

AlbertMohler.com

Science Trumps the Bible? — An Amazingly Candid (and Disastrous) Argument

Professor Giberson asserts that to believe in the truthfulness and historicity of the entire Bible is to paddle in an “intellectual backwater.” Christians committed to biblical authority should ponder that statement deeply, even as they keep paddling.

Wednesday, October 27, 2010

The folks at BioLogos continue with a fierce intensity to press their case for theistic evolution. In so doing, they are making the arguments that are essential to their case that Christianity and evolutionary theory are compatible. The arguments they are now making are integral to their cause, and they are amazingly, even breathtakingly candid.



In a recent article series responding to atheistic scientist Jerry Coyne, Professor Karl Giberson of Eastern Nazarene College rejects Coyne's insistence that evolution precludes theism. Coyne, one of Darwin's most ardent defenders, seems to operate under the quaint idea that Christians are marked by belief in an interventionist God and a confidence that the Bible is true.

Coyne also seems to believe that Christian theologians are not deists, and he is profoundly right. He wrote of “some theologians with a deistic bent,” who insist that evolution and Christianity are compatible, but who are in no way representative of true Christianity. Sometimes it takes an atheist to see the truth in a theological argument. Coyne strikes gold when he writes: “The reason that many liberal theologians see religion and evolution as harmonious is that they espouse a theology not only alien but unrecognizable as religion to most Americans.”

Coyne is one of the most recognized authorities on evolution in the world today. He sees those who argue for an accommodation of evolutionary science and religious belief as either dishonest or delusional. He is increasingly frustrated with scientists who make what he sees as a fallacious argument — that Christianity and evolution can be reconciled. “Attempts to reconcile God and evolution keep rolling off the intellectual assembly line,” he laments. “It never stops, because the reconciliation never works.”

In a five-part series at BioLogos, Professor Giberson seeks to refute Coyne's argument. Now, Professor Giberson does land a few well-placed intellectual punches on Coyne's absolute naturalism, but he does great damage to the Christian faith in so doing. At the same time, he ends up proving Coyne's central point.

Coyne argues that religious ideas are ancient and resistant to correction, and he identifies science as the only qualified correction. Giberson rejects Coyne's argument that religious beliefs are a fossilized set of ideas that reluctantly give way to scientific advance. Giberson retorts that religious beliefs change from within religious communities and that scientific advances often refute previously held scientific opinion.

At this point, Giberson's argument gets really interesting — and really dangerous. “I am happy to concede that science does indeed trump religious truth about the natural world,” Giberson writes. “Galileo and Darwin showed this only too clearly, even if it is completely lost on Ken Ham and Al Mohler.”

Well count me in as being lost to the assertion that science trumps the Bible “about the natural world” or about anything else. In his original response to Jerry Coyne, Giberson made the argument in more striking words: “Empirical science does indeed trump revealed truth about the world as Galileo and Darwin showed only too clearly.” That statement, with its reference to “revealed truth,” is even more shocking than the first.

In the economy of a few words, Giberson throws the Bible under the scientific bus. We should be thankful that his argument is so clear, for it puts the case for theistic evolution in its proper light — as a direct attack upon biblical authority.

There is more to Professor Giberson’s argument. ‘Theology and biblical studies move forward as well in dramatic and revolutionary ways but New Atheist critics dismiss this progress because it is not acknowledged by lay people on Main Street or in intellectual backwaters like those where Al Mohler and Ken Ham paddle about.’

And what does this theological “progress” look like? Consider this paragraph:

In ‘The God Delusion’ [Richard] Dawkins eloquently skewers the tyrannical anthropomorphic deity of the Old Testament—the God that supposedly commanded the Jews to go on genocidal rampages and who occasionally went on his own rampages, flooding the planet or raining fire and brimstone on wicked cities. But who believes in this deity any more, besides those same fundamentalists who think the earth is 10,000 years old? Modern theology has moved past this view of God.

Giberson’s theological “progress” is to deny the Bible’s truthfulness concerning crucial Old Testament texts. Modern theology rejects any notion that God would flood the planet or rain judgment upon cities, he insists. His summary: “Modern theology has moved past this view of God.”

In Giberson’s view, anyone who holds to the truthfulness and historical character of these biblical texts is simply intellectually backwards and unsophisticated. I can only wonder if the parents who send their offspring to Eastern Nazarene College have any understanding of what is taught there — and with such boldness and audacity.

In the last article in his series, Giberson makes the argument that the Christian faith “is rooted in unique historical events that were recorded by the early church as they tried to make sense of their encounters with the risen Christ.” Is that the sum and substance of Professor Giberson’s view of biblical inspiration — that the Bible is the record of the early church’s attempt to “make sense” of Christ and “unique historical events”?

We do know this: Professor Giberson asserts that to believe in the truthfulness and historicity of the entire Bible is to paddle in an “intellectual backwater.” Christians committed to biblical authority should ponder that statement deeply, even as they keep paddling.

Karl Giberson, “[Exposing the Straw Men of New Atheism](#),” BioLogos.org, [Part 1](#) (September 16, 2010), [Part 2](#) (October 2, 2010), [Part 3](#) (October 8, 2010), [Part 4](#) (October 22, 2010), [Part 5](#) (October 25, 2010).

Jerry Coyne and others, “[Does the Empirical Nature of Science Contradict the Revelatory Nature of Faith?](#),” *Edge*, January 21, 2009. Professor Giberson’s original response to Coyne is found in this forum.

