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Unit 1: War of World Views





Have you ever faced questions like these? “You say you believe the Bible. Well, where did dinosaurs come from? Did Noah have dinosaurs on the ark? Where did Cain get his wife? Isn’t it embarrassing to believe in a six-day creation about 6,000 years old when scientists can see galaxies millions of light years away and measure the age of fossils and rocks with carbon-14 and uranium dating?”

Or, how about this? “You say you’re a Christian. If God created just two people, what color were they? Where did all the races come from? If ‘creation’ should be taught in schools, do you believe in equal time for Muslim and Buddhist creation stories, too?”

Or, “If there’s an all-powerful, all-loving God who created everything, why do we have the AIDS virus and birth defects? Why do fossils show millions of years of struggle and death, and mass extinctions? Who’d want to pray to a ‘god’ who wiped out 99 percent of all the species he/she/it supposedly created?”

Maybe you’ve wondered about some of these questions yourself. Perhaps you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and you love the spiritual truths in the Bible and its promise of life in heaven forever. But privately, almost subconsciously, you’ve wondered, “Is the Christian faith any more real than other faiths? If I’d been born in a Muslim country, would I be a Muslim? Is the Bible really any different from the ‘holy books’ of other religions? Hasn’t science really shown it’s foolish to take the Bible literally?”

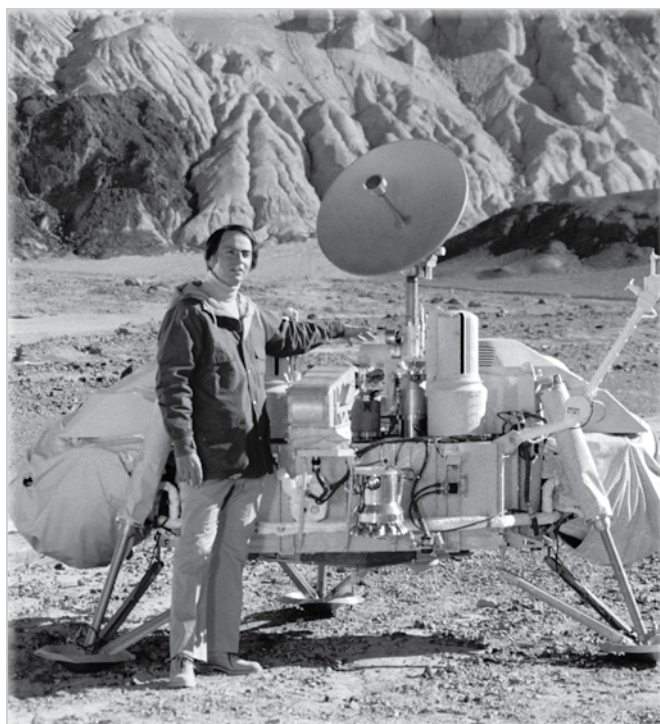
Or, maybe you have a solid foundation for your own faith, but you have friends, family, and people you love who just won’t accept the free gift of new life in Christ, and you wonder how to reach them. Lots of religions promise a “warm, fuzzy feeling,” many with far fewer demands than “dying to self and living for Christ.” Is there any reason to think the Christian faith enables us to understand ourselves and our world any better than other faiths do? Are there answers for people who excuse their disbelief by saying science has disproved the Bible and the Christian faith?

If you don’t need this *Creation Foundations* series to strengthen your own faith, you may need it to be a more effective witness in a world steeped in evolutionism. God, through the apostle Peter, commands us to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you . . .” (1 Pet. 3:15). And God through the apostle Paul warns us how evolutionary humanism and philosophic naturalism (“science falsely so-called”) has been a stumbling block keeping many from coming to Christ: “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust; avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of

science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith” (1 Tim. 6:20).

I certainly needed a “creation evangelist” in my own life. From a young age through my first few years as a professor of biology, I was a naturalistic evolutionist. I believed and taught, enthusiastically, that all life — including yours and mine — was produced by time, chance, and millions of years of struggle and death, NOT by the plan and purpose of some so-called “Creator God.” Indeed, I thought and taught that God was a figment of the human imagination, created in our image when we reached a stage in evolution where our minds could project dreams of an ideal future and create a god to lead us to victory (often over the corpses of other human beings who had made up images of different gods).

“*Science*” was my god. While philosophers and politicians struggled with less and less success over older and older questions, scientists conquered diseases and put mankind on the moon and were on the way to conquering aging and poverty and reaching onward to the stars! At age ten, I wrote a constitution for the first government of Mars, hoping I would be among the scientists leading the conquest of space. As a college freshman, I tried to found a new discipline, “experimental philosophy,” convinced that science could finally determine what truly produced human happiness. In all this, I was considered a “nice guy” and actually felt sympathy for Christians who hoped for heaven and believed “love conquers all.” But I wanted my students to realize that it was millions of years of struggle and death that had brought all life, including ours, into existence, and only science — *not* some god of our own imagination — could finally lead us past the



Sagan and Viking: Famous for his television series *Cosmos*, evolutionist Dr. Carl Sagan poses with a model of the Viking lander in Death Valley, California.
Image Credit: NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory

era of struggle and death into a new evolutionary age of universal happiness and peace.

Then a chemistry professor (Dr. Charles Signorino) at the college where I was teaching invited me to his home for a Bible study. I had no desire to study a dusty, out-moded, pre-scientific book like the Bible — but I did have a real desire for free coffee and donuts, so my wife and I began attending the Bible study. What followed was an incredible three-year “war of the world views” raging in my mind, paralleling the great debate that has raged in the hearts and minds of thinking people in the world during the past 200 years.

At bottom, there are two and only two possible views for the ultimate origin of the universe — time, matter-energy, and space. Either (1) the universe made itself, or (2) the universe was made by transcendent power outside the limits of time, matter-energy, and space.

These two are *mutually exhaustive* (i.e., they cover all possibilities), and they are *mutually exclusive* (i.e., one is true and the other is false). One view can be described by the pithy phrase attributed to Carl Sagan, “The cosmos is all there is or was, or ever will be,” and the other in the often-quoted first verse of the Bible, “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

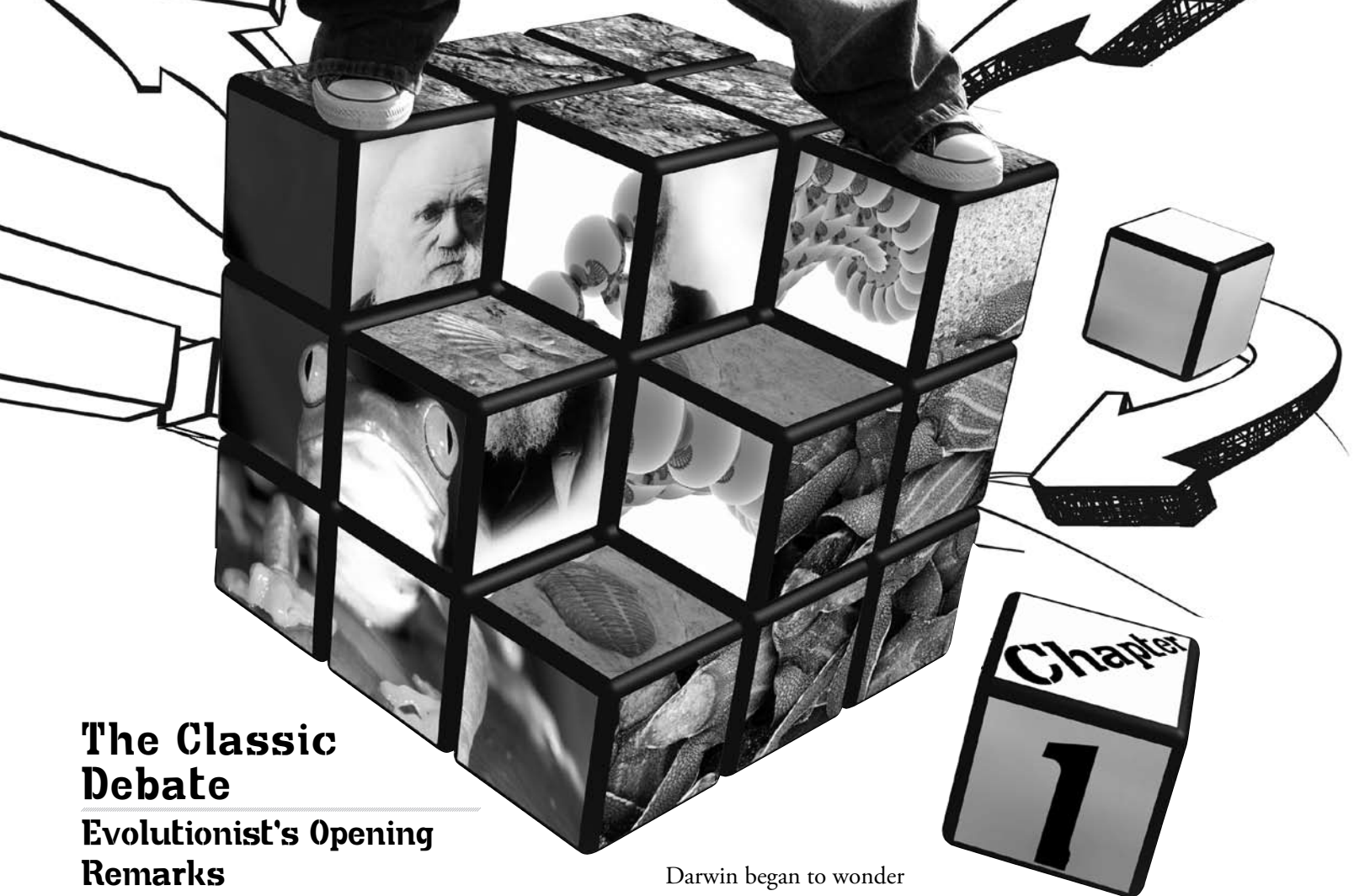


On a less ultimate plane, this “war of the world views” has centered on the classic debate between scientists building on the *biblical record* of the earth’s history and scientists espousing what’s called either *evolutionary humanism* or *philosophic naturalism*. As is popular today, we’ll call proponents of these opposing viewpoints “creationists” and “evolutionists,” respectively (and respectfully).

In this *Creation Foundations* series, we’ll examine both creationist and evolutionist perspectives, their *assumptions* and *implications*, and most especially differences in their understandings of *scientific evidences* related to origins. Can either of these views sustain a burden of proof? Are compromises between these two views possible or desirable? I hope you conclude, as I did, that *what we see in God’s world agrees with what we read in God’s Word!*

As a “preview of coming attractions,” let’s look at the stark contrast between creationist and evolutionist positions summarized in opening remarks of “the classic debate.”





The Classic Debate

Evolutionist's Opening Remarks

Anyone here a Christian? Anyone believe the Bible? Well, you won't after this lecture is over. Evolution's a fact, and science can prove it.

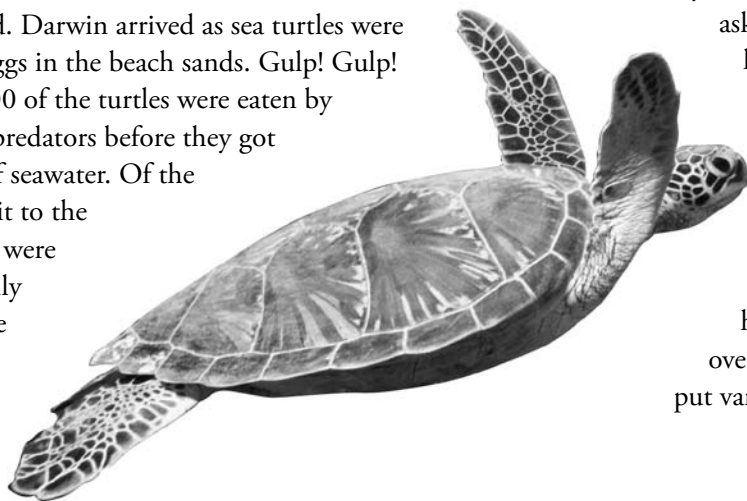
Now let me ask you an easier question. Anyone here want to sail around the world? That was an opportunity given to a young man named Charles Darwin. Darwin hadn't succeeded in medical or ministerial schools, but he really loved collecting bugs. So, his father booked him as ship's naturalist aboard the *H.M.S. Beagle*, departing England in 1831 for a five-year voyage around the world.

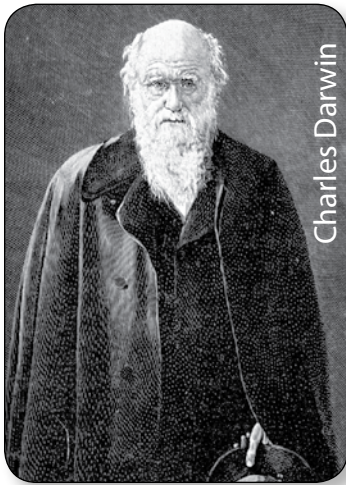
His stop at the Galapagos Islands, 600 miles (900 km) west of Ecuador in the Pacific, was destined to change the world. Darwin arrived as sea turtles were hatching from eggs in the beach sands. Gulp! Gulp! Perhaps 97 in 100 of the turtles were eaten by birds and other predators before they got their first taste of seawater. Of the three that made it to the sea, perhaps two were eaten, leaving only an average of one survivor among 100 hatchlings.

Darwin began to wonder how an "all-powerful, all-loving" Creator could be so cruel, wasteful, and inefficient. (His growing disbelief in a powerful, loving Creator may have been pushed over the line when his daughter died at the innocent age of nine.) Everywhere he looked, Darwin was confronted with what he later called the "struggle for survival." The ship's Captain Fitzroy professed to be a Christian, but when young Darwin

asked him how God could be so cruel, he had no answer.

Darwin did notice the incredible beauty and diversity of life on his voyage, too. For a young man from England, the astonishing variety of tropical plants, birds, and bugs must have been awe-inspiring. Yet it was over 20 years before Darwin finally put variety and struggle together into the





revolutionary/evolutionary concept that burst the bonds of Victorian Christianity: “survival of the fittest.” His concept was simple, yet profound, a logical conclusion based on a few observations. Darwin observed (1) that only a few of each species came through the struggle for survival, and (2) that each species included

individuals with a variety of traits. Logically, (3) some varieties would be more likely to survive than others — survival of the fittest! Add it up for yourself!

$$\begin{array}{r}
 1. \text{ struggle} \\
 + 2. \text{ variety} \\
 \hline
 = 3. \text{ survival of the fittest}
 \end{array}$$

Based on analogy to artificial selection practiced by plant and animal breeders (including himself), Darwin called this “three-step process” *natural selection*.

Evolutionists saw almost immediately that Darwin had discovered the means by which nature itself, not some capricious Creator, would continuously produce ever more varied and improved organisms — the appearance of design, without a Designer! Darwin summarized his theory with these words in the closing paragraphs of his *Origin of Species*, published in 1859: “Thus, from the war of nature, famine, and death, the production of higher animals directly follows.”

Natural selection, the “*war of nature*” that originally drove Darwin from God, now replaced God as the author of all living things.

Think about it for yourself. Is there a struggle for survival? Yes. Is there variety among living things? Yes. Are some varieties more likely to survive than others? Yes. $1 + 2 = 3$: struggle + variety = survival of the fittest. No wonder people think Bible-believing Christians are foolish. They can’t count to three. Evolution’s a fact. Most Christians accept evolution, and the Church is embarrassed by biblical literalists today just as it was in Galileo’s time. Evolution’s a fact; we see it going on all around us today.

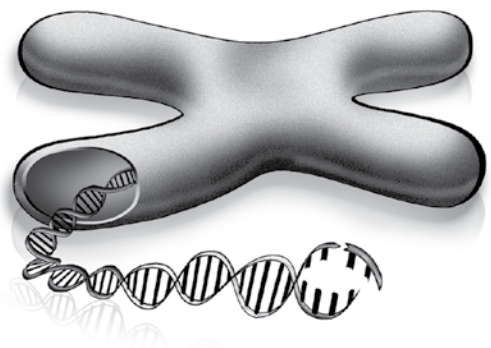
The amount of evolutionary change seen in a human lifetime or even a century is slight, like the change in the wing color of peppered moths that followed the Industrial Revolution in England. But imagine what would happen

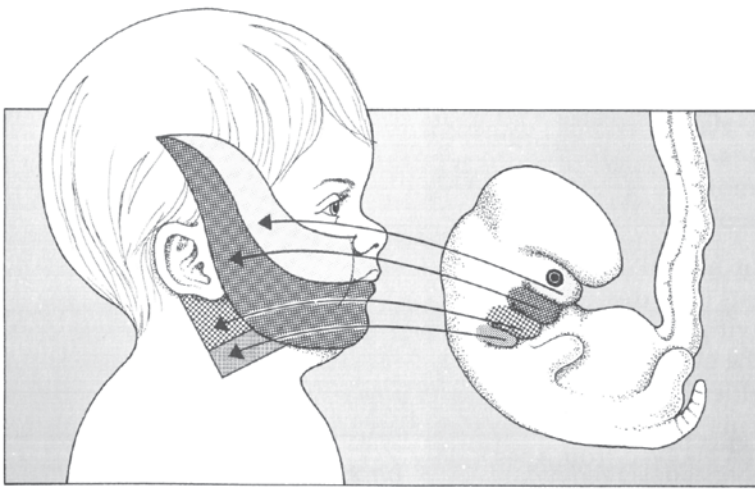
if natural selection continued, trait after trait, for millions and billions of years. Random changes in DNA, called mutations, would increase hereditary variability immensely. The many harmful mutations would be eliminated by natural selection, but the beneficial ones would be saved for countless generations.

Biblical literalists are stuck with a six-day creation that only goes back 6,000 years, but evolution is based on “geologic time” confirmed by radioactive decay dating that goes back to the earth’s beginning, 4.6 billion years ago. Charles Lyell, lawyer and amateur geologist working in England in the early 1800s just ahead of Darwin, was the first to push past the biblical “time limit.” He noticed the slow rates of sediment accumulation and erosion. Simple calculations show it would take far more than biblical time to build up the rock layers at the Grand Canyon, then cut through them a mile deep. Besides, argued Lyell, scientists should base their judgments of what happened in the past on their observations of the present, a principle called uniformitarianism, often summarized as “the present is the key to the past.” Lyell provided the time required for the small changes produced by natural selection to add up to big evolution changes, from molecules to mankind! As the late great Carl Sagan once put it, “The secrets of evolution are time and death.” Over eons of time, the continuous death of the less fit paves the way for continuous evolution of the more fit.

Laboratory experiments, such as those of Stanley Miller, and our exploding knowledge of DNA show us how chemical evolution from non-life to life could have occurred. Nothing supernatural appears to have been involved, but only time, chance, and the particularly suitable conditions of the ancient earth. Recent meteorite evidence suggests life may have evolved even earlier on Mars, and it’s the height of narrow-minded religious bigotry to believe that similar processes would not have produced life on many of the millions and billions of other planets in our universe. What a waste of space if life exists only here.

Man is the first animal on earth to look back over his evolutionary history. As we do so, we learn things that

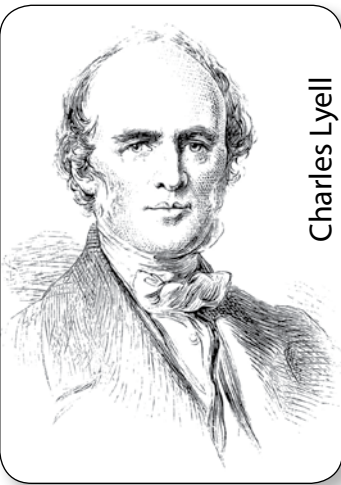




The structures in an embryo that evolutionists call gill slits actually have an important developmental function.

help us understand ourselves. Why do we have useless organs (vestigial) like the appendix and tailbone? They functioned in our ancestors. Why does the human embryo have *gill slits* and a *yolk sac*? We shared a common ancestor with fish and reptiles, which also explains why the bone pattern in our arm is like that in the forelimb of a whale, a bat, and a bear (homology).

More importantly, why do we do things that are harmful to other people? It's not "sin" or failure to live up to some "god's" moral code; it's the war of nature that brought us into being in the first place.



Charles Lyell

Fossils allow us to trace the evolutionary history of life on earth through the geologic column. The first abundant fossils show us life on earth over half a billion, perhaps 530 million, years ago, consisted only of simple sea creatures, like tri-

lobites and lampshells. About 400 million years ago, the first land plants and animals appeared in the fossil sequence. Dinosaurs ruled from about 220 to 65 million years ago. Fossils such as "Lucy" show how mankind evolved from ape-like ancestors during just the last 3½ million years. If the whole 4½ billion years of earth's history were condensed into a film one year long, our fragile species would not appear until the last second before the end of the movie. Surely the earth was not created as man's dominion, as the Bible says.

But we're not without hope. We've reached a level of consciousness that enables us to direct our own further evolution. We're already taking control of DNA, the molecule of heredity. Perhaps we can remake ourselves into our own image of what mankind really ought to be. We're reaching for the stars. There's simply no limit to what mankind can do.

As we look ever deeper into space, we're looking ever further back into time, back ultimately to the big bang that brought our universe into being. Biblical literalists embarrass themselves and other Christians by trying to claim God created a universe

6,000 years ago that includes galaxies billions of light years away! As we continue to search the heavens, inevitably we'll encounter other life forms, some undoubtedly more intelligent than our own. It may be in deep space that we find the final links in the evolutionary chain that turned particles into people, people like you and me who can finally appreciate the stardust from which we came. It was the laws of science and properties of matter that transformed dust into life, not the whimsical plan of some mythical "creator," and we are responsible only to ourselves. There is an awesome grandeur in this view of life that far transcends what is offered by the tribal god of the Hebrews and his son; evolution is an exhilarating push for discovery to expand the frontiers of scientific knowledge, "to boldly go where no one has gone before"!

* * * * *

Wow! Never underestimate the power or appeal of evolution! But is there an alternative to evolution more consistent with the scientific evidence? Most of the major scientific disciplines were founded in the two centuries *before* Darwin by scientists who considered themselves creationists. Let's see how a classic creationist looks at origins questions today.

Form your foundation.

The author once believed what evolutionists still teach, that all life (including yours!) came from millions of years of struggle and death (Darwin's "war of nature") and not from the plan and purpose of a caring Creator.

Building Inspection

- Which of these questions is used to challenge the Christian faith and belief in the Bible?
 - ☐ Did Noah take dinosaurs on the ark?
 - ☐ If God created only Adam and Eve, where did their son Cain get his wife?
 - ☐ If creation should be taught in schools, should Muslim and Buddhist views be taught as well as Christian?
 - ☐ Why would an all-powerful, all-loving God create the AIDS virus and allow birth defects?
 - ☐ If fossils and living things show struggle and death, does that mean God used millions of years of struggle and death to create?
 - ☐ All of the above
- The author began his college biology teaching career as an enthusiastic evolutionist; what enticed him to study the Bible and the evidence for creation?
 - ☐ the scientific search for truth
 - ☐ a spiritual encounter with Jesus Christ
 - ☐ a promise he made if God would get him out of trouble
 - ☐ intellectual honesty and academic curiosity
 - ☐ free coffee and donuts
 - ☐ none of the above
- Match each Bible quotation below with one of the three Bible references below.
Genesis 1:1 *1 Peter 3:15* *1 Timothy 6:20*
 - _____ a. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."
 - _____ b. "... avoiding profane and vain babblings of science falsely so-called. . ."
 - _____ c. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."
- Darwin believed evolution was produced by the "_____ of nature," a ceaseless "_____ for survival," plus "_____ " among members of a species which, he said, led to "survival of the _____."
- Which of these arguments was NOT used by the "classic evolutionist" in his/her opening remarks?
 - ☐ Experiments show DNA and living cells could evolve without help from God.
 - ☐ People and other animals harm each other because of the struggle for survival, not because of sin.
 - ☐ The human body contains no useless, leftover parts, because evolution eliminated all of them.
 - ☐ Fossils and radioactive decay dating show the earth is way older than the Bible allows.
 - ☐ We must look to science, not God, to make the world a better place to live.
 - ☐ None of the above; the evolutionist made all the claims above.
- Ultimately there are only two views about the origin of the universe: either the universe _____, or the universe was made by _____. In the classic and current debate, the first view is held by (creationists/evolutionists) _____ and the second by _____ (creationists/evolutionists).