

## What I thought of the debate

**Over 3 million viewers watched the evolution/creation debate between Bill Nye and Ken Ham, and this Salvation Army officer and medical doctor responds.**

*By Lt. Colonel Herbert C. Rader, MD, FACS –*

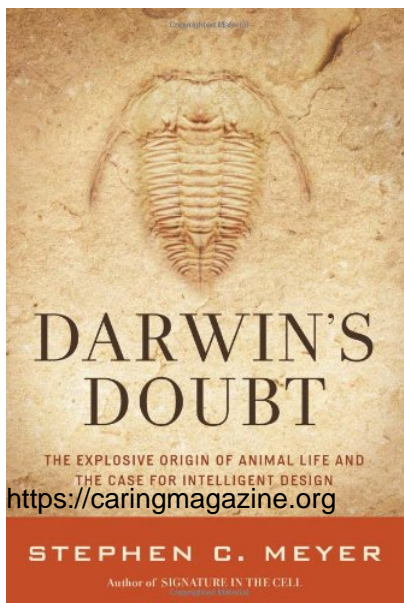
[Bill Nye](#) (“The Science Guy”)—a popular science educator in the mold of Carl Sagan, who claimed confidently that “the universe is all that there is and all that there ever was or will be”—met with Ken Ham, prolific author and founder of the highly acclaimed [Creation Museum](#) in Kentucky, in a more than two hour [debate](#) at the museum Feb. 4 that was moderated by CNN’s Tom Foreman.



Nye raised many important issues and questions, but remained on the surface of the topics discussed, dismissing them as though there had been some resolution. For instance, he repeatedly insisted that fossils are strong evidence for evolution, when, in fact they are not.

The debating technique is to introduce data and then to claim that one’s interpretation of the data is the correct one even if that interpretation is highly colored by one’s worldview or philosophy. Actually, creationists and evolutionists look at the same data, but their conclusions differ.

The fact is that animals in the fossil record always appear suddenly without precursors. An example is the so-called “Cambrian explosion” in which many phyla representing distinct body types appear all at once as complete and functional forms, without a hint of ancestral forms. This “problem” for evolutionists is discussed in detail in Stephen Meyer’s book, [Darwin’s Doubt](#).



“Darwin’s Doubt” |  
Amazon.com

This book is a must-read for those interested in this field. It is written for evolutionary biologists, who have praised it, and convincingly deconstructs neo-Darwinism as being an inadequate model to explain either the Cambrian problem or the subsequent proliferation of kinds.

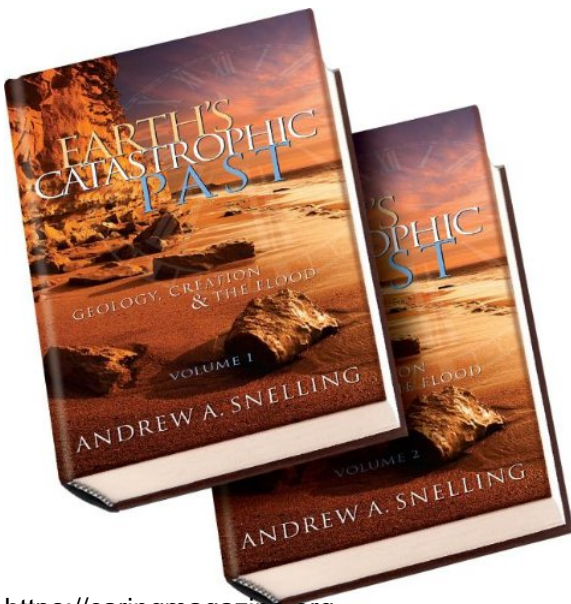
Neo-Darwinism had depended upon the “natural selection” of mutations in germ cells that would allow the passing on of new structures and functions to subsequent generations. The trouble is that recent discoveries in embryology have shown that early mutations in individuals at a time when they might influence new characteristics are uniformly lethal, while later mutations are no more than neutral.

Mutations are no longer considered by those working in the field to be a plausible mechanism for innovation, and without novelty, natural selection has nothing to work on. A great deal of work has focused on E. Coli, a common and rapidly reproducing bacillus. Despite thousands of generations of manipulation and naturally occurring and induced mutations, E. Coli remains E. Coli.

In the same way, there is nothing in the observable natural order or in the fossil record to suggest that one kind of animal ever becomes another. That is not to say that Darwin’s observations of finch beaks were not correct, or that finches did not respond to their environment, but rather that at the end of the day, the finches with smaller or larger or differently shaped beaks were still finches.

Nye dismissed the notion that a 450-foot ark could be built by unskilled workers, or that such a boat could withstand the rigors of ocean travel, or that it could accommodate all the animals necessary to repopulate the earth, since his own ship-building family, who were experts, could not do so.

This raised many questions about the intelligence of people in the second millennium BC, and the capacity of the ark, and the number of kinds that would have to be on board for a year. There was no time to discuss these things, but an interested person will want to visit the [full-size reconstruction](#) of the ark now under construction near the Creation Museum.



<https://caringmagazine.org>

“Earth’s Catastrophic Past: Geology, Creation & the Flood” | Amazon.com

A 450-foot by 75-foot by 45-foot vessel could easily accommodate the full complement of young animals along with enough food for a year. While we learn a great deal about judgment and salvation from this account in Genesis, we can also gain insight into how the present ocean trenches and mountain peaks and continental positions were established as a combination of volcanic explosions, and the breaking up of earth’s crust and months of crashing tsunamis not only laid down the layers of fossil-filled sediments, but reconfigured the surface of the earth. An interested reader might consult the two-volume work of Andrew Snelling, [\*Earth’s Catastrophic Past\*](#).

While Ham referred to experts in the fields of molecular biology, paleontology and astronomy, who are now a part of the faculty at the Creation Museum, as well as many other research scientists who are creationists, he did not claim to have the same level of expertise that they might have brought to the defense of his position.

When asked by Nye for evidence of creation, Ham might have cited specified irreducible complexity. Readers can find discussions of this concept in Michael Behe’s brilliant [\*Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution\*](#), and [\*The Edge of Evolution: The Search for the Limits of Darwinism\*](#). He might also have cited the numerous critical constants in the physical universe that must all be finely-tuned to support life. This is discussed in Karl Giberson’s [\*The Wonder of the Universe: Hints of God in our Fine-Tuned World\*](#), or Guillermo Gonzalez’s [\*The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos is Designed for Discovery\*](#).

This latter book is so insightful and represents such groundbreaking basic research, that the Smithsonian Institution was planning to feature it in a new exhibit. However, when it was learned that Gonzalez is a creationist, the exhibit was canceled. Although Nye claimed proudly that “scientists” gladly welcome new insights, he did not admit that the welcome only extends to those scientists who are “in the club.”

Many scientists who feel that their own work does not support an evolutionary model are reluctant to express their doubts out of fear that to do so would signal the end of their careers. Indeed, creationists are generally excluded from doctoral programs, from tenured professorships and from publishing their research findings. It has been said that in Russia one may criticize Darwin but not the government, while in the U.S., one may criticize the government but not Darwin.

Ham frequently asked for an explanation of consciousness, conscience, creativity and information. Nye seemed proud to offer an “I don’t know” as though it was more scientific to remain on a quest for such answers—albeit without considering the “unscientific” answers offered by the creation model. For those who want to dig into the information question, Dr. Werner Gitt has written a very helpful book, [\*In the Beginning was Information\*](#).

For those who would like to be brought up-to-date on the current knowledge in genetics that support creation and demolish evolutionary assumptions, consider [\*Genetic Entropy & The Mystery of the\*](#)

[Genome](#) by J. C. Sanford, and the recent [Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design](#) by Stephen Meyer, mentioned above. Things in science are not as they are said to be, and the claims of evolutionists to the contrary notwithstanding, the evidence for creation (or "intelligent design") is becoming more compelling, and more widely accepted among open-minded scientists in many disciplines.

One of the interesting ironies involving intelligent design is the [SETI](#) project. Nye mentioned frequently that taxpayer dollars are going into scientific research, and it is certainly true that quite a few are going into this project to determine whether there is evidence for intelligence in the universe. Scientists are looking for some sign, such as a radio signal from somewhere in the universe beaming prime numbers, or some other recognizable pattern, as evidence of such intelligence, while they refuse to acknowledge the clear evidence of intelligent design on earth in physical laws and finely-tuned constants, and in specified irreducible complexity, or in the phenomenon of information which is neither matter nor energy, but is obviously essential for the most basic function of cells.

Ham made clear that he holds the authority of the Bible above the changing theories and models in the area of inquiry he refers to as "historical" science. Most scientists have abandoned research into the origin of life, since the work has not progressed since the efforts of Stanley Miller, and all further work has been frustratingly unfruitful.

Many highly speculative notions have been proposed for the formation of complex molecules like RNA without disclosing the fact that life cannot exist outside of cells which are made up of thousands of protein molecules, and that proteins cannot exist unless protected from oxygen, heat, ultraviolet irradiation, water, changes in pH, and from other proteins. The tendency is always to break down.

Nye exulted in the second law of thermodynamics (the loss of energy and organization from systems) without conceding that no scientist has ever observed an increase in organization or function in any living thing or the addition of a new structure or information.

He repeated the word "troubling" frequently to express his concern about the backwardness of creationism, and suggested that what was at stake in allowing such a theory to be taught in schools was nothing less than turning the clock back on technological advance and the formation of a generation of scientific illiterates.

He said this knowing that such luminaries as Raymond Damadian, who conceived and developed a working MRI, is a young-earth creationist. His worldview certainly did not lead to turning any clocks back! Actually, what is at stake is a certain blindness that reminds one of the fable of "The Emperor's New Clothes." Everyone who wants to be in the club or who wants the right to express an opinion must repeat the shibboleth.

Ham is fully capable of making a more technical presentation, but in keeping with the mission of his organization, he wanted to make clear that he was not ashamed of the gospel or of the written Word of God—even in "American English"—another of Nye's favorite expressions.

One of the more important issues was radioisotope dating of ancient rocks and other artifacts. While Nye suggested that the various dating methods provide irrefutable results, the truth is that they are based on important assumptions, which cannot be proven. The [Institute for Creation Research](#) is now conducting important study in this area. Meanwhile, textbooks will continue to state without embarrassment that “the fossils are dated by the rocks in which they are found, and the rocks are dated by the fossils,” meaning the position of the fossils on the proposed evolutionary tree.



Photo via icr.org

One of the moments in the debate that I found perplexing and amusing was the brief display of 25 or so images of skulls. Somehow this was supposed to demonstrate that man arose from multiple lines, and that we are survivors after the extinction of the dinosaurs following a meteorite impact. Equally amusing—or “troubling,” as Nye himself might have said—were his outbursts of exuberant joy in scientific discovery even though he was proclaiming that we are accidental products of a mindless universe and face nothing but extinction ourselves after death.

Nye is certainly an engaging personality, and the debate was altogether civil. It was clear that he and Ham represent different worldviews. However, when it comes to actually “doing” scientific research, creationists and evolutionists conduct their work in exactly the same way. Indeed, Ham pointed out that both must work within the limits imposed by a logical and orderly physical universe of predictable laws. Both are looking at the same data, but they are coming to differing conclusions based on worldview assumptions that are not always admitted.

Are students really better off being indoctrinated in that philosophy when they might at least be exposed to the idea that we are indeed the special creations of a loving God, made in his image to think his thoughts after him, as creationist scientists of another generation used to put it, and to be good stewards of our privileged planet and to discover its marvelous secrets for the good of all using our God-given curiosity and creativity within the constraints of God-given moral law?

There is much more to say, and so I must encourage the reader to get hold of one of the recommended books.

Watch a replay of the [live debate](#) and listen to post-debate comments and answers.

Embed code for video replay: