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The 20 Most Brilliant Christian Professors

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The professors listed here are all “brilliant” in the original sense of the word—they shine brightly among their peers as towering figures in the academic world. In addition, they are all Christians who do not hide their Christianity and see it as significantly impacting their intellectual work.

We have limited this list to professors who teach in the English-speaking world. A few listed here have officially retired or moved on to other responsibilities, but in each case they keep close ties to the academic world.

Peter Berger (1929-)



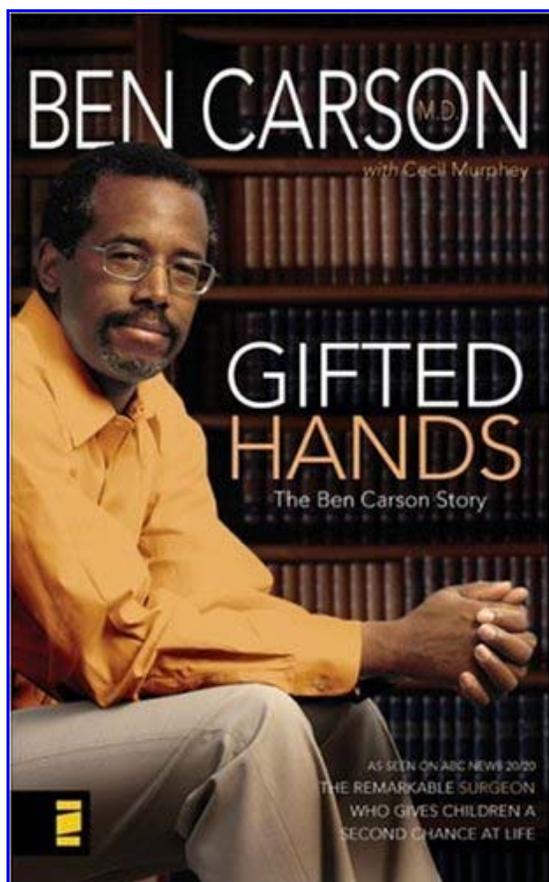
Professor Emeritus of Religion, Sociology and Theology at Boston University, where he directs its Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs. A Lutheran, he studies the secularization of the West, focusing especially on the rift between “elite culture and the rest of the population.” He sees American Christianity as a force for resisting secularization: “In the U.S., unlike any Western European country, there is enormous popular resistance to this trend [of secularization], especially from evangelical Christians.” He has written numerous influential books that have been widely translated. The University of Munich and Notre Dame have awarded him honorary doctorates.

References:

[Faculty Bio](#)

[An Interview with Peter Berger](#)

Benjamin S. “Ben” Carson Sr. (1951-)



Professor of Neurosurgery, Oncology, Plastic Surgery, and Pediatrics along with Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at [Johns](#)

[Hopkins University](#). Educated at Yale and the University of Michigan, Carson has written over 100 scholarly articles as well as three bestselling books on integrating work and faith, all three with the Christian publishing house Zondervan. In addition to 38 honorary doctorates, he has received dozens of national merit citations, including the Presidential Freedom Medal, awarded in 2008. In a debate with atheist Richard Dawkins, Carson raised questions about evolutionary theory's ability to reconstruct the natural history of life.

Reference:

[Benjamin S. Carson Sr. Profile](#)

Simon Conway Morris (1951-)



Professor of Evolutionary Palaeobiology in the Earth Sciences Department at Cambridge University. Praised by the late Stephen Jay Gould for his fundamental insights into the Cambrian explosion, Conway Morris ardently defends evolutionary theory in his book *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe* (Cambridge). At the same time, he has no patience with atheists who use evolution to try to "prove" atheism. Active with the Templeton Foundation, Conway Morris has become a key critic of intelligent design. Conway Morris's understanding of evolution is deeply tinged with Neoplatonism. His favorite author is the Christian apologist G. K. Chesterton.

Reference:

[Simon Conway-Morris Bio](#)

Louise S. Cowan (1916-)



University Professor of English at the University of Dallas. She, as a former dean, and her late physicist husband Donald, as president, fundamentally transformed the University of Dallas's curriculum, advancing a generous Christian humanism. An author of books and numerous articles, she is best known for her teaching and impact on students. Now in her 90s, she continues to teach. As one recent student remarked, "Dr. Cowan is a legend and a master at her craft. She is uplifting, inspirational and brilliant. She is the reason that many teachers are still teaching literature and loving it."

References:

[Louise S. Cowan Faculty Bio](#)

[Student Reviews of Louise Cowan](#)

William Lane Craig (1949-)



Research Professor of Philosophy at the Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. With a doctorate in philosophy (under John Hick) and another doctorate in theology (under Wolfhart Pannenberg), Craig is the premier evangelical apologist of his generation. A consummate debater who regularly debates atheists before university and (mega-)church audiences, he is at the same time a top-flight and wide-ranging scholar with a voluminous output that includes many books and articles. He has made fundamental contributions in the study of God's relation to time, traditional arguments for God's existence (especially the Kalam cosmological argument), and divine and human freedom.

Reference:

[Reasonable Faith](#)

Robert P. George (1955-)

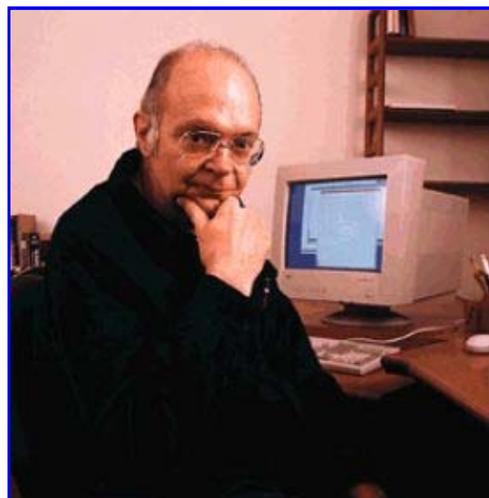


McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University and director of its James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions. Educated at Harvard and Oxford, his research and writings focus on the intersection between ethics and law. A Roman Catholic, he embraces a natural law approach to ethics and is known as a critic of liberal political philosophy. An author of many books and articles, he has had presidential appointments to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and to the President's Council on Bioethics. He is one of the framers, with Chuck Colson, of the Manhattan Declaration.

References:

[Princeton Faculty Bio](#)
[Manhattan Declaration](#)

Donald Knuth (1931-)



Professor Emeritus of the Art of Computer Programming at Stanford University. Knuth is the 20th century's greatest theorist of the algorithm. His influence within the computer science community is unparalleled. In addition to his fundamental work on algorithms, epitomized in his multivolume *The Art of Computer Programming*, he is the creator of TeX, mathematical typesetting software that has revolutionized publishing within the physical, mathematical, and engineering sciences. A Lutheran, Knuth has written a charming book on all the verses numbered 3:16 in the Bible, material he first presented to the Association of Christians in the Mathematical Sciences. He has received numerous awards and prizes, including the National Medal of Science.

References:

[Stanford Website](#)
[6th ACMS Conference Proceedings](#)

Robert Jackson Marks II (1950-)

Distinguished Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Baylor University. A founder of the field of computational intelligence (comprising fuzzy sets, neural networks, and evolutionary computing), Marks has published hundreds of articles on an very wide range of problems (everything from optimal detection of non-Gaussian noise to proper placement of radioactive inserts to treat prostate cancer). His work has enormous practical implications that are felt every day—all major North American utilities deliver energy using his work on neural networks. An Christian intent on understanding teleology in nature, Marks founded the Evolutionary Informatics Lab, which publishes peer-reviewed scientific papers supporting the controversial theory of intelligent design.

References:

[Faculty Bio](#)

Michael W. McConnell (1955-)

Richard and Frances Mallery Professor of Law at Stanford University, where he directs Stanford's Constitutional Law Center. Formerly at the University of Chicago and the University of Utah (leaving Chicago for Utah to place family above [career](#)), McConnell was a federal judge from 2002 to 2009. While at Chicago, he obtained a fellowship for then recent

Harvard Law graduate Barack Obama to bring him to the UofC Law School. McConnell is a top constitutional law scholar, focusing especially on separation of powers, federalism, and originalism. An unapologetic Christian, he embraces the sanctity of life and supports a constitutional amendment to ban abortion.

References:

[Faculty Profile at Stanford](#)

[NY Times Article on McConnell's Relationship to President Obama](#)

Alister Edgar McGrath (1953-)

Professor of Theology, Ministry and Education, and Head of the Centre for Theology, Religion and Culture at King's [College](#), London. Receiving his first doctorate in molecular biology, he earned a second doctorate in theology and has since become one of the English-speaking world's premier theologians and apologists. With an unrivaled scholarly output (one loses track of the number of books he has published), he has been a strong voice against the "new atheism." He has worked closely with the Templeton Foundation to advance the science-religion discussion. In 2009 he presented the Gifford Lectures on natural theology.

References:

[Oxford Homepage](#)

[McGrath's Facebook](#)

R. Albert Mohler (1959-)



Joseph Emerson Brown Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he is also the seminary's president. With an incredible ability to read and assimilate material (his personal library numbers well over 50,000 volumes), Mohler also hosts a national radio program and is a regular on talking-heads programs such as Larry King Live. A conservative Southern Baptist, he has been a controversial figure in his denomination, moving it well to the right of its previous moderate stance. Nonetheless, committed to cultural renewal, he works across denominational barriers, being an original signer of the Manhattan Declaration.

References:

[Albert Mohler Homepage](#)

[Albert Mohler Biography](#)

Martin Andreas Nowak (1965-)

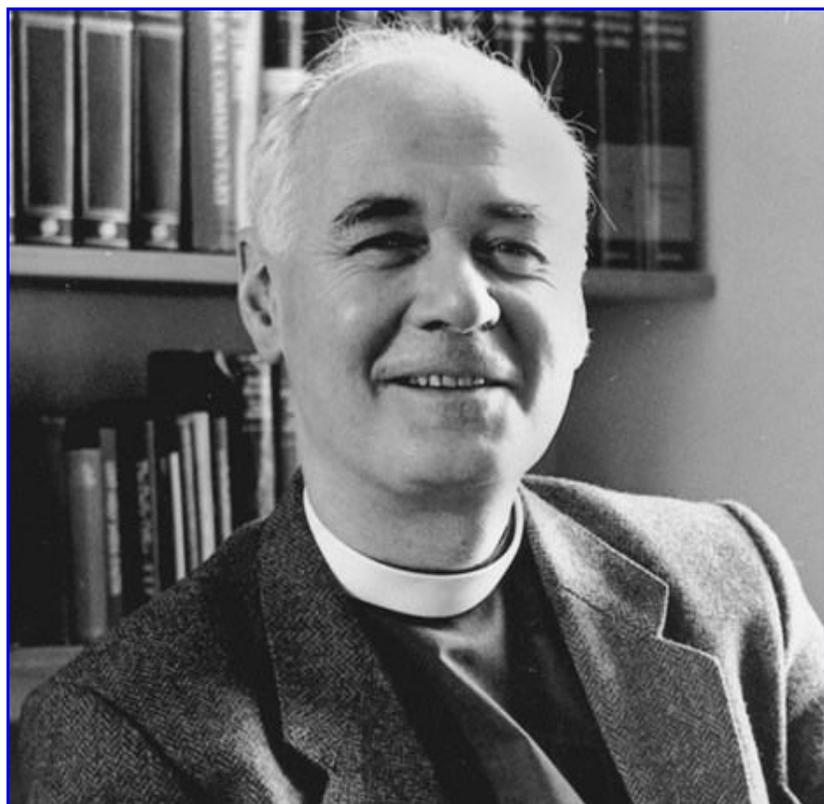


Professor of Biology and of Mathematics at Harvard University and Director of Harvard's Program for Evolutionary Dynamics. An Austrian citizen, Nowak received his doctorate in Vienna studying with Peter Schuster. He has published 300 scientific articles, over 30 in *Nature* and 10 in *Science*. In 2005 he was the first to quantify in vivo kinetics of human cancer. Nowak is a Roman Catholic who works with the Templeton Foundation on the connection between faith and science. According to him, "Science and religion are two essential components in the search for truth. Denying either is a barren approach."

Reference:[Harvard Faculty Bio](#)**Alvin Plantinga (1932-)**

John A. O'Brien Professor of Philosophy at the [University of Notre Dame](#). After receiving his Ph.D. from Yale, Plantinga taught at Calvin College. More than any other philosopher, Plantinga is credited with the revival of Christian theism as topic of serious inquiry within mainstream academic philosophy. In *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Mark Noll cites this move in philosophy as the only truly significant contribution of evangelicalism to the wider intellectual culture. Plantinga has written several important books, including *God and Other Minds* (Cornell), *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford), and his trilogy on proper function (Oxford).

Reference:[Notre Dame Faculty Profile](#)**John Polkinghorne (1930-)**



Former President of Queen's College at Cambridge University, where he was also Professor of Mathematical Physics. Elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society, he resigned his professorship in 1979 to pursue the Anglican priesthood. As a priest, he became one of the leading voices and teachers in the dialogue between science and religion, culminating in his award in 2002 of the Templeton Prize. Polkinghorne "believes that the universe is an 'open' and 'flexible' system, where patterns can be seen to exist, but where 'the providential aspect cannot be ruled out.'" "His own faith has little to do with physics. It stems, instead, from a more personal 'encounter with Christ.'"

Links:

[John Polkinghorne's Homepage](#)

Marilynne Robinson (1943-)



Pulitzer Prize winning author (for *Gilead*) and permanent faculty member of the Iowa Writers' Workshop (University of Iowa). Her non-fiction *The Death of Adam: Essays on Modern Thought* trenchantly critiques modern misconceptions that secular thinkers use to invalidate Christian faith. Her 2009 Terry Lectureship at Yale, titled *Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self*, expands on this critique. In a 2006 interview with *The Christian Century*, she remarked, "I'd like to see mainline churches, collectively and individually, remember and claim their profound histories

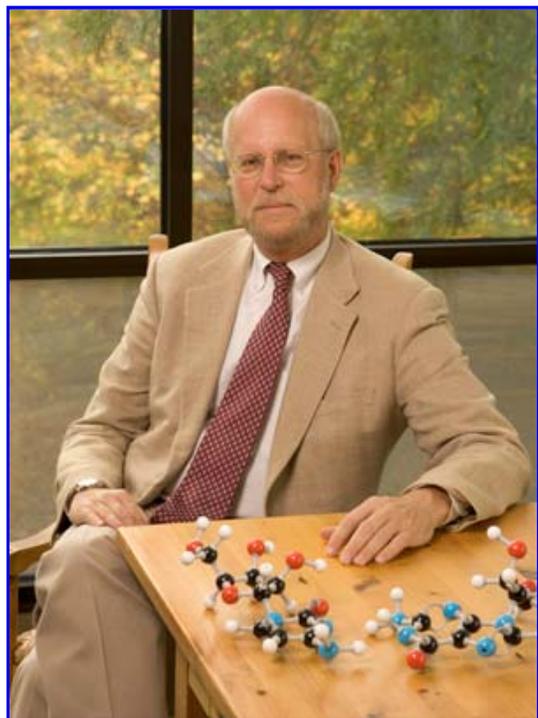
and cultures.”

References:

[University of Iowa Bio](#)

[Terry Lectures Video](#)

Henry “Fritz” Schaefer III (1944-)



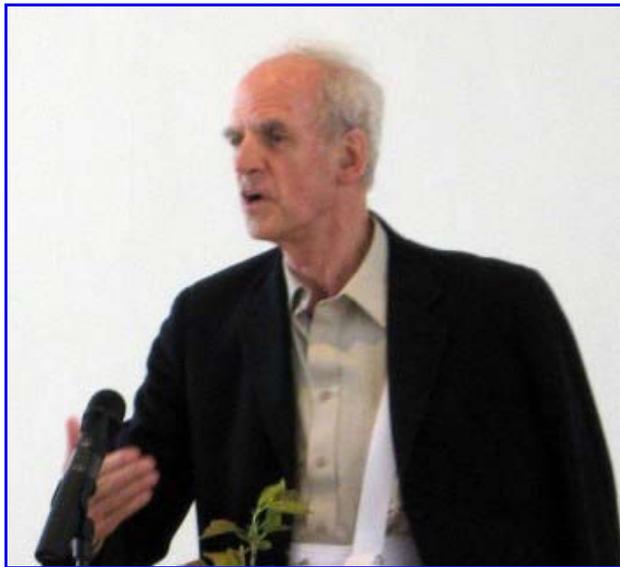
Graham Perdue Professor of Chemistry and Director of the Center for Computational Chemistry at the University of Georgia. The inventor of quantum computational chemistry, Schaefer has published over 1,000 journal articles and is one of the most widely cited chemists in the world. Receiving his doctorate from Stanford, he was on faculty at Cal Berkeley before taking his current position at Georgia. A constant contender for the Nobel Prize, he has been persistently passed over for membership in the prestigious U.S. National Academy of Sciences because of his outspoken Christian views, skepticism of Darwinism, and support of intelligent design.

References:

[Faculty page at UGA](#)

[Leadership U Faculty Office](#)

Charles Margrave Taylor (1931-)

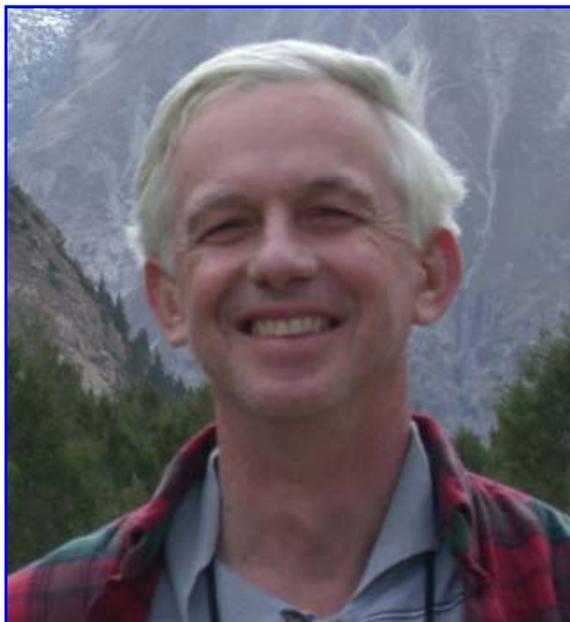


Emeritus Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at McGill University, Canada. A Roman Catholic, Taylor is one of the premier social and political thinkers of our time. His book *Sources of Self*, according to Robert Hoffman, provides “a historical account of the modernist protest against the disengaged and instrumental modes of thought and action that arose when theistically grounded morality crumbled.” It demonstrates Taylor’s thorough-going engagement with the contemporary intellectual world. Taylor is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Kyoto Prize (for arts and philosophy) and the Templeton Prize (for progress in religion).

References:

[Templeton Prize Winning Page](#)

John Suppe (1943-)

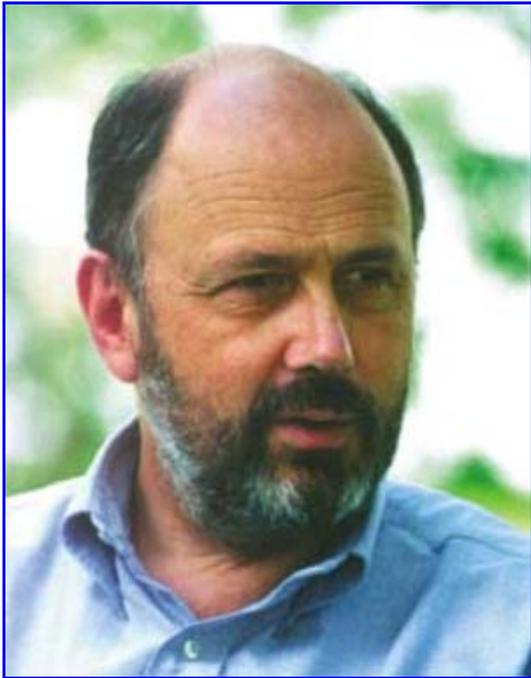


Blair Professor of Geosciences Emeritus at Princeton University. Known for his genius at “seeing through rocks,” Suppe has received numerous honors, including membership in the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. A convert to Christianity later in life, Suppe has a passion for missions. As a member of the American Scientific Affiliation, a professional society of Christians focusing on the relation between faith and science, he sees “significant parallels between Christian and scientific knowing that lie at the very core of contingent epistemology. Specifically, observation and interaction are fundamental to both Christian and scientific knowledge.”

References:[Christianity in Light of Science](#)[Princeton Faculty Page](#)**James Tour (1959-)**

The Chao Professor of Chemistry at Rice University. Tour also holds faculty appointments in computer science and materials science at Rice. Taking the mantle of his friend and mentor, the late Rice professor and Nobelist Rick Smalley, Tour has become one of the world's leading nano-engineers and is himself now on a fast track for the Nobel Prize. A skeptic of Darwinian evolution for, as he stresses, scientific reasons, he has nonetheless been passed over membership in the National Academy of Sciences. An evangelical Christian, he rises at 3:30am every morning to study the Bible for two hours.

References:[The James M Tour Group](#)**Nicholas Thomas “Tom” or “N.T.” Wright (1948-)**



Bishop of Durham in the Church of England and formerly on faculty at McGill and Oxford [Universities](#). Wright is one of the world's leading New Testament scholars. His magisterial *The Resurrection of the Son of God* is widely regarded as the definitive defense of the traditional view that Jesus rose from the dead. Though clashing swords with more liberal biblical scholars (who reject Jesus' bodily resurrection), everyone acknowledges that Wright's work cannot be ignored. The author of many books and the recipient of numerous honorary doctorates, Wright is also an honorary fellow at both Cambridge and Oxford Universities.

Reference:

[NT Wright Homepage](#)

[Publish A Christian Book](#)

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[Christian Singles](#)

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