How Ken Ham's mind hasn't changed

By Steve Thorngate

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That Ken Ham guy is pretty slick with words. This was clear before his evolution v. creation debate with Bill Nye last night, including in <u>his preamble at CNN</u>. Early on we get this:

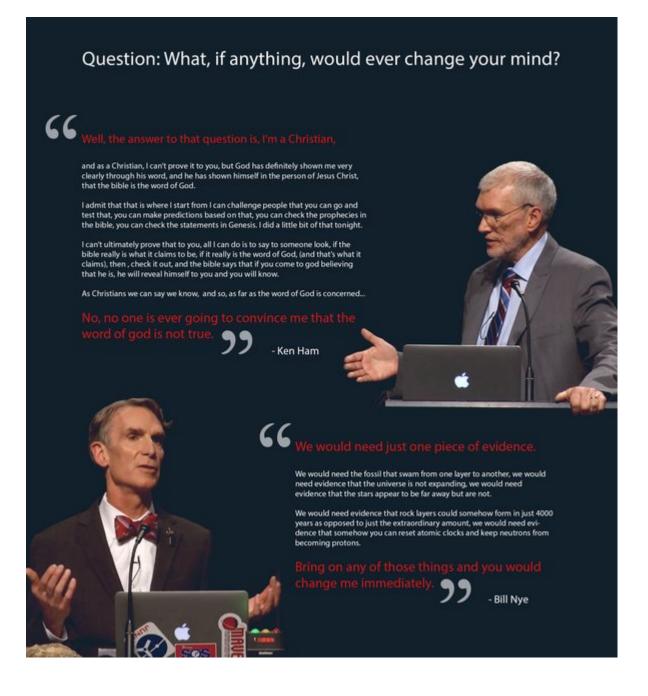
While we are not in favor of mandating that creation be taught in public school science classes, we believe that, at the very least, instructors should have the academic freedom to bring up the problems with evolution.

If you're just joining us in this long-running cultural debate, that might not sound too unreasonable. But soon, this:

Most students are presented only with the evolutionary belief system in their schools, and they are censored from hearing challenges to it. Let our young people understand science correctly and hear both sides of the origins issue and then evaluate them.

"Censored from hearing challenges to it" that most science teachers aren't at all interested in making? We're a long ways from Ham's earlier appeal to academic freedom. And that "both sides" bit implies that evolution and creation should be considered on equal footing, an argument the courts have long since rejected.

Ham sounded pretty good at the debate itself, too. But the substance again left a lot to be desired. This image has been making the rounds:



Evidence could change Nye's mind. Nothing could change Ham's.

For those of us who have no beef with evolutionary science, this crystalizes the difference between the two positions: only one debater is even theoretically open to revising his views in the future. So what's the point of a debate? (Lots of non-creationists didn't think there was a point, actually.) It's evidence that Ham isn't really interested in scientific inquiry here, only in what he already believes.

But it's more than that. Ham's answer also presents a discouraging view of what it means to be a Christian and to read the Bible. No one is ever going to convince him to understand the Bible differently than he does now? (I know those aren't his words, but that's the implication of how he shuts down the question so entirely.) Not new information about the Bible or the world, or new experiences or relationships, or even new revelation from Ham's relationship with the living God?

In my relatively short life as a Christian, I've changed my mind about lots of things, repeatedly—including what exactly we mean when we say the Bible is true. Lots of Christians have done this, of course (and not just liberal ones). The *Century* publishes a <u>whole series of articles</u> about how and why. It's part of the joy—and the responsibility—of a living personal faith.

Most scientists think Ham's approach is no way to do science. I've got little to add to that; I'm not a scientist. But I am a Christian, and I find it downright depressing to imagine a life of faith so utterly resistant to change.