**Origins of Humans**

**Evolution vs. Creation: The Great Debate**

The Evolution vs. Creation debate is often referred to as the "**Great Debate**." It's the emotion-packed question of "Origins “why, how, and where did everything come from?

20th century science has made the compelling discovery that, at some point, the universe began. Both sides of the Great Debate now agree that the universe has not existed eternally, that at some point it began. However, this is where the agreement ends.

There are two basic theories in this Great Debate. The first is the historical default - the **Creation Model of Origins**. This theory maintains that the intricate design of all things implies a Designer (God or creator). The second theory is the more recent, - the **Evolution Model of Origins**. This theory suggests that the intricate design permeating all things is a product of random chance and excessive time.

The **Big Bang Theory** is the accepted source of Origins among the majority of Evolutionists, and is taught in our public schools. However, it is argued that the **Big Bang** does not explain many things, including the uneven distribution of matter that results in "voids" and "clumps," or the retrograde motion that must violate the Law of Conservation of Angular Momentum.

**The Science vs. God debate is more intense than ever. The debate between Evolutionists and Creationists will continue, with each side holding strong to their beliefs. Where do you sit on the subject?**

Both Creationists and Evolutionists agree that if evolution is at all possible, there needs to be an excessive (if not infinite) amount of time.

For much of the 20th century, it was thought evolutionists had all the time they needed. If the earth ever looked too young for certain evolutionary developments to have occurred, the age was pushed back in the textbooks. In 1905, the earth was declared to be two billion years old. By 1970, the earth was determined to be 3.5 billion years old, and by the 1990's, the earth had become 4.6 billion years old.

The debate by creationists is that even following this timeline there isn’t time for this evolutionary process to allow what currently exists to have taken place, therefore God or a creator must have been involved.

**The Stone Age**

We call this period the Stone Age because most of the artifacts found from this time are made of stone. Humans who lived in the Stone Age are generally classified into a group called Homo. Homo was divided into two successive and overlapping species – **Homo Erectus** and **Home Sapiens**. The Stone Age is believed to have occurred from 2 million BCE to 5000 BCE.

**Homo Sapiens**

About 40,000 years ago, modern humans moved into Europe armed with the skills to make clothing, and better shelters. 19th century scientists named these newcomers Cro-Magnon people after the French rock shelter where three anatomically modern skeletons were discovered in 1868.

Cro-Magnons were Homo Sapiens who evolved in Africa and who slowly pushed their way into Europe. They developed the ability to endure colder climates, even those as cold as Iceland and Greenland.

For thousands of years, there was no significant change in the cultural development of the human species. However, about 35000 years ago, remarkable technological, artistic and cultural advances occurred. These developments are often called the “ Great Leap Forward”.

One of the most significant developments was social organization. People started living in small groups or bands and they started to live in the same location for extended periods of time.

They created homes to protect themselves against the elements by digging shallow pits and covered them with tree brush or hides. They sometimes camped under rock ledges but rarely in caves as it was cold and dark and smoke from fires would linger and fill the lungs of the occupants and sting their eyes.

Mostly during the stone age, caves would have been used during emergencies, such as storms, or seeking protection from large animals.

Neanderthals (an extinct member of the Homo Genus found in Europe and parts of western and central Asia) were quite social. They organized groups to hunt large prey. Evidence suggests they took care of the weak and sick within their community, and they buried their dead.

They were the first people to have a sense of religion. They certainly had greater mental resources then their earlier human ancestors and perhaps a capacity for abstract thought.

Cro-Magnons also lived in communities and survived through interaction. Like Neanderthals, they found that cooperation with others improved their chances of survival.

There is evidence that their settlements had housing for up to 40 or 50 individuals. The earliest tools were choppers. Choppers were stones that were chipped on only one side. Over time they developed a high level of expertise in tool-making, using a variety of items, including stone, bone, horn, ivory and wood.

Why do you think Cro-Magnons survived and Neanderthals didn’t?

Theories on the fate of the Neanderthals include an inability to cope with climate change, competitive exclusion or even genocide by anatomically modern humans. Hybridization could have been the result, where they were absorbed into the cro-magnon population.

**Use of Fire**

Evidence shows that Neanderthals had fire to keep them warm.  Some cave floors where remains have been found consist almost entirely of compressed layers of ash, many meters thick.

* First, fire allowed humans to spread farther into colder temperature regions of Europe and Asia.  As they began to cook their food - a much faster process than eating it raw – they had more time to pursue other activities.
* Finally stone age humans used fire for defense.  They threw burning sticks at animals to drive them away from people’s shelters.

**The Neolithic Age**

* During the Neolithic Age, people changed from being hunters and gatherers to being food producers. We call this transformation the Neolithic revolution.  Most scholars believe that Middle Eastern people were the first to discover that they could plant seed from wild grain.
* During the same period, the Stone Age people began to domesticate animals such as dogs, cattle, pigs, sheep and goats as another ready source of food. Perhaps hunters built fences to close in a herd of wild animal.  After killing one animal, they may have saved the rest for later.  As captured animals slowly lost their fear of people, they became domesticated.

The change to a food producing economy had a big impact on the lives of humans.  The advent of agriculture increased the food supply, making it possible for larger groups of people to live together in one area.  Permanent communities or villages began to develop.  The earliest known village is **Jericho**, which archaeologists date back to 8000 BCE.

* Archaeologists have discovered that the Neolithic residents of one community lived in houses of sun dried bricks with flat roofs made of mud covered reeds.  People of the Neolithic Age also learned how to make baskets, and how to weave cloth. These activities gave rise to a new group of craftspeople or artisans such as potters, jewelers, metal workers, carpenters, and weavers.

In turn, these artisans helped to promote the development of trade in other areas as they became interested in exchanging their wares for food supplies.  Trade led to new methods of transportation as Neolithic people began to think about better ways to transport their wares.

**Civilization**

* The word civilization comes from the latin word Civis, which means citizen or someone who lives in a city.  By 5000 BCE, the effects of the Neolithic revolution had led to what we can describe as the earliest civilizations.
* Agriculture allowed those conditions that we consider to be characteristics of the earliest civilizations.

**Middle Eastern Civilization – 3500 BCE – 395 CE**

* Historians know that two of the world’s first great civilizations developed along mighty river systems in Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt at roughly the same time.  Mesopotamia dates from about 3500 BCE and ancient Egypt from about 3100 BCE.

The Mesopotamians drew their source of life from the Tigris- Euphrates river system in Asia, and the Egyptians from the Nile River in Africa.  The availability of a constant food supply freed labor for other pursuits, and led to the development of thriving cities, magnificent temples, and powerful empires.