

# Strategically dismantling the evolutionary idea strongholds

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A survey of 600 student-aged respondents (aged 14 to 24) produced 404 responses and 292 respondents completed the entire survey. The study revealed that only four of 10 evolutionary topics make up 72% of the 'best evidences' for evolution. These four are human evolution (25%), evolution theory proper (mutations, selection/adaptation) (21%), fossils and transitions (15%), and science in general (i.e. as an authority) (11%). Thus, these topics need to be focused on in creation presentations and journals. To evaluate the alignment between these 10 evolutionary topics and the emphasis placed on them by creationist speakers when debunking evolution, 32 experienced creation speakers were asked to assign weights to the 10 topics. Creation speakers believed that the 'deep time', evolution theory proper, and dinosaurs were the most important topics to address. The reasons for these differences are discussed and strategies for creation ministries are recommended.

Many in the biblical creation movement have found 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 inspiring:

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

The research explored the *strongholds*, *imaginations*, and *high things* that are exalted above the *knowledge of God* that we are empowered by God to cast down. The Greek word translated *imaginations* in this passage is *logismos* and means an *imagination*, *reckoning*, *computation*, or *reasoning*. Specifically, “reconstructing the [evolutionary] past requires imagination and theory as much as brute fossil finds”.<sup>1</sup> Given that molecules-to-human evolution has never been observed and requires enormous speculation to even postulate it might have happened in the deep, unseen past, evolution could be considered such an imagination. Secular media and education systems now are the strongholds (established systems) and high things (authorities and icons) that attempt to hold up the imagination of evolution. These strongholds and high things use the imagination of evolution to stand against the knowledge of God—the saving knowledge of a creator to whom we all must give an account (Romans 1).

The good news is that we have information for pulling down these strongholds and high things that hold up the evolution imagination. These weapons must be forged by prayer, careful thought, and research, and then used in battle with faith and action. The Word encourages us to work in faith a labour of love with patience (1 Thessalonians 1:3) and to enter into battle “by the word of truth, by the power

of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left” (2 Corinthians 6:7).

In the case of creation apologetics, it is critical to know just exactly what the imaginations, strongholds, and high things are—their shape, composition, and nature. Paul employed this strategy when he opened the debate with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens by *beginning with the creation account* (Acts 17:16–34). Paul integrated Genesis into his evangelical outreach by establishing there is a “God that made the world and all things therein” who “giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” and “made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth”.

Darwin, no doubt due to his theological education at Cambridge, and the requirement that Cambridge students study Paley’s evidences, realized the major reason most people give for believing in God is the evidence of the creation all around us. To, in his words, ‘murder God’, required him to come up with another creator, and this creator was evolution by natural selection.<sup>2</sup> Darwin was so successful in his alternative creation theory that today over 95% of all leading scientists are evolutionists, and most of these are atheists.

One concept that is helpful for defining the ‘evolutionary imaginations’ that bind the minds of unbelievers and some Christians is a *semantic network*. This term is used to define a knowledge framework between interrelated concepts. With the evolutionist, this ‘evolutionary webbing’ clouds their thinking and darkens their understanding, preventing them from seeing the truth about origins, and the authority of God’s Word. To some Christians, the semantic network of evolutionary ideas becomes intertwined with sections of God’s Word that they accept, but not without creating

cognitive dissonance and uncertainty in the realm of origins and the authority of Scripture. God's Word is trumped by the 'high thing' of 'science' and millions of years and many local floods that are nowhere found in Scripture.

When reaching out to those trapped in the web of evolutionary falsehoods, we, like Paul in Athens, must be strategic. The first step in this strategy is to learn exactly what the specific 'imaginings' are that are standing between those we are trying to reach and the 'knowledge of God'. These 'imaginings' make up the knowledge strongholds that keep people from knowing God. What are the specific pillars of evolution theory that are the most believable to Christians and non-Christians alike? What specific evolutionary lies are causing many believers to leave the faith?<sup>3</sup> Knowing these specific imaginings will help guide Creation Ministries to focus on certain areas when it comes to dismantling the lie and constructing the truth.

To illustrate the importance, we will contrast two different creation ministry approaches. Consider situation A: Bob, a passionate creation speaker, learns that his son's biology class is taught 'whale evolution' as fact and decides to give a 'Debunking Whale Evolution' talk at his local church. If 100 people show up, including many skeptics who were asked to attend by church members, what should he cover? Bob's talk is excellent—he effectively dispels the idea that whales evolved over millions of years. How many people in the audience are transformed by the presentation? Likely only a scant few. Situation B is the same, but the topic is human evolution. How many people would be swayed to abandon the lie of evolution in exchange for the truth if this topic was highlighted rather than whale evolution? According to our research, many times more!

To find answers to these questions and define the evolutionary imaginings, we surveyed<sup>4</sup> student-aged respondents (aged 14 to 24) to identify the 'best' and 'next best' evidences for evolution (regardless of whether they believed in evolution). Their open-ended responses (404 total responses, of which 292 were complete) were then coded into 10 categories (see table 1).

## Methodology

The polling was done by the professional polling agency, Pollfish, which stops after they obtain the number requested, which in this case was limited to 600 requested subjects, as it was felt this would give a large enough sample to make reasonable deductions given the budget limits of those sponsoring the survey. Of the requested sample, 292 subjects properly and fully completed the form (49% usable) and produced interpretable, valid responses to either. This usable response rate is common for this type of survey. This is why captive audiences such as college classes are preferred

but have their own problems such as lack of a wide level of demographic variables.

The sample surveyed was: 44.7% male, 55.3% female; 37.5% between the ages of 14 and 17, 62.5% between 18 and 24; and 60.2% identified themselves as 'Christian'. Interestingly, there was no statistical significance at the .05 level difference between the frequencies of the 'best evolution evidences' when the data file was split between 'Christians' and 'non-Christians'.<sup>5</sup> The location of the respondents was not asked, but likely relates to Amazon customers, thus a reasonably valid sample of middle and upper-middle-class consumers.

They were asked: "Regardless of whether you believe in evolution, what is the best evidence that evolution is true?" or "Regardless of whether you believe in evolution, what is the next best evidence that evolution is true?" The 308 that were not useful responded with empty or bogus answers, such as the spaghetti monster is the creator, or one or two-word answers that were not classifiable such as those responses that were loaded with obscenities. The sample polling subjects were obtained when they exited from an Amazon shopping experience by offering a \$10 gift card to every *n*<sup>th</sup> person who participated. In this case, the screening question was age-related, specifically 14 to 24 years old. If funding can be obtained, this survey should be replicated to refine the results by factors such as education level and major area of study, occupation, and conclusions about origins. Nonetheless, as shown by the data, such as the importance of the evidence for human evolution and evolution proper, several clear conclusions can be made from the existing data.

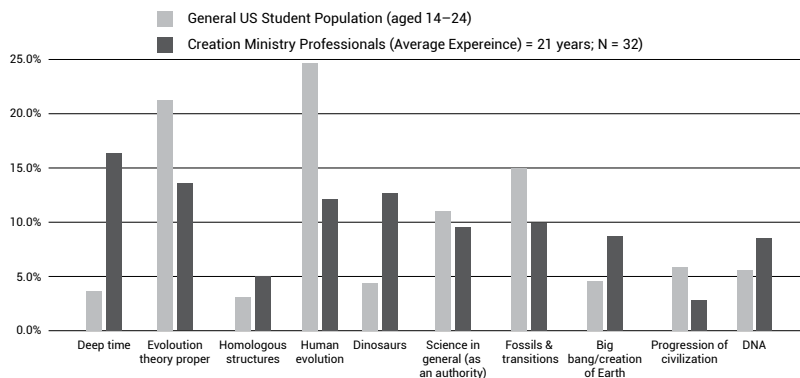
Because in some cases the coded responses overlapped between subjects, and several listed the same or nearly the same responses to the 'best' and 'next best', no priority or higher emphasis was given between these two choices.

To determine the alignment between these 'best evolutionary evidences' and the topics that are typically 'debunked' by creation speakers, 32 experienced creation speakers (with an average of 21 years' experience in creation ministry) were asked to distribute 100 points among the 10 topics to indicate the emphasis they would place on each during a hypothetical one-hour presentation that had the single goal of 'debunking' the evolutionary beliefs held by students aged 14 to 24. The results are shown graphically in figure 1.

Creation speakers selected typically included persons with at least a bachelor's degree, most had a master's degrees or higher, with 15 or more years' experience in speaking in this area and a reputation as an effective creation speaker. Most were also popular speakers involved with a formal creation ministry, such as Creation Ministries International, and most had many publications and/or books to their credit.

**Table 1.** Top 10 'best evidences' for evolution

Category Title	Definition	US Students (Aged 14–24, N = 292)		Average Importance by Creation Speakers (N = 32)
		Response Counts	Percentage	
Human Evolution	General human evolution, similarities between humans and apes, humans progressing over time (e.g. getting smarter), human-chimp DNA similarities, vestigial structures, embryo development.	100	25%	12%
Evolution Theory Proper (Selection/Adaptation)	Adaptation, Darwin's theory (proper), vertical evolution, natural selection, speciation, evolution theory (proper), mutations, Ice Age (e.g. extinctions).	86	21%	14%
Fossils and Transitions	General fossil data used by secular education and media as evidence for evolution theory (including 'transitional forms').	61	15%	10%
Science in General (as an authority)	Science as an authority (e.g. 'scientists say evolution happened', 'hundreds of studies have proved evolution to be true').	45	11%	10%
Progression of Civilization	Progression of civilization over time, such as societies becoming more advanced, development of technology, knowledge advancement, etc.	24	6%	3%
DNA	DNA studies in general showing the similarities between creatures (not specifically humans and chimps, listed above) and the evolution of the cell.	23	6%	9%
Big Bang/Creation of Earth	The 'big bang' and how this shows the creation/development of Earth and the universe.	19	5%	9%
Dinosaurs	Dinosaurs in general (including their extinction, place in time, etc.).	18	5%	13%
Deep Time	Deep time, including geologic time/layers, carbon dating, radiometric dating rocks/strata.	15	4%	17%
Homologous Structures	The similarity of structures between animals.	13	3%	5%



**Figure 1.** Comparison between the most convincing evolutionary evidences from the US student sample (aged 14–24, n = 292) and the emphasis on the same topics by creation ministry professionals (n = 32)

### The level of confidence of the study

We ran a population sampling study to determine the level of confidence of our study which revealed, based on 39,183,891 people aged about 15 to 24, that our sample of 292 had a 95% confidence interval of plus or minus 5.7% reliability (precision). Doubling the study sample to 588 would have a 95% confidence level of 4% from 5.7%, indicating that we can be confident that our sample of 292 represents the population at large (young Amazon users who responded to

the study), and a larger sample would have likely only better confirmed what we found in our study.

## Results and discussion

The results are shown graphically in figure 1. The most pronounced gap between the students and creation speakers was observed on the topic of ‘deep time’, which was only mentioned by 4% of the student population but given a 17% weight by creation speakers. We believe this is because creation speakers rightfully understand that radiometric dating is foundational to evolution theory in general, and therefore should be addressed in biblical creation ministry efforts. Conversely, the students obviously felt that this area was not a major concern, although it no doubt will be if they continue to learn about the creation position on evolution.

Another interesting observation was the responses from the student-aged sample regarding the general authority of ‘science’ as evidence for evolution. Comments such as ‘what science has found’ or ‘what science can prove’ made up 11% of the ‘best evidences for evolution’ offered. This finding clearly indicates that biblical creation ministries must differentiate between observational and historical science. Using scientific dating methods to speculate that the earth is over 4 Ga old is very different than applying scientific principles to advance the field of medicine. Many students fail to understand this distinction.

The topic of dinosaurs also revealed a gap between the two groups. Only 5% of the student-aged population placed dinosaurs on the ‘best evidence’ list, but the creation speakers placed a 13% weight on this topic. The creation speakers may have placed this high emphasis on dinosaurs because the topic is both interesting (i.e. it draws a crowd) and it encapsulates several of the other evolution pillars, such as deep time (i.e. fresh biomaterials<sup>6</sup>), evolution theory proper, and fossils and transitions (e.g. the complete missing dinosaur ancestors and transitions).

Perhaps the most remarkable finding was the emphasis placed by the student-aged population on human evolution. A total 25% of the ‘best evidences for evolution’ fell into this category, thus this topic should become a priority in biblical creation ministries.

Looking at the entirety of the results, only *four* evolutionary topics made up 72% of the evolution’s ‘best evidences’: human evolution (25%), evolution theory proper (mutations, selection/adaptation) (21%), fossils and transitions (15%), and science in general as an authority (11%). Thus, if a creation speaker had only an hour to present his case, the talk would be more likely to succeed with 72% of the audience by focusing on these top four topics!

## Conclusion

This study should help creation speakers to tailor their presentations to be more effective by focusing on the topics that are of concern to most audiences of young people, aged 14 to 24, as well as adults in general. It will also help publishers of creation literature to tailor their contents to the interests of the interested public and others.

## References

1. Michael, R. and Travis, J., *Evolution: The First Four Billion Years*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, p. 462, 2009.
2. Bergman, J., *The Dark Side of Darwin*, New Leaf Press, Green Forest, AR, 2015.
3. Bergman, J., *Evolution is the Doorway to Atheism: 52 Case Histories of Prominent Atheists and others*, Leafcutter Press, Southworth, WA, expected in 2017.
4. Survey results were completed in July 2016 using Pollfish.com.
5. The frequency counts for the 10 topics for the ‘Christian only’ respondents were 23.2%, 20.3%, 15.4%, 12.4%, 6.6%, 6.6%, 3.7%, 4.1%, 3.7%, and 3.7% (topics listed in the same order).
6. Brian, T., Original biomaterials in fossils, *Creation Research Science Quarterly* 51(4), 2015.

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