 1982, pp. 58-63). Yet John prefers an evolutionary explanation over one that is potentially Bible based and that accepts a global Flood.

(6) Brother Clayton suggests that those who write in Bible-science areas should be qualified by knowledge and training. We agree. The staff members of Apologetics Press hold multiple earned graduate degrees from accredited universities in both scientific and biblical areas. On the other hand, all of Clayton’s education was under science teachers who were Darwinists (Indiana University, Notre Dame; 1975e, p. 2). He has had absolutely no training under scientists who were creationists; he likewise has no formal Bible training whatsoever (1977b, p. 4). We do not argue this point to assert that one can never be qualified unless he is formally educated, but merely to point out John’s extreme inconsistency. He chastises others for speaking on “science” matters when they are not scientists (1983a, p. 15), yet he constantly pontificates upon biblical intricacies (e.g., “the Hebrew will not allow this,” and “the Greek says that”), when the truth of the matter is that he cannot read a line of either. In the same issue of his *Does God Exist?* bulletin in which he attacks *Discovery*, there appeared an article under the title of “One Week Creation—Of Man Or God?,” in which John attempted to defend his Modified Gap Theory by claiming that the “literacy [sic] of the Hebrew” language demands this viewpoint (1990i, pp. 5-12). But since he

insists that those who deal in these matters have adequate training, and since he has absolutely no such training in Bible, the question then arises: “What are **his** qualifications in making such an assertion regarding the original languages in which the Bible was written?”

[NOTE: John’s use of the English language gives reason for pause as well. His article, “One Week Creation—Of God Or Man?,” is a good example (1990i, pp. 5-12). All through the article he speaks of the “literacy” of the Hebrew on this point, or the “literacy” of the Hebrew on that point. What he **means** to say is the “literalness” of the Hebrew. The word “literacy” is used in describing the ability of a person to read, whereas the word “literalness” is used to mean something of a literal, historical nature. John’s viewpoint on whether or not the Bible really is a literal, historical document also is suspect. In the March 1979 issue of the *Rocky Mountain Christian* magazine, for example, he suggested: “I have been accused of not believing in Exodus 20:11. What I have pointed out is that Exodus 20:11 is a quote of Genesis 2, and Genesis 2 **is not a historical account**. Genesis 2 is for the purpose of showing the relationship of man and woman as is clearly stated in verse 24 and since Exodus 20:11 does not refer to Genesis 1, but to Genesis 2, **it is not speaking historically...**” (1979c, p. 3, emp. added). It should be noted, of course, that Exodus 20:11 is not a quote from Genesis 2. It should be noted further that Genesis 2 most certainly **is** a historical account. The Lord spoke to the Pharisees regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage (Matthew 19; cf. Mark 10), and based His entire argument on the literal, historical nature of the events recorded in Genesis 2; Paul used the literal, historical nature of Genesis 2 in order to discuss the proper role of woman in the church (see Ephesians 5). Which of John’s pronouncements are we to believe? Do we believe him when he speaks of the “literacy” of the Hebrew, or do we believe him when he says the account is **not** literal/historical?

Elsewhere, John erroneously speaks of a biological “specie” (1979d, p. 4; 1979e, p. 2; 1983c, p. 1). In fact, there is no such thing in biology as a “specie.” What he **means** to say, of course, is a biological “species.” Dr. George Gaylord Simpson (known affectionately by those in the evolutionary community as “Mr. Evolution” because of his encyclopedic knowledge in that area) has stated: “Species [is] identical in singular and plural; ‘specie’ means ‘coin’ and has no application in biology” (1965, p. 502). It seems that one who is determined to instruct his audience in the intricacies of a foreign language like Hebrew or Greek would do well to master the intricacies of his own language prior to such a venture.]

(7) Finally, the editor of *Does God Exist?* charges that children who are reared on a steady diet of the kind of material presented in *Discovery* “are easy prey for a well-educated atheist.” This is a most offensive charge. However, if such is the case, then the publishers of *Discovery* ought to be “easy prey” for such a skilled and knowledgeable man as John Clayton. Yet we have literally begged this gentleman to meet us in public discussion on the crucial issues that divide us. We have offered to pay his way to some ideal location; we have offered to pay all of his expenses; and we would tender him a handsome honorarium. But he wants no part of it! That speaks volumes. It is, it seems, far easier to sit behind a typewriter and attack a work that is intended to nurture our children in their formative years than to exhibit the courage of your convictions and discuss these issues in honorable debate.

It would take a lengthy volume indeed to chronicle the many errors that John Clayton has espoused through the years. We wish he would develop more confidence in the Scriptures and less in the writings of evolutionists. Unfortunately, we see little hope of such in the immediate future. In the meantime, those of us associated with *Discovery* will continue to turn out a first-class, well-written, instructional paper on Bible and science for kids. We think our children deserve no less, and that *Discovery* is an idea whose time has come.

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