

Young-earth creationists value literal reading of Bible over human intellect

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP)—In his 2006 best-selling nonfiction book, *The God Delusion*, British biologist Richard Dawkins said he is hostile toward religion because of what it did to Kurt Wise.

Wise, a Harvard graduate who studied under paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, gave up his dream of teaching at a major university because he could not reconcile claims of science with his faith.

At one point, Wise took out a newly purchased Bible and a pair of scissors. Beginning at Gen. 1:1, he cut out every verse that would have to be removed in order for him to believe in evolution.

Months later, he cut out his final verse and one of the last verses in the Bible, Rev. 22:19, which read, “If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

The philosophical evolution of Kurt Wise, a Harvard graduate who studied under paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, has placed him as the leading proponent of young-earth creationism.

Wise [describes](#) what happened next: “With the cover of the Bible taken off, I attempted to physically lift the Bible from the bed between two fingers.

Yet, try as I might, and even with the benefit of intact margins throughout the pages of Scripture, I found it impossible to pick up the Bible without it being rent in two. I had to make a decision between evolution and Scripture. Either the Scripture was true and evolution was wrong, or evolution was true and I must toss out the Bible.”

Dawkins called Wise’s story “pathetic and contemptible.”

“The wound to his career and his life’s happiness was self-inflicted, so unnecessary, so easy to escape,” Dawkins lamented. “All he had to do was toss out the Bible or interpret it symbolically or allegorically as the theologians do. Instead, he did the fundamentalist thing and tossed out science, evidence and reason, along with all his dreams and hopes.”

Wise’s current boss, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Albert Mohler, viewed it as a badge of honor. Mohler brought Wise to Southern Seminary in 2006 to lead the Center for Theology and Science.

Wise replaced William Dembski, a leading thinker in the theory of intelligent design, moved to a sister seminary. Unlike Dembski, Wise is a young-earth creationist. Based on his understanding of Scripture, he believes the universe is on the order of 6,000 years old.

After a global flood during the time of Noah, Wise believes, animals left the ark to disperse and multiply as God commanded, while humans disobeyed God’s command and settled in a city to build the Tower of Babel.

During that time, Wise theorizes, some animals became buried in layers of sediment during a series of catastrophic events that occurred while the earth was recovering from the flood and today are preserved as fossils. That would include the apes, such as the famous specimen “Lucy” discovered in 1974 that scientists believe is 3.2 million years old and an ancestor of humans.

Only a matter of time

Wise [acknowledges](#) fossil evidence interpreted as transitional forms lend support to evolutionary theory. He believes that because it is a young science, young-earth creationism hasn't yet come up with an explanation, but it is only a matter of time before it does. That is because he thinks science inevitably leads to incorrect conclusions unless it appeals to the Bible.

"It seems to be a clear reading of Scripture that God told us that the earth is young, and I hold that position for that reason," Wise said Feb. 13, 2007, on Mohler's radio program. "I also believe science is such that these are theories of humans, so if it's a choice between God's clear word and humans' reason, then I'm going to take God's word over it. That's why I am a young-age creationist as opposed to an old-age creationist."

Mohler concurred, speaking not as a scientist but a theologian. "I have to come to the Scriptures—and in particular the first 11 chapters of the Book of Genesis—and try to figure out why I should interpret those 11 chapters differently than I would interpret any other passage of Scripture," Mohler said.

In another 2007 radio broadcast, Mohler called theistic evolution, a middle-ground argument between evolution and direct creation, a "lie" and said Christians cannot have it both ways.

Mohler said teaching in Genesis that death entered the world as a result of Adam's sin makes no sense if species of animals had been dying off for millions of years. He also said without a literal Adam, it's hard to explain what the Bible means when it talks about notions like creation, the fall and redemption.

51 percent reject theory of evolution

Mohler and Wise are far from alone, and their ideas aren't new. [A 2005 poll](#) by CBS News found 51 percent of Americans reject the theory of evolution and say God created humans in their present form. And more than 500,000 people have visited the \$27 million Answers In Genesis Creation Museum since it opened near Cincinnati in 2007.

In 1987, the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee reported that most Southern Baptists believe in "direct creation of mankind and therefore believe Adam and Eve were real persons" and called on denominational agencies to "build their professional staffs and faculties from those who clearly reflect such dominant convictions and beliefs held by Southern Baptists at large."

Richard Land, head of the [SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission](#), told Chris Matthews of MSNBC in 2007 that he thought only a small minority of Southern Baptists believe God used the evolutionary process to create humans.

Land said the belief that mankind was created gradually rather than in seven 24-hour days is "an acceptable belief" held by many Christians, but he is not among them.

"I don't believe that," Land said when asked if mankind evolved from lower species.

That incenses skeptics like Dawkins.

"Fundamentalist religion is hell-bent on ruining the scientific education of countless thousands of innocent, well-meaning, eager young minds," Dawkins complained.

"Nonfundamentalist, sensible religion may not be doing that, but it is making the world safe for fundamentalism by teaching children from their earliest years that unquestioning faith is a virtue."

Mohler said rejecting evolution “raises intellectual questions that I don’t have neatly answered, but the alternative position leaves a larger number of messy questions, so I find this a much more intellectually satisfying position as well as theologically satisfying.”

“We have to remember that Christianity dignifies science because we believe God has given us a creation that is intelligible, because he wants us to love him, even as we come to see him in this world,” Mohler said.