

# Clark, Harold Willard (1891–1986)

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## JAMES L. HAYWARD

James L. Hayward, Ph.D. (Washington State University), is a professor emeritus of biology at Andrews University where he taught for 30 years. He is widely published in literature dealing with ornithology, behavioral ecology, and paleontology, and has contributed numerous articles to Adventist publications. His book, *The Creation-Evolution Controversy: An Annotated Bibliography* (Scarecrow Press, 1998), won a *Choice* award from the American Library Association. He also edited *Creation Reconsidered* (Association of Adventist Forums, 2000).

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Harold Willard Clark was an Adventist biologist who taught for many years at Pacific Union College. He became well known among Seventh-day Adventists through his writings that defended young-earth creationism and Flood geology.

## Early Life and Education

Harold W. Clark was born near Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada, on November 6, 1891, the eldest of four siblings. Until Harold was six his parents, Homer and Sarah (nee Gladden) Clark, managed a farm near Sherbrooke. Eventually the family moved to a second farm near South Corinth, Vermont, where Harold spent most of his childhood and adolescence. There he learned to tend livestock, plant and harvest corn and potatoes, put up hay, care for a family garden, and make maple syrup. He also developed a love for nature, in part by reading through a botany textbook by Harvard professor Asa Gray. During the spring and summer of his sixteenth year he enjoyed learning the names of local wild plants, a passion that would occupy the rest of his life.<sup>1</sup>

## Career in Education

At sixteen Harold passed Vermont's teachers' examinations, and was certified to teach elementary school, which he did for the next year and a half. During this time he became friends with Hazel Farnsworth, the granddaughter of William Farnsworth of Washington, New Hampshire, famous in Adventist lore as one of the first Millerite believers to keep Saturday as Sabbath.<sup>2</sup>

In May 1912, after teaching elementary school in Vermont for a year and a half, Harold completed his secondary education at South Lancaster Academy. When Orvil Farnsworth, father of Hazel, decided to homestead with his brothers near Sonningdale, Saskatchewan, he invited Harold to serve as the homesteader children's teacher. There Harold and Hazel Farnsworth were married in 1913.<sup>3</sup>

In 1916, Harold was elected educational superintendent of the Saskatchewan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. That same year the church opened an academy approximately 45 miles northwest of Sonningdale, in Battleford, Saskatchewan. Harold and Hazel, along with their two young daughters, moved to Battleford. For the next four years he taught science, math, and other subjects at Battleford Academy, in addition to being the conference superintendent of education.<sup>4</sup>

In 1920 Harold moved with his family to Angwin, California, to complete a college education at Pacific Union College (PUC). There he became a student under the creationist George McCready Price. When Price left PUC two years later, Clark, having finished his degree, was hired to take the position vacated by Price. In 1933 Clark completed a master's degree in biology at the University of California, Berkeley, becoming the first Seventh-day Adventist to earn a graduate degree in this field.<sup>5</sup>

## Involvement in Creationism

During Clark's first few years of teaching at PUC, he defended the views of Price. In fact, Clark dedicated his first book, *Back to Creationism* (1929), to Price, his "Teacher, Friend, Fellow-warrior and Prophet of the New Catastrophism." Clark's views, however, soon began to shift. He studied the effects of glaciation in the Rocky



Harold Willard Clark  
Photo from Wikimedia Commons.

Mountains and recognized the strong evidence for continental glaciation in the Northern Hemisphere, a view Price had earlier opposed. He also began to suggest that many new species had arisen since the creation through hybridization. He incorporated these views in a revised manuscript of his book *Back to Creationism*. When Price received a copy of the revision, he enthusiastically endorsed it, writing that Clark's work served "better as a general survey of the subject than any single book of mine."<sup>6</sup>

Clark's progressive views on geology, however, soon crossed Price's line of orthodoxy. In the summer of 1938, one of Clark's students invited Clark to Oklahoma and North Texas to see for himself that fossils appeared in the rocks in the same orderly manner as geologists said they were arranged. Indeed it was this predictable sequence of fossils that geologists used to find oil. Price, who had spent little time examining field evidence firsthand, vehemently opposed the view that fossils exhibited a predictable sequence. Indeed, Clark confessed that he himself was shocked by this evidence.

Having studied biotic associations in the Northern California Coast Ranges for his Berkeley master's thesis, however, Clark realized that living things are orderly distributed from lower to higher elevations in mountainous zones. So, he reasoned, perhaps as the waters of the Genesis Flood rose, they encountered various life zones and sequentially buried the organisms in these zones in an orderly fashion. This might account for the orderly arrangement of fossils in the geological column. He called his view "ecological zonation theory," and he wrote a letter to Price explaining his revised position.<sup>7</sup>

Price was not happy. A decade earlier he had published what he called his "great law of conformable stratigraphic sequences . . . by all odds the most important law ever formulated with reference to the order in which the strata occur." His so-called "law" asserted that "Any kind of fossiliferous beds whatever, 'young' or 'old,' may be found occurring conformably on any other fossiliferous beds, 'older' or 'younger.'"<sup>8</sup> The fact that his former student now opposed his "law" infuriated him. When Clark eventually detailed his views in *The New Diluvialism* (1946), Price responded with a 46-page diatribe entitled *Theories of Satanic Origin*.<sup>9</sup> But despite Price's opposition, Clark's views on geology occupied center stage among Adventist creationists for many years.<sup>10</sup>

About the same time, Clark became embroiled in a controversy with another Adventist creationist, this time over the origin of human "races." Ellen G. White had written that "if there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God and caused confusion everywhere."<sup>11</sup> Clark, along with several other Adventists, interpreted this to mean that before the flood humans had crossed with apes leading to the development of degenerate races of humans today. He specifically referred to certain living tribes in Africa and Malaysia as degenerate. Frank Lewis Marsh, an Adventist biologist teaching at Union College, disagreed and argued that White's statement referred to interbreeding of human races with one another and of animal types with one another. Marsh did not believe crosses between humans and apes were even possible, and he particularly was concerned that Clark's interpretation would lead to charges of racism. Unlike Clark's dispute with Price, the Clark-Marsh disagreement was a friendly one. Nonetheless, church leaders met with Clark and Marsh on September 8, 1947 to listen to their opposing arguments with the result that Marsh's perspective became the favored interpretation for many Adventists.<sup>12</sup>

Clark was very active in creationist organizations. He was a founding officer of the short-lived Religion and Science Association in 1935.<sup>13</sup> Soon after that society folded in 1937, he became a founding member of the Society for the Study of Creation, the Deluge, and Related Science (or simply Deluge Geology Society), which remained in existence until 1945.<sup>14</sup> When the Deluge Geology Society disbanded, many of its members, including Clark, formed the Natural Science Society, which survived until 1948.<sup>15</sup> In that year Clark wrote an article for the Society's journal, *The Forum for the Correlation of Science and the Bible*, entitled "In Defense of the Ultra-Literal View of the Creation of the Earth." His basic principle was that "when we come to the Genesis record of Creation and the Flood, we maintain a simple, literal interpretation because we do not believe that the scientific facts make it necessary to take any other view."<sup>16</sup>

## Other Activities

In 1947, Clark established the Mendocino Biological Field Station along an estuary near Albion, California. Teaching Pacific Union College students at the station allowed Clark to act on his belief that "It is especially in the field of natural history—the study of trees, flowers, birds, animals, insects, et cetera—that the student has the best opportunity of witnessing the power of God at work."<sup>17</sup>

For 26 years, Clark taught a correspondence course in geology offered by Home Study International, a distance education organization sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to numerous published articles, Clark wrote several books: *Back to Creationism* (1929), *Genes and Genesis* (1940), *The New Diluvialism* (1946), *Skylines and Detours* (1959), *Crusader for Creation: The Life and Works of George McCready Price* (1966), *Fossils, Flood and Fire* (1968), *New Creationism* (1980), and *Nature Nuggets* (2012, posthumous).

## Death and Legacy

Harold W. Clark died on May 12, 1986 at the age of 94.<sup>19</sup> His writings on biology and geology exerted a long-term influence on the nature and direction of Seventh-day Adventist discussions on the topic of science and faith.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Harold W. Clark, *Skylines and Detours* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1959), 11–30.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–14, 30–40.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–60.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 78–87.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 88–96,
- <sup>6</sup> Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, Expanded edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 142–144.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 142–145; Harold W. Clark, *The New Diluvialism* (Angwin, CA: Science Publications, 1946), 62–93, and graphically illustrated in Plate 7; Clark, *Skylines and Detours*, 198–203.
- <sup>8</sup> Numbers, 144–148; George McCready Price, *The New Geology* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1923), 637–638.
- <sup>9</sup> Clark, *The New Diluvialism*, 62–93; George McCready Price, *Theories of Satanic Origin* (Loma Linda, CA: Self-published, n.d.).
- <sup>10</sup> See, for example, Leonard Brand and Arthur Chadwick, *Faith, Reason, & Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016), accessed on August 1, 2017, <https://read.amazon.com/?asin=B06XR6SSYW>. Chapter 16 favorably presents and illustrates

Clark's ecological zonation model; see Figure 16.7.

<sup>11</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts, Important Facts of Faith in Connection with the History of Holy Men of Old* Volume III (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864), 64.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon Shigley, "Amalgamation of Man and Beast" What Did Ellen White Mean?" *Spectrum* 12, no. 4 (June, 1982), 10–19; Numbers, 149–150.

<sup>13</sup> Numbers, 123–124.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 139–141.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 155–156.

<sup>16</sup> Harold W. Clark, "In Defense of the Ultra-Literal View of the Creation of the Earth," in *Early Creationist Journals*, ed. Ronald L. Numbers (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), 507–511.

<sup>17</sup> Clark, *Skylines and Detours*, 219–284, 217.

<sup>18</sup> "Harold W. Clark obituary," *Adventist Review*, December 11, 1986, 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

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