

Jonathan Wells Recalls His Days at UTS

Douglas Burton
September 2, 2015



Apart from the Founder of the Unification movement himself, few Unificationists have received as much media attention as John Corrigan "Jonathan" Wells. Wells, 73, has made a name for himself as an American molecular biologist, author and advocate of Intelligent Design. According to Wikipedia, his views on evolution have been rejected by the scientific community, whereas the Seattle-based Discovery Institute has supported his arguments and research for decades.

Dr. Wells has received two Ph.D.s, one in Molecular and Cell Biology from the University of California at Berkeley, and one in Religious Studies from Yale University. A Senior Fellow at Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture, he has previously worked as a postdoctoral research biologist at the University of California at Berkeley and the supervisor of a medical laboratory in Fairfield, California, and he has taught biology at California State University in Hayward.

He has published articles in *Development*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA*, *BioSystems*, *The Scientist* and *The American Biology Teacher*. He is the author of *Charles Hodge's Critique of Darwinism* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), *Icons of Evolution: Why much of what we teach about evolution is wrong* (Regnery Publishing, 2000), and *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Darwinism and Intelligent Design* (Regnery, 2006).

He is also co-author with William Dembski of *The Design of Life* (FTE, 2008). His latest book, *The Myth of Junk DNA* (Discovery Institute Press, 2011), dismantles a new favorite Darwinian icon by showing that much of the non-protein-coding DNA performs essential biological functions.

Dr. Wells is currently doing research and writing on developmental information in embryos that is outside of, and inherited independently of, their DNA.

In his book *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth?* (2000), Wells argues that images commonly used in biology textbooks to teach evolution were grossly exaggerated, distorted truth, or were patently false.



What UTS Did for Me Jonathan Wells

When I was a student at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS), Father told the students to pray every day at the same time and in the same place to find out what God wanted us to do with our lives. So I started praying every night while walking in the dark on Father's Trail. I also took a weekly shuttle from UTS to New York City to do research at the Columbia University biology library. My prayers, my research, the contents of some of Father's talks and my studies at the seminary convinced me that with my background in science God wanted me to challenge Darwinism, the belief that we descended from ape-like ancestors by unguided natural processes. Darwinism (like Marxism and Freudianism) is materialistic philosophy masquerading as empirical science.

When Father chose some of us to receive scholarships to pursue doctoral studies in religion at mainstream universities, I went to Yale and did my Ph.D. research on the theological aspects of the nineteenth-century Darwinian controversies.

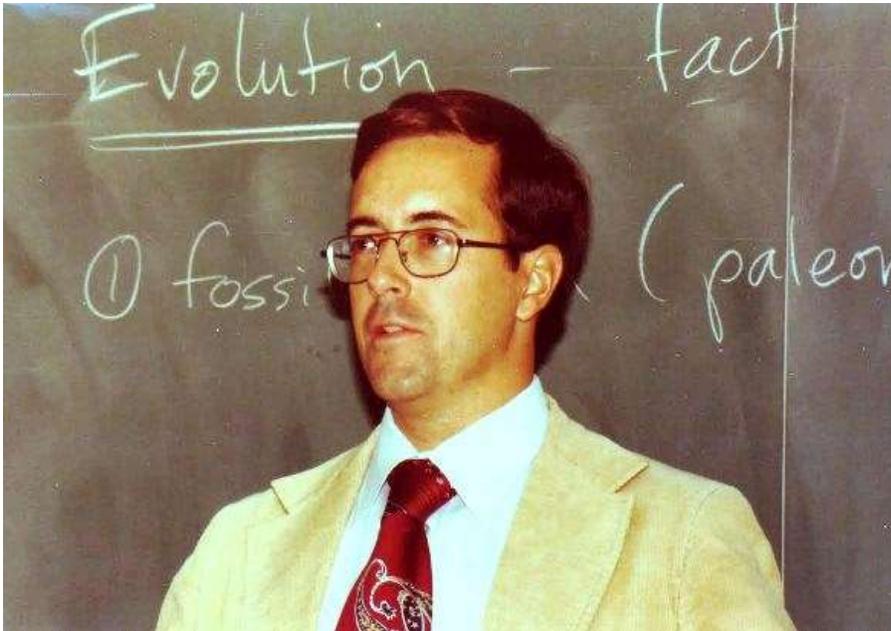
After finishing at Yale I directed the International Religious Foundation for several years before realizing

that in order to do God's will I would have to go back to school. In 1989, I entered a second Ph.D. program at the University of California at Berkeley, this time in molecular and cell biology. While at Berkeley, I learned a great deal about the biological aspects of the controversy over Darwinism, and in 2000 I published a book, *Icons of Evolution*, about images in biology textbooks that misled students about the evidence for evolution.

The book provoked a storm of controversy, which continues to this day. And it all started with my prayer walks at UTS.

Jonathan Wells Responds to the Critics November 5, 2011

Note: The following article "Here's Jonathan Wells on destroying Darwinism – and responding to attacks on his character and motives" is excerpted from Uncommon Descent, a website supporting the Intelligent Design community.



As an undergraduate at Princeton and Berkeley in the 1960s I studied mathematics, geology, physics and biology (with minors in philosophy and German). Along the way—despite my upbringing as a nominal Presbyterian—I became an agnostic and a Darwinist. (Note: By “Darwinism,” I mean the claim that all living things are descended from one or a few common ancestors, modified solely by unguided natural processes such as variation and selection. For the sake of

brevity, I use the term here also to include Neo-Darwinism, which attributes new variations to genetic mutations.)

In 1963, I dropped out of Princeton and drove a New York City taxicab until I was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1964. While spending two years in Germany as a medical laboratory technologist, I became opposed to the Vietnam War, and after I was separated from active duty in 1966 I transferred to Berkeley and joined the antiwar movement.

The Army called me back as a reservist in 1967, but I refused and spent a year and a half in prison. After being released from Leavenworth in 1969, I completed my bachelor's degree at Berkeley. By 1970, however, I was repulsed by the increasingly violent and hypocritical Berkeley Left, and I soon headed for the hills. Living in a cabin I built in the mountains of Mendocino County, I was transformed by the beauty, peace and evident design around me. I ceased being an agnostic and a Darwinist.

In 1974 I joined Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church. In 1976 I entered Unification Theological Seminary in New York, where I studied the Pentateuch under a Romanian Orthodox Jewish rabbi; the New Testament under a Reformed Church of America minister; the Early Church Fathers under a Greek Orthodox priest; philosophy under a Polish Roman Catholic priest with three earned doctorates; medieval theology under a Church of Christ missionary with a doctorate from the University of Tübingen; and Reformation and modern theology under a Presbyterian with a doctorate from Harvard.

I read—and was repelled by—modern theologians who took Darwinism for granted and tried to re-fashion Christian doctrine in the light of it. As I researched more, I concluded that the Achilles' heel of Darwinism is its assumption that genetic programs control embryo development, with DNA mutations supplying raw materials for evolution. At the time, however, I did not question Darwin's claim that all living things are descended from a common

In 1978, I was one of a score of seminary graduates awarded church scholarships to pursue doctorates in religious studies at other schools. I went to Yale, where I did research on the nineteenth-century Darwinian controversies and received a Ph.D. in theology in 1985. After that, I was appointed Director of the Unification Church's inter-religious outreach organization in New York City.

By 1988 I felt called to devote myself to destroying Darwinism's hold on our culture, so I resigned from my position to return to graduate school—this time in biology. I applied to several schools in California and moved there with my family, only to learn that I had not been admitted anywhere. I took a job as a medical laboratory technologist (the Army had taught me a trade!), and sometime afterwards went back to New York to attend a meeting between Unification Church leaders and Reverend Moon. When he learned that I was planning to go back to graduate school he admonished me not to do it, saying that I was too old (I was 45 at the time). After the meeting, however, I prayed for a long time and decided that I had to continue on my course.

I returned to California and applied again to various graduate schools. In 1989 I was granted interviews at Cal Tech, Stanford, U.C. Berkeley, and U.C. Davis. I chose Berkeley, where I completed a Ph.D. in molecular and cell biology in 1994. By then—having been exposed to the actual evidence — I was skeptical of Darwin's claim that all living things share a common ancestor.

A senior Unification Church leader then asked me to write something for other church members explaining why I went for a second Ph.D. even after Reverend Moon had admonished me against doing so. I wrote an essay [Darwinism: Why I Went for a Second Ph.D.](http://www.tparents.org/library/unification/talks/wells/DARWIN.htm) [<http://www.tparents.org/library/unification/talks/wells/DARWIN.htm>] that I thought would be for in-house use only, but it was subsequently posted on the Internet without my knowledge or permission.

I first learned that my essay was available online in 2001, when Jerry Coyne made it the alpha and omega of his review in *Nature* of my book *Icons of Evolution*.

Since then, many of my critics have quoted the now-infamous line, “Father's words, my studies, and my prayers convinced me that I should devote my life to destroying Darwinism.” (For a sampling, just do a Google search on the words.) Remarkably, Darwinists never quote much else from my essay, even though the 18 words in this one line represent only 1 percent of it, while a subsequent passage dealing with my scientific reasons for rejecting Darwinism represents 37 percent. Talk about quote mining...

Nor (as far as I know) have any Darwinists bothered to learn anything about the context in which I wrote the essay. If they had, they would know that Reverend Moon did not instruct or command me to destroy Darwinism (though years later he commended me on publishing *Icons of Evolution*.)

I freely admit that I was motivated to pursue a biology Ph.D., in part, because of my religious views. On the other hand, Francis Crick freely admitted (to historian Horace Freeland Judson) that he went into biology, in part, because of his atheistic views. What ultimately mattered in Crick's case was not his motivation, but whether his biological claims were consistent with the evidence. The same is true in my case. That's why I cite abundant scientific references in my publications—such as *Icons of Evolution*, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Darwinism and Intelligent Design*, *The Myth of Junk DNA*, and “Why Darwinism Is False”, a detailed critique of Jerry Coyne's book, *Why Evolution Is True*.

I encourage readers not simply to take my word for anything, but to go the scientific literature and check for themselves. After all, nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evidence.