

# The tragic toll of toxic teaching

A review of  
*Saving Darwin: How to be  
a Christian and Believe in  
Evolution*

by Karl W. Giberson  
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This is the story of how a professing Bible-believing Christian young-earth creationist, Karl Giberson, became a committed Darwinist who now enthusiastically opposes those who have concluded that God has played an active role in creation. Giberson even argues that those who believe evidence exists for intelligent design in nature are ‘anti-science’. Evolution, he argues, can explain all life and the entire natural creation. As will be illustrated, his arguments against design and for naturalistic evolution are irresponsible.

Until college, Giberson was a creationist—creationist Henry Morris was one of his boyhood heroes, and his “dog-eared copies of Henry Morris’s classic text of scientific creationism and Christian apologetics, *The Genesis Flood* and *Many Infallible Proofs*” were among his most prized possessions (p. 1).

## The college connection

What happened to change his worldview is the subject of his book. In short, he attended Eastern Nazarene College. In his Bible class, his Bible professor “assaulted my literalist reading of Genesis, suggesting that Genesis should be read as poetry ... to make matters worse, the science faculty—despite claiming to be Christians—all seemed to accept evolution” (p. 2). He added that even his “fellow students, at least in the

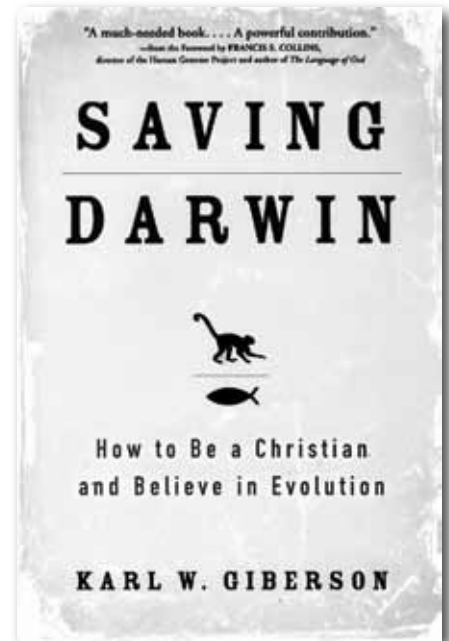
science division” were also evidently all evolutionists.

By the middle of his second year Giberson was “sliding uncontrollably down the slippery slope that has characterized religion since it began the liberalizing process just over a century ago” (p. 6). He realized that acceptance of evolution forced a radical reinterpretation of the Bible, and he eventually rejected the account of Adam and Eve, and most of the core teachings of Christianity itself. In his search he writes:

“I turned with some optimism to religion scholars, but found they had little to offer. Some of them strangely insisted on the historicity of *some* portions of the Genesis story, while allowing that much of it was not historical. The fall, for example, was sometimes an important part of elaborate theological systems, serving the critical function of getting God off the hook for a creation filled with so much suffering. So even though Adam and Eve were not actual characters themselves and Eden was not a real place, they at least represented *something* historical. Once upon a time human beings did *something* to ruin God’s perfect creation, and this is where it all went wrong [emphasis in original]” (p. 9).

## A matter of convenience

He adds that by his third year in college he “was now wearing scientific spectacles almost all the time” and, as a result, non-evolutionary explanations for life “looked a little too convenient to me”. Giberson writes he “had come to the point where, by definition, *nothing* could ever be explained by reference to God [emphasis in original]” (p. 110). An example of the ‘too convenient’ explanations he rejected was the view of those theologians who



“... drew a provocative connection between the fall and redemption (1 Cor. 15:45). The first Adam made the mess; the second Adam cleaned it up. I could never see, though, how theologians could be so comfortable with a mythical interpretation of Eden, but insist on an important historical role for its resident. Paul’s ‘first Adam’ was indeed the original sinner, but he didn’t live in the Garden of Eden, he didn’t name all the animals, and he may or may not have been married to Eve” (p. 9).

As Giberson continued to struggle with the many challenges to his Christian faith he encountered at the Nazarene college, he learned that even the religion scholars there

“... were quite accepting of evolution. An Old Testament scholar ... assured me that ‘Genesis was never intended to be read literally’. He and his colleagues had made their peace with evolution ... [and] were surprisingly disinterested in the struggles of those who, like me, were trying to hold on to some version of their childhood faith, while portions of its foundations were slowly removed” (p. 9).

### Fanciful fables?

Giberson ended up reducing historic Christianity and the Scriptures to myth. He calls the Genesis story an ‘old fashioned fairy tale’ that is ridiculous because it includes such things as a ‘magical garden’ and ‘talking snakes’ (p. 8). The clear impression Giberson leaves in the reader is that Genesis is ridiculous because, as an antisupernaturalist, he accepts the line of reasoning that rejects all of Jesus’ miracles and every act of God in physical nature, calling into doubt both Old and New Testaments.

Giberson never addresses the logical implications of his conclusions except to note that evolution is not only the doorway to atheism but, as Tufts University philosopher Daniel Dennett argued, evolution is a ‘universal acid’ that affects everything and with

“... undisguised glee he outlines how evolution, which he calls ‘Darwin’s dangerous idea’, eats through and dissolves the foundations of religion. The theory of evolution, which he thinks is the greatest idea anyone ever had, destroys the belief that God created everything, including humans. ‘Darwin’s idea’, he writes with approval, ‘eats through just about every traditional concept, and leaves in its wake a revolutionized worldview’” (pp. 9–10).

What’s left of Christianity? After reading this book at face value, one could be forgiven for thinking—not much, certainly not its foundation, although Giberson unsuccessfully tries to argue otherwise. Giberson admits that

“Acid is an appropriate metaphor for the erosion of my fundamentalism, as I slowly lost my confidence in the Genesis story of creation and the scientific creationism that placed this ancient story within the framework of modern science. Dennett’s universal acid dissolved Adam and Eve; it ate through the Garden of Eden; it destroyed the historicity of the events of creation week. It etched holes in those parts of Christianity connected to these stories—the fall, ‘Christ as



Figure 1. Karl Giberson

second Adam’, the origins of sin, and nearly everything else that I counted sacred” (p. 10).

Under the heading “Dissolving the Fall” Giberson writes, “Clearly, the historicity of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace are hard to reconcile with natural history.” The reason is “the geological and fossil records make” the case against Adam and Eve compelling. He adds that once

“... we accept the full evolutionary picture of human origins, we face the problem of human uniqueness. The picture of natural history disclosed by modern science reveals human beings evolving slowly and imperceptibly from earlier, simpler creatures. None of our attributes—intelligence, upright posture, moral sense, opposable thumbs, language capacity—emerged suddenly. Every one of our remarkable capacities must have appeared gradually and been present in some partial, anticipatory way in our primate ancestors. This provocatively suggests that animals, especially the higher primates, ought to possess an

identifiable moral sense that is only *quantitatively* different from that of humans” (p. 11).

### The case against

In fact, the case *against* human evolution is compelling, as I and others have documented. Giberson seems totally unaware of this devastating case. In trying to hold onto a remnant of Christianity, he argues that “Christianity, as its name suggests, is *primarily* about Christ”, yet Christ and the early church fathers clearly accepted Adam as the first man, the Fall, and all the rest that Giberson rejects (See Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:22). Giberson also makes numerous egregious claims, such as:

“... ‘scientific creationism’ (also called ‘creation’ science’) and ‘intelligent design’, [are] sibling perspectives insisting they are unrelated. Despite being largely devoid of scientific content, these movements have captured the hearts and minds of over half the country, although they remain, for the time being at least, banned from America’s public schools” (p. 17).

His claim that “the science of evolution grows increasingly robust and secure, even as America’s schools find the topic increasingly harder to teach” is directly the opposite of reality.

He does admit that the goal of evolution “is to win ... the cultural-war ... not to discover the truth” (p. 172). The book is miss-titled—it should be “Why Creationism is Wrong”, because little to no effort was expended to “save Darwinism”.

### Chemicals plus magic equal creation

His story of evolution starts about 3.5 billion years ago with simple chemicals that evolved into cells; then some of these cells clumped together to form multi-celled organisms and, eventually, humans evolved, all due to time, the actions of natural forces, chance, and luck (p. 191). No role for God; none is noted. It’s all magic—molecules become people and “a

central nervous system can become intelligent” and “light-sensitive cells can become sophisticated and turn into eyes” all due to ‘mother nature’ (p. 192).

The mistakes in this section are everywhere. One example is, in contrast to Giberson’s claim, human embryos do *not* have gills, or tails like a dog (p. 200). Similar genetic ‘mistakes’ in different organisms are not irrefutable proof of evolution as he claims, but are likely due to hot spots or a dozen other reasons (p. 203).<sup>1</sup> In contrast to his claim that the four nucleotide codons (A, T, G, C) for amino-acids are ‘without exception’ universal (p. 203), exceptions do exist.<sup>2</sup>

Giberson concludes that evolution from molecule to man is “quite simply, true” (p. 206) and that “God’s signature is not one of the engineering marvels of the natural world”, but ‘evolution’s signature’ is an engineering marvel (p. 210). The fact is, all of the ‘proofs’ that Giberson gives for evolution have been refuted, often by evolutionists themselves.

After giving many historically early examples of intelligent design (ID)—then called natural philosophy—he notes that scientists and philosophers with few exceptions until Darwin believed that “God’s fingerprints were everywhere” in the creation (pp. 28–29). He then argues for several hundred pages that ID is found nowhere in the natural world yet notes even those who reject Christianity acknowledge that ID was everywhere, writing:

“Even those starting to reject Christianity and the Bible found in nature a compelling witness to God as creator. Thomas Paine, who penned the notorious *Age of Reason*, in which he claimed to ‘detest’ the Bible ‘as I detest everything that is cruel’, found in nature a clear revelation of God’s power and benevolence. The Bible, Paine contested, was written by men; God wrote the book of nature. The Bible was parochial and recent; nature was ancient and universal, available to all people at all times. Such celebrations of nature were common across Europe and in

the New World. Everywhere, science supported belief in God through its revelations of both God’s wisdom and concern for creatures. This tradition of natural theology nurtured the young Charles Darwin who set sail on the *Beagle* [Emphasis in original]” (p. 29).

### Darwin’s ‘big picture’

Darwinism was central in overturning this once dominant worldview. Darwin originally believed that the natural world revealed a benevolent and wise Creator, but as he experienced life, Darwin “began to wonder why so much of the world looked neither wise nor benevolent” (p. 31). Darwin eventually rejected the historic Christian answer to the problem of evil by reasoning that maybe

“... we just don’t see the big picture; perhaps sin and the fall are responsible for some of the problems; maybe we don’t understand the phenomena well enough; and so on. But these responses are woefully inadequate and little more than patches on an ancient ship riddled with holes and taking on water” (p. 32).

Giberson also appears to negate the validity of not just core Christian doctrines, but also the Scriptures as a whole:

“The gospels, noted the critics, disagree on such basic history as Jesus’s resurrection. Matthew places two women at Jesus’s tomb, Mark places three, Luke more than three, and John only one ... . Now that we understand the importance of history, how can readers put faith in the historicity of an event chronicled by such unreliable reporters?” (p. 47).

### The ‘problem’ of the synoptic Gospels

Even the explanatory notes of many translations document that this ‘problem’, which could have been dredged up from ‘gutter atheist’ websites, is a non-problem: several women visited Jesus’ tomb, as Luke

noted, and Matthew mentioned two of them, Mark three, and John only one. No contradiction. Giberson’s reason in noting such examples is an attempt to save Darwin by demolishing the opposition, namely science and Christianity. Giberson claims that Darwin was a “reluctant convert to evolution and ultimately agnosticism”, because Darwin was convinced that he had demolished, not only Christianity, but also the major evidence for the existence of God, namely the evidence from design (p. 38). In the end, Giberson has gutted Christianity so that only an unrecognizable shell remains. The cost of ‘saving Darwin’ was to sacrifice Christianity.

Giberson also supports indoctrinating students into Darwinism and against both creation and ID, even concluding that:

“As noble as it might seem to ‘balance’ education, the reality was that creation science was nothing but a tiny intellectual backwater championed by a handful of minor fundamentalist scientists. If every tiny opposing viewpoint received the equal time that Louisiana wanted for creation science, the public schools would be opening their doors to astrology, Holocaust denial, alien visitation, and countless other preposterous topics” (p. 109).

### A trial of faith

He is especially opposed to ID, claiming that at the 2005 Dover Trial “the key ID people—deeply religious people—in the trial were actually lying and knowingly misrepresenting their case” (p. 113), as if being ‘deeply religious’ was a negative trait not welcome at Eastern Nazarene College, at least by some of the science professors. Instead, Giberson favors secular atheistic science. Having read the entire trial transcript, including the Judge’s opinion—which was almost totally plagiarized from the ACLU brief—plus four books on the trial, I am not aware of any credible evidence that the ‘key ID people’ lied or knowingly misrepresented their case as Giberson claims (p. 113).

Giberson correctly notes that those who oppose Darwinism are “Christians concerned about the pernicious effects of evolution steadily eroding traditional American values” (p. 117). Giberson is only helping to erode these values, as are many theologians:

“Dayton, in Arkansas, at the Supreme Court, in Dover, and on every legal field where creation and evolution met, there were always strong religious voices in support of evolution. Biblical scholars and theologians from all but the most conservative Christian denominations were every bit as opposed to creationism as the scientists ... I have found, for example, after more than two decades as a faculty member at an evangelical college, that the most vigorous opposition to creationism comes from scholars in religion departments rather than in scientific disciplines. As strong as the scientific evidence against creationism has become, the biblical and theological arguments for rejecting it are perhaps even stronger. Expert scholars of religion made this clear in each of the trials” (p. 119).

### Bad design?

Giberson’s theological solution to the problem of evil is that God is not the Creator, therefore He is not responsible for floods, earthquakes, sickness and what Giberson claims is the poor design of the human body. His examples that “the human body is riddled with ... bad design” (p. 163), including knees, the back, the larynx, and junk DNA have all been refuted.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, ‘bad design’, even if it did exist, does not prove no designer exists. He implies that God was responsible for almost nothing historically. To Giberson, God is largely a word, and not a meaningful tangible part of reality. Giberson also indicates that he teaches soft atheism in his classes, and most of his courses include atheistic attacks on creationism and ID. Few differences—certainly not any *practical* ones—exist between classical atheism and Giberson’s soft atheism.

In his attacks on creation and ID, Giberson employs less name calling than atheists and, in a few places, condemns the common *ad hominem* attacks against Darwin doubters, such as calling them wicked. This kinder, gentler approach to proselytizing for soft atheism may be more effective than the in-your-face, nasty and bold atheism, such as that by atheopathic Professors Richard Dawkins and Jerry Coyne. Since Giberson believes he has destroyed the most common argument given by people for believing in God, the argument from design, why does he still believe in God? He is very forthright in explaining why:

“I understand how honest thinkers and seekers after the truth like Daniel Dennett and Michael Ruse can end up rejecting God. Like that of most thinking Christians, my belief in God is tinged with doubts and, in my more reflective moments, I sometimes wonder if I am perhaps simply continuing along the trajectory of a childhood faith that should be abandoned. As a purely *practical* matter, I have compelling reasons to believe in God. My parents are deeply committed Christians and would be devastated, were I to reject my faith. My wife and children believe in God, and we attend church together regularly. Most of my friends are believers. I have a job I love at a Christian college that would be forced to dismiss me if I were to reject the faith that underpins the mission of the college. Abandoning belief in God would be disruptive, sending my life completely off the rails. I can sympathize with Darwin as he struggled against the unwanted challenges to his faith” (pp. 155–156).

In other words, he ‘believes’ in God because of peer pressure. In reality, his faith is moribund, since it is not based on Christian foundations, but rather on naïve readings of atheists and secular writings. This attribute is hardly one that will inspire young Christians struggling with their faith who attended Christian colleges.

Also, Paul, in Romans 1, tells us that there are no truly honest thinkers who become atheists; rather, they are ‘without excuse’.

Giberson admits that ID is a solid argument for belief in God (p. 156) yet the story of his fall into unbelief is repeated hundreds of times today. I personally know of dozens of cases where Bible-believing Christians rejected the core teaching of Christianity due to Christian or secular influence, including Drs Stanley Rice, Louis Leakey, George Gaylord Simpson, P.Z. Myers, Richard Dawkins, and even Darwin himself. Parents spend from 20 to 50 thousand dollars for a Christian college education, and some end up with an anti-Christian education that is the doorway to atheism—and no small number of students from these colleges end up as atheists.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, except for its thin veneer of close to meaningless theism, this book is almost identical in content and conclusions to the many atheists’ books on the market published to disprove the major arguments for God, the cosmological and teleological arguments. The reasoning in this work is also very similar to the writings by atheists and others against creation and ID. Even mocking believers is present, although not quite as vicious. When I was an atheist we used to call people such as Giberson ‘useful idiots’ who were making major contributions to destroying their own religious edifice.

### References

1. Truman, R. and Borger, P., Why the shared mutations in the Hominidae exon X GULO pseudogene are not evidence for common descent, *J. Creation* 21(3):118–113, 2007.
2. See Tourancheau, A.B., Tsao, N., Klobutcher, L.A., Pearlman, R.E. and Adoutte, A., Genetic code deviations in the ciliates: evidence for multiple and independent events, *EMBO J.* 14(13):3262–3267, 1995.
3. See the articles under [creation.com/bad\\_design](http://creation.com/bad_design).