

Opinions

A failed union of faith, logic

It's a good thing Frank Turek wasn't around in the 15th century, or we all might still think the world is flat.

Turek spoke at Elon Thursday night in a room overflowing with eager students and Burlington residents, many desperate to hear his evidence for Christianity. He bragged about his ability to speak 150 words per minute, and then dazzled the audience with an onslaught of

scientific words, theories and clever jokes.

But there was a problem.

When carefully examined, the presentation was merely the work of a professional apologetic, peppered with logical flaws, misquoted information and marketing ploys. It was actually a carefully-manipulated piece of Christian propaganda for Turek's own personal benefit.

What his argument boiled down to was this: Because a world was created with things we can't currently explain, God must exist.

This is simply an argument from ignorance. In mathematics, it would be like saying if a solution is nine, the problem that created the solution must be seven plus two.

But what about five plus four, three times three or 153 divided by 17? There are many possibilities, claiming that one is "the truth" and polarizing audiences with ignorance for personal profit is unethical and harmful to society. It comes as no surprise that Turek has appeared on such shows as "The O'Reilly Factor."

But, as Turek states in his presentation, there can be only one right answer in this case. He said that it is important to be open minded until you have "enough evidence to close your mind around it."

So where is his evidence?

He claims that because the universe is so complex, there must have been a creator. While this is one possibility that could explain it, what it actually does is raise a much bigger question: How was the creator

created? If the universe's complexities require an explanation, why doesn't the much more complex being that created it?

Even if there was "something" that created the universe, it is illogical to give it other attributes without any proof, as Turek does. In actuality, he has "closed his mind" around a concept with extremely little evidence — making him the definition of ignorance.

To someone with very little background on the scientific nature of the universe, Turek's words might sound like the word of God.

When talking about his major competitors, most notably famous atheist Richard Dawkins, he resorted to jokes when dismissing their ideas. He also blatantly misquoted Stephen Hawking, asserting the famous scientist believes there was a single point in time when everything was created. Hawking's theories are much more complex and do not suggest this.

But how is anyone in the audience supposed to know?

In the Q-and-A session, junior Mike Kleinman tried to call Turek out on some of the major logical flaws. Turek, with his doctorate in apologetics, kept the crowd on his side with a few jokes and ultimately avoided the question. When Kleinman brought up some of Hawking's real theories on time, Turek tried to discredit the question by joking, "I don't have time for this."

But after another joke during his presentation that lamely discredited the multi-verse theory, "It looks like a demented French horn," Turek may have made a slip-up that undermined his entire presentation when talking about what he believed.

"That's what it seems to be at this point, anyway," he said.

The statement proves his speech is a classic argument from ignorance. Older civilizations thought solar eclipses were the work of God, but we now know eclipses can be scientifically explained by the position of the sun and the moon.

Turek claims to be proving God with science, but what he's actually doing is using an all-powerful being to fill in the gaps of science we haven't figured out yet — and making a profit doing it.

Think about it. In the 15th Century, it probably "seemed" like the world was flat too.

Bickering, stubborn states



Kevin Clang
Columnist

Politicians like to demonstrate the unity of the country by pointing out the idea that there are no red states or blue states, just the United States. It is a nice idea if you're running for an elected office, but it could not be farther from the truth.

While there have always been major ideological differences between the many states, rarely in history have they been so numerous.

Red and blue political beliefs are growing farther and farther apart and it is getting increasingly difficult for the two to understand each other. Big government versus small government. Pro-life versus pro-choice. In today's America, you're either a gay-marrying, baby-killing member of a blue state or a gun-toting, Bible-loving member of a red state.

So it is really no surprise to hear talks of sovereignty and even secession from some states unhappy with Washington's current spending policies. Alaska, Vermont and most recently Texas have all spoken of secession in the past few years.

With the struggling economy, the United States finds itself at its lowest point in recent history. Morale is down and the states are starting to point fingers at each other and the federal government. Let's ignore that statements are made to get attention, not to be taken seriously.

Also, let's ignore that 75 percent of Texans don't even want to secede, and that even mentioning the action is un-American. Let's also ignore that the possibility of secession is unrealistic and remote at best — states would have to defeat the most powerful military on the planet to succeed in seceding. Does the United States have a problem? If so, how do we fix it?

Since there is no idiot's guidebook to repairing feuding states within a country, I consulted the next-best source: relationshipprich.org, a Web site that uses Dr. Phil's books to give advice to troubled married couples. When you think about it, the United States is not unlike an unhappy, old married couple on its last nerve.

We've experienced the blissful union of 1776, the mid-life crisis of the Civil War and moved into old age with World War II. Now, it's like we're recently retired: We worked hard and now have the attention and respect of everyone around us, but beneath the surface we've grown bitter as we've all drifted away from each other. And all the money we saved up is running out.

First off, this constant arguing is not helping anyone. States need to learn to listen to each other's gripes rather than constantly trying to defend themselves.

Simply listening to each other without trying to advance an agenda may help defuse the situation. Incessant attacks just exacerbate the problem and increase potential damage. The first step to understanding each other's differences will be to acknowledge them.

Listening to each other will give us greater perspective and allow us to see the issues from the other side's point of view. This will broaden our picture, letting us see past red or blue issues and focus more on America's issues.

Our differences are what make America great. The country needs this back-and-forth dialogue of ideas. If one side secedes, the country loses. The key is to talk about these matters without allowing them to anger us.

The blame game also needs to stop. Both sides have made mistakes. While taking responsibility off of ourselves and putting it on the other states may feel good, especially when we know that we are right, it turns the others into adversaries. This opens the door to more argument, which only leads to guilt, shame and resentment.

Being the minority party is just part of politics. Sometimes you're up and sometimes you're down, but in the end the American people will decide what is best for themselves and we need to accept that, even if we don't agree with current policies.

It would be a tragic shame to lose any one of the 50 states. Each is so unique and special, adding its own distinctive flavor and culture to the country. Seceding is equivalent to giving up. By doing so, the other side automatically wins.

Perhaps Congress could benefit from hiring a marriage counselor or two to sit in on vitriolic sessions — maybe then they could see past their own egos and consider what is best for the country.

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A talent that cannot be airbrushed

How many times have you witnessed judgment being passed against another person? You have probably observed the scrawny yet dedicated football player on your high school team, who, despite his work ethic, is never given the chance to play because he is considered too weak. Or the old-fashioned faculty member you think won't understand your adolescent troubles merely because their clothes

remind you of past decades.

How liberated would our lives be if we skipped the part in our interactions with one another where we attempt to completely assess another person's being based on their appearance? A perfect example of the aforementioned freedom can be seen in the case of Susan Boyle, a recent television and Internet sensation since her singing debut on "Britain's Got Talent."

Susan Boyle is a 48-year-old, somewhat matronly looking woman who demonstrated her spunk and zeal for life in front of millions of people with her audition for the show.

What began as a sort of comedic spectacle that had the audience and the judging panel doubled over in laughter soon transformed into a tear-jerking performance as Boyle began to sing, "I Dreamed a Dream" from "Les Miserables."

The glint in Simon Cowell's eyes as she introduced herself was instantly recognizable. He had, within seconds, sized her up, put her in his own judgment box and put a label on it. His demeanor seemed to say, this woman can't possibly display the talent that Carrie Underwood, Kelly

Clarkson and other young, gifted celebrities had before her. Why?

The answer sits in plain view. Boyle didn't look like she could do it. She didn't have the look of someone capable of having enough talent to make it onto the show. Thus, a warped, inaccurate correlation is created between her physical appearance and her potential. Since when did beauty equal singing talent?

I would think on a national stage like "Britain's Got Talent," such profiling wouldn't be so blatantly obvious as it was on the day of Boyle's audition. Her judgment on that stage serves as a testament to the judgment we all experience on the various stages in our own lives, big or small.

The most disheartening part of those moments is the superficiality of the expectations we impose upon one another. Professional attire seems to indicate a professional attitude regardless of actual etiquette, and unqualified people are constantly rewarded around the world for their perceived attractiveness.

If Boyle was 20 years younger, tweezed her eyebrows and straightened her hair, would she have been received differently? Why was it that she had to prove her worth, while others need not even try because their outward appearance speaks for itself?

Furthermore, a debate has ensued over the question of giving the emerging star a makeover, prompting Americans and Britons to weigh in on her potential physical appearance. Another judge on the panel, Amanda Holden, has already declared the singer shouldn't change her look.

"She needs to stay exactly as she is, because that's the reason why we love her ... she looks just like anyone who could live on your street," Holden said.

What Holden said is true, but Boyle's appearance need not precede the talent she possesses or the person she is inside, nor should anyone else's.



Ashley Jobe
Guest Columnist