

Modern Atheists Who Became Christians

Dr. Jay L. Wile

Qualifications

- Helped Develop Indiana's Only Residential High School for Gifted and Talented Students
- NSF-Sponsored Scientist with More Than \$200,000 In Research Grants
- Became Interested in Homeschooling Because of Excellent University Students Who Were Homeschooled
- Currently writes homeschooling materials through Berean Builders
- Is an adjunct professor at Anderson University

Let's Start With Yours Truly

My early education made me an atheist.

When I first learned about evolution, I was excited, but when I actually looked at the scientific evidence, I was disappointed.

In high school, I was an atheist but did not think evolution was the proper explanation of how life began and diversified.

A girl I was "in love" with asked me to attend a debate entitled "Atheism versus Christianity." To my surprise, BOTH debaters were scientists!

That Debate Shook Me

I was confident that atheism was the most scientific view, but the Christian debater had some very good arguments!

The Christian ended his part of the debate with a challenge... If you consider yourself educated, you must look at all sides of the issue.

I realized I had not looked at Christian view of science, so I did a lot of reading. Based on that reading, I decided science strongly indicates that the universe was created.

That meant more reading!

I read the Bhagavad Gita, the Quran, some Taoist works, and the Bible.

I also read books by people who believed in each.

It became clear to me for many reasons that the Bible was the work that came from the Creator, so I believed in Christianity on an intellectual level.

A personal situation ended up producing a crisis in my life, and that turned the intellectual belief into a real belief. I went to university as a Christian.

The Reverend Dr. Alister McGrath

“When I was growing up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during the 1960s, I came to the view that God was an infantile illusion, suitable for the elderly, the intellectually feeble, and the fraudulently religious.”

Went to Oxford University in 1971 to study chemistry and experienced a crisis of his atheist faith.

There were several factors, but one of them was science. The more he learned about chemistry and biology, the less reasonable atheism became.

“Atheism, I began to realize, rested on a less-than-satisfactory evidential basis. The arguments that had once seemed bold, decisive, and conclusive increasingly turned out to be circular, tentative, and uncertain.”

“The opportunity to talk with Christians about their faith revealed to me that I understood relatively little about their religion, which I had come to know chiefly through not-always-accurate descriptions by its leading critics...”

“I also began to realize that my assumption of the automatic and inexorable link between the natural sciences and atheism was rather naïve and uninformed.”

He earned a Ph.D. in molecular biophysics and then two other Doctoral degrees (theology and intellectual history). He is an Anglican priest and a professor at Oxford.

Dr. Gunter Bechly

“I’m coming from a family background which is totally secular, agnostic. [I] was not baptized, didn’t join any kind of religious education, never went to church, so I was completely irreligious.”

- Earned a Ph.D. in paleontology and is a world-renowned expert on dragonflies, having discovered 170 new species.
- Eight species of organisms, two genera, and one family have been named after him.
- Became curator for amber and fossil insects in the at the State Museum of Natural History in Stuttgart, Germany

In 2009, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Darwin’s book, he designed a display for the museum. It showed a balance with many books by evolution opponents on one side, and Darwin’s book on the other. The scale was tipped all the way to Darwin’s side. It illustrated his view that Darwin’s theory is the only good scientific view of origins.

He then decided to actually read some of the other books! He Was Surprised

“...and what I recognized to my surprise is that the arguments I found in those books were totally different from what I heard either from colleagues or when you watch Youtube videos where the discussion is around intelligent design versus NeoDarwinian evolution. And I had the impression on one side that those people are mistreated – their position is misrepresented and on the other hand that these arguments are not really receiving an appropriate response. And they have merit.”

He came to realize that as a scientist, he was studying things that were created by God, and he openly acknowledged that science points away from evolution and to design.

He was told by the museum to quit, and his pages were removed from their website, even though they didn't mention religion or design at all.

He is now a Senior Fellow at The Center for Science & Culture, an Intelligent Design Think Tank.

“ I did not become a theist *in spite* of being a scientist but *because* of it, based on a careful and critical evaluation of empirical data and rational arguments, following the evidence wherever it leads.”

Dr. John Sanford

- Ph.D. in plant genetics.
- Became a professor of genetics at Cornell University in 1980.
- Holds 25 patents in genetics, most notably, the “gene gun.”

“I was totally sold on evolution. It was my religion; it defined how I saw everything, it was my value system and my reason for being.”

His own research convinced him that evolution doesn't work.

“For several decades, this was the main thrust of crop improvement research. Vast numbers of mutants were produced and screened, collectively representing many billions of mutation events...The effort for the most part was an enormous failure...low phytate corn is the most notable example of successful mutation breeding...The low phytate corn was created by mutagenizing corn, and then selecting for strains wherein the genetic machinery which directs phytic acid production had been damaged.”

Over the years, his view changed from believing in some sort of creator God to eventually becoming a Christian.

He retired from Cornell in 1998 and is now the president of Logos Research Associates, which does original scientific research regarding creation/evolution issues.

He continues to publish in the secular scientific literature, adding to the growing list of secular sources that question the validity of evolution.

“There is a desperate need for more creation researchers. The fields are white and ready for harvest, but the workers are very few...I believe the Lord is saying, Whom shall I send?”

Dr. Rosalind Picard

- Professor of Media Arts and Sciences at MIT.
- A Fellow with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and was elected to the National Academy of Engineering
- Invented an entire branch of computer science called affective computing.

“As early as grade school, when I was a voracious reader and a straight-A student...I believed smart people didn’t need religion. As a result, I declared myself an atheist and dismissed people who believed in God as uneducated.”

Eventually, she started meeting Christians who she considered smart and well-educated.

When she was in high school, one well-educated couple suggested that she just read the Bible. She started with the book of Proverbs.

“When I first opened the Bible—this was the King James Version—I expected to find phony miracles, made-up creatures, and assorted gobbledygook. To my surprise, Proverbs was full of wisdom. I had to pause while reading and think.”

She read through the Bible twice and read works from other religions, too. She thought she was going through a phase that would pass if she learned enough.

In college, she reconnected with a friend who took her to church. She talked to him about the doubts she had over God, and he suggested that she pray about those doubts.

“It seemed silly to pray about this — after all, I still had doubts about God’s existence. But in the spirit of **Pascal’s Wager**, I decided to run an experiment, believing I had much to gain but very little to lose.”

“I once thought I was too smart to believe in God. Now I know I was an arrogant fool who snubbed the greatest Mind in the cosmos — the Author of all science, mathematics, art, and everything else there is to know. Today I walk humbly, having received the most undeserved grace. I walk with joy, alongside the most amazing Companion anyone could ask for...”

Dr. Yingguang Liu

Born and raised in rural China

In school, he was taught to be an atheist. One of his texts said this about Darwin's book: "Although it is developed in the crude English style, this is a book which contains the basis of natural history for our views."

Became a medical doctor in China in 1993.

He came to the United States in 1997 to get a Ph.D. He became involved in a Chinese Bible study, just to get to know some of his fellow students who came from China and to learn more about the culture in the U.S.

"We surveyed the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation in three months. What impressed me most were the many prophecies and their fulfillment."

"During the first winter break, the Bible Study group took me to a Chinese Christian conference in Chicago. There, God used an evangelist with experiences similar to mine. After a message in the evening of 27 December 1997, as the evangelist gave the invitation, my heart was burning and my body was shivering, but I refused to raise my hand. Didn't I claim to be a scientific atheist just three months ago? How can I become an 'apostate' so quickly? The evangelist invited the converts to come to the front, I could resist no longer. I stood up and went down the aisle."

He earned his Ph.D. in virology in 2002 and is now a professor at Liberty University.

His Christian faith has led to a very interesting discovery that has been documented in the scientific literature:

"My students and I proposed some hypotheses that evolutionists are not particularly interested in, and God granted some interesting findings. There are elements in the human genome that evolutionists believe to be remnants of accidental viral infections of a common ancestor of humans and animals (therefore they are termed 'selfish' junk DNA), but we found these elements respond to female sex hormones, implying a role in human reproduction."

It is now widely accepted that his hypothesis is correct.

Dr. Sarah Irving-Stonebraker

- Raised in an atheist home.
- Earned a Ph.D. in History and was awarded a research fellowship at Oxford University
- Attended a lecture series about human value given by atheist philosopher Dr. Peter Singer

"I remember leaving Singer's lectures with a strange intellectual vertigo; I was committed to believing that universal human value was more than just a well-meaning conceit of liberalism...I

began to realize that the implications of my atheism were incompatible with almost every value I held dear.”

As a result of her “intellectual vertigo,” she began to explore avenues that she had never explored before, including theology. She began reading Dr. Paul Tillich and was attracted by the intellectual underpinnings of Christianity. However, she was not convinced.

“In the Summer of 2008, I began a new job as Assistant Professor at Florida State University, where I continued my research examining the relationship between the history of science, Christianity, and political thought.

Seeing Christians showing the love of Christ to others convinced her that Christianity was true.

“Christianity was also, to my surprise, radical – far more radical than the leftist ideologies with which I had previously been enamored. The love of God was unlike anything which I expected, or of which I could make sense. In becoming fully human in Jesus, God behaved decidedly unlike a god. Why deign to walk through death’s dark valley, or hold the weeping limbs of lepers, if you are God? Why submit to humiliation and death on a cross, in order to save those who hate you? God suffered punishment in our place because of a radical love. This sacrificial love is utterly opposed to the individualism, consumerism, exploitation, and objectification, of our culture.”

Dr. Holly Ordway

Earned a Ph.D. in English Literature

“At thirty-one years old, I was an atheist college professor – and I delighted in thinking of myself that way. I got a kick out of being an unbeliever; it was fun to consider myself superior to the unenlightened, superstitious masses, and to make snide comments about Christians.”

Then she started being struck by the profound Christian messages found in some of the greatest English poetry.

She was an avid fencer, and at about the same time she noticed the Christian ideas in poetry, she got a new fencing coach, who was a Christian.

She was taken aback by the intellectual underpinnings of her coach’s Christianity, so she started to investigate the claims of Christianity for herself. What she learned made her very uncomfortable.

“It is a hard thing to look at the truth when it runs contrary to what you’ve always believed. The experience is like pulling back the curtains in a dimly lit room and looking out the window to see what’s really outside.”

She was forced, very reluctantly, to come to the conclusion that God exists, but that wasn’t the end of the story.

She continued to wrestle with the claims of Christianity in particular.

“I had worked through all the arguments; I knew where I stood. It was a fact of history that Jesus died on the cross and was raised on the third day, vindicating His claim to be the Son of God. It was true. I felt strangely calm, as if I were at the eye of some internal storm. All the forces within me lay quite, but in tension; I knew that I could not stay in this place. Decision was required.”

She made the decision to follow Christ. She is now on the faculty of Houston Baptist University, teaching graduate-level classes in Christian apologetics.

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