

TRUSTEES OF THE TRUTH

In 1600 at Campo dei Fiori in Italy, a monk named Giordano Bruno was accused of a variety of religious heresies. One of these heresies was a speculation that the universe might be much larger than people believed the Bible said it was. This idea is accepted today, but at the time of Bruno it conflicted with the teachings of the church.

Within the Italian church at the time of Bruno there was a group of well-intentioned Christians who were very confident about their particular interpretation of spiritual truth. These self-appointed "trustees of the truth," as they might be labeled, felt that the best way they could serve the cause of Christ was to purge fellow Christians of differing ideas. Giordano Bruno was not willing to abandon his beliefs, so this group of well-meaning Christians took their Christian brother, with whom they had previously broken bread, tied him to a stake, and burned him.

One of the errors that these trustees of the "truth" hoped to destroy by burning Bruno was the "heretical" notion that the universe might actually be larger than our solar system and that there could even be life on other planets.

In Italy, in the year 1600, Christians were told to believe that the universe ended just beyond the orbit of Saturn, with a large sphere to which all the



stars were attached. The earth was the center of the universe and the only planet with life; our sun was unique and not like other stars. In the years that followed the death of Bruno, the newly developing field of astronomy continued to set Christian against Christian. It seemed as though some aspect of every new scientific development was in conflict with the doctrines of the church.

Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton were all challenged by this same ecclesiastical attitude. The trust-

ees of the truth were always able to show how each new scientific development disagreed with their view, which they felt was based on the Bible. The "truth," fortunately, is periodically sacrificed on the altar of the obvious, and now the church accepts the universe constructed from these formerly "heretical" ideas. The church has even issued an apology to Galileo for forcing him to recant his belief that the earth was not stationary. Unfortunately, the apology came centuries after his death.

The "trustees of the truth" have recently regrouped, prepared now to wage battle over evolution.

In the current version of the "truth," Christians are told to believe that evolution is fundamentally an attempt to undermine the theistic basis for the origin of life. A true Christian *must* believe that evolution is explicitly in disagreement with

spiritual truth. To believe in evolution is to become a member of the "evolutionary religion" and subscribe to Carl Sagan's arrogant doctrine that "the cosmos is all that is, ever was, or ever will be." To believe that anything could actually "evolve" is to abandon the faith—or so they say.

This hostile attitude toward evolution has developed in response to a fundamental misrepresentation of what "evolution" means. Some misguided secular extremists have presented evolution as if it provides some

kind of evidence that God does not exist. This assertion is totally ridiculous however; evolution simply means "change." To "believe" in evolution is to believe in change. To accept the theory of biological evolution is simply to believe that life and living organisms have the potential to adapt to a changing world. This is hardly equivalent to denying the existence of God.

The current conflict emerges because the "trustees of the truth" are convinced that biological evolution is incompatible with the doctrine of God as Creator. God's creative process must be *supernatural* they argue—outside the realm of scientific inquiry. The laws of nature are not the tools of God's creative process. Creation is magical, not natural—or so they say.

The current argument about whether evolution is an adequate explanation for the origin of the universe and life itself is certainly a highly engaging scientific question. For the Christian, however, whose primary focus should be Christ, this question is becoming an undesirable distraction.

This distraction is currently the source of a very heated battle that bears an unfortunate resemblance to the controversy about the stationary earth at the time of Galileo. Then, as now, this controversy is setting "brother against brother" as sincere Christians find themselves on opposite sides of a very complex question. The division within the church over evolution is especially unfortunate in view of the fact that the major issues are still being debated within *both* the scientific and the theological communities. Scores of sincere Christians, including many of the faculty at Christian colleges, who all confidently affirm God's role as Creator, understand evolution as a *creative* act of God. To keep this issue in perspective, Christians need to recognize that the controversy is primarily a *scientific* problem, with less relevance to faith in Jesus Christ than the "trustees" would have us believe.

The latest "trustees of the truth" have claimed the title *creationists*. They have recently descended from the mountain with the claim that it is both theologically and scientifically necessary to believe that God can only create life in one specific way. If life

can evolve according to natural laws, they argue, then God cannot have been involved. God will become irrelevant and atheism will result—or so they say.

Whether or not life can develop by natural law, however, is really a *scientific* question. It is ultimately of no more *spiritual* relevance than the motion of the earth around the sun. Man's relationship with the Creator is *spiritual*; science makes no claim to understand the origin of this aspect of humankind. Our spiritual nature co-exists in the same body with our physical nature, but it cannot be equated with our physical nature. The "image of God" is certainly not what we see in the mirror.

The spiritual nature of man is indeed a "treasure in earthen vessels"; there is nothing for Christians to fear as science attempts to help us understand how these "earthen vessels" came to have the form that they do. If the next expedition to Mars finds that Mars, which was lifeless at the time of the last expedition, is now inhabited by amoeba, does that destroy our faith in God as the Creator of life? Is there even any spiritual relevance to such a discovery?

The "trustees of the truth" have drawn a line around the origin and development of life—a line like the one they erased around a stationary earth. They have stated that a particular type of supernatural act of God is the only possible explanation for life as we see it. This kind of dogmatic position produces two undesirable results: (1) a quarrel emerges within the church as Christians find themselves on either side of the "line." Many sincere Christians feel that scientific evidence currently suggests a variety of explanations for the origin of life as we know it; (2) the "trustees" make numerous statements that go "on record" and then become potentially embarrassing as the world outside of the church thinks that these are the views of all Christians. When these views are later abandoned, the credibility of the church and its witness for Jesus Christ are seriously compromised.

There was a time when it was impossible to be a "good" Christian and believe that the universe that God created contained an earth that actually moved. The "trustees of the truth"

now tell us that a "good" Christian cannot believe that evolution might be one of the mechanisms that God used to create.

Should the kingdom of God spend its limited human and financial resources trying to persuade people that one particular interpretation of creation is valid? Should tax-deductible tithe money be spent financing efforts to show that the earth is very young, or that radioactive dating doesn't work very well? Should Christians spend their time writing books that bring no one closer to a knowledge of Jesus Christ and serve only to convince people that their faith is incompatible with the results of modern science?

Once upon a time the "trustees of the truth" told us that the radical idea about the earth moving about the sun was demonic and would destroy the faith. But the gospel of Jesus Christ proved to be stronger than they believed. Now we are told to believe that the theory of evolution will destroy the faith.

It is time for the Kingdom of God to put its energies into tasks that bring people to Christ and stop being so distracted by spiritually irrelevant controversies within the scientific community. **H**

BY KARL GIBERSON

A Nazarene physicist living in Hingham, Massachusetts.

Heavenly Splendor

*I gaze in wonder
from afar,
at the awesome mysteries
of a twinkling star.
Gentle hands of God
have emplaced,
A myriad of starry worlds
in time and space.
Radiant, swirling islands,
in soft, velvet night,
God's glory to behold
in resplendent sight.*

—FLOYD MAGER
Kansas City, Missouri

THE EVOLUTIONARY EFFECT

The battle over whether creation or evolution accurately explains the origin of life has again become a popular topic, particularly in relationship to the teaching of such subjects in public schools. Evolutionists argue that evolution is science and should be taught, and that creation is religion and therefore should not be taught. Creationists argue that creation has the right to be taught in the public school, since it is a valid explanation of the origin of life for them. As a microbiologist, I would like to offer my observations on the subject. It is not the intent of this article to offer the arguments that disprove the evolutionary origin of life, even though that can easily be done and there are many fine books that do that. I wish to expose what many persons do not see, which are the ramifications to human life that this theory conveys.

First of all, there are two aspects of evolution. I have found that most people do not realize this. One aspect of evolution deals with the ability of organisms to adapt to a slowly changing environment over a period of time. This is the part that does have some scientific basis. Personally, I view this as a quality imparted to living things by a Creator. However, evolutionists use this observable adaptability of living things to contrive the second aspect of evolution, which deals with the origin of life and formation of all the different forms of life from one primordial life form. This aspect, dealing with the origin of life, cannot be proven scientifically, and therefore is not science, but religion. Evolution, as most commonly defined today, deals with origin of life. It also attempts to define destiny, therefore it is as much, if not more, a religion than Christianity.

Evolution is a religion that disguises itself as science, so as to appeal to human pride and gain public acceptance. Evolution is the state religion of communists and is rapidly becoming the primary religious belief in the United States. One can rarely read any kind of "scientific" article without finding some reference to this religion, and usually it is accepted without question as fact. Our society, particularly the children, are flooded with this religion daily. One has only to watch educational television for a few minutes until some statement is made concerning evolution, or some idea is planted regarding the truth of the religion the pro-

ducers of such programs uphold, that being evolution. Indeed it appears that most scientists and scholars are very religious people, since it requires more faith to accept the evolutionary origin of life than it does to accept Christianity.

The effect of evolutionary religion on society has been detrimental. Those who accept evolutionary religion, whether they are aware of it or not, believe that there is no God, no judgment, and no life after death. If there are none of these things, indeed life on earth would be meaningless. This religion has led many to lose respect for life. If humans, or indeed any living things, are no more than a complex set of chemical reactions, as evolutionary religion purports, then human life is no more important than bacterial life, or putting out a fire for that matter. If we think nothing of killing bacteria to prevent spoilage of food, we also would think nothing of killing millions of unborn children, or of advocating killing elderly persons whom society may regard as useless.

Evolution is one of the most formidable foes of evangelical Christianity today. In the last several years I have noticed that the gospel appears to be more readily accepted in the less developed countries of the world than in the United States. I believe that this is greatly due to the spread and influence of evolution. Promoters of evolution often ridicule those who do not accept their religion as uneducated, archaic, or feeble-minded. Evolution is presented in such a way as to appeal to the depraved carnal nature of man, and thus attract the populace. If persons, particularly children, are heavily indoctrinated with this religion, as is currently being done, few will question it and most will accept it unknowingly. If we are to be effective in reaching those people for Christ, we must acknowledge the presence and effect of this widespread religion and prepare ourselves to deal with those who have fallen under its influence. We must also take a stand against this religion and its spread.

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BY TIMOTHY R. CASSITY

Head of the microbiology laboratory at Scioto Memorial Hospital in Portsmouth, Ohio.

LETTERS

UNSCRIPTURAL

I was shocked to read "Trustees of the Truth" in the November 15 issue. This is the type of thing I would expect to read in a secular newspaper, not the *Herald of Holiness*.

Mr. Giberson can call me a trustee of the truth if he wants. I feel honored. I am not in the dark ages. I have read the arguments on both sides. I have no doubt that God could have used evolution had He wanted to and probably has used it some. To suggest evolution as the explanation for the origin of life is not scriptural. God created man as man, not as amoeba.

I am shocked and disappointed that

you would print such a thing in a Christian magazine, and I protest in the strongest way.

Joel Merrill
Pella, Iowa

FIRST-RATE

Karl Giberson's article "Trustees of the Truth" in the November 15 issue of the *Herald* was first rate. Discerning between faith in God as Creator and scientific explanation of creation is a great help to Christians who wrestle with the creation-evolution question.

It makes sense to treat Genesis as a biblical record and not a scientific text. We can affirm faith in the person of the Creator without having a final verdict on the exact times and circumstances of creaturely origin.

I hope to share this fine article with

those who experience unnecessary tension between the work of science and religious experience.

Jonathan Privett
Pierce, Idaho

POOR COMPARISON

To compare the biased beliefs of the church in the 1600s, which were not based on anything in the Bible, as against our belief in God's creation of man, which is definitely stated in the Bible is a poor comparison.

We do not need scientists to tell us how our bodies came to have the form they have. We are told in the Bible God created us this way. We did not evolve. You cannot believe both.

Norma Vanciel
Sacramento, California

GRATEFUL

I would like to commend you for

publishing the article "Trustees of the Truth" by Karl Giberson. The issue of Christians arguing about the subject of evolution has troubled me for many years. The media attention that subjects such as evolution receive can really confuse Christians and mislead them into believing they must speak out against anything that *appears* to contradict or threaten biblical statements or authority.

I am very glad that Karl Giberson is a Christian who cared enough to write an article that he knew would certainly be subject to criticism. I am grateful that he has been able to be a voice for other Nazarenes, like me, who may not possess his credentials, but share his convictions. Finally, I would like to thank the *Herald* for printing the article which, because of its wide circulation, has provided many Christians with an important perspective to consider.

Nancy E. Lutke
Coquitlam, British Columbia

SECULAR

"Trustees of the Truth" is a put-down of the historic faith of the church, and a put-down of the Bible as the infallible word of the living

God. Mr. Giberson has the right to his personal views, but this attack upon those who believe in biblical creation should not have been published.

The basic issue is creation or evolution. Evolution is the basic doctrine of the secular humanists, whereas creation is the fundamental truth of God's scripture. The "trustees of the truth" are right on this issue—the Bible record with the support of the evidence of science provides the answer—Creation, and in six days.

Gerald Q. Gardner
Ashland, Oregon

CONCURRED

The article "Trustees of the Truth" in the November 15 *Herald* was one that I never expected to see. I suspect you will receive many dissenting letters on that one. Put me down as one who concurs with the author, Karl Giberson. It was a superb article on a subject (evolution/creationism) that dearly needs to be discussed. It presented, of course, the other side from what is usually espoused by evangelicals. Christians sometimes work themselves into untenable positions because of their oppositions to anything that may come from the non-

Christian society. In the end, hanging on to an insupportable position can do more harm than good to the church.

Bill Scheibner
Kennewick, Washington

CONFUSED

To compare creationists to 16th-century "Trustees of the Truth" is to confuse fact with fiction. The flat-earth and earth-centered system beliefs were based on theories much like evolution is today. Should the kingdom of God spend its "limited resources" on trying to prove creation? No, but God's resources are sufficient, and we should support efforts to dispute those professionals whose salaries are earned by explaining how evolution is virtually certain, and put it in textbooks. Such simple facts as a butterfly's metamorphosis or the complete lack of transitional forms in the fossil record are enough for me to disbelieve evolution. The point is Psalm 100: "It is He who made us and not we ourselves." Any attempt to dispute THAT does deserve our time, money and prayer!

Alan Raleigh
Melbourne, Florida

Worlds Apart, a new book published by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City.

Worlds Apart: The Unholy War Between Religion and Science by Karl Giberson, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1993

HH083-411-5042 \$16.95

Reviewed by W. E. McCumber

I would not say that Karl Giberson, professor of physics and astronomy at Eastern Nazarene College, carries a two-edged sword, but he does swing his sword in two directions—against scientists who deny the Creator and against theologians who read scientific opinions into Scripture and then argue from those opinions as if they were scriptural.

Giberson believes that God created all things. He does not believe that we can dogmatically affirm by what method that divine creation occurred. He does believe that much of the controversy between scientists and theologians would be dissipated if all these cobblers stuck to their own lasts. Theologians have expertise for interpreting revelation; scientists have expertise for interpreting nature. Needless warfare arises when they dogmatize in each other's area of special research and knowledge.

However, *Worlds Apart: The Unholy War Between Religion and Science* does not discuss these issues in perfect balance. The bulk of Giberson's book is a polemic against "Creation Science," a small school of fundamentalist exegetes and theologians who scorn "evolution" as demonic, a long-continued rebellion against the Creator. These persons, as Giberson argues, elevate their interpretations of Scripture to the level of revelation, and then proceed virtually to unchristianize all who disagree with them.

The author of this polemical call for "beating swords into plowshares" once occupied the very ground he now disputes. He fervently believed the opinions set forth by the "Creation Scientists" and entered college prepared to set straight all who disavowed them. His studies, together with his closer examination of cre-

ation science writings, drew him away from what he now perceives as unwarranted and narrow-minded dogmatism.

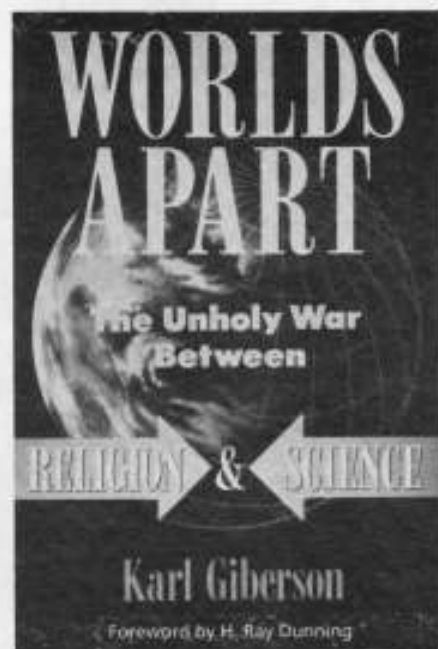
He advocates a division of labor in which religion is interpreted in the light of Scripture and nature is interpreted in the light of science. He indicts both scientists and theologians who violate the nature of the phenomena they are exploring and the methods appropriate to each exploration. He rejects scientific materialism, which empties the universe of

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—Max Reams, Ph.D.
chairman, Natural Science Division
Olivet Nazarene University

God, and creation science, which mines Scripture for scientific explanations.

Giberson finds in "The Crime Against Galileo" a powerful caution against religious dogmatism in the field of science. He draws parallels between the attitude of Catholic theologians toward Galileo's findings and that of creation science writers toward scientists who embrace any



kind of evolutionary theory today. He is fond of Galileo's "quip": "The Bible teaches us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go." One cannot deny that the author finds some potent ammunition for his thesis from a survey of official Christianity's past blunders and consequent diminution of credibility in scientific matters.

Giberson knows that a person who is both a Christian and a scientist will find it difficult to keep the two fields of inquiry carefully separated in content and method of research. At times he is forced to speak as a scientist doing theology himself. To his credit, his conclusions are congruent with those recognized and respected by theologians in our movement.

This book is sure to provoke controversy. It will fly, some of which may never be collected again. The book will be hailed with joy by some of our people and condemned with fervor by others. I hope it will be neither praised nor condemned without being carefully read. I am glad we have published it, for that seems to signal our arrival at a level of maturity that recognizes the pluralism of opinion within the church and allows those diverse opinions to be openly and seriously discussed without consigning to perdition persons who disagree.

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Eastern Nazarene College

Stephen W. Nease, President

May 11, 1988

Dr. Karl Giberson
Eastern Nazarene College

Dear Karl:

Thank you for sharing with me your thoughtful article, "Trustees of the Truth". I am not totally sure of what you expected from me; however, I think you said that you would not be sending it until you heard from me. Hence this response.

Without entering into your line of reasoning, much of which makes sense to me, I think I must say that although I am confident that you mean to address an issue in a positive way and seek resolution of the matter rather than to fan flames, I believe that were this article to be published in our church paper, it would tend to fan flames of controversy in the wider readership rather than put the matter to rest. Indeed, as it had repercussions to the College itself, it might provoke arguments and even emotions that could keep some of the very students whom you might wish to influence in your classes from coming.

By no means do I wish to tell you not to send the article. I simply think that you need to know the above and also to know that were you looking for my approval I would have difficulty giving it to an article that I believe could be divisive rather than reconciling in nature.

God bless you, Karl. I have no question as to your intent, your relationship to the Lord or your value as a professor in the Natural Sciences Division on this holiness college campus.

Sincerely yours,

Stephen W. Nease
President

SWN:law