

“The Biggest Elephant in the Room”

Dr. Richard S. Koole
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I. Introduction

A. Facing the inevitability of Death

1. “In Christ Alone”

“No guilt in life. No fear in death. This is the power of Christ in me.”

2. The death of Fred Meijer at age 91
 - a. The wealthiest man in Michigan
 1. My time with him
 - b. 36 others in the area that died
 - 2 infants
 - 1 – in their 20’s
 - 2 – In their 30’s
 - 3 – in their 40’s
 - 6 – in their 50’s
 - 2 – in their 60’s
 - 4 – in their 70’s
 - 7 – in their 80’s
 - 9 – in their 90’s
3. Everybody here will eventually face death
4. The biggest question is what happens to us when we die
 - a. The biggest elephant in the room
5. Rich DeVos to Fred Meijer’s wife Lena

“We have to get Fred right with Jesus”

B. Various opinions regarding God and life after death

1. The Atheists say that we are just really clever animals
 - a. There is nothing beyond this life
 - b. We're not much more than two-legged road kill
2. The Agonistics say that we can not know
 - a. So its useless to try to know
 - b. Dinesh D'Souza

The agnostics professed ignorance translates into a "practical atheism." Often with a self-satisfied smile, they say, "I cannot believe because I simply don't know."

They are entirely incurious about the most important questions of life: Why are we here? Is this life all there is? What happens when we die?

These great mysteries press themselves on all humans who ponder their situation, and yet there are people who refuse even to consider those mysteries.

3. The Apathetic just ignore the question
4. How do you answer the question?

C. Proving God apart from faith and the Bible

1. Yes, I have faith...and believe in the Bible
2. But what do you say to those who don't?
3. Colossians 4:5-6

(5) Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. (6) Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

4. Don't argue
5. Let your life and speech shine

II. Proofs for the Existence of God

1. The unexplained cause of the "Big Bang?"

2. The design and exquisite tuning of the Universe

3. The intelligent design of our bodies

- a. Dr. Robert Locke (not himself a creationist)

Furthermore, even the simplest possible cell imaginable within the limits of biology, let alone the simplest actually existing cell, is far too complex to have been thrown together by any known non-living chemical event. So even if evolution has an explanation of how species evolve from one to another, it has no way to “get the ball rolling” by producing the first species from something that is not a species.

*****now*****

4. Darwin’s unresolved objections to his own theory

- a. Proposed by Charles Darwin in 1859 in his book “The Origin of the Species.”
 b. Previously witnessed evolving within certain species

1. Changes within a species are not an assault on the belief in a creator
2. Science is not the enemy of faith
3. Calvin College’s new billboard

“Faith/Science....Do Both”

3. Astronomy and the stars
- c. But Darwinism went farther
1. Proposed there was evolution between the species
 2. Attempted to show that there was no need for a God to create anything
 3. All natural forces....no need for a creator
- d. Dr. Ehrlich—evolutionist author

“Evolution is taught as a dogma, accepted by “most enlightened people” because the “only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible.” Evolution is simply the assumption that an unobservable process believed possible, but not capable of being proved, has actually taken place. No one

can think of ways in which to test it...[Evolutionary ideas] have become part of an evolutionary dogma accepted by most of us as part of our training.”

e. The increasing attacks on Darwinism

1. Robert Locke

“I am not a creationist, and must confess that until recently, I treated people who questioned evolution with polite dismissal. But there has recently emerged a major trend in biology that has been suppressed in the mainstream media: evolution is in trouble. More importantly, this has absolutely nothing to do with religion but is due to the fact that the ongoing growth of biological knowledge keeps producing facts that contradict rather than confirm evolution.”

2. Michael Denton in his book, “Evolution: A Theory in Crisis” points out:

“there has always been a dissident faction of highly distinguished scientists of impeccable credentials and no religious motivations, who have declined to concede that evolution has been proved. This is inconvenient for evolutionists who would like to dismiss their opponents as Bible-thumping hicks and claim that questioning evolution is tantamount to questioning the value of validity of science.”

Denton points out biologists like Richard Owen, who were prepared to allow that evolution had taken place.....but thought that other causes were involved in bringing about the origin of the species.”

3. Larry Hatfield in Science Digest

“Scientists who utterly reject evolution may be one of our fastest-growing controversial minorities”

f. From Darwin’s own book

1. Many people talk about it...but few have actually read it
2. Darwin expressed some serious concerns in his book

g. **Darwin’s unresolved questions**

1. Darwin on “Mutations”

“How can we account for species, when crossed, being sterile and producing sterile offspring, whereas, when varieties are crossed, their fertility is unimpaired?”

- a. One scientist wrote:

Mutations overwhelmingly destroy genetic information, and produce creatures more handicapped than the parents. And natural selection simply weeds out unfit creatures. Neither mutations nor natural selection explain how new genetic information could get into an organism's genetic code to produce a totally different kind of creature.

2. Darwin on the missing “Missing Links”

“... why, if species have descended from other species by fine gradations, do we not everywhere see innumerable transitional forms? Why is not all nature in confusion, instead of the species being, as we see them, well defined?”

- a. Darwin hoped later generations of scientists would come up with answers

3. Darwin on “Irreducible Complexity”

“To suppose that the eye with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree.”

4. Darwin on “Beauty”

“some naturalists...believe that many structures have been created for the sake of beauty to delight man or the Creator (but this latter point is beyond the scope of scientific discussion), or for the sake of mere variety, a view already discussed. Such doctrines, if true, would be absolutely fatal to my theory. I truly admit that many structures are now of no direct use to their possessors, and may never have been of any use to their progenitors; but this does not prove that they were formed solely for beauty or variety.”

5. Darwin on “Instinct”

“Can instincts be acquired and modified through natural selection? What shall we say to the instinct which leads the bee to make cells, and which has practically anticipated the discoveries of profound mathematicians?”

6. Darwin on “The Origin of Creation”

- a. Title was “Origin of Species” not “Evolution of Species”
 - b. Yet failed to address “origin” of the original matter
- h. The “missing links” are still missing
- 1. Darwin believed if enough fossils could be found, it could be proved
 - a. Today, after 150 years of searching....still missing
 - b. Dr. T. George of Texas

More fossils now than we can catalogue, yet, not one example

- 2. The problem of the absence of “living transition stages”
- 3. Even if you believed that all the transitions died out—where are their fossils?
- 4. Often the oldest layers of fossils reveal *more* complex phyla
- 5. Evolutionist David Kitts, writing in the journal “Evolution” observes:

“Despite the bright promise that paleontology provides a means of “seeing” evolution, it has provided some nasty difficulties for evolutionists, the most notorious of which is the presence of gaps in the fossil record. Evolution requires intermediate forms between species, and paleontology does not provide them.”

6. Dr. Robert Locke

The first big problem with evolution is that the fossil record increasingly does not, honestly viewed, support it, a fact that famous Professor Steven Jay Gould of Harvard has described as the “the trade secret of paleontology.” Evolutionary theory claims that there once existed a whole series of successive forms of the various organisms alive today. These supposedly changed by infinitesimal amounts with each generation as they evolved into the present varieties, so the fossil record should show these gradual changes. But it doesn’t. Instead, it shows the sudden emergence of new species out of nowhere, fully complete with all their characteristics and not changing over time. It is almost entirely devoid of forms that can plausibly be identified as intermediates between older and newer ones. This is popularly known as the “missing link” problem, and

*it is massively systematic across different species and time periods. Worse, this problem is getting worse, not better, as more fossils are discovered, as the new fossils just resemble those already found and don't fill in the gaps. **In Darwin's day, it was easy to claim that the fossils were there but had not been discovered. Problem is, we now have hundreds of thousands of well-catalogued fossils, from all continents and geologic eras, and we still haven't found these intermediate forms.***

The more we dig, the more we keep finding the same forms over and over again, never the intermediates.

- i. Even Einstein was wrong sometimes
 1. The Big Bang theory
 2. Science is constantly changing
 3. The unshakable scientific theories of a thousand years ago are laughed at today
 4. Our grandchildren may someday be amazed at what we currently hold to be absolute scientific truth
 5. We may discover God chose to use evolution

5. The human mind...soul...consciousness

- a. Each of us has first-hand knowledge of this one
- b. Dr. J. R. Smythies of the University of Edinburgh

“The consciousness of other people may be for me an abstraction, but my own consciousness is for me a reality.”

“Scientist can determine what's happening in your brain...but not what's happening in your mind”
- c. Only you know what's going on inside of your mind
 1. What have you been thinking about while I've been preaching?
 2. What you think about as you attempt to fall asleep
- d. Where does this occur?
 1. We can dissect a brain and not know what a person is thinking

e. How could non-material come from material

f. The uniqueness of the human soul

1. Where is it located?
2. If it evolved....how and when
3. Why do people have a conscious...and the animals don't?

g. Darwinist philosopher Michael Ruse

“Why should a bunch of atoms have thinking ability? Why should I, even as I write now, be able to reflect on what I am doing and why should you, even as you read now, be able to ponder my points, agreeing or disagreeing, with pleasure or pain, deciding to refute me or deciding that I am just not worth the effort? No one, certainly not the Darwinian as such, seems to have any answer to this...The point is that there is no scientific answer.”

h. “Incognito”

i. Near Death Experiences

1. Physician Sam Parnia and Peter Fenwick, a neuro-psychiatrist at the Institute of Psychiatry in London

Their study of heart attack victims who were declared clinically dead and later revived. About ten percent reported having well-structured, lucid thought processes, with memory formation and reasoning during the time that their brains were not functioning. The effects of oxygen starvation or drugs—objections commonly offered by skeptics—were ruled out as factors.

j. Atheist Colin McGinn

“How can mere matter originate consciousness? Consciousness seems like a radical novelty in the universe, not prefigured by the aftereffects of the Big Bang. So how did it contrive to spring into being from what preceded it?”

k. Therefore...

1. **You are a soul....and you have a body**

- a. Vast difference from the animals

2. *We appear to be created in the image of an intelligent creator*

3. *Your soul...the real you...will continue to exist after your body has died*

6. The universal belief in a godlike being

a. The universal belief in a “god” of some sort

1. Every tribe and every nation

2. May define God differently

3. Various names

a. God

b. Allah

c. The “Great Spirit” of American Indian

d. Hindus have Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva

e. Greek and Romans had Zeus

4. Atheists are made—not born

5. Blaise Pascal—*“There is a God-sized vacuum in each of us which only God can fill!”*

b. The almost universal belief in life after death

1. Reincarnation

2. Heaven

3. Disembodied spirits

4. The happy hunting ground

5. The ancient Egyptians

c. The belief among every people group that death is not the end

d. It seems “hard-wired” into every person

e. Why is that so?

1. Logic would say that it is reasonable to believe it exists

7. The existence of the unexplainable?

- a. Miracles or the unexplainable
- b. Natural science struggles to explain—
 1. Instinct
 2. Extra-Sensory Perception
 3. The apparent existence of a spirit world...demons and angels
 4. Miraculous healings
 5. Resurrection of Jesus
 6. Near death and out-of-body experiences

8. The fulfillment of specific prophecies

- a. The prophecies of Daniel
 1. Most already fulfilled
- b. The timing of the Messiah
- c. The return of Israel and the survival of the Jews

9. The uniqueness of the Bible

- a. Absolutely no other book like it
- b. One theme from start to finish
- c. More than 20 authors over 1500 years

10. The changed lives of believers

- a. Testimonies of those Jesus has changed
- b. His presence in my life

11. The testimony from near-death-experiences

- a. Recent books
- b. Research
- c. Something's going on

12. The consequences of being wrong

- a. The only two choices
 1. All of the above work well with the existence of a God
 2. Try to explain without the existence of God
 - a. What caused the big bang?
 - b. Why do only humans have consciousness?
 - c. Why are all people born with a yearning for a godlike being?
 - d. Where did the first cell originate
 - e. How do you explain miracles and other supernatural occurrences?
 - f. What about the intricately fulfilled prophecies of the Bible?
- b. If I'm wrong and there is no God...
 1. I haven't lost anything
 2. The benefits of a moral life
 3. Loving church and family
- c. If you're wrong and there is a God...
 1. ...And life after death
 - a. Facing a God you've spurned
 - b. No preparation for eternity
 2. Next week.... ***"The scariest verse in the Bible"***
- d. Pascal's Wager

1. The two possible outcomes
 - a. Either there is....or there isn't a God
 - a. Either there is....or there isn't life after death
2. D'Souza

If we have faith in God and it turns out God does not exist, the only real downside we face is having been wrong.

But if we reject God during our lives, and it turns out God does exist, there is much more serious risk: eternal separation from God.

The ingenuity of Pascal's argument is that it emphasized the practical necessity of making a choice. The necessity is imposed by death (the biggest elephant in the room). There comes a day when there are no tomorrows, and then we all have to cast our votes for or against the proposition on the ballot. The unavoidability of the decision exposes the sheer stupidity of "apatheism," the pretense that something doesn't matter when it is quite literally a matter of life and death. The apathetic and the agnostic refuse to choose when there is no option to abstain. So the refusal to choose becomes a choice—a choice against God.

III. Summary

A. Arguing with people is not the answer

1. But we are to have an answer (Colossians 4:5-6)
2. And we need to settle the issue first in our hearts
3. Kids going off to college

B. The preponderance of evidence

1. Dr. Werner von Braun, the father of space science

"The vast mysteries of the universe should only confirm our belief in the certainty of its Creator. I find it as difficult to understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe as it is to comprehend a theologian who would deny the advances of science."

2. Calvin College, "Faith/Science...Do Both"

C. The testimony of those who searched the evidence

1. The story of Dr. Allan Rex Sandage

The greatest observational cosmologist in the world—who has deciphered the secrets of the stars, plumbed the mysteries of quasars, revealed the age of global clusters, pinpointed the distances of remote galaxies, and quantified the universe’s expansion through his work at the Mount Wilson and Mount Palomar observatories. The New York Times dubbed him ***“The Grand Old Man of Cosmology.”***

In 1985 he stunned the world of science at a conference on science and religion. In the context of a talk about the Big Bang and its philosophical implications, he shocked the crowd of his peers by publicly disclosing that based on his discoveries, he had decided to become a Christian at age fifty.

“The Big Bang,” he told the rapt audience, *“was a supernatural event that cannot be explained within the realm of physics as we know it. Science had taken us to the First Event, but it can’t take us further to the First Cause. The sudden emergence of matter, space, time, and energy pointed to the need for some kind of transcendence.”*

“It was my science that drove me to the conclusion that the world is much more complicated than can be explained by science,” he would later tell a reporter. *“It was only through the supernatural that I can understand the mystery of existence.”*

2. Romans 1:20

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

O Lord my God. When I in awesome wonder. Consider all the worlds your hands have made.

I see the stars. I hear the rolling thunder. Your power throughout the universe displayed.