Truth Sheet #03-1

# The Real Truth about Jonathan Wells

Responding to Smears against the Author of Icons of Evolution.

**Overview:** Since the publication of *Icons of Evolution* (2000), biologist Jonathan Wells has been subjected to a smear campaign by Darwin-only lobbyists, who have attacked everything from Dr. Wells's integrity as a scholar to his personal religious beliefs. This fact sheet rebuts some of the most outrageous smears.

#### 1. Is Jonathan Wells a genuine scientist?

- Dr. Wells's scientific credentials are impeccable and speak for themselves.
- Dr. Wells earned his Ph.D. in molecular and cell biology from the University of California at Berkeley, one of America's top research universities.
- Dr. Wells engaged in further research as a postdoctoral research biologist at the University of California at Berkeley. (Beware of false information about Dr. Wells's post-doc put out by the "National Center for Science Education." See Truth Sheet, #03-2, "How the NCSE Misrepresents Jonathan Wells's Science Credentials.")
- Dr. Wells has published articles in a number of leading scientific publications, including Development, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA, BioSystems, The Scientist, The American Biology Teacher, and Natural History.

#### 2. Has the "Scientific Community" Refuted Icons of Evolution?

- While Darwin-only activists shrilly denounce Dr. Wells's book, they hardly speak for the entire scientific community.
- Findings presented in *Icons of Evolution* draw on the latest scientific research, and Dr. Wells includes more than 70 pages of documentation containing citations to the peer-reviewed scientific literature.
- Chapters of *Icons of Evolution* were peer-reviewed before publication by several scientists (including one Nobel laureate) to ensure their accuracy. These reviewers included scientists who support Darwin's theory of evolution and were therefore critical of Dr. Wells' overall point of view.
- According to one biologist, Wells "has brilliantly exposed the exaggerated claims and deceptions that have persisted in standard textbook discussions of biological origins for many decades." (Dean Kenyon, Emeritus Professor of Biology, San Francisco State University)
- Another biologist writes that "Wells has done a great public service" by writing his book, adding that the book's "extensive coverage of all the icons of Darwinism... with extensive research notes, makes this volume a valuable reference for a professional biologist." (Paul Chien, Professor of Biology, University of San Francisco)
- Since the publication of Dr. Wells's book, some textbooks have started to correct the errors he identified. For example, Holt, Rinehart and Winston recently acknowledged that it re-evaluated the use of the peppered moth and Haeckel's embryos icons in its latest textbook and decided against their use. If the problems identified by Dr. Wells are non-existent, why are some textbook writers already making changes?

### 3. Is Icons of Evolution refuted by Dr. Wells's religion?

- Unable to disprove the science in *Icons of Evolution*, some Darwinists have resorted to attacks on Dr. Wells's religion instead. For example, more than 40% of the book review of *Icons* by by evolutionist Jerry Coyne in *Nature* was devoted not to the content of the book but to "outing" Dr. Wells as a member of the Unification Church.
- Trying to shift the focus onto Dr. Wells's religion is bigotry, not science, and it ought to offend thoughtful Americans who support religious liberty.
- Purporting to "refute" Dr. Wells's scientific views by attacking his religion is a cynical rhetorical ploy that has no place in legitimate scientific discourse.
- Darwinists who attack Dr. Wells and other scientists on the basis of their religion are hypocritical. While these Darwinists complain about supposed religious motivations of scientists critical of Darwinism, they never object to the <u>anti</u>-religious motives of leading Darwinists.
- For example, Darwinists Francis Crick and James Watson, co-discoverers of the structure of DNA, are outspoken atheists, and Crick has indicated that his scientific research was motivated by a desire to undermine belief in religion. Similarly, Darwinist Richard Dawkins asserts that "faith is one of the world's great evils, comparable to the smallpox virus but harder to eradicate." When is the last time you heard a Darwin-only activist claim that the scientific views of Crick, Watson, and Dawkins should be ignored because of their anti-religious views?

## 4. Does Dr. Wells misquote evolutionists?

- Darwinists frequently claim they are being misquoted by scientists critical of Darwinism—even when they aren't. This is a debating trick employed by Darwin-only lobbyists who don't want to answer the scientific arguments being raised against neo-Darwinism.
- While Darwinists have sometimes tried to make this allegation against Jonathan Wells, the allegations aren't supported by the evidence.
- One example: In oral testimony before the Texas State Board of Education in July, 2003, biologist David Hillis complained that Dr. Wells quoted him "extensively" in *Icons of Evolution* and alleged that the quotes were "taken completely out of context."
  - o In reality, Dr. Wells quoted a mere four sentences from Prof. Hillis on a single page in *Icons*, and none of the material was taken out of context.
  - The quotes cited by Dr. Wells came from a chapter by Prof. Hillis in the book *Homology: The Hierarchical Basis of Comparative Biology*, edited by biologist Brian K. Hall. <u>Ironically, Dr. Hall also peer-reviewed the chapter in *Icons of Evolution* that quoted Prof. Hillis's comments. Is Prof. Hall guilty of misunderstanding what Prof. Hillis was saying as well?</u>
  - For a detailed refutation of Prof. Hillis's spurious misquotation claim, see "Reponse to Dr. David Hillis" by Jonathan Wells, available at www.discovery.org/crsc.