

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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## Compromising Genesis and Other Scriptures

(A Look At Some Of The Teachings of John N. Clayton)

by Ted J. Clarke

### Introduction

John N. Clayton is a popular brotherhood speaker from South Bend, Indiana. He holds weekend seminars teaching his views on creation versus evolution and some topics of Christian evidences. He has written a book on these things entitled, *The Source*, and publishes a periodical called, "Does God Exist?" In the July issue of **Fulton County Gospel News** I made some editorial comments regarding brother Clayton, styling him as a theistic evolutionist and promising a review of some of his publicly proclaimed teachings, which I believed involved some serious error.

A few of our readers wrote or called us, insisting that John is not a theistic evolutionist in any sense, that he does not teach anything contrary to the Scriptures, and that he is always being quoted out of context by his critics. One person suggested that I had "gullibly swallowed the writings of [Bert] Thompson and [Wayne] Jackson," without determining for myself the truthfulness of the accusations made against John. Accordingly, I decided to delay the proposed article on Clayton's teaching, partially because of a month long illness, but mainly to read again his book (*The Source*) and his periodicals, and to listen again to his tapes which I have. "A Word of Explanation" appeared in the August issue of **FCGN**, noting this course of action. My sincere desire is to be fair to John Clayton and those who believe in his teaching. I have spent many, many hours researching and restudying his material, seeking to clarify any misunderstandings I may have formed regarding his views and looking to document (in proper context) matters serious enough to be discussed. Clayton presents some excellent material in his writings on various aspects of Christian evidences. There are, however, some teachings which compromise the Genesis account and other Scriptures. Only a few can be addressed in this article. I have

absolutely no desire to misrepresent anyone. My obligation to fellow Christians is to not bear false witness. My obligation to God is to uphold His truth. I hope to accomplish both.

### A "Conservative Theistic Evolutionist"?

Clayton denies being a theistic evolutionist and in some important ways he does not teach their concepts. He does state that man is a special creation directly from God, unrelated to evolution's cavemen, which John calls cave-apes (*The Source*, 1976, pp. 155-158). He does not believe, as some theistic evolutionists do, that God caused the ape to evolve until it was refined enough to drop a spirit into it. Still, his approach to the biblical account of creation in Genesis and some of his science closely parallel other concepts of theistic evolution.

Concerning the creation of the heaven and earth in Genesis 1:1, he has said, "What else is involved in verse 1? How much time is stipulated in this verse? Is it not possible that this creation was accomplished over a period of millions or even billions of years? To nail down a time period would be to add something to the Bible that isn't there" ("Genesis One and the Creation," *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*, 1968). John does not seem to realize that to suggest millions or billions of years were involved also adds something to the Bible that is not there! Later in this article it is shown that Genesis 1:1 is part of the creation week. Therefore, the Bible does give a time frame relating to Genesis 1:1. On one hand Clayton denies that he believes that the earth is 4.5 billion years old, but then he makes statements like the one above and chastises any who accept the traditional belief in creation. John insists that we are "attempting to explain away the 400+ separate scientific evidences [dating methods] of great age to the earth" (*Does God Exist?*, Jan. 1980, p. 4). Modern science says it has proved the earth is 4.5 billion years old

by using such dating methods. Although John says, "I think that there are enormous scientific problems in the idea that the earth is billions of years old..." he also remarks, "In the statement about the evidence of dating methods, I've tried to be fair with the evidence. And anybody who has worked in geology knows that the dating methods do work" (Taped response to *Evolutionary Creationism*, a booklet by Bert Thompson and Wayne Jackson; see also *The Source*, 1990, p. 131). If these dating methods "do work," as John contends, and scientists use them to prove the earth is 4.5 billion years old, why doesn't John admit he agrees with them that the earth is that old? In chapter twelve of his book he specifically mentions "4.5 billion years [as] another indication of the age of our system" (p. 130). John says it doesn't matter how old the earth is, but he promotes an ancient earth which is consistent with the theistic evolutionary viewpoint, all the while denying he has ever said the earth is billions of years old.

Theistic evolution requires these vast amounts of time, just like godless evolution does, for it must have a great age for the earth to make its theory work. Some theistic evolutionists contend that the "days" of Genesis 1 are exceptionally long periods of time. John believes the days of Genesis 1 are 24 hour days, but he simply moves the long periods of time up to Genesis 1:1 to allow for widespread evolutionary processes. However, neither that verse nor any other in the Bible requires such an understanding. First of all, Genesis 1:1 does not in any way indicate a vast period of time between itself and the rest of the chapter. Second, other verses of Scripture prohibit any such view. But John thinks that perhaps billions of years transpired during verses 1-3, and that during that time there was an entire creation consisting of dinosaurs, various plant life,

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bacteria, etc. He contends that those kinds of life evolved for billions of years along with the earth, until God began preparing it for man's habitation in verses 4-31 (*The Source*, 1976, pp. 147-148; *Does God Exist?*, Oct. 1976, pp. 5-7). He states it this way, "I suggest that all geological phenomena except the creation of warm-blooded life [including man] were accomplished at this time" (*The Source*, 1976, p. 148). However, notice what Exodus 20:11 says against such a view. **"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is..."** If God made the heaven, the sea, and all that in them is **"in six days,"** there can be no separate creation of billions of years in Genesis 1:1!

John attempts to define his type of evolution as "unfolding changes," like dogs and other animals developing new breeds (*The Source*, 1976, p. 132; *Does God Exist?*, Mar.-Apr. 1984, pp. 15-16). But John also makes comments like, "[T]he ape has evolved in its own tree. Whether this evolution began with pliopithecus, a lemur, or some primitive rodent, I cannot say because the evidence is inadequate. This evolution culminated in the modern apes" (*The Source*, 1976, p. 170). He later identifies his possible "rodent" connection with the tiny tree shrew, stating that modern scientific classification systems put the tree shrew in the primate category. When questioned about this type of evolution, John said, "[A]nd if chimpanzees and tree shrews were related, so a little monkey turned

into a big monkey. What's the big deal?" (Taped response to *Evolutionary Creationism*, 1980). The "big deal" is that this type of evolution is **much broader** than what John tries to say is his definition of evolution. It goes considerably beyond simple variation in dogs, cattle, men, etc. We can see the differences within species like these, but where is the evidence that a rodent became an ape?

Brother Clayton believes in God, which makes him a theist, but his brand of evolution puts him in the company of the theistic evolutionists, even if he is a conservative one. In fact, in a book review of Alan Haywood's *Creation and Evolution*, Clayton mentions that Haywood describes himself as a "conservative theistic evolutionist." John says of Haywood, "His arguments are biblically based and are interesting and informative," and he recommends the book as "meat" for educated readers, being "especially good on the inconsistencies of some creationist theories in the United States" (*Does God Exist?*, July-Aug. 1987, pp. 20-21). If Haywood's arguments for a conservative theistic evolution are really "biblically based," they would be true. Are they? Brother Clayton seems to think highly of them.

John is not misquoted nor taken out of context as frequently as he would have us believe. He often contributes to such problems by the manner of his writing. For example, he frequently uses the word "evolution" in broad, moderate, and narrow senses without clearly identifying how he is using it. While no one denies changes like different breeds of canine (dogs) or bovine (cattle) developing over time, most Bible believers are careful **not to identify these variations as "evolution,"** since the word is not commonly used in that restricted sense. To use John's own words, "It is not honest to use a term that you know different people understand differently" (*Does God Exist?*, Aug. 1981, pp. 9-11). Only a lack of space limits our ability to multiply this type of example. John holds to a type of evolution much broader than simple variation in species.

**Is Genesis Historical?**

In order to maintain that there is a creation and evolution of various life forms in Genesis 1:1, **different than the six day creation** in the rest of Genesis 1, Clayton must deny the historical nature of various Scriptures. We use the word "history" to mean a true and factual record of people and events,

a telling of things that actually happened. Why must John deny the historical nature of some Scriptures? Because if all of Genesis 1 (verses 1 through 31) refers to the six day creation, then he does not have his billions of years with which to establish his brand of evolution. He must have Genesis 1:1 (actually he believes verses 1-3) refer to a previous creation than the rest of the chapter to make his theory work.

As stated above, Exodus 20:11 is absolutely devastating to John's position! For if **all that is in heaven and earth and the sea were made in six days, like Moses said, there can be no previous creation of various life forms evolving over billions of years.** John knows this and labors hard (and confusingly) to resurrect his creation. Notice his varied and contradictory attempts to do so. In March of 1979 John wrote a letter to the editor of the *Rocky Mountain Christian*, a brotherhood publication. He said in part, "I have been accused of not believing 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 not speaking historically, but rather referring to the creation of man and woman" (p. 3). John further says, "[T]his is the belief of all who have examined this in depth" (ibid.). Obviously John thought that he was one of those who had "examined this in depth." However, John soon surfaced from this "depth" and took other confusing and contradictory positions to the one he claimed was so scholarly. In 1980, in his taped response to *Evolutionary Creationism*, he again refers to Exodus 20:11, saying, "First of all, Genesis 1 is a literal historical document. 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." Then he states (about Genesis 2), "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." Are you confused? Who would not be? How can a document be "historical and... historically correct" but not be a "historical account"? There is more. On the same tape a little later on John adds to the confusion by claiming, "...I believe that Exodus 20:11 is referring to what Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are talking about. Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, it seems to me, are discussing the history of man and man's world." It must be obvious to even a casual reader that even John does not know what he is talking

about. The more he tries to deny Exodus 20:11 is a reference to Genesis 1:1-31, the more he is forced to take confusing and contradictory positions. There is still more. Fairly recently John wrote on this again, saying, "In Exodus 20:11 for example, a reference is made to the week of Genesis 1... The creation from nothing [Genesis 1:1] is not what this verse is referring to if we take it literally. It is dealing with the making of those things described in the week of creation" [which John believes excludes Genesis 1:1] (his emphasis, *Does God Exist?*, Jan.-Feb. 1991, p. 9). In his effort to salvage his separate creation in Genesis 1:1, John has taken three different positions on what Exodus 20:11 is referring to. First it was Genesis 2; next Genesis 1 and 2; then only Genesis 1. First Genesis 2 was "not a historical account," then it was "historical and historically correct." One is forced to ask if John really knows what he believes on these matters. If he has changed, why not just admit the error and state clearly what he does believe? Unfortunately, John frequently writes in this manner and then complains that he is taken out of context or misquoted. Surely a man who has two Masters Degrees should be able to write so as to present his beliefs clearly, unless he does not know his material or he is trying to cloud the issues so he can try to take whatever position is convenient at the time.

Is Genesis 2 historical? Indeed, it is! Jesus quoted it as being the basis for marriage in Matthew 19:5-6 and Mark 10:7-8. Is Genesis 1 also historical? Absolutely so! Christ combined parts of Genesis 1:1 and 1:27, **tying them both to the same one creation account in that chapter!** Jesus said, "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." (Mark 10:6) When was "the beginning" of the creation week, during which God "made them male and female"? Christ referred to the entire chapter of Genesis 1, beginning at "the beginning" in verse one and culminating in the crowning event of mankind's creation as male and female in verse 27. The *Arndt & Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon* notes how the word Jesus used for "creation" in Mark 10:6 is defined. The Greek word for creation (ktiseos) in that passage is said to be "the sum total of everything created... from the beginning of the world" (p. 456). It does not just refer to the creation of man, but to "the sum total of everything created" (empha-

sis - TJC). That takes in Genesis 1:1 as well as the rest of the chapter. Thus, man is not "a very recent newcomer to this planet" as Clayton indicates ("The History of Man on the Planet Earth," *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*, 1968). Rather, as Christ says, man has been here from the beginning of the creation, **the creation** of Genesis 1:1-31! One may not intend to do so, but when someone denies the one creation event of Genesis 1:1-31, that person is denying the factual historical record of what God did and wants us to believe. One would also have to deny that Christ knew what he was talking about in Mark 10:6. There are also other passages involved which we do not have space to discuss.

Conclusion

Some may ask, "What is the harm in believing in John Clayton's type of evolution and his approach to the Genesis account of creation?" First, as stated before, one must deny the plain teaching of Scripture to the contrary (Mark 10:6; Exodus 20:11; Romans 1:19-20; et. al.). To exercise such a disregard can lessen the respect one has for biblical authority and lead to compromise in other areas. Second, John cries out long and hard against what he says are additions to God's word by creationists. Of course, it is always wrong to add to God's word (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19). However, it is Clayton who is adding to God's word by adding **his creation** to the Bible's one creation in Genesis 1:1-31. Third, while we should accept scientific fact, it seems that John is ready to accept scientific theory which, if believed, would falsify the Bible. While John has said, "all the scientific evidence in the world is meaningless in the face of a clear biblical statement," he does not accept what we believe are "clear biblical statement[s]" set forth in this article (*Does God Exist?*, Jan. 1980, p. 5). Brother Clayton should **spell out clearly, so that we can all understand him**, those scientific facts which he believes require changing the Genesis account of creation to include Clayton's Creation. Shall we also accept the so-called scientific ideas that life does not begin in the womb; that alcoholism and other such sins are diseases; or that homosexuality is genetically inborn? Shall we neutralize the verses of Scripture which teach God's will on these matter too?

It is not our contention that all who

believe in John and his work are evil and plunging headlong into apostasy. Most are no doubt good, dedicated Christians who are serving the Lord in many excellent ways. However, many claims that good is being done may be weakened by a lessening of respect for the authority of the Bible, even if we do not realize that possibility. It may work slowly and take some time to be noticed, but I honestly believe that some of the positions which John holds have contributed to the deterioration of respect for the authority of the Scriptures within the Lord's church over the past 25 years. This may be evident in some of the other teachings of brother Clayton that we do not have space to discuss here. See the book review for *In the Shadow of Darwin* elsewhere in this issue.

While we remain open to consider the opposite viewpoint, we presently believe that there are real dangers in these compromises of Genesis and other passages which try to make the creation something other than it clearly claims to be.

*Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
At all the times you can,  
In all the places you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.*

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## GOD'S FAITH IN YOU

by Louis Mahaffey

*"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able..."*  
1 Cor. 10.13.

Satan loves to whisper in our ear that it is simply too hard to follow Christ. He loves it when we wallow in self pity and laughs when we tell ourselves no one else has it so tough. Paul tells us we have many things in common. We have so many things in common that no one, absolutely no one, has a temptation that has not been pushed upon mankind a thousand times before. Our Lord is so merciful, and knows each of us so well, that Satan is not allowed to hurl anything at us that we are not capable of overcoming.

We often discuss our faith in God, but this powerful passage speaks about God's faith in us. When Scripture says, *"who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able..."* it shows God has faith in us that we will not give up and commit the sin. Incredible! When a temptation comes your way it is a positive and not a negative. It is a proof that God has faith in you, that God believes in you! Blessed be the name of the Lord.

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### JUST USE ME ...

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To him who has lost his way, I am a safe guide.  
To those who have been hurt by sin, I am healing balm.  
To the discouraged, I whisper glad messages of hope.  
To those who are distressed by the storms of life, I am an anchor.  
To those who suffer in lonely solitude, I am a cool, soft hand resting on a fevered brow.  
O, child of man, to best defend me,  
just use me!

-Author Unknown



## BOOK BLURBS



### Recommended Reading

*In the Shadow of Darwin - A review of the teachings of John N. Clayton*, co-authored by Wayne Jackson and Bert Thompson. Published by Apologetics Press, Inc. in 1992.

This book, as noted in the title, takes an in depth look at some of the matters presented in the feature article in this issue of *Fulton County Gospel News* and much more. This book is an expansion of a previous booklet on some of these same issues entitled, *Evolutionary Creationism*, also by the same authors. This book has sections dealing with brother Clayton's various statements on the existence of God, inspiration of the Bible, careless (?) comments made about Jesus, doctrinal errors, miscellaneous errors, deliberate misrepresentations, non-creationist/theistic evolutionist comments made by Clayton, John's views on the different material presented in Genesis 1-11 (days of creation, ages of the patriarchs, the global flood), the age of the earth, Clayton's problems with the Genesis account of creation, and John's difficulties with words and the way he uses them.

As I read this book a second time, I strove to check all of the references which the authors used to prove their criticisms of John's positions. Although John and his supporters contend that brethren Jackson and Thompson have constantly misquoted him or have taken him out of context, I did not find this to be so. I found myself in agreement with nearly all of the criticisms which I could check from my own collection of John Clayton's writings and tapes. It may be that there are a few occasions of misunderstanding, but even then Clayton has contributed greatly to this by his careless use of words and his apparent inability to write clearly. In many of the places where Clayton says he is misquoted, that he is merely setting forth what others believe or "possibilities," it is not at all clear that such is the case. I believe that one who takes the time to painstakingly check these quotes will be duly impressed with the general accuracy of these authors.

The book is fully documented so that you too can check for accuracy. It contains 170 pages and can be ordered from Apologetic Press, Inc., 230 Landmark Dr., Montgomery, AL 36117. The cost is a modest \$4.00

## GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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