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*An Analysis of the Debate over Creation, Evolution, and
the Timeline of the Universe at an Ecumenical Christian
University*

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A Senior Honors Thesis project submitted to the Honors Program in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree:

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Chapter 1: Introduction

If one has been around the domains of American Christianity and science, one is sure to come across pervasive expressions of animosity between the two facets of culture. In most cultures, religion has been the part of human existence that provided insight for the most fundamental aspects of the world. As humanity has progressed in its journey through time, the field of science has uncovered methods and fundamental truths behind the functioning of the world. It is evident that the reign of Christianity and religion as a way of understanding the world has dwindled for generations as science takes the podium. From the Catholic Church attempting to contain Galileo's revolutionary discoveries to evolution being an accepted theory taught in American schools, people have put this conflict to the forefront of culture in many ways. Central causes of much tension concern ideas such as the creation of the universe, the Earth, humanity, and the processes by which this all came about. The Big Bang, the age of the universe, and the creation of life (and humanity) are very much on the mind of those who have a stake here. Such ideas often put one party on the offensive and the other on their heels, but might there be some harmony between religion and science beyond this introductory encounter?

Many might view the fields of science and religion as one being correct and the other being flawed. Some might say that religion is traditional and was functional for a time in history but has and is becoming obsolete as the real answers are found through scientific inquiry. For example, how could the ancient Hebrews have been able to explain the complexities of evolution? On the opposite side of the spectrum, others might see there is no problem reconciling the thoughts of both science and religion. It is my

judgment that the ideas presented by science fit together much better within Christianity than commonly perceived when one only considers surface level arguments. One idea may not be lessening the other, as stated previously, but could actually be a further understanding of the same idea in nature. It is my hypothesis that many individuals, especially around a Christian college campus, share these thoughts, and that science is not removing Christianity as the secular world might believe.

In this research project, individuals at the predominantly Protestant Christian, educational community of Belmont University were surveyed to see if these individuals are understanding and open to a harmonious relationship between science and Christianity or lean more toward animosity. The questions specifically asked what the participant personally believes about the creation of the world, how life developed, and the relationship between science and religion. Additionally, one-on-one interviews were conducted with some of the participants in the study to glean further detail on the questions asked and where individuals fit into the debate in the modern day. With all of this data collected, a comprehensive research summary is compiled below, including information on the history of the dichotomy between creationistic science and Christianity, explanations of the modern-day perspectives, as well as qualitative and quantitative analysis of the surveys and interviews. The final product is a summary of how many individuals in a Christian collegiate environment perceive the headlining issues between science and religion in the midst of an ongoing “cultural battle” between the two.

Chapter 2: History of the Debate

Evident in the modern culture of America, there appears to be some animosity between modern science and the beliefs held by Christianity. Science has continued through time in finding the mechanics that describes the nature of the universe. With each new discovery, science presents a competing answer to what Christianity has taught for centuries. Several times, as this timeline progressed, the two parties have had conflict outright, in a public setting recorded by history. The stories of how evolution became a common theory taught in American schools going back to the events of Galileo's collision with the Catholic Church present the public with the opportunity to ponder how this thought landscape has changed and challenge their personal thoughts. Central themes in this debate seem to focus on the creation of the universe and the manner in which life propagated the Earth. Throughout much of western history, this debate has transformed into a new form to meet the issue that has presented itself in that time period.

The histories presented in this chapter are examples of what is seen as the apparent conflict in the modern day. All of what modern readers have been taking in comes through the lenses of their personal thoughts and experiences with both science and religion. When one is diving into this issue, it is important to not regard one of the parties as an absolute "truth." All of the science that is studied today is based on a system of theories. Theories are, by their nature, things that can never be established as an absolute truth. Any theory, no matter how tested and verified it may be, could be overturned with a new discovery. Easily, this can be seen with the overturning of what used to be held as common thought, the geocentric model of the solar system, into what is now the presiding theory of a heliocentric universe. The laws and theories that science

keeps are governed by reason and rational thinking. Conversely, religion is distinguished from scientific thought because of its apparent lack of being based in reason. Religion cannot be communicated and derived from rationality but comes from a faith in ideas that do not need to be empirically verified. Both of these thoughts are presented to help show you, the reader and human being, that the two cannot necessarily be compared as schools of thought competing for the same space within an individual's personal belief. Science and religious faith are defined in different playing fields, and while there is plenty of overlap, it is not necessarily one idea over the other.

The following chapter is for the purpose of preparing the reader for the later data found for the study. With the initial context provided with a quick jump into some of the primary hot-button issues surrounding science and Christian faith's overlap, the reader can put what was found to be the beliefs of a portion of Belmont University's community into context. A greater, historical framing of what the affair has become in the world is a good place to start before seeing what is at play with a new study.

The Galileo Affair

When an individual wishes to bring up the animosity between the church and science, the usual first thought comes from what has become known as the Galileo affair. The story has become shrouded in myth where opinions seem to take the driver's seat from what actually occurred in the first half of the seventeenth century. While there was unquestionably a conflict between Galileo with the new science he advocated for and the Roman Catholic Church that possessed extreme influence and power in that day, the full story does not reveal the church opposing science like it is its personal demise, as many

may regard the event today. There is much grey area and doubt cast on the events, and, of course, both parties were not without their own flaws in their arguments.

Galileo Galilei was born in Pisa, Italy in 1564, the son of an experienced musician. Possibly the steady rhythms presented to him in his early life by his father assisted the man in his later career, analyzing the constant timing of pendulums and formalizing the concept of acceleration. Perhaps his most influential and tangible contribution to science comes from his influence in improving the telescope. Galileo became the scientist renown in history and in that day by becoming familiar with the new ideas of the time

By this time, Nicolaus Copernicus' theory of a heliocentric solar system (first published in 1543, *On the Revolution of the Heavenly Spheres*), which placed the sun at the center of the solar system rather than the Earth with circular orbits of planets, was established through the scientific community. It is important to note that, while this theory is more correct than previously held thoughts that the Earth sat in the center of the solar system, the Copernican system was still flawed. Planetary orbits are not circular, as Copernicus (and Galileo) believed. This was not resolved until Kepler presented the idea (*Astronomia nova*, 1609) that the orbits of the planets around the sun are actually in the path of an ellipse. This solved the issues that the Copernican theory could not fit, such as the retrograde motion of the planets. It is important to note that both Copernicus' and Kepler's findings were available to Galileo in his time. However, Galileo stuck with the Copernican system through all of his trials.

As Copernicus' ideas began to spread, Galileo took it upon himself to help clarify the issues that many thought contradicted scripture by presenting his own opinions and

findings. Galileo published his findings that supported heliocentrism in *Sidereus Nuncius*, which described evidence found in the phases of Venus and the moons of Jupiter. As ideas on this new thought of the Earth's position within the heavens circulated, Galileo thought it important to iron out the details. The scientist formulated these thoughts into an essay, the *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina*, which was circulated around the scientific community of the day. With the thought of heliocentrism spreading around, the Catholic Church (specifically, the Congregation of the Holy Office, a part of the Inquisition) sought to take action and came together to deliberate their stance on this revolutionary idea in 1616. The eventual decision from the church was to reject the Copernican theory of the solar system in favor of the traditional geocentric thought, on the grounds that it was heretical (Graney, 2014). Once the decision was made by the Inquisition, Galileo was brought in, on order of Pope Paul V, to be told he should abandon his position defending heliocentrism. The scientist did quiet down after this friendly reminder and stayed out of the church's hair publicly for almost twenty years.

The remainder of the event that is sometimes regarded today as a historical fiasco concluded in the 1630s. From the time he was told to abandon his position in regard to heliocentrism, Galileo had been working on a work that would argue for and against both the classical view of the solar system and the newer one he advocated for. *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems* was originally published in Florence in 1632, away from the church. Eventually, the text made its way to Rome, where it was read by the church officials. Previous to this engagement, Pope Urban VII had been more sympathetic to the controversial scientist, and they had a very understanding relationship. Once the newly written text was received, however, the relationship between the two had to shift. In

1633, Galileo was ordered by the church to stand trial for his publication. The outcome was to ban *Dialogue* and place Galileo under house arrest for the remainder of his life, as well as the man having to renounce his views (Graney, 2014).

While the historical event that became known as the “Galileo Affair” sounds to be a relatively cut and dried issue with clear goals of the opposing sides, as always, history is not as simple as it looks. The Catholic Church at this time in history is not necessarily known for playing fairly and was not immune to the temptations of the world. This affair took place in the midst of the Inquisition and the Counter Reformation, where all over Europe the church had been on its heels and was now making its move to strike back. Politics throughout the church were also most definitely at play throughout the whole matter, as well. Galileo purposefully went against his word given to the church to write *Dialogue* because of how strongly he felt in his knowledge. All of this is to say that the decisions made were most likely not purely based in the theological issues regarded at that time. These issues assisted in creating the thought of science and religion being at odds, with religion desperately trying to cling to the knowledge that science is swiping from its grasp.

Darwin, Evolution, and its Reception

In 1859, Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, communicating his observations that biological species evolve over long times and introducing the public to the new theories of evolutionary biology. While the process of natural selection that Darwin described in this particular text does not specifically go into humanity’s place within his new system, the author implies that it would work in

much the same way as it does for the rest of the natural world. The thoughts on humanity would come later. The idea that all of life on Earth has not always been a constant (i.e., since God created the Earth) and actually was subject to modification over time created ripples throughout the world, especially and immediately in science and religion. The implication that evolutionary biology makes created several difficulties that were difficult for Christian doctrine taught at that time. Still today, the ideas that Darwin presented to the world cause issues for many Christians in regard to how humanity became a part of the world and the timeline of the universe.

Upon publication of *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin received immediate attention for the work. Scientists began to scrutinize the work and present their own findings. Famously, Thomas Huxley, a contemporary English biologist of Darwin's, was one of the first Darwin exposed his thoughts to and then went on to work himself on how humanity fit into the whole new equation. Even more famously, Huxley went on to debate a member of the clergy, Samuel Wilberforce, on evolution and was able to prove that it was a theory that could hold its own ground. Though debate continued for some time on the mechanisms of the actual process of evolution, the idea itself stuck and continued to spread throughout the scientific community and into the general public. On the other side of the ocean, the general populace and churches in the more conservative areas of the country were less tolerant of the new ideas, gearing up for an event that became one of the most recognized in American history.

Though America had grown away from its traditional, Protestant background in some areas of the continent, the country still held on to its religious roots strongly in the conservative south. The response in the south was to oppose any progress for the theory

of evolution. The state of Tennessee specifically created legislation to prohibit the teaching of the theory of evolution, specifically the teaching of humans coming from a “lower order of animals” (Webb, 1994). With this legislation as its target, the American Civil Liberties Union desired to back a trial that brought this issue into the public eye. A substitute public school teacher by the name of John Scopes was contacted to see if he would be the focal point of the trial, though he was not sure himself if he had actually taught the illegal theory. Both sides of the trial brought in the biggest names for lawyers they could, William Jennings Bryan for the state of Tennessee and Clarence Darrow for the defense, in order to heighten the exposure the trial would get. What the Scopes Trial became was a public debate for science versus religion, rather than a trial to see if the law was upheld.

Though Darwin did not live to see much of the effect his lifework created around the world, he seemed to be comfortable with his own personal stance. The man held strongly to his scientific thoughts in how life came to be on Earth. Though he was involved in the church for his entire life, he was not a faithful worshipper, electing to go on walks while his family attended service. It is also important to note that the issues Darwin had with Christian faith did not stem from any issues his work presented, but from natural evils and doctrine taught on hell (Darwin, 1887). He personally described himself as agnostic, but the scientist was never opposed to religion and saw no issue “that a man might be an ardent theist and an evolutionist” (Darwin, 1879).

Similar to the Galileo affair, the issue that the theory of evolution caused when the culture of progressive science and traditional Christian faith mixed came from a dramatized case that has been prevalent since it occurred. Today, the thought that science

and Christian faith have to be at odds, with one party being incorrect and the victor claiming the spoils, was increased by the popularity that the Scopes Trial created. The culture surrounding the issue is not lighthearted because of the passion people have placed on the theory of evolution and its implications.

The Big Bang and Other Modern Theories

Unlike the other two stories from history, the Big Bang Theory came from a “religious” beginning. Georges Lemaître, the man who first verified galaxies were receding, the evidence necessary for supporting the Big Bang Theory, was a Roman Catholic priest as well as a scientist. Though the scientific theory has not had the same culture-smashing effect that Darwin’s theory had, it is just as an important part of the debate. Empirical proof that the universe has expanded outward for 13.8 billion years, especially when supported by the Church, obviously throws a bit of a curveball at any who hold to fundamental truths in the Biblical creation story. Pope Pius XII stated that the world was “pronounced billions of years ago by the creator Spirit, unfolded in the universe, calling into existence with a generous gesture of love the exuberant matter of energy.” (Pius XII, 1951).

The Big Bang describes the beginning of the universe with several important characteristics. Perhaps most importantly, especially for the purpose of this project, is that there was a beginning moment. It argues that the universe has not always been in the manner we see it today but has been changing since one single event that set everything in motion. That one event, called the singularity, is the apparent “big bang” where the theory gets its name. When the universe had its beginning, both space and time were

created. Extremely quickly, the universe expanded from a highly dense and hot state to a place where gases could consolidate and eventually form into the bodies our universe holds today. It is also important to note that the universe is continuing to expand to this day. The most famous detection that supports this idea and gained its discoverers the Nobel Prize was the finding of the cosmic microwave background radiation. This evidence, still seen continually today, is an essential tool to help make the Big Bang Theory into the accepted theory that the scientific community holds to.

Though Lemaître first noted in 1927 that the universe was not in a constant state, the theory has not always been accepted completely in the scientific community (Lemaître, 1927). The initial argument was between those who stood behind Lemaître and his new theory and those who favored a steady state universe. With continual advancements and discoveries as time progressed, the theory was ratified further. However, its opposition was not always just with cosmologists or science as a whole. Quite obviously, this theory directly contradicts the narrative described in both Genesis accounts as to how the world was created—if taken completely literally. Many fundamentalists who prefer to take the Bible at its literal word would and will fight tooth and nail against this theory and what it has produced in science. In 1951, however, Pope Pius XII declared for the entire Catholic Church that the Big Bang theory does not conflict with the Catholic concept of creation (1951). The current dissenting opinions on this theory are held by Christian believers who would take the Bible literally or are unaware of what the theory actually implies in their faith.

While the previously discussed theories and historical events are many of the main points that are initially brought up in a discussion about science and faith's

relationship, there are a multitude of other cases that now add to the narrative. Scientific advancements have pushed farther and farther into what humans can now accomplish, and ethics of what was never before an issue are made into a new predicament for Christians to wrestle with. Issues with bioethics, reproductive health, and artificial intelligence paint a broad picture of where some of the many advancements in technology will lead humanity. All of those mentioned will present new points for Christians and culture as a whole to find their stance on, though this particular study does not pursue their place in the way it will with creation and the means by which it arose.

Another perspective is one of harmony between the newly discovered science and theistic thought. Instead of viewing these events as conflict, they can be used to support both parties. For example, the Big Bang points to one specific moment of creation and that time has a beginning, as any Christian might say. The Galileo Affair showed that the universe is bigger than previously thought, and therefore the God who created it is bigger and more powerful than previously thought. With evolution, a God who put the processes in place for organisms to be able to adapt is more powerful than one who just makes their creation static.

The relationship between science and religion is not stagnant after all of the developments the affair has been through. History has told us time and time again that this dialogue is far from concluded. From being discussed as the news headline of the time, as Galileo was, to casual conversations over lunch, the ideas and apparent conflicts presented by the overlap of science's theories and the beliefs of Christians will continuously develop a dialogue. The following study and analysis are for the purpose of diving into that relationship and seeing some of the mechanisms behind the story.

Chapter 3: Data Collection Methods and Survey Results

In order for this study to be outside of simpler research that can be conducted sitting in a library, a survey was created. The survey's main goal was to gather the personal beliefs held by any student or faculty member in the Belmont community on creationism, evolution, and their own faith experiences. The survey was designed in such a way as to maximize the amount of information received on the subject while keeping the survey respondents engaged (i.e., making it so the whole survey can be completed relatively quickly). It consisted of mainly multiple-choice questions utilizing a Likert scale (five choices ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) with several supplementary questions where the respondent is given the opportunity to expound on their answers. Those supplementary questions were optional for the survey in an effort to get more individuals to participate; however, the vast majority took the time to give at least some extra detail. Further into the process, to go even more in-depth into the thoughts behind the beliefs, several one-on-one interviews were conducted. The ideas discussed in this project are complicated—and at many times difficult to articulate, to say the least—for many individuals. The more information possessed that reveals what is behind each answer, the more complete understanding of that person's full perspective one can garner. Obviously, in an ideal setting one would want to map all of a participant's perspectives on the issues. With the number of respondents and the amount of information gathered and reviewed by individuals' responses, ranging quite widely on the belief spectrum, there was an ample amount to provide a picture of what Belmont's community, as a whole, believes. This whole process was approved by Belmont University's Institutional Review Board.

After being out for a period of three weeks, the survey generated 168 complete responses from the Belmont population. The respondents of the survey were current students and faculty members, ranging in age from 17 to 66 years. From the recorded responses, there is an obvious range in the beliefs recorded. Several resided (and one can assume, still reside) in a very conservative and traditional school of thought, centered around ideas that the Bible and its words should be taken more literally. And then there are the others on the opposite end of the story, whose beliefs lean on the side of agnosticism and atheism. This can be expected, and in fact, is desired from a large number of respondents. However, there was a large portion of those individuals surveyed who see a harmony between their Christian religious beliefs and the theories that science presents. If one were to predict the overall opinions of a university like Belmont on the issues discussed in this survey, it can be extrapolated that this would be one of the main schools of thought. Within an academic setting in the modern age, the liberal arts and academics can be assumed to lean away from religion. But throw in a Christian background that is essential to all the university embodies, and the story becomes different. This thought noticed before the data was gathered was extremely exciting to find verified in some way once all of the survey numbers were compiled.

On the following pages is the initial display of the data received in the survey with the questions included. In later chapters, the data will be delved into further with additional information on the subject in general. The additional material collected in one-on-one interviews is also provided in the chapters that address each specific topic further.

The numbers found in the survey are nothing if not thought provoking. If an individual who had taken the survey was not overly familiar with the topic at hand or

possibly had not previously thought about the questions at all, this project gave them the direct opportunity to connect and ponder such ideas. For anyone who has not seriously considered how their personal faith interacts with the theories of science, letting them read through and complete the survey makes the idea present in their mind. Wrestling through these questions as a member of culture, especially in the Christian-doused culture of Belmont, can be a productive and introspective exercise for the participant. One of the goals made at the beginning of the project was to create a venture to help others think about evolution, creation, and humanity's place in the story within the context of Christian faith. This is exactly what the survey accomplished for at least 168 people. Whether they were experts on the subject or looking at the issue with new eyes, they answered the questions, contributed to this study, and more importantly for this author, considered significant topics in faith.

For overall understanding of the data and the information the entire project gives the reader, one should be aware of a popular standpoint that several of the survey participants indicated. Some respondents had not seriously considered or perhaps avoided the subjects pursued in this study. They had a lack of knowledge on the theories and competing values of science and Christian faith by self admission. While this is not the case for some, it is important to note that the apparent conflict between science and religion is not a hinderance for some people's faith/science walk. Those individuals are content knowing what they know about the issue and further information may cause unnecessary trouble. This data did not corrupt the survey by any means, but increased its value by more accurately painting the picture of how many individuals deal with these thoughts. Belmont's community is a partial mirror of how American academic society

looks at these issues as a whole, so all thoughts are welcome. Ratios of belief may be swayed nationally to the averages seen in this study, but anyone can have the same thoughts described by the wide range of answers seen here.

In total, 166 students and faculty members of Belmont completed the survey. While looking over the histograms presenting the collected data on certain questions, looking at the correlation of answers that one would think make sense does not always line up. For example, one believing in the Big Bang theory as the creation mechanism of the universe does not necessarily mean that they believe evolution is the way that life has been produced. Similarly, if someone believes in evolution for all of the rest of living things, it does not necessarily mean they would say that humanity is also a result of evolution. The debate at large between science and religion, or at least within the surveyed population of Belmont University, is not a binary, two-party system.

Survey Questions

Age:

[Type age]

Occupation:

**Example: Student, teacher*

[Type occupation]

Personal faith background:

**Example: Raised Methodist, currently agnostic*

[Type personal faith background]

How important is faith in your life?

[Option to choose options 1-100]

Personal view of creation:

** How do you believe the universe was created? Please be as specific as you can.*

Example: Zeus created the universe 1000 years ago by throwing a lightning bolt.

[Type personal view of creation]

Do you believe the Big Bang occurred?

[Definitely yes, Probably yes, Might or might not, Probably not, Definitely not]

Do you believe evolution occurred with organisms other than humans?

[Definitely yes, Probably yes, Might or might not, Probably not, Definitely not]

Do you believe humans are a result of evolution?

[Definitely yes, Probably yes, Might or might not, Probably not, Definitely not]

Personal view of evolution:

**What do you think of the theory of evolution and all of its scientific implications (species changing over time, all of life coming from single-celled organisms, prebiotic evolution)? Please be as specific as you can. Example: I believe everything but humans have evolved from dinosaurs.*

[Type personal view of creation]

Do you believe that science and Christian faith are in conflict?

[Definitely yes, Probably yes, Might or might not, Probably not, Definitely not]

Do you believe that science will make religion obsolete?

[Definitely yes, Probably yes, Might or might not, Probably not, Definitely not]

Do any of your views on science and Christian faith clash or cause personal distrust of one area?

[Definitely yes, Probably yes, Might or might not, Probably not, Definitely not]

Please explain any of the feelings of clashing or distrust in the previous question.

** If you have any issues in the dynamic between the two, please describe how/where you think there is an issue.*

[Type views on personal distrust]

Would you be open to having further questions asked in a one-on-one interview?

[Yes, No]

If Yes, what is your name and best method to contact you? (i.e. email, text message, etc.)

**At this point you forfeit your anonymity to the Principal Investigator, but to no other person.*

[Type name and contact method]

Responses to Survey

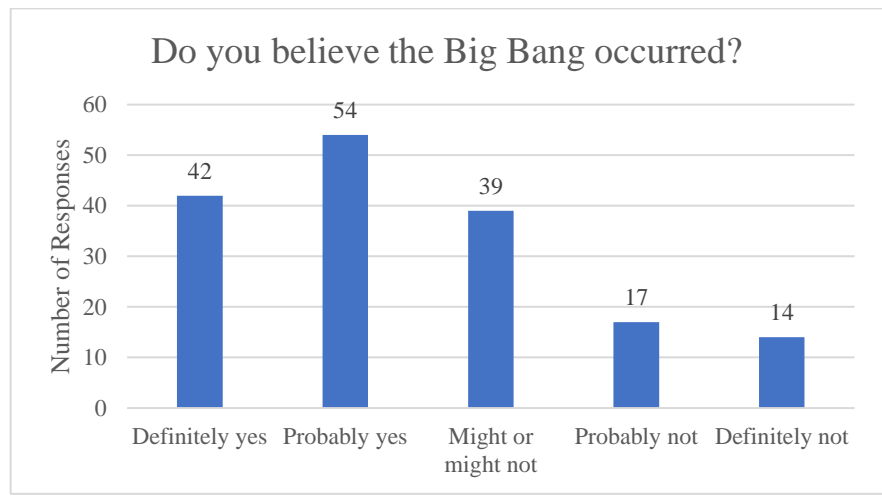


Figure 1: Survey data on “Do you believe the Big Bang occurred?”

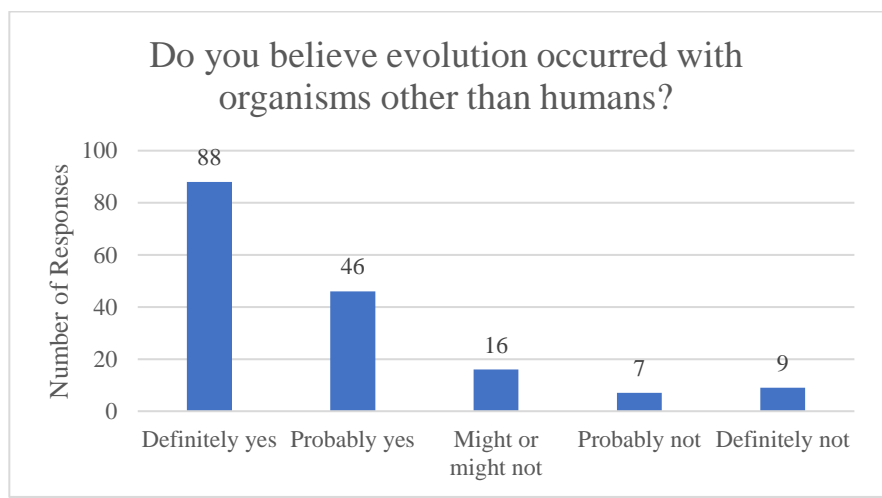


Figure 2: Survey data on “Do you believe evolution occurred with organisms other than humans?”

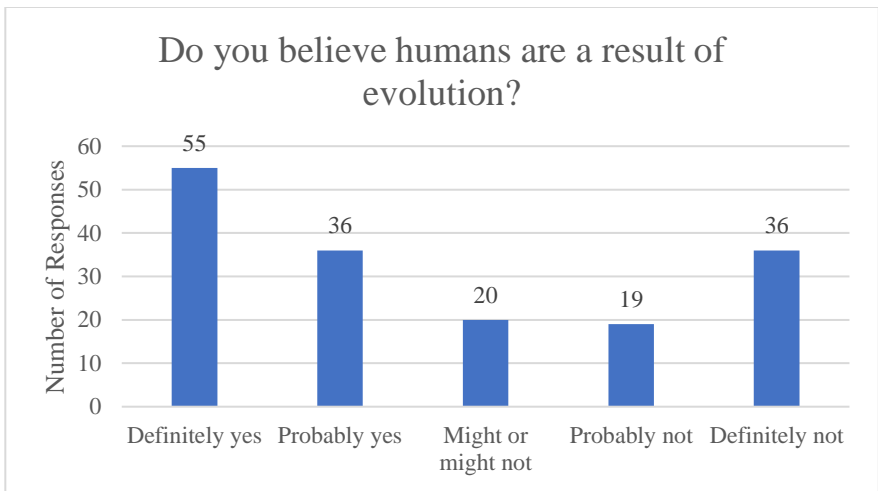


Figure 3: Survey data on “Do you believe humans are a result of evolution?”

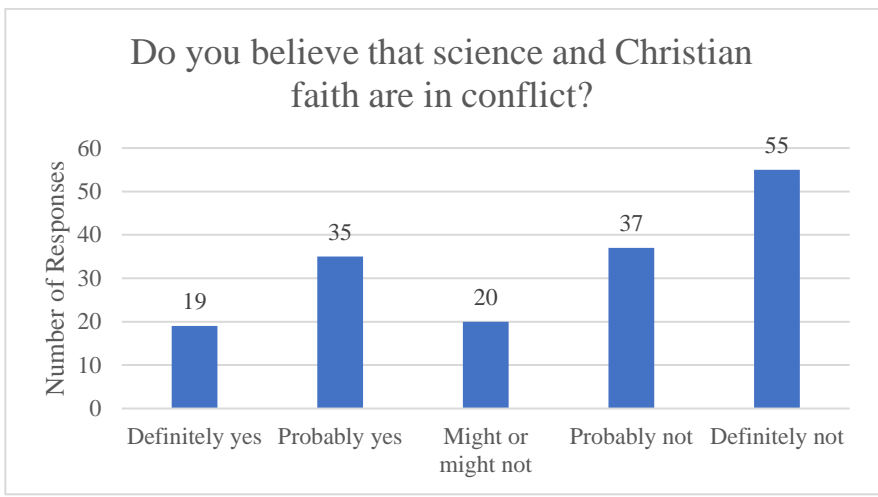


Figure 4: Survey data on “Do you believe that science and Christian faith are in conflict?”

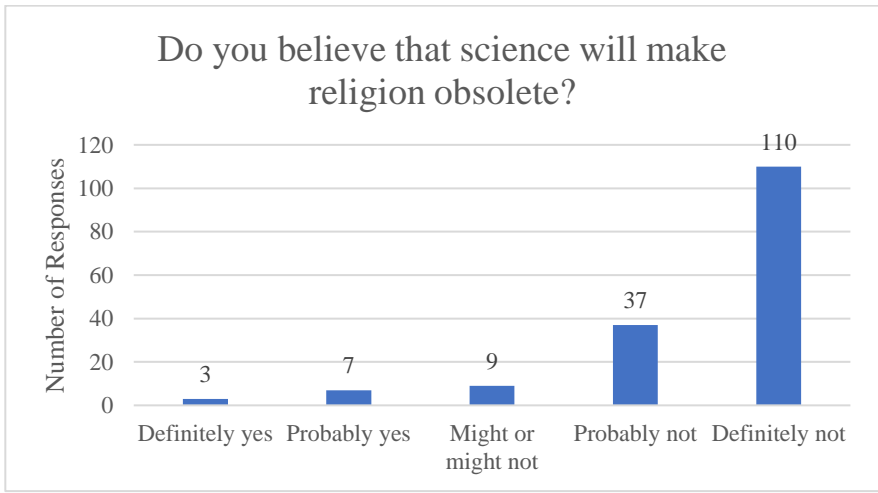


Figure 5: Survey data on “Do you believe that science will make religion obsolete?”

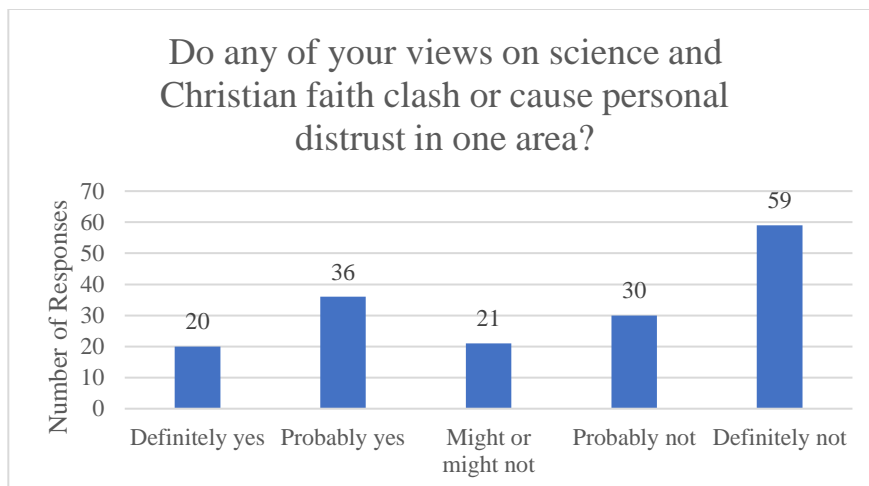


Figure 6: Survey data on “Do any of your views on science and Christian faith clash or cause personal distrust in one area?”

The additional in-person interviews were conducted to put more meat on the bones of the data the survey gave initially. In order to understand the complex idea of where the population of Belmont University lies in their beliefs of the Big Bang, evolution, or humanity in creation, more than numbers have to be given. Of the 166 individuals who completed the survey, 100 of the individuals indicated they were open to being interviewed. Seven individuals were selected from those who marked on the survey they would be willing to give more information in person, in a partially random manner while still utilizing persons with different perspectives for the largest spread of reinforcing material. All of the participants were asked the following questions and answered to what fit into their story. The responses by each individual are spread throughout the remaining chapters, in an effort to fill the holes that theory and other research cannot.

Interview Questions

- What was your experience with religion growing up?
- Did your experience with religion change when you arrived at Belmont? If so, how?

- Have you seriously considered how the creation of the universe/Earth occurred?
- How certain are you of your understanding of creation?
- Do you believe science and religion are competing?
- Do you think science is getting the upper hand and religion is being marginalized by it?
- Where/what are your issues in accepting evolution?
- Where/what are your issues in believing in creationism?
- What is the hardest part for you to believe about the creation of the universe/Earth?
- Do any of these issues affect your faith?

Chapter 4: Creation of the Universe

Even amongst the most devout Christians, there are many differing opinions on where all of creation came from and by what manner it was established. Anyone who has even attended Sunday school a few times in their life would have no trouble recounting the story of the seven-day creation, ending with God taking the very first Sabbath. While this story may make perfect sense to the six-year-old hearing about each respective part of creation being initiated on its own day, continued exposure to culture when growing up might result in a little more confusion and soul-searching. The actual manner by which the entire universe was created is a debate that has been going on for many years and will most likely continue for the foreseeable future, as religion's description of nature's workings does not always align with what modern scientific discoveries have revealed.

While these thoughts can easily bleed into ideas on evolution and life's debut in the universe, the goal of this chapter is to look more into the initiation of the universe. The snap (or bang) that started life or when God said, "Let there be light," are the thoughts discussed in this chapter. Either something started it all or it has always been, and individuals support many varieties of the thoughts on this. The population of Belmont is no exception to this notion. The format of this chapter (and the following chapters) will first look at the survey's findings on the particular issue, then discuss them within the larger schools of thought in both Christian faith and the sciences, separately.

Scientific Interpretation

An extremely important facet to know about the Big Bang theory is that it does not describe how the universe was created, as in where all of the energy and eventually matter the universe contains comes from (Sutter, 2019). It tells us exactly how the universe expanded, why it is continually expanding to the current day, and the initial conditions before the explosion of energy the theory describes, but does not detail or give any information on how that energy got to where it was for the event to take place. There are, of course, many theories of what and how things happened before the bang. The use of “theories” here is not in the same way one thinks of the theory of gravity or electrodynamics, which are testable. This version of “theories” are mostly just hypotheses without any scientific proof. Things like the multiverse or some mirror universe are possibilities, as there is no way to prove them wrong. But there is absolutely no way to test and see if they are right at this time. All of this to say that in some sense of the idea, believing that the Big Bang theory is the end-all-be-all for the creation of the universe is a flawed understanding of the theory itself.

The Big Bang theory encompasses many details on how the universe got to its state today. Within the first second of the universe, many very important and nowhere-near-understood physics concepts are present for the first and only time in history. The universe originally started in an extremely small, hot, and dense state. At time zero (a concept humans may never measure), the universe began to be governed by one unified force consisting of all four of the forces known now, which is not understood by the laws of physics known today. Very soon after, gravity broke away from the force and left the remaining three to form the Grand Unified Theory, and the universe expanded outward rapidly in what is known as the inflationary epoch (Greshko, 2017). From there, quarks

formed, which were the building blocks for protons and neutrons (collectively known as hadrons) which formed soon after. All of this occurred within the first second of the universe's existence.

From this one moment, all of space and time started, so the theory states. The Big Bang did not occur at one singular location in space but over all of space uniformly at the same time (Cossins, 2019). As the "bang" expanded outward, so did space and time themselves, which did not exist prior to the event. From the initial starting condition, atoms formed, and the universe was cooled. Eventually matter was assembled by the atoms, stars were born followed by planets, and eventually, quite a while down the road, life began.

Those are the essentials of what science knows to be true, but there remain many questions that science has no way to answer at this moment. There is no factual or theoretical evidence for what was or could have been before the Big Bang itself. The perspective taken by scientists on this thought change drastically. There are those like Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking, though different in their own interpretations of the data, who would stand at one end of the debate, saying the evidence points to the lack of a God who started all creation and governs the laws and ways in which it works. Many others, such as the first proponent of the theory, Georges Lemaître, who was a Jesuit priest, would point to the initial expansion of the universe and apparent beginning of time as evidence for a creator. Science and the scientific method would dictate that the testable theory in this instance is the initial inflation of the universe and conception of the laws that govern the universe. The theory describes what happens and the means by which it occurred. Science does not answer the questions of why the event happened at all, but

just that the events did occur via mathematical and observational proof. The rest, in pure science, is left to philosophers and theologians.

Biblical Interpretation

The creation story presented within Genesis seems, at first glance, very straightforward until further research gives rise to further questions. This text, that has been passed down from generations, does not always give its reader a clear idea of what it describes. Beliefs held within the Christian tradition are almost as wide-ranging as what scientists believe the Big Bang theory signifies. To put it simply, there is again no cut-and-dried answer to the question of what Christians believe as to the creation of the world. That answer lies individually with each Christian to interpret and interact with scripture in their own life experience, where they can come to their own conclusions.

First, there are actually two creation stories within Genesis, with some discrepancies between the two. Genesis 1 begins with the famous line “In the beginning...,” and from there continues to outline each new aspect of God’s creation in six successive days (Genesis 1:1, New International Version). God begins the whole process by creating light, day, and night on the first day and concludes His creation on the sixth day by making “human beings in our image” (that particular line will be further explored in Chapter 6 of this project). At the beginning of Genesis 2, God takes the seventh day of the week to rest and participate in creation’s first Sabbath. The remainder of the second chapter explains the narrative of God creating the Garden of Eden, creating a man to look over the garden, and creating a woman so that man would no longer be lonely. While there are several noticeable distinctions between the two, the most notable

between the two is the difference in the order of where the inception of water, land, humanity, and other life are jumbled. This fact, and others that fall out of the narratives, are obvious issues for any who might take the scriptures as literal facts or a direct historical record.

The Hebrew tradition holds that the original author of the Genesis text, as well as the other four books of the Torah, were written by Moses several thousand years after creation occurred, in accordance with young Earth timelines (Middleton, 2018). Within that long gap where there was no written text, it is theorized that the stories were passed down orally and were memorized by each successive generation. Modern scholars, however, tend to believe that the book came to be written much later than Moses' time (McKenzie & Graham, 1998).

On one side of the story are the members of the Christian tradition (or even Jewish and Islamic tradition) who would take all words written in the Bible, specifically in our case the book of Genesis, as a historical account of what actually occurred at one point in time. Known as the fundamentalist interpretation of scripture, these Christians would personally believe that the Earth was created in seven days in the exact outline that was provided in the Bible (Campbell & Looy, 2009). God created all of creation, made Adam and Eve to protect the Garden of Eden, and completed everything just as the tradition states. There is no room for human or interpretive error, as all of scripture was given to humanity by God himself, who is perfect. This particular viewpoint raises new questions about other areas of scripture, such as the timeline created with a global flood and even with the back end of the Bible in the Revelation prophecies.

There are many Christian beliefs on how the Genesis narrative falls into the truth of what occurred ages ago. Opinions vary on how literally one can interpret the Biblical creation narrative, possibly extending from reading it as a historical account to a story to assist people of a different time in understanding scientific concepts they could not yet understand. Some Christians take the seven days described in the story to mean units of time much longer than a day, ranging up to billions of years. This viewpoint would allow for some of the geological findings the nineteenth century presented on the age of the Earth, while still abiding by the key points within the Genesis story. This point would be taken by those known as Old Earth creationists, contrasting the actual seven-day creation story held by Young Earth creationists. These two camps each believe that God created the world in the order presented and the same manner stated in Genesis, but differ on the timelines.

Within the Christian faith, there is a third central viewpoint on how the creation story is supposed to be interpreted in the modern day. Though it is known by several names, they all outline the same thought. Theistic evolution is the thought that the findings of science up until this point have been true. However, all of the theories and mechanisms by which creation has been built up were created, initiated, and sustained by the creator, God (Haarsma & Haarsma, 2011). The Earth is as old as modern cosmology pronounces and the universe made it to its place by the forces that science describes over the timeline of approximately 13.8 billion years. This school of thought also holds to evolutionary theory, which will be further explored later. Within theistic evolution, the Genesis story still holds significance in that it is part of the Bible, God's Word to humans. However, they would state that not all of the Bible is meant today to be taken at

its literal word. Stories like Genesis were created for the people of the time to understand a complex idea they could not yet understand. The story can still be used today for spiritual teaching and is crucial to the faith in general but should not be regarded as a history textbook. They would say that Genesis is still divinely inspired, but the meaning has shifted as humanity has progressed in its level of understanding.

Survey

According to 166 participants, 96 (58%) of them would believe that the Big Bang was an actual historic event (refer to Figure 1 to see the precise spread); i.e., half of the individuals surveyed would back up the theory and regard it essentially as truth. Of those 96 that marked either “Definitely yes” or “Probably yes,” 56 (34%) of them cited God or a “higher being” being the source and instigator of the actual Big Bang event. So, one in three of those surveyed believe that the theory held by the larger scientific community can also be held by those who profess to be Christians (all of those 56 responses marked they were practicing Christians). However, 24 (14%) of those who answered in the same way cite that God or any higher power were not involved with creation at all. They would generally cite their belief system to currently be agnostic or atheist, with a few exceptions in other religions. On the flip side of that belief, 27 (16%) of the individuals who marked “Definitely not” or “Probably not” did so and identified as Christians. Many of those people cited belief in some form of the creation story from Genesis, citing things like “not being a literal 7 days” or simply believing the line “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Seven of those 27 specifically referenced a seven-day creation story or a literal Genesis interpretation, leaning toward the fundamentalist beliefs.

For other reference, 39 (23%) individuals were not sure where they leaned either way on the issue. That could mean many things, different for each person. The individual could just not have enough information on the subject to make an informed decision, they might be generally confused by all of the data and opinions, or they might simply not care about the universe's origins.

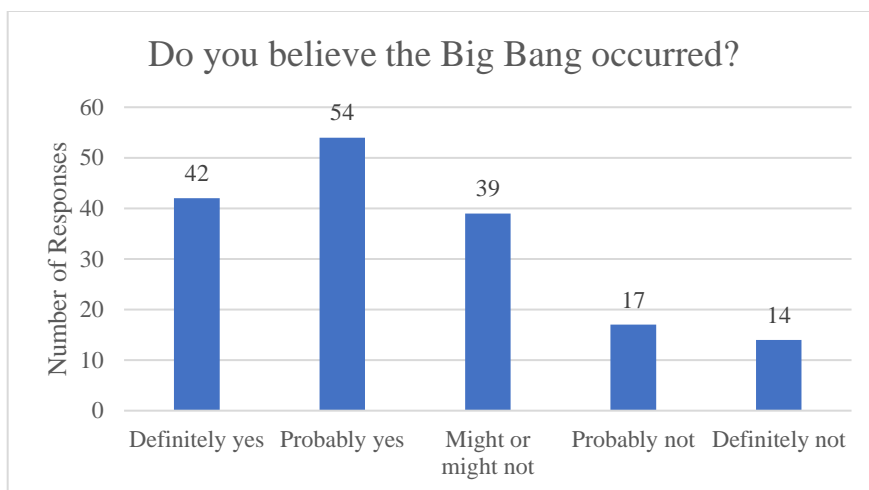


Figure 7: Survey data for "Do you believe the Big Bang occurred?"

Each person who took the time to fill out the survey did so in their own unique way, as seen above quite evidently. No one person's responses would match anyone else's, as all people have a vastly different experience leading up to this data collection point. And while this survey and its questions did gather crucial information to consider some of Belmont University's opinion as a whole, it is just a snapshot of that person's experience. All of the statistics coming out of this project are subject to any kind of change at any time. Still, it is reasonable to believe that the numbers and facts presented show a pattern of the university as a whole and places like it.

One-on-one interviews functioned greatly in their desired purpose of putting meat on the bones that the numerical statistics divulged. Due to the fact that those

selected for interviews were ranging in their belief system, a little bit of several sides of the debate was captured. One participant, while outlining their school of thought, provided a quote that showcased an important aspect of this issue. “I do not think [creation] is a theological deal breaker either way.” Another interviewee noted that this idea does not affect their individual view of salvation, in any respect. This is by no means the case for all of the participants of interviews and the survey; yet, it is an important aspect found in several of the interviews. When asked to give further detail on their considerations on the universe’s creation, individuals would delve into their personal journey and then give the level of importance this idea had in their life. It was noted by one that this is a frustrating concept to think about that neither science nor religion has fully explained. That same individual said they did not think it was their place to know, so they personally did not explore further. Another individual spoke on their own wrestling with how the timeline actually worked out but concluded by noting on the day-to-day level that that internal grappling did not hinder their living. More or less, as individuals thought about how creation came to be, they came to realize this may not be something to spend days wondering about. It is worth some thought but nothing to lose faith over. This was the case for six of the seven interviews, that whatever the creation story was does not affect their overall life. The one interview who differed in this case was from an atheistic point of view. Obviously, if the universe was found to be created by a Creator, it would change a lot for this individual.

Chapter 5: Evolution of Life

Perhaps the most hotly debated plotline historically of all creation between the Christian church and the scientific community is that of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Once Darwin had published the now famed *On the Origin of Species* and the world began to unpack what the implications of such a theory were, the culture at large began the chronicle for what some think as two independent ideas competing for the same story. Upon his discovery and publication, Darwin knew what his theory had the capability of doing to the minds of Christian believers and non-believers alike. The man himself went through his own troubles in his faith, though ended up a self-proclaimed agnostic. His point of view is the tip of the iceberg for the sometimes very difficult struggle of reconciling evolution within a personal faith tradition.

The thoughts on evolution as part of life, creation, and faith at Belmont University are not immune to change and influence, as everyone has experienced. All sorts of experiences were recorded in the survey on all sides of the debate. Though the tensions and polarization in the modern day are not at the height they would have been around the Scopes trial, some people continue to believe the two extremes and any of the ground in the middle, from God instituting all life in six days to life developing from single-celled organisms billions of years ago. The numbers seen in the survey section, accompanied with the additional interview information, paint a stroke of Belmont's view on evolution.

Note that this upcoming study dives into evolution in general; i.e., within all kingdoms of life. The following pursues how the theories Darwin presented, such as

natural selection and the timeline of life, fit within the context of the Christian representation on the same thoughts. The ensuing chapter will tackle humanity's place in the story of creation and evolution, along with some findings on the first humans, original sin, and the *Imago Dei*.

Scientific Interpretation

The theory of evolution has been the prevailing theory on how Earth has become the biodiverse planet all of humanity has called home. Though the initial scientific reaction was met with fierce skepticism, as most world-changing theories have been received, the theory has been tested almost continually since it was proclaimed to the world. The theory of evolution and all the facets that accompany it have held up time and time again to testing in the lab and within culture. Though humanity cannot be certain of any theory, as new evidence can be found at any moment to disprove a theory (as is the nature of science), this one is the best explanation that can be currently found. Evolution in general can be used to explain life from a "primordial soup" to modern humans and all other life.

Evolutionary thought did not completely begin with Darwin and his publishing. Before Darwin, scientists such as Linnaeus and Lamarck laid important groundwork of dividing life into species based on specific characteristics and gradual "transmutations" of species over generations (Packard & Lamarck, 1901). There is no doubt that these past thinkers were understood by Darwin and were used in addition to his own studies to land on his final product *On the Origin of Species*. In his book, Darwin even refers to Thomas Malthus' work in economics as backing up some of his claims with populations (Darwin,

1901). Many thinkers within biology and others presented some of the ideas that Darwin would later bring into the sciences and the world's eye. Make no mistake, however; though Darwin utilized other scientists' findings, the real change came with the theory of evolution by natural selection, spurring the "Darwinian Revolution."

The modern theory held by the scientific community can be described as "survival of the fittest." As new life developed, species over many generations adapted to fit into the environment of the present day. If the species could not keep up with changes, they would go extinct. The strongest and smartest species survive, and nature continues to progress, and if their niche remained in the world, they would continue living until threatened. The species who were not strong, whose niche was impeded upon by another, or who did not change quickly enough, would not survive for a long amount of time. Natural selection does not care much for emotion or charity but is the fact of how a species can continue to preserve itself and future generations. This process is done by a variety of mechanisms, even via means other than natural selection, which can be more of a blanket term (Reznick & Ricklefs, 2009). For the purposes of this project, natural selection is the focus of much of the debate when it is discussed with religion.

Evolution can be divided further to describe both the timeline and magnitude the process works on. Microevolution is the process by which adaptation occurs over generations at the genetic level. This process can be observed throughout nature and tested within the lab (Harvard Medical School, 2017). Macroevolution describes the biodiversity of species throughout the world. One can trace macroevolutionary roots for a species back to its nearest relatives or as far back, potentially, to the beginning of all life. The thought behind these concepts is that the small steps that microevolution describes

would, over time, compile to the larger steps of the macro system (Reznick & Ricklefs, 2009). These processes happen to all areas of life, from simple life like bacteria up to the complex level of humanity.

One of the essential questions raised within the realm of this topic is where all of the life on Earth originally came from. The theories Darwin and his successors presented can build most of the structure backward in time; however, the actual origin and common ancestry of all life is a pretty gray area for all experts. Whether the event happened on land or sea, the clues from this event might be preserved in some fossil evidence (McGowan, 2017). There is little hard evidence on the actual beginnings or what kind of “primordial soup” produced the first cells and genetic code, which presents a small predicament for the overall theory of life’s origins by evolution. Experts of all subjects have teamed up to tackle the origin of life and have come up with many differing theories that have promise to be truthful. However, science has yet to discover any evidence that is a clear-cut answer for the world to rest in.

An interesting point to consider with evolution is the wide range of positions that those within science hold, especially in terms of its conflicting with a religious system to describe the same phenomenon in a different way. Famously, individuals such as Richard Dawkins would advocate profusely that evolution and the way science has discovered life to be to have proved religion to be obsolete and outdated (Dawkins, 2002). Dawkins, perhaps the most famously outspoken atheist, has outlined how evolution and many of the details around it prove that there is no higher being in our universe and that religion is antiquated. Within the sciences, however, this is not the absolute opinion of all scientists by any means. Francis Collins, who led the Human Genome Project, which completely

sequenced the human genome for the first time and is the current director of the National Institutes of Health, is a strong advocate for both faith and evolution. His beliefs on theistic evolution, or evolutionary creationism (the thought that God instituted the processes of evolution in His creation), are outlined in his writings and the BioLogos Foundation (Collins, 2006). This particular point of view will be discussed further in the following section, as it has biblical roots. It is important to note, however, that not all in the sciences have to or do subscribe to the notion that evolution or other modern discoveries overrule and replace religion.

Biblical Interpretation

Anyone with just a surface level knowledge of evolution and Christianity could immediately say that the creation story presented in the Bible does not allow for evolution to be a factor at all. God created the whole universe in a week and began all life on Earth in just a couple of those days. It took God 48 hours, in a literal interpretation of the text, to create every species of bacteria, fungi, mammal, and everything else. Many Christians would believe the story went exactly as it reads in the Genesis text, in a literal week with the universe being around 6,000 years old in total. This is not the complete story for all within Christendom, though. Christians believe a wide range of thoughts along a spectrum with nuanced ideas on certain individual parts of creation.

There is, quite certainly, a large portion of Christians who are sure of the creation narrative found exactly in Genesis. This stance within Christendom is referred to largely as the fundamentalist approach, which views scripture as literal in all ways. The Bible is inerrant in the Christian's view, and, for fundamentalists, that is taken to each word in

scripture. In general, this point of view is known as Young Earth Creationism. Within the modern era, this point of view has grown in the level of scrutiny it has given and received at large. As evolution became a common idea within American culture and especially within public schooling, this group would be the one to fight fiercest for their absolute truth in a seven-day creation. In modern American culture, after more than a century of publicized animosity between atheistic evolutionists and fundamental Christians, this group is just as prevalent as it has ever been.

Perhaps the most prominent proponent of Young Earth Creationism in modern culture is Ken Ham. Through creating a creation museum, debating individuals within science such as Bill Nye on the subject matter, and a website to answer all questions to support a Young Earth Creationist point of view, Ham has created his legacy from defending his point of view against not only non-believers but also Christians who are not as literal in their view of scripture (Answers in Genesis, 2020). This point of view might be what many Christians believe, especially the more traditional and fundamentalists members, believe and what the majority of the culture at large believe that Christians support.

As one knows without a doubt, Young Earth Creationism is not the only position that any Christian can take in terms of how they view the Genesis narrative and the creation of the universe. There is a slew of individual thoughts on the matter of how literal to take the story traditionally held in the faith. Another common thought on the issue is conversely known as Old Earth Creationism. This idea can infer many different ideas to each individual who claims to reside in this school of thought, but the essential portion of the idea is that the six days of creation spoken of in the Biblical account are

only metaphorical days and actually refer to longer portions of time. This idea would account for many of science's findings in the dating of the Earth and universe, but still holds to the order of creation that God outlined in His week. Old Earth Creationism does account for some of the timeline but does not budge on life not emerging out of the evolutionary process. Life was created and initiated by God as is stated in the original text, but there remain issues with how evolution is supported in the larger belief system.

Within Christendom, there is yet another large school of thought, that of theistic evolution. Based on the name, one can deduce the main principle of this institution: that God directly instituted evolution as the system for life to grow on Earth as part of His creation. This is the position that Francis Collins (referred to above) has championed. Essentially, the thought is that all of what modern science has found to be tested as true, including the timeline of the universe, cosmic inflation, life's conception, and evolutionary processes are valid processes that explain the situation we have in the universe but were instituted and created by God. The creation narratives put forth in Genesis are thought of as important in tradition and for people in a time where the real workings of creation could not be understood. In the modern day, however, the narrative is not to be taken literally or as a historical account, but as more of a teaching tool and for the basic knowledge that the universe was created by God. The teaching in question was never meant to be thought of as a factual account; therefore, the Bible is still inerrant. Whether God has directly intervened since the moment everything began or just set his created "watch" in motion is another debate per an individual's belief, this describing the incompatibility of deism and theism. The overall thought behind this theory is that both science can be correct while God can continue to be the creator of all.

Survey

In the following histogram (Figure 2), the survey responses for the question “Do you believe evolution occurred with organisms other than humans?” is reported again. The question was phrased in that manner to allow for the next question in the survey that specifically asks about humanity’s place in evolution. It was important for this study to separate if the respondent believed in only one, both, or neither of the questions on evolution. This question refers to all manners of life being ruled by evolution and natural selection, except humanity.

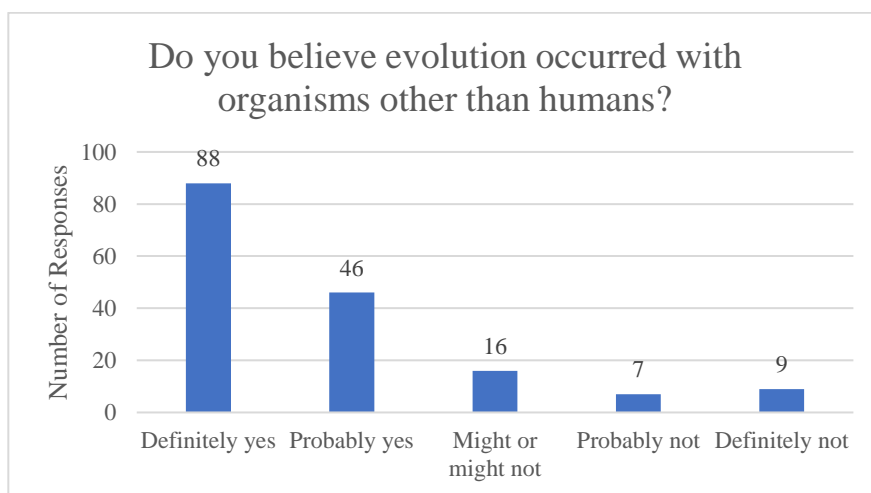


Figure 8: Survey data for “Do you believe evolution occurred with organisms other than humans?”

As can be seen quite immediately, there is an obvious leaning in this statistic. Of the 166 people who completed the survey, 134 of them responded with “Definitely yes” or “Probably yes”. Just a hair over 80% of all of those responding are on the side of evolution for almost the majority of life, excluding humanity. From the group that answered, “Definitely yes,” the respondents ranged from Greek Orthodox to atheist to Baptist in their self-professed faith background, as there is all manner of individuals who hold to evolution. And from the group that either answered “Definitely yes” or “Probably

yes,” 94 (57%) of them self-identified into some group of Christianity. About 70% of those who would say that evolution was most likely the manner by which life has evolved up to this point in this time are also proclaiming themselves to be part of the Christian faith in some manner.

The reasoning for such a high percentage of leaning toward the evolution being a true theory is not certain, based on the evidence this study has found. Any number of speculations can be used to provide a reason for such a shift to one side. There are no hard and fast reasons presented here, but simple speculation can deduce why the issue may not be the same dividing topic it appeared to be in America with the Scopes trial in 1925. Americans are being taught evolution more prevalently within the school system, though it is not something taught in the same way across the nation (Berkman & Plutzer, 2011). In addition, Americans are going to church less now than they have historically (Pew Research Center, 2019). This survey was conducted at an institution for higher learning, which have been shown to have had a higher rate of belief in evolution (Lac & Himelfarb, 2010). And finally, perhaps individuals who grew up in a culture which values faith have found that the evidence that supports the theory of evolution and natural selection is not mutually exclusive with faith and can even be used to support a personal spiritual belief.

Of the remaining 20% of the population, it is split in the middle of leaning toward the process not being true at all for most of the life forms on the Earth and just being unsure about the concept overall. In fact, though that is the number of participants who decided to answer with their indecision, looking further at the individual responses reveals more of the uncertainty of the respondents. Even some of those who answered

“Probably yes” noted in the question in which they could expound on their personal view of evolution that they were unsure. It could also be the case that those who were unsure had never really pursued the topic on their own, had a lack of understanding, or simply did not care to know. This issue has the possibility of being a non-issue for any individual, and certainly appears to be so for some in this survey. So, even though this particular question has a strong leaning to one side, this topic is a much more complicated issue for many than can be seen in a question with five possible answers. There are so many more facets to a person’s belief system, but a survey like this was designed and is functional in showing the main ideas of people’s thoughts overall.

The interview answers for this issue have revealed more to the depth of this topic. One interviewee confirmed the theistic evolution approach: “I think that you can believe that [evolution] was ordained and planned by God. I see no conflict there.” That same individual went on to explain that while the scientific theory causes no consternation in his mind, there are some hesitations regarding where humanity fits into the scenario and also with the social Darwinism that the theory helped produce. In fact, all seven of the interviews conducted were very accepting to evolution as the way to explain how life has become what it is, but three noted the difficulty with reconciling it with their own humanity. Other issues revolved around seeing the bridge between macro and micro evolution, not being able to witness and test the former as thoroughly as one can with the latter.

While people seem to generally have a pleasant feeling about evolution in general, the reaction towards the Christian position on the issue does not harbor the same emotions. Throughout the survey and interviews, it was noted how Christians could be

stubborn or ignorant to ideas other than their own. This adamant position is not something specifically unique to Christians, obviously; however, the stark atheistic position was not noted in the same way the stark Christian position on the issue of creation was. An interviewee noted that Christians changing their interpretation of events based on new data being reveal (referring to a “God of the gaps” type of philosophy) has been a serious hindrance for them believing in creationism. Several others noted that many of the more modern discoveries in science, including plate tectonics, geological dating, the size of the universe, and even mysterious thoughts of the possibility of life outside of Earth cause distrust of the traditional creation story taught literally in Christianity.

The survey results and interviews ensnared a wide range of viewpoints of how life began in the universe and the process that guided it. Perhaps surprisingly, a sizeable portion of that group surveyed both professed to Christianity as their religious background and accompanied it with saying that evolution of life outside of humanity occurred and is occurring. From the results of the remainder of the survey, thoughts on humanity’s place within the whole story complicate many people’s view of how faith can interact with a world that is discovering more about their its origins.

Chapter 6: Humanity's Place

This chapter revolves, again, around the topic of evolution. Yet, this chapter's focus is much different than the preceding's. In this project it was important to differentiate between the evolution of all life and the evolution of specifically humanity and how our species came to be. As everyone who is reading this (to my knowledge) is human, this topic is a personal one and is naturally a little more divisive and critical. The implication of all life evolving up to the present day does not necessarily affect everyday life for most individuals in the world, but knowledge that the species you belong to is not much more than a random product of nature is obviously more disturbing.

When it comes to finding one's own place within all of creation, there are many things to consider. If you subscribe to science being the only way to describe the universe and how it works, you can come to realize that you are a summation of billions of years of evolution and many chemicals that happened to bond together in a pattern to create you. The thoughts you have are from complex chemicals reacting and are just nature behaving in the way the rules science has found describes. You might also think that God put man first on the Earth and woman because man was lonely, that sin was introduced at one moment when they disobeyed, and that all of humanity has come from these two individuals. Those two descriptions are the extremes on either side if one views the two schools of thought as a spectrum. Taking both schools of thought to the letter would give the answers described previously, but the majority of individuals live in the middle of that spectrum. There are parts of the traditional Christian narrative that present issues that are highly unrealistic, and science does not appear to have the whole picture answered, as there seems to be more to life than just chemical reactions.

Empirical data shows, as intuition might suggest, that there are some individuals who adhere to the notion that lifeforms except humans are subject to evolution but then discern something else when it describes their own being. This is precisely what the survey data portrayed from the Belmont populace exhibits. There was a slew of different beliefs between the two thoughts on evolution from an individual. The difference in personal beliefs on where humanity fits into this whole debate is an exciting topic to pore over.

Scientific Interpretation

For hundreds of years, humanity in general has wondered where its species came from. And while for much of history, the origin of the human race was explained by religious and cultural epics, reason and modern findings have produced a new history of the human race. Archaeology and anthropology have begun to paint the picture of humanity's path through time and how the species became the powerful and intelligent creatures seen today from those who discovered how to create fire. The scientific belief on how humans arrived on the scene can be boiled down to a straightforward idea, despite the many nuances that are still studied today: humans are a product of evolution.

Humans are primates, just like modern chimpanzees, gorillas, and the like. At some point, likely around seven million years ago, a group broke off from the evolutionary line of the lesser primates. Now known as hominids, this group started the sequence of eventual breaking off of the evolutionary tree to reach the modern *Homo sapiens* species. From the early hominids, the ancestors of the humans speciated into the australopithecines, which had larger brains and walked primarily bipedally unlike their earlier relatives. Within the last two million years, the genus *Homo* became the group to

take over the evolutionary reigns. Growing their cranial capacity even further, the species was able to utilize tools for survival and harness fire, changing life forever (National Geographic, 2018).

It is agreed upon that the earliest hominids, as well as the remainder of the species mentioned above all had their beginnings on the African continent. The many different varieties of the early hominids and australopithecines did not take the opportunity to move very far from their origins, as there have been no substantial findings of them outside of Africa. The *Homo* genus, however, started migrating out of the nesting ground in Africa to the remaining continents. Specifically, modern *Homo sapiens* migrated out of Africa approximately 200,000 years ago into Eurasia. This migration eventually led to the demise of the remaining *Homo* species including the Neanderthals, as humans are the only species remaining from this genus today (Stringer & Andrews, 1988).

While there are still many questions to answer to complete the timeline of human history, the general idea of how the process happened is largely understood and accepted by modern science. Evidence found around the world in remains and tools supports the theory presented. There may be some pieces missing along the evolutionary trail and dating is never exact but, overall, science can see story based on the factual evidence collected. As with any theory in science, any one piece of evidence could turn this whole theory on its end. In this case, it would take a very substantial finding to break down the certainty held in the evolution of humanity.

Biblical Interpretation

Very similar to the thoughts on life in general, discussed in the previous chapter, the Bible lays out a story in Genesis on how humans were created, although it is almost two different stories presented in the first two chapters of the Bible. Christians, of course, have interpreted and added to the creation of humanity based on their own experiences and findings, just as they have in all areas of life. This topic, however, is always just a hair more personal for individuals to think about. Being able to trace one's lineage back to one pair of humans is an easy, comfortable, and straightforward thought. It is a simple explanation for what has become a more complicated process with modern science's advent of what empirical evidence and educated conjecture tells us humanity's origin is. Accepting a newer idea against the tradition Christianity and America at large has held to is not an idea many necessarily want to give up just yet.

Within Genesis, the two creation stories describe different events for how the human race was initiated. Genesis, Chapter 1 places humanity within the sixth day of creation, where it is famously said, "So God created mankind in his own image" (Genesis 1:27, New International Version). From then on in the story, God gives man the command for humans to be the owners and managers of the rest of the Earth. It is said there that God created humans "male and female" but does not designate a single couple or even name Adam and Eve. Even further, there is no specification of number of humans in any sense within this passage or mention of a special garden. The majority of what is traditionally viewed as the creation of humans takes place in Genesis, Chapter 2.

In this second chapter, God "formed a man from the dust of the earth" and preceded to give him life (Genesis 2:7, New International Version). He then placed the man into the Garden of Eden and gave him the order to take care of it. Sequentially next,

in contrast with the order presented in the Genesis 1 narrative, God provided Adam with all the living creatures on the Earth to find a companion. With the lack of worthwhile partners, God took the opportunity to create woman from and for man. From then on in the story, the couple is seduced by the serpent and is cast from the garden for bringing sin into the world. Genesis then details how some aspects of life came to be, such as pain in childbirth for women and the reason for the snake to crawl on its belly.

The two stories are obviously not describing the conception of humankind in the same way and may even be presenting completely different stories. Later on within the book, Cain, who is Adam and Eve's son, has a wife with whom he has children with. If Adam and Eve were the only humans on Earth, the obvious incest would be an issue for their posterity. Some individuals would take this to say that Adam and Eve were not the first humans, and that there could have been some "pre-Adamite" peoples to aid in population growth (Snobelen, 2001). This kind of thought process has continued to fuel creationists who believe in a fundamental inerrancy of the Genesis text to create other arguments in support of their belief (Bolton, 2012).

All of Christianity, as is usually the case, is not in the same boat for this issue. There is a vast spectrum, just as seen previously with evolution, as to how humanity arrived on the world stage to produce the histories and cultures learned about today. As early as the first century with the philosopher Philo of Alexandria, there has been a thought that Genesis may not have been meant to be viewed as a literal history (Philo et al., 1993). Biblical scholars from this time on have wrestled with Genesis as part of the Biblical canon and how it should be interpreted in their current day. It has been noted that the account recorded in the written version of Genesis has similarities to other Near

Eastern culture's creation myths (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2016). It can be very easy to think that the Hebrew tradition and its stories, which were passed down orally for hundreds of years, were immune from the influence of their neighboring cultures, as they were God's chosen people. However, the people were influenced and integrated into the likes of the Babylonian and Egyptian cultures, among others.

A predominant thought in those Christians who hold to theistic evolution would be that humans were subject to the same processes and mechanisms of evolution as the rest of creation. From the conception of life, organisms continued to evolve and split until humans emerged. The tricky part with this theory is when and how that organism made the transition from being not human one day to human the next. This changeover could have happened in several ways. God could have created this process in a hands-off, predestined or hands-on, interfering approach to make a change in the human mind. The first humans given a sort of consciousness separating them from the remainder of creation would pass on their "original sin" to their predecessors through their upbringing. The consciousness of a human could also be realized by that one human gradually through life as they gain experiences and react to them. After a certain point when the individual gained awareness, they became human. There is no straightforward approach to explain this process of how humans gained their humanness in the form of a consciousness capable of understanding, as there is no factual evidence for it. There is, however, factual evidence for the evolution of man, which is the main point of this idea. For theistic evolutionists, the essential point is that God created the process and man in the way described by the methods science presents and at some point became a separated organism for His purpose.

This is all to note that the purpose of the Genesis narrative may not have been to describe a factual, historic timeline. Genesis is meant to show that God created the world. Genesis' purpose could have been a placeholder for individuals to believe how the Earth was created until humanity could understand a more complicated process. It is used to show God's greater plan for His creation and to set up the story of the events that follow later in the Bible, namely the coming of Christ. Regardless of the manner in which the deed was done, God created man for His greater plan. The theories of where humans came from presented by those Christians who subscribe to a non-literal Genesis have a wide range, but this main idea should hold for all.

Survey

This individual question in the survey produced some of the most thought-provoking data found in the whole study. As seen below (Figure 3), significantly more people do not believe in humans being a result of evolution versus the rest of all life on the planet (Figure 2). This study shows quite clearly with empirical evidence that humans, at least at Belmont, do not like it when the rules apply to them. There is very little issue applying the scientific theory you were taught in school to every plant, animal, and fungus around you, but the same thoughts do not carry the same weight or certainty when one's unique self is in question. An obvious question coming out of this observation is why this is the thought pattern several individuals surveyed chose.

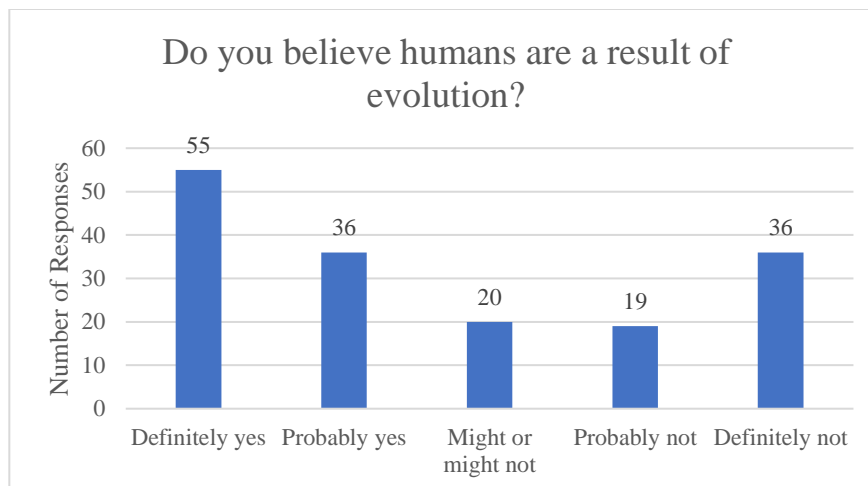


Figure 9: Survey data for “Do you believe humans are a result of evolution?”

From the first survey question on evolution, the numbers swayed. For evolution for non-human organisms (EFNHO), 80% stayed on the side it most likely happened. However, for human evolution, the side that agreed dropped to 55%. In fact, 27 (16%) different individuals first stated that EFNHO was either “Definitely yes” or “Probably yes” and then when referring to specifically human evolution, changed their answers to either “Probably not” or “Definitely not”, completely switching their thought. A similar number of individuals (16 to 20) continued to ride the fence on the issue.

There is a multitude of reasoning behind this shift in belief. Overall, from the survey data, many of the responses who flipped their certainty as to why humans did not seem to be held to the same rules as the remainder of created life is that God created humans as separate and special from the rest. Several of the respondents defended their thoughts on evolution in a manner very similar to this one response: “I think that species on the earth have definitely evolved since creation. However, I believe that humans were created in God’s image and separate from plants or animals. Therefore, I do not believe that humans evolved from primates.” Due to the fact that the Bible gives humanity the

Imago Dei and entrusted us with more responsibility than any other piece of creation, humans are more than a product of nature's fine-tuning process. Others seemed to simply have trouble making the jump from evolution being a factual process to saying that humans evolved from primates. They can see how the process should work, but the implications are uncomfortable.

In 2019, Gallup updated their Values and Beliefs survey, which began in 1982. From the data acquired, one can clearly see in Fig. 10 the percentage of Americans who believe in various levels of involvement by God in the creation of humans. Though America in general is much different in its overall make-up than Belmont University, it is interesting to see how the numbers compare. Nationally, 40% of responding individuals believe that God created man in its present form, 33% thinking that man developed but God guided the process, and 22% with man developing and God had no part in the process (Brenan, 2019). Comparitively, the survey at Belmont University, when grouped in similar pools (creationist, theistic evolutionist, and atheistic, for simplicity) was 34%, 43%, and 23%, respectively. It appears from the data that overall, the population of Belmont University can see more of a union between science and religion, at least in the area of evolution. The numbers found in this study are a combination of several unique aspects. Belmont, as an academic institution, would fall into the category of the Gallup poll with college degrees (or pursuing a college degree) but is also lumped into the category of overall Protestant, as 114 of the 166 (69%) surveyed identified as associating with a Protestant denomination or being nondenominational. This statistic found mirrors what the university at large found in its most recent survey of all students in 2020. 70%

of students self-identified as nondenominational or within a protestant denomination (T. Lake, personal communication, Jan 23, 2020).

| Americans' Views on Origin and Development of Humans, by Subgroup | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | God created man in present form | Man developed, with God guiding | Man developed, but God had no part |
| | % | % | % |
| Church attendance | | | |
| Weekly | 68 | 26 | 3 |
| Monthly | 47 | 44 | 6 |
| Seldom/Never | 27 | 33 | 36 |
| Religion | | | |
| Protestant | 56 | 33 | 6 |
| Catholic | 34 | 46 | 18 |
| None | 14 | 22 | 59 |
| Education | | | |
| No college degree | 48 | 30 | 16 |
| College degree | 23 | 40 | 33 |

GALLUP, JUNE 3-16, 2019

Figure 10: Gallup survey data on American views on human creation, 2019

If anything, this data illustrates how complicated the issue is for individuals to fully think about. As with the previously discussed topics, there was an amount of uncertainty with the individual beliefs on the topic. Whether it is lack of education on the issue, struggling through the thought process, or just wanting to avoid the topic, many struggle to come up with a complete answer. Possibly, an institution such as Belmont could be a place to foster conversation between the sides some would see as competing and let individuals see there can be union of evolution and God creating the universe, for example. The deviation from the national average (from 33% to 43% of individuals thinking God had a hand in guiding evolution) on this thought shows that a Christian-based, academic institution might be a place where harmony happens.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

After completing an analysis of the entirety of the data and survey collection, reviewing all of the positions on the issues, and historical notions, one might expect some sort of clarity on the topics at hand. One clear answer might just fade into view as you read through all of the data and wade into all of the schools of thought. If this occurs, the reader should be proud of being the smartest person to ever exist, as it seems this will always be unknown for humans at this point. Study into any of these topics should not necessarily aimed at looking for the end-all-be-all to the grand answers of the universe. If anything, the arguments and thought patterns presented above should and hopefully do spur more questions in the reader's mind.

Up until this point in science, humans have not completed their understanding of the universe. There are a multitude of unanswered questions scientists are spending their lives trying to answer in any one area of science. As discussed several times previously, science works on a series of theories that are just that: theories. They are shown to be true continually, but many times throughout history the theories are proven wrong. What is understood right now in science has the possibility of being completely overturned with a new theory and new data. Of course, this is not to say that science is wrong by any stretch, but if history has told us anything, it is that humans have the ability to not understand completely when it is thought the total picture is understood. Especially when talking about issues such as this, human bias can always be a roadblock if there is a personal stake in a scientific conclusion.

Similarly, within the Christian faith, the scriptures have not always been treated as absolute truth without any debate. Even amongst the most devout teachers and

theologians, so many essential facets of the Christian faith are not universally agreed upon by everyone who declares Jesus as Lord. The faith that has come out of history is one replete with reformation of thought and action and does not shy away from competing thoughts. While the Bible is universally thought across all of Christianity to be God's word to His people on Earth, that does not mean that all of the people who adhere to the book must have the same understanding of the text.

It makes complete sense that when the ideas of both science and religion reach to explain the same phenomenon that humans take parts of each to fill in their own thoughts. The amount that one takes of each of the two into that personal thought is a reflection of that person's upbringing and take on how life works. Within this particular study, however, Belmont University has a population that overall seems to take a unique perspective compared to a completely secular university or a conservative church. It appears from the survey data and comparing it to national averages that the people who populate Belmont University at large carry more understanding and acceptance of both science and faith's perspective on topics such as the creation of life and the universe.

This one notion shows and implies that Belmont's community is a unique place to foster learning and understanding between the two at-times competing parties. Within both American and global culture, science and religion are often thought of as two opposing forces fighting to be the superior of the other. This may be the thought of some individuals in both camps, but is certainly not all of them, especially those at Belmont. From the survey, it was found that 55% of individuals did not think that science and Christian faith are in conflict, as opposed to the 32% who said they were in conflict. Almost 89% of the survey respondents decided that science will not make religion

obsolete. Granted, this data is not completely without any skepticism of the issues at hand, but many, as seen in the previous survey results from the Big Bang and evolution chapters, are very open, accepting, and advocating for the union of science and Christian faith.

The overall point of presenting the survey data is for the reader to come to his/her own conclusions in interpreting how it might fit into the overall picture of the debate. The overall point of the project is for individuals to become educated on some of the many thought patterns on the issues of the creation of the universe and life and then have the ability to make their own educated decision on said issues. Specifically, this was done through Belmont's unique status as both a modern academic institution and holding to its Protestant Christian traditions. While humanity may never complete the picture of how the universe was created and understanding its processes, people will fill in the gaps with their own thoughts. Whether that thought is from factual evidence based in empirical findings, through the belief in an Almighty Creator, or a combination of the two, that decision is left to that person.

Note from the author

For my honors thesis, I decided it would be a worthwhile use of my time as an undergraduate to pursue a project that I have thought about for several years and is something I most likely will never get the opportunity to do again. The project you are beginning to read is the culmination of over two years of reading, research, asking questions, interviewing, writing, rewriting, and fleshing out ideas that have been floating in my head since the beginning of it all.

It is my personal hope that through the data, research, and other thoughts presented, you as an individual will understand more of Belmont's place in this whole topic, but also do some thinking about your own beliefs on the presented topics. From going through this whole process, I have found that many do not take time to seriously ponder such topics as creation in terms of modern science and Christian faith, for whatever reason. If these things are an unnecessary hinderance to your faith and lifestyle, stay content in your knowledge. But, if this whole idea keeps your mind restless, go and seek out the answers, because they just might find you. That sounds very optimistic and sentimental, but I do sincerely believe that being more informed on an issue is better than being content in the dark.

I hope you all, whether that be five or five million total readers, enjoy this project as I have enjoyed the process thoroughly. I hope that you have the ability to look at the data with open eyes and see how it applies to your own story. And most importantly, I hope that God's love finds you in its full force. Thank you for picking up my thesis, and I hope you enjoyed the project.

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Appendix 1: Survey Data

*Names and personal data collected by the survey are not shown for the respondent's privacy, per Belmont University's Institutional Review Board project approval.

| What is your race? | Occupation of the Student: teacher | Personal faith | Personal view of creation: How do you believe God created? Please be as specific as possible. | Do you believe the Big Bang occurred? | Do you believe organisms other than humans evolved? | Do you believe humans are a evolution? | Do you believe evolution is a scientific fact? | Personal view of evolution: What do you think of evolution and all the scientific evidence? | Do you believe Christian faith are in conflict? | Do you believe that science will ever be able to explain personal experience? | Do any of your views on science faith clash or cause personal distress? | Do you believe in a personal God distinct from the religious community? | Do you believe in a personal God distinct from the religious community? |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Students | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | Student | Raised Christian, currently agnostic | I am content with having no religion. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Evolution is a scientific principle. Humans along with all other living things evolve with time. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Probably not | | | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Raised charismatic Christian | I believe God created the world rather than being through a Big Bang or 7000 years of creation. I do not believe in the creation narrative word for word. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe everything has evolved including humans. Everything was made to adapt and I believe if we are still seeing evolution occur today it is safe to say we also have experienced this as human beings. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | Yes |
| 21 | student | raised in a nondenomi national megachurch , currently attending a Presbyterian (PCA) church | I believe God created space, time, and our universe. I don't know how old I believe the earth is, but I don't believe it's 6,000 years old like some theologians do. | Might or might not | Might or might not | Probably not | I struggle with evolution. The entire scientific community seems to be in agreement with it, but I haven't been fully convinced. I just don't know how to reconcile the complexity of, for example the eye, with sheer chance mutations over millions of years. Our world is so deeply intricate. Many biological features don't seem to have been adaptations. It is not a subject I have studied enough but that's where I am currently. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Probably yes | I struggle with the naturalism aspect of science. I believe in faith and the supernatural. The current scientific thinkers/community seem to reject anything that is not natural because it is not observable, and I think that my Christian faith has the opportunity to explain things that science cannot. | | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Catholic all my life | God created the universe | Probably yes | Probably yes | Might or might not | I don't know. Sorry. | Probably yes | Probably not | Might or might not | | | Yes |
| 18 | Student | Raised Methodist, currently Christian | I believe God created the universe as told in the biblical book Genesis | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | Probably not | I think organisms adapt and evolve over time to suit their environments, but I believe God created humans or something that is very close to the modern human. | Might or might not | Definitel y not | Probably yes | | | Yes |
| 18 | Student | Raised Church of Christ, nondenomi national | God created the universe over the course of 6 days as outlined in Genesis. | Probably yes | Might or might not | Definitel y not | I believe that evolution is factual in that the fittest will survive and pass on their genes, whereas the weak will die. The idea that humans would evolve from a microbe is simply wrong. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Probably not | | | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Christian, nondenomi national | God, an omniscient being, created the material world. Everything that exists is his creation. | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | Definitel y not | I think the Bible is not specific as to the methods and ways in which God created the world, so evolution could be a part of how he created it. However, the implication that humans evolved from other species directly conflicts with the story of how humans were created in the bible. | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Definitel y yes | | | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Raised presbyterian , currently not affiliated with any religion in particular | I believe in a God and I believe in an afterlife. I believe that there is a higher power that created the world and universe as we know it, however I don't exactly believe there is a right or wrong way to worship this higher power. | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe that evolution and religious beliefs can both coexist together. I believe that everything evolved from something and that god played a part in evolution. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Probably yes | | | Yes |
| 19 | Student | I was raised Christian, and I was exposed to many different denominati ons. I am currently solidly | I believe that God created the big bang. Truthfully, I don't know much about science, but I do know that whatever scientists believe happened in the earth's creation was definitely created by God. The typical narrative of Christian creation, in my opinion, is an illustration that | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Again, I believe that God is the root of creation, and God probably used evolution. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Southern Baptist | God created the universe | Might or might not | Might or might not | Might or might not | Evolution seems evident, but the implications looking backward are more hazy than looking forward. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Might or might not | | | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Catholic | I believe the Big Bang Theory | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe all living beings evolved from early beings (microorganisms) | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Raised Baptist, currently nondenomi national | I believe that God created the earth and everything else involved in it. | Definitel y not | Probably yes | Definitel y not | I feel like species evolve over time to adapt to the surroundings except for humans. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Raised Baptist, currently Non-Denominati onal Christian | I believe the universe was created by God's will, but not by his hand. In other words, I do not imagine the God of the universe waving his hand to separate the waters of the sky from those of the land. Instead, I believe he created the biological and chemical system that allowed these things to happen naturally over a long period of time. | Probably yes | Probably yes | Probably yes | I think it is a very likely theory that demonstrates how all life is connected and dependent on each other. I think evolution is a humbling theory and it should be incorporated into Christian teachings. It is the less literal interpretation of the creation story. | Might or might not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | Yes |
| 22 | Student | Raised Roman Catholic, currently agnostic | I'm not exactly sure what created the universe, but I believe there was a creator of everything. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I think that species have evolved over time from small single-celled organisms to larger and more capable organisms. | Probably not | Probably not | Probably yes | | | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Raised Non denominati onal, currently non denominati onal Christian | God the father created the world as described in genesis | Definitel y not | Definitel y yes | Definitel y not | Organisms evolve over time there's objective proof of that, but God created the animals and humans and we have all evolved in adaptation to our environments. | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Probably not | | | Yes |
| 18 | Student | Baptist | God created the universe | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | Probably yes | I believe we evolved and that the creation story is not literal and coincides with the large amounts of time evolution takes | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | Yes |
| 18 | Student | Christian | I believe the universe was created in 6 literal days by God, and on the 7th day He rested. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | I believe that microevolution occurs due to a need for adaptations, but macroevolution is completely false for all living organisms. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | Yes |
| 19 | Student | Raised Baptist, currently nondenomi national | God created the universe in 7 days, he spoke it into existence I believe that the Universe is and always was. I believe God created the Earth as it is described by the Bible, with the process lasting seven days. I believe God separated the sky from the waters, put living creatures in each, and breathed into them the breath of life. I believe God created the sun and the moon and all of the stars, and that He creates Adam from the dust and Eve from Adam, breathing the breath of life into both of them as well. I believe that He saw everything | Probably yes | Probably yes | Definitel y not | I believe in the probability that some animals have evolved since God created the Earth. I do not believe that humans have evolved in the same way, if at all. I believe that God made each part of the world in a time period that would seem like lasting only a day to Him, while it seems like millions of years to us. I believe the dinosaurs were created alongside bacteria and other organisms of that nature as well as many animals. Because of reasoning only God can determine, the dinosaurs faded out or possibly evolved into smaller creatures. I think humans were created later with cavernous minds and features. I think I'm small ways we have evolved and developed according to what nature called for, as did every other creature. However, I do not think we began as monkeys, because the Bible has a clear conversation between animals | Probably not | Definitel y not | Probably yes | | | Yes |
| 20 | student | christian | | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | Definitel y not | | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | Yes |

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| 21 | Student | Raised Southern Baptist, Now Broadly Evangelical/Southern Baptist | I believe God created the universe. I believe that God created the scientific process by which the universe as we know it is here today. I can't really be more specific than that. | Probably yes | Probably yes | Might or might not | I think it is possible that Genesis 1 is an example of exalted prose, and that evolution is thusly compatible with Christian thought. Such that, organisms evolved into humans, and there was a historical Adam and Eve at some point chosen by God after he created them from scientific processes. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Might or might not | I see faith as John Calvin talks about it: as the spectacles through which I see the world. So, I am more open to prioritizing faith when they could potentially be an issue. I believe in a bodily resurrection of Christ, but I'm not sure the miracles of Christ necessary fall into the purview of science. Science deals with natural, recurring phenomenon, and miracles are obviously exceptions to this rule. Science cannot definitively say they are impossible—at best, they can say improbable. | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Raised Presbyterian, currently deist | The big bang | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe evolution happened from a single celled organism to all of the diverse aspects we have today. | Definitel y yes | Probably not | Probably yes | I believe christianity in the bible directly conflicts with science, but christians dont use the bible when it conflicts with science, so christianity in practice "doesnt conflict" because they just alter what they profess | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Raised Christian, still a believer | God created the universe | Definitel y yes | Might or might not | Might or might not | I believe we have genetic similarities but I'm not convinced we all came from single celled organisms. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Probably yes | I believe God created everything, I'm just not too sure how because of what I was taught in school and what I know from the Bible. I believe that God can do whatever he says by virtue of being God, but we have evidence suggesting things happened differently. We also, on the other hand, have evidence suggesting God's existence. | Yes |
| 22 | Student | Raised Catholic, currently not religious | Don't know what I believe, but if I had to choose I would say the Big Bang. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe all that I know of the theory of evolution. | Definitel y yes | Probably not | Probably yes | Again, I am not currently very religious, but part of the reason is definitely because of the conflict between faith and science, especially in the realm of evolution. | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Christian - nondenominational | I believe God created the Universe through the Big Bang. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe God continues to evolve us through what we environmentally need. He is the one who created evolution as a way for us to grow. | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Might or might not | I believe everything has evolved over time and changed to make humans (and everything else) what we are. I'm not sure if I'm confident on a starting point of this evolution. | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Independent Baptist | I believe God created the universe via methods not well understood, but I believe the process co-insides with evolution and Big Bang. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe everything has evolved over time and changed to make humans (and everything else) what we are. I'm not sure if I'm confident on a starting point of this evolution. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Raised nondenominational christian | I believe that the event that created the planet we live in were set in motion by God. I understand that the creation story in the bible is not a scientific journal nor should it be taken as one, but I also believe that the events that created the universe as we see it today had to have been mastered by someone. | Probably not | Definitel y yes | Definitel y not | I think that animal adaptation is an irrefutable fact however, I think that the theory of evolution is just that, a theory that draws upon facts but still remains conjecture. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | I think that the bible is filled with a lot of information but it is not and never will be a science textbook. It was written to chronicle the israelites stories, not to document scientific discovery. The story of creation may or may not be true, in fact it's probably not. But the one thing that it answers is the question we all want answered, " where did we come from ". I think that is what we're to learn, not whether the events are accurate or not. | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Christian | God breathed life into existence. Much like what Genesis states. | Might or might not | Might or might not | Might or might not | I believe God created humans when he created earth. However, that's not to say humans haven't evolved over time to adapt to earth changing. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | I don't have any issues between the two. | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Catholic | By god in 7 days | Might or might not | Probably yes | Probably not | Humans were created and evolved a bit but did not evolve from other primates. | Probably yes | Probably not | Probably yes | The whole evolution and creation story clash. | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Methodist, currently agnostic/quieting | I believe that thousands of years ago, particles expanded rapidly to create the universe. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe all life came from single-called organisms. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Probably not | When I was Christian, I found my beliefs with science constantly clashing with each other. | Yes |
| 22 | Student | Raised traditionally Jewish (not spiritual) | The big bang, any idea of how some event that was scientific, not created by a being or "god" | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe all life came from single-called organisms over hundreds of millions of years. Humans are one of millions of results from this. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y not | | Yes |
| 19 | Student | just follow traditions/holidays) Raised Presbyterian, currently agnostic | I believe it was created from the Big Bang | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe that humans evolved from primates, as the current model states. | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | I definitely believe there is an issue between ideas of the creation of the universe and how humans came into existence. | Yes |
| 19 | Student | Raised Presbyterian, currently non-denominational | I think that both creationism and theories like the Big Bang have validity. I think the description of God creating the heavens and earth in 7 days in genesis is metaphorical. God's concept of time would obviously be impossible for humans to understand, therefore the story of creation was just meant to offer a simplified description of his creation timeline. | Probably yes | Probably yes | Might or might not | I think evolution is also valid- biblical creation doesn't have to conflict with evolution if you take the Bible's words as a non-literal description. Again, the 7 day timeline is something I believe to be metaphorical and not an actual calendar week because of God's infinite existence. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Might or might not | I just think it is possible to believe in the validity of BOTH what science tells us about the world and what faith tells us. Many Christians have an "all or nothing" approach to the Bible and assert that every word must be believed and followed in order to prevent eternal suffering. I do not believe that the semantics of the Creation story are what my soul is relying on. Therefore, I acknowledge that there is some conflict and have been struggling with it, but ultimately the Gospel is the critical part of the Bible. I believe it is possible that the Creation is hypothetical, demonstrative, an allegory, etc. for what physically happened. However, God is omnipotent, and I do not doubt that He CAN create the Earth in 6 organized days. Time without life is irrelevant, so if those days were really millions of natural years, so be it. Faith is faith whether Eve ate an apple or an orange. | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Raised Baptist, currently non-denominational | I believe that God facilitated the creation of the universe, but I am unsure how the physical process occurred since I was not there, nor was anyone else. | Probably yes | Probably yes | Might or might not | It is almost certain that organisms evolve over time. However, because there is very little concrete evidence that humans absolutely evolved from another distinct species, I am not certain that we share a common ancestor with apes nor others. There is evidence that we evolved as a species. The extent of evolution is still murky. | Probably not | Probably not | Probably yes | | Yes |
| 18 | Student | Raised methodist, currently atheist | I believe in the Big Bang and evolution | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | I believe in evolution, but I don't believe we evolved FROM apes. I think we coevolved beside them. That's why neanderthals existed the same times humans did. | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | It's wrong of either side to taunt or hate the other. Science and religion can coexist and I feel like it has to in order to explain everything in the Bible. The Bible itself states that in the beginning there was chaos, but chaos means water. Who's to say cells didn't already exist and they were evolving as Adam and Eve were made? It's also disputed how long creation took so evolution could also be the time period when God was creating everything. | Yes |
| 18 | Student | United Church of Christ | God is the catalyst for the Big Bang. Everything happened as science suggests and God is the thing that created the matter and force to get it started. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe evolution happened as science indicates and that God perhaps influenced this process and intended it to be so. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Yes | |
| 20 | Student | Raised non-denominational Christian | An eternal God outside of time spoke the world into existence and designed humanity, creation - the world around us. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | The theory of evolution began as a theory and has been taken as a factual account. While I do not believe that all of life has evolved from a single organism, I am aware that many characteristics of animals have changed and evolved to adapt to their environments. Don't have a problem with that - I just don't believe that humans evolved from other species. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Raised southern baptist | I believe god created the world through how science tells us. He made the big bang and oversaw evolution. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I think god oversaw the evolution of all humans have evolved significantly over time, and are continuing to evolve and devolon today. | Might or might not | Definitel y not | Probably yes | I just question how two huge concepts can contradict each other and why others dont think they can occur simultaneously. | Yes |
| 19 | Student | Raised Catholic | All I know is that the universe had to have been created | Probably yes | Probably yes | Probably yes | | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Probably yes | I believe that there is tension between science and religion, but I also believe that the true answer people are constantly | Yes |

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| | | currently Christian | somehow by a superior being, a higher power. | | | | | | | | | | searching for is in the shared space between the two. | | | | | |
| 21 | Student | Catholic | As the bible says with God creating the universe | Might or might not | Probably yes | Definitel y not | | | | | | | Honestly I'm not really sure, I do believe that God created humans and that we came from Adam and Eve, and I know that evolution in animals is real. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | There have been studies done how they work together. I know, I think they should not clash. | Yes |
| 22 | Student | Raised Baptist, attended Church of Christ, now non-denominational | Mixture of both scientific and religious | Probably yes | Probably yes | Probably yes | | | | | | | It's hard to refute it when your entire life is taught a different way but there has to be a happy medium somewhere. | Might or might not | Definitel y not | Definitel y yes | It is hard to think that one being (God) created every single thing on earth and knows what is going to happen at all times. Sometimes I think life is a simulation and I'm the only "real" person in it. | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Roman Catholic | I believe in the big theory but that God was the one that caused the big bang and brought creation into existence out of nothing. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | | | | | | | I believe in evolution for all organisms, but specifically with human. I don't believe we evolved from monkeys or any other such organisms. I believe we have evolved from an ancient human organism as we have adapted to the earth throughout the thousands of years. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | None | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Raised nondenominational Christian, currently Christian | God created the world | Might or might not | Probably yes | Probably not | | | | | | | I believe most species evolve over time in response to their environment or to cross breeding. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | Yes |
| 20 | student | Methodist, currently an atheist | Big Bang theory leading to evolution | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | | | | | | | I believe humans evolved from ape like creatures and animals evolved from like animals. Species all changed over time and evolved to fit the current state of the Earth. | Probably yes | Might or might not | Probably yes | Because of my scientific views my belief in God became obsolete. | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Raised non-denominational, currently define my faith as believing in Jesus and love | God created the earth | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | Might or might not | | | | | | | I think we all evolved, but I don't know a ton about human evolution. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Probably not | I think there can be a marriage between the two in the sense that God created science for a reason. | Yes |
| 19 | Student | Raised Roman Catholic, currently agnostic | Not super sure. Creation is a weird topic for me. I think Big Bang is the most plausible theory, but a power higher than me caused all of it to happen. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | | | | | | | I think that humans were created by a higher being and everything around them was created for them. Humans have evolved but always from another species. I'm more likely to believe in reincarnation than anything. But everything descended from something else. | Probably yes | Probably yes | Might or might not | | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Nondenominational | God created the heavens and the earth and saw that it was good. | Probably not | Probably yes | Definitel y not | | | | | | | I think that species on the earth have definitely evolved since creation. However, I believe that humans were created in God's image and separate from plants or animals. Therefore I do not believe that humans evolved from animals. | Definitel y yes | Probably not | Definitel y yes | How old the earth is, evolutionary theory. | Yes |
| 20 | Student | Raised Southern Baptist, currently atheist | Big bang | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | | | | | | | I believe everything evolved from a single celled organism. | Probably not | Probably yes | Definitel y not | I'm not religious so no clash. | Yes |
| 37 | Student, first year | Raised Episcopalian, currently agnostic | I believe that the Big Bang is the most accurate theory we currently possess | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | | | | | | | I believe wholeheartedly in the theory of evolution. In general I tend to side with conclusions drawn from tedious scientific observation over a popular book. | Definitel y yes | Probably not | Definitel y yes | Christianity doesn't seem to realize that it can continue to exist quite happily while still supporting science. Just because the Big Bang happened doesn't mean there is no higher power. | Yes |
| 21 | Student, server, non manager | Raised Baptist, currently non denominational | God created the Earth in 7 days. Man was created from dust, bones from rib of Adam | Might or might not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | | | | | I believe over time evolution has the ability to alter characteristics of species. I do not believe evolution has ability to change a species in entirety (ex. Monkeys to humans) | Probably not | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | Issue between creationism and evolution. Many clashes between certain aspects of the two where man came from, is there even a higher power?, dinosaurs, Big Bang | Yes |
| 21 | Students | Christian | Through God in 7 days | Might or might not | Probably not | Definitel y not | | | | | | | Not a thing | Might or might not | Probably not | Definitel y not | | Yes |
| 19 | Drummer | Non denominational Christian | I believe in the biblical creation story, however I believe that our modern interpretation of a day is different than the ancient greek and hebrew, therefore I believe the earth's creation was God acting through science. It took many many years to develop and I believe God acted through scientific, and not 100 percent mysterious ways. God could have caused what we see as traces of the big bang. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | | | | | | | I think humans have evolved from subspecies, that were created by God. I believe God made this world ever changing and that we, now, are a final result of his plan to make the world dynamic. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | I have no issues, I believe you should apply both areas to every problem in order to come up with a rational solution to the problems in this world. Faith has its place in the emotional and spiritual department but that doesn't have to conflict with logical and analytical reasoning. God gave us both emotional (spiritual) and logical mindsets on purpose, they don't have to be conflicting. | Yes |
| 18 | Full-time student | Episcopalian | By God, but not specifically shaped in any way, just that a divine creator shaped how the earth was created. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | | | | | | | I think that evolution most definitely occurred. | Definitel y not | Might or might not | Definitel y not | | Yes |
| 21 | Project Coordinator, Student | Christian | God initiated the Big Bang Theory. | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | | | | | I don't know the specifics of single-celled organisms, prokotic, etc. That's above me. But I believe it's obvious that all species change and adapt over time. | Probably not | Probably not | Probably not | It's easy to say the Bible doesn't align with scientific discovery, but the Bible is told by humans and summarized events over the course of many years. It could be interpreted to support science. | Yes |
| 21 | Student | Raised & currently Baptist | I believe God spoke the universe into existence | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | | | | | | I do not believe in evolution. I believe God created the world and everything in it including humans | Probably not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 22 | Student | Roman Catholic | God created the universe | Probably not | Probably yes | Probably yes | | | | | | | Evolution seems legit. Science is cool | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | All good | No |
| 21 | student | raised Catholic | God created the Big Bang which made atom n stuff which set forth evolution | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | | | | | | | We have proof that other animals have evolved. If humans are also animals n mammals why wouldn't we have evolved just like everything else? | Probably not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | I have no problems | No |
| 20 | Student | Raised Catholic | God created the universe | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Might or might not | | | | | | | I believe (or perhaps would like to believe) that evolution is an ongoing part of God's work. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised Methodist | I don't know, I support the idea of the Big Bang, but I feel like God had a role in the creation of our universe | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | | | | | | | I believe in the theory of evolution and all of it's scientific implications | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I often find myself stuck in between what science says and what the Bible says. Like with evolution, I think that there's a lot of scientific proof to support evolution and it just makes a lot of sense to me. But the Bible basically says that evolution doesn't exist without much proof. I find myself conflicted. | No |
| 18 | Student | Raised Catholic, became a non-denominational Christian | Not very well educated on theories of the actual physical phenomenon, but God created the universe. That could take just about any form. | Probably yes | Probably yes | Might or might not | | | | | | | | Probably not | Definitel y not | Might or might not | | No |
| 17 | Student | Christian | God initiated the Big Bang and set the development of the universe in motion according to His set plan. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | | | | | | | I believe all living organisms evolved from the primordial ooze. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 21 | Student | Catholic | God created everything in his time. Just because the bible says 7 days, does not mean that was 7 current "human days," it could mean it took a thousand human years, who knows. | Probably yes | Probably yes | Definitel y not | | | | | | | I believe God created everything in his time, and the intentionality of making the Earth included intentionally creating things to evolve. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | The only issue I can think of is how most people who do not believe in a God and are extremely into the scientific thoughts of how the Earth was created, have shamed me into believing what I believe. Yet, no one from my faith communities have ever told me I was wrong for having a specific science centered view. | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised non-denominational Christian | First, a slight modification to the question above - I couldn't tell which end of the scale was which, but my faith is | Definitel y yes | Probably not | Definitel y not | | | | | | | I think that evolutionary theory is inconsistent with the fossil record. Patterns of discontinuity extend throughout the geologic column, and really represent the | Definitel y yes | Definitel y not | Definitel y yes | I wouldn't call it personal distrust, but professional distrust, certainly. When the Bible has been in conflict with popular scientific theory, historically, scientists | No |

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| | | currently non-denominational Christian | definitely 'extremely important' to me (couldn't tell whether that meant I should put 100% or 0%). Anyway, I believe in the biblical account of creation wherein God spoke the universe into existence and created each species fully-formed (not through evolution). | | | | rule rather than the exception (this includes the sudden appearance of entire groups of animals as exemplified in the Cambrian Explosion). | | | | have discovered that they were incorrect in that area. Examples include the oceans containing springs (Job 38:16), the movement of light (Job 38:19-20), and air having weight (Job 28:25). | |
| 21 | Student | Nondenominational Christian | Some higher being | Might or might not | Probably yes | Probably yes | I believe evolution implemented by God. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y not | Definitel y yes | | No |
| 19 | Student | Southern Baptist | "In the beginning" I believe the opening lines of the book of Genesis in the Christian Bible paint a truly awesome display of the creation of the world as we know it. I believe God, who existed before all things and will continue to do so after all things, spoke the universe into existence. Personally, I believe the universe's creation was a relatively calm event, first nothing--then something--no cosmic crashes or accidents of happenstance, although who's to say God's voice doesn't sound like a "big bang"? | Probably not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | While I accept evolutionary adaptation as the changes of species over time to better survive in it's environment, I do not accept the popularized Darwinist theory of evolution. I believe man and woman were made in the image of God at their creation, not that they grew into what we call human from a single organism evolving and branching into several species over the eons. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y not | Definitel y yes | Science always seems fixated on proof and while proof is paramount in our understanding of the world around us, I believe an element of faith is necessary in order to begin to understand the universe. Faith and Proof cannot exist without one another, blind faith is naïveté and the refusal to accept results without proof is obstinacy. Together, however, they can build on one another, filling in holes each one has. | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised Christian | God created the universe through the big bang | Probably yes | Probably yes | Probably yes | Evolution is real | Might or might not | Probably not | Might or might not | | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised Lutheran, currently still Lutheran | I believe that God created the universe in its entirety, or perhaps the means for universe to be created. I honestly struggle with this concept a lot, as it is hard to comprehend, but I have faith that it is meant to be that way. | Probably yes | Probably yes | Might or might not | I believe that evolution has occurred on a micro level, but I'm hesitant to believe that it occurred at a macro level, like humans evolving from bacteria. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Might or might not | In Christianity, humans have our own interpretation of the Word as well as our own witness of God. Science tries to best explain the natural world using logic and reason, yet there is still so much to discover and find. I see it as a giant puzzle that humanity is still trying to solve, and some of the pieces are seemingly missing, but God ensures that the pieces are all there. It is a very difficult puzzle; perhaps it is not meant to be solved. I am uncertain on almost everything, but that is what my faith is for. | No |
| 19 | Student | Raised Baptist, currently not sure | God created the earth | Might or might not | Probably yes | Probably not | I believe in micro evolution but not macro evolution | Probably not | Definitel y not | Might or might not | | No |
| 20 | Student | Catholic, currently non-practicing | The big bang | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I think everything has evolved from single-celled organisms. I think the idea of bones and other functions of animals become unnecessary over time makes sense and so does natural selection, but I do not believe humans were a result of evolution. | Might or might not | Probably not | Probably not | I will believe science over religion if there is a conflict and consider stories in the Bible to more metaphorical than factual. | No |
| 22 | Student | Non denominational Christian | I believe God create the universe just as was written in the Bible in Genesis | Definitel y not | Might or might not | Definitel y not | | Definitel y yes | Definitel y not | Definitel y yes | They can work together, but they need to learn how to have cordial debates | No |
| 20 | Student | Christian nondenominational | The universe is God-breathed and was created in seven days. It continues to evolve for God's purposes. | Probably not | Probably yes | Definitel y not | I believe God created each species but they have evolved over time to look different than they used to. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 20 | Student | Raised Protestant, currently a non-denominational Christian | I believe that God did in fact create the Universe by initiating the "Big Bang" with a plan in mind for what would follow. I do believe we were all created in God's image but I also believe in evolution, etc. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Might or might not | I don't believe that all life came from single-celled organisms. I believe that animals did in fact evolve and change from their initial form though. | Might or might not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | I have no issue in the dynamic between the two because of something that one of my science professors at Belmont once told our class. Science is the study of matter in the universe whereas religion is the belief in a higher power meaning science cannot possibly explain religion. | No |
| 21 | student | Christian (non-denominational) | I believe the Earth was created from light, but that the "7 days" as we knew it were longer than the timeframe we understand together. This extra time accounts for evolution. | Might or might not | Probably yes | Probably yes | I'm not familiar with the theory in detail, but yes I do believe humans evolved from animals (not dinosaurs though). | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Probably not | I think they support one another, but people have the power to nit-pick details and use them as negations of each other's arguments. | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised Catholic, still identify as Catholic | God created the universe longer ago than I could even imagine. He transcends time and space. | Might or might not | Might or might not | Probably yes | I think we can't really know for sure, but whatever happened was set in motion by God. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Probably not | | No |
| 20 | Student | Raised Baptist, currently Presbyterian | God created the universe in 7 days | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | I do not believe all life came from single-celled organisms, but I do believe species have evolved over time. | Probably yes | Probably not | Might or might not | I think, ideologically, there isn't much of a clash, but the clash comes from people. I think science and religion are describing two different things | No |
| 20 | Student | Raised catholic, current non denominational Christian | The Bible story but over the course of many many years. | Probably not | Might or might not | Definitel y not | Evolution is a thing. But I think one single cell did not create the whole world. | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Probably yes | The Bible word for word. When I think the Bible is used to tell a story that happened over many years. | No |
| 18 | Student | Methodist | God created the heavens and the earth in the seven day classic story for the most part | Might or might not | Might or might not | Probably not | I believe that we were all put here for the most part and organisms adapted to their environment. Dinosaurs and man could have and might have lived at the same time. | Probably not | Probably not | Probably yes | In the whole topic of timing of everything. Especially the earth being much older than the bible says but there's evidence to a wide range of stories. | No |
| 23 | Student | Nondenominational christian | I believe God created the earth in 7 days (literal or metaphorical) for Himself. | Probably not | Probably not | Probably not | I believe in evolution in the sense that animals evolve to their surrounding to better survive, but not the all organisms evolved from the same thing over millions of years. | Might or might not | Definitel y not | Probably not | I believe that alot of science backs up the time line laid out in the bible. Most conflicting theories are just theories. | No |
| 23 | Student | Agnostic but dabbling in Buddhism | The Big Bang theory | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I do believe everything evolved over the years. | Definitel y yes | Probably not | Definitel y not | I have none | No |
| 21 | student | raised baptist | God formed the earth and heavens, and He could have taken 7 actual days of 7000 years! He could have used a "Big Bang" to get it all started or not. Fuzzy on the details. | Might or might not | Probably not | Probably not | I believe God used the ecosystem to create everything in the earth, including humans! He created us but could have used evolution to do it. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Probably yes | I just have no idea on how everything got created. I just know it did get created. I think science and faith go more hand in hand than actively in conflict. | No |
| 22 | Student | Currently Catholic | Big Bang, instigated by divine force. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I think life evolved from single celled organisms via natural selection, mutation, | Probably not | Definitel y not | Might or might not | | No |
| 18 | Student | Raised Methodist, currently Methodist | God created the universe as described in Genesis | Probably not | Probably yes | Might or might not | I believe micro evolution has occurred and still does. However, I do not believe humans evolved from an entirely different species. | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Probably not | n/a | No |
| 19 | student | raised methodist, currently non-denominational | I believe that God, who is part of the trinity, created the Universe by speaking it into existence. I believe this occurred a couple of thousands of years ago. | Probably not | Probably not | Definitel y not | I believe that God created all organisms. Some organisms may have changed over time in different ways, but God is the one that constructed it all. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 17 | Student | Christian (nondenominational) | Genesis 1 | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | Might or might not | I believe evolution exists. Whether it occurred in humans I do not know. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Might or might not | I don't take the Bible too literally. I would say I have a fairly loose interpretation. Sometimes when I feel doubtful due to scientific claims, I try to remember that not everything will make sense in my mind and doubt is normal. | No |

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| 18 | student | born catholic, made the personal decision at age 16 to become baptist | I believe in the Big Bang. I think god created the trees and organisms on planet earth. I believe he created the skies, the mountains, and all of the bodies of water, but I believe it all came after the Big Bang. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | I believe that god created us after dinosaurs. I think after they all died, god came back and created Adam and eve. But Adam and Eve may not have been the organisms which we now consider to be human. I think through time out bodies have evolved and we have changed in order to be able to survive. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Probably not | | No |
| 20 | Student | Committed Protestant | Created intentionally by One Being (God). Not necessarily in an exact seven days. | Probably yes | Probably yes | Probably not | I do believe that humans have gone through changes over time but do not believe that all things are a product of evolution. I believe that while humans have evolved over time, they were created intentionally. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Probably not | | No |
| 20 | Student | Raised Presbyterian, currently Questioning | Greater being must have set off big bang. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | I believe that all things adapt with time however I do not know the root. | Might or might not | Probably not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 21 | student | roman catholic | I believe the one, Christian God created the universe on an unknown time frame. I believe the earth is billions of years old and the universe much older than that. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | I believe that the theory of evolution and the biblical creation story are not mutually exclusive. I believe that God created the universe with all matter necessary for organisms to form. I believe any life forms we know today have experienced evolution to some degree. | Might or might not | Definitel y not | Might or might not | I think that faith and science can initially cause conflict. The core of science is evidence based facts. The core of faith is trust and belief. I believe that faith absolutely has a place in a science-based mindset. | No |
| 20 | Student | Raised southern baptist | God created the universe | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | It's all not true | Probably yes | Probably yes | Probably not | | No |
| 20 | student | raised presbyterian, go to a baptist church back home, not really sure which denominati on i identify most with at the moment | God created it in some form or fashion- no clue how it happened because i don't have all the answers, but could have been the big bang, could have been over more time, no clue but definitely was God | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | Might or might not | Not 100% sure- have heard a theory that evolution happened and God breathed life into the first humans to make them truly "human", and i think that's what im going with at the moment | Probably not | Definitel y not | Probably not | | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised evangelical Christian, now agnostic | I don't think much about it, but I trust the judgment of leading scientists, most of who seem to believe the Big Bang Theory is our best explanation thus far. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe that every organism is subject to evolution through generations. Otherwise, life on Earth would not have survived as long as it has. | Definitel y yes | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | The biggest thing that made me begin to question my Christian upbringing was Christianity's views on various social issues, particularly surrounding homosexuality. Science suggests that gender and sexuality are fluid, yet Christianity rejects that and often leads to discrimination. | No |
| 20 | student | raised Southern Baptist, currently Unitarian Universalist | I believe an all-knowing Creator made the universe by way of the Big Bang | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Probably not | I believe in everything except that humans have evolved from apes. | Probably not | Probably not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 21 | student | family is protestant, currently agnostic | | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | | Might or might not | Probably not | Probably yes | | No |
| 19 | student | raised catholic, currently practicing more nondenomi national christianity | conflicted about this bc i want to believe in things like the big bang but also want to believe God created it all | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | everything has evolved over time like humans were once monkeys | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Probably yes | | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised Catholic, currently Agnostic | The Big Bang theory | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe all of the theory of evolution. | Probably yes | Probably not | Probably yes | While I don't identify as Christian anymore, I always struggled with the idea that God made humans as we are which ignores evolution. I also have a Christian friend who doesn't believe dinosaurs ever | No |
| 19 | Student | Nondenomi national | God created the heavens and the earth | Might or might not | Might or might not | Definitel y not | I believe that animals have evolved over time, but humans have not (God created Adam and Eve and later placed people in different places throughout earth. | Probably yes | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | existed because of her faith which is problematic to me. | No |
| 18 | student | raised non-denominati onal, currently confused | the big bang | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | while it's still considered a theory it's pretty much proven. I personally can't deny all the evidence found for it. | Might or might not | Definitel y not | Definitel y yes | | No |
| 21 | Student | Non-Denominati onal Christian | God created the universe in 6 days. | Might or might not | Might or might not | Probably not | I believe God created the world in 6 days. Whether or not it was literally 6 days, I'm not sure. I don't personally know how God created animals and humans, but I don't think it was evolution. I've seen enough holes in the theory of evolution that I doubt the theory. The Bible does not specify how God created the world, so my disbelief in evolution is not because of that. I believe in microevolution for sure, but I have doubts about macroevolution. I do believe that dinosaurs existed at one time, but they did not evolve into something else. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | I think when people do see a conflict, it is either a misinterpretation of science or the Bible. Science is simply the process of discovering and learning about the world around us. The Bible doesn't focus on how the natural world works, but rather the one who made the natural world. We do the best we can with the tools we have and the previous knowledge we have gained to understand how things work and we get it wrong sometimes. | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised Lutheran, currently Christian | I believe that God created the earth and everything on it | Definitel y not | Might or might not | Definitel y not | I think that animals could have evolved but not humans | Probably yes | Might or might not | Probably yes | I think there are many different views of creation, which is probably the biggest issue between the two | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised Catholic and Jewish, currently agnostic | I personally believe in the Big Bang Theory. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe that life came from single celled organisms, and that evolution is a result of millions/billions of years of changes occurring on our planet and adaptation to those changes. | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | I believe that science and Christianity contradict each other and I am personally more inclined to believe scientific evidence. I also believe that many Christian communities do not make an effort to address the conflict and thus push their congregation away as a result, or create science deniers who do more harm than good. | No |
| 21 | student | raised and currently nondenomi nian christian | I believe in the scientific theories of a "big bang" event | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | I believe in the theory of evolution because there is evidence/relics of this (bc it archaeological evidence of the fact that humans have toolbones) | Might or might not | Might or might not | Probably yes | I take most of what the bible says as thematic. I use this as a guiding message and not literally. Ex: Jonah probably wasn't actually swallowed by a whale. | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised Wiccan, currently agnostic | The physical universe was formed in a Big Bang or something similar to it that may or may not have been executed by an intelligent creator | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe a series of small changes over an extremely long period of time occurred (most likely guided by some intelligent force) that brought us to the diversity of plant, animal, and other life on Earth today. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 20 | student | Raised Catholic, currently non-denom Christian | God instigated the Big Bang-- I take very much a creation-then-evolution stance from there. I believe God provided the building blocks for evolution to occur. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe everything about evolution! The science is indisputable. However, I believe God put that into motion-- I like to think of it as him revising his creation, making it more and more perfect. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 20 | Student | Raised Eastern Orthodox, currently non-denominati onal | God created the Earth | Definitel y not | Probably not | Definitel y not | I believe that God created each living thing just as it is now | Might or might not | Probably not | Probably yes | I am confused about the relationship between religion and evolution - does believing in God mean that there is no room for evolution or can the two both be true? | No |
| 21 | Student | Raised baptist, currently non-denominati onal | I believe both what the Bible tells us, as in God spoke it into creation. BUT I also believe that the "Big Bang theory" or something similar was the science behind God speaking it into existence. | Definitel y yes | Might or might not | Probably yes | I think everything has evolved over time but I don't know exactly how and what came | Probably not | Definitel y not | Probably not | | No |

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| 20 | Student | Currently Christian | Created by God in 6 days | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Might or might not | | No |
| 19 | Student | Always agnostic | The universe always has and always will exist. There is no beginning of time. | Probably not | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Humans as well as organisms evolved from single cell organisms | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Probably yes | I really want to believe in a creator, but the scientific evidence just isn't there for me. I have a hard time that one mind consciously created and watches over the world we know. Why is he so hesitant to make his presence more obvious? | No |
| 18 | Student | Raised Baptist, currently Baptist. More spiritual than religious | I believe God created the universe, and I believe that the God I worship is also the same God that other monotheistic religions worship. | Probably not | Probably yes | Probably not | As of right now, I do not believe that humans evolved from other creatures, but I believe some species have evolved over time. | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Probably yes | It is difficult for me because I understand and see the logic behind the theory of evolution and the Big Bang, but I also was taught that God created all things. | No |
| 23 | Student | | The Big Bang | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe every living creature has evolved from something. | Probably yes | Probably not | Might or might not | They are very contradictory in theory. | No |
| 17 | Student | Christian | God created the heavens and Earth. | Probably not | Probably yes | Might or might not | I believe God used evolution throughout His creation. Everything on this earth has been created by God and for God, but I do believe that species have changed over time. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 18 | student | Lutheran | I've always believed in the big bang theory | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe everything evolved from single-celled organisms. | Probably yes | Probably not | Probably yes | I would like to believe God created everything on this Earth; however, my knowledge of science and evolution clash with this. | No |
| 18 | Student | Agnostic | I believe it was created through matter and atoms. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe every organism has evolved from the most basic single cell organisms. | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Probably yes | I don't see how people can believe that there's no evolution when there's evidence of evolution. | No |
| 19 | Student | Nondenomi national | God created everything. Genesis | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | The evolution theory discounts God. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | No |
| 19 | Student | Reformed Christian | I think God might've caused the Big Bang. | Probably yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I think everything has evolved from then. | Probably not | Probably not | Probably not | I am a whole hearted Christian but also believe in science and evolution. I don't think everything isn't the Bible is exactly true today, which many Christians would get upset about. | No |
| 20, 208 053 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Fac ulty /Sta ff | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 31 | Admini stration | Raised Baptist | I believe that God created the universe millions of years ago. | Might or might not | Probably yes | Probably yes | I think that evolution is part of God's design. I believe that all creatures have evolved over time but it is all part of the grand design. God's time and our time are very different. It says in the Bible that man was the last creation, and I believe that evolution was a part of that. | Probably not | Probably not | Probably not | | Yes |
| 23 | Grad Assista nt | Raised Mennonite, currently go to a Presbyterian church | I believe that God created the earth and everything in it. | Might or might not | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | I believe in evolution and the scientific proof behind it and I believe that dinosaurs were on this earth, but I also believe that God created everything and who's to say He didn't work through evolution. | Probably not | Definitel y not | Probably not | I feel comfortable with my views and how they align. I believe in science and I also believe in an all knowing God who is infinitely wiser than humans and feel confident that His hand is in the scientific discoveries humans have made. I don't know how, but I don't believe that I'm called to know how. | Yes |
| 22 | Graduat e | Raised Methodist, Currently Baptist | God created everything in the way that Genesis describes over millions of years | Might or might not | Probably yes | Definitel y not | Species continue to evolve but we were all started as God intended | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | Yes |
| 41 | profess or | raised Methodist, current | God created the universe 13.8 billion years ago via the Big Bang. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | I believe that all life on Earth evolved from some single-celled organism which existed billions of years ago. | Probably not | Probably not | Might or might not | If science shows that my brain is deterministic, I'm not sure how I can fit faith into that. (But I doubt that science can do that.) | Yes |
| | | Southern Baptist | | | | | | | | | | |
| 36 | Profess or | Roman Catholic | The details and timeline remain a mystery, God created the universe. | Probably yes | Probably yes | Probably not | This is a great question! I think that the theory of evolution is becoming very denomination-specific. I believe the "micro-evolution" exists because God created a planet/universe with the ability to run like a well-oiled machine. While I do not believe that all life came from a single-celled organism, I think that over time, species changed and adapted from each other in regards to climate and migration, etc. even humans. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y yes | I am a Catholic and interpret Genesis very differently than the Young Earth Creationists. There are groups that interpret the Bible literally and believe in a literal 7-day creation and that evolution is the "great lie" from Darwin. I am struggling with the facts that early Catholics believed in a young earth, but recognize the discovery of astronomy and physics have given more depth and room for an older universe. I believe Genesis is a narrative to describe the interaction between humans and God, but don't necessarily know if believing in a 7-day creation is important to my salvation. | Yes |
| 60 | Profess or | Raised Southern Baptist Protestant | By the hand of God 13.8 BYA | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Definitel y yes | Evolution is the keystone of biological knowledge; the great unifying theme of biology. I accept (not believe in) evolution based on the evidence collected in support of this robust theory. | Definitel y yes | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | | Yes |
| 42 | Profess or of Chemis try | Raised Presbyterian (Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, PCUSA), after a brief stint as a borderline atheist, I attended Southern Baptist in High School. In college and early adulthood, I attended a Methodist church. When I was about 28, I was "argued" into a Reformed (Calvinist) interpretation of the Scriptures and again changed my church affiliation to Presbyterian, but I joined the Reformed Presbyterian Church of America (PCA), which is very | The Universe was created by God the Father, through the action of His only Son, Jesus Christ. The exact mechanism is currently unknown, but the evidence we have is consistent with ex nihilo, God "spoke" and created all out of nothing by His will alone. This occurred at an indeterminate time in the past, all available evidence suggesting that moment of creation occurred more than 13.8 billion years ago. This, by the way, is somewhat at odds with the codified doctrine of the PCA, though the conflict is a bit tangential. | Definitel y yes | Probably yes | Probably yes | With limited time and space, this statement is a highly condensed summary of my beliefs. I believe, of course, that micro evolution—change within species—is constantly happening. Understanding genetic drift, I accept that interspecies evolution is a distinct possibility within the fixed laws of God's creation. Yet, the possibility of spontaneous abiogenesis is vanishingly small and I have trouble accepting that supernatural intervention was not involved. If I need to pigeonhole myself, I think I fit mostly into the "intelligent design, with evolution occurring later" camp. However, when we die, I am not going to be really broken up if we find out the Universe was created "as is" 6000 years ago, either. | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | Definitel y not | I don't have any feelings of clash between the two, despite the fact that I have been "dis-fellowshipped" by several of my brothers in the faith due to my understanding of the Scriptures. I view the first three chapters of Genesis as a parable. Christ, during his earthly ministry, used many parables to communicate very deep truths about our condition and God's love. Why would he not also use such a teaching style with Moses when he was writing the Pentateuch? | Yes |

