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Throwing the Bible Under the Bus

Giberson and Collins reveal their true understanding of biblical inspiration when they locate it, not in the authorship of the text at all, but in the modern act of reading the text.

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In his 1996 novel, *In the Beauty of the Lilies*, John Updike told of the Reverend Clarence Arthur Wilmot, the fictional pastor of New York's Fourth Presbyterian Church, who stopped believing in God one day in 1910. On that day, the Rev. Wilmot "felt the last particles of his faith leave him," Updike wrote.

Rev. Wilmot's crisis of faith was rooted in his loss of confidence in the Bible as the revealed Word of God. The influence of liberal critics of the Bible had reached him even at seminary years before, and now he saw the Scriptures as just another human book. In Updike's words, the Scriptures were "one more human volume, more curious and conglomerate than most, but the work of men—of Jews in dirty sheepskins, rotten-toothed desert tribesmen with eyes rolled heavenward, men like flies on flypaper caught fast in a historic time, among the myths and conceptions belonging to the childhood of mankind."

Updike's brilliant and accurate depiction of the liberal approach to the Bible remains shocking. The Higher Critics, as the liberal scholars were then known, did indeed see the authors of the Old Testament as "rotten-toothed desert tribesmen" who could not see beyond "myths and conceptions belonging to the childhood of mankind."

Well, the Reverend Clarence Arthur Wilmot was fictional, but Dr. Karl W. Giberson is not. Giberson is not a pastor, but a professor at Eastern Nazarene College near Boston. He is also a scientist involved with the BioLogos Foundation, a group committed to the defense and promotion of theistic evolution.

Just recently, Professor Giberson wrote an article published at CNN's *Belief Blog*. In the article, Giberson claims that Jesus would believe in evolution, and that the rest of us should accept evolution as well. In the process of making his argument, Giberson castigates those who hold to a literal interpretation of Genesis for forcing the biblical text to be read as "a modern account of origins." Instead, Giberson asserts, Genesis is "a story that began as an oral tradition for a wandering tribe of Jews thousands of years ago."

Sound familiar? Giberson went on to argue: "While Genesis contains wonderful insights into the relationship between God and the creation, it simply does not contain scientific ideas about the origin of the universe, the age of the earth or the development of life."

So, according to Professor Giberson, Genesis contains "wonderful insights," but no authoritative revelation of how God made the universe. Evidently, he believes that the Bible is not making a claim to historical truth when it tells of the creation and function of Adam and Eve. "We now know that the human race began millions of years ago in Africa—not thousands of years ago in the Middle East, as the story suggests," Giberson insists.

In making his case, Giberson uses the old argument that God has given humanity two books of revelation — the Bible and the created order. This is one of Giberson's most frequently offered arguments. It is a theologically disastrous



argument in his hands, for he allows modern naturalistic science to silence the Bible, God's written revelation. In another article published last year, Giberson said, "I am happy to concede that science does indeed trump religious truth about the natural world."

Later, he stated even more directly that "science does indeed trump revealed truth about the world."

In other words, he throws the Bible under the bus. In language hauntingly reminiscent of Reverend Clarence Arthur Wilmot, Professor Giberson describes the human authors of the Old Testament as "ancient and uncomprehending scribes."

In his new book, *The Language of Science and Faith*, written with Francis S. Collins, readers will find this strange paragraph:

Biblical interpretation falls short without an understanding of biblical inspiration, of course, as we do not suggest that the Bible is simply another book to be interpreted. But we do a great disservice to the concept and power of inspiration when we reduce it to mere factual accuracy, as though God's role were nothing more than a divine fact checker, preventing the biblical authors from making mistakes. A dead and lifeless text, like the phone book, can be factually accurate. The inspiration of the Bible is dynamic and emerges through engagement with readers.

That paragraph is, quite simply, one of the most ridiculous statements concerning the Bible one might ever imagine. Who has ever argued that the divine inspiration of the Bible is reduced to "mere factual accuracy"? Giberson's dismissive language about God as "nothing more than a divine fact checker" is sheer nonsense. Who has ever made such a proposal?

The conclusion of the paragraph is an embarrassing *non sequitur*. It is patently untrue that only a "dead and lifeless text, like a phone book" can be factually accurate. Giberson and Collins reveal their true understanding of biblical inspiration when they locate it, not in the authorship of the text at all, but in the modern act of reading the text.

As they make their argument for theistic evolution, Giberson and Collins embrace a form of Open Theism and argue, quite consistently with arguments common to BioLogos, against the historicity of Adam and Eve.

They end the book with their own version of "The Grand Narrative of Creation." This is their climactic conclusion of the narrative:

Eventually, the most advanced of the life forms on the planet, human beings, become deeply religious. Throughout the history of our species belief in God or gods has been close to universal. Abstractions like right and wrong, the meaning of life, the where everything came from have become critically important questions. The religious impulse developed into one of the deepest aspects of our complicated understanding of ourselves.

They conclude: "And God saw that it was good."

Here is their own rendering of what it looks like when the "Book of Nature" trumps the Bible. Just compare their "Grand Narrative of Creation" with Genesis.

Then again, Karl Giberson believes that the human authors of Genesis were "ancient and uncomprehending scribes" and that Genesis "began as an oral tradition for a wandering tribe of Jews thousands of years ago."

That sounds strangely like John Updike's description of "Jews in dirty sheepskins, rotten-toothed desert tribesmen" caught in "myths and conceptions belonging to the childhood of mankind."

This is what is left, when the Bible is thrown under the bus.

I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at mail@albertmohler.com. Follow regular updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler.

Karl W. Giberson, "[My Take: Jesus Would Believe in Evolution and So Should You](#)," CNN *Belief Blog*, Sunday,

April 10, 2011.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "On Darwin and Darwinism: A Letter to Professor Giberson," Wednesday, August 25, 2010.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Science Trumps the Bible? — An Amazingly Candid (and Disastrous) Argument," Wednesday, October 27, 2010.

Karl W. Giberson and Francis S. Collins, *The Language of Science and Faith: Straight Answers to Genuine Questions* [InterVarsity Press, 2011].

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