

Running Head: INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

**The Effect of Theological Perspective and Gender of
Teacher upon Strength of Agreement Ratings
Concerning the Interpretation of Scripture**

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Abstract

Dr. Jim Bond, General Superintendent for the Church of the Nazarene and other authors have indicated a concern for the Church's stance on the interpretation of Scripture, specifically concerning the Creation story. Their concern is that a Fundamentalist position is making its way into the pulpits, educational systems, Sunday school classes and laymen beliefs within the Church. The present experiment was derived from these concerns and was designed to determine if college students and faculty of Olivet Nazarene University were in stronger agreement with a Wesleyan, Fundamentalist or Liberal position on the interpretation of Scripture. This experiment was also looking at whether the gender of the person maintaining the position had an effect upon the participant's responses. Ninety Olivet Nazarene University students (36 males, 54 females) volunteered to participate in the experiment for extra credit in a psychology course. Ten responses from the female students who participated were omitted using a random number table in order to equalize numbers across the factorial conditions in this experiment. In addition, Seventy-two Olivet Nazarene University faculty members (from every division) participated as volunteers. One participant's response was omitted due to failure to follow directions. Each of the participants were randomly assigned, using block randomization, to read one of six scenarios with a male or female Sunday school teacher portraying either a Wesleyan, Fundamentalist or Liberal position on the interpretation of Scripture. The six scenarios were identical in all respects except for the changes that were necessary to manipulate the two independent variables, which were the focus of the study (theological perspective and gender of the teacher in the scenario). After reading the appropriate scenario, all participants were asked to respond to a series of statements related to the content of the scenario by rating their strength of agreement with each statement. It was hypothesized that students' overall agreement ratings would not follow the same pattern as those of the professors. More specifically, I hypothesized that the faculty would rate the Wesleyan scenario significantly higher than the Liberal scenario and that there would not be a significant difference between the agreement ratings for the Wesleyan and Fundamentalist scenario. In addition, I hypothesized that the students would rate the Wesleyan scenario significantly higher than the Fundamentalist scenario, and that there would not be a

significant difference between ratings for the Wesleyan and the Liberal scenario. Furthermore, I hypothesized that the female in the scenario would receive lower agreement ratings overall in both faculty and student data. A 2 X 3 between groups factorial analysis of variance was conducted on these data and no significant effect of theological perspective was found when looking at the student data, but the faculty responses showed no difference between the Wesleyan and Liberal perspective while there was a significant difference in the Fundamentalist viewpoint. There was also no significant effect of the gender variable with the student data but there was a significant effect within the faculty responses, with the male being rated higher than the female.

The Effect of Theological Perspective and Gender of Teacher upon Strength of Agreement Ratings Concerning the Interpretation of Scripture

The Religious Right: John Wesley meets Fundamentalism is the topic which served as the stimulus for this research project. Does John Wesley meet Fundamentalism, and if so where do they meet, and where does the Church of the Nazarene stand within this spectrum? These are some of the questions that were asked in the process of this research.

According to McGrath (1997) "Fundamentalism is a long-standing tradition that arose as a religious reaction within American Protestantism to the rise of a secular culture during the period 1920-40". The term Fundamentalist has since then developed an ever-changing meaning. It can be used in both the religious realm as well as political and often the two overlap. Some of the current views of what Fundamentalists are would be: militant, a separatist approach in religion, and disengaged from the world (W. W. Dean,

personal communication, November 20, 2003). These views, although true in some arenas, do not get at the roots that hold Fundamentalism together. Smith (1996) lists five major convictions of the Fundamentalist viewpoint. These convictions are: the Verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures (the Bible is the exact word of God and is, therefore, without error), the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the Substitutionary Atonement (Jesus received the wrath of God for human sin), the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus (the resurrected Jesus had a physical body), and the Premillennial Second Coming of Christ (the second coming of Christ will usher in the millennial age). The Fundamentalists claim regarding the verbal inspiration of Scripture refers to the fact that the original autographs of the Scriptures were infallibly correct. This discrimination made concerning the interpretation of Scripture is the tenant of fundamentalism that the present research project is focusing on.

A Wesleyan view of Scripture is not as straightforward as the Fundamentalist view. John Wesley had a high view of Scripture, but he did not believe that the authority of Scripture is based on the infallibility of the autographs (L. E. Murphy, personal communication, November 3, 2003). He recognized possible problems in genealogy and history, but he also regularly placed emphasis on certain teachings which were essential to ministry: original sin, the deity of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith alone, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity (Smith, 1996). John Wesley's idea concerning the interpretation of Scripture is best explained when looked at through the example of his life. Henderson (2000) states, "He placed high importance on following the guidelines of the Bible, he imitated Christ and the apostles in sharing the gospel message with the most needy". Wesley rationalized his thoughts with the words of

Christ, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:13). Because of this scripture and many others John Wesley worked to share the Gospel with the poor and needy. Furthermore, that is how scripture worked in his life.

The Church of the Nazarene stems from the Wesleyan Holiness movement and the official statement of this church regarding the Holy Scriptures is:

We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith (Fairbanks, Hahn, Moore, Stone & Warrick, 2001).

Throughout the years there has been much debate regarding the clarity of the Church of the Nazarene's position on the interpretation of Scripture in comparison with other religious viewpoints. A recent area of debate, regarding the interpretation of Scripture, is specifically concerning the Creation Story. Dr. Jim Bond, General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, stated on June 16, 2001, that this is an issue that needs to be looked at in the church today and proclaimed from the pulpits. In his speech at the Faith, Living and Learning Conference he addressed this issue stating the position of the Church of the Nazarene, "We affirm that God is the Creator; we do not affirm "how" God created...The fact is we do not draw a line in the sand and demand adherence to any one view. One can believe that God created all things in a seven-day period of 24 hour days or that God employed some form of "gradual creation" or "continuing creation" that

encompassed millions of years-you can believe either view and be a good Nazarene.” Dr. Bond went on further describing Wesleyans as "centrists," avoiding the extremes of Fundamentalism while also avoiding the extremes of Liberalism. Both of these extreme positions are seen as a potentially destructive threat to the Church of the Nazarene but Liberalism has not been viewed as much of a threat as Fundamentalism. He continued saying that the Fundamentalists, “From their literalistic biblicism have made their view of creation the litmus test for evangelical orthodoxy for everyone”.

The present study was derived from the above background research and focuses upon the examination of the strength of agreement ratings from male and female university students and from the faculty at Olivet Nazarene University. Their ratings are upon agreement with a Wesleyan, Fundamentalist, or a Liberal Christian view concerning the interpretation of Scripture (specifically the Creation Story) put forth in a scenario. I also examined whether or not there was an effect of gender of the person in the scenario who states the interpretation of scripture. The participants’ ratings are derived from their responses to a Sunday school discussion consisting of one of the possible scenarios listed above.

I hypothesized that students’ overall agreement ratings would not follow the same pattern as those with the professors. More specifically, I hypothesized that the faculty would rate the Wesleyan scenario significantly higher than the Liberal scenario and that there would not be a significant difference between the agreement ratings for the Wesleyan and Fundamentalist scenario. I hypothesized this because I thought majority of the faculty would probably be coming from a Wesleyan background so their responses

would most likely be consistent with a Wesleyan response. Also, I thought that the faculty would respond this way because many of them were raised in a more conservative time, unlike that of the student respondents. In addition, I hypothesized that the students would rate the Wesleyan scenario significantly higher than the Fundamentalist scenario, and that there would not be a significant difference between ratings for the Wesleyan and the Liberal scenario. One of the reasons behind not finding any significance in the student ratings between Wesleyan and Liberal perspectives would be because of the postmodern world they have been raised in. A Liberal perspective is more acceptable to the times than a strict Fundamentalist perspective and this generation has grown up hearing and seeing churches adapt to this thought of the times.

Method

Participants

Ninety Olivet Nazarene University students (36 males, 54 females) volunteered to participate in the experiment for extra credit in a psychology course. Ten responses from the female students who participated were omitted using a random number table in order to equalize numbers across the factorial conditions in this experiment. In addition, Seventy-two Olivet Nazarene University faculty members (from every division) participated as volunteers. One participant's response was omitted due to failure to follow directions. Each of the participants were randomly assigned, using block randomization, to read one of the six scenarios described below

Design

The design of the experiment was a 2 x 3 between groups factorial. The independent variables were the theological perspective of the Sunday school teacher in the scenario (either Wesleyan, Fundamentalist, or Liberal) and the gender of the Sunday school teacher in the scenario (male or female). The dependent variable was ratings on agreement with the conclusion concerning the interpretation of Scripture.

Design of Experiment
2 x 3 Between Groups Factorial

Theological Perspective

		<i>Wesleyan</i>	<i>Fundamentalist</i>	<i>Liberal</i>
		Gender of Teacher in Scenario	<i>Male</i>	
<i>Female</i>				

Materials

Scenarios. This experiment was conducted by using 6 scenarios that I wrote. The scenarios consisted of either having a male or female Sunday school teacher leading the

class discussion that put forth either a Wesleyan, Fundamentalist or Liberal theological perspective (see appendices for the complete set of scenarios). The discussion in question was concerning the Creation story, and all versions were identical in every respect except in regards to the manipulation of the independent variables. Furthermore, all theological positions are briefly mentioned in all versions of the scenario but each version consistently differed in two places: the Sunday school teacher's response to a question in class, and the teacher's conclusion on the interpretation of Scripture. The critical portion of the Wesleyan scenario regarding the interpretation of Scripture that was manipulated read as follows: "...it is essential for us to realize that the creation story is God's message to human beings. It was inspired by God to make humankind aware of His creative acts. The fact that He brought all of creation into existence. Although we do reject the version of evolutionary theory that rejects God, we do not have to make a specific decision one way or the other concerning any particular view regarding how God created the heavens and the earth, or how long it took Him to do it. It is possible that God created all things in a seven-day period of 24-hour days. But is it also possible that God employed some form of "gradual creation" or "continuing creation" that encompassed millions of years. Overall, we need to know that Scripture need not be interpreted literally, and thereby provides spiritual truths about the nature of God". The critical portion of the Fundamentalist scenario regarding the interpretation of Scripture that was manipulated read as follows: "...it is essential for us to realize that the creation story is God's message to human beings-His infallible word. It was inspired by God to make humankind aware of His creative acts, the fact that He brought all of creation into existence in six 24-hour days and rested on the seventh day. Overall, we need to know

that scripture should be interpreted literally and thereby provides spiritual truths about the nature of God”. The critical portion of the Liberal scenario regarding the interpretation of Scripture that was manipulated read as follows: “...it is essential for us to realize that the creation story is a fallible human product. It could have been the result of the creativity of the Ancient Israelites in an attempt to show superiority of God over nature or even a myth derived from earlier Mesopotamian Creation stories. Overall, we need to know that Scripture was never meant to be interpreted literally, but was intended to be used as a vehicle to teach spiritual truths about the nature of God”. The critical dependent measure that the participants responded to was: Mr. or Ms. (gender depending on the scenario randomly received) Smith’s conclusion concerning the interpretation of scripture is correct. The participants responded to this question and four others on an agreement scale rating, ranging from 1 to 7, 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree (see appendices for the complete set of scenarios).

Procedure

The experimental sessions with the male students were conducted in four 30-minute time periods and the experimental sessions with the female students were conducted in two 30-minute sessions with one additional combined male/female 30-minute session. The faculty data were collected from divisions in 15-minute sessions before the division faculty meetings. The scenarios were handed out in random order according to the seating. In every session the experimenter explained to the participants that at any point during the experiment they could withdraw from the study. The participants were also given a brief explanation about what they were going to be participating in and they were thanked for being a partner in this research. The

instructions were to read the scenario carefully and to rate their strength of agreement with each of the statements, concerning the scenario, on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree). Then the participants were asked if anyone wanted to withdraw at this time, and then they were permitted to begin their task. After all of the participants were through, the experimenter went around and collected all of the scenarios. After everything was collected the experimenter proceeded to debrief the participants and requested that they not share any of the specifics of the experiment with anyone until all of the data had been collected. They were told that if anyone would like to know what the results of the experiment were they could contact my professor or me. Then, if the participants were students, they signed a sheet for their extra credit points, were thanked again and dismissed. If the participants were faculty members the experimenter thanked them again for their participation and then left the meeting.

Results

Table 1 displays the student mean strength of agreement ratings across the factorial conditions of the experiment for the students. The overall means for theological perspective suggest a possible main effect of this variable upon the mean agreement ratings, but there seems to be no main effect of the gender variable. Overall, the Wesleyan scenario received the highest mean agreement rating, then the Liberal and rated lowest was the Fundamentalist. The data also suggests a possibility of a significant interaction between the two independent variables. The data shows that the Wesleyan ratings in both male and female scenarios were fairly close in agreement ratings. But the gender of the teacher in the scenario ratings for the Fundamentalist and the Liberal scenarios show larger differences in the strength of agreement ratings, but in opposite

directions. For instance, in the Fundamentalist scenarios, the male received the highest mean strength of agreement rating but in the Liberal scenarios the female had the highest rating. Further inspection demonstrates that the mean agreement rating for the male Wesleyan and the mean agreement rating for the female Liberal show almost no difference in the strength of agreement rating concerning the interpretation of Scripture.

Table 1
Student
Mean Agreement Ratings as a Function of
Theological Perspective and
Gender of Teacher in the Scenario

		Theological Perspective			
		<i>Wesleyan</i>	<i>Fundamentalist</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>Overall</i>
Gender of Teacher in Scenario	<i>Male</i>	4.733	4.4	3.4	4.067
	<i>Female</i>	4.4	3.133	4.731	4.178
	<i>Overall</i>	4.567	3.767	4.033	

The data which the means displayed in Table 1 are based upon were subjected to a 2 x 3 between groups factorial analysis of variance. Table 2 displays the ANOVA summary for the student data. When looking at the probability of either theological

perspective in the scenario or the gender of the Sunday school teacher in the scenario having a direct effect upon the agreement rating there were no significant effects. However, the interaction between the two independent variables is marginally significant. A marginal interaction in this data set is showing that the pattern of differences associated with gender changes at the different levels of theological perspective in the scenario. For example, in the Wesleyan and the Fundamentalist scenario, when the Sunday school teacher is a male, the mean strength of agreement rating was higher than the female. But in the Liberal scenario, when the Sunday school teacher is a male, the mean strength of agreement rating was lower than the female.

Table 2
Student
ANOVA Summary for Analysis of
Agreement Rating as a Function
of Theological Perspective and Gender
of Student in the Scenario

	Theological Perspective			
	<i>F-Observed</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>MSE</i>	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Theological Perspective</i>	1.14	2;84	4.367	0.325
<i>Gender of Teacher</i>	0.278	1;84	4.367	0.801
<i>Interaction</i>	12.311	2;84	4.367	0.065

To determine if there might have been a difference in the pattern of results in the student data due to gender of the respondents the data were split according to gender and

two separate analyses identical to that described above were conducted (one for males and one for females). However, the details of these analyses will not be discussed further since the details concerning the results of these analyses were essentially the same as the overall analyses for the male and female data combined.

The data collected from the faculty were analyzed in the same manner as discussed above for the student data. Table 7 shows the mean agreement ratings of the faculty participants. The overall means for theological perspective and gender of teacher in the scenario suggest a possible main effect of both of these variables upon the mean agreement ratings. The Wesleyan theological perspective received the highest mean agreement rating, then the Liberal and Fundamentalist was rated the lowest. These results are consistent with those in table 1 displaying the students' mean agreement ratings. Overall, the scenario with the male teacher received the highest ratings. In addition, inspection of the table indicates that there is no interaction between the two independent variables. Further investigation shows that the Wesleyan male received the highest mean agreement rating and the Fundamentalist female still received the lowest mean agreement rating.

Table 7
Faculty
Mean Agreement Ratings as a Function of
Theological Perspective and
Gender of Teacher in the Scenario

Theological Perspective

		<i>Wesleyan</i>	<i>Fundamentalist</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>Overall</i>
Gender	<i>Male</i>	5.5	3.25	3.75	4.167
of Teacher	<i>Female</i>	3.833	2.167	3.917	3.306
in Scenario	<i>Overall</i>	4.667	2.708	3.833	

As noted above the faculty data were subjected to the same 2 x 3 between groups factorial analysis of variance as the student data. Table 8 displays the ANOVA summary for the faculty data. When looking at the probability of theological perspective having a direct effect upon the agreement rating there was a significant main effect found. A BonFerroni test was utilized to conduct a pairwise comparisons test between the three theological perspectives. There were no significant differences found between the Fundamentalist and Liberal nor between the Wesleyan and the Liberal. But there was a significant difference found between the Fundamentalist and Wesleyan perspective. This means that the strength of agreement ratings for the Wesleyan were significantly higher than the ratings for the Fundamentalist. There was also a marginal effect of gender of teacher in the scenario, with the male teacher receiving the higher ratings, but the interaction between the two independent variables was not significant.

Table 8
Faculty
ANOVA Summary for Analysis of
Agreement Rating as a Function
of Theological Perspective and Gender
of Student in the Scenario

Theological Perspective

	<i>F-Observed</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>MSE</i>	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Theological Perspective</i>	6.126	2;66	3.784	0.004
<i>Gender of Teacher</i>	3.527	1;66	3.784	0.065
<i>Interaction</i>	1.391	2;66	3.784	0.256

Discussion

The present study examined the effect of theological perspective and gender of teacher upon strength of agreement ratings concerning the interpretation of Scripture. Before the experiment was conducted I hypothesized that students' overall agreement ratings would not follow the same pattern as those of the professors. More specifically, I hypothesized that the faculty would rate the Wesleyan scenario significantly higher than the Liberal scenario and that there would not be a significant difference between the agreement ratings for the Wesleyan and Fundamentalist scenario. In addition, I hypothesized that the students would rate the Wesleyan scenario significantly higher than the Fundamentalist scenario, and that there would not be a significant difference between ratings for the Wesleyan and the Liberal scenario. Furthermore, I hypothesized that the female in the scenario would receive lower agreement ratings overall in both faculty and student data.

My specific hypotheses regarding the relationship between the student and faculty data were rejected when looking at the independent variable theological perspective. For

the student data there were no significant differences of theological perspective. However, when looking at the faculty data the Wesleyan theological perspective was rated significantly higher than the Fundamentalist while there were no other significant differences found. This in itself does become a significant finding because there should be a significant difference found between the three theological perspectives, especially among the faculty. When the student data showed no significant effect of theological perspective it suggests that the students saw no difference between a Wesleyan, Fundamentalist or Liberal perspective on the interpretation of Scripture. Furthermore, the faculty ratings suggest that they see no difference between a Wesleyan and Liberal perspective but they do with a Fundamentalist viewpoint.

The mean strength of agreement ratings for theological perspective do not completely coincide with the assumptions made by General Superintendent Jim Bond, or the opinions of many other authors on this topic. They have stated a concern for the Fundamentalist's strict viewpoint on the interpretation of Scripture, specifically the Creation story being maintained by many of our Nazarene pastors and laypeople rather than a Wesleyan position. When in fact, the data suggests that, the Church of the Nazarene solely holds neither of these positions. When a closer look is taken at the nature of the results of the data it is obvious that it does not seem to be Fundamentalism only that is posing a great threat to our denomination's stance on this issue regarding the interpretation of Scripture. It is the Liberal extreme that is showing through just as strong, if not stronger. First of all, I say this because of the finding of theological perspective in the student data set showing no significant effect. Secondly, the faculty data showed no discrimination between the Wesleyan and Liberal perspectives. The

finding of no significant difference between these theological positions is an extremely significant result. There should be a clear discrimination, especially among the faculty, between the three theological viewpoints with the Wesleyan rating being much higher than the Liberal and Fundamentalist interpretations of Scripture, but that was not the case. What does this say to us? Perhaps that the stance the Church of the Nazarene takes on the Holy Scriptures has not been effectively taught in our educational systems, preached from the pulpits of our churches, and/or discussed in the Sunday School classrooms and small group settings that Wesley himself saw as the most formative environment for Christians in the church. When the Word of God is misunderstood, misinterpreted and unclearly taught to the people coming into our educational systems and churches we are inviting other clearly stated viewpoints to enter in. It is possible that because the leaders and laypeople of the church today are more concerned with pleasing people and going along with current trends that the world is having a stronger effect upon the Church of the Nazarene than the Church is having upon the world. Adapting to society to better reach people is great, but when it alters the Scriptural truths the Church stands upon then there is a problem. And I fear that this is what is occurring in the Church of the Nazarene today. However, it is also important to further examine the pattern of the results from the students. It is possible that these results may be the product of a generation raised in a postmodern society. If so, we as the body of Christ need to find a way to break through this way of thinking so that the truth of the Word of God can explosively impact the world in a positive way. Also, the finding of no discrimination among the three theological viewpoints regarding the interpretation of

Scripture may be partially due to the mixture of religious affiliations and the lack of religious affiliation within the student population.

The hypotheses I had for the independent variable gender in the scenario were not supported. When looking at the ratings for the gender of the teacher in the scenario for the student data, there were no significant differences found. But in the faculty data the male was rated significantly higher than the female. This finding is important also because it suggests that the faculty is more likely to be in agreement with a male in church leadership than with a female. Which, if this stance is true could cause a rippling effect on the students coming out of Olivet. This is the place where students are developing and receiving extensive training in their fields and being equipped to work in ministry as well as grow Spiritually. If the students of Olivet, which includes many future leaders in the Church of the Nazarene, carries with them incorrect perceptions on the capabilities of women leading in ministerial positions in the Church or in leadership of any kind then this Church will be going down a road of destruction while taking on one of the frameworks of Fundamentalism. But, the student population's responses state that the gender of a person in a leadership position does not have an effect upon their agreement with that person. This is also a significant finding because with the history of the Church of the Nazarene strongly supporting women in ministry and leadership positions of various types, it shows that the youth of today are coinciding with the convictions of the Church. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the faculty at Olivet. This difference between the student and faculty responses may be due to a generational difference. The age in which these populations were raised vary when looking at the standings of women in the community at that time.

Some further research that could be conducted deriving from the current study would be to gather and collect more data from the other Nazarene Universities to obtain a more thorough evaluation of this issue within our educational system. It would also be interesting to collect data from the pastors in different regions. Another aspect to look at would be to reword the ending of Liberal perspective to a more strictly postmodern conclusion to see if the strength of agreement ratings would vary within the different scenarios or if they would remain the same and whether they would correlate with the current version of the Liberal perspective. Specifically, the change would be as follows in the last sentence of the Liberal scenarios: “Overall, we need to know that scripture should not be interpreted literally, but was intended to be used as a vehicle to teach spiritual truths about the nature of God.”

Overall, I think the Church of the Nazarene should conduct further investigations into this topic to get a closer look at the nature of these results. Scripture as it says in the Church of the Nazarene’s manual (2001), is “given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation” and therefore is not a subject that should be taken lightly.

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Appendix A

Female Fundamentalist

Year in School _____

Gender M____ **F**_____

Denomination _____

Major _____

Ms. Smith is a Sunday school teacher at a local church in the area. Her class is comprised of 12 men and women in the age range 23-54. Today in Sunday school her class is looking at the scriptures from Genesis 1:1-2:2. These scriptures talk about the creation: What was made, who made it, how it was made and how long it took. . “Well class, what do you think about the passage we just read? It is clear to me when we look at the first verse, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”, that the author is expressing the idea that God is the creator of all things” said Ms. Smith. The majority of the class nodded in agreement. “How can we be absolutely sure that God actually created everything?” said Joe. “Isn’t there scientific research that opposes the creation theory? For instance, the theory of evolution and the big bang theory?” he added. Some of the people in class seemed to agree with Joe’s point of view. Ms. Smith

responded saying, “Yes, those theories are being looked at, but there is no scriptural basis for any of them. Even though there may be some so called “discoveries” it is important for us to find it in the scriptures.” Sally added “But, those and other theories may be useful to us for seeing how God created everything. We do not have to assume that He said it and that is exactly how it happened. By looking at scientific findings and through personal thought and research we can come closer to seeing how God created the heavens and the earth.” Bill responded, “Although I do understand why you both are coming to the conclusions you have reached, we have to remain true to the scriptures. The scriptures say God said it and it happened and that it was good so that is what we should believe.” “I agree,” said Shelly, “We need to take the scriptures at face value, God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day and I believe it”. “There is no way all of this occurred in six days! That is impossible!” said Joe. Ms. Smith concluded, “Okay everyone, it is essential for us to realize that the creation story is God’s message to human beings-His infallible word. It was inspired by God to make humankind aware of His creative acts, the fact that He brought all of creation into existence in six 24-hour days and rested on the seventh day. Overall, we need to know that scripture should be interpreted literally and thereby provides spiritual truths about the nature of God.

Appendix A

Female Liberal

Year in School _____

Gender M _____ F _____

Denomination _____

Major _____

Ms. Smith is a Sunday school teacher at a local church in the area. Her class is comprised of 12 men and women in the age range 23-54. Today in Sunday school her class is looking at the scriptures from Genesis 1:1-2:2. These scriptures talk about the creation: What was made, who made it, how it was made and how long it took. “Well class, what do you think about the passage we just read? It is clear to me when we look at the first verse, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”, that the author is expressing the idea that God is the creator of all things” said Ms. Smith. The majority of the class nodded in agreement. “How can we be absolutely sure that God actually created everything?” said Joe. “Isn’t there scientific research that opposes the creation theory? For instance, the theory of evolution and the big bang theory?” he

added. Some of the people in class seemed to agree with Joe's point of view. Ms. Smith responded saying, "Yes, those theories are being looked at and we should remember that the authors of Genesis lived in a pre-scientific world. Therefore our scientific knowledge is beyond what they could have had the ability to understand." Sally added "But, those and other theories may be useful to us for seeing how God created everything. We do not have to assume that He said it and that is exactly how it happened. By looking at scientific findings and through personal thought and research we can come closer to seeing how God created the heavens and the earth." Bill responded, "Although I do understand why you both are coming to the conclusions you have reached, we have to remain true to the scriptures. The scriptures say God said it and it happened and that it was good so that is what we should believe." "I agree," said Shelly, "We need to take the scriptures at face value, God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day and I believe it". "There is no way all of this occurred in six days! That is impossible!" said Joe. Ms. Smith concluded, "Okay everyone, it is essential for us to realize that the creation story is a fallible human product. It could have been the result of the creativity of the Ancient Israelites in an attempt to show superiority of God over nature or even a myth derived from earlier Mesopotamian Creation stories. Overall, we need to know that scripture was never meant to be interpreted literally, but was intended to be used as a vehicle to teach spiritual truths about the nature of God."

Appendix A

Female Wesleyan

Year in School _____

Gender M_____ F_____

Denomination _____

Major _____

Ms. Smith is a Sunday school teacher at a local church in the area. Her class is comprised of 12 men and women in the age range 23-54. Today in Sunday school her class is looking at the scriptures from Genesis 1:1-2:2. These scriptures talk about the creation: What was made, who made it, how it was made and how long it took. "Well class, what do you think about the passage we just read? It is clear to me when we look at the first verse, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth", that the author is expressing the idea that God is the creator of all things" said Ms. Smith. The majority of the class nodded in agreement. "How can we be absolutely sure that God actually created everything?" said Joe. "Isn't there scientific research that opposes the

creation theory? For instance, the theory of evolution and the big bang theory?” he added. Some of the people in class seemed to agree with Joe’s point of view. Ms. Smith responded saying, “Yes, those theories are being looked at, but that does not mean that they are necessarily in conflict with scripture.” Sally added “But, those and other theories may be useful to us for seeing how God created everything. We do not have to assume that He said it and that is exactly how it happened. By looking at scientific findings and through personal thought and research we can come closer to seeing how God created the heavens and the earth.” Bill responded, “Although I do understand why you both are coming to the conclusions you have reached, we have to remain true to the scriptures. The scriptures say God said it and it happened and that it was good so that is what we should believe.” “I agree,” said Shelly, “We need to take the scriptures at face value, God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day and I believe it”. “There is no way all of this occurred in six days! That is impossible!” said Joe. Ms. Smith concluded, “Okay everyone, it is essential for us to realize that the creation story is God’s message to human beings. It was inspired by God to make humankind aware of His creative acts, the fact that He brought all of creation into existence. Although we do reject the version of evolutionary theory that rejects God, we do not have to make a specific decision one way or the other concerning any particular view regarding how God created the heavens and the earth, or how long it took Him to do it. It is possible that God created all things in a seven-day period of 24-hour days. But it is also possible that God employed some form of “gradual creation” or “continuing creation” that encompassed millions of years. Overall, we need to know that scripture need not be interpreted literally, and thereby provides spiritual truths about the nature of God.”

Appendix A

Male Fundamentalist

Year in School _____

Gender M_____ F_____

Denomination _____

Major _____

Mr. Smith is a Sunday school teacher at a local church in the area. His class is comprised of 12 men and women in the age range 23-54. Today in Sunday school his class is looking at the scriptures from Genesis 1:1-2:2. These scriptures talk about the creation: What was made, who made it, how it was made and how long it took. . “Well class, what do you think about the passage we just read? It is clear to me when we look at the first verse, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”, that the author is expressing the idea that God is the creator of all things” said Mr. Smith. The majority of the class nodded in agreement. “How can we be absolutely sure that God

actually created everything?” said Joe. “Isn’t there scientific research that opposes the creation theory? For instance, the theory of evolution and the big bang theory?” he added. Some of the people in class seemed to agree with Joe’s point of view. Mr. Smith responded saying, “Yes, those theories are being looked at, but there is no scriptural basis for any of them. Even though there may be some so called “discoveries” it is important for us to find it in the scriptures.” Sally added “But, those and other theories may be useful to us for seeing how God created everything. We do not have to assume that He said it and that is exactly how it happened. By looking at scientific findings and through personal thought and research we can come closer to seeing how God created the heavens and the earth.” Bill responded, “Although I do understand why you both are coming to the conclusions you have reached, we have to remain true to the scriptures. The scriptures say God said it and it happened and that it was good so that is what we should believe.” “I agree,” said Shelly, “We need to take the scriptures at face value, God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day and I believe it”. “There is no way all of this occurred in six days! That is impossible!” said Joe. Mr. Smith concluded, “Okay everyone, it is essential for us to realize that the creation story is God’s message to human beings-His infallible word. It was inspired by God to make humankind aware of His creative acts, the fact that He brought all of creation into existence in six 24-hour days and rested on the seventh day. Overall, we need to know that scripture should be interpreted literally and thereby provides spiritual truths about the nature of God.

Appendix A

Male Liberal

Year in School _____

Gender M _____ F _____

Denomination _____

Major _____

Mr. Smith is a Sunday school teacher at a local church in the area. His class is comprised of 12 men and women in the age range 23-54. Today in Sunday school his class is looking at the scriptures from Genesis 1:1-2:2. These scriptures talk about the creation: What was made, who made it, how it was made and how long it took. “Well class, what do you think about the passage we just read? It is clear to me when we look at the first verse, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”, that the author is expressing the idea that God is the creator of all things” said Mr. Smith. The

majority of the class nodded in agreement. “How can we be absolutely sure that God actually created everything?” said Joe. “Isn’t there scientific research that opposes the creation theory? For instance, the theory of evolution and the big bang theory?” he added. Some of the people in class seemed to agree with Joe’s point of view. Mr. Smith responded saying, “Yes, those theories are being looked at and we should remember that the authors of Genesis lived in a pre-scientific world. Therefore our scientific knowledge is beyond what they could have had the ability to understand.” Sally added “But, those and other theories may be useful to us for seeing how God created everything. We do not have to assume that He said it and that is exactly how it happened. By looking at scientific findings and through personal thought and research we can come closer to seeing how God created the heavens and the earth.” Bill responded, “Although I do understand why you both are coming to the conclusions you have reached, we have to remain true to the scriptures. The scriptures say God said it and it happened and that it was good so that is what we should believe.” “I agree,” said Shelly, “We need to take the scriptures at face value, God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day and I believe it”. “There is no way all of this occurred in six days! That is impossible!” said Joe. Mr. Smith concluded, “Okay everyone, it is essential for us to realize that the creation story is a fallible human product. It could have been the result of the creativity of the Ancient Israelites in an attempt to show superiority of God over nature or even a myth derived from earlier Mesopotamian Creation stories. Overall, we need to know that scripture was never meant to be interpreted literally, but was intended to be used as a vehicle to teach spiritual truths about the nature of God.”

Appendix A

Male Wesleyan

Year in School _____

Gender M _____ F _____

Denomination _____

Major _____

Mr. Smith is a Sunday school teacher at a local church in the area. His class is comprised of 12 men and women in the age range 23-54. Today in Sunday school his class is looking at the scriptures from Genesis 1:1-2:2. These scriptures talk about the creation: What was made, who made it, how it was made and how long it took. “Well class, what do you think about the passage we just read? It is clear to me when we look at the first verse, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”, that the

author is expressing the idea that God is the creator of all things” said Mr. Smith. The majority of the class nodded in agreement. “How can we be absolutely sure that God actually created everything?” said Joe. “Isn’t there scientific research that opposes the creation theory? For instance, the theory of evolution and the big bang theory?” he added. Some of the people in class seemed to agree with Joe’s point of view. Mr. Smith responded saying, “Yes, those theories are being looked at, but that does not mean that they are necessarily in conflict with scripture.” Sally added “But, those and other theories may be useful to us for seeing how God created everything. We do not have to assume that He said it and that is exactly how it happened. By looking at scientific findings and through personal thought and research we can come closer to seeing how God created the heavens and the earth.” Bill responded, “Although I do understand why you both are coming to the conclusions you have reached, we have to remain true to the scriptures. The scriptures say God said it and it happened and that it was good so that is what we should believe.” “I agree,” said Shelly, “We need to take the scriptures at face value, God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day and I believe it”. “There is no way all of this occurred in six days! That is impossible!” said Joe. Mr. Smith concluded, “Okay everyone, it is essential for us to realize that the creation story is God’s message to human beings. It was inspired by God to make humankind aware of His creative acts, the fact that He brought all of creation into existence. Although we do reject the version of evolutionary theory that rejects God, we do not have to make a specific decision one way or the other concerning any particular view regarding how God created the heavens and the earth, or how long it took Him to do it. It is possible that God created all things in a seven-day period of 24-hour days. But it is also possible that God employed some form of “gradual creation” or “continuing creation” that encompassed millions of years. Overall, we need to know that scripture need not be interpreted literally, and thereby provides spiritual truths about the nature of God.”

Appendix B

Female

Please rate your strength of agreement with each of the following statements, concerning the above scenario, on a scale of 1 to 7. Note that higher ratings equal stronger agreement with the statement, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree.

I would want to participate in a Sunday school class similar to this one.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly						Strongly

Disagree

Agree

The people in Ms. Smith's class seem interested in the topic under discussion.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

Ms. Smith seems open to allowing the people in the class to discuss their positions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

The members of Ms. Smith's class appear to be comfortable discussing their viewpoints.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

Ms. Smith's conclusion concerning the interpretation of scripture is correct.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

Appendix B

Male

Please rate your strength of agreement with each of the following statements, concerning the above scenario, on a scale of 1 to 7. Note that higher ratings equal stronger agreement with the statement, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree.

I would want to participate in a Sunday school class similar to this one.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

The people in Mr. Smith's class seem interested in the topic under discussion.

1
Strongly
Disagree

2

3

4

5

6

7
Strongly
Agree

Mr. Smith seems open to allowing the people in the class to discuss their positions.

1
Strongly
Disagree

2

3

4

5

6

7
Strongly
Agree

The members of Mr. Smith's class appear to be comfortable discussing their viewpoints.

1
Strongly
Disagree

2

3

4

5

6

7
Strongly
Agree

Mr. Smith's conclusion concerning the interpretation of scripture is correct.

1
Strongly
Disagree

2

3

4

5

6

7
Strongly
Agree