

Survey of Creation Apologetics Used in the WELS

A Survey and Report by Mark Bergemann, January 2016

Nearly 1,000 WELS pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and lay Sunday School teachers completed a creation apologetics survey in fall 2015. The WELS consistently and correctly teaches the Biblical position of a recent creation and a world-wide flood. That said, we do hold various thoughts on how to approach the lie of evolution.

One purpose of this survey was to gather information on how much support various creation apologetic methods have among our called workers and Sunday School teachers. A larger purpose was to encourage a synod-wide discussion of creation apologetics. This survey was conducted on behalf of the Lutheran Science Institute (LSI), a WELS affiliated group. Opinions and conclusions expressed in this report are those of the report author and are not necessarily the position of LSI. LSI publishes various creationist views which are consistent with Scripture.¹

Everyone is strongly encouraged to read ALL the comments made by those who took this survey. By reading all of their words you get a fuller understanding of how important creation apologetics are in the eyes of our WELS called workers and Sunday School teachers. Select quotes are in the body of this report. Complete unedited responses are available in Appendix 2. A Pdf is available at www.LutheranScience.org/survey

Please send any comments or questions about this survey to Mark Bergemann at office@LutheranScience.org or mail to: Lutheran Science Institute, 13390 W. Edgewood Ave., New Berlin WI 53151.

Principal Conclusions

1. Many or most WELS called workers see evolution as a significant issue for the church.
2. WELS called workers overwhelmingly agree that our schools should teach some of the scientific problems faced by evolution.
3. Many WELS called workers see a need for good creation apologetic materials.
4. There is a wide diversity of creation apologetic methods used by our WELS called workers.
5. Our WELS called workers are split on how to define “science.” One definition sees evolution as science. The other definition sees the exact opposite: evolution is not science.
6. Many WELS called workers have misconceptions about science and evolution.
7. WELS called workers are solidly young earth creationists (YEC).
8. WELS laity who teach Sunday School share these attributes.
9. Many WELS teachers view the effect of science on faith differently than many WELS pastors.

How Should the Church Address the Temptation of Evolution?

735 (75% of 978) respondents answered this question (Q #12). The words of a high school teacher seem to summarize what so many of our called workers answered, “Confront it head on using first God’s clear Word and how the world began at creation. Secondly, allow science to be the support for God’s Word, not taking the place of the Word.” A pastor also provides a good summary, “With Scripture, with science, with apologetics, with honest discussion.”

¹ LSI, “What We Believe,” www.LutheranScience.org/Believe (accessed January 21, 2016)

516 respondents (70% of those answering this question) specifically mentioned the Means Of Grace, and 235 respondents (32%) advocated using reason or science. A large portion mentioned both, as do the two quotes above.

A pastor answers, “Aggressively, because this continues to be one area where young Christians really develop doubt and uncertainty about the trustworthiness of the Scriptures.” Another pastor writes, “We can't bury our head in the sand and hope our children get through their formative years without too much confusion on the matter. We need to discuss the teachings with openness and honesty. ...I think our children should be able to clearly articulate the position of an evolutionist before they go to college and at least some of its scientific weaknesses. I think our children should also be able to clearly articulate the position of a young earth creationist and some of the apparent scientific weaknesses of this position as well. ...Finally, clear instruction on the incompatibility of God's Word and the theory of evolution (and any 'Christian' concession or spin-off of it).”

Intensity and Candor of Our Response to Evolution Is Emphasized with Words Like:

- Head On, 21 respondents.
- Boldly, Vigorously, Aggressively, Forceful, Unafraid, Not Being Afraid, 11
- Straight On, Straight Forward, Directly, 10.
- Openly, Open Discussion, with Openness, 8.
- Honestly, with Honesty, Frankly, with Frank Discussion, 8.

Christian Schools Should Teach a Few of the Scientific Problems Evolution Faces

922 respondents (95%) agreed or somewhat agreed, while only 27 (3%) disagreed or somewhat disagreed. The comments of at least 150 respondents advocated teaching evolution to our students. Almost no one spoke against it. A common comment was to suggest we teach more than a few problems faced by evolution. See page 17 for details.

Important Issue for Many

It is clear that addressing the temptation of evolution is important to many respondents, based on their extensive suggestions on how to deal with evolution. Several dozen went even further and verbalized how very important it is from their viewpoint.

A pastor writes, “I am VERY THANKFUL that a group like this [LSI] exists in our synod, as I believe this kind of work is SUPER important (and I do a lot of work with young people, so I think that opinion has some validity).” [Capitalization in original.]

An MLC professor emails, “Thanks for allowing me to respond to your survey. As stated previously, I do believe it is a good step in prompted dialogue on this campus and elsewhere.”

A Teacher answers Q #12 (How Should the Church Address the Temptation of Evolution?), “By doing just that. Addressing it. They should not remain silent and ignore the elephant in the room for what is being taught everywhere else in society.”

A high school teacher writes, “Billions of dollars invested into resources, research, and advertisements make some evolutionary statements seem pretty convincing for many of my students.”

A high school teacher with a biology degree writes, "This is an essential topic that we MUST address with our young people in a compelling way that shows we fully understand the science." [Capitols in original.]

A Teacher answers Q #12, "Through sermons when appropriate. Must be included as part of the design/goals of any Sunday School (adult/children), youth group, or Christian education."

Another high school teacher writes, "Scientific theories often come across as truthful because of all of the 'facts' that are sited--regardless if they are truth. The person presenting the information can be VERY convincing." [Capitalization in original.]

A lay person with a degree in physics writes, "This was a good survey. I'll spread this. Thank you. This is a subject the church needs to address, and I'm glad to see this. God bless."

A teacher writes, "Some scientific theories can be VERY convincing--unless you have ALL the facts." [Capitalization in original.]

Some survey respondents gave contact information which resulted in email discussions. After we discussed the diversity of creation apologetics used in the WELS, one WELS teacher wrote, "Blessings on your endeavors. Your work indicates a need for a clearly articulated statement in the WELS."

A teacher says, "Thanks for putting together. This is an important topic to explore."

A lay Sunday School and VBS teacher responds, "I don't know," as to how the church should address evolution. That SS teacher then confesses that evolution is a personal struggle, "Since I'm trained as an engineer and work and believe in science, I've struggled with the concept of evolution. It is hard for me to reject the science behind evolution yet accept the science I work with every day in my job. I treat creation as a mystery that I cannot fully understand."

Unimportant Issue for Few

Very few respondents minimized the need for the church to address the temptation of evolution.

A pastor answered how to address evolution, "By assigning it a fairly low priority. We have much bigger fish to fry. I don't like the idea of being part of the 'anti-evolution' denomination (or the 'anti-gay marriage'/ 'anti-scouting'/ anti-anything denomination). I want my denomination's identity to be based on the grace of God and the person of Jesus."

A pastor writes, "I have never had an adult enrolled in instruction class ever refuse to join the church because they accepted evolution and could not accept a 7-day creation in 35 years."

Opposing the Use of Science in Our Apologetic

I counted 21 whose comments seem to speak against using arguments from reason or science in our creation apologetic. They used restrictive words like "just teach," or "only use." I did not count those who answered Q #12 without restrictive words, even when they answered with something like "Teach Genesis," since so many who said those same things then wrote in the next comment box that we should also use science.

Many of these 21 comments are listed below. Note that ALL of these 21 respondents agreed (14) or somewhat agreed (7) to Question #22, "Christian schools should teach a few of the scientific problems evolution faces." Therefore these 21 are not against using reason in apologetics to the extent their comments seem to indicate.

One teacher's entire comment is, "Only use Bible."

One pastor's entire comment (spread over all three comment fields), "Share the gospel. Share the gospel. Share the gospel."

A pastor's entire comment is, "Stick with the Bible teaching and preaching."

Another pastor's entire comment is, "Biblical approach."

A pastor writes, "Teach bible doctrine and in no way yield. Stick with bible in basic truths, leave seeming problems to God."

A pastor answers Q #12, "Continuously yet carefully...as the confession of faith rather than as a scientific problem."

A lay person answers how the church should respond, "Just teach Gods Word. Be excited and thorough. Read Genesis."

A pastor wrote, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command. Human reason would dictate otherwise. I choose to approach the creation/evolution debate by faith and trust that Genesis and other references to creation in the Bible are true."

A pastor answers Q #12, "The ONLY way to do this is to start explaining/describing in an understandable way how we are sinful. We're not currently doing this. Anything else may be interesting, but is futile. I like science a LOT, but it is not the answer to this issue." [Capitalization in original.]

A pastor says, "While evolution is a false teaching, I'm not sure how much of a temptation it is. Keeping our kids firmly attached to the Word I think is the most important. I think teaching the theory that is accepted by many is a good thing, but I don't know that this needs to be an independent focus of Church as a whole."

A pastor writes, "I do NOT address it from a scientific viewpoint. There will always be counter answers. I address it from a moral viewpoint, the purpose of life." [Capitalization in original.]

A pastor states, "To narrow the church's focus to matters of physics or biology seems short-sighted."

A teacher quotes eight Bible passages and then says, "Do not underestimate the power of the Word of God to change opinions and to transform hearts."

A teacher says, "Present everything from a purely Biblical standpoint. Abstain from arguing or trying to convince others using facts. Let the Bible do the talking and our faith do the believing."

Supporting the Use of Science in Our Apologetic

At least 235 respondents advocated using arguments from reason or science in our apologetic.

A pastor states, "My opinion is that we can no longer just ignore the claims made by evolutionary scientists. We need to examine their teachings and offer rebuttals to our people. In short, we need to continue to do Apologetic work in this area."

A Pastor answers Q #12, "HEAD ON! I start my confirmation class with it every year, because Martin Luther didn't have to deal with Darwinism. All our young people should have memorized how to destroy this deadly theory, before we throw them back out there for school and university. Gospel alone / Holy Spirit brings one to faith - but science can be tool to help build a bridge. Depending upon who you are talking to, creation science can be very important, with others, not so much. A good tool to have in our hands. God bless your work!" [Capitalization in original.]

A pastor suggests, "Present the biblical and scientific evidences for creation in every aspect of the ministry."

A pastor states, "Important to point out the logical flaws of evolution. When it comes to constructing a positive theory of creation we do not need to commit to a certain scenario but can mention several alternatives."

A pastor replies, "Clearly teach Genesis 1-3 to our children when young. Then raise and refute some of the attacks of evolution during catechism years. Offer teens further resources for their level, such as the video Deadly Deceptions, and the movies Evolution vs. God, and Expelled. (sources: AIG, Living Waters, and Ben Stein). I hope you are familiar with all three."

A pastor writes, "Demonstrate biblically that evolution's tenets are false and anti-God. Provide sound answers both biblically and scientifically to questions people have about evolution's claims."

A pastor says, "God's Word, the Bible, has its own power to convince. We also need to answer by critics by sound apologetics that help them stop and think."

A pastor's entire comment is, "Empower Christians young and old with apologetics."

A pastor comments, "Your question about science increasing the effectiveness of the gospel is really about apologetics. Apologetics and Science cannot increase the gospel's effectiveness; but apologetics is often necessary to get people to listen to the gospel."

A pastor answers Q #12, "Every way it can. It is important to provide evidence for a young earth and to provide students with philosophical and empirical defense of a young created earth. Always remembering Hebrews 11:3. Any way you can foster this will be greatly appreciated."

A Pastor answers Q #12, "Well-reasoned Scientific evidence under the authority of Scripture."

A pastor writes, "Teach the truth in all its beauty, simplicity and power. Tell the story without apology. Also train students in the use of apologetics. Thanks for the good work you do."

A Pastor answers Q #12, "Head on by showing its fallacies and the science behind creationism, e.g., Ken Ham, David Menton, etc. A proper teaching of science can lead to a hearing of the gospel. Only God's Word and sacraments can create and strengthen faith, not logical argument based on science."

Resources Desired

Large numbers of respondents mentioned using books, videos, and websites with creation apologetic information. Many also expressed a need for such resources. The Lutheran Science Institute (LSI) is working to meet that need. For example, our free classroom video compares creation with evolution and shows from Scripture how evolution is incompatible with the Christian faith. www.LutheranScience.org/video LSI hopes to develop many more classroom resources in the next few years.

A grade school teacher requests, "An easy to understand book comparing creation and evolution would be greatly beneficial. Maybe it already exists, but Lutherans should be made aware."

A teacher with over 30 years of experience states, "Provide curriculum materials which are classroom friendly and/or provide access to these materials through preferred websites. Some creation stuff out there isn't that reliable."

A Pastor answers Q #12, "Good education materials, particularly available for junior high and high school students. Stress the Bible account and show the unscientific evolution position."

A recent MLC MEd graduate and grade school teacher reveals, "My knowledge of evolution is limited - we didn't learn much about it in my LES or [Lutheran] high school. I wonder if that hampers my ability to answer students' questions effectively or to respond to adults who may ask me questions? I am very interested to read about the results of this survey and its implications for Lutheran schools and ministerial education. I've never heard of LSI until this survey."

A pastor suggests continually updated resources, "A stream of information is better than a single book or resource that may be dated in a few years' time."

A 20 year veteran grade school teacher states, "I think Lutheran teachers need more resources to combat evolution theory that can be used for their own personal study and also in the classroom. Thank you for this survey and this site which helps do just that!"

A pastor emailed in response to the survey, "Our Sunday Bible class is currently working through the [LSI] Q&A by Warren Krug and appreciating the information in it. Your email also prompted me to look at your website (I had not known about it before). Thank you for making this excellent material available. I promoted it in our bulletin announcements recently. Have you had much response to the survey? Keep up the good work!"

Another pastor replied to the survey email invitation, "Thank you for the chance to take this survey. It opened my eyes to the existence of this resource."

A pastor states, "Looking forward to the resources you offer."

A grade school teacher requests, "Give us the flaws of the evolutionary thinking. ...I don't know the specifics about evolution enough to teach my students the flaws of it."

A grade school teacher says, "The church needs to inform lay leaders as well as members. It would be helpful to have materials developed for the younger students too."

A teacher writes, "Have a variety of resources readily available for lay people of all ages."

A teacher answers how the church should respond, "By better informing us about evolution. I went to Christian school my whole life, and people run circles around me in this area."

A lay Sunday School teacher says, "I teach Sunday School, 4-5 grade. From that perspective, I would love to have a lesson cover evolution EVERY year. I want my lessons to include real-life situations the children may find themselves in where their knowledge of the Truth may be attacked to better prepare them. As a Sunday School teacher, I would need to have a simple, concise lesson plan to cover evolution's holes to my students within a 30 minute period. I have many public school children that would benefit from such a lesson." [Capitalization in original.]

A pastor relates, "I have often seen dogmatic assertions by conservative Christians, regarding science, which are now known to be patently false. I hesitate to get too dogmatic in fields which I know not well. I look for the lead from Christian scientists."

Lutheran Science Institute (LSI)

Of the 274 respondents who wrote in the final comment field, 38 (14%) took the time to thank and/or encourage LSI in its ministry. Several emailed thanks for the survey. Twenty-two also recommended creation apologetic materials from AIG, ICR, and other non-Lutheran creation groups. More than a few were pleased to learn that the WELS has a provider of such resources (LSI).

A pastor emailed in response to the survey, looking for ways to help LSI, "I want to raise the profile of the work of LSI in the congregation."

A teacher comments, "I am very interested to read about the results of this survey and its implications for Lutheran schools and ministerial education."

A pastor says, "I found this survey to be incredibly engaging. I look forward to seeing results and I hope that they are shared at some point. I also believe that many of these questions merit a blog post/paper detailing LSI's views on the statements in question. May God continue to bless the work of LSI."

A teacher writes, "I didn't even know this group, Lutheran Science Institute, existed. I am a preschool teacher, so maybe not too much would apply, but praying your work helps many teachers with their study of God's creation."

A teacher states, "Enjoyed taking the survey. Put me on your mailing list."

A pastor writes, "I am currently using the Q & A sent out by Warren Krug a couple years ago for our Sunday Bible class. Continued sermon, Bible class, confirmation class references are essential. I also use CreationMoments.com bulletin inserts at least once a month."

A pastor comments, “I appreciate all efforts by Bible-believing scientists to educate pastors on the issue of evolution, so that we don’t misrepresent the theory of evolution and lose our credibility as we testify to the truth of Scripture.”

Misquoting Luther

One teacher seems to misquote Luther by stating, “Just because you disprove one argument, it does not necessarily enhance your own argument. There is no reasoning of man that cannot be overthrown by another man’s reasoning.” It seems this teacher is using a quote from Luther to suggest we should NOT use arguments from reason, which according to Siegbert Becker is the opposite of Luther’s position. Luther encourages us to use arguments from reason. Becker writes,

We have heard him [Luther] say, in regard to the natural knowledge of God, that there is no argument from reason that cannot be overthrown by another argument from reason. While Luther believed it was ridiculous and downright blasphemous to presume to defend Scripture with rational argumentation, yet he also believed it was perfectly proper to point out the logical weakness in the attacks made on Scripture whenever the opportunity to do so presented itself. In his controversies with his adversaries he says a number of times, “This reason itself is forced to admit.” It is evident that Luther did not place a great deal of confidence in such a procedure, but there is scarcely an opponent against whom he did not use this approach.²

Misunderstandings About This Survey

Many respondents showed misunderstandings about the purpose and/or format of this survey. Some seemed to assume LSI desired that they agree with all questions, even though the survey was worded to avoid that misunderstanding. The upfront instruction was, “Read questions carefully. Some questions state the opposite of other questions, so you will agree with some and disagree with others.” The multiple-choice section led with three basic doctrinal questions with correct responses of “agree,” “disagree,” and “agree.” This was to train respondents that they would agree with some statements and disagree with others. Some even thought LSI was seeking to revise its doctrinal position based on the survey results. The actual purpose of this survey was to gather information on how much support various creation apologetic methods have among our called workers and Sunday School teachers, and to encourage synod wide discussion of creation apologetics. Some wanted to have the words “science” and “evolution” defined for them, when one purpose of the survey was to test the respondent’s definition of these words.

Misunderstandings About Science

Making false statements about science (or anything else) discredits our entire message. If we make obviously false statements about science, are we also making false statements about the way of salvation? We can all use creation apologetics, but we must be careful to stay within the boundaries of our scientific understanding. Do not present a particular scientific argument unless you are sure it is correct. See “Handling Evolution in Your Witness,”

² Siegbert W. Becker, *The Foolishness of God – The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1982), 176 (page 169 in 2012 printing).

part two of “Witnessing in a World Where Evolution Claims ‘There Is No God.’” A pdf is available on the LSI website: www.LutheranScience.org/2015witness

ONLY a Theory (false)

A large number of survey respondents incorrectly claimed that evolution is ONLY a theory, it is not proven fact. This shows that they are unfamiliar with scientific terms. In science, the term “theory” denotes an explanation which is well accepted (overwhelmingly taken as true) by the scientific community. “Theory” is an end stage in science. Theories never become “facts” or “laws” as additional evidence is found. Scientific theories and laws are never proven with certainty. Any theory or law may be discarded and replaced tomorrow.³ For example a teacher writes, “I really struggle that if evolution is a theory why is it accepted so matter of fact.”

Species Equals Kinds (false)

Many survey respondents made comments incorrectly equating the modern scientific term “species” and the biblical term “kind.” Only one out of four called workers correctly answered a question about this (Q #29, see page 21). Several pastors and several teachers did correctly mention that most biblical kinds of creatures include many different species. A pastor writes, “I understand species to refer to changes within the Biblical kind. Lions are a species, as are tigers, but they are both the same kind.”

No new biblical kind will ever develop, but new species do develop within those kinds. There are dozens of species of cats, but they are probably only one or two biblical kinds, since most cats can interbreed. All of our present day species of land creatures would not have been able to fit into Noah's ark, but all the Biblical kinds (including the dinosaur kinds) would easily have fit.

Genus Equals Kind (false)

“Genus” is the scientific classification above “species” and below “family.” A staff minister incorrectly states, “Natural selection can produce variation within a kind, but not a new genus.” Yet some animals in one genus can mate with animals in another, such as sheep (genus ovis) mating with goats (genus capra).

Different Species in the Same Kind Cannot Reproduce (false)

A lay person falsely claims, “Natural selection can actually produce different species, but this is just a degradation of the DNA to the point where they can't reproduce when the two populaces are brought back together.” The only reason we can be sure that animals in two different species are of the same Biblical kind is that they CAN reproduce. Lions and tigers produce ligers and tigons, although these offspring are infertile. The offspring of some other species combinations ARE fertile, such as a dzomo, the female hybrid offspring of domestic yak (Bos Grunniens) and domestic cattle (Bos Taurus). A dzomo is fertile with both parent species.

Only a Minority Believe Evolution (false)

A teacher mistakenly thinks, “Evolution ...after 166 years, a very vocal and powerful minority of the world's population believes in it.” In the vast majority of non-Muslim countries, those who self-identify as evolutionists outnumber those who self-identify as creationists.⁴ In the USA, a Pew poll shows 60% believe that humans have evolved over time,⁵ while a Gallup poll shows 50% believe humans have evolved.⁶

³ Science and Creationism: A View from the National Academy of Sciences, NATIONAL ACADEMY PRESS Washington, DC, SECOND EDITION 1999, page 1-2.] A free pdf of this book (pages 12-13 in pdf) is available at: <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/6024.html> (accessed Jan 21, 2016)

⁴ <http://ncse.com/news/2011/04/polling-creationism-evolution-around-world-006634> (accessed Jan 21, 2016)

⁵ <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/12/30/publics-views-on-human-evolution/> (accessed Jan 21, 2016)

⁶ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/170822/believe-creationist-view-human-origins.aspx> (accessed Jan 21, 2016)

Theories Have No Evidence (false)

Numerous respondents seem to think that laws of science have evidence, while theories of science have no evidence. For example one pastor falsely claims, “Theories don’t have evidence.” Another pastor falsely claims the same thing, “Scientific laws can and do have convincing evidence. Example>> Second Law of Thermodynamics. Theories- nyet!!” Scientific laws are not scientific theories which have been better proven. Both laws and theories are held as solid explanations by the scientific community, and both laws and theories are open to falsification and replacement.⁷ For instance, Newton’s famous Law Of Gravity was falsified and replaced by Einstein’s General Theory Of Relativity in 1916. See pages 2-4 at www.LutheranScience.org/Lie

Evolution Completely Wrong (false)

A teacher falsely claims that evolution “is completely wrong.” There are many parts of the evolution story with which a creationist might agree.⁸ The comments of several respondents correctly mention how some parts of evolution ARE true. A teacher writes, “In the 'evolutionary science' category, there are things that we don't have to disagree with, such as adaptations of living things. Other concepts are in clear disagreement with God’s Word.”

Evolution Is Exclusively Biological Change (false)

More than a few respondents seem to think the term “evolution” refers only to biological change. For example a misinformed teacher writes, “I think it is strange that you say that EVOLUTION is the entire Theory Of Evolution from the Big-Bang to today. I would think of evolution as being Darwinian natural selection and the science that has evolved from that.” A layperson falsely claims, “Evolution theory isn't about hydrogen gas, cosmology.” Evolution includes The Big Bang, stellar evolution, planetary evolution, and the evolution of life from non-living chemicals.⁹

Days Are Exactly 24 Hours (false)

A pastor errs when he says, “Question about 24 hours - they were 24 hour days, not about.” A grade school teacher falsely claims, “24 hour days. Not ‘about 24 hours.’ 24 hours.” In fact, one rotation of the earth takes about 23 hours, 56 minutes, and 4 seconds. In addition, there are other definitions for the length of a day, including apparent solar time and mean solar time. A “day” of apparent solar time varies by about 50 seconds depending on the season (21 seconds less or 29 seconds more than 24 hours).

Evolutionists Don’t Know Their Savior (false)

A grade school teacher incorrectly states, “Christian school children should be aware of the teachings [of evolution] and also strongly taught about the fact that those scientists don't know the Savior.” The majority of people in the USA who believe in millions of years are Christians. The vast majority of Christian churches teach that God used evolution to create. Plenty of evolutionary scientists DO KNOW their Savior.

Darwin Invented Evolution (false)

A pastor incorrectly asserts, “Evolution is the man-made mythology of atheism, as admitted by Charles Darwin, its inventor.” The modern scientific community fully embraced evolution and millions of years long before Darwin published his book in 1859. It was the work of these geological evolutionists which inspired Darwin to propose a

⁷ Science and Creationism, 1-2.

⁸ Mark Bergemann, “How Can A Lie Like Evolution Have Scientific Evidence?” LSI Journal (Jan – March, 2015), 1-2. www.LutheranScience.org/lie (accessed Jan 21, 2016)

⁹ “The term ‘evolution’ usually refers to the biological evolution of living things. But the processes by which planets, stars, galaxies, and the universe form and change over time are also types of ‘evolution.’ In all of these cases there is change over time, although the processes involved are quite different.” Science and Creationism, 3.

mechanism for biological evolution. Yet even thousands of years before that, science in Greece had the same anti-god evolutionary stance.¹⁰

Diversity of Creation Apologetics Used in the WELS

Creation apologetic methods used in the WELS primarily vary regarding:

1. To what extent and for what purpose should arguments from reason be used?
2. What is and is not “science”?

I have been trying to understand and document the various creation apologetic positions used in the WELS, along with defining a Lutheran position. A February 2012 effort at defining a Lutheran position was “The Place of Reason in Defending the Christian Faith – with ministry ideas regarding creation / evolution.” www.lutheranscience.org/2012reason Continued discussions led to LSI publishing a collection of seven articles by five authors under the title, “Two Creation Apologetics with Opposing Views of Science are Taught in the WELS.” www.lutheranscience.org/TwoApologetics In January 2016 LSI published a new paper, “The Narrow Lutheran Middle Road For Creation.” www.LutheranScience.org/2016middle.

Four years of intensive study of creation apologetics used in the WELS, including talking with hundreds of called workers, reviewing more than a thousand articles and books they have written, and lengthy and repeated discussions with many, have led me to this conclusion: I am convinced that WELS called workers hold a proper understanding of the Means Of Grace. Faith is created and strengthened only through the Gospel in Word and sacrament. Each believes their creation apologetic conforms to this Biblical position on the Means Of Grace and to all other doctrines. A common issue is seeing each other’s creation apologetic as violating the Means Of Grace, inerrancy of Scripture, or other doctrines. Nothing in this survey leads me to change this conclusion.

It is my opinion that the WELS would greatly benefit by having widespread discussions about creation apologetics. The LSI Board continues to encourage such discussion. I have found that we all seem to have misunderstandings about what other WELS members believe regarding creation apologetics. Learning the views of others is beneficial and can sometimes even lead to revising your own view. During several extended creation apologetic discussions in which I participated, several participants revised the creation apologetic position they had held for decades. Humanly speaking, simply reading an article or two rarely moves a person to revise such a strongly held position. Changing such views often takes extended discussions over a period of time.

Survey Format

Survey responses were taken between September 3 and November 28, 2015. An email invitation to take this survey was received by as many as 4,169 WELS called workers, including both active and retired pastors, teachers, and staff ministers (4,359 emails were sent, while 190 were undeliverable, an August 11, 2015 email list was used). These emails were sent between September 28 and October 19, 2015, and included a request for the called worker

¹⁰ Mark Bergemann, “‘True Science’ – A Bad apologetic Method Rejected In The WELS” unpublished research paper, 2013, 11-12. www.LutheranScience.org/TrueScience (accessed Jan 21, 2016)

to forward the email to their congregation's Sunday School teachers. The emails included a private link to one version of the survey, while an identical public survey was advertised on the LSI website www.LutheranScience.org. The private link was advertised in a November 1 post to the WELS group LIFTalk. The public survey was advertised in a November 1 post to our LSI Facebook page. 977 people took the survey. 963 took the private version and 14 took the identical public version.

The survey was truly confidential. We do not know who submitted what response unless they gave us that information, which a few did. The identity of pastor and teacher is self-reported and not verifiable.

It was clear that a few lay Sunday School teachers listed themselves as "Teacher (Christian School)" or as "Other Called Worker," including one high school student. This was not expected when this survey was created, but it is reasonable as some congregations install their lay Sunday School teachers and some publicize that as a "call." There appears to be at most six cases where a lay person described themselves as a teacher and up to 17 cases where a lay person described themselves as an "Other Called Worker" (the college degree section helped in making this guess). The two most obvious cases have been switched to "laity" in this report. It also seems that some retired pastors and teachers (who are listed as such in the WELS yearbook) identified themselves as "Laity" or as "Other Called Worker." Any future surveys should more carefully word the demographic questions to more accurately sort called workers from laity.

The survey began with four questions about the survey respondent. This report counts these four questions as eleven questions (Q#1 - #11), since one question allows multiple answer choices. The first non-demographic question was also the only question requiring a written answer (Q#12), "How should the church address the temptation of evolution?" A short answer was expected, yet many wrote 100 - 200 words in a box where any more than 30 words required scrolling. Two additional comment fields (Q#23 and Q#31) were also provided.

There were seventeen multiple-choice questions. Some multiple-choice questions tested the respondents' understanding of certain terms like species, science, and theory. Some multiple-choice questions asked respondents to agree/disagree with specific statements commonly made by those using various creation apologetics. WELS authors and Bible study leaders commonly make such statements without defining what they mean by words like "science," "evolution," and "evidence." This was confusing to some taking the survey and they said so in the comments. This same confusion exists throughout the WELS, since our authors and Bible study leaders make such statements without explaining that they are using a non-common definition of terms. There are at least three different creation apologetics used in the WELS, and those apologetic positions can make opposing claims.

See appendix 1 for a complete list of survey questions. A pdf is available at www.LutheranScience.org/survey

Response Rate

This survey had an overall response rate of 21 % (874 WELS called workers out of 4,169 who received a single email invitation). The response rate of WELS pastors was 26% (405 out of 1,584 who received email). Most responded within 24 hours and most provided written comments. Many of these emails probably went into spam folders, so that even makes this response more amazing. This rather high response rate to a single email invitation is another indication that our called workers are concerned about creation apologetics.

Written Responses

The average of those providing a written response was 52 words (773 responses totaling 39,815 words), even though the three text response fields allowed only 30 words each before starting to scroll. Many wrote over 150 words. I expected one or two sentence responses, yet received so much more. This is yet another indication that our called workers are concerned about creation apologetics.

Demographic Questions

Question #1, *I am:*

- 973 Lutheran: WELS
- 2 Lutheran: ELS, CELC [*1 pastor, 1 teacher*]
- 0 Lutheran: LCMS, CLC
- 1 Lutheran: all others including ELCA [*staff minister who is also a seminary student*]
- 2 Other Christian (including no church affiliation) [*laity*]
- 0 not a Christian

All 5 non-WELS respondents answered all 3 theological questions correctly (as did 91% of all respondents, see "Creation Theology" on page 14). The multiple-choice response charts include these 5 non-WELS respondents. Any quotations in this report from these non-WELS respondents identify their church body.

Question #2, *I am a:*

- 96 Layperson
- 406 Pastor
- 16 Staff Minister
- 419 Teacher (Christian School)
- 41 Other called worker

Question #3, *Your college degree. (If MLC, DMLC, WLS, list year of graduation.)*

Question #4 - #11, *I currently teach, or have taught sometime in the past 3 years (check all that apply):*

- Q #4 305 Sunday School
- Q #5 477 Adult Bible Study
- Q #6 397 Vacation Bible School (VBS)
- Q #7 371 Confirmation class
- Q #8 393 Christian grade school
- Q #9 134 Christian high school
- Q #10 52 Christian college
- Q #11 43 NONE OF THESE

Multiple-Choice Questions

The following pages report the answers given for each multiple-choice question. Questions are grouped into categories. The answers to each question are tabulated in a chart. The first three charts show the number of respondents. All other charts show the percentage of respondents. Percentages are of the number who answered that particular question. Each question was left blank by some respondents, so these are not represented in the percentage reported. In these tables, “SW Agree” means “Somewhat Agree,” while “SW Disagree” means “Somewhat Disagree.”

Respondents are reported in several overlapping groups and in total. Some individuals are included in as many as four of the six groups, while some are only in the “All” group.

- Pastors 406 self-reported as “Pastor.”
- Teachers 419 self-reported as “Teacher (Christian school).”
- Teach H.S. or College: 181 self-reported as having taught in a Christian high school or Christian college in the past 3 years. Includes 111 teachers, 55 pastors, 10 other called workers, 3 laity, and 2 staff ministers.
- Teach Sunday School: 305 self-reported as having taught Sunday School in the past 3 years. Includes 93 teachers, 109 pastors, 25 other called workers, 66 laity, and 12 staff ministers.
- Laity 96 self-reported as laity. Includes 16 with MLC or WLS degrees. Includes some teens. 66 teach Sunday School. 25 teach VBS.
- All 978 everyone who took the survey. Includes 419 teachers, 406 pastors, 41 other called workers, 96 laity, and 16 staff ministers.

Creation Theology

This survey was NOT intended to test the theology of respondents. It assumed WELS called workers hold to correct Biblical theology. The survey did though begin with three theology questions (Q#13 – #15) aimed at training the respondent that they will be agreeing with some questions and disagreeing with others (this was also stated in the on-line directions). These questions can also serve to show our unity in doctrinal issues. In these tables, “SW Agree” means “Somewhat Agree,” while “SW Disagree” means “Somewhat Disagree.”

Question #13: “We can be certain that God created everything.”

972 answered this question and are tabulated below. 6 did not choose an answer (not even marking “skip.”).

Q #13	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	399	2	1	0	0
TEACHERS	410	4	0	2	1
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	177	3	0	0	0
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	301	0	0	1	1
LAITY	95	1	0	0	0
ALL	961	7	1	2	1

Question #14: “Gen 1:1-2 may indicate millions or billions of years.”

969 answered this question and are tabulated below. 9 did not choose an answer (not even marking “skip.”).

Q #14	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	0	1	1	2	395
TEACHERS	1	1	5	4	406
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	0	1	3	4	171
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	4	3	12	2	280
LAITY	6	3	6	2	79
ALL	7	6	19	9	928

Question #15: “Each of the 6 creation days were days of normal length (about 24 hours long).”

970 answered this question and are tabulated below. 8 did not choose an answer (not even marking “skip.”).

Q #15	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	400	2	0	1	1
TEACHERS	398	6	6	1	2
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	172	4	2	0	0
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	288	5	8	1	3
LAITY	85	4	5	2	0
ALL	934	13	13	5	5

Few if any church bodies the size of WELS or larger, have anywhere near the unity of doctrine shown here, especially among the laity. That said, one would hope that all WELS respondents would agree with Q #13 and #15, and disagree with Q #14, yet only 888 (91%) of 978 respondents answered all three questions that way. Furthermore, a total of 24 respondents (2.5% of 978) gave an incorrect answer (disagree / somewhat-disagree with Q #13 or Q #15, or agree / somewhat-agree with Q #14). This does NOT mean that 2.5% of respondents question the creation account, as we will see in the following paragraphs.

Wrong answers were given by 3 pastors, 0 staff ministers, 8 teachers, 4 other called workers, and 9 laity. Because of how they answered the college degree question, it is possible that up to 3 of the “other called workers” and up to 2 of the teachers are actually laity (possibly those who were installed during worship as Sunday School teachers, VBS teachers, or grade school assistants). If so, up to 14 of the 24 respondents could be laity. In addition, two respondents (both laity) answered more than one question (two questions) incorrectly.

While some of these respondents may not have a clear understanding of these doctrines, there are non-doctrinal reasons why many gave unexpected answers. In several cases the respondents’ comments show they have correct theology, but they interpreted the questions in unexpected ways. There are at least four reasons for unexpected answers. 1) It is possible that someone received the private link and gave false information. I think this unlikely, as the data gives no hint of that being the case. Only one of the wrong answers was from a respondent using the public link (a lay person). 2) Some respondents may have rushed through the survey, misreading some questions. This is a problem all surveys face. 3) During the survey period, 26% of our website traffic was from mobile devices, including 328 visits from Apple iPhones. It is easy to make typing entry errors on these smaller devices. 4) A likely cause of many unexpected answers is that the wording of questions can be interpreted in unexpected ways. Some comments showed respondents using unexpected definitions of some words in other multiple choice questions. That is the case with these questions also, as we shall see from the comments below.

Q #13: "We can be certain that God created everything." One pastor skipped Q #13 calling it "poorly worded." He wrote, "We can be certain of creation. It is the certainty of faith not sight." Maybe he means that God did not create some things such as evil, even though in this context it is common to say God created everything. He correctly disagreed with Q #14 and agreed with Q #15. He answered, "skip" to Q #13 and #16. Later he also skipped Q #28 before finally commenting, "Too many questions are vague."

Q #14: "Gen 1:1-2 may indicate millions or billions of years." A teacher who correctly disagreed with Q #14 said, "To the Genesis 1:1-2 question, I would comment that this COULD have taken millions of years, but that God tells us that it was 6 days, so we take him literally there." Could some who thought along this line have been led to incorrectly agree with Q #14?

While Q #14 is false, one can certainly agree with it and still firmly hold to correct Biblical doctrine including a young universe. At least nine of the 13 respondents agreeing or somewhat agreeing with Q #13 are laity. They have not received the Biblical hermeneutics training given our called workers and especially our pastors. This may point out an area where our lay Sunday School teachers could be better trained.

Q #15: "Each of the 6 creation days were days of normal length (about 24 hours long)." One pastor who answered "somewhat disagree" commented "Question about 24 hours - they were 24 hour day, not about." So here an "incorrect" answer is found to be correct, due to this pastor's thinking that a day is exactly 24 hours. The question was purposely worded "about" to satisfy those who would correctly argue that days are NOT 24 hours. (Scientific definitions of "day" can vary from 24 hours by several minutes. See "Misunderstandings About Science" on page 10)

I have heard some argue that we cannot be sure that the first three days were 24 hour days, since the sun had not yet been created. Maybe this was on the mind of some respondents. My answer to those who question the length of the first three days is, "Why?" The words God uses in Genesis 1 describing days 1-3 are the same words he uses to describe days 4-6 ("there was evening, and there was morning –the first [second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth] day"). These words would normally be interpreted as days of the same length, unless one wishes to somehow allow millions of years. In addition, making some of the six creation days be longer or shorter damages the comparison God makes in Exodus 20:8-11.

Most of the unexpected answers may be simple misunderstandings, but comments by two respondents hint at something more. It would be nice to hear from these two respondents, so that they could clarify what they meant. They typed 140 and 192 words respectively into 30 word scrolling text boxes. These are most likely off-the-cuff comments, which they did not review after writing.

One lay VBS teacher correctly answered "agree" to Q #13 ("We can be certain that God created everything"), but incorrectly answered "somewhat agree" to Q # 14 and "somewhat disagree" to Q #15. The comments of this layperson may indicate support that God created over billions of years. This respondent answers Q #12, (How should the church address the temptation of evolution?):

On the whole, it shouldn't. COMMENT 1: Evolution will not be disproved by using science, because evolution IS the current state of science in biology, geology, astronomy, and all their various subfields. The evidence agrees with it, and when new evidence comes to light the science changes to accommodate it. That's how science works. COMMENT 2: My faith does in no way depend on whether the earth is 6000 or six billion years old. Speciation is an observable effect you can see happening as isolated populations evolve to better fit the environment they're in. This is a good thing - that God gave his creatures the ability to change with the changing conditions

of their living space. Learning how evolution works has only increased the wonder I have for God, that he can use these processes to insure places for his creatures.

A high school teacher correctly answered “agree” to Q #13 (“We can be certain that God created everything”), but incorrectly answered “somewhat agree” to Q # 14 and “skip question” to Q #15. I find this teacher’s comments troubling. He seems to imply that we cannot use Scripture to judge science. We know from Scripture that death is the penalty for sin, not the means God used to create, so we can know that some scientific theories are false due to what God reveals in Scripture. His comment about “virtual history” most likely refers to something like Q #16 (created fossils). Is this teacher advocating “reading Genesis in a different light,” or is he saying we should NOT try to use science to argue against evolution because if we fail, we would then be tempted to change the creation doctrine? The teacher answers Q #12, (How should the church address the temptation of evolution?):

Head on. Teach the science and teach how we as Christians can view it. We need to be well equipped and armed, because avoiding the problem or hiding from it makes us look stupid and people dismiss us out of hand, making it so there's no way we can have a discussion with others about it. COMMENT 1: “Evolution can be proven false using science alone” is a poor quality question. First, science can't prove anything, it can support or disprove things. Secondly, we won't use religion to support/disprove science, since I tend to subscribe to the non-overlapping magisterial school of thought. So, if we're to disprove evolution, it certainly needs to be done with science. And if that doesn't happen, we need to figure out how to evaluate our faith and evolution, whether that's a virtual history or reading the teachings in Genesis in a different light.” COMMENT 2: “There are some questions in this survey that are simply bad questions that seem to be looking for a particular answer. This is an essential topic that we MUST address with our young people in a compelling way that shows we fully understand the science.

WELS Schools Should Teach Evolution

Question #22: “Christian schools should teach a few of the scientific problems evolution faces.”

973 answered this question and are tabulated below. 5 did not choose an answer (not even marking “skip.”).

Q #22	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	88 %	10 %	1 %	0 %	1 %
TEACHERS	73 %	21 %	2 %	1 %	3 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	83 %	15 %	0 %	1 %	2 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	77 %	16 %	4 %	1 %	2 %
LAITY	77 %	13 %	4 %	2 %	4 %
ALL	79 %	16 %	2 %	1 %	2 %

The comments of at least 150 respondents advocated teaching evolution to our students. Almost no one spoke against it. This correlated well with the above responses to Q #22.

A common comment was to suggest we teach more than a few problems faced by evolution. A teacher writes, “We should teach more than a few of the scientific problems in evolution.” A pastor responds, “Why just a few problems? There are multiple problems across the board in most areas that science touches. Be ready for them too.”

A teacher answers how the church should respond, “Education! Many in our pews don't have a background of Christian Education or only went to an LES and have forgotten so much. I have had parents ask me on field trips, What is it we believe about that? –when evolution, millions of years, etc. is brought up.”

More than a few pastors and teachers expressed their own desire to learn more about evolution and/or creation apologetics. One pastor wrote, “Some of these questions make it clear I need to read more in this particular area and be more conversant in scientific topics.”

Created Fossils

Question #16: “It is likely that God placed dinosaur bones in rock layers during creation week.”

966 answered this question and are tabulated below. 12 did not choose an answer (not even marking “skip.”).

Q #16	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	1 %	6 %	22 %	11 %	60 %
TEACHERS	6 %	10 %	29 %	9 %	45 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	4 %	8 %	28 %	10 %	51 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	6 %	7 %	27 %	8 %	53 %
ALL	4 %	8%	26 %	10 %	52 %

I was surprised to see so many supporters for created fossils, since over many years I have heard from only four WELS called workers who thought this likely. Eight survey respondents even mentioned their support for created fossils and/or created coal and oil in their written comments. Five mentioned their opposition to created fossils.

A Christian college teacher (who answered “skipped” to Q#16) commented, “The word ‘likely’ made the fourth [4th multiple-choice, Q#16] question difficult to answer. The word ‘possible’ is a better substitute for me. It is possible that God created the world with age - including fossils - but that is only a theory.” In writing this survey, I chose the word “likely” instead of “possible,” since even some who see significant Scriptural and/or scientific issues with created fossils may agree that created fossils are possible. I may say it is possible, yet I see significant problems with created fossils and wrote my opinions in a June 2015 Q&A answer at: www.LutheranScience.org/QA .

Supporting Created Fossils:

A grade school teacher commented, “God may have put dinosaur bones in rock layers and he may have created them. I am sure he made mature trees and rock layers.”

Another grade school teacher wrote, “God could have placed them [fossils, coal, oil] in the earth already.”

A teacher comments about Q #28 (flood may have deposited fossils), “Not just the flood, but God could have placed them in the earth already.”

A Lay person, who teaches Christian Apologetics to students age 14-17, claims a tranquil flood, “RE: Dinosaur bones. Scripture does not reference this, but the evidence in Scripture for a gentle flood rather than a violent one makes God's placing evidence of death in the original perfect world a plausible way of illustrating what you shall

surely die would mean to Adam and Eve and their descendants. I just completed a trip across the US by train. The railroad cuts demonstrated various layers of sediment. When my students shake a jar with a mixture of contents, the result is always the same with heaviest per unit of volume on the bottom. The rock layers on the trip did not demonstrate this. The Bible indicates that the original creation of earth was out of water by GOD! The erratic layers are another one of His finger prints on the creation. I watched 20 years of floods out my front window. The carbon items, plants and trees, float on top and do NOT settle to the bottom to be covered by many feet of solid rock. Salt caves, crystal caves, what I call God's diamonds -geodes, cannot be formed by a violent flood. They are a unique creation by a loving LORD. The dove would not have produced a fresh green olive leaf if there had been a convulsive flood. God made a mature world with high mountains and all their resources, to which Adam and Eve opened their eyes, a world which had everything in it that mankind would need."

Supporting Created Coal and Oil:

A pastor who disagrees with created fossils does support the possibility of created coal and oil, "God could have created the deposits of coal and oil from the beginning."

A grade school teacher who skipped the created fossil question agrees with created coal and oil, "I told my students today that I believe God could have created large coal and oil deposits already inside the earth at the time of creation."

Opposing Created Fossils:

A pastor writes, "I strongly resist the idea that God 'put dinosaur bones in the rock' at creation. This confuses people, since it would mean God put evidence of death in a world created 'very good' without sin and death. The Flood has seemed to me a far better explanation for the fossil record."

Another pastor states, "I disagree with the created dinosaur bones because that would imply some form of death before the fall into sin, with death passed over all creation."

A Christian college teacher asks, "What is the point of speculating on what or what not God placed in creation?"

A WELS doctrinal student who teaches at a Christian college mentions, "The theory that God created the earth with dinosaur bones in it strikes me as tautological and evasive."

Science Knowledge

Three questions (Q #17, #28, and #29) test science knowledge. These questions really have only one correct answer, although one could use semantics and other arguments to support other answers. It is important that we be accurate when speaking about any subject, including science.

Question #17: “The Theory of Evolution claims that hydrogen gas changed into people, over billions of years.” 961 answered this question and are tabulated below. 17 did not choose an answer (not even marking “skip.”).

Q #17	YES IT CLAIMS	MAYBE YES	SKIPPED QUESTION	MAYBE NO	NO IT DOES NOT CLAIM
PASTORS	21 %	15 %	38 %	5 %	22 %
TEACHERS	20 %	15 %	50 %	3 %	12 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	24 %	11 %	40 %	4 %	21 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	23 %	16 %	43 %	2 %	16 %
LAITY	29 %	10 %	36 %	3 %	22 %
ALL	21 %	14 %	43 %	4 %	17 %

The correct answer to Q #17 is “yes it claims.” The evolution story claims the Big Bang produced hydrogen gas which self-assembled into stars, which formed heavier elements, which eventually self-assembled into life, which later became people. One could argue that evolution does not claim that hydrogen gas changed directly into people, but Q #17 does not say “directly.” Others could argue that evolution often is used to refer to biological evolution, but that argument ignores the Big Bang, stellar evolution, and planetary evolution which are major parts of the evolution story. To have a good understanding of the evolution story, one should realize that evolution claims hydrogen gas changed into people over billions of years.

Q #17 was changed three times during the survey in response to respondents’ comments. Over half of the respondents were given the final wording. The majority of pastors received earlier versions. The major change was from “Agree”/“Disagree” to “Yes It Claims”/“No It Does Not Claim.” Each change is documented in the chronological list of respondent comments (Appendix 2). Wording changes do not seem to have significantly changed the answers given to Q #17.

Question #28: “Earth’s vast quantities of fossils, deposits of coal and oil, and continental-sized sedimentary rock layers are what would be expected from a flood which covered the entire earth.”

972 answered this question and are tabulated below. 6 did not choose an answer (not even marking “skip.”).

Q #28	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	73 %	15 %	11 %	1 %	0 %
TEACHERS	74 %	17 %	7 %	2 %	0 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	69 %	16 %	12 %	2 %	2 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	74 %	18 %	7 %	1 %	0 %
LAITY	69 %	18 %	6 %	2 %	5 %
ALL	73 %	17 %	9 %	1 %	1 %

The correct answer to Q #28 (per current scientific knowledge) is “agree.” Evolutionary scientists fully understand this. That is why they strongly oppose any planet-wide flood on earth (which has plenty of water in its oceans to cover the entire earth), while they propose planet-wide floods on Mars (which has little water today).

Question #29: “Natural selection produces new species of plants and animals.”

972 answered this question and are tabulated below. 6 did not choose an answer (not even marking “skip.”).

Q #29	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	13 %	12 %	19 %	7 %	50 %
TEACHERS	12 %	13 %	13 %	9 %	53 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	14 %	13 %	14 %	8 %	51 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	14 %	15 %	20 %	6 %	45 %
LAITY	26 %	9 %	23 %	1 %	41 %
ALL	13 %	13 %	17 %	7 %	50 %

The correct answer to Q #29 is “agree.” See “Misunderstandings About Science” on pages 8-9.

Laity were 117% more likely (more than twice as likely) to answer this question correctly than teachers. Laity were 100% more likely (twice as likely) to answer this question correctly than pastors. (26% of laity agreed with Q #29, while only 12% of teachers and 13% of pastors.)

Defining “Science” and “Evidence”

Five questions (Q #18, #19, #20, #21, and #30) test the respondent’s definition of “science” and/or “evidence.” Various creation apologetic methods use different, even opposing, definitions of words like “science” and “evidence.” This situation is examined in a 37 page collection of five articles, “Two Creation Apologetics with Opposing Views of Science are Taught in the WELS.” See pdf at www.LutheranScience.org/TwoApologetics

The results of these five questions were very surprising to me. I have found that the majority of WELS authors over the past 35 years (NPH books, Forward In Christ, Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, The Lutheran Educator, pastor and teacher conference papers, etc.) have written from a view that would agree with Q #19 and #30, and disagree with Q #18, #20, and #21. [Based on my research paper at www.Lutheranscience.org/TrueScience.] The respondents to this survey strongly supported the exact opposite, except for Q #30. I expected significant diversity in answers from pastors serving congregations and from grade school teachers, but still a small majority supporting the WELS authors’ view. I expected our high school and college teachers to closely reflect the position of WELS authors. I was wrong on both accounts. Our laity are the closest to WELS authors for Q #18 and #19. Respondents teaching a Christian high school or Christian college are the closest for Q #20 and #21. All groups have a majority agreeing with WELS authors on Q #30, but respondents teaching a Christian high school or Christian college are closest to WELS authors for that question.

While I claim the majority of WELS authors hold a particular position, some still hold the opposite. For instance, some WELS authors make Q #18 type statements. ChristLight states, “The Bible and true science never contradict each other; they cannot, for God created the laws of science too.”¹¹ See the “Two Creation Apologetics” pdf referenced above for more examples.

¹¹ Gerald Kastens, Course 5 Teacher’s Guide – Reading the Bible: The Focus, Lesson 1 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 4. <http://online.nph.net/SampleFiles/Print/746091E.PDF> (accessed January 21, 2016). Kastens was the project director of the ChristLight® religion curriculum published by NPH during the 1990s.

Question #18: "Science and the Bible always agree when both are properly understood."

973 answered this question and are tabulated below. 5 did not choose an answer (not even marking "skip.").

Q #18	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	57 %	16 %	6 %	5 %	15 %
TEACHERS	38 %	16 %	7 %	14 %	25 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	44 %	17 %	6 %	11 %	22 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	43 %	14 %	7 %	11 %	24 %
LAITY	36 %	17 %	3 %	15 %	29 %
ALL	46 %	16 %	6 %	10 %	22 %

Q #18 and its many variations are common statements made by those using the "True Science" creation apologetic. People making statements like Q #18 are using a non-standard definition of "science" where millions of years is not true science, but is instead pseudoscience science, false science, or so-called science. The comments of at least 74 respondents showed they use a non-standard definition of "science." Some of these quotes are listed on the following pages of this report.

Some might think that the 231 pastors (57%) who "agreed" with Q #18 are making science into a Means Of Grace, but 172 (74%) of those 231 pastors also agreed that "Science does not in any way increase the effectiveness of the Gospel in bringing souls to faith," (Q #26, see page 26). Only 12 (5%) of those 231 pastors disagreed with Q #26. This is essentially the same response rate as all 402 pastors to Q #26 (76% agreed and 4% disagreed).

Note that laity are nearly twice as likely to disagree with Q #18 as pastors (29% of laity disagree, while only 15% of pastors disagree).

Claiming Science and the Bible Agree

A pastor who agreed with Q #18 states his reason, "Science and the Bible always agree when both are properly understood, is a very tricky question. I selected true, knowing that Scripture leads my interpretation of science and that the ministerial use of reason (as opposed to the magisterial) does not conflict with God's Word."

Another pastor explained his non-standard definition of science which led him to "somewhat agree" with Q #18, "There is no scientific evidence for evolution = true when referring to true science which submits its findings according to God's revealed Word."

A pastor comments, "The Bible and true science don't disagree."

A pastor writes, "True science supports the truth of a world created by God."

Another pastor states, "Teach the Bible as God's absolute truth. Also, teach that science, rightly done, glories God and marvels at his creation. They are not in opposition to each other."

A pastor states, "True science will always support the Bible; however, not all of the things that are called science today are true science."

A pastor suggests, "I think we should focus on the positive. State what God says in the Bible and how that agrees with science. Like granite's formation; the Cro-Magnon man issues and the like."

Two respondents predict that science will agree with Scripture in the future. This view is also in keeping with a specialized definition of science. Science as defined today by the greater scientific community will never agree with creation, since science excludes miracles. A teacher predicts, “I believe that Science and the Bible will agree eventually. We just haven't reached that point yet because Science still needs to advance.” Another teacher states, “All I know is, if God says it, I believe it! If it contradicts God, IT'S WRONG! And eventually, science will bear that out--although I don't wait for that to happen.” [*capitalization in original*]

Claiming Science and the Bible Do NOT Agree

A teacher states, “Science and the Bible will not agree in every case in that science cannot explain miraculous acts of God.”

Another teacher writes, “Science and the Bible, even when properly understood, will not always agree because not all of the Bible can be grasped by reason.”

A teacher says, “The Bible involves miraculous events which cannot be explained scientifically.”

Another teacher comments, “Science is a man-made thing that can never be perfect. It will not totally agree with the Bible because it is done by sinful human beings.”

Question #19: “Evolution is science, because evolution is accepted as science by the greater scientific community.” 969 answered this question and are tabulated below. 9 did not choose an answer (not even marking “skip.”).

Q #19	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	5 %	7 %	5 %	9 %	74 %
TEACHERS	7 %	13 %	7 %	13 %	60 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	8 %	13 %	7 %	13 %	59 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	8 %	11 %	7 %	12 %	63 %
LAITY	9 %	14 %	11 %	16 %	51 %
ALL	7 %	10 %	6 %	12 %	65 %

Claiming Evolution IS Science

A teacher states, “Evolution is considered part of science.”

A Teacher answers Q #12, “Teach it as science with the understanding that science is man's interpretation of God's creation. Clouded by sin, our minds will make errors in that interpretation.”

Claiming Evolution is NOT Science

A teacher states, “Evolution is not science ... there is no true scientific evidence to prove the theory in its entirety.”

A teacher writes, “Evolution is not science--since it's based primarily on opinion and circular reasoning, and not on facts--no matter what people may call it.”

A pastor’s entire answer to Q #12, “Unsolved problems of evolution - help our people realize that there is no true science behind evolution.”

A teacher comments, “Huge question- no quick answer. Focus on the fact that Evolution is not strict science but interpretation of evidence. Creation is a teaching of the Bible, and we view evidence in light of it. Don't focus on all the so-called proofs that scientists offer.

A lay person states, “Provide clear answers to how evolution is not science.”

A teacher states, “Evolution deals with origins and not really with science.”

A teacher writes, "Isn't science simply the things God made and their characteristics, properties, functions. The true facts of creation?" [editor’s comment: One common way to provide a non-standard definition of “science” is to equate science and nature, as this teacher does.]

A teacher says, “I think there are number of kinds of sciences...true science and pseudosciences, baseless and fact-less science, science that is widely accepted with little to no facts, evidence, or data to support it, etc.”

Question #20: “There is no scientific evidence to support evolution as a theory of origins.”
969 answered this question and are tabulated below. 9 did not choose an answer (not even marking “skip.”).

Q #20	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	46 %	15 %	8 %	21 %	11 %
TEACHERS	52 %	17 %	11 %	12 %	8 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	38 %	17 %	7 %	21 %	17 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	47 %	16 %	10 %	15 %	13 %
LAITY	49 %	10 %	13 %	15 %	14 %
ALL	49 %	16 %	9 %	16 %	10 %

Over 90% of pastors taking this survey responded to Q #20 WITHOUT the words “as a theory of origins.” This most likely skewed the response of pastors away from “agree” and toward “disagree.” This was clear from the comments of some, as they feel there is evidence for the parts of the evolution story which are true, but not for one kind changing into another kind. (Over 98% of teachers responded to Q #20 WITH the words “as a theory of origins.”)

The group most likely to disagree with Q #20 is the group “Teach High School or College” where 38% disagree or somewhat-disagree. If called teachers are removed from that group, the percentage rises to 47% - a group of 70 with 55 pastors, 10 “other called workers,” 3 laity, and 2 staff ministers.

Question #21: "Evolution can be proven false using science alone."

973 answered this question and are tabulated below. 5 did not choose an answer (not even marking "skip.").

Q #21	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	29 %	26 %	11 %	13 %	21 %
TEACHERS	30 %	24 %	12 %	15 %	19 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	25 %	22 %	13 %	13 %	27 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	34 %	21 %	15 %	12 %	18 %
LAITY	35 %	15 %	22 %	9 %	19 %
ALL	30 %	24 %	13 %	13 %	20 %

Question #30: "Scientific theories which are not true can have evidence, sometimes very convincing evidence."

969 answered this question and are tabulated below. 9 did not choose an answer (not even marking "skip.").

Q #30	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	44 %	31 %	10 %	5 %	10 %
TEACHERS	46 %	33 %	9 %	5 %	7 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	52 %	31 %	9 %	2 %	6 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	47 %	34 %	5 %	4 %	10 %
LAITY	50 %	31 %	4 %	3 %	12 %
ALL	46 %	32 %	9 %	5 %	9 %

Means of Grace

Four questions (Q #24, #25, #26, and #27) test the respondent's views on reason and the Means Of Grace. God creates and strengthens faith only through the Gospel in the Bible, in baptism, and in the Lord's Supper, yet more than half our pastors answered in ways which at first seem to include science as a Means Of Grace. How can someone who correctly limits the Means Of Grace to the Gospel (in Word and Sacrament) agree that "Science can strengthen our faith that God created the world?" The answer is in how they define the words of this statement. Many respondents explained their reasoning in the comment fields. Some took this statement in light of Romans 1:18-20 and understood it to mean that observing nature (science) can show believers that God created. Others define "science" in a non-standard way, so that science always agrees with Scripture.

Question #24: "Science can strengthen our faith that God created the world."

970 answered this question and are tabulated below. 8 did not choose an answer (not even marking "skip.").

Q #24	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	34 %	15 %	1 %	9 %	41 %
TEACHERS	49 %	17 %	2 %	7 %	26 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	37 %	16 %	1 %	7 %	38 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	46 %	16 %	3 %	9 %	26 %
LAITY	46 %	23 %	7 %	8 %	16 %
ALL	43 %	17 %	2 %	7 %	31 %

Question #25: "Science can help believers better understand spiritual truths."

972 answered this question and are tabulated below. 6 did not choose an answer (not even marking "skip.").

Q #25	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	30 %	26 %	3 %	10 %	30 %
TEACHERS	24 %	24 %	6 %	12 %	35 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	28 %	23 %	4 %	16 %	29 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	29 %	23 %	5 %	13 %	30 %
LAITY	31 %	14 %	13 %	18 %	25 %
ALL	28 %	24 %	5 %	12 %	31 %

I expected Q #25 to have much more acceptance than Q #24. The exact opposite was true. My experience is that many who see Q #24 as a denial of the Means Of Grace, do not see Q #25 that way.

Question #26: "Science does not in any way increase the effectiveness of the Gospel in bringing souls to faith."

973 answered this question and are tabulated below. 5 did not choose an answer (not even marking "skip.").

Q #26	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	76 %	7 %	4 %	9 %	4 %
TEACHERS	56 %	10 %	7 %	17 %	11 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	61 %	9 %	7 %	14 %	9 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	56 %	9 %	7 %	18 %	10 %
LAITY	43 %	15 %	10 %	18 %	15 %
ALL	62 %	9 %	6 %	14 %	9 %

Question #27: "Jesus and the Apostles repeatedly used arguments from reason when speaking with unbelievers."

974 answered this question and are tabulated below. 4 did not choose an answer (not even marking "skip.").

Q #27	AGREE	SW AGREE	SKIPPED QUESTION	SW DISAGREE	DISAGREE
PASTORS	47 %	34 %	2 %	8 %	8 %
TEACHERS	26 %	33 %	10 %	12 %	19 %
TEACH H.S. OR COLLEGE	33 %	38 %	7 %	8 %	13 %
TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL	43 %	28 %	8 %	9 %	12 %
LAITY	44 %	22 %	9 %	8 %	17 %
ALL	38 %	32 %	7 %	10 %	14 %

Variation Between Pastors, Teachers, Laity

Note the wide disparity between the answers given by pastors from that of teachers, and those two groups from that of laity, for Q #24, #26, and #27.

Q #24: Pastors were much more likely (58% more) than teachers to disagree with Q #24, "Science can strengthen our faith that God created the world." Pastors were far more than twice as likely (156% more likely) as laity to disagree with that question. (41% of pastors disagreed, 26% of teachers, and 16% of laity.)

Q #26: Pastors were much more likely (36% more) than teachers to agree with Q #26, "Science does not in any way increase the effectiveness of the Gospel in bringing souls to faith." Pastors were much more likely (77% more) than laity to agree with that question. (76% of pastors agreed, 56% of teachers, and 43% of laity.)

Q #27: Pastors were nearly twice as likely (81% more) than teachers to agree with Q #27, "Jesus and the Apostles repeatedly used arguments from reason when speaking with unbelievers." In contrast, The answers of laity were

relatively close to that of pastors. (47% of pastors agreed, 26% of teachers, and 44% of laity.) It is surprising that our laity and pastors give similar response rates, while so many teachers stand alone in their response.

Concerns Expressed

Large numbers of pastors, teachers, and laity commented about these Means Of Grace questions. A select few comments:

A teacher pleads, "Your next 3 questions [Q #24, #25, #26] seem to be placing science on an equal plane with the inerrant Gospel. Please, please, please retain your Lutheranism and make science and reason subservient to the Gospel. The Holy Spirit will use the Means of Grace to bring souls to faith."

A teacher states, "God's Word and the Holy Spirit create and strengthen faith, not science. However, science integrated with God's Word can strengthen faith or when viewed through the lens of our faith, seeing the work of our Creator and marveling at it. God uses all things to work for the good of other and to do his work of saving souls and creating faith....including science."

A teacher writes, "Science can be a tool to help one better understand God's Creation, but I hesitate to say it can strengthen one's faith or increase the effectiveness of the Gospel. I do believe Science can break down barriers/walls that evolutionists may put up in the name of Science to try to verify or give validity to their causes."

A teacher says, "Science doesn't have the power to strengthen faith or bring people to faith. However, understanding Science and being able to explain it from a Biblical view can help Christians when they are confronted with the temptation to listen to man's reason instead of God's truth."

A pastor says, "The Gospel is the only means of grace, perfect, complete and powerful. That does not mean that we cannot use examples from nature and reason to give an always inadequate mental picture or example to try to demonstrate what God is saying in his perfect word."

A teacher states, "Jesus and the apostles often went against current reasoning; while we may be able to break down a couple of barriers with evidence, there is no reasoning that will pull a person into faith- only the gospel at work."

A pastor writes, "Faith is only strengthened by God's word or the sacraments."

A teacher comments, "Only the Gospel (Christ crucified and risen) can create faith. Science does not."

A teacher says, "Faith is strengthened only through Word and Sacraments. Science is only our interpretation of creation, and we still know so very little."

A teacher states, "Only the Holy Spirit can strengthen our faith through the Word of God."

Final Thoughts

It is my hope that this survey will encourage brotherly discussion of creation apologetics in our midst. May that discussion lead each of us to better understand the varied creation apologetic methods used by our brothers and sisters in Christ. Once we understand the positions of others, we can better evaluate our own position.

APPENDIX 1: Survey Questions, 4 pages

APPENDIX 2: All Survey Comments Received, 68 pages

These appendices are available in pdf form at www.LutheranScience.org/survey

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